Rhythm’s Expression

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

DANCE

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By

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Part 1: Original Thesis Proposal
Rhythm's Expression (working title)

(Estimated Length: 15 minutes)

Statement of Intention

In partial fulfillment of the thesis requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree in dance at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I will choreograph an original dance that will be 15 minutes in length. I aim to present this work within the department’s Winter Footholds January 2014, in the Earl Ernst Lab Theatre. I will fulfill the performance requirement of the degree with a solo in the same piece. Using Bharata Natyam movement vocabulary, this choreography will be my re-imagining of Bharata Natyam compositional elements that form the basis of “traditional” Bharata Natyam choreography. This choreography reflects my positionality as a Bharata Natyam practitioner.

Overview

The three sections of the piece highlight the three components of Bharata Natyam movement. These are nritta, or pure/abstract movement, abhinaya, or modes of dramatic expression, and nrtiya or natya, the combination of both to convey a story. The movement for this piece is both abstractly and literally inspired a poem titled “World’s Dance Stage,” written by Tirupathi Chandrupatla. This poem describes the energy, beauty, and grace of various dance forms sharing a “world stage.” I decided to use this poem as an underlying narrative as it poetically speaks to the root of my personal journey in dance, and in my life. The musical
compositions used for this choreography are performed with music, and musical instrumentation, from various parts of India and outside of India to reflect the poem’s title: “World Dance Stage.”

Outline:

The first section of the piece opens with my solo. I will articulate these lines of Chandrupatla’s poem:

“Let’s imitate nature, In all its grace, Like clouds moving, On peaks of mountains, Like leaves dancing, With blow of the breeze, Like waves dancing, To reach the shore, Let’s dance in rhythm, With nature’s swing”

The dancers will then enter and elaborate on the same lines of the poem with rhythm patterns (nritta) and expression (abhinaya). The movement in this section will alternate between nritta and abhinaya but does not combine them.

The second section of the piece will focus on nritta, inspired by these lines of the poem:

“Let’s play some music, and dance in rhythm.”

The dancers will demonstrate this through variations (articulated by adavus, or units movement) of the talam, mishra chapu, meaning the time cycle of 7 beats.

The third section of the piece will combine abhinaya and nritta to produce nritya or natya. The movement will more closely follow the poem’s narrative than in previous sections, and kinetically articulate these lines of the poem:
“Dance’s energy, Dance’s vigor, Dance’s vibrant, Flow of emotion, Dance’s art Body, the instrument, Let’s dance together, To show our happiness, And express our joy, On world’s stage.”

Context

Dance scholar Janet O’Shea wrote: “Bharata Natyam is a resolutely global form” (O’Shea xi). I begin with this quote to position my understanding of what a global form is. Through my scholarship in analyzing Bharata Natyam as a global form as it has traveled from its place of origin and is practiced in many parts of the world, I believe that Bharata Natyam has been transformed by global influences. Rather than look at the issues in the practice of Bharata Natyam in many parts of the world, my choreography will reflect my personal narrative as one who has benefited from the “far reaching” practice of Bharata Natyam, having studied and taught the form in Los Angeles, India, and Honolulu. Through this choreography, I also look at how I affect this movement, practicing, teaching, and choreographing it in contexts outside of its “birthplace” as my current location of Honolulu, Hawaii indicates. I express this idea by incorporating music from places other than India. Ultimately this choreography is a reflection of the dilemma I have always felt when working with Bharata Natyam movement outside of the context in which I learned it. However, my choreography will reveal how I negotiate this dilemma, and come to terms with my identity as Bharata Natyam practitioner.
Major Questions

- In deviating from set choreographic structures, how does one re-think and re-structure Bharata Natyam movement vocabulary?

- How does one “set” Bharata Natyam vocabulary on dancers that have had limited or no exposure to the dance form?

Structure

One way for me to re-structure Bharata Natyam composition is to apply basic composition tools often used, for example, in modern/contemporary dance choreography such as, cannon, dovetailing, and rondo structures to a name a few. I plan to apply these compositional strategies to Bharata Natyam movement sequences to arrive at my thesis choreography.

The structure of the piece is inspired by a Bharata Natyam composition known as varnam. It is a relatively long composition and is the culminating piece in a Bharata Natyam recital. In the varnam, the dancer is meant to successfully alternate between nritta and abhinaya. I plan to reflect structural elements of the varnam, though not its length, in my thesis choreography.

Musical Composition

The musical compositions for the three sections are not musical scores that are typically used for Bharata Natyam. This decision was driven by my previous explorations of “intercultural collaboration” in which I negotiated differences in
musical and rhythm structures. The music compositions for the first and third sections of my thesis are commercially available, pre-recorded music. The score for the second section was specifically composed for this thesis but will be pre-recorded. The music for the first section is called “Taal Manjari (Flowering of Rhythm)” by Baluji Shrivastav & Re-Orient (featuring Hossam Ramzy). This music is played by a combination of Indian classical instruments with classical guitar, tin whistle, bamboo flute, sax, etc. (to name a few), length 5:13.

The music for the second section is in collaboration with James Minton, a graduate student in the UH Manoa Music department. Minton’s music combines both rhythms in the South Indian system of Carnatic Music (which forms the basis for Bharata Natyam rhythm patterns) and Korean percussion instruments. The resultant product will demonstrate Bharata Natyam nritta performed to the combination of these musical systems, and highlight both the similarities and differences of these rhythm patterns, length 3:30min.

The music for the last section is called “Rhydun (Nothing but voice)” by Taufiq Qureshi & Shankar Mahadevan. It is the combination of the vocal recitation of rhythmic syllables in both the North and South Indian systems of music and percussive Indian instruments, length: 5 minutes.

**Casting:** Kathryn Holt, Malia Wild, Kay Linan, Megan Brennan will join me to form the cast. The dancers I’m working with have had minimal experience and exposure to Bharata Natyam. Working with dancers who aren’t trained in Bharata Natyam is an exploration of one of my major questions.
Lighting Design:

I will be working with a Lighting Design student in the UH Manoa Theatre department for the lighting design. The lighting will compliment the costuming. In the first section of the piece, the lighting will enhance the “nature” expressed in Chandrupatla’s poem and in the dancers’ movements. In the second section there will be one lighting change because there isn’t a need for many lighting cues. In the third section, I will repeat some of the lighting cues from the first one as the movement will continue to be narrative in a similar way as the first section.

Costume Design:

I will work with Eva Enriquez in the UH Manoa Theatre Department to create costumes for the dancers. Below are some inspirations for costume ideas:

Figure 1.1. Traditional Bharata Natyam Costumes
The left image is a traditional Bharata Natyam outfit, on the right is what is called a “practice sari,” which is considered a “traditional” practice outfit for Bharata Natyam dancers.

Contemporary costumes:

Figure 1.2 Contemporary Dance Costumes

We are both working on costumes that are based on both these traditional and contemporary costume ideas.

Timeline of Production:

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Bibliography


Part 2: Thesis Process, Preparation, and Performance
**Introduction**

Upon being admitted to the MFA Dance program at UH Manoa, work towards my MFA thesis production began from the outset of my studies and was a primary focus of my graduate studies. I came into this program trained primarily in the classical South Indian dance form of Bharata Natyam, which I began learning at the age of 7 in Los Angeles with my teacher, Viji Prakash. I was excited and curious about the opportunities I would have to perform in Honolulu and also how I would grow as a choreographer and teacher. In maintaining a focus on creating work in the style in which I was trained in, over the last three years I have had several opportunities to perform Bharata Natyam in many of the UH productions such as *Taiko Drum and Dance, Ocean’s Motion, Look Back: Move Forward* and in many of the *Footholds* concerts. I have also had opportunities to choreograph for the *Footholds* concerts, and grow as a teacher by teaching two introductory Bharata Natyam courses.

In addition to these opportunities, the research I have conducted over the course of my graduate studies has enabled me to interrogate my foundational understanding of Bharata Natyam in analyzing the history of the dance form and the topics in the current practice of Bharata Natyam both in its “birthplace” of India and in contexts outside of India, particularly the U.S. These opportunities and my research have informed the ideas of my thesis, the overarching theme of which was to build upon the foundation of my understanding of Bharata Natyam and to re-imagine a dance form in which ideas of “tradition” and “authenticity” are inherent to its practice.
The process of my thesis work titled *Rhythm’s Expression* began with this statement by scholar Janet O’Shea: “Bharata Natyam is a resolutely global form” (O’Shea xi). My research has allowed me to analyze the parameters of what constitutes a global form and in this context, I define Bharata Natyam as a global form as it has traveled from its place of origin and is practiced in many parts of the world. As someone who has benefitted from the “far reaching” practice of Bharata Natyam, having studied and taught the form in Los Angeles, India, and Honolulu, I wanted my MFA work, titled *Rhythm’s Expression*, to reflect my positionality within the transnational movement of Bharata Natyam. Rather than focus specifically on the issues in the practice of Bharata Natyam, *Rhythm’s Expression* is a piece that looks at how I affect this movement, practicing, teaching, and choreographing it in contexts outside of its “birthplace” as my current location of Honolulu, Hawaii indicates.

As my personal journey in learning Bharata Natyam for 20 years serves as an underlying narrative for my MFA thesis, for me, *Rhythm’s Expression* also marks a departure from the dilemma I used to feel when choreographing a Bharata Natyam piece. This dilemma was that I was afraid to create work outside of the structure in fear of being disrespectful or displaying a lack of deep understanding of Bharata Natyam. This fear stemmed from both a reverence for the “tradition” of Bharata Natyam as I had learned it in Los Angeles, California and knowing that I had yet to study music, instrumentation, and language components that are integral to the practice of Bharata Natyam. This work marks a growth, a transformation in my journey as a Bharata Natyam practitioner and as this process reveals, the way in
which I have negotiated this dilemma and have come to a statement about my identity as a Bharata Natyam practitioner in this “global” world. Deviating from set choreographic structures, how does one re-think and re-structure Bharata Natyam movement vocabulary or how does one set Bharata Natyam vocabulary on dancers that have had limited or no exposure to the dance form? *Rhythm’s Expression* is a culmination of the answers to these and other questions I pursued to better understand who I am and what I do as a Bharata Natyam practitioner.
Casting

The first phase of my thesis process was casting dancers for this piece. One of the major questions set forth in my thesis proposal explored the process of setting Bharata Natyam movement vocabulary on dancers who had minimal experience and exposure to Bharata Natyam. Early in my graduate studies I knew that unless a group of trained Bharata Natyam dancers enrolled in the dance program, I would be working with dancers who aren’t trained in Bharata Natyam for my thesis choreography. Over the last two years, I have learned to teach Bharata Natyam in the university setting and the opportunities I have had in both teaching these classes and choreography greatly helped and informed my thesis process.

Casting for my MFA thesis piece began at the start of the Fall Semester, 2013. The first dancers I cast were Malia Wild and Kathryn Holt. Malia, a trained modern dancer, had taken a Bharata Natyam course taught by visiting scholar Dr. Anita Vallabh, and danced in one of the pieces I choreographed earlier in my graduate studies. Kathryn, a trained modern and Irish dancer, enrolled in two of the beginning Bharata Natyam classes I taught at UH Manoa and we danced together in Sosen, a Bharata Natyam/ Taiko drumming collaboration that was staged for the UH Manoa annual Dance concert in February 2013. Because I had seen and assessed how well both of these dancers learned and executed Bharata Natyam movements, I knew that they were going to be a part of my thesis choreography and they committed immediately.
As I continued to write my proposal and struggled to cast the remaining dancers for my piece, I was simultaneously involved with casting a piece for the upcoming Dance concert, *Look Back: Move Forward*. The piece was a Bharata Natyam/Hula collaboration titled “The Other Rhythm,” choreographed by Anita Vallabh and Kumu Hula Vicky Holt Takamine. Kathryn and Malia were cast in that piece along with four other dancers including myself, Megan Brennan and Kay Linan, who I thought might be interested in dancing in my piece. I asked Megan because of her background as a trained Odissi dancer, another Indian classical dance form. Though Bharata Natyam and Odissi are stylistically different, I knew she would be able to learn Bharata Natyam technique and perform the nuances in expression that are integral to Bharata Natyam movement. I cast Kay as the 4th dancer in my piece. Though she hadn’t been exposed to Bharata Natyam prior to studying at UH, I felt that her extensive Hula training would assist her to perform the expressive and gestural movements of Bharata Natyam, elements that Hula and Bharata Natyam share.

With a cast of five including myself, I was excited to begin. This cast with dance backgrounds in Modern, Irish, Odissi, and Hula, further illustrated the ways in which this form might be transformed through the way each of these dancers learned, translated, and embodied the aesthetic of Bharata Natyam.
Musical Score

I chose musical selections for my MFA thesis score that best expressed my positionality of someone who practices Bharata Natyam outside of India by choosing music from places outside of India. However this changed as I started to search for appropriate commercially available music. I could not start rehearsals until I found the music because it was imperative for me that the dancers’ foot movements be rhythmically accurate highlighting the rhythmic quality of the musical composition. Since I knew there would be three distinct sections in the choreography, I needed to find three distinct musical compositions.

UH Manoa music composition student James Minton and I discussed collaborating. We were both enrolled in Hula 412 for the Fall Semester, 2013 and he would be involved in the Hula/Bharata Natyam collaboration, “The Other Rhythm,” as well, learning and dancing the Hula part of the piece. He was interested in the music that was being used for “The Other Rhythm” and we started talking about Indian classical music. He mentioned that he was interested in composing a piece that explored Indian rhythms for his thesis concert and because I saw an opportunity to use his composition for my thesis piece, we agreed to work together and see what the collaboration would produce.

In our first conversation, he expressed that it might be interesting to use Korean music percussive instrumentation to articulate Indian rhythms. I was interested in this idea as well, envisioning that music he would compose could be used for the nritta, or pure rhythm section. These initial conversations led me to
eventually settle on music that emphasized Indian instrumentation in collaboration with instrumentation from different parts of the world.

Though I had hoped he would compose the entire piece, he proposed contributing a 5-minute composition, the perfect length for the nritta section. Odd metered rhythmic patterns are common in both Korean and Indian (and specifically Carnatic) music, so we thought that the rhythm pattern for the composition would be in sevens. To give an understanding of how to structure patterns of seven in Bharata Natyam, I gave him a series of exercises that were taught to me in learning how to articulate these patterns when accompanying dancers as a part of a live musician ensemble. For example, in counting seven the base pattern is tha kital thaka dimi (phonetic spelling) and the way this would be articulated with clapping, a thattukali, or nattuvangam is beat on 1,2, hold on 3, beat on 4, hold on 5, beat on 6, hold on 7. In this particular exercise I shared with him, there are different variations to “beat” the rhythm count of seven. One variation might be to emphasize the beat on 1,2, hold on 3, beat on 4, 5, 6, and 7. Once he became familiar with these variations, he composed a score that incorporated these variations of seven. Each variation would be emphasized with a different Korean percussive instrument. The composition would begin with each instrument highlighting a variation then slowly the variations/instruments start overlapping. The composition would end with the basic structure. I thought it would be interesting if the choreography complimented and worked in counterpoint to the music, thereby creating a dissonance that isn’t found in Bharata Natyam.
With the music for the middle section in place, I needed to find the music for the other two sections of the choreography. I decided to use Baluji Shrivatsav & Re-Orient (featuring Hossam Ramzy) “Taal Manjari (Flowering of Rhythm).” This composition highlights a combination of Indian classical instruments with classical guitar, tin whistle, bamboo flute and saxophone. I also chose Anoushka Shankar's “Dancing in Madness.” The composition is a mixture of Indian and Spanish rhythms and I was immediately drawn to it because it was powerful, rhythmically complex, and because of its similarity to Carnatic music. It seemed appropriate for my solo.

The transitions between sections were musically challenging. The newly composed music was to be played live, adding to staging complexity. At this point of the rehearsal process, we decided to abandon live music in favor of a pre-recorded score. However, I experienced difficulties in synchronizing my choreography with the newly composed music as they were created separately. Also, though James understood how to articulate the seven patterns in Carnatic music, in the score the emphasis was on a different count in the seven which threw off the counting and the choreography. This might have happened because there is no numerical counting in Bharata Natyam or Carnatic music and I think it was difficult to translate that especially when one is accustomed to a counting system that assigns numbers to beats. Because of these difficulties, I decided to use a recording of a mrindangam, south Indian percussive instrument, played by Rohan Krishnamurthy called “Misra Musings.” The composition highlights the improvisational elements of moving through variations in the Mishra or seven rhythm pattern. Of all the areas in the creating of my thesis, the musical selection changed the most.
**Costume and Lighting Design**

I had the good fortune of meeting with Eva Enriquez, a recent graduate of the UH Manoa Art Department, who expressed interest in helping me design the costumes for my thesis. I told her that I wanted the costumes to be “contemporary” yet retain the aesthetic of a traditional Bharata Natyam costume, reflecting the concept of my piece to build upon the foundation of Bharata Natyam. I was excited to work with Eva because of her experience with and knowledge of Indian fabric (at the time of our conversation she was assisting with the Bollywood Costume exhibit at the East-West Center). After she saw a November rehearsal of the piece, she produced sketches of the costume detailing what color each of the dancers would wear (see Appendix B).

The costumes were constructed in three separate parts. The pants were tight at the ankles and pleated in the middle to reflect the fan portion of a Bharata Natyam costume, which highlights the major aesthetic feature of Bharata Natyam technique, *aramandi* or “half-sitting” position. The top half of the costume was a pleated sash that covered the chest. The remaining fabric fell over the left shoulder to depict the words of the poem “blow of the breeze.” The solid color scheme of the pants and sash were complimented with a white blouse. Integral to the costumes were the ankle bells, which I was able to borrow from the UH Manoa costume shop. It was important that each dancer wear ankle bells to highlight the percussive quality of the foot movements. Overall, it was truly wonderful to have the costumes turn out exactly as Eva drew them. We had a good working relationship and it turned out to be a strong collaboration.
UHM lighting design student Kelsey Peacock designed the lighting for my thesis. Though I had some lighting design ideas, I have very little lighting experience so ultimately I let her take over and come up with a design without much interference from me. I enjoyed the lighting for my piece as I felt the lighting design reflected and enhanced the poetry of the piece. For example, in the moments of the choreography where the movements were slower and more grounded, the lighting was more focused and dramatic. In each of the three sections the lighting design was different. Also the lighting enhanced and brought out the bright colors of the costumes. Working with Kelsey was wonderful and I look forward to learning more about lighting design.
Setting Choreography

The three basic elements essential to Bharata Natyam choreography are *nritta*, or pure/abstract movement; *abhinaya*, or modes of dramatic expression; and *nritya* or *natya*, the combination of both to convey a story. My MFA thesis choreography re-imagines the manner in which these elements highlight Bharata Natyam technique and choreography. I built upon the structure of a prominent Bharata Natyam composition known as a *varnam*, which literally means various shades of emotion. In the *varnam*, the dancer is meant to successfully alternate between *nritta* and *abhinaya*.

The *varnam*, a relatively long piece that can be up to an hour long, is an example of how closely the dance must match the musical composition. As a musical composition, the *varnam* is divided into three parts: *pallavi*, which is the thematic line of the song, *anupallavi*, which is the second section that follows the *pallavi*, and *charanam*, the ending section of the composition. The type of *varnam* that Bharata Natyam choreography is set to is a type of *varnam* called a *pada varnam*, *pada* meaning phrase or sentence. Important to Bharata Natyam choreography that is based off of a *pada varnam* composition are these elements: sthayi (underlying foundational emotion), vyabhichari or sanchari bhaavas (transitory emotions), and saattvika bhaava (involuntary indication of internal feelings). In outlining the structure of the *varnam* in both music and dance, I wanted the choreography to reflect structural elements of the *varnam*, though not its length. My thesis
choreography showcases how a dancer alternates between nritta and abhinaya yet also dissect these elements and features each separately in three separate sections.

To show an alternation between nritta and abhinaya, I incorporated Tirupathi Chandrupatla’s poem, “World’s Dance Stage.” When I first read the poem, I immediately saw how it would serve as the narrative of my piece particularly in these lines of the poem:

“Let’s imitate nature, In all its grace, Like clouds moving, On peaks of mountains, Like leaves dancing, With blow of the breeze, Like waves dancing, To reach the shore, Let’s dance in rhythm, With nature’s swing”

This poem, along with the music, was the inspiration for most of the choreography. In particular, I researched specific hand gestures that best conveyed the poem. In more abstract sections, I did not try to convey the exact meanings, i.e., “waves dancing,” and instead attempted to express a deeper sense of the sentiment.

The narrative of the poem was highlighted in the choreography in the 1st and 3rd sections. I showed the dancers videos of abhinaya as it is performed in Bharata Natyam to help them understand how integral narration is to Bharata Natyam technique and choreography. The video assisted me to teach the gestural choreography.

The middle section (which focused soley on nritta) was inspired by these lines of the poem:

“Let’s play some music, and dance in rhythm.”
And:

“Dance’s energy, Dance’s vigor, Dance’s vibrant, Flow of emotion, Dance’s art Body, the instrument, Let’s dance together, To show our happiness, And express our joy, On world’s stage”

Choreographically, this section of my dance reflects the manner in which one learns to articulate a specific repeated rhythm pattern used in teaching Bharata Natyam dance and music. I wanted the nritta in this section to reflect that repetition, and for the movement to reflect the art of vocal recitation to percussion syllables to create rhythmic compositions known as konnakol. Employing compositional tools (particularly canon), I choreographically articulated each rhythmic variation through foot movements, hand gestures, vocal recitation and clapping. Initially I had the dancers moving through 12 variations, and ultimately reduced it to six, with each variation repeated four times. This was the most challenging section for me to choreograph, and also the most challenging section for the dancers to learn because of how the movements and rhythms were distributed between the four dancers. Only at the end of the section did they move in unison.

In MFA thesis work, I found that my choreography did not always reflect what I created prior to rehearsal. Though I tried to come to each rehearsal with set choreography, there were some instances when I choreographed on the spot and incorporated this more spontaneously created material in the end product.
Rehearsal Process

Rehearsals for my thesis began in the last weekend of September 2013. I spent the first four rehearsals teaching the dancers basic Bharata Natyam movements to give them a basic understanding of Bharata Natyam technique. It was good for me to focus on technique in the beginning so I could think about certain movements in the choreography and assess if the dancers could perform those movements. In a sense this choreographic process was an important lesson on how to teach Bharata Natyam technique and methods to provide a context for Bharata Natyam.

Rehearsals took place on Saturdays and Sundays every weekend. I recorded each rehearsal and posted the videos to a private Facebook group. This rehearsal tactic had mixed results because the dancers did not consistently consult these postings. Sometimes there was miscommunication about rehearsal time changes, rehearsal notes, etc., so in addition to Facebook I also sent text and e-mail messages. I am grateful a forum like Facebook exists today because ultimately it was a rehearsal log for me to reference.

My thesis rehearsals were disrupted by preparations for a production in which my cast rehearsed another Bharata Natyam piece to be performed on the main stage at UHM. Initially I was concerned this would hinder the progress of my piece but I am grateful because the dancers were given a different context to understand, practice, and perform Bharata Natyam and when we picked-up
rehearsals for my piece, the dancers were much stronger and confident in processing the choreography and executing the movements.

At this point, when my rehearsals began again, the first and third sections were nearly complete. The most challenging section to finish was the middle nritta section. Over the course of the rehearsal process, this section underwent the most changes and it was challenging for the dancers to keep up with the choreographic changes.

When the faculty first viewed my work, the first and the third section were well received but there were some concerns about the second section as being too pedantic or repetitive – rightly so because the choreography was built on repetition in the musical composition. At the time of the first viewing, I was still deciding on the music as I was starting to move away from the possibility of using the Korean percussion and perhaps accompanying the dancers with a thattukali or wooden block. Also not seen at the first faculty showing were my solos at the beginning and end of the piece. Moving rehearsals to the Lab Theatre made a huge difference and was helpful in re-structuring the spatial arrangements of the 2nd section.

It was incredible to me that the piece was complete by the Winter Footholds audition on December 9, 2013 considering all that happened in 2 ½ months: creating, teaching a new movement vocabulary (to some of the dancers), teaching the choreography in that movement vocabulary, and articulating the extensive changes in musicality. After the audition, the feedback that I received was generally positive and for some members of my committee, it was the first time they had seen
the whole piece as my solos were finally complete at the audition. There were still concerns with the second section as I think it just needed more rehearsal, and further exploration of spatial forms in the second section.

The following rehearsals were spent cleaning up the movements and changing a few parts in the second section. However, practicing the piece over and over again is what made it performance ready. There were two additional showings for faculty and designers.
Winter Footholds Production

Technical rehearsals commenced in the third weekend of January. It was difficult to sit and watch the piece and then jump onto the stage to perform my parts and to truly understand how the lighting would look. I relied on the lighting designer, concert director, and my thesis chair (who was also the concert director), to provide lighting suggestions and feedback.

The technical and dress rehearsals and the performances from Wednesday to Saturday night and Sunday afternoon for the most part went smoothly. In the end, the Winter Footholds concert was a success. I was particularly pleased it received a good review in the Honolulu Star Advertiser written by dance critic, Carol Egan.
Final Reflection

On the day the show opened I had the opportunity to sit down for an interview with Hawaii Public Radio for a segment titled *The Conversation* with Chris Vandercook. The interview was arranged through the Kennedy Theatre to generate publicity for the *Winter Footholds Concert*. The interview represented the first time I had to discuss and articulate my piece to someone not involved with my thesis. Over the course of the 8-minute interview, I answered questions on my background in Bharata Natyam, what was the inspiration behind my piece, what were the challenges of working with dancers who weren't trained in Bharata Natyam, etc. There was one particular question though he asked that struck me, mainly because I fumbled through the answer but perhaps in part because it was a question I carried with me in creating my MFA thesis: what was I trying to say through my choreography and what did I want the audience to understand from watching the piece?

In answering Vandercook’s question, I said that *Rhythm’s Expression* is a piece that builds upon my foundational understanding of Bharata Natyam and how my practice continues to grow and transform. This was my intent and what I wanted to convey in the re-imaging of structural elements in Bharata Natyam. In the end, what I hoped was conveyed through my choreography was my personal journey in evolving as a Bharata Natyam dancer, performer, and choreographer in this global context.
**Final Rehearsal and Production Timeline**

- **September 25, 2013** Finalize Cast
- **End of September** Rehearsals begin
- **November 6, 2013** Thesis Proposal Accepted
- **November 22, 2013** First showing to committee members; costume designer
- **November 30, 2013** Second showing to committee members
- **December 7, 2013** Third showing to committee members; lighting designer
- **December 9, 2013** Winter Footholds Audition, Earle Ernst Lab
- **December 12, 2013** Winter Footholds Publicity Photo Shoot
- **December 18, 2013** First Production Meeting
- **January 15, 2014** Second Production Meeting
- **January 26, 2014** Technical Rehearsal
- **January 27, 2014** First Dress Rehearsal
- **January 28, 2014** Second Dress Rehearsal
- **January 29, 2014** Hawai‘i Public Radio: Interview – *The Conversation*
- **Jan 29-Feb 1, 2014** Winter Footholds 2014, Evening Dance Concert
- **February 2, 2014** Winter Footholds 2014, Matinee Dance Concert
February 2, 2014  Strike
Appendix A. Tirupathi Chandrupatla’s “Worlds Dance Stage”

World’s a huge
Dancing stage
Let’s play some music
And dance in rhythm.

Exciting dances
From all directions
From east to west
And north to south.

Classical and modern
Religious and ethnic
And folk dances
From all the countries.

Ballet or rock
Rumba or tango
Kathak or bhangra
Let’s try them all.

Let’s imitate nature
In all its grace
Like clouds moving
On peaks of mountains
Like leaves dancing
With blow of the breeze
Like waves dancing
To reach the shore
Let’s dance in rhythm
With nature’s swing.

Dance’s energy
Dance’s vigor
Dance’s vibrant
Flow of emotion
Dance’s art Body,
the instrument
Let’s dance together
To show our happiness
And express our joy
On world’s stage.
This piece is showing the different components of Bharatha Natyam dance, bringing emphasis in the essential rhythms of the music and dance. There are 4 dancers and a lead dancer, who plays tala until last section that she dances.

Kay
Melina
Katherine
Morgan

Rohini will be in bright pink.
Modern and Traditional Dance Meet in UHM’s “Winter Footholds”

Program Includes MFA Thesis Project “Rhythm’s Expression”

The Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa is proud to present the first installment of this season’s “Footholds” series, showcasing new choreography by its graduate and undergraduate dance students. This diverse production brings together student dancers, choreographers, technicians, and designers to create a concert that demonstrates the breadth of the department’s training. The program will be performed at the Earle Ernst Lab Theatre Jan. 29, 30, 31, and Feb. 1 at 8 p.m., and Feb. 2 at 2 p.m. A post-show discussion will follow the performance on Friday, Jan. 31.

A highlight of the evening will be “Rhythm’s Expression,” which re-imagines the components of the classical Indian dance style Bharata Natyam. The piece will serve as the MFA thesis project for Rohini Acharya, who was featured last semester in UHM’s mainstage dance concert “Look Back: Move Forward.” Reflecting a deeply personal narrative, Acharya’s choreography was inspired by Tirupathi Chandrupatla’s poem “World Dance Stage,” which equates the beauty and grace of nature with the beauty and grace of dance. Acharya has been
performing classical Indian dance for 20 years, and says she is proud to bring these traditions to her work in the department.

Dance BFA student Mitsuko Horikawa will also be featured in the concert, premiering two short pieces that demonstrate her skills as both a dancer and a choreographer. “Forest Festival” is a driving, rhythmic solo set to taiko drum music. “The Wild Chase” takes a light-hearted approach, telling a fun and energetic story of cavorting animals that reflects Horikawa’s interest in creating dance for young audiences. (Please note that while “The Wild Chase” is appropriate for viewers of all ages, some pieces at the concert are more appropriate for mature audiences.)

As always with UHM’s “Footholds” series, diversity takes center stage. Horikawa’s light and engaging “The Wild Chase” contrasts with Kele Roberts’ “Eve,” which uses dance to explore serious themes of physical and emotional violence. Some dancers perform to taiko drum or traditional Indian music, while Jenny Mair’s “Voices” will be set to music by Chopin and Vivaldi. Dance MFA students Mareva Minerbi and Faith Im will present works with music composed especially for their pieces. Minerbi’s “Night Rain” was created in collaboration with her dancers, and is set to music by Brendan Connelly (who was the Musical Director for last semester’s “Big Love”); and Im’s “Sentiment” was choreographed to a new composition from Art Koshi.

The seven featured pieces demonstrate the department’s dedication to a broad range of work featuring classical and contemporary influences. “We are constantly astounded by the unique choreographic voices of our students, and the variety of work they produce” says dance professor Betsy Fisher, who is coordinating and directing the concert (and last semester directed the dance program’s 50th anniversary celebration, “Look Back: Move Forward”). “Their far-
Appendix C3. Official UHM Kennedy Theatre Media Release, Page 3

reaching interests and creative curiosity make our jobs as faculty interesting, challenging, and deeply rewarding.”

Tickets for “Winter Footholds” are available online at etickethawaii.com, by phone at (808) 944-2697, at participating outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre box office beginning Jan. 13. The box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours on performance dates. Prices are $18 for general admission; $16 for seniors / military / UH faculty and staff; $13 for UHAA members and non-UHM students; and $5 for UHM students with a validated Spring 2014 UHM photo ID. All service fees are included in ticket prices. For more information, please visit hawaii.edu/kennedy or call the theatre at (808) 956-7655. For disability access, please call the theatre.

EVENT: “Winter Footholds”
PRESENTED BY: UHM Department of Theatre and Dance
WHEN: Jan. 29, 30, 31*, and Feb. 1 at 8 p.m.
        Feb. 2 at 2 p.m.
        * Free post-show discussion on Jan. 31
WHERE: UHM’s Earle Ernst Lab Theatre
        1770 East-West Road, Honolulu
TICKET PRICES: $18 general admission
                $16 seniors / military / UH Faculty and staff
                $13 UHAA members and non-UHM students
                $5 UHM students with validated Spring 2014 UHM photo ID
All service fees are included in ticket prices.
PURCHASE INFO: Tickets are available online at etickethawaii.com, by phone at (808) 944-2697, at participating outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre box office beginning Jan. 13. The box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours on performance dates.
Appendix D. Winter Footholds 2014 Publicity Poster

**Prime Time**

**Winter Footholds**

**Earle Ernst Lab Theatre**

S18 Regular
S16 Seniors, Military, UH Faculty/staff
S13 Students and UHAA members
S5 UHM students with valid Spring '14 ID

Tickets are on sale now online at ticketshawaii.com, by phone at 944-2697, and at the Kennedy Theatre Box Office.

**January 29, 30, 31 8pm**

**February 1 8pm**

**February 2 2pm**

Post-show rap: January 31

Featuring the MFA thesis project "Rhythm's Expression," by Rohini Acharya and new work by MFA and BFA dance students.

**University of Hawai'i Manoa**

www.hawaii.edu/kennedy

(808) 956-7655
Appendix E1. Winter Footholds 2014 Program, Page 1
CONCERT DIRECTOR: Betsy Fisher

### VOICES

**CHOREOGRAPHY:** Jenny Mair  
**MUSIC:** Antonio Vivaldi, Frederic Chopin  
**DANCERS:** Allison Burkhardt, Gabriel DeRago, Tomomi Jane Hara, Kapono Aiwohi-Kim, Jenny Mair, Wailana Simcock, Corbett Stern, Kim Takata  
**LIGHTING DESIGN:** Kelsey Peacock

### FOREST FESTIVAL (MORI NO MATSURI)

**CHOREOGRAPHY AND PERFORMANCE:** Mitsuko Horikawa  
**MUSIC:** Kenny Endo  
**LIGHTING DESIGN:** Rick Greaver

### EVE

**CHOREOGRAPHY:** Kele Roberts  
**MUSIC:** Florence Welch  
**DANCERS:** Gabriel DeRago, Malia Wild  
**LIGHTING DESIGN:** Ray Moschuk  
**COSTUME DESIGN:** Kele Roberts

"None who have always been free can understand the terrible fascinating power of the hope of freedom to those who are not free." Pearl S. Buck

### NIGHT RAIN

**CHOREOGRAPHY:** Mareva Minerbi in collaboration with the dancers  
**MUSIC:** Brendan Connelly  
**DANCERS:** Breanna Harvey, Mitsuko Horikawa, Tristan Maesaka, Jenny Mair, Wailana Simcock  
**LIGHTING DESIGN:** Falcon Aguirre  
**COSTUME DESIGN:** Mareva Minerbi
Appendix E3. Winter Footholds 2014 Program, Page 3

**SENTIMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHOREOGRAPHY:</th>
<th>Faith Im</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUSIC:</td>
<td>Art Koshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANCERS:</td>
<td>Lyndsey Baker, Gabriel DeReg, Tristan Maesaka, Alexa Manalansan, Samson Souza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIGHTING DESIGN:</td>
<td>Ray Moschuk</td>
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**THE WILD CHASE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHOREOGRAPHY:</th>
<th>Mitsuko Horikawa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUSIC:</td>
<td>Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANCERS:</td>
<td>Tomomi Jane Hara, Aoi Horikawa, Mitsuko Horikawa, Angela Rae Valdez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIGHTING DESIGN:</td>
<td>Rick Greaver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSTUME DESIGN:</td>
<td>Mitsuko Horikawa and Lauren Tiburcio</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**RHYTHM'S EXPRESSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHOREOGRAPHY:</th>
<th>Rohini Acharya*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUSIC:</td>
<td>Baluji Shrivastav and Re-Orient; Rohan Krishnamurthy; Anoushka Shankar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANCERS:</td>
<td>Rohini Acharya, Megan Brennan, Kathryn Holt, Kay Linan, Malia Wild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIGHTING DESIGN:</td>
<td>Kelsey Peacock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSTUME DESIGN:</td>
<td>Eva Enriquez</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

"Let's imitate nature, In all its grace, Like clouds moving, On peaks of mountains, Like leaves dancing, With the blow of the breeze, Like waves dancing, To reach the shore, Let’s dance in rhythm, With nature’s swing.”

Tirupathi Chandrupatla

* In partial fulfillment of the thesis requirements for the MFA degree in Dance at UHM.

The program will be performed without an intermission.
Production Staff

Stage Manager: Akemi McCollm
Assistant Stage Manager: Collette Karr
Light Board Operator: Christian Alcantara
Sound Board Operator: Blythe Stephens
Stage Crew: Lexi Hughes, Angela Valdez
Lab Theatre Technical Director: Jen Eccles
Lab Theatre Master Electrician: Kelsey Peacock
Lab Theatre Coordinator: Amy Johnson
Master Electrician: Kelsey Peacock
Set Construction and Electrics Crew: Students from THEA 101, 221, 240, and 343
Costume Shop Manager: Hannah Schauer Galli
Lab Theatre Costume Coordinator: Samantha Shields
Costume Construction Crew: Kelsie Bartolome, Calli Brennan, Amber Lehua, Kaitlyn Patrick
Wardrobe Supervisor: Calli Brennan
Faculty Consultants: Betsy Fisher, Brian Shevlenko, Cheri Vasek

Front of House Staff

Staff Theatre Manager: Marty Myers
Box Office Supervisor: Nicole Tessier
Box Office Staff: Jenny Lynn Bucao, Heather Kalehuawehe, Stephen Macaspac, Leah O’Gorman
Publicity Director: Matthew Kelty
Publicity Assistant: Benedict Juliano
Graphic Designer: Daniel Smith
Photographer: Chesley Cannon
Lab Theatre House Managers: Malia Ngaluola, Elise Shuford
Department Office Staff: Lori Chun, Tana Marin
Department Chair: Paul T. Mitri
Director of Dance: Gregg Lizenberry

Special Thanks

Rachael Smith, Yukie Shiroma

Front of House Information

For large print programs, Assistive Listening Devices or any other accessibility requests please contact the House Manager or call the Kennedy Theatre Box Office at 956-7655.

To arrange a Campus Security Escort from any two points on campus please see a House Manager.

Please silence all pagers, phones and digital watches. No photography, video recording or text messaging is permitted. Please refrain from eating, drinking or smoking in the theater.

Visit us on the web at http://www.hawaii.edu/kennedy
Indian piece dominates dance concert

Review by Carol Egas
Special to the Star-Advertiser

Modern dance usually dominates the annual Winter Footholds student concert presented by the University of Hawaii at Manoa's Theatre and Dance Department, but it is a piece based on the Bharata Natyam style of Indian dance that comes off strongest in this year's showcase.

This is partly due to the rhythmic and percussive Indian musical accompaniment. But most of the credit should go to the clarity of choreography created by Rohini Acharya, whose dancing is also outstanding.

Audiences have grown better accustomed to Indian dancing thanks to the popularity of Bollywood movies, but there is something intrinsically attractive and vital about the dance styles from that country. Acharya, a longtime practitioner of Bharata Natyam, created "Rhythm's Expression" as the final project for her master's of fine arts degree. Dancing with her are four finely trained students: Megan Freeman, Kathryn Hol, Kay Linan and Malia Wild. Though the movements and gestures are clearly Bharata Natyam-derived, the compositional elements, spatial arrangements and stage design bear witness to Acharya's mastery of modern dance forms.

The other bookend to the seven-piece Footholds concert is another strong work, Janny Ma'r's "Voices." Rarely do young modern dance choreographers choose to use classical music, and often when they do, they blatantly disregard or work against it. This is not the case with Ma'r, who seems to have a real sensitivity to the accompaniment.

The opening sequence, danced to a section of Antonio Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," begins with a couple (Ma'r and Wallana Simcock) standing frozen on each side of the stage. As the music begins, they run off and are replaced by three men and three women who begin with a series of explosive movements and gestures followed by a calmer unison section that dissolves into individuals walking back and forth, staring at the audience.

A silence is soon replaced by a Chopin melody. The group exits walking and is replaced by the original couple, who perform a duet. They seem to be lovers, yet there is a sense of disconnect between the two and the piece ends with the woman leaving her man and walking downstage toward the audience.

Though the meaning of the dance is not completely clear, its execution and musicality are reward enough.

Simcock returns later to display even more of his dance talent in Mareva Minther's group work, "Night Rain." Simcock's athletic build, fluidity and strength create a compelling presence. His maturity lends depth to his performance while his masculinity gives it a sense of weight. His body can ripple like waves moving onshore or, at other times, lengthen into distal lines reaching into space.

Other works on the program include Mitsuko Horiike's "Forest Fire" a solo to music by Kenji Koda, and a second piece titled "The Wild Chase," Roberts' "Eve," a study of addictive relationship; an Faith In's "Sentiment."
Appendix G. DVD of Performance

Title of Piece: Rhythm’s Expression*

Choreography: Rohini Acharya

Music: Baluji Shrivastav and Re-Orient; Rohan Krishnamurthy; Anoushka Shankar

Dancer: Rohini Acharya, Megan Brennan, Kathryn Holt, Kay Linan, Malia Wild

Lighting Design: Kelsey Peacock

Costume Design: Eva Enriquez

* In partial fulfillment of the thesis requirements for the MFA degree in Dance at UHM