

Moving People: Dance as the Living Shape of Emotion

John Neumeier

Dr. Inamori, Fellow prize recipients, friends, ladies and gentlemen—to begin, I would like once more to express my sincere thanks, gratitude and the great joy I feel at receiving this prestigious award—the 2015 Kyoto Prize, in the field of Arts and Philosophy which I have accepted with deep humility.

Standing before you today, in the sublimely beautiful city of Kyoto, where I have several times had the privilege of presenting performances with my company—the Hamburg Ballet—and where I have also had the great pleasure of experiencing—of being moved and inspired by the extraordinary Noh Theatre plays I have seen here—I am reminded of certain events and encounters leading me along the path to becoming an Kyoto Prize laureate.

I recall that, during the first year of my university studies, a man who was to become the most important influence in determining the direction of my life, Father John J. Walsh S. J., (of whom I will later speak more fully,) took a sabbatical, traveling here to Japan to study Japanese traditional theatre forms. Upon returning to the university, it was his enthusiastic and vivid descriptions of Noh and Kabuki Theatre that first fired my imagination and my own lifelong curiosity about, my fascination with and love for Japan and its culture. I regret very much that this remarkable mentor cannot be with me today in Kyoto to complete the circle, begun when I listened to his truly impassioned descriptions and witnessed his demonstrations of the art and techniques of Noh and Kabuki theatre. Unfortunately, Father Walsh has since passed away, but he is remembered, along with many others of whom I will speak, as I reflect on and recount the stations, stages and experiences leading to my development as a dancer, choreographer and artist.

As long as I can remember, I have always wanted to dance—even before I knew exactly what dance was! Quite honestly, it would be impossible for me to determine a particular moment when I consciously chose or decided dance was my destiny. My first impressions of the art form came from the technicolor American musical films my mother took me to see as a child. I loved the music, the color, and especially whenever the characters danced. I hated—I really became angry—and found the cinema extremely boring whenever movement stopped and the dancers started to talk. Of course, at home, I tried to imitate what I had seen on the screen and my family's living room could become an enormous stage when I threw myself about in my own form of “dance” to whatever music inspired me at

the moment. I was drawn as a child to everything theatrical. This could be simply dressing up in improvised costumes and just pretending to be someone else. At an early age this act of transformation was for me the most interesting way of playing.

Looking back at my childhood, one event remains unforgettable. It was a Sunday afternoon when my mother took me for the first time to see a live ballet performance. It was a matinee program of the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, which, at that time, passed annually through Milwaukee on tour. Approaching the theatre, I didn't really know what to expect and was in great anticipation of what a "Ballet" might really be. Finally, in my seat truly high up above the stage, the auditorium darkened, orchestra music began and the curtain went up on the ballet "Coppelia." A ballerina entered the stage wearing a pink costume, a pink tutu, and began to dance on her toes accompanied by Delibe's lovely music. Viewing this breathtaking performance from the extremely high perspective of the top gallery, I remember as if it were yesterday, the feeling of excitement and exhilaration—the happiness I felt at witnessing this, for me, incredible unforgettable vision. I sat entranced, while silently hoping and praying that the performers would not stop dancing and start talking! It was a great relief and pure pleasure that throughout this long program of ballets, each quite different in character, no one said a word! This first introduction to ballet instilled in me an intense longing to become a part of this mysteriously beautiful world—a world that seemed, however, so very far away for a child growing up in the Mid-Western city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin—a city having at that time no professional ballet company and no major ballet school. Not only because of the high and distant perspective from which I viewed this fantastic, astonishing spectacle did the realm of dance seem so out of reach—I simply couldn't imagine how I could ever enter—could ever be worthy of entering that magical world.

Although my thoughts about my future and what profession I wanted to pursue when I grew up changed regularly as a child, my interests had from the beginning, in one form or another, to do with what I would later learn was art. Even my very first wish, when I was quite young, to become a Catholic priest was probably related to my fascination with all things theatrical. Both my parents were Roman Catholic and my mother was of Polish origin. Therefore, we very often attended the Polish church, an impressive and very ornate basilica which was perhaps the most elaborately beautiful church in Milwaukee. Although a visit to church always had a sense of the spiritual about it, I think it was also the strangely exotic, candle-lit atmosphere, the evocative music and chanting, the incense, the ceremony of ritual entrances, processions and liturgical gestures which contributed to the feeling that the mass itself was a form of theatre—a strange and solemn choreography. I felt drawn towards the

spiritual life, but perhaps at the same time imagined myself dressed and transformed in the richly embroidered, colorful and sometimes flowing vestments which the priests wore. They seemed to me men transformed—similar to the “transformation” I had experienced in my dress up outfits. These moments in church, watching earnestly, a mysterious spectacle, were so different from the normal everyday life of a young boy growing up in Milwaukee! I longed to be part of this strange “other world.” The mass was clearly my first experience of “art.”

From an early age, before I studied dance, a talent for drawing was observed by an art teacher visiting our school periodically to evaluate the students’ work. She strongly suggested that I should have additional drawing lessons. Therefore, I was enrolled in a traditional institution in Milwaukee called the Layton Art School which was connected with the local art museum, to study drawing and painting. However, I felt quite lost there, being at the time only eight years old while most of the other students were in their teens or older. Later, my parents heard about art studies at a nuns’ convent. The nuns of the Notre Dame had a convent in Milwaukee where, on Saturday mornings, they taught drawing and painting. Their curriculum consisted of a very systematic, strict and serious study program. We began at first still life drawing of fruit and flowers, sketching only with charcoal. After many months, we progressed to adding color using pastel chalks. The next year we began a very slow process of learning watercolor technique and much much later, when our teacher felt the individual student was ready, we learned a precise method of oil painting.

In retrospect, there was here in this process an important lesson for my future life. By learning the precise handwork of drawing and painting, I came to understand that the quality and value of any art form depends on a learned, practiced and mastered technique—even if this technique may later be rejected. It became clear to me that essential to creation, was the mastery of a technique. Discipline in any art form ensures liberty and freedom to articulate during the spontaneous act of creation. For a choreographer, the training and discipline of his instrument, his own body, is essential. This technique, skill or knowledge, however, is of course not a guarantee that the creative result will be inspired or a true work of art. Along with the valuable tool of technique, life experience teaches us to connect our work with reality—with the conflicts, challenges and concerns of our fellow men. But that personal aspect which makes a work of art unique and undeniably individual can neither be learned, taught, nor calculated. Even the most perfect technique has not the power to invoke or guarantee inspiration. In other words, there is no set, single or perfect plan to becoming a great creator. It is a truly individual path.

In my case, there seemed at first no path or plan at all, nor certain clear direction indicated during my own childhood. Although I was studying to be a painter, the urgency to

dance persisted—the desire remained undeniable. For a long time, I had secretly wanted to take dance lessons and asked my parents. Not understanding the urgency of my wish, they did not take my request seriously. Eventually however, I was allowed to take tap dancing lessons—perhaps because that seemed a more familiar and less extreme form of dance. Later, I progressed to acrobatic, then finally I was allowed to study ballet at this neighborhood school. My first ballet class was a very special and memorable experience. It was as if I were discovering something new, strange and wonderful—but at the same time, returning to something that was an intimate part of me. The experience made me smile.

However, feeling unworthy and ignorant of how I might ever enter the magical world of my dreams, I sometimes deliberately distracted myself with thoughts of other possible future professions. In early adolescence, for example, I was determined to become a psychiatrist. I imagine it was because the strange, somewhat abnormal, psychotic or even supernatural aspects in human behavior had always fascinated me. I can't explain why, but the concept of "madness," the shadowy side of human nature did have great interest for me. I loved horror movies!

Still standing at a crossroad, uncertain of what direction my future should or could take, I entered Marquette University as a very young man, majoring in English literature and Theatre Studies, hoping to achieve a liberal arts education. But, in fact, this attempt to pursue an academic direction led me surprisingly in another! Marquette, a Jesuit university, was very well known for its excellent theatre department directed by a priest named Father John J. Walsh S. J.—whom I mentioned at the beginning of my address. Father Walsh not only taught theatre history and the technique of acting (based on Constantin Stanislavsky's method), but directed plays and musicals in a professionally functioning theatre in which we performed almost every weekend. Our theatre, Teatro Maria, was well known and extremely popular in the city. Father Walsh believed that dance was an important aspect in the education of an actor, and our curriculum included many movement classes. In the very first class which I attended, and which he, in fact, was himself teaching, he noticed me. Father Walsh seemed to have seen my talent immediately and very soon convinced me that my calling, my vocation was clearly to be a dancer. He arranged that, in addition to my dance studies at the university, I should have a scholarship to study at the Bentley Stone and Walter Camryn School of Ballet in Chicago, a city approximately 90 miles south of Milwaukee on Lake Michigan. As Father Walsh had also arranged for a ballet teacher, Sheila Reilly, to come three times a week to Milwaukee to give dance classes to our theatre department, I was able to have a very complete ballet education during my university years.

Therefore, in addition to English literature, theatre and dance studies at the university, rehearsals and performances at Teatro Maria, I traveled twice each week one and a half hours by train to Chicago and returned, after two ballet classes, with the night train, arriving in Milwaukee at 12:30 AM. The next morning, however, I was determined not to miss my early lectures at the University. On Thursdays each week, I had to scrub the floors of the ballet studios in Chicago—a symbolic gesture in payment for my scholarship.

It was truly an intensely, busy, challenging but exhilarating time for me. But it was also at this time, that the desire not only to dance, but to make, to create dances ignited. At our Teatro Maria I created my first choreography, arranging at first incidental dances for plays such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Everyman" and for musicals such as "Annie get your Gun" and "Peter Pan." Later, I choreographed my first ballet, "The Hound of Heaven," based on Francis Thompson's poem. At last, I had begun to realize the dream of creating a work entirely of movement—a choreography—in which no one spoke or sang! As a result of my past art studies and prophetic of future experience, I designed the costumes for this first ballet myself.

An additional and extremely important influence in my development as a choreographer at that time was Sybil Shearer, an artist to whom Father Walsh had introduced me. Shearer was a modern dancer and dance creator, who had been legendary in the 1940s and 1950s in New York as a solo artist. Shearer was an extraordinary dance innovator possessing an exceptionally individual, completely unique style and a movement vocabulary which was far ahead of its time. Being extremely sensitive and shunning the commercial aspects of her profession, Sybil had chosen to leave the chaos and competition of the New York dance scene to settle in the serene harmony of the Middle Western country side. There, in Northbrook, a small town between Milwaukee and Chicago, she lived and created dances inspired by a closeness and communion with nature. Working in her beautifully designed house situated in a meadow, she prepared solo concerts but also did group choreography with a small company of dancers. I was fortunate to become one of these few dancers working with and learning from this unique artist. Sybil's dancing and choreography had surely the greatest single influence on my own later movement vocabulary. Her invention seemed to flow from an inner secret spiritual source, impressing the spectator with the wonder of her original movement invention, dynamic and unforgettable physical images.

It is difficult in words to express or describe the particular quality or emotional impact of these extraordinary dances. Sybil, for example, was the first dancer who made me laugh because of movement alone, without reference to text, specific action, or narrative comic situation. All was communicated by means of physical coordination and emotional

commitment. Instinctively, one could recognize in the disconnected, incongruous and isolated movements one's own human frailty, weaknesses, confusion and sometimes desperation. Her dance astounded and moved us. The relentless energy of her sometimes unexpectedly aggressive choreography was also a revelation to me. A violence impossible to realize within the vocabulary of classical ballet erupted in the strength of her precise, almost Karate-like percussive movements. But, perhaps most unique was Sybil's lyric quality, evident in her unbelievable balance, in her soft but heavy port de bras and upper body movement. She created a modern lyricism. Modern art, modern dance seems so much more adept and capable to express aggression, to portray anger and chaos and to distort the natural harmony of the human body. Sybil invented a poetic movement quality which had nothing to do with the romantic gestures and cliché poses of 19th-century ballet, but suggested rather the sublime concentration of the Noh-dancer. This was the truly pure, the spiritual in movement. Only later did all this, which I had been fortunate enough to see, to learn and to be part of, unconsciously mutate, in another form, into my own choreography.

The work with Sybil, which meant commuting to Northbrook several times a week, added, of course, another degree of stress to university studies, theatre productions and ballet classes in Chicago. It was however dancing with Sybil's small group that I was first noticed by a major critic, Claudia Cassidy, who was then a highly respected but feared writer for the Chicago Tribune newspaper. Reviewing the first concert in which I danced, Cassidy wrote primarily of the genius of Sybil herself. But, near the end of her article she wrote "Among the dancers there was a tall, dark-haired boy named John Neumeier who made you watch him without trying. I am very much afraid he is a dancer."

The third influential person in my development as an artist was Vera Volkova, a teacher of classical ballet. After graduating from Marquette University, I was determined to concentrate completely on my classical ballet studies, considering this technique to be the most challenging but most complete discipline to prepare myself ultimately for the freedom to create. During the university years, there had been so many diverse activities demanding energy and attention that I felt the concentration on a single discipline—that of classical ballet—was necessary to properly finish my studies and prepare myself for a successful professional career.

In answer to my question, who was the greatest teacher in the world for male dancers, an acquaintance from the New York City Ballet replied "Vera Volkova in Copenhagen." I was determined, therefore, to study with Volkova at the school of the Royal Danish Ballet. At the last moment however, I discovered that it was, at that time, impossible for foreigners to study at the Danish school. I then decided to go to the Royal Ballet School in London. The

atmosphere there, however, seemed cold, completely impersonal, negative, and definitely not creative! Feeling quite depressed, I visited Vera Volkova during the Easter holiday. Immediately sympathetic, positive and extremely kind, she proceeded to give me private lessons. Volkova gave me confidence, was encouraging and it was her skill as a perceptive pedagogue, who used spontaneous verbal images to underscore her corrections, that made a professional ballet dancer of me. That year, in early spring, my encounter with the émigré Russian teacher had truly the sense of springtime for me. My professional life began to blossom!

After our first meeting, I returned several times to work with this remarkably inspiring teacher. She sensed in me the potential to be a creative artist and was the first in Europe to encourage my instinctive desire to become a choreographer.

It was, however, at the Royal Ballet School in London that a strange series of coincidences and seemingly missed chances occurred that determined the next step in my journey. During a class in character dancing, I was “discovered” by the ballerina of the Stuttgart Ballet, Marcia Haydée, who visited our school with her partner Ray Barra. Barra would later play an important role in the establishment of my first company in Frankfurt, becoming my ballet master and close associate. Several days before their visit, the director of the Royal Ballet, Ninette de Valois, who had rehearsed and coached me for a school performance in Roland Petit’s ballet “Ballabile,” finding me talented promised to speak to George Balanchine, director of the New York City Ballet about me during the forthcoming tour of the Royal Ballet to the USA. At that time, a career in the British Royal Ballet was impossible because foreign dancers were not allowed to be employed in England. Haydée and Barra, in the meantime, had offered me a job with John Cranko’s new company in Stuttgart—a city I had until then never heard of. I considered their offer interesting, but waited for de Valois’ return and her news. When at last she did return, de Valois passed me in the school hallway without so much as a word. Immediately, I accepted and signed the Stuttgart contract. Incredibly, several days later, again passing de Valois accidentally in the corridor, she stopped and coolly explained that she had indeed spoken to Balanchine and that I could join the New York City Ballet in autumn! However, feeling responsibility to the already signed agreement, I declined Balanchine’s offer and made plans to begin my professional career in Stuttgart—expecting to spend just one year in Germany!

How different the course of my artistic quest would have been had the timing been otherwise and I would have returned to America after that one year in England! But I joined the Stuttgart Ballet, became a soloist and after a time resumed my creative activities choreographing ballets for the young choreographers group in Stuttgart called “Die Noverre

Gesellschaft.” One of my first works was the ballet “Haiku” originally inspired by Yukio Mishima’s modern Noh play “Hanjo,” but based finally on a lovely Haiku written in the Japanese poetic form by my friend Joan Schwartz. Becoming a great public and critical success, the ballet “Haiku” was filmed for German television. It was precisely this ballet for which I designed and, in fact, sewed myself the Japanese inspired costumes, that was influential in determining my future. Another Japanese connection!

The success of the ballet “Haiku” resulted in invitations to create works for companies in America and England, and led eventually to the offer of becoming director of the Frankfurt Ballet. Frankfurt was particularly important for me as it was there that I began to formulate and develop my concept of a modern ballet ensemble, to create original choreography and experiment with new forms for traditional ballets such as my version of “The Nutcracker,” “Daphnis and Chloe” and “Le Sacre,” ballets which remain in the repertoire of my company today. After less than three years in Frankfurt, I was offered the directorship of the much larger, more prestigious ballet in Hamburg where I have remained artistic director until the present date—now (unbelievably!) in my 43rd year.

When I consider the development of my life and work in the light of what I have related thus far in my address, the diverse threads of my past education, inclinations and experiences seem strangely to have been woven into the fabric of my present situation and existence. Although the calling to the priesthood, the possibility of becoming a painter and, for a time, imagining a career as a psychiatrist may seem incongruous and unrelated to the burning desire to express myself in dance, I suppose that this combination of dreams, longings and various interests did, in fact, come together in my eventually becoming a choreographer. A choreographer designs and “paints” with human beings in time and space, so, of necessity, a combination of movement and design is always present in choreography. Also, in the type of ballet that interests me, the psychological motivation of the characters was always an important factor, resulting from a continued interest in psychiatry which began in puberty. Analysis of the forms and manifestations of madness and its possible expression in dramatic dance situations find, in fact, a prominent place in some of my most successful ballets.

For “A Streetcar Named Desire,” an empathetic understanding of the interior landscape of the central character, Blanche DuBois, was of paramount importance in portraying through movement this tragic figure from Tennessee Williams’s well known drama. Without a personal imagining of the inner emotional structure of such a person, creating Blanche would have been impossible or merely superficial. Perhaps most importantly, my lifelong

fascination with the Polish/Russian dancer, choreographer, painter and humanist Vaslaw Nijinsky would be the most convincing example of how my early occupation with psychiatry manifested itself in one of my most well-known, successful and moving dance portraits, the ballet “Nijinsky” created in the year 2000. Already at age 11, I read a biography of Nijinsky, “The Tragedy of Nijinsky,” written by his school comrade Anatole Bourman. My fixation with this great artist had from that moment not only to do with the sensational aspects of his legendary performances and glamorous life as the superstar of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes—but with the private Vaslaw and the tragedy of his descent into madness. This early fascination and later psychological research into the exact nature of Nijinsky’s madness became an essential part of the ballet “Nijinsky,” as well as in the ballet “Le Pavillon d’Armide” and earlier in my version of “Le Sacre du Printemps” entitled simply “Le Sacre.” In my version of Stravinsky’s masterpiece, the dance of the chosen virgin was, in fact, inspired by eye witness accounts of Nijinsky’s last dance in the Suvretta House Hotel on the afternoon of January 19, 1919. Of course, becoming and remaining a director for more than 45 years now, one must of necessity become a kind of psychiatrist to deal with artists—that group of very uniquely individual, extremely sensitive, highly emotional and very delicate people, who, in their desire to realize themselves as artists sometimes need psychological guidance.

Also religious beliefs and the fascination with the spiritual aspects of humanity have continued to this day to concern me and form an important theme in such ballets as “The Silence,” “Messiah,” “Requiem,” “Magnificat”, the “Christmas Oratorio” and most importantly in the “St. Matthew Passion.” Like pieces of mosaic stones, all these early interests, intuitions, desires and dreams have now come to form the complete picture of myself as a man, a choreographer and an artist.

Recalling and recounting for this address the experiences leading to my development as an artist, it becomes clear to me that the seemingly diverse, if not diametrically opposed events encountered on my quest have, in fact, not only resulted in the reality of becoming an actively working and prolific choreographer, but have contributed to the formation of a very personal definition of dance itself. Although rooted in the values and experiences of the past, my definition is not merely theoretical and intellectually proposed, but has unconsciously evolved and has been practically realized, developed and manifested in the more than 150 ballets I have created.

In researching the nature and specific function of the art, one must first determine that particular aspect unique to dance alone which is its essence. It is important to understand, that when I speak of “dance,” I am referring to theatre dance and not to any form of religious

dance ritual where movement might be understood as prayer, nor do I refer to types of folk or ballroom dance in which the pleasure is derived from the actual physical doing of the dance itself rather than its presentation and the consequential emotional response of an audience. I am discussing dance as an art form performed by professionals, who hope wordlessly to communicate with an observing public. I believe this art is unique, firstly in that it presupposes the living presence of the dancer and depends for its effect on his skills in execution and the radiating power of his presence. The human being is, therefore, of necessity its center. This central human being is also both instrument for and subject of every ballet. Like any performing instrument, the human body must be trained, must become articulate in order to communicate directly and most freely with other human beings. These observing human beings possess the same instrument—their body as well as the completeness of their humanity—and may therefore relate intimately to the wordless images projected from the stage. Dance is not communicated rationally. It is impossible to “understand” ballet because this particular art form cannot, to any great degree, communicate specific information. It is impossible for instance, to communicate abstract ideas or facts. You cannot dance the daily news. Nor is dance a form of sign language in which a particular gesture may convey a specific rational meaning. In dance, wordlessly recognizable feelings, sensations and emotions are projected to an audience who, without understanding facts, dates or clarifying tenses may recognize a familiar emotion directly, with reference to his own human condition. One human being dancing for an audience of fellow human beings might be compared to a violin playing a violin concerto to an audience of violins. Who better senses what being bowed or plucked upon feels like, more than another violin itself—certainly better than a grand piano that may also be in the audience! Who better then to feel the exhilarating power of an enormous human leap, the elevating magic of a dancer’s sustained balance on her toes, or the pain of a body contorted in grief than a creature sharing essentially the same nature?

Certain ballets or dance performances can, of course, use literature, history, biography or even music itself as its theme. In witnessing the performance however, it is not the literary or other rational reference that is paramount to our experience, but rather the direct emotional impact projected through movement images, specific physical dynamics and the emotional commitment of the dancer that moves the audience.

While watching the romantic tragedy of “Romeo and Juliet,” we do not cry at the end of the ballet for Shakespeare’s renaissance lovers, but rather as an emotional response to the actual, live performing dancers who have moved us to tears with the conviction of their interpretation. Even when using historical figures such as Vaslaw Nijinsky as I did in my

ballet created in 2000, or Eleonora Duse, the famous Italian actress about whom I am at the present moment creating a new work—the present, living incarnation is essential for the success of the performance. Dance can seldom function as a documentary medium or historical lesson. Therefore, it is the human presence, created in a ballet because of the choreographer's subjective reaction to the facts studied or the inspiration gained from the myths surrounding an historical figure which move us.

My intention as a choreographer is to give emotional shape to the truth of a character, his relationships or the human situations in which he is involved by means of selected or invented movements. Of course, our rational knowledge of any particular subject may help in providing a more complex, more complete, many layered frame of reference or comprehension. The Nijinsky scholar, for example, familiar with all the facts and all aspects of the dancer's life, has additional pleasure while watching the performance in recalling those incidents or situations suggested by my ballet. The fan or expert of the actress Eleonora Duse may be disappointed or upset by the portrayal of certain relationships envisaged in my ballet, which he sees in a completely different light. But, in fact, some of the strongest ballets—some also in my own repertoire, have been created depicting nameless characters whose existence is inspired solely by the emotional tension felt while hearing music, by the choreographer's instinctive choices, or by an inspiring dancer.

Whatever historical period or epoch a choreographer may wish to suggest in his ballet—whether pre-historic China, 18th-century France, or Renaissance Italy—when the theatre curtain rises, the performance takes place in the present. What we see, the action is happening now. It is the living presence, the concentration and involvement of the dancers, their “now” that reminds us of some part of ourselves. Dance speaks only in the present tense. There has never been nor, I believe, ever will be a movement created which signifies “yesterday I loved” or “tomorrow I will kill.” We understand, we relate only to what we see at this moment expressed through movement. Movement itself, being a primary sign of life, underlines the premise of dance as an essentially living art. It is also ever changing, and change is again an important sign of life. A ballet changes with each performance. No two performances are identical. This is the great challenge, the fascinating tension of live performance. The dance does not exist—all my choreographies do not exist—unless performed, unless embodied, incarnated by the interpretation of living dancers.

Let me remark that film can, of course, capture a dance performance making it in a sense eternal—so long, that is, as the material substance survives! Dance films are basically of two types and each serves quite a different purpose. I myself use film every day working on a new creation to be able later, in a situation more quiet and peaceful than the rehearsal

room itself, to study more objectively what has been accomplished during the intense hours of creation. It is interesting that it is exactly the distance to my work which a filmed sequence provides me with, compared to the emotionally charged atmosphere during the act of creation, that makes such film documents useful in rationally evaluating the results of a rehearsal. Also, the fact that the camera may pick one particularly inspired moment during spontaneous improvisations which are never again realized during the creative process that makes such materials especially valuable. This type of ballet film is of great importance as a tool during the working process or as a document recording the process of creation, but it is meant for the private use of the choreographer or for archival purposes only, and is never intended to be seen by the general public. It is part of the laboratory of the choreographer.

Archival in nature are also the films made to document the performance of a ballet at any particular moment of its existence. Again, such films are meant to capture a specific interpretation or version, intended to document the status quo of a ballet or record subsequent changes. Dance film may, however, also become a work of art in itself. In this case, an exact plan and schedule must be made with precisely planned multiple camera angles, numerous takes and extremely careful editing. The enormous possibilities of this medium have also fascinated me for many years and I have been involved—either directing myself or working closely with the film director, cameramen and editors to insure that the result will represent, in a completely other medium, the original intention of the ballet. I do believe it is possible to make wonderful ballet films of high artistic quality. Such films have the added advantage of determining, because of the use of close-ups and selective editing, the focus of the viewer who, in a live performance, distracted by the confusion of the whole picture may have trouble following the principal action. Again, this medium is clearly related to my early studies and interests in drawing and painting. Following the movement of a single arm in close-up, dancing through the dimension of a cinema screen may result in a unique form of truly moving choreography—making use of the technical possibilities of modern mediums.

Film is, however, clearly a different genre and can, I believe, never replace or become a substitute for the impact, suspenseful and exciting experience of watching the living dancer's performance.

Ballet must be constantly reborn. New life must be bestowed anew at each and every performance. As creator and choreographer, this living nature of dance means for me personally that none of all the many ballets I have created is completed. The constantly changing and evolving nature of my ballets is quite different to that of a finished painting hanging in a gallery or a published book on a library shelf. I consider each a work in

progress until the day I die. Watching a performance of my work, I observe critically, reserving the right to correct, change and re-work. The challenge for me is trying to see each ballet as if for the first time. This act of constantly seeing an old work as new is, for me, part of the responsibility but wonderful adventure of my work which keeps me also in a constant state of movement! To evaluate, criticize and determine the current validity, relevance and honesty of each work as it is being performed now, I must first ask myself, do I believe what I see, and most importantly, does it move me. If my work does not move me, if I can no longer find a part of me in my work, why should it affect anyone else? Never have I been able to create characters in a ballet whose attributes, qualities or even negative aspects I could not find, in some degree, as a part of my own human nature. I must use my creative imagination to determine if I could possibly be the vain, unhappy lover Don Juan, if I could feel the forgiving love of Julie in “Liliom,” or if I could experience the heartless jealous hate of Jago in “Othello.”

Honesty is essential to the dancer’s projection of emotion. I, as choreographer, must believe that there could in reality exist such a situation as I have created—that in a given situation the dancer’s actions are inevitable and that such an imagined relationship, harmonious or troubled, is true and possible. To achieve a truthful interpretation, I believe a dancer must work not only on the physical, technical demands of a role, but, during creation and rehearsal, begin to work on the emotional structure of his character allowing it to evolve organically, dramatically with each performance. A dancer must enter the stage with and for an action, be aware of what he is doing and find a verb in every one of his movements!

I believe, therefore, the primary source of movement is human emotion. The primary purpose of theatre dance is, by means of movement, to move others. Dance is, for me, the living shape of emotion. As an art, dance must reflect the human being in his entirety, including intellect, sensuality and spiritual aspiration. Therefore, as choreographers, our themes are as infinite as all human experiences and, in no sense limited to that which is simply entertaining.

For me, the struggle of the human being to understand his relationship with a higher existence—a dialogue with God—has always been one of my most important themes. Therefore, of all my works, the most important and profound is perhaps my ballet to Johann Sebastian Bach’s “St. Matthew Passion.” Inspired by Bach’s deeply religious music, I have explored choreographically—in direct narrative episodes as well as meditative solos and commenting group dances—the works central and universal themes: community, betrayal, violence, vengeance and the power of forgiveness and love. The “St. Matthew Passion” is for

me the prime example of the possibility dance may possess to embody a universally comprehended language.

Reflecting today on my long relationship with Japan, I would like, in conclusion, to recall a thought from my acceptance speech. I have always considered it a great honor and responsibility to be an artist. The possibility of wordlessly communicating in the work I love to do, some part of my world view, personal feelings and philosophy, I consider one of the greatest privileges of my vocation. The power dance may have to move people, to suggest a possible harmonious existence and to transmit a message of peace and reconciliation found one of its most profound realizations here in this country during the Hamburg Ballet's first visit to Japan. The presentation of my ballet the "St. Matthew Passion" on the 16th of February 1986 in Hiroshima remains an unforgettable high point of my long career because it combined an aesthetic statement with a healing vision of atonement.

Thank you for your attention.