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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
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Pioneering Dance at Evangelical Christian Universities

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in Dance

by

Autumn Mortenson

Thesis Committee:
Associate Professor Sheron Wray, Chair
Associate Professor Jennifer Fisher
Assistant Professor Chad Michael Hall

2016

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DEDICATION

For a future generation of dance artists.

That they may be excellent in their craft, purposeful in their lives, and mature in their ministries.

May you serve the Lord our God in spirit and in truth with all of your hearts, souls, minds, and strength for the benefit of humankind and the glory of God.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Pioneering Dance at Evangelical Christian Universities

By

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There are very few pre-professional dance major programs at Evangelical Christian universities in the U.S. today. Why do faith-based universities that have theatre, music, and art programs not also offer dance? This inquiry investigates why this gap exists and identifies what it would take to establish a new program. It explores the historical relationship the Christian church has had with dance. It gathers and synthesizes current perspectives and statistics about dance and Evangelical universities. It evaluates how the Bible and tenets of the Christian faith can integrate with dance training in higher education. Methods utilized include: a review of historical and current literature, interviews with thirteen professors and administrators at three Evangelical universities, an anonymous survey of undergraduate students, data gathering from accrediting agencies and target universities for statistical analysis, and a choreographic exploration of Biblical text. Results of this inquiry reveal that, currently, there are more structural challenges such as finances, facilities, and impact to existing programs, than there are anti-dance sentiments at the study sites. There is growing interest and receptivity to establishing dance major programs at Evangelical Christian universities where excellent dance training is intertwined with and inspired by faith.

Introduction

Establishing a New Pre-Professional Dance Major Program

“Study what you love—you have the rest of your life to work.” That was the advice of my admissions counselor when I was selecting an undergraduate major. It was good advice. Study what you love and invest in that about which you are passionate. I attended a fantastic university, but, as a Christian and dancer, I wish there would have been a university where I could have fully integrated my dance training and my faith.

Fast-forward many years, when I was directing a large, fully comprehensive dance department that was part of the Conservatory of the Arts at Valley Christian High School in San Jose, California. Every year my seniors would choose universities and degree programs to pursue. There were few Christian universities¹ that offered a dance major, and none that were near us in California. Many of my students had to make a choice. Those who wanted to continue with a Christian education gave up a dance major, and those who wanted to pursue dance did so at a secular or otherwise non-faith-driven university. To me, the lack of opportunity was a tragedy.

For this thesis, I investigate how many Evangelical Christian universities have dance major programs and what would be required to start a new one. My research questions include: why doesn't an Evangelical Christian university, particularly one in Southern California, have a dance major program while most other universities do? What would be the major obstacles and impediments to starting a program? What impact does anti-dance Christian rhetoric have on the situation? What would an excellent pre-professional dance major program at an Evangelical

¹ For the purposes of this study, I am defining a Christian university as one that is rooted and purposed to grow their students in their Christian faith, to prepare them for ministry through a multitude of fields, and to equip them to intellectually and passionately engage with the Bible and a Christian worldview. In order to clarify this definition, I will refer to these as Evangelical Christian universities.

Christian university look like? Is there a program that could be used as a model, one to glean wisdom and experience from in forging new territory?

For the scope of this project, I uncover and delineate what it would take to start a new dance major program that is technically, artistically, academically, and spiritually excellent, as well as imagining what one might look like. In Chapter One, to broaden my perspective, I review literature about the relationship between dance and the Christian faith, historically and biblically. I also examine the perception of dance fueled by secular concerns as well as conflicts within the church hierarchies directly. Furthermore, I investigate current scholarship and trends in 21st Century dance higher education in Chapter One in order to outline curricular considerations in developing a prototype of a new pre-professional dance major program that integrates Christian faith. I discuss interviews I conducted with professors and administrators at different Evangelical universities. The findings from the interviews are detailed in Chapter Two. My goal is to gain insight into their perspectives on dance, faith, and their integration in higher education. I also conduct anonymous student interviews to gain prospective student perspectives on dance education. In Chapter Three, I investigate the member institutions in the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities to discover what presence dance has at each campus. For comparison, I peruse the databases of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Senior Division and the National Association of Schools of Dance. I create a sample of possible curriculum for an Evangelical Christian university dance major program which integrates established dance training practices and Christian faith explorations. I present this in Chapter Four.

To bring all of the research elements together, I create a choreographic concert based on biblical text using multiple genres of dance that I consider applicable to a pre-professional dance major program. I seek to underline the choreographic themes with elements that address several

historical anti-dance concerns from Christian leaders. I am not the first to utilize biblical text for choreographic inspiration, as many influential modern choreographers have abstractly or narratively depicted biblical themes and passages. Some of these works include José Limón's "There is a Time," Ruth St. Denis' "Salome," George Balanchine's "Samson and Delilah," Martha Graham's "Embattled Garden," and Ted Shawn's "23rd Psalm." To some extent, my work follows these significant and impactful footsteps in the development of dance. Discussed in Chapter Five, I not only use biblical text as source material, I also design the work to embody the selected scripture in its essence, to elevate and highlight the word of God, creating an artistic endeavor that bridges heaven and earth. My goal beyond the concert is to take the work, in whole or in part, and present an abridged section of this thesis with the requisite historical and current research to administrators of Evangelical Christian universities as a performative example of a pre-professional dance major program.

Chapter One

Review of the Literature

Many strands must be considered in thinking about developing a new dance major program. Although the scope of literature on these strands is immense, this review focuses on three major areas: dance history in Christianity, advocacy for dance within Christian culture, and recent publications proposing change in dance curriculum for the 21st century. This review considers how these strands inform the possibilities and opposition to establishing a new dance major program in an Evangelical Christian university today.

Dance History in Christianity

In order to understand perspectives on dance at an Evangelical Christian university, it is important to gain some context for dance and the church. In this section, I investigate prominent attitudes towards dance in the early church, medieval times, the Christian Reformation, the Renaissance, and the Puritans.

Christians have had a tenuous relationship with dance for centuries, but during the first 500 years of the early church, according to *Dance As Religious Studies*, edited by Doug Adams and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, dance was considered a “natural way of expressing joy, a way of salvation, and a way of adoration, as illustrated by the references to the dances of the holy ones, the martyrs, and the angels” (19). In the early Christian church, unity of the total person was fundamental. For believers in the first century, “their faith was not just an intellectual acceptance of certain beliefs but an experience of abundant life and spiritual joy” (19). Dance was used in liturgies, described by Justin Martyr in AD150 and Hippolytus in AD200 as joyful circle dances, according to *The Dance in Christianity, a History of Religious Dance through the Ages* by Marilyn Daniels (13). Evidence suggests that, in the fourth and fifth century, theologian

Augustine, and Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, supported dance as a way of harmonizing the whole person and maintained dance should be kept sacred (14). Early on, it appears the church officially embraced the unity of body, mind, soul, and spirit. Daniels explained that eventually a tension began between the orderliness of worship in a formal liturgy and individual, spontaneous elements of worship (14). Beginning in the fifth century, discomfort surfaced from observing extroverted personal expression in the midst of corporate worship.² There was also growing concern about pagan uses of dancing seeping into the church (Daniels 21). The concern over secular culture and practices affecting Christian culture and practices has continued, even to this day. In my interviews, for instance, concern over a hyper-sexualized portrayal of the human body, especially in commercial dance, was mentioned.

During medieval times, dance was still used as a form of worship in the church, but had also began transitioning to being used as a teaching and evangelism tool for the church (Daniels 50). In some churches and ministries today, dance is still used effectively in these ways, not surprising in that choreography traditionally has been an effective tool for telling stories or as a platform for provocative ideas and social activism. The “Danse Macabre,” or “The Dance of Death,” arose out of sermons on death meant to frighten sinners into repentance (Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona 22). By 1373, it became a response to the horrors of the Bubonic Plague. Some scholars record that the procession began in a cemetery and featured angelic figures dancing as the souls danced off to death (23).

In 1462, King René of Provence created the “Lou Gué,” a “strolling ballet” (Vuillier and Grego 57), on the eve of Corpus Christi, a holiday honoring the body of Christ in the Catholic Church. However, in the procession, events from Christian history and Roman mythology were

² “Corporate worship” refers to worship in unity with others, not as a solitary exercise

co-mingled and represented simultaneously (Daniels 54). In *Adversaries of Dance*, Ann Wagner detailed this as a time of transition for dance in the church. She cited that sacred and secular dance were both included in subsequent rituals and processions, like the Children's Festival and Festival of Fools, but that the dances eventually became too disorderly and were prohibited after 1385 (Wagner 5). The church then used morality plays, which included dance, to communicate Biblical teachings outside their walls, and into the larger community (6).

In early 15th Century, changing thoughts about the human body began to creep into the church. In the episode of the PBS *Dancing* series, "Lord of the Dance," the Reverend Thomas A. Kane, explained that everything in the European church was positioned to "look beyond the body and into the realm of pure spirit. Therefore, all architecture and aspects of the liturgies were to direct attention heavenward. "So dance which is very body, is pulling away from that tendency....there is a problem of understanding" (Kane, "Lord of the Dance"). Instead of seeing dance as a way to connect our earthly bodies to a heavenly realm, dance was regarded as a fleshly activity. This suspicion of dance was due, in part, to Greek Gnosticism which had seeped into the church, a philosophy that the material world was bad and only heaven was good ("Lord of the Dance"). This spirit-mind-body dualism contributed to the removal of dance from the church. McElroy, author of *Finding Inspiration*, suggested that as Christians withdrew from the arts, they limited their influence, thus the arts were left to develop apart from the Christian church (McElroy 20). The minimal presence of Christian worldview in dance today is of grave concern to me, and one of the reasons I am interested in starting programs at evangelical Christian universities.

The Reformation, which began in 1525, officially put an end to dance in the church as the intellect became regarded as the most important sense of the body (Daniels 55). In order for all

Christians to have the Bible in their own language and be able to understand the Bible for themselves, the impetus for academic education began. A natural byproduct of this very noble endeavor was that intellectual activities became more important than activities of the heart or of the body (Ibid). Not long after, all dances and processions were abolished except for funeral processions (Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona 25). The Catholic Counter-Reformation made dancing an ex-communication offense (27). “In general, Protestant Christians felt that the portals of the spirit were to be entered with great seriousness through the mind and not through the senses” (29). This was not the case with every believer, according to Wagner. A tension began within the church where there were some who argued against dancing but others who would not condemn it, including Martin Luther, the author of the Reformation (Wagner 388).

Even though dance had been removed from the church, it flourished in the royal courts, such as in Italy and France (Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona 25-27). This was the birthplace of European ballet. Everyone wealthy enough would take dancing lessons, thereby securing their status. During the Renaissance of the 14th-17th centuries, “Dance in Christianity flourished in the theatrical allegorical ballets, in processional celebrations in the oratorio, and in the interpretation of hymns and psalms in worship. The church itself put a stop to these acts of worship in the post-Renaissance period” (Daniels 61). Hence, Christian expression through art only flourished outside the worship services of the church, arguably yielding some of the greatest artistic accomplishments of all time. “With no opportunity for creative life in conventional churches, sacred dance faded out and became unknown to church attendants” (Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona 30). The benefits of art to society were great, but the detriment to generations of Christians, who would not know dance as a form of worship, was also great.

In the post-Renaissance period from 1700-1900, religious dance all but disappeared, surviving in isolated instances such as folk dancing (Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona 29). The post-Renaissance time period saw the rise of the French Revolution, great explorations, the Puritan establishment in America, the American Revolution, and many other revolutions around the world.

In the United States, this timeline loosely corresponds with what Maureen Needham illustrated in *I See America Dancing* as the positioning of critics against “promiscuous dancing.” Most often these critics were preachers who spoke, from the pulpit and in writing, against some uses of dance. Reverend Increase Mather’s *Arrow against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing* in 1685 was not an indictment against dancing for worship or for natural expressions of emotion but rather against social dancing where men and women who were not married were in close contact. He felt this could lead to adultery (Needham 98, 100). Mather said, “leaping is a natural expression of joy: so that there is no more sin in it than in laughter, or any outward expression of inward rejoicing” (qtd. in Needham 98). Yet, Mather and other Christian leaders spoke out against certain dangers of dancing, as they saw them. One argument made popular by Mather was that David’s dancing in the Bible was a “religious dance,” not a social dance of “mixed gender” (109). Another argument against dancing was that since the world was suffering affliction, and it was a time of great mourning, that it was, therefore, not a time to participate in social dancing (a reference to Ecclesiastes 3:4 “a time to mourn and a time to dance) (47). I will address this in my choreographic concert with the section “Mourning.” I perceive this as a great misunderstanding of the Scripture and an unfortunate way to view mourning and dancing, which ultimately was a disservice to both. The third argument was that because horribly evil people like

Nero, the first century Roman emperor who slaughtered Christians, reportedly loved dancing, the Church desired to distance itself from it (106-108).

In *Adversaries of Dance*, Wagner pointed out that theologian John Calvin opposed dancing, comparing it to madness (27). In 1579, Lambert Daneau, who followed Calvinist thought, wrote *Traite De Danses*, where he accused dancing of being “frantic” and “folly,” comparing dancers to “wild beasts” (qtd in Wagner 27). His work was first printed in France and then England. Dancing was aligned with lusts of the flesh by Protestant writers because of the “accompanying immoral behavior,” which a Christian, having been “born anew in Christ,” had no business participating in (35). These moral thought patterns and beliefs influenced the English Puritans, who opposed not only dancing but many forms of recreation (36). English settlers in North America also had a cultural bias and preference for what dance should look like. English preacher William Perkins said some of the dance movements of Native Americans that he had seen on the American frontier were “more beseeming goates [sic] and apes, of who they are commonly used then men” (qtd in Wagner 36). The discovery of indigenous peoples’ native dancing was “absurd and grotesque” to white, European sensibilities, according to Ralph Giordano in *Satan in the Dance Hall* (16-17). The controlled and lifted aesthetic of ballet contrasted starkly with the bent knees, bouncing body, and earth-bound movement of the indigenous American Indians. Perhaps because dance was no longer a part of their worship expression, they saw the Native American and African American dance expressions as something to be mistrusted and as “other” than themselves. Trying to distance the church from the appearance of pagan practices, Christians in early American society did not dance.

Most Americans, in fact, had no experience of dancing in worship. The ‘dancing exercise’ or ecstatic outbursts documented at frontier revivals

were anathema to traditional Protestants. Similarly, the dance in worship as practiced by African American and Native Americans would have existed outside the sphere of acceptability of mainstream evangelicals. The uniqueness of Shaker dancing, coupled with the radical nature of Shaker religious beliefs, provided no means by which the evangelical denominations could accept and approve dancing (Wagner 180).

Cultural tension, as demonstrated here with Native Americans, continued to resurface with the expansive influence of the African diaspora on dancing in America in the years that followed.

As the nineteenth century progressed in America, more questions about the value of dancing arose. Evangelist Charles Finney called dancing a “wicked tool of Satan” because it pulled people into “worldly excitement” and away from his revivals (Wagner 117). “Ballet as well as social dance drew the ire of the clergyman” (141). Reverend Henry Ward Beecher spoke against famous ballerina Fanny Elssler, complaining that people would pay to see her dance but were not paying their financial debts (150). An important distinction was made by Wagner that the anti-dance argument in the 1800’s was against social dancing and not against worship dance. “Almost universally, dance opponents took care to distinguish the dancing referred to in the Bible from that which they opposed in their own day...what they did indict was dancing and occasions for dancing that served no other purpose than enjoyment and pleasure” (Ibid). Emphasis placed on intellect and reason during the 19th century was crippling for dance. Social dancing was considered non-intellectual. Consequently, Wagner noted, social dance could hold no place of value for the Christian (161) because it did not inherently prepare people for eternity (163). Concern over the frivolity of social dancing would dissuade many Christians from dancing at all, even in worship. In contrast, the Shakers, a Christian sect who came to America in 1774,

embraced a kind of dancing as a way to prepare themselves for eternity. They did so as a form of worship as well as encouragement to each other. They would “shake out all that is carnal” and “receive spiritual blessing” (Daniels 64). The Shakers were not widely accepted by evangelical Christians because of their many radical beliefs. Thus, dancing was marred even further in the eyes of evangelical denominations (Wagner 180).

The Jazz Age of the 1920's brought especially turbulent times for dance and the Christian church. In 1922, Reverend Dr. J.W. Porter said about the “dangers of dance,” that, “a man and a woman only danced because it was the road to sex” (Giordano 43). This was in reference to James 1:15³, which says, “Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (*New King James Bible*). The scripture is not talking about dance, but Porter applied the principle to dancing. Giordano elaborated on the particulars of jazz music. “Jazz also promoted close and fast-paced dancing, and both were viewed as scandalous” (Giordano 130). Jazz music and the accompanying Charleston dancing were new, bringing out visible and visceral relief from the tensions and strife of the 1920's. There was concern over the lack of clothing on the girls, alcohol, and relaxed morality that was associated with the jazz era (xii). An evangelist from Oregon went so far as saying, “Dancing is the first and easiest step toward hell” (135). *Ladies Home Journal* editor John R McMahan, “spread unjustified fear” to his 6 million readers when he charged “that if the music and dancing was not regulated ‘in time (it) will devastate our country’” (138). Unfortunately this was a viewpoint and warning that stuck in the minds of many in the Christian church throughout the 20th century.

³ Giordano actually mistakenly referenced this as James 1:5 in his book “Satan and the Dance Hall” when in fact it is James 1:15.

Interestingly, it wasn't just the church that opposed some of the social dance developments, but also dancing masters,⁴ social activists, and government officials who were opposed to the popular dancing of the time. Giordano emphasized that the end of WWI, rising living costs, influx of immigrants, influenza epidemic, and prohibition all factored into the social climate of the 20's (5-10). "New industrialization," capitalism, and a strong Protestant work ethic were factors which led to ceaseless work, no holidays, and no festivals (19). People wanted an outlet and so they danced. Giordano said 150,000-200,000 girls who worked in factories reportedly went to dance halls every week (6). There were multiple issues with the dance halls becoming breeding grounds for girls to be taken advantage of (6, 78, 80, and 175). Therefore, regulation was a top priority. But people argued over what and how they should be regulated. Some topics of debate noted by Giordano were operation hours, police presence, locations, if dance hostesses should be tipped or paid, chaperones, alcohol, types of music, and types of dances. Surprisingly, a major "anti-dance" voice came from the dancing masters, those who taught the social dances (75). Wealthy people traditionally employed dancing masters for instruction in these dances in order to maintain their social standing (77). Dancing masters controlled which dances were done in the dance halls, what was popular, and what music was played (75-76). The public demand for the Charleston and jazz music indicated society didn't need the dancing masters anymore. Thus, dancing masters protested alongside Christian leaders who argued against the dangers of the new jazz movement (75). In fact, famed dance teacher Arthur Murray and teacher Charles J. Coll, offered dance instruction via the mail, a kind of mail-order "how-to-dance" kit (82), in response to the decreasing demand for private dance instruction.

⁴ Dancing masters were the curators and teachers of the social dances of any given time. They were the foremost authority on how a dance should be done, when it should be done, the music, and the social mores of the dance.

Not only were there moral and safety concerns, but racial tension also affected social dancing. As a result, segregation occurred in the dance halls. Even though they were separated, white and African-American dance halls were monitored for moral conduct and the types of music and dancing that were allowed (80). One exception to segregation, the largest and most influential dance hall in the U.S. was the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, which opened in 1926. They also employed stringent rules, regulating the types of dances that could be performed, dictating a refined atmosphere, and requiring a strict dress code (183-184). Unlike exclusively white ballrooms, the Savoy did allow “hot” jazz music (Ibid). “Hot” jazz, rooted in African polyrhythms, was not given playtime on the radio, so most white Americans were not exposed to the music (132). “Hot” jazz versus “symphonic” jazz was a big issue from 1917-1921.

Adding to the growing racial tension of the time, founded in 1922, the American Eugenics Society espoused the superiority of the Nordic race and sought the “sterilization of worthless types,” seeing the influx of certain European and Mediterranean immigrants as being detrimental to America (87). In fact, the 1924 Congressional National Origins Act restricted immigration from Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Asia (88). There was a push to “Americanize” social dance by suggesting people should dance the old folk dances “of America”, instead of the then popular dances, such as “The Charleston” (Ibid).

In the 1920’s, anti-dance sentiment by some Christians shifted to include all forms of dance. One such preacher, Reverend John Roach Straton, wrote “The Dance of Death: Should Christians Indulge?” in 1920. Straton did not cite direct biblical arguments against dancing, but rather, “referenced the Bible...as a historical source” in creating his anti-dance sermons (41). Dance halls were big business, with estimates of 10-20 million people regularly dancing (139). Giordano claimed there were no morals in advertising and that the image of the barely clothed,

corset-less flapper⁵ was promoted everywhere (100). Straton, and others of the time, were concerned with the sexual promiscuity, revealing clothing, and declining morality that were linked with dance. “Taxi-dance halls,” or “Closed Dance Halls,” where dance hostesses were paid to dance with male patrons (177), and dance marathons where couples would dance for 27, 90, and even 428 hours straight, were of concern to many society leaders (183). However, as the 1900’s progressed, there were more pressing issues to attend to, such as the economy, than the alleged evils of dancing (207). Thus, Stanton and others turned their attention elsewhere.

Uncovering the anti-dance history in the U.S. is important to understanding its potential influence on Evangelical Christian universities today. Investigation into this influence occurs in Chapter Two.

Advocacy for Dance and Arts in Christian Culture in the United States

As mentioned earlier, dance flourished in the secular marketplace beginning in the Renaissance. For a time, these dances maintained a theological and spiritual connection to the church, but as the church pulled away from dancing, dance was left to secular, non-Christian, influences. In the early 1900’s, the earnest desire in America to develop a uniquely American form of dance rather than a European derived one, contributed to the beginnings of American Modern Dance. Isadora Duncan, one of the earliest pioneers of American Modern Dance, said this of her vision of an American form of dance:

Rather, let them come forth with great strides, leaps and bounds, with
lifted forehead and far-spread arms, the dance the language of our
Pioneers, the Fortitude of our heroes, the Justice, Kindness, Purity of our

⁵ The definition of a flapper from the Oxford Dictionary is “a fashionable young woman intent on enjoying herself and flouting conventional standards of behavior”. Flapper dresses were short with tassel or beads for the skirt. They often wore headbands with short haircuts and fishnet stockings.

statesman, and all the inspired love and tenderness of our Mothers. When the American children dance in this way, it will make of them beautiful beings, worthy of the name of the Greatest Democracy. This will be America Dancing [sic] (qtd. in Needham 199).

Interestingly, two other first generation modern dance pioneers, Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis, explored spirituality in their choreography. Wagner credited both St. Denis and Shawn as having “pioneered the concept of dance in the church” in the 1920’s and 1940’s (Wagner 346).

According to Marilyn Daniels in *The Dance in Christianity*, in 1917, at an interdenominational church in San Francisco, St. Denis performed a piece based on Psalm 23 which was well-received (Daniels 66). Ted Shawn conducted a “dance church service” in 1917 where all of the worship was done in the form of dancing (Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona 4). St. Denis choreographed and performed “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring” and “Masque of Mary” inside and outside of churches (66). These works not only brought dance back into the church but were formational to the early foundation of modern dance. Carla De Sola was another Christian dance pioneer who promoted dance as means of worship and communication. Her work led to the eventual formation of the Sacred Dance Guild (Daniels 80) in the U.S. in 1958 (Wagner 346). De Sola was quoted as saying, “practiced by liturgical artists, dance serves and functions as a conduit from the inner workings of the spirit to the outer expression of today’s worship” (qtd in Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona 153). Because St. Denis viewed the dancer’s essence as having the unity of body, mind, and spirit, she was compelled to train the body and the spirit (155). Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona also argued that if God is the Creator and we are made in His image as creative beings, then we should create in relationship to Him (191).

Ruth St. Denis was not the only modern dance choreographer to use the Bible as inspiration. Works by influential choreographers throughout the 20th Century were surveyed in *The Gospel According to Dance*, by Giora Manor and the Editors of *Dance Magazine*. Mostly American, these choreographers included Loie Fuller, Maude Allan, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Ninette de Valois, Jose Limon, John Butler, Martha Graham, Joel Schnee, James Truitte, Norm Walker, Paul Sanasardo, Anna Sokolow, Lester Horton, Jiri Kylian, George Balanchine, Frederick Ashton, and Alvin Ailey.⁶ In *Dance as Religious Studies*, Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona included Bella Lewitsky and Robert Yohn (4). Manor said of Ted Shawn, “All his life Shawn was passionately interested in the relationship between dance and religion” (Manor 20). The pieces listed in this reference point to the popularity of the Bible as source material for choreographic work. Not all of these choreographers were Jewish or Christian, but they used the Bible, Manor asserts, because they saw the breadth of human experience, the universality of interpersonal relationships, and psychological drama throughout the text (20). “The Bible is a grid in which choreographers can place their work” (152).

Manor suggested there is natural attraction to using Biblical text as the backbone for a dance by stating that dance is “the most physical of art forms, in which the sensual and spiritual meet” (23). I agree with Manor and consider dance to be a powerful unity of body, mind, soul, and spirit. I see the attraction of artists to biblical text as the grace of God, beaconing dancers to Himself. Even though the church turned its back on dancers and the dance, God was going to reach dancers through the dance. Although I support choreographers investigating Biblical material through their work, I think that if one uses Biblical text merely as subject matter that it limits the impact of the work. As a Christian choreographer, I intend to embody Scripture in such

⁶ See Appendix A for a list of these works.

a way that the meaning is deepened and enriched. I will design my thesis concert to illuminate how a dance major program at an evangelical Christian university might utilize Scripture as inspiration for dance, and conversely, how the dance might give insight into Scripture. An analysis of the concert and Scriptural integration will be explored in Chapter Five.

Many proponents of dance in Christian culture claim dance is a powerful picture of the possible unity of body, mind, soul, and spirit. Advocates, such as Wagner, also speak of the health benefits of dance. “Even the person untrained in dance knows that the human body is subject to wide-ranging perceptions and values. The body can be thought beautiful or ugly, good or evil. It is personal, sensual, sexual, and powerful” (Wagner xiii). In *The Dance in Christianity*, Marilyn Daniels said defenders of dance “saw dancing as an art involving the whole person, reinforcing the opinion that dancing was no mindless or mechanical activity” (Daniels 124). Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona argued that fullness of meaning of spiritual matters cannot be understood just with the intellect but must be felt in the heart and body (Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona 160). They also assert that Jesus’ presence as incarnate God places high value on the human body (Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona 160). The early Christian mindset was all inclusive. The body was not thought of as evil, as it was in Gnostic and Greek thought.⁷ The One who created the body found the body not only acceptable, but beautiful and valuable.⁸ I consider that to view the body with degradation in comparison to how God sees it is irreverent. It could also be viewed as a form of self-hatred. One who is embodied cannot rid oneself of the

⁷ <http://www.theopedia.com/gnosticism>

⁸ Genesis 1:31 “Then God saw everything He had made, and indeed it was very good”, Song of Solomon 1:15-16 “Behold you are fair my love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove’s eyes. Behold, you are handsome, my beloved. Yes, pleasant!,” Deuteronomy 6:5 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength,” 1 Corinthians 12:27 “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually,” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

body. Celeste Snowber Schroeder in *Embodied Prayer* also noted that the Hebrews regarded the person as a totality (23). Furthermore, Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona argued, “Dance lives at the heart of the Hebrew Scriptures. There is scarcely a chapter that does not have at least an indirect relationship to dance” (67). This was emphasized for Christians when Jesus commanded everyone to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and with all your mind” in Matthew 22:37, which was a reference to Deuteronomy 6:5 that also included “with all your strength.” It appears no one was excluded from expressing their worship through dance. “The tendency in Judaism has been to accept a wide range of even awkward movements within a group so that all persons are included” (35). This places value on dancing from the inside out, reiterating that dance is a form of self-expression.

Thomas Ryan, in *Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality*, advocated for a holistic view of the body. Ryan said, “The Church is called the ‘body of Christ,’ not the ‘spirit of Christ’” (24). He argued, as others have, that the body is an intimate habitat of God wherein Christians are called “the temple(s) of the Holy Spirit” (23). Ryan says, in reference to current American culture’s fascination with the body, “The body is idolized, particularly as it relates to the sexual. In both dichotomizing our bodies from our spirits, and in idolizing physical comeliness by itself, we deny our sacredness as embodied spirits, made in God’s image” (46-47). Similarly, Schroeder called attention to the importance of the body in Christian spirituality. “Moving is integral to being human. May we again find the joy we did as children and welcome our bodies in our spiritual journeys” (Schroeder 95). Schroeder acknowledged philosopher and author C.S. Lewis, who felt Christianity brilliantly embraced the body (40). Lewis reasoned that God must consider the human body good for three reasons: Jesus took on a human body, we will

be given new bodies in heaven, and the new bodies will be essential to our experience in heaven (Ibid).

There were those in the church even during anti-dance periods that recognized the value of dance in Christian expression. In *Adversaries of Dance*, Wagner referenced Martin Luther, author of the Reformation, who chided those who vilified dance. “If some who abused liberty meant all had to abstain from dancing, then those guilty of gluttony meant fasting by everyone” (Wagner 388). Wagner quoted preacher Edward Everett Hale, “the church had taken a wrong stance in preaching total abstinence from dancing” (210). Even though anti-dance rhetoric and concern over the social mores of the time were prominent in the 1920’s, Giordano noted there were also many Christian thinkers and preachers who emphasized the value of appropriate dancing as a worthwhile endeavor. For instance, one of the founders of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), Luther Gulick, said “dancing in itself is a thoroughly wholesome form of recreation and exercise” (Giordano 5), a perspective with which I agree.

Christian advocates for dance made a distinction between dance as an activity and the intention of the dancer. Also in the 1920’s, Frank Block, a deacon of a Presbyterian Atlanta church, “asserted that the Bible nowhere proscribed dancing. Since the Bible served as the basis for church law, he contended that he had broken no law. He asserted that the real evil lay not in the dance, but in the dancer” (Wagner 210). A similar perspective was promoted by Reverend G. Oliver, an Anglican cleric in England in 1818. Wagner remarks, “Oliver makes a critical point by declaring that evil has often been ascribed to an activity whereas the evil actually lives in those who participate from wrong motives” (Wagner 124). Christians who supported dance worked at restoring the possibilities of dance from the staunch anti-dance position of preachers like

Reverend Stanton in the 1920's. By 1940, the New Edition of Encyclopedia Americana,⁹ defined dancing as “rhythmic movements of the body or parts of the body to express emotions or as a medium for religious exercise, amusement, or to convey an idea” (Wagner 345).

From the literature, it is clear that Christians have debated the use of dance in sacred and secular contexts. Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona suggested that the dancer is a living “icon” of the “good news,” enabling people to rejoice, wonder, inquire, and open their hearts to their innermost feelings (158). Dance can be a worshipful expression, a form of amusement, communication, and artistic expression warranting intellectual merit. The dancer acts as intercessor, witness, priest, and prophet (Ibid). In the documentary “Lord of the Dance”, one of the British speakers said “I would like to be a person who could get up and dance to express (myself).” For years the Christian church celebrated dance. Then, for years, the Christian church stifled dance, and believers were not encouraged to develop this expression of human experience. In *Finding Inspiration*, J. Scott McElroy advocated for Christian artists to birth a “New Renaissance” where Christian spirituality will be brought into the arts again and the arts back into the church, both being led by the Holy Spirit (18). “God designed the arts to jump over our barriers, past our intellect, and to go into our hearts and souls” (38). McElroy argued that God desires beauty, created beauty, and is the “ultimate Artist, having come up with more beautiful ways to express Himself in creation than we can comprehend” (51).

Building Higher Ed Dance Curriculum in the 21st Century

After considering the history of dance in the church, I now turn my attention to look at literature tackling current issues in dance education. In order to consider how to best propose dance

⁹ According to www.britanica.com, the Encyclopedia Americana was the first general, multivolume encyclopedia published in America and one of the largest in the English language. It was first published in 1829 and was revised yearly beginning in 1920.

curriculum for a new program at a Christian university, I first consider how to build on and add to proven methods of dance education. Below I outline current discussion of major topics in university dance curriculum as expressed in secular dance education literature.

Doug Risner, dance professor from Michigan, argues in his article “Dance Education Matters: Rebuilding Postsecondary Dance Education for 21st Century Relevance,” that there is not enough emphasis and focus on dance education (pedagogy) courses in BA, BFA, and MFA programs in the U.S. (96). He criticized the “hyper-professionalized, exclusive BFA environment” as being problematic for a broad dance career (Ibid). He cautioned that this can create an “artist verses educator mindset” that is “either/or” instead of “both/and” (97). The art of skillful teaching is just that: it is an art and it is a set of skills. Risner says these can and should be addressed in a comprehensive dance education, whether that be a BA or a BFA program. As he said, “Most will teach at some point” (97). In my proposed curriculum, outlined in Chapter 4, I address a strong presence of dance pedagogy, as I also find it to be essential.

In her article, “Dance across Disciplines: A 21st Century Model for Educational Reform in the Academy,” intercultural director and professor of dance in Florida, Andrea Mantell-Seidel, argued for a need to re-structure, transform, and re-calibrate post-secondary dance degree programs in the U.S. (118). Because of an increasing global environment, she suggested we should have a global perspective in dance instead of a Euro-American one (Ibid). Specifically, she advocates for African diaspora dance to be a “major component” of a BA or BFA program (124). There has been much discussion to change what can be interpreted as a hierarchy in many dance programs in the U.S. Mantel-Seidel identifies the hierarchy as this: ballet and modern technique sits perched at the top; jazz, tap, and hip hop, if present at all, are squished in the middle; and folk dance or “cultural” dance lies at the bottom (119). Similarly, Joann

Kealiinohomoku debunked the notion of “ethnic dance.” In her article, “An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance,” she argued that all dance is “ethnic” because it is a representation of the culture from which it comes (33, 39). In this era of growing global awareness, many dance departments include exposure to multiple cultural forms of dance. This would be important in designing a new program. Mantel-Seidel also suggests, “dance possesses its highest potential to transcend the prejudices, the inequities, the power struggles, and the violence of the profane world...sacred reality where the psyche and spirit are healed, and healing in turn is bestowed upon the world” (121). I will consider these recommendations in Chapter Four when designing a prototype of a new dance curriculum that intricately intertwines dance for the 21st century and Christian spirituality.

In addition, there are important benefits to capitalize on when advocating the value of majoring in dance to administrators, parents, students, and donors. In “Armed for a Multitude of Tasks,” education expert, Paul Kleiman, identifies the value of “soft skills,” which he defines as the emotional and social intelligence skills that employers look for in addition to technical ability. He suggests that a performing arts education provides students with many of these “soft skills” which will position them well in a job market that is looking for “magnificent generalists” who can cross boundaries. The skills he mentions are: learning to innovate and think creatively, exploring and forming values, developing a feeling and sensitivity and opportunity for social skill development, self-confidence, entrepreneurial skills, problem-solving skills, negotiation skills.

This reviewed literature about dance and the Christian church looked at current discussion on university dance education. I uncovered key arguments that inform me of what to

consider in conducting interviews at Christian universities. I am curious about what those who administer and teach in a faith and ministry focused Christian university think about dance today.

Chapter Two

Key Obstacles and Challenges

In this chapter, I first summarize the fundamental anti-dance positions and conduct interviews at three influential Christian universities to uncover potential impediments to beginning a new dance major program at an Evangelical Christian university. As part of my interviews, I probe the following questions: Is dancing today perceived as evil, as it was in the 1920's, or as an expression of worship, as it was in the early church? Does an Evangelical Christian university want to distance their expression of dance from that of secular, non-Christian expression? Are there other reasons why dance as an academic subject matter has not been forged in the majority of Evangelical Christian universities in America? One interview site is Belhaven University in Mississippi, which operates the largest and oldest dance major program at an Evangelical Christian university. The other two are prominent Evangelical Christian universities in Southern California: Azusa Pacific University¹⁰ and Biola University¹¹. These latter two do not currently, nor have they ever had, dance major or minor programs.

Historical Anti-Dance Arguments

It is clear that the history of dance within the Christian community has impacted the opportunities and climate for dance in Evangelical Christian universities. The anti-dance literature outlined in Chapter One, showed four main concerns with dancing. One, social dancing could lead to adultery; two, dancing could be representative of secular or pagan ideologies that the church did not embrace; three, the dance halls were unsafe for young women, providing

¹⁰ Azusa offers more than 40 national and international study opportunities, boasts a faculty over 1200, had a total of 9,972 students in 2015, and APU Theatre produces more than 15 productions a year. (source: apu.edu)

¹¹ Biola was ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as a "first-tier national university" (one of only two in the CCCU), had a total of 6,222 students in 2015, and the Princeton Review included Biola on their list of "Best Western Colleges." (source: biola.edu)

fertile opportunity for unsavory men to take advantage of unsuspecting women; and four, given times of pain and grief in the world, dancing should not be enjoyed.

Paramount to my interviews is inquiry about current theological and cultural viewpoints on dancing. I am curious if the institutions or those in influential positions currently hold an anti-dance perspective or if there are other reasons why the universities do not have dance programs. I seek to uncover what the obstacles are today for establishing a new dance major program.

Obstacles Uncovered at Evangelical Christian Universities

I interview seven key leadership faculty and administrators at Azusa Pacific University and Biola University. Both are located in Southern California, and neither have a dance major or minor program to date. I also interview six dance faculty and administrators at Belhaven University in Mississippi, which has the largest and most influential dance degree program at an Evangelical Christian university in the U.S., boasting an undergraduate BA and BFA in Dance, as well as a new MFA in Dance.

First, I want to know what presence dance currently has on the two California campuses. I look at both campuses concurrently while investigating common themes. “There is no anti-dance policy as far as I know,” according to Rachel Tracie, Theatre Department Chair at Azusa Pacific University. Azusa does not have an official anti-dance policy that would prohibit individual students from dancing as a recreation or as a form of study. However, Biola does have a “no social dance” policy in prohibiting officially sponsored “school dance” on or off campus, according to Chair of the Art Department, Barry Krammes. For example, Biola doesn’t host a senior prom. I suspect this may be a byproduct of anti-dance history. Azusa sponsors social dances for their students, both on and off campus. I found the guidelines for the dances on

Azusa's website.¹² Alternatively, Biola sponsors an annual "Mock Rock" lip sync competition where choreographed dances are created and performed by students. These students are not dance students as there are no current dance programs, but undergraduate students who desire to participate in dance performance and community building activities. A few of my personal contacts, who are students at Biola, spoke of this event as a highlight of the year. Surprisingly, I discovered that both universities offer dance classes. Azusa offers a ballet class as part of the Opera program; and "Fitness for Life: Dance for the Theater" and "Beginning Movement for the Actor" courses in the Theatre department. Biola offers a rhythmic movement class as part of the Physical Education department. Both universities also offer dance clubs and dance teams that are student led. Azusa has the *Azusa Pacific Dance Company* and Biola has the *Biola Dance Crew*. They both hold annual auditions and perform at school events and in the community.

Even though there is some exposure to dance at Biola, most interviewees did say there might be some deep-rooted distrust of dance. Associate Dean of Art and Communications at Biola, Jonathan Puls, observed that "evangelicals are still warming up to the arts... there is a culture war mentality." He said that often Christians know that the arts and dance in particular are God-given expressions but they also see abuses of the arts in our culture. He feels they want to distance themselves from those abuses. Puls also shared that, as a figurative painter, he observes an ongoing struggle to unite the body and soul in Christian culture. Lori Shanebeck, Director of the Biola Youth Theater, said she has experienced some parents and donors who still think dance is evil, but after having a positive experience in her program, change their perspective.

¹² <http://www.apu.edu/judicialaffairs/policies/dance/>

Adding to potential uneasiness with dance, Barry Krammes said external voices can be an impediment to change at Biola. There have been people not officially part of Biola that protest Biola's choices if they feel the university is becoming too "liberal." Educating the larger university community is important, according to Krammes, not just for a dance program, but for the arts in general. He views this as mainly an exposure issue which affects the majority of the community's preferences and tastes. Krammes also commented on the mind/body split, "Many Christians are uncomfortable with their bodies. Sometimes they pretend like they don't have one, try to negate it, or just don't pay attention." It would appear, given these perspectives, that there may be limitation on the current comfortability, knowledge, and appreciation of dance. My interviews revealed that this might change and be improved with exposure to dance that is uplifting, Biblically sound, culturally relevant, and is also executed with excellence.

What surprised me most in the interviews at Biola and Azusa was the overwhelming appreciation for dance expressed by each of the interviewees. Neither of them considered themselves dancers, but expressed deep desire to see relevant and excellent dance done for the glory of God. Barry Krammes of Biola said he grew up in the 1950's in a fundamentalist, Baptist home where there was significant stigma against dancing. That did not change for him until college when he met Christians who loved to dance. He said he still feels awkward and self-conscious while dancing, but he appreciates watching excellent dance. He finds dance inspirational in performance and as a form of worship for personal expression. He shared that he was deeply influenced by Mark Morris's "Gloria." He prefers concert dance that is physically risky, where dancers "seem to be able to do things normal people can't...perhaps they're gutsier people who take risks." Krammes shared that there was a "Year of the Arts" at Biola in 2012, when they brought in Sterling Dance Theatre from Missouri. They performed a piece about the

Underground Railroad, which Krammes said was very well received. He said there have been some other solo works or groups that have come through Biola that are sometimes successful and sometimes not. Most recently, there was a hula worship day in chapel that he felt was a genuinely worshipful experience.

At Azusa, Theatre Chair Rachel Tracie considers herself a “spectator who loves and appreciates dance” and tries to attend dance concerts when she is able to. She said that Azusa is “putting stock in the arts right now by developing the College of Arts and Sciences. This is a key transitional time.” Dance is on Azusa’s radar, probably to start as a minor, but it is something they would like to develop. Freddie Cardoza, long time faculty member and administrator in charge of multiple programs at Biola (including the Research Doctoral Program, Educational Studies, Undergraduate Christian Ministries, and the Society of Professors in Christian Education), finds “great value in art for our bodies, minds, and for transforming culture.” Specifically for dance, he said it demonstrates “the beauty of the body, an ability to tell stories, and a platform for redeeming hearts and minds.” Associate Dean of the Arts, Jonathan Puls, is a student of the human form and finds that dance inspires him: “When I see great dance, it raises my sense of human potential, and thus of the God who made us.”

Since there is substantial theoretical and personal support for dance from several of the faculty and administrators at these evangelical Christian universities and a lack of obvious anti-dance rhetoric, there must be other obstacles that have prevented the establishment of a dance program. There were four areas that surfaced during my interviews: finances, facilities, impact to current programs, and determining student interest. One upper administrator at Belhaven University offered advice about what it would take to establish a dance program from a business

perspective. The administrator asked to remain anonymous. I suspect this is due to previous experiences where their words were taken out of context.

The people who are going to pay for it are going to have to be excited about it. So the board and the President have got to be behind it...and the Chief Financial Officer, who has the ear of the board. There has to be a market for it. People have to be interested. There are only so many people who are going to want to go to a Christian university and who are trained in dance enough to major in it...initially it (dance department) made money but eventually it's not going to make money. So the President and Provost and board are going to have to say "this is still something good for us and we're willing to lose a little bit of money."

The financial obstacle was identified as the largest and most important one at Biola. According to Krammes, "Finances drive the development of new programs, not ideology. A donor who would (offer) support to get it started is an automatic plus." Freddie Cardoza concurred: "Finding people who are in positions of influence, who get it, and benefactors who think of possibilities are crucial. If a benefactor could catch the vision, it would make developing a new program a lot easier. Philosophically, we can get there." Cardoza suggested looking into Christian arts foundation groups who want to support new areas of growth in the arts. He suggested they often look for people with a vision to develop arts that would impact the culture in new ways. Although this is a good idea, it puts a burden on the developer of the program to find their own funding. At Azusa, conversely, the task of fundraising would not be expected from the program developer. Yet according to Theatre Chair Rachel Tracie, part of the pitch of a new program would need to include an assessment of the financial cost and potential financial revenue. At

Belhaven, finances were not an initial obstacle because the dance department was added as the university was expanding. Cynthia Newland, Chair of the Dance Department at Belhaven, said the Dean generated donors and secured the financial allocation from the university. It seems individual universities will each have their own processes for fundraising and new program development. From all of the interviewees, however, identifying funding and an accurate cost analysis was regarded as a key component to establishing a new program.

Mentioned almost as often as finances, was the impact that a new department would have on existing facilities and programs. The availability of current space and the appropriate functionality of using existing space was a concern at both Biola and Azusa. Neither university has spaces that are large enough or designed in a manner that would facilitate large dance classes. Currently, Azusa does have two small spaces, one for the dance for theater class that also operates as a box office and multi-use rehearsal space, and one for the opera ballet class, which is not designed for dance at all. “We have no facilities available. All our spaces are multi-use. It would be important to build things right,” commented Tracie. Azusa is looking at building new spaces which will facilitate their current programs, as well as provide room for growth. Tracie is concerned that whatever they do, they do well, including having appropriate, excellent facilities to offer a dance program. Biola and Azusa are both landlocked, without much ability to increase their footprint and find more real estate. It appears this is not an ideological anti-dance position, but is a practical limitation of their property. Yet, Zachary Bortot, the new Theatre director at Biola, argued, “It’s not an ideal infrastructure, but it could be done.” His support and optimism of a dance program was apparent: “I see incremental growth, maybe one class at a time, or developing an adjunct pool with dance teachers. I would support housing dance under theatre to

get it started once the theatre program is strong enough.” This brings up another of the expressed concerns: starting a new program when other programs need strengthening.

It was suggested that a university could not, in good consciousness, begin a new program when other existing arts programs need attention and resources. “We would have to strengthen what we already have before bringing something new,” mentioned Barry Krammes. He went on to say, “Is it better to have a mediocre program or no program at all?” Lori Shanebeck agreed that the current arts programs at Biola would need to be solidified first before bringing on a dance program. “We have no theatre building. The only stage was built in 1959 when there were no arts programs. The only vision for the arts at the beginning was for church worship music. So there was no need for a performance venue.” She also sees a great need for cohesive “all arts” planning meetings to strategically plan for their future together. “We need to have a vision for what the arts want to be at Biola. We need a leader to take up the banner and move everyone forward.” It appears imperative to have cohesion among the arts in order to build a new arts program from a strong foundation.

Several interviewees mentioned that a dance program would benefit theatre, music, and fine arts students by increasing the students’ understanding of the body and of form. However, they foresee tension between the departments in regards to resources. “It is not that the other departments would disagree about the value of a dance program, they would just fight over access to the resources,” Shanebeck said. Administrators at Belhaven cautioned in a similar manner. “There will be opposition initially from other departments, ‘Why do we need that?’” However, Cynthia Newland said that the dance department is very well respected at Belhaven by the other departments and that she is “admonished often by the other department heads who are complimentary of our dancers. The other faculty make accommodations for dancers and come to

the concerts to demonstrate their support.” One could infer that once a successful program is in place, and is mutually beneficial to the larger university community, that there would be collegial support. I recognize that developing a co-curricular mindset is crucial in establishing a new program designed for the 21st century. Not only will a program with co-curricular aspects bring dance to many other students, dispersing the benefits of dance to a larger audience as well as building a larger patron base, but it will also amplify the value of a dance program to the university, a value that extends beyond the walls of the dance studios. What is also fascinating here is the dichotomy between a new dance program diverting funds away from other departments and at the same time attracting new students to the university. “Dance might be a way to reach out to non-white communities, to affirm their experiences, expressions, worship and prayer (styles),” Puls considered. Bortot also commented on the value of having diversity in the students:

The more diverse the student body is in terms of who is here and what their interests are, the better equipped people are going to be global leaders. The true purpose of higher education is to prepare students for life in the world. You’re going to be a more understanding, empathetic person if you’ve encountered people with passions and goals that are different from your own.

Another aspect to the impact on existing programs is where a new dance major would be housed. Would it exist independently as it does at many conservatories? Or would it exist within the theatre department, music department, art department, or physical education department? The answer to that question would be very specific to the particular university interested in starting a dance program. The traditional development for a new dance department is that it starts as part of

another department, historically in theatre or physical education. It is apparent that for both Biola and Azusa, a new dance program would most likely get its start within an existing arts department which could support it until it grew enough to require an independent position on campus.

Lastly, determining student interest will be a key component to whether or not a university will develop a new dance major program. There are two demographics to consider: the existing student body and a future, yet untapped, reserve of students who would come to the university if there was a dance department. Surveying the current students at Biola and Azusa was not possible at this time, but Cardoza mentioned it would be a necessary, future step in proposing a new dance program. At Biola, many of the interviewees knew of a handful of current students who were seriously interested in dance. Most thought dance would be beneficial to existing students in connection to their current majors or even offered as a minor. At Azusa, Tracie said there was informal evidence of a large population of students interested in dance, many of whom take dance at the community college across the street because there aren't classes offered at Azusa. With both theater and tap dance courses filled every term, she believes offering a fully developed dance curriculum would be well received by many in the current student body. "Whenever we do musicals it is obvious we need more dance. Half of those auditioning are non-theater majors. The high interest in our dance club is also telling. Across campus there are those who are interested in dance." At both universities, they emphasized the need for a faculty sponsor from within the existing university fabric: one who was already vested in the university, aware of the processes and protocols, and who could navigate the administrative hurdles.

At Belhaven University, I was able to conduct anonymous student surveys within the dance department.¹³ The results from the surveys suggest the need for more Christian universities to invest in pre-professional dance major programs. Out of the 55 responses I received, these are a few of the thoughts on why the students chose to pursue a degree at Belhaven instead of another university. A sophomore said, “I chose Belhaven because of its strong foundation of the Christian faith and the active application of that worldview in classes. I also came because of its high standard of excellence in dance.” Another sophomore who has been dancing more than fifteen years said, “I chose Belhaven for the dance department’s pursuit of excellence in both dance and faith in Christ.” A freshman stated, “I liked how it was a Christian university with an excellent dance program and God focus.” A senior said, “I was seeking a Christian environment that fostered excellent and unashamed dance.” In response to a question about the benefits of a Christian university dance program, one senior said, “The Christian atmosphere, modest costuming and a less cutthroat environment...I’m encouraged here, not discouraged. Belhaven has strengthened me to stand up for my faith in the real world.” Another senior said, “It was the only Christian dance school with a top-notch dance program and an intercultural studies program.”

Yet another senior, who is from California, commented on the lack of Christian universities in California that have dance programs, “I chose this university because I wanted to study dance at a Christian college. I am from CA but none of the Christian colleges there had dance.” This was significant because I have chosen to focus on Southern California as a research demographic. “My upbringing in dance was really competitive and negative and I needed a different environment. Belhaven was the only school I found that was Christian and accredited

¹³ For a sample of the survey, see Appendix C.

by the National Dance Association,” shared a senior. I watched from a distance as these students excitedly and willingly filled out the surveys. They shared with me that they wanted to help start more Christian dance programs by imparting their belief in the strength of combining excellence in dance training with excellence in a Christian ministry-based education. Given their overwhelming responses, there is sufficient evidence that a market does exist of trained dancers who wish to pursue a degree in dance at an accredited Christian university.

Given the challenges and obstacles that would face launching a new dance major program at an Evangelical Christian university, the task is substantial. There may be individuals with potential biases against dance. There may be significant financial, facility, impact, and market research concerns that would need to be addressed. Yet, there are also many potential benefits to welcoming and establishing a new dance major program. High expectations for both dance training and integration of the Christian faith are held by current Christian dance students desiring to pursue a degree in dance. As of today, there are very few options in the United States where excellence in dance and in Christian ministry preparation are offered simultaneously. In Chapter Three, I investigate the current statistics of such programs and determine what gap actually exists.

Chapter Three

Dance in the University

In this chapter, I look at dance in the universities from various perspectives. First, I investigate Belhaven University's dance program as a case study. Second, I conduct a statistical analysis on universities and dance programs. Lastly, I consider reasons why dance is a worthwhile course of study in higher education.

Belhaven University Case Study

Belhaven University has arguably forged a successful dance program, given their longevity, sustainability, status at the University, and continually progressing development. I interviewed five of Belhaven's full-time dance faculty: Chair Cynthia Newland, Krista Bower, Laura Morton, Ravenna Tucker, and Emily Wright. I will illuminate, as shared with me by their dance faculty, what has proven effective for them; what is currently challenging; and what areas they endeavor to improve upon as they continue to develop and grow as a dance department.

In discussing what they found to be the strongest components of the department, they spoke of an integration of faith that is encouraged and given as space for the students to explore; a focus on preparing students for a wide range of jobs in the dance field; a holistic approach of training the whole person; high standards with respect to personal responsibility, integrity, artistry, and technique; and a caring environment where teachers not only train their students, but also care about them as people. Pairing faith and dance training, ballet teacher Ravenna Tucker, shared, "A dancer can feel with their body so that others can see. Dancers express spiritual things from the inside, in a way they wouldn't be able to do unless they danced. The training is to help students be able to express perfection and beauty better." Training in and of itself carries only part of the value, according to Tucker. Excellent dancers are trained so that they become

exquisite communicators and facilitators of the form and vocabulary of dance. Purposing to also represent things of God, Tucker suggests Christian dancers should be trained with the same, if not more, intentionality.

The interviewees also reflected upon ongoing challenges and goals for new program developments. The challenges can be grouped into two areas. One area relates to students directly, and is common to most programs. They identified injuries in dancers, scheduling conflicts, implementing rest time and balance for the dancers, and budget limits. The second area relates to Belhaven's resources and current constraints. They spoke of the need for a dedicated performance space and costume shop, conditioning equipment for the dancers, and strategizing how to get the local community to the department's performances. In forging new possibilities and developments for their program, the professors mentioned these strategic goals, which are informative in creating a new program:

- health and wellness courses
- dance and technology track
- dance education track that would offer a K-12 certification
- further collaboration with other departments on campus
- greater exposure to touring companies and performances

According to the students and dance faculty, Belhaven's program is strong, producing well-educated dance artists who are capable of engaging culture in a meaningful way through dance. Faculty seem actively invested in improving their program and responding to ever-evolving changes in the field of dance. Belhaven's success could encourage other universities to develop thoughtful and intentional dance majors. Next, I uncover how many universities have already embraced this challenge.

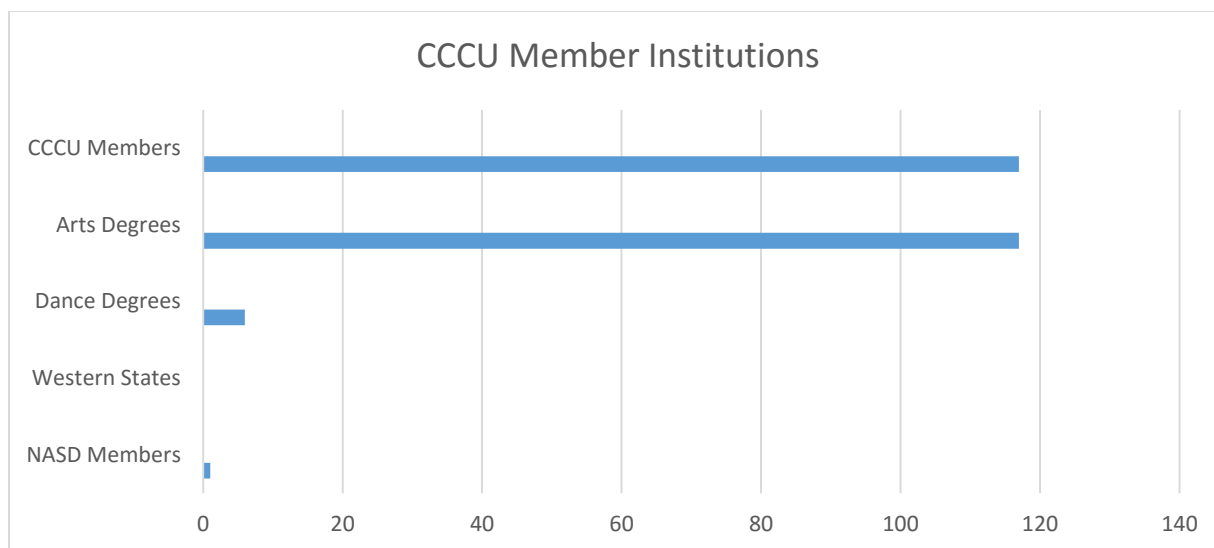
Statistics on Dance in Universities

I utilized four educational organizations for gathering statistical information on the numbers of universities in a particular area, the numbers of dance major programs, and accreditation or membership requirements. These agencies were the U.S. Department of Education, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the Christian Coalition of Colleges and Universities, and the National Association of Schools of Dance. The statistics I outline consider all accredited colleges and universities in the western region of the U.S. as well as specifically Evangelical Christian colleges and universities throughout the country.

Assessing Christian colleges and universities, the Christian Coalition of Colleges and Universities (CCCU) exists to unify and identify colleges and universities that are of the same faith foundation. The CCCU is important because it delineates the requirements for inclusion that are based upon faith doctrine and purpose.¹⁴ In short, this listing of member institutions provides a clustering of colleges and universities that are defined as evangelical in their mission, purpose, and essence. When looking at how many Evangelical Christian universities have dance programs, I consider only those that are current members in the CCCU. The numbers of institutions, arts degrees, and dance degrees, as of March 2016, are represented by the following graph:¹⁵

¹⁴ For CCCU's requirements for membership, see Appendix D.

¹⁵ For detail on the methodology and results from this inquiry, see Appendix E.

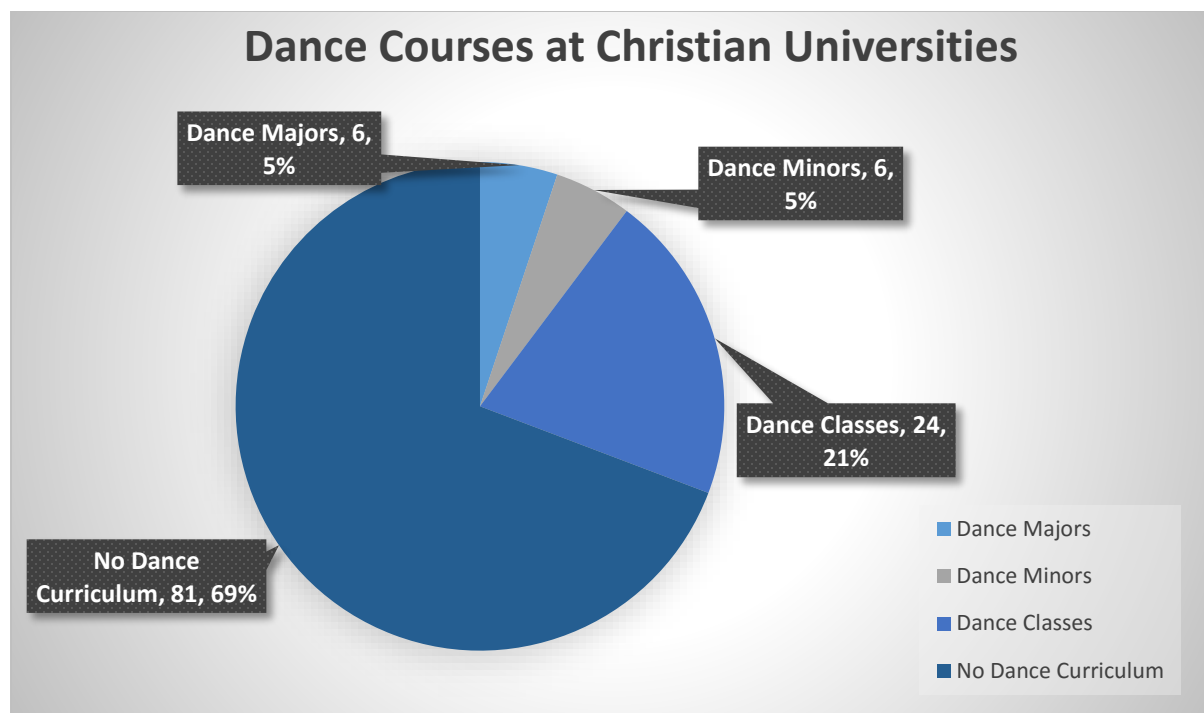


As the graph indicates, all of the 117 schools have arts programs, a requirement of membership in the CCCU, but only 6 offer a Dance Major.¹⁶ Staggeringly, there are zero offered at Christian universities west of Oklahoma. Of the 6 Dance Major programs, only 1, Belhaven University, is a current member of the National Schools of Dance (NASD). The NASD is the national accrediting agency for dance and dance-related agencies, which is in addition to the general University accreditation.

Despite a low number of Dance Majors, there are more universities than I had expected that offer dance minors, and classes.¹⁷ There are 6 schools that offer a Dance Minor, and an additional 24 that offer courses. Beyond the classroom, 46 universities offer dance clubs or teams for students.

¹⁶ CCCU Member schools offering a Dance Major are Anderson University in Indiana, Anderson University in South Carolina, Belhaven University in Mississippi, Messiah College in Pennsylvania, Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma, and Palm Beach Atlantic University in Florida.

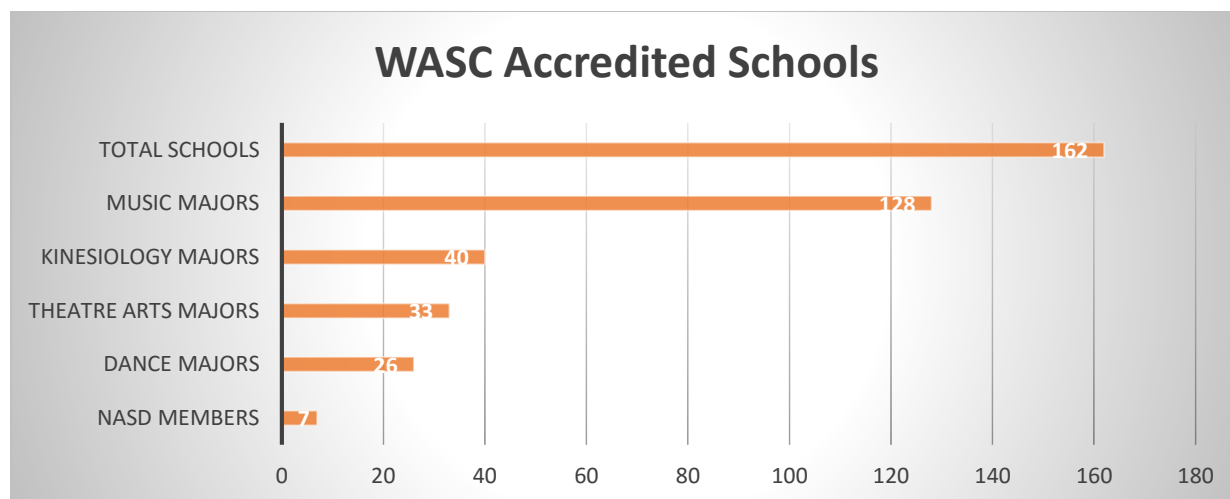
¹⁷ For a more detailed description of the presence of dance on CCCU institution campuses, see Appendix E.



This chart suggests there might be growing receptivity to dance in these colleges and universities. The lack of Dance Majors offered, compared with the presence of dance in any capacity on the campuses, is an indication of the interest for dance and potential for growth in developing new programs, especially in the western region of the United States.

I have considered whether the ratio of 6 out of 117 schools offering Dance Majors is in proportion to all colleges and universities in the U.S. or if this gap is larger in the Evangelical community. In order to examine this, I consulted the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), Senior College and University Commission. WASC is “one of the 6 regional accrediting agencies in the U.S.” and covers not only California, but also Hawaii, Guam, Asia, the Pacific Region, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe.¹⁸ I limited my search criteria to include only California.

¹⁸ <http://www.acswasc.org/wasc/acs-wasc-overview/>



As of March 2016, there are 162 colleges and universities with active WASC accreditation that are in California. Of these, 26 offer Dance Majors according to WASC's directory of majors. However, I know Santa Clara University offers a Theatre and Dance Major with Dance emphasis and it did not come up in the directory. Consequentially, the actual number of Dance degree programs might be higher than 26. Seven of these schools are currently members in the NASD. Interestingly, 128 schools offered degrees in Music, 33 in Theatre Arts, and 40 in Kinesiology. Those numbers are smaller than the schools in the CCCU, as all schools in the CCCU must offer arts and all offer music or theatre or both.

In comparing the Dance Majors between WASC and CCCU members, there is a three times greater likelihood that a WASC accredited school will house a Dance Major program than a CCCU school. 16% (at least) of WASC schools offer a Dance Major whereas only 5% of CCCU schools offer one. If we consider only the CCCU schools in California, all of which are WASC accredited, the percentage drops to 0%, as there are no Dance Majors offered at CCCU schools in California. These numbers are evidence that a disproportionately low percentage rate of dance majors exists in Evangelical Christian universities. These statistics, accompanied by apparent interest in dance as evidenced by the numbers of dance minors, courses, and

teams/clubs, present an opportunity for a Christian university to become a leader in this area, helping to fill the gap. It seems that a Christian university, especially in California, might be able to set itself apart in offering a pre-professional, faith-based dance program where very few other universities are. In order to strengthen a proposal that it is advantageous for dance to enter Evangelical Christian universities as a major course of study, I will inquire as to the benefits of studying dance.

Why Study Dance?

Preparing students for a job market after graduation is one primary task and responsibility for any institution. What then does a dance degree do for a person? As revealed in Chapter One, in his article, “Armed for a Multitude of Tasks,” Kleiman identified two areas needed for any job. “Soft skills,” as Kleiman identified, are the emotional and social intelligence skills desired for the workplace, and “hard skills” are the technical skills required for the job. Kleiman noted that soft skills include flexibility, contribution, communication, responsibility, stress management, interpersonal skills, being entrepreneurial, and being a life-long learner. He argued that a performing arts education, including dance, trains students in these skills, as well as builds self-confidence, problem-solving, and negotiation skills, all of which are crucial in today’s job market.

Professors at Belhaven University in Mississippi shared commensurate conviction that a dance degree prepares students for a variety of jobs. The skills they mentioned included problem solving; articulation of the body and of the mind; an entrepreneurial mindset; time management; self-discipline; analytical abilities; pain management; and social, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills that are useful in any job market. The specific dance-related jobs they are preparing students for include performer, choreographer, teacher, graduate student, company director,

studio director, and arts management. Doug Risner, in his article, “Dance Education Matters: Rebuilding Postsecondary Dance Education for 21st Century Relevance and Resonance,” listed the following dance-related professions: studio owner, community dance coordinator, dance educator P-12, professor, advocate, administrator, producer, production team, dance science, dance and technology, choreographer, and performer (108). He encouraged an “and/both” mentality for training all areas of a dancer with excellence in order to prepare them for the 21st century job market (Ibid).

Belhaven professor Emily Wright, is writing her doctoral dissertation on the current professionalization of Christian dance. In her research, she investigates Christian dance companies, as well as dance companies led by Christians who do not pursue ministry based work. Both types of companies look for dancers who are well-trained and who can contribute to the choreographic and performance work of the company. Being trained at a Christian university would certainly aid in preparing a dancer for working with such choreographers and companies. However, Wright noted that a Christian college-level program is a place where students rigorously invest in what it means to be a faith-filled dancer in any setting. When they graduate, they are well-equipped to enter the field of dance and to engage with the issues facing popular culture. Addressing the history of a mind/body split in the western Christian church, Wright believes:

We have an ethical responsibility for understanding the body, the body in relationship to our humanity, and our connection with God and the ministry we are called to here on earth. If non-Christians are talking about it (re-unifying the mind/body) and trying to solve it then we, as Christians, should be too.

This critical issue indicates that there is a great need for training Christian dancers who can think, articulate, and engage in discussions and dilemmas facing society.

Further strengthening the arguments for why one should study dance, several articles have been written about the benefits of dance on cognition and brain health. One such recent article, “Is Dance the Next Wave in Cognitive Neuroscience?” is by physician Steven Brown. He distilled some reasons why dance is a complex and healthy activity: “From the standpoint of cognitive neuroscience, dance represents a fascinating constellation of features: complex movement, rhythmic synchronization, interpersonal contact, motor learning and imitation, meaningful gesture and role playing.” Furthermore, in 2013, fitness coach and activist Christopher Bergland wrote, “Why is Dancing so Good for Your Brain?” in which he concluded, “Dancing improves brain function on a variety of levels...dancers achieve peak performance by blending cerebral and cognitive thought processes with muscle memory and proprioception held in the cerebellum.” In novelist and Professor Richard Powers’ article, “Use It or Lose It: Dancing Makes You Smarter,” he argues, “dancing integrates several brain functions at once: kinesthetic, rational, musical, and emotional, further increasing your neural connectivity.” It would reasonably follow that if dancing is good for one’s cognition and brain health, in addition to the physical and emotional benefits, that it is worthy of academic study and worthwhile to all students as a healthy activity.

I have looked at the success and ongoing challenges at Belhaven University, which is the largest and oldest Evangelical university dance major program, and identified the statistics that show an obvious dearth of dance as compared with other arts programs at Evangelical schools in the CCCU. Evidence is building towards presenting a multifaceted persuasive argument for the benefits and importance of studying dance in higher education, especially one that is faith-based.

Anticipating that more Evangelical universities and colleges would be open to starting pre-professional dance major programs, the next chapter will give a brief overview of a sample program, including courses to be offered that integrate technique, artistry, academics, and Christian worldview.

Chapter Four

A New Evangelical Dance Major Program

In this chapter, I suggest and describe a selection of courses, structures, and goals for an integrated and excellent Dance Major program at an Evangelical Christian university in the 21st century. Pursuing dance in higher education provides vast opportunities for a dancer's growth in such areas as technician, creator, teacher, scholar, critic, writer, and therapist. In light of the evidence put forward thus far, a convincing argument can be put forward to include dance as an academic discipline in a Christian environment that proposes to address the whole person in body, mind, soul, and spirit and can foster growth in a way that is also connected to spiritual calling and purpose—for the art and for the artist.

The Integration of Faith and Dance

In developing a new comprehensive dance major that integrates faith, I consider the mission statements of Azusa Pacific University and Biola University, leading me to shape and articulate curriculum that is technically, artistically, and Biblically excellent. One benefit of a Christian university dance program is that the mission of the university can be embodied, demonstrated, and enacted in a more holistic way than anything else. At a Christian university, dancers have the opportunity to “develop a Christian perspective of truth and life.”¹⁹ Dance can add to this and manifest what it means to be a “community abiding in truth, abounding in grace and compelled by Christ's love to be a relevant and redemptive voice in a changing world.”²⁰ Truth and grace can be danced in relevant and redemptive ways. For instance, instead of praying for people with only words, dancers can perform their prayers, physically interceding on behalf of others. To further illustrate examples of collegiate Christian dance education, I have created

¹⁹ Excerpt from Azusa Pacific University's mission statement. <http://www.apu.edu/about/mission/>

²⁰ Excerpt from Biola University's vision statement. <http://www.biola.edu/about/mission>

sample syllabi for two dance courses that integrate the Christian faith with dance practices. They are detailed in Appendix F.

In order to provide a scaffold of structure for a new dance major program, I have categorized four distinct areas of curriculum: training, ministering, producing, and collaborating. These are shown in the table below:

| Training | Ministering | Producing | Collaborating |
|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Dance Techniques | University Outreach | Live Performance | Interdisciplinary Arts |
| Creative Processes | Local Outreach | Technical Theatre | Cross-Discipline |
| Dance Studies | Social Activism | Arts Management | |
| Dance Science | Global Outreach | Digital Formats | |
| Pedagogy | | | |
| Professional Skills | | | |
| Christian Engagement | | | |

In the following sections, I break each of these areas down further, expanding on theory and examples of courses that might be offered.

Training

The holistic and progressive training of a dance artist flourishes from proven, effective methods as well as from fresh approaches gained from new discoveries, such as those revealed in Chapter One, and recapped here. Coursework required to train a dancer to the highest standards is included in my curriculum, equivalent to many pre-professional university programs.

However, what is different about a Christian university is the spiritual purpose, atmosphere, and faith integration in every class.

As suggested in Chapter One, today's dance artists should be trained in a variety of movement techniques and vocabularies. Dancers who only train in one genre or discipline might develop deep roots in that discipline, this may be limiting in terms of career longevity. Whereas dancers that have investigated multiple dance techniques, having access to a breadth of approaches and a diversity of movement vocabularies fosters the development of versatile performers and choreographers. They also gain understanding in order to value others' histories, cultures, geographies, and expressions. In "Dance across Disciplines," Andrea Mantell-Seidel proposed developing a dance curriculum "informed by knowledge of diverse social and cultural realities" (119). This would align with Biola University's diversity statement to "foster an understanding and appreciation of those elements in every culture that enhance human dignity and are consistent with scriptural teaching."²¹ I propose that Christian university dance major programs in the 21st century should train dancers' technique in modern, ballet, jazz, hip hop, tap, Pilates, ballroom, West African dances, and Latin dances, and offer electives in other cultures' dances such as Capoeira, Caribbean, Polynesian, Chinese, Irish, and European folk dances. This list is certainly not exhaustive and would be determined by the local community, faculty interests, student interests, and goals of the university.

In addition to dance technique, an immersive dance major program would offer creative, analytical, scientific, pedagogical, professional, and spiritual explorations. Courses such as *Composition, Choreography, Screendance, Improvisation Techniques, and Contemporary Partnering* are all creative processes that could be explored in the university setting. Inspiration for choreographic material might include Biblical text or themes. Improvisation techniques that utilize the spirit as a source of motivation are also possible in a Christian university. An example

²¹ Excerpt from Biola University's diversity statement. <http://www.biola.edu/about/diversity>

of the integration of Christian thought and beliefs fleshed out through the creative processes of dance is my choreographic concert, *Time to Dance*. I reflect upon this in Chapter Five. Possible foundational dance studies courses that help dancers think critically about the world and their art form would be *Dance History from Global Perspectives*, *Dance History in Western Civilization*, *Dance Criticism*, *Dance for Social Change*²² (a critical issues course rooted in Christian worldview), and *Music for Dancers*. Dance science courses could include *Principles for Dance Health* that would investigate body/mind/spirit integration including somatic techniques and a Biblical model for health, *Nutrition for Dancers*, *Cross-Training for Dancers*, *Body Mechanics and Injury Prevention*, and *Kinesiology*.

Given that a majority of dancers will teach at some point, and that the Bible provides instruction on teaching as a practice, pedagogy courses would be important in a Christian program. As discovered in Chapter One, education expert Doug Risner suggests that without purposeful training in teaching practices, the art and skill of teaching is actually devalued (Risner 8, 105 and 106). Robust dance pedagogy could include courses in *Methods of Teaching Young Children*, *Methods of Teaching K-12*, *Methods of Teaching Ballet*, *Methods of Teaching Modern*, *Methods of Teaching Jazz*, and *Methods of Teaching Students with Disabilities*. Preparing students to teach in a multitude of situations will not only make them more marketable, but will adequately prepare them with the skills they will need to teach effectively.

In addition, a pre-professional program might also include courses designed to prepare students for an array of dance industry requirements. Courses such as *Résumé and Reel*, *Audition Skills*, *Arts Management*, and *Grant Writing* would train a dancer in necessary professional skills. Concurrent to these practical dance skills, courses specific to providing space for students

²² For a sampling of course specifics, see Appendix F.

to explore Christian tenets and expressions are possibilities. Courses might include *Dance as Worship*,²³ *Worldview Issues in the Arts*, where current issues in the arts are compared and contrasted through Christian and secular worldviews, and *Dance Studies in Popular Culture*, which could explore aspects and ideologies of dance in popular culture and how the Christian artist responds.

Ministering

Evangelical is a term that describes Christians who actively share their faith and worldview with people outside of the church. Outreach endeavors for an Evangelical dance major program can be a natural extension of the larger university mission that includes “service.” From going into local schools where arts education funding has been cut and providing dance experience, to reaching into underserved communities and using dance for expression, exercise, and healing, to participating in the community through dance performances, to going overseas cross-culturally and using dance as a universal language where we can exchange ideas and share our lives, dance can also be a platform for sharing the gospel. Course offerings might include *Blessed Feet*, where students investigate, create, and implement dance in service to the local community, *Dance Ensemble*, *Appreciation of Dance* for non-majors, technique courses open to non-majors, community dance workshops, and *International Blessed Feet*, as well as the *Dance for Social Change* course mentioned in the previous section. Exciting and life-giving, dance outreach extensions should be a core tenet of an Evangelical dance major program.

Producing

The production and presentation of the art form is also crucial to a degree in dance. Congruent with standards for pre-professional BA and BFA programs, I suggest including faculty directed

²³ For a sampling of course specifics, see Appendix F.

dance concerts with guest choreographers, student choreographed concerts with full production support, and technical theatre courses such as *Light Design*, *Sound Design*, *Stage Management*, *Set Building*, *Costuming*, and *Hair and Make-up Design*. In addition, designing and managing a production of their own, such as a *Dance Capstone Project*, empowers and challenges students by providing desired interpersonal skills, time management, budget management, and publicity experience. *Digital Dance* and *Experimental Projection* are courses that would create opportunities for students to explore and produce work in various technological mediums.

Collaborating

Collaborating with other departments on campus contributes to fostering well-rounded professionals with appreciation of other disciplines. Collaboration within the arts might mean offering collaboratively taught performance, history, or critical issues courses, such as *Worldview Issues in the Arts* or *Christianity and Creative Process*. It could mean requiring dancers to take acting, musical theatre, film, photography, or music classes. Alternatively, collaborating with cross-discipline departments such as worship studies, women's studies, cultural studies, physical education, and primary education, would be mutually beneficial. Examples of these might be *American Worship Expressions*, *West African Dances*, *Latin Dances*, *Capoeira*, *Polynesian Dances*, *Pilates*, *Social Dance*, and *Arts in Primary Education*.

Inside and outside the classroom, a thriving Christian environment would strive to build a healthy community of dancers at the university. Mentoring might take place at a deeper and more intentional level because professors would be inherently invested in a dancer's life and career choices. A weekly, all-department meeting, such as they have at Belhaven University, could provide time to connect, inspire, and edify the students and faculty as well as celebrate guest artists. Prayer could be instrumental as a cultural practice in and out of the classroom. A

professor might choose to start each class or rehearsal with prayer to help students focus and prepare the space or provide opportunity for personal prayer and reflection as a centering activity. Dancers might support each other through prayer and Bible study, creating a support system that would propel them forward in their investigations and development. Ideally, in this community, everyone would be invited and empowered to put action to their faith and their art, the faculty would nurture the student as a whole person, and outreach into the community would become a personal and collective responsibility.

With so few dance major programs at Evangelical universities to date, the potential for creating a new and exceptional program is seemingly wide open. Excellence in educating the whole dance artist, as well as inspiring the faith-filled artist, is the ultimate goal. Christian dance artists are uniquely positioned and poised for such work, if they are given the opportunity. My thesis concert, *Time for Dance*, was a presentation of the possibilities of such a program. In the next chapter, I discuss the concert, my inspiration and goals, and the outcomes.

Chapter Five

“Art and creativity in the hands of anointed Kingdom people becomes one of the many intersection points that God uses on the earth to reach the hearts of His people to heal them, touch them, and to set them free” (Tommey 47). In this chapter, I discuss how dance and Scripture can be intertwined in a Christian context, the inspiration and design of my choreographic concert, and the perceived outcomes of the concert.

A Time to Dance

I purposed my choreographic concert to be a representation of what a pre-professional, dance major program at an Evangelical Christian university might look like in a formal concert.²⁴ In order to present dance that could unite faith and artistry, I rooted the choreography and theme of the concert in Biblical text, something that would be common ground for administrators at a Christian university. I selected passages from Ecclesiastes 3 from which to create my dances. I also sought to represent many of the genres and techniques of dance that I propose should be included in a robust dance program.

Scripture is the authoritative, contextual, historical, and ethical basis of the belief system for a Christian. Holding to the conviction that Scripture is useful for the edification of the Christian believer,²⁵ and that dance is useful for the edification of the physical body, soul, mind, and spirit of a dancer, combining the two together in training of faith-filled dancers is essential. Harmonizing Biblical Scripture and dance together accelerates the training for dancers who seek to be excellent and proficient technicians, artists, and ministers of good works, desiring to make a difference in their world. Scripture can inform the dance: rooting the dance in spiritual truth and context, providing a sound basis from which to draw inspiration for the dance. Dance can, in

²⁴ The program from the concert is documented in Appendix G.

²⁵ 1 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

return, illuminate and embody Scripture: highlighting and breathing life into written truths that can be felt, experienced, and witnessed in movement through the human form. In the very human form that God created us with, we, as Christians, can express the full magnitude of our human existence and our spiritual existence. We can move so that we ourselves can be moved, and we can motivate movement in others. Celeste Snowber Schroeder wrote in “Embodied Prayer,” “Our humanity is nothing to be ashamed of. It allows us to be beautiful and ugly, rough and smooth, frightened and calm. God loves it all, and we embody it all in body and soul” (34).

For my concert, I choose the following selections from Ecclesiastes 3: “there is a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,” “there is a time to be silent and a time to speak,” “there is a time to mourn,” “there is a time to breakdown and a time to build up,” and “there is a time to rejoice (dance)” (v.5, 7, 4, 3, 4). I designed the five movements in the concert work around these themes. In order to seamlessly connect each of the movements into one work, I crafted an arc in which I aimed to take the observer on an emotional and thematic journey. Importantly, I chose to utilize different genres and techniques for each of these movements in order to display a breadth of possibilities in a fully realized dance department.

For “Abbracciare,” Italian for “to embrace,” I chose to choreograph in the style of neo-classical ballet, inspired by the work of George Balanchine, an important choreographer who changed the face of American ballet. This movement was first in the work for two reasons: it was relatively calm and light thematically; and it provided an emotionally receptive place to begin, since ballet is often accorded a privileged place in light of the overall historically skeptical view of dance imposed by the general Evangelical Christian community. The second half of this work contained a duet that contemporized ballet even further. It integrated ballroom and contemporary dance techniques and was performed by a male and female couple. This section was important to

me to include considering the significant concern in the historical anti-dance argument over social dancing. I endeavored to portray a respectful version of a romantic couple, where their relationship was established but was not vulgar or offensive.

“Silent/Speak” was choreographed and designed in the style of postmodern work that integrated spoken word with movement. The movement was not separated from the words but the two supported each other. Much in the way that Scripture and dance support each other, the spoken word piece further emphasized this interconnectivity. “Silent/Speak” began in silence, with only a faint heartbeat in the background. The ideas the dancers were conveying in their speech were rooted in my conviction that too often we speak about what is not important and we remain silent on what is. The selected text voiced social concerns over three current issues that are worthy of discussion, particularly in a Christian university: Christian persecution, oppression of women, and human trafficking.

“Mourning” was choreographed in the style of classical modern dance, taking inspiration from Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and José Limón. It was a series of consecutive solos performed by five women. There are many inferences that could be drawn from the piece but my perspective was that mourning is a universal human experience. Moreover, I am proposing that dance is also a universal human experience, regardless of the style. In my experience, every baby I’ve known that can hear, regardless of culture, bounces and moves when it hears music. It is the way God made us. I propose we cannot deny this God-given form of expression and communication, especially in the church.

“Rise” was choreographed in the contemporary style of lyrical hip hop. Thematically this was the only piece with words and was the piece that aimed to lift the observer and the performers from the narrative place of deep sorrow and darkness and into a place of hope, of life

continuing. It was crucial to me to include hip hop as I propose it must have a significant place in the design of a new dance major program given that it is prevalent in mainstream dance and popular culture today. This was the most challenging piece for my dancers. Most of the dancers had not been trained in hip hop, and the new movement vocabulary and aesthetics were foreign to them. This only fortifies my position that we need to train artists in this genre if they are going to be prepared to effectively engage in their culture and be marketable when they graduate. The dancers gained a deeper appreciation for the form and improved in their hip hop dance ability and stylistic nuances through the process.

“Rejoice” was a jazz section set to jazz music that was meant to enliven the body, mind, soul, and spirit. There were moments of improvisation and self-expression, in true jazz style, as well as group cohesion. Choosing to use “a time to rejoice” in the translation instead of “a time to dance” was purposeful. As Susan Michelle Tyrrell demonstrated in “The Key of David,” there are many times in the Bible where rejoice and dance can be used interchangeably.²⁶ I took liberties here to use the word “rejoice” as I felt it was more specifically the inverse of “to mourn” and it was thematically appropriate for the concert ending. I also wanted to illustrate through the concert that there is not only “a time to dance” but we can dance about all times, all seasons of life. This was another major concern of anti-dance history covered in Chapter One that I intended to address in my concert. Many Christians had prohibited dancing because the world was in such pain and demise, a time to mourn, when in fact, they could have danced about the pain and difficulties they were facing in such a way that would have brought healing and hope to their communities. Schroeder agreed in “Embodied Prayer” that dance can help us process our grief,

²⁶ For a list of Biblical references to dance, see Appendix B

“My embodied grief gave me the opportunity to dwell in God’s presence in brokenness, anger, hurt, and abandonment” (161).

Responses to the concert and choreographic work were multifaceted. I did not conduct a post-performance survey, but I did host a post-performance question and answer session between audience, performers, and myself. I posed a few questions for reflection in the program to prepare the audience for viewing the work and probe some thoughts for discussion.²⁷ The discussion lasted about fifteen minutes, including questions about the process of the spoken word section, the challenges for dancers in approaching a vast array of techniques and genres in an evening’s work, a mission statement for a dance major program at an Evangelical Christian university, the Ecclesiastes 3 source material, and the creative content of the music and movement. During the hours and days following the concert, I had many informal conversations with viewers that centered around the integration of faith and deep artistic/technical work, the choreography, the impact of the themes on the individual, the beauty, the artistry, the high production value, the growth in the dancers through the process, the range of techniques utilized, and the intangible, uplifting presence of God that many experienced. The professors I had interviewed were unable to attend the concert, but a two-camera edit of the performance will enable them to experience it at some level. This, I hope, will provide artistic fuel for further discussion, inspiration, and exploration of dance at their universities.

The work demonstrated that Scripture can provide a rich tapestry from which to create dance that can engage the audience and performer in body, mind, soul, and spirit. For me, dance that can connect us deeply as humans, which also engages us spiritually, connecting us to our Creator and Life-giver, is an entirely powerful and humbling encounter with heaven and earth.

²⁷ See Appendix G for a sample of the program.

This is what I have witnessed, and what I think is possible, in a technical, artistic, and academically excellent dance program that is rooted in a Christian worldview for the purposes of engaging culture for such a time as this.

Conclusion

In order to pioneer new dance major programs at Evangelical Christian universities in the U.S. today, I embarked on a journey of investigation and discovery. I set out to determine historical and cultural considerations, the current obstacles and impediments, and to create an example of a faith-filled, excellence driven pre-professional program.

To this end, I gathered, evaluated, and synthesized literature about the Christian church's history and relationship with dance, the holistic benefits of dance, and the objectives in designing a new curriculum. I demonstrated why there might be potential tension over dance at a Christian university, organizing this into a coherent historical argument. Over the course of the research, I initiated new conversations with universities that are potentially on the cusp of welcoming and implementing dance programs. Through my interviews, I uncovered a growing interest in dance, evidenced by administrators who eloquently articulated the beauty of dance and how it has personally moved their souls. I gathered statistics about the current presence of dance at Evangelical Christian universities to produce a cohesive and updated summary of schools and offerings that did not previously exist. Through crafting a sample curriculum, I have shown how young artists can be trained excellently and relevantly in dance with an immersive integration of Christian faith and spirituality. Lastly, I created and presented a concert inspired by Scripture that not only represented a breadth of dance techniques and expressions, but that challenged the historical anti-dance Christian arguments in such a way as to illuminate new possibilities for Christian dancers.

There is significant and challenging work to be done in order to develop fully-realized dance programs at Christian colleges and universities. Areas of further investigation include conducting student surveys at universities currently without a dance major, identifying and

obtaining financial resources for the establishment of a new program, producing and presenting exemplary dance works at target universities in an effort to build pathways for a new program, and developing a vibrant curriculum that could be presented to a university Provost or President for consideration. My vision is to equip a new generation of young dance artists; young artists who are exceptionally trained technically, artistically, academically, and spiritually to be able to engage society through their bodies, hearts, minds, and souls as God intended. It was my goal for this project to contribute new ideas in such a way that its findings can expeditiously move an Evangelical Christian university towards establishing a pre-professional dance major program.

This thesis was carried out in order to be useful and impactful in forging new ground for excellent dance major programs at Evangelical Christian universities. As a result, I now have the data, perspective, and exhortation to create new opportunities that will impact a generation of Christian dance artists. They will be well-trained and well-equipped to fully realize all that dance has to offer them, for their good, for the good of others, and for the glory of God. God designed dance as a means of worship, expression, and communication. “Let them praise His name with dancing” (Psalm 149:3, *New International Version*).

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Appendix A

Choreography on Biblical Themes

The following list is derived from *The Gospel According to Dance: Choreography and the Bible* compiled by Giora Manor and the editors of *Dance Magazine*, *The Dance in Christianity, a History of Dance through the Ages* by Marilyn Daniels, and *Dance as Religious Studies* edited by Doug Adams and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list but a fair sampling of choreographic work based upon Biblical source material by prominent and influential choreographers of the 20th century.

Alvin Ailey

According to St. Francis, 1954
Three Black Kings, 1976
Revelations, 1960

Maude Allan

Vision of Salome, 1907

Frederick Ashton

The Wise Virgins, 1940

George Balanchine

Noah and the Flood, 1962
Prodigal Son, 1929
Samson and Delilah, date unknown

John Butler

According to Eve, date unknown
After Eden, date unknown
Esther, 1961

Nanette de Valois

Job, 1931
Wise and Foolish Virgins, 1933

Loie Fuller

The Deluge, 1921
Miriam's Dance, 1911
Salome's Veils, 1895

Lester Horton

Faces of Violence, 1950
Salome, 1932

Jiri Kylian

Stoolgame, 1973

Bella Lewitsky

Pieta, date unknown

José Limón

Eden Tree, 1945
Exiles, 1950
Psalm, 1967
Song of Songs, 1947
There is a Time, 1956
The Traitor, 1954

Martha Graham

El Penitente, 1940
Embattled Garden, 1958
Herodiade, 1944
Judith, 1950
Lucifer, 1975

Paul Sanasardo

Hosanna, 1977

Ted Shawn

23rd Psalm, 1921

Dreams of Jacob, 1949

Job: a Masque for Dancing, 1931

Joseph's Legend, 1915

Miriam, Sister of Moses, 1919

Song of Songs, 1951

Ruth St. Denis

*Dancer at the Court of King Ahaseurus
(Esther), 1919*

Jephthah's Daughter, 1918

*Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring, 1933 (with Ted
Shawn)*

Masque of Mary, 1939

Salome, 1948

Anna Sokolow

Esther the Queen, 1960

Song of a Semite, 1944

James Truitte

*With Timbrell and Dance, Praise His Name,
1973*

Normal Walker

Lazarus 1973, 1977

Three Psalms, 1973

Robert Yohn

Cruciform, 1974

The Man They Say, 1974

Appendix B

The Bible on Dance

My Research

I studied the *Bible (King James Version)* alongside *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and Lexicon*, investigating all of the references to “dance,” “dances,” “danced,” and “dancing.” I found 27 entries.* Of those, only 3 reference dance as being used for sinful purposes, 12 are used in reference to celebration, tradition, or are otherwise spiritually neutral, and 12 refer to the praise and celebration of God through dancing.

On the left are the references and next to them are the numbers that correspond to the Hebrew or Greek word used. At the bottom are the Greek and Hebrew words and their definitions.

“Dance”

Judges 21:21 (2342)
Job 21:11 (7540)
Psalm 149:3 (4234)
Psalm 150:4 (4234)
Ecclesiastes 3:4 (7540)
Isaiah 13:21 (7540)
Jeremiah 31:13 (4234)
Lamentations 5:15 (4234)

“Dances”

Exodus 15:20 (4246)
Judges 11:34 (4246)
Judges 21:21 (4246)
1 Samuel 21:11 (4246)
1 Samuel 29:5 (4246)
Jeremiah 31:4 (4246)

“Danced”

Judges 21:23 (2342)
2 Samuel 6:14 (3769)
Matthew 11:17 (3738)
Matthew 14:6 (3738)
Mark 6:22 (3738)
Luke 7:32 (3738)

“Dancing”

Exodus 32:19 (4246)
1 Samuel 18:6 (4246)
1 Samuel 30:16 (2287)
2 Samuel 6:16 (3769)
1 Chronicles 15:29 (7540)
Psalm 30:11 (4234)
Luke 15:25 (5525)

Hebrew words and definitions

2342—chûwl/chîyl: to writhe in pain, travail, twist, wait, bear
4234—mâchôwl: a round dance, dancing
4246—m^echôwlâh: a dance company, dances
7540—râqad: to stamp, spring about (wildly or for joy), leap, jump, skip, dance
3769—kârar: to dance, whirl
2287—châgag: to move in a circle, march in a sacred procession, observe a festival, be giddy, celebrate

Greek words and definitions

3738—ōrchēōmai a row, ring dance, rank like or regular motion
5525—chōrōs a ring, round dance, dancing “choir”

Margaret Taylor, “A History of Symbolic Movement in Worship”²⁸

Taylor presents an argument that where Jesus spoke in Aramaic about dance, the word used for “rejoice” is the same word used for “dance.”

Luke 6:23 “Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”

Susan Michelle Tyrrell, *The Key of David*

Tyrrell identifies Strong’s Hebrew word #1523 as meaning “properly to spin around ...be glad, joy, be joyful, rejoice” (52). As Taylor suggests, Tyrrell also argues that the word “dance” could be substituted for “rejoice” in several scriptures. She lists twelve scriptures where this Hebrew word is used but is translated in English not as “dance” but as “joy” or “rejoice,” even though the word indicates movement such as dancing in its very essence.

1 Corinthians 16:31

Isaiah 9:3

Psalms 2:11

Isaiah 41:15-16

Psalms 9:14

Isaiah 29:19

Psalms 89:15-16

Psalms 16:9

Psalms 21:1

Isaiah 61:10

Proverbs 23:24-25

Zechariah 10:7

Mayer I. Gruber, “Ten Dance-Derived Expressions in the Hebrew Bible”²⁹

Gruber outlines 11 verbs used to describe dancing in the Bible, as seen in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, some of which I do not have in my research as seen above and some of which are conjugated or used in connection with other words which change the spelling:

ḥāgag—dance in a circle

sābab—encircle, turn about

rāqad—skip

qippûṣ and dillēg—jumping dance

kirkēr—whirl, pirouette

pizzēz—skip

pissûaḥ—limping dance

ḥyl/ḥll—perform a whirling dance

śihēq—dance, play (used in 2 Samuel 6:21)

²⁸ Adams, Doug and Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane, *Dance As Religious Studies*, p.15-32

²⁹ Adams, Doug and Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane, *Dance As Religious Studies*, p.48-66

APPENDIX C

Anonymous Undergraduate Student Survey

University: _____ Your Current Year: _____ Date: _____

1. What are you currently majoring and minoring in here at this University?

2. What is your background in dance? (please use the back if you need additional space)

3. Why did you choose to pursue a degree at this University instead of at another University?

4. How do your faith and dance intersect?

5. What value does dance have at a Christian University? Is it important?

6. What life, job, and/or ministry skills do you feel you are prepared for from this program?

7. What are the benefits and negatives to a dance major program at a Christian University?

Appendix D

CCCU Requirements

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) is a higher education association of 180 Christian institutions around the world. The 117 member campuses in North America are regionally accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities with curricula rooted in the arts and sciences and whose missions are Christ-centered and rooted in the historic Christian faith. In addition, 63 affiliate campuses from 20 countries are part of the CCCU. In addition to their baccalaureate programs, many of our members and affiliates offer master and doctoral degrees in a variety of disciplines.

Membership Requirements

1. **INSTITUTIONAL TYPE AND ACCREDITATION** All member campuses must offer comprehensive undergraduate curricula rooted in the arts and sciences, and be located in North America. All U.S. members must have non-probationary regional accreditation and Canadian institutions must have the equivalent accreditation in Canada.
2. **CHRISTIAN MISSION** Member campuses must have a public, board approved institutional mission or purpose statement that is Christ-centered and rooted in the historic Christian faith. They are committed to integrating Biblical faith with educational programs.
3. **EMPLOYMENT POLICY** Member campuses must have a continuing institutional policy and practice, effective throughout membership, to hire as full-time faculty members and administrators (non-hourly staff) only persons who profess faith in Jesus Christ.
4. **COOPERATION AND PARTICIPATION** Member campuses must be supportive of other Christian colleges and universities and have a commitment to advance the cause of Christian higher education through participation in the programs of the CCCU and payment of the annual dues. Member campuses are urged to demonstrate continuing support for the CCCU through annual registration for CCCU professional development and/or student programs.
5. **INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY** Member campuses must demonstrate responsible financial operations, have institutional practices that reflect high ethical standards, and operate all financial and fund raising activities consistent with the standards of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, which can be reviewed at www.ecfa.org.

All statements above are from the CCCU Website: http://www.cccu.org/members_and_affiliates, 3/2016

Appendix E

Summarizing Report of Statistical Investigation

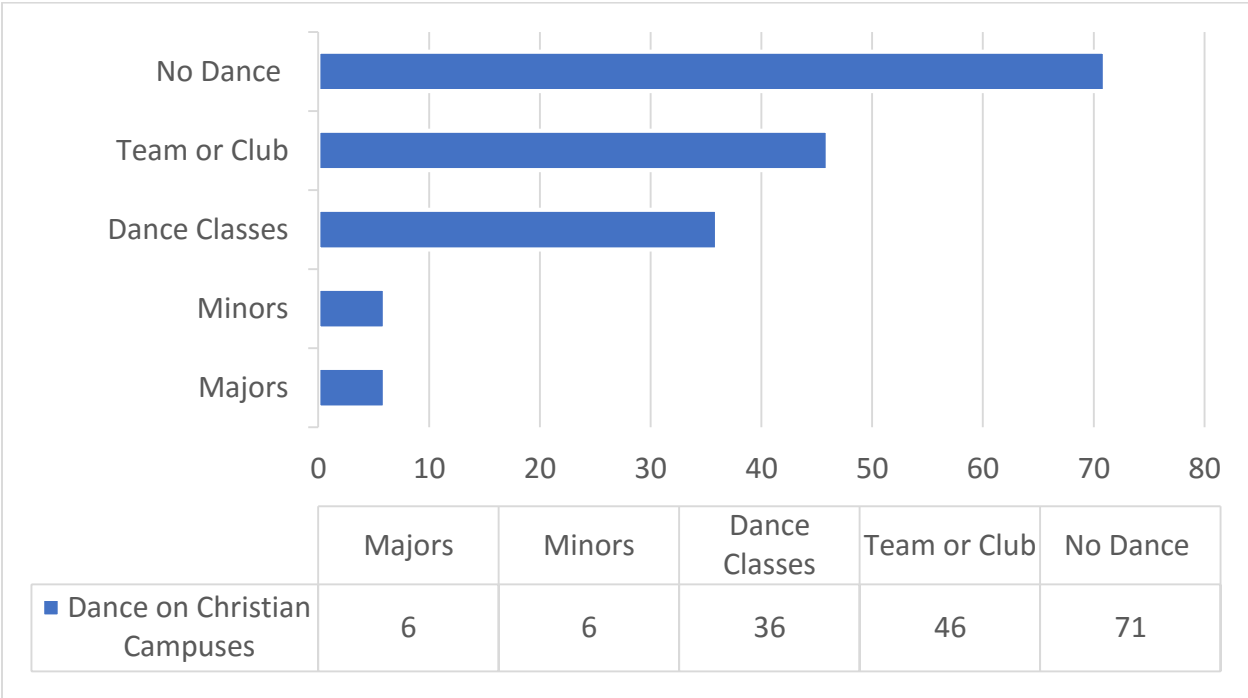
Necessary Research

The absence of an existing database where I could obtain accurate information about the presence of dance on campuses of CCCU member institutions, required me to launch my own detailed inquiry. Without accurate information, there could be deficient conclusions. In order to be confident I had an accurate account of every dance program or presence of dance on campuses, I visited each website of the 117 CCCU member schools and searched for “dance.” I also navigated their majors/degrees pages and course catalogues where available. What I discovered is that an additional 6 schools offer a Dance Minor. In addition to that, another 24 offer dance classes embedded in Theatre or Kinesiology departments. Most unexpected, of the 117 member schools, 46 institutions sponsor dance teams, troupes, or clubs as an extracurricular activity. Often these are student led, but they are available to the student body and are encouraged by the university. This does not appear to be denominationally polarized either. The participating institutions are Baptist, Southern Baptist, Assemblies of God, Reformed Church of America, Mennonite, Free Methodist, Friends, and Presbyterian just to name a few.

Accreditation Considerations

The U.S. Department of Education does not accredit schools but they do oversee and validate the accrediting agencies. They recommend regional accreditation over national accreditation as being more thorough. Considering one of the requirements of the CCCU is that they are actively regionally accredited, I did not need to cross-reference their accreditation status. However, I was interested in how many secular universities existed and how many of those have dance majors. Having delimited my focus area for this project to Southern California, I therefore chose to analyze data from only the secular institutions accredited through WASC.

CURRENT DANCE PRESENCE AT CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES



Appendix F

Sampling of Two Dance Courses

Dance as Worship Course

Worship is an outflowing of one's relationship with God. It can be quietly reflective or visibly and vocally expressive. Permission or even a command to dance as worship is mentioned at least twelve times in the Bible. Dance is a fundamental human expressive tool that God has given us to embody our emotions, thoughts, and experiences. This course will investigate worship as a spiritual discipline, dance as a vehicle for private and corporate worship, the Biblical foundation for dance, and the function of a worship leader. There will be readings, class discussions, guest lecturers, field assignments, and practical applications.

Week 1: Theology of Worship

Week 2: Heart of Worship

Week 3: Biblical Foundation for Dance as Worship

Week 4: Expressions of Dance as Worship throughout Church History

Week 5: Liturgical Dance, Culture and Practices

Week 6: Function of a Worship Leader

Week 7: Corporate and Private Worship Experiences

Week 8: Reports from Field Observations

Week 9: Preparation for Leading Worship in Chapel

Week 10: Leading Worship in Chapel Experience and Reflection

Sample Texts/Works: *Dancing in the Spirit, a Scriptural Study of Liturgical Dance* by Karen Curry; *The Dance in Christianity, a History of Religious Dance Through the Ages* by Marilyn Daniels; *The Worshipping Artist* by Rory Noland; *Embodied Prayer* by Celeste Snowber Schroeder

Dance for Social Change Course

Social activism and the arts have had a long history. Modern dance and postmodern dance have lent themselves naturally to being vehicles of expression for social concern. Choreographers such as Pearl Primus, Urban Bush Women, Kurt Joos, and Bill T. Jones have fueled their commentaries on social justice issues with compelling expressions of dance. This critical issues course will look at and identify areas of social concern today. We will investigate Biblical examples and provocation for cultural engagement, as well as evaluate dance activism from the past and present, and provide space for students to explore and develop areas of interest for their own projects. There will be readings, video viewings, class discussions, guest lecturers, and projects.

Week 1: Examining our World for Social Concerns, part 1

Week 2: Examining our World for Social Concerns, part 2

Week 3: What does the Bible have to Say about Cultural Engagement?

Week 4: Dance Activists from the Past

Week 5: Dance Activists of the Present

Week 6: Choosing and Researching a Project

Week 7: Fueling your Passion, Designing Choreography/Performance

Week 8: Sharing Progress with the Class, Continue Designing

Week 9: Presentation of Projects

Week 10: Presentation of Projects; Reflection

Sample Texts/Works: *Breath Made Visible* a film by Ruedi Gerber about the life and work of Anna Halprin; *The Green Table* by Kurt Joos; *Strange Fruit* by Pearl Primus; *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* by Nato Thompson

ABUNDANT THANKS...

To you, the audience, for attending the concert tonight!

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, without whom I would have nothing.

To my husband and children who have unwaveringly supported, loved, and encouraged me, sacrificing so much so that we could do this together. You are my biggest cheerleaders and my refuge.

To my dancers: You trusted, invested, and gave of your time and talent to bring this concert to life. It has been a joy to watch you grow as performers and as people over the course of this project. You are beautiful. You have been gifted with dance in order to make a difference, so keep on!

To Diane Diefenderfer, Jennifer Fisher, Chad Michael Hall, and Sheron Wray for attending rehearsals, watching videos and providing choreographic feedback for myself and the dancers. Your insight and care was invaluable.

To my thesis committee, Jennifer Fisher and Chad Michael Hall and my incredible chair, Sheron Wray, for numerous hours reading my written thesis work, supporting my research, and providing sound counsel for completing this work.

To my extended family and friends who have loved and prayed for me, your belief in me and God's leading has propelled me forward.

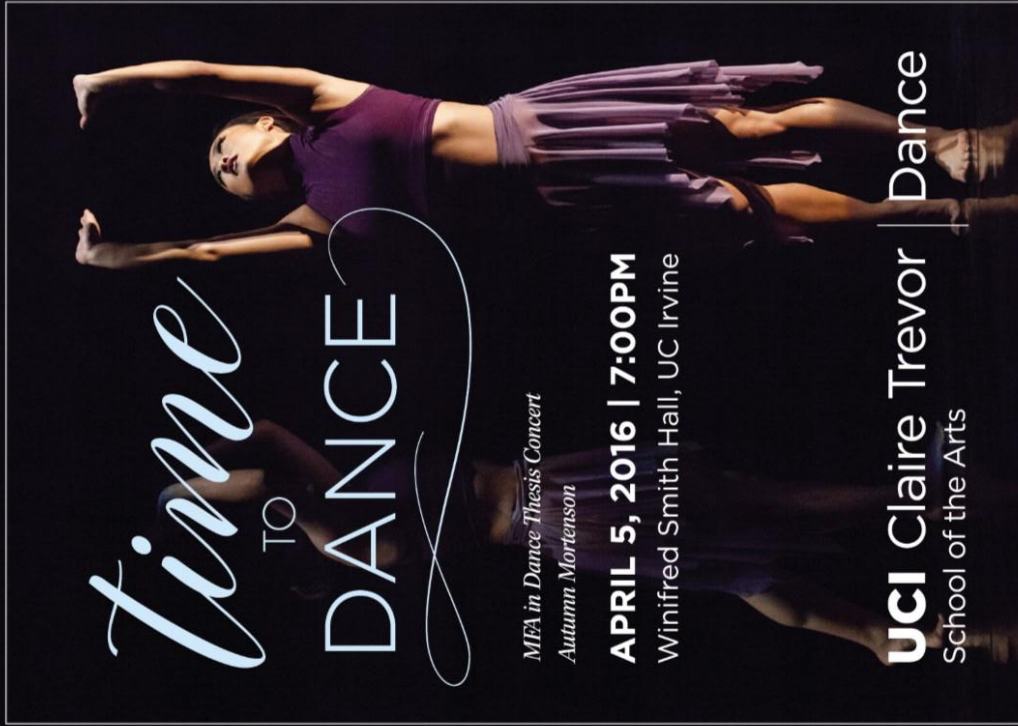
To my cohort who has sojournd with me along this MFA road, we have laughed, cried, struggled, and succeeded together. You're next!

To the dance faculty at UCI for the conversations, advice, suggestions, and mentoring you have provided in and outside the classroom.

To the Administrators and Professors whom I interviewed for this thesis, for sharing your perspectives and stories of your journeys of faith and of dance.

To Yvette Adame, Shannon Bicknell, Bob Warner, and Toby Weiner for your administrative support with scheduling and logistics.

To Gabbie Koizumi, Sarah Resch, and Hannah Shin, for fantastic Stage Management, Lighting Design, and Graphic Design, respectively. It was a privilege to work with you.



Time
TO
DANCE

MFA in Dance Thesis Concert
Autumn Mortenson

APRIL 5, 2016 | 7:00PM
Winifred Smith Hall, UC Irvine

UCI Claire Trevor | Dance
School of the Arts

Photo by Amy Farnsworth, University of UC

Program Notes

Aiming to demonstrate the possibilities of a pre-professional dance major program at an Evangelical Christian university, I have utilized excerpts from Ecclesiastes 3 as source material. The five movements of this work were choreographed in five distinctive genres of dance.

"Abbracciare" explores "there is a time to embrace and refrain from embracing" with movements and patterns abstracted from this theme and embodied by a trio of women and a male/female duet. "Silent/Speak" is taken from "there is a time to be silent and a time to speak" and utilizes postmodern techniques. "Mourning" is a solo danced by five female dancers in order to convey that mourning and grief are universal, albeit uniquely individual, experiences for all people. "Rise" finds inspiration in "there is a time to breakdown and a time to build up." It was critical for me to include the hip hop genre in this concert as I suggest that it is time for collegiate dance major programs to embrace hip hop in the university. "Rejoice" is an interpretation of the second half of "there is a time to mourn and a time to dance" wherein the word dance means "to rejoice."

Dance as an art and communication form has a voice and a platform from which individuals and communities can express, process, and reveal the vast experiences of life. The great irony here is that there is not only a time to dance, but we can dance about all "times." I propose it is time for dance to enter the Evangelical Christian university. Throughout the Bible we are told to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. For me, there is no better singular expression of this than to dance.

There will be a brief audience participation discussion following the performance. I encourage you to reflect on your experiences with dance as an art form, an academic subject, and a vehicle for self-expression as you engage with our work in this concert. In addition, I invite you to linger, interact with performers and fellow audience members and enjoy our post-performance reception just outside the theater.

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work God does from beginning to end. I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice." Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11-12a

Time to Dance

Choreography and Artistic Direction by Autumn Mortenson

Abbracciare

Music: Original Commissioned Composition by Gabriel Wheaton
Trio: Jamie Elster, Stacie Overmyer, Olivia Stroud
Duet: Erick Espino, Loren Sexton

Silent/Speak

Collaborative Work with the Dancers
Ashley Bolden, Lucy Dillon, Molly Gray, Jessica Sanmarti

Spoken Text from: Polarisproject.org, GFA.org, Compassion.org, ACLJ.org, Persecution.com, Rescuewomen.com
To Learn More...to ACT ...to SPEAK,

Please Visit These Organizations' Websites

Mourning

Music: "Into the Dark" by Sebastian Larsson
www.sebastianlarsson.com

Soloists in Order of Appearance:

Jazmine Curie, Lucy Dillon, Jessica Sanmarti, Molly Gray,
Stacie Overmyer

Rise

Solo Choreography by Sam Yoshikawa

Music: "I'll Keep On" by NF, Featuring Jeremiah Carlson
Ashely Bolden, Lucy Dillon, Jamie Elster, Erick Espino,
Molly Gray, Stacie Overmyer, Jessica Sanmarti, Olivia Stroud,
Sam Yoshikawa

Rejoice

Music: "L'Ascenseur" by The Dirty Dozen

Ashely Bolden, Lucy Dillon, Jamie Elster, Erick Espino,
Molly Gray, Stacie Overmyer, Jessica Sanmarti, Loren Sexton,
Olivia Stroud

Stage Manager: **Gabrielle Koizumi**

Lighting Designer: **Sarah Resch**

Lighting Assistant: **Darrin Wade**

House Management: **Alyssa Taylor**

Graphic Design: **Hannah Shin**