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

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

DANCE

MAY 2005

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Introduction .............................................. 1
   Methodology ....................................................... 4
   UHM Dance Program Overview ................................. 6

Chapter 2 Alumni/ae ................................................ 10

Chapter 3 Current MFA Dance Students .......................... 26

Chapter 4 O'ahu Dance Company Artistic Directors ............ 32

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations .................... 40

References .................................................................. 46
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Dance Program is producing dancers that are making a difference in the professional world of dance on O’ahu and the mainland. I selected five alumni/ae pursuing careers in dance who had completed their MFA degrees at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa (hereafter UHM). I interviewed each of them over the telephone and via e-mail using a list of questions I created to question how their degrees relate to the positions they now hold. Each dancer graduated with an MFA degree in the past twenty years and continued to either dance professionally, teach at an educational institute, or both.

I also interviewed four current MFA students in the Dance Program and asked them to share their personal aspirations and their hopes for the UHM Dance Program. Additionally, I selected three local modern dance companies that have ties to UHM through their dancers. I asked each Artistic Director how the University of Hawai‘i Dance Program affects their company. My goal was to find how UHM is affecting graduate alumni/ae, present MFA candidates, and Artistic Directors of local companies. In what way did each dancer take what they
learned at UHM and apply it to their everyday professional and personal lives?

I am pursuing my MA degree at the University of Hawai‘i. I started studying modern dance during my undergraduate time at UHM from 2000 - 2001, and obtained a minor in dance. I fell in love with modern dance, and decided to pursue a graduate degree. This research is relevant and interesting to me as it shows how a UHM dance degree affects other’s in their lives, both personal and professional. I wanted to find how these alumni/ae were able to incorporate their passion for dance into a career, and how the university helped to contribute to the vitality of dance in the O‘ahu community and on the mainland.

In interviews I posed the same questions for each alumni/ae and current dancer at UHM. These questions were: Where did you study dance before attending UHM? Did you perform professionally? Which dance styles do you associate the most with? Why did you chose UHM for your MFA? When did you attend UHM? Do you feel UHM made a positive influence on you? Who were your greatest influences at UHM? Did UHM push you further than expected or hoped on a physical or mental level? Where do you teach dance? Where have you taught since
graduating from UHM? Do you teach your students what you learned from UHM? How does UHM compare to the school you are employed by? Do you reflect back on your degree and time spent at UHM and how? Looking back, would you go to UHM and do it all over again? Would you recommend UHM to others? What do you think are UHM’s strengths and weaknesses? Do you think local modern dance can survive on O’ahu without UHM? And I asked each subject to list anything they would like to add that I might have missed.

My purpose was to find out if these dancers applied what they learned while obtaining their UHM degree in their current career. I wondered what the current degree candidates were hoping to achieve by completing their MFA degree from UHM. At the beginning of my interview process with the alumni/ae, I did not know if they used their UHM schooling or not. Were these former UHM dancers applying specific lessons gained during their degree pursuits? To what extent do they credit UHM for where they are with dance today? While wanting to discover if the UHM Dance Program is contributing to the vitality of local dance, I wanted to find if it contributes to the evolution of this artistic discipline locally. I believe my role in the process of
interviewing the heads of current O’ahu dance companies is to be a facilitator of dialogue about dance and find insights for current and future students about the long-term contributions of the UHM Dance Program for its graduates’ careers in the local community and beyond as a performer and choreographer. A larger inferred question that my research analyzes is: Can local modern dance survive without the university?

**Methodology**

My first step was to winnow a list of alumni/ae down to five candidates. I chose students who attended UHM at different time periods. They were from twenty to thirty years of age. I also chose subjects whose backgrounds, previous to their attending UHM, differed. Second, I selected four current MFA students, that ranged from first year MFA student to third year MFA student, to get a wider perspective on overall experiences within the dance program. Third, I chose two modern dance companies that are prominent in the modern dance community of O’ahu, and one that is “up and coming.”

My first interviewing method included a list of twenty questions submitted to each of the five alumni/ae and four current students about their experiences at
UHM, what they hoped to achieve with their degree, and how UHM graduates are being prepared for professional dance careers. Then I e-mailed a list of separate questions to the three artistic directors and asked about their relationships with the UHM dance program and its dancers that perform in their companies. I interviewed people either by telephone or e-mail according to their preference. Six out the twelve people wanted to answer the questions by e-mail because they could take time in answering and give more thoughtful responses. (The six others preferred to respond over the telephone.) After several weeks, I followed up with a second set of questions in order to fill the gaps in my previous research.

To document information found in the clearest manner, I have decided to express the reflections of the alumni first. The five interviewees were Catherine Zahn, Darryl Thomas, Yukie Shiroma, Anonymous A, and Anonymous B. Next, I will introduce the three dance companies on O'ahu. These companies are Tau Dance Theatre, Iona Contemporary Dance Theatre, and Upside-Down Dance Company. And the most current section will include the current MFA dancers: Nicole Pouliot, Celia Chun, Michael Pili Pang, and Anonymous C.
UHM Dance Program Overview

Before looking at my questions and the answers, it is important to paint a picture of UHM and its community, and to put both in context. The University of Hawai‘i was founded in 1907, and today has approximately 19,000 students in attendance. The student body is made up of a variety of ethnicities including Euro-American, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Hawaiian. The UHM Dance Program emphasis in Asian and Pacific dance exists partly as a result of the diversity which is unique to the university. The UHM Dance Program also emphasizes curricula in modern dance and ballet.

The UHM Dance Program was founded in 1967. The dance program contains an average enrollment between four and five hundred students a semester, with an average of forty-five undergraduate and fifteen graduate dance candidates. There are currently five full-time faculty and ten adjunct faculty at UHM. Thirty-two to thirty-six courses are offered a semester. These classes range from ballet, modern, hula, Baharatanatyam (Classical Indian technique) classes, to dance composition, theory and criticism, Labanotation, creative movement, among others. There is a formal exchange relationship offered between UHM and the London
Contemporary Dance School, each institution accepting one dancer each year to study at the respective institution. It is important to note that in spite of UHM's focus on both modern and Pacific Rim cultures, the MFA program primarily focuses on modern dance choreography and performance. Therefore, the majority of graduate students interviewed have mostly modern dance backgrounds with the exception of one MFA candidate who I interviewed has an emphasis in hula.

The UHM Dance Program offers a strong curricula in dance forms from Western Europe and the United States. The focus in Asian and Pacific dance is also unique to UHM. The Polynesian dance classes are under the music department, while the Asian classes are under the auspices of the dance department. MFA dancers are required to enroll for three credits of Asian Pacific Dance to become more well rounded in their dance studies.

Part of the criteria for obtaining the MFA degree at UHM requires that each graduate assistant teach a beginning technique class. This helps each dancer learn what it takes to become a teacher. Some of the graduate students did not take a class on how to teach prior to this endeavor. Each student teacher that teaches a
beginning technique class has to audition to teach a class the semester before in front of the faculty. The faculty then assesses the student teacher and decides whether or not they are right for the job at that time. The faculty then monitors the progress of the student teachers and provides feedback throughout the semester.

The UHM Dance Program has offered classes in teaching methods since its inception. Peggy Hunt taught Creative Movement, which was a course designed to instruct university students in a methodology introducing movement into the K-12 curriculum. Hunt also offered a teaching internship as part of her curriculum. Kristi Burns, a faculty member since 2003, teaches this class now and a Seminar in Teaching Methods for graduate dance and theater students. This course is designed to follow the ArtsBridge America curriculum, a National Alliance of Arts Education and outreach. Burns teaches the students different methods in teaching and following the content standards in their field. Also, Burns offers an internship course where students teach at different schools statewide.*

UHM also offers special programs for students to take part in. The UHM Dance Ensemble is a group of graduate and undergraduate students that are on
scholarship who travel around the state performing at children’s hospitals, schools, and senior centers representing the university dance program. Friends of Dance is an organization within the program that donates money to students with special needs. Money raised throughout the year, for example; outside donations and concession sales during Kennedy Theatre performances are used as grants for special projects students would like to attend during the summer or school year.

Being in an isolated environment it is only natural to become ohana, family. Since UHM is located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, there is not a large multitude of visiting artists and companies that tour Hawai‘i. A lot of the dance that is shown on stage comes from local dance companies that have fused Asian and Pacific dance forms with modern dance.
Chapter 2

Alumni/ae

This chapter focuses on five alumni/ae during their studies in the UHM Dance Program. These students gave their reflections on the dance program through interviews I conducted via telephone and e-mail. The alumni/ae in this section are Catherine Zahrn, Darryl Thomas, Yukie Shiroma, Anonymous A, and Anonymous B.

Catherine Zahrn, attended UHM from 1998-2001, told me in an email interview conducted over January and February 2005, that she began dancing as a child at a Y.W.C.A. in Virginia, where her mother was her creative movement teacher. She started taking ballet, tap, and jazz at the age of eight at a local studio called The Meredith Gravely School of Dance in Danville, VA., and stayed there through high school. She did a summer workshop at The Virginia School of the Arts at age eleven, and various festivals/ classes through the studio in the Virginia and North Carolina areas. In college, Zahrn double majored in Psychology and Dance at Sweet Briar College in Virginia in 1998, with an interest in preparing to be a dance therapist. Sweet Briar College is where Zahrn first discovered modern dance. She was extremely active in the dance program
there, and at the conclusion of her time she put on an
evening-length performance of her choreography, entitled
“Dreaming.” Then off to UH in 1998!

Thomas studied dance at the Detroit City Dance Theatre.
Thomas obtained his BFA from 1984-1989 at The University
of Maryland in College Park, MD. before attending UHM.

Yukie Shiroma, who attended UHM in the 1980’s,
studied hula as a child growing up in Windward O’ahu.
Her family moved to San Francisco, where she studied
modern dance in high school, and ballet and jazz in the
community. Shiroma received her BA in Behavioral Science
from California State University at San Jose. In the mid
1970s, she was part of a core group of dancers in San
Francisco who started Asian American Dance Collective,
now called Asian American Dance Performances. The group
taught, choreographed, performed, and toured along the
West Coast for approximately ten years. At the time,
Shiroma trained in improvisation with Anna Halprin, Kei
Takei, and Eiko and Koma. In 1980, Shiroma moved back to
Hawai’i to study dance with Cheryl Nakasone at the Kin
Ryosho Okinawan Classical Dance Academy. This is also
when Shiroma started taking dance classes at UH as an
unclassified graduate student.
Prior to attending UHM in the mid-1990's, Anonymous A started studying dance during college. She took several elective dance courses, but never fulfilled a minor degree in dance. She attended college in the late 1980's, and later came to UHM to fulfill a MFA degree in choreography and performance in the mid-1990's.

Anonymous B attended UHM in the early-1990's and started dancing at a young age in New York City at a private school. She later danced with various professional dance studios in New York. She graduated in the 1970's from a prominent conservatory in the United States before performing professionally for small companies and concerts around the country. Then in the early 1990's decided to attend UHM for her MFA in dance.

Each dancer expressed a love for modern dance, and chose a career that helped them to share their passion with others. Catherine Zahrn, who had an emphasis in performance and choreography while attending UHM, has not had enough time to have an established teaching career as yet. Her first dance job after attending UHM was teaching at The Healing Arts Centre in Athens, Georgia, in 2001. Zahrn is currently a Guest Lecturer in Dance at the University of Georgia.
Darryl Thomas also had an emphasis in performance and choreography. Thomas is currently a Professor of Dance in the Division of Creative Arts at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, Oregon. Since 1997, Thomas has been teaching Modern Dance, Jazz, Ballet, Composition, Labanotation, Dance History and World Dance to all levels. Thomas prefers Hawkins Modern Technique, West African Dance, Hip-Hop, Salsa, and Hula. Prior to working at WOU, Thomas danced professionally for companies such as: Detroit City Dance Theatre, Konkouran West African Dance, Valerie Bergman Dance Company, Rainbow Dance Theatre, and Pilobolus Dance Theatre. He also taught at Florida School of the Arts, University of Florida, and was a guest lecturer at several prestigious dance festivals including La Selle School for the Performing Arts in Singapore, Malaysia, in 2002 and the American College Dance Festival in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2000. His teaching credits include partnering, hip-hop, modern dance, and West African dance in places ranging from South Korea to Mexico City to Europe. Through dance companies and workshops Darryl Thomas has been able to travel, spreading his knowledge and style of movement to students around the globe.

After Yukie Shiroma graduated from UHM in 1987,
she started teaching, and currently directs the Mid-Pacific Institute School of the Arts Dance Program. In the beginning, Shiroma taught modern technique, improvisation, composition, 6th and 7th grade dance workshops, and also choreographed and directed an annual concert. Now Mid-Pacific Institute has an additional six faculty members in the dance department. Shiroma currently teaches the 6th grade dance workshop, dance history, dance topics, mask and movement workshop for theatre students, and directs two concerts annually. In addition to teaching, Shiroma co-directs a performing mask dance theatre company in Hawai‘i called Monkey and the Waterfall.

Anonymous A left UHM and went on to pursue a professional career in performance with a prominent dance company in the United States. She toured with this company for two years, feeling she needed professional experience prior to applying for teaching positions at the university level since she did not have an extensive background in dance pedagogy. As she planned, Anonymous A began teaching five years ago at a university in the mid-western United States.

Anonymous B now teaches at a performing arts institute on the mainland United States. She taught at
various private studios and public performing arts high schools throughout the past few years. Also, Anonymous B co-teaches at a higher-education institute that enables her to share her creative aspirations.

It is my feeling that each dancer who pursues an MFA chooses an educational institution for several different reasons. My research reveals several things, but most of all these students chose UHM for geographic location. Catherine Zahrn had no qualms about answering why she came to UHM, "Location! Location! Location!" All of the alumni/ae I interviewed believed they wanted to learn different dance forms as well as modern and ballet technique, which helped them chose UHM for their graduate degree.

Timing also played a role. Some dancers feel that UHM is a school that is right for them at a specific time. Anonymous A feels that UH was the smart choice for her because her husband was working in Hawai‘i at the time. "UHM seemed practical because the school had an MFA program in dance and the faculty knew some of the same people I did."

For Shiroma, both location and timing played a big part in seeking a higher degree at UHM. Shiroma had already taken several dance courses at UHM as an
unclassified graduate student, and was encouraged by the faculty to apply her maximum of twelve unclassified credits towards a MFA degree.

I asked if UHM had a positive impact on Zahrn. "Yes, it did. I learned the most from technique classes, the UHM Dance Ensemble, and teaching the beginning modern classes." Zahrn believes that Gregg Lizenbery, Director of the UHM Dance Program, and Elizabeth Fisher, professor of modern dance, dance history, and dance composition had a tremendous impact on her because, "both make dance an integral part of their lives, and both are passionate about their art and are wonderful, compassionate teachers."

When Darryl Thomas was asked the same question, whether UHM had a positive impact on him, Thomas stated, "My connection and appreciation for cultural diversity in dance was enhanced both kinesthetically and spiritually from my time at UH." He had several positive influences in the dance program. Of Judy Van Zile, teacher of Labanotation and Dance in World Cultures, Thomas said "she taught me the value of research." Of Peggy Gaither Adams, teacher of modern dance, dance improvisation, dance composition, and stage production, Thomas said, "Her youthful spirit kept reminding me of
why we dance.” Gregg Lizenbery, Director, “taught me that a dancer can grow old gracefully. He also taught me a couple of great exercises to keep the body young and supple during the aging process.” Vicki Takamini-Holt, hula teacher, “taught me the spirit of hula.” Harriet Glass, affiliate graduate faculty member, “taught me how to know myself through improvisation.”

Thomas remarked about cultural diversity was extremely important because he is African-American. At his current university he is the only African-American and there are only three people of color on the WOU faculty. He felt even though UHM does not have a large African-American population, there are several other teachers and students who are non-Caucasian which made his experiences richer. Yukie Shiroma wrote in her e-mail interview,

Judy Van Zile was an especially influential and supportive teacher, and I ended up with an emphasis in Labanotation. I worked with Judy on several independent notation projects and with her encouragement passed Beginning and Intermediate Notation Certification.

Anonymous A felt UHM made an impact on her in many positive ways. She was very interested in Tai Chi, and got to take classes from Patricia Leong and learn to not only master movement qualities, but also learn about
weapons. Anonymous A also felt that she could become involved in projects with the professors, and felt it was a vibrant experience which added to her time in Hawai‘i.

Anonymous B said UHM made an impact on her without a doubt. Returning to school in her late thirties, Anonymous B got the sense that Lizenbery cared deeply about her and her success, and sympathized with her re-entry to school after a long absence. This was very important to her. UHM brought dance back into her life and rekindled her interest in a life-long pursuit of choreography and performance. Anonymous B wrote in an e-mail interview,

UH rounded out my brain, challenged me intellectually and academically to expand and have confidence in my capabilities. This enhanced my already strong teaching skills.

Another question I asked each subject was if they felt UHM had pushed them to a physical or mental level that was beyond their own boundaries. Zahrn said she was driven mentally and physically seeking out every performance opportunity and class she could. She was in excellent physical condition during those years. But Zahrn felt she could have been pushed a little harder in some modern technique classes. Thomas, on the other
hand, believed he was pushed in both areas, mentally and physically, but more importantly he left UH with a “love for dance and a connection to dance that was rooted in his connection to Hawai’i and the spirit of Aloha.” Shiroma felt the MFA program at UH is a rigorous and comprehensive program that pushed her to test the boundaries of her physical and mental abilities.

Anonymous A felt she has two answers to this question. In hindsight, she wishes she had been challenged more on a physical and intellectual level, and she had been better trained because she was new to dancing. However, all in all, she thinks “UH as a whole package was satisfying.” The program was flexible enough that she could immerse herself in the styles of dance in which she was interested and work in either student or faculty choreography.

Anonymous B expressed that certain faculty members pushed her in different areas. Anonymous B felt, faculty member, Van Zile used her always friendly insistence on excellence to push hard academically. This gave Anonymous B a challenge to meet and learn about herself through her writing. On a physical level, UHM gave her a non-stop physical regime between being a graduate assistant teacher, taking classes, and being in

19
rehearsals and performances.

Thinking back on their time spent at UHM, the dancers have all reflected positively about the dance program. Thomas states it the best by saying in his e-mail interview,

The UH dance program, while not glitzy on the surface, has an under-stated elegance, a depth that is beyond the veneer of a 'big name' reputation. Like the trade winds that blow through the palm trees or the smell of the plumeria in the evening or like the gentle rains that fall in Manoa Valley throughout the day- this is Hawai‘i this is the UH dance program.

After reading Thomas’ words one can only imagine how special it must feel to obtain one’s master’s degree at an institution where the teachers genuinely care about each dancer in and out of the classroom.

Four out of five of these graduates have now moved from O‘ahu to the mainland to pursue careers in modern dance. All of these dancers teach in a university, intermediate, or secondary school setting. It is interesting that this terminal degrees has led to teaching positions.

I asked each of my subjects if they took a seminar in teaching class while attending UHM. Thomas did take a class offered by Judy Van Zile, along with other classes in theory, Labanotation, history, technique, and
movement fundamentals. These other classes helped him to prepare for teaching because of the day to day knowledge he was gaining. Thomas has now been teaching dance off and on for the past fifteen years, since he graduated UHM.

The graduates I interviewed feel they use their UHM studies on a day to day basis while teaching in their respective institutions. Thomas gives credit to several teachers he had while attending UHM. He currently teaches Labanotation and Dance History. In an e-mail, Thomas wrote,

I am sure Judy Van Zile would be amazed to discover that I am now teaching Labanotation. Funny I didn’t put in much time when I was taking the class. I think the word is ‘distracted,’ too busy chasing girls, but now that I am teaching the class I actually enjoy the material. Funny how being on the other side of the fence gives one a different perspective. I did pay attention on occasion because I wanted to get value for my time and my money."

Thomas uses back exercises he learned from Lizenbery in his modern classes. And added this witty comment, “I hated the exercise, but now I understand its value.”

Anonymous B and Zahrn feel that Laban Movement Analysis is at the back or forefront of their minds in various teaching contexts. LMA is the study of movement analysis. The class focuses body alignment and spatial
intent. This study can be incorporated into composition and technique classes through movement and LMA vocabulary terms. The class helps broaden one's language in the field of dance. Lizenbery teaches this class, and he relates LMA to all movements he uses in all forms of dance technique.

Shiroma still works closely with both faculty and students in community projects and company performances. Shiroma regularly re-constructs dances for her students from notation and refers to her Dance History and Theory and Criticism class notes. She feels what she learned at UHM has greatly added to her dance experience and learning.

Each person believed if they had to attend UHM all over again, without a doubt, they would do it in a heartbeat. Each dancer mentioned how they appreciated the environment within the university and the natural surroundings of O'ahu. The state of Hawai'i contains an enriching and multicultural environment that anyone could fall in love with. Anonymous B said, "it was a ripe atmosphere for going into a new territory with my creative work." Zahrn and Anonymous A felt it was the right school at the right time. Zahrn recommends the UHM dance program to others depending on their personal goals.
Zahrn wrote in an e-mail,

if a student was interested in going to New York City to join a professional dance company he or she might find better training elsewhere, but anyone interested in a multicultural, enriching experience would love it at UHM.

Thomas is content he attended UHM for his MFA. He has no questions about it. So much so that he just recommended the dance program to a graduating senior who has an interest in doing research in hula.

Shiroma reflects back on her time spent at UHM and still works closely with faculty and students in the community. She recommends the UH dance program to her students at Mid-Pacific Institute whom she feels would benefit from its unique strengths.

There are many things dance programs can do well, but there is always room for improvement. The candidates I interviewed all had something different to add about the UHM dance program. Thomas said,

I would have liked to have seen the Asian-Pacific dance forms under the umbrella of the Dance Program. However, being on the other side of academia, I can only imagine the political necessity for such an arrangement.

Zahrn expressed,

I needed more emphasis on what to do after graduation. I liked it that Betsy Fisher had us work on our resumes during technique, but there needs to be more of that. Lots of people seemed to be working towards an unknown goal. Enjoying the moment, but not planning ahead, myself included.
In retrospect, Shiroma wishes she “had received more training in teaching technique philosophy, dance administration, and preparation for ways to seek employment in the field of dance.” Other than that, she would not have done anything differently while attending UHM.

Anonymous A wished she could have had a better understanding of the way a professor’s life is directed by their work, more insight into research, publications, and to be more involved in faculty projects. Whereas, Anonymous B felt if she had been a younger dancer in the program, and wanted to build a stronger modern dance technique, that the program was lacking this training. However, she was very grateful for the visiting artists that did residencies at UHM. Because the state of Hawai‘i is so far removed from the mainland, Anonymous B felt it was thrilling to be exposed these visiting artists.

These dancers have all shown exceptional progress in their careers by continuing to develop modern dance through teaching and performing. These dancers have been able to credit UHM for making them into interactive dancers within their respective teaching communities. Shiroma is involved in the local dance community using
local dancers in her performances for her dance company, Monkey and the Waterfall, as well as teaching future dancers at Mid-Pacific Institute. When Thomas attended UHM he performed on occasion with local modern dance company, Tau Dance Theatre. In 2000, Thomas returned to UHM to teach a master class in modern technique. By allowing alumni the opportunity to return to UHM to teach a master classes, the dance program can see the progress the alumni/ae have made and can pass on the graduates’ accomplishments and knowledge to future generations of students.
CHAPTER 3

CURRENT MFA DANCE STUDENTS

This next section is to help further my study of how the university dance program is affecting the lives of four current MFA students, and what they hope to get out of their graduate degrees. The questions and answers followed a similar format and received similar responses. I interviewed Nicole Pouliot, Celia Chun, Michael Pili Pang, and Anonymous C.

Nicole Pouliot is in her final semester of graduate studies at UHM. She has done something no other MFA student has done in the UHM Dance Program: she will be completing her MFA degree in two years. Pouliot started her degree in 2003. She started studying dance ten years ago, and studied at the University of Minnesota for four of those years. After graduating from UM, Pouliot danced professionally for independent companies, Liz Lerman, and The Dance Place in Washington D.C. Pouliot came to UHM because she was offered a full tuition scholarship and stipend to teach the beginning modern dance class. She also believed the UHM dance program was small enough she would be able to study several different things such as Asian Pacific dance forms.
Pouliot believes that even though UHM is a small program, the teachers are all experts in their fields of studies. However, she feels that UHM is short staffed and limits what is taught. She feels there should be twice the amount of teachers and classes offered. For example, technique classes should be offered every day at the advanced level, and theory and criticism classes should be broken down into different subject headings. However, Pouliot feels there are advantages to being a small program. This plays a large part in creating opportunities for her to be in the Graduate Student Organization, easier to apply for travel grant money opportunities, one-on-one time with professors, and less competition in castings for concerts.

Pouliot thinks UHM needs to go into the community more and do practical training such as internship programs. This would allow the student to grow more in diverse areas and become well rounded. She feels the dance program needs more young visiting guest artists. The modern technique teachers at UHM are all from the same era and this makes the styles being taught rather similar. Pouliot understands the program would need more money from the UHM system to get more visiting artists.
Celia Chun is in her first semester of her MFA degree after taking several years off to raise a family and be assistant director of Honolulu Dance Theatre. Chun studied ballet at the Mavis Tracey Ballet School in Kailua, Ballet Hawaii, Metropolitan Ballet, MO., and has toured with Matthew Wright of Honolulu Dance Theatre. Chun chose to go to UHM because of logistics.

Chun appreciates the diversity of teachers and different styles of dance offered at UHM. She feels she is being challenged mentally because she has been out of school for so long. Chun wrote in an e-mail interview,

The UHM Dance Program needs to work on the ballet classes and the modern classes somehow using the same language in corrections. Possibly linking the classes in what they work on in the semesters.

By this, Chun means she would like to see the same terminology used from modern technique class expressed in ballet class. She thinks that since UHM is a higher education institution, a ballet class should be more than just a standard technique class, and go further into the why's and how's of alignment and posture.

Michael Pili Pang is in his third year of his graduate studies at UHM. Pang will be getting his MFA degree with an emphasis in hula. Pang started dancing hula over twenty years ago. He has his own company
called Halau Hula Ka Noeau and a non-profit company called Hawaiian Arts Ensemble. In 2005, Pang was appointed Executive Director for the Mayor’s Office of Culture and the Arts. Pang chose to go to UHM because of location.

Pang believes UHM has several strengths. He feels the faculty is very strong in their fields of studies, and offers him a new way of thinking as they keep evolving with the times. He recognizes how the faculty continues to produce people that are going into the community of O’ahu to teach and perform. He wishes, however, that the facilities could be in better condition. He also knows that the funding for the faculty is low, so there are not enough teachers to offer a diverse amount of Asian and Pacific dance forms. He also would like to see an arts administrative component. When I interviewed Pang, he said, “Yes, UHM helped me with the job position I have now. It gave me a broader point of view on how art is created and how art can be effective.”

Anonymous C is in the middle of her graduate studies at UHM. She started studying tap, jazz, and ballet prior to attending college on the mainland where she later focused primarily on modern dance. Anonymous C
chose UHM because of logistics. She wanted to be closer to her family and felt Hawai‘i was the right location for her. Anonymous C also believed UHM’s small dance program would allow her to receive more individual attention than a larger dance program.

Anonymous C feels a small dance department is beneficial for her graduate work. She is able to have had a lot of feedback from her teachers. Anonymous C responded in an e-mail;

I have enjoyed the three visiting artists this past semester. Working with Jeong Ho Nam, Chuck Davis, and Odette Blum have been an incredible experience that will forever impact me as a dancer and teacher. I think it is wonderful that this department is always working on grants and finding ways to fund guest choreographers.

Anonymous C knows that when she receives her MFA degree it will be a result of hard work and learning. She feels that her research seminar class, Labanotation, theory and criticism course have all challenged her to think on a graduate level. She thinks UHM is very special because it has great access to Asian and Pacific dance forms. These classes offered are not found in such abundance and with so many expert teachers anywhere else in America. Also the Labanotation course offered at UHM is a plus. One can benefit from adding clarity as a teacher or choreographer through this method of notation. Also,
the Dance Ensemble is an important part of exposing dance to different age groups and populations throughout the state.

However, Anonymous C feels UHM should offer more modern technique classes. She feels that an institution that offers both BFA and MFA degrees should offer techniques courses everyday. She reiterates that more and better facilities would be helpful. She finds necessary rehearsal space is often hard to obtain.

In conclusion, all of these past and present students of the university have proven to be valuable sources of information to help the dance program in reevaluating its curricula. All nine dancers stated the UHM teachers gave them a sense of support that is hard to come by at other educational institutions. All nine students felt at least one teacher pushed them further in their studies to produce work that was above and beyond their personal expectations. By having positive role models, these MFA graduates look forward to teaching at other institutes. Through positive feedback, each student experienced the commitment that it takes to become a compassionate professor of dance.
Chapter 4

O'ahu Dance Company Artistic Directors

In this next section I will examine three modern dance companies situated here on O'ahu and how they inter-relate with the UHM Dance Program. These three modern dance companies are Tau Dance Theatre, Iona Contemporary Dance Theatre, and Upside-Down Dance Company. Peter Rockford-Espiritu, Artistic Director of Tau Dance Theatre, studied at Leeward Community College and audited classes at UHM. Cheryl Flaharty, Artistic Director of Iona Contemporary Dance Theatre, graduated from UHM in 1981 with a BA in dance. Lisa Smith, Artistic Director of Upside-Down Dance Company, periodically takes modern technique classes at UHM, and is thinking of pursuing a MFA degree in the near future. All three of these companies are related to the UHM Dance Program through the artistic directors and the dancers that dance within their companies. At present time, about half of the current dancers in each company are either UHM alumni/ae or are currently pursuing their degree in dance at UHM.

As a child, Espiritu's first formal dance training was in hula on the island of Molokai. Then, as a young adult, Espiritu attended ballet classes at the School of
American Ballet because "he wanted to be a bun head." He felt though being on the mainland with his unique ethnic look of Hawaiian, Spanish, Samoan, Filipino, Chinese, and Euro-American ancestry, he could do so much more aesthetically. He wanted to learn more about modern dance and experiment with body movement initiation. In 1989, Espiritu returned to O'ahu and took modern dance classes from Betty Jones and Fritz Ludin, and soon after became a leading male dancer in their company called "Dances We Dance." These technique classes and rehearsals were influenced by the style of Jose Limon, and started to affect Espiritu's own choreography. In his company, Tau Dance Theatre (hereafter TDT) focuses on producing dances that are a fusion of hula and modern dance.

From working closely with UHM, Espiritu has been able to use dancers from UHM in his company. Currently, alumna Malia Yamamoto and current student Jacki Nii are dancing for TDT. Yamamoto gives Lizenbery and his movement fundamentals class credit for helping her in dancing for TDT because she claims she is more aware of her body alignment and has a great understanding of how to move her body through space with purpose. Espiritu believes that with a "good sense of movement and the
willingness to try new things," dancers like Yamamoto and Nii are capable of dancing for his company and others.

Three-fourths of TDT's dancers are from the UHM system. Both Lizenbery and Fisher danced with TDT from 1994-1999. They both agreed it was a good way to network and make connections within the dance community. They both danced with TDT when it was Limon-based technique and left shortly after it changed to choreography that contained hula for separate reasons. Lizenbery felt the deep plies caused knee and hip aches. And Fisher parted ways as her family and work became more of a priority. Both reminisce about dancing with TDT and how much fun it was to work with the other company members.

Cheryl Flaharty, Director of Iona Contemporary Dance Theatre, graduated from UHM in 1981. Like Espiritu, Flaharty danced with "Dances We Dance" for three years. After graduation from UHM, Flaharty told me in an interview, she decided to move to New York City to pursue a career in choreography because "there were not enough dancers of her caliber in dancing to choreograph on." Flaharty worked for five years for Jennifer Muller with the help of her connections to Betty Jones. While in NYC, Flaharty used her influences from the Butoh
aesthetics of Poppo Shirashi, stunning costumes, and modern dance movement to make a dance company that is very well-known on O‘ahu.

Flaharty uses improvisation techniques a lot in her choreography. In our interview she told me she likes to “choreograph around the students abilities.” Over the past fifteen years about half of her dancers have come from the UHM Dance Program. Some dancers come more experienced technically and others are more advanced meditatively. Through a structured improvisation technique, Flaharty tells the dancers where to enter at a certain point in the music, and the dancers have their own freedom to dance in her choreographic style as long as they end up where they are supposed to at the specific time.

Flaharty would like to see a stronger relationship between UHM and her own company. By having an internship program Flaharty hopes to teach students the business side of dancing in the community and how it works. Flaharty was also fortunate to have use of the Temporary Dance Building at UHM to house an audition for dancers. She wishes that she could use the Temporary Dance Building more often for company rehearsals because large studio spaces on O‘ahu are so difficult to come by when
it is time to rehearse for larger shows that are performed at the Hawai'i Theatre. For now, Flaharty schedules rehearsals at her home in Kailua and only can host five dancers at a time due to the small studio space.

Lisa Smith, Artistic Director of Upside-Down Dance Company, moved to O'ahu in December 2003. Smith's ballet training comes from Vagonava Ballet Technique. Her early modern training comes from the styles of Martha Graham and Bella Lewitzky. In 2001, Smith obtained her BA degree in dance with a concentration in choreography at Columbia College Chicago. In college, her professors strongly encouraged modern dance methods such as the stretch and release technique. After obtaining her degree, for three years Smith danced professionally for Anatomical Theater, and danced as an independent professional dancer for choreographers Shirley Mordine and Jan Erkert.

Smith originally came to Hawai'i to teach Pilates technique. Pilates uses the Five Basic Principals of breath, pelvic placement, rib cage placement, scapular movement and stabilization, and head and cervical placement. When Smith realized that the only classes for dancers of her caliber were available through the UHM
Dance Program, where she would have to enroll as an unclassified graduate student, she decided something else must be done. She decided to form her own dance company and dance her own style of modern dance. Smith uses several dancers from UHM. Her company consists of Jacki Nii, myself, and alumni/ae Christopher Quiocho, Malia Yamamoto, and Nicole Young. Smith feels these dancers tend to use mainly their limbs and make shapes when dancing. She does not feel that they have a good sense of “core-connectedness.” This means they initiate more peripherally than centrally. This becomes a challenge for her when re-staging and choreographing because she must refocus on teaching a new quality of movement to the dancers. Smith has since then, decided to offer free Pilates classes to all company members. However, Smith relayed to me in a phone interview, that she “does not feel they are at a lower level, but feels they have a different level of experience.” Smith has sometimes had to stop rehearsals to teach partnering lifts and rolls that she would like to use in her pieces. In Chicago, Smith felt dancers were already aware of these types of movements and practice them on a regular basis.
Smith bought a Marley dance floor for The Arts at Marks' Garage and would like to offer classes and have shows where people can dance when they graduate. Smith is a member of The Arts at Marks' Garage located in downtown Honolulu. The space is used as a performance venue for theatrical presentations, gallery exhibitions, dance concerts, and office space for at least twelve arts organizations and arts related businesses. Smith, along with Lizenbery and Fisher, believe the UHM dance program needs better dance facilities. The three dance studios are too spread apart, and are not well maintained. The Temporary Dance Building has been the main dance building at UHM now for over thirty years. Without the support and money from the state, the facilities will remain the same. Lizenbery would like to see three studios added onto Kennedy Theatre in the future.

Smith would like to be more affiliated with the university. She would like to see the university do more hands on work in the community, and possible have an internship program one day with her company. She thinks dancers should be getting credit for dancing in shows and learning how to run companies. Smith would also like it if dancers from the community could pay a daily fee
and take modern technique class at UHM. If dancers could pay a stipend towards Friends of Dance, more people on O'ahu would be dancing. Smith would be happy to help promote the UHM program on her website.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through my interviews I have found eight out of nine dancers commented on how the UHM Dance Program has a high priority in teaching Asian and Pacific Dance courses. The non-western dance forms that are offered at UHM are excellent experiences that compliment traditional modern and ballet technique classes. Six out of nine dancers felt, if one wanted to pursue a career in professional modern dance, universities that offer advanced modern technique classes five days a week would be more beneficial. The dance technique classes were considered too short (one hour twenty minutes as opposed to the more standard one and a half hour to two hour class) and sparse because they were only offered three days a week. A possible remedy would be to offer modern technique classes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at one level and have another level on Tuesday and Thursday so students can have an option of enrolling in modern technique class everyday. And as earlier suggested by Smith, community dancers might pay a small fee to Friends of Dance that would allow the opportunity to take a technique class on a drop-in basis.
From all the data I have collected, these twelve subjects have shown UHM to be a good institution in which to study dance. I believe local modern dance cannot survive without the aid of UHM. Every year there is a new stream of dancers from UHM that teach in the community and feed into local dance companies. Without UHM, there would be fewer places to study dance and there would be a lack of dancers on O’ahu. Lisa Smith, who started her dance company because she wanted to dance, felt there were no modern dance classes being offered besides the university. Now she takes classes at UHM to stay in shape and to find dancers to use for her performances.

By listening to the suggestions of these students, the dance program can only improve. My research indicates that these suggestions have remained the same over a course of twenty years. Resources permitting, these are things dancers past and present would like to see happen in the dance program. Dancers want: to have modern technique classes offered five days a week; to have more frequent guest artists visit; to be more involved in the community through practical training in internship programs; better facilities.
By looking at each of these past and present students' responses, one will notice that UHM is producing exceptional advocators of dance in O'ahu and on the mainland. Each student expected to be challenged as a dancer, and hoped to grow and reach new heights in the field of dance so they will become better qualified upon exit of the UHM Dance Program. One can see they have all accomplished many of their goals with the aid of UHM. Zahrn teaches at University of Georgia modern dance technique. Thomas teaches at Western Oregon University Labanotation, Composition, Dance History, World Dance, and Modern dance technique courses. Shiroma teaches at Mid-Pacific Institute Dance History, workshops, and runs her company Monkey and the Waterfall. Anonymous A teaches modern technique courses at a university. Anonymous B teaches modern technique courses at a dance institute. Pouliot hopes to attend Temple University in Philadelphia for her doctorate degree in dance. She would like to teach studio and academic courses, which include modern technique, theory and criticism, and choreography. (And maybe work at UHM one day in the future.) Chun hopes to teach with the UHM system after receiving her MFA. She currently has her own school of one hundred students at The School of
Honolulu Dance Theatre. Pang is a Kumu Hula and directs Halau Hula Ka Noeau, Hawaiian Arts Ensemble, and is the Executive Director for the Mayor's Office Culture and Arts Division. Anonymous C would like to stay on O'ahu after graduation and teach dance in the community colleges, teach younger children during the school year, travel to the mainland and internationally in the summer to teach, and perform in local dance companies. Flaharty founded Iona Contemporary Dance Theatre and teaches workshops in the community. Peter Rockford-Espiritu is Artistic Director of Tau Dance Theatre and teaches dance at the Iolani School. Lisa Smith heads Upside-Down Dance Company, teaches creative movement, and runs a Pilates Studio. From all of these accomplished people, we can realize that without the university there would be a lack of modern dance companies and teachers in the community, and fewer on the mainland. These twelve subjects showcase a fine example of what UHM is capable of producing. UHM must listen to these people in order for modern dance to keep growing on O'ahu for future generations to come.
I am the first student to intern with a professional dance company called Iona Contemporary Dance Theatre. On a personal note, I feel every student should have to intern before they graduate. This is good experience in learning part of the trade that the student hopes to pursue in the future, and gives them a chance to try out aspects of the profession before they pursue their career.

"I found this quote to be quite funny, and quite true. Many times we live in the day to day world of trying to get by, and then later find ourselves doing something we never dreamed of doing. For instance, many times in Labanotation class I did not see the point in learning how to notate dances because I felt it was a technique of the past. This past semester I danced in the Mainstage Concert in a piece entitled Breakers, choreographed by Victoria Uris in 1985. Odette Blum from Ohio State University directed and staged this dance on twelve of us using the Labanotation score arranged by the Dance Notation Bureau. At times I wished I had prepared more in the past for this future endeavor.

"This reminds me of my modern technique classes with Fisher. She does difficult abdominal exercises at the beginning of class contrived from Pilates, which I do not enjoy, but when asked to do a workout with friends, I always resort to her exercises.

"I was fortunate to be the first UHM student this semester to intern, and will hopefully help bridge a future with the two parties.

"In studying Asian and Pacific Dance forms I have learned that there is a strong emphasis in the usage of hand, foot, and eye gestures. For example, in Baharanatyam, Indian Classical dance, and West Javanese dance forms the movements are extremely intricate and use isolation of body parts. By studying the gestures, the dancers can learn that every body part and movement is extremely specific. Also when studying hula, the dance tells a story. I learned that each gesture is a symbol that reflects the land and water that we live and dance upon. By taking a large variety of ethnic dance classes, I feel I have widened my knowledge in dance and can incorporate details from other dance forms into modern dance training. Also, I believe the costumes used
in these ethnic dance forms play a large part in the performances. Several costumes require props, such as the *uli-uli* in hula, masks in West Javanese dance, and scarves in Baharanatyam. This gives another dynamic instrument in choreographing with props.
Resources:

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Anonymous C. E-mail Interview. 27 March 2005.
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