

Dream

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Dream and Dare! Dare and Dream. This is my challenge for all of us and also the challenge of our conference: “The Creative Process: Choreography, Choice-Making, and Communication.” We must dream to create and communicate, but we must also dare and take risks, and our choices often can and should include venturing into the unknown and unexpected.

This challenge has made my lifetime in dance a wonderful adventure. Early influences were classes that included Dalcroze explorations, Graham and Humphrey techniques, and teachers who emphasized openness to all kinds of movement. From the 1950s through the early 1970s, my main interests were performance and choreography. Two wonderful opportunities proved important in the 1950s. As a sophomore at Brandeis University in 1952, I auditioned and was one of two students who performed with Merce Cunningham when he choreographed Igor Stravinsky’s *Les Noces*. His movements were new and strange, and I was fascinated. I wanted more, thus returning to my hometown of New York and transferring to Brooklyn College. I did take classes at the Cunningham studio but also explored classes with other artists. After taking classes with Marie Marchowsky, an early Graham dancer, she invited me to be in her company and perform at Henry Street Playhouse in 1955, the year I graduated from college. In the next year I took classes with Hanya Holm, Alwin Nikolais, Jose Limon, Robert Joffrey, Gerald Arpino, Martha Graham, Nona Schurman, and others, and taught drama and dance in private schools and various recreational programs.

A year at Juilliard, Dance Division, after college, with Graham, Tudor, Humphrey and others was inspiring, but convinced me being in a company was not my goal. Following this was my Master’s at University of Wisconsin, which included classes with the great visionary Margaret H’Doubler. During the 1960s my dance world began to change radically. By 1967, I was full time faculty at American University, and became involved in curriculum, education, committees, organizations, community. I think those of us in dance have so much to give back, and we can help create a better world. I am proud to be here with all of you: dancers, educators, administrators, writers, choreographers, leaders, researchers. You are so disciplined, passionate, smart, sensitive, and tuned in. For me, giving back started with board membership for American Dance Guild (ADG), which in the 1960s was the first organization focusing specifically on dance in art and education. In 1971 and 1973, I published for ADG two surveys on dance in the public schools, regarding curriculum and certification. I was also involved in PROJECT CAREL, one of the pioneering government endeavors in bringing dance into the schools.

By 1998, I had served on the boards of Society of Dance History Scholars (SDHS), Congress on Research in Dance (CORD), and had been involved with the newly founded National Dance Education Organization (NDEO). I began to feel we were such a small field, always worried about money and survival. What would happen if we all got together and formed an umbrella organization? By that time, there were twenty dance organizations, many quite small, covering criticism, dance medicine, films and more. Very few were communicating and were often unaware of each other. I convened several meetings, inviting representatives of all the groups, and hired a management consultant to help. The organizations eventually decided not to create an umbrella group, but to sponsor a major conference involving all. The grand result was the Millennium 2000 Conference, which many remember as a landmark in our field.

The program booklet lists all twenty groups participating and a wide range of events. For update, in 2016 SDHS and CORD came together and formed one organization: Dance Studies Association.

Choreography and performance remained close to my heart. I spent many Christmas vacations taking workshops with Cunningham, Nikolais, Hawkins and others. I went to many performances, looking for new emerging artists, and created a company with colleagues where we performed, choreographed and were pioneers developing concerts in the schools. In 1971, the American University's Music Department was asked to create a college summer program, allied with Wolf Trap Park for Performing Arts. I decided to get dance involved. I wasn't sure how to do this, but since the administration ignored me, I went my merry way. I had no money, but set up a meeting with the Dance Director of the recently established National Endowment for the Arts. I was in pleasant shock learning that if I had major companies in one month residencies, one third of each company's cost would be covered. I decided to get the other two thirds through establishing a credit program and charge tuition. I wrote to Paul Taylor, Merce Cunningham, Erick Hawkins, Murray Louis, Twyla Tharp and all wrote back with great interest. There was one small problem: Paul Taylor called asking what other companies were coming. When I mentioned Tharp, there was sharp silence on the phone, and then: "If she is coming, I am not." My quick response: "But Paul, I will keep the two of you separated." And so they both came, and I kept them in two separate facilities: and we had peace. Over the ten years of the program, many companies came including Jose Limon, Paul Sanasardo, Don Redlich, American Dance Machine. The program impacted several hundred students and teachers, as they worked daily with these great artists. Audiences in the Washington area saw choreography new and exciting for them; the companies had sustaining summer income, and young artists and educators to mentor.

In my closing remarks, I want to emphasize the hope of sharing your stories, dares and dreams. If my story has any value, it is about risk and the value of moving into the unknown. In my forty years at American University, it was often scary when I suggested new pathways for students. In my NDEO on-line teaching, many tell me they never thought about new possibilities in writing and criticism. Serving on various national and local panels, such as the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, it was challenging to make decisions about who should get money. My six Fulbright Fellowships to different countries made me think about how the world connects. Appointed Full Professor in 1974, it was scary to go back to school and get a PhD in 1983, but also exciting to start another adventure of research, scholarship and book publication. Dream and Dare!!! Life is not about competition, and repeating what works, but about discovery and freedom for yourself and others. Family, friends, colleagues, students helped me in my journey and tonight many thanks: to Martin, Becky, Reuben, Gabriel, Nurit from Israel. Rima and Jane, and to NDEO, particularly Susan and Melissa. I would like to finish with a quote from the late Toni Morrison. "I tell my students, when you get these jobs that you have so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free someone else. If you have power, then your job is to empower someone else." And so I repeat: Dream and Dare.. enjoy the challenges and ideas presented in this marvelous conference.