Steps of a Dance Production:
The Working Lives of Professionals at a Dance Company

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is an ethnographic study of fine art dancers' identities, vocational life, and the dance culture. It explains the dancers' process of becoming and living as 'artistic beings,' and shows how dancers take on their journey of self-discovery, as well as how they are motivated through the feeling of empowerment and inspiration. The exploration starts with the analyses of the socio-cultural dynamics of a dance production team. Non-structured interviews are conducted with the director, ballet master, twelve dancers, two choreographers, and a few employees in the administration. In the process, the research objective develops into an investigation of the dancers' vocational life, their identities and philosophy, which keep them disciplined and focused. First, the structural characteristics of the dance community are explored, and characteristics such as mobility, 'connectedness,' and rich social networks become the focal point in analyzing the dance culture's structural frame. Second, the contextual characteristics of the culture are examined. Here, the dancers' identity construction, philosophy, objectives, reality, value/belief system are carefully analyzed. Finally, the empirical data are presented, incorporating the analyses of their notion of vocational life. The distinctiveness of their identities and reality will be highlighted, and the structural and contextual characteristics of the dance culture will fuse into each other.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For my parents, who taught me how to speak Do Re Mi.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

To perform is to perform is to perform, is

To exhibit or illumine, is

To Do or To Be

A performance is a performance is a performance

A performance can be an exhibition of self

A performance can be a technical display

A performance can be a revelation (Koner 1993, 1)

This thesis investigates the notion of 'vocation' by drawing particular attention to performing artists' vocational lives, while making a contribution to the ethnography of performing artists. What is a sense of vocation? What drives individuals to pursue a committed path? What types of personal fulfillment do those devoted individuals gain from their vocations? In many different careers and professions, people find special meaning in what they do in their vocational life, and attain a sense of accomplishment. Although a sense of vocation can be achieved in many different professions, the initial motive and what makes them continue their careers seem different. Some devote themselves to their careers because of social recognition, prestige, power, responsibility, or even anger, justification, a sense of guilt, and obligation.

A sense of vocation can be developed by various motivational sources, circumstances, and social contexts. In approaching the issues of vocation and conceptualizing 'vocation,' I would like to question the intermingled notion of work and life, which people decreasingly experience due to industrialization since the height of modernity.

In industrialized societies, an exploration of individuals who do not experience a loss of self but develop a strong sense of vocation and accomplishment is a fascinating undertaking. My

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purpose here is to present fine art professional dancers as individuals with a distinctive vocational sense, and show how their identities and worldview affect their working style and perceptions of their vocational life. In order to describe the dance world and dancers, I would like to draw the readers' attentions to two aspects: 1) contextual characteristics, and 2) structural characteristics of the dance world. I chose a dance production company, *the Dance X* (pseudonym), as the site of my field research, which is the point of entry to the larger context of the fine art dancers' world. This thesis does not intend to display or showcase stories of particular characters (i.e. dancers) of a particular dance production company. Rather, it intends to treat fine art dancers and associated professionals as members of a distinctive group with its own value/belief system in relation to the process of conceptualizing their vocational sense, and to unfold their lives and reality which are often unknown to outsiders.

In this study, the terms 'dancers' and 'fine art dancers' refer to professional dancers who have been trained in classical i.e. ballet and contemporary dance, and they refer to themselves as 'dancers' 'ballet dancers' 'fine art dancers' 'professional dancers' 'artists' or 'performing artists.'

How do fine art dancers conceptualize their notion of vocation? There are several interesting themes that entail their sense of vocation. This thesis examines each theme and determines whether or not they contribute to the dancers' strong vocational sense. First of all, the process of embodiment and internalization of art is notable. These dancers invest so much of themselves into their careers not only physically but also emotionally and psychologically, therefore, their dancing career is not merely what they do for living, but they 'become the dance' i.e. the dance and dancers cannot be separated (Kirpich 1997, 209; Khudaverdian 1998, 41). This implies their attachment to what they produce, thus the Marxist concept of '*alienation*' is an unlikely consequence in the world of dancers. Since this study takes off from the idea that the intermingled notion of work and life is the basis of one's conceptualization of 'vocation,' the process of identity construction and the embodiment process (i.e. to 'become the dance') are tightly connected.

Secondly, there is a particularly rewarding sensation which these dancers receive in their careers—spiritual gratification (Halprin 1995, 15). Anna Halprin claims that spiritual gratification is the utmost element of the dancing experience, and dancers attain it only after they reached a certain level of expertise and commitment in three other elements: physical, emotional and mental. In the following chapters, I will discuss how the spiritual element and the aforementioned embodiment process contribute to the dancers' identity formation.

Thirdly, the self-development and self-actualization are also significant components of the dancers' vocational sense. Search for spirituality became an increasingly important phenomenon in post modernity. By the same token, discovering one's true nature or self became of a great interest among people in fragmented societies in the post-modern period where individuals increasingly experienced a fragmented sense of identity (Heelas 1992). Paul Heelas argues that many search for true self in order to find authenticity, liberation, creativity, and natural wisdom in life (1992). As Marx also points out that 'a loss of self' is directly related to the sense of *alienation*, finding a 'sense of self' and one's own place in society through vocational activities give individuals a strong sense of 'vocation.' The process of the dancers' identity construction and reconfirmation of their identities through their vocational activities are extensively discussed within this thesis.

Fourthly, creative activities in the dancers' daily operations such as participation in improvisation sessions and choreographic collaborations seem to elevate the level of motivation and satisfaction in their vocational activities. Laura Dunham and R. Edward Freeman undertook a study of theatrical directors and their leadership. They highlight the implications of creative working environments such as theatres, and argue that artistic directors are more open-minded to give freedom to team members, and more likely to empower, inspire, and motivate their subordinates in comparison to business leaders (Dunham and Freeman 2000, 108). This is because artistic directors are more willing to incorporate their team members' ideas and initiative while giving more freedom to the members (Dunham and Freeman 2000, 108). Based on their

theory, I hypothesized that a creative working environment such as a dance production team allows the team members to feel empowered and respected, while receiving an open-minded work place that encourages creativity. The implications of 'a creative working environment' will be examined in detail in this study.

Lastly, being involved in the processes of co-construction, collaboration, and decision-making seems to be very rewarding in many different fields. In the following chapters, a high degree of involvement by the dancers in the art production process will be analyzed from different perspectives. Parminder Bhachu argues that the success of the South Asian women's fashion market in London is thanks to the innovative negotiations and improvisations between the designers and consumers that are shaped by the Indian diaspora fashion market, where designers are often consumers themselves (2003, 140, 141). John G. Craig also suggests that successful cooperatives are organized in a manner that participants can achieve a collaborative working environment (1989, 63). Since participants are often consumer themselves in case of cooperatives, a collaborative working environment can provide a place of co-construction between consumers and service providers (Craig 1989, 63, 68). By the same token, James C. Scott claims that authoritarian approaches in state policy-making that are not 'connected' with the actual practices, knowledge, life, and needs of the local population are destined to fail (1998).

Dunham and Freeman encourage business leaders to incorporate the aforementioned 'open management style' in order to stimulate productivity and motivation of employees in the business counterpart (2000, 111, 115, 116). They define 'open-minded management' that is symbolized by actions such as offering a creative workplace and giving them freedom to generate ideas as 'management techniques' that can be applied to other sectors such as business counterpart.

Treating them as 'ready-to-apply' management techniques becomes questionable when we realize the contextual characteristics of the organization in question. Mats Alvesson argues the importance of contextual characteristics in analyzing organizational culture and various

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organizational issues (1993; 2002). He suggests that both macro and micro-levels of analyses must be undertaken, and his method underlines the necessity of incorporating socio-cultural analyses into organizational studies (Alvesson 2002, 151, 152, 154, 155). This is because any organization is situated within a larger context of social reality which includes shared values, symbols, and experiences (Alvesson 1993, 2). Taking Alvesson's idea into consideration, I approached this study not only from the micro-perspective of the organization, *the Dance X*, but also from the macro-perspective by analyzing dancers' reality and philosophy. Examining how they construct their identities and their world becomes an important part of understanding how their strong vocational sense develop. In addition, this study does not overlook the fact that their identities, reality, and philosophy ultimately produce the 'texture' of the organization, *the Dance X*.

Since the strong 'vocational sense' suggests the amalgamation of one's life and profession, exploring the contextual characteristics of the dance world, the process of identity construction in relation to their vocational sense, and the 'cosmological' make-up of their reality, philosophical frame as well as their value system becomes the focal point in this study (Chapter 3). In examining the process of identity construction, a cognitive approach is employed. Both Anthony Cohen (1985) and Fredrik Barth (2000) suggest that people construct identities and boundaries based on their lived experiences. Taking their doctrines into consideration, I hypothesized that fine art dancers/performing artists develop a similar sense of identity based on shared symbols, aesthetic sense, values, philosophy, and experiences.

These values and aesthetic sense are *lived, practiced*, and *reinforced* within their cultural boundaries of artists as well as those who appreciate their works. Pierre Bourdieu argues that taste and aesthetic sense are strongly related to the cultural knowledge, and the cultural knowledge is linked to the class structure (1984, 1-4). Martha Graham (1998), Pauline Koner (1993) and Daniel Nagrin (1997) highlight that the path of becoming a dancing being—crafting their artistry and internalizing the artistic and aesthetic intentions behind the 'act of art'—is in

fact synonymous of who they are and the very path is the 'lived experience' they share with each other. Cynthia J. Novack (1990) and Clara Khudaverdian (1998) examined the concept of 'the dancing body' and argue that the use of their bodies as well as the discipline, pain, and emotional sensations that are felt through their bodies conceptualize their identities and the philosophical frame of the world/reality they live in. Dancers are often trained with the image of a 'perfect dancer' in their mind (Khudaverdian 1998, 67), and the struggles to become the image of 'a perfect dancer' can become an obsession (Wulff 1998, 76). No matter how unreasonable it may seem to non-artists, the drive to reach 'perfection' and their self-critical attitude are part of their identities, and they reconfirm and reinforce their values and sense of self in the name of professionalism (Wulff 1998, 76).

The structural characteristics are important elements in the description of the dance world. My original objective was to explore socio-cultural dynamics of an art production team. However, the objective was immediately challenged by the epistemological notion of the field. Upon entry to the 'field,' I learned that the way I treated the production team of *the Dance X*—as a finite field site with its own finite concepts of organizational culture, values, beliefs, and practices—ignored the mobility and fluidity of the dance world, within which this company is situated. The dance world is very mobile and dancers have global and rich social networks. The notion of a 'dance company' is rather elusive in their mind (Wulff 2000, 148, 149, 159). The dancers are active not only within the boundary of the company, but also have personal projects outside the company. The amazingly rich social networks of the dancers serve as the information sources for their future projects, events, and career opportunities. They are active in the intricate networks of the dance community for their personal and career benefits; at the same time, the networks serve as the refuge for friendly and personal support when they move to a new city or a new company, and start a new life. Therefore, the dancers see a dance production company as a 'temporary collectivity' and they seem to move around freely within the larger frame of the dance world. The high mobility and worldwide career opportunities allow the dancers to prioritize their

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needs and career objectives to a much larger degree than some other professions. Their cognitive sense of the dancers' community is quite large, and they find 'connectedness' among the community (Wulff 2000, 148).

In order to clarify the location and situation of my research subjects in the context of the dance community, the structural characteristics will be elaborated in the methodology section (Chapter 2). This discussion also incorporates the shift of scope and focus of my study, and the very shift becomes especially notable in the process of identifying and locating the 'field' in this study.

The process of identity construction of fine art dancers will be explored in detail in Chapter 3. The analyses and exploration of these artists' characteristics are presented throughout the thesis, both through literature and my field experience. In the process, my own background as a professional musician became an important asset in understanding and communicating with the dancers during the field research. In the discussions, the process of my 'encounter' with the dancers is also displayed, by questioning the issues of boundaries and identities based on the theories of Cohen (1985), Barth (2000) among others.

Having familiarized ourselves with the identity, reality and aspiration of the fine art dancers, the empirical data collected in the 'field' will bring a realistic picture and deeper meaning of the dance world to us. Their notion of vocational life and its significance are discussed and analyzed, while presenting their true voice. I will show how dancers are motivated through the feeling of empowerment and inspiration. The distinctiveness of their identities and reality which keep them disciplined and focused will also be highlighted. In the discussions, the structural and contextual characteristics of the dance world will finally fuse into each other. This thesis will in due course explain the dancers' process of becoming and living as 'artistic beings' and their pleasure, struggles, pain, and objectives that altogether shape their vocational life and journey of self-discovery.

Chapter 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE FIELD AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will present the general description of the micro-field, *the Dance X*, a dance production company, as well as the discussion of the 'situation' and 'location' of the micro-field within a larger macro-context. This process includes a redefinition/redirection of the focus of my research topic and subjects.

My Original Intention

Prior to the start of my journey in the 'field', what originally fascinated me was the way in which members of an art production team interact, support each other, and work together in a highly creative environment. I went to the field with the purpose of exploring the socio-cultural group dynamics of a performing arts production as a *working team*. Another intriguing aspect of art production was that participants of the production activities do not regard their careers simply as jobs, but their vocational activities are a large part of their lives. Here I do not mean to claim that performing artists are the only people who work with a strong sense of vocation. However, it is interesting to see how artists develop a vocational sense, and the key to finding the 'uniqueness' of artists may lie in this area of analysis.

In the process of industrialization at the height of modernity, the concept of domestic and private spheres of production emerged. As this process continued, the notion of private life became separate from that of work. An early form of a work organization—a bureaucratic organization—appeared; work was a series of tasks performed within the working domain. As Karl Marx states, "[t]he worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object," and this results in the sense of '*alienation*': there is no connection between what the labour produces and the labour's existence (Tucker 1972, 71, 72). This sense of 'alienation' is not a phenomenon of the past; even in postmodern societies, many employees and

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workers alike experience this tendency. The current trend of management both in public and private sectors encourages their employees' proactive and entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours (du Gay 1994, 658). This new trend entails a concept of individuals within the organization incorporating a vocational dedication with a high sense of responsibility, identification, and creativity (Clarkson 1989, 14).

Although this new management trend is a high hope in the business world among executive members of organizations, in reality, it is very rare for top management to witness such devotion from the regular employees who occupy the vast majority of the organization's work positions (Manz and Sims 1993, 8-9, 11, 49-50; Dreyfack 1982, 167-168, 226-227; Janov 1994, 13-14). I hypothesized that art production companies cannot afford to have *passive employees*, but necessarily depend on highly *active contributors*. In return, an active contributor will gain a sense of achievement, gratification, and pleasure. Consequently, the contributor's ambitions and pride will inspire him/her to even greater accomplishment. In order to find such a reciprocal reinforcement and merging of the two domains of life and work, I believed that it was ideal to observe members of a performing arts production team.

Furthermore, a creative environment implies certain facts: 1) the organizational members should feel empowered, respected, and trusted in order to propose new ideas, and 2) in order to encourage creativity among the members, the organization should be open-minded to some degree, and be prepared to give freedom to the members. Dunham and Freeman explored how good theatre directors manage theatrical productions, and argue that:

> "good theatre directors [...] manage the dichotomous objectives of 1) achieving organizational unity and cohesiveness behind a vision or set of goals, [...] at the same time, 2) giving free rein to the multiple, individual and unique talents of the people within their organizations" (2000, 108).

They claim that theatrical directors and business leaders share similar roles and responsibilities, and business leaders can learn from the practices of some leaders in art production companies (2000, 111). Dunham and Freeman suggest that theatrical directors are more prepared to

empower their team members, trust their ideas and initiatives, as well as be more open to new ideas in comparison to the business counterpart (2000, 115, 116). According to these scholars, open-minded directors acknowledge that there are many different interpretations and there is no single solution to a problem. They are often eager to learn, to listen to people, and are critical towards their own works and views (2000, 117, 119, 120).

Each organization has its own agenda and thus faces its own challenges. I was very interested in seeing the ways in which issues are handled in an art production company, especially in regards to interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, and organizational behaviour. In other words, my intention was to see *how* they do, rather than *what* they do. In terms of interpersonal relationships, many organizations in various fields often experience similar problems and issues; one can learn different lessons from issues and operations in one organization and apply them to another situation. The following sections will describe the organization where I conducted my studies with a working team of dancers.

Montreal and Show Business

The dance production company, *the Dance X* (pseudonym), where I conducted the field research for about five months, is located in Montreal—one of the biggest cities in Canada with a population of a little over three million. Montreal is one of the most important capitals of performing arts, as well as visual arts, in North America. There are currently about thirty to forty dance production companies, and about ten independent choreographers in this vibrant and cosmopolitan city.

Since all these companies and choreographers compete with each other for public recognition through artistry and choreographies, the standards in this city are very high. By the same token, the members of audiences are often connoisseurs of fine art dance, as well as performing arts in general; their expectations are high.

This sense of competitiveness is always present in this industry. The artistic director once mentioned to me:

> "One of the most difficult aspects in this business is *competition*. There is an oversupply in show business. There are simply too many people in show business. We always have to find a new idea. The standards are so high, and we cannot afford any mistake."

The artistic director has strong aspirations for the company's artistic growth and further public recognition. Since the great show business center, New York City, is also on the East Coast and geographically close (approx. 600km), the image of New York City and the trends in the New York dance scene do influence the Montreal scene as well. The director and the artists themselves are very conscious about events in "The Big Apple" and other major cities. Therefore, the cognitive proximity to the mega 'show-biz' center encourages them to be à la mode.

The Company Background

The Dance X was founded in the early 1970s. The 'actual' name of the company suggests a form of dance, which was developed and became extremely popular in the 1970s. The 1970s was a special period for artistic liberty and effervescence, and this trend penetrated well into the dance world. Despite the fact that *the Dance X*'s strong reputation was built through this particular form of dance, and that the company experienced significant growth in the 70s, *the Dance X*, today, produces completely different types of dance. The artistic liberty of the 70s led to the evolution and development of new forms of dance performances. Thirty years later, the audience is enthusiastic about new and more contemporary forms of dance.

Since its inception, the company had worked with numerous directors and choreographers, but in 1998, the current artistic director, *Patrick*, arrived, and effectively shifted the company into a new phase. Today, the company's ultimate goal is to become the leading contemporary dance company in Canada. Along with the development and changes in the art

milieu's trends, this new director's motivations have been to re-orient *the Dance X* into an even more sophisticated and dynamic company as well as to achieve outstanding artistry as a whole.

Patrick used to be the principal dancer of another major dance company in North America, and he established an internationally recognized position through his brilliant dancing career. His acclaimed position, talent, instinct, as well as ambition, amalgamated well in the process of reorientation of *the Dance X*, and this transformation is one of the most important events in the history of *the Dance X*.

Dance forms such as neo-classical and contemporary require dancers with a strong background in ballet. As in the case of the music world, the dance world also sees that classical training is the most sophisticated and highest form of art. This should not be taken merely as a conservative elitist perspective. Since new forms of arts are derived from classical theories, if an artist has a strong background in the classical form of art, he/she automatically possesses a strong basis in the artistic practices and interpretations. Since classical training is extremely demanding, both technically and theoretically, classically trained dancers are highly versatile. Many dancers and the artistic director expressed the view that classical training simply produces the best and strongest artists. This is the primary reason why *the Dance X*—despite the company's contemporary repertoires—gives morning classes in classical dance. The artistic director commented:

> "The reason why we use classical ballet is because it is the best way to train them for the type of work they do, and (classical) ballet is the essence of the dance. It fits to the kind of work they do. By giving them (classical) ballet classes, their work comes nicely (they can perform nicely). It is like a vocal training for singers, and a routine exercise for instrument players. It is to take care of their instrument—body—and to mentally focus on the self. It has a therapeutic purpose: not only for the body, muscles, and articulations, but also for their mind as well."

Most of *the Dance X*'s dancers have a strong classical dance background; therefore they are highly versatile dancers who can produce persuasive artistic articulations and creative movements by blending classical and contemporary techniques, which has enabled them to capture various audiences worldwide. The company has a strong preference for dancers with a classical

background; thus the company attracts dancers from the top category, which keeps the company's standards very high. Considering that *the Dance X* is a medium to relatively small company, the reputation and potential of the company is excellent in this highly competitive environment.

Getting In

I am very fortunate to have a very good friend who used to work for *the Dance X*'s administration. It has been several years since she left the company; however, she is still acquainted with one of the administrative employees in the company. When I mentioned to my friend my intention of the field research, she introduced me to the initial contact person. From then on, I was introduced to the artistic director, and had a first opportunity to talk to him about my research project. He was very kind to invite me to the company, and allowed me to observe their everyday activities for some months to come.

The company's annual season starts in June. However, the director advised me to come before the season started: they had numerous shows scheduled at the end of the current season, and in between, there were ballet classes and studio rehearsals. Therefore, my very first day in the field was one of those days on which the dancers were taking the classes and practicing in rehearsals for the up-coming shows. That morning, I appeared in the studio a little before the morning ballet class started. I had an impression that the studio was quite large: I was thinking, "this is going to be the studio where I will be observing the dancers for the coming months!" The dancers were stretching their legs, warming up, and getting ready for the class. They set the *barres* surrounding the dancing surface, leaving the center of the room empty. This gives enough space for them, and this is where the ballet master stands. An entire wall of the studio was covered by a large mirror. In the rim area were the dancers' personal belongings, such as bags, water bottles, food, clothes, shoes, towels, walkmans, and portable mats. They wore casual clothes such as T-shirts, sweat shirts, sweat pants, and shorts. Later I found out that as they get warmer in the class, they take off layers of clothes and leg warmers, and eventually they end up

dancing with very light clothes such as shorts, aerobic and gym wear. Some were still sipping coffee and tea from their cups, putting them beside their belongings as they stretched.

The director pulled out a chair for me, placing it in the middle of the rim of the dancing surface: indeed, it was the best location where the director usually sits during rehearsals. I was briefly introduced to the dancers, and they all gave me friendly greetings and smiles. I was nervous about the first day, but when I felt a special energy in the air, my nervousness cleared out. It was an energy, with which I was very familiar. Having grown up in a family of performing artists, I immediately recognized the special energy and spirit of performing artists in the studio. I had a flashback of my own experience in the preparation process for on-stage performances, in daily routines, and in the hectic but special backstage atmosphere. It was a new and exciting environment; at the same time, it was very familiar and comforting.

"Are you a dancer?" "Are you an artist?"—these were the most common questions I was asked on that day. When I explained my music background to them, there was always a sense of relief and excitement in their expressions: "Oh! So you understand what's going on!" "You understand the 'language' then!" "Music and dance are so close, you know!" After that, 'engaging' with the dancers was very easy. As a matter of fact, I was so surprised to see that the daily routines which the dancers went through were, practically speaking, *exactly* the same as what I was going through when I was playing the piano. The difference was that they danced, and I played the piano, and in our mind, it was a minor difference. I will later discuss in detail the nature of the similarities of my experience as a performing artist and theirs as dancers. My music background not only became an icebreaker, but also it was a major asset in, literally, 'understanding what was going on.' I understood the artistic intentions, dialogues, protocols, as well as aesthetic judgments, challenges, problems, and most of all, humors—we spoke the same 'language' (Hodgson 2001, 222-223) as some dancers expressed. At the same time, I understood the nitty-gritty of life as an artist: struggles, physical pain, emotional pain, and discipline to name

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a few. We started to have a lot of deep discussions on the pieces that they were working on, and on the arts in general.

Their questions about my 'anthropological research' came after the discussions of our status as 'performing artists.' They were more than helpful for my data-collection process, and they provided a great deal of time for my interviews. For about five months, I was in the studios everyday, and except for the times when they were touring outside of Montreal, I was following them pretty much wherever they went. I started to socialize with some of them, and even became very good friends. I was accepted as 'part of the family,' and I received many interesting comments from the dancers, director, and the ballet master: "it's strange when you are not in the studio..." "you are an insider..." "you are one of us..." "we feel special energy from you when you are here..." etc. As I have often experienced with other artists, the dancers at *the Dance X* also often use the term 'energy' to express themselves and to talk about arts. The discussion of 'energy' will appear in the later sections.

Technical Elements of the Research

My areas of interest are professional dancers' working styles, work ethics, goals, interpersonal relations, communication, group dynamics, and their sense of collectivity. Because of this, the primary focus of my participant observation was the daily routines occurring in the studios. My observations were thus solely on the interactions among the dancers, choreographers, ballet master and artistic director; the administration side of the company was not observed. I spent most of the day in the studios where they worked, and spent time with dancers during their short breaks, lunchtime, and after work. Interviews were conducted with all 12 dancers, 3 of the choreographers, the ballet master, the artistic director, as well as with some of the administration employees.

My typical day started in the studio where the dancers were having the morning classes. I showed up in the studio before the class started, so I would already catch the atmosphere of the

day, socializing with some of the dancers while they were stretching and warming up. Some dancers brought music CDs with them and often played the CDs before the class started. They would talk about the music, sing along, or simply listen and 'feel' the music. Very often, the 'morning music' was the mood-setter for the harsh day in the hot and steamy studio. Even though the windows were open, the studio is large, and there are only two small fans; therefore, the heat was sometimes unbearable. A dancer told me, "The heat is actually very good for the muscles. You notice the difference when you dance. They are much more relaxed." No matter how beneficial it was to the muscles, still almost everybody was complaining about the heat and humidity in the studio, constantly wiping off the dripping sweat from their faces and bodies.

The class lasts about one hour and 15 minutes. It starts with the *barre*-exercises. The ballet master leads the class, and he gives instructions for the movements. The dancers catch the signals of the ballet master, and know what movements are coming next. A pianist plays music pieces for the class. Good pianists catch the ballet master's signals and play suitable pieces for the assigned tempo, steps, and movements. After the class, there is a short break before the morning rehearsal starts. Following the rehearsal, it is lunchtime. The daily schedules—the dancers' names, the name of the piece, rehearsal director, time and studio—are posted on the board in the corridor. During the break, the dancers check their schedules, and move to the designated studios along with their personal belongings. During the breaks between classes, workshops, and rehearsals, the dancers socialize with each other, by drinking and eating together, or sharing personal issues, having casual conversations, discussions, and joking together. Some dancers spend lunchtime alone, reading a book or sleeping on a couch in the lounge. After lunch, there are usually creation workshops and rehearsals. The discussions on creation and rehearsals will be made in the later sections. Occasionally, some dancers have free time in between rehearsals, simply because there is a free time slot due to their casting arrangements. In these cases, very often these dancers will go to a studio to watch their colleagues practicing or creating, thereby informing themselves of the general activities in the production as well as learning by

watching others, even getting inspired by some choreographic works. On average, they work about 7 hours a day, 5 days a week. Of course, when they are on tour or when they have shows, the schedules change.

I was observing them everyday in the studios as long as they worked, and taking notes on their daily activities. My notebooks were often the source of jokes for them or the point to tease me: they made comments such as, "I cannot believe how much you take notes everyday!" "What are you writing?" "Do you really have *so much* to write?" "You don't ever get bored?! Sometimes *I* get bored, you know. It's amazing you keep writing..." and they also imitated me taking notes. I was very careful not to make the interviews too structured. Since our 'initial engagement' was so natural and smooth, it often took the format of a casual conversation and discussion. I had specific questions in my mind, and would ask them as the conversation developed. I was taking 'notes on notes' as the interviews proceeded, and wrote complete notes after an interview came to an end. Since the interviews were not structured, the conversations often took interesting turns, and they guided me through the processes. In order to protect their privacy, I did not use any photo or video equipment during my field research. My objective was to make our relationship and conversations as natural and friendly as possible; therefore, no recording device was used. When I was socializing with them on weekends and other private settings, I was seeing them as friends. Although I could not turn off my ethnographic 'eye' and 'ear,' I did not take any notes on these occasions.

The Organizational Structure and Members

The Dance X consists of two divisions of operations: administration and production. The head of the company is the general manager, and she coordinates both the administrative and production operations. There are a few administrative employees working under the general manager, being in charge of public relations, communications and other administrative responsibilities. The head of production is the artistic director, *Patrick*, and 12 dancers—6

women and 6 men—are working under his supervision. 4 out of 12 dancers are from outside of Canada. The stage lighting and logistics are handled by the technical director, who coordinates the work with the choreographers and the artistic director. The artistic director's main role is to coordinate all aspects of production, select repertoires, conceptualize productions, direct rehearsals, monitor the dancers' technical/artistic standards, and fulfill administrative duties and social obligations for the growth and further recognition of *the Dance X*. Since *Patrick* has an incredibly busy schedule, in many aspects, he has to depend on the ballet master, *Sébastien*. The ballet master gives the daily morning class, and performs other important functions such as directing rehearsals, coaching the dancers on artistic and technical aspects, and also giving emotional and psychological support to the dancers. *Sébastien*'s classes are known to be very demanding, and his charismatic quality empowers these dancers who constantly face various challenges. His magnetic characteristic also encourages the cohesiveness of the group. *Isabelle* once stated:

> "*Sébastien* is incredible! Such a special character! He has power to put and mould everything together. He centers everything, equilibrates everything. He gives so much love by helping us."

Claudio made similar comment with slight differences:

> "I feel that he is charismatic, and he has a great element: a bit of craziness, and a good balance with *Patrick* (the artistic director). *Sébastien* is a good facilitator and a communicator between the company and the dancers."

Many dancers mentioned to me that *Sébastien* is the father figure to them in the company. It is interesting to note that the 'ballet master' is seen as the father figure; he supports and takes care of the dancers, a role which is theoretically the responsibility of the director. Since *Patrick* has so little time, the ballet master has a hands-on presence with the dancers on *Patrick*'s behalf.

Currently *the Dance X* has been working with a resident choreographer, *Melanie*, whose artistic gift is highly appreciated and recognized. Even though the company's repertoires are also chosen from other choreographers' works, *Melanie*'s creations are considered to be the 'main dish' of *the Dance X*'s shows. Her impressive dancing and choreographic career is

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internationally acknowledged, and her contributions led to the dramatic growth and transformation of the company during the last few years.

Recently, one of the dancers was appointed *the Dance X*'s apprentice choreographer. While performing as a dancer in the company, he has also been given an opportunity to produce pieces for the company. His creations will add another dimension to *the Dance X*'s repertoires. Since it is one of the important missions of the artistic director to combine various styles of dance techniques and artistic forms, *Patrick* seems one step closer to the ideal environment where artists freely express themselves, by cultivating young talents both in choreography and dance.

The members of the organization are relatively young: their age varies from the early 20s to 40s. The dancers' age-variance is even smaller. Since a dance career is very short, it is natural to find a concentrated age group. *The Dance X*'s dancers are from richly diverse technical, professional and cultural backgrounds. During my field research, one of the male dancers left the company, and a new dancer joined soon after. Observing this new dancer in the process of adjustment, adaptation and growth among the troupe was also a very interesting experience.

Atmosphere of the Dance X

At *the Dance X*, unlike many other dance companies, diversities in body types, racial backgrounds and artistic styles are encouraged and individual quality is highly valued. Where physical characteristics are concerned, these dancers come in all kinds of sizes and shapes, and there is no 'ideal' body type *per se*. In terms of 'interpretations' of works, the dancers are encouraged to interpret choreographies in their own terms and to express them in their own style. *Patrick*, therefore, looks for unique artistic characteristics in individuals, and their personalities are often displayed through their dance. Accordingly, the atmosphere of the company is very open. Since many dancers have worked for various companies, they also make comparisons between *the Dance X* and other companies; they believe that this company is much less bureaucratic than anything they experienced before.

There is very little hierarchy attached to casting in *the Dance X*, a rare situation for a dance company. Normally, hierarchy stands in direct relation to the roles the dancers get. However, there are no ranks assigned to the dancers in this company, such as the principal dancers, first soloists, demi-soloists, corps de ballet etc. *Patrick* himself mentioned that there is no hierarchy in this company, although there are skill differences: "some dancers are better in some aspects than others." In addition, the repertoires of *the Dance X* often do not have 'obvious' principal roles, and even when there are some main roles, these are rotated among the dancers by making the second and third sets of castings, so that all dancers have the opportunity to dance a variety of roles.

Although the artistic director has the final say to almost every aspect of the production, he shows special respect towards the dancers who have been working for this company longer than he has. It seems that *Patrick* consults these senior dancers on some company issues, and his relationships with them appear a lot closer than with other newer dancers.

The above issues such as the open atmosphere, flat hierarchy, and the relationships with the director will be discussed in detail in later sections.

An Intersection of Dancers

As I continued my field research at *the Dance X*, my study started to take very interesting twists and turns. Although I initially approached this company with the intention of observing a team with a finite boundary, or something that I can treat as a unit, this boundary was not a stand-alone entity unlike my original assumption. Contrasting with many other potential fields where researchers are placed in a large context of the 'field' and select a few key informants within the large 'field,' my case was almost completely opposite: I started with a micro group, and the micro field has led me to discover the macro context later. I began my field research with key informants, and through interactions with my informants, they guided me through their life. My fieldwork was literally a 'journey.' Their world is amazingly rich in social networks, and it is

'transnational' (Wulff 2000, 159), 'transcultural,' and 'trans-paradigmatic.' As Helena Wulff suggests, her 'field'—ballet dancers' community—is "demarcated by ballet centers of different kinds and peripheries, by the dancers' professional and personal networks, and by how dancers and other ballet people move between these localities that are consequently connected" (2000, 148).

What I did not anticipate when I initially 'entered' the field was my own position in the field. In a way, I did not expect that my field research would be self-reflexive to such an extensive degree. This process involved the reconfirmation of my own identity as a performing artist, and the realization of an epistemological problem concerning my fixation about the 'field' in the sense of a limited boundary of the company by compartmentalizing this particular group of people I encountered in the field. Thus my field experience took place through the realization of multiple layers of collectivity. The fact that I was trained and performed as a professional pianist became not only a facilitating factor for non-verbal and verbal communications between my informants and myself, in and beyond the artistic paradigm, but also it proved to be an acknowledgement of our 'common identity' as performing artists. There was something instinctive about this issue. We sensed a form of connection and intimacy between us. We shared a similar set of ideals, and we believed in dedicating to these ideals. As will be elaborated in the next chapter, I was included in one of the collective layers on which their "cultural consciousness" (Amit 2002, 6) rested. At one level, the members of the team have collectivity as members of *the Dance X*, and at another level, they are part of the dancers' community in a large 'transnational' context (Wulff 1997; 1998; 2000), and at yet another even more general level, they are part of the category of 'performing artists.'

If I would have compartmentalized my 'field' in the rigid frame of a working organization, I would have diminished the representation of my informants' world. I realized that what I was observing was not just artists who worked in the studios of *the Dance X*, but an aspect of the fine art dancers' community, and even the world of performing artists at large. The rich

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social networks and their dependence on the dancers' as well as artists' community are prominent in their quotidian experiences. As I followed my informants, I was introduced to a much larger context of the dancers' community: they had their personal projects outside the frame of *the Dance X*'s operations, such as plans for *concours*, shows, auditions, as well as teaching at dance schools, choreographic collaborations, and physiotherapeutic studies to name a few. The dancers' discourses were not enclosed in the micro level at *the Dance X*, but the company was rather viewed as a form of collectivity where my informants encountered and worked together at a particular time and place—a sort of *intersection*. Here, I do not mean to say that these dancers hold different responsibilities according to various situations e.g. a dancer, a father, a choreographer, a teacher, a philosopher, and a lover. What I would like to emphasize here is, literally, the mobility and the multi-local nature (Amit 2000, 12, 13, 15) of the dancers' community itself (Wulff 2000, 159).

At the same time, these dancers' careers are far beyond the idea of 'jobs': their life and careers are so closely intertwined that their private networks are often the resources for future projects and events, as well as the source of encouragement and inspiration. Unlike many other people whose jobs and careers are the *means* to an end, e.g. financial and social rewards, etc., dancers' careers are 'an end' in itself. In this regard, dancers have much more mobility, freedom, and even the sense of 'empowerment' and 'personal achievement' than the *so-called* regular employees of corporations and institutions who often passively participate in the economic activities as the *means* to an end, and feel *alienated*. The vocations of dancers are, by no means, an easy path; however, it seems to me that they are much more 'empowered' and 'inspired' people than some of those in the corporate world (cf. Diller 1980).

My purpose of the study, thus, shifted from the simple observation of the socio-cultural dynamics of an art production group as a working team within a specific company to a much larger context of the dancers' world, reality and vocational life. My research observation and analyses still include issues of teamwork, group dynamics, and interpersonal relationships to a

large extent; however, these issues can only be elucidated within the context of their life and reality. My informants communicated to me the similarities of dance companies and the fine art dance culture worldwide, even though the working conditions and power structure alike vary from company to company and also according to the cultural context; dancers basically expect and are expected to have similar artistic paradigm and follow comparable practices. Their transnational mobility and rich social networks further encourage these similarities. Since *the Dance X*'s dancers' reality and working lives transcend the boundary of the company, I am accordingly encouraged to see *their* version of reality, which often reminds me that the micro-setting, *the Dance X*, is an intersection within the large context of the dancers' community. Thus, it is important to recognize that the issues and practices of the micro field, *the Dance X*, should not be seen as company-specific, but rather ubiquitous in other dance companies as well as work organizations.

Another notable concern here regarding studies of organizations and organizational culture is that both macro and micro-levels of analyses must be undertaken in order to deal with various organizational issues (Alvesson 2002, 151,152,154,155). Alvesson suggests that organizational culture is the shared experience and interpretation of events, ideas, and values in a coherent social reality (Alvesson 1993, 2). Not only the organization, in this case, *the Dance X*, should be analyzed at the micro-level, but also the macro-level analyses, such as the social dynamics of the dancers' subculture or the local cultural attributes must be addressed. It is a safe assumption that the objectives, operations, practices, even symbols and values are comparatively similar particularly when dealing with dance production companies, as suggested by some scholars and dancers themselves. As mentioned above, my primary focus is *how* they do, *why* they do, and *who* they are, rather than *what* they do: the portions of "*what* they do" will be explicated automatically when I discuss and analyze the manners of certain practices and the ways certain reactions occur. Organizational studies should not primarily focus on the 'structure' of the organization, but on the 'cultural context' of the organization (Alvesson 2002, 5). And

when we deal with the 'cultural context' of the organization, the members of the organization inevitably become an important part of the studies as well. This is because the members and their interactions bring the 'texture' to the organization, and the organizational culture at large. In the particularly fluid, transnational, and mobile dance culture, the position of an organization such as *the Dance X* is nothing more than an 'intersection,' and it is subordinated to the larger context of the dance culture, the reality and life of dancers, and ultimately—*who* they are. When the reality and identities of people are so distinctive in their characteristics, as a result, their priorities, goals, aspirations, and philosophy, etc. will be distinctive as well (Clarkson 1989, 10). Accordingly, their behaviour and reactions to certain events/issues will also be unique. Alvesson and Hamada and Sibley argue that studying contradictory and subjective experiences (Hamada and Sibley 1994, 6-7) is one of the important parts of understanding human motivations and behaviours within an organization (Alvesson 1993, 6-7). Therefore, my research is a study of organizational culture; however it emphasizes the first half of the ingredients that constitute the organization— the organizational texture: *who* they are, *how* they do and *why* they do. The next chapter is devoted to the description of identities and boundaries of dancers and performing artists.

Chapter 3: WORLD OF PERFORMING ARTISTS

In the early stage of my field research at a dance company, I experienced a fascinating development of my own position among the dancers, choreographers, and the ballet master. It was a reciprocal process between 'them' and myself. It did not take a long time for them to see me as part of 'them' despite the fact that I was not a dancer. This made me realize that their sense of identity as dancers was not merely due to the fact that they danced, but rather that there was a sense of collectivity (*esprit de corps*) and something that connected 'us' together. I was trained and performed as a professional pianist, and certainly my experience and knowledge in the performing arts world became a great asset during the field research.

In regards to my position as a part of 'them,' I came to understand many interesting factors that shaped their boundaries, which also led me to reconfirm my own self-identity, as well as to our mutual negotiations of boundaries. I had opportunities for discussion with numerous dancers from various countries and backgrounds, some of them working for the same company, as well as some from different companies. Despite the diverse backgrounds, including my own, these dancers seemed to genuinely share something in common such as training process, professional background, and life-style.

In the following paragraphs, I will present a general discussion of identity and boundary construction, as well as their maintenance, for fine art dancers and performing artists at large. At the end of the chapter, I demonstrate the common ground between the dancers' boundaries and my own. My emphasis in this chapter is how dancers and artists perceive themselves and live in their world. In order to have a true voice, I made an effort to consult literatures from various fields, written by dance scholars, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, and musicologists. In addition to the use of those varied literatures, the insights from my own field experience and practice in the art world are interwoven in the process of analysis since my encounter with the

dancers triggered opportunities for deconstructing the boundaries and identities of dancers and performing artists at large.

General Discussions on Identities and Boundaries

You Are What You Know

How do people construct their identities? In regards to the construction of the self, Laird Stevens mentions the following notion of the human mind:

> "The human mind is like a videotape recorder; it may play back what has been perceived. It is like a computer; it may store data for subsequent recall. There is first the experience, and then there is the memory of it. Experiences and memories have a one-to-one relationship" (1994, 186).

The trajectory of a person shapes the person's perceptions, behaviour, beliefs, disbeliefs, and ultimately, *Being*. Steven's view has remnants of John Locke's concept of *tabula rasa*, that every human being is born with a blank slate: what makes a person is what the person experiences, i.e. 'you are what you know.' A baby who tastes strawberries will potentially have numerous experiences: the strawberries may taste sweet or sour to the baby, or the baby may have some allergic reactions to the berries. Thus, Stevens's argument can be reduced to the fundamental relation between the Self and knowledge. According to this view, the knowledge will then be processed and categorized in one's mind, and the Being is shaped only after the person can formulate thoughts and act accordingly.

Immanuel Kant, on the other hand, takes a slightly different approach. He believes that empirical data will shape our cognitive power, but insists that our mind is already capable of constituting a causal relation of matters. Therefore, the human mind does not start with a blank slate, but rather it is equipped with an *a priori* mental capacity, which enables us to constitute and

understand events in the form of experiences (Kant 1996, B1-B3, 43-45). Regarding a human's experience, Theodor W. Adorno who gave numerous lectures on Kantian doctrine, argues that:

> "We are assuming that the reality that is the object of our knowledge is identical with our knowledge, and that, in the final analysis, it is fully coextensive with it. This means that we would have begged the question, presupposing in advance a solution to the problem of knowledge, assuming that reality is identical with us" (2001, 83).

According to Kant's argument, there is reality beyond our comprehension, even in the process of constructing our identity.

As symbolic and interpretive anthropological theories in the twentieth century suggested, cultural phenomena are mental phenomena, and what happens in one's mind is what really matters. Whether or not reality really exists beyond us, or each one of us lives with an individual reality, the construction of the identity seems to be in a direct relation with our lived experience, reality, and intuition. In addition, our identity is not a static entity. Our lived experience is accumulated, influenced, and reinforced every second, thereby shaping our reality. Even our orientation towards the metaphysical senses can change. By stating that, I would like to embrace our constant but sometimes unconscious contradictions in human actions.

Where You Belong

Anthony P. Cohen argues that the concept of boundary can be interpreted as the nature of community, which simultaneously separates it from other putative groups, and whose members have shared commonalities that are the core elements of the same community (Cohen 1985, 12). People with similar experience will not make identical individuals, however, it is a pretty safe presumption that a group with a similar experience is likely to develop a typical Durkheimian sense of collective consciousness. I do not wish to tie the concept of social boundaries to geographical territories; rather, I intend to argue that boundaries are also a mental construct, which can be influenced by geographical, ideological and other classifications. By studying different social groups, Fredrik Barth suggests that boundary is not necessarily linked to the

territorial division on the ground, but is a conceptual construct (2000, 19). He shows an example of a group of Persian nomads, and claims that their social boundary is conceptualized through their living experience as they move according to their migration patterns (2000, 19). According to Barth, therefore, the notion of boundary of a particular group will be realized only if one experiences the mind frame of the members within the group, by living through their "local circumstances, and especially to the particular patterns of social relations, to provide the framework for our insights" (2000, 27).

Moreover, boundaries change according to a situation, depending on the process of 'discrimination' which is applicable at the moment. It could also be said that one is aware of his/her notions of boundaries especially when there is a contact with 'otherness' or those who are not encompassed within the same community. Here again, the lived experience is the important ground of a particular group of people; however, it is not only the simple collection of individuals, but also the 'shared' experience/knowledge among the same people which reinforces and challenges the sense of collectivity as well as the essence of the existing community. As in the case of identity, a community is not a static entity: through interactions among people, the quality and energy of the group can transform into a new form.

Negotiation between Identity and Boundary

As shown in the above section, both identity and boundary are cognitive phenomena, and they are interrelated. There is no need to separate these two phenomena; however, it seems that there have been constant negotiations between one's identity and boundary. Since human beings are social animals, interactions among them will shape and reshape the ideology, beliefs, and values of the group where they belong. To be extreme, a person who does not have, or never had in the past, any contact with other human beings or animals is likely to live without the concept of 'identity', simply because there is no need to construct one in this type of situation. Jonathan Rutherford argues, "Identification, if it is to be productive, can never be with some static and

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unchanging object. It is an interchange between self and structure, a transforming process"
(1990, 14). In addition, Jeffrey Weeks argues, "Identity is about belonging, about what you have
in common with some people and what differentiates you from others" (1990, 88). From this
perspective, one can say that our identity can exist only because other identities and boundaries
are present in the given environment. It is a process of negotiation between identity and
boundary. *Do I belong here? Where do I belong?* Questions like these occupy our mind
frequently, and we attempt to assure or search for our place. Ultimately, we are social animals,
not because we are 'sociable,' but because we need to 'socialize' in order to exist and to be a
Being—an individual with identity. In order to hold a separate identity, one concurrently needs
the sense of 'togetherness.'

Cohen indicates the importance of the symbolic aspect of boundary, and argues that
individuals within a given group do not share symbols in an identical manner; rather, varied
meanings of the symbols, which are bestowed by each individual's experience, are kept under
control through manipulation of its symbols so as to maintain the consciousness and the integrity
of the community (Cohen 1985, 15). Similarly, but with a structuralist twist, by using an example
of religion as the basic framework of intelligence, Durkheim shows how shared symbols make
collective realities, and how certain practices uphold the group consciousness and cohesiveness
(1985, 118). Cohen's doctrine is not structuralist but it rather emphasizes the interactions and
experience among the members. Despite the differences in views, both doctrines suggest that
members of a community are exposed to the symbols, and acquire the means of interpretation of
symbols, such as language, rules of conduct, value and belief systems in order to interact and
build social relationships with each other. The members of the community are, then, capable of
(re)confirming, retaining, reforming, and reproducing the collective consciousness within the
given group. Cultural integrity is, thus, highly dependent on the repositories of meaning for its
member, and not on the superficial mechanical linkages of members and categories (Cohen 1985,
98). Therefore, boundary is a cognitive and symbolic construct, where the members make it a

referent of their identity, and "should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of [visible] fact" (Cohen 1985, 98, 110, 118).

Experience, Knowledge, and Symbolic Boundaries

In the above section, I argued that the construction of boundary is conceptualized by the lived experience and the constructed reality of the members of the given community. In order for a community to exist as a social system, there must be shared symbols, principles, and value system among the members. In the process of conceptualizing boundary, the demarcation of "us" and "them" becomes even more palpable. Interdependence and inseparability between boundaries and identities are also important in the above discussion. Therefore, experiencing the social patterns and relations within the given group ultimately signifies the process of understanding *how the world functions* and *what reality is*. As I noted above, the cognitive process of *reality* can be defined in millions of different ways; however, specific symbols are shared and embraced among individuals within the community. Accordingly, interactions especially in regards to the knowledge- and symbol-sharing among members are highly relevant in boundary constructions.

Active Experience

Erving Goffman takes a dramaturgical approach to analysis of people's behaviour, interactions, and construction of the self (1959). He supports the idea that individuals become social actors by experiencing performances through assuming roles (Goffman 1959). In order to perform social roles, one should learn the rules and know-how of the particular culture/situation. Goffman believes that the same person will behave differently according to various situations (1959); therefore, the learning process includes acquiring attributes, symbols, values etc. as well

as realizing the relations between particular types of personae, behavioural codes, and situations. Instead of imagining that individuals are just passive recipients of symbols in the course of their life, Goffman rather treats individuals as active agents, who give, receive, and exchange symbols as well as signals in order to present themselves to others, and to negotiate their positions in a variety of situations (1959). "The impression of reality fostered by a performance is a delicate, fragile thing that can be shattered by very minor mishaps" (Goffman 1959, 56). Therefore, according to Goffman, the 'experience' of individuals consists of constant role-playing in performer-audience positions, while gaining proficiency in the 'game' of social acting: i.e. learning expectation of the others, definition of symbols and signals, as well as value system and rituals in order to deliver adequate messages and images to the observers according to various circumstances (1959, 35).

In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman refers to people's 'experience' in an even more microscopic fashion (1974). Individuals' reality is constituted through ritualistic activities: individuals develop the self according to social frameworks in which they experience symbolic interactions on the basis of corresponding cultural elements (Goffman 1974, 33). When participant roles in the same event are varied, different perspectives will be derived from the same event, thus 'experiences' of the participants will be related but different (Goffman 1974, 8-9). This is to say that 'experience' depends on the participant's role and position in the given frame of interpretation, and the emphasis of analysis is on the point of contact among the participants. In other words, the importance of discussion is on the shared collective consciousness (i.e. frame of interpretation) of the participants, although the roles and positions may vary, and not on the dissimilarity of individuals' psyche and characters.

From Goffman's discussion of active experience, we can confirm that exchange of symbols and signals is an important element of social interactions. At the same time, those interactions can exist only when there is a shared frame of interpretation such as values, principles, and a coherent set of rituals. I believe that when the frame of interpretation becomes

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apparent among the participants, the boundary of the group is established. Therefore, active experience of individuals is also highly dependent on the given boundary. Through active experience within the community, individuals acknowledge the frame of interpretation, thus this process involves transmission, digestion, reformation and reconfirmation of given knowledge and symbols within the group.

Knowledge Transmission

To take an extreme case, Ernest Gellner argues that transmission of knowledge and skills through a standardized educational system shapes citizens' ability to function in industrialized societies, and ultimately supports the existence of the nation-state as a community (Gellner 1983, 35-38). This theory explains that the relative homogenization of transmitted knowledge through the educational system produces citizens with more or less similar values. This naturally includes accepting their positions within society, learning to respect authority, and valuing the concept of diligence.

This argument can be related to some of the above discussions: Goffman's theory of individuals' experience of behaving as active agents in a given frame; Kantian arguments of individuals as more passive recipients of experience from a larger structure; and Cohen's argument regarding the negotiations between individuals and boundaries. Goffman assumes that individuals are rather active instigators of events (1959). However, Gellner brings an overtone of institutionalized citizenship in his discussion of boundary (1983). As I discussed above, boundary is not a static entity, but fluid and elastic at the same time. Considering that individuals also change in time, and that the same individuals can act differently in different situations, I believe that the positions of individuals within a community as well as structure are neither totally passive nor active. As Cohen suggested, along with the organized and manipulated knowledge that we give and receive through our 'experience' in daily life, the continuous negotiation between individuals and boundary occurs. We are passive and active beings at the same time,

and we can be givers and receivers, performers and observers concurrently. In addition, knowledge does not only flow in one direction as in the above example of Gellner where states control the institutionalized knowledge and the centralized structure perpetuates. Knowledge can vary according to time, place, class, and gender; moreover, the power and authority that are attached to a particular piece of knowledge can influence the status and use of this knowledge within a social group. Therefore, in the process where individuals form identities, the same individuals go through similar trainings, and understand the given environment, yet at the same time, each individual is an active agent in analyzing, modifying, and inventing the knowledge to be transmitted.

Pierre Bourdieu argues that taste, e.g. sense of beauty, is highly related to the cultural knowledge which an individual possesses; furthermore, this type of knowledge is linked to the class to which the individual belongs (1984, 1). Just like economic capital is distributed among stratified classes, knowledge is also distributed according to classes. "A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded" (Bourdieu 1984, 2). Taste is acquired through experiencing a certain type of culture and cultural artifacts, and the acquisition of a certain culture is a necessary process to live in, talk to or with and behave among a particular class: in other words, those who do not possess the same 'code' are excluded from the social group and the code remains the means to reproduce and maintain the boundary (Bourdieu 1984, 3-4). This is exactly like learning a language to communicate with others within the community. As indicated in Goffman's theory of social interactions in terms of dramaturgical approach, any piece of artistic work has its potential audience, and it is understood and appreciated among the members of the designated frame, i.e. class. Artistic symbols, knowledge, and even aesthetic sense can be 'stratified' according to social classes. This implies that knowledge of artistic sense also includes learned values and symbols, which are shared within the community of artists as well as those who appreciate the works.

Dancers, Performing Artists, and the Dance Culture

The above discussions demonstrated that transmitting knowledge, symbols, and values are highly dependent on the common experience and interactions among the members. As I mentioned earlier, boundaries are elastic and fluid, therefore interpretations of symbols and values as well as knowledge can change over a time period. Now, I would like to discuss how knowledge is transmitted, and experiences are formed in the dance world.

When I was conducting the field research at the dance company, I was accepted as part of them. As we communicated, shared the space, and lived through the moment of performance, we began to understand tacitly that we are the 'same kind.' I encountered so many private accounts, or ethnographical works on dancers and the dance world, that the more I read about dancers and performing artists, I could not help but noticing some common thread in our Being. I believe that those shared elements of performing artists' boundary and identity formation are what connected us. This realization was the key to finding out why and how they included me in their community. Since I was trained and also performed as a professional pianist, my experience and knowledge were accidentally very close to theirs. Interestingly, the fact that I didn't dance was really a minor detail to them, and they saw me as part of them. Their boundaries are set upon certain criteria and I happened to share these criteria as well. In the following sections, these criteria are deconstructed and analyzed.

The Learning Process

Susan A. Lee who studied the adult development of professional dancers argues that the major part of young future-dancers' lives involves the process of identity formation and the acquisition of a value system, coping skills, as well as a code of conduct and artistic principles (1997). Going through numerous auditions, those who survive the gate-keeping mechanisms are able to shape themselves into professional dancers (Lee 1997, 229-230). Young dancers'

construction of the Self is accompanied by the training of technical skills, and these various types of knowledge are effectively passed on to future generations in an intimate learning environment (Lee 1997, 229). In addition, Sharon E. Friedler and Susan B. Glazer argue that mentoring relationships between teachers and students are far more complex and intimate in the dance world than in other fields: the process of training and mentoring not only includes teaching the technical skills and knowledge, but also involves showing the *reality of the dance world* to the students, which includes the philosophy of what it is to be a performing artist (Friedler and Glazer 1997,1-2, 21). Their discussions imply the intensity of relationships between teachers and students, and its comparability to parent-child relationships also suggests that dancers grow up in a distinct environment with its own set of values.

Anna Halprin has been active in the professional dance world for five decades, as a performer, creator, teacher and dance therapist. She believes that creating a friendly and sympathetic atmosphere is one of the key issues for children to experience the dance (Halprin 1995, 25). Halprin also addresses the importance of children's development not only in the technical sense but also in the sense of acquiring a kinesthetic awareness of movement: they should be aware not only of "what" they are doing but "why" they are doing a certain movement (1995, 29). Arguably, the technical skills of young dancers should be accompanied by the understanding of aesthetic senses and artistic expressions. This is a 'learning process' not a 'training process.' Halprin believes that if kinesthetic awareness is encouraged, students' experience will be pleasurable, and in this way, the students will not just be absorbing rules without understanding them (1995, 29). She also supports teaching techniques that allow students to develop their own kinesthetic movements that 'feel right' to them, and once this sense is achieved, that is the moment when things start to make sense in the students' dancing reality (Halprin 1995, 29). Just like every human being goes through the process of learning a language, it is a learning process of the 'language of art.' Every performing artist is exposed to a certain set of values and learns to use the special language to express him/herself. As indicated in

Goffman's theory, through active participation in the learning process, a young dancer will feel, understand, and experience the symbols of the dance world and dancing reality. The techniques and approaches of dance teaching can be adjusted according to the needs of individuals; therefore, the learning process is not a one-way approach, but it actively involves both parties: students and teachers.

Clara Khudaverdian studied the concept of "the Dancing Body" and the ballet culture. Her main argument is that the use of the body in the dance world is so unique that it becomes central to the identity formation of dancers as well as of the dance world (Khudaverdian 1998, 42, 45). She argues that many dancers face harsh reality very early in their careers, and the experience will shape their perception and expectation of their careers (Khudaverdian 1998, 51). As Lee mentions, auditions are one of the important elements in their learning process. Khudaverdian treats the process of auditions as the ritualistic steps for young dancers in forming their identities (1998, 51). Auditions and summer schools impose a strict measurement on young dancers' physical abilities, mental strength, discipline, personality, appearance, and artistic talent. Both parents and children will be exposed to the judgment criteria, and they will soon learn if there is any potential for a career as a professional dancer (Khudaverdian 1998, 52). In my earlier discussions of identity formation, boundaries, and experience, I did not include the cases where only 'selected individuals' are 'allowed' to remain within the given community, whether it is based on individuals' capacities or on natural characteristics. The elite dance world holds such a rigorous set of values, that not everybody who intends to enter the community is invited into this exclusive world. This shows how closed the community is, and how distinct the boundary's nature becomes.

Mind-Body Dichotomy & The Conceptualization of Body

In the past, many scholars have treated mind and body as separate entities. Khudaverdian argues, "The body today is a symbol of the self, of one's identity and is highly political" (1998,

25). I believe that the body is neither merely capable of expressing one's idea and identity as the mind dictates, nor is it totally socially constructed, but the body can also teach and direct us to a new reality and experiences: mind and body are indivisible phenomena of the Self. If the Self is socially constructed, so are mind and body as part of the Self. A mindless body will never be the complete Self, and mind and body are interdependent. Cynthia J. Novack who studied contact improvisation as a cultural system also denies the mind-body division, and argues that the division becomes problematic especially in the culture where the degree of interdependence between the two forces, mind and body, is high (1990, 4-6). She states that many cultural observers and researchers "scarcely notice the body, seldom comment on movement, and thus often miss the role or significance of either in human events," and if they do pay attention to the body, they would try to see the cognitive component of movement systems: *what is the thinking behind this move?* (Novack 1990, 7). The dichotomization of mind and body treats human experience in two different components, thus ignores the *essence* of the pure human experience.

Khudaverdian argues that the dancing body is both socially conceptualized and experienced (1998, 21, 101). Michel Foucault argues that bodies are objectified, and humans tried to control bodies as objects throughout history: bodies are manipulated, shaped, trained and they became responsive and skillful in expressing power (1977, 136, 137). He demonstrates the domination-submission relationship in the forms of discipline, slavery, and law enforcement (Foucault 1977, 137, 138). Here, he displays the political implications of the use of the body; this notion of the body can also be interpreted as a social construct as Khudaverdian argues.

Khudaverdian believes that dancers maintain their cultural tradition and identity, because of the unique practices and discourses of the body (1998, 28, 100). Dancers experience their bodies at the physical as well as visceral levels, and the visual image of the dancing body is constantly present in their experience (Khudaverdian 1998, 101; Wulff 1998, 103). Through the learning experience from early on, young students internalize the special use of the body, as well as the concept of the dancing body and what is to be expected from their bodies.

Philosophy of Dance

Some fascinating accounts from the dancers' point of view can be found in the ethnographical and autobiographical works of dancers. During her teaching career, Anna Halprin created a diagram of how dancers should experience 'dance,' which was originally created as a tool to communicate the 'philosophy of dance' to dancers (1995, 17). For her, dance should be an opportunity for them to "explore the theme and find out what's real for them" (Halprin 1995, 14). This diagram indicates the four interrelated areas of dancing experiences: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual: these experiences are enhanced by, a) the inner force of deepened life experience, and b) the outer force of expanded artistic expression (Halprin 1995, 15). The combination of the two forces will create a special energy to enrich the interrelated four elements of dancers' experience. 1) The physical element refers to the kinesiological and structural movement; 2) emotional element refers to feelings and sensation; 3) mental element refers to artistic and aesthetic expressions; and 4) spiritual element refers to the ultimate pleasure of dance, meditated state, inspiration, excitement of living, grace, and the ecstatic mind state (Halprin 1995, 15). Many dancers and choreographers in my fieldwork express the view that their dancing career is experienced by their whole Self, and the four categorizations are made artificially for the sake of analyses and discussions. What is most notable here in Halprin's diagram is that the fourth element—the spiritual gratification—is the most precious and the utmost element of the dancing experience, which can be attained only if the three other elements—physical, emotional and mental—are realized (Halprin 1995, 15). Similar views are shared widely among dancers and other performing artists. Halprin's theory of 'philosophy of dance' suggests that dancers' experience in performance consists of all these unified elements, and the dancers' goal may develop into the realization of the ultimate spiritual gratification. Their quest for spiritual gratification was often expressed in terms such as 'feeling energy,' 'being high,' 'electrifying,' 'feeling close to God,' and 'finding a spiritual path,' etc.

A beautiful account by Pauline Koner in *Elements of Performance* gives a general guideline for dancers on aspects such as the art of performing, the dance world as well as the philosophy of performance (1993). She mentions that "a performance should never be an ego trip," and that her primary interest is to transcend the mechanics and to find the spirit of the movement (Koner 1993, 2). According to her, once a dancer discovers why he/she is dancing, the dancer will work and perform differently, since the concept comes from within (Koner 1993, 2). Koner explains:

> As the elements of the art and the craft are learned and absorbed, they become part of your being. Although each element is taken separately and absorbed mentally, you must remember that they are part of a unified whole. That mental understanding must be transformed into a kinesthetic feel, an emotional and body reflex that transcends thought. You are illumined within. When that happens, a performance becomes a revelation both for the performer on the stage and the viewer in the audience (1993, 2).

Her dance philosophy is based on this spiritual realization, as many dancers and performing artists also claim.

Sentient Body as Identity

Musicians play instruments to express themselves. However, it is often ignored that most musicians do not treat the instrument as *an object*. Musicians treat the instrument as a *subject*: the instruments and musicians unite, and together they express and talk the melodious language of music. The same can be applied to dancers and their bodies. The body is not only an instrument to communicate and express, but also an initiator and author of a certain experience and consciousness, just like the act of music performance. Novack claims that the translations of movement into cognitive classification can be insightful and illuminating; however, the translations may subsume the reality of the body (1990, 7). The essence of the experience through movements and expressions has its own consciousness and state of mind. It is the mutual communication process between the instrument and the performer, e.g. the dancer and the body,

or the pianist and the piano. At this stage, the body can bring numerous sensations to the performers such as surprise, pleasure, sorrow, and excitement.

Similarly, Aikido practitioners will slowly (re)shape their values, philosophy, and identities through the conceptualization of the 'Aikido body' by learning the martial arts (Kohn 2003, 142-146). By practicing Aikido techniques within Aikido's artistic paradigm and philosophy, they will learn their unique ways of relating to the world, others, and life, so that they will become conscious about their own positions within the world (Kohn 2003, 142-146). "[T]he bodily practice may be said to be inscribing of society as a whole, as well as something that transforms the individual body and spirit" (Kohn 2003, 145). As an Aikido specialist sees "movement like a painting drawn with the stroke of brush" (Kohn 2003, 146), practices within a certain paradigm will bring a whole new feeling, perspective, and even purpose in life.

Khudaverdian argues that "dance is not only about the plié or the pirouette but is, rather, about a feeling, thinking and moving body which communicates and expresses itself" (1998, 50). There is no dualism between the mind and body, but the body becomes the *mind*, and is part of the identity (Khudaverdian 1998, 39). Khudaverdian argues that dancers' Self is woven into their bodies, and they express and experience through their bodies (1998, 45). The important point is that their physical experience becomes simultaneously an emotional, intellectual as well as spiritual one (Khudaverdian 1998, 45). The body becomes the extension of the whole Self as a dancer, and it is the body that can feel and communicate—a sentient body.

During piano performances on stage or in a studio, I do remember the moments of my whole body becoming the energy source for the spiritual attainment. Unlike the common perception of pianist only using their fingers and hands to play, piano-play is an extremely physically demanding action, which involves the whole body. The musicians' use of their bodies i.e. the use of gravity, weight, kinesthetic tricks, breathing, and muscular techniques indeed share a lot of similarities with dancers' reality of expressing and experiencing through the body. The instrument and myself become one, and experiencing performance is beyond just the mechanical

aspect of the body. Naturally, the attainment of the ultimate spiritual gratification through performance takes years and years of training, both for dancers and musicians. Since their performing experience becomes such a large portion of their reality, life, as well as pleasure, the intensity of work and the devoted life style largely contribute to the identity- and boundary formation of performing artists.

Moments of "On"

Khudaverdian's main interest is the conceptualization of the dancing body, and how a dancer's identity is built around the process of body-conceptualization. However, I would add a point that the meaning of performance as well as the moment of performance also makes dancers' *reality* and *mind frame*, thus identity. "Performances" go beyond the ones on stage: dancers practice daily in studios, private rooms, and also in their mind. Novack also observed the dancing body; however, her argument slightly differs from Khudaverdian's. As I mentioned elsewhere, the body is not merely a means to express, but also an initiator of a certain experience and consciousness. Novack's observation of contact improvisation makes this aspect of dancing reality even more palpable. Contact improvisers focus on the physical dialogue between partners, and they "use momentum to move in concert with a partner's weight, rolling, suspending, lurching together...and its interest lies in the ongoing flow of energy" between partners (Novack 1990, 8). Khudaverdian treats the dancing body as the means of expression, i.e. conveying a certain message to the audience, or an aesthetic object (1998). Novack, on the other hand, treats contact improvisation as a means to reveal the Self; the body is a means of communicating ideas and emotions, but with a high degree of the individual's essence (1990, 8-10, 152-154). Some choreographic works of this genre emerge from the *act of moving* and the body itself, instead of the mind or the strong intentional consciousness (Novack 1990, 27). In other words, the choreographic works develop because certain movements just 'feel right' and 'make sense,' not because they are built with a rigid aesthetic framework.

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I often experience(d), as part of the audience as well as during my fieldwork, that the personality or the core of the performer exudes so much during his/her performance, so that I can be in touch with the performer's Self. Great performers always reveal their spiritual essence. Martha Graham argued that "the essence of dance is the expression of man—the landscape of his soul," and the act of dancing is to reveal something of oneself: the legends of his/her soul's journey are expressed with all his/her tragedy, bitterness and sweetness of living (1998, 67). Therefore, the magical moments and spontaneity are the essence of performing arts as well as that of the performers. Performing artists are more than just technicians, and even more than simply trying to express emotions.

It is important to note here that the energy flows as well as self revelation do not only occur in modern dance or in contact improvisation, but also in ballet and in music performances. Even in the strict tradition of classical performing arts, the *performing reality* is as exhilarating as in any modern art forms: the moments of "On" are always full of energy and spirit. The modern form of dance makes this aspect even more visible to the audience than the traditional form, since the traditional style of the strict aesthetic framework is alleviated in the modern style of dancing.

Art of Living and Identity

As I pointed out earlier, being a professional dancer is not simply having a dance career, but living according to certain philosophical norms and experiencing a certain reality and gratification. Being a dancer is a state of Being. Therefore, their dancing career is not a portion of their life, but it constitutes their artistic being—their life. The division between their life and career is virtually non-existent. Martha Graham notes that:

> I think that by every act you do—whether in religion, politics, or sex—you reveal yourself. This, to me, is one of the wonderful things in life. It is what I've always wanted to do—to show the laughing, the fun, the appetite, all of it through dance. In order to work, in order to be excited, in order to simply be, you have to be reborn to the instant. You have to permit yourself to feel, you have to permit yourself to be vulnerable (1998, 71).

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This very *vulnerability* is often associated with the art of revelation and self-expression. Koner's view is similar to Graham's idea of revelation. Koner believes that inner focus is a primary force for a dancer's endless search for the self-core, and the inner self gives the electric intensity to the performance (1993, 21).

> [Inner focus] is part of us, the part that binds all the elements of focus into one, that illumines—that reveals. It takes us to a higher level of consciousness—a sense of the immediate shadowed by a sense of timelessness. You must be so concentrated, so involved with the life on stage, that nothing else exists. Belief in what you are doing must be absolute. This belief concerns your emotions; nothing happens in life without some emotional involvement. It is your inner focus that makes you aware of all the nuances of emotional color. Coming from your center, it seeps through the pores of your body without trying. It is the feeling of *emotion* rather than *emoting* (Koner 1993, 21).

Since a performer must share the core of him/herself with the audience, a soul search inevitably becomes an important part of his/her personal challenge. The state of 'vulnerability' takes courage, strength and honesty. This signifies self-acceptance, generosity, and even beauty. Therefore, a performing experience—where a dancer's core is so exposed—is often compared with spiritual realization and gratification. Koner's terms such as "the higher level of consciousness" and "timelessness," are similarly expressed by Daniel Nagrin as "the elusive state of being (Koner 1993, 21; Nagrin 1997, 6). Nagrin claims:

> If the performing ecstasy envelops [the dancers], they embrace it; if it doesn't, they plow forward, carried by all the thought, rehearsing and integrity needed for the performance. When we are dancing immersed in this state of "losing our mind," we are not quite accountable, but *we are responsible for how we get there*. The route lies along a road carved by hard work, our taste, our training and our philosophy of dance and of life. That road is a synonym for who we are (1997, 6).

The accounts of Graham, Koner, and Nagrin clearly outline the art of living as a dancing being. Their life is highly physical and emotionally intensive, and their identity is constructed accordingly. The above testimonies also indicate the high involvement of the dancers' psyche and emotion in the identity construction.

We have seen the fundamental elements of identity, experience, and boundary of performing artists. Finally, the following section re-organizes the aforementioned arguments in order to present the shared values, experience and spirit that connected us—dancers and myself—within the common collectivity of performing artists.

Boundaries of Performing Artists

As expressed in Koner and Nagrin's account, the path to the higher level of consciousness is synonymous with their identity. Thus, being a dancer is a state of Being rather than a role at one level. Lee claims that the dance world is a social system like most art worlds, and the major three interrelated facets, which constitute the dance world are: 1) the training which dancers go through, 2) the implications of the artistic conventions, and 3) the physical aspect of the culture (1997, 229). Indeed, Halprin's view on philosophy of dance (see this chapter, page 38) is similar to Lee's view; Lee's perspective is based on what is physically visible in the dance world from an outsider's point of view, whereas Halprin's perspective is based on the lived experiences in the dance world from an insider's point of view. I have mainly relied on perspectives that are based on the lived experience by reviewing ex-artists' ethnographies and other accounts from artists themselves on this issue. As Halprin argued, the fourth element—spiritual gratification—can be achieved only if physical, emotional and mental elements are well understood and experienced. This element is absent from Lee's discussion; however, the importance of spiritual essence in the performing arts is evident from the discussions in the above section. Therefore, the fourth element—spiritual essence—can also be included in the interrelated elements of the dance world.

During my field research, I was able to mingle with many dancers; both those who worked for the company where I observed their daily activities and also with those who worked

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for different companies including freelancers. In their private life, they seemed to mix often regardless of the theatre or companies they belonged to. There seem to be several reasons for this. Some of them regularly take classes at different companies in order to get a desired ballet master and coaching. Some shared the experience of studying at the same ballet school in childhood. However, many of them just became acquainted with each other because they shared experiences and values as dancers. Many of these dancers are in fact not Canadians, but from various countries. Helena Wulff points out the transnational aspect of the ballet world (1998, 162, 163). More and more ethnic and racial mixture is present on stage (Wulff 1998, 162). Many of those dancers with whom I became acquainted also worked for companies in Asia, Latin America, the US, and Europe before working for companies in Canada. They often shared the view that the fine art dance world is more or less the same wherever they go. The conditions may differ from company to company; however, the boundaries of dancers and of artists seem to remain in place despite the transnationality. The demarcation of boundaries appeared to be between 'non-artists' and 'artists,' rather than in terms of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, and even language. After all, they all speak 'the language of art' and spiritual essence and energy shared among 'artists' are far more important than any other 'details.'

Billie Kirpich who reports on the ageing process of dancers also argues in the same line (1997, 208-210). Even if the muscular endurance and strength may decline, the inner spirit and the radiance of a dancer live forever (Kirpich 1997, 208). The turning point of performing artists' careers can happen anytime: some due to the natural process of ageing, and some due to injuries. "The dance and the dancer are one—they cannot be perceived separately" (Kirpich 1997, 209). Even if a dancer experiences the turning point, there are still so many things to explore (Kirpich 1997, 209). The dancing career may be short, but the identity of dancers will not change even if they age—the dancers' spirit remains.

Wulff discusses the issue of "Doing Ballet versus Watching Ballet" (1998, 8-9). She believes that her position as both an *ex-insider* and an *outsider* benefited her in the course of

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fieldwork (Wulff 1998, 9). My background is not in the exact same field; however, my experience as an ex-performing artist gave me an epistemological advantage in my fieldwork as well. Besides the experience of strict training from an early age, artistic and aesthetic appreciation as well as knowledge undoubtedly connected us. The stage experience was another common experience we shared. Wulff also argues that vulnerability is an important aspect of the performing experience, and the elusive quality of performance that cannot be explained in any other forms of media except the performing experience itself, is the heart of the ballet art (1998, 9). These are the shared experiences and values between the dancers and myself.

Discipline and Training

Daily training and discipline are the cornerstone of life as a performing artist. This is especially true for classically trained artists. Ballet companies offer classes every morning. No matter how sore the muscles are, no matter how tired they feel, dancers must go through the routine. This is a means to 'warm up' their instrument; at the same time it gives a therapeutic function as a meditation session. One of my informants once told me: "This is my daily meditation. I slowly wake up during the class." Khudaverdian points out the importance of the daily rituals, and states that the daily training constantly reminds them of the heritage of this art form and reinforces their identity (1998, 57-58). Wulff likewise argues that the career of ballet dancers consists of the daily routine of morning classes and afternoon rehearsals (1998, 68). She presents an excerpt, which indicates the tough reality of dancers' careers:

> If you miss class once
> you will notice.
> If you miss class twice
> your colleagues (or teacher) will notice.
> If you miss class three times
> the audience will notice (Wulff 1998, 68).

Undoubtedly, I agree with their views and experiences on daily training and discipline. At the same time, if love of performing is absent, this type of dedication and commitment is virtually impossible to maintain (Dunsby 1995, 32). I remember the time when I was sitting in front of the piano for hours and hours practicing. This is a process of meditation and soul searching. Since there was nobody in front of the piano except myself, I had no choice but to face *my Self.* The discipline certainly taught me to manage my ego, limitations, and life. During the interviews and discussions, I heard comments similar to my own experience from several dancers.

Khudaverdian states that "the daily class is a ritual in-and-of-itself and it is the repetition of this ritual, day after day which generates this culture's uniqueness and teaches it to [the dancers]" (1998, 60-61). The rituals and practices promote dancers' consciousness for perfectionism and high expectations (Khudaverdian 1998, 67). Critical eyes are everywhere. As in Wulff's explanations of a typical dance studio, there is usually a large mirror covering a wall in a studio (Wulff 1998, 70). Not only are dancers constantly expected to correct their movements and postures through the mirror image, but there are also the critical eyes of their fellow dancers, choreographers, ballet masters, and the director. Being in a highly competitive performing arts environment is challenging. Whether it is on stage or in studios, performances sometimes go very well but some other times not. Combined with the perfectionist attitude, critical eyes can push individuals to the extreme, thereby becoming dependent on hard work in order to re-collect their self-identities (Wulff 1998, 76). There is no easy-way-out in this business. The stringent discipline as a *means* to an end can become, at times, the *end* itself for their self-confirmation. No matter how much this may seem disagreeable or unreasonable, this is one of many obstacles dancers, as well as other performing artists, must overcome.

Implication of Artistic Practices

Fine art dancers and musicians, not only share a similar training process but also an artistic philosophy and aesthetic symbols. What we learn to regard as beautiful and *not* beautiful are constructed values (Genette 1999, 61-62). A simple landscape can be stunningly beautiful. However, the landscape is not a piece of art. The 'artistic intention' of a piece of work in order for it to be seen as art and to purposefully create it under the concept of art, is fundamental to Arts (Redfern 1998, 131). It is its *intentional* aesthetic function—that is its *artistic* function (Genette 1999, 1-2).

The primary objective of an art piece is to express. What musicians and dancers learn from an early age is 'the language of art' i.e. its symbols. They learn to express ideas and emotions through their body and/or other instruments. They often receive comments from their coaches such as "Say something!" or "Speak to me!"—What coaches mean here is to express the artistic intention in a richer and fuller manner: making a clear statement, or conveying messages through tonal phrases for musicians and through kinesthetic phrases for dancers (Cone 1968, 13). Therefore, even if the technical skills of an artist are exceptional, if the artistic essence is missing from the performance, it nullifies the whole artistic intention (Cone 1968, 13). This mastery of the 'language of art' includes grammars and structures of the special language: how to make tonal phrases and kinesthetic-/physical-phrases and what to express based on the particular sets of values they learn (Goodman 1976, 242, 248-9; Cone 1968, 15). The artistic conventions will be automatically similar, especially if the basis of the artistic frame is in the same artistic epistemology, e.g. Western classical arts (Genette 1999, 63-64). Therefore, for example, not only what is considered 'elegant' or 'tasteful' but also the development of energy, emotions, and articulations in scores are extremely similar, if not identical, in both the fine arts dance- and music world (Goodman 1976, 248-9). Interestingly, because of the solid theoretical training in both fields, those who are trained in classical ballet and classical music share their values and

symbols much more with each other than, for instance, between rock musicians and classical musicians.

The ultimate challenge for performing artists is to amalgamate the technical aspect with artistic/emotional expression. "[W]hen these two elements become one, the dancer then becomes 'the dance.' The battle here is to integrate the body into the dance and become one with it"(Khudaverdian 1998, 41). As I mentioned elsewhere, musicians' training does not involve the spatial bodily training to the extent of dancers, but it has its own physical challenges. Thus, any performing artists who manage to combine the two elements will experience the 'physical experience' fusing into the 'emotional experience' (Khudaverdian 1998, 44-45). Performing artists cannot afford to be simply technicians. They strive for the emotional and spiritual aspects of the performing experience.

Through a long-term commitment to artistic experience and expressions, the mental understanding of arts as well as bodily understanding of crafts will be transformed into a kinesthetic feel: "an emotional and body reflex that transcends thought" (Koner 1993, 2). This is the moment when 'the sentient body' comes into existence. In this instance, the body as an instrument for expression is turned into an author for emotions and consciousness. Both dancers and musicians show corresponding facial expressions when performing, not out of a deliberate act, but out of an emotional reflex. This process is fascinating. In the early stage of the profession, the crafts are mastered in order to express something, the next step is to deepen the artistic expressions by manipulating the mastered skills, and then finally, the body will dictate emotions and consciousness of the performer. In the case of a musician, one should make a particular mechanical movement, in order to create a particular type of sound. Since the emotional and body reflex are constantly associated with the action of the particular sound or phrase making, it becomes second nature.

"Within the dance culture, the body is trained daily preparing to become 'the dance.' " (Khudaverdian 1998, 42). Khudaverdian argues that a dancer's body is his/her artistic medium

and is also part of his/her identity (1998, 39). The ultimate pleasure of performance is spiritual gratification through searching and revealing the core of the Self (Koner 1993, 1-2, 21; Graham 1998, 71). Arguably, the practice of art itself and the artistic experience also constitute their identity. Therefore, the mutual process of two forces between the Self and artistic experience slowly moulds the artist's particularized style(s) of expressions. Due to the similarities in the practices of art—whether it is in the field of dance or music—fine art performers have a collective consciousness and share common categories of symbols.

Physical Challenge

Khudaverdian claims that dancers "must first work the body—to tune it, sculpt it, shape it and control it—in order to be able to move through space freely and express themselves" (1998, 40). Interestingly, despite the continuous hard work on the body, the concept of 'Body' is secondary to many dancers (Khudaverdian 1998, 40-41). The discipline is for achieving something greater and to become 'the dance' (Khudaverdian 1998, 42; Wulff 1998, 102). No dancer will work hard only for the sake of sculpting the body. Dancers' focus is the artistic expressions and experience, and the physical training is the path to get there. The concept of musicians' training is identical to that of dancers. The difference is that these two groups train 'different parts' of their bodies. Precision is everything, and mechanical excellence is absolutly necessary in order to become 'the music.' The physical tuning is the consequence of the artistic endeavor. The attitude towards perfectionism and even pain to get *there* is all part of who they are (Khudaverdian 1998, 40; Friedler and Glazer 1997, 178). This 'path' is something dancers and musicians have in common.

The Balanchine school of dance produces very thin dancers with the stereotypical ballerina image (Friedler and Glazer 1997, 178). Even so, the ideal body image is not only preferred for the sake of appearance, but also for dancing particular types of choreographies both

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technically and artistically (Friedler and Glazer 1997, 178-179). It is logical that as the trend of choreographies changes, the required body type changes.

Injuries are another factor which performing artists have to face in their careers. Wulff argues that dancers have a high tolerance of pain that is associated with injuries (1998, 106). Despite the better control and versatility in dealing with pain, psychological pain—frustration, guilt, anger, etc.—is also accompanied, thus making the overall experience even more 'painful' (Wulff 1998, 106). According to Alford and Szanto, some pianists believe that pain is a necessary process for their career success, and there is a tenacity of the silence surrounding the issue of pain (1996, 4). In the dance world, an injured dancer may cause further accidents resulting in injuries to other dancers (Wulff 1998, 106). Injuries can jeopardize performing artists' careers both in the dance world as well as in the music world. Even if major injuries may be absent, artists are often coping with some type of pain. In an extreme case, they have to abandon the career altogether (Alford and Szanto 1996, 2). Each individual's experience differs, but the life of coping with physical challenge, pain and injuries in order to achieve artistic pleasure is something all performing artists share.

In terms of the 'psyche' of performing artists, I would like to introduce some vital and noticeable traits such as insecurity and perfectionist attitude in the following section. These characteristics are very important in understanding their mind frame, and how they react to certain issues. Some examples on these themes will be presented in the later chapters.

Insecurity

Insecurity is something we all deal with in our daily life. However, in the dancers' world, as well as in the performing artists' world at large, 'insecurity' seems to carry an even deeper connotation. When my informants and I were discussing, the topic of 'insecurity' often surfaced. The theme itself is an uncomfortable one, but once they felt comfortable talking to me

and also saw me as somebody who has experience in the performing arts environment, they often brought up this issue. "All dancers are insecure," "I am so insecure, but I try not to show it," "I am so afraid to be judged," are some of the comments that I frequently heard from most of the dancers. One day in a private setting, two dancers and I were having a conversation. They mentioned:

> "We must constantly face ourselves, so we know so much about ourselves. Maybe we know too much about ourselves. That's why we are so insecure [laughter]!" "We have to reveal our deep inside, so we become so vulnerable..." "It's unbelievable how insecure we are!"

These two dancers openly talked about the issue and admitted to each other that they were insecure, but some dancers asked me not to tell anybody that they mentioned it (i.e. revealing their identity). Behind their deep insecurity, there is a long path of crafting an 'artist' out of themselves. As explained earlier, this long journey often starts with a series of auditions as a young child and artist, then once he/she follows the professional path, he/she gets constantly judged, evaluated, and criticized. Not only as a young artist under the highly demanding training, but also throughout his/her career, criticism, struggles, conflicts and insecurity will chase him/her around.

Sports players and athletes might similarly experience physical challenges and criticism of their physical techniques and skills. It is hard to conclude from this study that sports players and athletes are different from performing artists in the aspect of insecurities; however, performing artists seem to go through a significant level of insecurity and self-struggles that are tied to their careers and are beyond the physical training and mechanical aspect of their performances. Since performing artists reveal the most intimate 'essence' of themselves through performances, i.e. emotions, thoughts, interpretations, worldviews, philosophies at all times, there is an aspect in their artistry that they cannot simply rely on the technical excellence of their skills. The separation between 'sports' and 'arts' may lie in the degree of their attachment to a particular artistic paradigm. For instance, martial arts practitioners such as Aikidoists do not see Aikido as

a sport although specific sets of techniques are taught in martial arts (Kohn 2003, 139). This is because martial arts in general do not consider the physicality as the core of the practice, but the philosophy behind the practice is the foundation of the corresponding physical movements. The physical techniques are built around a philosophy, and the martial arts become complete when the physical element is consistent with the philosophical intentions. Unlike what are commonly represented as 'sports activities,' the excellence of the physical performance in dance only provides half of its purpose. As a matter of fact, dancers with technical excellence who do not possess a talent for artistic expressions are seen as mediocre. By the same token, the physical techniques of martial arts practices are only one element of the learning process. Therefore, performing arts such as dance seem to be much more comparable with martial arts than with sports.

Another observable distinction between sports and performing arts may lie in the difference of the quantitative and qualitative nature of the two disciplines' codes of conduct. In some sports, athletes' achievements are measured in quantifiable manners, such as the speed, length, height, and the number of scores. At the end of the game, the decisions are made: who wins and who loses according to the quantifiable evidence that the athletes produced. Even seemingly more artistic sports such as figure skating and gymnastics follow certain codes of conduct in the athletes' performances. The choreographies of artistic sports contain certain sets of labeled techniques: triple turns, spiral, salchow, etc. It seems that the main purpose of figure skating is to show the technical excellence. Although it may touch the audience at the emotional level, it does not appear to be the primary purpose of figure skating. In addition, other than the cases where individuals undertake sports for training and fitness purposes, most sports activities not only involve competition, but the 'primary purpose' of a sporting game is to compete. Performing artists do compete with each other for better roles and recognition; however, they do *not* perform in order to compete: competition is not the 'primary purpose' of the performance. In other words, whether in team sports or in individual sports, most professional athletes 'compete'

in sports, and the glory of the career is associated with 'winning' the game. Criticism in sports is concentrated on the 'physical' and 'technical' aspect of the athletes' performance; accordingly, insecurity among athletes may be associated with the performance, physical limitations, pressure for winning, etc. Dancers not only experience limitations in the 'physical' and 'technical' senses, but also in the artistic sense. Criticism, in performing arts, ranges from the 'physical' and 'technical' skills to the more abstract qualities such as the philosophical, mental, emotional, artistic, and personal aspects. As I discussed earlier, practicing arts means to express the artistic and aesthetic intention (Cone 1968, 13), and to fully express by revealing the core of the Self (Koner 1993, 1-2, 21; Graham 1998, 71). Since the artistic expressions are emotional expressions, they come from within. At the same time, the ultimate goal of a performing artist is to become the 'art piece' itself (Khudaverdian 1998, 41-42; Wulff 1998, 102). A very small portion of elite athletes such as Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods may actually have achieved to 'become the sport' and to combine the aesthetic and technical aspects in their performances. However, the kinesthetic beauty we find in sports seems to be the 'consequence' of the technical/mechanical excellence which these athletes deliver, but the aesthetic and philosophical aspects are not the primary concerns of sporting activities to the extent of those of performing artists. Whereas performing artists' primary goal is to 'become the dance' and to express the artistic and aesthetic intention. Criticism in performing arts, thus, potentially signifies a rejection/denial of the artist's Being. At least, the criticized artist will feel as if his/her whole Being is rejected. In their career, the physical as well as emotional and mental investment is huge. Therefore, it is common for artists to experience major depressions, isolation, and hopelessness (Diller 1980, 181, 182).

The ephemeral nature of 'performance' increases their insecurity even further. Contrary to painters, sculptors, writers, composers and the like, what performing artists' perform/express in a particular moment is only valid at that moment—there is nothing tangible left in what they produce—only the impression, sensation, and emotion resonate in the spectators' mind. Wulff

argues that no recording media such as photographs and videos are truly capable of 'reproducing' or 'recording' performances (1998, 9). "The heart of the ballet art" (Wulff 1998, 9) can only exist in the moment of performance. That is what I call the 'essence' of performing art. No matter how much mental concentration is invested in the artistic intention, or no matter how hard the artist practices, there is always a risk-taking factor involved in their actions—there is no guarantee for a successful performance.

Even when they are practicing, the constant exposure to the critical eyes continues. As I mentioned elsewhere, a 'performance' is not limited to one on stage. For example, dancers' *performances* are held daily in studios when the artists practice in front of spectators such as colleagues, coaches, the director, and other people in authority. Sometimes, the eyes of the aforementioned 'behind-the-scenes' spectators can be even more critical for their career than the regular audience and fans. A dancer commented on the 'behind-the-scenes' spectators of the studios:

> "When you join the company, they will see quickly who you are, what type of artist you are...I think it is a good thing. The director will see your skills clearly, and who is good at what..."

Most of the dancers take the high visibility of skills and transparency in the studios positively, because they believe that the openness will create no secrets and no surprises. At the same time, whenever the director comes into the studio during rehearsals, the atmosphere changes immediately. It seems that the dancers become very conscious of his presence, and they seem to make an extra effort to impress him or to prove to him that they are good. Another dancer mentioned:

> "It is quite scary that everything is so transparent. It gives additional challenges to the dancers. It is a crazy environment. But it gives an opportunity for one to develop his or her own style, and become professional at his or her own style. The director can see and trust the individual's style."

However, perhaps the most critical and disapproving observer of all is the artist him/herself. Not only have they been exposed to judgmental eyes since they were young through auditions, schools, performances, and practices, but also they are constantly surrounded by mirror images that will indicate their imperfection to their faces. The mirror images never lie to them. As I discussed above, they sometimes feel totally rejected as a person when criticized on their artistic Being, and their technical skills are relentlessly evaluated and judged. The mirror images scream at them and they are reminded of their imperfection in a world where the visual aesthetic has such high values (Khudaverdian 1998, 75, 77; Wulff 1998, 7-8).

In the morning classes and rehearsals, I often witnessed the dancers' self-criticism and inner-struggles. Some dancers look at their performances in the mirror, and they can become really frustrated with themselves. This is exactly the same process musicians go through. Dancers, musicians and the like, have an intention of producing certain kinesthetic/ tonal phrases; however sometimes the intended actions do not turn out as expected. In the moment of failure, negative internal dialogues occupy the artists' mind: "shit!" "damn!" "that's not it!" "what the hell are you doing?" etc. When steps/movements do not work, their facial expressions immediately show frustrations and negative emotions, and sometimes they mutter, or clearly express their anger and frustrations verbally. Often, these frustrating situations result from the fact that they are in pain due to the overuse of body parts or due to injuries. Even in these situations, they usually do not settle for mediocre outcomes. Again and again, until they see the results they want, they continue to work on the movements/steps tenaciously.

On stage, when things do not turn out well, artists deal with failure slightly differently than failure in the studios and other practicing settings. When a mishap occurs on stage, it is too late to worry; at the same time, there is no time to worry about it. Certainly, the feelings of shame, anger, frustration, and disappointment will overwhelm the artists later. But as long as they are on stage, they should maintain the appearances of grace and glory. Therefore, the negative internal dialogues will be kept on the side for later, and they will do their best to cover

the smudged spot. Unsatisfactory performances in the studios are handled in a rather harsh way, sometimes even in a seemingly self-destructive manner. Even if it is in a warming up session, or in a ballet class, which trains their bodies, they expect a lot from themselves. A depressed dancer can be found crying in the corner of the studios, or he/she will try to find a spot for retreat in the studios, lounge, corridors, and staircases: the dancer tries to recollect him/herself in a moment of mental and physical solitude. Even if the fellow colleagues and ballet master give encouraging comments, usually positive comments do not get through in such moments, and often self-criticism and self-blame occupy their minds. Because performing artists are often perfectionists and they expect so much from themselves, even top artists are rarely satisfied, let alone impressed, with their own performances, and quietly fear that they are not good enough (Khudaverdian 1998, 40-41, 67).

The continuous process of external criticism and self-criticism creates a cycle of inner-struggles in performing artists. They become not only extremely self-critical, but also insecure, sometimes disappointed and depressed. Whether or not this is a healthy mechanism to their career is beyond the scope of this research. However, there seem to be reasons/purposes for them to fall into this habit. The following section will describe this phenomenon by touching upon the issue of perfectionism, which is ingrained in their mind so deeply and is an important component of their identity just as 'insecurity' is.

Unattainable Goal—Perfection

Since the degrees of physical, mental, emotional, and personal investment are so high in the dance culture, the need to prove themselves and to be approved by others seem very strong (Diller 1980, 183, 184). A dancer mentioned: "We want to show that we can do it…especially to the director. You know, that's what motivates us…to show that we can do it." The driving force to prove themselves and the self-critical attitude both appear to be related to the unattainable goal—perfection.

Khudaverdian explains that dancers are often trained early on with the image of a 'perfect dancer' in their mind: what the perfect body is about, what the perfect dancer can do, how the perfect body looks, etc (1998, 67). By learning what the perfect dancer is, young dancers understand that there is a lot of work ahead of them and their objective is to shorten the distance between themselves and the 'perfect dancer' (Khudaverdian 1998, 67). Once a dancer who is very critical of himself commented:

> "We all have some type of idea what the perfection is. We will never reach it, but we are conscious about it. The type of dancers who are too confident, too full of themselves, will not improve, because they don't see a need for an improvement."

In the challenging learning process, those students who managed to master good technique but have not yet learned "to feel the music and, thus, interpret it, will be told constantly that they are not 'dancing', and that their bodies are 'lifeless', 'boring' and 'not expressive'" (Khudaverdian 1998, 67). On the contrary, those students whose artistic expression is rich and free, but who have not yet learned the technique, "are told how 'ugly they look' or that they are 'dancers but have no technique', that '[they]'ll never make it in the ballet world'" (Khudaverdian 1998, 67). Unfortunately, this kind of criticism does not end in the learning process of a young artist, but continues well into the career of the professional artist. 'The perfect dancer' is able to amalgamate the technical and artistic aspects, and the discourses of 'the perfect dancer' within the dance culture clearly stipulate what it is to become and to be a dancer. A denigrating form of criticism is highly visible in the high art dance as well as music world. As previously mentioned, most performing artists live with some type of physical pain. The 'emotional pain' that they cannot reach perfection is almost a prerequisite for the highly committed life of performing artists. Despite the glorious image of the artists' world, they are sometimes depressed, miserable, and have low self-esteem in front of the eternal goal: perfection (Diller 1980, 176, 177, 181, 182). Those who teach the notion of 'perfection' to the next generation are living in a culture where the very concept of 'perfection' is *real*: it is neither their intention to overwhelm young artists with

the notion of perfection, nor to confuse them with demanding comments such as the above examples, but rather, their intention is simply to introduce the *reality* of perfection, which happens to be impossible to attain. Through the rituals and discourses within the art world, artists learn to accept the notion, take it seriously, and aspire to it.

The question still remains: why are artists so critical of themselves, and why do they fall into this habit? There are certainly reasons for this experience to happen in terms of their thinking patterns or other logical explanations. But the interesting point is that dancers and other artists seem to 'benefit' from this tendency. As mentioned earlier, dancers push themselves to the extreme and sometimes become dependent on hard work in the name of professionalism (Wulff 1998, 76). Nonetheless, the loyalty to their career and self-criticism are not necessarily complementary to each other. The answer to the above question may lie in the fact that they dance ultimately for *themselves*.

When I approached the dancers on whether they dance ultimately for themselves or for the audience, all of them except one, answered 'for themselves.' Performances are not limited to ones on stage: performances can also exist in studios, private rooms and in their mind. Despite the fact that they dance ultimately for themselves, it should not be confused with an egoistic undertaking. In their mind, they can clearly differentiate 'egocentric' performances from 'non-egocentric' performances. An example can be found in a dancer's testimony:

> "I don't want to become a self-absorbing artist. I don't want to practice arts like that. I like to fight for perfection, but not to be egoistic. I also believe that artists should be happy about what they are doing, and become happy through what they are doing."

What this dancer means by a 'self-absorbing artist' is that the artist is performing just to feel superior, be so impressed with him/herself, and showing off, but not *sharing* the performances. Regarding the concept of performing for him/herself or for the audience, the dancer continued:

> "I am performing for myself. If you are happy inside, you can project the energy to others. If you are confident, people will be. I am truly content when I am performing. So, I think that the audience will also feel content."

Koner states that inner focus is a primary force for a dancer's eternal soul-search (1993, 21), and Graham claims that the essence of dance is the representation of the landscape of the dancer's soul (1998 67). As noted here, many dancers take on a rather inner-worldly focus: their energy is invested in the inner-worldly journey of the Self, in spite of the 'extrovert' activities they engage through onstage performances. It is comparable to taking a pilgrimage to a sacred place for personal enlightenment.

There are many misconceptions related to performing artists' professions. The common impressions that the general public has of show business are glamour, fame, and glory. And it is often believed that dancers and the like live prestigious lives and feel glamorous and glorious about themselves. Certainly, it is prestigious and rewarding in the sense that their strong dedication, talent and belief made it possible for them to accomplish their dreams and objectives, as well as that they are 'chosen' people to be where they are. But dancers mention that they feel privileged and proud because they have the 'opportunity' to take the personal journey to find their Self, rather than due to the public attention and status they achieve. More accurately, the prestige and gratification in dancers' discourses seem to be something directed toward their inner-self in the philosophical sense. It is possible that the initial attraction to the dance culture for a young artist may have been the glamour, fame, and glory. But sooner or later he/she will learn that there is much more to it than just the superficial attractions and exterior aspects of the dance world. As the young artist continues living in the world of dance, the initial motivation will, if not disappear, be transformed to something deeper and more substantial.

Needless to say, dancers also dance for the audience, and the special energy that is exchanged between the dancers and audience through onstage performances is a very rewarding experience (Wulff 1998, 129). Performances on stage are celebrations: performers attempt to share the ultimate experience with the audience. Therefore, shows are the important moments in their career: they are important in the sense that they get to experience the utmost sensations from expressing and touching the audience at the emotional level (Wulff 1998, 129), but not from the

public attention and the glamorous image attached to it. Artists feel even more awkward, or distant from the audience, when the general public admires them as 'stars' under any circumstances, while they themselves do not feel particularly glamorous about their own performances (Wulff 1998, 130). The superficial aspects of their career are usually not strong enough motivations for them to assume such dedication. Their primary interest is what they give outwardly, not what they receive from the public. Therefore, the 'path to get there' is a synonym for who they are (Nagrin 1997, 6).

Artists' attempt is inner-worldly because they challenge themselves, prove to themselves, and last but not least, they are highly competitive with their own selves. Here plays the concept of 'perfection.' The image of the perfect performance is so vivid in the artist's mind, that the only true ambition comes from within. "The dance comes from 'inside,' therefore, it is not the external physicality of the body which counts but, rather, the way [they feel] the body from 'inside'" (Khudaverdian 1998, 44). The artist tries his/her best to be as close as possible to perfection. The inner determination says, "you can do it," and "you *will* do it"; the artist takes off to the performing moments. It is a mixture of self-hypnosis and conviction. Having the right mindset is very critical when performing. If the artist is, even by just a bit, unmotivated or distracted, the outcome will be disappointing, at least to the artists' point of view. The key is to have complete control of their bodies (Khudaverdian 1998, 40) and the state of mind. Several dancers expressed the notion of self-control during the performances: their goal is to have complete control, know exactly what can be done, how it is done, and feel as much as possible with their bodies. The state of mind is another big issue. A dancer revealed to me: "If you become too eager, you know, trying to show off or impress, then your body freezes. Too much urge can screw it up completely. The balance is very tricky." If performing arts are not practiced for the purpose of competitions as sports are, then the notion of self-control for both mind and body is the only aspect that translates to, in a way, 'competing' with his/her natural instinct, emotional reaction, bodily reflex, and impulse. "There is nothing natural about what we do"—

some dancers amusingly speak of their artistic endeavor. This 'self-control' is unequivocally directed to 'perfection,' 'precision,' and 'discipline.'

As Wulff suggests, some artists become dependent on hard work (Wulff 1998, 76). Ironically, at the same time, artists will certainly benefit from the high degree of physical, mental, and emotional investment into their day-to-day artistic challenges. Moreover, the aspiration to the 'perfection' and its corresponding habit of self-criticism, self-control, and non-compromising attitude are ultimately necessary components of their identity: who they are, what they do, how they live, and where to reach. Disciplinary power has its own natural and 'organic' uniqueness according to the situation to which it is applied (Foucault 1977, 155, 156). No matter how unrealistic or unreasonable it may seem to the outsiders, their discipline and self-criticism are *not* there for the sake of discipline and self-criticism, but rather, their disciplinary acts and critical behavior are there to serve artists' purpose of existence as an 'organic' whole. Therefore, the discourses of discipline, criticism, and control in the dance as well as in other performing arts culture designate the recollection of their identity in the end.

Taking on the incredible mission of achieving 'perfection,' they remind themselves of who they are by self-criticism and self-control, and eventually re-charge the energy to face challenges and to shake off various fears—at least temporarily. Through this process, individuals will experience success, gratification, and pride, thus they become even more prepared to take on new challenges. Receiving denigrating criticism is often part of their discipline. On-going negative internal dialogues symbolize high expectations from themselves. Since they were young, they have been standing up to the harsh criticism, and have always been proving that they are capable of accomplishing the missions. In this cycle of mind-frame, artists prove to themselves and others that they can do it, and reassure their existence in the world (Diller 1980, 203). It is such a rewarding and gratifying experience.

Spiritual Gratification

As mentioned before, Halprin argues, the ultimate element, the spiritual gratification, is attained when a dancer incorporates and masters the three other elements (see this chapter, page 38): physical, emotional and mental (1995, 15). Whether it is in the dance culture or in the music culture, the process to realize the utmost artistic and spiritual experience is identical (Dunsby 1995, 29-30). Foucault categorizes interlinked human knowledge into several forms according to their modes of human conduct, skills and attitude (1988, 18). Performing artists' life can be classified as "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1988, 18).

> [T]echnologies of the self permit individuals to effect by their own means or
> with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies
> and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform
> themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom,
> perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1988, 18).

Elsewhere, I mentioned that "being a dancer is a state of Being." This *state of Being* signifies the mental as well as physical discipline, self-criticism, perfectionist attitude, self-forgiveness, vulnerability, soul-search, aspiration, passion, dream, and spiritual gratification in their own unique manner. Therefore, Halprin's theory of 'philosophy of dance' can be seen as 'technologies of the self' in the dance world (1995, 15). Similarly, Nagrin mentions: "The route lies along a road carved by hard work, our taste, our training and our philosophy of dance and of life. That road is a synonym for who we are" (1997, 6). I believe that the 'path' is our common 'lived experience,' which the dancers and myself shared within the same collectivity. Most importantly, each artist must develop his/her own style of 'technologies of the self' over the course of his/her career and even after retirement. Each individual's trajectories may differ from each other's, but the ultimate mission as an artist is identical.

Moreover, as Graham and Koner argue, their life and career are inseparable. One of the most valuable aspects of performing artists' life is the onstage experience. This is also evident from the discourses of such scholars/artists as Graham, Koner, Nagrin, and Wulff. Without the stage experience, performing artists cannot truly be 'artists.' It is a special moment of celebration

where they glow, get empowered, and experience magical energy and spiritual gratification. The ultimate goal as artists is often attained on stage. This experience shapes artists' psyche, philosophy, and their life. Indeed, a great portion of their life and energy is devoted to the mental as well as physical preparations for these celebrative moments. Those who went through this experience will know the true essence of life as a performing artist.

During the field research, I was in the studio everyday, *participating* in their classes, rehearsals, shows, and also in their 'path' to attain the ultimate happiness. I was observing the behind-the-scenes process of them developing their end product. Through interactions between the dancers and myself, they quickly recognized that not only did I appreciate their final product, but that I also understood exactly what took place in the nitty-gritty of their daily life. When we shared spiritual gratification with each other, we experienced an incredible amount of 'connectedness.' There were certain types of verbal and non-verbal communications between the dancers and myself. They were *also* observing how I was observing them. They could see how serious I was in wanting to understand their life, and some of them really enjoyed the fact that I was rendering my listening ears to their personal stories and that I could truly empathize with them. One of my informants once told me, "When you are in the studio, we feel so much energy from you...it's so different! We love it, you know." The dancers as well as the choreographers and the ballet master felt that I was a participant and part of the 'family' rather than just an observer. This comment made me realize that there was a special energy exchange and common consciousness among us. When people belong to each other, or experience *esprit de corps*, they just 'know' it; they can just 'feel' it.

Throughout the chapter, I presented the identity and boundary construction of performing artists with particular attention to fine art dancers. The most interesting initiating factor for the journey of deconstructing dancers' identity and my identity is that the dancers' community

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accepted me as part of them, despite the fact that I have no professional dancing experience. Our connection was immediately discovered and at the instinctive level. This strongly suggests that the common practices and disciplines that I share with them are so much more valuable and interesting to them than what I actually do professionally. More exactly, they pay attention to what we shared: certain background, mind frame, philosophy, symbols, and 'essence.' Our mutual communication ground was based on the fact that I understood their 'language,' and was able to empathize with them.

In this chapter, I have argued that dancers' identity-construction is based on their ultimate goal to attain spiritual gratification through performance and particularly on stage. Having this intention, their life, philosophy, and all the preparation processes are built around this utmost objective. I also argued that the path to the aspiration itself is the indicator of their identity. Their boundaries are, therefore, constructed through the experiences of trying to achieve these ecstatic moments.

Boundaries are three-dimensional. The categories and criteria of commonalities must agree in order for a boundary to exist; however, the scale or degree of commonalities must also be taken into account. "To what degree can we understand each other?" and "How deep is our understanding?" are pertinent questions in the process of boundary-negotiation. Further analysis is required in order for us to extend our insight to the issues of identities and boundaries in this regard.

As Cohen and Barth suggest, people construct identities and boundaries based on their lived experience. In my particular example, the mental demarcation of 'us' from 'them' was rather based on our basic instinct as social animals. There was common 'essence' among us. The dancers' boundary already existed, and I came into their environment. Since their community placed an importance in spiritual gratification through performance, and I appeared in their environment i.e. their 'living experience,' the criteria of boundary-negotiation between us were set according to their measurement. At the moment of encounter, there might have been many

different ways to connect or communicate with each other. Instinctively, we connected by tuning into the 'wavelength' of performing artists. As a result, I was seen as 'their kind.' Through this experience, I reconfirmed that boundaries are fluid, permeable, and flexible. 'Our encounter' turned out to be a practical apparatus for deconstructing dancers' identities and boundaries. At the same time, this process reconfirmed that boundaries are derived from the lived experience of the members. As any retired artists do, I am still living in the spiritual moments of performance—just like these dancers are living today.

Chapter 4: THE PRODUCTION TEAM OF *THE DANCE X*

In an earlier chapter, I indicated that the intention of my study is an exploration of the dancers' world and their vocational life through participant observation at a dance production company. My attention is not confined to the particular organization in question, i.e. *the Dance X*. However, when the members of the organization 'meet' in the 'intersection,' there are certain shared symbols, values, and meanings according to which they become motivated, behave and function in a particular fashion within the given social structure. While recognizing that this company exists within the larger context of multiple collectivities, this chapter purposely focuses on the micro circumstances of *the Dance X*.

The Dance X is a relatively small company, and when I focus my attention on the working team of dancers, the fact that it is a small group of twelve dancers shows its own unique attributes in terms of their quotidian experiences. Despite the small size, the complexity of the group dynamics is amazing. The size of the group, the absence of hierarchy, their expectations, and even frustrations are all related elements. My purpose here is to describe this micro-field in a holistic manner without determining the liable and responsible party in each event. Various issues are discussed and analyzed, and through this process, the picture of *the Dance X* hopefully becomes clearer.

Around Choreographies

In terms of their daily activities, like any other dance company, the center of *the Dance X*'s operation is its 'choreographies.' What this means is that everything that happens in the production process is *about* and *around* 'choreographies.'

As I pointed out earlier, the artistic director's main functions are to conceptualize productions and to select the most adequate repertoires for the company. This is a very complex

process, and the director's artistic sense will be tested; at the same time, he has to be sensitive to the artistic as well as market trends. *Patrick* once mentioned to me: "This process involves a lot of risk-taking…" His major challenge is to choose the 'right' repertoires (see this chapter, page 84)—choosing 'right' choreographers and choreographies. Since the budget of the company is limited, the decisions to purchase choreographies and/or to hire choreographers for creation must be made cautiously. Choreographies are expensive.

The Dance X's dancers' day normally begins with *Sébastien*'s mandatory ballet class. His morning class is designed to warm up their 'instrument' (see Chapter 2, page 12) and it prepares them to manage afternoon sessions of choreographic works. After his class, their schedules are filled with rehearsals or creation sessions. The weekly schedules are posted on the main board in the corridor, and they check their schedules; for example, their name, time, the name of the choreographic piece, the rehearsal director, and the studio number.

For rehearsals, the dancers are divided into a few groups according to the casting, and each group's rehearsal is led by a rehearsal director—it could be the artistic director, ballet master or the choreographer him/herself. The more they practice the piece, the more they improve especially at the beginning of the practice. However, after it reaches a certain point, it starts to stagnate or the choreography can even crumble. When the dancers patiently continue practicing the piece even after the learning curve declines, then, they truly start to internalize the choreography and they will improve once again. Overcoming the stagnation and saturation is a big part of the challenges in rehearsals. Musicians also experience exactly the same process. It is a very repetitive process, and it takes an incredible amount of patience and tenacity. Interestingly, professionals in this field often use the term "to clean" for rehearsals. Expressions such as "We are going to clean the choreography," or "First we learn the steps, and we clean it later" refer to the process of fine-tuning and also to the recovery from the stagnation period. Thus, rehearsals are designed to 'clean' choreographies.

For a creation-session, as in the case of rehearsals, the appointed dancers are invited to the studio with the choreographer. Some choreographies are purchased as a complete work. In that case, dancers are going to learn the ready-made pieces with the instruction of the choreographer. The creation sessions that I observed were mostly collaborative works between the dancers and the choreographers. Currently, *the Dance X* works with a resident choreographer and also with an internal choreographer. The resident choreographer, *Melanie*, is a specialist hired by the company, who holds a position similar to an outside consultant. Technically, the outsourced choreographer is not part of the organization; therefore, the artistic director is not considered to be in a truly superior position to her. However, the internal choreographer is one of the dancers at *the Dance X*, who also creates pieces for the company; therefore the director is in a clearly superior position to this dancer/choreographer. Consequently, the power relations and dynamics affect these two choreographers differently within the production team. Details regarding the collaborative works are discussed in later sections.

There have been many testimonies made to me in my fieldwork indicating the importance of choreographies to the dancers, and to the company. *Claudio*, a dancer, mentioned:

> "Choreographies are the center of the universe to us, dancers. The reason why I stay in the company is *Melanie* (the resident choreographer). I get inspired by her work and her dance. I think that *Melanie* is the best choreographer I've ever met, and worked with. Her dance is so emotional and sensual."

Quite a few dancers made very similar comments to me. Some dancers stated clearly that because they want to work with *Melanie*, they would stay in the company as long as *Melanie* has a contract with *the Dance X*.

The Notion of Choreography and The Treasure Hunt

Choreographies are as important as the art of dance itself. Therefore, searching and hiring talented choreographers for collaborative creations with the dancers, or purchasing ready-made choreographies are vital and challenging aspects of the artistic director's career.

Choreographies should not be seen merely as sets of steps and movements. There are 'sacred' notions to choreographic works. They are the expressions of the creators' soul, emotions and knowledge. As in the oral culture where knowledge is transmitted through verbal communications, the world of dance transmits the 'sacred knowledge' through kinesthetic experience and communications. Therefore, choreographers are proprietors of the 'sacred knowledge' in the dance world. The artistic director aims to synchronize dancers' artistry and the 'produced knowledge.' Having such an important role to play, choreographers have responsibilities to produce aesthetically appealing and conceptually complete pieces that are pleasurable to dance while being sensitive to the general trends, the world we live in, and to the dancers' Being.

An improvisation-exercise is another activity that is closely related to choreography. During the creation sessions with a choreographer, dancers are often encouraged to improvise movements. Especially if the choreographer is enthusiastic about collaborative works with the dancers, he/she will let the dancers explore movements and kinesthetic sensations. An improvisation workshop of this sort provides the dancers as well as the choreographers with several notable positive elements. First of all, it stimulates the dancers' mind. Literally, it is designed to explore their movements and discover the 'new' sensations and parts of themselves. Secondly, this process takes more of their mental and emotional exertion rather than the physical one; therefore their visceral sense becomes sensitized, and they also gain more artistic awareness. Thirdly, since it allows them to get in touch with both their mind and bodies concurrently, the communication between mind and body—if there is any division between mind and body— becomes smoother, thereby enabling them to achieve even more natural and freer movements. Fourthly, it provides the choreographer with opportunities to see the dancers' habits, styles, and more importantly personalities and characteristics. "It is the best way to get to know the dancers...": *Melanie*, the resident choreographer, once mentioned to me. As I mentioned above, kinesthetic movements are the communication tools in the dance world. It is analogous to the

cases of non-dancers who become acquainted with each other through verbal greetings and introductions. Last, but not least, improvisation-exercises make it possible for them to create even better choreographies while breaking the choreographer's own habits. Since the choreographer gets familiarized with the dancers' styles and personalities, he/she is able to create something that best suits the artists who dance the piece. Therefore, the improvisation-exercises are meant for the dancers to discover their 'treasures' from deep inside.

I often witnessed their enlightened faces after finishing improvisation/creation sessions. One day, *Valentine* mentioned to me as we walked out of the studio after a session with *Melanie*: "It's exhausting because *Melanie*'s work is so mentally challenging, but it's great!" The feeling of enlightenment can also be expressed in different ways. On a different occasion, right after another creation session with *Melanie*, *Émilie* communicated her sentiment by using the term 'energy':

> "I absolutely adore *Melanie*'s work. (By dancing what she creates) I feel her energy so much...all over my body, my heart, my mind...I feel her energy force, where it wants to go, her driving force, and where it is going next, and after that..."

Vincent used an interesting metaphor:

> "*Melanie* inspires me so much! She is like "good food" to us. She is not repeating the same thing; exploring new things constantly...she speaks 'the language' of instinct and arts, and she is a very intelligent choreographer. Whatever she does, everything makes sense. She will challenge you, and it is a real mental challenge."

Similar comments were made by the dancers on numerous other occasions. One common factor is that it is very encouraging and important to work with a 'great' choreographer, who guides them through the exploration of their minds and bodies.

In certain productions, the dancers' are appointed to perform certain choreographies that have some sections of improvisation. During these few minutes of improvisation, the *dancers* can be the proprietors of the 'sacred knowledge.' A dancer expressed the incredible pleasure he gets each time he performs this piece on the stage:

"I love the moment I improvise on the stage. There is no repertoire comparable to that. It's my best moment, I feel so free…and the audience is watching me…what I want to say in that *very* moment. Ah…it's incredible!"

When they express their feelings 'verbally,' they often use the term 'energy'—"I feel the energy" "I give/receive the energy" "good energy" "bad energy" etc. These expressions seem very abstract to outsiders; however, the feeling of 'energy' not only appears in their discourse as a metaphor, but it *is* very 'real' to them, and they are passing around this invisible 'energy' to each other. Some say that it comes with the practice of arts, and they certainly became very sensitive to detecting these energies from outside and from within. Creation/improvisation workshops are perfect opportunities for them to explore their own bodies, minds, and their world.

High Visibility of Performances

Elsewhere, I mentioned that exposure to the eyes of the 'behind-the-scenes' spectators is critical to the dancers' careers. This transparency can be stressful from time to time; however, as most of the dancers agree, the high visibility of skills is beneficial in many ways. Since one cannot 'fake' one's ability, the expectations are clear among the team that includes the dancers, the artistic director, the ballet master, and the choreographers. I organized my informants' testimonies into four categories.

First of all, the high visibility of skills can build confidence and trust in one another. Even though they are very critical of themselves, the openness among the team will assure no surprises in terms of the quality and standards of others and of the whole group. Consequently, they can have more confidence in each other's performance. The level of trust increases accordingly. The dancers are hired on the basis of specific standards, quality, and skills, and one's unique skills become a strong asset; trust can be built around the individuals' unique skills.

Secondly, the dancers will have more control and security due to the high visibility. Accurate evaluations/expectations of one's colleagues' skills/habits will help avoiding potential

accidents and mishaps. Because everybody is so aware of each other's skills, the standard of the group's performance as a whole gives security in the continued existence of the group. If the dancers know that the group is strong, and produces high-standard performances, the group's team spirit and morale get heightened, and everybody is proud to be part of the team. The sense of belonging and the sense of prestige as a group may be enhanced.

Thirdly, the transparency encourages individuals to improve their performances. It will trigger the sense of competitiveness and that will promote excellence. Fourthly, somewhat similar to the third point, there is a teaching effect in transparency. Exposure to new ideas, approaches, and interpretations in others' performances may give opportunities to reflect on one's own performances, and it may expand one's horizon.

All in all, these positive aspects of high transparency give more opportunities to the dancers for their future projects. Naturally, the company as a whole can plan repertoires according to the strengths of the dancers, and try to project specific images that the company would prefer. The director can also build castings in accordance with the strengths and characteristics of the dancers. At the same time, as I mentioned in the earlier chapter, dancers are very active outside the boundary of *the Dance X*, thus, the transparency enables them to organize their personal projects such as choreographic collaborations, shows, and auditions. If one dancer wants to coordinate a show, he/she chooses dancers according to their skills, interpretations, taste, as well as aesthetic and artistic compatibilities. The familiarity goes even further. Since the dancers are publicly known through shows and auditions, other dance companies and freelancing choreographers might invite the dancers for future contracts and the like. This skill-specific way of hiring is particularly interesting in this field. The members of the company may not agree in their taste of the repertoire; however, situations such as 'over-qualification' or 'one is wasting his/her skills' rarely happen in this field, since there is always space to improve, and individuals' excellence also demarcates the company's excellence.

Issues of Organizational Culture

In regards to the organizational culture of *the Dance X*, there are some very important cultural and structural matters to be considered. Alvesson points out: "For organizational practitioners—managers and others shaping organizational life—a developed capacity to think in terms of organizational culture facilitates acting wisely" (2002, 2). He notes that organizational culture is a cohesive system of meanings and symbols within which social interaction takes place (1993, 2; 2002, 5). Alvesson refers to Geertz's theory in distinguishing culture and social structure. "Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action" (Geertz 1973, 145); whereas social structure is "the behavioural patterns which the social interaction itself gives rise to" (Alvesson 2002, 5). I agree with Alvesson's approach in terms of treating organizational culture as a culture or subculture within a larger collectivity. According to Geertz, there is constant incongruity and tension between the culture and the structure, as well as between these two and another element—the pattern of motivational integration within the individual personality structure (1973, 145). I believe that the social structure and culture often reciprocally influence each other within an organization, and *the Dance X* is no exception.

Advocates of the functionalist approach to organizational culture view culture as a measurable variable and as a management tool to achieve better performance such as high efficiency and profitability (Alvesson 2002, 24-27; Martin 2002, 4-5). In contrast, I argue that culture is not *created* by simple slogans and the management's inclination, but rather the organization *is* a cultural system, and the culture has to be lived and experienced by the whole organization including the management. As I mentioned above, the structural frame that is designed by the management of a corporation/institution can influence the atmosphere and texture of the organization, at the same time, the members of the organization in return react to the structural arrangement of the organization by conforming to or challenging it.

The most problematic aspect of writing about the organizational culture of any corporation, institution, and other organization is that there are so many different perspectives on the single event/ phenomenon depending on the position of the person. At the same time, every single motivational factor cannot be addressed when analyzing a set of actions and behaviours. It is also impossible to identify and apply a single causal relation to an event. Everything that happens within the organization is relative and multi-causal. Interpretations of events at *the Dance X* not only arise from the point of view of the person who experiences and explains the event, but are also influenced by my own filters of interpretations. I am interested in the process of each event's development, and hope to portray the situations from multiple perspectives and identify the sources of these multiple viewpoints.

Another concern is the seemingly contradictory characteristics of actions and phenomena within the organization. I believe that contradictions are rather expected in an organizational environment and any kind of social situation. Positive characteristics in one situation or from one angle can be negative in another situation. Good intentions of a person can lead to a disaster in a different frame as well. Therefore, it is critical to remember that everything is double-sided, sometimes even multi-faceted. My informants' comments are sometimes mentioned in relation to other companies, other genres, and other times, within the frame of this particular company.

Some cultural attributes that can be used to describe *the Dance X*'s organizational culture are: unconventional, free/open, humane/personal, less bureaucratic, and an absence of hierarchy. Notably, this company manages to have a relatively egalitarian environment. This is due to the artistic director's effort to influence the company's atmosphere i.e. its organizational culture, through introducing a less authoritarian and egalitarian system, which is rather uncommon for a dance production company. As explained above, these positive characteristics—free/open, humane/personal, less bureaucratic, etc.—that are intentionally brought to the organization often directly affect the organizational culture, but these are not the only attributes that shape the 'texture' of the organization. Despite the positive characteristics, there are other contributing

factors that might create conflicting situations within the organization, and the negative

characteristics occasionally overshadow the positive ones. Relative ways of understanding and

recognition of the multi-causal relations of events thus become highly crucial.

The Organizational Culture of the **Dance X**— *The View from The Top*

Even within the same organization, the dancers' team as a cohesive whole reacts to

various key figures differently: the group dynamics varies according to the person who is

interacting with the team. What seem to matter most in terms of the group dynamics are: a) the

level of involvement with the team, b) the position of the person within the organization versus

the dancers (i.e. power relations and stakeholders' positions, etc), and c) the kind of activities that

are shared.

When I asked *Patrick*, the director, about the company, he shared many interesting and

important concepts and comments with me. Some of them seem to indicate the atmosphere of the

company, some show his concerns, and some are the ideal images the director would like the

company to project to the public. In any case, the words of the director represent the image of the

company from his point of view and this image lies somewhere between the actual and the ideal

position of the company. If I really try to analyze the situation from the *outsider*'s viewpoint,

Patrick's influence on the team's morale, mood, and camaraderie is considerable. Intentionally

or not, *Patrick*'s personal care and humane management style sets the tone of the dancers' team;

however, interestingly, the dancers do not necessarily identify the humane characteristic of the

team with the director's approach or his management style. By the same token, what disturbs the

director's vision in leading the team also appears to bring anxiety to the team, even though it is

not his intention to cause any type of disharmonies among the dancers.

The head of the company is the general manager, *Linda*; however, her degree of influence

on the dancers' team and that of the artistic director are completely different. This is because

Linda is not directly involved in any aspect of the production processes in which most of the

dancers' attention and energy are invested, and also because the dancers are tacitly aware that the most important stakeholder in their careers within the boundary of *the Dance X* is the artistic director.

The decisions related to the artistic production and administrative issues come from the top, i.e. the artistic director and the general manager; therefore, one can claim that the ambiance and mindset are both shaped by their intended design of the organizational structure. However, the participants in the production team, the dancers, also reinforce and sustain the structural frame. In terms of the working style, the team takes a highly open, non-bureaucratic style. The tension between the top-down decision/information flow and the non-bureaucratic ambiance— incongruence—seems to be the critical point in analyzing the group dynamics of *the Dance X*.

Some values are equally appreciated both by the artistic director and the dancers. The personal care and humane ambiance are some of the examples. They are evident in their discourses, and *Patrick* seems especially conscious about these values in their working environment. When I asked him what the necessary qualities are in order to have a good working team, he answered: "Love, respect for others, and humane quality for one's own." It is a simple answer, but at the same time suggests the philosophy of the company. In regular corporations and institutions, the management often wishes to have a humane and encouraging working environment for the employees and participants (Craig 1989, 68, 70; Kolodny 1989, 37); however the leaders and managers are rarely able to incorporate this type of benevolence to the management approach. The director mentioned during the interview:

> "I am particularly conscious about the motivation of the dancers. We are working with artists, which means, if they don't grow as a person and as an artist, there is no motivation for them. They have to grow as a person and as a dancer. I make an effort to make them experience a new creation, performance. Personally, they have to polish, analyze, and find new ways of dancing. And for that, they have to work hard. Artistically, they have to experience different things in their life, and incorporate them into their dancing."

He describes the special characteristics of *the Dance X* as below:

"The personalities of the dancers on the stage are the special characteristics of the company. We have twelve unique personalities. We try to draw their personalities into their dance. This is a company of dancing, which means, [the dancers] are not just there to do what they are told to do, or to serve the technical performances designed for them, but it is quite opposite. They are not servicing us, but they are the main part. It is a company of fusion, movement, energy, charisma, and performers. It is an urban, cosmopolitan company, and I think it identifies with Montreal. It presents new ways of presenting and seeing dance. This company is very unconventional."

This company encourages creativity as well as a collaborative and open atmosphere among the dancers through a non-authoritarian and open-minded management style, which is rather unusual for a dance production company. As addressed by *Patrick*, 'unconventionality' is one of the key characteristics of the company, and the dancers, ballet master, and the choreographers, seem to agree with *Patrick*'s idea about 'unconventionality,' and their judgment is based on their experiences in other companies around the world.

As explained in the earlier chapter, there is virtually no hierarchy in the team of dancers at *the Dance X*. The egalitarian mentality affects the atmosphere of the company to a large degree. This company not only has a non-authoritarian management style, but also the dancers are supportive, friendly, and highly respectful to each other. In terms of the structure, *Patrick* clearly expresses his aversion to bureaucracy:

"It is an open and friendly company. People are warm. I do not like bureaucracy, and bureaucratic administration. They have to be free to express, and they have to feel free. I would like to minimize the politics, because insecurity is a bad thing."

There is healthy competition among the dancers; however, in principle, there is no negative tension or awkward mood, which is so prevalent in many ballet companies according to my informants. *Jessica* commented:

"They are so open…there is no ranking. Everybody is equal and supportive. This company allows everybody to grow, at the same time, it's challenging…with solid classes and good choreographies…I get inspired by the other dancers."

Isabelle stated during a casual conversation:

"It's such a great company, huh? People are so nice...this is the only company where I feel so free, comfortable...so open, nice people..."

As shown in the above, the friendly atmosphere is very much appreciated by both the director and the dancers. Things are expressed in different ways, but the dancers point out the same issues as good values: the openness, freedom, nice atmosphere, personal growth and good camaraderie. Another dancer mentioned:

"I like working in this company because of *Patrick*'s honesty. He is very direct. I trust him, and he trusts me. He wouldn't do anything to hurt us. There are sometimes issues between the office and dancers, but it's normal. *Patrick* helped me to grow as a dancer. Because we have a mutual trust, I grew faster."

"The good aspects of the company are the repertoire, and the choreography. We are not really family, but we are like family. We used to have favors and politics with the old director, but since *Patrick* joined, things changed. Salaries are better, for example. It is a unique company in Montreal in terms of style. This company is more relaxed. Less tense. Of course, when we talk about salaries, schedule, contracts, 'economization' (pushing dancers to dance so much in short time), we do have issues of politics, but much less bureaucracy. It is good to be free. Since *Patrick* joined, it became less bureaucratic, and we started to have more freedom. The freedom goes with responsibility, and I think the balance is important."

The absence of hierarchy, and the non-bureaucratic/ non-authoritarian environment are the factors that are certainly compatible with the ideal direction of the team, as *Patrick* believes. Since some of the dancers see the changes since *Patrick* joined the company, his approach and beliefs have been influential in the organizational culture. In terms of culture, it is very close to the director's ideal picture, still, he is convinced that all in all, having a clear vision is the most important aspect in managing and directing the team. He stated:

"Having a vision is important. Teamwork is important, but having vision is important. Sensitivity, sensibility in many aspects...what is art today, what is dance today, what is good for individual dancers, and what is good for the company, but also what is "bad" for individual dancers, and what is bad for the company...and one should be aware of these things. What is good, but also what is *bad*."

Despite all the positive characteristics of the company, *Patrick* identifies two weak points in terms of directing the team. The first point is the time constraint. He thinks that there is

simply not enough time for all the things he should pay attention to. Secondly, he recognizes that there are communication problems within the organization. This includes the communication between the administration and the production team, as well as between the dancers and himself. Even though the atmosphere of the company is 'open' and 'friendly,' this apparently does not lead to 'open communication.' The related conflicting issues will be discussed later.

The group dynamics of the dancers' team also show interesting characteristics when they work with the ballet master, *Sébastien* and one of the choreographers, *Melanie*. Both of them are highly involved in the activities of the dancers, and are also important stakeholders in many ways. However, despite the significance of their positions, they are *not* part of the management. Both *Sébastien* and *Melanie* are 'invited' specialists who provide specific knowledge and services to the team of the dancers. Ideally speaking, a dance production company should not treat the dancers as merely 'human resources'; *the Dance X* is also highly aware that 'the dancers' make the existence of the company possible. *Patrick* is very conscious that the dancers are not there to *serve* the company, but that they *make* the company. *The Dance X*, thus, provides the key specialists to the dancers, so that the company as a whole and especially the dancers can maximize their sense of empowerment and existence as a cohesive unit. In order to facilitate the process of high involvement in the daily activities, and minimal involvement in the management activities, both *Sébastien* and *Melanie* try to avoid getting occupied with administrative issues, politics, and other nitty-gritty technical matters. At the same time, at the moral and emotional levels, the dancers depend on them to a significant degree. Since *Sébastien* and *Melanie* are not the dancers' direct bosses, but technically speaking, 'invited outsiders,' the dancers often find refuge in their embrace. They often become facilitators between the dancers and the management as described in the earlier chapter. Hence, in regards to the team's group dynamics, the strong cohesiveness and positive team spirit particularly become eminent due to the high degree of intimacy these experts share with the dancers, and the fact that they have earned a considerable amount of respect and trust from the dancers.

Craig investigates the difference between the philosophy of cooperatives (i.e. the original motivation for establishing cooperatives) and the actual practices of cooperatives (1989). Cooperatives are an organizational form intended to encourage people to work together to accomplish common objectives (Craig 1989, 63). Craig claims that, in spite of the original intention, cooperatives are often run by a few leaders and are oriented towards the interests of a handful of people (1989, 69). He encourages a more collaborative, less bureaucratic approach to cooperatives, and the new paradigm will not only serve the organizational purpose, but also contribute to the psychological and social benefits of the participants through a strong value driven attitude (Craig 1989, 68).

Although the situation and purposes are different, the director of *the Dance X* aims for something similar to the *philosophy* of cooperatives: he wishes to make a working environment that is collaborative, less authoritarian, and less bureaucratic for the dancers by paying attention to the dancers' personal as well as artistic growth and by giving them more freedom. In a way, it is not an overstatement that a performing art production requires (or ideally requires) the type of mentality that is close to the philosophy of cooperatives in Craig's discussion. Given that these traits are highly valued by both the management and the dancers, the participants of the organization, i.e. the dancers, have certain expectations and aspiration within the boundary of *the Dance X*. Consequently, when the expectations are not fulfilled from their perspectives, frustration emerges. The following sections will discuss some conflicting areas in the production team at *the Dance X*.

Some frustrating situations and conflicting areas of the production team are 1) the company image, 2) repertoire, 3) general manager, 4) the precarious situations of the dancers, and 5) favoritism. Before I begin the discussion, I would like to once again point out that disagreements in any organization could rise due to different perspectives and interests of the people who are involved in the events. I intend to describe these situations from various points of

view, and try to avoid passing my own judgment on the events, persons, and other related matters. In addition, employees and people in a subordinate position are often highly critical of those in power. This is because they have certain expectations from the people in the superior positions, such as: 'commitment,' 'competence,' 'integrity,' 'leadership,' and 'clear direction/vision.' As many scholars of management and organizational behaviour claim, these are probably necessary qualities for leaders of organizations and institutions. However, leaders and managers are also human beings, and it is sometimes very difficult to live up to the image of ideal leadership and the high expectations. It is, therefore, critical to remember that people in power do have huge pressure both from the inside and outside of the organization, and they have far more responsibilities than other organizational members.

The Company Image

As mentioned earlier, many people associate the real name of the company with a particular form of dance, since the company became very popular during the 70s through this style of dance. Hence, during the 70s, the name of the company guaranteed to satisfy these public expectations; however, according to the artistic director, *Patrick*, today, this genre of dance has become rather obsolete, thus the name left an outdated aftertaste with the company. Since *Patrick*'s job is to be very sensitive to market trends and public demand, and to be image conscious, the 'name issue' certainly disturbs his vision and style of directorship. Some of my informants told me about some incidents where various theatres refused to do business with the company when it approached theatres worldwide, simply because the image of the 70s' dance form struck too strongly.

Patrick told me that he is very motivated by the new challenge of his career— directorship. At the same time, his concern about the 'negative' company image is strongly present. The founder of the company, who is also one of the board members, does not wish to change the name of the company. *Patrick* said that the board members have never tried to

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influence him on the context and flavor of the company's repertoire so far, and he thinks he is already very fortunate about this, in spite of the existing 'name problem.' Torn between the board's wish and the public trend, *Patrick*'s determination to reverse the company's image grows ever stronger.

As I suggested earlier, what interrupts the director's smooth running of the company operations seems to increase the anxiety level of the production team. This is because the dancers are extremely sensitive to the director's decisions and vision. *Patrick*'s anxiety about the company's name is deeply felt among the dancers. The ambition to change the company image is also frequently expressed by *Patrick*, and the dancers often encounter situations where they are asked to understand why the director is making certain decisions especially regarding the repertoire/choreographies and this company's future directions. This is also a way to keep the attention of the dancers on *the Dance X*. Needless to say, the talented dancers are invaluable assets to the company; therefore, the director would like to give a positive impression of the company to the dancers. This is particularly true for the key figures among the dancers who make this company's image cosmopolitan, trendy, cool, young, and energetic—the very image he wishes to convey. The key figures of *the Dance X* are not necessarily the lead dancers in the traditional hierarchical sense, which can be found in ranked positions such as principal dancers and soloists. However, this company cherishes individuals' unique characteristics, and those dancers who possess strong characteristics are especially important assets to the company, because they help to add a distinctive flavour to the company's cosmopolitan and trendy image. *Patrick* is also very aware that if the repertoire/choreographies are not interesting or challenging to the dancers, they will leave the company and it will change the company's dynamics. A dancer mentioned to me that a dance contract is usually designed in a way that either party—the company or the dancer—can get out of it quite easily if necessary. According to this dancer, this is because disagreements in artistic philosophy, working styles, as well as the degrees of each other's expectations can happen easily in this field, and both parties usually do not wish to waste

time, energy, and resources for meaningless efforts. Since artists are not passive employees, but rather pursue their careers based on the values they attribute to their personal accomplishment and development, they are highly involved in the process of evaluation and negotiation between their personal principles and the company's philosophy, ethics, and professional profile. I am not implying that the bargaining position of the dancer is much better than that of the director—quite the opposite—but the director is certainly responsive to the mobile nature of professional dance culture, and thus cannot underestimate the flexibility and potential mobility of the dancers.

Some dancers initially did not mind the company's name, either because they themselves are not familiar with the 70s dance style, and/or they simply do not associate the name of the company with the obsolete form of dance. However, it is somewhat frustrating for the dancers that their artistic director is constantly obsessed with the 'negative' image of the company and its name. Even if it was *not* a problem for some dancers at first, it *becomes* a problem eventually: it is constantly stated as a problem by the leader of the team. Some dancers expressed the view that the dancers would start to have a complex about the fact that their artistic director has a complex about the name. As will be elaborated in the next section, some dancers believe that *Patrick*'s desperation to improve the company's impression is not necessarily related to the choice of repertoire/choreographies that are *supposed* to make the company's image better. Frustrations and confusions regarding the 'name issue' and 'repertoire' persist.

The 'Right' Repertoire

Having the 'right' repertoire is a very important but difficult task for the director. The director builds the repertoire with choreographies that are either ready-made or collaboratively developed with the dancers specifically for the company. Due to the lack of funds, this company does not have as large a repertoire as some other major companies. This means that the dancers must dance the same pieces over and over for a long period of time. Consequently, it can create a

slight annoyance among the dancers. However, the issue of true frustrations in terms of repertoire/choreographies reveals more intricate situations.

In a previous chapter, I mentioned the fact that the dancers dance ultimately for *themselves* (see Chapter 3, page 59). Unlike many other people who work because they have to, or choose a particular job not because they are passionate about the job itself, but because of what the job brings such as money and status, dancers and other performing artists are passionate about what they do. Frankly speaking, if they were not passionate about what they do, they would not be able to find the energy to go through all the pressures, struggles, and unpleasant/ hard working conditions. In other words, under normal circumstances, 'regular' people will never tolerate such pressure or working conditions alike, and dedicate themselves to the maximum as those dancers do. The bottom line is that they are passionate about artistic experience; at the same time, it is their purpose of existence. They made the decision to take on the inner-worldly journey of the Self: searching for the purpose of existence and practice of art, expressing emotions and thoughts, struggling and negotiating with one's limitation, forgiving and embracing one's own soul and spirit...their internal dialogues continue.

The same principle applies to the 'dancing experience.' As pointed out earlier, it is very important for them to have pleasurable choreographies to dance, and to work with inspiring choreographers. The repertoire of a company is often critically evaluated by dancers, and before anything, i.e. wages, working conditions, prestige, etc., the company's repertoire and associated choreographers become the primary deciding factors for a dancer to sign a contract with the company. All dancers at *the Dance X* agree that the 'pleasure' of dancing 'good' choreography is far more important than the 'role' itself. Even though there are more prominent roles for some choreographic pieces, the individuals' characteristics are more respected in this company, and they also have chances to express themselves in various ways and occasions, they tend to focus on the choreography itself rather than the role. A dancer who does not hold a leading role in a particular piece mentioned: "I love dancing it, even though my role in that piece is not big. I love

the 'energy' of it." Conversely, a dancer who has a major role in a choreographic work shared the view with me that he/she does not enjoy dancing the piece simply due to some choreographic problems in terms of quality, taste, energy and dynamic, and he/she does not feel 'right' about performing in it. On the other hand, another dancer stated: "my first objective is to do it well...to do it right. I don't even have to think about the pleasure, it will come automatically when you adapt to it." Some dancers mentioned that dancers at classic ballet companies tend to believe that the roles are more important, because the roles are directly linked with the rigid ranking system within the company such as principal dancers, soloists, corps de ballet, etc. On another occasion, I had a chance to discuss this issue with some dancers who work for a classic ballet company. According to them, even within a limited performing scope that is strictly attached to their rankings, great choreographers produce great pieces for each individual role, thus it is pleasurable to dance regardless of the role and vice versa. To put it briefly, what occupies the dancers' mind, at least at *the Dance X*, seems to be the choreography and not the roles.

Interestingly, there appears to be a discrepancy between what the general audience wants to see and what the dancers enjoy dancing. If the dancers' primary goal is to please the audience, and/or if their main interest is to get public attention and to live the glamorous image, they will be happy dancing what the general public demands. However, the situation is far more complicated than it seems. Speaking of pure preference, most of my informants clearly stated that they prefer to dance more contemporary, intellectual and artistic pieces. On the other hand, the general audience prefers more commercial and approachable pieces, especially in North America, according to my informants. Dance companies usually attract talented dancers by having interesting repertoire/choreographies and also by organizing collaborative projects with renowned choreographers. Thus, having the 'right' repertoire has a double-sided purpose: to please and entertain the audience, as well as to gratify and keep the dancers, while allowing them to grow.

The Repertoire Frustrations at **the Dance X**

The importance of the 'company image'-/ 'repertoire'-discussions lies in its potential to represent the origins of the tension between *Patrick* (the director) and the dancers in terms of the group dynamics of the production team. What becomes prominent in the analysis of the production team's tension are issues such as ineffective communication, the dancers' level of trust in the director's taste, competence, leadership, vision, and integrity.

The director's principal concern is to increase the popularity and growth of the company. Among many objectives, he is determined to make *the Dance X* more 'contemporary,' by adding contemporary works that have "energetic, young, cosmopolitan images." It is his responsibility to track the market demand and trend in order to sell the shows. As discussed in the above section, the director is desperate to change the company's image. But his good intention simultaneously causes a negative psychological impact and lack of integrity in the team. Some dancers are somewhat skeptical about the director's claim that he is actually trying to 'improve' the image. In terms of the director's choice of repertoire, there seem to be some frustrating situations among the dancers: some agree with his choices, and some are dissatisfied with what he chooses or the way he chooses. Besides the obvious challenges associated with the selection within a limited budget, there are some fundamental or philosophical disagreements between the director's choices and what the dancers want. In addition, in the discourses of the production team there is a puzzling term, 'contemporary.' Below, I would like to demonstrate the three different interpretations regarding the disagreements/confusions of *Patrick*'s choices for the company repertoire.

There appear to be three main possible interpretations—in my informants' minds—of the existing confusions. The first possibility is that the term 'contemporary' is understood differently by different individuals. The second possibility is that there is a 'taste-incompatibility' between *Patrick* (the director) and the dancers. The third one suggests that the dancers simply do not

believe that *Patrick* knows what he is doing, i.e. they question *Patrick*'s judgment and/or competence.

The first possible source of the confusions is in regards to the interpretation of the term, 'contemporary.' According to the testimonies of my informants, there are confusions among the dancers in terms of what the director wants and where the company is going. It mostly stems from the term, 'contemporary,' which is often used by the director to express his vision of the company. Even if the confusion is eliminated, there are still artistic and philosophical issues to overcome. When illustrating choreographies, the term 'contemporary' is normally understood as intellectual, artistic, philosophical, abstract, postmodern, fragmented (without a common major theme throughout a choreography or a set of choreographies). Usually, the term 'commercial' stands for the opposite of 'contemporary': commercial pieces are perceived to be lightweight, non-intellectual, shallow, superficial, and tacky. To most fine art dancers, commercial pieces have negative connotations. Let us look at what *Valentine* mentioned:

> "He (*Patrick*) wants to make the audience inspired and enjoy the show. He wants it to be popular but not too contemporary. I think he wants to commercialize the company, and I think that's fine."

As explained above, the evaluation of the choreographies is made on a scale between 'contemporary' and 'commercial.' *Valentine* believes that *Patrick*'s intention is to be in the middle of the range that has both contemporary and commercial nuances. She is certain that he wants to make the company popular and contemporary, but in terms of 'commercialization' she just states her opinion. This is because *Patrick* does not use the term 'commercialization' when he explains his vision to the dancers. As a result, the dancers make their own interpretations of what has been said by the director. Since the terms such as 'contemporary' and 'commercial' are qualitative and ambiguous, there is some space for free interpretations. Similarly, some dancers strongly believe that his intention is to commercialize the company, and agree with his decision, not necessarily because of the taste or types of repertoire, but for the sake of the company's

growth. Those dancers who clearly see *Patrick*'s vision of 'commercializing' the company do not even question the fact that his objective is said to make the company 'contemporary.' Despite the fact that the terms 'commercial' and 'contemporary' are at opposite ends in many dancers' minds, there is still a possibility for each individual's interpretation of the terms. This is a situation where the dancers believe that *Patrick*'s mission is to improve the company image by adding contemporary pieces, but at the same time make it accessible to the general public, i.e. some commercial aspects must be tolerated. Whether or not to agree with the commercialization strategy is yet another level of issue on which the dancers must form their opinions. The source of the confusion not only lies in the definition of 'contemporary pieces' but also in the director's goal to commercialize the company.

The second possible reason for the confusions is that some dancers at *the Dance X* believe that *Patrick* has a distinctively different 'taste' from that of the dancers. A dancer mentioned:

> "He doesn't explore things. I think he is tacky. He doesn't mean to bring tacky things, but he is just tacky. So from his point of view, those repertoires are good choices. I don't think he means to commercialize it. He actually thinks that he is putting enough intellectual stuff."

The main difference between *Valentine*'s and this dancer's opinion is that this dancer does not think that the director is actually trying to 'commercialize' the company, but that *Patrick* simply has very different ideas of what 'contemporary' pieces are. As a result, he ends up incorporating many 'commercial' pieces (from this dancer's and some others' point of view) involuntarily. It is important to note that, the emphasis of the second scenario is not on the 'interpretation' of the director's words, but rather on the director's 'taste'.

The third possible source of the confusions questions the competence of the director in directing the team. *Mathew* claims:

> "*Patrick* says that he doesn't like commercial stuff, but he does choose commercial stuff. He always mentions that he wants to make the company more contemporary. That's the

key word. But his vision and actual practice is quite different. He is contradicting himself."

In his discussion, the focus is not the interpretation or taste, but the director's level of competence—the capacity to be consistent. A few other dancers also stated similar comments to *Mathew*'s.

As *Patrick* himself admits, the fundamental problem lies in the ineffective communication within the team: in this case, particularly between the director and the dancers. Despite the director's clear intention of making *the Dance X* more contemporary, there seems to be a misunderstanding about 'how' *Patrick* wants to make it contemporary. The intention is communicated by *Patrick* to the dancers, but the 'how'-part appears not to be clarified. Consequently, the degree of confusion within the team regarding the director's choice intensifies even further. The commercialization strategy of the company also does not seem to be communicated properly, although the term 'contemporary' often appears in the discourses of the director. Some dancers believe that the director wants to 'commercialize' the company, and some do not. As long as the dancers feel that they have to dance 'commercial' pieces, it is less motivating for them, since commercial choreographies often have a negative overtone, and it is confusing because it is primarily against what the director expresses i.e. making this company more 'contemporary.'

There are only two things that seem consistent among all the dancers' opinions related to the repertoire issue: 1) *Patrick* intends to make the company contemporary, and 2) *Patrick* chooses commercial pieces for the repertoire. However, the reasons for choosing the commercial pieces are not so obvious to the dancers. Even those who agree with his decision and believe that he is trying to commercialize the company, express that they respect his choices but those 'commercial' pieces are often not pleasurable to dance. This repertoire-issue gives anxiety to the dancers, and affects the group dynamics. As we have seen in the above discussion, the repertoire-issue implies that there is a communication problem within the production team, in addition to the

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'lack of confidence' in the director's expertise that is suggested by the dancers' apprehension. This is a good sample case for the conflicting areas of the production team, especially between the director and the dancers. This case infers that the core problems, i.e. communication difficulty and 'lack of trust' in the director, become evident not only in the repertoire-issue, but also in other organizational issues. The dancers' battle continues between their personal challenge, accomplishment, pleasure and what they have to do to follow the company's direction.

Artistic Being

Imagine two bowls—each bowl contains the identical amount but different kinds of liquid with a different consistency. Now, if I would throw a tiny pebble into each bowl, I would imagine that the wave patterns of the ripple effect in each bowl would be dissimilar because of the different consistency of the liquid in each bowl. This is what I am trying to depict in this paper. The identical event in the group of performing artists will cause different types of 'waves' and 'impact' from the non-artist environment, due to the different 'composition' of the people.

What I would like to point out with particular attention is the distinctiveness of performing artists' reality. I do not want to isolate artists from the rest of North American society; however, these people do possess special characteristics, and it has to be acknowledged. It is a long process of training, lifestyle, and philosophical frame that shapes these individuals in a distinctive manner. Amateurs usually concentrate on the physicality of dance. However, to dancers, the physicality of dance is only secondary: the spiritual essence of dance/art is the most important element (Baryshnikov, 2003), just as martial arts practitioners do not consider the physicality as the core of the practice (Kohn 2003, 139). The essence of art and the artistic Being exists somewhere deep in our core (Graham 1998, 67), and only those who experience the "heart of the [...] art" (Wulff 1998, 9) can understand the essence of art. One of my informants who teaches dance to paraplegic people once told me about the essence of dance and her growth through this teaching experience. A paraplegic and dance? —One might wonder. Since

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paraplegic people's bodies do not have versatility or freedom as others do, the philosophical connection this dancer has with the paraplegic students is through the purest form of dance—the essence of dance. This dancer explained: "Through this invaluable teaching experience, I am able to re-live, re-experience my own body and internalize the essence of dance."

That very 'distinctiveness' is the focal point that allowed a special connection between myself and my informants, and that is the essence of the artistic Being. It is *not* about being an artist, but it is about being an 'artistic Being.' Here, by no means do I wish to romanticize this distinctiveness in a positive sense, but rather it includes their insecurity, vulnerability, clumsiness, stubbornness, and awkwardness. Therefore, what I describe in the following sections may not seem logical, reasonable, or imaginable in the 'average' North American or European context; however, it is logical and reasonable in the context of artists' reality.

Strong Principles

Even though *the Dance X* operates in North America, and in many ways, in the North American context, it should still not be seen as just *any other* North American company/institution, but in the context of an art production company, most of whose members are performing artists. These individuals have an idiosyncratic level of connection, particularly through strong principles. These principles can be interpreted as professionalism and sense of discipline, but it is even beyond the scope of vocation, and in the deeper, more personal levels such as moral values, ethics, and ideology.

Living as artistic beings, these dancers' work ethics are significantly different from that of 'average' people. It is because artists' reality, priorities, and aspirations are quite different from those of others. As explained in the earlier chapter, they have a dancing career *not* as a 'means' to an end, but as an 'end.' They constantly ask themselves: what it is to be a dancer and the meaning of living as an artistic being. Despite the fact that they have learned and practiced under strict sets of rules, expectations, artistic principles, and standards, one thing they do not do

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easily is to simply do what they are told without question. Some scholars portray the image of dancers as emotionally damaged, confused, manipulated, and psychologically unstable (cf. Diller, 1980). However, I believe that these impressions and theories often emerge from highly negative personal experiences as ex-dancers, by highlighting anger and frustration toward the dance culture and not making peace with their past, and thus should not be accepted at face value. The stereotypical image of an obedient attitude in front of authoritative figures undermines a more realistic picture of dancers; they are never so clueless, helpless, or powerless.

Whether or not to belong to a dance production company/institution or to dance as a freelancer often emerges as a big question in the careers of dancers. Those who truly desire to discover the essence of dance and 'self core' often question the danger of losing their unique Self and of decreased chances for free expression by joining a company. Some freelancers and those who prefer not to belong to an institution do share a similar view: even sacrificing job security and other benefits, some dancers value the way in which freelancers work, leaving room for free expression and 'free being' rather than working for a company within the philosophical framework of a single artistic director. As I repeatedly mentioned throughout the paper, dancers dance for themselves, for their personal growth and accomplishment; therefore, disagreements in artistic philosophy, repertoire, taste, work ethics, and moral principles are good enough reasons to leave a company far more often than those based on working conditions, wages, and job security which are normally more important deciding factors for choosing or terminating a job for 'average' employees. Some of my informants mentioned to me that they are more willing to be unemployed for artistic reasons than doing something that they do not agree with. Sometimes rather unusual reactions and decisions can be seen due to their strong sense of principles. As a matter of fact, some dancers left the company this year without setting subsequent projects, but based on their strong beliefs and principles.

High Sense of Professionalism and Humbleness

As we have seen above, dancers have a distinctive idea about professionalism due to their strong sense of work ethics and principles. Having a career as a dancer takes an incredible amount of commitment and effort. Without this strong dedication, it is impossible to achieve the level of success which these dancers attained and try to maintain. Since their careers require so much discipline, they are intrinsically diligent people, and they are focused on polishing their artistry. Despite the fact that the performing arts world has a glamorous aspect due to the performances on stage and public attention, surprisingly, their sense of elitism rarely stems from this aspect of their stage experience; rather it stems from the fact that they possess an exceptional talent, love of dancing, respect and dedication towards arts and life, and achievement in their careers. They are proud of what they do, but their sense of elitism is not in the material sense: it is quite contrary. *Max* told me about his life as a dancer:

> "I grew a lot since I became a dancer. Dancing allowed me to enjoy my life more. It allowed me to experience with the world, and in the world. Life as a dancer is certainly hard. At the same time, it is so rewarding to touch the audience. I appreciate my life more...it humbled me..."

As suggested in *Max*'s comment, there is often a certain humility among the dancers. Performing on stage also has some aspect of 'gambling.' The performers can never over-prepare themselves; at the same time, their performances are ultimately dependent on the luck of that very moment on stage. Because they constantly put themselves at 'risk,' they try hard to have complete control of their body, mind, and life. The sense of 'loss of control' can become a source of fear and vulnerability. In order to fight this fear, they have to remain disciplined, focused, and motivated. For this reason, at times, staying disciplined and diligent can itself become an obsession (Wulff 1998, 76).

However, besides this noticeably hard-working trait, they show a fundamentally modest and respectful attitude. Throughout their careers, they have been on a journey to discover their true Self, and they have asked many philosophical questions of themselves. Some of them see

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themselves as in a process of achieving personal enlightenment, and some of them already have much wisdom to share. They are very easy-going and relaxed when it comes to interpersonal relationships, but they take life and arts very seriously. This is because somewhere along the path, they have learned to appreciate what they have in their life, never to underestimate what life and arts can teach them, to stay humble, and not to overestimate themselves in front of the greatness of life and arts. The modesty especially affects their attitude to learning. Two dancers mentioned:

> "We should never assume that we are the best, or we have nothing to improve or to learn from others. There is so much to learn...we have to keep working hard. Ego will block you. When you dance, you should never dance to show off. Every exhibition/spectacle is different, and you should follow as the show takes you. Ego is dangerous. The harder you work, the more humble you become."

> "It's important for me not to lose the sight of why I am dancing. I want to be an artist, and be happy about what I am doing, I want to keep on absorbing, keep on learning, I just want to be a sponge forever."

There seems to be the notion of the 'right attitude' including the one for accomplishing their goals. To the question, "What qualities or characteristics do you value most as a dancer?", the dancers answered in a relatively comparable manner:

> "To be open, and to be real...to be real to yourself."
> "To be very very open to yourself and to others, and versatility."
> "Open-mindedness, willingness to accept, and respect towards others."
> "Open-mindedness, consistency, and to try to find who you are, and to be yourself."
> "Being natural, being a human."
> "Commitment and flexibility."

They approach their career and life with this 'right attitude,' and ultimately try to achieve their personal objectives. I will introduce some of my informants' accounts when they stated their goal as a dancer:

> "To get intensity and to touch intensity. And to emancipate myself."

> "To create emotion, to touch people, and to be very humble."

> "It happens almost everyday, maybe only for five to ten minutes...to be able to dance totally...physically, mentally, and emotionally...the unity of *all* at the same time. The

body feels all the extremity, focused…then I feel the most alive and freest in the present moment. I am dancing in order to feel that, and my goal as a dancer is to be conscious about these moments."

"I want to explore myself…to challenge the limit of the body, work hard, and strive for perfection. I also want to take good care of my own body. I love to move and touch people through my dancing. The important thing is to be flexible, disciplined, focused, and versatile."

As seen above, one could 'feel' the considerable degree of emotional and physical investment which those dancers make in their vocational life. Because of this serious devotion, they expect a lot from themselves, and also from others. The drive to pursue excellence and perfection is a prerequisite in their world. Accordingly, their ethical sense of their vocation also develops in the same direction. All these elements—the strong principles, beliefs, commitment, and attitude—shape their notion of professionalism. They frown upon laziness, superficiality, and arrogance towards life and arts. At *the Dance X*, these dancers have found a few issues on which they often question this sense of professionalism.

General Manager

The role of the general manager, *Linda*, was to coordinate the administrative as well as the production aspect of the company. Technically speaking, she was the head of the firm. In addition, she was expected to fulfill a 'Public Relations' function, which included making connections with sponsors and theaters, selling the company products i.e. dance shows, and expanding their stage opportunities worldwide. Her function was strictly administration-oriented, she spent most of the day in her office on the top floor; occasionally coming down to the office where administrative employees work. However, this is a dance production company; thus the dancers and choreographers are the most valuable assets of the company. Naturally, taking care of employees, and being a supportive leader are some of the important duties of the general manager. She rarely appeared in the studio where dancers work. As a matter of fact, during the

five-month observation, I saw her only once briefly in the studio when the dancers were having rehearsals for the upcoming shows.

As soon as I started my participant observation at *the Dance X*, I noticed that most dancers, as well as office employees of the company, had negative impressions about the general manager. Most of the dancers told me directly: "She is a difficult person," "She won't listen to you, she has no time for you," and "She is a bitch!" Based on their own experience, they commented on her in colorful language. Some were rather serious about the issues, tried to communicate to me their personal problems related to *Linda*, and even insisted that I should thoroughly describe her problematic ways of managing the company and people in my thesis. Those who encouraged me to write about the general manager seemed to expect that my thesis could become a communication means to convey certain messages on their behalf to the management and to the manager herself. In so doing, they seemed to hope that the manager would finally understand their frustrations and angers associated with her. Some of them believed that things would change with her, and others did not expect changes, but just wished her to comprehend that her existing practices and manners were simply wrong. On the other hand, there were some who amusingly told me various stories about her to stimulate my interest, or tried to shock me with stories and enjoyed watching my reactions, and/or tried to tease me by sensationalizing my eventual encounter with her as if it were some type of big mission or challenge.

Although most of the stories and rumors about the general manager—which I heard from the dancers and other members of the company—were negative, one thing was certain. *She* was constantly 'the hot topic' in the company. Everybody I talked to pointed out to me that I should interview her as soon as possible, because she is such a character and it would be worth meeting her. The dark image of the general manager overshadowed the morale of the dancers as well as the administrative employees. By then, I became highly curious about meeting her. Since I was never officially introduced to her, I have never met her personally. I tried to make an

appointment to see her, but the administrative assistant told me that she did not seem interested in meeting me. Many days passed without having a chance for a personal encounter with her.

One morning, I arrived in the studio as usual, and I noticed that the atmosphere of the studio was somewhat different. Everybody appeared so restless and anxious. Something had happened—I suspected immediately. Before I even had a chance to sit down on my usual spot, *Oswald* ran towards me and said cheerfully but in a whispery voice, "Did you hear about it?"— "Hear what?"—"*Linda* (the General Manager) got fired!" Later, many dancers told me about what had happened to the General Manager in detail. The board decided to lay her off, and she left the company immediately. Consequently, my field research ended without having a chance to meet her in person. Soon after this incident, the mood in the company improved. The dark shadow disappeared as if clouds had cleared in the sky. However, technically and administratively, the company was going through a difficult time. A company without a general manager posed many uncertainties for the employees, and it affected their morale. Until the company found a new candidate for this post, they had to continue the daily operations without a clear direction.

Although she had already resigned her post, her presence was still one of the most crucial reasons for conflicts, and sometimes for negative group morale during my field research. Therefore, I illustrate the development of their conflict relations and group dynamics from the employees' perspectives in the following.

Her Personality and Mannerism towards the Dancers

Linda was not respected as a good organizational leader partially because, according to my informants, she lacked interpersonal skills. Many of them expressed the view that she is simply not a nice person. Despite the fact that *the Dance X* is a dance production company, the general manager was perceived to be uninterested in what the company produces, or even concerned with the healthy growth and performance of the company. According to them, she was

only interested in her status, material gains, and her appearance, but not the company, dance, and most of all, dancers. Most of the dancers told me that they did not like the way they were treated by the general manager. In addition, they had a problem with the fact that *Linda* did not care about the production, at least in their perception. As a general manager, she should have been familiar with the daily operations of the production side as well, especially if she would like to sell the products, the dance shows, to various theaters in the world. Whether the bad relationship between the general manager and the dancers derived from the dancers' constant opposition to the management, or from the manager's lack of consideration towards the dancers is unclear; however, she appeared to be very detached from the dancers' dedication, productions, and the dancers themselves. The mutual frustration seemed to widen the chasm between the two parties, and there appeared to be very little damage control they could bring to bear at that stage.

"She doesn't even greet me when we meet in the corridor"—a dancer who has never been in a conflict situation with *Linda* commented. Likewise, many dancers felt that *Linda* was very snobbish, and they felt no respect from the manager. "Because we are second class citizens, we don't deserve a decent treatment": a half-joking but half-serious statement as this one indicates displeasure in dealing with her. Many of them also thought that it was very strange that *Linda* did not spend any time in the studios, observing their work, in-progress collaborations that would be presented in the coming season, or simply getting informed about what was going on daily in the studios. At least in many of the organizational members' mind, she is not working hard in the company, and her unprofessional attitude did not inspire or motivate them. Instead, she spent most of the day in her office, which is also luxuriously decorated with company funds. "She is busy with her stereo system in her office and with her fancy car."—The dancers often spit out such a statement. Although *Linda* no longer works for the company, the dancers at that time perceived that their busy schedules and the frustrating situation would continue.

Disappointment in Her Qualifications and Achievement

Particularly because of their strong work ethic and professionalism, the dancers have high expectations especially of their superiors' dedication and competence. Judging on the basis of their own standard of professionalism and work ethics, the general manager's attitude and achievement appeared unacceptable to the dancers. According to them, the general manager, *Linda*, was not fulfilling her responsibilities in the most effective ways. *Claudio* told me about *Linda* on tours: "We are all aware that she doesn't do anything during the tour. She is supposed to make connections with theaters and do her PR job, but she doesn't do anything!" *Max* also expressed a similar comment:

> "*Linda* is wasting too much money. What bothers me is that she comes often to tour with us. If it's a prestigious tour or destination, she comes with us. But if she comes with us, she is paid for her accommodation, airplane tickets, and other expenses, which are higher than that of a dancer. If she utilizes the trip to do some PR work, we understand. But she doesn't do anything, and just enjoys shopping. I think it is a complete waste of company's money if she comes on tour with us. We should either save the money, or re-distribute the costs to the dancers."

Many dancers commented on her in a comparable manner. Anybody who does not put his/her mind to what he/she does, or anybody who does not 'respect' the work is regarded negatively. But, in their case, they are the ones who are the most affected by *Linda*'s 'incompetence': her 'incompetence' in the PR function affects their performance opportunities. Furthermore, their dissatisfaction with the low salaries becomes even more frustrating if the dancers believe that the general manager is wasting the company's funds.

The Precarious Situations of Dancers

The company's annual season starts in June. Except for special cases, the dancers sign a contract every year, and it seems that this system is the norm in this industry. In general, salaries are quite low in the dance world. However, there is an even higher oversupply of female dancers, thus the competition among female dancers is particularly intense. Being in the less

advantageous position, they cannot freely complain about dissatisfactions that they experience

with both their salaries and working conditions. A dancer who has also worked for other

companies shared her concerns with me:

> "One of the most difficult aspects of working in this company is the lack of funds. So, the working condition is bad. For example, touring in this company is one of the hardest I have ever experienced in my dance career. When we visited France last year, the tour was horrible. We always stayed at bad hotels. Plus the tour scheduling was bad. Sometimes, we had to ride in a bus for seven hours, and we had to perform the same day after the long ride!"

The dancers often expressed the view that they are treated as second-class citizens in this field.

Max told me how he feels:

> "We are often abused in this industry. There are plenty of dancers out there looking for a job, and the standards are so high, so we have weak bargaining power. The administration—*Linda* –doesn't understand how hard our job is. The schedules and conditions, especially, the tour schedules should be planned in a much better way. I mean, at least, *Patrick* should know. He used to be a dancer! But he doesn't confront *Linda*. I really think that *Patrick* should interfere more with the administration. The administration doesn't give any consideration for the dancers. Theoretically, we should not work on national holidays, but working on holidays is taken for granted. If we work on national holidays, we want to be compensated for it, but instead, we get extra '*unpaid*' holidays."

There are two representatives of the dancers in the *Dance X*. If the dancers as a whole

group have some issues to discuss with the management, these two representatives are going to

approach the management, i.e. the general manager and the artistic director. The roles of

representatives are rotated among them every year. However, confronting the management is not

an easy task to undertake. Especially if it is related to the working conditions or the pay, many of

them already know that they are in a weak position, so they are reluctant or in some cases even

afraid to approach the management on this issue. In addition, there are four levels in the pay

scale. Since some of the dancers have even stronger dissatisfaction and sense of injustice about

their pay than others, it is hard to coordinate the complaints regarding the pay scale. In certain

cases, some dancers are jealous of others' pay and do not see this problem as the whole group's

struggle with the low salaries, so that things get even more complicated.

Among them, one dancer in particular took a strong initiative to confront the general manager on the low-salary issue. However, the relationship between the general manager and this dancer just got worse and worse, and there was no improvement on the actual issue itself. "I am sick of fighting with *Linda*."—commented the dancer. A female dancer once mentioned: "it's a good thing that some people are fighting more with *Linda* on this issue. I am not interested in being involved in this mess." Some other female dancers gave me a comparable statement, highlighting their weaker bargaining position. A male dancer commented on the fact that only a few people are fighting on this issue:

> "It's too bad that they don't stand up for themselves. They are not courageous enough. They are bitching a lot, but they don't do anything about it. For now, only a few of us did actually complain to *Linda* or *Patrick*, face to face."

Patrick has absolute decision-making power regarding the production; on the other hand, the administrative and financial matters are in the hands of the general manager. The dancer who confronted her most mentioned to me that both parties—*Linda* and this dancer—are tired of this long-lasting quarrel. On this matter, many dancers told me about *Linda* avoiding any contact with the dancers even if it were to be on a non-confrontational basis. In our conversations, this issue often came up as a form of joke. They often imitated her by saying with an exaggerated gesture: "Oh, I don't have time for you, I am so busy"—"I don't want to hear your complaints"—"I have nothing to talk about!" In spite of their jokes, there was still a serious problem and considerable dissatisfaction. As mentioned earlier, their tour scheduling, working conditions, and the low salaries are a constant annoyance. What bothered the dancers most was that the general manager was not giving them more consideration, i.e. improving the annual contracts and working conditions. As long as the dancers believed that the general manager was not competent and dedicated—accompanying the troupe on tours while not fulfilling the company duties—they felt that they were shortchanged.

Favoritism

In any organization and institution, the existence of favoritism is often an undeniable fact. Yet, it is a very sensitive issue, thus very difficult to talk or raise questions about. Here again, my objective is not to establish the position of whether the issues of favoritism really exist by identifying responsible people, but rather, it is to acknowledge that some dancers believe that favoritism is present, and that the notion of favoritism is affecting the group dynamics of the production team accordingly. There are many different perspectives on this issue; therefore introducing various points of view becomes crucial in the process of approaching the issue holistically.

In the previous chapter, I introduced a few traits of dancers, one of which was 'insecurity.' Especially because dancers are constantly exposed to critical eyes since an early age, the public approval and especially the ones from authoritative figures become encouragement and energy sources for their further efforts. The hard work pays off when the artists receive positive comments from the pivotal figures.

At *the Dance X, Patrick*, the artistic director, is the most critical figure to the dancers. He has absolute decision-making power in terms of production, casting, and other matters. Most of my informants shared a similar view that they always long for his approval and try to please the director. They stated that they have constantly longed for the approval of directors and other important figures throughout their dance careers. When they were young, it was their teacher to whom they looked up, and as professional dancers, it has been the directors of the companies they worked for. They believe that it is quite normal to desire for attention from the key figures in this field.

"We always try to please the director."—is a comment I have often heard from the dancers. However, this comment should not be interpreted as unconditional obedience to the authoritative figure. The dancers are not at all powerless; true powerlessness can be experienced in a completely different situation. As a matter of fact, they are extremely loyal to the director as

long as they have faith in the director's leadership and professionalism, i.e. as long as what the director tries to do makes sense to the artists, and they respect, and support the decisions he makes. However, when faith in the director fades away, the situation changes dramatically. As I discussed in the section of 'repertoire dilemma,' the dancers seriously invest their time and energy in evaluating the company's repertoire and comparing it with their own philosophical frame. Once they see no point in staying in the company for one reason or another, they will move on to the next 'intersection' within the flows of dancers' traffic. The mobility, flexibility and trans-local nature of the dance world plays an important role in determining dancers' *locations*.

Then, who are the directors?—or what are the roles preformed by the director? Besides the obvious function of art directing, the artistic director can be a mentor, teacher, leader, father/mother, supporter, comforter, and decider of the dancers' future. At *the Dance X*, the dancers also expect a high level of professional commitment and competence from the artistic director, *Patrick*, while desiring other types of 'humane' attention from him as a mentor.

Attention from an authoritative figure, such as the artistic director, is highly significant in dancers' careers. Dancers are often extremely self-critical, and they are surrounded by constant physical and emotional challenges. As stated above, they often feel insecure about their performances and the future. In this type of competitive and challenging life, encouraging comments from somebody they respect are very comforting and rewarding. Getting attention from the key individuals has two important elements: recognition and growth. 'Recognition' is also a subject matter that is often raised in management studies and studies of organizational behaviour. Recognition is often understood as a sign of acknowledgement in one's achievement by the manager/leader. Similarly, in the dance culture, dancers can have points of assurance in their achievement when their performance or skills are positively commented on and appreciated by the ballet master, coach, and directors alike. Secondly, the 'growth factor' is not exclusive to the performing arts world, but it is certainly a common notion in this world. When artists receive

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attention from pivotal figures, it can often lead to more opportunities to perform, to receive better quality of tutelage, and to have better access to privileged knowledge. For these compelling reasons, it is often a struggle to get attention from key figures, especially from the director. Lack of attention, to some dancers, causes a sense of powerlessness and rejection.

Transparency which gives them constant exposure to critical eyes, also protects them in many ways. At *the Dance X*, the dancers agree that high visibility and transparency can make the strengths and weaknesses of the dancers clear; therefore, they take it positively precisely for the recognition factor. This also suggests 'openness' within the production team, which is one of the most valuable qualities in their perception.

There is a common belief in *the Dance X* that one particular dancer receives more 'attention' from the director than the rest of the group, due to the director's intimate relationship with this dancer. Whether it is 'reality' or not is difficult to determine; however, the fact that many dancers feel highly uncomfortable about it, may already be a good enough reason for the director to review the situation of the group.

Romance in a dance company is not a rare concept. The director or choreographer of a company may be married to one of the dancers, or a married or unmarried couple could be working in the same company as dancers. As a matter of fact, it is quite normal to imagine that the people who experience intense emotions and physical challenges together would develop romantic feelings for each other. According to my informants, the intimate relationship of these two was a hidden matter for quite some time, even though many dancers suspected it. Some of the dancers told me that what they disliked the most about this issue is that it was kept secret for the director's personal reasons. As discussed above, to be open to the Self and open-mindedness towards others are regarded to be important qualities. This event, thus, symbolized a compromise of the open atmosphere which the director himself wished to create among the team members and which the team members value; therefore, it undermines the strong work ethics and professionalism that the dancers expect from the director.

"It's *not* a men-women thing, but it's a director-dancer thing"—a female dancer who feels uncomfortable with this event once told me. This comment triggered me to investigate if a sense of jealousy with regards to 'attention' is involved in the issue. However, according to my findings, the frustration does not only exist among female dancers, but also among male dancers. A male dancer stated:

> "As a director, first of all, he should not date with people he works with. That's a sign of lack of professionalism. I believe that any director should not mix private and professional matters. That's a golden rule."

The female dancers certainly feel uneasy about this issue, but actually it appears to have a lot more to do with the sense of righteousness, professionalism, and work ethics than issues related to sexual attention.

In order to contemplate the issue of 'attention,' let us look at how the dancers relate to each other. In the previous section, I argued that dancers make a considerable degree of emotional and physical investment in their vocational life. A dancer's career is extremely demanding in every aspect of the artist's life. In such an intense working environment where vulnerability and self-search is involved, "love, respect for others, and humane quality for one's own" become necessary qualities in order to have an effective working team, just as *Patrick*, the director, mentioned. Their work colleagues are much more than just somebody they work with. In the world where the 'work' is so much more than the means to an end, dancers learn to appreciate each other's care, love, respect, open-mindedness, and encouragement throughout their vocational life. Moreover, dancers are constantly exposed to situations where physical dangers and accidents can happen. Whether dancing in a group or pair, they have to pay attention to each other's safety and polish the precision in their work. The group effort they produce together often challenges their personal incompatibility, and thus pushes them to go beyond everyday 'earthly' life' and to achieve spiritual gratification. Love and respect for each other, open-mindedness, humbleness and special camaraderie in their discourses signify all these unique senses of vocation

and teamwork. Similarly, their artistic director is *not* simply a 'boss' in a regular working environment. He/she is expected to be a mentor, teacher, leader, father/mother, supporter and comforter. From this perspective, the attention the dancers desire from *Patrick* comprises the humane aspects of attention.

For the above reason, some dancers did feel a sense of rejection, lack of love, and powerlessness when they learned that the director was having an intimate relationship with one of the dancers. Some of them expressed the view that *Patrick* is taking something away from them, since attention from the pivotal figures implies recognition and growth for dancers, and strong work ethics and professionalism prevail in their working environment.

If an intimate relationship were to be between two individuals from the same hierarchical level or equivalent, it would have probably been less problematic. Relationships between two principal dancers, two directors, and between the director and the principal dancer may seem more 'reasonable' to dancers. However, at *the Dance X*, the director is proud of the fact that there is no bureaucratic ranking system among the dancers, and he encourages an egalitarian and collaborative working team. The dancers expect *Patrick* to treat all these dancers equally, however, by choosing to have an intimate relationship with one of the dancers, he cannot distribute his 'attention' to all his dancers equally. In fact, some dancers believe that *Patrick*'s partner gets better treatment than the rest of the group. A dancer claimed:

> "She (*Patrick*'s partner) gets 'injured easily' and gets away with it. We all suffer from some type of problem. Just before the show, she just doesn't feel like dancing, and somebody else has to take the position. You know, this dancer (the new cast) has to learn the choreography quickly, and performs on stage. She can get away with a lot of things. That's not right."

Among other claims of the dancers, some of them believe that this relationship is affecting *Patrick*'s professional decisions such as casting and treatment of the dancers. As in the above testimony, some dancers believe that *Patrick*'s partner is taking advantage of her personal affair with the director, and getting a lot more freedom and choices than the other dancers. Recently, there was a chance for the director to show special appreciation and respect to one of the senior

and key figures in the company. Everybody expected that the senior member would receive this special recognition from *Patrick*; but instead, the recognition went to his partner. Again, many of them are affected by this incident, which has touched upon their moral principles and work ethics, and at the same time, they are disappointed by what they identify as the director's 'lack of professionalism.' As long as they perceive that the director's professional decisions and choices are affected by his personal relationship, they are disappointed by the director's 'unprofessional' actions. These are some of the issues related to favoritism that are from some of the dancers' perspectives. The dancers have created a special relationship that is charged with love, care, and respect; however, it got slightly damaged through this event. The sense of rejection, powerlessness, and disappointment is experienced by some of them. As *Patrick* suggested, open communication between himself and the dancers might ease the tension between the two parties. To resolve this problem, both parties must be willing to step forward to communicate openly and to clear possible misunderstanding and gain mutual respect for each other.

Despite the various frustrations which the dancers experience at the company, the dancers at the Dance X are empowered individuals who work cooperatively as a team. In the following sections, I will demonstrate some positive practices and characteristics of the production team at *the Dance X.*

The Place of Empowerment and Empowered Individuals

In addition to the dancers themselves who have strong principles and work ethics, there are two key persons who contribute to their strong team spirit. One of them is *Sébastien*, the ballet master, who 'empowers' the dancers, and the other one is *Melanie*, the resident choreographer, who strongly inspires them.

As introduced briefly in the earlier chapter, *Sébastien* has a strong presence in the company's daily operations. He gives the daily morning class, and usually directs rehearsals in

the afternoon. The dancers appreciate *Sébastien*'s demanding classes, because they see positive changes in their bodies and feel empowered by his teaching (see Chapter 2, page 18). By mentally 'participating' in his classes everyday, *I* also felt inspired by this charismatic figure. "I see my classes as a place of empowerment. I am like a shaman"—*Sébastien* once mentioned to me. He continued:

> "I teach understanding of consciousness within, and connection with energy. I like people who can be powerful without me. I want to teach them 'self-management.' I am teaching them to find their own charismatic power through my own. Teaching is my identity. Teaching gives them love. It is a medium of expression. I am not attached to teaching; I just love it."

> "I am being personal without being personal. It is all about finding our own spiritual path. I am teaching them to find the spiritual path, and some technicality, of course. I am confident that I encourage and inspire them. There are sparks. I give them these sparks in their heart, mind and bodies. It doesn't matter where, but they feel them, and they remember them. I want them to vibrate their spirit. I help them vibrate to high frequency. Inspiration is mutual. We have moments of vibration—insight of inspiration."

Other than his excellent classes, one of the most important aspects of *Sébastien*'s influence on the production team is his emotional and psychological support for the dancers. When the dancers feel rejected or unsupported by *Patrick*, the artistic director, they search for refuge in the comfort provided by *Sébastien* (see this chapter, page 80). Besides the frustrating situations that are found in the team, *Patrick* has an incredibly busy schedule, which does not help to improve the communication between the dancers and himself. *Sébastien* often plays a facilitator's role between the director and the dancers. Thus, in many ways, the psychological, emotional and physical distance between *Patrick* and the dancers is compensated by the paternalistic attention that *Sébastien* gives to the dancers. Many of them in fact see *Sébastien* as a father figure. They usually desire paternalistic attention from the director, however, the circumstances do not allow this to happen easily. *Sébastien* is very aware of this situation; therefore his magnetic quality is one of the sources that promotes the cohesiveness of the group and empowerment of the dancers at *the Dance X*. Among the pivotal figures in the company,

Sébastien clearly spends the most time with the dancers. He commented on the current situation of the company:

> "It is a small group. They are very dependent on each other. Because the way the director is, it became this way. [...] The company is going through a difficult time artistically, or it has been always going through a difficult time. They are extremely professional. They rely on themselves, only on themselves now."

By watching how they dance and how they follow his classes, *Sébastien* knows exactly how the dancers feel, what their struggles are, what conditions they are in, and what to give them in order to empower them.

Another important person who influences the dancers' morale is *Melanie*, the resident choreographer. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, her creations and dance inspire the dancers, and many of them stated that they would stay in this company because *Melanie* is working with *the Dance X* (see this chapter page 70, 71). Earlier, I mentioned that some dancers are highly apprehensive about the director's choices of choreographies and repertoire. However, regarding *Melanie*'s work, most of the dancers specifically mentioned that her pieces are 'ideal' for *the Dance X*: her creations have both the intellectual aspect which the dancers desire, and accessibility that *Patrick* would like to bring to the repertoire. Being very sensitive to the dancers' personality and the 'colors' of their soul, she seems to continuously inspire them, while creating aesthetically engaging and intellectually motivating pieces that are pleasurable to dance.

"*Melanie* is the most professional choreographer I have ever worked with"—a comment as such was often made by the dancers. The choreographic pieces which *Melanie* produces as the 'end product' are not the only items that the dancers adore and admire. The secret of her popularity seems to also lie in her professionalism, competence, and approach. *Max* stated:

> "It is very exciting to see somebody excited in the creation process. With *Melanie*, so much work is getting done in such a short time. You don't waste time...your mind is always busy, so time goes fast!"

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The dancers find the process of collaboration with *Melanie* extremely inspiring and motivating particularly due to her working approach and style, which appeal to their sense of professionalism. According to them, she promotes creativity and contributions from the dancers, and they are a 'part' of the creation process. Many dancers shared the view that the sense of involvement and collaboration with *Melanie* gives them great satisfaction. In addition, she respects each dancer's own interpretation and is open to the dancers' suggestions; as a result, each individual's personality blends into the dance, which is exactly what the artistic director would like to have. *Melanie* explained about the creation process:

> "It has to be pleasurable to perform. They should enjoy what they do. I have to make them happy. I feel responsible for their growth and experience. It requires a lot of open-mindedness to create…it is an interesting process to see what comes out of it…and it's important for the dancers to take ownership of their dance. I don't like to use this term, but I would like to 'empower' them."

Like the ballet master, *Sébastien*, *Melanie* has a strong presence with the dancers. The emotional and psychological closeness she shares with the dancers is certainly the source of encouragement and inspiration for the dancers. She told me that she is reluctant to use the term 'empower,' because it is such a cliché. But she wishes the dancers to have the best dancing experience and growth through the creation process and the final product by showing them to take ownership of their dance. Both *Sébastien* and *Melanie* are concerned with their growth, and their love, care, and respect are certainly felt and appreciated as a healthy form of 'attention' by the dancers. Both of them do not tell the dancers 'what to do,' but rather they wake up the senses within the dancers' selves, so that the dancers themselves can find 'what they want to do' or 'what feels right' to them. They are dedicated to give freedom of expression to the dancers. The difference between *Sébastien* and *Melanie* is the area of interest. The types of work *Sébastien* gives to the dancers increase individuals' bodily and psychological consciousness. Since his classes are based on individuals' work, the focus is truly on their individual selves. On the other hand, *Melanie*'s concerns are individuals' creativity and also the group's collaboration. As

explained earlier, the dancers are asked to work in pairs and groups during the improvisation sessions. As a result, the dancers also receive opportunities for learning with which partner(s) they have better compatibility and how they exchange and communicate 'energy' with each other. Similarly, in case of bad compatibility, they also get to learn how to improve the compatibility. *Melanie*'s creation/improvisation sessions are designed to challenge the mental/intellectual side of the dancers, as well as to promote the unity of the dancing individuals. Having the opportunity to work with these two experts, the dancers at *the Dance X* are empowered and inspired to achieve even higher goals.

Collaboration and Freedom

The extraordinary collaborative spirit and true uniqueness of the production team at *the Dance X* seem to come from the fact that the dancers have a lot of freedom in their activities. The artistic director, *Patrick*, explained:

> "I want to work with mature people. So, everybody has to be responsible. Sometimes, I have to discipline them. But I also have to give them freedom. This is an open company, and I think they get a lot of freedom. I have to check if we give them a healthy working style [...]."

Patrick's intention is to make a collaborative working environment without an authoritarian style by giving them a lot of freedom. As pointed out earlier, this company's unconventionality lies in its non-authoritarian management style, and its impact on the collaborative and open atmosphere, which encourages empowerment of the team members. However, the notion of freedom is very difficult to define. Depending on a person's experience, opinions about the issue of freedom varies. For example, the resident choreographer, *Melanie*, believes that *the Dance X* has more freedom in comparison to other companies, thus allowing her to take risks in terms of the content while creating accessible pieces. However, the company still wishes to have a certain style, and these guidelines are indirectly or directly given by the director. Accordingly, she has a certain

amount of freedom within the frame of the company's objectives. Some dancers believe that they

have a lot of freedom in this company. A female dancer mentioned:

> "Because I have shown my dedication to the company, I have freedom to take charge of
> my own. Other ballet companies are pretty strict for body weights, and dancing styles
> [...]."

What she refers to as 'dancing styles' is the artistic interpretations as well as the expressions of

choreographic pieces; therefore she is suggesting that the company gives "the authority of the

dance" to the dancers, rather than telling the dancers how to interpret and how to express. It is

quite significant for artists to have freedom of expression, since it directly translates into respect

and appreciation of the artists' dance i.e. their Beings. *Claudio* made a similar comment:

> "...When deciding how far to explore, how to dance, and how you are and who you are,
> there is freedom...which is actually rare for a dance company."

Another dancer also compared *the Dance X* with other dance companies.

> "It's difficult to say. I have freedom, yet I don't have freedom. [...] Compared to other
> companies, politics of the company is very relaxed. We are free to talk (express our
> thoughts). Freedom is something you find by being respected by others. They respect
> me. I have freedom to choose what I want to dance, and they don't force me to learn
> anything if I refuse. I dance what I want. [...] My job is to create emotion, and freedom
> allows me to be able to give."

In the dancers' discourses, 'freedom' signifies a position of being able to stay who they are and

how they are, which includes their interpretations and expressions of choreographic pieces. They

explain that feeling free also depends on the degree of respect they receive from others. The

dancer above feels empowered because the dancer feels free. Recall the comments the dancers

made on the most valuable qualities: they value open-mindedness, flexibility and respect toward

others. In their discourses, open-mindedness and respect are inter-connected notions; therefore,

freedom, respect and open-mindedness are all related issues, as in *Patrick*'s view about the

company. His goal is to create a less structured, less bureaucratic working environment, so that

the dancers can feel freer to express themselves, and a collaborative working environment is

attained. The logic works as the following: since they feel confident that others are open-minded

and thus are likely to respect what one has to suggest, say, do, or show, a more collaborative working attitude is encouraged. The open-mindedness and freedom not only promote collaborations among the team members, but also empower the collaborative participants.

Collaboration involves two or more parties' equal participation and equal amount of recognition/ appreciation of all participants' contributions. As argued in the above section, the dancers get a strong sense of empowerment and fulfillment through working with *Melanie*, the resident choreographer, since the dancers are intensely involved in the creation process with *Melanie*. Collaboration i.e. group effort is, however, out of necessity when dancers work in a team. In other words, *Patrick*'s objective is to create the best possible environment for the dancers who are 'required' to work in a team.

Since most of their activities (creation and rehearsals) are undertaken as group effort, they form a special 'bond' and sense of 'unity.' In addition, they often go on tour, performing and teaching on challenging schedules. Although they have a strong sense of solidarity, the very companionship can become a source of anxiety and even frustration. Due to the lack of privacy, and/or intimacy. 'Lack of privacy' is rather easy to imagine, and this is also due to the aforementioned notion of high visibility and transparency within the team. "Everybody knows everything about everybody else"—a dancer once expressed the sense of discomfort. High visibility and transparency are good qualities when it comes to performing, but can be difficult issues in personal/private life. 'Lack of intimacy' is not a simple concept, and might be an unexpected notion from the outsiders' point of view. The following section will discuss this complex notion and inner voice of some dancers.

Dependence and Intimacy

As indicated by *Sébastien*, the ballet master, the dancers are very dependent on each other due to the circumstances of the team. He implies that the lack of attention and the detachment from the director is one of the reasons for the present interdependence among the dancers.

Another possible cause that is suggested by *Sébastien* is *the Dance X*'s artistic instability regarding the company's image and choice of repertoire. When the direction is not clearly stated, and the dancers face uncertainties, it produces a sense of insecurity. Being critical of their own performance, dancers in general already feel insecure about themselves. In addition, the issues of physical insecurity i.e. injuries and accidents, are constant alarming factors. In such a working environment, the dancers tend to become dependent on each other, physically and psychologically. As often happens, a group of people who go through hardship together develop a strong sense of camaraderie.

At *the Dance X*, the dancers go through physical, emotional, and psychological challenges together, hence develop a special sense of solidarity and dependence. By design, the dancers work together; therefore, the interdependence and bond are the results of the group effort. It is a natural outcome of the group effort; at the same time it is a necessary factor for their survival as group. Several dancers noted that if one dancer leaves the company, or joins the company, the dynamics of the team will change dramatically.

Then, why do some dancers feel frustrated and apprehensive due to a lack of 'intimacy'? When I asked the dancers if they think that there is a lot of freedom in the company, a few dancers answered negatively, precisely because of a lack of intimacy in the team. This is because some dancers associate the notion of freedom with that of 'intimacy.' As mentioned in the above section, dancers feel free when they are respected and appreciated as who they are, how they interpret art and express their emotions and thoughts. Even if they share care and respect with each other to a certain degree, some believe that care and respect are just out of necessity for the sake of the group effort, and not 'intense' or 'deep' enough. According to a dancer:

> "Real complicité—thinking along the same line, strong bond, united mind—is not there. We act together, but our thinking, our *heart* is not together. On the surface, we are 'buddy-buddy' but it's not true intimacy. The group is beautiful, but there is no real intimacy...no real complicité. Because people can be in any way they want, in that sense, I can be myself. But I can't *share* myself with them."

"We are passionate people…" "We are sensitive people…"—during my field research, they often reminded me of their constant position of having to deal with various emotions, moods, and contexts by expressing themselves to the maximum. The vocation of feeling and expressing with their whole body and heart is by no means easy; it can make them vulnerable and at the same time gratified.

What they are pointing out is the 'artificiality of the bond.' In a 'regular' working environment, e.g. offices and factories, the management would be already happy if they could achieve the 'artificial bond' and cohesiveness of the working team. On the other hand, some dancers have very high standards for what they expect of their 'vocational life': they not only care about their personal achievement but also about the people they share their 'life' with. Some of them believe that a certain degree of dependence is necessary because they spend so much time together, on tour, or through regular working activities, and performances on stage. 'Dependence' in this sense is the coping mechanism for the challenges they face. However, according to them, when the degree of love, care, respect, support, and appreciation is high, 'true' trust and intimacy among the group members emerge. They believe that 'true' love, trust, and intimacy can only be attained when the group effort is addressed beyond necessity. The dancers are used to pushing their bodies and even emotions to the extreme. That is part of their profession as well as life. With their perfectionist attitude, some of them will not compromise the level of ultimate gratification and intimacy of the whole group.

For those who look for 'deep' trust and intimacy and 'the vibration of the soul' (the ballet master's words) as a whole group, the current situation at *the Dance X* may not be satisfactory. In general, those who have especially experienced rigidly structured companies tend to appreciate the degree of freedom at *the Dance X* particularly since *Patrick* joined the company. Whether considered an 'artificial' or 'genuine' bond, which varies according to each individual's perception, *Patrick* seems successful at providing the production team with some degree of freedom. Even including those who could not attain 'true' intimacy and trust, the dancers at *the*

Dance X tend to agree that they have a collaborative working environment, where they feel empowered and inspired.

In this chapter, I presented how the dancers at *the Dance X* work together and how they perceive and experience their working environment by using a holistic approach. While introducing the 'unconventionality' of the company within the context of the dance culture at large, I attempted to elucidate the 'typicality' of the dancers' mind-frame, as well as reality and priorities. *The Dance X* currently experiences the challenges of crafting an effective repertoire and changing the company's image into a more contemporary style while ensuring the company's growth. I have also introduced some internal conflicts between the dancers and the management. Despite these challenges, the dancers at *the Dance X* manage to keep themselves motivated, focused, and disciplined. Especially in the process of coping with the difficulties, the characteristics of dancers/artists became palpable. The dancers at *the Dance X* are very committed and professional individuals with a strong sense of work ethics and principles. In the journey of self-discovery and spiritual gratification, they prioritize their self-growth and the group's solidarity by learning to respect each other. In the description, I hoped to emphasize that their vocational life is not a means to an end, but it is an *end* itself, and their destiny to understand the 'essence of dance' symbolizes the 'artistic being.' In the process, they continue to have faith in life and art, as well as to be respectful for the greatness of the two intermingled notions. They try hard to make their vocational experience as meaningful as possible, physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually.

In the continuous conversations with the dancers after the field research, some of them brought forward the issues of hierarchy in the dance world. Even within the dance culture, there are significant differences in terms of the degree of bureaucratic structure from company to company. Usually, a bureaucratic and more authoritarian style accompanies a stiff hierarchical structure. In such organizations, there are rankings of dancers, as well as customs/rituals, codes,

norms and connotations associated with the rankings and promotional system. Although this type of structure makes the organization more formal, and less likely to encourage free expressions and creativity (as the dancers mention), it seems that the formal structure does bring a certain order and operational clarity, which can be beneficial. As seen in the case of *the Dance X*, the egalitarian structure created an open atmosphere; however, it also brought some impressions of 'unfairness' to the dancers because one dancer was seen as more 'favored' by the director *not* out of a structural/ranking or artistic reason, but because of a 'personal' reason. Consequently, this situation did not appear sound or fair, and created confusion and disappointment.

The tension between the dancers' desire to gain validation/recognition and their preference to have an egalitarian and open working environment becomes palpable. Since their vocational commitment is a highly individualistic enterprise, particularly in terms of the nature of their conceptualization process of 'vocation,' evaluating the benefits of having pivotal figures' attention which is associated more with a stiffer hierarchical environment and of having opportunities to express one's own artistic interpretations becomes a difficult matter. It comes down to a decision between having opportunities for their growth and advancement in their career, and gaining an artistically autonomous position in their career.

Even after my field research ended, my contact with the dancers continued. Today, *the Dance X*'s production team has drastically different members. There was an incident where some dancers did not feel right about working according to the artistic director's decisions and philosophy especially regarding the company's repertoire. Even though this incident might not have been the direct cause, five out of twelve dancers chose not to renew their contracts with the company and decided to move on to new projects. Their strong principles and the sense of professionalism also contributed to these dancers' decision to leave the company. Even though this was a particularly difficult year for the company, and it is rare that such a large portion of the team would depart at once, this incident symbolizes the mobility and flexibility of the dance culture. Just as I argued, the temporary collectivity, *the Dance X*, is analogous to an

'intersection.' The period that I spent with the company was 'typical' in the sense that the mobility of dancers and their principles were strongly present in their community, but it was 'unusual' in the sense that so many members of the production team perceived that the artistic director made so many 'critical mistakes' in the decision-making process and his leadership in such a short period of time.

We have seen the characteristics of dancers/artists in the course of analyzing their reactions to events as well as priorities and interests. Under whatever circumstances, they remember that they dance ultimately for themselves. This is a paradoxical situation since they dance *with* their colleagues and also *in front of* the audience. The descriptions of their vocational life from multiple perspectives indicated their existence as 'artistic beings' whose destiny is to touch, feel, and internalize the 'essence of dance.'

Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I examined the notion of 'vocation' by emphasizing fine art dancers' vocational life and the process of conceptualizing their vocational sense. I also presented the distinctiveness of dancers' Being, the world of fine art dancers, and showed how these factors affect their working style and perceptions of vocational life.

There are two important angles from which this study was approached: 1) contextual characteristics, and 2) structural characteristics of the dance world. Four main elements that constitute the fine art dancers' vocational sense and the two motivational factors are highlighted in this study. In the following sections, the contextual characteristics are elaborated first through discussions of the dancers' identity-construction and the elements of their vocational sense. It will be followed by the discussions of the structural characteristics of the dance world.

Based on Dunham and Freeman's theory, I hypothesized that creative working environments such as dance production and theatrical companies allow the organizational members to feel empowered, respected, and trusted; at the same time, the leader of the working team gives freedom and an open-minded workplace which encourages creativity among the members. Soon after I started my field research at *the Dance X*, I realized two important issues. First of all, as I hypothesized, the company indeed encourages creativity as well as a collaborative and open atmosphere among the dancers through a non-authoritarian and open-minded management style; however the case of *the Dance X* is rather unconventional among dance production companies. Secondly, even though the artistic director's management style is appreciated and 'unconventional' in many ways, the true 'uniqueness' of this type of art production company does not solely lie in its special management style/techniques as Dunham and Freeman suggest, but rather, in the participants of the organization, including the dancers who bring a distinctive 'texture' to the organization. In other words, I believe that what really

makes the organization a coherent social reality is the people who work within the organization, and bringing in 'ready-to-apply' management techniques to an organization without taking its contextual and structural positions within a larger context into consideration will ignore the most important aspect of the micro and macro cultural unit such as causal relationships, behavioural patterns, value system, etc. (Alvesson 2002, 151, 152, 154, 155; 1993, 2).

Therefore, my emphasis within the study was not the structure of the organization itself, but *how* they practice various activities, *how* they conceptualize their vocational sense, *why* they behave in a certain way, and ultimately *who* they are, by 'experiencing' their version of reality, priorities, aspirations and philosophy. Hence, I strongly agree with Alvesson's approach of organizational studies, and observing an organization from above, i.e. the management's point of view, is by far insufficient in understanding the dynamics, behaviours, relations, and negotiations among various interest groups within the organization.

Instead of treating an 'open management style' as a set of techniques, it is necessary to contemplate the underlying motivational factors concerning the dancers' commitment in their careers, and in their vocational satisfaction in daily operations. It seems premature to conclude that a creative working environment is directly contributing to the dancers' vocational sense. Below, the notion of a creative working environment and its implications are discussed based on the findings of this study. In the discussion, I would like to treat motivational factors and what constitutes the strong sense of vocation as two separate issues.

Motivational Factors

Passing down 'authority' to subordinates of a team, and/or involving those who are not in authoritative positions in the decision-making process are expressed in the terms "co-construction" (Bhachu 2003, 140, 141) and "collaboration" (Craig 1989, 63, 68). This dance production company is one of the organizations whose operations are highly reliant on employees who are active contributors rather than passive followers as I hypothesized. This high degree of

the dancers' involvement in the organization's operations and decision making through collaborative work is one of the major reasons why they feel motivated. The dancers value the fact that the company gives "the authority of the dance" (the choreographer's term; see chapter 4, page 113) to the dancers, and that they can be who they are and how they are in terms of the artistic interpretations and expressions of choreographic pieces. Especially during the improvisation- and creation sessions with the choreographers, their contributions are truly valued and they get to participate in the collaborative process. These are the moments when they feel empowered, respected, and motivated.

Although the artistic director has the final say in decision-making, *the Dance X* is a highly collaborative environment. The choreographers are there to encourage, inspire, and coordinate the inputs of the dancers, and the dancers are actively involved in the process of co-construction in this company. In addition, the choreographers are very aware of the fact that dancers should 'enjoy' dancing the piece, and that they also have to grow as artists through this process. The dancers not only dance for the audience as presenters/designers of the final product, but they also internalize and 'consume' the dance as part of their life experience. In this sense, these artistic beings are highly involved in the co-construction process physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. As in the discussions of Bhachu and Craig, these dancers are *par excellence* proprietors of their 'product,' which incorporates their personal interest and philosophy—it is far apart from Marx's sense of *alienation* in the production process.

Qualities such as 'creativity' and 'freedom' must symbolize other significances such as the sources of empowerment, respect, and autonomy in order to be perceived as motivational factors. A working environment which gives an excessive amount of freedom and is unstructured can be highly stressful to some people. The egalitarian structure of *the Dance X*, in fact, brought confusion and disappointment among some employees, even though the intention by the management was positive. Positively or negatively, freedom, opportunities for creativity, and the egalitarian structure influenced *the Dance X* in some manner. These qualities are conceptualized

and embodied within the context of a specific organization or culture. Therefore, applying 'ready-made' management techniques to organizations as in Dunham and Freeman's discussion will often bring disappointing results.

In this particular case, the creative working environment and freedom provided the dancers with opportunities to gain autonomy, accentuate their search for self, ultimately reconfirm and recollect their identities. Even though creative and collaborative working environments by themselves do not contribute to the vocational sense, they can certainly be motivational factors for those who have established a vocational sense to experience and relive their identities.

Strong Vocational Sense

First, dancers experience the ultimate amalgamation of themselves and what they produce—dance, and this process brings an exceptional level of vocational satisfaction. The embodiment and internalization of dance/art becomes possible only through a long and hard training and learning process in which not only technical skills are learned, but also the philosophical aspect of art, such as an aesthetic sense and artistic expressions are absorbed and internalized. They eventually connect kinesthetic movements and artistic/emotional pleasures. At this stage, the instrumental sense of 'job' that is pointed out by Marx no longer applies. The artistic act is not a *means* to an end, but becomes an *end* itself. The dancers' physical experience becomes simultaneously an emotional, intellectual as well as spiritual one (Khudaverdian 1998, 45). Also as Dunsby argued, realization of the utmost artistic and spiritual experience is identical (1995, 29-30).

This develops into the second element of their vocational sense—spiritual gratification. Their training/learning and performing experiences take such a large portion of their reality, life, and joy, the committed lifestyle largely contributes to the dancers' identity formation. Only those who could survive the discipline and screening processes (i.e. auditioning and schooling) receive

the privilege of experiencing spiritual gratification through the sentient body's sensory perceptions. Their special use of the body within a specific paradigm will teach the unique ways of relating to the world, others, and life, so that they will become conscious about their own positions in the universe (Kohn 2003, 142-146).

Through the rituals and discourses within the art world, the notion of 'perfection' becomes *real*, and discipline as well as the unattainable goal to reach 'perfection' can develop into an obsession (Wulff 1998, 76), and it is conceptualized as 'professionalism.' At the same time, the developed habit of self-criticism, control, and tenacity are necessary components of who they are, what they do, how they live, and where to reach. Therefore, the discourses of discipline, criticism, and control in the dance world function as an apparatus to recollect and reconfirm their identities in order to exist as "organic" (Foucault 1977, 155, 156) and artistic beings.

Dancers and artists are, as some dancers claim, similar to Buddhist monks joining the monastery for self-enlightenment. Due to their spiritual quest, they often discuss the concepts of eastern philosophies. Their self-committed acts are for the inner-worldly search for Self, and their whole energy is invested for themselves. Needless to say, it is indeed important for them to gain validation from pivotal figures for their career advancement and personal growth; however, as they claim, they dance ultimately for themselves: if it were not for their quest for the Self, they would not tolerate the hard life that is required of a professional dancer. Attaining enlightenment and spiritual gratification is a self-oriented act, and perhaps even appears 'selfish.' This process of self-development and self-actualization is the third element of the dancers' vocational sense. The luxury of having an opportunity to take on an inner-worldly journey and spiritual path has a particular significance in postmodern societies where people increasingly experience 'a loss of self' and fragmentation.

All these concepts—such as the convoluted system of discipline, the unattainable goal to reach perfection, spiritual gratification, self-search, self-development, and aesthetic/artistic pleasure—not only symbolize the dancers' identity-construction, but also reinforce their cultural

values and reproduce the fine art dance culture. The notion of 'exclusivity' plays an important role in the process of reinforcement of their cultural values and the culture's contextual as well as structural characteristics. This notion of 'exclusivity'—the fourth element—became apparent only after having gone through the field research and processing the empirical data.

Since these dancers touch spirituality through their vocational activities, they strongly believe that they are privileged to engage themselves in an elevated plateau of human life experience, that is expressed in Heelas's theory as getting in touch with authenticity, liberation, creativity, and natural wisdom in life (1992). To reach the next level, or to go beyond the 'earthly life' is an honorable and motivating endeavour. A sense of 'exclusivity' that accompanies this challenge also contributes to their strong vocational sense.

As dancers themselves claim in the comment—"there is nothing natural about what we do"—they constantly push to the extreme both physically and emotionally in their careers. They challenge the 'ordinary' use of the human body as well as the 'ordinary' concept of human bodily experiences. Reaching beyond everyday 'earthly life'/'ordinary practices', and achieving spiritual gratification is a way to assure their 'exclusivity.' Exclusivity is not only expressed towards 'others' who do not belong to their world, but also articulated and reinforced within their boundary through discipline, professionalism, spiritual enlightenment etc. This is a way to differentiate themselves from 'ordinary people' and also to assure their own identities.

The exclusivity entails numerous concepts. They are members of an elite who possess a special gift of dancing, and they are selected people. They have the ability to endure the disciplinary process in which they learned to speak "the language of art" (Hodgson 2001, 222-223), and earned the recognition that they have the capacity and willingness to show professionalism. They are also the proprietors of their 'product.' The technical excellence which they maintain throughout the hard disciplinary process retains the high standard, thereby limiting accessibility from outside their world, i.e. separating professionals from amateurs on one hand.

The same technical excellence is articulated as a means to gain recognition, respect, and career opportunities within the boundary of professional dancers on the other.

Since dancers relive, recollect, and reconfirm their identities through their vocations, in many ways, they are dependent on their 'vocations.' As mentioned above, they can become dependent on the aspiration to 'perfection' and the control mechanism through discipline in the name of 'professionalism' (Wulff 1998, 76). Even the painful part of their vocation is a way to remind themselves of who they are.

I have illustrated the cognitive 'connectedness' these dancers acknowledge through encountering a number of dancers on various personal occasions, art events, and projects. The 'connectedness' does not necessarily translate into a form of camaraderie automatically, but they can identify that other fellow dancers went through a similar path to their own, have a similar mind-frame, and live in the same *reality*. Not only the cognitive 'connectedness' but also the physical social networks, mobility as well as versatility bring an additional dimension to their community in a structural sense. They actively utilize the networks for their future projects alike (Wulff 2000, 148, 149, 159), and at the same time, this is a way to keep their 'exclusivity' through discourses of art and their vocations. No matter which part of the world they go to, they will find fine art dancers, directors and choreographers who speak the same 'language of art,' and thus can provide them with a sense of recognition and validation. At the same time, the seemingly flawless mobile community has a clear power structure. Their artistic autonomy, prestige, and the process of self-actualization are compromised by the dependence on the validation from directors and choreographers, as well as by intense competition and the low pay.

The structural relation to the 'ordinary people's world' is also interesting. The sense of 'exclusivity' of the community is often expressed in their discourses. Exclusivity separates them from 'ordinary people,' and at the same time it offers the conviction that they are on the right path for a more blessed life. The conviction also serves as a survival mechanism for them to go

through the long and difficult process of discipline, struggles, and unpleasant working conditions. However, the most ironical part is that the majority of their audience comprises 'ordinary people' who may not understand artistic interpretations, discipline, effort, and skills that those dancers put forth.

Even though dancers dance to touch the audience, the recognition and validation they receive from the general audience is limited. Since dancers conceptualize their identities as dancers not only on stage, but constantly as *artistic beings* in the sense of 'state-of-being,' how amateurs perceive professional dancers in the glamorous light (from general spectators' point of view) often has absolutely no connection to the dancers' concept of their identities (Wulff 1998, 130). How laymen admire them has little significance to their vocational life, but how pivotal figures—who truly understand what they go through and how valuable their performances are—such as directors and fellow dancers appreciate and recognize their skills/contributions matters most to them. Since dance companies are dependent on the general public's reactions and financial contributions, the theme of validation and recognition becomes most complicated.

People continue to search for the sense of vocation. In the end, what one can get most from one's vocational activities is the sense of accomplishment one achieves. In many ways, one's occupation shapes and defines the person. The vocation might make them feel appreciated, respected, recognized, and even feared. The vocation may provide them with social and financial rewards; it may give them access to exclusive knowledge and life. The moment work and life get interconnected, one's sense of vocation emerges. By amalgamating the concept of work and life, and eventually integrating one's identity, emotion and spirituality into one's vocation, it can define the person even more strongly. Therefore, vocation is an apparatus to relive and reconfirm one's identity, and it ultimately becomes the landscape of a person.

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