

**PERFORMING PAST, PRESENT AND POSSIBILITIES IN IRISH
MODERN DANCE THEATRE'S *FALL AND RECOVER*
A CASE FOR USING DANCE IN PEACEBUILDING**

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

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“Artists...live in barrenness as if new life, birth, is always possible.”

-- John Paul Lederach

ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the research question: What contributions can dance – both experiential and watched – make to peacebuilding projects? An in-depth case study of *Fall and Recover*, a dance by Irish Modern Dance Theatre, whose cast is comprised of two professional dancers and eleven survivors of torture and asylum seekers to Ireland, helps answer this question. We find that dance is particularly well positioned to replenish individuals' cognitive, emotional and intuitive capacities blunted or destroyed by trauma and conflict that are necessary for peacebuilding to occur. Moreover, dancing in a group or watching a performance can also foster several of Cynthia Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation and all four of John Paul Lederach's core essences of peacebuilding. This research overall highlights the ways in which dance could be incorporated into future healing or peacebuilding projects for effective and long-lasting results.

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PROLOGUE:**BACKGROUND NARRATIVE OF THE CASE STUDY:
IRISH MODERN DANCE THEATRE'S *FALL AND RECOVER***

The dancers come back out one by one with a mysterious music playing. Half-lying, half-sitting, they trace their bodies with a thick line of salt, poured from a container the audience can never quite see. When the outline is finished, each performer calmly stands up and walks off stage, slowly but matter-of-factly, leaving an ocean of figures across the floor, shining eerily blue in the dawn-colored stage lights. Each figure is different, an imprint of what was just a moment before.

“You see in the piece when we use that salt at the end, something always comes to my head whenever I finish. The moment I draw it and get up, in my head, I look at it and I go,

‘That’s my past -- goodbye.’ And I walk away.

I always look forward to that salt part, because it’s like that’s my past there – gone. Because at the end of the day it will be swept away.”

So says Solomon, a performer in *Fall and Recover*, the dance described above. He is also a former asylum seeker to Ireland. He and eleven other asylum seekers, refugees and torture survivors of different ages, nationalities, religions and backgrounds, as well as two professional dancers, make up the cast of this piece of art. *Fall and Recover* simultaneously helped its performers to heal and to share their stories with audience members, hoping to inspire social change.

* * *

In June 2003, John Scott, choreographer and artistic director of the Dublin-based Irish Modern Dance Theatre (IMDT), received an email from SPIRASI, a non-profit organization aiding asylum seekers and refugees, asking if he would teach four dance workshops to members of their Centre for Care of Survivors of Torture (CCST). John remembers that, “At that time, I didn’t even know that people who had undergone torture existed in Ireland, and I was unaware of immigration or asylum issues.” A group of survivors had experienced two years of counseling at CCST, and it was time for them to move on to allow CCST to take on new clients. As one of CCST’s social workers told me, “Our goal is to steer them toward normality. When they first come to [SPIRASI], it’s like a womb, a safe place for them, but you can’t always stay in your safe place, you have to move out into the world.”

So the social workers asked the refugees what kind of activity CCST could plan to help them with this transition. The consensus was that dance classes might help because so many of the survivors were from Africa. As Bridget, one of the African performers, relates, “Singing and dancing – it’s part of our tradition – even if somebody’s dead, we sing and we dance, maybe it’s a way of consoling ourselves; singing and dancing is the way we enjoy ourselves.” If individuals ever needed to return for counseling, CCST’s doors were always open.

But none of them ever felt the need to return for counseling: “The dance healed us,” describe Bridget, Solomon and Kiribu.

John has absolutely no background in therapy; he is a dance artist through and through and becomes extremely excited when talking about Merce Cunningham and

Meredith Monk, two of the most abstract choreographers in modern dance history. The Living Theater and its founders, Julian Beck and Judith Malina, with whom he toured for a winter in his early twenties, are also “huge influences” for John. His work and his dance interests are non-representational, non-linear and certainly non-narrative; he cringes at the word. The only therapeutic advice John received from CCST upon his first workshop was not to inquire about the participants’ pasts because it could induce traumatic flashbacks.

But when John walked into the room, he was immediately “inspired:” by the way they moved, their dignity and who they were as human beings. As an Anglo-Irish (meaning that full-blooded Irish people often regard him as less than fully Irish) and as a gay man, John had always felt like an outsider. These people were outsiders too, and he immediately connected to them: “They felt like family.” But John’s artistic level of interest went even deeper: from the first moment until today (winter 2011), he is constantly “stimulated and thrilled by the way they move.” Their bodies and movement gave him a whole new aesthetic to work with as a choreographer and greatly expanded his “poetic universe.”

The survivors were equally taken with John and his way of moving. Modern dance was a completely new experience for them and not what they were expecting – but they were intrigued. Thus it happened that four workshops turned into many months of workshops on every second Tuesday night. John began to have ideas for making a full dance with the survivors. His ideas coincided with SPIRASI’s plans for a large fundraiser for June 26, 2004, the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, where the dance would first be performed at Dublin’s Project Arts Center, a public

theater. A grant from the Arts Council of Ireland in May 2004 allowed John's plans to move forward, the dancers to be paid (via per diems since they could not legally earn a salary), the professional dancers to be hired and *Fall and Recover* to be created. The former strategic development director remembers that, from SPIRASI's perspective, the goal of performing *Fall and Recover* at the fundraiser was "to create media and public awareness [about SPIRASI and the needs of asylum seekers] but to do it in a way that was positive – it's always easy to raise money if it's positive. Negative things have a shock factor, but if it's positive, people find it far easier to get on board." Indeed, *Fall and Recover* has never been so-called victim art; rather from its inception, the dance has been a celebration of life and survival, a testament that the people involved have fallen – and recovered.

So John took particularly communicative movement phrases and improvisational activities that had been developed in the workshops and strung them together into a dance. Because of varying schedules, the full cast rehearsed for the first time all together the night before the show, but their performance blew people away, John included. Those involved remember that the audience was in tears. As Philip Connaughton, one of the professional dancers involved since the spring of 2004, says: "The fact is you are working with a load of torture survivors, which is not a normal situation. And they're putting their heart and soul into it, and you're creating an emotional environment where movement is being made with an emotional energy behind it. And so of course that's heart-wrenching, because they've got a lot of stuff that they need to get out and it's coming out. And just the fact that they are learning to trust again, and they're stepping out – that is a release of energy that could make a thousand people cry, it's incredibly

beautiful.” Asked how John made this release of energy possible, Philip continues, “It just happens by itself, you don’t need to [force things]. John really did honestly just make a piece, that’s all. He was just trying to make something beautiful and create beauty in them, and it’s wonderful how beautiful they become.”

After the initial performance, John continued working with the group to develop *Fall and Recover* into an evening-length dance. In 2005 and 2006, they performed several times, including a run at Dublin’s Project Arts Centre and many tours to other Irish cities. Often in preparing for performances, rehearsals were scheduled for every day of the week. In 2005, John created *The White Piece*, a new dance with three of the torture survivors and ten professional dancers, which was inspired by one of the survivor’s experiences as an asylum seeker in Ireland. *The White Piece* subsequently toured to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2006), Paris, France (2007) and Ramallah, Bethlehem and Haifa, in Israel and Palestine (2009). Although *Fall and Recover* itself remained dormant until it was re-commissioned for the 2009 Dublin Dance Festival, (an internationally renowned festival with companies from all over the world), John was continually working with the survivors whose movement quality and artistic expression he found particularly inspiring. Indeed, he integrated survivors into all of his works, including *In This Moment* (2010), *Rhythmic Space* (2007), *Close-Ups* (2006), and *Like Silver* (2004), among others. The 2009 rendition of *Fall and Recover* garnered an invitation from La Mama Theater for a three-week New York City season in March 2011, which was sponsored by Imagine Ireland. Over time, some of the original cast members have moved on and other survivors from SPIRASI and elsewhere have joined. Today, about five of the original *Fall and Recover* cast members are full members of the

professional company, working with John and any international choreographers who come to set dances on IMDT.

The Context

The Republic of Ireland is a small country of 4.58 million people (O'Brien), with another 1.8 million in Northern Ireland, on an island the geographic size of the state of Maine. Historically, Ireland has been a country of net emigration; significant numbers of immigrants to the country – both economic and refugee – did not begin to come until the early 1990s when the Irish economy improved. Thus, in the last twenty years, visible changes have resulted as many ethnicities have come to live in a place that was mostly ethnically homogenous for centuries. As Steven Loyal relates, “Since the foundation of the state, Irishness and citizenship have been correlated with whiteness and Catholicism which implicitly acted as the measure against which difference was constructed” (Loyal 46). Even a majority of immigrants still come from white, predominantly Christian countries: in 2006, only 13 percent of immigrants came from countries outside of Europe (Fahey 29).¹ Thus, as the country has dealt with new understandings of multiculturalism and racism, Irish people have also had to change their national sense of self. Recent articles in the *Irish Times* about the results of the 2011 census reveal that people are still adjusting to the fact that Ireland has become a country of immigration rather than emigration. One article reads, “Central Statistics Office officials said they may have underestimated the high level of net inward migration and overestimated emigration rates in recent research” (Smyth 7/1/11). The number of asylum applications has also

¹ To be specific: 23 percent of immigrants in 2006 were repatriating Irish, 9 percent came from the UK, 11 percent from the original EU member states, 43 percent from the new EU member states as of 2004 (i.e. Eastern Europe), 1 percent from the USA and 13 percent from “the rest of the world” (Fahey 29).

increased in recent years: “In 1992, Ireland received only 39 applications for asylum. By 1996, this figure had risen to 1,179, then to 10,325 in 2001 and peaking at 11,634 in 2002. By 2003 it began to fall, reaching 7,900 at the end of that year and falling farther to 4,323 by the end of 2005” (Loyal 37). Putting these numbers in perspective, that means “between 1995 and 2000, asylum seekers constituted less than 10 percent of all immigrants who entered Ireland” (Loyal 39). Nigeria, Romania, Somali, Sudan and Iran produced the most asylum seekers in Ireland in 2005 (Loyal 37).

The Irish modern dance scene is small, interconnected and looks equally to Europe and the United States for influence and inspiration. The Arts Council, which receives funding from the government but is an independent body, funds more than 50 percent of the operating costs of the handful of dance companies like IMDT that have a formal structure. Many dancers work as independent choreographers or performers, and the few formalized companies find the remainder of their funding from other organizations such as Culture Ireland, or private donations. Thus, the funding structure of Irish dance lies somewhere in between the American model, (based mostly on private donations from individuals and foundations), and European models such as those of France and Germany, (which are almost entirely government funded). Although other Irish choreographers have done projects with ‘non-traditional dancers,’ and the theater scene in Ireland embraces a fair amount of multi-cultural work, “it is the sustainedness of what John is doing that is definitely [new]” and different in the Irish arts world, according to a former IMDT board member. She continues, “[John’s work] began to be a comment in a very direct way on what was happening to people who are [seeking asylum] in Ireland. With that direct connection, I feel that was a new thing happening within dance.

That's not to say that those kinds of things haven't happened before, but let's say that the continuity of that - not just with *Fall and Recover* but subsequent to that with other works, where arguably the performers are now *integrated*, and it's not an issue about looking at them as a separate sort of an entity - and I think that's something that's very different that hasn't happened here before."

The other 'new' aspect that John brought to the arts community, was that, in the board member's words, he "really became a champion for these people as well." John's involvement with the survivors did not end in the dance studio or on-stage; instead he ended up working with many of them to fight their deportation orders and to gain Irish citizenship. This kind of involvement began in Fall 2004 when one of the performers - Rory - received a deportation order a few weeks before a performance. John was determined not to let Rory be deported. He collaborated with Residents Against Racism, a citizen group that works with asylum seekers, and immigration lawyers to delay the order by finding inconsistencies in the deportation letter that could be fought in the legal system. (For example, in Rory's case, the letter had been dated in June but he received it in November.) Meanwhile, John wrote his friends and IMDT's mailing list urging people to write letters, make phone calls or help in any way possible. He rallied important people he knew in the community to write letters to the Minister of Justice explaining how much Rory was adding to the Irish community by participating in IMDT and other volunteer endeavors. Journalists with whom John had developed relationships over his years as an artist wrote feature stories about Rory's situation and contributions to society. John wrote and presented affidavits at court. Lo and behold, on the day Rory was due to be deported

at 4:00 pm, he received an Injunction from the High Court at 1:00 pm.² After that, whenever any of the cast members faced deportation problems, they would come to John. John would do whatever he could to help, sometimes even going to the Immigration Offices with them and standing by their side to make sure they were not whisked away onto an airplane. Philip recalls, “He would not sleep if there were problems – court cases or problems with people being deported. He was there 24 hours, and, virtually, he’s helped everyone. I don’t know how many people he has helped.” In eight years, only one of the performers has been deported. (Although another chose to return home.)

Today, the group considers itself “a family,” with John as “the father” and Kiribu, a natural leader from day one, as “the mother.” Each Christmas, everyone gathers at John’s apartment bringing a dish from his or her homeland. Many other social gatherings take place during the year. Bridget, one of the original cast members, named John the godfather of her first child born in Ireland, and he has been best man at the weddings of other cast members. As Bridget says, “I don’t know how to thank John – thank you John, thank you John.”

Description of the Dance

All of these profound relationships are apparent in *Fall and Recover* right next to the horrors the performers faced in their previous lives. This contrast adds to the distinct feeling that the dance, in the final analysis, is uplifting – a thanksgiving and a celebration of life. The dance begins as Kiribu and Sheila take two seats at the front-right side of the stage, which has no curtains whatsoever, just the rafters of the room marking boundaries.

² Eventually, in 2007, Rory was granted a status called Humanitarian Leave to Remain, and he will be able to apply for citizenship in 2012.

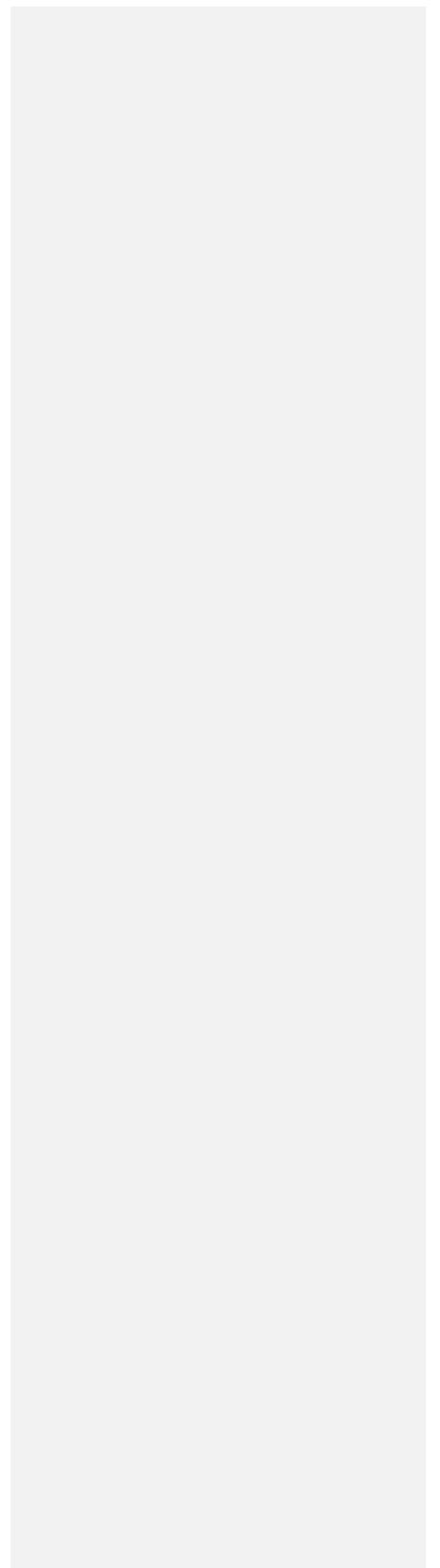
Kiribu talks in her native language while Sheila copies any natural gestures that Kiribu makes. Soon, other cast members enter and draw pictures of their homelands – a house here, a flower there - with magic markers, whose scent can be smelled from the audience, on huge sheets of white paper that cover the floor completely. Still others come out and jump or run like airplanes, accompanied by Kiribu's voice.

Then all of a sudden, the cast rips up the paper, throwing it in the air, both gleefully and determinedly, as the cascade of unkempt origami rains down on the performers only to be collected and carried off. The dance progresses as a series of scenes that are not obviously connected. In one scene, the performers, dressed all in white, line up shoulder-touching-shoulder. They start talking, each one in his or her own language – John calls it a “passport,” wherein they introduce themselves – as they slowly shuffle such that the line rotates around its axis, carving a pin-wheel in the stage space. The line then moves to the back wall, and everyone slides to the floor at the same time, except for Sheila who remains standing in a pool of fading light as her fingers palpably investigate the air in front of her face.

Another scene starts with Nuala against the back wall, framed by a rectangle of light. She slides slowly down the wall, a seemingly inevitable descent, until her knees are at 90 degrees, and then with a movement paradoxically both desperate and graceful, she uses her fingertips to inch her way back up the wall in measured increments. After a few repetitions, she leans side to side against the wall, her arms reaching and her far leg coming off the ground, a perfect sequencing through the vertebra and ribcage creating a seamless arc of torso and movement. When she stops, Sheila runs to her, stomach to

stomach, stretching her arms to make an X with Nuala's arms against the wall. Others follow at a run, making a linear, multi-person hug.

Yet another scene has everyone picking up Nuala, raising her above their heads and walking a ways, before putting her down and picking up Solomon the same way. Short solos intersperse scenes or take place in a performer's own world while the group does something else. Rory takes great deep, heaving breaths that move his arms and change his face; Eamon writes his name in the air in front of him; Keelin makes fast, frantic circles over her stomach as if trying to keep an internal explosion contained; Sheila's hands crawl and scratch up and down her arms and legs like contorted red ants in slow motion. More than once, soloists break out into different African call and response songs, and the group starts dancing and responding in traditional African styles. After one of these songs, Eamon drops to his knees, and then lies down on his side. Others join him. Conor has a transcendent jumping solo where he bounds in the air, arms swinging to the side; great eagles or albatrosses might recognize him as one of their own. Others join him as well. Towards the end, each person leans onto the back of a partner, their legs coming off the ground, a moment of complete trust. Then they all move into a big circle, take hands and raise them in the air; shimmering their fingers, the group melts into a mass as we look only at the upraised hands. Afterwards they leave and return with the salt to outline their bodies, eventually leaving the stage awash in poignant images of the human form.



INTRODUCTION AND ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

Drawing from an in-depth analysis of John Scott's work, my overarching research question in this thesis is: What contributions can dance make to peacebuilding projects? Peacebuilding itself is vital to our world, yet there is still much to learn and understand about the underlying processes [that can](#) transform conflicts and build coexistence between individuals and communities. Within peacebuilding, [using](#) the arts in reconciliation and coexistence is a growing topic of interest, but less research has been done about dance in comparison to other art forms. However, because our bodies *are* ourselves, and the body is at the root of our identities (Shapiro 145), I believe dance and movement offer a particularly potent window into better understanding how to build peace at the individual level.

Within the field of peacebuilding, why look towards the arts for new ideas? Elise Boulding's *Building a Global Civic Culture* provides an overarching rationale for using the arts in peacebuilding. According to Boulding, the imagination is the most important tool for creating peaceful, productive citizens, since the ability to imagine the future as a peaceful place is an imperative first step to creating a more peaceful society (Boulding 1988 86-87). Because imagination also forms the foundations of the art-making process, [there exists](#) a synchronicity and shared value set between the two fields. Indeed, Martha Eddy calls the arts "profound gateways for opening the imagination" (Eddy 27), and Arlene Goldbard states that, "We cultivate imagination more fully and deeply through art

than any other means” (Goldbard). At a very fundamental level, both fields appeal to, respond to and shape people’s deepest cores of values, attitudes and behaviors at conscious and unconscious levels.

Situating **this** Thesis in the Field of Peacebuilding

The Reflection on Peace Projects (RPP) of CDA Learning Projects has a helpful matrix for classifying and understanding the interaction between different peacebuilding projects. Here is a rendition of their matrix:

	More People	Key People
Individual/Personal Change	Trauma healing	Leadership Dialogue
Socio-Political Change	Mobilization of Citizen Groups	Negotiation of a Peace Agreement

CDA Learning Projects RPP, page 10

CDA describes the broad categories of this matrix: “Programs that work at the *individual/personal level* seek to change the attitudes, values, skills, perceptions or circumstances of *individuals*, based on the underlying assumption that peace is possible only if the hearts, minds and behavior of individuals are changed. Most dialogue and training programs operate at this level, working with groups of individuals to affect their skills, attitudes, perceptions, ideas and relationships with other individuals” (CDA 10).

Socio-Political Change, on the other hand, includes: “Programs that...are based on the belief that peace requires changes in socio-political structures and processes, often supporting the creation or reform of institutions that address grievances that fuel conflict, or promoting non-violent modes for handling conflict. Change at this level includes

alterations in government policies, legislation, policies, economic structures, ceasefire agreements, constitutions, etc. But it also incorporates changes in social norms, group behavior, and inter-group relationships” (CDA 10).

Most of the discussions in this thesis operate in the top left corner of this matrix in the realm of individual/personal change for regular civilians. So the question is: how does individual healing and change lead to change at the socio-political level? Boulding reminds us that the personal is never entirely separate from the wider workings of the world: “Our thoughts, attitudes, and actions are continually shaping and reshaping our societies. We can reinforce old ways or create new ones, but without human action, society does not exist” (Boulding 1995 203). Moreover, she notes that there is a direct relationship between violence within families (interpersonal violence) and structural violence or conflict in wider society. She [describes this truth](#) succinctly: “The habits learned through...ubiquitous family violence feed into behavior in other social arenas – the school, the workplace, the institutions of governance, and the civic culture. Community institutions mirror familial institutions” (Boulding 1995 199). In other words, although creating individual level change is not the same as socio-political change, they are directly connected and feed each other.

Indeed, in order to build peace, changes must be made at all the different layers of society: the individual, community, national and even international levels. Thus, as an extremely complex phenomenon, peacebuilding requires multi-disciplinary research to develop any kind of understanding. Because I am working from the [realm](#) of individual/personal change, the literature necessary to consider is likewise literature that pertains to individuals. In particular, [within](#) the wider field of peacebuilding, peace

education is concerned mainly with the individual and is therefore important for [my](#) research question. Similarly, psychology studies the individual. Within psychology, we look in particular at the trauma literature since the *Fall and Recover* performers were survivors of torture, a severe form of trauma. Dance studies and performance studies respectively provide examples of other choreographers whose projects could also be considered [as](#) peacebuilding and present an intellectual context for understanding what happens when people watch performances. In the following paragraphs, first we will look at major ideas and trends in Peace Education, trauma literature, Dance Studies and Performance Studies. After this literature review, I will explain the overarching analytical framework for the thesis, which is developed from John Paul Lederach's peacebuilding ideas, Cynthia Cohen's work on the Arts in Coexistence and Daniel Bar-Tal et al's writings in Peace Education.

[It](#) is important to note that [this](#) thesis is divided into two different sections: Section One investigates the contributions of *experiential* dance to individual-level healing, while Section Two explores how *watching* a dance performance affects a wider audience of spectators. This distinction is necessary because doing and watching dance are both integral aspects of the art-form, but create very different cognitive, emotional and physical processes for the individuals involved. Therefore, doing versus watching contribute different potentials to peacebuilding that should not be confused with one another. Where appropriate, I will distinguish between literature relevant to Section One versus Section Two.

Literature Review

Peace Education

The field of peace education offers a particularly important contribution to peacebuilding by focusing on “changed capabilities, perceptions and dispositions [at the individual level]” rather than on the conflict itself (Cairns 6). To offer a definition, Ian Harris explains, “Peace education is the process of teaching people about the threats of violence and strategies for peace. Peace educators strive to provide insights into how to transform a culture of violence into a peaceful culture. They try to build consensus about what peace strategies can bring maximum benefit to the group” (Harris 11). This definition covers a wide variety of goals and programming – anything from conflict resolution training in Norwegian classrooms to inter-ethnic group dialogues in Sri Lanka. To understand this complexity, various authors divide the focus of peace education into three categories with slightly varying names, but all approximating Gavriel Salomon’s distinction of “Peace Education in regions of intractable conflicts; in Regions of Interethnic Tension; and in Regions of Experienced Tranquility” (Salomon 6). While researchers acknowledge that these classifications do not fully capture the wide range of peace education projects (Salomon 6), they are necessary to bring some analytical focus to the field, keeping in mind that context “determines... (a) the challenges faced by peace education, (b) its goals, and (c) its ways of treating the different sub-groups of participants” (Salomon 5).

The following assortment of authors’ ideas about key goals of peace education provides insight into the diversity of beliefs within the field. The International Peace Research Association says conflict resolution, human rights and democracy are the most

important, based on their research [in the Middle East](#) (IPRA). Facing History and Ourselves suggests that “moral reasoning,” “interpersonal understanding” and “consideration of multiple points of view” are [paramount](#) (Tollefson 102,105). Indeed, based on thirty years of programming this organization has found that these three characteristics bring about the most measurable changes in American high school students. Meanwhile, Betty Reardon, [the Director of the Peace Education Program at Columbia University’s Teacher’s College](#), suggests that the seven capacities needed for peacemaking are reflection, responsibility, reconciliation, risk-taking, recovery, reconstruction and reverence. These capacities combined are crucial because they “permit us to look beyond our ordinary understandings of reality to move into something approaching a meditative or contemplative process through which we deepen our understanding of personal, social and global realities” (Reardon 62).

Meanwhile, Ed Cairns suggests that peace education programs in regions of ongoing, intractable conflict represent the prototype of peace education from which we can understand, compare and contrast all other programs (Cairns 5). Thus, let us take a look at different scholars’ views about peace education’s goals in regions of intractable conflict.

To begin, Salomon recommends the following goals for peace education in intractable conflict: “Accepting as legitimate the other’s narrative and its specific implications; being willing to critically examine one’s own group’s actions toward the other group; being ready to experience and show empathy and trust toward the other; and being disposed to engage in nonviolent activities” (Salomon 9). He sees these four attributes as key because they address the particular challenges of intractable conflicts.

including that the conflict is “between collectives, not between individuals,” that historical and “deeply rooted...collective narratives” are involved, and **that** the conflict “entails grave inequalities” (Salomon 7).

Daniel Bar-Tal, Yigal Rosen and Rafi Nets-Zehngut suggest that within regions of intractable conflict, peace education can either be “direct” or “indirect.” Direct peace education can take place when “the societal and political conditions are ripe and the educational system is ready administratively and pedagogically” (Bar-Tal et al 32). Direct peace education openly addresses the particulars of the specific conflict, its history, consequences, unique narratives, and progress and obstacles towards the peace process (Bar-Tal et al 33). Next comes “legitimization, equalization, differentiation and personalization of the rival” (Bar-Tal et al 32-33). And finally, “On the affective level...there is need for a reduction of collective fear and hatred and...a need to initiate collective hope, trust, and mutual acceptance” (Bar-Tal et al 34).

Indirect peace education, on the other hand, can be undertaken by individuals in the midst of conflict, even when the socio-political environment is so enmeshed in the culture and rhetoric of violence such that talking about the specifics of the conflict is dangerous or counterproductive. In these instances, Bar-Tal et al recommend that peace education focus on **developing** five capacities **within individuals**: reflective thinking, tolerance, empathy, knowledge of human rights and conflict resolution skills (Bar-Tal et al 28-31). **For me**, these five capacities seem to be at the core of any peace education precisely because they can be developed at any stage of conflict, in any context, and help to develop the “openness, criticism and skepticism, exposure to alternative ideas and their consideration” that can eventually “strengthen peacemaking and reconciliation” (Bar-Tal

Mariah Steele 12/14/11 1:42 PM

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et al 28). Thus, I use this framework of indirect peace education in my overarching analytic framework described later.

Trauma Literature

Because the participants in [John Scott's](#) work are torture survivors and former asylum seekers, the wider literature on trauma becomes crucial to [include](#), especially in Section One. Trauma, by definition, “overwhelm[s] the ordinary human adaptations to life,” leaving victims to experience “intense fear, helplessness, loss of control and threat of annihilation” (Herman 33). Many therapists, doctors and scholars have explored what happens on psychological, emotional and physiological levels when people are traumatized and have researched different healing modalities. Judith Herman discusses how traumatized individuals can regain their sense of self slowly but surely with the support of their communities and by forgiving themselves (Herman 52). Kaethe Weingarten emphasizes the power of self-reflection and “co-creating meaning” and hope (Young 41) for trauma survivors, without losing sight of the biological mechanisms – an overactive sympathetic nervous system and high levels of cortisol – underlying the condition (Weingarten Lecture). Psychotherapists tend to focus on healing through reliving the trauma in the safety of the therapist’s office where all the suppressed emotions can be released (Haanel 13), whereas dance therapy believes in the wisdom of the body to find its own individualized forms of healing (Halprin 2000 29).

In particular, I draw from the perspectives of psychotherapy and dance therapy; the former because such techniques have specifically been documented with asylum seekers who are also torture survivors, and the latter because dance was the healing

medium in *Fall and Recover*. I compare the two theories by looking at how the artistic process of *Fall and Recover* closely followed the stages of psychotherapy, but then surpassed counseling as a healing modality for these individuals.

Dance Studies & Performance Studies

The field of dance studies has documented how other choreographers have used dance to promote intra- and inter-group understanding. Here, I briefly name a few who have written about their work. Starting from the belief that we can most identify with another's suffering by seeing the other's suffering body, Sherry Shapiro forms cross-cultural understanding in American college students through dance. Her students make dances about their identities, and then share them with each other as [a](#) catalyst for discussion (Shapiro [151-152](#)). In the 1960s in California, Anna Halprin became famous for bringing a group of whites and a group of blacks together to create and perform a dance called *A Ceremony of Us*. Many had never interacted significantly with someone from the other [racial](#) group, but life-long friendships were forged in the production and Halprin went on to found one of the first multi-ethnic dance companies in the nation (Halprin 1995 16-17). Among other community-based projects, Liz Lerman has built relationships between inner city kids and the [adults](#) in their neighborhoods: over a series of dance workshops, the kids and [adults, even policemen](#), created dances together, learning to trust each other more in the process (Lerman [47](#)). Meanwhile, Martha Eddy teaches inner city American high-school students to understand their own and others' body language to prevent fights. Eddy has developed techniques for individuals to learn to recognize what the way they carry themselves may communicate to others, as well as

how to begin to read others' feelings and intentions from their movement (Eddy 26-27). The through-line in all of these projects is that dance provides a way for individuals to become more prepared for interactions with the other [by learning about themselves](#). At the same time, the dance project provides a structured, goal-oriented, safe, and even fun, environment where the inter-group relationships have time, space, community and [the support of](#) conflict resolution processes to develop.

In Section Two, about audience reactions, performance studies literature helps us understand the relationship between audience and performer and what kinds of communication can occur through the amorphous time and space we call a performance. Following Victor Turner, some scholars look at how performances create a liminal space that changes people's relationships to each other for the [duration](#) of a show (Turner 94). In particular, Richard Schechner compares and contrasts performance and ritual to look at how audience members can either be "transported" or "transformed" through watching performance (Schechner 127-130). The whole field revels in the complexity [of multiple interpretations, since](#) each audience member will have a different experience and each performance is unique; but at the same time, [practitioners](#) attempt to draw conclusions about the nature of what we learn, gain and transmit via performance. Indeed, Helena Grehan "explore[s] the ways in which performance can stimulate active engagement, reflection, action, response and responsibility in spectators" (Grehan 21). I adopt a performance studies [paradigm](#) in Chapter Three by suggesting that *Fall and Recover* shows us how *some* individuals may respond to seeing a dance presented for peacebuilding purposes, without proscribing exactly how *everyone* will react. Thus,

performance studies provides the intellectual context for what is happening in performances in order to draw conclusions related to peacebuilding.

Overarching Analytic Framework

Elements from the fields reviewed above are woven together into the overarching analytic framework outlined below. In particular, I draw from John Paul Lederach, a towering figure in peacebuilding, Cynthia Cohen, who has been contributing to understanding how all the arts contribute to coexistence and reconciliation, and Daniel Bar-Tal et al's ideas of direct and indirect peace education. The combination of these three schemas provides a wide enough lens to name and understand the complex reality that is *Fall and Recover*, which I will discuss more at the end of this section.

In *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, John Paul Lederach spells out four “core essences of peacebuilding:” relationship, paradoxical curiosity, creativity and risk (Lederach 34). According to Lederach, peacebuilding at both the individual and socio-political level would not be able to occur without these four elements. In his own words:

Transcending violence is forged by the capacity to generate, mobilize and build the moral imagination. The kind of imagination to which I refer is mobilized when four disciplines and capacities are held together and practiced by those who find their way to rise above violence. Stated simply, the moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence (Lederach 5).

Reading Lederach's text closely, we also find that he outlines seven personal capacities of individuals that are necessary for these four core essences to occur. Building

relationships requires “acknowledgement of interdependency” and “taking personal responsibility” (35); Paradoxical curiosity requires “respect [for] complexity and refus[al] to fall into forced containers of dualism” (36) and “inquisitiveness that explores the world of possibilities” (37); Curiosity requires “vision and belief that the future is not a slave of the past and the birth of something new is possible” (38) and the “quality of providing for and expecting the unexpected” (38); and all of the core essences, but especially risk taking, require “imagination” (34 & 38).

In situations of conflict, however, including structural violence, these seven human capacities are often blunted, weakened or even destroyed by negative emotions and experiences in conflict zones. As Cynthia Cohen says:

Widespread ethnic violence and long-standing oppressions can leave people and communities with insufficient capacities to undertake this work. People are likely to be disoriented and confused, often having lost loved ones, the places that sheltered them and the webs of relationships that gave meaning, texture and ethical anchoring to their lives. People’s abilities both to listen and to express themselves so others can understand are often impaired. Along with bombed-out villages and desecrated shrines, capacities to discern when trust is warranted, to respond to problems creatively and to imagine a different future have often been destroyed. Those who have perpetrated abuses or are implicated in other’s suffering (even through omissions) may be straight-jacketed by inexpressible shame, fear and self-loathing (Cohen 11).

Looking closely at Cohen’s quotation reveals several specific capacities that become destroyed through conflict: trust, creative response, self-expression, listening-skills, and imagination. Overlap between Cohen and Lederach’s ideas certainly exists: Cohen’s creative response and imagination in particular match directly to Lederach’s seven capacities, and trust and interdependence are closely related. However, the other capacities that Cohen states, though related to Lederach’s, represent distinct capacities depleted through conflict. Yet another capacity that both allude to without stating directly

is the need to overcome fear. For instance, Lederach says, “Isolation and fear paralyze the capacity to imagine the web of interdependent relationships” (Lederach 172). I would argue that another name for being able ‘to imagine a different future’ is hope.

The peace education literature offers [yet](#) another set of individual capacities that are weakened in conflict and [whose](#) restoration can greatly aid wider peacebuilding initiatives. Although, as we saw above, different educators may name and categorize them differently, I find Bar-Tal et al’s classification of [capacities in](#) “indirect peace education” to be particularly succinct: reflective thinking, tolerance, empathy, knowledge of human rights and conflict resolution skills (Bar-Tal et al 28). In their words: “These themes allow indirect movement toward a change of the repertoire that supports conflict and the establishment of a new repertoire that begins the process of reconsideration and eventually the construction of new skills, beliefs, attitudes, emotions and values that support peacemaking” (Bar-Tal et al 28). Although they do not [speak about the need to revive individuals’ capacities after violence in the same way as Cohen does](#), I think [a synchronicity exists between the two perspectives](#). [Additionally](#), in [their](#) discussion of direct peace education, Bar-Tal et al point to the need to overcome fear and create hope as another set of capacities requiring peacebuilders’ attention (Bar-Tal et al 34).

Compounding the difficulties survivors of violence face, [trauma occurs frequently in conflict zones](#). [As described in the Literature Review](#), [trauma](#) takes away not only such capacities as Cohen and Bar-Tal describe – trust, creative response, self-expression, listening-skills, imagination, self-reflection, tolerance, empathy, [and](#) conflict resolution

skills – but also basic abilities to understand the self and cope with the surrounding world.

How does one replenish these capacities after conflict and trauma have destroyed them on the individual level, so that further peacebuilding at both the individual and the socio-political level can occur? Cohen has found that “the arts and cultural projects can be crafted to overcome the after-effects of violence, facilitating necessary learning while nourishing and restoring capacities required for coexistence and reconciliation” (Cohen 11-12). In particular, she groups the ‘nourishable capacities’ into the following groups: “perception, expression, receptivity (listening) and imagination” (Cohen 51-52) and “to acknowledge and grapple with complexity and paradox” (Cohen 53). Once these capacities are restored, Cohen has also found that the arts can help fulfill seven elements necessary for reconciliation, which she describes as follows:

- 1) Appreciating each other’s humanity and respecting each other’s culture
- 2) Telling and listening to each other’s stories and developing more complex narratives and more nuanced understandings of identity
- 3) Acknowledging harms, telling truths and mourning losses
- 4) Empathizing with each other’s suffering
- 5) Acknowledging and redressing injustices
- 6) Expressing remorse, repenting, apologizing; letting go of bitterness, forgiving
- 7) Imagining and substantiating a new future, including agreements about how future conflicts will be engaged constructively (Cohen 10-11).

In addition to fostering the above reconciliation goals, the arts can also positively impact Lederach’s four core essences of peacebuilding. Indeed, one of Lederach’s main goals in *The Moral Imagination* is to convince peacebuilders to embrace an artistic outlook in their work because the creative process is so useful to peacebuilding. In Lederach’s words: “We must explore the creative process itself, not as a tangential inquiry, but as the wellspring that feeds the building of peace. In other words, we must

venture into the mostly uncharted territory of the artist's way as applied to social change, the canvases and poetics of human relationships, imagination and discovery” (Lederach 5). Lederach himself makes drawings and writes poems in order to better understand what people are telling him about the conflicts in their communities (Lederach 72). [Therefore, yet](#) another role for the arts in peacebuilding is to directly help peacebuilders understand their work and to attain relationships, paradoxical curiosity, creativity and risk-taking.

To summarize the analytic framework just outlined: Peacebuilding requires certain capacities on the part of individuals; these capacities are weakened or destroyed by conflict, so there is a need to replenish the capacities in order for peacebuilding to happen. The arts can be used to replenish such capacities and to contribute to related goals of reconciliation and peacebuilding. Figure One provides a visual representation of the framework with a complete list of capacities that require nourishment, and Figure Two conveys the relationships and overlaps between the three researchers' schemas.

How the Analytic Framework Frames [this](#) Thesis

In this thesis, we will look at which of the [seventeen](#) capacities in need of nourishment and which of the reconciliation and peacebuilding goals can be aided specifically through dance, as revealed by the *Fall and Recover* experience. Whenever I refer to 'peacebuilding goals,' I am referring to Lederach's four core essences of peacebuilding and Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation, whereas [the seventeen](#) 'peacebuilding capacities' refer to [the combination of Lederach's, Cohen's and Bar-Tal et al's 'capacities in need of nourishment.'](#) Although some overlap [exists](#) between these

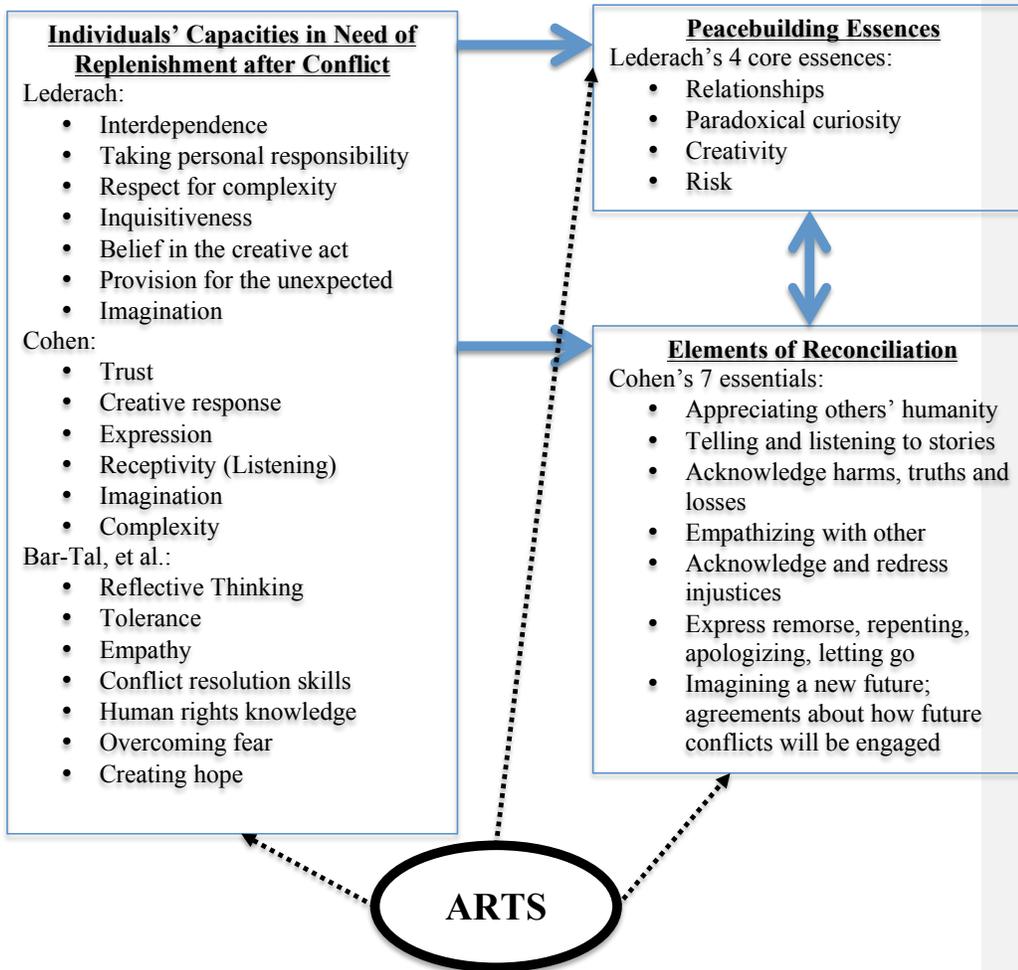


Figure 1: A visual representation of this thesis' Analytic Framework, showing the relationship between the human capacities that need to be replenished at the individual level after conflict in order for peacebuilding and reconciliation to occur. The capacities are divided up by the three researchers from whose work the analytic framework is based: John Paul Lederach, Cynthia Cohen and Daniel Bar-Tal et al. All three categories are informed by artistic activities; the goal of this thesis is to investigate how dance in particular can contribute to these capacities and peacebuilding goals at the individual level.

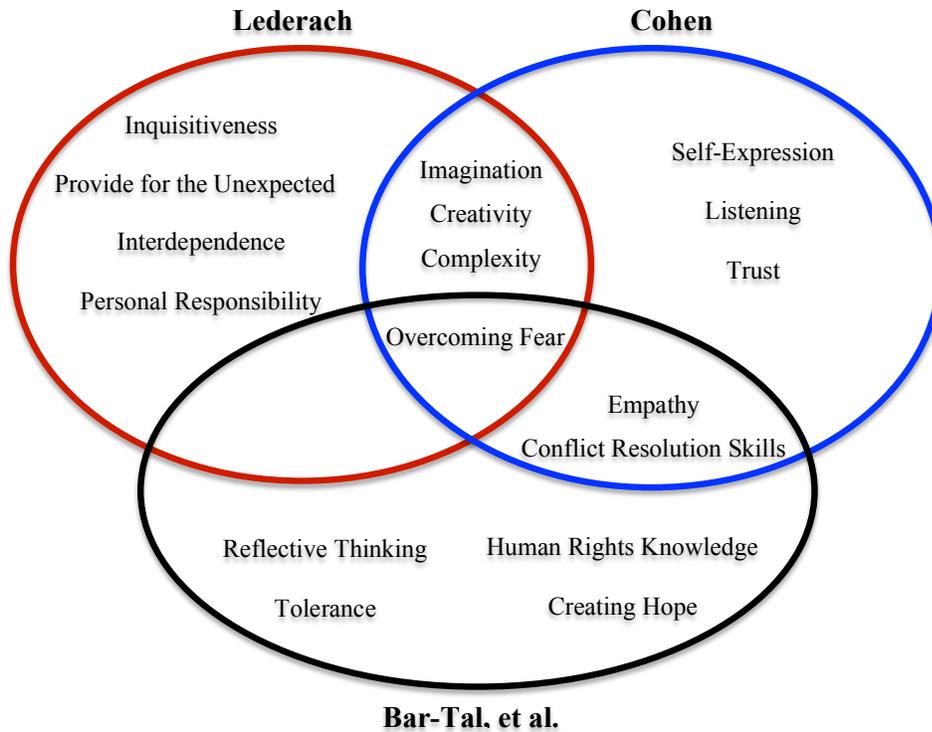


Figure 2: Depiction of the relationship between the seventeen capacities that need replenishing after conflict from Lederach, Cohen, and Bar-Tal et al, as outlined in this thesis' Analytic Framework. While all three schemas include overcoming fear, each researcher discusses capacities that the others do not. Thus, by considering all three schemas in this thesis, we gain a wider lens for analyzing the many ways dance can contribute to peacebuilding.

three researchers' schemas, all three are necessary for [this](#) analysis for two main reasons. Firstly, Lederach's and Bar-Tal et al's schemas are more about individuals' capacities in their daily lives, while Cohen's reconciliation elements happen between people and within groups. Secondly, the complexity of 'real life' as described in *Fall and Recover* does not fit into just one schema; my research was first and foremost observational and inductive, in the tradition of anthropology. Thus, following Lederach's call for embracing complexity, I do not want to oversimplify reality, and wish to label my observations of real-life as precisely as possible, rather than try to fit [every observation](#) into ready-made

molds. Instead, I look at what happened, describe it, and then connect it to the most relevant idea from peacebuilding [and peace education](#). The combination of Lederach's, Cohen's and Bar-Tal et al's schemas provides [sufficiently wide](#) latitude for naming and categorizing observations about *Fall and Recover* that does not overly distort the reality. The thesis' structure follows a narrative line with analysis embedded therein because, as someone trained in ethnography, I believe we learn as much from the narrative of reality as the pure analysis. As Lederach himself says, "Knowledge and, perhaps more important, understanding and deep insight are achieved through aesthetics and ways of knowing that see the whole rather than the parts, a capacity and pathway that rely on intuition more than cognition" (Lederach 69). By writing from a more narrative voice, I hope to provide a whole-picture view that will allow readers to intuit some of their own understandings about dance and peacebuilding in addition to what I spell out in the pages ahead.

Thus, in Chapter [One](#), I explore how *Fall and Recover* helped heal the participants by comparing their experience to the sequential trajectory of psychotherapy. [Next, in Chapter Two](#), I look at which of Lederach's, Cohen's and Bar-Tal et al's [seventeen](#) capacities were 'nourished' by this particular dance-healing process. I use research from the field of psychology to flesh out the understanding of each capacity – for instance, what is empathy and how can we develop it? – and to support the idea that any dance project, not just *Fall and Recover*, could nourish the same capacities for other people. Then we look at the overall strengths and limitations of experiential dance for healing trauma and nourishing the [seventeen](#) capacities needed for peacebuilding at the individual level.

Chapter [Three](#) considers the experience and individual level change of audience members watching *Fall and Recover*. Here an inductive approach allows me to observe spectator's responses, describe and categorize them, and then analyze which of the seventeen capacities and peacebuilding goals the categorized observations best match. Bar-Tal et al's five capacities are particularly useful in this chapter. We then again look at the strengths and limitations of watching dance for peacebuilding at the individual level.

[Finally, the Conclusion addresses overall findings and provides recommendations for the design and implementation of peacebuilding projects using dance.](#)

Why *Fall and Recover*

One may ask: how can a single case study provide enough information to draw conclusions about dance's contributions to peacebuilding? *Fall and Recover* is unique and important for several reasons. For one, *Fall and Recover* profoundly affected both its participants and many of its audience members; so in one dance, we can look at both the experiential and spectator side of the art form. Furthermore, the entire process of making and performing *Fall and Recover* has, to date, lasted more than eight years. This long timespan has allowed for the leader and the group to work through problems and develop better practices along the way. Thus, what we see today are practices that successfully contributed to individuals' healing in meaningful ways, as Chapter [One](#) will show. The longevity of *Fall and Recover* has also meant that different performers have joined and left the group, expanding the pool of individuals positively affected. A natural control group also [appears](#) to exist – according to the performers, their friends from the torture

counseling center who did not join the dance [project](#) are still depressed – [which supports](#) the proposition that the *Fall and Recover* experience, rather than some invisible external variable, helped lead to the participants' transformations. Unlike some other dance projects, moreover, *Fall and Recover* has been extremely well documented in newspaper articles and videos so that ample data is available for analysis.

Furthermore, the fact that the dance has been performed around the world provides a multiplicity of audience viewpoints. [Moreover, the similar reactions](#) that [both](#) Irish and international audiences have had to watching the torture survivors perform suggest that *Fall and Recover* successfully [communicates](#) across cultures. Such cross-cultural communication is hard to achieve, but is crucial for any peacebuilding project trying to match its programs to immediate context and culture. Simply put, *Fall and Recover* is an inspiring work of art, and understanding how it works its magic will shed light on how to make other art in the context of peacebuilding that speaks to people across linguistic, cultural and conflict divides. All of which points to why this case study provides a unique vantage point for looking at how dance – on both experiential and performative levels – can contribute to peacebuilding.

[Data Collection](#)

I was fortunate to see *Fall and Recover* performed in New York City in April 2011. After watching the performance, I [spoke with](#) John Scott and [planned](#) a two-week trip to Dublin in July 2011 to gather research. In Dublin, I conducted sixteen in-depth interviews, ranging from one hour to several hours: with John, seven of the survivor-performers, one of the professional dancers, the former and current general managers of

IMDT, a psychosocial worker who knew the performers, the former strategic development director of SPIRASI (the organization through which John first met the torture survivors), the head of Residents Against Racism who helped John with [performers'](#) deportation cases, a former member of IMDT's board and the director of the Dublin Dance Festival. (The latter two [interviewees](#) provided aesthetic and social context for the work). Meanwhile, I also combed IMDT's archives of newspaper articles and reviews as well as some internal documents, and watched videos of past performances and post-show discussions.

Throughout this thesis, some names have been changed to protect people's identities; in particular, several of the survivors prefer not to be named because it could cause repercussions in their countries of origin. When choosing pseudonyms, I have used traditional Irish names to emphasize and celebrate that most of them [now have Irish passports](#) and think of Ireland as home. Others I refer to using their relationship to the group rather than a name, such as 'the former General Manager.' Some have stage names that they use consistently [and which I use herein](#). Others who chose to have their real names used are represented as such, including John Scott. Still, I have not attached anyone's names – real or imagined – [to](#) their countries of origin. Suffice it to say that members of *Fall and Recover* over the years and the different casts have come from: Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Eritrea, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Romania, Sudan, Togo, and Uganda. All omissions and inclusions are to respect people's choices and identities.

CHAPTER ONE:

PARTICIPANTS' HEALING THROUGH *FALL AND RECOVER*

This chapter looks in-depth at the ways in which *Fall and Recover* helped heal the survivors of torture who took part in the dance. The chapter is structured around the sequential trajectory of psychotherapy, as related by several therapists and doctors in *At the Side of Torture Survivors*, edited by Sepp Graessner. I consider different stages and goals of psychotherapy in comparison to what happened during *Fall and Recover* to better understand how the dance and group experience helped heal the participants from their traumas.

One may ask: How does learning about healing torture survivors help us understand dance's possible contributions to peacebuilding? Firstly, the healing of trauma provides an important groundwork for peacebuilding activities. In fact, the phrase 'healing from trauma' can in many cases be understood as the rebuilding of lost cognitive, emotional and intuitive capacities, including, but not limited to, the seventeen capacities outlined in the Introduction that must be "nourished" (Cohen 51) for peacebuilding to occur³. Understanding how the *Fall and Recover* participants healed through a dance experience will provide insight into how dance could potentially heal

³ Once again, peacebuilding capacities are: understanding interdependence, taking personal responsibility, respect for complexity, inquisitiveness, provision for the unexpected, imagination, trust, creativity, self-expression, listening, reflective thinking, tolerance, empathy, conflict resolution skills, human rights knowledge, overcoming fear and creating hope.

other trauma survivors in conflict zones – a necessary precursor to effective peacebuilding as well.

Secondly, torture survivors in particular make an important case study because of the severity of their traumas. The seventeen peacebuilding capacities are notoriously hard to measure. Since we have no units of measurement for empathy, trust, or hope, how can one say that a particular activity, in this case dance, increased or improved a specific capacity? This question plagues the evaluation of peacebuilding endeavors worldwide. However, it is also exactly why looking at how dance has affected *torture survivors* is important: as I discuss in this chapter, torture survivors are, for all intents and purposes, starting from zero on all seventeen peacebuilding capacities. After torture, every capacity needs to be re-developed as the self is pieced back together. Thus, when a torture survivor feels trust after an experience (e.g. *Fall and Recover*), we have a crude sense of measurement because we know trust was not present before, and afterward it is. Studying the effects of dance practice on torture survivors versus other populations may thus provide a clearer sense of what dance can do in healing trauma and peacebuilding, because we have a rough sense of measurement rather than no measurement at all.

For this rough measurement system to be believable, we need to know more about individuals' capacities before, during and after the dance experience. The trauma literature helps us identify where the *Fall and Recover* participants began and what their cognitive, emotional, physical and intuitive capacities were like prior to meeting John. The psychotherapy and dance therapy literatures help us understand how the participants moved forward during the dance process, and my own research documents where they are today. This chapter will establish that dance truly can promote healing of trauma, and

will compare the effectiveness of dance to other healing modalities, in particular psychotherapy. Once we have established in this chapter *how* and *what kinds* of changes occurred in individuals during *Fall and Recover*, the following chapter will explain how these changes relate to the specific seventeen capacities needed for peacebuilding.

* * *

The Trauma of Torture

“The goal of torture is to destroy personality and annihilate identity” (Nirumand xi). “Through torture, the unity of body and soul (psychosomatic unity) within the person and his organism is significantly and profoundly disturbed” (Gurris 30). Thus, survivors of torture face many challenges even after the torture is over and they have reached a place of safety. “Victims often suffer from intense depression, and they are often pursued by nightmares and anxieties. Amnesia, agitation, delusions, feelings of powerlessness, a constant shift between aggressive overreaction and apathy are among the victims’ observable attributes” (Nirumand xii). As in other forms of trauma, the body’s autonomic nervous system remains in a state of hyper-vigilance and fear, and generally can no longer regulate itself normally. The individual’s natural, immediate response is most often “avoidance” – trying to forget – but this very avoidance and trying to lock away the memories in the psyche, “repeatedly intensifies the originally learned anxiety reaction. The kind of avoidance that leads to short term relief thereby repeatedly prevents anxiety reactions from dissolving” (Gurris 36). Torture survivors may also suffer from severe physical pain, lack of movement, or deformities because of the specific wounds

inflicted by torturers. Moreover, “an altered, deformed internal representation of the world and of people comes into existence and continues to shape future life experience” (Laub xv). In other words, survivors experience an intense lack of trust in other people, in the self, and in their sense of reality. When survivors return home, they frequently feel completely alone: others will often not believe them or will not want to hear about their experiences, nor can the torture be fully expressed or comprehended through language. Intense feelings of guilt and shame are common as well: guilt for surviving when others did not, and shame from feeling ‘dirty’ because it seems the degrading experiences were somehow one’s own fault. When others doubt the veracity of the torture experiences, survivors may even start to feel that they themselves are going crazy (Haenel 4).

Exacerbation of Trauma: Seeking Asylum

All of these physical and psychological wounds are compounded when survivors flee their homelands and become asylum seekers in another country where they most likely do not know anyone, do not speak the language and are subjected to a confusing and invasive asylum process. In Ireland, the asylum process can last years – cases of 10 years have been documented – in which the asylum seekers remain in a state of limbo. Working is illegal and they only receive 19.05⁴ euros a week (plus 9.52 euros per child) from the government. Thus, their mobility is greatly restricted, and watching television each day may be the only constant activity for many. Moreover, the hostels where asylum seekers are required to stay are mostly overcrowded and often feel like prisons because of strict curfews. Many hostels’ conditions are horrible: I heard reports that one woman

⁴ To put in perspective how little money this is: a bus ride costs 2 euros, dinner at a middling restaurant might cost 10-15 euros, and a train ticket to the suburbs from the city center averages about 4 euros round trip.

died of starvation at a hostel, and another died when the hostel management refused to call an ambulance when she had an epileptic fit. Compounding the issue, asylum seekers live in fear that they will be deported. Deportations often occur with no notice: police arrive at hostels in the middle of the night and forcefully take people to the airport. When deportees reach their home countries, they will be at the mercy of the government, which may have been their tormenters in the first place. During interviews for asylum in Ireland, the government officers often do not believe the asylum seekers' stories and tell them they must be lying. Between 2000 and 2005, only 12.7 percent of asylum applications were accepted in Ireland, and 60 percent of those acceptances occurred during the appeals process (Loyal 39). In Steve Loyal's words, "Asylum seekers overall have the least access and entitlements to social and material resources of all the groups who live in Irish society. They are the most disempowered group in Irish society since they lack certain fundamental civil, political and economic rights – including the right to work" (Loyal 39). All of these conditions greatly compound the depression and fear that torture survivors and other refugees experience, preventing them from feeling hope and moving on with their lives. In other words, the experience of seeking asylum may even produce new traumas on top of old ones.

These descriptions only begin to capture the daily existence of *Fall and Recover* performers between their arrival in Ireland and the time they started working with John. Kiribu describes this time period: "I used to think I would never laugh. That's how sad I was. Honestly, I used to look at people and [think], 'What makes them laugh?' I used to go to the shopping center and sit there and watch people pass and I said, 'How can they be happy?' And I thought I would never feel it. I felt guilty to laugh, I felt guilty to be

alive.” Similarly, recounting an example of racism where someone threw raw eggs at him, Solomon says, “If I wasn’t strong enough, I’d rather go commit suicide because that means these people don’t want us. It’s obvious – I mean in the main city center if you can do that – throw raw eggs at an African person.”

Healing through *Fall and Recover*

Today, all seven of the survivor-performers that I spoke to credit the experience of *Fall and Recover* – both the movement and dancing, the performance, the group dynamics and friendships formed – with healing them and/or changing their lives for the better. For instance, Bridget reflects, “I think the group was a part of healing and I’ve really healed in the process...I know that this group is the founder of who I am today...who made me think there is more to hope on, there is life yet, there is joy... It’s not only dancing, it’s like counseling at the same time, motivating people, giving people a new life.” Rory says dance is “medicine for my memories” (BBC 4 Radio). More than one participant was even able to stop taking anti-depressants while working on the show. In the newspapers, Kiribu has been quoted several times as saying, “I’ve been going to counseling for two years, but the counseling didn’t help me the way dance helps me” (Byrnes). And in an interview she said:

“If you had seen these people before...just the photos will show you...I’m a completely different person. People are really changed. When I met John I already had my refugee status, I should have been happy – I was working then and everything, but I wasn’t. It still felt like really you had no life, you had nothing, you are not looking forward to anything. But now people are going to study, people are going to marry, people are having children. That was not really how people saw life before. People just thought, ‘Oh, we are just going to die.’... That’s how everybody felt because there was nothing to look forward to. But now all the people I saw before, they are completely changed.”

Even on a physical level, the changes are palpable: in the first workshops, Kiribu could not walk up stairs and needed help every time she stood up from the floor; when I interviewed her, she walked up three flights of stairs with ease. The former General Manager says it this way: “I bump into them now, and they are very smiley now, extremely, which is something I didn’t see initially. And I see them as more empowered. . . They’re not afraid of showing who they are anymore.” And even from my perspective as an outsider, although Philip describes how initially “these were people with issues,” in the interviews I found them to be quite ‘normal’ people. Considering how the psychosocial worker at SPIRASI explained to me that the original rationale for starting the dance project was to give the survivors “a stepping stone towards the goal of normalcy,” their appearance of normalcy is an achievement indeed.

These quotations are only a few of many that point to significant changes in individuals and the group; from talking to insiders as well as outsiders, I think it is indisputable that *Fall and Recover* was instrumental in allowing these survivors to heal,⁵ grow and build a new life in Ireland. Of course, it is important to remember that the experience was probably not the only factor leading to their newfound hope and progress. After all, many had already undergone counseling at SPIRASI before John arrived on the scene, and an expanse of several years has passed from the initial workshops until now. However, the importance of *Fall and Recover* cannot be denied either because a natural control group did exist: as Kiribu relates, “If you see people who were in *Fall and Recover* and see the others who didn’t – they are sad.”

⁵ It is important to keep in mind that a difference exists between “cure” and “heal.” According to Anna Halprin, “To ‘cure’ is to physically eliminate a disease. . . . To ‘heal’ is to operate on many dimensions simultaneously, by aiming at attaining a state of emotional, mental, spiritual and physical health” (Halprin 2000 15).

Hans Rinderknecht 12/20/11 11:10 PM

Comment [1]: Do other people corroborate this? Another supporter might be useful, since you made a big deal out of the control group before.

In light of the apparently radical healing these individuals experienced, many questions arise: in what ways were people changed? What elements of the dance experience helped create such changes? And how do these phenomenon fit into wider psychological conceptions of healing? We will see that John's artistic process for making *Fall and Recover* provided plenty of space for many psychotherapy goals to be reached organically by the participants – such as breaking the cycles of fear, strengthening positive memories, restoring confidence, re-experiencing the trauma in safety with full self-expression, expanding emotional capacities, rebuilding trust and gaining acceptance of the past in order to move forward. At the same time, many elements of the dance experience – including the actual act of performing and communicating without words – helped rebuild emotional resources beyond what therapy can provide. The goal of this section is to develop a better understanding of what kinds of individual healing and growth dance can foster and to begin a discussion of how and why.

Parallels to Psychotherapy

Breaking the Cycles of Anxiety

In *At the Side of Torture Survivors*, edited by Dr. Sepp Graesner, several psychotherapists and doctors discuss their treatments for asylum seekers in Germany who are also torture survivors. The goals and processes of the psychotherapy treatments described in the book match closely with what happened during the process of making *Fall and Recover*, even though from John's perspective he was just “making a piece of art, a thing of beauty.” For instance, therapist Ferdinand Haenel discusses how torture

survivors' autonomic nervous system and other internal body systems are so primed for dealing with terror that the body becomes stuck in these learned patterns and cannot release on its own. Therefore, one of the first steps in psychological therapy for torture survivors is breaking through a patient's constant biological cycle of fear and anxiety and offering their mind a moment of relaxation, so that the body has the chance to find a new state. Haenel uses visualizations of the patient's good memories from before the torture as well as breathing exercises and guided meditations. He writes: "Relaxing journeys of the imagination like this, traveling through the body, are the first countermeasures (counterconditioning) against experiences of torture that are stored in the body, which express themselves in excitement, tension and pain (anxiety). The patient experiences interruptions in his states of unrest. Simultaneously he wins back a small amount of control over his body, together with the feeling that he need not always be at the mercy of these conditions" (Haenel 44).

John's original workshops appear to have offered just such moments of release, giving the mind and body an opportunity to experience a new state of being. For instance, Solomon describes how, "Each time we perform or do rehearsals or workshops, even when I'm disturbed in my heart, when I go into the rehearsal or workshop, at the end of it, I'm like, hey I can live more now. It just makes me feel better each time...it takes a lot of stress off. I fell in love with it because it's so mind soothing. You go in sometimes and you're so stressed and at the end of the workshop you just feel, ooof, there's a big load lifted off you." Eventually, with enough exposure to this new state of

being, (possibly through relaxing exercises or dance workshops), the body can fully adapt and change such that the new state of being becomes dominant over the fear state.⁶

Strengthening Good Memories & John's Artistic Process

Haenel next explains that the terrible memories of torture survivors have become more dominant and have weakened the “good, stable internal objects of early childhood experience” (Haenel 13). In other words, the trauma memories prevail and paint the world for the survivor more powerfully than previous good experiences. Thus, “the first step in the therapeutic approach should be to strengthen the good (meaning emotionally supportive) parts of internal objects” (Haenel 13). In the psychologist’s office, this step may mean visualizing a happy memory from before the torture and developing that memory further by recalling specific details and sense impressions. Indeed, “tying these positive resource images to qualities of sense perception stabilizes the effectiveness of positive internal images” (Gurris 45). In the original workshops, John unconsciously created a forum for the participants to connect back to their pre-torture lives in a very visceral manner, which most likely helped bring back and fortify these positive memories and sense of self.

Indeed, John’s creative process is first and foremost spontaneous and “in the moment,” to use Philip’s words. John uses guided or structured improvisations to create some of the movement and then uses a keen sense of observation to either gather

⁶ As a dancer and someone constantly trying to become more aware and attuned to her body, I have found truth in the above statement. When you are trying to change any behavioral pattern, (i.e., your posture), it is extremely helpful for a teacher to guide you to feel the new sensation. Once you have felt the new state, it often takes awhile to make that the norm, but at least you and your body know what the goal is. A teacher can guide you to the new sensation or placement either through providing a mental image to imagine and move with, or from using touch to directly move your body in a new way. So the extrapolation I have made in the above paragraph is a combination of the therapists’ writings and my own body experience.

interesting aspects of the improvisation or embellish what was generated. Sometimes, John even develops movement he observed someone doing on the sidelines thinking they are not being watched. Philip laughs, “If someone sneezes, you’re like oh God – it’s in the piece, you can tell. If somebody falls over you’re like shit, it’s in the piece.”

To start the workshops, John would say something like, “Do something from your previous life.” Philip describes: “There was a man who was a teacher, so he would mime his teaching and somebody else would do something from their former life, what they worked at.” Likewise, Kiribu recalls participating in John’s workshops:

[John would ask,] ‘What would you do in your country if someone wanted to sing a song for just general happiness, which song would you sing?’ So then I would sing that one, and then he’d say, ‘That’s very good, that’s very good,’ and we’d take that [and put it in the piece]....I remember the first time he said, ‘Brush your teeth’ and we imagine we’re having a brush and everyone goes shhhhhh. But that as well, people have different angles and then he says, ‘We’ll take so and so’s,’ and then we start to imitate that person....And then another possible one he would say, ‘What about in the morning when you wake up, what would be the first thing you would do?’ And then people would start to tell, ‘Oh I would do like that,’ and then eventually people just spread, ‘This is how we dance in my country, maybe celebrate.’ The whole class, from nowhere, people would just come up and bring the material themselves. John never imposed on us [to do something specific].

Another favorite theme for activities was to write one’s name: trace out the letters on the floor, inscribe it on one’s body, shape it in the air. For the former, John remembers, “The Farsi and Arabic speakers went to one side of the room, and everyone else went to the other side, and we had instant choreography!” (For more details and stories about John’s artistic process and workshops, please see Appendix A.)

The full dance of *Fall and Recover* developed out of these activities; John chose the most interesting or compelling movements from the workshops and then strung them all together in a specific order of vignettes to make the dance. But in the process, all these reminiscences probably acted to strengthen the individuals’ connections with their

pre-torture pasts in a very sensory way, building up their positive internal images and personalities as in the psychotherapy goals. Kiribu says, “I always like to perform when I’ve closed my eyes – then I’m visualizing things in my mind. I’m completely out of that space though I’m there, but my spirit and my mind are really back home. I’m trying to think of how it was before everything went wrong, and then how things went wrong and then how I came out of it.” Even as someone untrained in psychology, Philip noticed the connection between positively connecting to a pre-blemish past and the movement activities: “[The artistic process] was very therapeutic in a way, I’m sure, because it was a way of dealing with what they had been and a way of touching on it but in a kind of abstract way so it wasn’t too personalized. They were dealing with the past without really dealing with it directly.”

Moreover, as *Fall and Recover* progressed, not only were individuals reconnected to their pre-torture selves, but they also had brand new positive memories to counteract traumatic memories. For instance, Kieran talks about how after a performance, “When you come home and you’re really gonna start thinking, you have really good memories in your life which you can think about in all the rest of your life.” In particular, he has two funny memories – one of John flapping his arms and one of two other dancers talking in different languages during a dance – that he describes as, “These are two memories I can remember always and make me laugh even when I’m on my own.” In other words, Kieran now has good memories to balance his traumatic ones.

Restoring Confidence

Rebuilding these internal memories and images is part of what Haenel considers “the first goal” of therapy: “to strengthen the self [and] the patient’s self-confidence” (Haenel 13). Confidence is one of the most ubiquitous ways the *Fall and Recover* performers say they have changed. For instance, Maeve recounts, “Before, I was worried, shy and afraid to talk to people. Now I have confidence to perform and to do anything.” Kieran concurs: “I really enjoy myself because [the dance] gives me a lot of confidence, lot of exercise...makes your body really nice and...makes your mind peaceful.” Kieran in particular talks about how learning and perfecting difficult dance steps not only makes him feel good about himself because he can see himself becoming stronger, but also allows him to notice and reflect upon having improved and succeeded. Eventually, these feelings even moved beyond confidence to what the former General Manager calls “empowerment.” Specifically, she recalls a moment when Rory decided he wanted to hold a fundraiser for the Special Olympics in Ireland and rallied other performers and IMDT to help out as he planned the project.

Self-Expression & Emotional Capacities

The central stage of psychotherapy – “reawakening the traumatic experiences” – follows next, “only this time under the accompaniment, direction and protection of the therapeutic guide” (Haenel 13). Haenel continues, “This gives the patient an opportunity to live up to and fully live out all previously suppressed feelings and emotions of anxiety, powerlessness, despair and rage, or to complete the big, open, overwhelming gestalt of the trauma so that those who have survived torture physically can also become (and

remain) psychological survivors, not victims” (Haenel 13). In other words, the implicit theory of change here is that self-expression, release and portrayal of the emotions experienced during and after the trauma are necessary for healing to occur. As mentioned earlier, the survivors created their own movement in response to John’s questions, activities or prompts. This gave them room within the workshops to ‘tell’ parts of their stories with a level of privacy and emotional expression not available in words. As Kiribu says, “The dance was a way to express without talking. Each time it looks different because people are going through different emotions at different times. We are supposed to express what we are feeling; this dance is our expression of our life, our past, our present, our future. So we do that in our brains. So that’s why you see it is all the time changing, because it depends on people’s feelings. The performers use their movement to say maybe what they intended, what they should have said.” Moreover, the survivors could tell their stories in complete freedom: “[Dance is] a way to talk without really saying things, without worrying about what the other people are going to think,” according to Kiribu. Indeed, the performers appreciated being able to express themselves such that the others in the group could empathize with their suffering without knowing their exact personal stories, which might often feel shameful.

In other words, the abstract nature of the creative activities, structured improvisations and dance exercises that John lead in the *Fall and Recover* workshops allowed the participants to bring their own stories and thoughts to the movement, and even to bring different emotions on different days. For instance, Catherine Rutter (the current General Manager) remembers Tressa’s explanation from a post-performance discussion about a section where they carry each other on their backs. For Tressa, this

moment represents all the other refugees she saw carrying a loved one while she fled her country on foot. Tressa recalled that everyone would want to help others, but it was impossible to do so if one wanted to save oneself and one's family. Thus, in a set of dance steps that from John's point of view were completely abstract and non-narrative, Tressa expresses her own experiences. Similarly, Solomon remembers that one time when John was trying to get him to jump higher, John said to think about an airplane. But to Solomon, 'airplane' means something specific: "In my head I remember when I was fleeing so it helps me because I want to jump really high, [like the airplanes] because that's how I escaped." The abstraction of the choreography allows for a wide range of expression, not only of the past and its horrors: Solomon also gives thanks to God for being alive in a particular section, and in other sections he "throws all the anger and everything [away] and I try to show who I was meant to have been, what I should have gone through, so I bring it now into that piece and I try to express it."

All to say, *Fall and Recover* allows for a very wide range of expression – from horror and terrible memories, to a celebration of life. This wide range of expression through dance is consistent with the work and research of one of the founders of dance therapy, Anna Halprin. Halprin has shown that "when movement is liberated from the constricting armor of stylized, pre-conceived gestures, an innate feedback process between movement and feelings is generated" (Halprin 2000 25). Halprin also notes that different movement qualities⁷ are connected to different emotions and that "a particular movement may reveal a feeling or emotion never experienced before by a participant. . . . Once we are able to experience an unfamiliar movement, it will often provide us with

⁷ For example, the following all constitute different 'movement qualities,' or ways of moving differently across time, energy and space: "Flowing, jerky, strong, soft, expansive, contracted, reaching, retreating, fast and slow" (Halprin 2000 24-25).

new emotional resources” (Halprin 2000 25). The important corollary to this truth is that “as we develop a broad vocabulary of movement, we have greater freedom to express the way we feel” (Halprin 2000 25). This insight suggests that it was not just the creative act of *making* movement that helped the performers in their self-expression, but that *trying out other people’s* movement (as John would often have them do) and *learning the set movement* for the finished dance, also helped expand the survivors’ movement experiences and thus their range of felt emotions and ability to express all emotions. In other words, John’s artistic process allowed them to express what they already were feeling *and* gave them new resources for expanding their abilities to feel (and express) a wider range of emotions than before. For example, one of the songs in *Fall and Recover* is a traditional melody of thanksgiving from Bridget’s home country that she taught to everyone along with the corresponding traditional dance, which is very buoyant and cheerful. When others experienced this celebratory movement, it is possible it could have awakened in them celebratory and thankful feelings that had been long dormant or never expressed. Thus, just like the goal of psychotherapy, the making of *Fall and Recover* helped participants simultaneously relive past traumatic experiences while expressing their emotions in a safe environment. At the same time, the survivors felt full autonomy over what to express or not, maintaining their own privacy. In the process of trying other people’s movements, their emotional resources were also expanded through experiencing new movement qualities.

Developing Trust

Absolutely essential to any and all of these therapeutic endeavors is trust. Haenel writes, “This means an attempt to eliminate mistrust and offer the patient an intimate relationship like one experienced in an earlier time,” such as a parental or familial relationship, through the patient-therapist interactions (Haenel 13). Many of the *Fall and Recover* performers reported that they now consider each other as a family. These close bonds took time to develop and were not present at the start, but the artistic process was essential to helping re-build the participants’ trust in themselves and others. John gained the participants’ trust from the outset; whether it was his “childlike nature” as Philip suggests, or because “anybody is free with him, people can talk to him freely” as Kiribu says, we may never know for sure. But I have a hunch that John’s explicit encouragement for people to do only what they felt comfortable doing played an important role. “Do what you think you can” is how Kiribu remembers John’s refrain. So if someone only wished to move their hands rather than their whole body, that was perfectly ok; and even if one just wanted to sit and watch, that was also fine.⁸ John also showed appreciation for what everyone was doing: “We used to laugh because everything was good to John,” says Kiribu. At that time, Kiribu’s knees caused her so much pain that she often needed help to stand up, but the group responded and became closer through these moments of interdependence: “So if I’m struggling, someone would come and lift me. It was so nice. We formed a bond like that,” she remembers.

⁸ Various other somatic modalities, such as Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement, and Anna Halprin’s research, have revealed that even the smallest movements can create significant changes in the body; even just visualizing and imagining movement can help tremendously (Halprin 2000 24). So participating in minute ways not only helped participants feel safe, but may have also influenced their healing.

Moreover, as trust grew, people started stepping out of their comfort zones. Philip recalls: at first, “There were things you just couldn’t do. Some of them had suffered from sight deprivation, it’s a form of torture where they take your sight away....So then to ask people to suddenly close their eyes and then walk across the room was traumatic for some [In time,] because they started to trust in [John], people who at one stage wouldn’t close their eyes, began to close their eyes. And people who wouldn’t allow themselves to fall and have someone catch them, they started doing those things.” Eventually the whole group practiced lifting each person above their heads and walking them around the room – an activity requiring large amounts of trust. This exercise ended up as part of the final version of *Fall and Recover*, and according to Philip, lifting John in the air was one of the group’s favorite pastimes. Thus, trust evolved slowly but surely between the participants and John, and amongst the different performers, in such a way that people began to change and take more risks, leading to more individual growth and interdependence within the group.

Acceptance of the Traumatic Experience

Finally, therapist Norbert Gurriss explains the ultimate place psychotherapy aims to bring the patient: “The goal of therapy is the conscious internalization of the entire traumatic reality into the patient’s self-concept, so that at some point he can say: Yes, I really did experience that; it happened to me, but it’s history. I am no longer a victim, I’m a survivor instead” (Gurriss 42). The *Fall and Recover* performers appear to have reached this point with the help of the dance experience. For instance, this thesis opened with how Solomon says good-bye to his troubled past and consciously leaves it behind every

time he traces his body in salt and walks away at the end of *Fall and Recover*.

Solomon's thought processes are a recognition of what came before, but also a clear choice to look forward to the present and the future. Many performers also talk about how the name of the dance truly captures the performance's meaning for them: *Fall and Recover* expresses their having fallen down in their past life but simultaneously celebrates their ability to recover and move forward. Halprin helps explain how creative dance projects meet the goal of therapy to accept the trauma but move on: "Through an experience of our creativity, we have the opportunity to break the chain of identifying ourselves with our suffering. We are often released from our identification with our suffering by the creative act of a dance, which reveals, externalizes, and clarifies our experience for others to witness. This does not imply denial; it implies a new perspective" (Halprin 2000 29).

Thus, the process of making *Fall and Recover* helped break the cycle of fear for the survivors, strengthen positive memories, restore confidence, re-experience the trauma in safety with full expression, expand emotional capacities, rebuild trust, and provide room for acceptance and the ability to move forward, all of which are goals of psychotherapy.

But if the dance experience followed psychotherapy as directly as this discussion suggests, why was the dance process actually experienced by the performers as more powerful than the counseling? This question is extremely complex and may not be fully answerable, but I would like to outline some of the aspects that I think were essential for the individual transformations. In particular, the *Fall and Recover* experience created a deep sense of trust like a family, overcame cultural barriers, and helped people move

forwards rather than backwards in comparison to counseling. The act of performing also carved out more space for individual growth, and the longevity of the shows helped affirm changes over time. The group's success also depended on an active third side. Thus, the artistic process not only accomplished the goals of counseling particularly well, but it also went "beyond and below words" (Halprin 2000 14), adapting to the needs of the individuals and the group in a unique way.

What Dance Offered Beyond Counseling

Strong Support Network and Deep Trust

On a basic level, the *Fall and Recover* experience provided a wider and stronger support network for each participant than one relationship with a therapist can impart. As trust grew, individuals began to rely on one another and felt like they "belonged" to the group and would be appreciated for who they are. Solomon thinks that the group helped him feel "more accepted and more in the community." Even today, the group will help individuals when they are sick or looking for jobs. Kieran, in his twenties, also remarked that the group offers an important venue for him to learn from older people's experiences and advice.

More than just a trusting environment, John created a "loving environment," according to Philip. Also, John's involvement above and beyond the call of duty far surpassed the kind of day-to-day support a therapist can provide. As Keelin explains, "It's different talking to someone who you know it's their job. They are paid to listen to you, so they can pretend to be really concerned, and then they can go to their amazing car and then drive home and have a really happy life. And then tomorrow they can come and

open a chapter of your life again. [But for you it's not a story, it's your life.]” This quotation reveals an underlying suspicion towards the therapists. Such distrust was furthered by the fact that what was said in the counseling room was not confidential: Justice Department employees would talk to the counselors to corroborate the stories asylum seekers gave in the formal asylum interviews. Any discrepancies between the two accounts could jeopardize one's asylum case. Kiribu thinks, “That's why the healing took [so] long because people had to watch what they are going to say.” On the contrary, “For us performing, we are not talking, so we are not afraid of people misquoting us. We are just saying exactly how we feel, without anybody questioning,” Kiribu describes. She continues, “Dance was our expression without limitation, without worries. That's why you see people got relaxed because they don't have to fear anymore, they are free, they can choose what they want people to see or what they don't want them to see.” Thus, *Fall and Recover* offered the participants a network of devoted friends who could be called at any hour of the day for problems big and small; this level of trust was probably able to run much deeper with John and with the group than with the therapists, all of which greatly contributed to their healing.

Eventually, the group even began to feel like it was a family, and to freely describe themselves as such, with Kiribu as “the mother” and John as “the father.” Haenel points out that under “persecution and torture,” (as well as migration, we can add), not only are families torn apart, but family structures also break down, “intensifying the helplessness and disorientation of everyone involved” (Haenel 8). This observation suggests that there is more than mere symbolism to the fact that the *Fall and Recover* group has become a family for each other. Indeed, in addition to a newfound support system, the sense of a

family may represent a re-binding of a moral fabric for participants, and a re-creation of meaning and structure after their biological families have been torn asunder.

Overcoming Cultural Barriers

Another important area where the non-verbal nature of dance may have offered the participants more healing than psychotherapy is the fact that some cultures do not have a tradition of talking about traumatic experiences that are considered shameful. For instance, Bridget relates, “It was difficult telling your story because we are not brought up like you people. So we Africans, we can be dying, but you can’t tell your story to most people. It wasn’t our culture to let it out. For example, if a girl is raped in my country, she would never say it to anybody, not even to her mom. They think it’s too shameful, don’t want anybody to know.” Dance and movement on the other hand allowed for self-expression without an individual having to reveal exactly what happened to them, as discussed earlier. Where words for traumatic experiences were not culturally accessible, dance could transcend language and cultural restrictions by being factually ambiguous and abstract.

Moving Forward

Kiribu also likes to point out that talking about the past in counseling “takes you back,” whereas the dance experience helps “move us forward.” Indeed, Kiribu’s experience of counseling reveals how it was counter-productive for her healing process: “It’s like playing a tape and you are going through all those emotions again and you are trying to live them. So when you come from the counseling you are really exhausted,

you don't want to eat, you don't want to do anything. I used to just go to my room and sleep. I used to sleep a lot, because I found that I was mentally exhausted." On the other hand, leaving dance workshops, in Kieran's words, "makes your body [feel] really nice and makes your mind peaceful." How much more different can two experiences be? Kiribu votes for the dance experience over the psychotherapy experience: "You know, it's hard to remember home, but we have to, we have to move forward, we have to first know our past and then move forward."

Sherry Shapiro and Anna Halprin shed light on how and why movement can touch people in a deep place and forge connections between the body, mind, emotions and spirit to fuel the healing process. Shapiro points out that our bodies *are* ourselves, and that because the body is the physical site of all one's felt experiences, much of one's sense of identity is rooted in the body (Shapiro 145). When the body's individuality and wisdom are turned towards healing itself, Halprin finds that self-movement becomes a powerful healer: "There is no treatment which works for everyone. Treatment needs to be targeted to the specific needs of the individual....When we do our dances and they come from ourselves, they are unique and will adapt to our needs. We can create dances that work for us because they come from our bodies and our particular illness. Dance that is approached creatively allows for and encourages this perfect adaptability" (Halprin 2000 29). In other words, creative movement processes allow the body's own unconscious wisdom to surface and to create a unique healing process perfectly designed to fit that individual's needs.

Importance of Performing

As more and more people have discovered and accepted the healing capabilities of movement, dance therapy has developed over the past few decades into a burgeoning field. But *Fall and Recover* is different from typical dance therapy classes because the participants actually *performed* a full dance, and this performance has been revived repeatedly over a *long period of time*. Although nobody planned for *Fall and Recover* to last so long, I think that both the actual performance and its longevity have been unique contributors to the performers' healing and growth. In particular, I am intrigued that the men more than the women voiced these thoughts.

For Kieran and others, confidence and self-esteem grew as they saw themselves improve in the dance – but the performances were the *motivation* for working hard to see these changes. Thus, participating in just the workshops without any performance might not have been as transformative for the participants who mentioned the importance of the performance to their healing. Kieran explains:

When you go home [after a performance], you shower, you relax, you remember lots of things in your mind. It's really peaceful, your body is fresh, you feel so good after the performance. After practicing, you cannot get the same feeling, because after practicing you are thinking, 'Did I do it well or not?' You're asking yourself questions, so even though [you are] home, you still want to practice more, because you want to have confidence that you did well...Sometimes you can even look at yourself in the mirror and do it again by yourself. But after performances, all the people in the studio, they are happy, they really had a beautiful day or night with you guys. And you, too, you're happy because they are happy. You will see people and they say it's really good – if it's not good they will tell you as well. So you can leave with the result. And when you go home, it's good relaxing....When it's past, you think about it, how you've done it and the whole story is going to make you confident really. [If] you can say, 'Ok now, now I have not done any mistake,' you have full confidence. But if you did mistake [in the] performance, you wouldn't have that much confidence. You always want another chance. But if you did well, you really have full confidence. So it doesn't matter, you can go and anybody will look at you perform and you are 100 percent sure that others will leave with happiness and want to see you again.

This quotation reveals how performing, and even more importantly, performing *well*, was instrumental in building Kieran's confidence, enjoyment and growth during the whole process. Workshops alone may not have made Kieran feel the same pride in himself and his work.

The longevity of the performances also allowed for the continued growth and success that Kieran yearned for – to improve each time. The longevity was important for Solomon, as well, in that every single time he outlines his body in salt and walks off stage, it reaffirms his recovery and his adieu to the past. Furthermore, therapists talk about “framing” memories, by which they mean developing some way, usually physical like a specific seated position, to separate out a memory – either to access positive memories better or to contain the traumatic memories (Gurris 47). In performance theory and theater anthropology, performances are considered to be liminal spaces, a transitional space, (for both actors and audience), with specific boundaries of a beginning, middle and end, but infinite possibilities within the performance (Schechner). Thus, I suggest that this liminal space of a performance helps to “frame” the traumatic memories for the performers. They know that during the span of the performance they can re-visit their pasts and fully express their emotions therein, but when the lights come up and they take their bow, they can return fully engaged to the present moment with their past behind them. As Solomon relates, “Each time we finish *Fall and Recover*, I look forward to the next one. Because it's another time, another period, that I'll remember again how to live properly and how to forget my past again.” So the repetition of the show continually affirms and strengthens all the positive lessons learned and changes made during the process.

But it is important to keep in mind that the performers' torture experiences may not be the only trauma for which they require healing. As the social worker at SPIRASI describes, "Most of them had a high level of education in their home country, but all that disappears once you get here, and you become invisible." Many of the performers have faced direct instances of racism, ignorance and a lack of compassion from Irish individuals, and certainly from the Irish state during the asylum process. Performing *Fall and Recover* then also provides an opportunity to undo some of the above injustices: the performers not only became 'visible' through being watched onstage, but they were also able to show audiences that they are competent and contributing members of society.

In addition, Judith Herman has found that for trauma survivors, "Sharing the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world" (Herman 65). She continues, "The women who recover most successfully [from rape] are those who discover some meaning in their experience that transcends the limits of personal tragedy. Most commonly, women find this meaning by joining with others in social action... Women who made the best recoveries were those who became active in the anti-rape movement" (Herman 73). Thus, the fact that the *Fall and Recover* performances allowed the participants to raise awareness about asylum seekers and refugee issues in a public manner, as discussed more in Chapter Three, may also have contributed to the healing.

Even better, the audiences enjoyed the shows! As Kiribu says, "Now we have confidence in ourselves, maybe just knowing that you can do something other people like also helps. Because the way we have progressed in this dance, it shows us that our life is progressing as well." The importance of the actual performance, more than just the

workshops, to Kieran is also clear: “Why do I like it so much? It’s because you will be really happy, making people laugh and smile looking at you acting. You’re really going to love it.”

Active Third Side

Although the process was incredibly healing and transformative for the individuals involved, not everything went perfectly smoothly; disagreements or fights between performers did occur. Stress could be particularly high around show times, causing some individuals to respond angrily at a perceived insult. One time, someone even walked out ten minutes before a show because of an argument. As the former General Manager notes, “We were a family, with all that that entails. Families are not perfect – we never strived to be perfect, but we shared a lot together and we all maybe had to compromise in our ego to make this happen.” Facilitating these compromises, the group has always had an active “third side” (Ury): group members not party to an argument will take it upon themselves to act as mediators and help the arguers relax and move forward. Kiribu and Keelin often filled this role.

Thus, the experience of *Fall and Recover* seems to have surpassed counseling as a healing modality because it created a deeper trust and support network for the performers, overcame cultural barriers and helped them move forward rather than perpetually relive the past. The act of performing also created profound individual growth, and the longevity of the performances sustained that growth. Moreover, the accomplishment of performing *well* allowed the participants to feel visible, accepted and welcomed in

society. An active third side supported these outcomes by helping the group function as smoothly as possible.

Current Day

The *Fall and Recover* experience's positive effects did not end with the last performance. Today, when the performers no longer need healing in the same way they once did, *Fall and Recover* still brings other benefits to their lives. For instance, Kiribu has applied what she learned about body language and movement to connect better with the elderly and infirm people she works with in her job. Kiribu explains, "I don't see with my normal eyes anymore, I see through my insides." She also says that *Fall and Recover* awakened "this really deep need to help other people, maybe because I know that I've gone through that without anybody caring." At the same time, she has been inspired to raise her voice when she disagrees with the status quo, even speaking out against her homeland's dictator with other members of the diaspora. *Fall and Recover* also inspired Solomon to help the wider community, and he feels great encouragement from John to do so. The dancing also spurs him to eat and live more healthfully. For Bridget, dancing now brings her "happiness and fun," and Maeve has developed a passion for dance and an artistic voice that she continues to deepen with John and IMDT.

The torture survivors were not the only participants who gained strength and healing from the experience. Philip, one of the professional dancers, recounts his own healing: "For me [*Fall and Recover*] was very important, because I was definitely going through a stage in my career as a dancer where I was questioning the importance of it all. What am I giving back? What is the purpose of what I do? I wanted to know what I was

giving to society, and I felt slightly self indulgent as an artist...Working with these people really turned that around, because it really gave me a sense of importance and an understanding of how important dance is. And I think that was the luckiest gift I could have ever received, just to have the opportunity of working with people who have been through so much and seeing that what you do in whatever minute form can help them, can benefit them ever so slightly...It was therapeutic and beneficial for me because it put me back on the road, and then I could do my self-obsessed crazy stuff but feel that I was part of something that was very important, and that I had my place in society.”

And perhaps most important for everyone involved is that “John has taught us that we can just make anything out of nothing,” Kiribu says. According to Lederach, this ability to “live in barrenness as if new life, birth, is always possible” (Lederach 38) is indeed the greatest gift artists can give to the world. Sure enough, out of having nothing in their lives as asylum seekers, all the members of the group can look back over the *Fall and Recover* years and see how much has changed for the individuals involved. People have started families, (or their families have joined them in Ireland), gone to school, started jobs, and generally moved forward in their lives. Seven now have full citizenship and another seven have official papers through family reunification and Humanitarian Leave to Remain; only one is still in danger of deportation. These simple realities continue to be extremely “inspiring” and “motivating” for Bridget and many of the others.

* * *

Overall, we have seen how John’s artistic process closely paralleled the goals of psychotherapy, even without his conscious knowledge, by providing the performers with

opportunities to break the cycles of fear, strengthen positive memories, foster confidence, re-experience the trauma in safety with full self-expression, expand emotional capacities, rebuild trust and accept the past. But the *Fall and Recover* experience also surpassed counseling in terms of healing for the performers by giving them a long-lasting family, overcoming cultural barriers and moving forward rather than backwards. The act of performing over eight years added to individuals' emotional growth by improving feelings of confidence and acceptance in the wider community. The group's active third side helped stabilize this progress.

In the context of this whole thesis, this chapter has traced and named some of the changes that took place within individual participants and within the group during *Fall and Recover*. The trauma literature helped us understand how diminished the participants' capacities were at the beginning, while the psychotherapy and dance therapy literature helped us comprehend how dance contributed to the healing of these individuals. This discussion affirms that dance can indeed help heal trauma survivors and helps us document the usually un-measurable development of individual capacities. In the next chapter, we will look at how some of these capacities fostered through experiential dance relate directly to Lederach's, Cohen's and Bar-Tal et al's peacebuilding goals as outlined in the Introduction.

CHAPTER TWO:

EXPERIENTIAL DANCE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEACEBUILDING

The last chapter explored how the individual participants in *Fall and Recover* were changed and healed through the experience. This chapter looks at how such changes could be extended to reach others in peacebuilding endeavors, and in particular which of the seventeen capacities necessary for peacebuilding outlined in the Introduction's Analytic Framework can be successfully "nourished" (Cohen 51) through experiential dance. We investigate all seventeen peacebuilding capacities, discovering that only four lack substantial evidence of having been positively affected by experiential dance as seen through *Fall and Recover*: inquisitiveness, providing for the unexpected, conflict resolution skills and human rights knowledge. Psychology and dance studies literature helps us along the way to discover how the majority of these capacities are inherent byproducts of experiential dance practice and not completely unique to *Fall and Recover*. We then find that four out of Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation and all four of Lederach's core essences of peacebuilding can also be developed through dance practice. Thus, experiential dance has the potential to make enormous contributions to peacebuilding. We investigate the strengths and limitations of experiential dance for helping to heal trauma and reach all of these peacebuilding goals in the second section of this chapter.

Creativity, Listening, Self-Expression, and Trust

A few of the seventeen peacebuilding capacities were explored in depth in the previous chapter, so I will only mention each of those briefly here in order not to repeat myself. Indeed, the earlier healing narrative revealed that participants' creativity, listening, self-expression and trust were all strengthened by the *Fall and Recover* experience. In terms of creativity, we saw how John encouraged the participants to create their own movement via his prompts and directions. Over time their capacity for creativity grew immensely as they were asked again and again to produce movement. John and his artistic process helped structure the proceedings such that the participants were given support as they developed their creative skills. As they were asked to learn movement that others in the group created, they had to develop listening abilities, both verbal and nonverbal. During performances, they also must actively listen to each other with eyes and ears to be in the right formations at the right time. Likewise, while performing their own and others' movements, they felt free to express their emotions knowing that others would be listening to them, but relieved that the listeners would not know their exact stories. In their minds' eyes while performing, many relive being with loved ones or escaping their countries and then express the emotions they felt during these varied experiences. And in the process, trust developed amongst the participants, as evidenced by their lifting and carrying each other in the dance, and their family-like network outside the dance studio.

Overcoming Fear, Creating Hope & Inspiring Imagination

Overcoming fear, and its converse, creating hope, are extremely important for any peacebuilding endeavor, since fear is one of the primary emotions that may be felt in a conflict of any scale. Maria Jarymowicz and Daniel Bar-Tal's research shows that fear is a primary emotion, meaning that it occurs unconsciously in reaction to stimuli. Fear affects behavior immediately: "The empirical evidence shows that fear has limiting effects on cognitive processing. It tends to cause adherence to known situations and avoidance of risky, uncertain, and novel ones; it tends to cause cognitive freezing, which reduces openness to new ideas, and resistance to change" (Jarymowicz 372). Hope, on the other hand, as a second-order emotion, "has not been associated with any specific physiological response leading to specific and concrete forms of behavior. It is based on higher cognitive processing, requiring mental representations of positively valued abstract future situations and more specifically, it requires setting goals, planning how to achieve them, use of imagery, creativity, cognitive flexibility, mental exploration of novel situations, and even risk taking" (Jarymowicz 373). In other words, fear immediately shuts down all four of Lederach's four elements of peacebuilding: relationships, creativity, risk taking and the ability to embrace the complexity of an issue. Vice versa, the advanced cognitive processes involved in hope – the ability to imagine a future and a path towards that future – mirror Lederach's discussion about creativity. Thus, while hope can be very helpful to promote the cognitive space for effective peacebuilding, fear can shut down any progress towards re-humanization.

Movement and dance have a unique ability to transform emotions, including negative ones such as fear, through non-rational and unconscious ways using the body's

physiology. For instance, a wide-array of research has focused on how aerobic activity can positively affect people's physiology and emotions in the short term, showing that "both genders were significantly less anxious, tense, depressed, angry and confused after exercising than before" (Netz and Lidor 407). Netz and Lidor, in addition, have been comparing how aerobic activities, such as sports, compare to more mindful and less aerobic movement activities such as yoga. Their research suggests that mindful activities do indeed confer an even greater benefit to people than aerobic exercise: "Our results suggest that repetitive, low-exertion rhythmical movements that are cognitively based may be more powerful in immediate mood enhancement than high intensity rhythmical movements that are not cognitively focused" (Netz and Lidor 415). Although dance was not part of this study, cognitive mindfulness is necessary while dancing since one must constantly learn new sequences of movement and be mindful of the space and other dancers in order to avoid collisions. Similarly, the ability of the *Fall and Recover* workshops to provide periods of peace within the body ultimately helped break the performers' cycles of anxiety. Thus, dance is uniquely positioned to provide some physiological tools for overcoming fear and other negative emotions that impede peacebuilding.

Neuroscientists have also been finding that participating in creative acts builds abilities in several different areas of the brain: "[creativity] is a whole brain activity. When you're doing something that's creative, you're engaging all aspects of your brain" (Charles Limb quoted in Anstead 86). Boulding emphasizes that "cognitive," "emotional" and "intuitive maturation" are all necessary for people to form the vibrant imaginations she views as paramount for envisioning and building peace (Boulding 1988

92). The cognitive ability to imagine is also an important aspect of being able to feel hope, as mentioned earlier. In dance projects, all three aspects of Boulding's representation of human development are covered: the brain must work cognitively to learn the steps; emotions are encouraged to be expressed within the movement; and intuition is developed as people relate to each other kinesthetically in time and space, rather than verbally. In other words, creative acts such as dance that use the whole brain – including cognitive, emotional and intuitive parts – can be instrumental in building people's imaginations and capacity for hope, which will in turn aid other peacebuilding goals.

Embracing Complexity, Reflective Thinking & Tolerance

The fundamental nature of a group dance experience where members create their own movement is all about complexity. Every individual moves in a different way, and each person's background and experiences affect their conscious and unconscious expression. In dancing together and watching each other, participants come face to face with difference and individuality. Liz Lerman, a choreographer known for her community-based projects, calls this phenomenon the "multiple truths" or "multiple perspectives" that collaborative dance practice automatically brings to the fore (Lerman xvi). Sure enough, in a group like *Fall and Recover*, the vast diversity of cultures, languages, backgrounds, nationalities, and ethnicities of the members not only highlighted complexity, but encouraged participants to embrace the complexity as the diverse group began to feel like a family. Moreover, I think the inherent abstraction of the whole art-form of modern dance forces one to confront complexity: as a performer, no

two performances are ever the same, and each spectator, as discussed more in the next chapter, will have his/her own interpretation. Talk about complex!⁹ So I think embracing the complexity of abstraction and a group's diversity in dance-making lends itself to breaking down the either/or dichotomy that Lederach hopes to overcome. How can one say making that gesture means this or that, when it could mean one of a thousand things to a thousand different people? Being confronted with this idea of multiple interpretations in dance practice – which includes seeing the person next to you doing the same steps in a completely different way – encourages such realizations.

This idea of embracing complexity is closely tied to Bar-Tal et al's capacity named tolerance. The peace educators write: "Tolerance refers to the recognition and acceptance of the rights of all individuals as well as the groups to have different thoughts, opinions, attitudes, will and behavior" (Bar-Tal et al 29). If the group experience of experiential movement encourages an acceptance and understanding of complexity – the comprehension that multiple perspectives exist – then it is one more step down the same road to accept that these multiple perspectives are not better or worse than your own, just different from each other, and equally valid. Philip shared a story about when one *Fall and Recover* participant teased him about not going to church, and another participant stepped in and said, "You have to respect Philip because Philip believes what he does; I'm a Muslim and I believe in my religion and you believe in your religion and we just have to respect each other like that." Likewise, Kiribu relates how tolerance has become the norm in the *Fall and Recover* group despite all their differences: "We have gone beyond [thinking in terms of ethnicity] in our group. We really do not see boundaries in

⁹ I believe this complexity and lack of a single interpretation also explains why many are uncomfortable watching modern dance.

our group, we just see people the way they are. Unless people start to ask us, I don't really realize that we are different. You see the world just sometimes takes a certain mentality to change attitudes. So the dance has also helped us move barriers – we don't see barriers [anymore].” So somehow the *Fall and Recover* experience of dancing together, relating to each other in such a way, allowed an appreciation and respect for each other's differences, adding to the cohesion of the group and developing individuals' own capacities for embracing complexity and tolerance.

And for tolerance and complexity to be embraced fully, self-reflection is needed. Bar-Tal et al explain that reflective thinking “refers to the ability of not taking any knowledge for granted but rather to consider and reconsider various alternatives in order to reach valid inferences, decision or evaluations....Reflective thinking facilitates learning and enables deeper understanding of the relationship and connections between ideas and/or experiences. This thinking allows one to be evaluative and critical of the policies, goals or practices employed by the society of which one is a member” (Bar-Tal et al 29). We see the presence of self-reflection in dance practice through how the *Fall and Recover* performers changed their perspectives over time about what was possible for them in re-making their lives in Ireland. In the previous chapter, we saw how at one point, Kiribu thought she would never laugh again, and now she is fully integrated into Irish society with a job and most of her family nearby. A shift in thinking had to take place for this kind of change to happen, a realization that the status quo is not the only way and that change can and should occur. Solomon and Kieran also both talked about going home after rehearsals and thinking about what he did wrong, why and how he could improve; such thought processes are self-reflection at its finest.

Taking Personal Responsibility

Taking personal responsibility for one's actions is also extremely important for peacebuilding endeavors. John often encouraged individuals to take responsibility for themselves and their own needs during the artistic process, such as asking participants to create their own movement and to choose how much or how little and in what way they moved. Moreover, teaching their movement to others would have created a situation where individuals' actions would directly affect others and the leader of the moment would have to 'own' his/her movement. Coming to rehearsals also demands a certain amount of accountability, and in performance, too, each person is responsible for being in the right place at the right time. So all these myriad dance activities reinforce various layers of taking personal responsibility for one's own actions.

Moreover, movement and dance practices like John's artistic process can simultaneously provide individuals with feelings of increased personal responsibility – as they learn how to control and direct their own bodies – and an improved self-image from connecting to their bodies in a new way. In fact, Sherry Shapiro believes that movement and dance inherently foster the feeling of, knowledge of and responsibility of one's own actions. Moreover, she finds that the confluence of movement, expression, agency and responsibility gives rise to an understanding of shared humanity among students: "Using movement as a pedagogic method...allows students to focus on their bodies, not as objects to be trained, but rather as potential active subjects of their own world. Indeed without this sense of agency and power there can be no talk of emancipation and possibility. Students learn how to express the world as they experience it and through that ability become able to see themselves in others" (Shapiro 155). Thus, taking

responsibility for one's own actions, integral to any peacebuilding endeavor, is often fostered through movement and dance, including *Fall and Recover*.

Empathy

Movement exercises similar to those that helped the *Fall and Recover* participants express themselves can also help develop empathy – one of the most important peacebuilding capacities and goals. Nancy Eisenberg has found several parenting practices that increase children's capacities for empathy, two of which include “allowing children to express negative emotions that do not harm others” and teaching “practices that help kids cope with their negative emotions” (Eisenberg 17). As we saw, the *Fall and Recover* participants would use the movement to express how they were feeling at any given moment, even if the emotions were negative. Dancing helped the performers express and cope with negative emotions rather than let the feelings stew inside. As long as someone is willing to try expressing emotions through movement, any kind of dance practice can provide room for such negative emotions to be aired without harm to others. Hence Eisenberg's findings suggest that expressing negative emotions through movement could be an important peacebuilding tool to help enhance individuals' capacity to empathize.

The same processes that expanded *Fall and Recover* performers' emotional capacities through experiencing new movement qualities can help anyone develop or expand their ability to empathize. Indeed, psychologist M.L. Hoffman believes that a certain level of empathy is innate in humans at birth. However, he has found that the further development of empathy requires having experienced a broad range of emotions

(Hoffman). Combining Halprin and Hoffman's research, we see that the more movement qualities one tries, the more emotions one will experience, and the more emotions one has experienced, the greater one's capacity for empathy. Additionally, by imitating others like in *Fall and Recover*, or by trying to be a character in choreography, or simply by following how one's dance teacher moves – all daily happenings in the dance studio – dancers embody another's experience by taking on the other's way of moving. The colloquial way of stating this phenomenon is that dance allows people to literally 'walk awhile in someone else's shoes,' which also improves individuals' capacities for empathy. Thus, dance – both by increasing emotional range through movement qualities and embodying others' movement – is a powerful tool for peacebuilders who want opposing groups to learn to appreciate the other side's suffering and expand individuals' capacity for empathy.

Understanding Interdependence

Cynthia Cohen discusses how making groups understand their interdependence with each other is another extremely important part of any peacebuilding endeavor (Cohen 9). Although the *Fall and Recover* group did not make up opposing sides of a conflict, they were an extremely disparate group of people who learned to trust each other through dancing together. Their experience suggests that dancing together could also help groups in conflict trust each other and build cross-cutting relationships. In particular, creating a dance is working together towards a shared goal – one of the characteristics that Gordon Allport notes as extremely important in any project designed to reduce prejudice (Allport). Weight sharing and other direct physical interactions in the

choreography of a dance can heighten the feelings of interdependence in a peacebuilding project. Even without partnering, dance participants will feel how if one person misses a rehearsal, it is harder to be in the right place at the right time and how the whole dance suffers from the loss of an individual. Debriefing and conversation during and after dance projects allows for participants to draw connections between what happens in the dance rehearsal and the rest of their lives. Moreover, the interactions and conversations that happen at lunch, during breaks or in the hallway are as important, or even more important, for building community as what happens during rehearsal; the rehearsal brings people to be in the same place at the same time, but the tenor of the interactions with each other will be what people remember. The fact that the *Fall and Recover* group developed their sense of family through all their interactions, not just in John's workshops, supports this point.

In addition to pioneering dance therapy, Halprin is one of the pioneers of dance practices aimed at creating inter-group understanding. One of Halprin's most memorable projects in terms of peacebuilding and building interdependence took place in the 1960s in California. She brought together a group of whites and a group of blacks to work together on a dance performance, at a time when many of the participants had never spent time with someone from the other race. Halprin's process – which later became known as the RSVP Cycles – succeeded, (as determined by the fact that life-long friendships were forged, including an inter-racial marriage), in part because she worked with each group individually for many months, completing extensive intra-group discovery. When both groups came together for the first time, they were able to use their skills and the mutually comfortable RSVP process to work through initial tensions. Eventually they

figured out how to move forward and create a performance together called *Ceremony of Us* (Halprin 1995 16-17). Halprin's work provides terrific examples of how intra- and inter-group understanding and interdependence can be built through dance, especially when a specific process is used. The use of a clearly defined process creates a safe space within which stories can be told and listened to, relationships can form, conflicts can be solved constructively and people can become aware of their interdependence.

Capacities that Experiential Dance Does Not Inherently Affect

Four of the capacities in need of nourishment have yet to be discussed -- inquisitiveness, providing for the unexpected, conflict resolution skills and knowledge of human rights – because they, in varying amounts, do not seem to be inherently impacted by experiential dance, as seen in the *Fall and Recover* case study.

Inquisitiveness & Providing for the Unexpected

Although the healing process as a whole led the *Fall and Recover* participants to engage more with their new Irish communities, which one could call a sign of increased inquisitiveness, I do not think this capacity necessarily resulted directly from the experiential dance per se. Rather, I think that by feeling more sound in mind, body and soul, participants could contribute to and interact with the world around them more than before. This same soundness of mind, body and soul could definitely help them respond with more resilience in the face of changes and possible set-backs in their asylum processes – being prepared for the unexpected – but again, I think that the fact of being healed allows for this new perspective on the world, rather than the experiential dance

itself. In short, I do not have any specific data to definitively speak about experiential dance's ability to develop the peacebuilding capacities of inquisitiveness or providing for the unexpected.

Conflict Resolution Skills

According to Bar-Tal et al, "Conflict resolution skills refer to the ability to negotiate, mediate, and collaboratively solve problems in the context of conflict situations....The goal of learning conflict resolution is to develop the following main abilities and skills: understanding that conflict is a natural and necessary part of life; becoming a better conflict manager; becoming aware of how critical it is to the process of constructive conflict resolution to share information about one's own perspective and to understand the perspective of the other side; effectively distinguishing positions from needs or interests; expressing emotions in nonaggressive, non-inflammatory ways; reframing a conflict as a mutual problem that needs to be resolved collaboratively with compromises via negotiation...; and brainstorming to create, elaborate on and enhance a variety of peaceful solutions" (Bar-Tal et al 31).

Although the *Fall and Recover* group did develop their own successful conflict resolution mechanisms, including an active third side, I think these structures mostly developed out of Kiribu and John's strong leadership; the third side would not necessarily have happened on its own, and therefore is not an inherent part of experiential dance. It would certainly be possible to design dance workshops that specifically addressed how to negotiate or mediate, but this kind of activity would require forethought and planning. Similar to the human rights knowledge discussed next, learning about the difference

between needs and interests, and group biases also requires active dialogue. Although such dialogue could be preceded by building trust through experiential dance, in the final analysis, an actively led discussion and verbal practice would be needed to teach effective conflict resolution skills.

Knowledge of Human Rights

Bar-Tal et al explain that human rights education “requires the development of knowledge, skills and values that cherish and support...rights: civic-political, social-economic, and cultural...Achievement of this educational goal requires accepting differences and recognizing one’s own biases, taking responsibility for defending the rights of others, educating others about human rights issues, and critiquing and analyzing information related to human rights” (Bar-Tal et al 30). By the nature of their experiences as asylum seekers and torture survivors, *Fall and Recover* participants are very personally acquainted with the need for human rights and the ability to stand up for other people’s rights. So human rights knowledge may not have been one of the capacities that these particular people needed to replenish. Nevertheless, experiential dance’s emphasis on movement, emotions, and group dynamics, usually precludes more analytical discussions about global issues. An enterprising dance teacher could certainly talk about human rights or relate a movement activity to the experience of rights or a lack of rights. However, no inherent connection exists between experiential dance and the kind of discussions and transfer of factual knowledge that are needed to impart the human rights capacity that Bar-Tal et al describe.

Connecting to Lederach's and Cohen's Peacebuilding Goals

I hope it is relatively clear by now that through “nourishing” (Cohen 51) the seventeen capacities above, experiential dance also directly builds Lederach's four core essences of peacebuilding: strong, enduring *relationships* are formed through dancing together as people relate to each other at a very deep, personal level mediated through the body rather than through language; *paradoxical curiosity*, or the favoring of complexity over duality, is embraced by the multiple perspectives, multiple physical embodiments and multiple interpretations constantly at play in dance practice; experiential dance participants *take risks* every time they move their bodies in front of other people because it is such a vulnerable way to express oneself; and, finally, *creativity* occurs constantly as participants make up movements or interpret other people's movements through their own bodies. Moreover, a beautiful synchronicity exists between Lederach's description of creativity – “the vision and belief that the future is not the slave of the past and the birth of something new is possible” (Lederach 39) – and Kiribu's own words: “John has taught us that we can just make anything out of nothing.” Lederach would be proud. If this capacity – the belief that something can be made out of nothing – can be developed in conflict areas through experiential dance, peacebuilders will be well on their way to fostering profound changes.

Again returning to the Analytic Framework outlined in the Introduction, we see that experiential dance does help attain some, but not all, of Cynthia Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation. For instance, as discussed in the tolerance, empathy and trust sections above, *Fall and Recover* participants definitely learned to “[appreciate] each other's humanity and [respect] each other's culture,” “[tell] and [listen] to each other's

stories and [develop] more complex narratives and more nuanced understandings of identity” and “[empathize] with each other’s suffering” (Cohen 10). In addition, they also learned how to “[imagine] and [substantiate] a new future” (Cohen 11) for themselves and the group through the *Fall and Recover* experience. I am confident that these four reconciliation aspects can be fostered through any experiential dance activities that one might conduct during a peacebuilding project, especially if the group is made up of people from both sides of the conflict.¹⁰

Cohen also lists “acknowledging harms, telling truths and mourning losses” along with “expressing remorse, repenting, apologizing; letting go of bitterness, forgiving” as elements of reconciliation (Cohen 10-11). My interviewees certainly expressed that the dance helped them mourn their own losses and let go of bitterness in order to move forward with their lives. However, because their tormenters did not dance with them, and the other elements on Cohen’s list require that both sides be together, my data does not fully answer whether or not these elements can be reached through experiential dance. In particular, “expressing remorse, repenting, apologizing” may need to happen in more explicit ways than through dance – i.e., a formal apology or ceremony. A dancer might intend for a performance to act as an apology, but unless that intent is formally communicated to the people being asked for forgiveness, the abstraction of the form may prevent the dance from being understood as an apology.

¹⁰ Anna Halprin’s experiences in this realm suggest that before bringing groups together, however, much intra-group preparation must be done first (Halprin 1995 16). Thus, when instituting experiential dance projects as part of peacebuilding, one would first want to develop the creative dance skills of each group separately before bringing them together. See Appendix B for concrete recommendations for practitioners.

And finally, my research suggests that the final two elements of Cohen's reconciliation framework cannot be met through experiential dance since they require action on a more community-wide level, and not just the individual level. Indeed, "acknowledging and redressing injustices" (Cohen 10) cannot be carried out in the dance studio because the dancers do not have access or control over the legal and societal institutions that can actually make this happen. Similarly, we have already discussed how conflict resolution skills are not necessarily imparted through experiential dance unless a teacher explicitly designs a lesson to teach such skills. And so "agreements about how future conflicts will be engaged constructively" (Cohen 11) as an element of reconciliation, also demands engagement at a wider community level than can be reached in a small-group experiential dance project.

In this chapter so far, the experience of *Fall and Recover* has shown which capacities needed for peacebuilding can be nurtured by experiential dance. In particular, creativity, listening, self-expression, trust, respect for complexity, reflective thinking and tolerance were all directly impacted by *Fall and Recover*. Furthermore, experiential dance offers very important contributions to overcoming fear, creating hope, inspiring imagination, taking personal responsibility, building empathy and understanding interdependence. However, developing inquisitiveness, providing for the unexpected, building conflict resolution skills and learning about human rights seem to be the capacities that experiential dance does not "nourish" in a convincing way. We then looked at how experiential dance helps develop Lederach's four core essences and four of Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation. Although experiential dance does not have all

the answers for healing or “nourishing” capacities, the *Fall and Recover* case study reveals the medium’s strong potential for becoming a powerful tool in peacebuilders’ repertoire.

Strengths and Limitations of Experiential Dance for Peacebuilding Endeavors

Strengths of Experiential Dance

If peacebuilders did embrace experiential dance as a tool, what are some of the strengths and limitations of this art form for peacebuilding? I begin with the strengths: We have already investigated experiential dance’s ability to heal traumatized individuals, to nourish capacities such as empathy, trust and imagination, and to help learn about self and other through the process of sharing stories. We also saw how experiential dance can provide the strong support networks that are vital to peacebuilding missions since the relationships formed while dancing create enduring bonds. Dance also has the potential to communicate across cultural barriers or allow people to contribute aspects of their own culture with pride. Relatedly, dance can often express and convey emotions, ideas, and experiences that cannot be captured by words – which helps with language differences and emotional barriers faced in peacebuilding endeavors. Furthermore, expressing through one’s body not only provides a unique connection to self and self-esteem, but also brings one viscerally to the present moment, which can help people move forward from their thoughts of the past. As Arlene Goldbard says, “We learn to be wholly present more fully by making art than by any other means” (Goldbard). And, as explored more in Chapter Three, performing provides a unique platform for inaudible voices to be heard in the wider community.

However, these very real strengths of dance as a peacebuilding tool also belie some of its weaknesses and limitations.

Limitations of Experiential Dance

To begin with, some of the intended participants may simply not be interested, or may feel embarrassed by moving. A first class may strike some as strange, and they may not want to continue. Such resistance occurred at the very beginning of John's workshops, but Kiribu rallied everyone and encouraged them to try it a few more times, after which many of them became inspired. It is also interesting that the majority of the *Fall and Recover* cast comes from sub-Saharan Africa, and the Africans in the group often talk about how dance and music are intrinsic parts of their cultures. Will individuals from Western cultures – where the body, its needs, and its wisdom are often mistrusted, ignored or even suppressed – seek out expressive practices in the same way? I believe that everyone can move and can be positively affected by dance, but I suggest that when searching for initial participants, it may be easier to attract people from cultures that embrace movement in daily life than to interest individuals from cultures that distrust dance. In other words, effectiveness of dance in peacebuilding endeavors depends on individuals being willing to try movement whole-heartedly in the first place.

Even once someone has chosen to join a dance group, preparing for performances can be very frustrating and could alienate members of the group. For example, Solomon discusses how in rehearsals when “there was stuff I was not comfortable doing, it gets me down - it's like I'm not fit enough to be here. Something tells you you're not good enough. Thank God I have this thing in me that resists things like that – it helped me to

carry through, and later I go to John and say, ‘I can’t do that,’ and then he’ll understand.” Someone more prone to self-criticism might find such situations even more distressing and unhelpful – or even harmful – for their psychological healing.

Yet another limitation of dance in peacebuilding is that dance projects of this nature require a very specific kind of leader – someone empathetic, patient, sensitive, open-minded and flexible, who can also build trust and give large amounts of energy over a long period of time. John’s intensive involvement in people’s lives and deportation cases appears at moments to be superhuman. Indeed, the need for a specific kind of leader, coupled with the importance of building group relationships, reveals that small groups are essential. Projects like *Fall and Recover* are neither scalable nor necessarily repeatable.

In the previous chapter, we saw how important the actual performance was for many of the participants’ healing, and *Fall and Recover* was lucky to be performed many times over a long span. But performances require time, money, logistical planning and organizational skills that may not be available to other groups. Indeed, *Fall and Recover* is also unique in that it has lasted so many years in so many different renditions. But eventually dance projects end. What happens to participants afterwards? Will their healing ‘stick’ or will the process have ended too soon for some? These questions may be relevant for all peacebuilding endeavors.

Finally, we must acknowledge that many people do not believe in dance, or do not believe in the efficacy of what they may not be able to see or quantify. So using dance in peacebuilding means braving up to skeptics, believing in the wisdom of the body and the unconscious mind, and waiting patiently for ‘results.’ But, as one therapist writes, “It

also takes a highly unorthodox, flexible, creative, and above all multidimensional therapeutic approach to effectively address” the situations of torture survivors (Laub xx). So a multidimensional modality such as dance may in the end contribute to more holistic healing than is possible through Western medicine and psychotherapy. *Fall and Recover* provides one very effective proof-of-principle for projects seeking to use dance in a peacebuilding context.

Some of these limitations can be mitigated by screening for leaders and then training them carefully; tailoring dance practices to local cultures; focusing on having many small groups rather than one big group; securing generous funding ahead of time to ensure longevity and a final performance; providing participants with psychological support and offering them the choice to leave the project if it ever becomes overly stressful or uncomfortable; and developing ways for the group to stay in touch with each other afterwards. Multidisciplinary work is a must, as well as having a peacebuilding project large enough and flexible enough to reach different kinds of people in different ways. Considering the limitations of dance as a peacebuilding tool, the best peacebuilding projects might include dance as one level of intervention and then develop other types of group interactions activities using different brain modalities to round out the project.

* * *

Overall this chapter explored how the healing of traumatized individuals through experiential dance directly aids peacebuilding goals by nourishing thirteen out of the

seventeen peacebuilding capacities, four out of Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation and all four of Lederach's core essences of peacebuilding. This chapter also highlighted the strengths and limitations of using experiential dance in peacebuilding. In essence, movement can communicate experiences and expression that words cannot convey; however, dance projects are very hard to scale and require specific kinds of leaders and participants. In the final analysis, I believe that the strengths outweigh the weaknesses. One need only look at the benefits *Fall and Recover* participants still experience in their day-to-day lives long after the project has ended, as described in the last chapter, to see the power of this unique approach to healing and capacity building.

CHAPTER THREE:

PERFORMANCES FOR PEACEBUILDING: AUDIENCE REACTIONS TO *FALL AND RECOVER*

“I cried after every single show in New York,” reports Catherine, IMDT’s current General Manager. She is not alone. The performers report that often during shows they can hear people in the audience crying, and after shows, they can see the tears running down people’s faces. John remembers in particular that after the very first performance in 2004, “The entire audience was sobbing at the end. A dance critic who came told me that she would have to tell me what she thought on a later day after she stopped crying.” The tears run irrespective of whether IMDT does a post-performance discussion, in which John and Kiribu tell the story about the first workshops and relate the indignities of seeking asylum in Ireland. Such widespread tears indicate that *something* about *Fall and Recover* has the ability to move people.

But the question is, in what ways does *Fall and Recover* move people? How and why does it affect them? Does the dance succeed in raising awareness about torture survivors and asylum seekers? Does it change people’s minds about these groups of ‘others?’ Does it “nourish” any of the seventeen peacebuilding capacities? And how might the answers to these questions aid our understanding of performances potential contributions to peacebuilding? Such questions plague performance studies theorists and artists, because there seems to be no way to gather quantifiable data. For example,

although one could give questionnaires after a show, “Textured [personal] responses [of audience members asked after a show] cannot be evaluated in a scientific way because they are not reducible to empirical findings” (Grehan 5). Long-term impacts are even harder to gauge because of the difficulty of proving a clear causal connection between any one event and a change in behavior. The only truth that seems to be agreed upon is that watching performances affects each individual differently, and that “there is no formula” for connecting to audiences or communicating a message through “aesthetic education” (Hartman qtd in Grehan 1).

My goal in this chapter is not to add to the never-ending performance study debate about the impact of performances on a theoretical level. Rather, my goal is to collect, organize and reflect on various individuals’ myriad responses to a particular piece of art – *Fall and Recover* – as a vehicle towards understanding the range of possibilities of how performance can affect individuals, and which of our seventeen peacebuilding capacities, seven elements of reconciliation and four core essences of peacebuilding can be “nourished” through watching a performance. From this synthesis, peacebuilders interested in including art in their work can determine if using a dance performance is in fact a good match for their wider goals. (Needless to say, a peacebuilder’s choice would also depend on the nature of the particular dance in question.) In other words, analyzing audience responses to *Fall and Recover* will shed light on what performances can and cannot do, without prescribing exactly what it will do for any given individual. For instance, we shall see that for individuals, *Fall and Recover* sometimes acted as an agent of information about human rights issues, sometimes helped people feel hope and express their emotions, sometimes forged a sense of connection between self and other through

empathy and understanding interdependence, and sometimes changed people's opinions through self-reflection and embracing complexity. Perhaps most importantly, for communities, *Fall and Recover* created a visceral, peaceful vision of how the world *could be* and allowed minority narratives to be accepted in a wider societal discourse, in this case expanding what it means to be Irish. The latter two phenomena are extremely important in any peacebuilding endeavor targeted at communities, as noted in Cynthia Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation. However, *Fall and Recover*, and by extension other performances, was less capable of moving spectators towards taking responsibility and concrete action or teaching communication skills and only fulfills one of Lederach's four core essences of peacebuilding. Many other limitations of dance performances in peacebuilding endeavors are also explored.

My 'data' in this chapter is extremely anecdotal and individualistic, which unfortunately is the only way researchers have to document people's reactions to performance at the moment.¹¹ The research draws on writers' thoughts expressed in reviews and newspaper articles, audience comments in post-performance discussions captured on film, a few first-hand interviews,¹² my own experiences, and the performers' memories of interactions with audience members. It cannot be denied that the latter method for data gathering, in particular, is not ideal because of its second-hand nature. However, I have only used these second-hand stories where *the facts* of a re-told event convey certain insights, rather than the emotional valence of the teller.

¹¹ Maybe someday we will be able to scan people's brains after a performance, but that day appears to be far away.

¹² These first-hand interviews are unfortunately very few because I believe there are ethical implications in trying to track down audience members: it is most likely a violation of privacy to obtain a list of theater-goers from a theater's files and then call the audience members, especially when they may have seen the show years ago. Thus, I have had to rely on people close to IMDT who saw the show, and personal acquaintances of my own. These may not be the most impartial people, but they are better than nothing.

How Watching Performances Affects Individuals' Peacebuilding Capacities

Vector of Information about Human Rights

At the most basic level, *Fall and Recover* acted as a conduit for information about human rights issues, “nourishing” one of the capacities espoused by Bar-Tal et al. For instance, Bridget recalls meeting countless audience members who “didn’t even know what a refugee is, they don’t even know what causes you to come to this country.” For these people, notes in the program about torture survivors or Kiribu’s post-performance talk about the conditions facing asylum seekers is an education, a revelation of facts that they did not previously know. I myself – a relatively well traveled Fletcher student – learned more about asylum seekers in the talk-back after the show I saw in New York than I previously knew. Catherine reports that one of the La Mama Theater administrators brought her children and their friends to see the show after she herself saw it once because “it’s important for them to see this.” Often audience members will talk to performers after the show, asking questions about what life is like in their homelands. The informational impact of *Fall and Recover* on other asylum seekers reaches even further; IMDT and Irish theaters often invite asylum seekers living locally to see the show during its tours in Ireland. Kiribu relates that frequently these asylum seekers have never heard of SPIRASI, and do not know that such organizations exist. Thus, the basic information about SPIRASI gives these people the vital first step of seeking help – information on where to find it. Thus, *Fall and Recover* acted as a vector of information, educating many different kinds of people about human rights issues related to torture, refugees and the asylum process, as well as making other asylum seekers aware of their own rights to access help in Ireland.

Inspiring Hope & Self-Expression

Moreover, Kiribu reports that these other asylum seekers gain a great deal of “hope” from having seen “someone like them who has managed and succeeded” in making a life in Ireland. Asylum seekers are not the only people who feel hope or other positive emotions after watching *Fall and Recover*. Reviewer after reviewer mentions how, despite some of the harrowing images, the overarching emotions the piece leaves them with are uplifting and even joyous:

“But beyond all else, perhaps this is the most wonderful and surprising of things about this work, was the thundering pulse of life joyously lived.”
– *Duncan Keegan, blogger*

“[The dance] represents at once the tragedy of the past and hope for the future. *Fall and Recover* is an utterly redemptive work of art.”
– *Gus Solomons Jr., reviewer*

“These people cannot be poured into a beginning-middle-end resolved story. But still there is happiness – it’s unexpectedly upbeat.”
– *Deirdre Mulrooney, reviewer*

“*Fall and Recover* is urgent and uplifting, deeply humbling and beautiful.”
– *Patrick Brennan, reviewer*

I also experienced this sense of hope after watching the live performance in New York – a feeling created both from the movement presented on stage and from considering how much the performers have overcome to be able to share themselves with us in this way. I was also uplifted by the power of dance, and it inspired me to imagine what else can be accomplished through choreography.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the ability to foster feelings of hope is no small feat. To recap, researchers Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal have found that hope is an

extremely complex state of being that is not easy for people to experience; fear, on the other hand, as a primary emotion, can take over people's emotional landscapes quickly and easily. Hope is extremely important for peacebuilders not only because it helps people overcome fear, but also because the cognitive processes involved in hope help with the relationships, paradoxical curiosity, risk taking and creativity that Lederach calls for in peacebuilding (Lederach 34). So anything that has the ability to inspire people with hope – like an uplifting dance, performance or story – has real capacity to aid peacebuilding goals.

Some spectators also experienced being able to express their own emotions more after watching *Fall and Recover*. Joan Davis, an Irish choreographer, said in one post-show discussion, “It really put me in touch with my own suffering, survival, living, joy, everything, and I will never forget that. It just touched me immensely [and] I'm left so hopeful.” A New York audience member told me, “I can never cry for myself, but I am able to cry after I see something like this – and it releases so many things I have kept inside me that I was not able to cry about before. It's like a catharsis for me.” Similarly, one reviewer writes that the image at the end “when they joined together in the circle...[was] emotionally cathartic” (Costello). Thus, watching *Fall and Recover* offered some individuals release through emotional expression in different ways.

In yet another example combining information dissemination, hope and emotional expression, a young Iraq veteran attended the show in New York, befriended some of the performers and invited them over for dinner a few nights later. He thanked them profusely, telling Kiribu that “now I know that dance can help me. I haven't talked to anyone about what I saw [in Iraq], but now I can express myself in my dance.” He had

been taking dance classes simply as something to do, but was now going to approach the classes in a different manner, to express and heal himself. Thus, the information and inspiration this young man gained from watching *Fall and Recover* and befriending the performers may have a profound impact on his life, should he choose to act on his newfound information.

Connecting to ‘The Other’ through Empathy and Understanding Interdependence

Watching *Fall and Recover* also appears to have created a unique experience for viewers to feel connected and similar to the people on stage – the ‘other’ – and therefore experience a profound sense of shared humanity. Using peacebuilding words to describe this phenomenon, we can say that spectators experienced empathy for the people on stage and began to understand the interdependence between all people. Here are some individuals’ reflections:

“That these are the words of another place, another tongue means nothing....I just get it. I recognize that face, infused by story; I’m at ease with this voice as it segues into song, before falling back again into the easy rhythm of daily life. And in the space of a few moments – and I still don’t quite know how it happened – I found my own voice in the shared idiom of a shared humanity.”

– *Duncan Keegan, blogger*

“It left you with the feeling, I don’t know if it’s contentment, or it just gave the feeling you were still in the piece and yet you’re not part of the piece, because maybe a piece of you was part of the show in a way.”

– *Keelin reflecting on the first time she saw Fall and Recover; she joined the group in later years.*

“The dancers lock arms in a long row, and shuffling, they gradually turn the line. It’s a powerful image of solidarity. And you feel in solidarity with them.”

– *Owen Orel, reviewer*

“[The performers] and John Scott have created a piece that was devastating in its simplicity and emotional impact, which reinforced for me the value of dance as a medium for our expression of ourselves as human beings and the fragility of our common humanity.”

– *Louise Costello, reviewer*

Each of these quotations reveals how at least for some viewers, watching *Fall and Recover* broke down barriers between self and other, giving rise to a distinct perception of sameness or togetherness. Somehow the proverbial fourth wall of theater actually broke down all invisible walls and allowed people to experience a shared humanity: a deep compassion for the other through seeing themselves in the other’s experience. It is hard to know whether to call this an emotional, cognitive or even spiritual experience. Regardless, the quotations suggest that some viewers’ perceptions of the world around them were altered as they received a fuller understanding of and connection to the people on stage than they had before they entered the theater. We can also understand this connection as a form of empathy and knowledge of interdependence leading to re-humanization and understanding of the other. Thus, performances’ ability to allow audience members to walk in another’s shoes, to relate with others’ trials and emotions, and to find a piece of themselves therein, may be one of the most profound ways performances can help in peacebuilding.

Changing Opinions through Self-Reflection & Embracing Complexity

IMDT’s former board member points out that this sense of a shared humanity gained by watching *Fall and Recover* might be “why one could listen to [John’s] post-

show discussion in a particular way” – an open-minded, empathetic and self-reflective way. As noted in the previous chapter, reflective thinking is imperative for peacebuilding because the critical thinking and dynamic re-thinking needed when working through conflicts require reflection (Bar-Tal et al 28). Several examples reveal that watching *Fall and Recover* did lead some audience members to reflect critically. Indeed, in at least one of the New York post-show discussions, audience members reflected out loud on the asylum system in America and how it connected with what Kiribu and John had said. Another man spoke about how he had quit a dance career at age 30 because everyone told him that 30 represented the end of his body’s abilities; but *Fall and Recover* inspired him to rethink the cliché and see that it *is* possible to dance at any age.

The latter audience responses provide examples of personal self-reflection induced by *Fall and Recover*, whereas the following two examples suggest that self-reflection may have even changed people’s minds about particular issues, contributing to their ability to embrace complexity. First, in June 2004, an Irish national referendum to change citizenship laws was approved by 79 percent of voters. Before the referendum, babies born in Ireland automatically became citizens, but now, newborn children only become citizens if at least one parent is Irish or has been an Irish resident for at least three years. Politicians campaigned for the referendum saying that foreign women arrived in Ireland just before giving birth and therefore abused the asylum system. On the other hand, immigrant rights-activists, as well as the *Fall and Recover* performers, felt that the new citizenship laws made it even harder for refugees to receive asylum and, in general, showed that foreigners were not welcome in Ireland (BBC News June 2004). *Fall and Recover* had a string of performances in Dublin in July 2004. John remembers that, after

the post-show discussions, some audience members reflected that had they seen *Fall and Recover* and connected to the performers' stories *before* the referendum, they would have voted against it, and now wished they could change their vote. Thus, thinking reflectively after watching *Fall and Recover* allowed some spectators to accept differing points of view about the referendum, giving them practice in embracing complexity rather than dualities.

Second, the former General Manager recounts that *Fall and Recover*, and in particular John's personal involvement in helping individual performers avoid deportation and gain citizenship, created widespread discussion and dissent in the arts community. The conversation revolved around whether or not art – and more specifically in John's case, an artist's platform and connections – should be used in such a way. "Some people were questioning whether it was right to do it or not....There was quite a divide between those who were pro and those who were against....But John was very adamant that this was the right thing to do, and if there was a way of positively influencing the general public, he would use his creative work and his company and what IMDT stood for to make that statement....He was always very clear that these people have the right to stay here, have the right to start a new life and Ireland has to become their home," she explains. Interestingly and importantly, after people saw the show – and in particular saw the man perform whose deportation case had caused the ruckus – "what happened before was forgotten. He was part of the group and he was part of the community, so I think at that stage, all the discussion just dropped," the former General Manager relates with some awe in her voice. In other words, it appears that when people – who previously thought John and IMDT should not be 'interfering' in charged political

issues – connected to the individual whose life was at stake through the performance, they saw the issue in a different light and no longer felt the need to obstruct or question John’s actions.¹³ In this situation, complexity of thought was fostered by showing others that the categories of ‘artist’ and ‘activist’ can have fluid boundaries and do not represent a mutually exclusive duality.

I am certainly speculating, not having spoken to these audience members directly. But I think the latter two examples show that watching *Fall and Recover*, (or other IMDT dances with former asylum seekers in the cast), created enough self-reflection for people to reconsider and even change their opinions on some thorny political topics, through beginning to reject dualities and understand the complexity of differing view points. Considering again that self-reflection and embracing complexity are two of the most important capacities in need of “nourishment” for peacebuilding to occur, the ability of performances, as demonstrated through *Fall and Recover*, to encourage or provide a space for self-reflection and understanding complexity could be very important for peacebuilding activities.

Peacebuilding Capacities that Performances Do Not Nurture

The two examples above – about the referendum and the controversy over whether an artist should use his/her artistic platform to make political commentary – also point to one of the peacebuilding goals that artistic performances do not seem to fulfill

¹³ The former General Manager herself was initially skeptical about John’s involvement outside the studio, and also “a bit afraid that this would be counter-productive for the company.” But when she realized that inaction would mean losing a cast member a few weeks before a performance, she changed her mind and became fully in support of John’s endeavors. In retrospect, she says, “I think [the outside involvement] was added value throughout the whole process – that we were not just involved in a production, we were involved in something bigger. We were using, if the term use is the right word, art to make a case on a different level.”

well, at least in a direct way: encouraging people to take action or to change their behaviors, which Lederach describes as “taking personal responsibility” (Lederach 35). Of course, spectators’ actions after watching *Fall and Recover* would be very hard to document. It is possible that audience members might interact with the next immigrant they see differently without even knowing that the performance affected them. But it is also possible that people might leave the show feeling connected to all of humanity and then fail to interact positively with the next immigrant they meet. Furthermore, while it is possible that if people had seen *Fall and Recover* before the citizenship referendum, they would have changed their vote, the timing of the performance precluded such reversals of action. Thus we see that the timing of shows (and the finite audiences) are very real limitations to using performances in peacebuilding. The only indication that people *may* have been moved to action from my research is that sometimes after a show spectators would give performers their phone numbers and tell them to call if they ever needed help. However, I do not know if performers ever followed through with these offers or what kind of actions people would have taken after a phone call, so this example is not definitive in either direction. Although we can hope and speculate that the performance moved people to take responsibility for their actions, it is very difficult to know for sure.

Spectators’ capacities for creativity are also not substantially “nourished” through watching performances. Although viewers may have a newfound respect that things they never thought about are possible, unlike experiential dance participants, they will most likely not develop a belief that “the birth of something new is possible” (Lederach 38), having not created anything themselves. So here, I am separating imagination from

creativity, because as discussed more later, I think performances can spark imagination. In addition, because of the typically passive nature of watching a performance, spectators' ability to provide for the unexpected is not nurtured either.

Yet another important peacebuilding capacity that watching performances *does not* "nourish" is actually teaching people the skills – communication, conflict resolution or otherwise – they may need to interact with 'the other.' Although viewers may be more interested in forming a relationship with someone whose story they just heard, they may still lack the language skills or even the confidence to implement the idea. If relationships were to develop thanks to a performance, eventually people from different cultures will need conflict resolution skills, which a dance performance is unlikely to have taught. In other words, making someone interested in relationships with 'the other' is very important, but it is only the first step. To forge new kinds of relationships, people need new skills. Thus, a peacebuilder might use a performance as a first level intervention to give information, teach empathy and encourage self-reflection. But after the show, a good peacebuilder would also add another layer of activities designed to teach and practice communication skills and create opportunities for hands-on encounters between different groups. As we saw in the previous chapter, actual dance workshops can fulfill these goals better than a performance. Other non-arts based peacebuilding activities and tools can also make a difference, such as workshops on negotiation or mediation skills.

The remaining peacebuilding capacities have yet to be discussed because further research is necessary to better understand of how performance may or may not contribute to their "nourishment." For example, does connecting to 'the other' on stage lead one to

trust the performer? Would one leave one's child in their care the next day? Certainly there are different levels of trust, but the *Fall and Recover* data does not shine much light on this area. Similarly with inquisitiveness: does learning about something new – i.e. torture – inspire audience members to go learn more about the issues on their own? Possibly, but again I have no data, so more research would be necessary. Does feeling a sense of shared humanity equate to developing tolerance for another point of view? Maybe for some, but it is also possible that someone feeling a shared sense of humanity after a show could be very disappointed when he/she then interacts with the performers and finds their cultures alien and hard to understand. Also, does being receptive to *watching* 'the other' translate into receptivity for *listening* to each other? If the realm of movement connects more to the non-rational side of the brain, will cognitive patterns of fear and hatred return when the dialogue becomes language based, or can the movement-based communication re-set the whole system? Relatedly, can the hope or uplifting emotions produced by seeing one performance like *Fall and Recover* last long enough to change the physiology of fear in spectators in a conflict zone? My guess is that one performance would only break the fear cycle for a short time – which is no doubt better than nothing, but not as strong as experiential dance's direct effect on the body over a long period of time. Still, a performance that generates feelings of hope timed right before a facilitated inter-group peacebuilding discussion might provide just the window needed to foster open and trusting dialogue during the meeting. All to say, that if performance is used as one peacebuilding tool among many, its potential to contribute can be amplified.

So far we have seen how for individuals, *Fall and Recover* sometimes acted as an vector of information about human rights issues, sometimes helped people feel hope and express their emotions, sometimes forged a sense of connection between self and other through empathy and understanding interdependence, and sometimes changed people's opinions through self-reflection and embracing complexity. However, not enough evidence exists to definitively say whether or not audience members were moved to take responsibility and change their behaviors or actions. Watching the dance also did not help viewers provide for the unexpected, release spectators' own creativity, nor teach conflict resolution skills. Finally, further research is necessary to determine whether, or to what extent, the final peacebuilding capacities – trust, inquisitiveness, tolerance, listening, overcoming fear – can be “nourished” through watching performances.

The discussion so far has related to how performances affect individuals in their own lives and relationships. In the next section, we see how *Fall and Recover*, and by extension other performances, affected the *communities* (from the local to the national level) in which it is a part and in which it is performed.

Strengths of Performance for Peacebuilding on the Community Level

“More Nuanced Understanding of Identity”

Cynthia Cohen's second element of reconciliation reads, “Telling and listening to each other's stories and developing more complex narratives and more nuanced understandings of identity” (Cohen 10). By putting bodies on stage that are usually unseen and unheard, *Fall and Recover* touches on all three aspects of this element of reconciliation: stories, narratives and identity. Moreover, I believe that this act – making

the invisible visible and adding unheard narratives to the larger discourse – has a profound impact on helping spectators understand and describe current reality, and is one of the two most important ways the performing arts can help peacebuilding on the level of communities.

The head of the Dublin Dance Festival describes diversity in Dublin as “ghettoized. African communities are very separate, there are probably artists in those communities, but they are not making art that is coming into the main scene.” Indeed, immigrant communities have mostly remained shuttered from public view and discussion in Ireland despite the immigration boom of the past two decades. Take for example, a recent op-ed from the *Irish Times* that suggests people are unaware of refugees and immigrants alike: “It is important to recognize that migration to Ireland is ongoing” (Gilmartin). Another article about IMDT says, “The CCST is one of Ireland’s responses to the existence of people amongst us whose stories are troubled and foreign; denial and abuse are other responses, and dance, and art is yet another” (Murphy). In other words, immigrants’ are part of the new Irish identity, but remain an unobserved reality that many Irish find hard to accept.

Thus, *Fall and Recover* and John’s other dances with the torture survivors not only bring audiences face to face with Ireland’s changing identity, but also present the newcomers in a human light, encouraging spectators not to be afraid of their country’s demographic changes or their new neighbors. The performances also reveal that refugees are active contributors to society, rather than “spongers,” criminals and problem causers, which is the common narrative often spouted by the Irish media and politicians (Loyal 38). IMDT’s former General Manager explains how the *Fall and Recover* performers

view their role in this discourse of difference: “We made this [dance] ourselves and by merit of the fact of you audience being here to see it is our way of saying we exist....The performance itself is very courageous but without wanting to show off. It’s brave but not shouted.” Furthermore, reviewer Deirdre Mulrooney poetically describes how *Fall and Recover* not only allows new voices to be heard, but also presents the stories in a way that makes them more understandable across cultural and linguistic differences: “They are everywoman and everyman, the faceless ‘other’ that our society needs to let represent itself. Words won’t do it – their words aren’t our words, their cadences aren’t ours either. But bodies eloquent with unspoken experience unleash meaning that can be picked up intuitively, communicated more clearly than any sentence.” In other words, through *Fall and Recover*, the invisible story becomes illuminated and unheard voices of asylum seekers and immigrants are added to the discourse of a nation: the epitome of Cohen’s “Developing more complex narratives and more nuanced understanding of identity” (Cohen 10).

Perhaps the best example of John’s work creating an outlet for the unsaid and the unspeakable occurred while *The White Piece* – a dance inspired by Rory’s deportation ordeal, with a cast of three torture survivors and ten professional dancers from multiple countries – toured Israel and Palestine. John remembers that after a show in Ramallah, audience member after audience member came up to them and said, “I was tortured too,” “I was tortured, too.” One of the professional dancers felt like “we were giving them a gift” by acknowledging and giving voice to their unspoken experiences. One can imagine it was a particularly profound moment for all. This story also exemplifies how performances can reach the reconciliation goal that Cohen describes as “Acknowledge

harms, tell truths and mourn losses” (Cohen 10). By bringing harmful truths out into the open in Ramallah, the performance opened an opportunity for community mourning. Whether or not that opportunity was seized upon in this particular instance, my data unfortunately does not reveal. However, knowing the potential of performances to open such spaces, future peacebuilders could plan a performance followed by a community-wide mourning ceremony.

Expanding National Narratives

Expanding on Cohen’s idea of “more complex narratives,” Polly Walker, a peacebuilder working on the reconciliation of indigenous peoples with colonizing cultures, speaks eloquently about how giving voice to suppressed or unheard narratives is very important for new relationships to be built. New relationships will eventually lead to the realignment of power structures such that different points of views can exist simultaneously in what Lederach would call “paradoxical curiosity” (Lederach 34). The peacebuilder’s goal, according to Walker, is for communities to embrace differences in narrative without shutting down alternative worldviews or saying only the dominant narrative or power structure is ‘correct’ (Walker at Brandeis Workshop). In dance historian Ramsay Burt’s words, the equality John creates between the refugee performers and professional dancers “troubled and disturbed dominant power relations that limit recognition of humanity to those who conform with ideologically constructed and legitimated identities. . . .As dancers perform choreography that reveals their vulnerability and as spectators develop their own interpretations of this and witness what is performed, each, from multiple and diverse points of view, experience being together in a radical,

relational plurality” (Burt 8). In other words, seeing the body of ‘the other’ in relation to Irish people onstage, and to oneself as an audience member, forces spectators to consider unheard narratives, recognize the changing identity of Ireland, and expand one’s conception of what it means to be Irish.

One of the most concrete suggestions that John’s work has indeed caused a change in (some) people’s conceptions of what it means to be Irish is that *Fall and Recover*’s New York season was made possible by Imagine Ireland: “a year-long celebration of Irish arts in the United States in 2011....[with programs intended to] reshape and reinvigorate notions of Ireland, what it means to be Irish and the potential for Ireland into the future” (Imagine Ireland Website). Of course, the arts presenters who chose *Fall and Recover* may or may not represent the majority of the population’s views, but they are still Irish, and are in a position to represent Ireland not only internally, but also internationally. Sure enough, some New York reviewers hinted that their expectations of what Irish art would be had been challenged: “[*Fall and Recover*] will offer an entirely new and unique idea of what Irish dancing can be” (Reiter); and “When we think of Dublin, about the last thing that springs to mind is African torture victims” (Solomons).

Moreover, United States Homeland Security’s concept of ‘Irishness’ was also challenged, nearly preventing the New York shows. Homeland Security almost rejected the group’s visa applications because the officials did not think *Fall and Recover* met the requirements of a “culturally unique program,” as per the particular type of visa’s requirements. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services wrote: “Given the multi-ethnic composition of the group and the universal subject matter of the work to be

performed, USCIS is unsure whether the term ‘cultural’ applies in this case” (qtd in Catton). In other words, Homeland Security did not believe that people originally from Africa or the Middle East could represent Ireland or portray Irishness. Thus, the reviewers’ reactions, Homeland Security’s disbelief and the fact that *Fall and Recover* being sent to America to represent Ireland suggest that IMDT’s work has indeed made room for minority narratives not only to be heard, but also to be welcomed into the larger narrative of Irish identity, at least for some people.¹⁴ Other performances can serve the same function of expanding narratives and providing “more nuanced understanding of identity” (Cohen 10) in future peacebuilding endeavors as well.

Imagining a Peaceful Future

Overall though, I think the most profound experience and peacebuilding goal that *Fall and Recover* provides audience members, participants and outside observers alike is a vision of a peaceful future. Cohen captures this idea in her seventh element of reconciliation: “Imagining and substantiating a new future” (Cohen 11). *Fall and Recover* demonstrates that an egalitarian, trusting, multicultural community that honors the dignity of each individual without compromising the group *is* possible. Several people have noted the egalitarian nature of *Fall and Recover*: reviewer Paul Clancy writes, “One of the most beautiful things about this very beautiful piece is that one can’t differentiate between the dancers. The professional and the amateurs all blend into a

¹⁴ This discussion suggests that larger art establishments – beyond just one dance or one artist – can be useful in building new inclusive narratives for peacebuilding endeavors. Here, Imagine Ireland, as a national arts presenting organization, has a fair amount of control over what people see, through advertising as well as actual performances. This kind of cultural ‘power’ held by the larger arts (and entertainment) industry is important for peacebuilders to keep in mind – both as a potential ally and as a potential spoiler – when planning arts peacebuilding endeavors.

seamless, integrated whole. The word professional has no real meaning in this piece anyway – it is far too egalitarian for that” (Clancy). The head of the Dublin Dance Festival concurs, “[John] puts together a group of people on stage that includes people who are extremely highly trained and technical next to people who have no formal training in dance and they don’t look mix-matched. They all look like they came from the same team.”

Furthermore, the trust people have for each other on stage is almost tangible, as portrayed in Gus Solomons Jr.’s words: “Back to back, partners alternately take each other’s weight, evincing the trust they’d regained through the workshop process that produced the piece. The full cast forms a wide circle that slowly contracts into a tight clump with everyone yearning their fingers to the sky – a tight-knit community, empowered by each other’s spirit.” And various other reviewers capture the multicultural vitality of a group working within a community of individuals: “[*Fall and Recover*] weav[es] culturally diverse people into an ensemble, while honoring their individuality” (Jowitz); “The dancers underscore not past oppression and violence but resilient vitality, beauty and the humane exchange of support across differences of language and culture” (Yaa Asantewaa); “It is art that directs us to something that transcends identities...while yet affirming the dignity of one’s identity” (Keegan). These attributes of the dance combined make it possible to envision a future based on equality, trust and appreciation of differences.

Dance scholar Ramsay Burt captures this egalitarian vision of the future and its affect on viewers as he writes about John’s piece, *Close Ups*, which also has a mixed cast of survivors and professional dancers:

At the centre of the piece was an abstention from discriminating between, or creating hierarchies within different orders and qualities of experience.... I certainly found myself not needing to know who were refugees and who were trained professionals in order to appreciate the performance. The widely diverse material that made up the piece, together with very different kinds of performative presences and the different social and cultural identities these inferred, were all in and of themselves of equal value and interest. This relational plurality constitutes the work's ontological insurrection....*Close Ups* represents a creative way of making space for possible alternative ways of thinking and being (Burt 8).

In other words, watching a previously unimagined concept or an idea considered to be impossible – that of an egalitarian, trusting and multicultural community – play out in front of one's eyes on stage offers viewers new ways to relate to the world around them and provides more possibilities for the future. Burt's quotation echoes Lederach's words, showing how John's work embodies goals of peacebuilding: “[Artists] embrace the possibility that there exist untold possibilities capable at any moment to move beyond the narrow parameters of what is commonly accepted and perceived as the narrow and rigidly defined range of choices” (Lederach 38). *Fall and Recover*'s unique contribution to the world is that it helps audience members “move beyond the narrow parameters” (Lederach 38) as well as towards “imagining and substantiating a new future” (Cohen 11).

This vision of future possibilities is not restricted to within the walls of the theater. The group's visibly multicultural nature has engendered conversation wherever it travels, making a clear statement that peaceable and supportive multicultural community is possible. In particular, Kiribu remembers that, “When we went to Brazil – they had never seen a group like us. They were really happy that at least now they know they can start that with people.” Similarly, in Israel because of ongoing conflict, their message in post-show talks was, according to Kiribu, “trying to make people know that all cultures

can survive together... We can all work together – see us now, we have Americans, we have French, we have Africans, we have Iraqis, we have all these women, and see we're happy. And they looked at us and they said, 'That's very strange.'" Beyond the stage, the group's driver was a Palestinian. He was curious about the group and asked Kiribu one day, 'Are you really from Africa? What are you talking about in your dance?' And Kiribu remembers answering, "'Yeah, I'm from Africa but I'm living with all these other people and I don't have any problems with anybody.' He said, 'Probably we should think like that.'" Thus, in these two instances, simply watching a multicultural group traveling and working together made observers think about what was possible and what could be different in their own communities. In Burt's words, "[John's work exemplifies] theatre dance's potential to create a shared space of reciprocity in which to imagine a possible future communality and a politics to come" (Burt 8).

Such visions of an egalitarian, trusting, multicultural community are extremely valuable for peacebuilding endeavors because, according to Elise Boulding, the ability to imagine the future as a peaceful place is an imperative first step to creating a more peaceful society (Boulding 1988 86-87). Sometimes it can be very difficult for individuals to imagine a peaceful future for themselves, so the artist can help by providing "the vision and belief that the future is not the slave of the past and the birth of something new is possible" (Lederach 39). Moreover, seeing the possibility of a peaceful future embodied on stage takes the vision a step further from imagination to a place where it can be perceived by all five senses, at least during the course of the performance. Thus, artistic performances could be extremely important in peacebuilding endeavors to spark peoples' imaginations about possible futures different from the present difficulties.

Return to Cohen's and Lederach's Peacebuilding Goals

We have now seen how *Fall and Recover*, and by extension other performances, can impact individual spectators in different ways, including providing information about human rights, generating feelings of hope and self-expression, creating empathy and interdependence through connection with 'the other,' and provoking self-reflection and embracing complexity that can lead to altered opinions. Thus dance performances can fulfill many of the seventeen peacebuilding capacities in need of "nourishment." Performances like *Fall and Recover* also affect communities of different sizes by giving voice to the invisible, bringing minority narratives into wider social discourses and offering a vision for what a peaceful future could look like. However, performances like this one are not particularly good at teaching individuals' skills for interaction with 'the other,' and limited documentation – or even understanding – exists about the ways in which one may or may not be moved to action through performance.

Returning to Cynthia Cohen's framework, we see that watching a performance is likely to foster four out of her seven reconciliation elements that pertain to individuals: "Appreciating each other's humanity and respecting each other's culture; Telling and listening to each other's stories and developing more complex narratives and more nuanced understandings of identity;...Empathizing with each other's suffering;...and imagining and substantiating a new future" (Cohen 10-11). A fifth reconciliation element discussed – "acknowledging harms, telling truths and mourning losses" (Cohen 10) – can occur in certain situations, such as *The White Piece* in Palestine, where the issue of torture was relevant to audience members. But in other situations, the one-way sharing of stories – from performers to audience – typical of performances precludes this

reconciliation element from being achieved. *Fall and Recover's* post performance discussions and the performers' willingness to talk to spectators afterwards help give audience members the opportunity to share, but ideally in a peacebuilding project, both sides would have equivalent chances to contribute to the dialogue. Indeed, because of this one-directional sharing, the reconciliation element Cohen terms "Expressing remorse, repenting, apologizing" (Cohen 11) also remains unfulfilled by performance. Moreover, as in experiential dance, the final reconciliation elements – "Acknowledging and redressing injustices" and "Agreements about how future conflicts will be engaged constructively" (Cohen 10-11) – are beyond the capacity of performance to affect because they happen at socio-political levels of society, rather than at the level of individuals and local communities.

Interestingly, performances appear to only inherently foster one of Lederach's four core essences of peacebuilding: paradoxical curiosity. Indeed, while performances may instill an interest in *building relationships*, they do not inherently allow for relationships between audience and performers to be developed beyond the timespan of the performance. As explored earlier, watching a performance may awaken the imagination, but it does not force spectators to access or enact their own *creativity*. Although it might be risky to attend certain performances in a conflict zone, watching a performance is a relatively passive experience. The performance's content may encourage *risk-taking* or ask the person to think differently, but a spectator need never have to take an actual risk. However, I do think *paradoxical curiosity* can be fostered by watching performances since the very nature of dance, as discussed earlier, includes the reality of multiple interpretations. Especially in a language-based culture like our own,

being asked to perceive, decode and interpret moving bodies engages the mind on a different level. At the very least, dance performances ask us to consider the complex differences between language and movement and how we know what we know.

Limitations of Performance for Peacebuilding at the Community Level

In addition to the limitations already noted – performances do not teach conflict resolution skills, do not necessarily lead people to action and do not promote two-way sharing – many other limitations at the community and implementation level need to be considered when designing a performance within peacebuilding projects.

As hinted earlier, timing is crucial. If a peacebuilder intends for a performance to influence people's decisions before a particular vote, the performance must precede the intended event, and yet not be too far in advance since audiences may have short memories. For example, had *Fall and Recover* been performed *before* the 2004 citizenship referendum, some spectators may have voted differently.

Relatedly, performances have a limited reach. Only so many people can attend, and modern dance performances tend to attract even smaller audiences than theater or music concerts. Hopefully, audience members will talk about their newfound emotions or experiences with others who did not attend the performance, but a peacebuilder cannot depend upon this word of mouth.

Central to any performance theory is that different people take away different emotions, thoughts, and impressions from performances, so no single meaning ever exists. Therefore, if peacebuilders want to communicate a very specific message, dance may not be the best medium. In different locations, furthermore, a performance may be

perceived differently and an alternate message may be conveyed. Recall, for example, that *The White Piece* held a different meaning for Palestinian audiences (solidarity with other torture survivors, evidence of multicultural individuals forming community) than for Irish audiences (illuminating the invisible). Of course, this ability to connect to a broad range of people is also one of dance performance's strengths, but must be taken into account when planning a peacebuilding endeavor.

Moreover, sometimes the people who attend performances with an explicit message are already 'the converted;' the perennial question is if a show actually reaches one's target population in need of "nourished" capacities. One of the challenges for *Fall and Recover* in this regard seems to have been, according to the head of the Dublin Dance Festival, that advertising the performers as torture survivors may have scared away some potential audience members who feared that the dance would be depressing. Thus, if peacebuilders are not reaching their target audiences, how must they change their marketing to appeal to the intended population without masking the reality of the performance?

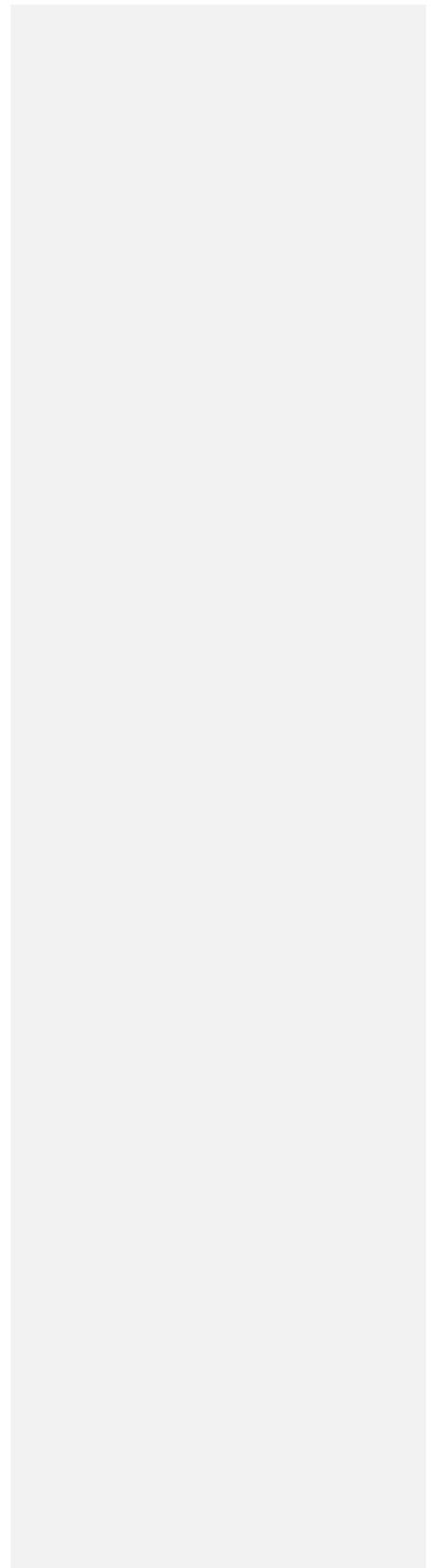
For revealing the reality of the performance – in this case, that the performers are survivors of torture – may be essential for conveying the intended message. Would spectators experience *Fall and Recover* differently if they did not know the performers' backgrounds? Probably. Even with appealing 'reality' marketing, the question of what knowledge a spectator enters the theater with remains. How will their level of knowledge affect what they see, feel and remember? For instance, it is plausible that, despite IMDT's extensive advertising, an audience member could arrive without knowing the performers' backgrounds, never read the program and not experience a post-performance

talk. Will this spectator view the dance differently without all the background information? How will the lack of knowledge affect his/her experience and the show's impact? Peacebuilders must also account for these variables in their plans.

Lastly, no research has been done about how long images stay with people or how long audience members will think about a performance. The longevity of memories probably differs from person to person. However, my personal experience suggests that one can forget an image, memory or performance for years – but then when some stimuli triggers a memory, the image can appear fresh in one's mind's eye. Thus, memories of performances remain in the realm of the unknown, so trusting in performance and memory for peacebuilding goals requires a leap of faith. But in wondering whether to leap or not, it may be useful for peacebuilders to recall that art speaks to the non-rational mind. So perhaps the rational mind's inability to grasp the power of performance should be viewed as just that – a limitation of our rational mind – rather than as a failure of performance to speak to humans on a deep, personal, and long-lasting level.

For overall, this chapter has shown that although we cannot predict how a performance will affect any one specific person, and we cannot assume that all people will be affected in the same way, watching dances such as *Fall and Recover* can and does impact individuals. Indeed, performances can “nourish” some of the capacities needed for peacebuilding including human rights knowledge, hope, self-expression, empathy, understanding interdependence, reflective thinking, and embracing complexity, all of which may even lead to changed opinions. Most importantly, performances like *Fall and Recover* affect communities by giving voice to the invisible, bringing minority narratives into wider social discourses and offering a vision for what a peaceful future could look

like. Throughout these processes, at least four, if not five, of Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation are met, and one of Lederach's core essences of peacebuilding. Limitations of performances for peacebuilding certainly exist – including a one-way sharing, inability to teach communication skills or move individuals to direct action, timing, limited reach, difficulty reaching target populations because of lack of interest or unappealing marketing, and lack of assurance that a particular message is conveyed. However, many of these limitations can be mitigated through planning details of the performance to match the target audience's needs and concerns, as well as balancing the performance with other peacebuilding events. (Appendix C offers practical recommendations to practitioners interested in presenting a performance within a peacebuilding endeavor.) Mostly, I hope this chapter encourages peacebuilders to take a leap into the unknown, non-rational parts of the mind and imagination where space, time and form dissolve, and someone who one minute was sitting passively is the next moment experiencing viscerally the pain and joy of 'the other' moving on stage – to find, as Duncan Keegan says, "[one's] own voice in the shared idiom of a shared humanity."



CHAPTER FOUR:

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this thesis, *Fall and Recover* provided a case study for how dance and movement can contribute to peacebuilding goals in both the individuals who participate in and the individuals who watch a performance. The Analytic Framework based on the scholarship of John-Paul Lederach, Cynthia Cohen and Daniel Bar-Tal et al, helped us understand how certain capacities within individuals need to be developed and “nourished” in order for peacebuilding and reconciliation to occur. These seventeen capacities include understanding interdependence, taking personal responsibility, respect for complexity, inquisitiveness, belief in the creative act, provision for the unexpected, imagination (Lederach), trust, self-expression, listening, (Cohen), reflective thinking, tolerance, empathy, conflict resolution skills, human rights knowledge, overcoming fear and creating hope (Bar-Tal et al). Chapter One investigated healing from trauma through dance by comparing the *Fall and Recover* performers’ experiences to the stages of psychotherapy, revealing how experiential dance can help break cycles of fear, strengthen positive memories, restore confidence, re-experience the trauma in safety with full expression, expand emotional capacities, rebuild trust, and accept the past to move forward. Chapter Two expanded on this healing experience to show how all but a few (human rights knowledge, conflict resolution skills, inquisitiveness and providing for the unexpected) of the Analytic Framework’s seventeen peacebuilding capacities could also

be developed and nurtured through other dance projects similar to the *Fall and Recover* experience. Experiential dance additionally builds Lederach's four core essences of peacebuilding and four out of Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation, excluding the ones that must be initiated at a community or even national level such as "redressing injustices" (Cohen 10). Chapter Three then analyzed which of the seventeen peacebuilding capacities were experienced by audience members watching *Fall and Recover*: feeling hope, experiencing empathy, expressing oneself, understanding interdependence, embracing complexity, thinking reflectively, inspiring imagination and gaining human rights knowledge appear to be the most prevalent capacities experienced by some audience members. On a community level, the performance of *Fall and Recover* fulfilled five out of Cohen's seven elements of reconciliation, having the most profound effects on expanding local and national narratives, broadening concepts of identity, and providing a peaceful vision of the future. See Figure Three for a visual representation of all these findings in relationship to the overarching Analytic Framework. Along the way, we also discovered many of the strengths and limitations of using dance in peacebuilding endeavors. My hope is that future artists working in peacebuilding can learn from these *Fall and Recover* insights, that peacebuilders will be eager to use dance in their future work, and that all readers will be inspired by the performers' stories of resilience and their ability to create the ultimate work of art – a new life.

Why this Research is Important

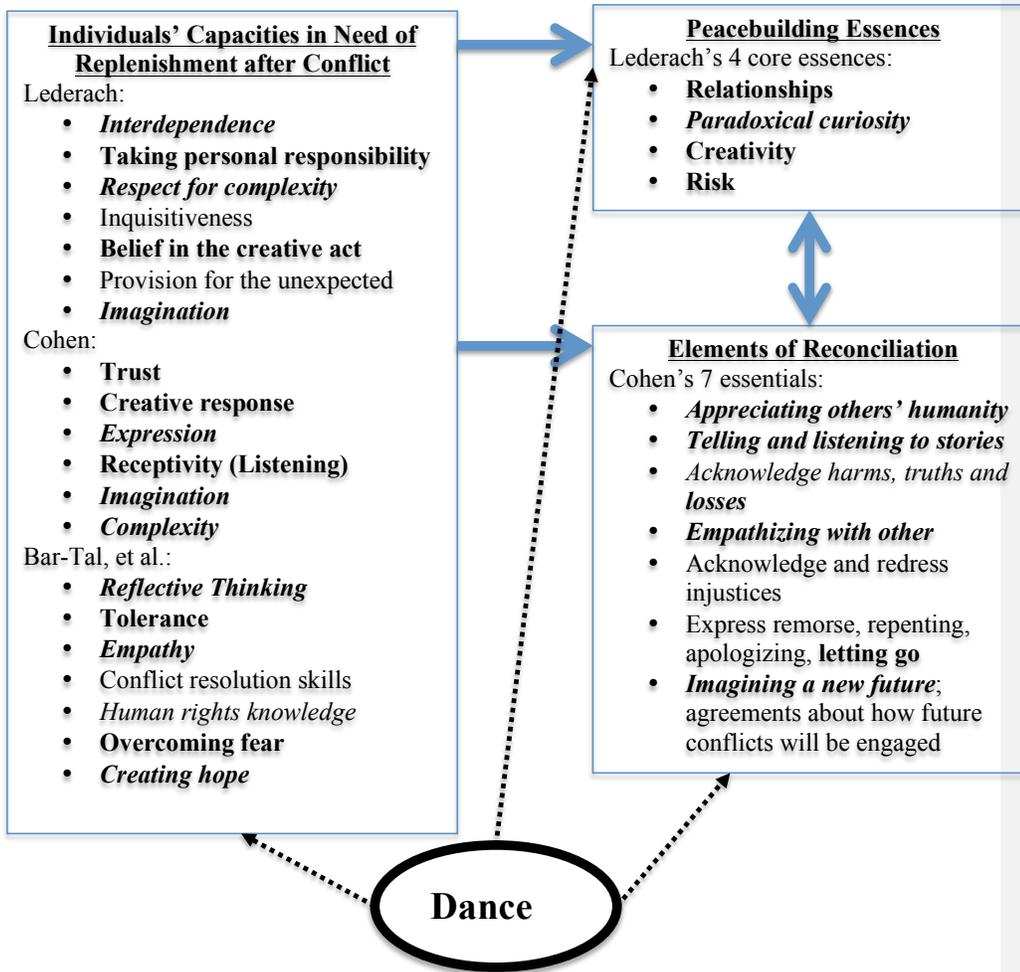


Figure 3: A visual summary of this thesis' findings through an updated rendition of the Analytic Framework taking into account all the research and analysis. Bolded words represent those capacities and peacebuilding goals attainable through experiential dance; italicized words represent those that can be achieved through watching a dance performance.

Skeptics of my research and the power of dance may say, 'But *Fall and Recover* is only one example of a dance affecting people deeply – and a very small group of people at that – and cannot even be repeated; why focus so much on *Fall and Recover* and draw so many conclusions from one project?' To such skeptics I respond, yes, dance

projects affect a finite number of people directly, but it would be very hard to quantify how many more people are affected through numerous interactions with those healed, inspired or changed by the dance. Moreover, I suggest that if dance can help to heal torture survivors – who by definition underwent numerous traumas – then it also has the potential to help others traumatized in different ways. Indeed, because all of these peacebuilding capacities are extremely hard to measure or quantify, if we can understand how and the ways in which dance healed and built capacity in torture survivors – who are starting from nothing – then we will begin to have a sense of the kinds of change dance can help create in general. In other words, studying the effects of experiential dance on trauma survivors provides us with more measurable data than trying to chart the changes wrought by experiential dance in non-traumatized people. I think *Fall and Recover* distinctly reveals that such changes through dance are immense and noticeable, even if not perfectly measurable.

Also, *Fall and Recover* is obviously a unique story, especially because of John's long-term commitment outside of the dance studio. However, many of his tools, realizations and processes are very similar to those of Anna Halprin, Liz Lerman and other choreographers who have spent their entire careers developing and refining processes for building inter-group relationships and community understanding through performing and watching dance. John stumbled upon such processes and figured out haphazardly how to make everything work to match his artistic vision as well as the performers' needs. But how much more powerful might these processes and projects become when they are planned and designed in advance with the past experiences of

many different practitioners in mind? And how much more powerful yet when combined with other peacebuilding activities to complete a well-rounded roster of activities?

This glorious vision raises many more questions. What kinds of other peacebuilding activities will best complement experiential dance or watching dance performances? How should they all mesh together? Who can and should participate? Where and when? How can harm be minimized for all players? How can collaborations and partnerships between artists and peacebuilders be built? Where to find funding? At this point in time, the answers to many of these questions require delving into projects and learning as one goes. However, ongoing academic research also needs to be part of the equation so that documentation about what worked or did not work will exist. Such research will provide future practitioners with a strong beginning point, rather than starting from scratch each project. Furthermore, when future researchers make comparisons and contrasts between different practitioners, a much wider understanding of the complex workings of creating and performing art may become better understood.

In the meantime, I have a couple of overarching, philosophical recommendations for using dance in peacebuilding garnered from this research.

Social Change Goals or Aesthetic Goals?

Fall and Recover sheds light on one of the debates in the wider field of peacebuilding and the arts: whether focusing on aesthetic goals versus social change will advance your goals further (Brandeis Workshop). Of course it depends what ‘further’ means, but I think just about everything in *Fall and Recover* points to aesthetic goals as being a more useful guiding force towards creating healing for trauma survivors and

affecting audience members positively. I define aesthetic goals as using an artistic process as the guiding principle: in an artistic or creative process, no final goal per se exists – the goal is simply to create something – anything – that arises during the time spent working on it. In social change goals, on the other hand, a leader has a specific goal in mind be it ‘asylum seekers will gain confidence’ or ‘lower the illiteracy rate in India.’ Thus, an artistic process leaves many outcomes open and undefined until they are re-defined within the process itself by the participants themselves. On the other hand, leaders guided by specific social change goals may become blind to what a group really needs in that moment, because of trying to reach an outside metric. Thus, valuing the artistic process over specific social change goals will foster change matched to individuals’ needs, through allowing ascribe their own meaning to the entire experience. As we saw, this practice allows individuals to take ownership and feel pride in the dance, as well as give a high quality performance that pleases the audience aesthetically.

Differences between Experiential Dance and Watching Dance

Throughout this thesis, I have distinguished between experiential dance and watching dance, but both appear to have the potential to contribute to peacebuilding. So what is the difference? When would a peacebuilder use one over the other? It is hard to know for sure, but my hypothesis from this research is that experiential dance can *develop* the seventeen peacebuilding capacities from scratch, whereas watching a performance appears to *exercise* those capacities once they have already been built.

Theater theorist Richard Schechner’s research supports this idea. Schechner distinguishes between the words “transport” and “transform.” “Transport” conveys that

someone is brought to a new understanding or emotional space for a period of time, but then returns to the status quo. On the other hand, “transform” suggests a permanent change “from one status or social identity to another” (Schechner 127). Usually, Schechner thinks that art performance “transports” viewers, while ritual “transforms” people, although he perceives art and ritual as existing on a continuum (Schechner 130). Comparing the participants’ experiences documented in Chapter One to the audience members’ experiences explored in Chapter Three, it appears that *Fall and Recover*, and by extension other dance performances, acts as a transforming ritual for the participants and more of a transporting experience for viewers.

The idea that experiential dance develops capacities while watching performances exercises those capacities does not denigrate the watching of performance; like any muscle, cognitive and emotional capacities require exercise. The question for peacebuilders may be: does the population I’m working with need to develop these capacities (i.e., they are so traumatized that their seventeen capacities are depleted), or do they simply need to exercise dormant capacities? Because experiential dance requires small groups over a long period of time, one strategy might be to use experiential dance with the most traumatized people, and target performances towards a less traumatized section of the population. (Assuming one could actually distinguish the levels of trauma in the population.)

Design of Projects

Overall, dance as a peacebuilding tool will be most effective when paired with other programming and peace processes. Distinguishing between “transforming” and

“transporting” also has implications for how a peacebuilder might integrate experiential dance or watching performances differently into their wider peacebuilding programming. For instance, the transporting nature of a performance might make spectators feel hope for a few hours, even if it does not fully break the physiological cycles of fear as experiential dance can do over time. Peacebuilders could use this hopeful window of time after a performance to bring together people from opposite sides to have a dialogue, plan future community goals or envision a peaceful future together. Working in such a window of hope might produce different results than the same dialogue would without a performance beforehand. Perhaps even negotiators involved in peace processes could watch a performance with images of a peaceful future before entering the negotiating room to inspire their creative problem solving!

Performances could also be used simply as a vector of information, to re-humanize ‘the other’ by telling some of their stories, revealing them as human beings with emotions. Performances that tell stories from one’s own side, but that include *both* bad and good actions, might also contribute to changing conflict narratives towards embracing more complexity. Like *The White Piece* in Palestine, performances about important local issues can also help communities acknowledge and come to terms with what happened. So peacebuilders might choose to commission a dance or theater piece about specific issues that they feel need to be addressed or mourned in a particular community. After the performance, the peacebuilder could then facilitate discussions or some sort of public mourning ritual to acknowledge the community’s pain and pave the way to move individuals forward out of grief.

Experiential dance in peacebuilding could be structured similar to Daniel Bar-On's "To Reflect and Trust" workshops with children of Holocaust survivors and children of Nazi leaders (Bar-On 11). People from two different sides of a conflict could first work solely with members of their own group, learning how to create movement and becoming comfortable with the leader and the artistic process. After both groups feel familiar and confident with the process, the groups could come together and share what they have made and then also work together to create a new, integrated dance. If the context is safe enough, this dance could then be shared with their local communities to spread the image of the two sides working together. Once participants have created enough inter-group trust, teaching each other traditional dances from one's own culture might be another effective way of sharing across sides.

On a simpler level, if people from different sides are not ready to come together or live in mono-ethnic regions, experiential dance practice could focus on individual healing within one-sided groups. In such workshops, the specific goal would be developing the seventeen capacities outlined in this thesis. Leaders could also design activities to foster a better understanding of one's own side's roles in the conflict and incorporate discussions into the dance practice. For example, inspired by one of John's activities, a leader might ask participants to "Do something you would do before the conflict." Next, the leader might prompt, "Now do something you did during the conflict." After showing each other the movement developed from these prompts, the group could discuss the differences between their embodied actions from before and during the conflict to gain some understanding of the changes that took place. Moreover, becoming reacquainted with their pre-conflict selves may help participants access, or at

least acknowledge, an alternative way of being in and thinking about the world.

Participants could also make short dances about lost loved ones or lost hopes to express their suffering, though ultimately making dances about present hopes and imagined futures will probably heal people further. At all times, discussions about re-humanization, history of the conflict, and the peace process could be woven into the dance practice so that cognitive, emotional and bodily intelligences are all impacted.

And finally, peacebuilders themselves could use experiential dance to connect to their creativity and intuition, learn more about their own mediation or negotiation styles, become more attuned to their own and others' body language, and build relationships with other practitioners or the people they are working with in the conflict zone.

In terms of specific recommendations for practitioners interested in implementing projects, I have listed many best practices below based on *Fall and Recover*. For more detailed explanations of each recommendation, please see Appendix B and C.

Recommendations for Experiential Dance Peacebuilding Projects

- Find a flexible and open-minded leader; two leaders when possible.
- Allow people to choose to participate and/or leave.
- Continue the dance experience for a long time.
- Care about group dynamics; build a Third Side.
- Follow-up with participants when they are sad or acting differently than usual.
- Create a safe space for people to take on challenges; and a safe space for the leader.
- Provide opportunities for all to air their thoughts and opinions.
- Brief other technical staff or collaborators about performers' needs.

- Provide enough money to participants to cover costs of rehearsal.
- Do a performance as well as a workshop.
- Create ownership by having participants create their own movement.
- Use individuals' natural strengths in the choreography.
- Challenge participants to improve.
- Always remember who you are working with; create choreographic structures that allow for discrepancies from one performance to the next.
- Teach technical and performance skills needed for high quality performance.
- Honor cultural differences by incorporating them into performances.
- Ensure equality amongst all participants.

Recommendations for the Presentation of a Peacebuilding Dance

- A good piece of art is crucial.
- Time the show to match the timing of related political events.
- Use contacts to maximize the message's reach beyond performances.
- Find a balanced marketing to attract a wide audience, not just the 'converted.'
- Provide space after the performance for the audience to reflect.
- Design a performance setting that is safe for the performers.
- Structure the dance to match or complement the political message or vision of the future the artist is trying to convey.
- Provide opportunities for invisible people to be seen, using their own voices.
- Abstract choreography can help the individual performers' stories shine through.

Minimizing Potential Harm

In any peacebuilding endeavor, one must be aware that even the best intentions may actually cause problems or worsen a situation for individuals and groups. While attending to the recommendations above may lead to best practices and help minimize the possibility of harm, it is also important to be aware of the kinds of problems that interventions may cause. Hopefully, an awareness of such issues will allow practitioners and policy makers to prevent them from happening or at least to notice when a problem begins to develop and to address the issue promptly. The experience of *Fall and Recover* again highlights some of the potential concerns about using dance as a healing modality for trauma survivors or in performances for peacebuilding.

- *Constantly changing stimuli and activities in the dance studio may trigger flashbacks for trauma survivors.* When working with trauma survivors, it may be impossible to prevent altogether the possibilities of flashbacks since an artistic environment often creates new stimuli and survivors do not necessarily know which stimuli will set off their anxiety reactions. The flashbacks, moreover, may arise without warning. However, the best thing that leaders and groups can do is be prepared for such happenings and support the individual in their ordeal. Also, leaders should always respect when an individual says, 'I don't feel comfortable doing that' or 'I'd like to stop now;' the individual will have a much better sense about what is manageable for his/her own mind and body.

- *People's whereabouts may be revealed to their former tormenters through the performance, placing them in possible danger of retribution.* The *Fall and Recover* performers who fear retribution from their home countries use stage names to disguise their identities in the performances. Indeed, the increased media attention and widespread knowledge of the show makes such precautions a recommended 'do' for other projects as well.
- *Participants may place super-involved leaders in uncomfortable situations.* For instance, one performer in danger of deportation had recently become engaged to an Irish woman. The performer asked John to explain over the phone to the fiancée – whom John had never met – that getting married quickly would prevent deportation. As the phone was thrust upon him and John started talking, he realized that the fiancée had no idea that the man was at risk of deportation or even that he was a survivor of torture. John handed the phone back to the man, but not before seeds of doubt may have entered the woman's mind about his reason for marrying her. As of this writing, the two are still engaged though not yet married. This example reveals a set of complicated questions for super-involved leaders: When do you say no to participants' requests for help? How much can you trust participants to look out for your needs as a leader? When tough situations arise, how will you extricate yourself? When does 'helping' a participant turn into enabling their weaknesses? When does helping a participant possibly harm a third party? When do participants need to learn to do things

without your help? All of these questions are very important for leaders to consider both prior to and during complicated situations.

- *In volatile settings where a performance makes a controversial political statement, performers lives may be at risk.* Luckily, *Fall and Recover* never faced this predicament – partly because the message is about shared humanity rather than political controversy, and partly because the performances took place in democratic and pluralistic societies. But in post-conflict regions, the possibility of violence towards the bearers of unpopular messages is high and must be considered for peacebuilding initiatives.

Though other possible harmful effects undoubtedly exist, and may differ from individual to individual, following the above recommendations – especially the ability for performers to end participation at any time of their choosing – should help groups minimize harm. A peacebuilding leader must also always be looking for problems in order to mitigate them as fast as possible.

Future Research: The Role of Images

In terms of future research, I think that general psychological and neuroscience research into the nature of creating and watching art may be the most helpful for understanding how dance can contribute to peacebuilding and many other fields. Indeed, the question of *how* exactly *Fall and Recover* was able to connect to spectators so deeply remains unanswered. This question is, once again, part of a large philosophical debate in

performance studies with no real answer. However, reviewer after reviewer and interviewee after interviewee has mentioned how powerful “the images” in *Fall and Recover* are, how “the images” speak to them. The idea of images also abounds in my research: John used imagery to shape performers’ improvisations that led to the choreography; the psychotherapists talk about how “images were themselves making him [and other torture survivors] suffer, yet through images he could also make himself understood and understand himself” (Haenel 14); Halprin talks about “images” being part of the feedback process between movement and emotions that can lead to healing (Halprin 2000 19); and Boulding writes about the importance of forming images in one's head and then recombining images into new ways for imagining and building peaceful futures (Boulding 1988 86-87). In other words, images – both internally generated and externally viewed – have the ability to hurt and heal individuals, and to affect them profoundly on many different levels.

Cognitive development research may offer some preliminary clues to understanding this phenomenon. Psychologist Jerome Bruner considers forming images in one’s mind to be the defining characteristic of the second of three developmental stages, after “motor response” and before “symbol system” (Bruner 258). Cognitive development was traditionally viewed as a linear, mutually exclusive progression from one stage to the next. However, new research shows that the different stages do build on each other, but are also always in constant, interconnected use. Moreover, skipping stages or failing to integrate the stages can negatively affect behavior; connecting back to or practicing previous stages can fill the gaps and further cognitive development (Werner 145-146). Forming images in one’s brain through doing and watching dance may provide

such an inroad to accessing Bruner's second developmental stage. Clearly, more psychological and physiological research needs to be done on the power of images, but in the meantime, artists, healers and peacebuilders should be aware that a connection between images and emotions, beliefs and actions, does exist.

What we do know is that images speak to different people in different ways. For instance, while most reviewers found the instances of weight sharing and trust in *Fall and Recover* to be poignant reminders of solidarity or community, Gia Kourlas of the *New York Times* feels that these moments "come off as exercises" and that the piece as a whole "doesn't result in an especially powerful evening" (Kourlas). On the other hand, some particular images do appear to be more universally influential: almost every reviewer mentions the salt body-outlines at the end as a moment that spoke to them, including Kourlas. This example suggests that some images – like the salt – may be able to transcend individuality and affect a majority of people.

But *Fall and Recover* differs from other performances because the performers are not acting out a script or one artist's imagined geography. Rather, they are re-living events in the topography of their minds, revisiting their own experiences within the abstract structures of the dance. Moreover, the images spectators see of an egalitarian, trusting, and multicultural group represent the actual lived present reality of the group. As Kiribu explains, "The color doesn't matter to me, I just see their hearts. We really do not see boundaries in our group, we just see people the way they are." Thus, because of the *synchronicity* of reality with image, a performance of the actual, I believe the images that viewers take with them from *Fall and Recover* – bodies falling, bodies lifted and

supported, salt outlines left behind – are particularly resonant, meaningful, hopeful and long-lasting.

Peacebuilders take note.

APPENDIX A:

JOHN SCOTT'S ARTISTIC PROCESS

John's artistic process is at the heart of the *Fall and Recover* experience. I am probably not the only one who has wondered, 'How did he do it? How did he come up with that?' Or, for choreographers, 'What can I do to engage non-dancers and bring out their self-expression through movement?' This Appendix provides a broader picture of John's artistic process than could fit in Chapter One with the understanding that the moment of creative inspiration during a rehearsal may be even more ephemeral than dance itself. The performers words capture John's process best, so the following quotations are loosely grouped into categories without analysis or description in order for the experiences themselves to illustrate what rehearsals were like.

In rehearsal, John sets up tasks for people to improvise within – then lets people proceed however they want. He pays close attention, and when something “works,” he says something or directs the person further. In other words, he is very patient, waiting for the nuggets to appear and then nurturing them. He also pays attention beyond the obvious movement happening center stage and mines what people do while they watch from the sidelines as well. For instance, in rehearsal one day, Nuala was very upset, (John found out later she had received a deportation order that morning), and simply slid up and down a wall for a long time. It became part of the dance. Once the sections were complete, John combined the scenes randomly in the tradition of Merce Cunningham. As

Philip says, “The process isn’t easily defined...and it’s based a lot on John’s energy and John’s empathy and the way he works as a choreographer anyways which is constantly the newness of the moment.”

At the beginning of the workshops, a literal sharing of different cultural dances took place. Kiribu recalls: “Our first performance was everyone dancing their own dance, the way it was. People would teach others, ‘We dance like this, so follow.’ Whatever we can copy properly, we used that. And then another [person would say], ‘In Iraq, we dance like this.’ So we just did that because each country had one person, so you had to teach the others who are not from that country. So whatever is easy for us, we took that. If it was difficult we left it, because it was too technical and not everyone could copy it. So that’s how we did for the next performances, we picked what was easy for everybody. And John in his own way, he made a piece out of it, which was a surprise to all of us.”

Philip reflects on how John adapted to whatever came his way and made everything up as he went along: “It was so improvised; it was very instinctual. He was feeling them at every moment. So if he felt a lull, he would suddenly say, ‘Everyone into a circle, hold hands, breathe, now breathe out, now make a noise, now make a —.’ So a great deal of energy was going into it, he was constantly plucking at how they were feeling at that particular moment so that he could keep them entertained.”

John notices what people are doing in the room, whether or not they think they are dancing. For instance, Maeve remembers: “[One day] I had an allergy and so [I was itching].” She demonstrates an intense itch all over her body. “Then John says, ‘Wait, wait, do that again!’ I say, ‘No I can’t, I’m itching!’ John says, ‘Do it! Do it!’ ...Every

gesture you do, he says ‘Wait, wait!’ He notices what people do on the side and tells others to do it.”

Sometimes the choreography evolved out of specific activities or exercises that John brought to the class, rather than movement through individuals’ improvisations.

Philip describes: “At the end, they have this back to back thing, that would have come from... exchanging of weight and those trust things, those basic exercises in class. Like we’d do exercises where...we would lift everybody. Because it was also a sensation of allowing yourself to be lifted and to trust in other people, that was kind of something that was quite special. And he’d say ‘Ok, you know that back to back thing we did in the workshop? We’re going to do it here. Or remember that time we lifted everyone, well, now we’re going to lift Nuala here.’ One of the things they used to get really excited about in the workshops was lifting John, they were like, ‘Now John, John, let’s lift John, let’s lift John, John.’ And of course John would be screaming, and they used to love getting him up in to the air, I think because he’s such a big man you know.... The people who turned up to rehearsals, it was never constant, so one day he’d have one, and the next day he would have five. And one night he had only Rory, so Rory got a solo on that day. That had a lot to do with the structuring of the piece in the end as well.”

John also worked with each individual separately, expanding and shaping what their bodies would do naturally. Philip reflects on how John developed solos for each participant: “He would have sat with her, he would have called her up and said, ‘Kiribu, we’re going to work on this. Now just, just move your head ever so slightly, that’s beautiful, that’s beautiful, now add your arms in, now try and make your arms bigger, now make a bigger circle.’ So he’d create like he’s creating a dance on a dancer, using

her body and what's comfortable with her. If she says that hurts then he'd say, 'Then do it like this, is that ok? Ok, then let's do this, now keep doing it,' embellishing it as he went along... What was particularly exciting was that Kiribu would put something on top of it, which was lovely."

When directing the performers in their own movement, John often used imagery. Keelin's reflections here also provide insight into what the rehearsal process was like for the performers: "John goes, 'Write your name.' And I was like, oh this is going to be so easy, I won't have to stress, I just have to write my name. And he was like, 'No, think about signing and you're really rushing out the door.' And I was like, does he realize this takes much more energy?! I just wanted to be really relaxed, cause I have this thing: I'll be doing one thing but thinking about ten other things. And I was like, oh I just want to be here and write and still thinking about the ten things I have to do. And he's telling me, 'Oh go faster and faster!' At the end of it, I was like, woah, that takes so much you know – because you do it once but then he thinks of it, 'Oh this is just great,' and says 'Do it again.' But then you do it differently, but then he says, 'Oh it was really much nicer [before] - you did this differently.' But you don't know what you did differently at all. But it was interesting because sometimes I would really scribble fast, and sometimes I used to feel like I had fleas and I started to scratch. And he would say, 'No, you're signing and you're rushing out the door, life is going really fast, you're not scratching yourself.' And it's really funny because after that I developed a scratching habit."

Sometimes John would ask the performers to create movement material directly from their life experiences. Solomon explains: "John gives you the opportunity to bring a story or put your story in a solo. If he gives you a solo, he'll say, 'Solomon, do you

remember any time in your life that this, this, this [happened], can you put that in that solo?' So that will help you really do better, because it's your story, it's you, so you translate that, and it's easy, it flows well, and people can connect with that."

At all times, John was also very aware of creating a safe and comfortable environment. Kiribu describes how he would accomplish this: "John has a way of getting people to start things they don't think they can do. Because John lets you do things at your own pace. He's not expecting too much from anybody. You're only giving what you can. He always says, 'I'm not going to say this, I'm not going to ask this, just do it the way you feel.' People then relax."

APPENDIX B:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS: HEALING TRAUMA USING DANCE

Chapter One revealed the complexity of experiential dance as a healing modality and as a medium of expression. Although creative movement and dance certainly fulfill some of the same goals as psychotherapy, they work on a different plane of experience. Regardless of the strengths and limitations of dance as a wider peacebuilding tool, in depth research into *Fall and Recover* reveals some excellent lessons or guidelines for artists interested in pursuing work with trauma survivors and/or policy makers or programmers who want to design a program for such people. In this appendix chapter aimed at practitioners, I outline some of the primary “Dos” that can be learned from *Fall and Recover*, in the categories of Leadership, Administrative, and Philosophical Lessons and Recommendations.

Leadership Lessons & Recommendations

Much of the research on any sort of peacebuilding or healing using the arts stresses the importance of the leader and his/her leadership style. *Fall and Recover* corroborates and adds to many others’ recommendations about leadership in these endeavors.

- *A leader must be extremely flexible and open-minded at all times. Fall and Recover* rehearsals rarely ran perfectly as planned because long commutes would

make participants late, or hostels' curfews meant people had to leave early. Once they became Irish citizens, many performers also had jobs that conflicted with rehearsals. John and his General Managers have learned to adapt to these realities with grace. For example, John often worked on a duet when only two people came to a workshop or a trio when three people were present; IMDT's General Managers will often tell the group that a bus or airplane is scheduled to leave an hour earlier than reality. In other words, they learned to adapt to the group's needs. Most importantly, John, reportedly, never got upset, even during on-stage rehearsals right before a show. He was also always flexible in terms of respecting participants' cultural and religious differences, which set a good example for the rest of the group.

- *Care about group dynamics and work towards building a third side.* When a third side exists, the group can take care of itself and develops its own conflict resolution mechanisms. The fact that Kiribu became a second leader to John – she had separate responsibilities and accomplished different tasks, including much conflict resolution – aided the growth of the third side in *Fall and Recover*. The group dynamics also fostered discussions amongst everyone that allowed for reflection and growth as individuals and as a group.
- The above feeds into another suggestion for practitioners: *when possible, having two leaders with clearly defined roles can make a difference.* Anna Halprin gives the same recommendation, advising that where possible, an assistant can help a

leader address individual's needs as well as the group's needs, which are often separate (Halprin 2000 40). John himself stresses that having one male and one female leader also helps meet individuals' varying needs.

- *Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up.* Even if a leader cannot put half as much time as John did into the performers' lives and fighting their deportation orders, it is important for leaders to be in touch with the members of their group regularly. Follow-up is especially necessary if someone has missed a session unexpectedly or looks sad in rehearsal. Such actions help build trust, engage participants more fully and keep the group integrated.

- *Long-term involvement on the part of the leader and the group.* Although not every leader needs to provide the complete dedication that John did outside of the dance studio, it is important for participants to know that the leader and group will be there for them in the long term. Change does not happen over night.

- *Be open to allowing people to move on and leave the group when they want to.* In the former General Manager's words: "I think some of them felt the need to move on, and I think this is very good. And the fact that John let them move on I think is very, very important, because I think it was a phase of their lives and everyone has the right to say, 'Ok I'm done with this and now I can go on to something else.' I think that's a freedom that John and the structure of *Fall and Recover* has allowed." In other words, when individuals felt they had gained what they

wanted to from *Fall and Recover* and were ready to stop performing, John encouraged them in this decision and found others to fill their roles in the dance. He also did not take it personally when performers moved on.

Administrative Lessons & Guidelines

A leader can be incredibly visionary, flexible, open-minded and fulfill all of the above leadership recommendations, but if the administration of a peacebuilding project is not prepared thoroughly, problems may result. The following suggestions revealed by *Fall and Recover* are far more important than they may first appear.

- *Allow participants to choose to participate at the very beginning and renew their commitment throughout the process.* If someone feels forced to participate, it is very doubtful he/she will experience significant healing. Moreover, he/she may cause problems in the group's dynamics, adversely affecting others' experiences. Such choice was always present in *Fall and Recover*.

- *Create a safe space for people to take on challenges and risks; if you can start in a place already viewed as safe by the participants, then you will have a head start.* For example, by having the initial workshops at SPIRASI, with a therapist on call in the building, *Fall and Recover* participants already felt safe. John also talked to them about keeping everything that was said in the room private.

- *It is also important that the place feel as safe for the leader as it is for the participants.* By having Philip and another professional dancer take part in the workshops, John set up a situation in which he felt safe to create. According to the former General Manager, having the professional dancers present provided a familiar structure for John that “gave him strength to be able to try out things and maybe fail sometimes.”

- *Brief stage managers, lighting designers and other professional theater staff about the need to be sensitive to the people performing.* Both Philip and the former General Manager reported that some of the most tense situations that caused the performers added stress occurred during rehearsals on-stage. Theater staff are accustomed to a certain specificity and curt way of giving directions that the torture survivors either did not understand or reacted to adversely. Thus, talking to technical staff in advance will help stage rehearsals and performances run smoothly.

- *When working with economically disadvantaged groups, it is extremely important to provide at least enough money for participants to cover their costs of commuting to rehearsals and shows.* Otherwise, people in these situations cannot participate even if they wish to. Because IMDT could not legally employ the performers, they provided per diems instead. Bridget in particular mentioned that the per diem was crucial to her involvement in *Fall and Recover* before she had a job.

Philosophical Lessons & Guidelines

In any realm of work, conscious and unconscious theories and values on the part of leaders or organizations can profoundly impact participants' experiences and outcomes. Thus, analyzing the core values of *Fall and Recover* is important as well. While many of the following recommendations could fall under the leadership or administrative categories, I have placed them under the heading 'philosophical lessons' to underscore that these are not just actions to be ticked off a to-do list. Rather, when these elements form the basis around which other administrative and artistic decisions are made, they will help maximize the positive outcomes of arts-peacebuilding initiatives and minimize the potential harms. In other words, these elements may be essential for an arts-peacebuilding project's mission to be met.

- *Have a performance as well as dance workshops.* In *Fall and Recover*, the challenging process of working towards a performance added dynamic feelings of achievement and acceptance in the community that greatly aided the healing developed through movement and imagery. Performance allows "invisible" people to be seen, heard, appreciated and commended by the audience.

- *Create ownership of the piece for individuals by having participants create their own movement.* When participants are actively involved in the process of creation, they will feel like the dance is their own and feel pride in every aspect. When movement must be set by the choreographer, the more abstract it is, the more it

will give the performers an artistic space to voice their personal stories, selves and identity.

- *Be inspired by and use individuals' strengths.* John found the performers' inherent movement talents and used these beauties directly in the choreography. For example, if someone had a great jump, John gave him a jumping solo. If someone had particularly expressive hands, John gave her a hands solo. This attention to individuals' strengths simultaneously created pride, self-esteem and a good body-image for the individuals, as well as an aesthetically pleasing and committed performance for the audience to watch.

- *Integrate the trauma survivors with others who are not traumatized where possible.* In *Fall and Recover*, the integration of the torture survivors with the professional dancers not only aided participants' self-esteem, but also affirmed their normality and feelings of acceptance in society.

- *Challenge people to improve.* Improvement shows individuals that they can be proud of themselves. For example, it was very important for the *Fall and Recover* performers to know that they did a good job, because as Kieran relates, "if it's not good, [the audience] will tell you." Moreover, Kieran felt good about himself specifically when he knew he had executed a hard movement well and when he could see himself improving in the movement.

- *Never lose sight of whom exactly you are working with, and create choreographic structures that allow for discrepancies from one performance to another.* Much of *Fall and Recover* is structured improvisation since many of the performers find it hard to remember exact steps. So built-in cues, often given by the professional dancers, exist for when to stop one section and move onto the next. The professional dancers also help keep the timing of the movement the same from performance to performance. Thus, John designed the piece specifically to fit this group of individuals' needs. No one was ever asked to do something they felt uncomfortable with, and the structure of the dance itself allows the unique nature of the group to breathe and grow.

- *While challenging people appropriately for their ability level, simultaneously teach them the technical and performance skills needed to produce a high quality performance.* As described earlier, the cast members felt pride in improving and would not have improved in self-esteem if they did not think they had performed well. So leaders should equally refrain from overly praising work regardless of quality and overly criticizing. Instead, a leader should provide specific directions for improvement, and resist asking people to do things that do not look good on them or make them feel uncomfortable. In other words, it is important to challenge people in a way that suits their needs, *and* it is also important to teach them the technical and performance skills they need to improve their performance.

- *Provide opportunities for all to air their thoughts and ideas on the process.*

Although John made the final decisions, participants were always welcome to raise their own thoughts, questions or concerns about the piece in discussions after a run-through, even right before a performance.

- *Do more than respect cultural differences – honor them. *Fall and Recover**

contains several moments where people speak in their own languages or the group sings African songs that participants shared from their homelands. This inclusion undoubtedly helped the participants understand their own contributions and feel ownership of the dance. At the same time, such inclusion also set up an inherent equality between cultures because the Western modality – i.e. modern dance – was never the only way to express.

- *Above all: Ensure equality amongst all participants.* An obvious fault-line in an artistic process like *Fall and Recover* is between the professional dancers and the non-traditionally-trained dancers. Indeed, John made a duet recently with one survivor and one professional dancer; this process did not go well because the professional dancer was unhappy and snobbish about doing ‘non-technical’ movement, which in turn made the survivor feel bad, eventually leading to a flashback. But in *Fall and Recover*, everyone always felt on equal footing, probably for many reasons: for one, Philip attended the workshops from the very beginning, participating in all the activities, so he was inherently a member of the group. Secondly, if professional dancers ever act disdainfully towards the

survivors, John stops working with them. Thirdly, John learned that when he would work solely with one of the groups, the other group would become bored watching. Thus he developed ways of incorporating the relaxing parts of rehearsals into the actual dance. For instance, in *The White Piece*, while the professionals perform a very technical section, the survivors walk around the stage casually. Fourthly, more specific to *Fall and Recover*, within the dance itself everyone is equal – everyone has his/her own solo at some point, which draws on that person's strengths, and each person's contributions to the piece have been included. Moreover, in *Fall and Recover*, the two professional dancers are truly integrated into the rest of the dance – some viewers remarked that they could not even identify the professionals. Furthermore, in the scene where everyone speaks his/her own language at once, a sense that no language is more important than another, no cultural reality more salient, rises above the babel.

Overall, this appendix chapter provided Leadership, Administrative and Philosophical recommendations to future arts-peacebuilding practitioners or policy makers based on lessons learned from *Fall and Recover*.

APPENDIX C:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS: SPREADING SOCIAL MESSAGES THROUGH PERFORMANCES

In Chapter Three, we explored the myriad ways in which watching a dance performance can contribute to peacebuilding goals. But not just any dance presented in any arena will produce those results: if an artist or peacebuilder aims for a performance to affect people's thinking on a social issue, care must be put into the choreography as well as the presentation of the event. This appendix provides a list of recommendations about creation and presentation for practitioners – whether artists, peacebuilders or programmers – garnered from the experience of *Fall and Recover*.

Recommendations for the Creation of a Peacebuilding Dance

We begin with some recommendations for the creative process of making a dance with peacebuilding goals:

- *Having a good piece of art is crucial.* If spectators are not somehow moved or intrigued by the artwork itself, they have no reason to fully engage with the live performance, tell people about it later, or to think of it in any other way than, 'that was a mediocre piece of work.' On the other hand, if the form and content of the piece combine into a compelling work of art, then the performance will not only open spectators to feeling, thinking and discussing afterwards, but the show will also have a larger life, reaching more people and more hearts. For instance, two

masterpieces of twentieth century dance – Kurt Jooss’ “The Green Table” (1933) and Anna Sokolow’s “Dreams” (1961) – both have political and peacebuilding messages: a cogent look at the inhumanity of war while politicians decide citizens’ fates, and an expression of the utter horror of the holocaust, respectively. These pieces have lived on and continue to be performed, spreading their messages, because they are powerful pieces of art that truly communicate to audiences in a visceral way. If these two dances did not connect to people, we would not still see them performed today. This paragraph is another way of saying that the artistic process may be a better guide than social change goals, as discussed in the Conclusion.

- *Make the structure of the dance match, or at least complement, the political message or vision of the future the artist is trying to convey.* One of the reasons *Fall and Recover* ‘succeeds’ in connecting with people is that both the cohesion and the multicultural nature of the group are palpable from the audience. Thus, the vision for the future that the dance creates – a vision of equality, harmony and mutual respect between individuals from numerous different backgrounds – completely matches its political message: encouraging people to welcome immigrants, asylum seekers, and people from other cultures. Thus what we see and what we are ‘told’ reinforce each other and make the message more meaningful.

- *Provide opportunities for invisible people to be seen and heard, using their own voices.* Giving airspace time to alternative narratives not only expands the possibilities of which narratives are accepted by society, but also can make viewers more aware of complexities and the inability to have only one version of history. Moreover, when people tell their own stories, both performers and spectators become more engaged.
- *Abstraction in the choreography can help the individual performers' stories shine through.* *Fall and Recover* audiences appreciated not being preached to and enjoyed being able to relate directly to the performers' own emotions and the personal stories behind these self-expressions. In other words, the abstraction allowed spectators to connect to what they saw, and performers to express their own stories.

Recommendations for the Presentation of a Peacebuilding Dance

A compelling work of art that follows the above guidelines is all great, unless no one comes to see the show, or no one makes connections between what they saw and current social issues. Thus, thinking about the presentation of a performance is also important for a social change goal to be achieved through watching performance. Here are some recommendations for the presentation of a peacebuilding dance:

- *A social message will travel further if it is timely with current events or current waves of thinking; if you want it to have real impact, make sure the timing of the show matches real life events.* The issue of immigrants and asylum seekers was

particularly topical in Ireland when *Fall and Recover* was first performed because of the nation-wide referendum on citizenship in June 2004. Ireland was also beginning to recognize its new role as a destination country for immigrants, and coming to terms with its increasingly heterogeneous society. So at the time of its premier, *Fall and Recover* touched a political nerve and was relevant to contemporaneous debates; it was not simply an artist's diatribe against a personal social pet peeve. At the same time, had John wished to influence spectators' actual votes on the referendum, he should have premiered the dance prior to the referendum.

- *To counteract the reality of small audiences and limited reach, artists can use their contacts to spread awareness of the performance and its mission to others who cannot attend.* John used this technique to its fullest, contacting journalists to write feature articles about the performers, as well as reviews of *Fall and Recover* in newspapers large and small. His marketing also clearly states that survivors of torture will be performing, so even people who only see a poster are faced for at least a split second with the realization that torture survivors exist in Ireland.

- *Find a balanced marketing.* Truth in marketing is important for peacebuilding endeavors so that spectators feel they can trust the presenter from the moment of first contact, even if that contact is a poster or an email. At the same time, however, if the marketing is too 'message heavy,' some prospective audience

members may become uninterested; balance is necessary. Like any marketing endeavor, knowing your target audience and talking directly to their interests using their own vocabulary will probably work best.

■ *Provide a space after the performance for audience members to reflect.*

Reflection is key for spectators to recall later what they experienced at the performance, as well as simply to name the experience as a way to understand it better. Post-performance discussions like John's often allow for some group reflection. However, peacebuilders can choose from a range of options, such as having small group discussions afterwards, or providing pencil and paper for people to write something individually. The choice of reflection format will be best chosen with the specific message, audience and setting in mind.

■ *Design a format for performance and reflection session that allows the performers to feel safe.* In *Fall and Recover*, many of torture survivors danced their stories precisely because they did not want to talk. Thus, John never required them to contribute to the post-show discussions; they could join in discussion however much or however little they wished to. This respect for silence was extremely important for the performers to feel safe.

The above recommendations for creation and presentation are not an exhaustive list, and different case studies beyond *Fall and Recover* may suggest different strategies altogether. However, for peacebuilders aiming to use dance performances to help affect

spectators thinking on social issues, I believe this list offers a good starting place for planning and evaluating prospective peacebuilding performances.

Perhaps the most important goal for planners has not yet been listed: always seek to minimize harm. Even the best intentions can backfire or have unintended negative consequences. Thus, minimizing harm should always be a central goal in planning, as well as the development of methods to identify harm that may arise unexpectedly during the process. With these tools in hand, I hope many others will be inspired by the example of *Fall and Recover* to create, present, perform and watch dances to further peacebuilding goals.

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