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DANCING VOICES

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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DANCE

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To Melissa

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CHAPTER I THESIS PROPOSAL

This chapter includes both the revised proposal for the concert shared between Melissa Teodoro and myself, Dancing Voices, and the revised proposal for my MFA thesis piece, *The smallest unit of meaning*. In an earlier version of this proposal, submitted in the Spring 2002 semester, the working title of my MFA thesis piece was *Syllables*. The change of title reflects the changes in the choreographic process, caused by a delay in the completion of the original score commissioned for the piece. These changes will be discussed in detail in chapter II.

Concert Proposal
Melissa Teodoro and Ana Paula Höfling
Spring 2002 (revised 09/03/02)

Dancing Voices

1. The concert

This MFA concert will be shared between Ana Paula Höfling and Melissa Teodoro. Our idea is to have a concert that showcases our choreographic work, old and new, in a cohesive concert that is more than a collage of unrelated dances. We have chosen the title “Dancing Voices” because of our interest in working with the spoken word, both in past works and new works.

The concert will be divided into two parts, one featuring each of our 15-minute pieces, created to satisfy the MFA degree requirement, and the other will feature

reconstructions and restagings of older pieces (some of them revised or edited).

The pieces that will be reconstructed/restaged are:

Bach ‘n’ balls—Melissa Teodoro

Three orange exercise balls chase four dancers across the stage to Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*.

Cast: Christine Berwin,, Kellee Blanchard, Melissa Lockyer, Noelani Goldstein.

Tchintchirote—Melissa Teodoro

Cesarea Evora sings a song about a native Cape-Verdean bird, the Tchintchirote, whose fluttering, gliding and diving movements are echoed by the dancers in an exploration of girlhood and youth.

Cast: Melissa Lockyer, Janie Koontz, Jackie Nii and Courtney Brebbia

In the Middle—Ana Paula Höfling

Three heads dance in this piece about trying to fit in.

Preliminary cast: Sarah Luscomb, Larissa Marceau and Samantha DeLange. Music:

First suite for unaccompanied cello by J.S. Bach (Prelude and Gigue)

Bachianas Cabeleiras—Ana Paula Höfling

A contemplative movement study about hair and bad haircuts.

Cast: Noelani Goldstein and Larissa Eastman. Music by Heitor Villa-Lobos

Underwater Study – Ana Paula Höfling

An exploration of the freedom and the pleasure of swimming.

The MFA performance requirement will be satisfied by our performance in this piece, since both of us are interested in being outside our own new MFA works.

Cast: Ana Paula Höfling and Melissa Teodoro will alternate in this solo.

No Más—Melissa Teodoro

Thesis requirement. A close look at war and its consequences, with an emphasis on the atrocities currently being committed in the civil war in Colombia.

Cast: Kane Balbin, Arturo Mariano, Sequoia Carr-Brown, Audrey Wicklund and Larisa Eastman.

The smallest unit of meaning (working title)—Ana Paula Höfling

Thesis requirement. An exploration of musical syllables and morphemes.

Cast: Kelly Del Rosario, Larissa Marceau, Sarah Luscomb and Vanessa Rodriguez

As a pre-show “performance” and during intermission, we would like to play Randy Hostetler’s *Happily Ever After*, a sound score composed of stories, sounds, syllables and musings on happiness.

We will not have bows following every piece, instead we will leave that for the end of the concert, where we will have a “company bow” with all the dancers, in order to give the concert a better sense of continuity.

2. Props, Set and Costume requirements

Melissa anticipates using props for her thesis piece (see proposal). Although Ana Paula's thesis does not anticipate using any props or sets, and having in mind what is available in the costume shop, we will both need to have new costumes constructed for our new works. We will adapt what is already available in the costume shop for our reconstructed pieces.

3. Production and publicity

We will start working with Kristy Miller, Director of Publicity for the Kennedy Theater, in the beginning of the Fall semester. The publicity office will be in charge of arranging photo shoots, interviews, contacting media, and any other task that involves PR, publicity and front of house.

4. Budget \$1.000

\$200 music
\$500 costumes (approx.)
\$200 props (approx.)
\$100 miscellaneous

The following itemized budget was presented at our first production meeting.

PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FALL Footholds/2002

• MUSIC		
<i>The Smallest Unit of Meaning</i>		
Composer: Doug Dunston		\$200.00
	SUB-TOTAL	\$200.00
• COSTUMES and PROPS		
<i>In the Middle:</i> 3 pairs of tennis shoes		\$30.00
<i>Bach' n' Balls:</i> 1 orange exercise ball		\$25.00
4 striped tops		\$40.00
<i>No Más:</i> 2 dresses		\$40.00
Cheese cloth		\$5.00
Blindfolds		\$5.00
5 sets of underwear		\$40.00
(5 pairs of boots		\$150.00)?
<i>The Smallest Unit of Meaning:</i>		
fabric		\$150.00
construction and design		\$100.00
	SUB- TOTAL	\$585.00

Since this was a Lab Theatre Prime Time production, it was not necessary to include items in this budget such as publicity costs, light instrument rental fees, theater rentals fees, financial compensation to crew, lighting designer, stage manager or dancers. Also not included in this budget are several costume items that were "pulled" from the stock room of Kennedy Theatre costume shop, as well as other items which belonged to the choreographers or dancers. In addition, all front-of-house logistics and expenses, such as tickets, box office staff and house manager were taken care of by Kennedy Theatre.

MFA thesis piece proposal
Ana Paula Höfling
Spring 2002 (revised 09/03/02)

The smallest unit of meaning (working title)

My source of movement

The idea of exploring the sounds of the human voice as a source of movement has been on my list of ideas for choreography for several years now. Both my interest in languages and my studies in linguistics add another layer to the idea of working with voices.

Five years ago, with this choreographic project in mind, my partner Melissa Teodoro collected stories told in different languages, mostly Asian languages, by performers who were attending the Asian Pacific Performance Exchange in Los Angeles in 1997. The intention in collecting the sounds of these particular languages (Bengali, Japanese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Tamil and Tagalog) was to work with languages that were completely unfamiliar to me, forcing myself to rely solely on the sounds themselves, without being influenced by their meaning.

The musical score

In order to create a musical score based on the raw recordings collected at the 1997 APPEX, I will need the help of a composer who would create a musical score using the voices from this raw compilation. The musical score would ideally be divided into two or three parts, beginning with cut-and-pasted discernible chunks of stories—starting with one voice and overlapping other voices gradually. At this point I envision a section

of silence or sparse recorded sound, giving way to live sounds and words produced by the dancers. A third section would build to a more abstracted flow of sounds, progressing to a purely musical composition based on the qualities and sequences of sounds of the different voices.

The composer who I am collaborating with is Doug Dunston, professor of music at New Mexico Tech in Socorro, NM. We have been communicating about the project throughout the summer and I have been working with the first draft of the score. Although I have given the composer guidelines for what I want, I have been open to his creative input.

The structure

The structure of the dance would be similar to the structure of the musical score. I will begin with a solo, paralleling the solo voice in the musical score. More dancers will be added as the voices in the score thicken, each dancer tied to one voice. When all five dancers are on stage, the score and the dance will come to a climax and abruptly stop.

At this point the second section will begin. I will work with a duet (Larissa Marceau and Kelly Del Rosario) and a then trio, perhaps overlapping the two. The dancers who are not dancing will remain on stage, watching and sparsely contributing words and sounds to this section of the sound score. (This live section maybe part of Doug Dunston's musical score or maybe something I will develop during rehearsals in collaboration with the dancers.)

The third section will deal with group manipulation in space and time, echoing the canons, fugues or other compositional strategies used in the music. The group of dancers

as a whole will be highlighted in this section, and here the dancers will constantly acknowledge each other as “real people” through eye-contact, at the same time as they materialize a kind of “music visualization”. I would like to end the piece in silence, perhaps repeating movement material from the beginning, a way to repeat what was said before, but this time movement stands on its own and doesn’t need to be propelled by the voices: movement becomes a voice in itself.

The process

The movement exploration will depart from the voices, using either the raw voice recordings or drafts of the musical score. Since I am not familiar with any of the languages used in these recordings, the movement exploration will be purely a response to the sounds, and not to their meanings.

I plan developing movement material both on my own and collaboratively with the dancers, based on improvisation. The second section of the piece is the one that will require the most input from the dancers, since there will be partnering and the dancers will be creating the sounds that will accompany the movement. The third section will use movement material previously seen in the first section, but this time manipulated in different ways, using canons, accumulation, repetition and reiteration.

The cast

I had originally intended to work with dancers who were also comfortable speaking on stage, but since I was not able to find performers who fit this profile in our department, I shifted my plans and now I plan on working exclusively with recorded

voices, although the sound score does include the dancer's voices.

I will be working with four dancers: Kelly Del Rosario, Larissa Marceau, Sarah Luscomb and Vanessa Rodriguez.

Timetable

I will begin working after Spring Footholds, then I will continue to develop material on my own into the summer and resume working with the dancers in August at the beginning of the Fall 2002 semester.

February 4th: Thesis committee formation

September 1st: recruitment of stage manager, stage crew, light and sound board operators and lighting designer. Meeting with costume shop manager about costume design and construction.

September 16th: First showing

October 7th: Second showing

November 1st: Third showing

November 13 – 17: Thesis Concert

CHAPTER II

THE SMALLEST UNIT OF MEANING

1. The original idea

The original idea for my thesis piece was to create movement in direct response to text spoken in languages that were unfamiliar to me. Having worked with spoken text that I did understand in the past, I was curious to see what would happen when the content was taken away and all I had to work with were the sounds of speech, devoid of meaning. This desire to work with recontextualized sounds of the spoken voice was reflected in my first working title: *Syllables*. At that point, another appropriate title might have been *Phonemes*, since I was initially interested in the musical qualities of the sounds of vowels and consonants. In order to create a score of voices from which to create my movement, I decided to use raw recordings compiled by Melissa Teodoro at the Asian Pacific Performance Exchange at UCLA in 1997 as the basis for a commissioned score for my MFA thesis piece. Doug Dunston, professor of music at New Mexico Tech and a friend of many years agreed to compose this 15-minute score using only the recordings I sent him. We communicated by phone and e-mail, when I explained the parameters of this project: to use small bits of sound—only syllables, loose vowels and consonants—to create a musical score with no recognizable portions of speech, even to speakers of the languages being used. I told him I wanted one section to be more melodic and one section to emphasize rhythm. I wanted one section to be an accumulation of four distinct voices, where I intended to assign one voice to each dancer and let my

choreographic choices be guided by the music, by the qualities of each of the voices.

Since my choreographic creative process depended heavily on the musical score, I commissioned this score early in the spring semester of 2002. The major problem in this long distance collaboration was the fact that the composer did not send me a first draft of the score (still incomplete) until the end of the summer, around early August. Although he did post bits and pieces of different sections on his website, as he worked on them, I was unable to copy the music onto disc in order to be able to take it to the studio and begin choreographing.

In the meantime, I worked in silence, or, when I could not bear the silence of an empty studio, I created movement listening to some of my favorite music as background: Indigo Girls, Gabriel o Pensador, the Finnish all female vocal group Värttina and the Brazilian early music ensemble Anima. The absence of the musical score that was meant to be the main creative impetus for this piece led me to a different creative process. During the summer, my choreographic process turned out to be an exploration of movement that “felt good” to my body. In my previous choreography at University of Hawai`i, every movement in every piece that I created had been justified by some choreographic device, such as the use of theme and variation in *Underwater Study*. In order to challenge myself as a choreographer, I also chose some self-imposed restrictions that limited my movement choices: in *Bachianas Cabeleiras* the soloist never leaves the stool; in *In the middle*, most of the first movement, the Prelude, uses only the head and upper torso of the dancers. For my thesis piece, I decide to let go of these conscious movement decisions and allow my body to lead the way. This exploration produced a movement phrase that was

later manipulated to create the second section of *The smallest unit of meaning*.

The original idea of creating movement in response to sounds which had been stripped of their linguistic meaning had to be saved for later. I had a deadline to meet and I had to find another way of approaching this piece. In order to create what later became the second section of *The smallest unit of meaning*, I decided to manipulate the phrase I had created over the summer in a way similar to the way in which I hoped the composer was approaching the musical score. I started looking for the smallest unit of movement—the simplest, most central motif—by stripping the movement phrase of certain elements (I will go into more detail about this process in section four of this chapter). However, even after I thought I had stripped the movement to its core, there was new meaning and intention behind it. Even the smallest, most minimal unit of movement carried meaning. I was looking for a movement phoneme and I kept creating movement morphemes instead.

2. The creative process

Before the summer, I cast five dancers in my thesis piece. I thought an odd number of dancers might help me create interesting counterpoint and asymmetry in the dance. At the end of the summer, I received an e-mail from one of the dancers saying she would not be able to dance in the piece. Instead of looking for another dancer to replace her, I decided to work with the four remaining dancers: Sarah Luscomb, Kelly Del Rosario, Larissa Marceau and Vanessa Rodriguez.

In several of the choreographic works I created before coming to the University of Hawai`i, I had successfully used the dancers' creative input, so I thought I would try

the same approach with this group. In my experience, a dancer's input can enrich the choreographer's ideas and sometimes take them to new, unexpected places. In our first rehearsal, I used a game I had learned from Liz Lerman (director and founder of the *Liz Lerman Dance Exchange*) at the Urban Bush Women Institute in 1997: a physical version of the game "telephone". I showed them a short section of the material I had developed over the summer, and, standing in a circle, I asked the person to my right to reproduce as much of the phrase as she could after watching it once. The dancer to her right would do the same, but using the second version of the phrase as a starting point. After going through a couple of cycles of this game, I asked them to compose their own version of my original phrase. I then learned each of the variations and later condensed them into two new versions, which I referred to as phrase B and phrase C. Working with an early draft of the commissioned score, I developed canons, accumulations and unison to create this first group section. Much of the unison, however, proved to be impossible, since one of the dancers could not roll, tumble, or execute any movement that required taking weight on her shoulders. In the process of changing her part and adapting the moments of unison to accommodate her limitation, this section became more layered and textured. She often became the counterpoint to the rest of the group: when they tumbled, she jumped; when they emphasized the horizontal plane, she held onto the vertical plane. This "problem" forced me to create new variations on the original phrase, enriching the final product.

The next time I tried to elicit material from the dancers was not as successful.

When I first began working on the duet between Kelly Del Rosario and Larissa

Marceau, I worked with improvisation in order to extract movement that “felt good” to each of these dancers. Since Larissa is trained primarily in ballet and Kelly’s first training is in capoeira, I thought that working with their “natural” movement tendencies would make for some interesting contrasts. I guided them in an improvisation exercise that explored their own “kinesthetic delight”—a concept used by Wailana Simcock during his movement workshop at UHM in the summer of 2002—at different spatial levels. Although the improvisation itself was rich and beautiful, expressing their respective training as I had expected, the attempt to turn the improvisation into composition was not as successful. Both dancers changed qualities completely when asked to turn their improvisation into a set phrase, resorting instead to what looked like “generic” classroom modern dance material. When asked to compose a movement phrase, they relied on movement they had learned in technique class rather than trusting and exploring their own movement preferences. Perhaps if I had video taped their improvisation and extracted phrases of movement from that, I would have been able to keep the qualities I was searching for. In the end, very little was kept from this first improvisational session. The duet was choreographed instead using a secondary idea that evolved throughout the creative process: holding on to someone or being held back.

3. The first showing

When I showed the first section that I choreographed to my committee, which turned out to be the second section of *The smallest unit of meaning*, I was relieved to find out I was on the right track. At that point in the process I was still working with an early draft

of the commissioned score, and this particular section of the score used bits and pieces of sentences, voices that were interrupted before they finished saying what they had to say. This might have influenced the direction in which I took this movement section as a whole. Gregg Lizenbery called it “interrupted momentum”. Interrupted speech had become interrupted movement. I began working with movement phrases that would flow for a while, then abruptly stop and change dynamics and/or direction. I had transferred the interrupted speech of the sound score onto the dancers’ bodies through movement. At that time, I envisioned this section as the opening of the piece, and I had begun to develop a brief entrance that would just take the dancers to their starting position. Betsy Fisher liked this entrance and she suggested that I make it longer and continue working with the ideas I had begun to explore in this opening section. After I had a clear idea of what I wanted in terms of movement, I was then able to ask the composer for very specific music for this section, and the result was one of the few sections of the commissioned score that I ended up using. I asked him for a rhythmic section, using mostly consonants, which would build and come to an abrupt stop.

My preliminary costume idea was questioned during this first showing. For the photo shoot, I had chosen costumes from the 1950’s rack in the costume shop, a choice that did not reflect a particular theme or narrative I was aiming for, but an element that might enrich the piece by providing the audience with another layer or information. Perhaps the audience would interpret the theme of trying to escape the group more literally, perhaps gender differences would be emphasized, as would be personal relationships between the characters; even the characters themselves might come to the surface as such, and every spectator could weave their own narrative while watching the piece. I never intended for

there to be a specific reading for this piece—on the contrary, I expected there to be multiple readings for *The smallest unit of meaning*.

However, I decided to heed the advice of my committee members and look for neutral costumes that wouldn't necessarily take the audience to a specific era. After several days combing through the Kennedy Theatre's costume shop stock room, I came across a more neutral costume choice: two very simple satin dresses, which had actually been used as slips. In the end, I decided to use them—along with a third matching dress and pants and a shirt for the male dancer—because their simplicity might allow for a more abstract interpretation of the piece.

4. **The smallest unit**

During this first showing, my choice of title was also questioned. Although the title reflected my creative process, some of the committee members questioned whether it reflected the final product. During my creative process, I manipulated larger chunks of movement material to elicit the smallest possible units of movement, a process that I hoped would parallel the process used by the composer of the musical score. When I say “the smallest possible units of movement,” I am not necessarily referring to size of movement, although making the movement smaller might be one strategy of manipulating movement. For example, I stripped a movement phrase of all embellishments until all I had was the bare, unadorned locomotor pattern: walking and running, which I used in the opening section. Conversely, for another section, I eliminated all locomotor movement and was left with arm gestures and weight shifts only. In the beginning of Sarah's solo, the smallest unit of movement, derived from

movement of the previous section, is a simple inhalation.

For a week I tried to rename the piece. I tried looking at the product rather than the process. I consulted my old Linguistics textbooks from UC Berkeley for ideas: “Acoustic Cues”, “Familiar Frequencies”, “Place of Articulation” and “Figures of Speech” were some of the finalists for alternate titles, but nothing worked quite as well as “The smallest unit of meaning”—the morpheme. In the process of creating this piece, I constantly looked for small bits of movement, and I discovered that even the smallest pieces carried kinesthetic meaning. As I mentioned before, in looking for movement phonemes I ended up finding movement morphemes, and I found myself using a kind of morphological analysis to create choreography. I attempted to build my own language of movement using these morphemes, repeating, reordering and transforming them. Although my other title choices were catchy and some of them even cute, I decided to stick to the title that reflected my process.

5. The musical score

In the spring of 2002, I contacted the composer and commissioned the music for my then untitled MFA thesis piece. The composer and I decided to call the music “Dancing Voices”, which was also the title Melissa and I had chosen for our MFA concert. We had long conversations over the phone about what I expected from the score. Doug Dunston, the composer, was excited about the idea of composing a score using bits and pieces of voices speaking different languages. In mid May, the composer posted a few minutes of the score on a website he had built for Dancing Voices (www.nmt.edu/~ddunston/dancingvoices): I was happy to see that he was on the right track. However, summer

came along and, since he had other priorities, he did not work on the score again until August. It was not until early October that I was able to hear a full first draft. The different textures and rhythms I had hoped for were not there. Some sections were too long and a few interesting and exciting moments were too short; musical ideas and themes were not developed in any way that I could understand. If I had had more time, I would have been able to give him feedback, he could have reworked some sections and I could have used the full score. However, I felt that I had to have a final score immediately so that the sections that I had been choreographing in silence could finally flow together. The dancers needed music to guide them through the dance; they needed to have something that would help them take the movement from its skeleton to full performance quality. My original idea of building choreography solely as a response to the sounds of voices had been discarded a while ago, since I had been working mostly in silence.

At that point I felt forced to make a drastic decision: I decided to work with only three minutes of the commissioned score for the entrance section, and for each of the other sections of the piece—the quartet, the solo, the duet and the ending—I chose different pre-existing pieces of music, some of which I had already been using in the studio (mostly for background and “company”) while creating and manipulating movement on my own.

The new musical choices led me to reorder some sections of the piece. The way the new musical choices flowed together called for a solo following the first group sections, and the duet, which would have come earlier in the piece, now fit better towards the end. After editing the separate pieces of music into a cohesive score—adjusting sound levels

and finally burning a CD for rehearsals—both the dancers and I were able to have a better sense of the piece as a whole.

6. The ending

I had recently read Brecht's theories on Alienation when I started choreographing the ending of my MFA thesis piece. Brecht believed that the theater should be a place where audiences go to be stimulated intellectually, and the action on stage should induce critical thinking rather than empathy. In order for this critical thinking to be possible, the theater needed to be stripped of all artifice and everything "magical", the performers would act like "normal people," and every effort should be made to make the audience take a step back and look at the action on stage as just that—the action on stage. Through what Brecht called the Alienation effect (A-effect), the audience would be made to think rather than be fooled into feeling. Several strategies should be employed when trying to achieve the A-effect: the lighting instruments should be visible, the costumes and set should be simple, and the audience should be made aware that they are watching a rehearsed event, performed by real people who are indicating their character's actions rather than becoming their characters on stage. For Brecht, the fourth wall that divided the action on stage from the audience —aimed at creating an illusion of an unrehearsed event taking place in real life—should be taken down if there was to be any dialogue between performer and audience. When trying to bring the piece to a close, I chose to try Brecht's idea of breaking the fourth wall. Throughout the piece, the dancers are interrupted by each other: one dancer stopping another by holding his or her arm is a recurring theme in this dance. When the dancers finally are able to walk off the stage

without being held back by one another, they leave the restrictions of their “characters” and are able to be themselves. I directed them to drop character and walk toward the audience out of character—making eye contact with individual spectators if possible—fixing their hair if they had to and breathing heavily if they were out of breath. They each stepped onto the apron of the stage, looked back at the dancers who remained on stage, and walked off the stage and out the front doors of the theater. My intent was to make the audience aware of the illusion of the stage and create a direct line of communication between performer and audience for a few seconds. Just as the dancers were set free from the boundaries and conventions of the stage by “just walking off” though the audience, the spectators were also set free and hopefully made to question stage conventions, taking a step back, “alienating” themselves from the action on stage. By walking off stage and breaking the fourth wall, the dancers invited the spectators to do the same: take a step back and break free from conventions.

Had I been familiar with Brecht’s work earlier in my choreographic process, I would have used the A-effect throughout *The smallest unit of meaning*. The idea of breaking the fourth wall might have been more effective if I had introduced this concept earlier in the piece, perhaps as an extension of the theme of running away or breaking free from the group.

1. Bachianas Cabelleiras

A long-haired young woman sits on a stool and distractedly plays with a lock of her hair, perhaps looking at herself in an imaginary mirror. Finding a loose hair, she examines it carefully: her hair has gotten so long and—is this a split end? She runs her fingers through her hair and twists it into a ponytail, then lets it cascade down her back again. Another woman, dressed in a severe black dress, hair slicked back, walks purposefully towards our long-haired heroine. She manipulates the young woman's long hair forcefully, almost angrily. Out of the front pocket of her apron, she pulls out something shiny. It's a pair of scissors. Lights out.

Bachianas Cabelleiras was created in the spring of 2001 and performed in the Footholds concert in this same semester (cast: Emma Cryan and Melissa Teodoro). It was then restaged and performed in the informal concert at the regional American College Dance Festival in Arizona (cast: Ana Paula Höfling and Melissa Teodoro). This piece was then restaged for the second time in the spring of 2002 to be performed in Dancing Voices, and the dancers chosen were Noelani Goldstein and Larisa Eastman.

Having performed the dance myself, it was fairly easy to remember and teach Noelani's part without the need to consult a video recording. Melissa Teodoro came in and taught Larisa's part in one rehearsal. It was wonderful to have the luxury of having so much time to work on such a short piece. I had approximately ten one-hour rehearsals for this duet, where I was able to polish the details, work on the timing and connection with the music, work on dramatic motivation and prop manipulation (Noelani's hair and a pair of scissors).

The element that posed the most challenges in this restaging of *Bachianas* was the

soloist's hair length and texture. Noelani's hair was fluffier and lighter than Emma's hair. This affected the quality and timing of certain movements as well as the effort used to perform them. In particular, it posed a challenge when Noelani flips her hair back and hits Larisa in the face, an action that was supposed to cause an unpleasant reaction, which in turn would cause Larisa's character to become even more impatient and annoyed with Noelani's character. However, her fluffy hair did not "slap" Larisa in the face, but instead caressed it gently. It took several rehearsals before Larisa could produce a realistic expression of displeasure as a reaction to the hair flip—she focused on the annoyance and impatience caused by this action rather than on the impact of the hair itself. Another challenge I encountered regarding the manipulation of Noelani's hair was the fact that Larisa, having straight hair herself, was not familiar with the untangling techniques people with wavy hair take for granted. In the section where Larisa runs her fingers through Noelani's hair, a gentle vibratory action was required to get her fingers through the real tangles until she found a "choreographed" tangle at the end and pulled out a loose hair, with disgust. It was after much unintended real hair-pulling that we discovered, through role switching and trying several options, that it was this vibratory action that would allow Larisa's fingers to run painlessly through Noelani's hair.

Having so many rehearsals at my disposal allowed me to work on dramatic motivation. After the dancers knew their parts and learned the relationship between the music and the movement, and after the hair and scissor manipulation were worked out, the dancers and I worked on developing the two characters. I asked them to develop a short biography, a profile for their characters. Larisa imagined a bitter hairdresser, jealous of the beauty and youth of her young client. Noelani thought of Larisa's

character as a mother figure, and her own as a girl who did not want to grow up. Cutting the hair at the end became a metaphor for letting go of childhood and growing up. We also worked with ideas of past and future: the past symbolized by youth and long hair, and the future, symbolized by the more mature scissor-bearing dancer. Noelani's character resists the future but knows it is inevitable. Larisa's character's job is to deliver the future to her "victim": she makes Noelani's character look in an imaginary mirror several times, makes her look at herself and accept her fate, symbolized by the haircut.

2. In the middle

Three young women stand next to each other downstage. The woman standing to the right slowly traces an arc with her gaze towards one side. The one standing on the other end looks abruptly straight up. The one in the middle tentatively sneaks her focus up too, but before she manages to look up, she shyly changes her mind and lowers her head again. The one in the middle struggles to catch up with the other two, and when they realize that their actions are being followed, they begin to enjoy the game and begin moving even faster. When the other two least expect, the woman in the middle finally runs away and leaves her tormentors perplexed.

In the middle was created as an assignment for the Advanced Choreography class taught by Betsy Fisher in the spring of 2002. This choreography was initially inspired by a piece of music I had been waiting to use for years: Bach's Suite for Solo Cello #1. My original cast, Larissa Marceau, Sarah Luscomb and Samantha DeLange, participated in the creative process. I was fortunate to be able to use the same cast in the restaging of this piece for Dancing Voices. The original idea was to work with head movement only, and this movement would be a direct response to the music. Sarah Luscomb, who happened to be standing in the middle, between the other two dancers, had difficulties

remembering her part and counting the music. This “problem” added narrative and counterpoint to a piece that would otherwise have been an abstract, straightforward response to the musical score. In the first movement, the Prelude, I incorporated most of Sarah’s mistakes into the piece, and her character began to take shape: the one trying to catch up, trying to conform, trying to be accepted into the group, struggling to keep up. However, in the second movement, the Gigue, the roles are momentarily reversed and it is the other two dancers who try to follow the one in the middle.

In order for one dancer to appear to be making mistakes, for her to be “off”, all three dancers had to learn to count to the music and execute the often minimal movement in exact unison or counterpoint. As a director, memorizing all three parts was a challenge. I often felt like a conductor, leading an orchestra from memory. In the beginning, I used Labanotation to notate the head movements of all three dancers, but as the dance evolved and became more complex, notating the dance became a huge time-consuming task. I replaced notation with my physical memory, which was enough to remember the dance from one weekly rehearsal to the next. Had the dancers been fluent in reading Labanotation, the effort of notating the whole dance might have been worth it.

Reconstructing the dance after summer break was fairly easy. With the aid of a video recording of the last showing of the piece, the dancers remembered the dance in two or three rehearsals. During our weekly rehearsals throughout the semester, we worked on timing and understanding difficult passages of the music so that unison and counterpoint would happen with precision. We also worked on the small details of “looking” during the Prelude: I had to clarify the difference between a simple head turn and a head turn led by the eyeballs. Or when should the eyes “look” and the head stay

still?

Since the main character, the dancer in the middle, was developed as a direct result of the personality of a specific dancer, one would think that the director could just let the dancer be herself and not much dramatic guidance would be needed. It was surprising to me how difficult it was to maintain the spontaneity of Sarah's original mistakes in repeated rehearsals and performances. Telling her to "be herself" was not enough: I had to help her recreate the original moments that were incorporated into the choreography and find a way to keep it fresh and real, avoiding contrived expressions and gestures.

Sarah's kinetic memory problems were, in a way, the creative impetus for this piece, but at the same time they were a liability. During our first dress rehearsal, Sarah skipped a whole section of the piece and confused the other two dancers for the rest of the performance. In case this happened again in performance, I told the other two dancers to elbow Sarah visibly if she made a mistake, as if it were part of the choreography. During one of the performances, Sarah made the same mistake, but she was elbowed and was able to adjust, without the audience noticing that a real mistake had been made.

3. Underwater Study

Dressed in a white terrycloth robe and a white swimming cap secured by a chin strap, a dancer enters the stage to the playful sounds of Louis Armstrong's trumpet. She takes off her robe and reveals a 1920's black bathing suit with two white horizontal stripes on the legs. She takes a deep breath and dives in, and once in the water—created by blue light reflected on the floor and backdrop—she practices her strokes and plays in the water, thoroughly enjoying the experience of being in it.

Underwater Study was also created as an assignment for the Advanced Choreography class taught by Betsy Fisher in the spring of 2002. My original intention had nothing to do with water: I choreographed the first two thirds of this piece to a song, sung a capella in Bengali, and my intention was to follow the contours of the singing voice and go where the sung words took my body. It was not until my partner Melissa Teodoro saw the piece and gave me feedback that I realized my movement was packed with images of swimming and being in water. The fact that I was enrolled in intermediate swimming that same semester was probably no coincidence. The piece was then named “Water Study”, but, since that title had already been used by Doris Humphrey, I changed it to *Underwater Study*. The music by Louis Armstrong and the 1920’s bathing suit and swimming cap followed as I began to think of the piece as a dance that was indeed about water and swimming.

Since this was a solo I had recently choreographed and was still “in my body,” it seemed to be the logical choice to fulfill my performance requirement. I then offered to teach it to my partner Melissa Teodoro to fulfill her performance requirement as well. Being the directors of a concert that involved 20 student dancers and a crew of first-timers, we had the idea to perform the same piece on alternate nights so one of us could be outside in the role of director, solving last minute problems, while the other could concentrate on her performance.

In teaching the dance, I became aware of details of my own performance, my choices of choreographic devices and my relationship to the music. In *Underwater Study*, I used the choreographic tools of motif, theme and variation, which I had been learning in Advanced Choreography at the time. These devices were consciously used in

the creation of this piece, although I often created the larger movement first, then extracted the motif and then the theme from a larger phrase. Because of this creative tool, several sections of *Underwater Study* challenge the performer's memory: one section may begin the same way as a previous section but face a different direction, or another section may actually be the exact repetition of another, but performed a lot faster. When I taught this dance to Melissa, I realized that I did not relate to the music in terms of counts. Although the dance was not choreographed to specific counts, movement throughout the dance related directly to specific moments in the music. Helping Melissa understand the music and hear the melodic contours the way I did without resorting to counting the music was a challenge. We never rehearsed the piece without music; I often would "sing" the more difficult passages as I did the movement, and we would repeat certain sections several times, until I saw that she had heard the music in the same way I had.

Teaching the dance not only helped me understand my own choreography better, it helped me embody it to the point that I could perform it on "auto-pilot". Although in the beginning I also had trouble remembering sections that were similar to one another, as did Melissa, after teaching the dance I knew it very well. Too well. A few times in rehearsals I would make a mistake because I found myself thinking about something else while running the dance. I wanted my performance to be relaxed and calm, but I had become too comfortable with this piece. It was definitely over-rehearsed. It was not until Marcia Sakamoto-Wong came to a rehearsal of *Underwater Study* and gave both of us feedback on our performances that I realized I needed to retrieve the original performance quality of this piece. My performance was too even; I had lost some of the

accents and, according to Marcia, I was just going through the movements, while Melissa was really “dancing” the piece and taking the audience to this “underwater” place. She then suggested that I make every movement bigger, that I exaggerate my performance, and then, if needed, I could pull back a little. Although I did not receive feedback on my performance from my thesis committee after the concert, I would say, after watching the video recordings of the performance, that Marcia’s suggestion worked.

Actually performing the dance in front of an audience also brought my performance to another level. The costume, an adaptation of a 1920’s swimming suit that I designed and had constructed in Brazil over the summer, also helped me get into character. The suit, swim cap and robe transported me to a public pool in California in the late 1920’s, where my character not only enjoyed playing in the water and swimming, but also the social aspect of going swimming in a public pool. Only later did I find out that *West End Blues* by Louis Armstrong, the music I had chosen before deciding on a decade for the swim suit design, was composed around the same time this style of bathing suit would have been in vogue. The last touch that helped me bring this swimmer from the 1920’s to life was the bright red lipstick, suggested during dress rehearsals by Betsy Fisher.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

I am glad my partner Melissa Teodoro and I decided to go beyond the minimum requirement for the MFA degree by producing a whole concert of our own choreography. It was wonderful to have the chance to restage and revise our previous choreographic work. This allowed us the opportunity to fine-tune overlooked details and rework certain sections to fit new casts. We discovered that dances change every time they are performed, and there is no use in trying to re-create a dance exactly as it was performed before.

Creating *The smallest unit of meaning* taught me a lot about the choreographic process. I identified some of my individual movement tendencies and I was able to challenge those tendencies by applying the choreographic techniques that I learned in Advanced Choreography at UHM. Having the opportunity to work with dancing bodies other than my own reminded me, once again, that a choreographer should use her dancers' strengths. If a roll or a lift doesn't work, maybe there is another movement just as exciting that can be executed better and more comfortably. A dancer's limitation can be used to enrich choreographic material. I learned that even when your original idea doesn't work, there is another approach just as valid waiting to be explored. I learned what to do and what not to do when commissioning an original score: long distance collaborations are possible, but very difficult. I learned that some dancers need to have their hard work acknowledged often, and others need to be given ultimatums just so they will come to rehearsal on time. Working with unpaid student-dancers, often your peers,

is a delicate balancing act.

In terms of producing the concert itself, I learned that it pays to be organized from the beginning. I learned that if you are nice to the people that help you put together your concert, such as front of house and publicity staff and your technical crew, such as the lighting designer and stage manager, they will be nice back and your concert will run smoothly.

I enjoyed being able to alternate *Underwater Study* with my partner and co-director. When I was on the outside, I was able to watch the show, take notes on both performance and technical problems in order to improve subsequent performances and solve last minute problems (such as finding a last minute videographer when the department's videographer didn't come as planned). I was also able to just sit down and enjoy the show, or at least try to. I believe it is important to watch a live performance of one's own work. It is nice to dance in one's own choreography, but it is also important to be able to see it unmediated by a video camera, which obscures details and turns a three-dimensional event into a flat, two-dimensional one.

Dancing Voices was a positive experience from all angles. Towards the end there was a sense of community among the dancers, respect towards the choreographers' work and appreciation for the crew. Our evaluations reflected that Dancing Voices was a positive experience for all of those involved in the concert.


Appendix A



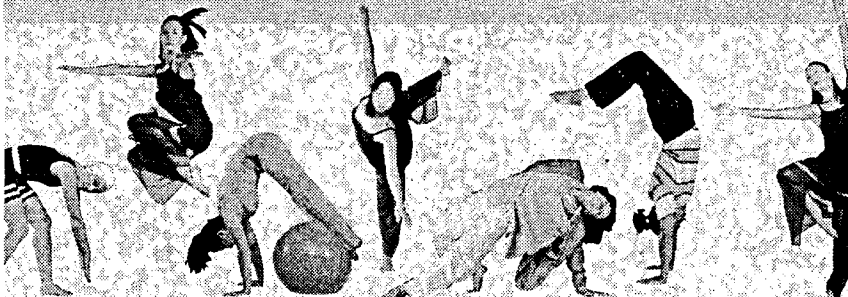
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA

Kennedy Theatre

Primetime Theatre
2002-2003 SEASON



dancing voices
mfa dance concert by Ana Paula Höfling and Melissa Teodoro



November 13-16 at 8pm, November 17 at 2pm

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Dancing Voices Program: Cover page

10 Minutes to Curtain: The Making of *Dancing Voices*
Pre-show video by Colleen Murphy

Bachianas Cabelleiras (2001)

Choreographer: Ana Paula Höfling
Dancers: Noelani Goldstein and Larisa Eastman
Music: "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5" by Heitor Villa Lobos

In the Middle (2002)

Choreographer: Ana Paula Höfling
Dancers: Larissa Marceau, Sarah Luscomb and
Samantha DeLange
Music: "Suite for Unaccompanied Cello No. 1" by J.S. Bach

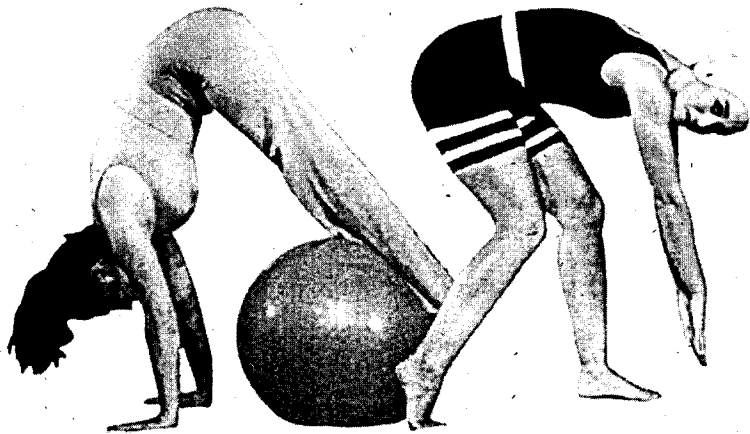
Bach'n'Balls (2001)

Choreographer: Melissa Teodoro
Dancers: Kellee Blanchard, Christine Berwin, Melissa Lockyer
and Noelani Goldstein
Understudy: Larisa Eastman
Ball Thrower: Yoshika Miyashi
Music: "Goldberg Variations" by J.S. Bach

The Smallest Unit of Meaning (premiere)

Choreographer: Ana Paula Höfling*
Dancers: Kelly Del Rosario, Vanessa Rodriguez,
Larissa Marceau and Sarah Luscomb
Music by Doug Dunston, S. Kaasinen and J.E. Gramani

INTERMISSION



Dancing Voices Program: Inside left-hand page

Underwater Study (2002)

Choreographer: Ana Paula Höfling

Dancers: Ana Paula Höfling* (November 13, 15, 17),
Melissa Teodoro* (November 14, 16)

Music: "West End Blues" by Louis Armstrong

Tchintchirote (2002)

Choreographer: Melissa Teodoro

Dancers: Janie Ewing, Jackie Nii, Courtney Brebbia and
Melissa Lockyer

Understudy: Melissa Teodoro

Music: "Tchintchirote" by Dany Carvalho

No Más! (premiere)

Choreographer: Melissa Teodoro*

Dancers: Kane Balbin, Sequoia Carr-Brown,
Larisa Eastman, Arturo Mariano, and
Jamie Nakama (November 13, 15, 17),
Audrey Wicklund (November 14, 16)

Music: "Soliloquy" from "How It Happens"
by Scott Johnson, text by I.F. Stone

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts degree requirements in Dance

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Betsy Fisher, Marcia Sakamoto-Wong, Harriet Glass and
Gregg Lizenbery

SPECIAL THANKS:

Yukie Shiroma, Kenny Endo, Byron Moon, Dennis Carroll,
Gerry Kawaoka, Tana Marin, Hannah Schauer Galli,
Angela Mangano, Marty Myers, Kellee Blanchard,
Quala-Lynn Young and Jennifer Radakovich

**THERE WILL BE A POST-SHOW DISCUSSION IMMEDIATELY
FOLLOWING FRIDAY'S PERFORMANCE.**

*Please turn off or silence all pagers, phones and digital watches.
No photography or video recording is allowed. Please refrain from
eating, drinking or smoking in the theatre.*

*For large print programs, program information in alternate formats,
or any other accessibility needs, please contact the House Manager,
or call the Kennedy Theatre Box Office at 956-7655 (v/t).*

Dancing Voices Program: Inside right-hand page

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Lighting Designer: Kelly Berry
Stage Manager: Michelle MJ Coats
Assistant Stage Manager: Lara Bowles
Assistant Lighting Designer and Master Electrician:
Daniel Sakimura
Crew Coordinator: Cora Yamagata
Lab Theater Costume Coordinator: Megan Patton
Lab Theatre Technical Coordinator: Cristian E. Ellauri
Lighting Board Operator: Sonja Kleiner
Sound Board Operator: Meghan Fink
Dresser: Christopher Quiocho
Wardrobe Supervisor: Kathryn Bishop
Costume Designers: Ana Paula Höfling and Melissa Teodoro
Costume Crew: Anna Maria N. Höfling, Nita Oliveira and
the UHM Department of Theatre and Dance Costume Shop
Stage Crew: Marissa Yogi, Ofeibia Laud-Darku,
Kiplinn Sagmiller, Jessica Womack and Sharyn Maeda
Dance Faculty: Judy Van Zile, Gregg Lizenbery, Betsy Fisher
and Peggy Gaither-Adams
House Manager: Daniel Akiyama
Assistant House Managers: Helen Lee and Allie Fishburn
Box Office Supervisors: Michael S. Lee and Tim Wiler
Box Office Staff: Daniel Akiyama, Tanisha Franquez,
Jennifer Norton, Lei Sadakari and Danielle Williams
Graphic Designer: Lauren Forsythe
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Marty Myers and Hannah Schauer Galli
Program Editor: Sylvia Zietze
Department Chair: Dennis Carröll

MAJOR SUPPORT FOR EARLE ERNST LAB THEATRE FROM WOMEN'S CAMPUS CLUB

We wish to acknowledge with gratitude the generosity of the Women's Campus Club for a \$5,000 grant award for a new light board console system in the Ernst Lab Theatre. In addition, the faculty of Theatre & Dance would like to thank the Student Organization of Theatre & Dance for their initiative in applying for the grant, and the organization's President, Debra Jean Zwicker, for successfully writing it. The new system will ensure optimum artistic and educational support for all those who design, run crew, direct and act in the Ernst Lab Theatre for many years to come.



Appendix B

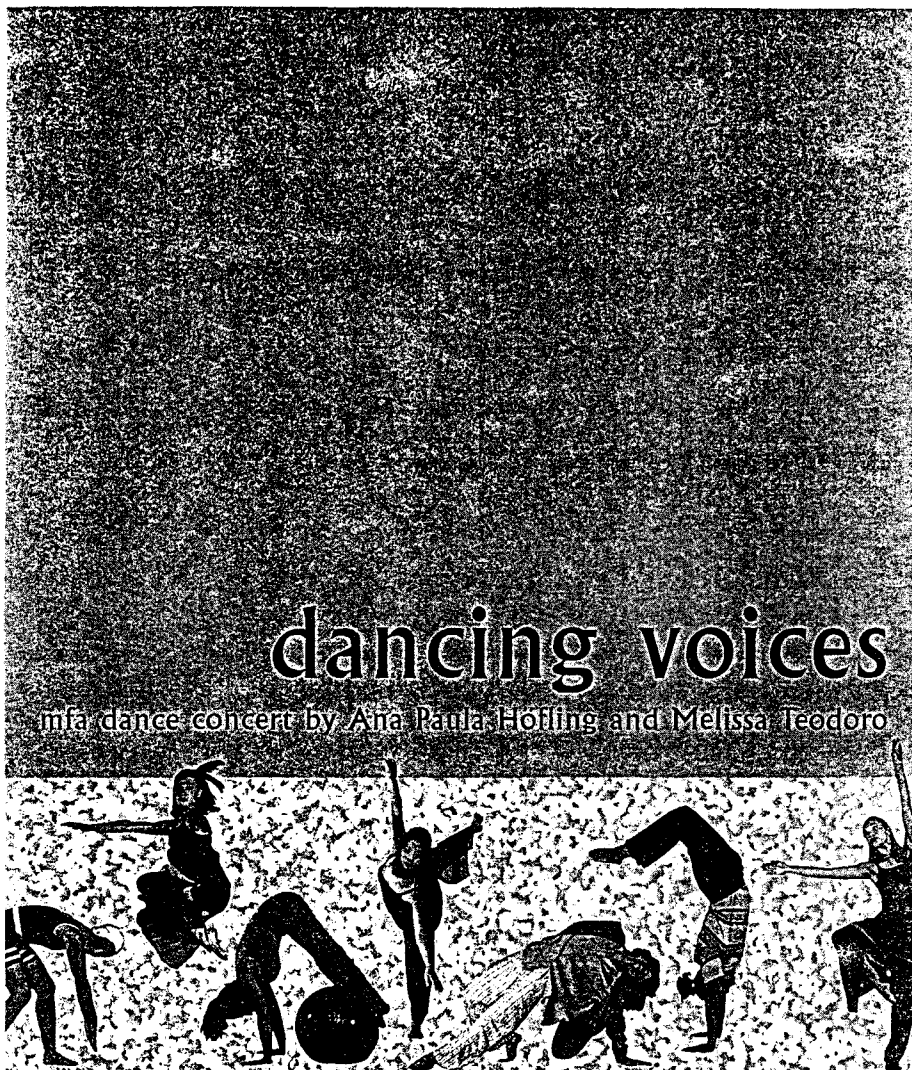


UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA

Kennedy Theatre

Primetime Theatre

2002-2003 SEASON



dancing voices
mfa dance concert by Ana Paula Höfling and Melissa Teodoro

Earle Ernst Lab Theatre ♦ Nov 13-16 at 8pm, Nov 17 at 2pm
Post Show Rap following the Nov 15 performance

TICKETS ON SALE NOV 12

\$9 REGULAR \$7 NON-UHM STUDENTS, SENIORS, MILITARY, UH FACULTY & STAFF \$3 UHM STUDENTS W/VALID FALL 2002 ID
All seating in the Earle Ernst Lab Theatre is general admission. Latecomers will be seated only during the breaks in the program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CHARGE-BY-PHONE, OR DISABILITY ACCESS,
CALL THE KENNEDY THEATRE BOX OFFICE 956-7655 (V/T)
www.hawaii.edu/theatre

Dancing Voices Poster (Reduced from original 8 1/2 X 13)

Figures: Media Coverage

PHOTO: ANDREW SHIMABUKU



Looking back at *Dancing Voices*

For one weekend, voices spoke loud and clear within the intimate Earle Ernst Lab Theatre of UH-Mānoa. *Footholds: Dancing Voices* fused expression, substance, whimsy and tradition in this year's annual student dance concert.

Unhindered by trends or commercial obligations, M.F.A.

candidates Melissa Teodoro and Ana Paula Hofling choreographed seven thoughtful and creative works. Using a black-box theater, pedestrian costumes, classical music and movement, Teodoro and Hofling added nuance and surprise to their treatment of contemporary dance. Facial expressions and the staging of single dancers apart from the group suggested themes of difference,

Rising & Falling

of inclusion and exclusion.

Another piece used yoga balls playfully as inventive props for grace and athleticism. "No Mas!" was rich and multi-layered. Blindfolds, frenetic movements, a word-infused soundtrack and an ending stripped bare — all reflected a feeling of loss and discovery, innocence and invasion.

Teodoro and Hofling are a needed addition to Hawai'i's medley of dancing voices.

—Stephanie Chang

Figure 1. Honolulu Weekly, November 27-December 3, 2002, page 39.



Andrew Shimabuku

Expression through dance

A collection of seven dance pieces emphasizing both the theatrical and the physical aspects of contemporary dance will be the subject of "Footholds I: Dancing Voices," a concert presented by the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa's Department of Theatre and Dance. Showtimes are 8 p.m. Wednesday-Nov. 16 and 2 p.m. Nov. 17 at Earle Ernst Lab Theatre.

The show is directed by Melissa Teodoro and Ana Paula Höfling, who reviews dance for The Advertiser, with all pieces choreographed by the two during their M.F.A. studies at UH.

Tickets are \$3 for UH-Mānoa students; \$7 for other students, seniors, military and UH staff; and \$9 for all others. Tickets may be purchased at the Kennedy Theatre box office or by calling 956-7655.

The Honolulu Advertiser Friday, November 8, 2002 • Page 7

Figure 2. TGIF, The Honolulu Advertiser, November 8, 2002, page 7.

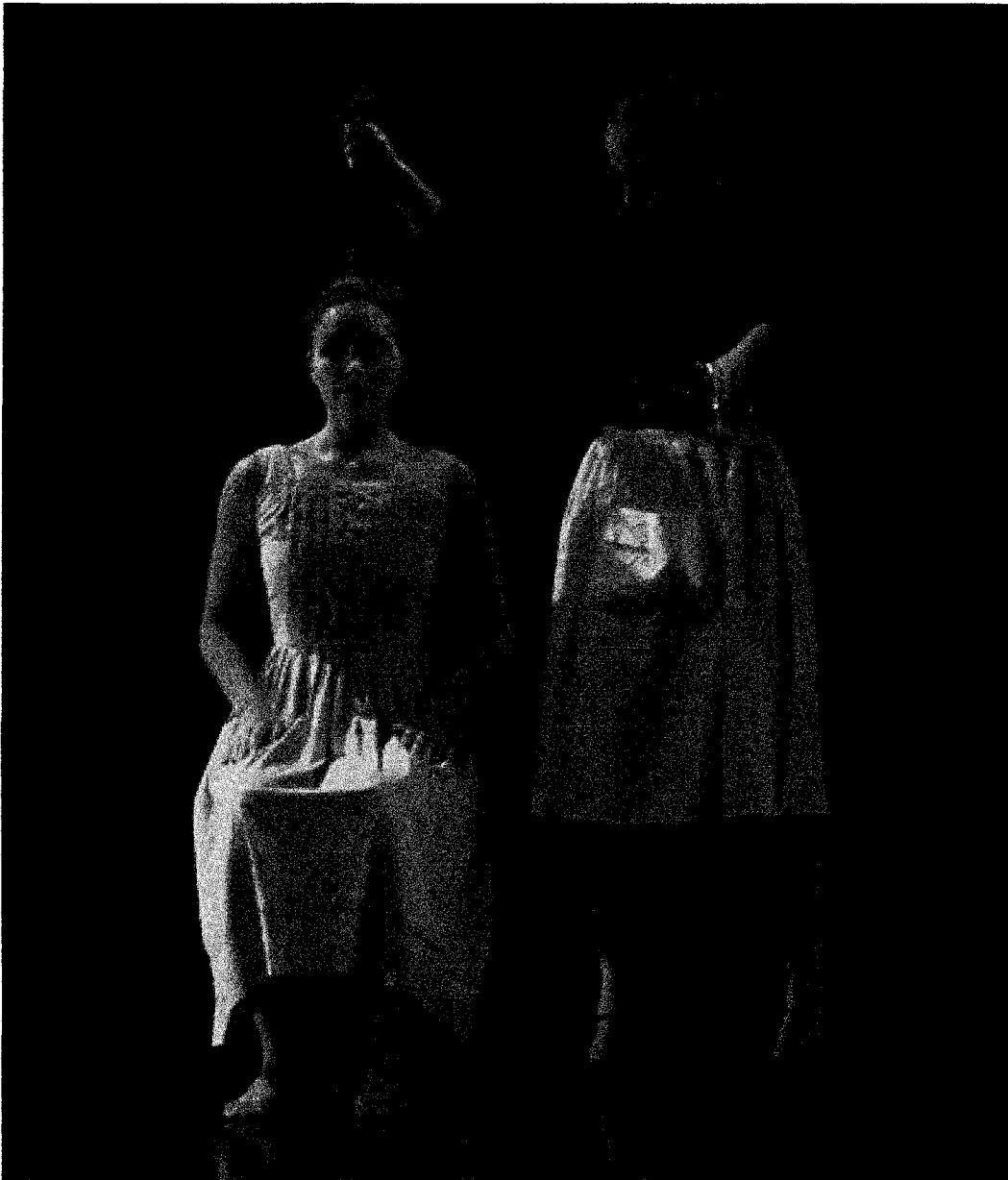


Figure 3. Bachianas Cabeleiras. Dancers: Noelani Goldstein and Larisa Eastman.
Photo by Angela Mangano



Figure 4. In the middle. Dancers: Larissa Marceau, Sarah Luscomb and Samantha DeLange.
Still clip from video by Joshua McDermott



Figure 5. The smallest unit of meaning. Dancers (from right to left): Vanessa Rodriguez, Sarah Luscomb, Larissa Marceau, Kelly Del Rosario.
Photo by Angela Mangano

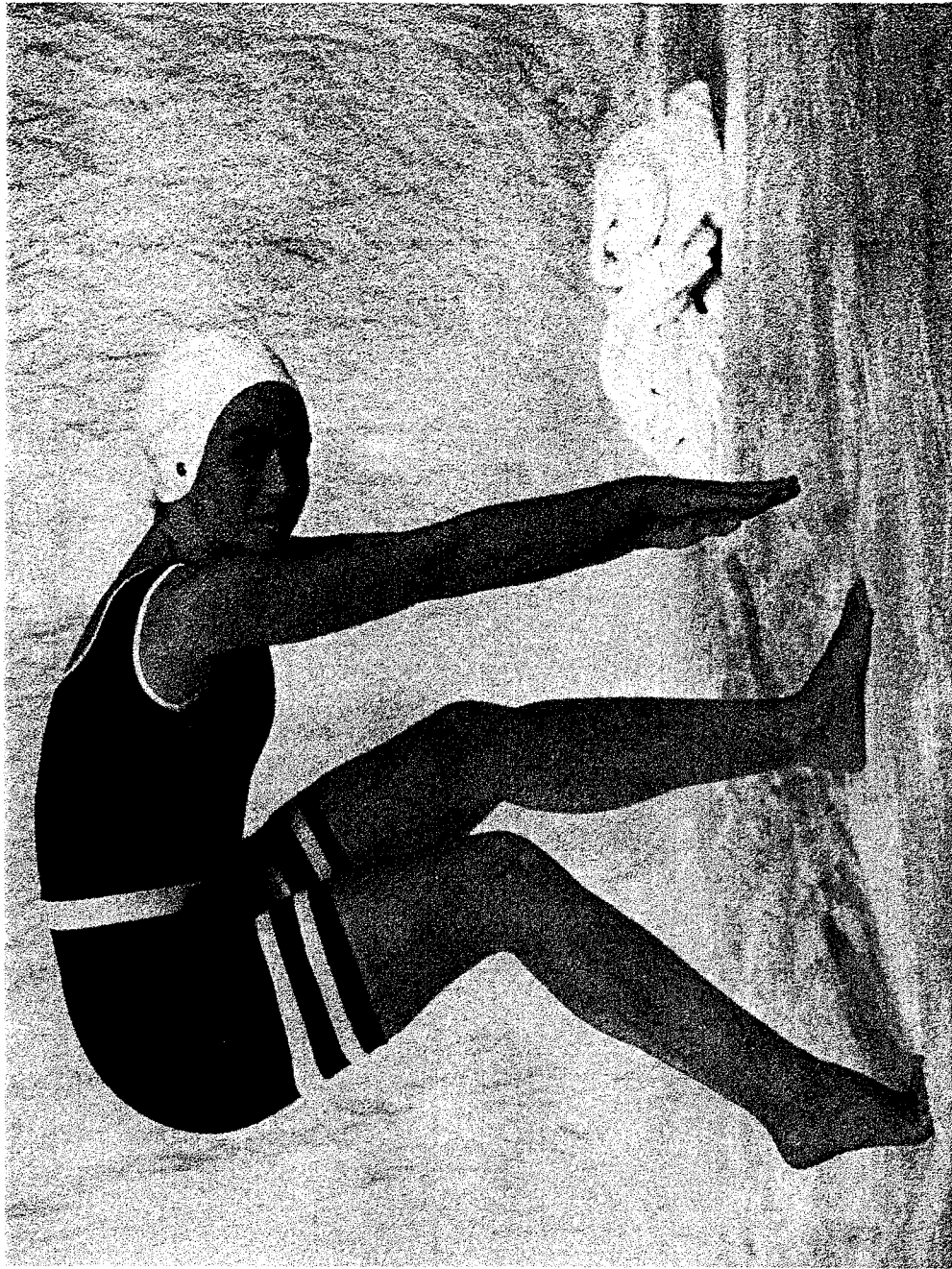


Figure 6. Underwater Study. Dancer: Ana Paula Höfling
Photo by Andrew Shimabuku