

A Re-Creation of Mary Wigman's *Ceremonial Figure* Emphasizing the Noh Theater and  
Butoh Elements

By

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## Abstract

This project is a re-creation of Mary Wigman's *Ceremonial Figure* that aims to highlight and re-contextualize the Noh Theater and butoh influences. Mary Wigman, along with other modern dance pioneers, was inspired by Eastern cultures that she deemed exotic and closer to nature. Beginning in 1925, Wigman was inspired by Noh Theater and its use of the mask as a transformative element. Noh Theater is a ritual theater formed through possession rituals that began in the 1300s. Wigman, in turn, inspired butoh, an avant-garde Japanese dance form that was also inspired by Noh Theater and began in the 1960s. The re-creation of Wigman's *Ceremonial Figure* is thus an attempt to reconcile modern dance's history of borrowing movement without context and Wigman's hope for a transcultural dance form. To construct the re-creation, I studied butoh exercises, Wigman's choreographies, and Noh Theater's structure. From butoh, I utilize the technique and quality of the movement. From Wigman, I utilize the performative quality, movement, and theme. Lastly, from Noh, I utilize the transformative element, character development, and mask technique.

## **Dedication**

For Susan Pace White

Who taught me the joy of dancing

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## List of Terms

**Ausdrucksstanz:** is a modern and expressionist dance movement in Germany during the early 1900s; it sought more natural movement divergent of formalized ballet movement.

**Bharatanatyam:** is a classical Indian dance, which originated in Hindu temples; utilizes various hand gestures, *mudras*, to tell a story.

**Charlotte Rudolph:** is a German photographer who focused on portrait and dance photography. He took numerous photos of Wigman and her dancers.

**Dadaism:** was an art movement of the European avant-garde in the early 20th century.

**Dalcroze method:** literally defined as rhythmic gymnastics; it was a European method of learning music through movement.

**Dengaku:** is a field performance developed from ancient agricultural festivals in which Noh Theater derives its sanctity of stage space (Komparu 3).

**Dynamic embodiment:** positions the human body's movement as the center of social action and theory instead of just saying the "body" is agent of social change; it is similar to the saying actions speak louder than words.

**Erick Hawkins:** is modern dancer who studied under Martha Graham; he eventually split ways from her to create his own more somatic approach to modern dance technique.

**Emic:** is a term coined by linguist Kenneth Pike used to describe the "inside" of someone's culture.

**Etic:** is a comparative term that uses a framework derived from outside a specific cultural system.

**Elève:** is a rise of the feet where the center of gravity is shifted from the heels to the balls of the feet.

**Generating:** is the creation of movement.

**Harold Kreutzburg:** is a student of Mary Wigman and Rudolf Von Laban; he was known to have played with humor and drama.

**Hellerau:** is the northern garden city district of Dresden, Germany; Dalcrozes was a resident there.

**Intercultural dance:** is the dialogue of two culturally distinct art forms on the concert stage.

**Isadora Duncan:** is a modern dance pioneer who believed that stimulus for movement arose from the solar plexus; she often used Greek mythology as inspiration for her works.

**Kabuki Theater:** is a classical Japanese-dance drama characterized by its elaborate makeup and costuming; originally all characters were played by women until the 1600s when men began to play both female and male characters.

**Kathak:** is a classical Indian dance that originates from nomadic bards or storytellers; it is known for its rhythmic footwork and dazzling turns.

**Locomotion:** is a dance movement that travels across space.

**Loie Fuller:** is a modern dance pioneer in the 1920s who utilized fabric and theater lighting to create dazzling dances concerts.

**Modern dance:** is a dance genre that originated in the early 1900s when some dancers broke away from the mold of ballet to find more expressive and freer movement.

**Omnagata:** are male actors who play female roles in Kabuki Theater.

**Orient:** is what the Western world would call “the East;” also known as the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies or its cultural contestant (Said 1).

**Orientalism:** is a term coined by Said as a coming to terms with the view of the Eastern world from a European perspective. It recognized the Orient as the exact opposite of the Western world. It was also the most recurring image of the Other (Said 1).

**Plié:** is a bending or softening of the knees.

**Sabar:** is a West African dance form especially practiced in Senegal; the movement is filled with high kicks, complex arm movement, and rhythmic footwork.

**Shintoism:** is a Japanese ethnic polytheistic religion where worshippers pray to shrines of *kamis* (gods).

**Under-curve:** is found in movement where the body moves from a high level to a low level and then back to the high level.



## Section 1: Introduction

### Background

*Wigman begins center stage, her fingers splayed in front of her face and her feet planted on the earth with her knees pointing up into the heavens. With an exaggerated breath resonating from her solar plexus, her fingers vibrate with tension as she pulls an invisible curtain away to reveal the alien replica of her face.*

In fall of 2015, we watched a clip of Mary Wigman in my dance history class. The piece was called Wigman's *Hexentanz II*, also known as *Witch Dance*. The piece captivated me. Wigman was the first modern dance pioneer who stirred a visceral response within me. I felt both an uneasiness and exhilaration in my gut. Her movement quality was unlike anything I had seen before. Her hands were deeply expressive, and they complemented her sharp head movements. The unblinking gaze of the mask seemed to ensnare me as I could not look away. The mask depersonalized Wigman and resulted in my visceral response. It was the mask, I decided, that created such a transformative performance.

My fascination with Wigman's use of the mask began in dance history class. As a performer, I had always struggled with the theatrical side of dance, especially when I needed to act with my face. I often felt my face was the one muscle group I could not control. My body might be within the character, but my face was still my own. Wigman's mask obscured the human face completely, resulting in her transformative performance and my own visceral reaction. I wanted to experience that transformative performance as the performer rather than the spectator.

Mary Wigman was a German modern dance pioneer, who was a member of the *Ausdrucksanz* movement. Wigman used the mask because she wanted a vehicle to express her emotions and themes. The mask provided a blank slate that allowed for complete transference of her inner emotions onto the mask. Wigman only used the mask when it was essential to the piece. It often became essential in her more ecstatic dances. She would feel a similar frustration with her face when it would not transform into the desired character. Because dance is inherently spiritual and ritual, she found the mask emphasized this spiritual, transcendent element of dance.

Masks are used sparingly throughout modern dance's history, so I wondered what had first drawn Wigman to the mask. As I researched, I discovered Wigman was influenced by Japanese Noh Theater, which utilizes the mask as a transformative vehicle to create character development. Noh was an ancient tradition dating back to the 1300s that combined dance, theatre, and music. It has evolved into a theatrical practice through various rituals involving possession through sacred objects. The masks themselves are still considered sacred objects due to their history of possessive conduits. Because performance arts are considered spiritual and ephemeral, the possession rituals were easily transferred to the concert stage. The close link between ritual and performance thus contributes to the mask's retaining its transformative power in Noh Theater and later in Wigman's work.

Noh Theater became popular in Europe around the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Japanese actors brought Noh Theater to the European stage, and it immediately transfixed the European audience. It was through this cultural exchange across Europe to

Japan that alerted Wigman to Noh Theater. She eventually used a Noh mask maker to create mask for her own works.

Wigman's cross-cultural influences are reflected in the entire *Ausdrucksanz* movement. *Ausdrucksanz* was the German modern dance movement that was a larger part of the German Expressionist movement. It began in the early 1900s in protest of classical ballet lack of innovation. It peaked in the 1920s, but eventually died out as War World II began. *Ausdrucksanz* dancers believed in using dance to clearly express their inner emotions, similar to the German Expressionist movement. *Ausdrucksanz* wanted to create more natural and freer movement. Wigman along with many other *Ausdrucksanz* dancers believed the future of modern dance could be found in unindustrialized cultures and the ritual origins of dance. Consequently, Wigman looked to other cultures, such as Japanese, Indian, Southeast Asian cultures, for inspiration.

*Ausdrucksanz*'s influence reached beyond German culture. It also helped Japanese modern dance develop its own techniques. One of these forms was butoh, an avant-garde modern dance. Butoh was directly influenced by Wigman's transformative and expressionistic technique. Butoh appeared in 1959 through the two founders: Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno. Similar to *Ausdrucksanz*, butoh began as a protest to the Westernization of Japanese culture and overly formalized theater forms. Butoh also sought to find more natural movement and express the inner turmoil of being human. The aesthetic of butoh is thus slow and bounded movement that exists on a lower plane. It also often deals with taboo subjects such as bestiality and utilizes distorted movement. Coincidentally, I had been interested in butoh since my freshman year after seeing a clip in my introduction to dance studies course. I felt the same visceral reaction towards

Wigman's *Hexentanz* as I did towards butoh. Butoh does not use masks, and yet it retains a transformative quality through its use of white body paint.

My thesis attempts to reconcile modern dance's history of borrowing movement without context and Wigman's hope for a transcultural dance form. To do this, I re-created one of Wigman's solos emphasizing Noh Theater and butoh and discussed the historical and stylistic similarities between the three art forms. I chose to incorporate the mask because it represented a direct link between Wigman and Noh. Therefore, I chose *Ceremonial Figure* to re-create because of its ritualistic and ecstatic themes. I also chose it because it was historically significant as it was the first piece Wigman performed with the mask.

This project is an interdisciplinary creative process that utilizes dance history, dance re-creation, anthropology of movement theory, and Edwards Said's concept of Orientalism. To provide sufficient context, this thesis is structured to provide individual sections on theory and methodology, Mary Wigman, Noh Theater, and butoh. Each section details the connections between Wigman, Noh Theater, and butoh to establish context and background research for the re-creation process.

### Underlying Theory

This re-creation of *Ceremonial Figure* highlights and emphasizes the cross-cultural influences on modern dance. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, Brenda Farnell's articles on dynamic embodiment, and Drid Williams' articles on anthropology of movement are utilized in this project to recognize both Noh Theater and butoh elements in the piece and respect their cultural significance. Cultural significance is respected

through studying the technique and preserving their symbolic elements/contexts. Said's concept of Orientalism explains Wigman and other modern dancers' fascination with Eastern cultures.

Within Said's Orientalism and within Western society, there is a binary mapping of the world. Orientalism is the Europeans' demeaning representation of Asian cultures and its relationship to these cultures, particularly within a colonial context. In Said's analysis, the Orient pertained to the Middle East, or the Bible lands as Said views it, and India until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Said 12). Orientalism was extended to include North Africa, Southwest and Southeast Asia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Said, who wrote *Orientalism* in 1978, breaks down these representations to reveal how European society used these perspectives of cultures to define themselves in opposition. Orientalism denotes a binary world in which European and American countries are the West while Asian countries are the East. The West represents industrialized society, science, rationality, and normal; while the East represents primitive society, spirituality, irrationality, and the exotic.

Orientalism has a long history in Western art and literature, although Said focuses on Western literature. It also has a long history in dance. Exotic ballets were often produced in the nineteenth century. Some of these ballets are still performed today. One of the most famous is *La Bayadere*. *La Bayadere* tells the story of an Indian temple dancer named Nikiya who has sworn her love to the warrior Solor. However, as in most ballet classics, they are torn apart by society. The High Brahmin covets Nikiya, and the Rajah betroths Solor to his daughter Gamzatti. Nikiya is ultimately killed and Solor falls into an opium-induced dream about Nikiya dancing with other spirits of deceased temple

dancers. The ballet is filled with Indian-themed clothing and even a dance called ‘Hindu Dance’ is influenced by the Indian dance *kathak*.

This Orientalist tradition in dance continued into the birth of modern dance. Because there was a disconnection between nature and industrialized society, modern artists felt a lost sense of humanity. Europeans viewed the East as a nostalgic, romantic portrayal of the root of humanity (Said 9). Consequently, they looked towards Eastern cultures, because they were perceived as the source of Europe’s languages and civilizations, or the origin of humanity. Ruth St. Denis, a modern dance pioneer, choreographed dances with Orientalist themes that she often borrowed from advertisements and visual art. Many of her pieces were inspired by Indian culture including her solos *Incense* and *Nautch*. In this thesis, I extend Said’s Orientalism to look at Japan and how Wigman believed the roots of humanity were especially in Japan and that modern dance could flourish if it utilized Japanese ritual theater elements.

Brenda Farnell critiques anthropology for ignoring the analysis of movement and the body as a communicative device. The critique adds to Said’s concept of Orientalism. It provides further motivation behind modern dance pioneers turning towards Eastern cultures for inspiration. Farnell states the neglect of anthropology of the body stems from a Western bias. Western academia and society often emphasize mind over body rather than recognizing the interdependence between the two. This stems back to René Descartes and Cartesian dualism developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which states the mind and body are two separate entities. The mind cannot exist outside of the body, and the body cannot think.

As a result, Western thought has recognized the mind as the “locus of rationality and knowledge” while the body is recognized as the “locus of irrationality and feeling” (Farnell 5). The body is considered strictly biological and animalistic. Its processes and behaviors remain unchangeable. However, the body itself is still a cultural and dynamic entity. We subconsciously learn socially appropriate posture, hand gestures, and even proper spatial awareness. Enculturation, the process of learning one’s culture at birth, not shapes the mind, but also shapes the body. This shaping continues well past our developmental stages. As we enter different life stages, our behaviors and nonverbal communication vocabulary shifts.

While there are several critiques of Cartesian dualism, Western society still emphasizes mind-body separation. Akram Khan, a foremost modern dance choreographer, who mixes modern and classical Indian *Kathak*, notes that contemporary Western society has an unlimited source of information, and yet less knowledge. The Internet provide us with endless channels of information without discriminating what is relevant or irrelevant. Because we are overwhelmed with information, we usually end up forgetting most of it. Thus, it never becomes knowledge. Knowledge has to be “embodied” and experienced; something we have forgotten how to do. In fact, kinesthetic intelligence is usually forgotten about in the classroom, which can result in low retention levels. We focus on cultivating the mind without any thought to the body that is connected to the mind.

Drid Williams, an anthropologist whose articles Farnell uses for her dynamic embodiment theory, criticizes the theory of dance being reduced to mere movement. He notes that nonverbal communication is not the negation of language, rather it has its own

form of language. Each action-sign is not decipherable if one looks at the mere movement involved in the gesture. To understand the meaning behind an action-sign, one must know the concept behind the movement in addition to the movement itself (Williams 3). Williams uses the Papuans' greeting in various parts of West New Guinea as an example. The action part of the action-sign is the touching of certain body parts such as the navel or the elbow. The concept behind this sign is *ipu*, or essence of life, that is manifested through a certain pattern of body parts. Each person's *ipu* is different and is displayed through a varying correlations of body parts. It is similar to saying one's name after saying "hello." If you only saw the movement without the context, you probably would be confused and would not know how to respond. Conversely, if you had read about the concept of *ipu*, but had not seen the corresponding movements, then you would not fully recognize the greeting in action.

Williams also recognizes the body is not the mere sum of biological processes and systems, but it is rather a "signifying body" (Williams 7). The signifying body is primarily recognized as a social entity that is in a constant performative state. This theory has interesting implications for dance around the world. Western thought historically prefer the development of mind over body, ignoring that fact that the body is connected to the mind and how it thinks. The body in Western society is instantly stifled and bound to socially acceptable behaviors. Even within ballet, the structure set in place is inherently logical, and the language itself is codified and has to be rationally studied.

Modern dance pioneers directly rebelled against these physical boundaries. They felt that their bodies had been lost, because of ballet's modifications to the body. These modifications include tutus, corsets, and pointe shoes. Consequently, they turned to



cultures with a perceived emphasis on the body through elaborate rituals and “wild dancing.” They took off their shoes and corsets and began to find the connection between the body, mind, and movement. Modern dance pioneers still believed the body was more primal than the mind, and thus they focused on what were considered more “primitive” cultures. What they found was usually not primal, chaotic dances, but rather just as elaborate structures and stylized movement as seen in ballets. However, these dances were recognized as a source of knowledge and significance. Dance in these societies had a more specific function than in industrialized Western societies in which dance was mostly entertainment. The movement was not abstract, but rather had a significance or meaning associated with it. This meaning and significance could be construed as more emotional and spiritual in reference to Said’s concept of Orientalism.

Williams’ analysis of movement and modern dance pioneer's borrowing from non-Western cultures makes something clear. Dance cannot be considered a universal language. However, dancers can be inclined to believe dance is a universal language, which can result in justifications of cultural appropriation. Although, dancers are able to learn different movement “vocabularies” quicker than learning a spoken language's vocabulary, the dancer cannot fully understand the meaning behind the vocabulary without cultural context. A more linguistic analogy is dancers can quickly learn the sounds or phonemes of a dance genre, and even perhaps the morphemes, or the smallest unit of meaning. However, they are unable to create a full phrase without making errors. They need the spoken language or immersion into the dance's origin culture to understand the dance's background and meaning. Williams notes that when a dancer recognizes

dance as a universal language, dancers borrow movement out of cultural context to create dances of “otherness.”

Dancers Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis were known for their Oriental-themed solos. In addition to supplying Hollywood with dancers throughout the early 1930s, they also choreographed extravagant Oriental-themed dances for film. Their dancers were extremely popular because of their “original” movement and exotic costumes. However, their dances were often based on popular extant imagery of other cultures. Ruth St. Denis’ original source of inspiration was an image of Isis on a poster of “Egyptian Deities” cigarettes. Although they were the first American company to tour North Africa and Southeast Asia, they were more concerned with finding new, exotic movement. Thus, they didn’t focus on learning new dance forms or their cultural contexts (Williams 3). This cultural borrowing doesn't have direct harmful effects until one considers how mainstream media's inaccurate portrayal of these dances results in classical Bharatanatyam dancers, Kathak dancers, and Sabar dancers being rendered voiceless and unable to represent their art form.

While dance is not a universal language, it still exists in a globalized world, and there are many hybrid forms of classical dances. It should not be ignored that both modern dance and ballet have freely borrowed without context from non-European ethnic dances to create hybrid forms (Mitra 10). Culturally pure dances do not exist, and the entire dance world is filled with cultural borrowing. Ballet, although a codified and formal technique has influenced and been influenced by multiple cultures. It remains an ethnic dance despite it being developed in several European countries and Russia. When

viewed from an outside culture, it is still culturally distinct in its narrative themes, its aesthetic, and its French terminology (Kealinohomoku 40).

A new term for a hybrid dance is “interculturalism,” or the dialogue of two culturally distinct art forms on stage. The term was first coined in the 1980s and was developed in theatre studies. It is a controversial term as the term’s history includes mostly white Western artist appropriating non-Western cultures traditions and art forms. However, Royona Mitra and others such as Una Chaudhuri are reclaiming the word. This new interculturalism involves a dialogue between two cultures. The new interculturalism focuses on the confusion, tension, and dialogue between a person and another cultures’ people, artifacts, politics, art forms and traditions (Mitra 15). It is more of a lived condition in which a person is constantly immersed in two cultures. Khan is an excellent example as he merges classical Indian *kathak* dance with modern dance. *Kathak* dance has a looser more improvisation movement vocabulary compared to *Bharatanatyan* (Mitra 8), which allows it to be an easier dance form to coexist with modern dance. Still, he notes that his style is not a fusion nor a contemporary form of *kathak*. To say so would suggest that *kathak* has to be westernized for it to become a contemporary art. Instead, it is a dialogue about how the two forms create new cultural meanings (Mitra 10). To add to his intercultural style, he also facilitates dialogues with various other “ethnic” dances. He has collaborated with equally diverse artists such as flamenco dancers.

I recognize that as a white woman performing this piece, a heightened cultural awareness is required. Therefore, Farnell's dynamic embodiment theory and William's emphasis on both movement and concept in action-signs are needed within this thesis to maintain the piece's cultural integrity. I hope to do this through creating an intercultural

dance piece that equally emphasizes each art form's influence on the piece. This piece will reflect Wigman's hope for a dance that speaks to multiple cultures, or a transcultural piece, without sacrificing the cultural context. From butoh, I utilize the technique and quality of the movement. From Wigman, I utilize the performative quality, movement, and theme. Lastly, I utilize Noh Theater for the transformative element, character development, and mask technique.

### Methodology

There are several ways to reconstruct or re-create a dance work, which depend on where the choreographer is situated in history. For example, if I were learning a piece by Erick Hawkins, who only passed away in 1994 and has a distinct lineage of dancers trained by him, then the main component of my learning process would be kinesthetically embodying the movement. I would work with dancers who trained with Hawkins, and the piece would be a part of original repertory. These types of pieces are usually called "restagings" or physical reconstructions. However, with early modern dance pioneers like Loie Fuller and Mary Wigman, who did not have a distinct lineage of dancers who learned their work, the sources for reconstruction are indirect links to the original choreography. Even when there is a direct lineage of dancers, sometimes a piece of choreography is lost. For example, Martha Graham's *Ekstasis* was recently reconstructed by former principal Virginie Mécène through such indirect links. There were no videos nor direct embodied knowledge to pass down the work. Therefore, Mécène used indirect links such as photographs, the choreographer's recollections, cotemporaneous reviews, and the embodiment of Graham technique.

To gain more specific insight into the reconstruction process, I interviewed Jessica Lindberg Coxe who has reconstructed Loie Fuller's works. In fact, in the spring semester of 2015, Coxe set her reconstruction of Loie Fuller's *La Mer* on MTSU dance students. According to her, *La Mer* was about fifty percent reconstructed choreography and fifty percent improvisation or original choreography. I asked her to walk me through her step-by-step of her first reconstruction, which was Fuller's solo piece *Fire Dance*. Her first step was acquiring the sheet music, which she used to piece the movement together, like a clothesline. She then obtained different photographs of the piece from when the piece originally premiered and its subsequent performances. Often photographs were taken as publicity shots and not during a live performance. This meant the poses were not a part of the original choreography. Therefore, she chose poses that appeared more frequently in more than one primary source to become the technique and key movements. Reviews and writings about the piece were the basis of her reconstructions. She used them to create a through line or a plotline of the piece. She then attached images that resembled the review descriptions to create a sequence of events that fit with the writings and the music. From there, the gaps were filled with improvised movement. One essential fact she emphasized was not only reconstructing the movement but also finding the grandeur and theatricality of the piece. These early modern dance pioneers were best known for their charisma rather than their athletic feats of technical movement.

Betsy Fisher had a different approach to her reconstruction of Wigman's *Hexentanz II* in her Doctorate thesis "Creating and Re-Creating Dance: Performing Dances related to *Ausdruckstanz*." Because the music score was lost, Fisher had to re-compose the *Hexentanz II* score. Instead of using music score as her through line, she

used a two minute video clip of *Hexentanz II* as the foundation for her reconstruction. This is the only visual record of *Hexentanz* and was filmed in 1930 for the documentary *Mary Wigman Tanzt*. From there, she utilized writings about Wigman's *Hexentanz II* and consulted photographs of the *Hexentanz I* and *II* (Fisher 60). However, her main source of generating movement was improvisation until she found her own version of the witch. She interpreted Wigman's theme rather than trying to accurately reconstruct it. Thus, she calls her reconstruction of *Hexentanz* a re-creation as more than fifty percent of the piece is her choreography.

Through my research, I have found no consistent guidelines on the difference between reconstruction, re-creation, and re-imagining. However, as there are no full visual records of Wigman's solo work nor a distinct lineage of dancers trained in Wigman's solo choreographies, often reconstructions of her pieces are considered re-creations. Both Fisher and Mary Ann Santo Newhall, who has also reconstructed *Hexentanz II*, consider their solos re-creations rather than reconstructions as a significant portion of their re-creation was their own choreography.

Because of the limited resources I had and because my project was utilizing different sources for movement and technique, I decided to choreograph a re-creation of *Ceremonial Figure* instead of a reconstruction. I still utilized Coxe's reconstruction techniques, but I included researching reviews, film clips, images, and writings about the piece and Wigman's choreographic work overall. I first conducted research into the aesthetic and technical similarities between Wigman, Noh Theater, and butoh. I also researched each art form's technique and cultural context. I then utilized this research to determine which art form would influence each aspect of the dance. From there, I used a

technical manual on butoh to study butoh technique and find the quality I needed for the piece. I used both butoh exercises and Wigman's writings and clips of her pieces to generate the phrases and motifs, or themes. I also consulted contemporary modern dance pioneers who choreographed solos with similar ritualistic themes to add several poses to the piece. I also used Noh Theater mask technique to create my head positions for each movement and utilized the Noh technique of walking in the piece. My last step was to journal after every session in the studio to retain my revelations, movement patterns, and spatial patterns.

## **Section 2: Mary Wigman**

### **Background**

Mary Wigman began dancing at a relatively late age after finding dissatisfaction in her limited future prospects. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze's students and the three Wiesenthal sisters' works peaked her interest. Wigman was caught between her parents' traditional expectations of marriage and the shifting society and growing opportunities (Newhall 368). She was given a thorough education, and yet was expected to marry. After the dissolution of an arranged engagement, she realized she was deeply unhappy and needed to break away from tradition. When she cried, she noticed she often cried with her hands. This was why the Wiesenthal sisters hand movements entranced Wigman and reminded her of own hand gestures. Wigman noted that their hands "...can laugh happily and also express struggle, sadness, and the gentleness of the dance" (Newhall 368). She was entranced with dancing from that moment and consequently sought a dance education. Finally at the age of twenty-seven, she began her dance training with the Dalcroze School. In Hellereau, she became friends with the Expressionist painter Emile Nolde. Nolde noticed a similarity of movement between Rudolf Von Laban and Wigman,

and he ended up introducing them to each other. After studying with Laban for a while, Wigman moved with him to Monte Verita where she began developing her own style steeped in Mysticism, Primitivism, Expressionism, and Orientalism.

In the early 1900s, her solos were first performed at Monte Verita, an artist's colony in the Swiss Alps. These solos included her first version of *Hexentanz*, which did not include the mask. She spent time with Laban and other artists in voluntary exile during the First World War (Manning 54). The colony was established as a haven for rebel youth of all kinds including writers, mystics, psychoanalysts, and Dadaists (Manning 57). These artists rejected modernism and negative effects of an industrialized society. More emphasis was placed on a natural lifestyle, which included abstaining from alcohol and meat (Kolb 30). The rejection of modernism, and consequently Western culture, resulted in Wigman's query into both ancient German, Chinese, Javanese, and Japanese culture particularly. As a member of the *Ausdrucksanz* movement—the German modern dance movement—she sought a more expressive and natural movement devoid of a formal and codified technique. She found she preferred to use improvisational structures to generate movement. These queries lead to Wigman choreographing solos with Oriental themes. For example, the whirling dervishes of the Sufi sect of the Islamic faith inspired her solo *Monotony/Whirl Dance* (Newhall 133). She also utilized a Japanese Noh- inspired mask in her solo *Ceremonial Figure*. She then later utilized the mask again in her second version of *Hexentanz*, *Dance of Death*, and *Totenmal*.

Mary Wigman's works can be arranged on a continuum of lighter to darker pieces. The continuum ranged from light, joyful pieces to more ecstatic, possessive, and transformative pieces (Manning 60). The works mentioned in this thesis were created in



her earlier career. Her first pieces to be publically performed were in 1914 at Monte Verita. These works included *Hexentanz*, *Lento*, and *A Day of Elves*. Her first group piece, called *The Seven Dances of Life*, premiered in 1920-1923. The individual pieces within *The Seven Dances of Life* ranged from light to darker pieces to depict the rich variety of human life. *Dance of Death* and *Dance of the Demon* depict her more ecstatic, darker dances. Both pieces utilize a transformative costume. *Dance of Death* was later adapted as a stand-alone group piece in 1926. This version utilized the mask. Wigman's first choreographed with the mask in *Ceremonial Figure*, which premiered a year earlier. *Ceremonial Figure* was created for *Visions*, a three part program that premiered in 1925. In 1926, Wigman performed both *Monotony: Turning*, also known as *Whirl Dance*, and *Hexentanz II*. *Hexentanz II* was the second version of *Hexentanz* and was Wigman's second experiment with the mask. In 1929, Wigman premiered *Shifting Landscape*, which again included a range of ethereal pieces to demonic pieces (Wigman 115-116). *Storm Song*, *Pastoral*, and *Dance of Summer* were all part of *Shifting Landscape*. I used clips from the latter two to aid my creative process. The last piece I discuss in this paper regarding the Noh Theater influences is *Totenmal*, which premiered in 1930.

*Ausdruckstanz* was the modern dance movement that participated in the German Expressionist movement. *Ausdruckstanz* sought a more authentic form of dance that diverged from the technical classical ballet. *Ausdruckstanz* artists recognized the subconscious and altered states of consciousness. Their purpose was to express these inner emotions through their movement and evoke a visceral response to their dances. Similar to the American modern dance movement, Wigman pursued sources of inspiration outside of her culture to express her inner emotions. In Monte Verita, she was

surrounded by new influences including the Dadaists and Nolde's sketches of African and Asian masks. Many Expressionist artists turned towards Asian and African cultures, because these cultures were considered more primitive and closer to nature. In short, they were considered a pure source of humanity. Wigman, along with her contemporaneous modern dance pioneers in America, choreographed ritualistic dances. These dances helped them achieve their goal of creating transcendent performative states.

The idea of using primitive culture as inspiration did not die out with modern dance pioneers. In *Modern Dance Forms* by Louis Horst, a book dedicated to educating the young choreographer, there is a dance study in an archaic or primitive form. The book's description of the Earth Primitive study could almost describe Wigman's second version of *Hexentanz*. Horst states the dancer's movement must avoid "any gestures that are fluid, smooth, or slick" and that the dancer is "alertly sensitive to the feel of the earth under his feet," (Horst 61). The movement description is also similar to the butoh aesthetic.

Wigman had a unique relationship to music that supported her interests in primitivism and mysticism. Reflecting a rebellion of her formative training in Dalcroze's extremely musical method, Wigman created percussive scores that supported her movement. Dalcroze's Eurhythmics taught rhythm, musical structure, and pitch through movement to create extreme musicality. Wigman's percussive scores resulted in her dancing not being subordinate to the music. This created more of a dialogue between the movement and the music rather than the music dictating the movement. She was often found of using Eastern European music as well as Asian percussive instruments. In

*Hexentanz*, she utilized the gong to accentuate her gestures. This is similar to Noh Theater in which the percussive music and chanting utilize a call and response pattern.

Although she utilized Laban's composition tools of space, time, and effort, her movement sought greater expressive weight. Wigman's unique compositional process can be compared with Nietzsche's philosophy on Dionysus and Greek mythology in *The Birth of Tragedy*. With Dionysus relegated by Romans to a lesser god of drunkenness rather than ecstatic abandon, Nietzsche considered the demotion to be the "triumph of rationality over irrationality and fact over intuition" (Newhall 134). Dionysus is often perceived as androgynous or even feminine, and is therefore imbued with a creative power. Wigman was often associated with Dionysus and even called "the Priestess of Dance" in the media. Her creative impulses rooted in ecstatic movement were associated with transcending the material world to reach spiritual enlightenment. However, she recognized the need to channel her impulses through the dance using the tools of time, space, and effort. Laban introduced her to these analytical compositional tools, and Wigman used them not only to analytically explore space but also to provide a means for her audience to transcend material reality. Her Dionysian impulses conflicted with Apollonian order, reflecting the discourse between the Apollonian modern world and the Dionysian "primitive" world. This is perhaps the reason for drawing on Japanese Noh Theater to utilize the mask. The mask and its use as a transformative vessel are representative of humanity's past connection to the spiritual and natural. Thus, Wigman's desire to place the mask within a theatrical context is representative of maintaining the link to humanity's soul within the modern world.

Wigman always started with a source of inspiration that brought an emotional and kinetic response out of her. The source of inspiration was almost always varied. In the formative year of her career, it was often a tangible object such as a brocade object or a recording of Hungarian music. For example, a bold piece of brocade sewn with metallic threads over a copper-red background (Wigman 40) caused Wigman to return her *Hexentanz* piece and create a second version. The source of inspiration wasn't necessarily the theme, but rather the catalyst for an emotion or inner truth that Wigman wished to express. Shaping that expression then came from improvisation and Laban technique within a dialectic, or using the anti-thesis to find the consistent truth (Newhall "Apollonian and Dionysian"). Wigman's greatest skill was born out of this process. She could convey or share with the audience her inner emotional landscape through her body, creating a transformative experience. Her transformative experience was aided by her use of mask and costume to depersonalize.

Wigman's first performance within the mask is recorded in her piece *Ceremonial Figure*. She ultimately decided to use the mask, because her face still "in spite of its disciplined mobility, bore the features of Mary Wigman" (Wigman 35). Her decision to use the mask was not made lightly. Wigman noted the use of the mask was of necessity. The mask "must be an essential part of the dance figure" and only used when the "imagination reveals the image of an apparently alien figure" (Wigman 124). She thus consulted a Noh mask maker named Victor Magito. The first mask Magito made for her evoked an unnerving reaction in Wigman. Instead of the mask being depersonalizing, it became extremely personal. So Wigman sent Magito back to the drawing board. His

second mask arrived with a “mere suggestion of human features” (Wigman 35) that Wigman loved.

Wigman performed two versions of *Hexentanz*. The first version was one of her first solos performed in 1914 in which she transformed into a primeval figure of a witch. When she returned to the dance in 1926, after a successful first experiment with the mask in *Ceremonial Figure*, she found that the mask was needed again to create a fully transcendent performative state. She realized that her piece of worn brocade used in the first version of *Hexentanz* and the mask originally made for *Ceremonial Figure* belonged together. However, the mask itself was like torture. Unlike the mask in *Ceremonial Figure*, the mask would not keep a neutral expression. Instead, its expression would change with every movement of the body and every tilt of the head (Wigman 42). It even appeared to be laughing at some points. The mask had a similar neutral expression to the *Ceremonial Figure* mask with just the addition of more unique features. Nevertheless, the *Hexentanz* mask felt more alive. The use of body to project expression onto the mask is one of Noh Theater’s defining qualities. It suggests that Wigman’s own mask technique was improving in a similar fashion to Noh Theater.

#### Noh Theater Influences

As previously stated, Wigman sought inspiration from outside cultural influence, especially within Asian cultures. Her most significant influence is found within Japanese culture: Noh Theater. In fact, because most European countries were searching for more “exotic” inspirations, Japanese artists found a niche in the European theater scene. Consequently, Noh Theater impacted European theater through several outlets. Arthur

Waley published *The Noh Play of Japan* in 1921; Bertolt Brecht adapted *Der Jasager* (1930) from a Noh original play; and Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa released their volume of *Noh of Accomplishment* in 1916/17 (Kolb 32). Although there are no primary sources describing Wigman read or saw these plays, it reflects the trendiness and prevalence of Noh Theater in Europe.

### Wigman's Influence on Japanese Modern Dance

Takaya Ito was a Japanese dancer who received early Kabuki training and attended the Dalcroze School, the same school Wigman attended early in her career (Kolb 33). Ito wished “to bring together the East and the West” and be a more universal dancer, merging Western materialism and Eastern spiritualism. Ito choreographed for operas, plays, and even a few movies. His credits include pseudo-Oriental commissions like *The Mikado* and *Madame Butterfly*. However, pursuing a more universal approach to art, she also worked on Western works like *Carmen* and on an intercultural Noh-inspired personal pieces like *Tamura* (Shiba 13). His work was also influenced by his early Kabuki training. Baku Ishii was a modern-dance inspired artist who performed in several films with traditional Japanese inspired movement. Takaya was the first Japanese modern dancer actually to train with Wigman in Expressionist dancing. Returning to Japan, he combined Wigman's “methodology” with traditional Japanese folk dances to create something “the Westerners can never do” (Shiba 122). Therefore, the Dalcroze School, and later the Wigman School became a site of cultural exchange.

During the Second Dancer's Congress held in Germany to discuss the future of modern dance, Wigman argued against the codification of technique. She believed

improvisation insured the dancer could freely and individually develop her or his own quality. This is a similar quality looked for in butoh. Although it has a process of using imagery to stimulate movement, it does not have a codified technique even after its globalization. Wigman's belief in improvisation as the technique for modern dance also reflects her transcultural hope for dance. During the Second Dancer's Congress, she successfully emphasized that returning to the ritual origin of dance would become the future of modern dance. She proved this through the most successful dance performance during the conference. The piece was a group work titled *Celebration* (Newhall "Second Dancer's Congress"). Wigman's belief in a universal dance stemmed from her mysticism influence. As historian George L. Mosse wrote, "The human condition was conceived as straddling two spheres—that of the individual on earth as well as a larger unit outside of society in which man could find a universal identity" (Fisher 15). Wigman believed that returning to the transcendent quality of dancing using various culture's traditions was key to modern dance's future. I believe she recognized the lack of dance's significance in the Western world at that time and sought to revive dance's societal importance through ritual origins.

### **Section 3: Noh Theater**

#### Noh Theater Origins

Noh's influence on Wigman is seen in Wigman's *Ceremonial Figure* and the second version of *Hexantanz*. Both used masks to dehumanize the dancer(s) and bear resemblance to Noh character masks. In Noh Theater, the mask is often used to "bridge the gap" between the natural world and the supernatural. There are several categories of

Noh character mask. The *shite* is the primary masked figure who transforms into a supernatural ghost or demon in the second act (Kolb 33). One of Wigman's dancers, Berthe Trumpy, was particularly entranced by this aspect of Noh Theater (Kolb 33). Accessing the supernatural or mystic realm was one of Wigman's goals in her expressive dancing, an interest probably picked up while in residence at Monte Verita. The extremely stylized and slow choreography found in clips of Wigman's *Hexentanz* and *Totenmal* also were influenced by the *Noh* Theater.

*Noh* Theater's origins are found in possession rituals based in Shintoism and *Dengaku*, or ancient field performances. Traditionally, a full program of *Noh* Theater last a full day and consists of five plays. The first play is the ritual-like *Okina* where the *shite* wears the mask of the *Okina* in which donning of the mask symbolizes the descent of the god (Tankosha 7). The *Okina* consists of three dances. The first is a formal dance of the distinguished young man *Senzai*. This first dance includes the percussive stamping of feet that resembles Shinto rituals that call forth the god. The descent of the god appears in this first dance when the *Senzai* places the white mask of *Okina* on his face, signaling the transition into the second dance. The second dance is a divine dance of the god with its calm and specific movement. The last dance is performed by a *Kyogen* actor wearing a black mask, which performs more abstract and allegro movement with leaps and kicks. The ritual is hence completed and resembles the three stages of a Shinto ritual where a god is called upon, appears and dances, and then is sent off (Tankosha 4). The *Okina* play is the one play performed for tradition rather than entertainment and harken back to possession rituals.



## Noh Theater Elements

The *Okina* play also represents the first stage of the aesthetic structure of Noh. In Noh Theater, there is a preference for odd numbers also described as “an aesthetic of discord.” Noh Theater is essentially a theater of tragedy, and thus discord is essential in moving the narrative forward. The key concept in Noh is therefore *jo-ha-kyu*. *Jo* indicates a beginning or preparation as seen in the *Okina* play. *Ha* indicates a breaking or destruction; one could almost consider this as the climax. *Kyu* indicates an urgency as seen in the last dance of *Okina* (Tankosha 24). This concept orders everything and not just the order of the plays. It orders speed, time, space, and plot. *Jo* refers to the spatial element, *ha* is the change or disordering element, and *kyu* refers to the temporal element (Tankosha 25).

The stage space is divided and designated in reference to the aesthetic concept as well. *Jo* refers to the upstage and the bridge that connects the stage to the mirror room. *Ha* refers to the middle stage and the bridge nearest the stage. Last, *kyu* is awarded the stage itself and also the downstage (Tankosha 27). The *ha* conflict aspect also helps orders the plays and the acts within each individual play as well. The plays must range from simple to complex with the *kyu* ending being the most spectacular. This also means the genre of the play is determined by the *jo-ha-kyu* concept, and each genre has its own slot within the full program. For example, genres are determined by the main character and its corresponding mask. These are ordered as god, man, woman, lunatic, and demon (Tankosha 27). The temporal aspect of *kyu* orders the rhythm within each play. The rhythm’s tempo is thus increasingly sped up. *Kyu* also orders the movements and actions of the performer, it is considered the natural human tempo of slow movement gradually

building up into a frenzy followed by a stop (Tankosha 29). Then the rhythm of human movement is repeated. I utilize this sense of rhythm in my re-creation.

There are five categories of play corresponding to each type of masks. I will discuss two categories here as they resemble Wigman's works closely. They are also the two categories that inform my re-creation. The first category is the god or *Okina* plays in which the order of the dances is described above. These plays are more ceremonial rather than dramatic and are usually performed only as the first Noh of New Year's Day (Tankosha 34). The play revolves around the god descending to Earth. In Japanese culture, these gods, *kami*, exist only in thought and language and not as recognizable images like Greek gods (Tankosha 34). Noh is thus the only recognizable concrete image of them, and Noh portrays the myths surrounding them.

The gradual descent of the god onto the main actor through formalized, ritualized dancing is profoundly similar to Wigman's concept for *Ceremonial Figure*. Wigman first used the mask in this piece, because her face was "still a human face" and would not subordinate itself to the "ceremonial figure" (Wigman). The percussive and small steps described in *Ceremonial Figure* and in the first filmed section of *Hexentanz* with the addition of the specific gestures creates a similar transformation process. In Noh, it's the combination of wearing the mask and robes and performing the same movement patterns that results in the actor acquiring the chi or spirit of the character, especially in the *Okina* plays (Tankosha 221).

The other category of plays that resembles Wigman's work, especially in *Hexentanz*, *Totenmal*, and *Dance of Death* is the fourth category or madness plays. While the *Okina* plays represent the *jo* aspect of Noh, madness plays can be categorized as the

most intense stage of the disordering or *ha* element. The madness play often utilizes the madwoman masks and features a derangement in the character. A derangement is a character ripped from normal societal boundaries and thrown into a possession of “unknowing” (Tankosha 37). The plays revolve around the process of becoming deranged and the separation from oneself. The recognizable self is then replaced by either another spirit, or the dual existence of two spirits within one body, also known as the “liberation of inner peace” (Tankosha 37). The last separation of self suggests the audience is moved to a sympathetic response towards the character's derangement. In fact one of the key elements of Noh Theater is the active audience and its relationship to the actors. The audience members are not passive viewers, but rather are an active audience. They are encouraged to form a relationship with the character. Wigman, as seen in *Hexentanz*, often portrayed manic and deranged characters that subverted societal boundaries. These characters often entranced the audience and evoked an emotional response out of her audience, although the response was rarely sympathetic, except in *Totenmal* which memorialized fallen soldiers.

In the madness plays, the woman who is already in an abnormal state caused by extreme tragedy or grief is catapulted into full madness. Madness is achieved through an event or extreme emotion such as yearning (Tankosha 37). Wigman experienced her own separation and conflict within the self in her practicing of both *Hexentanz* and *Ceremonial Figure*. In rehearsing *Hexentanz*, she saw her reflection of the witch in the mirror and described her image as “one possessed, wild and dissolute, repelling and fascinating...” (Wigman 40). This derangement is incorporated into my version of *Ceremonial Figure* through the reaching of the hands and the frantic motion of the hands

to evoke a yearning and an instability within the ceremonial figure. The hands as evocation of emotion reflects Wigman's own hand articulations used to express emotions. Moreover, I add the *jo-ha-kyu* temporal element to indicate possession and separation of my own self from the ceremonial figure.

### Similarities between Noh Theater and Wigman

The mask in *Hexentanz* was created by Noh mask maker Viktor Magito and exhibited the ambivalent features of Noh masks used in Noh Theater. The mask made for *Hexentanz* was an exaggeration of Wigman's own features that distorted or transformed the familiar into the distinctly different. The mask reflects mostly the Noh Theater masks of female humans with particular likeness to the "granny" (*uba*) and the middle aged women (*shakumi*) (Rath 15). The mask has slits for eyes. It suggests a downward gaze similar to the *uba* and *shakumi* along with thin lips that are even more pinched on Wigman's mask. The sunken cheeks of Wigman's mask create a gaunt appearance that is found in several Noh masks, regardless of their category. Still, the gaunt appearance is often associated with age and tragedy. Wigman's *Ceremonial Figure* mask can be seen as the reduced, abstracted form of all Noh mask, because of its "mere suggestion of human features" and its "chinalike thinness" (Wigman 34). Although both masks represents a female entity, the mask is almost ambiguous in regards to gender. The *Hexentanz* mask's distinct feminine feature reflects the "wild and disarranged hair" of the Hannya Noh mask, which portrays a demonic female (Coldirion 232). Hence, these mask are the evocation of the emotional and spiritual Other as seen in Said's description of the Oriental East. The use of feminine mask also suggest Wigman's view of the Oriental being distinctly feminine, even though all Noh roles are played by men.

One of Wigman's defining characteristics was her transformative or transcendent performances through both mask and depersonalizing costumes. This performance quality was influenced by Noh Theater. She even used a Noh mask maker to create her masks for *Ceremonial Figure* and *Hexentanz*. In Noh Theater, the actor's physical choices can change the supposedly fixed expression of the mask. For example, the actor can bring nuances to the role by tilting the mask upwards to indicate laughter/smiling or by tilting the mask downwards to indicate crying/brooding (Rath 13). The profile view is also used in Noh Theater to deemphasize the physical presence of the actor. It creates a more ethereal aura highlighted by the otherworldly quality of the mask. These nuances emphasize the ambivalent nature of the mask in which the audience is left to interpret its emotions. By leaving it up to the audience, the mask is given a larger range of emotions than normally found in the actor's human face. The mask in Noh Theater thus causes a paradox from an average human's perspective. A mask is first and foremost used to mask one's face, the central point in conveying emotion, and yet the mask is considered to be more expressive than the normal human face. This paradox erases audience's preconceptions about the mask wearer's identity.

Wigman used the Noh mask concept to a similar effect in her work especially within *Ceremonial Figure*, *Hexentanz*, and *Totenmal*. A similarity between Wigman and Noh Theater arises from the use of mask as vessels that hold the myths surrounding them (Rath 12). The use of mask as memory also reflects Wigman's view of the body as a site in which memory and experiences leave their mark. This belief led to one of Wigman's many innovations, as declared by Newhall. It is "her fundamental belief in and demand for a modern emphasis on the transcendent nature and spiritual purpose of dance"

(Newhall 19). This belief was an impetus for much of her dramatic work with the mask. This belief is reflected in the *Ausdruckstanz* movement where Wigman and other artists created an unsettling viewing experience for the audience and a transcendental state of being for the performer. With the world already well on its path to modernization in terms of time and space, the *Ausdruckstanz* artist focused on the other planes of existence within the individual by expressing it through the body (Newhall 74).

Wigman's connection to Noh is also visible in her overall sense of costuming for more transformative character pieces. Costumes included are found in *Storm Dance*, *Totenmal*, *Dance of Death*, *Idolatry*, and *Dance of the Demon*. In Noh Theater the costumes are three-dimensional with the *shite* dressed in rich, colorful brocades while the *waki*, or indirect antagonist, is dressed in muted colors to indicate he is a shadow character. The bright colors of the *shite* robes indicates revelation. The robes are inherently structural and de-emphasize the actor's human body. This depersonalization through costume is seen in Wigman's use of vast volumes of fabric to swath the dancer into a more architectural and less sensual figure. Often when she did not use a Noh mask, the head was still swallowed up by the costume with only the face showing a mask-like stare.

Perhaps Wigman's best example of using Noh narrative, character development, movement patterns, and costuming is in her group pieces like *Totenmal*. There is a roughly three minute film clip of this piece that shows the dancers in robes with large sleeves and gaunt masks. The antagonist looks most distinctly like a Noh character through his brocade and three-dimensional costume as well as his mask. The movement of the antagonist also is performed with bent knees and percussive stamping. The rest of

the clip features Wigman as the only character not masked, moving in slowed down manner as seen in the *jo* rhythm of a Noh play. In *Totenmal*, Wigman plays the main character without a mask while the rest of the cast is masked. This is fundamentally opposite of Noh Theater, in which the main character wears the mask. However, both have distinct ways of distinguishing the main character. In *Totenmal*, it is the ensemble characters of ghosts of soldiers and the demon of death that require actor transformation; therefore it makes sense for Wigman to remain unmasked.

#### **Section 4: Butoh**

##### Modern Japanese Dance Origins

The origins of butoh are authentically Japanese and were born out of Japanese societal conflict in the 1960s. Nevertheless, it is considered an avant-garde form of dance that has become increasingly globalized. Japanese modern dance was spurred on by German Expressionist/*Ausdrucksstanz* dancers such as Wigman and Harold Kretuzberg, who both indirectly influenced Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata, the founders of butoh. Along with the Dalcroze technique, *Ausdrucksstanz* informed much of Japanese modern dance in terms of composition and technique. The lineage that connects Western modern dance and butoh begins with Eguchi Takaya who studied with Mary Wigman from 1932-1933 and brought back the Expressionist creative power to Japan. Through him and Ishii Baku, Ohno learned Wigman's physical technique and creative experimentalism. Hijikata was taught by Masumura Katsuko and Ando Mitsuko, both students of Eguchi (*Butoh* 22). Hijikata and Ohno met through Ando between 1952 and 1954, completing the link between Wigman and butoh.

Although Japanese modern dance pioneers borrowed from *Ausdruckstanz* and Wigman, Wigman began the cultural exchange by borrowing from Noh Theater. Wigman's aspirations and technique were shaped by the "Oriental," especially Buddhism and Noh Theater. In fact, as stated before, the majority of modern dance pioneers borrowed from the "Far East" for exotic source material and new spiritual concepts. Ruth St. Denis borrowed liberally from Hinduism for several pieces and created a Japanese dance drama called *O-Mika* (*Butoh* 24). Her school, Denishawn, provided versatile dancers for Hollywood to use in numerous "exotic spectacles." She even hired Ito to teach at the Denishawn School. Ito eventually returned to Japan to focus on universal themes instead of "Oriental" content (*Butoh* 24). Other modern dance pioneers not only borrowed from the "Far East," but also borrowed from African tribes to create "primitive" dances. Even Martha Graham, whose work is often considered Americana, used Noguchi Isamu, a sculptor, to create Japanese styled sets (*Butoh* 24). Through all of these instances of cultural borrowing there lies a question: Are these elements authentic Japanese characteristics or simply the choreographer's idea of what the Japanese aesthetic looks like?

Butoh is an excellent example of how a dance form becomes globalized. Butoh reclaims what was originally Japanese, and yet butoh and its origins have been shaped by European culture. Consequently, butoh's origins and globalization question if there is really any true "ethnic" dance and exactly how power shapes the dialogue between cultures. Even Noh Theater "emerged as a courtly refinement of farcical "monkey dances, rice harvesting festivities, and Shinto and Buddhist beliefs and rituals," (Schechner 6). Everything is an amalgamation of what became before it. Butoh becomes



even more unique, because it is rapidly becoming a global art form shaped by other cultures. As the multi-pole globalization theory states, people do not live in a world where the American society absorbs and completely obscures any culture after the initial cultural contact. In fact, there are several emergent cultures that are becoming more globally influential including China and Japan. Regardless of what is considered the most dominant culture, one should realize that any cultural contact is going to result in the deemed “weaker” culture losing its voice.

### Butoh Background

Once Japanese modern dance began to develop with an *Ausdruckstanz* perspective, it was only a matter of time before the rebellion against codified dance technique occurred. Butoh was that form of rebellion. Butoh has now been established as a fusion of Japanese drama and Western modern dance, yet it is still distinctly shaped by Japanese history, particularly War World II in which both founders of butoh were extremely affected. After the devastation of the atomic bombs of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Ohno and Hijikata wanted a dance form that allowed them to express their anguish and frustration with Western civilization’s destruction of their cities and cultures. Butoh thus arose in 1959 as an avant-garde form of dance where people could return to their original humanity. Because of its rebellious origins, its foremost intention was to shock people into feeling. It often did this through taboo subjects and grotesque contortions of the body.

The catalyst for butoh began with Hijikata wanting to reclaim the Japanese body from Western colonization. In his shocking debut of butoh in *Rebellion of the Body* in 1968 (Fraleigh 83), Hijikata reflected on the darker, more aggressive side of butoh. Hijikata grew up in the misery of War World II that included the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; he saw the countryside spark into flames. He also saw the subsequent modernization of Japan, and recognized the Western influence on the Japanese body. Thus he sought to return to the agrarian Japanese lifestyle where Kabuki flourished uncensored by Western civilization (Fraleigh 82). He sought revolution through his shocking dances. He also shared similarities with Wigman in noting that dancing does not result in self-expression but rather is used to construct the self (Fraleigh 85). He recognized this tool of self-architecture could be used to erase Western influence. Hijikata used Western Expressionism to give Japanese a tool to regain their bodies and their identity.

Although Hijikata's style of butoh, dance of darkness, is no longer taught, his metamorphosis aspects of his Ankoku butoh lives on in other butoh dancers, including other co-founder Ohno. Ohno actually fought in War World II, and yet a distinctly gentler approach is taken in his finding of self in butoh. He occasionally criticized the Western aesthetic as too emotional, but he grew up with a unique exposure to Western ideas, including music. He even used Elvis Presley for one of his pieces (Fraleigh 95). He witnessed the revolt against Western culture and the subsequent obsession with Japanese purity, but did not choose to completely reject Western art. Instead, he used modern expressionist dance to develop a movement in response to his existential questions of "What is the body?" and "Who am I?" Ohno relates much more to the ecstatic feeling of

Wigman's work while employing a more somatic approach to listening to the body.

Although his work does not necessarily seek to reinstate prewar Japanese culture, his butoh was created to regain an authenticity within Japanese society by discussing taboo subjects.

This is why Ohno played with gender reversal within several pieces including *Lo Argentina Sho*. In *Argentina Sho*, Ohno transforms into Lo Argentina with subtle hip movements and a vivaciousness. He then transforms back into himself by reinstating a masculine angularity (Fraleigh 97). Ohno incorporates elements from all cultures and places them within his cultural perspective, creating a distinctly intercultural art form that does not make sense without placing it in a Japanese context. Ohno is the reason butoh has become a global art form. He uses it to empathize with numerous individuals by tapping into universal emotions. He reformed Ohno's underground movement to be accepted by more than Japanese revolutionaries.

In an interview with Nario Goda, Fraleigh asks what makes butoh Japanese. She initially responds with it is hard to dissociate from her culture. However, she notes that butoh is performed "six inches below the floor" while ballet is performed "six inches above the floor" (Fraleigh 173). This demonstrates that although butoh's principle is the universal "what is the body?" question, the body is still irremovable from cultural context. It affects how we use our body. In Japan, traditional restaurants seating is at a lower level; therefore, it makes sense for butoh to exist on a lower level. Besides the cultural shaping of the body, butoh is uniquely shaped by its history and is a revolt against main stream Japanese culture. While in postwar Japan it can appear everyone is

trying to look on the bright side, butoh looks at agony and conflict; the more realistic reality of postwar Japan. It seeks to shed light on the repressed side of society. By embracing the darkness, one can truly see and sense the light. For without darkness, there is no light.

Although butoh is distinctly Japanese and is considered to be a protest against the Westernization of Japan, both its origins and its future reflect its continual dialogue with Western art and philosophy, as discussed above. Butoh does not exist in a vacuum; it is political, spiritual, cultural, and social. It has been shaped by Japanese concepts, such as *ma*, by Japan's history, and by Japan's shamanistic background. However, it has become globalized and it is performed on a global scale. It is performed in Paris, St. Petersburg, San Francisco, and New York City. Additionally, even though it is impossible to codify, it exists and evolves in response to its surroundings. There are several distinct characteristics of butoh even without a codified, universal vocabulary. One is its relative proximity to the earth as most of its movement is performed at a lower level. It also seeks to transform the body, and often this transformation is considered therapeutic, which reflects butoh's shamanistic qualities. This transformation happens through the constant morphing of the body. Often exercises include the command: "Be a chicken" or "Be a stone" (Fraleigh 14). In these exercises, it is important to not only imitate chicken like movements, but to actually enter into the mindset of a chicken. Thus, one's movements continually morph and surprise and cease to resemble "The Chicken Song" dance. It is within these moments that one discovers something new about the human soul. As Ohno said about dancing in Auschwitz, stones are used to mark human history as well as geologic history (Fraleigh 38). It was when he connected to the stones in Auschwitz, he

could feel the pain that had occurred there. This continual goal of transformation deeply resembles both Wigman's and Noh Theater's intentions.

### Butoh Elements

Several distinct Japanese elements exist in butoh and are the foremost characteristics that Hijikata and Ohno used to develop butoh. One includes the stretching of time through an extremely slow rhythm that is also found in Noh Theater, giving it a mystic quality. Moreover, butoh has a floating-like aesthetic, evocative of Ukiyo-e in which highly stylized landscapes and ambiguous gender images of *omnagata* (Fraleigh 10) are often portrayed. This brings to light another key Japanese element of more fluid gender constructs. Often Hijikata or Ohno would cross-dress while other butoh artists desexualize the body in an androgynous manner (Fraleigh 58). In Japanese theater, it is considered art if an actor can portray/transform into a female. The gender fluidity and/or the degenderizing the body is extremely similar to both Noh Theater and Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz*. Wigman sought to transcend societal boundaries that reinforced gender in many of her pieces. In these ecstatic dancers, she either desexualized the body by using mask and costumes or reinterpreted the female gender. The latter is seen in *Hexentanz*.

Another key characteristic of butoh is the extreme slowness of the movement. Most butoh dancers create slow bounded movement. The emphasis is on the facial expressions and articulation of the hands, which is integral in understanding the dancer's intent. The slow movement reflects the concept of *ma*. The concept of *ma* is the foundation of butoh. There is no English translation for *ma*, but is considered the in between state of existence in relation to both time and space (*Butoh* 169). Moving through *ma* in Zen Buddhism implies an emptying of oneself and broadening the mind to

live in an ambiguous place. In butoh it is this opening of the mind that allow for the metamorphosis of the body. In Endo Tadashi's *Ma*, he keeps his movements relatively simple in order and focuses on moving molecule by molecule instead of moving body part by body part (*Butoh* 169).

I expect the concept of *ma* also reflects the Japanese view on time. Similar to the third space that is neither work space nor a home space, it is an in-between space and time in which people can use to step out of the continual cycle of work, home, sleep. Butoh reflects the transitory nature of the third space. In the third space, people can step away from being a culturally mediated body and then open themselves to unrestricted movement. Wigman had a similar purpose in living outside societal boundaries and exploring transgressive behavior deemed unfeminine. Although she did not have a German equivalent of *ma* to draw on, she used Noh masks to break away from objective reality into a more transitive state (Newhall 19). It is in this state, she explored "barbaric" characters, as seen in *Hexentanz*, and broadened her mind by exploring the in-between, as seen in *Dance of Death*, *Ceremonial Figure*, and *Totenmal*.

To delve further into the relationship between Wigman and butoh theatre, both Wigman's dances and butoh seek to tap into the collective unconscious. Instead of imitating animals and inanimate objects, Wigman used certain character archetypes to further explore the human psyche. Both Wigman and Ohno used thick description to evoke a certain mood in which the dancers would use to begin their improvisation (Fraleigh 37). Thus, Ohno and Wigman's pedagogical style were similar in their homey, nonprofessional atmosphere. One can easily see where Wigman's expressionist aspirations influence Ohno's own method of teaching. However, as one would note while

watching any butoh piece and comparing it to clips of Wigman's works, butoh movement is not in any way derivative of Wigman's movement style. Even though both Wigman and butoh seek to deviate from the culturally accepted behaviors and movements, they are both deviating from two different cultures that have distinct and separate ideas of culturally appropriate movements.

Butoh movement is more subtle than Wigman's frenzied ecstatic movement and focuses more on what happens in the stillness rather than creating surprising or interesting movement. The dancer is more attuned to the inner workings of the body. Both butoh and Wigman explore the inner human psyche, but butoh is more firmly entrenched within the context of the body. The slow *suriashi* walk of the butoh performer is indicative of Noh Theater. The Noh actors use this walking to enter and exits the stage with presence. The walk consists of arching ones' back by bending forward and then leaving one's hips in the same position as one stands up. The dancer then proceeds to walk without bending the knees by sliding the sole of the foot across the floor (Alishina 166). The effect is the dancer appears floating.

Butoh also uses white face paint to become the universal mask, indicative of both Kabuki and Noh Theater. Wigman borrowed the Noh style mask to layer an eerie stillness on her frantic dances; however, butoh takes the abstraction of Noh masks and distills it further by creating a thinner mask (Fraleigh 41). Thus, German Expressionism was an integral factor in developing butoh. Nevertheless, butoh's heart is Japanese and it extends into to serve a series of emotions shaped by Japanese society. These include the "antiheroic and wild" movements of Hijikata, the spiritual movement of Ohno, and the "existentially dark" of Ashikawa. (Fraleigh 38).

## Section 5: Re-creation Process

### Composition and Technique

Recreating *Ceremonial Figure* is a multi-level process that includes research into Wigman's choreographic career, research into Noh Theater's values and techniques, physical embodiment of butoh practices, and reinterpretation of *Ceremonial Figure's* music and costume. The first step was research into Wigman's movement practices and tracking down primary documents describing her work. Fortunately, Wigman was a prolific writer and has two compilations of her writings. The first is her self-compiled writings called *The Language of Dance* in which she describes her process in creating *Ceremonial Figure*. This served as the basis of my recreation of *Ceremonial Figure* for both movement quality, costume, music, and performative quality. Wigman's initial inspiration for the piece was actually not from the mask, but rather the music brought back from a Balkan tour composed by a Hungarian musician (Wigman 33). She describes the music as "a crystal clear and capricious tunefulness," with a "softly singing Siamese gong" (Wigman 33). This was unusual for Wigman to start with music. She almost always discovered a theme or an inner persona she wanted to express, developed a movement motif, and then either had music composed for her or found a percussive score to punctuate her movements. The music always supported the choreography rather than dictating the movement. Therefore, based on Wigman's usual choreographic process, I chose to choreograph the piece and then create a score to accentuate the movement.



Once Wigman found a beginning pose and a corresponding gesture, she began to improvise and found her feet were moving too freely. She eventually hampered them by sewing a hula hoop into her rehearsal skirt, creating a “bell-like” shape (Wigman 33). This hindered her movement, because if she stepped too far, the skirt would swing too wide. She thus created the movement to fit within the bell-like swing in an “uncompromisingly unified style” (Wigman 33).

From her description, the movement must have included a mostly upright spine with no bending in half past the hips. Its percussive quality must have called for small, exacting steps that contrasted with the more expressive torso, arms, and hands. The description of the lilting flute and the restrictive skirt meant movements with an under curve were used. These movements would match the skirt's natural movement. These few paragraphs of description thus became my outline of movement. There is only one photograph of the piece taken by Charlotte Rudolph and no other visual, video or picture, available. The photograph provides a basis for the costume, as well as a pose with which to create a movement motif. The photograph depicts Wigman balancing on *elevé* with her arms and torso stretching towards the sky. Her arms are strangely asymmetrical with her right hand stretched upwards, fingers splayed grotesquely while the left is held at shoulder level with elbow bent and hand delicately pressing through the space. From this photograph, I concluded the under curves in the movement must have been facilitated by a constant *relevé* and *plié* instead of just a bending and straightening of the knees.

With the parameters set for my re-creation, I began the process of composition. I had several factors to consider in this choreographic process. First, the movement quality and technique would be established through *butoh* practices founded by Juju Alishina.

Second, the movement of the head and traveling steps would need to originate from the Noh Theater tradition. Noh Theater specializes in characterization, and thus the persona of the ceremonial figure would be rendered through Noh Theater techniques. Last, the movement motifs were derived from Wigman's few clips of choreography that evoked the tone of *Ceremonial Figure*. Additional movement development was derived from contemporaneous modern dancers including Ruth St. Denis' *Incense* and Isadora Duncan's *Priestess*.

Through my exploration of butoh practices, I found the starting position of my piece, as well the initiation for the first movement. In butoh, one of the foundational positions is *seiza*. The position is how Alishina begins and ends her classes. It is found by sitting with legs folded under and torso stretching towards the sky. After performing stretching exercises for the hands, sides, and back, I found my hand directing through the space to my right while my head followed my hand shaped like a blade. This image arose partially from remembering Wigman's *Hexentanz* in which her hands cut through space like a blade. I then remembered how the mask and the placement of my head was key to constructing the persona of the *Ceremonial Figure*, I thus allowed my head to acknowledge the audience and then direct its attention to the left high diagonal. The left high diagonal movement slowly pulled me up to my original position. I repeated the movement on the left. At this part in the piece, I wanted the figure to appear benevolent and ethereal, hence the reason for aiming the mask to the high diagonal. In Noh Theater, the tilting of the mask up creates a more genial expression while the profile view of the mask deemphasize its physical presence, suggesting a more spiritual existence. I then

found I wanted to include the audience within my ritual. I bowed the traditional Japanese bow seen in the beginning of a butoh class.

I then proceeded into my folding hand motif. This was gestured straight to the audience as I wanted them to see the delicate unfolding of the fingers and the subsequent folding the fingers back into my body. In both Wigman's choreography and butoh's movements, the hands are much more articulate than found in most Western modern dance. In fact, Wigman's expressive hands was one of her most recognizable traits. Isa Partsch-Bergsohn who trained with Wigman in the early 1940s noted her expressive hands as soon as she walked into the studio (Bergsohn 113). Wigman often stated the hands had an emotive quality, and it was a vital part of her entrancing performances, as seen in the manipulations of her hands in *Hexentanz* and *Pastorale*.

To gain similar fluidity and detail within my hands, I practiced butoh exercises as well as exercises derived from traditional Japanese dance. Especially helpful was the practice of independently moving each finger from thumb to pinkie and vice versa. Eventually this exercise turned into my fingers becoming the petals of a flower in bloom; a motif found in my re-creation. Butoh training is heavily based in imagery. Every movement is evocative of an event in nature or in everyday life. For example, there is a movement called *kaiguri kote* that evokes the talons of an eagle fingers and nails (Alishina 1.7). This movement is found in the dance several times, especially within my re-creation of the only existing picture of *Ceremonial Figure*.

Another key or significant movement in the re-creation is inspired from a butoh practice as well. The exercises is described starting from the *seiza* position. The dancer raises their pelvis and places it first on the right and then the left foot. This movement

eventually becomes an elegant movement in which the dancer looks as if she is slowly levitating from one foot to the other. I added my arms and reaching from my sides to emphasize the fluidity and add an asymmetrical line. This movement is utilized to emphasize the entrancing persona of the ceremonial figure. In the studio, I practiced progressing from a slow rise and fall to a frantic grabbing in air. I pushed the movement and my body to the brink of unrecognizability. This possessive dynamic quality was also utilized by Wigman in her creation of *Hexentanz II*. She would work herself “up into a rhythmic intoxication” to develop her character (Wigman 40). The movement also follows the *jo-ha-kyu* rhythm found in Noh Theater as the circular, asymmetrical movement begins slowly and speeds up quickly before coming to an abrupt halt.

Once I rise, the movement becomes more inspired by Wigman's steps as seen in *Pastorale* and *Summer Landscape*. Although these pieces are more ethereal and light than I wanted *Ceremonial Figure* to be, the pieces both exhibit small percussive steps described in *Ceremonial Figure*. These movements include the wrapping leg motion in *Pastorale*, which includes the under curve and waltz-like movement Wigman used in her more lyrical pieces. As *Ceremonial Figure* was a mixture between her lighter pieces and ecstatic dances, similar movements were probably used. Additionally, the traveling step used on the diagonal is created through Wigman's waltz-like like steps. It takes the first pose of the *Ceremonial Figure* and travels it. The locomotion is provided by a butoh practice of side loosening where your body liquid rushes to the body's center and then is poured into the other side of the body. The movement reaches all the way up to the arms.

The poses in the re-creation are inspired by the original *Ceremonial Figure*, Ruth St. Denis' *Priestess*, Isadora Duncan's *Incense*, and traditional Japanese dance poses

found in butoh. These poses are held for an indeterminable length of time to primarily add tension and dynamic timing. The stillness should make the audience uncomfortable. This technique is found in Kabuki Theater. In Kabuki, however, the pauses are there to establish the character rather than to make the audience uncomfortable. Both Noh and Kabuki have stock characters with their own particular costume, movement, and personalities. These carefully constructed layers of identity are used to create a character or image more influential beyond one play. Anyone across Japan would be able to recognize them immediately when they struck the first pose.

In Japanese culture, these theatrical character archetypes have a quality that harkens back to Jung's collective unconsciousness. This recognition of a character type across cultures is what Wigman wanted for the character in *Ceremonial Figure*. Bergsohn recalls Wigman saying she used the mask "to overcome the individual sphere in order to connect to the archetype" (Bergsohn 114). The self-imposed restrictions Wigman created for the solo, such as tiny steps and limited visibility, were used to reflect the certain parameters needed for an archetype to exist.

Jungian theory states that there are universal figures found across all cultures in mythologies and folktales. For example, the trickster figure is found in multiple cultures and is often morally ambiguous. These archetypes are considered proof that all humans share a collective unconsciousness. Jungian's universalism is thus similar to Wigman's hope for a transcultural dance form that can resonate with multi-cultural audiences. However, as I critiqued modern dancers' tendencies to believe dance is a universal language, Jungian's theory has also been critiqued for its collective unconscious theory. Besides it being an unfalsifiable theory, there are also numerous exceptions to Jungian

archetypes and the defining characteristics are unclear. While Jungian archetypes can exist within cultures and can be construed as the same archetypes in other cultures, these archetypes all have different cultural contexts in which they were formed.

I utilized Japanese Noh character archetypes to create the mask and costume while I utilized European and American archetypes to create the poses for the piece. In this way I try to maintain the cultural context around the character archetypes and yet merge them into one piece and one character. Thus, multiple audiences from different cultural backgrounds could hopefully relate to at least one element used to create the character of *Ceremonial Figure*. In this way, I hope to re-create Wigman's transcultural vision for *Ceremonial Figure* without sacrificing the cultural context.

With limited primary sources about Wigman's *Ceremonial Figure*, I often used contemporaneous modern dancer's solos in the same theme for source material. Themes were looked for dealing in ritual, religion, and spirituality. With these themes, the subject matter was often Eastern rituals and practices, or the pieces were given an Oriental aesthetic. This is reflected in Said's concept of Orientalism, which denotes the East as more natural, mystical, and spiritual while the West represents logic, reason, and science. Ruth St. Denis' *Incense* had a distinct feel of Orientalism through the use of incense and mysticism. However, the piece's movement doesn't consist of natural movement, but rather includes a degree of formality and uniform gesture. The character within Ruth St. Denis' solos was one a caretaker or a vessel, suggesting something more mystical being called up by her.

While Ruth St. Denis was known for her fascination with contemporaneous Eastern cultures, Isadora Duncan's piece *Priestess* reflected her influence of Ancient

Greek culture and mythology. Like the friezes on Greek vases, her *Priestess* character, followed by her young maidens, had a two dimensionality to it. This piece, although still gestural and formalized, had a certain weight to it that was similar to Wigman's movement. This movement of gesturing to the earth and then pressing up to the sky with feet solidly planted in a wide stance was immediately striking and similar to Wigman's more spiritual and darker works. Moreover, the movement evoked an image of conjuration similar to St. Denis' work. It created the character once again of a vessel or gateway to supernatural. It had a transcendent quality which Wigman was always searching. It evoked Wigman's envisioning of her body as the medium like a painting or film. Thus, her dancing became a channel for supernatural forces and "ecstatic and demonic energies..." (Manning 43).

Butoh often deals in imagery to create authentic movement and to delve into a realistic quality of movements. From these visual stimuli, more original and unique movement is produced. For instance, for the hand articulation used in the piece, I played with not only blooming flowers and eagle's claws, but also with millipedes and falling rice. While I was rehearsing in the studio one day, I was playing with the *kaiguri kote* movement and trying variations of it while keeping my wrists bound to each other. When I took a break, I saw a small beetle flipped over on its back with its legs frantically searching in all directions for salvation. Its legs never stopped moving with spastic, twitching movements even though it didn't move one inch. This was the frantic energy that I needed in my hands, but they still needed the precise articulation in all of their joints, just like the bug's articulated legs. I tried the movement again and instantly the image clicked and my body absorbed the visual stimulus.

This frantic, bound movement was accented by the steady rhythm of my feet. The feet are a combination of Noh walking called *suriashi* and the butoh technique of spiraling. Alishina's practice denotes isolating certain body parts to create figure eights. It begins in the hands and then transfers to the hips and can encompass the entire body. Eventually, the figure eights propel me into the *suriashi* walk. When the energy is built up within my body, it is expelled through the spiraling of my leg. The spiral spins me around myself and results in a pause as I stare at my hands.

I began in the normal posture, which is an S-curve with the back and my pelvis tilted forward. The walk itself is called *suriashi* and is used in Noh Theater, butoh, and classical Japanese dance. The walk itself is created by acting if you were carrying something heavy and you have to scrape your sole of the foot forward. The position is kept all at one level. This *suriashi* is utilized to enter and exit the stage. In Noh Theater, the performer enters in across a bridge, which is considered the gateway between two worlds. There are no curtains so the audience sees the entire journey to the stage. The method in which a performer enters the space establishes the tone and atmosphere of the entire piece. This method of walking will be utilized in setting up before the piece and is utilized in the beginning of the piece.

A distorted version of this walk is developed later in the piece and is paired with the frantic wringing of hands, mentioned above. The wringing of hands is a mixture of the beginning stone flower image and of spiraling within the hands. The distorted version first begins with a spiraling in the hips, which slowly transfer into a sliding walk in which the feet sense the earth before moving forward. The figure eight motion becomes intense with a quicker tempo. The hands, although frantic, keeps a steady rhythm of folding,



spiraling, and unfolding. At some point the spiral from the hip travels down the leg, and the body spirals quickly around and freezes. The hands bound together, and the body positioned as if it is about to jump into a pool of water or a cliff. Returning back to the desperately squirming bug, which by this point was beginning to lose hope, I found myself flipping it back over. Instead of furiously scurrying away, it froze. It wasn't a peaceful stillness, but rather that of a frozen deer ready to flee. I stared at it for some time before I noticed that its back leg was slowly swimming through the air independent from its other appendages. It was this slow movement that entranced me. I finally approached it with a finger, and it fled with those multiple limbs furiously sliding across the ground.

As butoh specifically deals in not only animal imagery, but also becoming the beast, I found that I became the bug. After frantically scurrying in a useless fashion, I froze when I found stability. At this moment fixed in time, I tensed and every nerve was alive and taut, waiting for the eventual snap. Instead of snapping; however, I slowly resumed my *suriashi* walk by bringing my pelvis back to its tilted center of gravity. I began my walk and frantic hand gesture again. Once again, the spiraling movement inevitably found its way through my hips into my left leg and I whipped around. I froze again, looking off the cliff into the unknown abyss. I was not sure what was happening, but I felt a pull to continue in this pattern forever, but the snap happened first. My body snapped into the first pose of the ceremonial figure, and with the same slow calm movement of the bug's leg, I moved from one pose to the next of the ceremonial figure into the first pose of the ceremonial figure, and with the same slow calm movement of the bug's leg, I moved from one pose to the next of the ceremonial figure.

It is a moment of self-reflection. A moment of remembering how the ceremonial figure found herself on the pathway to possession. Possession by what she does not know, only that it is her duty to complete the task. At this point in the creation process, I noticed my stream of consciousness had a direct theme. I felt alienated from my body and the mirror showed a new face. This experience felt similar to Wigman's description of the finding her inner witch for *Hexentanz*. My own experience and internal monologue is described below.

*As she moves from one pose to the next in a ritualistic fashion. She finds herself forced slowly down into the ground, her fingers the source of the force. She returns to seiza and repeats her first phrases, but with her orientation being towards the diagonal rather than the audience. This is a performance not for the audience. Eventually the figure returns to her slow circular ascension and descension of her pelvis away from her legs. Only this time, the figure doesn't snap back to the seated position. She instead slowly arcs back and down into an arched back, arms still reaching towards the sky. At last moment, the left hand turns away from the sky and slowly lowers the figure onto her back. Her right arm resists to continue the movement until it slowly folds close and lowers down to her chest.*

The arching backbend while legs open into a contortion of the *seiza* position is an adaptation of the lobster curve in butoh technique. The movement is started from *uchimata* or *obahsan-zuwari*, which means grandmother sitting. From *seiza*, the bottom is place on the floor beside your heels, and you bend slightly forward. Then you can bend backwards. Bending backwards is used to create an intense dramatic effect or to express exaltation or an apex (Alishina 39). The position is used in classical Japanese dance as

well in which the back remains straight instead of arched. This is due to the rigid *obi* (Japanese belt for the kimono) or the voluminous wig. I utilized this movement at the end of the dance to create a moment of exaltation as well as the climax of transcendence.

### Costume and Music

The costuming was inspired by both Noh Theater and the original *Ceremonial Figure* costume portrayed in the picture by Charlotte Rudolph. I also utilized Wigman's description of *Ceremonial Figure's* costume in the *Language of Dance*. Wigman describes sewing a hula hoop into her rehearsal skirt to create a more structural costume. As seen in Noh Theater, the three-dimensional costumes de-emphasize the human body. Wigman does the same with the bell-like skirt she created. It restricted her movement, similar to Noh Theater costumes and traditional Japanese dance costumes. While the lower portion of Wigman's costume deemphasizes the body, the top portion is a more minimalist approach. Only a sheer sleeveless leotard with an elaborate cutout neckline emphasizes the human body. This costume is thus an interesting contradiction.

Because my movement included changing levels and larger movement as seen in *butoh*, I did not want the wide swinging skirt, but still wanted the voluminous swath of fabric on the bottom. Symone Sheffield, a fellow dance minor, aided my construction of the costume. We first focused on the color and type of fabric needed for the skirt. Because Noh Theater uses silk brocade for the outer kimono, we also wanted a silk or similar looking fabric. I decided against a brocade, because I didn't want to mimic the Noh Theater fabric with the wrong patterns. I did however desire a textured fabric. We

settled on a faux silk that had a crinkly texture that added enough dimension to the fabric. The color was a burnt orange similar to some of the Noh *karaori* I had seen. The color was also similar to Wigman's brocade costume for *Hexentanz*. The *karaori* is the outer kimono worn by a female character as pictured in the ceremonial figure. Noh Theater costumes along with the mask portray age, social status, gender, occupation, and personality of the character (Komparu 246). Thus, the color of costumes lends itself to character development. These *karaori* are often adorned by flower sewn with gold or silver thread. Additionally, if a red pigment is found in the costume, it denotes the character is a younger female. Lack of red pigment suggests an older female. I wanted to leave the ceremonial figure ageless so I chose the burnt orange color that leaves the age ambiguous. It is the closest shade to red without employing the actual use of red as an age signifier.

Color is also important to denoting the *shite* versus the *waki*. The *shite* wears bold colors as to signify the main character while the *waki* wears muted colors to signify a shadowy figure. The bold burnt orange presents the ceremonial figure as the authority. However, as the structure of the ceremonial figure creates a conflict, so does the colors of the costumes. The sheer fabric of the top is a deep purple with black stitching with a black undergarment under the mesh. The muted colors suggest that the ceremonial figure is its own shadow or its own antagonist.

Sheffield constructed a simple circle skirt to provide maximum volume in the skirt. She used interfacing to create some weight to the skirt, but kept the structure otherwise freeform. This reflects the minimalist aspect of butoh as well as Wigman's propensity to swathing herself completely in fabric. The length reached almost to the

floor so one could barely see my feet skim across the floor in the *suriashi* walk. The shirt on the other hand was one layer of the sheer mesh fabric lined with black interfacing. It allowed for the sinuous movements of the torso to be viewed and add a butoh minimalist element. Butoh is often performed naked covered in white body paint that allows the full body to be seen.

I struggled with choice to use a visual artist student or to make the mask myself. Although I am not a visual artist, I wanted to form the ceremonial figure with my own hands. Like Wigman's mask that bore some of her own features, I wanted my mask to be a combination of self-portrait and the ethereal ambiguity of Wigman's mask. I used Wigman's description of the mask found in *The Language of Dance* as my guidelines for the mask. I also looked at *uba*, *onryo*, and *onna* masks that bore resemblance to some aspects of Wigman's mask or had a character trait I wanted to include in my ceremonial figure. The *onryo* mask portrays an old woman ghost who bears a grudge or jealousy and whose eyes reflect misery. I wanted my ceremonial figure to have an underlying aspect of anguish. Additionally, the *onryo* mask had gaunt cheekbones and a thin mouth similar to Wigman's mask. The *onna* mask portrays an intelligent woman imbued with gracefulness. The formal elegance of the ceremonial figure's movement needed to be reflected in my mask. Also, the ambiguity of age needed to be maintained by the *onna*'s fuller lips and wider nose. Overall, however, I wanted to maintain the abstractionist features and neutral expression of the mask.

To create the mask, I used a Styrofoam mannequin head as the base for my mold. The head had the barest of human features, which made it easier to use molding clay to build up the features of the mask. I used the clay to create my dimensions for the mask.

I made the mask deliberately smaller than my face to create a more gaunt appearance. The clay was then molded to accentuate the nose, by building a straight ridge similar to Wigman's mask's nose. However, I made the nose wider to reflect the *onna*, *onyro*, and *uba*'s noses. I also emphasized the nostrils as they would be lost in the actual formation of the mask. I also formed the eyelids and emphasized the eyebrows/upper orbital rim as seen in both the *uba* and *onyro* masks.

Once I had molded the features onto my mold, I added a layer of Vaseline to the clay mold so the plaster would easily slide off the mold. I then cut some various sized strips of plastic cloth wrap and began dipping them in water. I first applied the strips in an x form over the bridge of the nose. I created three layers of plaster cloth wrap over the nose before turning my attention to the outer edges of the face. I then worked my way in from the edges, leaving slits in the eyelids for my vision. I used five layers to cover entire mask, using larger sheets for the last layers to create a smoother effect. I then let it dry overnight.

Once it dried, I added a layer of gesso to seal everything and create an easier canvass to paint on. Once the gesso dried, I painted the entire face an ivory to reflect the pale skin color of the Noh masks. I then used a silver blue to paint the eyebrows and mouth. I gave the mask a similar lip structure compared to mine, only exaggerating the fullness as seen in the *onna* masks. The eyebrows for were also similar to mine with one slightly raised in a disconcerting gaze. The color palette was chosen to reflect Wigman's description of the mask having the barest of features accentuated by a pale slivery blue.

The music was created using an untitled track for butoh composed by Nocturnal Emissions. I had been using the music to improvise to as it provided the right ambience.

It had peaceful atmosphere undermined by a certain tension. This sinister feeling was created through the minor key of the bells. Once the piece was completed, Solomon Smith, a graduate RIM major, layered the accents of the gong, a rustling percussive instrument, and the bell to accentuate my sharp head movements and poses. Each, pose correlated with the gong as if the gong froze the pose in place. The head movements were emphasized by the bell to as seen in the clip of Wigman's *Hexentanz II*. The rustling shaker alternated with the bell to create a dialogue in the middle of the piece as the leg swiped around and the head snapped to the back diagonal. The shaker was also employed for the breaks in the *suriashi* walks forward as the leg snaked around to force the walk to pause. Finally, the gong was also used to create a reverberation through the ceremonial figure's hands as she slowly dropped down to the floor. The music slowly fades out as the ceremonial figure lowers her back down to the floor, and the right hands grasps towards the sky as bird chirps in a melancholy tone.

### Performance

The performance on March 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm of the re-creation of *Ceremonial Figure* was performed to an intentionally small audience consisting of dancer minors, theatre majors, and professors. The piece was filmed as it was being performed along with the discussion section afterwards. The piece was filmed in a wide shot angle from the middle of the audience. The first version was created for documentation purposes. A second edited version was filmed after the audience had left with multiple camera angles to create a more intimate viewing experience.

The lighting used was a mix of deep blue and varying shades of orange to create a complementary and contrasting backdrop for the costume. At 7:15 pm after blackout, The

Figure entered in silence and the piece began. The lights arose to see the Figure in *seiza* position in the upstage right corner. As the piece began, my anxious thoughts and nervous action were channeled into the calm slow moving energy of the Figure. Before I performed, my mentor advised me to shake all the nervous energy throughout my body. I went to warm up alone. I shook my body out and mobilized my joints. I also practiced exhaling forcefully and responding with a contraction in my abdomen. I also practiced a breathing technique where I took short burst of exhales through my nose that were forced up from my belly. I also mobilized my finger by slowly unfolding them one by one and then folding them back in. Once I had built up a kinetic energy, I took a deep breath and steadied myself.

Performing for an audience instead of oneself results in an entirely different experience. The body moves in a different way as it recognizes its need to communicate to the audience. The dancing is use for expression rather than for self-discovery as seen in rehearsals. The mask, however, provided a barrier from communicating with my face. Although I am not an emotive dancer, I still felt like one of my limbs had been cut off. I felt the mask stifled my personality and identity and took over as the main performer. It was an exhilarating and terrifying experience. Still, it was also a relief not being able to look at the audience. Instead of watching their expressions, I had to feel them through their kinetic presence and focus on me. It was an entirely different performative experience.

My energy was obviously heightened as I performed, and yet the calm yet powerful energy of the Figure allowed me to slowly articulate my movements. Still, my speed was different than in rehearsals and my accent for the sharp head movement after



swinging my leg was altered. I found my leg swinging around on the slithery snake accent and gong rather than the accent occurring during my head movement. It was a different dynamic and one that I enjoyed as it changed the quality of my leg spiraling around. However, my favorite moment was not when I was dancing, but actually when I paused. After finishing my *suriashi* walk accented by my frantic hand movements, my leg snaked around for the last time and I stared at my hands. They were trembling with energy, and I stayed there transfixed by their movement. Although I had stopped twisting them, they continued the movement on a smaller scale. In that moment, I felt fully alive with my mind, body, and spirit all connected.

## **Section 6: Conclusion and Reflection**

This re-creation process has challenged me both as a scholar and an artist. I have choreographed before and have written numerous research papers; however, this thesis is my first experience combining interdisciplinary research with embodied knowledge. The various elements, including multiple theories and art forms, were difficult to integrate into one project. I had to ensure every element for the re-creation had a purpose. Merely using a movement because of its aesthetic could not be allowed. Instead, a movement must retain some sense of its cultural context.

Anthropological theory provided an awareness and respect for both butoh and Noh Theater elements I used. If in Noh Theater, the Noh mask is traditionally tilted upwards to create a more genial expression, then I could only tilt the mask upwards if I wanted to express a more benevolent appearance. Historical research into Wigman's life and her connection to butoh and Noh Theater allowed for cross-cultural comparisons, which better informed my decisions to include certain elements of Noh Theater and

butoh. Moreover, historical research also ensured the re-creation remained a Wigman-inspired piece that retained her technique, themes, and performance quality. The in-depth research I did allowed the creation process to proceed rather quickly, even though embodying the various techniques and qualities was challenging.

The embodiment of these three different cultural art forms created an interesting conflict in my body. I was used to moving in an expansive way, a quality Wigman used in her solos' climaxes. However, most of the movement I performed was contained, precise, and detailed-oriented. I had to re-train my body to improvise in a different movement quality, which resulted in bursts of expansive movements that always settled back into smaller, slower, precise movements. Moreover, my brain had to constantly provide imagery that would guide my movement. As I was primarily trained as a ballet dancer, this technique was familiar and yet different. Ballet uses imagery as a metaphor for the movement while butoh technique requires the dancer to imagine becoming the image.

The scholarly artist creative process used in this thesis is something I want to further develop. I want to continue using historical, anthropological, and physical embodiment research methods to create or re-create dance pieces. I believe the combination of research methods allows dance to explore cross-cultural connections and dialogues on stage with the challenge of maintaining cultural contexts. In this way, the global dance community will hopefully remain culturally diverse.

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