



CCDR Newsletter

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Summer 2002

BACK TO BASICS: An Anthropological Retrospective on Dance Scholarship Joann W. Kealiinohomoku

Two recent articles, excerpted below, one by Judith Lynne Hanna, and one by Adrienne Kaepler, remind me that we three are peers with common frames of reference and shared concerns. For the first, we are academically trained anthropologists who are pioneering an anthropological approach to the study of dance. Although each of us contributes to the study in unique ways, we share many concepts based on the wisdom of scholars who preceded us and developed the discipline of anthropology.

For the second, I perceive we feel compelled to alert budding dance scholars who do not have a classical training in anthropology, to guard against ignoring basic principles of sound scholarship without even realizing they are doing so. Especially upsetting is the currency of some ideas, taken for granted by many, that are really petrified notions. We three have addressed these notions, each in our own way, and tried to correct the record. In this case, it is shocking to realize some writers still refer to dance as a "universal language." It is shocking, also, that some limit the validity of dance research to certain performance genres with particular pedigrees and they tacitly imply that other dance forms are null and void.

I agree with the statements by Hanna and Kaepler quoted below. They plead with the reader to think logically, supported by irrefutable evidence collected by fine scholars over many years. To call dance a "universal language" is useless and misleading. Although dance (or phenomena generally recognizable as dance) is universal in human societies, that is not to say dance is a "universal language," just as verbal language is a human universal but clearly there is no universal spoken language. Likewise, since dance occurs in all human societies, the subject of dance studies must include all forms of dance and related activities wherever and whenever they exist.

This essay, reinforced by the declarations below, highlights two basic principles that underlie the mission, work and ethics of Cross-Cultural Dance Resources.

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p. 6 "... my anthropologist hat tipped . . . Contrary to conventional wisdom, dance is not a universal "language" but many languages and dialects. There are close to 6,000 verbal languages, and probably that many dance languages. Peter Martins, director of the New York City Ballet, has said that classical ballet and modern dance are different dialects of the same language. By contrast, classical Indian dance, with its ancient, elaborate system of codified gestures, is a different language altogether."

Judith Lynn Hanna, "Reading a Universal Language?" pp. 6,15. *DCA News (Dance Critics Association)*, Spring 2002

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p. 4 "... I have been struck by the emphasis . . . on theatrical dance - ballet, modern, and postmodern dance. . . . But what about all those dance forms that do not take place on theater stages? Studying dance as an anthropologist . . . I am concerned that we are overlooking those dance traditions . . . that have been underrepresented in public performance and have therefore escaped our attention. Indeed, dance in the Americas (and elsewhere) is much more than what we see on stage."

Adrienne L. Kaepler, "Dancing Beyond the Theater," pp. 4-6. *Channels/Canales: World Dance Alliance*. Summer 2002

IN REMEMBRANCE
this article was originally
published in CCDR
Newsletter #11, 1991

BEVERLY BROWN

Cross-Cultural Dance Resources is pleased to announce that Beverly S. Brown is the fourth awardee of the annual Halla K. Keali'inohomoku Memorial Research Choreographer Residency. She will be in Flagstaff for four months beginning February 1, 1991. She comes to Flagstaff from New York City after her performance in "Inscapes, New dances by Christopher Beck".

Beverly Brown is the founder and artistic director of the Beverly Brown Dancensemble Theater for Bodies and Voices. She was a soloist with the Erick Hawkins Dance Company for six years before beginning to produce her own concerts in 1974.

In addition to her years as a principal dancer and teacher with the Erick Hawkins School of Dance, Ms. Brown has been artist-in-residence at Case Western Reserve University, University of Colorado, and Thomas Jefferson College. She has also taught at the New York University Tisch School of the Arts, New School for Social Research, and the American Dance Festival. Her work has been presented by the American Dance Festival, the Riverside Dance Festival and Dance theater Workshop, and has been supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.

While she is in Flagstaff, Ms. Brown will be a Visiting Artist for the Performing Arts Department of the College of Creative and Communication Arts at Northern Arizona University. She will perform a solo for the NAU spring



Beverly Brown 1941-2002

Beverly Brown in "Inscapes: New Dances by Christopher Beck", 1991. Silougraph rendered from photo by Bill Irwin.

dance concert in May. During her residency she will be collaborating with Flagstaff dancers Kristin Eberhardt, Holly Hamilton, Jayne Lee, Carolyn Mayfield, Karen Myers, and Georgia Taylor.

Beverly Brown has sustained an interest in sacred and spiritual roots of dance. Research for her Master's thesis about Christian based dance experiences has taken her to several parts of the country and abroad. Her thesis was su-

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pervised by the renowned scholar of non-verbal communication, Dr. Martha Davis, of New York University.

Ms. Brown has also had a long standing interest in the deserts and cultures of the American Southwest, nurtured by her four years of high school at Verde Valley School in Sedona, AZ. Her artistic work with Eric Hawkins, who's own work was inspired by the Southwest landscapes and people, encouraged her continued focus on the Southwest. During her residency at Cross-Cultural Dance Resources, Ms. Brown will augment her "Desert Series" with a new dance work. The series was inspired originally by Barry Holstun Lopez's book *Desert Notes*.

Research for her new work will include library research, consultation, visits to Native American dance events and collaborative work with Flagstaff dancers. She plans to conclude this phase of the new work by having it filmed on the grounds of the Verde Valley School and surrounding Sedona sites.

Ms. Brown will be available for workshops and lecture-demonstrations throughout her stay in Flagstaff. For information please call (602) 774-8108.

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Cross-Cultural Dance Resources was saddened to learn that a very special lady, Beverly Brown, died of an apparent stroke this summer. She was 61 years old. CCDR is especially bereaved because Beverly was a former Halla Kealiinohomoku Memorial Research-Choreographer in Residence at CCDR. The news was conveyed to CCDR by Nancy Zendora, also a Halla Kealiinohomoku Memorial Research-Choreographer in Residence, and a neighbor of Beverly Brown in New York. We are grateful that Nancy attended the memorial for Beverly and sent both the following report and the article by Beverly Brown to us.

Editor's note

Beverly Brown, longtime leading member of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company, died of a stroke last month at 61. She taught dance and composed music, as well as producing a seminal monograph on Hawkins and experimenting with sound in her own choreography and for the Siddha Yoga community. Remember her June 22 at 3 p.m. at the Broome Corner Studio, 425 Broome Street, fourth floor. —**Elizabeth Zimmer, Village Voice, June 12-18, 2002**

Original Message From Nancy Zendora DanceCompany

Beverly's memorial took place on Saturday (June 22) at the Broome Corner Studio. About 40 people sat in a circle and shared their memories. Among them Lilo Way who danced with Beverly in the early days when Erick, Lucy, Bob Yahn, Beverly and Lilo toured the country in a station wagon. Apparently, and you will not be surprised, is that Beverly knew everyone's part. Her memory and discipline were phenomenal. People joked about her compulsive rules, her generosity coupled with her difficulty connecting. The most touching moment was when Myron, a painter she had lived with for about 6 years, talked about her work, his love for her and shared a beautiful painting he had done of her. People were there of several generations, including some children, a baby, the elderly mother of Gloria McLean and a few younger dancers who had rented Beverly's space and had made a strong connection with her. There was one of her writings given to all of us about the Hopi 7 directions and how that related to Hawkins technique from Beverly's perspective.

Reprinted from *Dance Scope* Fall 1970 vol. 5, #1

**A DANCER'S THOUGHTS
(courtesy Nancy Zendora)**

Beverly Brown has been with Erick Hawkins, as a student, teacher, and then member of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company for five years. She first studied modern dance at Carleton College, where she completed her B.A. in English Literature. Miss Brown also studied with many other notable dancers, including Hanya Holm, Alvin Ailey, Merce Cunningham, Betty Jones, and Mary Anthony, as well as at the Joffrey Ballet School. A dancer and choreographer, she has recently premiered two works in the Choreoconcert series at the New School in New York, and another dance at Central Presbyterian Church, Summit, New Jersey. The present piece was originally written for a publication of the Verde Valley School, Arizona.

**Where I Stand
by Beverly Brown
(1941-2002)**

I am always delighted when some fragment from a past experience springs up out of my unconscious and illuminates a present experience. As a student, teacher and dancer with Erick Hawkins I am often reminded of my acquaintance with the American Indian tribes of the Southwest, for Erick is an ardent admirer of the arts, especially the dancing, of those cultures. About a year ago I recalled an experience which I had at a Verde Valley religious meeting. The guest was a Hopi medicine man, speaking to us through a translator. He told us that the number seven was regarded as a magic number in the Hopi mythology because it represented the seven primary directions, or places, in the Hopi's world: the north, the south, the east, the west, up into the sky, down into the earth and the place where he stands. It seems that the Hopi understood in the magic seven the paradox that in order to know the universe outside of himself, a man must first know himself, and experience existence in his own body, the house of his spirit, the center of his consciousness. Without the seventh place, the other six directions have no meaning. The Hopi might look for the

north star in order to determine what place he was in, but he must be aware of himself before he can find the north star. The seven becomes a circle always coming back to itself, or infinity, in the sense of endlessly recurring self-awareness. For even as you say "the north, the south, the east, the west, the sky, the earth and where I stand," and visualize each place as you say it, you realize that the six directions all flow back to where you stand, yet the very existence of those directions is predicated on your being there in the center of awareness from the beginning. The seven not only follows the six, but also precedes the one.

The Hopi magic seven is a very appropriate metaphor for the most generic principle of body mechanics on which Erick bases his training for professional dancers: the pelvis is the center of gravity of the body structure; in order to find stable, integrated and efficient movement, you need to experience the pelvis as the center for energy and control, while the legs, arms and the whole spine (especially the neck and head) are experienced as weights controlled by and constantly relating back to that pelvic center. Find your center- Start the movement in the pelvis-Let the arms and legs respond like tassels-Let the weight of the head flow back down into the pelvis are a few of the constant reminders that Erick gives his students. The paradox is that energy and weight flow from the center out into the five body paths, yet simultaneously flow from the periphery back into center. Stability, integration and efficiency come from the balance of these two directions of energy flow. How the energy flows is as important as where it flows. Therefore, another principle that must go hand in hand with the first one is this; Movement happens because the muscles contract and decontract changing the position of the bones; it is important to learn to use a wide range of contraction-decontraction and to learn to control the facility with which the muscles can change from one degree of contraction to another.

I do not know of any other professional dance training that teaches with such wisdom. Erick found these important truths about human movement because, after having the finest ballet training and the finest modern dance training, he injured himself. He saw many dancers injuring themselves and he felt that it was tragic for them to be so lacking in wisdom as to ruin the very instrument of their art, and, after so many years of training (presumably it takes at least ten years to become a real master) to have to stop performing while still quite young. The result of Erick's re-examination of human movement led him to formulate what he calls a "normative theory of body movement." He distinguishes between generic body movement, given the structure of the human body, which all dancers should master and practice daily to keep the body well-tuned, and movement specializations, which become the vocabulary of a choreographer's artistic communication. Generic body movement can be conclusively determined by scientifically studying the human body, whereas there is infinite possibility in movement specialization. A choreographer's aesthetic choices determine what area of movement he will select.

Finding center, or, in terms of the Hopi magic seven, finding where I stand, is not just a physical experience; it is also a psychological one. I feel that the journey of my life has been and will continue to be a search for my center. In the dance studio, I practice centering physically so that in a performance I am able to center psychologically.

In the new dance "Black Lake" which the company premiered in its recent season here in New York, Erick choreographed a very beautiful solo for me called "Sun Setting." There are two things which I must perform that are very significant tests of my ability to "center." One is that I must walk slowly in a big circle around the stage. It is what I call a "people walk"- that is, I roll through from heel to toe on each step. Everyone in the world can recognize a beautiful walk. In a flamboyant, complicated movement pattern, if I slightly miss, it is relatively easy to catch the flow and continue without anyone noticing an error. But to simply walk beautifully and alone around that stage I must center myself totally into the experience of walking, to say, "This is where I stand; now I am walking."

The second test is an experience equally common to all people- clapping. I'm sure everyone recognizes immediately the thin line between a clap that resounds beautifully and a clap that doesn't quite clap. Three times in the solo I must clap, one perfect clap, with my arms opening to the side and then coming together extended out in front of my body. The challenge is heightened by the fact that I am wearing a mask that shuts off much of my vision. I cannot watch my hands come together so I must rely on my proprioceptive sense. If I doubt myself, I will miss; if I think of the audience watching, I will miss; if I think of looking down at my hands instead of straight out at the world, I will miss. The only way for my hands to find each other perfectly and without fail is to sense the flow of the arms' weight back into center.

Even as I write these words, I understand how difficult it will be for someone to read them and understand what they really mean. I listened to Erick's words and watched him move for several years before I experienced what he was trying to communicate. I learned from him that often the best way to clarify a movement idea is through the use of a metaphor. One of the most powerful yet simple images to express what it means to find your center is this: As a tree grows taller with wider reaching branches it will always grow a thicker trunk and deeper roots. The tree "knows" what to do for stability. Man's mind, on the other hand, can invent possibilities that are not necessarily good for his body. He may try to reach away from himself without, at the same time, growing deep roots. If we are to learn from nature, as undoubtedly the Hopi did, we must know where it is we are standing at the same time that we search for the north star.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! AT 21 Years CCDR Comes Of Age!

On July 14 CROSS -CULTURAL DANCE RESOURCES achieved 21 years! The incorporation papers were signed in 1981 by Louise Riley, Joann W. Kealiinohomoku, Halla K.Kealiinohomoku, and attorney Martha Blue. (It is an easy-to-remember date because it is also Bastille Day in France.)

Almost a year later, on July 4, 1982, CCDR moved into the Agassiz St. address - twenty years at this location. (Also easy to remember- Independence Day in the United States.)

Current members of the Board for Cross-Cultural Dance Resources:

President - Joann W. Kealiinohomoku

Vice President - Elsie Ivancich Dunin

Secretary - Blase Scarnati

Treasurer - Barbara Benally

Members At Large - Bob Schacht,

Pegge Vissicaro, Gina Wright

2002 Annual Members Meeting September 7 -
announcement on page 5. Please let us hear from you!

WOW! LOOK WHAT'S COMING!

Symposium:

Applied Dance Ethnology.

Fri - Sun, June 6-8, 2003

Cross-Cultural Dance Resources,
Flagstaff, Arizona
CCDR members only!

Co-sponsored by Applied Indigenous Studies
program at Northern Arizona University

Keynote speaker - Allegra Fuller Snyder

Other speakers - Elsie I. Dunin, Octaviana Trujillo, Joann Kealiinohomoku, Pegge Vissicaro

Further information, (costs and logistics):

-keep checking web site <www.ccdr.org>

and/or listserv CCDR-NET@lists.nau.edu

PLEASE TELL US BY NOVEMBER 1, 2002, IF
YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING
CONTACT US BY ONE OR MORE:

1. e-mail <symposium@ccdr.org>
2. list-serve (see above)
3. snail mail

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