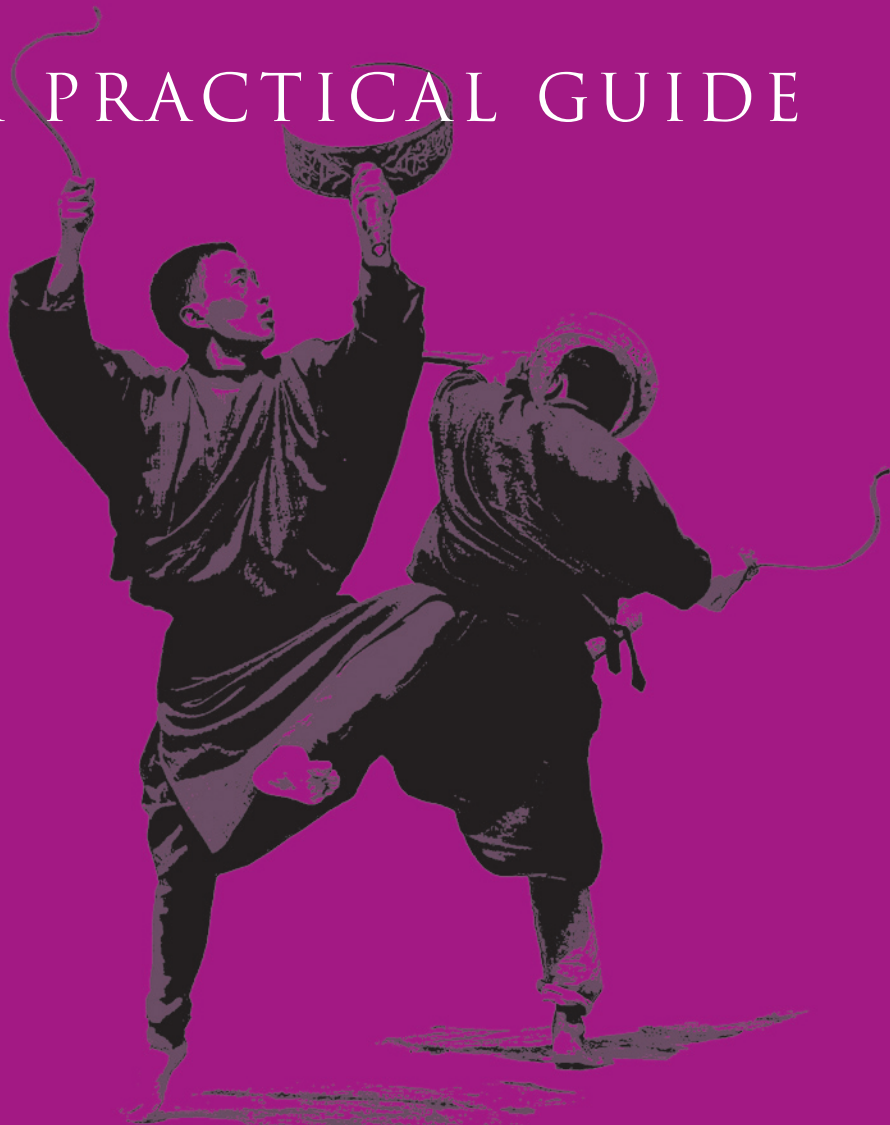


DOCUMENTING DANCE

A PRACTICAL GUIDE



DANCE HERITAGE COALITION, INC.

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The Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC) was founded in 1992 to address the problems that were identified by a study of the state of preservation and documentation of dance in America. Jointly commissioned by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, the resulting document *Images of American Dance* recommended the formation of an alliance of the nation's major dance collections (1) to facilitate communication; (2) to develop national standards, policies, and priorities; and (3) to implement collaborative activities and projects in the fields of dance preservation, documentation, and access. The DHC's mission is to make accessible, enhance, augment, and preserve the materials that document the artistic accomplishments in dance of the past, present, and future. The DHC also now serves as a think tank and a convener for the dance heritage field.

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American Dance Festival

Dance Notation Bureau, Inc.

Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

Library of Congress

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dance Division

Lawrence and Lee Theatre Research Institute, Ohio State University

San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Lay monks rehearsing sacred dances in the village of Ura, Bhutan. (Photograph by Joseph Houseal, used by permission.)

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INTRODUCTION

Our purpose is to provide a new reference work that raises awareness for the practical and theoretical benefits of dance documentation. This guide therefore offers approaches to and best practices for documenting and preserving dance works. It encourages conscious planning for documentation and preservation, to serve the dance field's many needs and several constituencies.

We describe seven major frameworks, the contexts or situations, within which dance may be documented. Often, dance preservation and documentation are not the primary objectives within these situations; in fact, sometimes the records that result are casual, even accidental, byproducts. In the creation of a dance work, for example, its documentation can be either a conscious or an unconscious process. The goal of this guide is to raise the quality of dance documentation by raising the awareness of choices that can be made for preservation and documentation.

Who Should Read this Guide? This work is intended to assist those to whom the dance culture is entrusted:

- Those who envision and produce the dance—choreographers, dancers, teachers, and artistic and administrative staff at dance companies
- Those who formally preserve dance records and study dance—archivists, dance historians, dance ethnologists, critics
- Those who record the dance—filmmakers, videographers, notators, technicians of new media and motion capture.

This guide is aimed at helping dance companies and dance communities to find more effective ways to document their work, approaches that will

serve immediate as well as continuing or future needs. Some case studies presented here demonstrate the application of the best practices of dance documentation. None of these cases is perfect; however, each one demonstrates how combinations of documentation resources have resulted in strong records of dances, dance-making, or dance events. Some of the techniques of dance documentation are time intensive and costly, and require careful pre-production and post-production planning. While the most expensive documentation tools may not be available to small companies or individual choreographers, care in pre- and post-production planning will ensure the best possible documentation product—despite budget or equipment limitations or the accessibility restrictions caused by copyrights. There is, as well, a role in dance documentation for the individual in the dance field. Therefore, a short section is included with advice on how to manage one's personal papers and ephemera.

Why Document Dance? While archivists and cultural historians are already persuaded that the dance field must aspire to documentation that is both higher in quality and more complete, many dance practitioners consider the idea of “dance documentation” a luxury. Nevertheless, dance documentation serves different needs and uses, for both the long and the short term. In the bigger picture, the documentation of a dance ensures availability to students, scholars, cultural commentators, and others for performance, study, and analysis. Some methods of documentation enable a dance to be reproduced in future times and contexts. In the short term, documentation may serve as a tool for audience-building, publicity, grant applications, rehearsal aids, and other uses.

The long-term uses of dance documentation are often not seriously considered by practicing dance communities, for reasons of economics, time, and resources. Historically, dance has received less funding and less attention than the other visual and performing arts; it has been possible to attribute some of this neglect to the lack of dance documentation or to uneven or incomplete records for dance-making and practice. Choreographers and other dance practitioners, then, will ultimately aid the field of dance for

the long term if concerted efforts can be made to engage in proactive practices for dance documentation. With good record-keeping of the role of dance in art and in culture, scholars can better develop both the theory and the criticism that will ensure dance's place in academe. Good records will also aid in reconstructing dances that have been retired from the active repertory, so that young dancers can learn and appreciate the myriad forms and styles of their field. Ultimately, greater and more reliable access to dance will affect public support for and funding of concert, commercial, and social dance forms.

There are three important components of dance documentation: representing the process, representing the performance event, and representing the cultural impact. If each of these three aspects of the dance event can be preserved and examined, then people looking back will have enough information to evaluate its significance and cultural impact. Giving forethought to dance documentation, then, contributes to both the recognition and the identification of what is essential to dance and dance studies. This is our field's legacy.

1: TOOLS FOR DOCUMENTATION

A framework is the context within which the documentation of dance may occur, and the process of recording dance by notation, by camera, or by motion capture might each be considered a framework. However, since all three processes can be used to document dance within any of the other frameworks presented below, the strengths and weaknesses of each approach are better discussed as tools of the dance documentation project. One or more of these tools may be virtually essential if a documentation project is to reach the caliber of “best practice.” Without using at least one of them, it would be impossible to assemble, reconstruct, or imagine the movement—the very foundation of dance.

In themselves, even the tools do not ensure a usable or attractive documentation of a dance. In any project, the aesthetic and informational value depends on skill, which might be defined as the artfulness of the application of the tool.

DANCE NOTATION

To fix a dance’s form and style by creating a written record through notation results in an intentional and highly accurate documentation product. Various dance notation systems provided the first conscientious technique for documenting dance. Dance notation scores function like music scores: they provide a stable written record based on codified symbols that can be used later to recreate or study the work. Complex systems, such as Labanotation, provide evidence of the quality of movement as well as the steps, shape, or pattern of the movement. Labanotation was originated by the dance theorist Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) in Germany and has since been further developed in Europe and the United States. Benesh Movement No-

tation was developed by Rudolf Benesh (1916-1975) and launched in England in 1955. Currently, the Benesh and Labanotation systems are the most widely used notation systems.

Recent developments in computer programming (such as the Laban-Writer program) have shortened the time it takes to render choreography into Labanotation, and also permit computer analysis of patterns (shapes), qualities of movement (efforts), and other aspects of the choreography, which could be an aid to dance researchers. In almost all cases where these widely accepted formal notation systems are used, dances are notated after they have been created. The version notated, by its selection for this special type of preservation, is given some authority over other versions of the same dance.

In some cases, choreographers have developed their own form of movement notation in preparation for creating a dance.

Where Labanotation is used, the Dance Notation Bureau (DNB) becomes the functional custodian of the dance. The DNB was founded in 1940 and the organization's mission can be found at <http://www.dancenotation.org>. The DNB certifies the competence of notators and maintains an archive of notated scores, alongside supplemental materials such as videotape or film of the work or the performance program. The DNB's services are not restricted to conventional dance companies or choreographies. Notated scores of traditional folk dances that are typically transmitted verbally or kinesthetically are among the DNB holdings, as well as notations of dances reconstructed from systems that predate Labanotation (such as the baroque-era Feuillet notation of the 1700s).

OBJECTIVES IN NOTATING

- To fix a dance's form and style in an accurate and stable record.
- To make the dance accessible to performance groups that might want to reconstruct and perform it.
- To make the dance accessible to dance researchers.
- To have a central or accessible archival custodian (such as the DNB) for the dance.

Method. Select a version or versions to be fixed in notation. Engage a certified notation expert, who will act as the primary agent in this documentation. (Most dance companies do not have a resident notation expert.) Arrange rehearsals with the dancer participants, choreographer or rehearsal director, and notator; arrange for videotaping. (The videotape offers corroboration and visual cues to future reconstruction, but it is not intended for use without the notation score.) The presence of the choreographer, répétiteur, or other coach is essential to act as a respondent to the notator. Additional information about set, costumes, music, video, additional choreographic notes or explanations, and other matter may be submitted with the score to the custodian of the notation (the Dance Notation Bureau, for Labanotation). The notation score is checked for errors before becoming a part of the DNB or other archive collection.

Advantages. An approved complete notation score gives full movement descriptions and positions for all dancers, as compared to a camera recording where angles or distance may unintentionally obscure parts of the dance. Notation is most suitable for a long-term record of the original style and the details of production. Together, codification of the symbols and certification of the notator ensure that the application of the notation system has a high likelihood of accuracy. Notation can also be used to purge idiosyncratic individual performance qualities or interpretation from the score. Furthermore, the integration of Labanotation into computer systems is expected to increase the speed with which dances are translated and recorded, and then later reconstructed.

The success of the Feuillet notation system in permitting baroque-era dances from Western Europe to be reconstructed and set to their corresponding music is a testimony to the value of notation systems in keeping an important period of dance history alive. Because instructions exist to help contemporary researchers decode the Feuillet scores, motivated researchers have become masters of the system and can reconstruct with a great deal of ease and speed. Notation systems for dance, then, do have the same capacity for ease in dissemination and access as music scores.

Disadvantages. The lengthy time to notate a dance fully as well as the need to have the dancers available for the notator can make for a cumbersome and expensive process at times. The use of notation for reconstruction is restricted by both a general lack of access to people qualified to reconstruct from specific notation systems and the length of time it takes to reconstruct from a score. Reconstruction from videotape is considered more efficient because copies of the tape can be lent to dancers to shorten the time the reconstructor needs to teach and coach a dance in the studio.

In North America, Labanotation has fallen into disuse in some communities, as university dance departments cut notation courses from curricula, a decision that further jeopardizes the future of notation because the next generation lacks the necessary skills and familiarity. This problem could be surmountable, if the field simply introduced dance notation to students earlier—much as youngsters begin to learn to read music.

FILM AND VIDEO

Of the tools available for recording dance movements, filmmaking and videography are the most familiar and most used. Filming or videotaping a dance or dance event potentially offers a watchable and accurate moving picture of its subject. With video camcorders becoming increasingly affordable, widely available, and small enough to handle easily, most dances are being recorded for personal or promotional use, although the quality of the filming and copyright restrictions often preclude the tapes from being marketed. However, as the broadcast media turn to lossless digital formats, high-definition broadcast capabilities, and widescreen formats, even the amateur documentary filmmaker will need to be well-versed on what cameras, technical support, and crew are best for the project. Choices should be influenced both by the intended use for the documentary footage as well as for archival longevity and quality.¹

¹ For hints on videotape documentation of concert dance, see <http://dance.fsu.edu/dancedocumentation/index.html>.

Method. Decide what will be recorded, and why (for what purpose), and schedule the space, artists and participants, and any other staff. Engage the best technical support and equipment within your means. Discuss the intention of the project with the camera person and other key people. For some projects, it is important to “storyboard” the scenes to ensure that they are captured. (Storyboarding is the process of making a series of drawings or descriptions to guarantee the order of the content of the video or film project, including the composition of the shots.) Work with the technical crew to arrange a suitable context for recording the project, including lighting, sound, space. Where the staging conditions for recording are not ideal, attempt to ameliorate problems or adapt the space (such as changing lights from fluorescent to incandescent, or hanging fabric as sound baffles). Use fresh and high quality film or tape. Review the footage. Reshoot as needed, replicating the original conditions. (For example, reshoot at the same time of day with the same lighting.) Index the footage, or select and edit it, depending on its intended use. Decide the disposition of excess footage or unusable products. (Caveat: Especially for archival purposes, do not reuse tapes!)

Advantages. Videotaping has had a distinct advantage of offering ease in access, and today, the videotape format is one that is most widely used. Digital video has the advantage of easy conversion to the DVD format, and now some affordable home computer systems can reproduce digital video files on double-sided DVDs, potentially accommodating up to two hours of digital media. With every season, additional refinement is achieved in the versatile digital format. Currently, television is wrestling with its transformation from 4:3 aspect to film’s 16:9 and is upgrading to handle “high definition,” which will approximate though not equal film’s clarity and resolution. With the Final Cut Pro editing suite upgraded to handle high definition, digital video is well placed to be the medium of choice for most documentary projects.

The widespread availability of broadcast-quality (3CCD) and high-definition “prosumer” cameras at a manageable cost for the investment means

that it will be possible for even modest-size dance companies to record rehearsals, creative and teaching sessions, and other documentary footage of a quality that could augment the documentary footage used in larger-market public television or in network projects.

Disadvantages. Most stage lighting that enhances a live performance is undesirable for high-quality shooting during a live performance. If possible, the stage lighting should be adapted to achieve the same effect on camera, but this is infrequently an option. The two-dimensional result of film and video does tend to flatten the image; this loss of depth is especially noticeable in wide shots taken from afar—

unfortunately one of the most common perspectives chosen for videotaping staged dances. However, with the training of more dance professionals so that they understand how to compensate when transferring a live event to a recorded medium, the impact of the disadvantages can be minimized and the overall artfulness of the project may be improved significantly.

Documenting percussive dance forms and improvisational forms in film and video presents special challenges. The percussive forms, such as tap, require expert sound engineers to ensure that the recording levels of both the music and the taps strike a balance of sound. The most successful recordings of percussive dance are found in commercially produced films such as Carlos Saura's *Flamenco* (1995) or the major American film *Tap* (1989) featuring Gregory Hines. Once recorded, the editor must ensure that the taps are synchronized with the image. Tap, and other percussive forms where

OBJECTIVES IN FILMING OR VIDEOTAPING

- To provide documentary footage of dance from preparation to presentation, as well as recording interviews with dance practitioners and related participants.
- To create programming for screen, broadcast stations, or websites.
- To create an archive of creative work for an individual, a company, or a publicly accessed collection.
- To gather samples of creative work to support grant applications or publicity initiatives.
- To aid in the creative process.

the footwork is faster than the eye, may benefit from filming at a greater number of frames per second than the standard 29. This technique enables the editor to slow the action without the blurring that slow motion can generate. Also, because of the resolution of digital forms, tap merits close-ups that will show the detail of footwork.

Degeneration of the image can become a problem for all formats. Although DVDs claim to be safe from the deterioration that has plagued magnetic analog tapes, there have been reports that both CDs and DVDs are succumbing to deterioration, even with carefully prescribed handling. Additionally, commercially produced DVDs are usually copyright-protected with a region coding that can be played only on equipment coded for Region 1 (North America) or Region 0 (coding disabled). The Dance Heritage Coalition recommends DVDs to increase public access to dance works; however, DigiBeta and Betacam SP formats are currently preferred practice for making an archival master tape.² Creating DVDs from the original footage results in highly compressed versions, and selective data are irretrievably discarded in making the new DVD copy (unlike DigiBeta, which is only mildly compressed). Unfortunately, multiple formats for film, tape, and disks are widely available, so although experts have identified preferred cameras, tapes, and compression rates for archival purposes, there is no guarantee that the electronics market will cooperate in providing the better formats for the long term.

In one-time events, there is also the risk that there may be equipment failures or uneven recording results, especially if only one camera is used or if the technical crew makes errors. Also, if permissions and copyrights are not cleared in advance, a film or videotape may not be viewed publicly but only used by a person or dance company within very narrow parameters.

² As of early 2006, the analog format of Betacam SP, is scheduled to be phased out by manufacturers.

MOTION CAPTURE

In motion capture, sensors are affixed to specific points of the body so that information about movement can be transferred to a computer. A computer program then reconstructs the figure on the screen. Great strides have occurred in improving the technology.

Method. Prepare the work to be used in motion capture (unless the intention is to capture improvised movement). Engage a motion-capture laboratory and technical staff. Practice the dancers with the equipment. Record the work.

Advantages. The selective application of motion capture to some dances helps to restore moments in a dance that are otherwise not identifiable in film or video formats. For example, in places where the two-dimensionality of video obscures complex partnering moves, these can be untangled for reconstruction purposes by motion capture, which renders the dancers as three-dimensional, maneuverable images on the computer screen. For choreography destined for the screen or the Web, motion capture offers the potential for an array of effects and animations because of the possibility of applying computer-editing software on the digitized figures. Also, should motion capture become more widely used for archiving dance, scholars will be able to analyze the work of a particular choreographer, to detect movement preferences or innovations, as well as to compare the works among a set of choreographers. Other advantages of this technology may be discovered as it becomes more widely used.

Disadvantages. Very few dance companies or university dance departments have access to motion-

OBJECTIVES IN USING MOTION CAPTURE

- To acquire detailed information about movement in a digitized format that can be entered into a computer for analysis or manipulation.
- To acquire information about a dance that may not be clear, available, or complete from notation or film/video.
- To make a creative work based on computerized images.

capture technology, and not all motion-capture laboratories have the best available equipment. A number of the early sensors were too delicate, so that some dance movement (notably falls or floor work) damaged the sensitive electronics. As of 2006, motion-capture technology is still beyond the financial reach of most dance practitioners and researchers. In addition, very few people are equipped with the computer training for this technology. The dancers must also adapt to the use of the sensors; a number have said that they feel the sensors affect some of their movement until they become used to the second skin of this technology. There is some question about whether motion capture technology will become mainstream and how long that might take, especially as many of the virtual-reality technologies have never achieved widespread use, even after about 20 years.

2: CATEGORIES OF EVIDENCE

All evidence is incomplete in documenting a dance because the dynamics of a live dance event with its specific audience can never be replicated. Several tools, however, when put in service to dance documentation, provide varying degrees of reliability and helpfulness. These tools might be referred to as categories of evidence, and each is listed and defined below.

RECORDED EVIDENCE

Some information that documents and preserves dance is tangible, such as the written, visual, and aural products that can be physically collected, archived, displayed, and republished or reproduced. This is known as recorded evidence

Written records include:

- Notation systems (including idiosyncratic notations by choreographers or teachers)
- Dance manuals, some of which include dance descriptions and notations
- Published critical responses (reviews, previews, interviews)
- Other descriptive accounts (such as Laban Movement Analysis)
- Publicity materials (such as press releases, posters)
- Memoirs and correspondence, of participants as well as eyewitnesses
- Performance programs and souvenirs
- Business records (financial papers, budgets, contracts)
- Transcriptions (oral accounts that have been videotaped or audiotaped, then transcribed or otherwise fixed)
- Music scores

Visual records include:

- Moving pictures/moving images or animation (film, video, digital motion capture)
- Dances made/designed for camera or new media
- Documentary recordings of dances
- Documentaries/Media programs
- Motion-capture technologies/computer-assisted data gathering
- Photographs
- Drawings, paintings, sketches, sculpture, and so forth, based on dance

Aural evidence includes:

- Sound scores or other music evidence
- Audiotapes of interviews

Ancillary evidence includes:

- Production materials (sets, set designs, lighting designs)
- Costumes/costume designs

UNRECORDED EVIDENCE

Unrecorded evidence includes other information (such as personal recollections or the body memory that participants in a dance carry with them after rehearsals and performances). It is less stable, is dependent on live interactive sessions, and is harder to disseminate, although interview transcripts or taped coaching sessions provide ways to archive some of it.

Direct personal transmissions from a person considered the dance's author or "authority" (either the choreographer or, in the case of culturally specific dance traditions that have no "authorship" or "ownership" of the dance, the culture's designated keeper of the dance) are examples of unrecorded

documentation. Transmission can also be via memory or kinesthetic sense—dancers who have participated in the process of originating a dance (in the case of concert dance) or who have practiced the dance for a long time (in the case of culturally transmitted dance) may have a repository of understanding of the dance and its practice in mind and body.

RELATIVE VALIDITY AND VALUE OF SOURCE MATERIALS AND TOOLS

In deciding which types of source materials or tools to use in a documentation project, it is important to make informed decisions. The following section outlines five possibilities.

Moving Images. Renditions of dance on film or video, as well as versions made by sophisticated motion-capture technology, usually have the advantage of providing the most visually clear information about the execution of a dance. Currently, video (both analog videotape and digital forms) has the advantage of being an easily accessible format for documentation and dissemination. For archival purposes, DHC recommends an archival master tape in DigiBeta while using the MJPEG2000 standard for lossless storage (see DHC’s 2004 companion publication “Digital Video Preservation Reformatting Project”). To capture a dance work most completely by film or video, a wide master shot, as well as two other closer angles are recommended.

Motion-capture technology offers the advantage of creating a record that restores or captures portions of a dance that may be obscured in filmic representations. The motion-capture data may have to be animated so that the data can be “read” or understood completely, and this type of recording does not show aspects of interpretation—which may be an advantage or disadvantage, depending on the needs of the preservation project.

Notation. Formal notation systems provide a score similar to that of music, which can be read by those schooled in the notation's codes and conventions. Advantages include a formal custodian and trained notators (for both recording and reconstruction). Disadvantages include the lack of widespread accessibility to the scores and the scarcity of certified notators.

Personal Coaching and/or Personal Guardianship. The success of using physical demonstration of a dance, often with reliance on memory, is dependent upon the mind and body memories of the coach, as well as the capability of the coach in communicating fine details. In some instances, personal coaching is the primary transmission of a dance, as in the case of traditional dances of culturally specific genres. Where personal guardianship is the sole authority to pass on the dance, nonintrusive ethnographic documentation would help to ensure that accident or catastrophe does not interrupt or terminate the transmission. In other instances, the repertory of a company may be transmitted by those who have danced the roles or who have been entrusted to re-teach the roles. In the case of notation reconstruction, often the notator/reconstructor is assisted by a repetiteur or coach familiar with the dance in performance.

Still Images. Performance photographs, staging designs, and other stills are all good as supportive evidence or contextual evidence. Publicity photos or staged shots, however, may not reflect the original dance.

Written Evidence. Some written records are better than others. Cyril W. Beaumont (1891–1976) described the steps in the ballets he saw, and printed them in his books, showing an astonishingly complete verbal description of both steps and action. Most written evidence, however, cannot provide a complete picture. Instead, it often serves as a document of the personal or critical response to the work, rather than a description of the work itself.

3: DOCUMENTATION FRAMEWORKS, OR CONTEXTS

The following frameworks, or contexts, are situations in which dance documentation can and should take place. These should garner the greatest and best range of materials toward preserving dance history while helping to examine the relationships between dance and culture. The frameworks listed below often spontaneously produce artifacts that become historical records; they document a dance work or a dance event. Many of these situations produce records whose purpose was originally commercial, as in the kinds of press or publicity materials intended first for audience-building—the byproduct of preparations for a dance performance. Other contexts instead demonstrate an inherently high degree of consciousness and intention devoted toward dance documentation. These broad categories are:

- **Creation**—the making of a new dance, perhaps the least predictable and the most individualistic process.
- **Presentation**—the putting of a dance or dance event before a group or audience.
- **Transmission**—the teaching of a work that has been inherited. (This is distinct from “creation,” in which a choreographer or teacher may impart a new piece, and from “reconstruction,” in which the teacher or coach may be working from a written or recorded score.)
- **Ethnographic study**—when a person outside a dance practice or culture undertakes to record, describe, and explain it. Some ethnographic contexts overlap with documentary programming (see below), where one of the outcomes of the project is to create a documentary program as part of the record.

- **Media**—in-production or post-production documentation, where film or video is used to record a version of a work (that is, the use of the camera as part of another documentation framework).
- **Documentary programming**—where film, video, or new media is used to create a feature program.
- **Archival**—where a library or archive collects materials around a specific subject, inventories the collection, restores it, and forms a finding aid or index to assist access to the information.
- **Reconstruction**—where a dance whose practice has been interrupted or corrupted is reassembled. Examples might be Sir Frederick Ashton’s *La Fille Mal Gardée* (1960) or Nijinsky’s *Jeux* (1913), neither of which has a full notation score or fulsome transmission from a reliable participant of the original production.

In the extended discussion of each framework, or situation, the “objective” is identified. This objective may have very little to do with preservation or documentation values. The “method” refers to how preservation or documentation materials may result from within the framework. In cases where more record-keeping should emerge, suggestions are made for ways that additional records can result.

Some of the terms used to describe the factors of these frameworks are defined in the Glossary section, at the back.

CREATION FRAMEWORK

During the creation of a dance, there are myriad opportunities to document the process of dance-making: conception, experimentation, rehearsals, and ultimately performance. The creative process is worthy of documentation, and potentially records of dance creation could unveil unique and unpredictable aspects about developing an idea into a finished

dance. As rich as this area is for dance documentation, it is also understandably one of the most unplumbed, simply because documentation is rarely a primary consideration within the creative context.

The creative process is often idiosyncratic and unexamined. A great deal of the preparation—the idea for and development of the concept—can happen unseen. Then, too, the information stored in the memories and bodies of the dancers is also an intangible product. Furthermore, most choreographers do not systematically document rehearsal time (a known exception being Elizabeth Streb, who videotapes most of her hours in the studio). Many may prefer to be able to work without such scrutiny, without the potential judgment of a camera's eye, for example. When studio space and dancers' time are scarce resources, spending time documenting preparatory work that may not be a part of the completed dance or may not have a purpose in advancing the company is not a high priority. If all creative rehearsals were documented through videotape, how would the hundreds or thousands of hours of tape be credibly indexed and accessed? Someone would have to become an arbiter of what is saved and what is expendable.

Some choreographers design their own system of choreographic notation in preparation for rehearsals. Merce Cunningham is a significant example: his notes and shorthand are unique artifacts of the creative process. Although the notation product of dance creation becomes a historical record, without a key to deciphering the symbols, it has little practical use (neither for reconstruction nor for critical scholarship).

Nonetheless, documentation of the creation process and its outcome offers essential information for understanding a dance's context: witness the excerpts of the collaborative process of the Pilobolus dance company, as shown in WNET's *Dance in America* series or the dialogic process of Paul Taylor with his dancers in developing *Piazzolla Caldera*, as shown in the film *Dancemaker* (1998). Awareness of the future significance of records of the creative process may encourage choreographers and dance companies

to record and preserve these materials, or they may open their rehearsals to reputable documentary videographers or others who can capture and save the essential features of creation, collaboration, and interaction.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE CREATIVE FRAMEWORK:

- To make a dance, make art.
-

Method. Often personal and unexamined. Choreographers have different methods of finding ideas, working them out, designing movement, and working with other dancers and artistic staff. Tangible documentation products are often infrequent or accidental. Rarely is formal notation attempted during the creative phase.

Awareness of the potential demand for information on the creative process could lead to better note-saving, recording of responses with dancers, videotaping of choreographic and rehearsal coaching, and other aspects of the process. Less invasive taping methods, such as still cameras, might result in freer interactions, though sound levels for videotaping would be important if conversations during the choreographic process are to be captured. Formal documentary projects (see below, Documentary Framework) can accomplish the recording of the creative process, where this purpose lies too far beyond or outside of the choreographer's or company's capabilities.

Agent. Choreographer, sometimes in collaboration with videographer.

Secondary Agents. Dancers; production staff; music/sound score composer, musicians, or accompanist (if used); auxiliary staff for editing or compiling products of documentation.

Products May Include: photographs or videotape, notes of choreographer, artistic staff, and support staff, experiential knowledge of the dancers and other participants.

PRESENTATION FRAMEWORK

When a dance is presented, a number of products are generated even when there is no intentional effort to document the performance. When a dance event occurs in any environment, these products document it beyond its ephemeral performance. Preparation for and execution of the event usually produce a wide range of recorded evidence, and spectators take away memories of the performance that are sometimes rendered in written products, such as journal entries, letters, or published reviews.

The presentation framework offers a chance to record the performance in an interactive setting, which allows for evidence of audience response and production details that may be otherwise unreported. The presentation framework is often the context in which choreographers, producers, and participants consciously strive to document the dance well. The presentation is usually regarded as the culmination of creative preparation and commitment by serious choreographers and dance companies. Less formal presentations still motivate the participants to take steps to document the experience, as personal souvenirs of positive community interaction, if not primarily for aesthetic gain.

Live presentations, whether formal theater stagings or open-air events, usually have lighting and logistics that work against successful video recording. Stage lighting is not the ideal lighting choice for video production, and multiple lighting changes for moods and effects often complicate camera settings further. Open-air presentations can have environmental light or noise that interferes with optimal results. The choice of both camera operator and the camera itself is critical: optimally, the camera operators should view the dances in advance; then, multiple camera stations and shooting on more than one occasion should help to ensure adequate footage. In cases where improvisation or variations are permitted or even encouraged (for example, some tap choreographies allow for improvisation at certain points), taping the presentation on more than a single night provides a sampling of the variety within the performance.

Documentation of the performance of improvisational forms of dance is among the most ephemeral. When a dance is intentionally designed not to be repeated, it demands the fullest documentation of its range of possibilities. A project to document the performance of a dance that includes improvisation might include the recording of multiple performances, as well as recordings of rehearsals where experiments with improvisation can show what was rejected and what was retained.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE PRESENTATION FRAMEWORK:

- To present a dance or host a dance event for a group or an audience.
-

Method. A range of methods reflect the extent to which a presentation is planned (or spontaneous) and formal (or informal). The most formal presentation involves much pre-presentation planning, including the engagement of a performance space, publicity materials, rehearsals, contract negotiations, set and costume design or rental, and arrangements for music. Then, the presentation itself is often commemorated by a printed program (sometimes with photographs). The presentation often is allocated some time to rehearse or set cues in the performance space, especially when the setting is a traditional theater milieu. The presentation framework may also allow for recording the live performance in analog or digital video formats or on film. When the use of a presentation space is governed by a contract, sometimes permission to film and numbers of cameras must be negotiated or spelled out in the legal agreement.

Agent. Event producer.

Secondary Agents. Dancers, audience, technical crew.

Products May Include. Publicity materials and critical reviews, programs, costumes and props, sets, souvenirs, films or videos as well as other visual records. The performers will have memory and body knowledge of the event or the dance choreography. The musicians may also have sheet music with dance cues or other performance notes.

TRANSMISSION FRAMEWORK

The transmission framework occurs in cases where few, if any, tangible records of the dance exist, because the dance is passed down orally or kinesthetically to succeeding generations or practitioners. This framework is especially typical of “classical” or traditional dance forms, whether Western or non-Western, when the dances are not intended to be seen or practiced outside the community in which they are located. In some cases, the dances can be easily imitated by others in the community; in others, the dances require arduous study of the style, gestures, and movements and even one-on-one tutelage. Such dances are rarely recorded by the owners of the dance.

Many of the dances handed down through the transmission framework have been codified in movement and style by the community, even though the codification is not written down. A more thorough methodology of recording these dances, especially in video or on film, would provide evidence about the occasions of innovation or transformation in traditional dances. It would also furnish aspects of teaching approaches and—where the dance is explained as well as demonstrated—would elucidate the values or preferences in style and execution.

The transmission achieves a handing-down or confirmation of community values and expression, though there are cases where an outsider engages a teacher in order to learn the dances firsthand rather than only observe them. Community dances may also be performed within the presentation framework (see Presentation Framework section above), when the dances become part of an event or performance that is witnessed by members of that community (and sometimes by visitors as well).

OBJECTIVE FOR THE TRANSMISSION FRAMEWORK:

- The cultural expression of a specific community group; preservation and transmission of cultural values.
-

Method. Transmission occurs primarily by oral instruction or by imitation, as dictated by the community culture; recorded evidence of the dance is often accidental and rare. Should the community find reasons to document dance practice more extensively, then they could benefit from the strategies in the Documentary Framework section, below. Where an outside individual comes to document the group's dance practice, the framework is treated in the Ethnographic Framework section, below.

Agent. Designated person or group in whom the responsibility for cultural continuity lies, such as a priest/shaman/guru/community leader; a social club or a religious society.

Secondary Agents. Succeeding generation; designated cultural successors; specialists/documenters engaged or allowed by the community.

Products. In the absence of a motivation within the community to document the dances for outsiders or for study, few formal records exist. Most products will reside in the memories and body experience of the participants. Typically, there might also be casual eyewitness accounts of travelers; scenes in literature, magazines, or anthropological writings; representations in art or photographs. Where there are gender restrictions in dancing or where the community protects the dance from outside view, documentation efforts are resisted. Some dances that are learned primarily by transmission have been documented cursorily in published dance manuals. If concerted efforts to document are engaged, then additional recorded evidence might be generated.

ETHNOGRAPHIC FRAMEWORK

When researchers or visitors to a culture document a dance or dance event, they take an ethnographic focus. The ethnographer witnesses the dance to observe and describe: most ethnographic researchers are trained in techniques of observation and exploration, as well as still and motion photog-

raphy. This motivation distinguishes this framework from that of the presentation framework. Unlike the community presentation or event that is documented by its own members, which falls under the presentation framework, the intention of the ethnographic framework is to gain knowledge about or from the dance or event. While the ethnographer may use tools to record the dance or event, the purpose of the recording would not be to replicate or restage the performance but to transmit the knowledge accurately within a cultural, social, or educational context.

Because the focus of the research is the relationship of the dance event to culture, this often provides more data than simply the dance movement. Also this approach is determined not to be intrusive; it is meant to be objective, so it affirmatively resists natural inclinations to interpret or understand from one's own known background or culture. The ethnographic framework may provide a helpful counterpart to the transmission framework in contexts where otherwise the continuation of a dance may be in jeopardy.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE ETHNOGRAPHIC FRAMEWORK:

- To gain knowledge of the event.
-

Method. An outsider lives among members of an unfamiliar community, making notes or recordings with their permission, participating in the learning of practices and dances.

Agent. Researcher-observer-participant.

Secondary Agents. Community.

Products. Field notes and textual descriptions of steps, dances, costumes, settings, practice, which may take any number of forms; videotape, film, or notation of dances; musical recordings; art or iconography, photographs; musical instruments or costumes obtained during the fieldwork; published scholarly studies.

MEDIA FRAMEWORK

When dance becomes the subject of an arts television program or a film, the project director is especially influenced by the prevailing practices of shooting documentary subjects. Where storytelling is often eschewed by many contemporary choreographers, it is central to the medium of film conception and production. Storyboarding, putting together a visual through-line of the film story, is central to pre-production planning of documentaries, even though many documentary projects lack a written script. Storyboarding prepares the director and editor to ensure that all aspects of the subject are adequately covered in the film or video footage.

Dance documentaries succeed more when the director has expertise in or empathy with the subject, a talent for applying the camera's "eye" to movement, and a nonintrusive style in cases where hand-held camera techniques are used. Even if the choreographer or dance company commissions the documentary, it is advantageous to have a seasoned cinematographer who is well versed in the range of technical obstacles and variables a project is likely to encounter. For example, simply moving a shoot from one rehearsal room to another may change the color and intensity of the lighting, which may complicate matching shots in the editing room. Stage lighting is not captured accurately by the camera; Linda Lewett of ArtTV, a seasoned director and cameraperson on dance projects, recommends providing the lighting designer with a monitor so s/he can see how the design looks on camera. A follow-spot, for example, is likely to blanch out a figure clothed in a light-colored costume, rather than effectively directing attention and focus to it.

Selection of the size proportion of the image must be a consideration. Standard television has a 4:3 aspect, while film proportions, to which television is surely moving, is the wider 16:9. DigiBeta offers a fine picture, and with a wide-angle lens can approximate the coverage of the 16:9 aspect without breaking the budget. However, as more television stations update their technical capabilities to handle High Definition (HDTV), these cameras

may become more affordable and widely available. Different cameras also have different features for sound inputs, and the selection of a screening venue may dictate other choices.

The quality of the simple back-of-the-house concert recordings could be vastly improved by applying some of the techniques and practices developed by film and television documentary professionals. The concern for full-body shots often pressures amateur dance videographers to leave too much “head room” at the top of the frame or take so long a shot that the energy of the movement dissipates. Lewett, whose background includes photography and studio art in addition to her expertise in engineering and television production, advises that the successful documentary footage of dance lets “the energy extend past the frame.”

Documentary projects do require copyright clearances, or broadcast media will refuse to air the program. In late fall 2005, the Center for Social Media and the Program on Intellectual Property and the Public Interest in the Washington College of Law at American University published “Documentary Filmmakers’ Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use.” Endorsed by a number of high-profile documentary filmmaker organizations, this document outlines and clarifies reasonable application of the copyright doctrine of “fair use.” For further information and a copy of the statement: <http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/fairuse.htm>

OBJECTIVE FOR THE MEDIA FRAMEWORK:

- To tell a story about the dance subject, using film or video.
-

Method. Although it is possible to execute a well-plotted documentary as a solo project, engaging a tech crew for production and editing usually yields a more polished result. A streamlined media project would include the following: identifying and defining the scope of the project; obtaining all permissions, licenses, and clearances; obtaining funding for the project; engaging capable technical crew and equipment; arranging the times and places

for shooting and scheduling the subjects (dancers, participants); editing the product; distributing the product. (See the timeline for *Mad Hot Ballroom* on page 41 for details on a complex media project.)

Product. The projected result is a recorded program that is suited to its intended audience.

ARCHIVAL FRAMEWORK

Archival frameworks are employed primarily by libraries, museums, or archives that have trained staff to identify and inventory the items of a collection, and then take steps to prevent deterioration or to restore damaged items. The final phase of an archival project is to create a finding aid or other resource that would enable public access to materials within the collection.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE ARCHIVAL FRAMEWORK:

- To collect, inventory, share, and preserve materials related to dance.
-

Method. The materials are collected, inventoried, cataloged, and where needed, preservation efforts are initiated to preserve materials. Materials may be copied or converted to other research and reference formats so as to inhibit the wear-and-tear from the public's access to the items. As archives turn toward digital formats for preservation, materials are being converted for Web access or high-demand use.

Agent. Archivist/librarian.

Secondary Agents. Advisors from the dance field, scholars, library assistants, computer technicians (in cases where the materials are converted to digital form).

Products. The collection in an easily accessed and clearly labeled form is the objective and the product. Parts of the collection are often used in tandem with other historical materials to produce other products, such as documentaries, exhibitions, booklets, website materials, scholarly articles, and reference works and guides published by the archive. Scholars may receive permission to use photographs, letters, or other materials for their own publications.

RECONSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK

For the purposes of this document, the reconstruction framework is defined as one that relies upon sources providing an informed but incomplete set of documents about a dance. In some cases, reconstruction is attempted for a work whose tradition has been broken or interrupted: no choreographer or participants survive, as in the cases of Catherine Turocy's reconstruction of baroque-era dances for her New York Baroque Dance Company or the Joffrey Ballet's reconstruction of the early twentieth-century dances of Nijinsky. In other cases, there may be film evidence or the testimony of one or more participants who no longer perform the dance. Both cases result in exercises of reconstruction. In both, the reconstruction of the dances provides an opportunity to discover (or rediscover) information inherent in the execution of the dance. When performances have lapsed for a significant amount of time (say, a generation, or twenty years), reconstruction efforts even with advice from former participants can sometimes be limited by the realities that dance training changes, aesthetic preferences for kinds of movement shift, and even the everyday activities and physical culture can unintentionally ingrain movement habits in the younger dancers' bodies.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK:

- To recreate or replicate a choreographic work whose tradition has been broken or interrupted. To restore or rediscover a dance that has lain dormant.
-

Method. After application of available evidence—notation scores or visual evidence if any exist, the reconstructor adds cultural information about the original performance context, including relevant historical and social conditions and events. The product is a new documentation, which cannot be said to be identical to the original, but it tries to approximate as closely as possible the movements, style, and motivating spirit of the original.

Agent. Reconstructor, as researcher and interpreter.

Secondary Agents. Other scholars, musicians, dancers, students of history or the arts.

Products. The reconstruction process should culminate in a dance performance of this “new” staging of a historical work. Ancillary products may be a videotaping of the performance or a notation score, research notes, sets and costumes constructed for this performance, as well as a renewed memory and kinesthetic experience that can inform future performances or interpretations of the historical work. Many of these reconstruction projects are undertaken as an exercise within university studies, a context that sometimes also generates videos, research aids, or other academic resources connected to the reconstruction project.

4: BEST PRACTICES: EXAMPLES

The following examples show how well-conceived and planned projects can incorporate multiple tools to create a historical document or other product that preserves essential information about the dance, the dance event, and/or the choreographer. In each case, the ideal objective of documentation—to allow those who have not had a direct experience with the performance to get as close as possible to the essential aspects of the experience—has guided the project although the confluence of tools in each case is unique.

Each example discussed below puts to best use the tools and resources that were available. Also, each one offers access to the content or products in a different way.

CORE OF CULTURE DANCE PRESERVATION: DANCE IN BHUTAN—BUDDHIST SACRED DANCES

A model for documenting the transmission and practice of sacred dances.

Background. In this case, the lead fieldworker (Joseph Houseal), head of Core of Culture Dance Preservation, was commissioned for this project by the Honolulu Academy of Arts, an institution that intends to share video footage and other archival materials in public exhibitions and programs. Earlier fieldwork had revealed that, at a number of easily accessed Buddhist monasteries, the dances had become corrupted because of the intrusive interchange with tourists. Coupled with the threats to dance transmission due to political repression and economic changes, the opportunity to see dance transmissions in pristine settings was rarer with time. Houseal's

project worked with Buddhist monasteries that were isolated from outside commercial influences, in order to identify the essential characteristics of the dance practice in each monastery.

The Project. As project leader, Houseal engaged a specialized staff of eight that included a Bhutanese filmmaker, who could speak seven of Bhutan's ten languages, and a database designer. Houseal himself took on the role of ethnographer, using a consistent method of daily ethnographic note-taking he learned from Dr. Joan Erdman, a close advisor to this project and a professor at Chicago's Columbia College. Keeping a daily written log, he recorded the day in three installments:

- 1) an *account* of the events of the day, including detailed description of dances,
- 2) his *interpretations*, allowing for ongoing threads of puzzle-solving to take form over time, and
- 3) his *conclusions*, including lessons learned and what needed to be further discovered.

This disciplined format, which took about two hours each evening, organized the field notes in such a way as to ensure that factual information would be separated from intuition and analysis.

This project used a recent form of high-definition mini-DV for the cameras, which had a feature that enabled two or even three cameras to record with synchronized timecodes. This arrangement yielded especially high exactitude in the documentation of technique, and was one of several reasons that the video medium was chosen over Labanotation for this project.

Two years into the four-year project, sacred dance festivals at twelve villages or monasteries were filmed, the information entered into the database, and Houseal's eyewitness accounts recorded in the journal. Footage was also obtained of a demonstration of the dance technique of a rare dance, Chamchen. The database component of the project, underway with more than 350 separate dance entries that interface with more than 200

hours of high-definition video documentation, ensures that the materials are easily accessed from multiple fields of information. (See sample database entry.) In 2008 Core of Culture plans to provide a web-based version of the database with film extracts. The early products of this project, which documents sacred dances of the Bhutanese Buddhists transmitted from person to person, some dating from the seventh century CE, are producing rare and rich materials, both for understanding and preserving the dances.

Bhutan Dance Database

Punakha Tsechu

20/2/2005

Shoot Subject	Punakha Tsechu		
Specific	Day Three of Punakha Tsechu - Final Day		
Place	Punakha Dzong		
Place Specific	Main Courtyard - Camera level with dancers		
Date of Shoot	20/2/2005	Time 2:00 - 3:00pm	
Dance Name	Durdag - Lords of the Charnel Ground		
General Notes	Durdag - Dance of the Lords of the Charnel Ground		
Tape Identifier	050220A1(4)		
Make of Tape	Sony DVC Premium 60	Audio Channel 1	Auto
Camera ID	Sony HDR FX1-A	Audio Channel 2	Auto
Shoot Format	1080i HDV		
Cameraman	Karma Tshering		
	Rating	Medum	
Camera Notes	Taking place in the afternoon, the courtyard was now shadowed from the bright sun - though part of the background, was still illuminated by strong light. Thus strong contrast between brightness and shadow created a complex light regime.		From Time : 0:45:19
			To Time : 0:52:45
			Special Seq 1: 0:49:20
			Special Seq 2: <input type="text"/>

FESTIVALS AND DANCE IN THE PERUVIAN ANDES

A model for documenting a dance event that shares scholarly commentary along with the documentary materials of the music and dances.

Published in book form as *Shaping Society through Dance: Mestizo Ritual Performance in the Peruvian Andes* by Zoila S. Mendoza. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2000. With CD (included with the book) and VHS videotape (available separately from UCP). Also available in Spanish from a Peruvian publisher.

The Project. Zoila S. Mendoza, an anthropologist, documented several contexts for dance in ritual performances that honor the patron saint of the Peruvian town of San Jerónimo, near Cusco, with the objective of distributing her research in a book with accompanying music CD and videotape. In the book, she uses conventional ethnographic approaches: she observes, describes, and provides extraordinary photographs of several events. As a native of Peru (now living in California), she had a relatively smooth path in making connections among the residents who organized and performed the festivals. Her equipment was not sophisticated, a situation common to most doctoral candidates: a Sony Video8 Handycam for the video material and a Sony Professional Walkman for the music recording. She herself did the video- and music-recording; she also interviewed participants, attended and taped rehearsals, and taped the performances.

Preferring to capture the moment, she resisted writing a script; rather, she made it her objective to videotape something the participants would enjoy. Their intention became her intention. The lengthy videotapes she shot during her two and a half years in the field have been excerpted and edited as a companion to the book. A concise and unobtrusive voiceover identifies the dance and its context, and it points out specific features or practices of importance. Regional dance contests held in the city of Cusco provided a

juxtaposition of context and age-group; they helped Mendoza document that style, energy, and even the patterns of dances change when the purpose or context shifts.

The strength of Mendoza's book is in her capable descriptions, on which her conclusions or theories have been based. Her detailed analysis of the costume elements for each group enlightens the ways in which *mestizo* racial, social, and ethnic identity were signaled through costume. The CD and the VHS videotape add amplification that is rarely available as supplemental material to scholarly books.

As an anthropologist with little formal dance training, (although an avid dancer of popular and folkloric dances), she honed her skills in dance analysis by taking a short course in Effort/Shape analysis sponsored by the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies in New York City. This material, which derives from the principles in movement notation and analysis of Labanotation (see the chapter on "Tools" above) offered Mendoza a way to observe movement, to see how it places emphasis on certain parts of the body.

Mendoza admitted that she lost the material on three two-hour tapes possibly because the dusty and windy conditions resulted in dirty tape heads. Although she took along filters, because of the challenging taping conditions of the mountains' shadows with strong sunlight, she found that she rarely used them since there was little time while shooting at live outdoor festivals to change lenses or settings. Nonetheless, the quality of the tapes is remarkably clear.

Access to the video and audio raw material is available in two languages and on two continents. Mendoza believes that it is important to give the practitioners of the rituals the documents of their events. To that end, she donated copies of all her tapes to the Catholic University of Peru in Lima, which found funding to transfer and index all the analog Video8 tapes to a digital format.

**COMMERCIAL FILM DOCUMENTARY:
MAD HOT BALLROOM**

A model for feature-length documentary filmmaking, as well as a model for documenting dance events that need to accommodate spontaneous or unexpected action.

Background: *Mad Hot Ballroom* (2005), directed by Marilyn Agrelo, written and produced by Amy M. Sewell, chronicles New York City's Dancing Classrooms after-school ten-week program that teaches fifth-graders to dance the meringue, rumba, tango, foxtrot, waltz, and swing. The program, which was initiated in 1994 by Pierre Dulaine and Yvonne Marceau of American Ballroom Theater in a single school, was extended in 2004-2005 to some 70 schools throughout New York City. Schools may now opt to enter four pairs of their students in a city-wide competition.

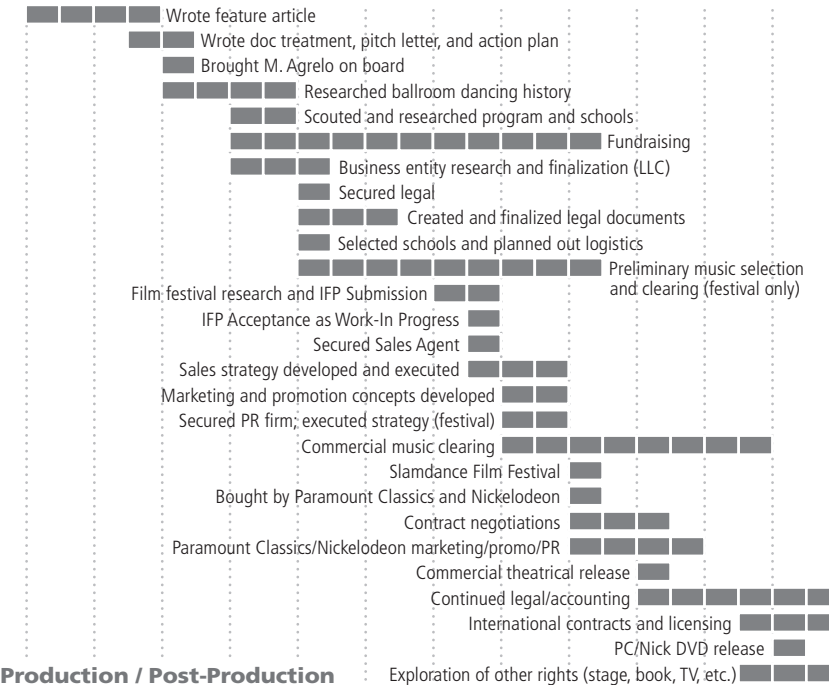
The Project. Amy M. Sewell proposed the Dancing Classrooms program to Marilyn Agrelo as a possible collaborative film project. Sewell, a writer with a master's degree in business administration, served as both writer and producer for the project. The participation of three schools with different constituencies, was advocated by Agrelo, a strategy which provided the opportunity to follow three simultaneous storylines, creating some dramatic tension and interest much in the way that the documentary film *Spellbound* (2002) followed eight spelling-champion competitors through their preparation for the contest. As both the director and the producer hoped that this independent film would find its way into major cinema distribution (and it did), mini-DV tapes with a Panasonic 24p 100A camera were chosen because the format and quality transferred well to film. Sewell, a first-time producer, spent a year preparing for her job by reading books about documentary filmmaking (see "Selected Reading and Resources" list for some of the sources she found most helpful). For a project with hopes of breaking into the commercial market, planning is/was essential and time-consuming. Among the challenges were fund-raising, permissions/copyright clear-

ances for music used in the classroom and in competitions, permissions releases from parents. (See time line that shows how her time was spent as a producer of this project.)

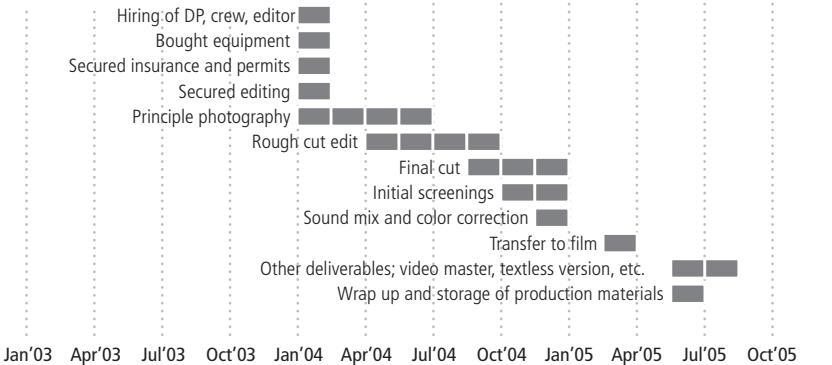
TIMELINE FOR MAD HOT BALLROOM

Courtesy of Amy Sewell, *Mad Hot Ballroom* writer and producer

Pre-Production / Business Aspects



Production / Post-Production



Claudia Raschke-Robinson was chosen as director of photography because of her skill with hand-held shooting and her personal experience as a dancer. The sensitive camera work navigates among the dancing children in the classrooms without disrupting the dance lessons.

Rarely does an independent dance film find its way into national cinema chains as did *Mad Hot Ballroom*. (The film was released on DVD in late 2005.) The success of this project is due largely to the forethought and planning, which ensured that the administrative and business plan kept the project on track and that the project had secured all licenses and copyrights for film use. Then, too, there was the integrity of the camera work, which was faithful to the storyline and to the children it presented.

SIMULTANEOUS CAPTURE OF HISTORY, PROCESS, AND PERFORMANCE: MERCE CUNNINGHAM'S *POINTS IN SPACE*

A model for chronicling a dance's creation through to performance, in a documentary-programming style.

The Project. In 1986, *Points in Space* was made as a 55-minute program for television. It documents the making of Merce Cunningham's *Points in Space*, a dance conceived for the camera. It was rehearsed and taped at the BBC studios in London, England, where some of the finest video and broadcast equipment of its time was used. Because of the availability of the expert technical crew and equipment, the caliber of the product is very high. It is the pre-production storyboarding that has made for such a complete story in the creation of a dance piece.

In the economical length of 55 minutes, director Elliott Caplan manages to interweave the background of Cunningham's dance career with the creation of the new work for camera. This documentary-style program features voiceover commentary that explains scenes, but does not dominate. Inter-

view segments with Cunningham, with sound score composer John Cage, and with a number of dancers offer multiple perspectives on the process and the artwork. Design preparation and execution for the dance is also covered. The final version of the dance is included in its entirety. The result of the careful planning of this project is a tight and clear program that does not feel overly scripted. This program has remained widely available on video long after it was filmed and aired, which suggests that permissions must have been secured with a view to distribution and access.

Many otherwise-commendable documentaries follow the process of creation but offer only snippets of the final work, which fails to satisfy the curiosity of either fan or scholar. (Compare the beautifully filmed *Paul Taylor: Dancemaker* (1998) with its brief excerpts of Taylor's *Piazzolla Caldera*.) Other documentaries (such as the WNET Dance in America series) may include some dances in their entirety, but they lack the contemporaneous footage of the creation and rehearsal phases. Thus, despite nearly two decades since the *Points in Space* project was conceived and executed, its high production value and thoughtfully selected content distinguish this as an exemplary project for documenting the creation, rehearsal process, and performance of a specific dance.

MIAMI CITY BALLET AND EDWARD VILLELLA'S LEGACY

A model for working within copyright and financial restrictions in creating and remounting a work.

Background. Miami City Ballet offers a typical example of a major ballet company that is confronted with financial and copyright obstacles in documenting and preserving its repertory. The company, only very recently recovered from the debt and loss incurred as a result of Hurricane Andrew in 1992, does not have a dance notator among its artistic staff. The company does, however, maintain a file of the ballet mistress's notes and diagrams,

which are based on the rehearsals she witnesses, and videotapes have been made of the rehearsal process. Because of music copyright restrictions (the recording of the music and sometimes the score itself), the rehearsal and live video footage is often restricted to in-house use, with the exception of occasional promotional use. Much of the company's repertory is composed of the George Balanchine works that artistic director Edward Villella helped to make famous during his career with New York City Ballet (NYCB). When Balanchine works are set on the company, Villella engages artists who had worked directly with Balanchine during the creation of the piece.

The Project. Villella has become a choreographer in his own right, and Miami City Ballet has a character distinct from NYCB. For Villella's latest work *Neighborhood Ballroom* (2003), he drew from the vernacular social dances of four different periods and adapted them to stage much as the early Romantic-era ballet choreographers adapted contemporary social dances within their storylines. The work was informed by Villella's own experience of going to the then-famous New York City dance hall, Roseland, in the 1950s, but he also engaged consultants on social dance practice (notably Frank Regan) to advise the project.

As a former television director and producer, Villella created a map for the creation of a work, much as it would be done for a TV show. A broadcast-quality camera obtained for the company by a donor in the film business was used for videotaping: the beginnings of the creation of the dance were shot, then the work was moved to the studio, and finally it was taped on-stage. For the performance, Villella ordered a long-shot master, but he also believed in investing money on tight shots. The company has obtained the expertise of skillful videographers who are willing to donate in-kind service. The notes and diagrams of the ballet mistress, photographs of the production that add information about the exact placement of the set, and the kinesthetic experience and memories of rehearsals by the dancers all contribute to the process of keeping the work in repertory. Villella, the creator of the work, remains available to advise and offer coaching.

Taking *Neighborhood Ballroom* on tour has meant that the work has been adapted to different stage spaces. For the “Quick-Step” interlude, for example, the set includes a piece of scrim that is backlit. Not all stages are deep enough to accommodate this staging. Furthermore, the choreography itself is not seen by Vilella as immutable. As new dancers take on roles in the piece, the choreography may be adapted toward the new performers’ special talents or proclivities.

Whether the project is his own piece or the mounting of a work by a guest choreographer, Vilella esteems the memory of the artists that were involved in the original project. He is consistent in engaging artists who were agents involved in originating George Balanchine’s choreography. When ballet choreographer Trey McIntyre was engaged to set *The Reassuring Effects of Form and Poetry* on the company, the process involved bringing two artists, at different times, to coach the rehearsals, followed by an extended visit by McIntyre so that the participants could hear directly the intention of the creator. Artistic intention is valued by Vilella; his process of staging dance rests on trying to recapture that initial impulse, for in his words, without the input of the originators the work is “diluted.”

For the public, access to the repertory of Vilella and the company’s other performances must remain primarily through live performances until such time as the music rights held by the musicians and composers can be negotiated or relaxed. Vilella’s duty is to ensure that the caliber of each live performance—through the combination of coaching by himself, the company’s ballet mistress, and other coaches, the muscle and intellectual memory of the dancers, and other documents of the choreography and production—reaches toward capturing the intention of the creator for a new audience.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ARCHIVAL PROJECT: MARTHA GRAHAM FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

A model of a full-scale archival project that includes the creation of supplemental materials.

Background. With the acquisition of the Martha Graham collection in 1999, the Library of Congress embarked on a comprehensive documentation and preservation project that would not only preserve the surviving materials but also create new materials to document Graham's legacy.

The Project. The archival materials (papers and photographs) that are now stored in the Music Division, were inventoried; items that had been damaged from prior improper storage or use, water damage, or other deterioration were identified, and conservation treatments were begun. Video and film materials in the collection were cataloged and preserved in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division.

To create new materials, the Library of Congress assembled a production team that would videotape interviews with nine former and current company members. Several of these subjects were also invited to coach the current dancers in roles that they had danced during the period when Graham had been at her most conversant while coaching company members in roles. In addition, the Library of Congress sponsored a performance of *Appalachian Spring* in 1999 (this piece, with music by Aaron Copland, had its debut in the Library of Congress's Coolidge Auditorium in 1944), along with other reconstructed dances. This new performance was videotaped with three cameras, and a version edited with a "live switch" was recorded on the second night of the performances, to provide a quick edited version.

Executive director of the project Vicky Risner selected Linda Lewett as director of the video documentary work, an experienced technician as well as project director of other dance documentaries. Budget considerations drove some of the decisions, such as to limit some of the interviews to a single

camera on the subject, while others had two-person cameras that facilitated the inclusion of the interviewer into the footage. The setting for a large number of the interviews, the Noguchi Museum in Long Island City, New York, provided an aesthetic environment artistically compatible with the subject, since Isamu Noguchi designed many sets for the Graham works, including *Appalachian Spring*.

The decision was also made for both financial and aesthetic considerations to shoot in DigiBeta rather than High Definition widescreen format. Lewett's experience with both formats led her to conclude that the widescreen format might have served the performances better, but the interviews would be framed more aesthetically in the standard 4:3 aspect.

The coaching sessions, along with some of the assertive observations in the interviews, provide a significant new body of work to augment the existing videotapes of Graham's company. Pearl Lang, for example, had witnessed Graham and her partners dancing *Appalachian Spring* for almost a decade, and she noted places where she felt that details of execution and aspects of the original Graham technique had fallen out of the company's recent performances of the dance.

This massive project at the Library of Congress does not simply restore existing papers and materials to dance history, but it has collected almost fifty additional tapes of testimony, coaching, and performance to reinvigorate the study of Martha Graham's legacy.

RETRIEVING AND RECORDING “LOST” DANCES: THE PAUL TAYLOR REPERTORY PRESERVATION PROJECT

A model for recording dances that lacked complete records of the original performances or those that had fallen out of active repertory.

Background. The dances documented by this preservation project had little or no original information available from videotapes, films, or notation of the earliest performances.

The Project. Since 1992, the Paul Taylor Dance Company has embarked on a systematic project to document with notation and videotape more than thirty dances dating from as early as 1957 (*Epic*), 1961 (*Junction*), and 1969 (*Private Domain*) through the early 1990s. All dances documented by this project were returned to active repertory for at least one season. Called the Repertory Preservation Project, the effort was funded by a multiyear 3-to-1 matching grant (for which the National Endowment for the Arts contributed \$850,000). In addition to an archive of these notation scores and videos, other primary materials (such as interview transcripts of original dancers and collaborators, newspaper reviews, and Taylor’s personal papers) will be included in the repository. The videotapes and materials are available to scholars to view onsite, but the primary intention of the project is to return many of the dances to active repertory and to ensure that others will be accessible for future performance.

This Taylor project is notable for two reasons. First, it complements the ongoing efforts of the company to preserve Taylor’s choreography. Taylor’s company has been proactive in documenting his works in notation; in fact, most of his 100-plus works have already been documented by Labanotation, which has helped make his works accessible for performance to companies worldwide. The Taylor project’s effort to reconstitute dances in danger of being lost recognizes that lesser-known works may have an as-yet unidentified but significant place in dance history. As well, sometimes an

initial popular success or critical acclaim of works that catapults them into secure places in a company's repertory may obscure the value of less-acknowledged works that may find their following later, whether in performance or in critical study.

Second, the Taylor project plans to bring in support materials that will provide historical and interpretive context to the notation scores and film records. While the tools of notation and the film records provide complete accounts of the dance movement for all performers, auxiliary primary materials of the choreographer's notes, the testimony of original performers, and any critical response provide historical stylistic evidence, which may be partially absent when the dances are set on and filmed with the current Paul Taylor Dance Company.

Following on the success of the 1992–1997 documentation project, regular videotaping for purposes of preservation and documentation has continued since 2000, as each year's new dances and others in the season's repertory are now taped under two types of conditions. The first videotaping replicates the costuming, lighting, and staging of all performance conditions. A second taping is intended primarily for reconstruction purposes: dancers are each assigned a different-colored unitard, so someone learning a role or reconstructing the dance can easily follow the corresponding figures, and the lighting is modified for greatest visibility of the movement. Under this stable procedure, an additional eighteen dances have been carefully documented.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY'S DOCUMENTATION OF ANNA SOKOLOW'S *STEPS OF SILENCE*

A model for using multiple sources to reconstruct and analyze a dance, with the addition of motion-capture technology to restore obscured information from earlier sources.

Background. This project extends the records of an earlier documentation project and collects some of the most valuable evidence in a DVD that includes both performance and supplemental archival materials. All three extant tools in dance-movement recording—Labanotation, video/film, and motion capture—were applied so that each validated or supplemented the information of the other. The addition of rehearsal footage and interviews creates a work's context and interpretation, which will become increasingly valuable as that work recedes into history. Although DVD formats currently create a loss of digital information because of compression, they do have the advantage of ease of distribution and use in teaching settings.

Aspects of the original 1968 production of Anna Sokolow's *Steps of Silence*, commissioned for Repertory Dance Theatre in Salt Lake City, Utah, are documented by footage of a 1968 lecture-demonstration by Sokolow, photographs of Sokolow in rehearsal with the original cast, a 1970 film of the original cast (although the first three minutes of the piece were not recorded), and the memories of three dancers from the original production, as well as assorted written records. A 1975 revival, which Sokolow set on Contemporary Dance Theatre, is recorded in Labanotation (Ray Cook, notator).

The Project. *Steps of Silence* was remounted on Repertory Dance Theatre (RDT) during February and March 2004. Valarie Mockabee, a certified notator and professor at Ohio State University, compared the film footage with Ray Cook's notation score and used both to restage the work. Three original

cast members (Lynne Wimmer, Gregg Lizenberry, and Linda Smith) were interviewed to document aspects of the original rehearsal process and production.

In an innovative move, motion-capture technology was used to document moments in the dance where partnering or film angle obscured a complete recording of the movement and interaction. The motion-capture “markers” were transformed to animated three-dimensional figures that can be manipulated on the computer screen, to reveal details of the movement from different perspectives or angles.

Finally, to share the fruits of this project beyond the context of the live performances, much of the documentation was digitized and incorporated into a three-disk DVD set designed for educational use. Included on the DVD are digital footage of rehearsals from 2004 with Lorry May (executor of the Anna Sokolow Foundation), digitized footage of Sokolow’s 1968 lecture-demonstration, 1968 rehearsal photographs, the 1970 film and 2004 RDT performance, sample excerpts of Cook’s Labanotation score, motion-capture data of specific phrases, interviews with original cast members, as well as other photographs, and contextual information of the year 1968. Of particular use to scholars and educators is the ease of juxtaposing evidence from all three performances. The DVD set is slated for release in September 2006 through the dance department at Ohio State University (<http://www.osu.edu>).

Copyright clearances were obtained early in the project, an achievement that has enabled the compilation of all the materials into a format that could be widely and easily distributed.

5: ADVICE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

The case studies presented in the previous chapter of exemplary dance documentation and preservation projects were often enabled by strong funding support and teams of experts. Small-scale efforts to document dance creativity and activity may also be quite successful if you follow a few pieces of advice. Even such a well-respected independent choreographer as Trey McIntyre has had to document his own work by personally setting up several cameras during rehearsals.

Individuals actively involved in the dance field—not just dance-makers, but also dancers, board members, designers, teachers, and others—may take simple steps to ensure that their papers and mementos contribute to the tapestry of dance history. Consistency and chronology are the keys: *consistency*, because it is important to collect, box, label, and store before ephemeral evidence is misplaced or damaged; *chronology*, because dates form the simplest and most understandable way to organize materials and construct histories. An easy way to begin a personal archive is to separate and group the materials by date, then fill and label acid-free envelopes, folders, or boxes chronologically.

To develop a more comprehensive approach to organizing and saving your materials, the Dance Heritage Coalition's *Beyond Memory: Preserving the Documents of Our Dance Heritage* provides basic information on beginning an archive; this document can be found at www.danceheritage.org/preservation/beyond_memory.html. A number of sources offer published guides to the safe-keeping of photographs, newspaper clippings, and fabrics; good information can be obtained from any genealogical society, museum, library, or archive. For example, the Northeast Document Conservation Center is an excellent resource (www.nedcc.org). *Dance Videotapes at Risk*, a publica-

tion of the Dance Heritage Coalition provides detailed information on caring for analog videotapes; this document can be found at www.dance-heritage.org/publications/dance_video_risks.html. The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) also publishes online guidelines for film and videotape preservation (www.amianet.org). Information on storage guidelines for photographs and negatives can be found on the website of The National Archives (www.archives.gov).

Creating the archival recording of a dance does not have to be an expensive endeavor. A carefully lit studio recording from three angles should give most of the visual coverage that is needed. Visual recordings made of a live performance from the back of a theater often do not provide the desired clarity, as stage lighting is not optimal for video recording. Instead, be sure your archival storage box includes evidence of the lighting design and other technical specs, in case a choreographer, dancer, or researcher is motivated to reconstruct the work.

Whatever the caliber of your video equipment, you can maximize the quality of your documentation by knowing how to operate it properly and ensure that everything is in top working condition. Technology authority Tim Glenn notes that the results of videotaping can be vastly improved by paying attention to three settings before the taping begins: focus, exposure, and white balance. (See his technical and aesthetic advice at <http://dance.fsu.edu/dancedocumentation/index.html>.)

Know how long your batteries last, and have backups. Always use brand new tapes, preferably the more expensive professional quality, to reduce the chances of dropped frames or poor recordings. Dust is not the only cause of streaky recordings or pixel “dropouts.” Using tapes with different kinds of lubricant can damage the recording heads, too. Because the lubricant in tapes differs from brand to brand and even within brands, find out what high-quality tape is recommended for your camera and restrict the camera’s use to only this kind of tape.

Your informal archival collection does not have to take up lots of your time. To help achieve this goal, any collection should be simple to access—one of the most important objectives of archival documentation.

6: CAVEATS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning ahead smoothes the process of creating work and supports efforts to document your work at the same time. The brief advice in the following sections is designed to help you avoid common pitfalls without encumbering you with a large additional workload.

Copyrights. Property rights and intellectual property rights are protected by law. For general information, see the DHC guide *A Copyright Primer for the Dance Community* (2004) or go to <http://www.danceheritage.org/publications/copyright.html>. Dance documentary filmmakers should consult *Documentary Filmmakers' Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use* at www.centerforsocialmedia.org/fairuse.htm. Be sure you hold the rights, or the permissions for use, for all aspects of your production if you intend to distribute or exhibit the documentation of your production. Not only must you clear music rights, but in many cases you will need to clear permissions from the performers. Even if you initially expect a videotape recording will be used only as a reconstruction aid, clearing permissions of dancers and music rights-holders for other future uses gives you the flexibility and freedom to use excerpts in other contexts, such as part of a public broadcasting program. Furthermore, as music distributors are becoming more vigilant about unlicensed piracy, downloading, and distribution, choreographers must take proactive steps to ensure they are not operating outside the law.

Copyrights are often just as important for reconstructed works as they are for more recent works, unless the works (including the music) have been identified as falling into the public domain. Especially for materials that will be on display publicly or distributed for sale, clear permissions in writing.

Contract Negotiation for Choreography. Do you know who owns a dance work after it is complete? The way the contract is worded may determine whether a choreographer can stage the work elsewhere or owns the rights to any video recording.

Contract Negotiation for Performance Venues. Some performance spaces, usually larger, union-regulated venues, restrict the number and/or position of cameras for live performances. Be sure to clarify your intentions to document your piece so that you have access to the space and the technical resources you need.

Disposition of Archival Material. Consider working with an archival partner for preservation of fragile papers, notes, photographs, scores, designs, and tapes/films. If your organization is large enough to manage its own archive, be sure to have staff schooled in best practices for both cataloging and preservation.

Decisions of What to Save—for the Choreographer. Consider the future uses of your documentary evidence as you decide what to save. Not every conversation or every rehearsal moment is worth saving. If you have weeks of rehearsal footage that is not indexed, it is unlikely that future scholars or choreographers will have the time and patience to work with so much material. (Many a book or reference work has been rendered useless without an index, contents, or other finding aid.) Therefore, when storing or donating your material, select and identify the most valuable process or rehearsal footage. Better yet, do the detailed indexing that will make the material accessible and valuable.

Decisions of What to Save—for Deposit into an Archive or Collection. As high-quality digital media become ever more widely available and affordable, it will fall to a curator to choose what to save, what to make readily available, and perhaps what to decline. In the case, for example, where hours of rehearsal or creative experimentation have been recorded and are offered to a collection, the curator may have to make critical judg-

ments in the interest of space and practicality. A choreographer (or other informed participant) should be encouraged to select the footage that is most revealing of the creative process. Lengthy, unindexed, or unedited recordings of rehearsals or movement experiments are unlikely to be usable for historians or other choreographers.

Funding. Integrate documentation and record-keeping into project-funding applications, just as ethnographers already do for fieldwork. Funders should encourage grantees to make their work accessible and to take steps to preserve dances by adopting grant guidelines that require some aspect of

public programming or continued access. Since copyright clearances may entail expenditures, if not for the rights themselves, then for the staff time and ancillary costs pursuing the rights, those expenses should be part of the budget in applications for project funds.

Personal Rights, Royalties, and Private Papers. Make a will. Be sure to get legal advice to ensure that your intentions are properly worded. Name an executor who is both willing and competent to carry out your wishes.

Press Photos. Be sure to have black-and-white as well as color photographs available for promotional uses. The need for high-resolution stills in multiple formats is as crucial for live performances as for film and video

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOCUMENTATION

- Label items you save.
- Chronological record-keeping is a good practice.
- Keep current of best practices in documentation.
- Advice from archivists is often free.
- Your best friend is not always your best videographer.
- Know your equipment and what it needs to do the best job.
- Know what your contracts say; negotiate to protect your right to document.
- Clear all permissions and get clearances in writing; obtain licenses early.
- Make a will.

venues, according to Deirdre Towers of the Dance Films Association. Although slide formats are preferred by visual artists for clarity and color accuracy, slide film has become less and less available.

Label Press Photos Accurately. Many companies and choreographers stage some photos for publicity purposes, but the images do not really reflect any specific moments in the choreographic work. Unfortunately, sometimes when these images are reproduced in print sources, they are mistakenly attributed to the production.

Self-help. No one method of documenting dance is infallible or complete. Apprise yourself of the best, most up-to-date practices, stay informed, and try to employ more than one method for each project to ensure the best information. Consult some of the sources listed in the “Selected Reading and Resources” section below.

Technical Staff and Crew. Engage the most skilled people you can afford. Obtain the best equipment for them that your budget will allow. Communicate with the tech crew about your aesthetic preferences and objectives for the project, but hear them out when they have different suggestions. Documenting tours or field work may require additional support. For example, Joseph Houseal, lead fieldworker and head of Core of Culture Dance Preservation, recommends engaging production assistants and staff who can accomplish day-to-day tasks to free yourself to focus completely on the project.

GLOSSARY

Agent is a term most often used in anthropological analyses of systems. Here the term indicates the person most involved in leading the dance activity within a given framework, with the term “secondary agents” meaning the other participants and supporters of the activity.

Documentation is the use of a set of tools to record an event or item.

Dance documentation is a process of recording the existence of a dance using information garnered from one or more tools, or sources. The objective of dance documentation is to find ways to allow those who have not had a direct experience with the performance to get as close as possible to the essential aspects of the experience. Certain tools may provide a greater approximation of the original dance than others. Moving images, for example, almost invariably provide a better visual picture than still photographs or written accounts. However, moving pictures benefit from contextual information in such sources as memoirs, photographs, critical accounts, and other historical artifacts. In the absence of movement records or notation scores, an accretion of materials from a variety of sources can be combined toward creating essential aspects of the dance work and its context.

Framework is the context within which the documentation of dance may take place. Each of the seven frameworks described in this document has a specific identifiable objective, but dance documentation is not the primary objective in most of them. Forethought permits documentation of dance to take place as the dance is being created, prepared for performance, or taught to successors. Other frameworks occur during the presentation or post-production.-

Product is a technical term for the dance documentation records that are produced. These potential historical records may have been planned intentionally to serve as dance documentation, but in some cases the results are casual byproducts of other work in the service of dance creation, teaching, and performance.

Recorded evidence includes the dance documentation products that have a visual or written form. Recorded documentation becomes fixed in a form that reflects the performance, practice, or response at a particular moment in time. Recorded evidence can give a detailed account, such as a videotape of a performance or a complete Labanotation score of a dance. Other recorded evidence, such as press releases or photos, may provide an incomplete description of the dance, but becomes valuable when used with other evidence. **Unrecorded evidence** is unwritten, or otherwise unfixated, information deriving from body experience, such as having seen a dance or having participated in it. A performer who participated in a dance might be asked, years later, to use his or her memory and kinesthetic knowledge to teach the dance to another group, with few other visual or written aids, or a person who witnessed an improvisatory dance might tell someone what he or she saw.

Tools are the assorted written, visual, and personal instruments used to help document a dance. A tool that provides a vivid detail of a dance (such as a film or complete notation score) may be able to function well as the sole source necessary for documentation or reconstruction. Other tools, such as a descriptive account by a dance critic or a series of photographs, which by themselves convey a sketchy impression, may be better used in a group of tools to augment or confirm information from each other.

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