Dance and Healing

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PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Abstract

Dance consciously or unconsciously can by its very creative process from idea or feeling through to performance work and beyond, form a catalyst for healing.
Acknowledgements

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Thank you to my teachers, colleagues, employers and supervisor for showing interest and giving support and encouragement.

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Thank you to my awesome, faithful and loving God who makes his presence felt in the people and places of this research.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and
lean not on your own understanding;
in
all your ways acknowledge him
and
he will make your paths straight

by Solomon, Proverbs 3:5–6 The Holy Bible
New International Version 1984
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* These Appendices are Primary Data, and are not included within the document.
Chapter One

Fundamental Aspects
Introduction

This paper provides a written record of a practical, phenomenological, qualitative, dance and healing research project. The researcher's ideas coalesce from three schools of thought. They are health sciences, dance art and faith. Body sciences and homeopathic theory inform the practice of exploratory contemporary dance improvisation. Wholistic (objective 2 p.15) and ethical methods of research practice are applied to the study of a range of dance and health concerns. (Appendix Five – Dance and Healing UWS HERC Protocol No. HE01/021).

Prefatory Remarks

Two inter-current streams of research practice are reported in this paper. One stream is the process of observation of dance and healing phenomena from the researcher's point of view. The other stream covers the substance of dance and healing research practices through human interaction in community relationship.

Formation of the Contents

The form of the paper is in six chapters. Chapter one gathers fundamental aspects of the project together and chapter two sets out frameworks to support practical research action and the researcher's investigative process of reflective observation.

Exploratory dance processes are observed, considered and recorded in the format of thirteen thematic studies contained by chapter three. The fourth chapter encapsulates four relevant Dance and Healing research discoveries. Ongoing observations, surrender, time sense, atmosphere and gifts prove to be core elements of discoveries in the correlation of contemporary dance improvisation and healing dynamics. The conclusions in chapter five articulate outcomes to the aims and objectives from chapter one with additional concluding and conjectural remarks. Bibliography and a short glossary are included.

Some Restrictions on Primary Data

Human ethics research protocols of confidentiality restrict general access to some primary data. Therefore privacy for participants is maintained. However where a participant gives written consent some primary data may be viewed on request by direct communication with the researcher and if the participant gives permission each and every time (Protocol No. HE01/021).

Protocols and Participants

In writing about research procedures the researcher refers to persons who actively dance in dance explorations, dance creation processes and dance performances by the word participants. The term participants include all men and women who perform the dance work in this project. Participants may be trained professional dancers, choreographers,
teachers, students, actors, artists and therapists involved with dance. The term participant also refers to persons who have no dance training and for whom this research project may be a first practical experience of dance.

**Attitudes and Responsibilities**

The research is conducted with approval of UWS Human Ethics Review Committee including protocols for projects involving human participants. An attitude of respect toward each participant as a unique individual (Benson 1996 p.8) is engendered. Independent thinking and informed choice are encouraged. Personal responsibility with regards to matters of health and dance is preferred. Sheila Peace in collaboration with Shakespeare, Atkinson and French confirms the researcher’s approach with regards to both participation and faith.

> To try out a research method and see if it works, then participation can become an act of faith. Greater involvement in the research process should ensure that all participants feel that they own part of the outcome.

*Reflecting on Research Practice* (1993 p.33)

This study centers on people who are students and or staff in tertiary institutions where the researcher is currently employed as a dance lecturer. Christian faith is the common factor for most of the people who participate or observe the dance work.

Participants range in ages between nineteen and sixty years. However the project does include observers and participants from the wider community. Therefore a variety of faiths are represented. Professions include drama, dance and movement therapy, clowning, poetry, literature, music, voice, graphic art, commercial photography, law and homoeopathy. *Appendix One* is a chronology of research performances and presentations that may be useful in gaining an overview of how participants and observers are actively involved in the project over the time frame of three years.

**Faith and Prayer**

Faith emerges as an integral part of the research process for both the researcher and participants. Faith in action by way of prayer from a church community forms a support network for the researcher and the project. Learning and personal development are enhanced by a prayer field that gives validation to participants’ and observers’ healing experiences.

Through prayer participants and observers alike demonstrate a collective interest and involvement such that new and deeper levels of thinking, creative expression and exploration are generated. Heart felt interest is expressed and recorded in photographs, participant journal writings and formal written responses (*see appendices*). Faith affirmed through prayer proves significant in this study. The part that a life of faith can play in the health of a participant is acknowledged.
Community Support
A sense of community involvement is vital in developing this research. Social support, fellowship and the feeling of belonging are a restorative factor in health research (Benson 1996 p.179). Appropriate meeting places, dance spaces, time management, technical equipment, individual needs, boundaries and methods of practice are all negotiated between the researcher and people involved whenever appropriate. The considerable volume of exploratory dance work bears testament to a high level of voluntary commitment as seen in the energetic participation of individuals and groups.

Contemporary Dance Practice
Exploratory contemporary improvisation is the single dance genre selected by the researcher for this research study because it is primarily a creative dance practice of here and now. Training, traditions and preconceived or set creative forms need not be applied to this style of dance. The dance material may originate from abstract, mundane and occupational movement or from any source that participants care to nominate. Participants of all ages and backgrounds may explore, create and perform dance improvisation in a manner relevant to themselves and the exploration at the time of the dance session.

Process and Practice of Observation
The researcher sustains methods of investigation engaging in processes of observation during practical workshop sessions. Practical, exploratory, creative, workshop style dance sessions provide for continuity of practice in observation. Performances, presentations and collaborations in the broader community provide more expansive contexts for observatory research practice.

Contemporary dance improvisation challenges the researcher’s abilities in observation because of the unpredictability of this genre. Initially three particular elements are most relevant to observation in this dance and healing study. They are contemporary dance improvisation, psycho-physiological connections and creative processes. Observation informs the researcher’s core ideas with regard to the three elements. Validation of core ideas is sought after via discussion with participants and other observers and audiences after workshop sessions, public performances, community presentations and reading.

Practical dance explorations arising from workshop style sessions continue for the duration of the researcher’s candidature. Thus observation, interpretation and documentation of phenomena are continuously under review. As more dance and healing connections are made the practical workshop sessions show many fluctuations in dance content and participant involvement. Adjustments and reordering of practical procedures is achieved via negotiations between the researcher and participants, colleagues and employers.
Throughout the time of candidature research emphasis remains on the practice of active investigative observation of dance and healing phenomena for the purpose of learning, discovery and dissemination of new knowledge.

**Research Tensions**

In the heart and mind of the researcher the cumbersome nature of administrative operations in conjunction with dance research is given a second place. Emphasis is directed towards discovery and communication about healing dance phenomena as the researcher's priority. The tension between required formalities and phenomenology is tempered by the researcher's faith that all things will work together for good. Faith as written about in this paper is informed by Biblical teachings specifically Romans chapter eight verse twenty-eight. These three, formality phenomenology and faith make a cord of three strands that holds this paper together.
Aims and Objectives

The aims of this research are to explore the process of healing in dance creation and dance performance.

These aims are to be achieved by the following objectives.

1. To bring together learning, research and community in an innovative, productive and experiential form.

2. To engage in wholistic research practice. The researcher seeks to make connections between a participant’s inner world (Logan 1998 p.1) inclusive of mind, body, soul and spirit as an individual person and in relationship with community. That is to perceive the interrelatedness of all aspects of a person.

3. To devise, direct, facilitate, compose and present a practical dance project specific to the exploration of healing phenomenon in dance.

4. To search closely and carefully for processes of healing within contemporary dance improvisation.

5. To observe and write about the mentoring and discipleship of subtle, spoken, spacial, musical embodied textual forms of healing dance so commonly experienced yet rarely documented.

6. To investigate and by a course of inquiry identify a range of ideas that informs the pathways of healing through contemporary dance and in turn form new paradigms for further research.
The Researcher’s Job Description

In simple terms the researcher

- devises and completes a pilot study for the research work as part of a qualifying program for postgraduate studies.

- is accepted as a postgraduate research student Masters Arts (Honours)—Contemporary Arts University of Western Sydney.

- negotiates for available dance space and time for practical research sessions

- applies for and receives Human Research Ethics approval

- applies ethical research practices throughout

- recruits participants to work individually and in groups

- sets in motion a number of practical workshop style sessions

- observes dance explorations generated in research sessions

- observes the condition of participants in the research environment

- searches out and examines relevant areas of literature

- observes the out workings of research activity via participants interactions in the wider dance community

- interprets and documents dance activity and healing phenomenon

- seeks out verification of delivery, observation and interpretative methods

- collects and collates responses from some participants and observers when formal consent is given

- collects data, reflects, writes up and reports on all of the above
Hypothesis

Dance consciously or unconsciously can by its very process from idea or feeling, through movement to performance work and beyond, form a catalyst for healing. The researcher defines healing as a regenerative, transforming, restorative and creative process towards being well. The process of healing may be natural, spontaneous or supernatural and include the whole person and their situation in life.

Contemporary dance improvisation is the medium for healing explorations. The researcher defines contemporary dance improvisation as a genre relevant to the here and now without prescribed creative restrictions, forms, contexts or techniques. Or in the words of a participant when writing about contemporary dance improvisation

Contemporary improvisation does not demand what you can do but to move in a way that is you and to explore from that point. 

(Appendix Four – Participants’ Responses answer to Question 4 – code 18. C)

For both observer and participant internal and external awareness of the more subtle expressions of what is central to the inner state created by disease can become heightened through dance. This awareness opens the way for healing and the human being as a whole can permeate, transform, relinquish or at very least transcend the conditions of disease.

In keeping with the researcher’s professional practice of classical homoeopathic medicine disease is seen as a disturbance that affects the whole being and not something local. This disturbance neither originates nor is local to the mind or the body alone. It is at a level deeper than both and embodied prayer can give access to the deeper level. Homoeopathy is holistic in the treatment of diseases and utilizes a reflective pathway to healing.

The reflective theoretical methods of homoeopathy draw parallel with methods of reflective practice in contemporary dance improvisation. The disease may be revealed in the process of dance creation. Prayer can encompass the dance and healing journey, inform reflective thought and the development of theoretical concepts.

Dance may be seen as metaphor in motion (Frank cited in Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.239). The embodied language of metaphor in dance creates an objective field of experience useful in the observation and experience of healing processes. The researcher utilizes the objective observational practices of Homoeopathy in correlation with observations of the explorations in dance improvisation. Objectivity creates a distance that has an empowering effect for participant and observer. This objective field of experience may also be created and supported by prayer.
Chapter Two

Frameworks of the Study
Context

Early Connections
Some of the earliest connections between dance and health are to be found in the pure and ancient forms of tribal and sacred dance such as the Increase Ceremonies still performed today by aborigines of the Aranda tribe of central Australia (Dean 1967 p.36). To commune through dance with the nature of being with one's self in relationship (Hackney 1998 p.14) with others in the social and physical environment is a fundamental unity of wholeness in mind, body, soul and spirit (Anderson 1997 p.247) (De Sola 2001 v75 i12 p.62).

Methods of Handing on
Methods of handing on an integral approach to well being innate to primitive dance (Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.269) are emerging in contemporary dance. Dance is again a medium for good medicine. Today the healing properties of dance so commonly experienced by those who love to dance operate within a variety of frameworks. Dancers, teachers and choreographers often hand on concepts, theories and findings specific to healing and dance unconsciously (Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.2). The mentoring and discipleship of healing dance knowledge moves through subtle, spoken, spacial, musical and embodied textual forms (Albright 1997 p.152), sometimes undeclared and rarely written down.

Formalisation in this aspect of dance seems to be overlooked. Research and literature in dance medicine and dance therapy are slow to establish in Australia compared with America (J. Exiner and D. Kelynach 1994) and the United Kingdom (H. Payne 1992). These concerns reflect the researcher's interest in generating activity into dance and healing practices, literature and education.

If contemporary dance is often a catalyst for reading, uncovering or contacting awareness from within when and how does the contemporary form become a medium for healing? What working conditions are prevalent when healing is in motion? Does the process of dance creation hold a vital key to enable access to the movement of healing? Perhaps healing potential is part of a dancer's make up? The researcher will seek to address these questions and to identify the medicinal action of dance by methods of exploration, observation and reciprocal interaction.

Preference for Wholistic Practice
Creative processes activated in dance and healing require research methods that are phenomenological (Thomas 1995 p.170) and qualitative (Hanstein cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.142). Therefore the practice is wholistic, participatory and people centered (De Sola 2001 v75 i12 p.62). Consideration is given to acknowledge the inner world of a person and to make sense of the inter-relatedness of all aspects of that person with regard to
their life in the world around them (Logan 1998 p.2). Interpretive skills are required in order to read the figurative expressions of wholistic dance phenomena (Lavender 1996 p.82).

Exploratory work seeks to address the mind, body, soul and spirit of dance participants via integrative methods. That is to accept the interdependent nature of all aspects of the person and facilitate the metabolism of experiences in order to achieve integration (H'Doubler 1957 p.62). In this instance wholistic dance practice strives to perceive the multidimensional whole person as part of a bigger picture and simultaneously direct sufficient attention to the inclusion of small and individual details (Logan 1998 p.2). The capacity to hold and communicate polarities and ambiguity is a restorative strength within dance art practice. Wholeness at once transcends and holds all things together within the movement of opposites (Dalley 1987 p.168).

Contemporary dance improvisation with free association, imagery and the unconscious, stillness and spirituality inform pathways of healing relevant to the study. The theoretical framework is an interweaving of the art of contemporary dance and wholistic medical science conducted within a community of Christian faith. The directions of healing, reading of signs (Vithoulkas 1981 p.91) and interpretation of experiences are observed and recorded in correlation with the ethics, principles and practices of the researcher's chosen professions, dance art and homoeopathic medicine.
Exploratory Contemporary Dance Improvisation as a Medium for Healing

Aesthetics
Within contemporary dance styles it is possible to improvise across a range of aesthetic pathways. Moving through minimal, sculptural, abstract, narrative, meditative and biographical improvisation the research encompasses a broad range of dance qualities. A distinguishing feature of exploratory contemporary dance improvisation is that it does not draw from traditional forms with regard to vocabulary, structure or content. Dance activity in this research however does have a single and identifiably consistent aesthetic quality of reflective awareness (Rockwell cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.194) (Allbright 1997 p.5).

Inner Reality
The researcher observes the participants being drawn (Dossey 1993 cites Jung p.70) inward as they improvise and explore in dance. An atmosphere comes around the participants when the focus of their attention becomes inward bound. The atmosphere is one of thoughtfulness and a depth of process comparative with other more sedentary activities such as meditation, reading, studying or contemplation. The differences here are that the participants are moving in the dance space whilst reading from a text that is embodied. Participants are expressing inner dialogues from a creative process that is generated from within each individual dancer.
Dance improvisations inclusive of a vast array of different kinds of movement are performed before the researcher. However attention to dance material that contains reflective embodied expressions of a participant's inner reality (Tufnell & Crickmay 1993 p.48) is most interesting because inner reality is a key to the investigation of healing processes.

**Intimate Connections**

Contemporary improvised dance as a medium for healing work is the researcher's preferred option because the form easily engages all senses in reflective and meditative states of being in the moment of each movement. The whole person is engaged as the sensual and spiritual become non-dualistic (Schroeder 1995 Ch.2) in meditative dance. The non-dual phenomenon is a contact of body with soul where they set one another dancing in harmonious motion.

Harmony and wholism are noted as significant factors in the process of healing. Hugo Rahner describes non-dualism as an experience most intimate in nature (Ignatius the Theologian 1968 p.182) where the connection between body and soul could be described as something that occurs by way of an affect they have on the delicate membrane that lies between them.

Contemporary dance improvisation performed in this project may appear boring, random, indefinable or even chaotic compared with more conventional modes of dance. Without tradition, form, style, technique, ritual and theatricality the dance improvisation in the exploratory sessions of this project is a bare art form. Pressures to conform to a particular pattern of movements or come up to an expected standard are not imposed by the researcher, the participants or this contemporary dance style. Each individual participant is given space to dance spontaneously in untrained ways (Turner cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.109). When released from conventional dance frameworks and encouraged to explore the dance material that emerges from within improvisation sets in motion a most intimate communication (Moreland 1999 p.13).

The improvising participant can be in a state of communion within the act of dance creation. Inner landscapes and connections with reflective and meditative states of being expressed in these improvisations can engage all senses and absorb the participant completely in the
creative process of dance making. The search for healing phenomena appears to influence participants towards the more reflective and meditative aspects of exploratory contemporary dance improvisation.

**Specific Correlations**

Dance is often a catalyst for reading, uncovering or contacting an inner awareness, it is specifically so in this study. The process of contemporary dance improvisation in this research is a phenomenon of the moment. In correlation with healing the spontaneity of improvised dance may seem even more ephemeral, transcendent, subtle and evaporative than it already is. The subtleties of healing and improvisation however are sustainable and measurable and in effect could prove vital links between the two.

The improvisations may be captivating and atmospheric to observe however time in the sessions is not given to prepare specific dance material with an audience in mind. If on occasion the participants perform in a way that is entertaining it is more likely to be because they are absorbed in the process of exploration rather than because they are performing a prepared or theatrical style of dance. Centeredness and an exploratory, inward focus from each participant are characteristics of this contemporary improvisational dance work.

Very few theatrical elements such as those seen in commercial and theatrical dance performance are relevant to the study. The participants are not drilled; trained or rehearsed. The dance work is simply exploration (Rockwell cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.194). In terms of context the reflective style of dance improvisation in this project is more a medium of performance art rather than dance as entertainment or show business. This distinction is intended to help identify and clarify the characteristic style of dance relevant to this research.

*(Appendix Four – Participants’ Responses answers to question four)*
Boundaries of the Study

Participation
This research is people centered and all participants are volunteers. The range of exploration is bounded by the abilities, needs, requests and availability of each volunteer participant within the time frame of the researcher's candidature. The particular dance focus and health status of each participant produces a wide range of possibilities, some limitations and infinite variation.

Harmonious Method
The intention is to draw together the subtle threads of healing experience in the performance of dance improvisation. Therefore the method is one that evolves rather than one that is set in place. Boundaries are not imposed upon the participants. A harmonious resonance (Vithoulkas 1998 p.93) is sought after whereby people, places and times can come into balance. Explorations tend to move at a pace and with the degree of involvement a participant can allow. Progress appears to be a gradual procedure however intermittent bursts of activity bubble up and surprise every one from time to time.

Subtle yet solid borders are defined in the researcher's selection of wholistic principles. Homoeopathic thought designs an approach towards each participant as an individual. An attitude of respect reduces possible conflicts or digressions in regard to matters of faith and cultural diversity.

Elements to Compare and Contrast
The style of exploration delves into matters of faith, belief, and personal awareness, spiritual and social concerns in a reflective and meditative manner. These elements allow for small ventures into comparison and differentiation. The combination in design of respect for each individual and for community interactions also facilitates sufficient depth and breadth of enquiry for the researcher.

Because participants are between the ages of sixteen and sixty years, with many different disease conditions, diverse cultural influences and dance backgrounds broad scopes for variation are possible. As a result contrasting elements in individual and group dynamics impact on the investigation and enrich the quality of active participation and interaction.

Limiting Time and Space
The time frame for the over all project is three years part time study. In terms of daily practice boundaries of time and space are by necessity rather fluid. Fluctuations in participant interest and energy within a project such as this are perhaps inevitable. The voluntary nature of
participation and the floating world of dance call for flexibility. Thus attitudes to time management require ongoing adjustment on the part of the researcher.

Practical dance research sessions are between one and two hours in duration and occur on average once or twice per week. This time frame is chosen so as to avoid undue stress or fatigue on participants. And this boundary remains firm throughout the project.

Allowing time to elapse between sessions for the processing of experiences is thought to be beneficial in some cases. Alternatively continuity of practice is established through weekly sessions in a series of up to fourteen weeks. Continuity is a considerable advantage for development of group dynamics, creative processes and participant confidence in dance exploration.

Priority is always given to allow time and space for the unexpected to happen. Therefore the fundamental details of setting up and setting in motions the constructs of the study are adaptable rather than stringent. Opening out the boundaries allows for a greater range of possibilities in exploration, observation, recording, writing and discovery.

**Formal Boundaries**

Participants are given formal invitations. Written and verbal information, consent forms and response forms are made available with invitations (*Appendix Three*). The recording of this study is mainly note taking, reading and reflection and writing up. A few video recordings show segments of the dance work and give some indication of quality and quantity of dance activity. Two audiotapes include conversations between participants and the researcher. A number of photographs and art works generated by participants are included as resources for the study.

**Margins of Focus**

Whilst practical dance action has primacy the researcher does not try to make things happen. Exploration with an aim to discover is accentuated in both observation and dance action. As a consequence of this active, exploratory approach the researcher interprets what the participants appear to experience. Readings are sought out for validation of interpretations and discoveries before and during observation and writing up processes. The essential framework of wholistic practice is a mainstay and acts as a springboard into the unknown and underpins each discovery.

**Broader Considerations**

This research paper is neither final nor definitive. Rather it is an assimilation of ideas and interpretations to be considered and added to. More exact ways of observing and evaluating the healing processes of dance are waiting to be uncovered. The more details elicited the more confusion and overlapping of details will occur (Sherr 1994 p.3).
It is beyond the scope of this study to focus more precisely upon specific points or propose systematic ground rules and a sound basis. To fully utilize the healing potential in dance a vast amount of research is still to be done. The healing properties of dance are a positive force waiting to be tapped. This research in physical practice and within this paper is a direct attempt to tap that force and instigate future work toward the formalisation of dance and healing practices.
Research Sessions

Session Formats
Dance sessions, workshops, classes and rehearsals are generally delivered through fairly predictable formats. An easily recognisable format in dance circles is one that commences with warm-up exercises followed by the main work of the day and linking into full physical exertion. Usually there is a time of wind down after full exertion and then closure of one kind or another.

By comparison dance sessions in this instance have neither precise formats nor set conventions as such. The researcher has a conscious preference for a mode of work that enables structural arrangements to form afresh whenever possible.

When viewed objectively recurrent and seasonal themes surface in the practical working sessions and follow up conversations. In addition coherent and retrievable improvisational sequences are also seen to develop if participants dance in the project for extended periods. In hindsight and from the researcher’s perspective ways of setting a session in motion and the direction of that session is seen to take on a degree of form relative to particular group dynamics of participants in a session or a cluster of sessions.

Inclusive Participation
Initially the perceived needs of the participants are solicited and used to shape an entry point into the improvisation work. For example the way the participants are in themselves on the day of the session (Schneer 1994 p.72). If there are sore muscles, relaxation and stretching moves are improvised to bring relief. If participants arrive with injuries, emotional problems, resistant moods or recent trauma all are embraced and acknowledged and incorporated into the overall dance improvisation process.

From beginnings such as these a spirit of inclusion, exploration, play and innovation develops. Nevertheless the researcher may intervene in order to avoid unnecessary repetition or digression. Also the direction of dance making is monitored so as to prevent introduction of any unethical practices.

When a session is showing signs of fragmentation or digression and participants are resistant to or unfocused on the exploratory or creative process they may be brought into the research focus with improvisation that utilizes proprioceptive mechanisms (Todd 1959 p.39). The researcher introduces an idea or a theme for improvisation that will gather participant’s attention towards self-observation and knowing exactly how, when and where their body is in the movement (Hackney 1998 p.4). Also when improvisation allows for self-expression the session is seen to align towards the research focus again.
From moment to moment due consideration is given to responses and requests from participants in terms of exertion level, pace and scope of inquiry. Thus the content from session to session shows many variables.

**Taking the Pressure Off**

No pressure to perform what so ever is brought to bear on any participant throughout the entire process (*Appendix Five – Protocol No. HE01/021*). When deemed necessary an option may be given to simply take time out and observe other participants dancing. This option is experienced as a comfort or inspiration to those who enjoy time out to watch. Others tend to experience an increase of their frustration levels. Encouragement is afforded and value given to spontaneous verbal responses, innovation and initiative from all dance participants. The researcher directs proceedings so as to incorporate all of the above.
Creative Processes

Creative processes operating throughout the research are evoked from the life processes of the participants (Schneer 1994 p.102). The researcher takes into account life experiences and the way those experiences are viewed by the participants. This inclusive method of dance creation involves the participant as a whole person. The interweaving of content, color and texture of daily life (Schneer 1994 p.25 and p.114) with the linear creative processes of dance improvisation ensures corporeal contemporary practice. The dance is created by participants who have an opportunity to fully inhabit their bodies in an artistic expression of what life is for them (Hackney 1998 p.214) (Cunningham 1998 p.128).

When life processes inform improvisation the emergent patterns become coherent, easily translatable and reproducible if and when required. Continuity in the cross-flow of references from the lives of participants to dance making and back again enables participants and researcher to see patterns of movement emerge in the dance space (Tuffnell & Crickmay 1993 p.130). The movements are expressions or extensions of experiences from the conscious or unconscious world of the participant. Some are the patterns of habit (Hackney 1998 p.13); some are drawn from memories and feelings. Other patterns appear to be repeated over and over until the participant finds a sense of relief, release or relaxation.

Creative processes generated from life processes give entry to and correlate with healing processes. These creative and healing dance process are directly accessed through the medium of self-reflective (Schneer 1994 p.22) and exploratory, prayerful and meditative dance improvisation.
The Challenge in the Mystery of Healing

**Meeting the Challenge in the Mystery of Healing**

What is healing? Initially the researcher meets the challenge in the mystery of healing with a search in definitions of healing. It seems that many authors ask this question and rather than labour with this point the researcher chooses to settle for the following.

Pythagoras said that the most divine art was

that of healing. And if the healing art is most divine, it must occupy itself with the soul as well as with the body; for no creature can be sound so long as the higher part in it is sickly.

Appollonius of Tyana

(cited by Larry Dossey, M.D. 1993 *Healing Words* p.197)

Five key elements cited by Dossey are in accordance with this project. The divine, healing, art, body and soul are all crucial stand-points for both Pythagoras and this research. Recognition of the hierarchy in healing towards the highest part of the human organism is also in correlation with the researcher’s current understanding. Also as the project is established and practice evolves the mystery of healing is seen as quite capable of defining itself.

(Researcher’s definition of healing is shown under *Creative Places* p.49)

**Is the Art of Dance Good for Health?**

Ted Shawn husband and dance partner of Ruth St. Dennis believes that dance can heal. Dorothy Buck in her book *The Dance Of Life* quotes Ted Shawn as saying

I believe that dance has the power to heal mentally and physically. I believe that true education in the art of dance, is is education of the whole man

(Buck 1987 p.3)

Similarly the researcher believes that the energetic, creative, expressive and artistic elements of dance art today are essentially pro-life. In addition social culture in the dance industry expects and requires a professional dancer to be sound in mind, body and communal interactions (Friedlander and Gazer 1997 p.185). The very state of the art demands high levels of health from today’s dance performers (Woollam 1978 p.116).

**Professional Dance Expectations**

High health and performance expectations create all kinds of pressures on every professional dancer. To keep up with expectations and performance demands dancers may develop patterns
of behavior that lead to the suppression of the symptoms of illness. Compensatory behavior, denial and other coping mechanisms (McCabe 1997 p.292) can disguise a true picture of health. Consequently suppression of symptoms can mask a dancer’s real health status. Today’s professional theatrical environments of highly refined dance training and performance exemplify this point more than ever before (Woolliams 1978 p.118).

The Value of Appearances in Social Culture

Generally speaking a state of health displays qualities such as vibrant energy, glowing complexion and clear thinking (Livingston 1991 p.14). On the surface the characteristics of health are easily recognizable features and common in everyday life. In the simplest of terms a sense of feeling better and being well again after a time illness is hardly a mystery because we know when we feel well (McCabe 1997 p.115).

Disease is often seen to run a course or alternatively time is said to heal all wounds and health can simply return. Of course the signs of health are common knowledge however the actual process from sickness to health is less obvious and often unidentifiable. In life when the signs and symptoms of illness lead to terrible suffering and all manner of treatment and medication fails to bring about a cure the mystery of healing is very deep indeed (Vithoulkas 1998 p.249). In the face of human suffering how can an art form such as dance be considered as an option for healing?

Mysterious Soul Life

When dealing directly with symptoms of sickness and disease a creative and artistic dance framework can effect improvement of a scale and type that may be surprising compared with conventional medical models. Connections between healing and dance indicate a range of awesome possibilities. One important aspect concerns that which is termed “the mysterious nature of the soul” (I. Gawler 1997 p.199).

The work of uncovering healing dance reveals a process of literal complexity for the researcher. Disease is the covering in conjunction with a social culture of denial and unknowing. This disease covering produces an unconscious, shadowy soul life resulting in division and loss of balance within an individual (Twentyman 1989 p.299). The intimate nature and complex subtleties of disease contribute to the mystery of healing (I. Gawler 1984 p.181).

Matters of the Spirit

The soul can find renewal and fullness when dance is created and performed in the Spirit (Benson 1996 p.216) (Observation Nine – Choice and Thoughts). The Spirit referred to here may be the Spirit known as Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost is described in many Christian scriptures. The Holy Spirit is recorded as a Spirit with gifts of healing (Holy Bible NIV 1Corinthians: 12 1984).
The spirit (Kreemer 1987 p.74) in dance can creatively address difficulties in life and bring about a sense of balance and health. If the Spirit or spirit in dance is vital to healing processes the mystery has yet another dimension. Human spirit, soul (Humphrey 1959 p.169), the spirit in dance and the Holy Spirit are topics infrequently under discussion in mainstream dance as compared with aspects such as technique, body image, nutrition, composition and performance.

With the inclusion of matters spiritual the researcher is not likely to be able to tie the healing properties of dance up in a neat, articulate intellectual package (Peck 1993 p.81). Who among us can do such a thing? The Holy Spirit, the spirit in dance and indeed spirit as in Freud’s terminology die Seele, the soul is much more than cognition (Seligman 1994 p.245).

In the fact of daily physical dance practice spiritual dimensions of this research are absolutely good in nature and expression. The improvisation work is seen to touch on Holy Spirit, human spirit, dance in the spirit and dance moved by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual aspects are more often subtler than words spoken or written and perhaps far more mysterious to the researcher than the mystery of healing. However matters of spirit are systematically addressed in this project because they are vital and intrinsic to wholistic practice (Observation Nine – Choice and Thoughts).

With contemporary dance improvisation as a medium for medicine the signs and processes of healing may be less obvious than other healing modalities. In addition the healing properties of dance are perhaps active only under certain circumstances and even then may not be that easy to interpret? What is clear to the researcher is that healing dance has many layers and the shroud of mystery is partly because of the covered state within a participant’s soul (Dossey 1993 p.81) and partly due to the power of the spiritual dynamics that are called into play when healing is in motion and dance creation is in action.

Creative Places

In this paper the researcher defines healing as a regenerative, transforming, restorative and creative process. From this definition the factor of an active creative process is absolutely fundamental. Perhaps dance creation is a process running in parallel with the creative process of healing?

The potential for this research to succeed could hang on ways to access the movement and direction of healing via processes of dance creation. Also when creative practice is fueled with spiritual qualities such as faith, hope and love (Dossey 1993 chapter 6) the possibility for a healing outcome gathers in momentum.

The ageless faith, hope and love (Holy Bible NIV 1984 1Cor:13) could be the life-sustaining foods vital for soul health. If dance creation and healing come from the same creative place
and that place is in and of the Spirit and that Spirit is the Holy Spirit the researcher supposes dance as being a competent medium for healing?

The Directions of Healing

The process of dance creation in contemporary dance improvisation moves from within to without. When a healing process moves in the same direction from the inside out perhaps the two can move in synchrony. Accompanied by signs of unity and harmony (Peck 1993 p.233) healing and creative dance processes moving from within the dancer to without may be acceptable evidence (Van Gelder 1985 p.91). Therefore is it necessary for the participant (in this research practice) dance creation and the direction of healing to move in one accord in order to sustain a curative process?

Defining Possibilities

Homeopathic physician Constantine Herring (McCabe 1997 p.67) defines a law of cure that is perhaps useful as a guideline for this research. Herring’s Law upholds a tripod of indications as to the direction healing can take in a person who is recovering from disease.

First, a healing process can move from within to without. That is to say disease symptoms will leave the human organism from the most essential and deepest, internal organs first and progress outwards to more superficial and external organs. Second, the signs of healing may commence from above and move in a downward direction as disease regresses from the head towards the toes. Third, the healing may move in a reverse order in symptoms of the onset of disease.

Application of Herring’s three basic directives could enable the researcher to more readily observe and map the movement and direction of healing in dance. The graphic evidence of a map (see Appendix Ten) to show the way is a possible tool for demystification. However complications may arise if a participant is host to more than one disease. Another relevant deliberation is for any participant who may carry residual trauma or negative side effects from medication. Disease influences can be multi layered and reinforced by a lifetime of negative experience and range in intensity from subtle disturbances to gross pathology (Sankaran 1991 p.44).

Therefore the dance and healing journey of a participant may not conform to basic directions of Herring’s Law. The healing process may be in a pattern that crosses over and or mutates. Also research conditions that effect healing for one individual may not work with another participant or another disease for that matter.

Confusion over entirely relevant matters such as the above can easily add to the mysterious nature of healing. The direction of healing may possibly be too broad a topic to contain within the parameters of this project therefore a fundamental view is sought by the researcher?
fundamental view can to cap any potential confusion and sustain the research focus towards observation of the healing properties of dance.

In addition an overly analytical and cautious approach into solving the mystery of healing particularly in association with dance could produce a maze of complexity and detail far beyond the scope of this project. The researcher is keen to sustain an emphasis on observation, investigation and interpretation of practical dance improvisation as this genre relates to healing. The emphasis towards open observation of exploratory dance art may be lost in overly analytical approaches to the articulation of healing directions.

An early decision is made to sustain an emphasis towards the creative and artistic elements of this research practice in respect to the mystery of healing and dance. Creative and artistic elements are again the selected preference in order to reign in investigations and maintain a manageable framework for the process of observation.

**Dancing in the Light**

Spontaneity, vitality and the lighter sides of life are markedly obvious in the practical components of the research. The participants have a good time. As in any successful healing medium play, laughter, fun and a sense of humour are essential elements. So too it seems when dance is the medicine. Many sessions are taken over by an effortless light heartedness amongst the participants. What a welcome relief this is for a somewhat overly earnest researcher.

In the recording of this project few references to laughter and happiness are made mainly because the ideas that laughter is the best medicine seem so glaringly obvious to the researcher.
Also ideas about laughter and happiness are not in the researcher's mind in the preparatory phases of the project. Never the less the researcher enjoys explorations most of the time simply because the sheer enjoyment expressed by participants is highly infectious. The words of Hippocrates influence the researcher's line of thought as cited from Healing Essence.

What you should put first in all the practice of our art is how to make the patient well; and if he can be made well in many ways one should choose the least troublesome

(Gaynor 1995 p.vii cites Hippocrates)

Boundaries for the Researcher

To facilitate healing with the medicinal qualities of dance the researcher assumes a role somewhat similar to a midwife (Dalley 1987 p.159). The aim is to guide and assist participants towards healing via creative dance processes that are primarily rights of passage. The structure of the project creates the supportive environment where healing can happen and the researcher works both empathetically and objectively to facilitate dance and healing. This role requires a leap of faith and stretches all the researcher's personal boundaries (Benson 1996 p.217).

Selective Focus

Surely healing is a timeless subject of infinite possibilities and mystery. Manner of belief is a proving ground for healing in many cultures and medical systems across current and historical times. As in any research practice where healing is a core theme the workings of nature's law of cure, placebo effect (Sherr 1994 p.37) and nocebo effect may have considerable impact (Benson 1996 p.35). Phenomena of this kind are acknowledged at this point as they carry a touch of mystery and perhaps all three are a part of what occurs in this project. The research focus is not however attentive in the areas of nature cure, placebo and nocebo.

Mission

The search for healing properties in dance provokes an air of mystery, as do matters of the soul and Spirit. The researcher aspires to see participants well and fully alive in the act of dance and the work is fueled by a sense of a mission. Inner strength is gathered from the participant's Christian faith in the love of God. The power of the love of God is their hope and all boundaries expand in the spiritual sense because of this. Therefore the researcher embarks on this research with hope (Gaynor 1956 p.168) and in a spirit of mission and ready to adjust boundaries in the quest for dance and healing phenomena.
Chapter Three

Observations of Dance Explorations
Introduction

Observation of dance improvisations is the researcher's principal activity in searching for the correlation of dance and healing phenomena. The method of observation is congruent with classical Homoeopathic practice. That is to say freedom from prejudice, sound senses and fidelity in tracing the picture of what is seen (Hahnemann 1988, aphorism 83) all play a part in the style observation. To observe what is going on and what participants are doing in any given moment without preconceived notions or judgment, to witness without analysis and to be completely focused (Shankaran 1991 p.196).

The researcher aims towards a perception of the states, feelings and expressions of participants as they improvise. At all times maintaining a wholistic view inclusive of body, mind, soul and spirit of the dance action as it happens. Therefore the researcher nurtures an attitude of perceptual openness towards the improvisations and considers this point essential in development of observation skills. Needless to say critical assumptions are best set aside (Lavender 1996 p.132).

The research is a reflective practice and involves the researcher in some struggles. One struggle is perpetuated in a process of formulating ways to interpret, write about and consolidates what is seen. The sense of a struggle arises because the medium of improvisational dance performance is an ever changing and ever moving point of reference. Boundaries shift quickly from one moment to the next and contexts, description, analysis and meaning are under continual review in an openness to explore and discover (Lavender 1996 p.82). In addition observation ranges across formal and informal situations so as to include as many variables as practicable.

Practical dance workshop sessions, rehearsals and performances are the frameworks for the healing medium of contemporary dance improvisation. Participants are mainly students and staff from two different tertiary institutions where the researcher is employed. The institutions operate as extensions of the Christian church namely Christian City Church and Wesley Mission. Influences from these two communities of faith are tangible spiritual, practical and professional supports for the researcher.

What follows now is an anthology of observations brought together in a series of thirteen themes.
Observation One –

Relaxation Facilitates Improvisation

The topic of relaxation is a pivotal support for practical explorations into Dance and Healing (Benson 1998 p.133). By methods of equating relaxation with health and appropriate action (J. Gawler 1984 p.41) the researcher consolidates wholistic principles and brings together a variety of dance research practices. Relaxation facilitates Dance and Healing explorations.

Pain Free Relaxation
Relaxation techniques can lead a participant to move and dance in ways that are free from anxiety, stress and pain (Fitt 1982 p.294). A participant who has not had the experience of performing well in a state of pain free relaxation questions if such conditions are really possible? Many people with dance experience have an idea that if there is no pain or tension, stress or struggle there is nothing to gain.

Pain Free Dance
The researcher gradually introduces the benefits of relaxation via a wide range of improvisational dance practices. This means that participants are given ample opportunity to experience pain free dance. A research participant is enabled to experience relaxation physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and socially. Thereby participants may experience for themselves pain free dance and draw their own conclusions about relaxation.

Three Avenues of Relaxation
After a time of settling into the research protocols and practices and when initial negotiations are complete between participants and researcher three avenues of relaxation are selected for application during exploratory sessions. Simple techniques to relax body, mind and emotions are introduced first. Relaxation to bring about altered states of being comes next. The third approach applies relaxation as an entry point to creative improvisational processes.

Relaxation Techniques
The positioning of simple relaxation techniques early within a session time is an effective placement for such practices. Tensions and stresses can be dealt with in approximately the first twenty minutes of a session. Relaxation techniques fit easily into the introductory warm up or at times when participants show signs of tension overload or fatigue. Initial restful positions and easy movements are given a relaxation focus by application of autosuggestion, mental and emotional imagery, breathing, and body awareness.
Benefits of Deepening Relaxation
Participants are seen to adjust and adapt postural placement and alignment of the body in motion as relaxation deepens through practice. When bodies and minds are loose and free then artistic, creative and exploratory pursuits are quick to follow (Turner cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.101). Characteristic patterns of in built tension naturally vary from one individual to another and are similarly released in unique variation. An experience of relaxation and ease in dance improvisation gives physical relief to both a raw beginner with many physical and creative inhibitions and a professional dancer who may have a lifetime of set tension patterns and dance concepts (Sandler cited in Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.201).

Appropriate Actions
Through repetition of a collection of suitable movements, shapes and postures relaxation can become easily accessible. The researcher draws from a number of small rituals (Bartenieff 1980 p.149) commonly used for the relief of tension and stress to form a combination of themes for exploratory purposes.

Selection of Common Rituals for Improvisational Themes
The motion of a mother as she rocks her baby to sooth, comfort and calm the infant ready for sleep demonstrates how the movement of rocking can be beneficial. When bodies become stiff and cramped the desire to stretch and change position is irresistible. Stretching and shifting body weight from on position to another are familiar ways to relieve tension and fatigue. Tired aching legs are propped up on a chair in order to find some measure of relief. In bed the body turns and rolls over to make a more comfortable position for restful sleep. In times of stress or when life is very busy an escape into the imagination and dream of a holiday can bring the mind to a state of relaxation.

The researcher brings together a selection of moves from observing activities such as those listed above. The combination may include rolling, rocking, swaying, swinging, floating, propping, stretching and stopping. A range of combinations are shown in more detail in the following pages.

As participants become involved in exploring the movements and postures a loose structure gradually forms. Ways to join and flow the simple movements one into the other are spontaneously accessed as relaxation takes over. Phrases, sequences and sections link and transpose into thematic studies and dance dialogues.

Transitions from Movement Rituals into Dance
Beginning from an easy to grasp combination the participants are seen to make the transition from movement into contemporary dance improvisation (Thomas 1995 p.29) with an absolute minimum of tension or stress. The creative process simply clicks in and the inner world of the participant is soothed and settled in an orderly way by a relaxation experience drawn from common rituals in association with relaxation.
Total Involvement

To maximize creative flow and avoid any sense of programming the more traditional modes of instruction, teaching programs and training are not followed in the application of relaxation (Rockwell cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.192). The researcher does not give instructions with regard to set order, how much repetition or a designated point for conclusion.

More importantly focus is not actually directed towards the release of tension and stress (Gaynor 1956 p.57). Notably the purpose of promoting ease and relaxation may not necessarily be declared. Contrary attitudes and a resistance to relaxation are common when participants are physically tense, over stimulated or bearing compensation for disturbance on a deeper level. However when relaxation is introduced indirectly opposition is minimized, tensions and over stimulation loosen (Observation Eleven – Choice And Imagery).

Attention and time are given to allow for total involvement in the experience of each movement. As a result participants enjoy exploring the collection of simple, familiar movements just to see where they may be taken and what might happen. When emphasis is given to exploration and awareness rather than instruction an atmosphere of harmony (Grieg 1994 p.xiii) is easily produced.

Key to Correlation of Processes

As a result of this unimposing approach some unplanned yet invaluable aspects of relaxation surface and augment dance creation processes in the improvisations. At the outset the movement vocabulary is almost second nature for the participants and therefore simple to grasp. The seemingly simple collection of movements actually links into a vast creative field for dance making. Relaxation becomes a starting place or a key into the correlation of dance and healing processes.

Physiological Shifts

Participants are refreshed and fascinated by dance material originating in these moves. The researcher observes the physiological shifts towards ease and enjoyment and allows space for methods of self-referencing, autosuggestion and creative imagery to take over and shift the dance moves into dance creation (Observation Ten – Conscious And Unconscious Imagery And Choice).

The dance movements generated from this particular exploratory practice are rich with innovation, play and freedom. The researcher observes a suspension of usual physical reference points and nervous habits (Hackney 1998 p.207). Group unity is easily developed as relaxation brings a common ground to participants of all capabilities. Participants can experience healing properties in dance when improvisations embody a state of relaxation.
Simple themes
Based on small rituals of relaxation
Outlines for a series of movement improvisations

The following studies are now included as an illustration of the application of relaxation with improvisation utilizing a number of basic positions and simple movements. Thematic word studies give an indication of ways to introduce relaxation to improvisors through suggestion and guidance with words spoken by the researcher (Schneer 1994 p.102).

Prop
Lie down and prop the feet on a chair or legs up on a wall
   And slowly sway the head a little from side to side
Sit with one leg stretched out to the side
   And prop the head up on the hands elbows on the floor
Stand on one leg and prop the other foot up on it
   And simply stand there
Standing with one leg on the barre or a chair
   And soften the body deeply in the hip joints
Lean two dancers, one on the other
   And be a prop for one another – in couples or in a group
Prop one another up back to back / side to side / shoulder to shoulder
Shift from one propped up position to another or settle for a while
Be inventive and try a new position any position
Stop for a while

Halt
Stay still and wait
Give yourself a break
Pause and draw breath
Simply dwell in the moment
Linger just where you are
Settle down and rest or
Hang around and dream
Hang just one part of the body over the barre and lean on the barre
Or completely flop

Sway as though in a gentle breeze

Aware of gravity
Sway this way and that
Sway and float as seaweed moves with the waters of the ocean
Sway the way branches of a tree sway in a breeze
Sway in tune with the movement of the body

Swing

From one side to the other
Swing the arms and let the body follow through completely
Rising and falling in an arc
Slower to rise
Falling quickly
Heavy towards the bottom and light at the peak
Light and heavy and light
Play with weight and suspension
The movement has a particular momentum
Feel the impetus of swing and the shape of the arc
One swing leads in to another
There is a rhythm
Bones
Swinging bones
Singing bones
Playing with the rhythm
Play in the swing of things
Swing and groove
Funny bones

Rock
From one foot to the other feel heaviness in one foot
   and then the other
Rock from side to side or forward and back
Sense the place of lightness half way between one foot
   and the other
Move one part of the body in a rocking motion then another
Rock several body parts at once
Rock the whole body
Make different shapes that rock on different levels
Sense the affect of gravity
Rock continually one way and then another
Gradually slow down
Allow the body weight to change
As the movement to changes

Rock
As if you are in a boat with water all around

Rock
As if you are a babe in arms

Rock
As if you are resting in a rocking chair
Settle in and rest awhile
Feel the weight of rocking motion
Sense the momentum
Rock back and forth, rock to and fro, to and fro
Float
Lightly and easily
Experience weightlessness
Dance on the air
Drift
Drift and float down
Easily buoyant
Floating down on to the floor
Floating into stillness
Now the breath floats in and out as the whole body settles
Allow changes to be made as the body becomes still
Then slowly begin to roll

Roll
Slowly as close to the floor as possible
Roll over and over and over
From one side to the other side
Starting with the head
All the way down through to the toes
Roll over
Then start with the toes and roll over
Moving all the way up to the head
In a most comfortable easy way
Freely and easily move through each roll
Allow the bones to roll the whole body over
Over and over
Rolling and unrolling
Letting the changes happen
Perhaps the hips will initiate the roll
New movements and familiar movements blending in and

Changing over to s...tre.....tch
A stretch begins to grow
Listening to the body as it opens out into the stretch
Following the stretch all the way
Waiting for the full extent of a stretch that lasts and lasts
Relaxing into the stretch
Relaxing and finding the full length of the stretch
One stretch leading to another
And then another
Any stretch or all kinds of stretches or just one very slow stretch

The Researcher Observes Results from Deeper Levels of Relaxation
Participants discover an alteration in mood and the formation of thought patterns when relaxation progresses to deeper levels. Lifetime fears and phobias are transcended through altered states of relaxation experienced in dance improvisation. The atmosphere of relaxation presents as a seemingly safe place where resistance, tension and fixity are less dominant features. Participants are able to relax on all levels of being and enter into the free place of dance improvisation in a non-judgmental and uncritical atmosphere of relaxation.

Inclusion of relaxation as an entry point and connection between dance and healing is readily observable. Participants’ bodies are softer and hence more pliable. Physical freedom and flexibility increase. Inhibition and reservations are minimized when the mind of an individual takes on a softer focus and become more creative. Emotional anxiety is minimized in a state of relaxation and a sense of play and adventure stimulates creativity for participants. Also there is a letting go from anxieties about body shape that leads to an easier use of dance space.
PARTICIPANT COMMENT

Journal entry 14th March 2001 – participant code 17. C

Relaxation and improvisation is free. It is fun and exciting because of all the new areas to explore. I have never done any of the content before. I learned a lot about myself, what my limits and strength are. Improvisation sessions provide a very safe atmosphere for exploration of dance. Today was the first day that I mentally got over my fear of going from a standing position and dropping to the floor. The big thing was that I made a start by thinking that I can do it.

Deeper Levels of Awareness

Science defines relaxation as a learned skill inclusive of deep rest and an absence of neuromuscular activity. Science also claims that tension is produced from within the human organism. Therefore tensions that are created within and by a person are under the control of that same person (Sobel and Hornbacher 1973 p.116).

When dance improvisation material is generated from within a participant who has an opportunity to apply relaxation techniques or who enters the dance improvisation from a spontaneously occurring state of relaxation there is easy management of dance tensions. Also that participant shows preference for more relaxed styles in choosing dance movements.

Overall a refined degree of control and a healthy management of tensions is seen in participants as they gain access to deeper levels of awareness. In combination with relaxation deeper levels of awareness take participants into reflective and meditative states in improvisation. Meditative aspects of contemporary dance improvisation are experiences that may be accessed in several ways. The researcher selects one method and that is relaxation in conjunction with a study of slow motion. The dance work that is created in slow motion improvisation often spontaneously accesses meditative states.

Continuity in Slow Motion

Slow motion allows participants to refine awareness of physical action and highlights the inner workings of psyche and soma in the act of improvisation. The participants are enabled to relax and fully inhabit their bodies in each moment of every movement (Cheney cited in Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.84) within slow motion dance.

Meditative Moments

The relaxation response (Benson 1996 p.134) is easily triggered within slow motion. At a certain point in time slow motion becomes mesmeric and both participants and observers can make a shift into an altered states of relaxation. The participants find a place where at last there enough time and no need to conceive rhythmical patterns or make a display of technique. There is an intersection of the present with the eternal in slow motion meditative dance. Bound by slow motion improvised dance is safe and well ordered, manageable and
measured. The participants are seen to take great pleasure in a rediscovery of the body in slow motion with space and time.

**Coming Home**

The following page is a considered response based on observation of slow motion from the researcher. The response is an illustrated word study to give a glimpse into the exploration of slow motion as an improvisational dance practice. As dance practice moves in the meditative awareness of slow motion participants speak about a feeling of coming home or they may say that they have a light bulb experience. Body chemistry is altered and the mix of motion and artistic expression is balanced in slow motion improvised dance.
STUDY

IN

SLOW

MOTION

LOOKING IN
EYES CLOSE
SENSE THE CONTINUOUS MOTION
MUSCLES FOLLOW BONES
FROM ONE PART OF THE BODY TO ANOTHER
INWARDLY SEEING
TOTALLY AWARE OF EACH PART AND EVERY MOTION
ANOTHER WAY RISES
ALWAYS CONNECTING
MOVE FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER
CONTINUALLY MOVING ON AND ON
AWARE OF BREATH AND EVEN THE SMALLEST MOVE
DISCOVERY OF NEW MOVEMENT
VERY SLOW NEVER STILL
MOVEMENT MERGES INTO DANCE
DANCE WITHOUT CESSATION
DANCING EVERY SENSE ALIVE
TOTAL INVOLVEMENT IN MOVEMENT MEDITATION
PATHWAYS OVER CROSS
EYES OPEN AND THE GAZE IS SOFT
SEAMLESS TRANSITIONS
SHAPES FORM AND LEVELS SHIFT
SLOW DANCERS MOVING SLOWLY TO
DANCE
IN SLOW MOTION
PARTICIPANTS COMMENT

Journal entry 27th August 2002 – participant code 21 C.

The dancing for improvisation is fabulous. It is so interesting how people can constantly improvise and become in unison with each other especially in slow-motion and to see talent everywhere… is amazing. Sometimes when I improvise I feel I actually find more interesting steps than when I just sit around and think about it! I learned a lot from this… an excellent experience in my life. … Fantastic!

Journal entry 30 August 2002 – participant code 4 C.

I found that moving in a diagonal across the room in slow motion one after the other was very powerful. I felt the presence of God and also felt as though I helped to encourage one of the other dancers. I had these words come into my head. Ask, see, honour, serve, want, thrive and die for. Slow motion with the breath was also very powerful. I loved being able to let myself go. We also moved in slow motion using sounds and it was amazing!!!

Journal entry August 2002 – participant code 20. C

It is amazing how three very different people can move as one in slow motion improvisation

Journal entry August 2002 – participant code 19. C

It was amazing to watch all the slow motion pieces – Beautiful! Some groups were incredible. … Amazing that you can create a group dance just on the spot. … That is beautiful and exciting to watch. That must be the Holy Spirit!! The solo dancers were also good. Everybody’s dance is so personal and unique. Just like God made us to be.
Observation Two – Embodied Dance Language

Every art form can be seen to take a position in social culture and communicate across a certain range. Whilst aural and written languages are our most common means of communication the arts continually inform and enrich society via a vast array of identifiable texts. Within the world of art body language, graphics, symbolism, signing, sounds and music communicate in particular textual forms. The spectrum is multi layered and each art form may enable several levels of communication (Hanstein cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.140). Embodied languages of dance are mostly seen to honour silent communications (Schneer 1994 p.ix).

The embodied languages of dance (Allbright 1997 p.5) communicate the tapestry of life through ritual, ceremonial, choreographic texts and many more (Winearls 1990 p.68) (Thomas 1995, Chapter 1). The subject of embodied language is broad and mostly outside the boundaries of this project. Nevertheless one vital feature within range is the notion of embodiment. Methods of observation in reading messages and meanings embodied by participants in dance improvisation are absolutely essential to this research. The researcher is dependent upon reading the texts of embodied languages of dance improvisation in collecting the most valued and primary level of data in this project (Observation Seven – Homeostasis and Kinaesthetic Sense).

The Embodied Languages of Contemporary Dance Improvisation

To explore the healing properties of dance the researcher chooses the medium of contemporary dance improvisation. The unique characteristic in the language of exploratory contemporary dance improvisation (Grieg 1994 p.3) is found in communications that reach beyond the range of mimicked language. Imitation is not the given norm and a formal glossary of terms cannot be found for exploratory contemporary improvisation. Compared with other dance forms such as classical ballet, modern or jazz and ballroom dance exploratory contemporary dance improvisation has no set terminology or emulative vocabulary.

The lexicon of exploratory contemporary dance improvisation is unique to each individual because no two people experience life in exactly the same way. Each exploratory improvisation speaks physically about what life experiences mean for the participant who is dancing (Creative Process). Dance improvisations may appear similar at times but the researcher does not see any that are identical. Therefore the researcher sees each participant as unique and the language of each participant’s improvisational dance creation as an expression of that uniqueness and a source of ever fresh in built wisdom (Cheney cited in Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.94).
Human movement flows through each participant's uniquely formed body into dance improvisation. The patterns of each participant's fingerprints are unique. Similarly the patterns of embodied communications find a unique blueprint in dance improvisation. There may be not so much as one spoken word, yet so much is said.

**Inner Life**

Because embodied languages in improvised dance do not have the particular literal complexity of spoken or written language the visual impact of dance material can move outside any conscious use of conventional, literary boundaries. Free from those rules akin to literature dance improvisation creatively embodies languages coming from somewhere deeper (Thomas 1995 cites Williams p.168).

Therefore the embodied languages of dance improvisations are seen to by pass the rigor of a doubting intellect. Whilst in a state of absorption in the act of improvisation the participant's intellect is more towards a state of suspended disbelief (Schneer 1994 p.109). Perhaps another part of the mind becomes operable? Dance improvisation describes and conveys not only a participant's outer life but also more importantly that participant's inner life (Ullman 1992 p.19). Between this inner life and contact with the healing force there may be healing for both participant and observer (Hanstein cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.139)?

Dancer, Paula Douthett (Inspire Journal 2000 p.16) describes accessing emotions and speaking out of the depths. So too in exploratory sessions the dance material is seen to speak out of emotional depths. The language is of the whole person from the inside to the outside and can take in a full emotional range. From a place of internal states in the core of participant communication moves through the body in an essence of being (Todd 1959 p.281) to a place far beyond the level of usual linguistic constructs. (Blom and Chaplin 1942 p.126)

**Prayer Levels**

Further more when an atmosphere of prayer is prevalent as it is in this research project the language of dance improvisation reaches another level. The uplifting language of embodied prayer (Schroeder 1995) allows for a complete connection to be made so that participants and the essence of dance become vessels for the power of healing.

The foundation of this healing perspective holds a key to spirituality (Peck 1993 p.233). In short the deeper feelings about God and the greater truths that are perhaps beyond the usual language of words are observed as within reach in prayerful dance. Participants are seen at times to embody the signs and wonders of miraculous and heavenly languages. The researcher observes dance languages like no other and discovers a connection between the ancient languages of prayer and the embodied languages of dance. *(Chapter 4, Discovery Three)*
Artistic Expression in Embodied Improvisation Language

Dance improvisation is at times a language expressed through embodied metaphor or poetry in motion. An improvising participant can embody a song or even engulf the researcher in a symphony of movement. The physical activity of dance improvisation can paint a picture on the canvas of the dancing space and touch the researcher, an observer or another participant in places where spoken words and music never go (Blom and Chaplin 1942 p.125). The participants speak, sing and whisper clearly into and across the dance space (Hanstein cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.141) in the embodied languages of dance improvisation.

In creative art forms such as painting, sculpture and music the heart and soul of a person may be moved or touched as in no other way and this can also be the case in dance (Cunningham 1998 p.128). In exploratory improvisation sessions the researcher and participants touch on unique communications in the exchange of embodied language. From mundane to extraordinary the texts of dance improvisations are made authentic in the dancing motions of moving bodies (Observation Ten – Conscious And Unconscious Imagery And Choice).

PARTICIPANT COMMENT

Journal entry 3rd September 2003 – participant code 2. C

It was my turn to move and initially I experienced terror. Then something happened, something took over. I truly was not moving I was watching myself move. I stripped myself of negativity, this grief. I felt tender toward this negativity, soft about it knowing that it brings me light, without the darkness there would be no light. (The Alchemy of Agony) I was deeply moved by this experience so much so that I needed to support myself on the ballet barre on the side of the room.

At the session end I chose to sit in the center of the room rather than to dance. I did this not for myself. On a conscious level I did it for my dying cousin. Yet it was where I needed to be. Perhaps the grief I had just danced was all poured out in the physical movements because now I felt safe and held as the others improvised. Perhaps it was collective grief? It was and overwhelming experience. Lightness followed.
Observation Three –

Spiritual Considerations

The Dance of Freedom

Spiritual considerations come to mind when freedom takes the dancing space and effortlessly dismantles the stresses and strains of technical, artistic and physical accomplishment. The dances of freedom in this project are of a genre other than one acquired through the physical effort of dedicated training in a specific dance technique.

Within frameworks governed by style and technique a trained and accomplished dancer is capable of demonstrating flexibility, balance, virtuosity and artistry. Techniques that condition a dancer over many years of training in highly refined and specific movement vocabularies and clearly identifiable styles such as classical ballet develop a conditional freedom for that dancer (Hackney 1998 p.207).

The freedom witnessed in this research is a release from tradition and training, conditioning and habitual patterns. The participants are exploring in a transformational space and their dance vocabularies are light, easy, melodic and supported by the safety of the research environment.

The participants are moving in the creative and atmospheric conditions of a presence that is simple, free and wonderful. Healing happens in free dance of this nature. Participants dance without pain and the dances are full of amazing movement that emerges effortlessly without strain or stress.

Is this free and healing dance happening in the spacious place referred to in verse nineteen of the eighteenth Psalm of David in the Holy Bible NIV 1984?

But the Lord was my support.
He brought me out into a spacious place
He rescued me because he delighted in me

Is a dance of freedom in this research the same as dance in the Spirit? Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, chapter three, verse seventeen provides an answer for the researcher. “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (Holy Bible NIV 1984). How does the Spirit of the Lord come into the research sessions and how does the Spirit of the Lord bring about the dance of freedom and healing?
Impartation

When the researcher witnesses and experiences an impartation of spiritual healing in dance research sessions there is release for the whole person from everything that binds and hinders. Physical tensions and life long patterns of habitual postures and movement are released from participants’ bodies. Mindsets and attitudes that previously prevented a person from exploration and creativity are no longer active in that participant (Appendix Four – Participants' Responses).

Freedom is a clearly visible and tangible factor of the dances that are performed in a movement of the Holy Spirit. The participants and the researcher observe the transformations and attempt to convey their experiences. The participants write, draw and speak their responses. The researcher writes a considered response to observations of dance in the Spirit via the following poem.

The charcoal sketch is by another one of the participants who is an artist – participant code J. 31
Inner Space
Across the silence
Without a trace
The Spirit falls and
Soul is reshaped
As if from nowhere
Coming Home
Holy Spirit
Shapes
Winged being
Ascending light
Poetic patterns of hope emerge
Tangible
Beautiful
Freedom is in the air
Holy Spirit
Takes melodic form
Manifests
Dance and
Soars the body in
Space
Dance
Releases the
Whole body
Singing
Songs of freedom
A Dancer holds the tune
Dancing free
In the Spirit
PARTICIPANTS COMMENT

Journal entry 23 July 2002 – participant code 7. C

We then went on to dance in the Spirit. This was an amazing experience. I felt such freedom. I allowed my body to move with the Spirit. I was able to really let go and just move. I didn’t have to think which step to do next: I was able to just keep going. I really felt the presence of a God and was filled with such a joy. Really free! Praise You, Father.


Today I closed my eyes and danced with the Spirit inside of me and it was so freeing. I felt incredibly present, alive and especially peaceful. Like there was just the Spirit and myself and although I was aware of the music and the other people in the room they were a long way away. This was like dancing with love and light pouring into and out of my heart. A very moving experience today. I had the best class. Free! Free! Free! God and I danced together. So grateful I am to have this. I love God and God loves me just as I am.


As I danced spontaneously in the Spirit the love of God poured into me. Yet I knew there was hurt and pain I had been ignoring for so long because I wouldn’t let it go. It was a reminder to me from God that in order to give up everything I had to give up that pain in my life to Him so that He can heal me and bless me. His love for me was falling down like rain and all I had to do was release my pain and accept His rain.
Observation Four –

Inner Stillness

Keys to the Spiritual Path

Generally speaking spiritual teachings give a seeker of truth certain keys to the spiritual path. These keys have various names such as stillness (Psalm 46:10), peace, faith, hope, love, revelation and connection. Could access be found into the field of healing dance by application of these keys (Gaynor 1995 p.222) in practical improvisation sessions?

Commonly known spiritual practices and pathways such as prayer, reflection, meditation, praise, worship and pilgrimage may be found with these keys (King 1995) (I. Gawler 1997) (Sanford 1972) (Mother Teresa 1991).

Questions

Perhaps spiritual healing comes from a place of stillness (Dossey 1993 p.87) within the participant? Does spiritual healing then lead to physical and emotional health? If this is so, could such a source of healing always be present and available for a dancer via stillness? Within the context of research sessions the researcher watches out for answers to these questions.

The notion of stillness, (Moreland 1999 p.13) (Cunningham 1998 p.18), an inner stillness may be a welcome relief to the physically driven and often exhausted participant who is training constantly to develop techniques and performance works outside the research sessions. Equally refreshing can be the notion of stillness to the participant troubled in mind or physical sickness and injury. Crossing cultural and religious borders by way of the intelligent simplicity of stillness or inner peace seems too good to be true.

T. S. Elliot in Burnt Norton lines 66 and 67 writes, “Except for the point, the still point, there would be no dance, and there is only the dance.” The discovery of a still point in a turning world is also acknowledged by author Philip Yancey in an image of Christ as the one still point in all (1995 p.14). The tried and true spiritual practice of stillness (Dossey 1993 p.87) is obviously in vivid contrast with dance business. Therefore the researcher can conceive stillness as an ideal place to begin investigations into matters spiritual in conjunction with healing and dance.

More Questions

Is the stillness associated with dance and healing in the participant’s mind? When the participant’s awareness of all that is within and without becomes finely tuned perhaps a centered inner stillness occurs? May be the place where passive observation is initiated is a
place of stillness? Perhaps stillness occurs when passive observation merges into simply being (Todd 1959 p.281) in the moment? Is the stillness of time or space (Cunningham 1998 p.18)? Could stillness be a way for the participant to come to knowledge of God? The Holy Bible NIV 1984 Psalm 46:10 reads “Be still and know that I am God”.

The participants’ approaches towards stillness of the mind may range across analysis, passivity, yielding, impartiality or the practice of simply being still and relaxing physically into the moment (Gawler 1987).

Therefore it seems reasonable to suppose that what occurs for a participant before and after an experience of stillness in dance improvisation sessions will be useful in understanding the relationship between dance, healing and stillness. Careful observation may reveal pathways to and from stillness and inform answers to the many questions arising out of this topic.

**Stillness of the Mind**

Amongst the participants reflective concentration and inner observation are seen to be prerequisites in revealing the stillness of the mind. It is worth stating that in this study the mind of a participant appears to be softly focused, calm, quiet and not at all empty. The participants experience a stillness of mind that may be likened to a calm sea. The participant dances and creates the improvisation in a supportive fluid environment without mental resistance. Admittedly the participants are people of faith and faith is known to make quiet the mind like no other form of belief (Benson 1996 p.203).

**Stillness of Being and Authentic Movement**

The researcher perceives the participants to be passively attentive as though watching from within. The participants appear to be silently seeing all that is to be seen prior to the stillness of being in the moment. This experience is soon followed by varying degrees of wonderment, intuition, fulfillment or insight (Fraleigh 1987 p.26).

Stillness in this context appears to be a place of origin and authenticity. The still place from where authentic dance springs forth is a womb like environment fluid and supportive in nature. Inner stillness comes to the participant through soft concentration, self-observation and absorption. These three form a triangular base to support the improvisation process. It is of some importance to note that stillness presents as an outcome for the participant rather than a goal or intention and authentic movements or authentic dance are byproducts.

**Other World**

Stillness of being spontaneously occurs in this study in various ways. The researcher observes a certain steadiness as participants become aware of the inner world of dance. The steadiness is a defining moment with a calm decisive quality evident in the dance movement. There is an obvious point of connection being made. The connection is clearly meaningful and absorbs
the participant completely in the dance creation process. Perhaps the inner stillness evident here is the connection referred to by J. D. Blackmer (1931 p.26).

Quiet is needed to bring one’s scattered thoughts to a still, introverted point of focus, to make a connection with the other world.

Acrobats of the Gods, Dance and Transformation

Another Dimension

Stillness of being in contemporary dance improvisation has yet another dimension. There is the very real sense of another. That is to say both participants and observers are seen to experience the presence of something greater (Dossey 1993 p.87). Is this the presence of God? The presence of God could account for the sense of eternity, timelessness and time travel (Morris 1986 p.122). All ordinary sense of time is lost in a research session where stillness is part of the experience. The affect of stillness impacts on all those present in the session. The participants appear to be completely at ease and seem reluctant to leave when it is way past the time to go.

Most importantly a tangible atmosphere surrounds the participants, affects the researcher’s observation and transforms the dance space into a place of infinite possibilities. The researcher is at one with the process in this atmosphere from stillness. Respect and awe for the order of all things great and small describes phenomena of dance improvisation in this atmosphere.

The following illustrations and words attempt to convey the relationship between stillness and improvisation. The words are a considered response after reflection on notes taken during research sessions. Illustration is by one participant.
DANCERS MOVE INTO STILLNESS

Listening to the body

WAITING FOR STILLNESS TO COME
BEING STILL
EYES SETTLE IN
BODY SETTLES DOWN
BREATH MOVES OUT AND IN
BODIES BECOME QUIETER
INNER EYE LOOKS IN

WATCHING AS STILLNESS MOVES INTO BEING
WITH GOD
BREATHING
WITH GOD
KNOWING WEIGHTLESSNESS
BONELESSNESS
WITHOUT A BOUNDARY

DANCE BEGINS FROM WITHIN
DANCING FROM STILLNESS
DANCERS FOLLOW
WATCHING THE DANCE WITH INNER QUIET
FROM A STILL PLACE THE SPIRIT MOVES
DANCING FREE
DANCING UP A STORM
AND SEEING FROM THE EYE OF THE STORM
MIND IS A WAVELESS OCEAN WITHOUT A RIPPLE
KNOWING
GOD
WALKS
ON
WATER
Observation Five –

Dance Electricity

Plugged in

Dance improvisation performed in the Spirit has a most compelling quality that could be identified as psychoneuro-immunological (Dacher 1996 p.3) dance activity. The term psychoneuro-immunology refers to a bringing together in the study of behavior, the brain and our natural defense system (immune system). The compelling quality has electricity (Cheney cited in Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.84), perhaps an electrostatic field or a kinesphere is generated (E. Franklin 1996 p.57) when telesomatic improvisation is in action (Dossey cites Paracelsus p.50). It is most definitely plugged in, turned on and charged up. Plugged into what source the researcher may well ask?

Consideration of dance electricity brings to mind an electrical field around the human body captured in the colourful aura like images of Kirlian photography. In addition medical science for example uses magnetic resonance imaging through a MRI scanner (Tortora and Anagnostakos 1987 p.25). Examples from established technology employs magnetism and physical imaging in three-dimensional colour. MRI scanning to reveals bio-chemical density, energy (voltage) and provides an analogy for more skeptical minds.

Currents

There are electrical currents operating within the dance activity of this study and these currents bring healing to the participants. The field of action is at times hypnotic and at times magnetic for participants and observers alike. The researcher seeks verification of this type of phenomenon. During the study confirmation comes from casual observers and formal audiences. Spontaneous comments include the use of terms and expressions such as transported, mesmerised, and drawing into a presence, atmospheric, prayer field, speechless and compelling (Hanstine cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.139).
Connection

It is possible that the compelling quality of contemporary dance improvisation could be due to its tangible space for individuality. Now participants with dance abilities ranging from untrained to highly skilled may create dance in their particular body language. There is the distinct possibility of being independent, individual and unique whilst at the same time totally connected (Hackney 1998 p.28). Whatever the inner source of improvised dance may be the participants make contact with a creatively charged place.

Within the context of the workshop sessions and performances of this research there are times when the participants literally shine. Faces become radiant and participants’ dancing bodies improvise with a glow about them (Schneer 1994 p.56). Healing happens in events when participants shine as they improvise and perform enlightened contemporary dance.
Observation Six –

Spirit Of Prayer

Life Matters

From the earliest stages of the research a spirit of prayer is made manifest. There is a covering of prayer over the whole project from practical administrative details through to dance improvisation sessions and performances. On going practical and aesthetic benefits are seen to arise from moving with the spirit of prayer.

The effect of prayer on the project is positive. In the first instance voluntary offers of prayer support come from colleagues and friends. These early expressions of community support, interest and encouragement lead to dance studio space being made available for research sessions. Also participants to dance in the project are forthcoming in answer to prayer.

One year after commencing a pilot study for this project the researcher accepts offers of employment from two Christian tertiary arts institutions, Wesley Institute and School of Creative Arts. Prayer, praise and worship are integral to the daily schedules of these two establishments. The majority of participants in the research are drawn from a selection of students and staff and prayer is very much a part of every day life for these participants. Therefore from the time of accepting the offers of employment forward to the conclusion of the project influence from the power of prayer has a positive effect on the research.

Tradition

Many cultural rituals and religious traditions include movements of the body in prayer. Both movement and stillness are seen when people come into a place of prayer. To kneel, bow the head, join the palms of the hands, stand, raise the arms high and look up, open arms wide and spin, make the sign of the cross and bow down, walk and fall, and lie prostrate are all postures or gestures customary in acts of prayer. Occasionally common prayer gestures and postures appear spontaneously in improvisation sessions.

Spirit of Prayer

The dance and movement seen for the duration of the research is noticeably free from any recognisable prayer conventions, religious forms or traditions. Rather the improvisations demonstrate a dynamic creative freedom and prayerful reverence for the spirit of things. The improvisations look remarkably different because the movements are spontaneous, creative and they are in dance form.

When the participants improvise as a group they are influenced by one another to move in ways other than their own unique style. An observable blending and exchange of motifs and
patterns or the dance material may move in an almost unison form that is not the work of any one particular participant. Boundaries and borders between participants are blurred under the influence of prayer.

_Atkosphere_

Throughout the study, time, space and interest are given to develop attitudes of acceptance and a sense of relaxation (Observation One – Relaxation Facilitates Improvisation) within session times. It is thought that this cultivation grows an atmosphere of harmony and gentleness. What becomes more and more evident as the study unfolds is that this atmosphere makes apparent a stillness (Observation Four – Inner Stillness) of prayer both silent and voiced.

Prayer actually comes about often unannounced and without the trappings of ritual. Prayer and prayer dancing operates as a central, supporting medium and a protective covering for the participants. Feelings of safety, certainty and hope within the dance activity seem to come about as a consequence of the spirit of prayer.

In this environment of prayer the potential for dance as a medium for healing becomes a tangible element of creative processes. Anxieties and tensions are reduced to a minimum, participants are observed transcending the limitations of more conventional communication. They find creative ways to be together in dance and find renewal through experiences of comfort, release and peace.

_Embodied Prayer_

Embodied prayer improvisation takes many forms, from the prophetic (Rutherford 2003 p.2), intercessory and contemplative to spoken and meditative (Schroeder 1995). One dancer or a group of participants together may at times voice spontaneous prayer songs whilst improvising. The dance material of prayer has a flow on effect (Ullman 1992 p.19) (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). It is creative and offers thanksgiving, surrender (Gaynor 1995 p.222), adoration and worship. The phenomenon of improvised anointed prayer dancing brings transformation through emotional breakthrough and supernatural healing (Hypothesis).

_Miracles in Dance Improvisation_

The physical and dynamic range of embodied prayer improvisation is a wholistic expression that ignites healing through creative processes. Herein the field of miracles becomes probable (Graham 1991 p.5) to the participants and the movement of supernatural healing is clearly visible to the researcher. Improvisations to celebrate miracles of participants’ healings both past and present are produced in research sessions.

The researcher seeks verification for miraculous phenomena in the Holy Bible NIV 1984. There is a King Hezekiah who prays to God when he is very ill and close to death (2 Kings 20:2). God answers Hezekiah’s prayer saying that he will be healed. The biblical story reveals
that God is true to his word when Hezekiah is healed. Therefore the researcher supposes that a prayer request embodied in improvisation and offered to God can be a dance that brings the miracle of healing from God.

In prayer dance improvisation a participant connects to a sacred space and time inside that he or she may find inexplicable and miraculous. Never the less, let us assume that communication with God through a sacred space of embodied prayer is possible. Is the sacred space of prayer akin to the participant's own creative place? And is this creative process of dance improvisation miraculous when the creator God is present?

Is the inexplicable for participants perhaps another mystery to bear and one more fragment of the great mysterion (Rohr 1999)? How can the correlation of dance and healing in connection with the divine through embodied prayer be grasped by thought? Perhaps a struggle to interpret such phenomena is imposed because of the limitations that words place on the researcher who is in heart a dancer.

**Momentum**

The research sessions show prayer to have a gathering force. As more participants and observers experience benefits from research practices an easy sense of unity and community develops (De Sola 2001, v75 112 p.62). Momentum from the spirit of prayer increases when a cluster of research sessions draws towards conclusion. Perhaps the gathering momentum of prayer is in the researcher's imagination.

Yet, if the dancing space and dancing time are otherworldly, there is nothing out of this world about the matter of the dancer – his or her body. Everything is the matter! This stuff, these bones, “this too, too solid flesh” are truly down to earth and mundane, quite the opposite of the sacred space in time in which the dancer, trained or untrained will move. Here the polarities of this and the other world mingle, indeed are muddled.

*(Acrobats of the Gods, Dance and Transformation by Joan Dexter Blackmer 1931 p.26)*

**Moving With Momentum**

Following the sense of an increase in momentum and the uncertainty of transition the researcher is drawn (Dossey 1993 cites Jung p.70) into the spirit of prayer. The researcher is moving with a momentum from the spirit of prayer and walks around the participants as they improvise (*Discovery Three – Prayer And Configuration*). With a change of position from passive observer to active prayer walker the perspective of observation is altered.

Now rather than sitting quietly by the side and keenly watching dance work the researcher is moving in the dance space and intrinsic to the action via prayer, walking and watching.
Unexpectedly dance improvisation in the spirit of prayer is transformed. Participant’s creative expressions shift to another level in response to the action of the researcher walking around the room praying. This walking prayer acts as a catalyst (Hypothesis) within the group of improvisers.

**PARTICIPANT COMMENT**


**Prayer Dance**

Loved it, just danced. Felt free and less exposed today and able to go with the flow. Yet in all probability more exposed because a visitor watched and for some reason this changed my attitude. We had some great free inner dancing. I felt healthier. What has changed in me? What has moved? I prayed a lot before class this week and a friend prayed with me. I asked God for his help, his guidance in my heart and to soften me in patience and well it is happening. My boundaries were stronger and I felt more freedom from unhappiness in these moments.
Observation Seven –

Homoeostasis and Kinaesthetic Sense

For most of us the interplay between environmental factors and our personal condition is a delicate balancing act that frequently falls off center (Tortora and Anagnostakos 1987 p.18). Physiological homeostatic processes of feed-back and regulation function within our bodies to maintain a dynamic equilibrium of internal environments (Weston 1989 p.21).

Dynamic Equilibrium

The internal homeostatic processes in all systems of the body provide indicators of wellness levels and maybe monitored and adjusted (Dacher 1996 p.15) by a participant who is sufficiently aware in this dynamic balancing act. The internal physiological homeostatic devices oppose the forces of internal and external stress and are a striking feature of all organisms.

Dynamic Equilibrium in Dance

Most obvious for any participant who requires warm flexible muscles, cardio-respiratory fitness and abilities to turn, leap and change weight effortlessly are the mechanisms of circulation, respiration, balance and relaxation. Levels of external stress such as heat, cold and loud noises and levels of internal stress such as pain, anxiety or unpleasant thoughts can be monitored and regulated by the participant who is sufficiently aware (Tortora and Anagnostakos 1987 p.19). A healthy awareness of the onset of external and internal stressors and an awareness of internal regulating mechanisms are developed in participants as a result of exploratory improvisations.

Into Balance

The research process seeks to facilitate dance activity where the interplay between a participant’s inner and outer environments (Rockwell cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.194) is balanced in favor of health. A healthy state of mental balance is achievable for participants when they become absorbed in the physical action of dance (Feldenkrais 1979 p.33). Exploratory contemporary dance improvisation performed in a harmonious environment (Peck 1993 p.233) initiates and develops a degree of mental and physical absorption from participants. Together these elements of harmony, absorption and favor towards health bring the participants towards a state of inner balance.
Physical Signs

The researcher notes observable signs of interplay between the inner worlds of participants and the environment. The physical feat of dancing well connected to the floor, free, easy, in full awareness of one's body, the space and in time with the music are signs of success in this area.

Participants become physically unblocked when their minds are in a state of balance (Tufnell & Crickmay 1993 p.48). Mental balance enables messages to move directly from the brain out through the limbs and beyond. Bodies are seen to find freedom of movement when the messages coming from within are from a state of mental and emotional balance.

Kinaesthetic Sense

The researcher builds upon improvisational explorations where the focus on mental balance is achieved via activation of the kinaesthetic sense (Flit 1988 p.266). Explorations that feature postural awareness, movement transitions, weight transference and resistance to spatial contacts in relation to their bodies are for the most part effective towards this end.

The participants are quick to become attuned to their kinaesthetic sense and an ability to apply a working knowledge of that sense whilst dancing is soon built up through these activities. This focus on kinaesthetic sense in turn generates original dance material wherein relevant signs of health may be easily read. Emotional and mental balance becomes more easily achievable by application of kinaesthetic sense.

Positive signs are noted as participants' bodies become more relaxed, flexible and responsive. Concentration, facial pallor and expressions may also be seen to change for the better. In addition more sustainable dance energy is easily generated from the condition of inner equilibrium when the kinaesthetic sense is fully activated.

Findings on Balance

In the wider world of dance an accomplished professional performer can take and sustain physical balance in any shape, position or level appropriate to a given dance work. A sense of inner balance, wellness and the accomplishment of being on balance in the act of dance performance all call for the highly developed skills and innate resources of the trained and talented dancer.

When dance improvisation in this project is created from a state of inner equilibrium both the true novice and the experienced dancer alike are enabled to perform the physical act of being on balance more readily.

Further more when participants perform from a state of inner balance and in balance with their environment an observer has more scope to read, understand and translate the languages of dance (Observation Two – Embodied Language). The dance, the participants and observers
become open to clear lines of communication and therefore also available to the healing force.

The conclusion is that balance in the sense of homeostatic balance is observable in improvisations as an element of the process of healing. Physiological signs indicate when a participant is moving along in the direction of healing (The Challenge in the Mystery of Healing p.28). A participant's capacity to be well is also indicated by observable physiological signs.

Application and development of the use of the kinaesthetic sense are seen as beneficial on both the health and dance ability of participants. All stages of dance expertise from beginner through to experienced professional benefit from development of their kinaesthetic sense.
Observation Eight –

Transference Phenomenon and Contact Sequence

Cures are brought about by numerous divergent methods. One avenue considered as curative by many authors is the phenomenon of transference (M. Feldenkrais 1979 p.2). The healing properties of dance improvisation are transferable across the ether and via physical contact between participants.

Care and Safety Considerations

In research sessions a healthy balance of transference is embodied and initial surface appearances are sustained (Landy 1986 p.160). Creative dance art practices generally speaking are alive with transference phenomena literally and metaphorically. This means that implications with regard to roles and realities are fluid rather than fixed. The potential for transference to be a mixture of healthy and unhealthy communications and translations is considered relevant. Therefore this project encapsulates dance art practices where the phenomenon of transference is active in dance creation in favour of health.

In a formal written sense the roles of participants and researcher are clearly defined prior to practice and governed by formal human research ethics protocols. Exploratory sessions are conducted within occupational health and safety standard requirements and caring Christian environments are established in the host institutions. Safe dance practice (Geeves 1997) is always a consideration and principles and practices of the researcher’s professions of dance and health care are maintained. Therefore phenomena of transference are observed in a safe, creative and orderly fashion.

Proprioception and Transference

When dance making processes and participants’ projections interweave the intermingling of who is who and what is what (Ryan 1987 cites W. Yeats p.5) re-creates through embodied symbolic forms. Dance improvisation that embodies symbolic forms (Thomas 1995 p.174) from one participant can make a favorable impression on another participant’s health or on the health of an observer through transference. A key feature for this transference to occur is the participant’s use of their proprioceptive abilities (Hackney 1988 p.186).

The researcher proposes that this is because highly expressive proprioceptive ability (Todd 1959 p.39) generates clear and free states of being (Todd 1959 p.281) in a participant. In addition an able bodied, healthy participant with an intention towards healing for others is likely to transfer healing to another participant or to an observer (Dossey 1993 p.80).
Ease of Communication
Observation and interpretation of a dance performance where the participants move freely from an inner knowing of where and how the whole body is in space and time is easy work (Cunningham 1998 p.18). The researcher or another observer may easily reach a refined quality of attention and clearly interpret the language of dance under such conditions (Schneer 1994 p.110). Dance performed by participants who are moving clearly and freely puts those who observe at ease. When the observer is at ease the participant draws the attention of that observer towards and into meaningful connection. This results in a more direct form of communication. Clarity is essential in this exchange or transference. The researcher is always on the alert for any movement or expression and in fact any change that may indicate a healing direction or the beginning of a healing process.

Defining Characteristics in Transference
Identifiable characteristics of a clear free state in a dance participant are steady concentration, peace, expansion and transcendence. Physical, mental and spiritual realms of healing and transformation, Safe dance and injury prevention are possible outcomes for the participant. Artistic expression and a discovery of physical freedom can give rise to wonderment for participants and observers. This is to say transference of a clear free state is capable of moving across from the participant to touch an observer or another participant and alter the inner state of that observer or participant in a healthy and inspirational way.

Contact Improvisation and Transference
From time to time the research sessions include a loosely pre-structured improvisation sequence. The form of the sequence is a progressive series of four contact improvisations. Contact improvisations in this sequence are included with the aim of further exploring the transference phenomena. The sequence is relatively simple utilizing imagery (Gaynor 1995 p.222) and trust work. A pathway for healing transference becomes available in contact improvisation when the element of trust and the application of healing imagery are intrinsic to the creative dance process.

Reproducibility to Seek Out Reproducible Outcomes
The researcher also tests and observes this contact sequence with a wide range of participants in many different situations from group warm ups and workshops to choreographed performance works. The number of participants at any one time may vary from as few as two and up to as many as two hundred.

Obviously contact improvisation engages the sense of touch. The potential to heal via transference is more immediate, more tangible with human touch and the laying on of hands (Holy Bible NIV 1984 Luke 4:40 and Act 8:17) (Vithoulkas 1998 p.90) (Hahnemann 1988 Aphorism 288 p.309). The intention towards healing and the atmosphere surrounding
research participants again prove to be influential factors (Dossey 1993 p.80). (Observations One, Two, Four, Six and Nine and Discoveries Two and Four all refer to the effects of atmosphere.)

Signs to Look for in Correlating Dance and Healing

Without exception visible physical signs such as surrender (Gaynor 1956 p.222) and relaxation indicate degrees of receptivity and involvement. Participants also display euphoric states and speak afterwards with insight into difficulties in their lives. Participants volunteer to share their experiences of physical and emotional release, peace and healing.

The steps of the contact improvisation sequence are outlined in the following pages.
Three Blessings – Contact Sequence

Arrangement
All participants stand facing the center of the room in two concentric circles. For this first phase of the sequence participants work in pairs. One of the pair is from the outside circle and stands closely behind the other one of the pair who is in the inside circle.

Leadership
From a position as one of the outer circle the researcher initiates the process and leads the group throughout. The researcher demonstrates and explains the role of giving by working with one participant who is known as a receiver. The entire group is invited to follow along simultaneously with the demonstration and background musical accompaniment is provided.

Role Playing – There are two roles givers and receivers

1. The participants and the researcher standing in the outside circle play the role of the givers and bestow blessings on the participants who stand directly in front of them as part of the inner circle.

2. The participants of the inner circle play the role of the receivers and receive the blessings standing with feet slightly apart, usually with eyes closed, the whole body in an easy upright position arms relaxed by the sides.
**First Phase – approximately 3 minutes duration**

This phase of the sequence introduces three different contact movement experiences namely light relaxing touch; firm grounding touch and a release by complete pass.

**First – Light relaxing touch** – Contact through a gentle fingertip sun-shower of raindrops from the head all the way down to the toes

1. The giver positions their hands with palms softly together directly above the head of the receiver.

2. The giver opens both hands over the receiver’s head and lightly touches the receiver’s head with light soft fingertips moving as gently as light rain. The raindrops cover the receiver from the head to the neck, then across the right shoulder, down the right arm to include the right hand.

3. The raindrop movements continue upwards and across to cover the left shoulder, down the left arm and the left hand.

4. Next the raindrops cover the entire back and the back of the legs. The feet are the last to receive the raindrops.

**Second – Firm grounding** of the heel bones spreading down into feet and toes.

1. The giver shapes one hand around the back of each heel bone of the receiver squeezing several times with a gentle and firm downward pressure

2. The giver smoothes the feet of the receiver with several strokes of the hands over the upper surface of the feet connecting the feet to the floor gently with a firm smooth downward pressure

**Third – Release** through one tension release pass from above downwards

1. The giver reaches up above the head of the receiver with the palms of the hands together. Both the giver and receiver inhale deeply.

2. Both exhale softly and slowly as the giver slowly and smoothly passes both hands from the head down to the toes in one continuous movement
Second Phase – approximately 2 minutes duration
This phase of the sequence includes contact and trust in weight bearing in four parts.

Arrangement changes
The givers move inwards to stand beside the one who is receiving from them and the two circles become one. Everyone begins the second phase standing one beside the other in one circle facing the center of the room. The participants all continue to work with the same partner.

Coming beside and taking the weight and swaying

1. The giver places the arm closest to the receiver around their waist or shoulders depending on body heights.

2. The receiver leans on the giver and rests their head on the giver’s shoulder. The giver may support the receiver’s head if needs be with their other free hand.

3. Both soften and bend their knees a little as the giver sets up and leads a gentle side to side swaying dance movement

4. The giver ceases the swaying movement and returns the receiver to an independent upright position and slowly releases the weight back to the receiver and ceases physical contact.

5. The giver returns to the original position standing behind the receiver
Third Phase – approximately 3 minutes

This phase includes three parts, contact by touch leading, shadow dancing and duo improvisation

Arrangement

The giver usually works behind the receiver. However approximately halfway through this phase the receiver may more often than not set out to dance quite freely in the space. Therefore the giver may have some difficulty in following closely all the time and may simply let the receiver dance solo anywhere in the space without any further physical contact.

1. The giver lightly touches the hips and or back of the ribs and or shoulders of the receiver who sways gently from side to side moving in direct response to the touch

2. The touch of the giver gradually develops hips, ribs or shoulder sways of the receiver into full free swinging motion of the whole body

3. By the application of lightly touch leading the giver initiates the receiver into what becomes a duo improvisation. The duo improvisation can take both giver and receiver anywhere in the room. The duo may be in any style of free dance unique for each participant.

Time to Talk

The receiver and the giver chat briefly about their experiences.

Transition

The receiver and the giver exchange roles. Then the whole process is repeated.

Conclusion

The repeat of the sequence concludes with another chat time after the run through of the whole sequence.
RESEARCHER’S COMMENT

Inserted below is a voluntarily response written by a participant who is an artist who attends one research session only. The session on this particular occasion comprises a group of five participants who are artists and five participants who are a mixture of second and third year tertiary dance students.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE

Written response in a letter dated 20th May 2002
participant code J.30

My Experience of Dance and Healing. For me healing means being perfectly well.

Just before I shut my eyes I saw the dancers coming behind us. I saw two dancers whom I knew, yet I had a strange feeling that all those dancers were not like human beings. Suddenly they seemed to be unspeaking heavenly creatures getting into their position to serve us. I felt excitement and anticipation.

The dancer behind me just put her hands around my shoulders and so gently slightly rocked with me. Then she led me through a few movements like rolling my arm sockets or stretching the neck. Because the dancer's hands were on me I felt such a closeness, comfort and warmth. I also felt more and more relaxed because someone was so close behind me.

It was such a lovely feeling. I wanted to see how the others were enjoying themselves, so I opened my eyes to spy. Then suddenly I thought to myself all the others are married or engaged or have a boyfriend but I have been separated for ten years and I felt God specially reminding me that the Holy Spirit is the closest thing to me. He is under my skin. He can be always close to me if I let him. I felt peace and wanted to have this closeness with the Holy Spirit daily by just remembering what the dancer did with me.

I felt a smile on my face and thought if a dancer can bring the closeness of the Holy Spirit to me by holding and moving with me then a painter with a brush can do the same thing to bring the closeness of the Holy Spirit to the viewers.

Later the dancers danced while Psalm 139 was read. They all danced completely individually. I felt God was saying to me "You are ok as you are" such an acceptance and an approval came to us all from God as I watched the dancers move in their own style and their own rhythm. I realized that the ultimate well being is to be with the Holy Spirit.

It was a totally new experience for me. My daughter did ballet and I was more familiar with dancing than the average person. I never thought what I experienced was possible. Today I was not watching ballet but dancing with the dancer.
Observation Nine –
Choice and Thoughts

Harmony and Choice
An experience of simultaneous inner and outer harmony brings forth dance improvisations where by a fleeting thought, a flash of intuition or a moment of peace may bring a participant into a personal realization of the harmony and health connection (I. Gawler 1987 p.110). When a participant gains a practical working knowledge of how to sustain inner harmony (Grieg 1994 p.xiii) and maintain harmonious working conditions these inclusions can position a dancer within the realms of healing possibility. The participant can then choose to dance in a state of harmonious connection.

Soul Work in the Spirit
The inclusion of soul dance work (Gaynor 1956 p.221) and dance that is in the Spirit in conjunction with already established dance practices consolidates the wholistic framework of this research. Such inclusions enable the cultivation of harmonious working conditions (Buzan 1990 p.12) and facilitate harmonious states of being. Harmony allows for a natural pathway to health (I. Gawler 1984 p.55).

Dance improvisation with soul work refers to the inclusion of those parts of the participant that are deeper than cold cognition (Seligman 1994 p.245). The very heart of the person, qualities of character and spirit, core beliefs and the essential nature of each participant are included in the exploratory process. Therefore the soul of the participant is actively engaged in dance and observed by the researcher within the content of improvisational dance (Thomas 1995 cites Williams p.168).

An atmosphere wherein the presence of God or the Holy Spirit is experienced and acknowledged is a key factor in revealing to the participant the very nature of their soul. The harmony from such a presence is enlightening for the participants.

Thought Patterns
Dance practices that embrace soul and spirit within a wholistic framework foster elevated levels of an individual’s personal awareness. The participant who performs dance improvisation with heightened levels of awareness is well positioned for healing because that participant can see thoughts, internal dialogues, imagery and attitudes clearly and objectively (Todd 1959 p.281). Spiritual atmosphere, heightened awareness and internal objectivity enable the participant to discriminate between productive and unproductive thoughts and fixed ideas. Objectivity and clarity whilst dancing make the choice to develop healthier patterns of thinking an attainable choice for participants.
In addition a decision to change is accompanied by a resilient frame of mind. As changes are made new ideas and new patterns of thought cause hope to become operative. One possible outcome for the participant who experiences the side effects of thought reformation is a realization that healing can come from within and whilst dancing. The participant moves through an inner process of change that is initiated by way of an appropriate choice in the act of improvisational dance making.

Old patterns of thinking are reformed and the process out works to a re-patterning of movement pathways and shows increases in dance abilities in improvisation. The forces of harmony and the process of healing that moves from within the participant can lead to greater fulfillment (Fonteyn 1978 p.120) in artistic expression and indeed life.

Healing the Split

When a participant makes a choice for healing and inwardly moves to a position of responsibility (Carlson 1997 p.142) there is a renewed perspective as pathways of healing become apparent to that participant. Williams (1993 p.16) speaks of people who live as though they are victims and the way in which they are enabled to find new life. Through the activation of personal and conscious choice the movement of healing takes the participant away from victim hood to become an agent of their own life (Young - Eisendarath 1996 p.149). This sense of renewal in life is initiated in dance improvisations by conscious choice and empowered by an acknowledgement of personal responsibility.

Over the course of the project the researcher observes the participants making choices. As change occurs and the internal shifts find embodied dance expressions the improvisation work takes on lighter and easier qualities. The participant has the initiative and personal power to regroup and reform the patterns and processes of thought. The reformation finds outward coherence through dance creation. The participant more fully inhabits the physicality of their body and the space around them. As a consequence improvised dance composition has a visible integrity and the participant appears to take command and own the dancing and the space.

An activation of preconscious knowledge not accessible in linear intellectual inquiry is contacted in a participant’s willingness to perceive movement in improvisation and enrich bodily knowledge of the connection between thoughts (Hackney 1998 p.3). The chasm between the mind and the body, the conscious and the unconscious can be breached (Dalley 1987 p.171). The participant can make a choice (Ullman 1992 p.20) to let go or change disease habits and fixed patterns of thinking, moving and dancing.

Altered preferences give potential to a process of personal evolution and a healing of the split between body, soul and spirit. As health returns and hope rises there is a reinforcement of the participant’s inner strength. The power of personal choice infuses the dance improvisations and the researcher observes an uplifting and expansion of the dancer’s spirit.
Observation Ten

Conscious and Unconscious Imagery and Choice

Internal Pictures
An image in the brain comes to formation when a certain constellation of nerve cells becomes active. Internal imagery gives and reflects shape and texture into the symbolic physical expressions released in a participant’s body (Franklin 1996 p.22) in dance improvisation. Form and content in the process of dance creation are influenced by the power of internal imagery (Buzan 1993 p.73).

Participants picture themselves and their situations from several perspectives. Internal pictures plus internal dialogues or self-talk form mental imagery. The pictures created in the mind build bridges between inner and outer reality (Dalley 1992 p.19). Images from both the conscious and unconscious mind can influence the content of the dance research work. Some images mediate between the conscious and unconscious mind and bring depth, subtlety or nuance into improvisational dance dialogues. Other images are instrumental in the development of physical dance techniques (Grieg 1994 p.14) and artistic expressions (Lewis 1984 p.54).

Creative Imagery

Recurrent themes to do with relaxation and harmony in association with dance and healing throughout this project are repeated here in connection with embodied imagery (Albright 1997 p.152). Research practice of systematic observation of embodied imagery brings the researcher into a deeper understanding of the integrative nature of the human organism’s management of tension (Todd 1959 p.281).

Recall of Life Events
Neurosignatures are patterns of brain activation. The patterns are in storage and available to memory. To recall an image the brain reconstructs the patterns of activity from an original occurrence. The great storehouse of the brain holds all our life events and emotions (Benson
1996 p.80). Authentic dance arises out of unconsciously activated neurosignatures and contains the recall of original experiences. Muscle memory plays a part in the storage and release of these experiences (Benson 1996 p.80).

**Authentic Movement**

Contemporary dance improvisation in this project gives birth to authentic dance material (Turner cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.101) and recall and release from the weight and restrictions of past experiences. Free association movement is something Penny Lewis Bernstein describes as authentic movement in a way that parallels with dance movement created in this study (1981 p.3).

Free association, authentic movement from the primary process world of the unconscious provides not only images and verbal reflections but it can totally engage the person in re-experiencing the developmentally based environments that negatively influence natural development. These same types of movement experiences can allow the individual to explore the elements required for building strong foundations.

*(Theory and Methods in Dance – Movement Therapy 1981 p.3)*

**Choice and Imagery**

The participants discover and observe the influences from internal imagery upon their health and dance abilities (Grieg 1994 p.13) whilst in the act of dance making. The images that rise and form may be from long established patterns of the mind. Participants may realise their part in the patterning of imagery. Also previously unacknowledged images may be uncovered (Hackney 1998 p.15).

Alternatively the improvisation dance explorations investigate the effects of creative imagery aimed toward healing. The researcher may suggest or introduce healing imagery in direct and indirect ways (*Observation One – Relaxation Facilitates Improvisation*). Dance practice that investigates the power of imagery develops transformational awareness in the participant (Franklin 1996 p.19).

As a result of combining imagery work in dance explorations the researcher notes a key for change. This key involves the participants in intellectual processes of conscious decision-making and therefore a pro-active approach to dance and healing. Enthusiasm and inspiration are seen to accompany choices of this kind (Buzan, 1993 p.158 and p.159). When a participant's intellectual will is consciously creative in healthy imagery formation and improvised dance exploration the power within embodied creative imagery awakens kinaesthetic intelligence (*Observation Seven – Homeostasis And Kinaesthetic Sense*).
The prospect of making a conscious choice to recreate internal imagery conducive to health and freedom is readily available to participants in this project. Conscious recreation of positive healing imagery can change past destructive or unhealthy patterns of unconscious thinking and transform the participants from the inside out in the creative process of dance improvisation (Grieg 1994 p.116). The direction of healing specific to this process is from the inside out. The pathway is from the deepest and most subtle organ of unconscious mind moving (McCabe 1997 p.67) outward through the body in an expression of dance creation (Chapter Two – The Challenge In The Mystery of Healing).

The Results of Embodied Imagery Explorations

The powerful, graphics of healthy internal pictures can change biology and pathology, thinking and communication, dance movement (Grieg 1994 p.14) and dance creation. Embodied imagery instigates dance research that is wholistic practice and consequently establishes wholistic health for participants.

Participants and observers appear to connect with the past, present and future (Benson 1996 p.80) when previously unacknowledged mental imagery is released in the embodied expression of dance improvisation (Albright 1997 p.151). Embodied images generate metaphorical dance messages of considerable import (Frank cited in Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.239). Participants and observers experience a particularly intimate communication. The relationship is one of communion. Spontaneous intimacy in the group activity of dance making in connection with healing processes is a result of communion. Communication of this nature is active in the many dance research sessions via a process of healthy exchange mediated by embodied imagery (Albright 1997 152).

Interpretation

Interpretations of the imagery coming from within each participant may resonate long after the dance improvisation session is over. Even if the actual dance steps seem to be lost (Moreland 1999 p.13) there is an afterglow of experience. In the afterglow the researcher witnesses the participants taking the time to reflect. As participants assimilate their experiences and come to a point of understanding the process takes time because the method is one of refinement. The participants are slow to leave the dance studio or theatre space where the session is conducted. Rather there is a tendency to linger and time obligations seem to be forgotten.

From an objective point of view the researcher partakes of the transformational process of embodied imagery. The researcher is absorbed into the participants' stories simply by observing and gazing into the substance of dance improvisations. When the dancing is finished the researcher also experiences the afterglow and listens to and reflects with the participants. The researcher is aware of a reluctance to move on. The participants appear to be settling into a process that is leading to a moment of discovery (Discovery Two – Healing in Dance Time).
Decoding

Continuity of practice and familiarity with this form of exploratory contemporary dance reveals avenues where by dance material may be retrieved and replayed in another dance session. For participants and researcher certain elements become apparent and provide the scope for decoding and translation (Kreemer 1987 p.76) of embodied dance imagery.

Four Elements

Elements include a tangible inner space (Pease 1976 p.50) where dance creation originates, an alteration of time sense, poetic form (Ullman 1992 p.21) and silent songs emerging. These four elements are significant in the improvisations when embodied imagery is instrumental to the healing quality of the dance.

With familiarity and analysis the physical metaphors and sculptures of a human being alive in the dancing moment of improvisation become readable and translatable. For the researcher and participants the dance phrases, motifs and themes transpire to give meaning and message (Hanstein cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.140).

One Example

A participant may spin and roll, twirl and circle the whole body with a seemingly inexhaustible momentum time and time again. This may be interpreted in a theme of winding or unwinding. The dance theme reoccurs in one session after another with the same participant. Thus the movements become familiar to the participant and the researcher. A sense of ease develops with progressive familiarity and removes clutter from the participant’s mental space. At the point of ease in this process the workings of the mind become clear for the participant. The participant can recognize and own the mental images as they come into play and identify their origins and associations. With each exploration the participant’s body releases more of the pattern.

Eventually the participant no longer appears to be driven by the movement. This is the stage when new and healthier images may be formed spontaneously, by suggestion and by conscious choice.

As if in a dreamtime the researcher may see a dream like quality as the participant becomes capable of observing the pattern. The research sessions become dreamlike and the dreams of healing and dance come true as the pattern runs its course to completion and the participant dances new patterns of movement originating from newly chosen images.
Another Illustration

A way to introduce imagery and dance improvisation that aims to develop a sense of being well is described on the following page. The example that follows is in a simple format and suitable for participants of all ages and from any dance background. Of course there are many simple ways to give an experience of the power of mental imagery to participants.

In the following guided imagery meditation core elements included are improvisation, relaxation, suggestion, surrender, choice, memory and position because they are effective in healing and dance.
A Guided Imagery Meditation

Incorporating relaxation, stillness, memory of health and dance (Benson 1996).

Find a comfortable position ...... may be lying down ...... Perhaps sitting is best for you ...... or standing ...... you can choose what is comfortable for you ...... when you are comfortable become aware of your whole body ...... and ...... put yourself at ease ...... Can you make yourself as comfortable as possible? ...... Perhaps close your eyes and simply rest for a moment ...... Now move to an even more comfortable position and rest again .............

Gradually become aware of the movement of the breath ...... Concentrate very softly ...... Without tension in the mind, without any force ...... and relax any part of your body that seems to be holding tension ...... Let the feet ...... relax ...... let the legs relax ...... soften the muscles ...... and relax deeply into the bones of the pelvis ...... and the muscles of the abdomen ...... let go ...... and relax ...... Release any tensions in the back ...... and shoulders ...... relax and breathe easily ...... soften the muscles of the chest area and shoulders ...... and neck ...... let go ...... soften the muscles of the arms and hands ...... the rhythm of the breath can lead the way into complete relaxation ...... relax a little more with each breath ...... feel the tension drain away ...... Softening the facial muscles ...... the muscles around the eyes and the muscles of the mouth and throat ...... Breathe ...... and relax the whole head ...... let go ...... and just simply be ......

Aware of the stillness ...... the physical stillness of your body ...... and the sense of relaxation ...... there is the movement of the breath ...... the soft concentration ...... and the stillness ...... and the feeling of relaxation ...... the stillness is there after the breath in ...... and before the breath out ...... and between the breath out ...... and the breath in ...... let go into that stillness between each breath ...... Now move one little finger just a little ...... and follow the sensation of the movement as it travels up the arm ...... and then when it is finished ...... there is the stillness again ...... let go into the stillness and relax ...... the stillness ...... expands ...... the breath is moving the body ...... the rest is ...... stillness ...... let go a little more into the stillness.

Now ............ Remember a time when you felt really well ...... or perhaps a time when you experienced healing after a sickness ...... think about the experience ...... or re-picture the situation you were in ...... when you felt well ...... go into detail and remember the way you felt well ...... Remember the feeling of being well ...... what it feels like ...... and let that feeling spread through the whole body ...... the sense of well being ...... and a sense of being at ease ...... in every part of you ...... a feeling of wellness ...... If you have never really felt well or can't remember a time of good health take a little longer and dream about what it could be like. Take the time to day dream to see and feel wellness all through your body.

Gradually wriggle your toes ............ open your eyes and ............ stretch ...... change positions or roll over and begin to move ............ Move with the feeling of being well ...... and continuing to allow the feeling of wellness to spread into all the deeper areas of the body.

Allow the movements to transpose into dance ............ and continue to dance with the awareness of wellness and feel that sense of wellness moving throughout the entire body ............

Dance with that memory of wellness as part of every moment in an improvisation ...... Expand the feeling of wellness throughout the dance ...... and be well as you dance ...... Enjoy the memory and sense the feeling of dancing well more and more with each movement in your dancing ...... Create a well dance.
Observation Eleven – Beyond Words

Elusive Element

There is an element of dance improvisation where the activity from the unconscious mind becomes visible within the participants movements. When a trained eye perceives unconscious expressions in the shapes and dynamics of dance improvisations translation or interpretation is not always possible. When prompted to talk about their dance improvisation participants are capable of articulation and explanation in varying degrees yet some areas are never verbalised.

The researcher witnesses that the unconscious can release through embodied expressions a text that no one can interpret. In a situation of this nature the dance vocabulary completely eludes any real translation into words at all (Ullman 1992 p.21).

The participants and the researcher sense that perhaps it is better that this element beyond words is left without explanation or translation. There may be no words to grasp or words may cause trouble or the search for words may be a destructive process? In fact this is perhaps a situation with no need for words. Perhaps the improvisation beyond words is pure dance?

Elusive dance material is observed and validated by dance practitioners and authors Blom and Chaplin.

Often the knowledge contained in the system cannot be translated into words; in fact, words may cloud or warp the understanding, execution, or communication of that knowledge.

(The Moment of Movement 1988 p.14)

Elusive Emotion

Occasionally a release of pure emotion is witnessed as a flood of tears or laughter in the dance activity. The participants cannot articulate or describe why or what they are crying or laughing about (Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.85). A free release as unconscious emotion surfaces to be embodied in dance improvisation apparently needs no translation.

Supposition

The researcher supposes that perhaps the emotion finds a form of complete expression inclusive of a complete kind of understanding that does not require any further articulation. When the unconscious mind (Ullman 1992 p.19) finds satisfactory physical expression in dance the unconscious does not actually require entry or processing in the conscious mind of
the participant (Fitt 1988 p.266). Perhaps this element is rarely spoken of simply because-conscious thought is by-passed.

**Indicative Qualities**

The dance material beyond words may be a vent for past, untapped emotional responses, intellectual insights and instinctual drives (Albright 1997 p.151). Qualities of absorption, connection (Blom and Chaplin 1942 p.125 & 126) and rites of passage indicate the element beyond words.

The researcher can sense the participant’s free association with an inward direction (Gaynor 1956 p.59) and a particular way of being when this element is active and perceivable in the improvisation. The way of being is unencumbered and the participants trust the improvisational process (Schneer 1994 p.55) in an undeclared and carefree way.

The element beyond words in dance improvisation is a silent treasure for the researcher. Not a lot can be written about this quality and yet one must not simply leave an empty space on the paper because just as silence speaks similarly the element beyond words in dance improvisation also makes a communication.

**PARTICIPANTS COMMENTS**

**Journal entry 20th July 2003 – participant code 2. C**

*Dancing the journey of our life I felt I needed triple the time, everyone moving too quickly, slow down, slow down. Falling into a grief stricken period, I realized how easy it was to express, but there was no feeling of HURT. There was no feeling of needing to verbalise anything. Feeling deeply nourished by this session.*

**Journal entry 20th August – participant code 7. C**

*Dancing in the spirit ...... Nothing can describe it! I felt heavy and then released. I cannot seem to put words to this feeling in dance improvisation. Words would only degrade it! The Spirit has no limits!!!*
Observation Twelve –

Creative Process and Aesthetic Distance

The mid-way point of aesthetic distance is a treasure chest in the therapeutic application of creative processes in dance (Chesner 1994 p.116). Creative and artistic qualities innate to dance improvisation activate the relative factor of aesthetic distance. The visual impact of here and now freshly created quality of contemporary improvisation engages participant and observers in a graphic and atmospheric experience by means of degrees of objectivity. Through dance improvisations that participants create aesthetic distance is a conduit for healing available to and for both participants and observers.

Transitional Space

Aesthetic distance provides a transitional space for participants and observers because the transitional space is a place to travel through that is somewhere inside, outside and between participants and observers. Liberation from disease and the freedom to be fully alive is an experience or at least a glimpsed experience in the balancing act of aesthetic distance. (Landy 1986 p.118)

Flow State and Aesthetic Distance

Contemporary dance improvisation gives way for synthesis and providence. When a participant’s heart and mind are on the same page original movement created and generated easily in the ever-changing ambience of the flow state (Csikszentmihalyi 1997 p.27) gives an informed sense and the feeling of serenity. The different contents of individual experiences come into synchrony in the dancing space to activate ease (Rockwell cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.192) and healing. The sense of being alive in the moment and in tune with the motion allows (Cheney cited in Friedler and Glazer 1997 p.84) for spontaneity, play, aesthetic distance and intuition.

The Point of Liberation

R. Landy (1986 p.119) explains that the unconscious mind becomes accessible at the point of liberation. The moment of infinite possibilities releases playfulness and creativity through aesthetic distance. Potential for the new and unknown qualities of here, now and beyond are seen in symbolic dance forms generated from unconscious imagery.

The leap between the unknown world of the unconscious mind and more known conscious mind, the dream state and the waking state becomes negotiable and natural with this kind of dance activity. Mental images trace unconscious impressions and emerge in physical
expression (Blom & Chaplin 1988 p.17). The body transposes the information and composes a dance in graphic immediacy and in so doing seems to bypass the intellect.

It is as though the body has a mind of its own (Humphrey 1959, cites Doubler p.33) (Gaynor 1956 p.47). The participant or observer may connect fragments of experiences, physicalise dreams, make sense or understandings of tensions and gaps, pains and blocks or even just simply be (Monk 1990 p.303).

**Art Field**
Aesthetic distance is a dance improvisation art field where conventional intellectual patterns are transcended and conditional and conceptual boundaries cease to interrupt creative flow. In an air like space of aesthetic distance a participant’s inner position is afloat and the dance dialogue is explicit.

**Aesthetic Distance**
Dance improvisation articulates a language of movement via kinaesthetic intelligence and via creative process (Allbright 1997 p.5) Healing finds a vehicle to move with and entwines the participant in the harmony of creative flow (Winearls 1990 p.58). The intermingling and co-existence of these two phenomena healing and creative process become apparent with aesthetic distance.
Observation Thirteen –
Dance in Time

Time And Dance Unfold

Core themes almost without exception in the corpus of literature on dance studies are of motion in time and space (Kremer 1987 p.76) (Ullman 1992 p.20) (Cunningham 1998 p.180). To illustrate, a property of dancing time is the progression forward from one second to the next. Improvised dance simply unfolds as time goes on (Pease 1966 p.28).

What is behind time generally is a reflection of our culture, an element of this work a day world and measurable in worldly terms in musical time and steps in motion. By the application of finer degrees in observation, dancing time is measured by additional means such as levels, direction changes, motifs, themes, inner rhythms (Humphrey 1959 p.105) dynamics and more.

The researcher sees in this series of qualitative sessions what seems to be directly related to time and space phenomenon denoted by Todd (1937 p.281), Blackmer (1931 p.26), Ullman (1992 p.20) and many other dance authors in their own writings. However some occurrences in this dance project are outside frameworks given by these authors and the researcher attempts to address these initially here in Observation Thirteen and more broadly in Chapter Four, Discovery Two – Healing In Dance Time.

Where Time has no Meaning

Once participants are into the deeper or higher experiences where time has no meaning or relevance they are dancing in a condition that is the opposite of distraction. Concentration is positioned in one open place and no longer making references to conditions such as keeping in time with music and making the movement conventionally effective (Woolliams 1978 p.122). The participants are engrossed in a state of concentration that is absorbed by creative flow.

The state of a participant’s being in the flow of dance creation gives relaxation from any usual sense of time. Now eternity takes to the floor and dances beyond conventional space of dance time. Engrossed in metaphysical experience in what can easily be termed eternal time participants are transported by subliminal dance dialogues without words.

Time Travel Phenomena

As dance material is self-resourced participants experience uniqueness, individuality and independence or is it freedom? (Tufnell and Crickmay 1993 cite Karczag p.48). The participants
become increasingly aware of the self-resourced inner processes when improvisation becomes familiar practice. Dancer and author Gay Morris describes this self representational quality as the poetic time travel of the individual. In dance, of course, the notion of literally freezing anything or anyone in time is illusory, limited to a momentary choreographic manoeuvre (...) the dancer moves outside language into a space that we enter only when we no longer are.

(Gay Morris *Moving Words* 1986 p.122 and p.123)

Consequently the concept of time travel lends support to the present view or position in this research work. And that view is seen when dance and healing processes come into synthesis time sense changes from worldly measurements and becomes elusive.

Time in this instance assumes a vastly more spacious role. The participants may be at one in musical time and also time-traveling through prophetic perceptions, historical references, transitional space and more. The participants and the observers can be in that place "where you are, when you don't know where you are" (Tufnell and Crickmay 1993 cites Smith p.64).
Chapter Four

Discoveries as a Result of Observation
Introduction

See I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up. Do you not perceive it?

(Holy Bible NIV 1984 Isaiah 43:19)

The hope of unearthing something new in the midst of practical dance action is core motivation in the conduct of this project. When on the surface very little progress is being made or nothing new appears to happen in research procedures perseverance is sustained by the prospect of discovery (Holy Bible NIV 1984 Hebrews 12:1) Deliberation on primary research criteria of learning, exploration and observation is always subject to the researcher’s expectation that something new will be found (Holy Bible NIV 1984 Romans 12:2).

Each of the Thirteen Observations in Chapter Three contains findings made along the way. In all project areas participants, observers and researcher make discoveries of personal or professional value. To include discoveries of this general kind is beyond the scope of this paper. General discoveries fuel individual and group interest and give momentum to exploratory dance improvisation processes.

Here in Chapter Four are four discoveries entitled Uncovering The Mystery of Healing, Healing in Dance Time, Prayer and Configuration and Other Gifts. Exploratory sessions including all the different groups of participants stretch across the period of three years and provide contexts for the discoveries. Phenomena from the discoveries effortlessly emerge from and merge into practical research sessions and they occur and reoccur from reproducible circumstances.

Discoveries are made when the researcher is observing practical dance work. Therefore the discoveries are written about from the researcher’s point of view. The findings are specific to the healing properties of contemporary dance improvisation within the context of this project.

These four discoveries of dance and healing phenomena make considerable impact on research processes, researcher and participants in terms of inspiration, transformation and healing.
Dance and Healing

Discovery One –

Uncovering the Mystery of Healing

Research Methods of Practice Bring Familiarity

The practice of continuously seeking out healing via close and objective study of dance improvisations gives the researcher ongoing contact with healing phenomena in association with faith. The mystery of healing in correlation with dance improvisation observed in exploratory sessions is demystified because the researcher becomes familiar with movements of healing.

Directions and patterns of healing represent again and again in contemporary dance improvisations. Observation One – Relaxation Facilitates Improvisation, Observation Three – Spiritual Considerations, Observation Nine – Choice And Thoughts and Observation Ten – Conscious And Unconscious Imagery And Choice record some of these patterns of healing. From the researcher’s perspective the element of mystery in association with dance and healing reduces as exploratory work establishes a visual field for the expression of healing directions.

Inside the Researcher’s Mind

In addition to the researcher’s outward focus upon investigation of dance and healing phenomena is an internal incremental process of transformation. As the practice of objective observation develops so too does an attitude of openness to discovery. Therefore open observation takes precedence over critical conditioned thinking in the researcher’s mind. During this internal process of exchange the researcher gradually yields internal conditioned responses in favour of learning new ways to see, think and write about the dance activity.

In a step-by-step exchange established thinking patterns are waived for new ways of thinking and a tension of effort in concentration develops. Interpretation and articulation of what actually is observed (Hanstein cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.145) sustains this tension further. Whilst tension between inner and outer processes is initially experienced as a struggle in the mind of the researcher the result is rewarding. The combination of expectation and a willingness to simply and openly observe improvisations reveals the nature of healing in dance. As a result the challenge and sense of mystery associated with healing ceases for the researcher.

First Stage in the Process of Familiarisation

To monitor the movements of healing in the initial stages of observing dance explorations the researcher draws from medical methods. Traceable movements and directions of healing
in dance are observed and recorded drawing on medical models such as correlations of symptom constellations and Herring's Law of Cure (The Challenge In The Mystery Of Healing – Directions Of Healing). Testimonials or accounts given by participants who experience an increase in levels of wellness and restoration of health are applicable (Journal Extracts and Appendix Four – Participants' Responses and Appendix Seven – Videos).

The methods first applied are similar to homeopathic case taking and depend upon the researcher's training and professional experience. One difference from homeopathic practice is the role of participation in presentation and reading of symptoms. Specifically the researcher is taking the case of the participant in the performance of improvisational dance rather than sitting together in consultation. The researcher reads the general symptoms of the disease disturbance and any characteristics signs that may individuate the disease experience of a particular participant whilst that participant is actually performing dance improvisation. This means that embodied languages of dance improvisations are read, interpreted and recorded (Hypotheses and Observation Two – Embodied Language).

Thus reading a disease picture in a first improvisation session enables a documented reference point for making evaluation. Subsequent readings taken in follow up sessions are accumulated in order to compare and contrast evaluations of a participant's patterns of progress towards health. Thereby researcher and participant can estimate if the participant is worse or better in both general and specific areas on a session by session basis and in the over all research time.

Transition into the Second Stage

After a several months of applying methods of case taking the researcher judges the process as too individualizing and too cumbersome for a project of this size and duration. Documentation of paper cases is an approach considered by the researcher as useful to underpin practice and establish familiarity with dance and healing phenomena in the early stages.

Second Stage in the Process of Familiarisation

Concurrent with the disease approach the researcher also assesses obvious and general signs of health to gauge improvement or deterioration of participant's health in successive sessions. Here again an expectation
and hope for healing, health and transformation in the creation of
dance improvisation is applied (The Challenge In The Mystery Of
Healing).

The movement of signs and symptoms away from disease
processes towards healing directions (Chapter Two – Boundaries)
in dance can be observed and documented specifically for an
individual participant (Appendix Ten – Case Studies – restricted
access primary data) and more generally with couples or groups
of participants.

Stage Three in the Process of Familiarisation
To stay within boundaries the researcher hopes to find
innovative methods homogeneous with
contemporary creative dance arts practice in
recording the movement of healing. With hope
in mind the researcher yields to the practice and
process of observation, interpretation and
articulation of dance and healing phenomena through a series of thematic studies.

As already stated the methods of observation are essentially as objective (Hypothesis p.21)
and unprejudiced as possible (Schneer 1994 p.56). The practice of objectivity is commented
upon in Observation Nine – Choice and Thoughts and Observation Twelve – Creative Process and
Aesthetic Distance. And for the duration of the project the researcher exercises all available
resources and abilities in order to see, to read and re-read and translate the dance material
in an unprejudiced fashion through a series of themes. Coincidental
with this exercise is the already stated bias towards health
outcomes for participants.

Physical, psychological and social signs and symptoms
are evidence of healing to the researcher. These are seen
in dance movement qualities and read from the content
of messages and meanings of dance creation. The signs
of mental balance are features specific to both dance and
healing. These signs are recorded in Observation Seven –
Homeostasis and Kinaesthetic Sense. Equally important in social
contexts are styles of communication. Observation Ten – Embodied
Imagery attempts to convey the workings of messages and meaning.
The Fourth Stage of Familiarisation

Tensions between inner and outer processes are minimized at this stage. The researcher is no longer straining to do the work (Observation Twelve - Creative Process and Aesthetic Distance p.139–14). There is no strain because observation becomes a natural part of the overall creative dance experience and causes tension within the researcher’s mind to reduce greatly in comparison with initial stages of the investigation. The researcher grows confident in the process by observing the health benefits for participants as they too become familiar with healing in exploratory improvisation practice.

The combinations of skills required are an extension of the researcher’s professional experience as a dancer, teacher, choreographer and homoeopath. The factor of aesthetic distance is a strong supporting element in objectivity (Thomas 1995 p.170).

Woven into the transformational fabric of observation for the researcher or performance of healing dance improvisation for the participants is the subtle, yet powerfully active influence from faith. Thereby differentiation between pathways and directions of disease and healing become familiar and clearly recognisable for the researcher.

Place Where Healing and Dance Intersect

Participants express the changes in levels of health via movement language, dance dialogues and dance creation processes during improvisations. Also the participants consistently speak, write or draw creatively about their healing experiences. The integrative nature of dance improvisation as a wholistic arts practice is a self-referencing and inter-dependent process for the participants. The fact that the process of exploration absorbs the participants in improvisation is important in developing familiarity with healing patterns. The participants are not looking towards the researcher for help or developing dependence on the process.

Familiar places where healing and dance intersect are accessible via a range of key pathways. An indication of these may be seen throughout the thirteen observational themes that make up Chapter Three. Keys such as inner reality, spirituality and the nature of soul plus the power of choice, creative flow in association with time travel and configuration.
The depth and direction of healing dance appears to be distinctive for each individual participant. However particular participants are not singled out in the researcher's observational writings rather general terms of reference are applied. In lieu of confidentiality specific references to an individual are avoided such distinctive qualities are used only to inform writing in \textit{Chapter Three}. Also \textit{Appendix Four – Participants’ Responses – Introduction} gives further validation of this point.

\textbf{Conclusions to Uncovering the Mystery}

Uncovering the mystery of healing reveals a definitive process of dance creation performed in atmospheres charged by spiritual movement. At the conclusion of practical explorations and at the time of writing this paper the challenge in the mystery of healing is no longer active for this researcher.

Underneath the mystery the researcher finds holy presence capable of bringing experiences of healing to many participants. The researcher discovers the holy presence to be the Holy Spirit alive and active in healing communities of Christian believers who dance.
Discovery Two – Healing in Dance Time

Perceptions of Time
Through observation of dance improvisation the researcher discovers phenomena to do with an alteration in perceptions of time in correlation with dance and healing. Obviously the close alliance of healing with dance can pose many puzzling questions none more so than those arising from an alteration in the sense of time. When healing is in progress in this project exploratory contemporary dance improvisation is often seen to move outside common and conventional references to time. In so doing the perception of unconventional time sparks off a line of investigation that leads to a discovery of healing in dance time.

Keeping Up Appearances in Time
Healing in dance time appears to be unrelated to concepts of time commonly applied within conventional dance contexts. To move in time with the music and in time with others within a dance (Woolliams 1978 p.122) and a scheduled time for class, rehearsal or performance articulates the typical application of time standards in common use for the researcher and participants.

Current social time constructs are formed around being busy, wasting time, arrival and departure times, timetables and calendars. Time categories in core culture and surface manifest culture in daily life are given pride of place in today’s a work a day world (Hall 1983 p.14). Habituated values and standards of time are cultured into participants, observers and the researcher a like. Yet something happens to change the understanding and value of time within the context of Dance and Healing?
The Signs of Time Change

The researcher takes note of and puzzles over alterations of time sense throughout the project. Reoccurring factors of change in perceptions of time can be seen in Chapter Three. To illustrate Observation One – Relaxation where slow motion and meditative dance are capable of incorporating an experience of eternity. Observation Four – Inner Stillness mentions time travel and poetic time travel. Four elements of improvisation appear in conjunction with an alteration in time sense plus a reference to dreamtime can be read from Observation Ten. Also time is actually the subject of Observation Thirteen – Dance In Time. Phenomena of time travel present repeatedly in research sessions and beg several questions (Dossey 1993 cites Davies p.119).

What becomes of time in healing dance?

If healing triggers off alterations in time sense how does that happen? What is happening to time when the participants are healing? Why are participants reluctant to leave the studio (Observation Four – Inner Stillness) at the end of a dance improvisation session that involves time travel? What influences the movements of dance improvisation performance with a sense of ease and lightness when an alteration in the perception of time is present? Why is no mention made of the time lost when a session runs over an agreed conclusion time?

Looking into the Last Question First

To illustrate how the last question arises: during the first year of the research a structured and formal presentation of improvisations with approximately thirty observers continues forty minutes over time. As observers enter the studio they are handed the running order for a presentation that is entitled Poetic Time Travelers. Perhaps the power of suggestion coming from the title is responsible for the presentation running over time? Who can say? All present including observers, participants and researcher are aware of a pre-set twenty minutes time limit. Prior to the commencement of the presentation one observer takes the role of official timekeeper.

Without interruption or declaration from anyone the presentation continues beyond the time limit and takes one full hour. In conversations directly following the presentation two observers speak with the researcher and describe experiences of personal healing at the same time that they are watching the dance work. Perhaps the process of healing runs a course in time and therefore simply takes the time required for that healing? Such an idea is pure speculation from the researcher.

During the presentation of Poetic Time Travelers the researcher sometimes speaks to the observers and participants. However the majority of the time the researcher introduces each segment and observes proceedings. The researcher only becomes aware of actual time by the clock when the presentation finishes and every one involved is late for their next appointment.
Time sense that allows a complete disregard for time constraints in correlation of healing and contemporary dance improvisation is a perception of time that seems easy to justify. Perhaps everyone is completely occupied and absorbed and time is simply forgotten. However within general practical exploratory sessions this does not appear to be the situation. From a point of observation perceptions of time in the areas of time travel, timelessness, reluctance to leave and a sense of eternity or heavenly time remain indefinable for the researcher.

**Time Past, Time Present and Future Time**

Healing in dance time is a most amazing phenomenon. To be more specific dance in healing time is far beyond conventional mainstream dance practices both to observe and experience. Amazing because usual time parameters of here and now are no longer a force to be reckoned with. The content of movements and modes of expression in the dance action in fact blur any sense of what is from the past, present and future. Thus structure and compliance to a framework for time or a timetable cease to be effective. Attempts by the researcher to define or classify the space and time of healing dance are fascinating and stimulating (Hall 1983 p.15).

**The Value of Appearances and Experiences**

The researcher watches closely and perceives the following three characteristic signs of time travel.

1. The improvisation appears effortless and airborne and these qualities could well tie in with Laban’s theories on the relationship between weight, space, time and effort (Ullman 1992 p.21 and ). Participants demonstrate and describe experiences of incredible lightness. The researcher senses all limitations falling away from participants. In the experience of lightness participants appear enabled to do all things well.

2. Participants reach a particular depth and breadth of involvement in the process of dance creation. The researcher sees this as the vital factor for reaching the time altering dynamics of creative and healing dance experience.

3. In the general sense it is important to note an obvious physiological sign seen in conjunction with Dance and Healing time travel. That is the participants’ faces reflect a rosy glow. The researcher interprets the facial glow as radiance.

**Creative Place in Time and Space**

The creative place or space where and when dance making happens and the place where healing dance movements come out from lend support to an alteration from any conventional or usual sense of time phenomena. This time free dance work does not appear as a technique or trained style from any particular dance pedagogy. This is happening, healing art in the making with a timing all of its own.
One threshold for discovery obvious to the researcher comes via the perception of a stress free creative place where everything for the participant is moving in synchrony and in the time of healing. The internal timing mechanism is keeping the participant in step with biological time (Hall 1983 p.16), dance time and healing time simultaneously. Another threshold is quality of surrender visible in every moment of each and every dance action emanating from the participant. Healing time travel appears to carry the participant along for a ride to dance in a free association with time.

**Transition and Surrender**

When participants experience a transition phase in dance from the usual sense of time and make a shift over and into the free flow of dance creativity they appear to surrender and move more within the action. The researcher sees no sign of resistance coming from within.

Complete surrender into the moment appears to be the key into the flow of time travel in improvisation. The participant is seen to surrender through the movement of dance into the time of the moment that is happening now. The time of now is a dance moment (Pollack and Humphrey 1993) and as the next moment comes the participant is right there involved and totally engaged in the moment of dance. This happens in the next moment and so on. The point of time, the dance improvisation and the participant are all in each and every successive moment of movement (Blom and Chaplin 1988). Who is to say what comes first (Dossey M.D. 1993 cites Davies p.119)?

Healing is happening as participants are creating improvisation. Those who observe this phenomenon are seen to engage in each creative dance moment with participants. Characteristically all present in the dance studio remain oblivious to any usual sense of the over all time the process actually takes.

**Experiential Journey**

The space and meter of healing time in dance does not stand on formality nor does it respect a particular person. It is of another time and travels a land that is more spirit and light than muscular movement, more heaven than earth. Present time perceptions are in suspension and participants are seen to be at once lost in time travel whilst fully absorbed into the experiential dance creation journey.

Hanging on to or trying to make time travel happen does not seem to work. Rather it slips into and over dance improvisations and is experienced as a fluid process in three transferable parts. The parts are seamlessly incorporated into the dance making (Ullman 1992 p.76).

Firstly dance phenomena in time travel carry a tangible pervasive atmosphere that surrounds participants and experienced with a sense of invitation (Dossey 1993 p.87) or a time of waiting. The atmosphere is characterized by an actual shift in the colour and brightness of light around the participants (Dossey 1993 p.50). The light is a haze (Discovery Four – Other
Gifts) with a golden glow when dance improvisations are in time travel. An experience of transition into the second part is recognized by a characteristically quiet expectancy or availability and hope in process of dance improvisation. The third part is seen as a gradual letting go for the participant and a shift from physical, mental and emotional positioning into the free flow of dance making and dance creation.

**The Space of Healing Time**

Boundaries in dance and healing time are dynamically fluid therefore the prevailing quality of the dance work is smooth. Transitions of weight and directional changes in dance movements slip easily from one place to another place. The researcher can distinguish a simultaneous coming together of all creative points as ideas, interactions, musicality, movement, composition and expression interweave.

The more familiar constructs usually applied in dance creation produce work via phrases and sections that develop through experimentation and repetitions. Such constructs are not applied in the light and fluid improvisational space of dance and healing time. The participants are observed to be creating dance in a time, space and atmosphere that seems to draw references from who knows where?

**Beyond Exploratory Workshop Sessions the Healing Goes On**

Perhaps dance in healing time can be described as dancing in heavenly time? It may to take an eternity and a moment and is certainly less quantifiable than healing processes. The phenomena of time travel are expansive in a community sense as seen when the researcher surrenders processes of the research work over to participants who incorporate the work into their individual creative dance practices.

Initially healing is experienced from within the context of a small circle of participants attending a group exploratory improvisation session. Secondly as individual participants network outside the research time with other dance groups the works produced reflect aspects of exploratory sessions. The healing processes of improvisation are thereby integrated effectively into more mainstream performance. Participants' larger dance works involve wider circles of dance people, musicians, artists and audiences in the community.

Exploratory improvisation sessions initiate healing directions with a flow on effect that actually ripples outward in ever widening circles in community (Price 1996 p.49). After a series of research sessions' participants instill practices from their experiences of time travel into more general choreographic works and dance productions.

Participants include healing connections found through this research in their performance work even two years after the original session times. The creation and performance of such productions are also shown in surrounding dance and art communities. Presentations and
performances for the general public are both formal and informal in style. (See Appendix One – Chronology of Research Activity and view videos entitled Glow, ADV Cloud and One Plus One.)

Letting go and observing the research work in contexts beyond the formal circumstances of exploratory dance improvisation sessions is a conscious choice for the researcher. The researcher has the happy fascination of simply seeing what happens and how far the practices of Dance and Healing move out.

Creation, production and performance augments a process initiated in research sessions and enables participants to access deeper and wider levels of personal healing in relationship with broader community contexts (Cunningham 1998 p.128). From the researcher’s perspective healing time travels through these community dance works and each encounter may be noted as an out-working of research processes (Price 1996 p.49). The researcher simply looks, learns and is inspired a little more each time healing dance moves onwards and outwards.

**Containing Timelessness and This Paper**

Alternative to ways of observation and interpretation are direct objective inferences. To this extent therefore the perception of time in this project and in relation with other writings on time perception may have academic value for insight, comparison and discussion. However to assist the researcher’s understanding at this discovery stage of the present work consideration of this type of discussion is perhaps premature and beyond the boundaries of this paper.

Areas to further investigate the seminal ideas in this Discovery are found in the works of scientists, physicists, theologians and philosophers. Davies writes about the belief of many religious people into the technicalities of the logical relationship between time and eternity. Apparently from a religious perspective insights into this subject of time perception are provided by revelation rather than academic debate (Davies 1995 p.25).

Perception of time is a subject of much scientific debate. Space enters into (Observation Thirteen – Dance In Time) the equation when questions are asked about time perception. Where are the participants in space when they are dancing, healing and traveling through time? Chapman (1995 p.146) asks if time travel is possible then who can say where the time travelers are? The short answer is that the time travelers of this project are in the space of dance and healing time.
Discovery Three –
Prayer and Configuration

Working with the Unexpected
Unusually a most remarkable discovery is made when the researcher prays and walks in
circles on the perimeter of the room during dance improvisations. To be specific the discovery
is with regard to prayer in conjunction with creative dance processes.

The researcher finds difficulty in articulating the specific significance and meaning behind
the configuration of circles in the context of this discovery (Ullman 1992 p.21). Nevertheless
the researcher regards active physical involvement in the circular pathway as a key into this
discovery. The circular configuration is considered crucial because the researcher is no longer
observing from the usual position of sitting on the side of the room. Also a degree of objectivity
is lost as the researcher actually walks around the room praying and observing all at the
same time.

About Walking In Circles
The pattern and practice of the circular prayer walk are relatively simple to describe.
Observations and interpretations of transformational dance creation as performed within
the circles follow.

The pathway of the prayer walk is more often than not at the very edge of the room so as to
encircle the participants wherever they dance in the space. Occasionally the circle may close
in towards the center of the room when one participant or a small group of approximately
three participants improvise in a central position.

The pattern that effects the transformation in dance creation is a continuous circular walk in
a clockwise direction. The clockwise direction is seen to positively influence the improvisations.
The researcher is just walking around the room praying silently and observing the
improvisations when this discovery is first made.

How Does the Researcher Walk?
Slowly is the answer, slower than a march and slower than a stroll. The steps are taken in a
quiet, natural style with bare feet. Socks are worn if the temperature is low. The researcher’s
hands are relaxed and swinging with the arms in the natural rhythm of walking. Ceremony,
tradition and ritual are not considered as influential in this simple activity. For the most part
the researcher walks around the room praying silently and sometimes to rest the eyes or
concentrate on the prayers a few steps are made with eyes closed.
What are the Prayers About?
Audible words are not spoken. The prayers are silent within the researcher's mind in the form of repetitive invocation. The words are an invitation for the Holy Spirit (Dossey 1993 p.87). The three words of prayer are "Come Holy Spirit". Occasionally the researcher sings spontaneously in the Spirit and continues to walk. A few times when a participant spontaneously joins in the prayer walk both the participant and the researcher may sing in the Spirit together. On rare occasions the researcher may also ask a participant to join the silent prayer walking.

Experimentation
To experiment with different possibilities the walking steps are taken sideways, forwards and backwards. Trials are made with fast and slow walking and running and dancing, lines and circles. The circular walk is tested with and without prayers and songs, speaking the prayers out loud and saying prayers before, during and after the dance improvisations. All the above are attempted in varying combinations. The simple natural walk in clockwise circles with prayer in silent invocation or songs in the Spirit brings transformation to dance improvisations. Incidentally anticlockwise circles simply do not feel right for the researcher.

What Happens Inside the Circles?
The researcher prayer walks in circles in many sessions over the three years of this project with many groups of participants and watches again and again as a marked increase of creative flow occurs. Creative flow in dance improvisation observed by this researcher is moving inward and outward within the circular configuration. Ullman who revises Laban's work in Mastery of Movement considers the motion factor of flow in detail because it plays an important part in all movement expression. Laban says flow streaming inward and outward establishes liberation. Freedom certainly appears to happen in the improvisations within the circles for this discovery.

Participants dance freely in the space and perform improvisations in bodies that are totally unbound. The researcher believes continuous intercessory prayer walking in circles is the catalyst (Hypothesis) for freedom. As the researcher physically and prayerfully joins in the action the power of group faith is released and as a result participants are enabled to create exceptional dance improvisations. Participants and researcher in communication with one another and God through prayer cause the factor of flow to accelerate dance creation processes (Ullman 1992 p.75). Within the circle exceptional dance and healing phenomena are happening and the circle is some how the key.

Discoveries Overlap
The researcher now writes to cause an overlap of Discovery Two – Healing in Dance Time with Discovery Three – Prayer And Configuration. The phenomena of work in a creative field such as
contemporary dance improvisation is interwoven and overlapping is primary to the process. Overlapping is intrinsic to wholistic dance practice and even more likely to occur when writing about faith, motion, time and space.

The common factors of time and space relative to Discovery Two and Three are differentiated by the researcher's physical position in the configuration of a circular pathway. References may be drawn from the revelations of physicists who write about the curvature of our space and time as analogous with what happens in relative motion (Chapman 1995 p.135).

The ponderings of physicists and phenomena of shared experience in perceptions of time are said to come together under the influence of group focus. Greg Braden author of The Isaiah Effect writes about the effects of collective "feeling for the outcome" rather than the feeling of "how long it takes". Relevant to this dance and healing research is the subtle yet important difference in a group's focus of feelings (Braden 2000 p.92) between beliefs in healing objectives for the participants and however long a healing process may actually take.

Prophetic Books in the Holy Bible Inform Discovery

A marked increase in creative flow arising from prayer walking in a circle may find references in historical literary forms such as the highly symbolic books of Isaiah and Revelations. Old Testament prophet Isaiah (chapter 40 verse 22) sees God sitting enthroned above the circle of the earth. And New Testament scripture tells of an angel who gives a prophetic vision of crystal clear living water flowing in a river from the creator's heavenly throne. (Revelations 22: verse 1).

The mention of a circle and the picture of the creator God releasing a flowing river of dance improvisation from above may be too symbolic or fragmented for contemporary western ideas. Never the less symbolism from the Holy Bible comes to life through faith in the context of Christian community in dance creation processes. Biblical symbolism informs the symbolic art form of dance (Thomas 1995 p.178) through the faith of a community of believers and via the dance creation processes in contemporary improvisation.

When Prayer is Answered

The simple prayer "Come Holy Spirit" is answered in an unexpected yet satisfactory way for the researcher. The experience of observation and the memories drawn from these observations deem further references out of place. More importantly interpretations of direct transformational dance experience can be drawn from the embodied texts of improvisational dance through objective observation and qualitative evaluation.
An Outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Dance Improvisation

Creative dance material literally pours forth from the participants. The dance work demonstrates heightened body awareness plus an availability to dance freely in space and time (Discovery Two – Healing In Dance Time).

Spontaneous improvement is seen in the quality and quantity of dance improvisation via interactions between participants. Physical contact is more sensitive, and participants demonstrate increased confidence in spatial awareness and dance creation design. The participants know where, when and how to lead or pass, follow or sustain a move.

Innovation is shown in both the dance work of an individual participant and the group dynamic as a whole. Participants’ innovations take the shape of a wider scope to demonstrate light, shade, weight and displacement in movement qualities and movement textures. Variable speeds in transitional moves and sculptural formations, height of jumps and number of turns are also innovative. The group dynamic becomes more synchronized and adventurous in dance creation. The work is exciting to watch.

Positive Developments in Dance Energy

Prayer walking in a floor pattern that encircles the participants sets off other changes in dance improvisations. The changes are positive and developmental. The ability to release physical energy through dance technique is significantly increased.

A new found physical freedom in terms of range of motion lets loose vigorous new dance and movement vocabularies. The sense of space within and around participants becomes a place of adventure and a place to take risks. Abilities to manage level changes, flexibility, virtuosity and musical responses are all enhanced. Audiotape number one in Appendix Eight is useful for hearing a participant’s point of view.

Signs of Healing

Participants are released from trained and conditioned patterns of movement and interaction. The dance improvisations are fearless, confident and fully conscious. If and when participants spend more time per session and in several successive sessions creating improvisation within the circular configuration they begin to process and articulate the experiences of dance inside the circle of prayer.

Meanwhile the researcher senses that good is happening and so continues to monitor changes and improvements in improvisations whilst continuing to walk and pray. From time to time participants are asked to step out side the prayer-walking circle so that they too may witness the changes in improvisations. Participants corroborate the researcher’s accounts of the positive effects of prayer walking in a circle around the dance work.
Questions Arising from Discovery Two
What prompted the researcher to walk and pray in circles? (Observation – The Spirit Of Prayer)
Why is the circle configuration of prayer causing a transformational effect on the creative flow of improvisation? How is this exploratory practice useful in the correlation of dance and healing?

Looking for the Answers
Possible answers can be found in Moving In The Spirit by author Phillip Pringle a Pentecostal Minister who writes about walking in the Holy Spirit (1994, Chapter Eight). Pastor Pringle explains the importance of focusing the mind on the Holy Spirit in order to keep in step with the Spirit. This explanation is in direct alignment with the silent words of invocation in prayers made by the researcher whilst walking around improvisations.

Apparently a relationship with the Holy Spirit is a subjective experience with a person living in another dimension who is able to guide, inspire, reveal, gift and empower us (Pringle 1994 p.3). These words resonate with the researcher who is most certainly guided and inspired to witness wonders in the realms of dance improvisation in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has the credentials that can directly account for spontaneous embodied prayer, songs, (Other Gifts Discovery Three) freedom and much more. Pringle cites the Holy Bible (NIV 1984 Galatians 5:25) as the source of his thoughts about how life in the Holy Spirit will let us walk in step with the Spirit.

The Importance of Being There
The researcher witnesses and experiences the Spirit of prayer to be a catching force and supposes that over time research work in a prayer centered community accumulates a positive spiritual effect on the research practices. What appears to be in the first instance a combination of walking, praying and observing dance improvisation over time becomes a powerful force in the transformation of dance creation processes moving in the Holy Spirit.

PARTICIPANT COMMENT

Journal entry 23rd July 2002 – participant code 7. C

What an improvisation session. The Holy Spirit was on fire. Praise God for He is awesome in power. I felt God moving me in my dancing. I felt release for my inner being and the presence of God. God was speaking through my dancing to me. This was an opening for me that showed me beautiful things of how God will be with me and use me the entire way. Praise Him!
Discovery Four –

Other Gifts

A Context for Giftedness in the Social Culture of Dance Art

Beyond the parameters of this project in the wider world of professional dance the ideal physique for a dancer is a subject for ongoing debate (Ryan and Stephens 1987 p.5 and p.108) (Friedler and Glazer 1979 p.178) (Woolliams 1978 p.14). The visual impact of dance in the main stream brings emphasis to embodied imagery. Professional dance paradigms make demands for fully articulated body languages.

Dance technique training prepares highly cultured physicality (Woolliams 1978 p.18). Dance techniques finely tune the body of today’s successful dance performer with a range of extraordinary movement qualities that are only attainable through years of rigorous training. The program of fine-tuning is most successful when the dancer has the gifts of ideal physical proportions (Grieg 1994 p.52) artistry, musicality and dedication.

Relatively few aspiring dancers survive the rigorous pre-selection processes for professional training and continue on to professional dance life without giftedness. Commercial dance art is highly competitive business and a dancer’s physical attributes present as the first benchmark to success. The dancer who is endowed with a combination of dedication, artistic and physical gifts plus an excellent training in technique is a rare creature (Cosi 1982 p.5).

Significant professional dancers appear to be beautiful or handsome, talented and gifted with the right opportunities. Being in the right place at the right time, able to dance with the music and capable of original dance creation are three precious gifts valued by professional dancers and choreographers. The more successful and gifted dance artists are also diligent workers.

Conditioned Mindsets

Very few of the participants in this project are gifted in all or some of these ways. However the paradigms of today’s dance profession are an influence on the artistic, social, physical and environmental cultures (Anderson 1997 p.294) in the majority of people (Introduction p.8) involved in this research (Thomas 1995 p.168).

The researcher is under the influence of a lifetime of training, education and performance in mainstream dance and is aware of the influence and effect conditioning has in forming an image of what a gifted dancer actually does and is. Professional archetypes in the dance industry of today are strongly imprinted in this researcher’s ideas about gifts in dance. In particular the many years of training usually required in mastering such skills as those
involved in the performance of multiple turns, high leaps, feats of flexibility and strength. Artistic depth and performance experience behind dance work that communicates meaning and message are known to take many years to develop. This point of conditioning highlights the contrasting context of this discovery “Other Gifts” and offers an explanation for the researcher’s enthralled response.

**Another Cultural Context for Other Gifts**

Within the context of this project and from a position of observation the researcher is occasionally held spellbound. All preconceived notions in reference to gifts in dance fall away when participants display a range of “Other Gifts” in dance improvisation. Physical attributes, hard work, training (Introduction p.12) (The Challenge in the Mystery of Healing p.44) (Observation Three – Spiritual Considerations p.83) and professional opportunity are no longer relevant criteria in reference to these “other gifts”. To interpret and articulate what is observed about “other gifts” requires a somewhat different vocabulary from the terms usually applied in speaking about gifted dancers in mainstream dance.

The researcher looks else where for points of reference and finds these so-called “Other Gifts” to be phenomena that could be termed the gifts of the Spirit (Pringle 1994 p.71) moving through the participants dance improvisation. An impartation of the Holy Spirit may empower a participant or a group of participants to move in extraordinary ways with almost boundless energy (Discovery Three – Prayer and Configuration). Dance creation moves in full force and pours through that participant or group facilitating the discovery of “Other Gifts” in Dance and Healing.

**Points of Differentiation**

However dance creation in other gifts differs from dance creation that is described in Discovery Three – Prayer and Configuration. The main difference is seen in the content of the dance improvisations. Also Discovery Three – Prayer and Configuration shows the researcher as physically and prayerfully involved in observing a marked increase in dance creation processes in participants’ improvisation that are in step with the Holy Spirit. Here in Discovery Four – Other Gifts the researcher is sitting and simply observing participants when improvisational content is enriched with a whole range of exceptional gifts of the Spirit.

**Gifts of the Spirit**

Manifestations of “Other Gifts” may move as a prophetic calling in an improvisation. Messages transmit through embodiment in the dance movement and participants communicate healing, sacred wisdom, love and power to those who watch. At times the participants and observers may translate the improvisational material for themselves as the dance is actually created. Other translations and interpretations may be articulated in conversation times after the dance improvisation is finished.
Another Realm of Observation

The researcher is taken to another realm of observation as the dance language (Hanstein cited in Overby and Humphrey 1989 p.140) becomes wide-ranging. The researcher is in a state of awe. Another realm of observation refers to an inner place inside the researcher where social conditioning and critical thinking are transcended by an experience of awe. The state is quiet minded whilst questioning and thinking continue more as background thought an experience of awe predominates (Mysterious Soul Life p.45 and Observation Four – Stillness p.89) (Dossey 1993 p.87). The improvisational dance atmosphere in the room and the dance action that is performed before the researcher’s eyes is more enthralling than what happens inside the researcher’s mind.

Embodied Spiritual Gifts

Dance improvisation seen frequently in this study appears to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and looks remarkably similar to the gift of speaking or singing in tongues written about in the Holy Bible. It is in an effort to account for the empowering quality of this facet of dance improvisation that the researcher draws comparison with particular gifts of the Holy Spirit. Exhortation to eagerly desire “Gifts of the Spirit” such as speaking in tongues, healing, prophecy, the discernment of spirits and others may be read in Christian scriptures (Holy Bible NIV 1984 One Corinthians, Ch. 14).

Cultural Comparison

Visual diversity is provided in the origins of the movements, qualities of tone and texture, fluency and harmony in these improvisations are seen as embodied languages (Observation Two – Embodied Language) that compare with the spiritual gift of speaking or singing in angelic tongues or heavenly languages. Pentecostal church cultures today demonstrate the gift of speaking and singing in tongues and whilst this is an amazing acoustic experience through the sense of hearing it is also remarkably similar to the visual sense experience of observing dance improvisation moving in the gifts of the Spirit.

The experience of spiritual encounter is for the researcher essentially the same in both cases. That is to say observation of participants moving in improvisation in the gifts of the Spirit is comparable to experiencing the effects of listening to or singing and speaking in tongues.

Gifts are Freely Given

The participant who moves in the gifts of the Spirit is truly inspired from within and deeply informs those who look on. For participants and observers the phenomena of other gifts cause healing to become available via words, insights and transformation. (Appendix Four – Participants’ Responses.) Gifts of the Spirit do not exhaust the participants rather they are seen to inform, inspire and bring release, refreshment and restoration. The gifts of the Spirit in
improvisation are given freely. The participants are improvising creatively and proficiently in these gifts without any training regime.

**Constructs Fall Away**

So-called difficult bodies (Grieg 1994 p.xiv) for dance techniques by mainstream standards are set free to dance with an unworldly excellence. The participants improvise dances that are informed by concepts and ideas unknown to the world of mainstream professional dance. Familiar dance and social constructs fall away on the occasions when the participants are so inspired by the gifts of the Spirit.

The dance material speaks of adventure and breaks all regular spatial relationships with new and daring ranges of motion. Participants fly through the air with amazing leaps and spin many pirouettes at high speed. Any sense of being right or wrong with regard to body shape, age or appearance and inhibition is lost. The participants appear as though greatly embodied and perfectly placed in just the right place at the right time in most delightful and enjoyable ways. The researcher sees all the dance work happening through unconditional eyes and is totally enthralled.

**The Spirit Moves**

Being a Spirit on the move the Holy Spirit can move over the participants as a tangible atmosphere (Pringle 1994 p.17) (Dossey 1993 cites Paracelsus p.50) (De Sola 1986). In such a time as this the room fills with Holy presence and anoints the dance improvisation. Here once again as written in *Discover Two* and *Discovery Three* a seemingly golden haze sheds light over the dance activity in the room. So much so that in the instance of unsuspecting persons entering into the research dance space unexpectedly the researcher sees that they too are held spellbound by what transpires in dance improvisations.

Holy atmosphere infuses the artistic range and creative capabilities of active participants. Substance, form and delivery are refreshing. Boundaries expand and extend and new depths of meaning inform previously unseen areas of dance expression. Alternatively at times some participants are held spell bound and unable to move at all and together with the researcher may simply stand or sit wrapped in awe watching the phenomena of dance that is performed by participants who fully inhabit their bodies and dance in the gifts of the Spirit.

One, two or all participants involved in a session may be literally transformed by an anointing or impartation of the Holy Spirit. The fabric of this gifting appears to bubble up from inside participants, spill over and literally embrace the space or sweep into the dance space from who knows where? These "other gifts" in dance improvisation are what the researcher observes and experiences as a discovery of amazing grace in dance.
Reflecting on the Power of Unity

Spiritual unity is a strong influence on participants, observers and the dance improvisation work. Integrative influences from dance life in connection with Christian arts in an education community make for a very rich mix in the field of this research. The context of the project takes on an extraordinary emphasis from ideas of unity in the Holy Spirit. Dance ideas and dance art practices moving in the unity of the Holy Spirit give rise to creative community phenomenon that is new for the researcher and catalyst (Hypothesis) for this discovery of “Other Gifts” in dance improvisation.

Dreams That Come True

Filled to overflowing with wonder the researcher watches the power and beauty of men and women as they embody and create dance that is purposeful and edifying (De Sola 2001 v75 i12 p.62). Depth and meanings of communications in the content of these gifted improvisations are timeless and delightfully human. This is the dance that the researcher dreamed of as a child long before ever seeing dance performance. The gifts of the Spirit moving in dance are inspirational and a blessing to all those who watch or participate. Dance improvisation in the gifts of the Spirit is dance that heals.

PARTICIPANTS COMMENT

Journal entry 24th September 2002 – participant code 7. C

When a person dances the way they are is expressed. Improvisation is spiritual and reveals what is on one’s heart and how we relate to God. When I am improvising I express my deeply hidden emotions. When I improvise I come into one mind, one place and emotions with the other participants to be overwhelmed and know God and his gifts for us.


We watched improvisation dancing with God it was a beautiful sight, the passion behind the movements and the expressions of love all came out in the dance. To watch dance in God’s presence with simple movements was a moving sight. There was so much love pouring out of the bodies dancing. It was amazing.
Chapter Five

Conclusions
Conclusion to the Aims and Objectives

Introduction
The results of this study in relation to the aims and objectives are as follows.

The aims of this research are to explore the process of healing in dance creation and dance performance.

Selected Focus Successfully Contains Research
In relation to the aims: Exploratory focus is maintained around the processes of healing in performance of contemporary improvisation dance creation and dance performance. The selected focus towards one particular dance genre exploratory contemporary dance improvisation successfully contains the research inside manageable boundaries. Of course many other dance genres await exploration. The broad range of healing possibilities in correlation with dance need not be confined to one genre.

Exploration of dance and healing within University of Western Sydney research protocols provides formal guidelines and infrastructure. The aims are achieved within the context of this infrastructure and boundaries of the methodology of this project (Context p.21 and Boundaries p.30) and by the following objectives.

THE FIRST OBJECTIVE:
To bring together learning, research and community in an innovative, productive and experiential form.

Community Through Faith
In relation to the first objective: Researcher and participants have chosen to study and work in Christian arts education communities and these communities support the research procedures of Dance and Healing. Community through faith is a significant factor in the sessions and facilitates production of an abundance of new dance material relevant to the research topic of dance and healing. As a consequence of community spirit a fundamental unity within each and every group of participants involved in dance improvisation explorations are sustained.

Practice Productivity and Limitations
The project is most productive in the area of innovative dance material generated in exploratory sessions and less successful in the production of video recordings of this dance improvisational work. All participants are given an opportunity to experience for themselves many aspects of contemporary exploratory dance practice. Video records of participants'
experiences are valued as tool for referencing and dissemination of this visual embodied communication. Limited financial resources and time constraints place restrictions on the research in this vital area so relevant in dance culture of today.

**THE SECOND OBJECTIVE:**

*To engage in wholistic research practice. The researcher seeks to make connections between a participant's inner world (Logan 1998 p.1) inclusive of mind, body, soul and spirit as an individual person and in relationship with community. That is to perceive the inter-relatedness of all aspects of a person.*

**Integrative Practice**

In relation to the second objective: Via systematic integrative methods in the chosen medium of contemporary dance improvisation research, learning and community construct wholistic practices. With regard to participants *Dance and Healing* activity observed by the researcher is inclusive of the whole person as an individual and in relationships with others.

Observations are considered, interpreted and recorded in the form of thirteen written themes as can be read in the main body of this paper. The content of formal written responses from some participants together with informal responses in written, spoken and photographic forms is regarded as additional evidence of the wholistic nature of this research.

**Innovation Obstacles And Reservations**

The newness in this style of research in a dance context is ideologically vulnerable to a few obstacles. First, ideas of dance research are rarely contemplated simply research practice in mainstream dance is comparatively new. This research project breaks new ground therefore resistance to ideas and innovative frames of reference presents a challenge to the researcher. To communicate the aims of a dance research project in association with healing, creative processes and wholistic practice the researcher strives to develop ongoing dialogue with dance associates. The aim is to gain attention, arouse interest and meaningful exchange.

Second, dance research in a spirit filled Christian context is is seen to draw reservation from some sides of a more general dance community. Also the church in Sydney today is only marginally interactive with dance in comparison with performing arts such as music and drama. In addition matters of spirit and faith are perhaps more difficult to articulate in a dance context where embodiment and physical performance have primacy. In academic circles Spirit and faith seem less fashionable topics and biblical perspectives are not commonly drawn into frames of reference for faculties of dance education.
THE THIRD OBJECTIVE:

To devise, direct, facilitate, compose and present a practical dance project
specific to the exploration of healing phenomenon in dance.

Building the Project from the Inside

In relation to the third objective: Previous findings from a pilot study facilitate methods of exploration. A pilot study is part of the researcher’s qualifying program prior to this degree. Findings and processes gleaned from the study are refined to form structural and functional aspects in the current study.

Informed by the foundational work the researcher devises and directs exploratory dance practice sessions with six different groups of dance participants. The sessions are in clusters of between seven to fourteen weeks. Participants are introduced to and involved in creative dance processes and exposed to experiences of healing through contemporary dance improvisation.

Harmony Builds Continuity of Practice

Exploratory sessions facilitate social and physical harmony in the practical daily working environments. Harmony increases the potential for healing phenomena. The researcher seeks out the healing properties of dance via exploratory practice and thereby the dance sessions provide a means of gathering information. Continuity in the flow of learning via experimentation, trial, error and repetition is sustained by these sessions. Composition of this paper and research results are totally dependent upon observations of physical practice throughout the three years of this dance and healing project.

Conformation of Methods of Practice

From time to time the dance work is presented in community performances, conferences and seminars and at University of Western Sydney colloquia. Presentation increases opportunities to exchange ideas relevant to dance and healing phenomena. Performances provide confirmation of process validity and a forum for exchange through active physical practice.

THE FOURTH OBJECTIVE:

To observe and write about the mentoring and discipleship of subtle, spoken, spacial, musical, embodied textual forms of healing dance so commonly experienced yet rarely documented

Interpretation Transposition and Translation of Dance Material

In relation to the fourth objective: Healing phenomenon observable in dance performance is accessed via thirteen specific lines of practical and theoretical investigation. Over the course of enquiry ongoing observation of physical practice informs the writing of this paper. Through
methods of observation reflection, discussion, note taking and referencing the researcher is able to examine the mentoring and discipleship of subtle, spoken, spacial, musical embodied textual forms of dance and healing.

Mentoring and discipleship of healing dance is finding new expressions through creation and performance of dance art works of, by and for participants in the wider dance community. (See Appendix Seven – “Glow”) Three years of practical and theoretical investigation results in the writing of thirteen considered observations. Investigations come together in the composition of chapter three in the main body of this paper.

**THE FIFTH OBJECTIVE:**
*To search closely and carefully for processes of healing within contemporary dance improvisation.*

**Successful Improvisational Methods**

In relation to the fifth objective: The pre-selected mode of contemporary dance improvisation provides an appropriate creative field of action. Exploratory sessions and performances facilitate close scrutiny into the correlation of healing dance and open the way for discovery. The pursuit of dance and healing phenomenon results in some relevant discoveries as recorded in chapter five of this paper.

**THE SIXTH OBJECTIVE:**
*To investigate and by a course of inquiry identify a range of ideas that informs the pathways of healing through contemporary dance and in turn form new paradigms for further research.*

**Many Questions are Raised and Some are Answered**

In relation to the sixth objective: The search for healing within practical dance performance by methods of investigation, observation, reflection and interpretation is an incremental process. For researcher, participants and observers the ideas and images, methods and performances and interpretations and interactions undergo changes at every stage. Healing phenomena are found to be associated with faith, surrender, atmosphere, time and gifting.

As to be expected in a course of enquiry of this nature every anomaly imaginable and unimaginable comes to the surface. Never the less contemporary dance practice impacts on the range of ideas and provides a cohesive matrix to consolidate this research. Questions are raised and answers are found to some of them. In three years part time study the researcher identifies new ideas, breaks through long established conditioned responses (*The Challenge In The Mystery Of Healing*)(*Discovery Four – Other Gifts*) and discovers community dance and healing culture moving in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Transformational Practices

For the researcher in the early stages of the project the factor of faith simply underpins procedures, informs background thought and initiates prayer life. As the project unfolds and healing processes emerge faith takes a more open and expansive position. Initial emphasis on dance and healing with theory and practice informed by homeopathic medicine is gradually infused more and more by Christian influences via unity in the Spirit and participant's faith in the healer Jesus Christ (Yancy 2000 p.174). Thereby the open discovery approaches adopted in this project find new paradigms for further research.

Faith that was at the outset positioned in the researcher's background thought transpires into an all-pervasive atmosphere in practical dance research sessions. Faith acknowledges a healing presence. Participants share common beliefs capable of transcending differences in age, cultures and ranges of abilities. Over the course of the project the unifying effects of a common ground of belief causes a shift of emphasis in the research (Schneer 1994 p.99).

The Christian arts education community wherein all the practical dance activity takes place reinforces the sense of unity in the Spirit. Faith and the ramifications of Christian ethos and spiritual life are no longer confined to background thoughts in the researcher's mind. The factor of faith comes to the forefront of both the explorations and the outcomes.

Reflections in Hindsight

In the wake of this study the researcher can see that investigative methods reveal participants getting well when they dance and observers getting well watching dance via four principles.

Four Progressive Principles Apply

The first principle has three cohesive parts and they are wait, relax and pray. Second, healing processes operate through and in correlation with dance creation processes. An atmosphere where at least someone asks for and believes positively for healing is the third principle. The fourth principle comes as a gift of healing to be experienced as something to give and something to receive.

According to phenomenon observed in this study when these four principles are in operation then both those who dance and those who watch are available to the movement of healing.
State of the Heart –
Concluding and
Conjectural Remarks

Phenomenological Methodology
A sense of mission in a research project of this nature (Chapter Two – The Challenge In The Mystery Of Healing – Mission p.53) brings fusion to phenomenological processes (Thomas 1995 p.22). Whilst seeking, learning and discovering about Dance and Healing phenomena the researcher is taken on a personal journey.

Notions of embodiment through faith and dance in correlation with healing become consciously alive via observation of participants in improvisation (Thomas 1995 p.171). The point of view of the researcher finds re-orientation in the atmosphere of healing phenomena. The blending of a sense of mission within methods of study secures the project firmly with both passion and systematic practice. As a result the researcher’s ideas undertake a transformation. The research journey broadens the mind and methods of observation allow evidence of embodied healing dance to illuminate reason and reflection.

Generating Research Activity
The researcher currently presents practical, written, spoken and components of Dance and Healing at state, national and international conferences and seminars. An extract from this paper is due for publication July 2003 for Inspire international dance journal. As a direct result of this project and via these activities some degree of formalisation, presentation and promotion of conditions that surround healing processes in dance are beginning to be generated.

This Project Moves Towards a Vision
This project may be viewed as a decisive and positive step towards the researcher’s vision for further studies of healing processes in correlation with dance. As a result of this study the researcher now believes that there is some evidence for exploratory contemporary dance to significantly improve health in participants and observers providing the dance practice is conducted under defined conditions. This project puts down a legacy for further formal investigations.

To develop the results of Dance and Healing more fully plans need not be confined by ideas of reproducibility. That kind of approach is not an immediate concern. Rather the vision is for dissemination of the healing properties in dance from a much broader research base.
One strategy for expansion is by continuation of the present project. For example a possibility exists for this research to find a broader base within environments where the researcher is currently employed. This means the project can find additional momentum in areas of staff and course development.

Expansion of the project requires a more regulated qualitative approach of investigation than the present method. Also in order to define phenomena of Dance and Healing more rigorously a quantitative phase is thought practicable. Quantitative evaluation of results of healing outcomes from an effective number of surveys from approximately one hundred participants is a part of this strategy.

A second possibility is a furthering of the present work via continued postgraduate research to include the interrelation of three phases of investigation. First a phase to assess dance and healing with trained professional dancers. A contrasting second phase for untrained non-professionals who dance with an aim to improve health. Still another phase to study the affect of dance and healing specifically for observers. All three phases to link into an overall quantitative and comparative evaluation of healing outcomes from participants in all three categories could bring the study to a cohesive conclusion.

Concluding Remarks

In taking this time of approximately three years to observe participants and healing in contemporary dance contexts the researcher is happy to consider the time well spent. In this research equation a continual pull on the researcher’s heart is to look forward to health and improvement for the participants through dance. The process of observation is as objective as possible however the researcher's desire for healing and dance to happen together is an openly declared bias and considered as an influential factor regarding the results.

Through research processes of observation fused with fascination and curiosity the researcher is now well connected with a community of people (Hackney 1998 p.1–10) who dance, heal and share their faith. As results are considered, interpreted and talked about the researcher regards the compound effects of dance, healing and faith phenomena as difficult to measure in quantitative terms. Of course quantitative evaluation is beyond the aims and scope of this project.

Exploratory practice enriches the researcher’s soul and provides food for the spirit. Finally the researcher is left with a vivid mental picture of participants dancing free, fully alive and well in the Spirit capable of favourably effecting those who may watch. Such a picture creates an internal movement that breaks the researcher’s heart open to dream of the healing possibilities of dance yet to be danced. To watch and see what happens for a participant in the moment of inspiration and transformation is indeed a privilege. Dance and healing is a happy dream come true for the researcher.
PARTICIPANT COMMENT

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The experience in improvisation sessions was my first knowledge of an encounter with God. Oh yes I could feel the heat. It was burning. I am thankful with all my heart because I have started to understand why I am here as a student and the essence I will be carrying with me when I begin to teach others.
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