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An ethnochoreological investigation of oral traditions of contemporary dance transmission in higher dance education in Greece

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UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
THE IRISH WORLD ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DANCE

An Ethnochoreological Investigation of Oral Traditions of Contemporary Dance Transmission in Higher Dance Education in Greece

Marianna Panourgia

Doctorate of Philosophy

Supervisors
Dr. Jennifer Roche and Dr. Orfhlaith Ní Bhriain

Submitted 2025

Abstract

This research marks the first large-scale ethnochoreological investigation into contemporary dance transmission processes in the Greek region, essentially laying the groundwork for further research into understanding, preserving and academically grounding dance in this context.

Moreover, this study portrays institutionalized contemporary dance in the 21st century, reflecting on its complex interaction with history, political influence, and the evolving pedagogical ethos of contemporary dance in higher education in Greece. The research is anchored in time and place through ethnographic documentation of the massive art protests occurring after issuance of Presidential Decree 85/2022, downgrading both the financial and the academic status within the dance sector.

Furthermore, this investigation draws parallels between dance scholars such as H. Thomas (2003), A. Lepecki (2010), S. Fraleigh (2013), D. Gilbert (2014), Y. Hardt (2020), T. De Laet (2020) and E. Charalambous (2022), anthropologists, namely D. Howes (1991a), T. Ingold (2000) and S. Pink (2009), ethnochoreologist such as G. Kurath (1960), A. Kaeppler (1978), T. Buckland (1999), pedagogue H. Giroux (2020), educational theorist J. Dewey ([1916]2008) and scholar W.J. Ong (1982), among others, while exploring three intertwined concepts, those of oral tradition, embodied knowledge and contemporary dance transmission. It also introduces the concept of ‘moveprints’ (what the body receives after transmitted movement) and ‘somatoralities’

(the multifaceted, multilayered and embodied oral practice of contemporary dance transmission).

Additionally, it illuminates key dimensions of the cyclical, embodied and oral pedagogy shaping contemporary dance transmission within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. Dance ethnographies, ethnographic interviews with course directors, contemporary dance educators, dance students and autoethnographic material all create a clear outline *vis-à-vis* higher dance education in Greece. More specifically, autoethnography was used in a multi-dimensional way, associated both with this academic inquiry and my very own artistic evolution. Transitioning between roles, from dancer to dance educator and researcher, my autoethnographic writings formed an internal space, becoming the backbone of this four-year investigation.

This study proposes that the body is not just a repository of movement and memory but on the contrary, a living archive capable of storing, generating and re-activating knowledge, while interacting with other bodies in space, and time. Ultimately, this investigation aims to vocalize (our) dancing experiences as valuable forms of embodied knowledge that can serve as a threshold for future generations.

Declaration

I, Marianna Panourgia, declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person, except where due acknowledgement has been made. I understand that ethical implications of my research meet the requirements of the Faculty of Arts Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee, from whom I received ethical clearance before undertaking any research.

Singed 15/09/2025



Acknowledgement

I am deeply grateful to the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick and to my supervisors, Dr. Jennifer Roche and Dr. Orfhlaith Ní Bhriain, for their guidance, support and creative impetus, without which this dissertation could not have been completed. I am especially thankful for the opportunity they gave me to pursue my dreams, equipping me with the skills to experience and appreciate dance from a fresh perspective.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who participated in this research and supported me directly or indirectly. In particular, I am thankful to the students of the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools who stood by me when I was ultimately exhausted, filling me with joy, laughter and a sense of purpose. I extend my appreciation to the contemporary dance educators whose contribution helped me recognise the value, the depth and the complexity of teaching practices, and to the course directors who welcomed me into their schools and believed in the importance of this study.

I also want to thank my family and friends, who stood by my side throughout this journey, even at times when it was difficult to reach me. Finally, I want to express my love to IDOCDE community and my students at the Art School of Keratsini (2018-2025) who inspired me with their somatoralities, transforming my teaching practice and personal pathway forever. Special thanks to A. Rokakis for his time in proofreading during the final stages of my dissertation.

Dedication:

To my beloved students at the Art School of Keratsini
whose presence inspired this journey…

Αφιέρωση:

Στα λατρεμένα παιδιά του Καλλιτεχνικού Σχολείου Κερατσινίου
που με ταξίδεψαν ως εδώ…

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Glossary

I. **Somatorality(ies):** This term refers to the multifaceted and multi-layered, embodied oral practice of contemporary dance transmission, within higher dance education in Greece. It encompasses soma (the body) and orality, the spoken, auditory, non-written forms through which contemporary dance knowledge is shared in everyday practice. As a concept, it signifies a non-text-based teaching and learning system forming a dynamic, living foundation of knowledge.

II. **The ethos of dance movement:** This term refers to core values, principles and priorities that people in the field (students, educators and directors) aim to transmit to the next generation of contemporary dance teachers in Greece. It embodies the cultural, pedagogical and artistic legacy considered essential for this practice.

III. **Moveprint:** This is a merged term combining movement and imprint. Moveprint refers to the embodied trace left behind by transmitting movement. It does not refer to movement itself (e.g. raising an arm), but rather to the relation and corporeal imprint formed and shaped through the act of transmitting the orality of the body. This also extends to how I myself was affected as an outsider/researcher. Moveprint captures the ephemeral and intangible nature of dance as it leaves embodied traces in participants.

IV. **Sensescape(s):** This term refers to the felt, embodied experience shaped by both external and internal stimuli, as well as interpersonal relationships and dynamics. It focuses on what was sensed, felt and thought, when participating in or observing the contemporary dance transmission process within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

...Μόλις έχω σχολάσει από το Καλλιτεχνικό σχολείο. Δίδασκα πέντε ώρες, από τις 08:15. Περπατώ ως το μετρό, βρέχομαι. Δεν έχω ομπρέλα. Η τσάντα μου είναι βαριά, 'κόβει' τους ώμους μου πάνω από το μπουφάν. Ανησυχώ μήπως βραχούν τα τετράδια με τις σημειώσεις. Αν χαθεί κάτι τώρα, θα χαθεί για πάντα. Σημείωση: Πρέπει να μεταφέρω όλα τα αρχεία στον υπολογιστή το Σαββατοκύριακο… Αλλάζω γραμμές από κόκκινη, μπλε και μετά πράσινη. Κάνει κρύο. Είμαι κουρασμένη. Προσπαθώ να θυμηθώ αν έχω την μπαταρία της κάμερας μαζί. Ντρέπομαι να τη φορτίσω στην Σχολή. Πήρα τους μαρκαδόρους σήμερα. Το μολύβι; Την προηγούμενη εβδομάδα ζωγράφισα ένα ενδιαφέρον σκίτσο από το μάθημα… Ψάχνω το πλάνο της έρευνας για σήμερα στις σημειώσεις του κινητού. Ο συρμός του ηλεκτρικού διαπερνά τις σκέψεις και τη μουσική στα ακουστικά μου. Βιντεοσκοπώ μια μικρή διαδρομή από τα Κάτω Πατήσια έως τον Άγ. Ελευθέριο. 2' βίντεο. Είναι κουνημένο, έχει φωνές, σκουντήματα, ουρλιαχτά των βρεγμένων φρένων. Μυρίζει κλεισούρα. Δεν θα το χρησιμοποιήσω. Το διαγράφω. Κάνω χώρο για το μάθημα... Σήμερα θα δω το β΄ και το γ΄ έτος. Πονάει ο δεξής ώμος μου. Κατεβαίνω από τον συρμό. Φτάνω στη Σχολή. Ανεβαίνω βαρυγγωμώντας τα σκαλοπάτια. Βγάζω τα παπούτσια μου. Ανοίγω τη βαριά πόρτα, έβαλα όλη μου τη δύναμη. Όλα είναι ήρεμα, οικεία. Ακούγεται μουσική πίσω από τις κλειστές πόρτες. Μυρίζει ζεστός καφές και χορός. Τα κορίτσια μόλις που βγαίνουν από το προηγούμενο μάθημα, με χαιρετούν εγκάρδια. Με ρωτούν πως πάει η έρευνα, αν χρειάζομαι βοήθεια. Δεν ξέρω τι να απαντήσω. Χαμογελώ. "Θα τα καταφέρουμε" τους λέω, "6μήνες έμειναν μόνο"! Σκάμε στα γέλια. Μπαίνω στην μεγάλη αίθουσα, αριστερά μου. Κάθομαι στη 'γωνία μου', απλώνω τα 'υπάρχοντά' μου, κάμερα, κινητό, υπολογιστή, τετράδια, μαρκαδόροι. Τυλίγομαι με ένα μάλλινο σάλι, είμαι ακριβώς κάτω από το παράθυρο. Τα παιδιά ξεκινούν το ζέσταμα…

(Προσωπικές σημειώσεις έρευνας, Τετάρτη 22/01/24, 14:15)

Note on Translation

All translations in this document from Greek to English, and vice versa, have been carried out by the author. All interviews forming part of the ethnographic process of this investigation were conducted in Greek. Selected excerpts from these interviews were also translated by the author. Due to language nuances, certain terms could not be translated directly into English. In these cases, the translation is accompanied by a footnote including further explanation. All translations were done with respect to each interviewee's unique way of language expression. Prior discussions with interviewees were conducted in order to form the final text regarding clarification, translation queries and additional comments.

1.1 Scope and Purpose of this Research.

This thesis examines the role of oral traditions in the transmission of contemporary dance within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in the urban setting of Athens, Greece from 2021 to 2025. In this study, an ethnochoreological perspective, following Gertrude Kurath (1960) and later scholars such as Adrienne Kaeppler (1978) and Theresa Buckland (1999), views dance as a cultural and social practice enabling analysis of contemporary dance transmission in Greece – not just as technical training but as a deeply embodied, orally transmitted and culturally embedded form of knowledge shaped by socio-political and institutional contexts. (Buckland 1999, Foley 2016). The study investigates teaching and learning methods of contemporary dance education as embodied, oral traditions within these institutions.

In section 1.1, I introduce the scope and purpose of my research within the context of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. In section 1.2, I map the landscape of Higher Dance education in Greece. In section 1.3, I position myself as a researcher and explain my role in the field site. In section 1.4, I outline the research methods employed in forming an embodied archive. In the final section 1.5, I provide an overview of the following chapters.

My research is based on the hypothesis that movement and bodies carry cultural references, behaviours and mannerisms, and dancing bodies are embedded with their past and their corporeal history (Mauss 1935, 1941, Bourdieu 1990a, Casey 1987, Thomas 2004). Simultaneously, they are in a constant social interaction (Cohen 1985) since they are part of a community. This central principle of ethnochoreology views

dance as an embodied social practice that negotiates identity, power and tradition (Giurchescu & Torp 1991, Kaeppler 2001). What is particularly interesting, and here I extend Dewey's ([1916]2008) argument about society, which can be applied in this particular community, is that teaching and learning processes "not only continue to exist by transmission, by communication, but also exist in transmission, in communication" Dewey ([1916]2008, p.5). Therefore, we could talk about creating cultures of teaching and learning (Dragon 2008, 2015) through the lens of what is valued in the urban, institutionalized framework of higher dance education in Greece in the 21st century.

My research questions are formulated as follows: What are the key methods of transmission of contemporary dance within higher dance education in Greece throughout the 21st century? How do the individual somatoralities[1] (educators and dance students), the orality of the dancing body (soma), in the field of contemporary dance education transmit and receive kinetic/corporeal knowledge? Can these everyday oral rituals and traditions that belong to the ephemeral form of contemporary dance be captured and archived through ethnographic processes?

The importance of the research rests on the fact that no prior extended ethnochoreological exploration has been conducted on the theme of transmission processes as oral tradition in the contemporary dance field, in Greece. Moreover, exploring historical circumstances of art protests in Greece[2] provided a multi-layered research background. The study aims to create a solid ethnographic archive of the investigated themes and literature for further research.

[1] Detailed explanation of the term in Glossary p.xii and Section 2.3.
[2] See detailed references in Chapter 1.3.

1.2. Mapping Higher Dance Education in Greece. Researching Ethos and Moveprint. Formation of a Contemporary Urban Tradition.

1.2.1 Contemporary Dance Education in Greece.

Contemporary dance in Greece is an artistic activity which often begins at the early age of six. Private dance schools and dance studios provide classes for children until the age of seventeen. Students wishing to continue in the professional realm have two options. The first one is gaining admission to public institutes of vocational training for further education for adults (recently updated under Law 5082/2024)[3]. These institutes provide students with two years of training and one year of professional practice - not geared towards obtaining a teaching degree. Students are accepted without dance entrance exams or summer preparation classes. There is no age limit, and students from different backgrounds may apply. Institutes of vocational training fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (Zervou 2015).

The second option is following higher professional dance training, governed by Law 1185/1981[4] and Presidential Decree 372/1983. Students (females and males) aged 18 and over may apply[5]. In order to gain admission to a Higher Professional Dance School[6], whether 17 private or 2 public, students must pass the entrance exams

[3] https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/939767/nomos-5082-2024[accessed on 20/05/2025]

[4] https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-ergasia-koinonike-asphalise/n-1185-1981.html [accessed on 20/05/2025] «Περί Οργανώσεως και Διοικήσεως Σχολών Ανωτέρας Καλλιτεχνικής Εκπαιδεύσεως κλπ» (ΦΕΚ 127/Α/81).

[5] Π.Δ. 372/83 «Κανονισμός οργάνωσης και λειτουργίας Ανωτέρων Σχολών Χορού» (ΦΕΚ 131/Α/83).

[6] There is one public (State School of Dance), and eleven Higher Private Dance Schools located in Athens, while the rest (seven) are situated in cities such as Thessaloniki (3), Larissa (1), Patra (1), Ioannina (1), and Komotini (1). Thessaloniki, Ioannina and Komotini are in Northern

administered by the Ministry of Culture. According to Ministry guidelines[7], exams consist of three practical courses: contemporary dance, ballet, and improvisation. Students who wish to obtain a teaching diploma are also required to pass a written exam - an essay based on topics relevant to dance and society. It is customary for students to attend summer preparation classes from June to September in order to achieve the highest possible technical level.

The curriculum is standardized across all Higher Private and Public Professional Dance Schools. However, there are notable variations concerning the pedagogical approaches among Higher Professional Private Dance Schools, individual educators, and techniques, particularly in the field of contemporary dance. These variations were documented in ethnochoreological research conducted between 2015 and 2017 (Panourgia 2017). To obtain the Diploma in dance teaching, students must successfully complete all the courses over the three years of study and pass the final internal exams of each private/public Higher Professional Dance School. Only then, they are eligible to participate in the diploma examination conducted by the Ministry of Culture.

Even after obtaining their professional diploma, graduates face significant limitations in academic progression. Graduates cannot pursue a master's degree in an interdisciplinary field, (e.g. performance studies) at a Greek university, unless they hold an additional degree from another university. If students do not hold a second degree, they can only continue their studies abroad. The same limitation applies to PhD studies.

Greece, where Larissa is in Thessaly, and Patra is in Southern Greece, in the Peloponnese region. Information accessed: 14/09/2024 by the website of Ministry of Culture in Greece https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/service/SitePages/view.aspx?iID=2601
See map in the appendix No.1, Figure 12.

[7] See Π.Δ. 372/83 «Κανονισμός οργάνωσης και λειτουργίας Ανωτέρων Σχολών Χορού» (ΦΕΚ 131/Α/83) translated in English in Panourgia 2017.

Therefore, the only possibility to pursue an academic pathway is through a foreign university endorsing dance as an academic discipline. This paradox persists despite the fact that dance graduates are well-qualified as conservatoire-trained dancers both in contemporary and classical dance.

1.2.2. Contemporary Dance Influences in Greece Until 1937.

As dance scholar Natalie Zervou (2015) observes,

> Contemporary dance scholarship has still not developed into a recognized academic discipline in Greece, whereas traditional dance has been an object of ethnographic study and a recognized discipline since the early 1900s (known as laografia)[8]
>
> (Zervou 2015, p. 43)

This research contributes to the on-going discourse around the development of a holistic archive of contemporary dance education in Greece, incorporating historical archives, current contemporary dance practices and ethnographic documentations.

According to Zervou (2015), there has been a parallel connection between Greek folk dance and what is now considered to be contemporary dance in Greece, highlighting physical culture events and dance festivals such as *Anthestiria*[9], in the 19th century.

[8] Laografia is the Greek terms for folkloric studies.
[9] 1911 Revival of ancient Greek celebration dedicated to the ancient God Dionysus. The celebration was related to the beginning of spring by Parren and the Lyceum of Greek Women.

Additionally, organisations such as the Union of Greek Women, the Lyceum of Greek Women[10], the Delphic Games revival and the revival of *Orchistiki*, the ancient Greek word for 'the art of dance', played key roles in shaping the early modern Greek dance identity.

Modern dance first emerged in early 20th century America and Europe. It was shaped by social evolutions, industrialization and technological advancements such as electricity (Foster, 1986, Barbousi 2004). Dance was influenced by artistic movements such as Art Nouveau[11], Bauhaus[12] and Surrealism[13]. Pioneers in America like Ruth St. Denis[14], Isadora Duncan[15] and Loie Fuller[16] were also influenced by the wave of Orientalism and Exoticisms. In Europe, the teaching approaches of Francois Delsarte[17]

[10] See more in Fournaraki, E. (2010a) 'Bodies that Differ: Mid- and Upper-Class Women and the Quest for 'Greekness' in Female Bodily Culture (1896-1940)', The International Journal of the History of Sport, 27(12), 2053-2089. DOI: 10.1080/09523367.2010.497330.
Φουρναράκη, Ε. (2010) «Γυναικεία σωματική κουλτούρα και επινόηση εθνικών παραδόσεων: συμβολές της Ενώσεως των Ελληνίδων και του Λυκείου των Ελληνίδων (1897–1940)», στο Αβδελά, Ε. (επιμ.) *Το Λύκειον των Ελληνίδων: 100 χρόνια*, Αθήνα: Πολιτιστικό Ίδρυμα Ομίλου Πειραιώς, σσ. 365–403.
Fournaraki, E. (2010b) 'Women's Physical Culture and the Invention of National Traditions: The Contribution of Greek Women's Union and the Lyceum of Greek' in *Women Lyceum of Greek Women 100 years*, ed., Avdela, E., Athens: Politistiko Idryma Omilou Peiraios, 365-385.
[11] Art Nouveau was the movement answer to Modernism and the Industrial Revolution (1760-1820). Art Nouveau was closely related to French Symbolism.
[12] Bauhaus was an artistic movement embracing the cohesion of practical arts and architecture (The Bauhaus Manifesto 1919, p.1)
http://mariabuszek.com/mariabuszek/kcai/ConstrBau/Readings/GropBau19.pdf [accessed 24 May 2017].
[13] Surrealism was an artistic and literary movement which appeared in the early 1920s, its major characteristics being a tendency towards imagination, the realm of dreams and the unconscious mind (http://www.arthistoryarchive.com), accessed 24 May 2017
[14] Ruth St. Denis (1877-1968) was an American dancer, influenced by "Oriental" dance. (Barbousi 2004)
[15] Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) was an American dancer. Her work was influenced by the tendency to return to nature and natural ways of living, and the Ancient Greek spirit. See also Thomas 1995.
[16] Loie Fuller (1862-1928) was an American dancer. She is known as being the first dancer to use props and lights in performances (Barbousi 2004). See also Thomas 1995.
[17] Francois Delsarte (1811-1871) was an opera singer who developed a system based on the study of movement, gesture and mime. (Barbousi 2004).

and Emile- Jacque Dalcroze[18] offered a new perspective on dance through music and expression. Rudolf Von Laban[19] in Germany, and his teaching regarding movement also played an important role in the shaping of expressionist dance, and later modern dance, in Europe. The wave of expressionist dance, "Ausdruckstanz" [20] (Barbousi 2014, p.21) flourished all through the 1920s. Despite the distance between the two worlds (America and Europe) they came together initially during the 1900 'Exposition Universelle de Paris' and after many German dancers migrated to the U.S.

What is commonly called Modern dance in Greece, particularly in the period between the two World Wars 1923-1940, was influenced by both American and European trends, but more so by German expressionism from Central Europe. Important women like Isadora Duncan[21] and Eva Palmer Sikelianou[22], emerging from the melting pot of innovations between America and Europe, acted as bridges between Greek Modern dance and American-European Modern dance. Even though both women were inspired by the Greek culture, they held slightly different views on the revival of ancient Greek dances and culture. Duncan envisioned the establishment of a dance school where she

[18]Émile *Jaques*-Dalcroze (1865 –1950) was a Swiss composer, musician and music educator who developed *Dalcroze Eurhythmics*. (Findlay 1971).
[19]Rudolf Von Laban (1879-1958) is considered to be the first dance theorist. He studied movement, and is also known for developing a system of movement analysis, called "Labanotation".
[20] See also Thomas 1995.
[21] Isadora Duncan was known for her admiration of the Greek culture. Duncan visited Greece for the first time in 1903, returning to Greece several times after her first trip. In 1904, she established a dance school in Berlin's Grunewald, together with her dance group, the "Isadorables."
[22] Eva Palmer was the first wife of Greek Nobel awarded poet Aggelos Sikelianos (Άγγελος Σικελιανός). She met Isadora Duncan in Paris, and visited Greece after Raymond Duncan's suggestion (Raymond Duncan was Isadora Duncan's brother, married to Aggelos Sikelianos' sister). There are a number of videos on the topic of the Delphic Games Revival by Eva Palmer and Aggelos Sikielianos.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3f8iq7EpBE,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKTa_NX6TJ4,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYgrTo8YmDA,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOE43IZ6cok [all accessed 01 Jun 2017]

could teach ancient Greek dances and their aesthetics. She embraced the high ideals of ancient Greece: beauty, philosophy, and humanity – emphasizing naturality and freedom in rejecting ballet, calling her dance "Dance of the future". In contrast, Palmer emphasized reviving the Chorus[23] in ancient Greek tragedy (Χορό της Αρχαίας Τραγωδίας). Palmer, along with her husband Aggelos Sikielianos, also aimed to revive the Delphic Games (Δελφικές Εορτές) during the 1920s.

The Modern dance period in Greece is relatively short but pivotal. According to Barbousi (2014) and the Greek Choreographers Association (2003), this period was dominated by one central figure, dance educator and choreographer Koula Pratsika (1899-1984). Pratsika studied at Dalcroze's, "Schule Hellerau – Luxemburg bei Wien" under Christine Baer-Frissell (1886-1932). Pratsika obtained a diploma in 'Rythmische-Musikalische" - Rhythm and music education (Barbousi 2014). She also obtained a diploma in 'Bewegungs Lehre', Kinesiology, at Biberach an der Riss, Baden-Wurttemburg in Germany (Savrami 2012). As Zervou underlines,

> Pratsika adapted European eurythmics principles by extracting their core Hellenic essence. For instance, she saw a reflection of ancient Greek principles in the harmonious balance between rhythm and body movement advocated by Dalcroze.
>
> (Zervou 2015, p.60)

[23] Choros, or Chorus, was a group of singers, dancers and actors singing in between the two parts of an ancient Greek tragedy.

Zervou argues that, “This approach to an extent recycled the directives of the educational system that relied on European imaginings of Greek history to set its pedagogical foundations” (Zervou 2015, p.60).

Dalcroze’s school founded in 1919, was transferred from Hellerau Germany to Luxemburg in 1925, its directors including Christine Baer-Frissel, Maian Pontain, Valeria Kratina and Rosalia Chladek (Robinson 1990). In 1927, Pratsika performed as a chorus dancer in the 1st revival of the Delphic Games. She was influenced by the figure of Eva Palmer[24] . However, Pratsika envisioned Modern Greek dance as a fusion of ancient ideals and Greek folklore traditions. She did not want to imitate the dancing figures featured on ancient ceramics but rather to develop the Greek dance idiom[25] (Barbousi 2014). Koula Pratsika was not only interested in the technical elements of dance. She drew attention to the spirit, to the soul to the holistic sphere of the dance art (Pratsika 1991). She envisioned dance as “an equal art amongst others” (Barbousi 2014, p.97). Pratsika was also influenced by the German expressionist dance[26] of Rosalia Chladek (1905-1995) and Mary Wigman.

Rosalia Chladek (1905-1995) was Head of Modern Dance Education at the German Masters of Dance in Berlin (1940-41). Subsequently and until 1952, she was Head of the training centre for stage and subject at the Conservatory of the City of Vienna. She was on the Board of the Department of Artistic Dance at the Academy for Music and

[24] They met during the Delphic Games Revival.
[25] As Barbousi comments Mamakis article of 1950: “Pratsika was interested in the spirit of ancient Greek dance and the deeper meaning of the classical art” (Barbousi 2014, p.91).
[26] Known also as Ausdruckstanz (Partsch-Bergsohn and Bergsohn 2003).

Performing Arts in Vienna Until 1970 and was Head of the university course "Modern Dance Education and Dance Pedagogy – Rosalia Chladek® System" up until 1977.

The Chladek® System[27] is a dance and movement system based on the understanding of the anatomical conditions of the body and the physical laws acting on it. The dance technique is based on 3 basic principles of movement leading to a clear, comprehensive, timeless and style-free dance technique. The Chladek® technique emphasises pedagogy and holistic individual development. Chladek believed that dance education should not focus on one-sided skill training but should promote a holistic development of the individual through dance. In an interview, she answered the question about the basic principles of her teaching method saying, "It is not about teaching a particular movement style. In doing so I cannot come to myself; I would merely be someone who has learned to move in a certain way" (Chladek in Radrizzani 2003, p.133).

Mary Wigman (1886-1973) was a dance pioneer who studied at Dalcroze School at the age of twenty-three. She was known for rejecting predetermined steps, embracing improvisation, and expressive gesture. During 1913-1919 she collaborated with R. von Laban. She is also known for her choreographic repertoire.

Although Chladek was almost unknown in the world of Greek dance education, Mary Wigman was a more recognizable figure, particularly in official archives. This is obvious in the Greek Presidential Decree of 1983 (Government Gazette 131/A/23/09/83), according to which Wigman's technique was recognised as the second main technique of contemporary dance that would be taught, and would be part

[27] https://www.tanz-chladek.com/tanzsystem-2/

of the curriculum in Higher Professional Private Dance Schools throughout the Greek territory. However, the decree text provides a rather vague and inexplicit description of Wigman's class. Unfortunately, there is no bibliography attached to this text, or name(s) of the author(s) commissioned by the Ministry of Culture. According to Panourgia (2017), Wigman's technique is rarely or never practiced in higher dance education.

1.2.3 Contemporary dance influences in Greece from 1937 until 1981.

The year 1937 marked a major milestone in Greek contemporary dance education as the first Higher Professional Dance School was founded in Athens by Koula Pratsika. Despite her dancing and choreographic work, Pratsika was known mostly for her contribution in shaping modern and contemporary dance education in Greece. Her pedagogical approach and the foundation of her school defined the trajectory of modern and contemporary dance in the country (Barbousi 2014).

One of Pratsika's prominent students was Rallou Manou (1915-1988)[28], a dance educator and choreographer who later became a key figure in Greek contemporary dance. After obtaining a diploma in dance at Güntherschule – Carl Orff Stiftung, in Germany, Manou returned to Greece and taught at Pratsika's Professional Dance School. During 1947 – 1948, Manou pursued a Master's degree at New York University, studying under Hanya Holm (1893-1992) and Doris Humphrey (1895-1958), where she also encountered Martha Graham who influenced Manou's teaching and choreographic view. Rallou Manou integrated Greek folk traditions and "topics of the post-

[28] https://www.ert.gr/ert-arxeio/ralloy-manoy-15-oktovrioy-1988/

independence history" (Zervou 2015, p.79) along with Post-War music called Rebetika[29] creating a very distinct hybrid of ballet and Graham techniques, where "technique was just the means" as Manou stated in 1987.

In 1951, Rallou Manou founded her dance company 'Greek Choreodrama' the first non-state professional dance company which became a symbol of Greek contemporary dance. The same year, Manou founded the second professional private dance school in Greece. From 1937, Pratsika and Manou's dance teaching ideas, ideals, methods and training became central to dance education in Greece.

After 1951, more Professional Private Dance Schools were established, specifically in Athens (the capital) and Thessaloniki (the second major city in Greece). By 1981, there were approximately seven[30] such Schools formed. Collectively, these institutions co-cultivate the ethos of contemporary dance pedagogy and its transmission.

According to relevant historical records, personal testimonials of Pratsika's students and dance archives, contemporary dance in Greece up until 1981 was influenced by ancient Greek philosophy and mythology, Greek traditions and folklores, Eurhythmics and German expressionism. Over these 84 years, contemporary dance in Greece was shaped and transformed by both local and international influences.

[29] Rebetika songs are part of the Greek folkloric music, listed under the category of underground urban popular songs (Dalianoudi 2016). Hatzidakis, influenced by this genre, created music for Manou's choreographies.
[30] Further archival research is needed for clarification of the exact number.

1.2.4 Contemporary Dance after the 1981 Curriculum to Present Day.

In 1981, a legal framework (law 1185/1981) officially defined professional private dance schools as institutions of tertiary education. As a result, these Schools were classified as "Higher Professional Private Dance Schools". The 25 articles in this law defined the structure and the administration of these institutes.

Two years later, in 1983, Presidential Decree 372/83 further regulated the organisation and the operation of the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools. Among others, it established the official curriculum for higher dance education. Interestingly, the curriculum of contemporary dance was informed by Martha Graham and Mary Wigman. In particular, Wigman's technique was described in detail within five pages. However, it is crucial to emphasize here that up to the present day (2025) this curriculum has never been revised (Panourgia 2017). In contrast, other educational levels of dance education have indeed updated their curriculum: the one concerning Secondary education was revised in 2016, (Gazette B 166/26-01-2016), where the Vocational Training curriculum was updated in 2024 (Gazette B 4920/28-08-2024)[31].

However, the Ministry of Culture has made no effort to update the Higher Dance Education Curriculum - it is commonly acknowledged that this curriculum is not actively implemented in the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece (Panourgia 2017).

[31] https://gsvetlly.minedu.gov.gr/sxoles-anoteris-epaggelmatikis-katartisis-s-a-e-k/odigoi-katartisis-spoudon
https://gsvetlly.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2023/Οδηγός_Κατάρτισης_Εφαρμοσμένες_τέχνες_χορού.pdf
In this Curriculum I participated as a writer.

1.2.5 Announcement of Public University of Performing Arts.

Following the nationwide art protests and strikes of 2022 (see Chapter 1.2), the Prime Minister of Greece announced the establishment of a Public University of Performing Arts by 2025. This institute would provide university-level specialisation and studies in the fields of dance, and possibly music. In particular, the Prime Minister emphasized, "We are immediately designing the road map by which our country will acquire public, university-level studies in the performing arts by 2025"[32].

In addition, the Prime Minister announced the creation of two multi-ministry teams (one for theatre, one for dance) consisting of General Secretaries from the Ministries of Education and Culture, representatives from institutions such as the National Authority for Higher Education, directors of state schools and renowned artists from all three branches of the performing arts. These teams were tasked to engage in "extensive and regular consultation with the representative sectoral and student unions" (Prime Minister announcement)[33], having the responsibility to support the University of Performing Arts.

While actors and musicians[34] are currently able to pursue postgraduate degrees at Greek Universities in Theatre Studies (University of Athens, Department of Fine Arts –

[32] https://www.facebook.com/kyriakosmitsotakis/posts/755602889256158
[33] https://www.facebook.com/kyriakosmitsotakis/posts/755602889256158
[34] Musical education in Greece, as conservatory education in our country is still governed by a Royal Decree of 1957. (https://psaomous.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/cea6ce95ce9a-1957.pdf). However, in 1985, according to (https://www.nomoskopio.gr/n_3475_06_20.php?toc=0&printWindow&) there was a variation

Aristoteleio University of Thessaloniki and others) or in the Department of Music Studies at the University of Athens, dance graduates were excluded unless they held an additional university degree, in this way forcing them to seek postgraduate studies abroad.

Despite the academic limitations and a lack of research in the dance field, dance has indeed flourished since the 1980's comprising numerous dance companies (dance theatre, contemporary dance and ballet), and investigation/documentation conducted (Tzartzani 2007, Tsintziloni 2012). These companies follow different contemporary-dance approaches and techniques, influencing pedagogical practices within higher dance education.

Decades later, during the period 2010-2020, we observe a significant expansion of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools occurred, reaching a total of 20 institutions. According to the National Hellenic Statistic Authority, approximately 280 students per year were studying at these institutions, 150 of whom were certified as dance teachers after passing the diploma exams administered by the Greek Ministry of Culture[35]. Although this study does not explore this specific time period, existing research highlights the impact these institutions had on dance education. (Loutzaki and Tsoutsoura 1992, Alkalai 2002, Mourelou 2014, Papadopoulou 2023).

in musical education: musicians having classical and academic training, and vocational trainees/traditional instrument players were both placed at a higher rank than dancers. According to laws issued later, musicians could be employed in secondary education as permanent, full-time teachers.

[35] https://www.culture.gov.gr/DocLib/g_57126.pdf (results of entrance exams 2004-2015)

Summarising, by tracing the course of contemporary dance educators in Greece, it becomes evident that there is a connection with Central European modern dance pioneers (see also Chapter 2). In particular, there was a significant influence from Hellerau School during the early decades of contemporary dance development in Greece.

Although this influence was evident during the 1950s, distinct Greek variations emerged regarding themes and dramaturgical structures, especially in contemporary dance performances. In more recent decades, during the 1990s, other diverse contemporary dance techniques were embedded. The contemporary dance curriculum itself reflected influences from both German expressionism and American modern dance practices.

The next sections aim to address and fill the gap as regards the literature of contemporary dance in Greece. Simultaneously, through archival research, historical analysis and investigation of pedagogical methodologies, it aids in producing an archive of the contemporary dance ethos and collective cultural memory. Likewise, it emphasizes the role of oral and embodied pedagogy while providing the foundation for further academic research in the field of Greek contemporary dance education.

1.3. Situating the Ethnographer in the Field.

1.3.1. Historical Context: Art strike in Athens Greece 2022.

In 2022, for the first time in the country's history, a series of massive protests and occupations of public buildings by students in the arts sector occurred, lasting more than four months. The protests were in opposition to the Presidential Decree 85/2022, downgrading art studies from higher education to post-secondary education[36] . The impact of this event was immediate and severe: salaries were reduced overnight, and academic rights were demolished.

The most important impacts were, on the one hand, the shift on how dance artists perceived their art, and on the other hand, the society's reaction towards protests. Street protests and occupations were peaceful, while there were street performances, concerts and participation of families, young children and secondary-school students of art and music schools - a rare sight in Greek demonstrations[37]. The documentation of this event is important for this study concerning higher (contemporary) dance education and the oral traditions in Greece. In addition to literature and fieldnotes, I include formal information (from public web archives) and informal insights (gathered from my active participation as a member of the Union of Dance and Dance/Cinema/Film educators in Secondary education)[38].

[36] From Level 6 of Bologna to Level 5 and/or 4.

[37] Most of the documentation comes from wed and social media since the reportages were minimum. Also, it is important to pinpoint that most of the protests were not screened on the news. Photographs from Marios Lolos (independent Photograph reporter). Photographs in the appendix No.4, Figure 15.

[38] The "Union of Dance and Cinema educators in Secondary education" (Ένωση Καθηγητών Χορού και Κινηματογράφου) was formed in 2020 in order to claim educational branch from the ministry of education for the educators of dance and cinema who work in secondary public

1.3.2 Researcher's Positioning in the Field.

As a contemporary dancer since 2009, I found myself playing multiple roles in the Greek dance field and dance sector. As a dance educator, I am committed to creating fertile ground for my students to grow, encouraging their opinion, thoughts, feelings and inspirations through the Limón-Based Release Technique[39]. Concurrently, I aim to demonstrate that contemporary dance is a significant, multifaceted and multimodal discipline that can be inclusive and interdisciplinary through the ethnochoreological prism.

Since 2016, I have been working as a researcher conducting ethnochoreological investigations into the curriculum of contemporary dance education in Greece. I approach the field as an insider focusing on how curricula are implemented and how they shape higher education. I am interested to distinguish how curricula influence the dance scene and the identity of contemporary dance idiom in Greece, and examine all matters around curricula updates. Both roles, academic and pedagogical, informed my identity as a worker that is part of the Greek working class. Changes in the employment

education. The educational branch would chance the employment status of the educators that until 2023 are employed by the state as unqualified workers even though they have master and PhD degrees in dance and cinema education.

[39] José Limón (1908 - 1972) developed his technique based on the dynamic of falling and recovering, the interplay of weight, the use of breathing in movement. Limón's approach was influenced by his mentors Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. (Lewis 1999). Release Technique today forms an umbrella term including multiple movement approaches. During the 1970s, two defined branches emerged: Skinner Releasing technique (SRT) created by Joan Skinner, and Anatomical Release Techinique developed by Mary Fulkerson (Lepkoff 1999). The Limón-Based Release Technique, as formed in Greece and presented by the participants of this research, is a hybrid pedagogical that blends Limón's core technical elements with release-based principles of somatic awareness (Skinner, J., Davis, B., Davidson, R., Wheeler, K., Metcalf, S., 1979 and Neuhaus 2010).

status introduced by Presidential Decree 85/2022 instigated protests against the government by the majority of art and dance workers.

This overview of the 2022–2023 art protests is based on laws, Presidential Decrees and article reviews, including literature about the history of art protests both in Europe and Greece. Moreover, it is shaped by my personal autoethnographic fieldnotes, taken while I was a second-year Ph.D. researcher studying higher contemporary dance education and its oral traditions.

It is important to note that, I was initially planning to begin fieldwork in the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece at the beginning of the semester (January 2023). However, in December 2022, the field as I knew it no longer existed, due to the nationwide protests. Some of these institutions were under occupation; most of their dance educators were on strike. The majority of Greek dancers, me included, particularly in Athens, were protesting in the streets. This unregulated situation caused insecurity, frustration and confusion not only to the dance community but also across the broader art sector.

As a result, I found myself in a difficult position. The field I was preparing to study was in a state of massive revolt and this could not leave me unaffected. Instead of pausing my work or pressurising my informants, educators and dancers, regarding interviews on contemporary dance education and oral traditions, I decided to document the first massive protest of its kind in Greece. My hope was to provide an archive that future researchers could use to understand the on-going transformation of higher dance

education in Greece. I believe that these protests will provoke changes in the field, although I cannot yet define their full impact from my current position.

1.3.3. Legislation Overview.

On 17th of December 2022, a new Presidential Decree 85/2022 (Gazette No. 232) was announced from the government. This Presidential Decree updated the public sector payroll and employment framework. Specifically, it defined,

> The categories, branches and specialities, the standard qualifications, main, additional or auxiliary, for appointment or recruitment to positions in each branch and specialty of the permanent, or with a private law, employment status of their staff, while equalising existing branches and specialties of the above bodies with new branches and specialties.
>
> (Gazette No. 232)

The previous decree was issued in 2001. In both Presidential Decrees there are four branches, those concerning U.E. (University Education/tertiary), T.E. (Technological Education/tertiary), S.E. (Secondary Education) and C.E. (Compulsory Education). In the Presidential Decree 50/2001, article 16 placed Dance Studies under the T.E. branch[40].

[40] See Presidential Decree 50/2001 Article 16, T.E. Branch Faculty of Graphic Arts and Artistic Studies.

Furthermore, Law 1158/1981 (Gazette No. 127, Issue A', 13/5/1981), defined that "Higher Artistic Education (Theatre/Film/Dance) belongs to the Tertiary Education [level]." However, the Bologna Process led to the elimination of Higher Technological level of Education. Laws 4589/19 (Gazette 13 A 29/01/2019) and 4610/19 abolished this level, absorbing many departments into universities. Often this absorption involved superficial curricula modifications. In some cases, entire departments were closed or merged. As a result, the following paradox emerged: even though graduates, prior to 2019, had received a diploma from Higher Technological Institutions, those graduating after 2019 from the same Institutions, received a university degree instead. A similar inconsistency has affected Higher Artistic Education. Although diplomas from Higher Public and Private Professional Dance Schools are recognised as a bachelor's degree (EQF Level 6) across Europe, according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), in Greece they are treated as non-tertiary education qualifications.

From 2003 to 2025, (across six different governments, three political parties, fifteen Ministers of Education and twelve Ministers of Culture) this paradox still remained unresolved. Despite recurrent efforts by the Dance Union, well-known artists and educators requesting research rights, dance scholars' propositions for curriculum updates and the creation of a Performing Arts department in Greece, Presidential Decree 85/2022 downgraded Higher Artistic Education.

More specifically, Presidential Decree 85/2022 (pp.7610–11) equated diplomas of Higher Artistic Education with those of Vocational Training, or Technological Lyceums, placing them at EQF Levels 3, 4 or 5, rather than Level 6. This downgrade affected both

employment and academic rights. Graduates studying for three years, attending daily eight-hour classes, passing national diploma exams regulated by the Ministry of Culture would now, a) earn salaries equivalent to those allocated for individuals who only graduated from secondary education, with minimal recognition in the public and private sectors, and b) their diplomas do not qualify them (us) for a Master's degree unless they (we) hold a second degree in another discipline.

Although a third of these graduates have postgraduate qualifications (MA, PhD) from institutions abroad, they are not recognised accordingly in Greece regarding proper wage compensation or academic advancement.

1.3.4. Timeline of the Protest Movement[41].

This decree was announced and implemented in an already troubled, in terms of employment, field of dance, and arts in general, in Greece. A few days after the announcement, the artistic world in the country revolted. The text listed below is based on official announcements made by the Art Unions, the press, and the Administration of Occupations.

The presidential decree was announced on 17 December 2022. The first response came from the National Theatre School students. Occupying the school on 22 December, they reacted to the Presidential Decree through which, as The General Assembly of Students of the Drama School of the National Theatre states in their announcement on the web,

[41] See appendix No.2, Figure 13.

"The government decides to strip theatre, dance, music and cinema artists of their skills, invalidating our studies rendering them non-existent and declaring us as unskilled workers"[42]. The students announced there would be two days of artistic activities taking place at the School Theatre, with the purpose of having intentional dialogue with everyone concerned, and involving all Schools and students in a protest rally.

The response was significant. Students, educators from the National Dance School, Higher Professional Dance/Theatre Schools and artists were present. On the same day, the Association of Workers in the dance field made an open call for a protest rally outside the Ministry of the Interior (in the centre of Athens). The call supported the occupation of the National Theatre for the students, with the main slogan being "Fight against the degradation of the art studies". Dozens of other large demonstrations followed. There was a sequence of building occupations. By April 2023, more than ten occupations were prevalent across four major cities. The protests turned into street events, happenings, concerts, performances, acts, instant dance and theatre improvisations.

Beyond the Higher Arts Institutions, faculties of universities were also active in the occupations, including the University of Fine Arts in Athens and the Faculty of Theatre Studies. Protests were not limited to Athens but extended to other cities like Thessaloniki.

[42] https://www.facebook.com/sfdramaschool.ntg/posts/καταληψη-τησ-σχολησ-του-εθνικου-θεατρου-εναντια-σε-καθε-νομο-υποβαθμισησ-των-σπο/594361986033533/

On 27 December, the government accepted representatives of Art Unions[43] from all art sectors, to discuss strategies of decompression and possible solutions. Although the government promised reforms nothing actually changed. The representers claimed dignity for work, education and art proposing the following:

- "Immediate withdrawal of PD 85/2022, at least for artistic specializations
- Classification, according to the scope of work with T.E. (Technological Education) for positions in the public sector and T.E. sector for all graduates of art schools and conservatories (as was the case for diploma holders until 2003)
- Immediate establishment of a Public School of Performing Arts according to ASFA (Athens School of Fine Arts) standards and a department exclusively for the Art of Dance
- Possibility of rendering a U.E. (University Education) to graduates of higher art schools after qualifying, and one year of study at a Performing Arts University (29/12/2022)".

(P.F.S.E. Official Website)[44]

[43] Art Unions participating: the Hellenic Actors Union (ΣΕΗ), the Union of Dance and Cinema educators in Secondary Education (Ένωση Καθηγητών Χορού και Κινηματογράφου), the Association of Greek theatre technicians, the Greek audio-visual-visual cinema technicians Association, the Greek singers Union, the PanHellenic music Association, the Union of lyrical performers of Greece, the PanHellenic shadow theatre association, the National Theatre employees association, the Association of workers in the dance field (Σ.Ε.Χω.Χο), the Association of workers in the show, entertainment and culture, the Association of workers in the spectacle and culture of the Attica region, the Association of musicians of Northern Greece, the Greek National Opera employees' association, the Greek Directors Society (Σ.Ε.Σ), the Filmmakers Union of Northern Greece, the Panhellenic association of primary school dance teachers, the Association of professional musicians of Nafpaktos "Orfeas", the PanHellenic Association of Translators, and representatives of the higher art schools. All these unions and associations are under the umbrella of the PanHellenic Federation of Spectacle and Entertainment (Π.Ο.Θ.Α).

[44] https://potha.gr/2022/12/23/%cf%84%cf%81%ce%af%cf%84%ce%b7-27-12-2022-%cf%8e%cf%81%ce%b1-1100-%cf%80%ce%b1%cf%81%ce%ac%cf%83%cf%84%ce%b1%cf%83%ce%b7-

There were three more meetings with the government at the beginning of 2023. Furthermore, on 18/2/2023, the government made a slight adjustment, announcing the development of a Joint Ministerial Decision[45]. However, this decision could not overrule the Presidential Decree. It could only be addressed in specific situations, not solving the major problem with art education.

From 21 January 2023, demands expanded as listed below added by the students' unions:

- "Providing food, housing, free textbooks, State Scholarships and Student Allowances to the Student Body of Schools, supervised by the Ministry of Education.
- Increased staffing in Public Performing Arts Schools including necessary staff and equipment necessary to carry out our studies.
- Complete renewal of the curriculum [unchanged since 1981]"[46].

On 29 January 2023, actors in major theatres read the Presidential Decree on stage after the end of the performance[47]. They also read an announcement form the Hellenic Actors Union explaining the text of the Presidential Decree, and asking audiences for their support on the side of the artists. This action took place in every theatre and dance venue

%ce%b4%ce%b9%ce%b1%ce%bc%ce%b1%cf%81%cf%84%cf%85%cf%81%ce%af%ce%b1%cf%82/[accessed 13 Apr 2023].

[45] In the hierarchy of legal force, Joint Ministerial Decisions are subordinate to Presidential Decrees and laws as such are extremely vulnerable to appeals before the Council of State.

[46] https://www.902.gr/eidisi/neolaia-paideia/320449/se-katalipsi-i-sholi-enantia-sto-pd-85-kai-gia-anavathmisi-ton?utm[accessed 12 Apr 2023].

[47] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5wLId0PFSU&t=45s [accessed 12 Apr 2023].

repeatedly. A few days later, theatres and dance halls participated in the art strikes, keeping all venues closed. Moreover, art students and other artists engaged in interventions outside well-known art venues, where media and the press were present in order to draw as much attention as possible for the public to be informed.

From 26 January, students and educators of secondary education and public art schools also participated in the mass protests, occupations and strikes[48]. In addition, art educators collectively resigned *en masse*. On 8 February, during another major strike, a protest concluded outside the National Theatre of Greece, where forty-one educators including dancers of the NTG announced their resignations. The atmosphere was heavy. Participants walked in absolute silence; the whole scene resembled mourners in a funeral procession. During the announcement the crowd wept[49].

The art sector and especially the sector of dance was shutting down. The art students were facing not only losing their semester, but many of them (third-year students) even losing their right to finish their studies. At that point, it was obvious that something had severely changed in the field of arts. The art sector was not fighting any more, it was just in mourning. We, as artists, were mourning the loss of our dignity as workers, academics, educators, students and citizens. It is also worth noting that music curricula remained unchanged, although music continued to be part of higher education through universities and conservatories.

[48] See appendix No.3, Figure 14, extended material in the drive https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FVisual%20Documentation%20of%20Protests%202022%2D2023&source=waffle.
[49] See appendix No.4, Figure 15.

A few days later, on 31 January 2023, the government, in an action of good will, announced the formation of a working group including artists (theatre, dance, music) whose responsibility would be to resolve this incongruous situation concerning art studies. However, the artistic community remained sceptical, as a similar working group was formed a year earlier (announced by the Ministry of Culture on 26/05/2022)[50], yet no updates or reforms regarding art curricula have followed.

From 10 February 2023, the protests flourished with performances, screenings of art movies and a documentaries marathon[51], instant compositions, dance improvisation, theatre and music presentations. One of the most interesting events in the five-month protests, from an ethnochoreological point of view, was the anti–courses (term explained in the following section 1.3.5), open art classes where educators, students, amateurs, professionals, artists or non-artists all participated equally and anti-hierarchically.

Moreover, vehicle-based protests with bicycles, motorcycles[52] or cars resonated with the Dutch Provo Art movement in the 1970s. The protests followed a loose structure, constantly adapting to participant input. The organizers were students of the National theatre and dance schools. Protests, acts, courses, events and movements were open, flexible and coordinated via online and social media announcements.

[50] https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=4225 announcement of ministry of culture [accessed 20 Apr 2023]
[51] See appendix No.5, Figure 16.
[52] See appendix No.6, Figure 17.

During this time, art students from other countries were expressing their solidarity with the Greek artists. This included students from Fontys School of Fine Arts and Tilburg Netherlands[53], students from Jacques Lecoq International Theatre School[54], while even foreign media were covering the protests[55]. The occupations ended on 19 March 2023, after 50 days. In their live announcement the students stated, "Nothing ends here. The occupation has successfully served its purpose as part of the movement, and we continue to fight by other means".

They continued,

> Throughout this time, this occupation was one of the many centres of struggle for artists' rights, the first one formed specifically to claim rights in the field of dance. In this occupation, we had the opportunity to meet people from the dance world, very different individuals with different experiences and ideas, but with a common goal: the recognition of the value of dance. This occupation allowed us to redefine ourselves both as individuals and as artists, to get closer to each other, to get to know each other and to coexist. We were engaged in a constant exchange of ideas with other dance students, with students from drama schools, with dance teachers (and beyond), with future colleagues, and even with people outside the artistic sector who simply wanted to support our struggle. It became the basis of a daily coexistence with dancers and dance educators, who generously shared their knowledge and time, helping us keep our bodies active

[53] See appendix No.7, Figure 18.
[54] https://www.facebook.com/Hellenic.Actors/posts/1816617885387787 [accessed 19 Apr 2023]
[55] https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/113693-000-A/grece-la-colere-du-monde-du-spectacle/?fbclid=IwAR01H55MHdwcLgtibE5zpUMnhKL_Bo6n-E8WDJJ8nZqo7C0_VT8569OjNw4 [accessed 19 Apr 2023]

> while fighting to get through this struggle. In this occupation we became creative, we organized artistic activities, hosted events, and opened our space to other occupations, we demanded our rights, we became tired, we were frustrated, but we never gave up[56].

On 28 January 2023, the Prime Minister, along with the foundation of the Public University of Performing Arts, announced "Immediate legislation for fair remuneration of artists throughout the public sector, protection and safeguarding of academic, professional and salary rights of artists"[57]. Until today, in 2025, there has still been no change.

1.3.5. Ethnographic Documentation of Artistic Protests and Embodied Resistance.

This text is based on online programmes, autoethnographic experience, participation in open discussions with art unions and associations, and interviews with students of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. The protest movement embraced creative, non-violent and participatory forms of resistance. Among the most powerful

[56] https://www.facebook.com/SpoudastesKSOT/videos/232854735818797/ [accessed 20 Apr 2023].
[57] https://www.facebook.com/kyriakosmitsotakis/posts/755602889256158 [accessed 20 Apr 2023].

were the silent march[58], a sit-in protest[59], the grotesque funeral re-enactment[60], music concerts[61], street art exhibitions[62] and the occupation of buildings[63].

The following are two short descriptions of the human chain protest (07/02/2023)[64], the silent march (08/02/2023) and a brief description of the anti-courses. On Tuesday 07/02/2023, thousands of people gathered at Syntagma Square (the central Square of the Capital) for a protest of about five hours long. The crowd headed towards the Maximos' Mansion, at a time when the Council of Ministers convened in order to deliver a resolution regarding the demands. The artists' representatives were not admitted. From there on, the march headed to the National Theatre building. There, the 'human chain' protest started, where people stood next to each other with approximately half a meter distance in between, their back up against the wall. The crowd was growing by the minute, an eerie silence. There was a feeling of devastation in the air. After a short time, the protest dispersed peacefully.

H 'Efimerida ton Syntakton'[65] describes the silent march:

> Quiet. No sound was heard. Two children come out of the main window of the building. They raise their fist. What followed deeply moved each of us: one by

[58] See appendix No.8, Figure 19.
[59] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gwpp-OR7JQ [accessed 05 Apr 2023]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxqGJlSO4Ik [accessed 05 Apr 2023].
[60] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l979g82nHoo [accessed 17 Apr 2023].
[61] See photographs in the appendix No.9, Figure 20 and https://www.youtube.com/shorts/_oFT91rGCA8 [accessed 17 Apr 2023].
[62] See appendix No.10, Figure 21.
[63] See appendix No.11, Figure 22. See also students anouncements: https://www.instagram.com/ntgdramaschool/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=6ba611be-dd0a-441b-b9af-49289900ed6 [accessed 14 Apr 2023].
[64] See appendix No.12, Figure 23.
[65] 'The Editors' Newspaper' is a Greek newspaper founded by its editorial team.

> one, hands were raised and fists were clenched in the air. One by one, all who were there. Hands, fists, tears, smiles. Only. No sound. The silence was broken by Hatzidaki's music from Gioconda's Smile. A student from the National Theatre takes the floor. It is Nikiforos: We are not the same as 35 days ago. Now the foundations of a broad student movement are being laid. The right to public and free higher education is not a luxury - it is a necessity... Now we begin. To you who listen to us![66]
>
> (Efimerida ton Syntakton, 08/02/2023)

One of the major forms was the anti–courses. Students wanted to stay active both physically and intellectually in order to keep informed but also to exchange their ideas and organise courses open to everyone. It was all about a concept of democratic knowledge sharing. Every dance artist, body practitioner and student were given the space of the National School of Dance to give classes.

A series of anti-classes were indeed given during the months of the protest. And interestingly, these anti-classes went on for a short period of time even after protests ended. Unfortunately, due to time limitations, exhaustion and the strong emotional stress I was experiencing at the time, it was impossible to document this form of protest. However, I believe that the anti-classes were an important example of artistic protest in Greece in the 21st century. I consider my own response and the absence of their

[66] "To you who listen to us" (2003) is the title of one of the most important works of Loula Anagnostaki. She was a Greek playwright and one of the greatest female figures of Greek letters. She wrote 12 plays through which she gives rise to the most important themes of the post-war period in Greece, such as trauma, loneliness, guilt and defeat.

documentation as a productive silence, a deafening embodied experience not ready to be vocalised, not yet.

1.3.6. The Role of Art Unions.

Art unions played a key role in discussions and negotiations with the governmental body. The unions were divided in three parties, those representing students, those representing Higher Professional Art Schools, and those representing a number of several art sectors. Students elected their representatives during assemblies held at occupied Schools. Higher Professional Art Schools were represented by actor Michalis Kalabokis. The several artistic unions and associations were under the umbrella of the PanHellenic Federation of Spectacle and Entertainment, and most were present at the meeting with the government. All unions functioned like a pyramid; representatives from small associations transferred requests to union assemblies, and in turn, union assemblies transferred those to the federation. All members of associations and unions were informed through Zoom meetings. A collective of representatives acting on behalf of the larger unions, such as the Association of Workers in the Field of Dance (Σ.Ε.Χω.Χο), the Hellenic Actors Union (Σ.Ε.Η), the Greek Directors Society (Σ.Ε.Σ) were present in all meetings with the government. Due to the long period of negotiations and demanding long hours, representatives were rotated.

The press typically notes on 09/03/2023[67], "Twenty-three artists' associations and unions co-signed the intervention and invited representatives of all political parties to a dialogue, so that possible Parliamentary initiatives can be discussed" (left.gr 2023).

The one-day demonstration became a three-month protest and occupation in higher education buildings in general. It was all about demanding what we need, how we want dance to be in education, as a workplace, and as an academic field.

To summarise, it is evident that dance is not only deeply interwoven into society, but also continuously reshapes itself though social processes; at times, it may even generate social pressure. Accordingly, art protests and social demonstrations can influence directly and indirectly the (re)shaping of contemporary dance forms. Bempeza (2019) in her book 'History/ies of Art Strikes', demonstrates the above interconnection between art, society, protests, social and artistic change while she has a historical flashback regarding art protests in Europe and elsewhere. According to Bempeza (2019), art strikes worldwide are "a substantial form of opposition and disagreement" (Bempeza 2019, p.16) and "not a state of inertia" (Bempeza 2019, p.33). Art strikes and protest exist to "claim time and space for both collective and individual practices of doing" (Bempeza 2019, p.34).

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that this research adopts an autoethnographic methodology, shaped by my dual role as both a dance worker and a researcher, within the protesting community. My position inside the field evokes a

[67] https://left.gr/news/i-protasi-ton-kallitehnikon-somateion-se-kyvernisi-kai-kommata [accessed 08 Apr 2023].

subjective, embodied documentation of events. The documentation was merging of lived experience with formal data, while the Presidential Decree reshaped the research, forcing me to document a historical moment. This insider perspective actually provides a particular insight into the transformation of higher dance education in Greece.

1.4. Research Methods Towards an Embodied Archive.

The field research provides an immersive embodied experience between the researcher and the performative practice, revealing the complex dimensions and webs of kinetic experience in contemporary dance culture, dimensions that are often difficult to verbalise (Papakostas & Poulakis in Papakostas & Loutzaki 2022). In spite of the complexities of articulating dance experience, dance culture frequently functions as a field for epistemological inquiry (Frosch 1999, Carter & O'Shea 2010).

To address the research questions concerning the current oral and embodied rituals within the transmission process of contemporary dance, I adopted a qualitative research approach, drawing on a range of methods informed by an ethnochoreological methodology. At the core of the research lies an autoethnographic approach, employed to translate my corporeal experience into written language (Gore 1999, Holman-Jones 2005, Chang 2008, Pink 2010, Vionnet and Ingold 2018). This method positioned my (dancing) body and lived experiences as central analytical tools (Seremetaki [1994]1997, Okely 1994, Pink 2010). For over two years, I conducted participant observation within contemporary dance classes at each Higher Professional Private Dance School involved in the study. These observations included fieldnotes, sketches,

dance notation, Laban Movement Analysis, records of dance exercises and notes on accompanying music.

In parallel, I conducted in-depth ethnographic interviews to foster what Clifford describes as "multivocal exchanges" (Clifford 1988, p.10) and concurrently created an environment where voices from the field could interact and "respond to each other non-hierarchically" (Vionnet 2022, p.78).

The interviews were organised in three parts as follows: 1) interviews with course directors of three Higher Professional Private Dance Schools, namely Aliki Kazouri, course director at Moragemou, Betty Dramisioti, course director at Aktina, and Maro Grigoriou, course director at Choros; 2) interviews dedicated to contemporary dance educators of all three Higher Professional Private Dance Schools, and 3) interviews with students of each school, in focus-groups settings. All interviews were conducted on premises at each school in accordance with ethical procedures.

The research was further informed with archival material[68] and statistical data[69] although these are not included in chapters as they form part of prior research (Panourgia 2017). The literature used in this research is reviewed extensively in Chapter 2, further contextualising this study, and a more detailed discussion of the methodological approach follows in Chapter 3.

[68] Rallou Manou Archive, Archive of the Greek Ministry of Culture, Archives of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece and Archives of the Hellenic Statistical Authority.
[69] Archives of the Hellenic Statistical Authority related to entrance and diploma exams of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece.

1.5. Conclusion to Chapter and Overview of Thesis Chapters.

This research explores the complex, oral and embodied transmission of contemporary dance practices through an ethnochoreological lens, applying qualitative methods, such as autoethnography, participant observation, and ethnographic interviews. The primary goal was to examine the oral and embodied rituals termed as somatoralities (see Chapter 4) related to the transmission process of contemporary dance in Greece.

The study focuses on narratives and embodied experiences of students, educators, and course directors along with my autoethnographic perspective. Through the in-depth, semi-structured ethnographic interviews, this study aims to enrich the research on this topic, offering non-hierarchical and multivocal sensescapes (Appadurai 1990, Howes 1991a, 2003, Classen 1993a, Pink 2010, Ingold 2011). Course directors shared institutional frameworks, challenges, and pedagogical approaches. Educators elaborated on their methodologies, embodied practices and teaching philosophy, while students reflected on intimate and individual lived experiences forming oral traditions in contemporary dance transmission.

At the same time, the autoethnographic method allowed me, as a researcher, to express and analyse corporeal experiences. Additionally, extensive participant observation offered an insight into classroom dynamics, dance approaches, and interactions between educators and students. The study was also informed by relevant literature, archival sources and statistics, providing a contextual and historical framework, while

focusing on oral and embodied knowledge in contemporary dance education shaped within wider socio-cultural frameworks.

Conducting the first extended ethnographic research into oral traditions and transmission processes within higher contemporary dance in Greece, it was inevitable I would feel overwhelmed as a researcher. Although my prior connection with the field facilitated communication, maintaining critical distance while navigating through personal assumptions regarding this under-investigated territory proved challenging. Time constrains, resulting from complex institutional and individual schedules as well as personal commitments, ultimately prevented the development of an ethnographic film initially envisioned as part of this research. Nevertheless, the absence of this component did not compromise the quality or the depth of the dissertation.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows: Chapter 2 includes reviews and analyses of relevant literature concerning the major theoretical axis of this research. The literature refers to the institutionalized framework of contemporary dance practices, oral traditions and body politics in the 21st century in Greece. contemporary dance ethnographies and autoethnographic notes in detail. Chapter 3 elaborates on methodological tools used in this research. Chapter 4 presents research findings, divided in part A that includes ethnographic interviews and autoethnographic material and part B that includes contemporary dance ethnographies. Ultimately, Chapter 5 concludes with a synthesised discussion over research findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction.

This chapter elaborates on relevant literature which informed this dissertation and theoretically supports emergent themes during the four-year ethnochoreological research into oral traditions of contemporary dance transmission within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. At this point, it is important to underline the significance of this research including, as Balandina (2025) notes,

> Embodied and lived experience of [dance that] is linked to the affective, behavioural and emotional processes of the researcher and the research subjects and contributes to the knowledge produced about [contemporary dance] culture. Through (…) the experience of (…) participatory observation, (…) embodied and sensory research contributes to a better understanding of ourselves and the people who make [movement] in the field. And empathy, like the embodied and experiential experience of [dance], will emerge as a scientifically valuable ethnographic tool.
>
> (Balandina 2025, p.258)

Section 2.1. introduces the chapter. Section 2.2. explores the institutional framework of contemporary dance practice in Greece, in the 21st century. Section 2.3. discusses oral traditions in contemporary dance and the notion of somatorality. Section 2.4. reviews literature related to the practice, creation and use of dance archives. Section 2.5. provides an analytical scope of the ethnographic filming. The final Section 2.6. concludes the chapter.

2.2. Institutionalized Contemporary Dance in 21st Century.

2.2.1 Historical Development.

Contemporary dance in Greece has been intertwined with institutionalised education since 1937, when the first private professional dance school teaching gymnastics, Eurhythmics[70] and Music, offering a four-year course, was established by Koula Pratsika in Athens, Greece. The curriculum included classes on anatomy, gymnastics, eurhythmics, dance and music (Barbousi 2014, p.81). Pratsika's 'Professional School of Dance' was under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

Rallou Manou studied at Pratsika's first professional private dance school during 1933-34 and worked as a dance educator at the school from 1937 to 1941. Manou established her own dance school in 1941. Moreover, as outlined in the previous chapter, between 1947 and 1948, she studied at the dance department at New York University, attending modern dance classes with Martha Graham, Hanya Holm and Dorris Humphrey. In

[70] Eurhytmics from the Greek words *εὖ* (meaning good) and *ρυθμός* (meaning rhythm).

1951, Manou's dance school became the second professional private dance school for dancers and dance educators in Athens, Greece.

In 1957, the 'Letters and Arts Committee' [71] introduced the establishment of a Higher School of Music Rhythm and Dance Education, stating that, "Pratsika's School, operating now for thirty years, should be the core of this institution, for reasons of importance and tradition" (Barbousi 2014, p.82). Thus, Pratsika's professional dance school became a Higher Professional Private Dance School. In 1970, the school passed to state governance. In 1972, Pratsika's school became the State School of Dance, under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. Since 1973, the State School of Dance has provided a three-year studies curriculum. Pratsika was the course director until 1980 at the age of 81, four years before she died (26/01/1984).

Despite its institutional prestige, KSOT and all Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece were classified as Level 5 (post-secondary education) by Presidential Decree 85/2022 – a decision that caused nationwide protest. In Athens, on 8 May 1981, the President of the Republic K. Karamanlis, Prime Minister K. Stefanopoulos, and Ministers of Justice, Education and Religion, Culture and Science, Employment, and Economics founded law n.1158 whereby all Dance, Theatre and Film schools were under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Science (as outlined in Chapter 1). Within the forty articles of law n.1158/1981, the organisation and administration of higher cultural education in Greece were analysed. According to this law, higher dance education in Greece appertained to tertiary level of education.

[71] https://library.nationalgallery.gr/el/el_1957256_00001_0001.html (Full text - newspaper article 1957).

However, Presidential Decree 85 in 2022, p.7610[72] classifies graduates of Higher Professional Dance, Theatre and Film Schools as level 5. This level according to the Bologna Declaration, is a post–secondary education as it is known within the Greek framework. This was an unexpected devaluation leading to massive and unprecedented art protests and strikes in Athens and other major cities in Greece spanning the course of more than four months (as analysed in section 1.4). Although in previous years the Government announced that a University for the Performing Arts would be established by 2025, there has not been any further statement made so far. It was also said that this University was to absorb only students from public schools of cultural education, namely the State School of Dance, the National Theatre and the National Conservatoire. Film-School students would be absorbed by the on-going departments of film studies at Aristoteleio University of Thessaloniki.

Up until 1983, the curriculum of the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools was influenced and shaped by Koula Pratsika and Rallou Manou and their studies, philosophies and visions[73]. However, in 1983, through Presidential Decree 872/1983 a single – undivided – curriculum for all Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece was formed, which is still in use without any further changes. According to this curriculum, the dominant techniques are those of Mary Wigman[74] and Martha Graham[75]. We could say that Pratsika was influenced more by Wigman without following the form of her technical exercises, but by expressing dance as a form of energy. As Barbousi 2014, also states in her book, “Pratsika was influenced by the many

[72] http://www.publicrevenue.gr/elib/view?d=/gr/pd/2022/85/ [accessed 10/01/2025].
[73] See detailed analysis in the following section.
[74] German dancer and educator. See detailed information in section 1.2.
[75] American dancer and educator. Founded the Graham technique. See detailed information in section 1.2.

aesthetical movements [of the 20th century], that also included German modern dance" (Barbousi 2014, p.105).

In contrast, Rallou Manou related more with Graham. She was more interested "in [dance in] a more scholarly and ethnographic way. Rallou Manou herself says in an interview that she was technically influenced by Graham. (However) All these technical systems are only technical" (Gourlomati 2019, p.3).

Moreover, I must point out that this research focused on contemporary dance in higher dance education in Greece, following its traces and identifying its influences through direct connections with Europe and North America. However, it seems that there is no clear evidence of movement influences from other continents during the 19th century, although future research may uncover such links. While higher education remains mainly influenced by Europe and North America, the map of the contemporary dance scene in Greece reflects a more global range of influences due to the international networks fostered by contemporary dance festivals.

2.2.2. Body Politics of Contemporary Dance in Greece.

Through this research, both Pratsika and Manou appear to regard dance as a multifaceted cultural expression, embedded with cultural and ethnic references significant to their (Pratsika and Manou's) identities. Moreover, it is obvious, through archives and testimonials of students/dance educators (participating in Barbousi's 2014 research), that in Greece influences concerning the teaching approach and transmission process come from a Central European spectrum – studies at Hellerau in particular.

During the 1930s both contemporary dance and ballet were not viewed, researched or analysed as 'ethnic dances' (Kealiinohomoku 1970). However, Joann Kealiinohomoku later attributed the title "a form of ethnic dance" to ballet, arguing that "all forms of dance reflect the cultural traditions within which developed" (Kealiinohomoku 1970, p.35). Although I do not view contemporary dance as an ethnic dance, I believe that contemporary dance in Greece presents characteristics that could be linked to its socio-political and geographical position. At this point, I must emphasize the fact that there is also a differentiation between the contemporary dance form practiced and taught in a class, and contemporary dance presented as a stage product. For this research, I focused on the teaching process in dance class, rather than the aspect of contemporary dance practice which is viewed on stage.

There are ethics and values in dance practice and pedagogy that are often unspoken or unwritten. These elements create a form of everyday practice rituals that are ubiquitous and not frequently challenge or questioned by participants, in this case educators and dance students. This was particularly evident through the testimonials of dance students and educators, as seen in Koula Pratsika's and Rallou Manou's the archives (Barbousi 2014). This could indicate that the ethics, values and aesthetics of dance are also influenced by, or might even be imposed by individual institutions. Additionally, as became apparent through this research the small community of dance education in Greece was always influenced by geo-politics.

To illustrate how an overarching ethos might influence the development of a dance technique, in his PhD dissertation (2014) dance scholar Duncan Gilbert dedicated to "examining the historical transformation of Somatics" (Foster 2020, p.vii), explains

that he found a connection between variations in contemporary dance pedagogy, especially in the Contact Improvisation technique[76] in dance institutions, primarily related with the historical phase of development in Somatic practices. According to Gilbert,

> Contact Improvisation technique demonstrates variations in pedagogy in line with different historical phases of development in Somatics. Dance classes initially emphasized collective physical experience, gradually moved toward individualized processes and finally imposed a homogenized body in line with aesthetics that had been institutionalized. (…) Dancers integrated regional distinctions into a transnational discourse by connecting what oral histories and commentary revealed about geography with evidence of how Somatics framed through a transnational discourse in order to receive institutional support.
>
> (Gilbert 2014, p.12)

This observation is particularly useful when thinking about the development of the Greek contemporary dance idiom. Like the evolution of Contact Improvisation pedagogy, Greek dance practice has been shaped by both the geopolitical context and shifting institutional aesthetics. Greek contemporary dance emerged in local traditions while being influenced by European ones. Over time, it has moved toward individualised forms aligning with global aesthetics and perhaps, institutional demands.

[76] "Contact Improvisation is an evolving system of movement initiated in 1972 by American choreographer Steve Paxton. The improvised dance form is based on the communication between two moving bodies that are in physical contact and their combined relationship to the physical laws that govern their motion – gravity, momentum, inertia" (Paxton, S. et al 1979) https://contactquarterly.com/contact-improvisation/about/ [accessed 01 Jun 2025]

Gilbert's argument on how regional distinctions were absorbed into transnational discourse could help explain how Greek contemporary dance negotiated its identity between local culture and international aesthetics.

While dance pioneers have often embraced notions of corporeal freedom, their work has not been free from criticism, particularly regarding accusations of elitism or even extreme nationalism including association with dictatorships and authoritarian regimes. Laban although a pivotal figure in modern dance had complex relationship with the Nazi regime. He choreographed large-scale events aligned with state propaganda, including preparations for the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Although he promoted expressive movement some of his choreographic ideas were "appropriated by the National Socialist cultural apparatus" (Toepfer 1997, p.234). Despite his initial involvement, Laban refused to align with Goebbels propaganda performance and subsequently fled Germany in 1938 (Toepfer 1997, Manning 2004).

Authoritarian regimes such as Nazi Germany often imposed specific aesthetic ideals, defining acceptable bodies through ideologies of racial purity, discipline and strength. As Vallejos (2021) and Hewitt (1993, 2005) argue, fascist cultural policy excluded bodies that disrupted the fascist fantasy of unity. Obviously, this practice could have directly influenced the characteristics and the acceptable type of bodies in dance during this period.

More recently, contemporary dance choreographer Ohad Naharin, founder of Gaga technique and long-time artistic director of Batsheva Dance Company has also faced criticism, without beeing directly connected to the military Israeli context. Although his

technique is based on corporeal freedom, improvisation and self-exploration and awareness and although Naharin claims that there is nothing Israeli about his dance or technique (Naharin 2014)[77], scholars have questioned the extent to which his work can be independent of the extreme militarised national context in which it is produced (Quinlan 2022). These critiques suggest that even practices grounded in corporeal freedom may still be impacted by socio-political dynamics.

In Greece we can trace this impact during the 1930's.

> In the wake of the severe economic crisis of the early 1930s, the Government will adopt the slogan "Tourism – Culture", causing a very profitable and multipliable beneficial tourist wave in Greece. Greece became a pioneer in the phenomenon that today we would call "cultural tourism" responding to the lack of infrastructure by promoting cultural heritage.
>
> (Skiadas 2020, p.1)

One of the major cultural and touristic attractions promoted this period was the revival of the Delphic Games in 1927[78], along with the annual celebration making the revival of the Olympic Games. In the 1936 Olympic games[79], Pratsika and Manou lit the Flame during the Ioannis Metaxa's dictatorship regime (1937-1940) in Greece.

[77] Interview with the Jerusalem Post in 2014: https://www.logeion.upatras.gr/sites/logeion.upatras.gr/files/pdffiles/Arvaniti%2C%20%E2%80%9CLogeion%E2%80%9D%207%20%282017%29.pdf [accessed 10 Feb 2025].
[79] https://archive.ert.gr/page/1804/?cat=-1[accessed 10 Feb 2025].

It is evident that both modern and contemporary dance and dance education, have played significant roles in shaping body politics and social discourse, particularly in Greece. In the European context, modern dance is typically associated with the early mid-20th century, characterised by its break from classical ballet and its engagement with expressive movement. Contemporary dance emerges later from the 1960s, presenting a more critical view toward technique and institutional authority.

Tzinziloni (2015), in her article *Koula Pratsika and her Dance School: Embracing Gender, Class and the Nation in the Formative Years of Contemporary Dance Education in Greece*, examines the early development of dance education in Greece, mainly through Koula Pratsika's work. Tzinziloni emphasizes how Pratsika's school, influenced by German Ausdruckstanz, contributed to the formation of gender roles, class distinctions, and national identity in the 1930s. Though the term "contemporary dance" Tzitziloni refers to the dance traditions of the 1930s reflecting the socio-political and aesthetic frameworks of European modern dance, which were deeply entangled with nation-building, gender politics, and the negotiation of power structures in Greece, at the time.

Dance anthropologist Irene Loutzaki in her essay 'Dance as Propaganda: The Metaxas Regime's Stadium Ceremonies, 1937–1940', investigates how the phenomenon of dance both in its traditional and modern expression was used by the dictatorship in Greece. In this essay, there are a lot of references related to Pratsika's role in a feast dedicated to Ioannis Metaxas' authoritarian regime. Loutzaki notes that during this dictatorship period there were annual feasts "of the anniversaries in the Panathenaic

Stadium, in Athens, as commemoration of the establishment of the dictatorship headed by Ioannis Metaxas" (Loutzaki 2008, p.2). She continues, "Ceremonies and dictatorships are often seen as intricately intertwined" (Loutzaki 2008, p.2). as they "both engage the populace in rites of collective spectacle" (Berezin 2005).

According to Loutzaki's research Pratsika, as a choreographer and a dance school director, "was in charge of the artistic part and the staging" (Loutzaki 2008, p.8) of the propaganda festival which took place on 4th August, 1940, at Panathenaic stadium. Moreover, during the 1940 celebration, Pratsika presented a performance of a choreographic composition with 400 women workers from the "Papastratos" cigarette factory. "The preparation of these workers was incorporated in a general programme of on-going education and social welfare, when the factory, on its own initiative, had entrusted their training to Koula Pratsika's school" (Loutzaki 2008, p.10).

While the institutional use of dance as spectacle directly supported the regime's nationalist ideal, the rhetoric of Greekness/Hellenism – the pure Hellenic nation – during the 1930's and 1940's was used as a form of propaganda. According to dance scholar Zervou (2015), Hellenism as a term refers to an "ideal pertaining to ancient Greek philosophical values whereas 'Greekness' connotes a more modern manifestation of national identity following the establishment of the Independent Greek State (1832)" (Zervou 2015, p.ix). Taking into consideration all of the above, we can assume that the modern and contemporary dance idiom was also influenced by this relationship of the (re)imagined identity and authenticity, the re-invented and reconstructed traditions, the culture and the body politics of 1930 Greece.

Researching this era, during dance events in particular, we observe that "The urban Athenian identity was united with the rural identities into a mass ornamental production similar to National Socialist movement choirs" (Zervou 2015, p.69). Even though this is a strong statements and generalisation, by examining the people (both those who established and those who participated in dance education in Greece during this period of time) we can observe forms of class elitism, in the sense of placing an emphasis on upper-class, predominantly women, particularly in Pratsika's practices.

As Tzintziloni (2015) comments in her article,

> Modern dance education in Greece might not have been possible if Pratsika's work had not connected with the ideas on the (female) body and dance practices already introduced by the women's movement (the organisation 'Lykeio ton Ellinidon' [Lyceum of Greek Women] in particular) and to the greater ideological search for Greek national identity of the times.
>
> (Tzintziloni 2015, p.277)

Indeed, dance anthropologist Loutzaki, further argues that the Metaxas regime associated agriculture and folklore with a sort of a unified image of Greek culture while dance was represented by *Kalamatianos* (Καλαματιανός - a regional dance from the Peloponnese). *Kalamatianos* served as a symbol "of PanHellenic dance that embodied the Nation as the epitomy of unity, and continuity" (Loutzaki 2008, p.12).

However, Loutzaki is critical of this transformation, observing that,

> Traditional dances had never been performed outside the borders of local communities for an urban, alien, and unfamiliar public to the performers. By turning the village square into a proper dance stage, the travelling dancers transformed their dances from a communal participatory performance into a spectacle, thus opening the way to the folklorization of traditional dances.
>
> (Loutzaki 2008, p.13)

And that in this process, "Music and dance, especially folk dance may constitute powerful vehicles for the effective exercise of power and propaganda" (Loutzaki 2008, p.13)

2.2.3. Urbanisation of Contemporary Dance in Greece: Modernism, Identity and Cultural Contradictions.

The generation of the 1930's in Greece was influenced by a mixture of nationalism and folkloric elements with the tendency towards the modern European era. While Modern Greek historian Roderick Beaton (2011) outlines, "the dilemma of Greek modernism was the dilemma of how to be both modern and Greek at the same time" (Beaton 2011, p.235), Modern Greek scholar Dimitris Tziovas (1997), talks about the dilemma of being simultaneously ethnocentric and anti-colonial at the same time. Zervou (2015) adds to these issues above with "the eagerness of modern Greeks to satisfy European

expectations and fit in the moulds of the imagined Hellenic ideal" (Zervou 2015, p.66). Furthermore, Loutzaki (2008) notices that,

> Dance played a key role in the creation of a sense of national communitas[80] by creating a hierarchy of identities where the fragmenting identities based on traditional social markers such as local origin, age, sex, class were diminished in favour of a grandiose all, encompassing national identity.
>
> (Loutzaki 2008, p.14)

In addition to this argument, dance scholar Gilbert (2014), argues that "Dance establishes values in a symbolic exchange between performers and audiences that both confirms and diverges from artists' own understanding of their work" (Gilbert 2014, p.13).

It is striking how contemporary dance education played a part in massive changes regarding what body politics looked like, "functioning in a separate and somewhat 'protected' realm of activity, that required a certain social and financial status to enter" (Zervou 2015, p.76). In other words, the freedom that contemporary dance represented was not oppressed by the regime but at the same time only an elite group of people

[80] Victor Turner (1969) introduces "communitas" as the opposite to the norms and roles of hierarchical society that often arise in liminal phases of ritual when people are temporarily released from their everyday roles, allowing an egalitarian bonding. "Communitas is the spontaneous, immediate, concrete, and existential experience of togetherness, as opposed to the normative structure of social roles and hierarchies." (Turner, 1969, p. 132).

could have access. This supports somewhat Pratsika's and Manou's alleged affiliation with extreme right-wing regimes. Surprisingly though, these allegations did not significantly diminish their reputation, as both figures continue to be held in high regard within Greek society and dance community until today.

In contrast, they both are still considered very important figures in the realms of dance education and pedagogy in Greece. Consequently, this could indicate that their importance and contribution to education overshadowed their "dark" period which was somewhat purified within the Greek collective memory over the years. Indeed, there is an interesting juxtaposition regarding Manou who, during the late 50's and 60's, collaborated with a number of well-known leftist artists, musicians such as Manos Chatzidakis and Mikis Theodorakis, painters such as Ioannis Tsarouchis and poet Odysseas Elytis among others (Bournelli 2008).

As educators, Pratsika and Manou, were both very well trained abroad in Germany and Austria. Additionally, they both came from high-class, well-known families connected with royal families. Likewise, the first generation of their students also shared similar characteristics. Most, if not all participants in dance education, were middle and upper-class liberal women who had access to education and "the luxury to be involved in such a leisure activity" (Zervou 2015 p.61).

In contrast, during the following decades after the late 1950s the political orientation of dance practitioners and teachers changed. Nowadays, the dance community seems to share ties with the leftist party, a fact that becomes obvious when witnessing the actions of the Dancers' Union both during the recent art protests of 2022-2023 and the Union's initiatives concerning major regional, national and global issues.

Athens was and still is the centre of contemporary dance education. Since the establishment of the first school, Higher Professional Private Dance Schools have been centralised in the urban high-class areas of Athens. There are archives indicating that students travelled from provinces to the capital in order to attend dance classes. “In 1961, the operation of a provincial vocational school was organized, that is, female students from the province would come to Athens (...) and then return to work in their place” (Barbousi 2014, p. 82-83). After 1950, students from the upper and elite classes gave way to middle classes. During the same period “a slow shift towards the professionalization of dance which became recognized as an independent art form, no longer tied to [Greek] theatre” (Zervou 2014, p.87).

Even today, many dance students follow the same path to Athens in order to obtain a diploma in contemporary dance. However, we must underline, this has changed during the last five years, where Higher Professional Private Dance Schools have flourished in the periphery of the country. Throughout this research period of 2021-2025, contemporary dance practice has been primarily found in capital and city centres. High costs for tuition, mean that it is still an expensive practice not accessible to everyone. Over the decades, Athens has transformed from a high-class city to a more underground cultural location without losing the sense of urbanism (Bull 2000). Indeed, the city centre has drastically transformed. I suggest that Athens now has two ‘faces’, and between them there exists a space for dance creation in former industrial buildings.

2.2.4. Dominant Dance Culture and Democratic Bodies in Higher Dance Education.

For scholar Alison Leonard (2014) "democracy refers to the active engagement of young citizens in a democratic society" (Leonard 2014, p.2), whereas for Apple and Bean (2007) it is related to "involving the consent of the governed and equality of opportunity" (Apple and Beane 2007, p.7). For Jennifer Greene, "In a democracy, the educating of students and empowering them to become members of the public, to participate, and play articulate roles in the public space through democratic education is vital" (Greene 1985, p.4). Additionally, the notion of democracy for Dewey (2008) includes a sense of mobility and a constant becoming. In the same sense, dance could become a space for democratic practices since as Leonard "argues dance as a dynamic means of moving, responding, creating, and transforming exemplified the democratic ideas" (Leonard 2014, p.4).

Dance scholar Gilbert (2014) advocated that there is a sum of techniques which influence dance training through kinetic patterns of Somatics. Certain Somatics educators created techniques that are still in use today, and informed contemporary dance practice to the same or higher degree, namely Alexander Technique (of Frederick Matthias Alexander)[81], Ideokinesis (of Mabel Ellsworth Todd), Klein Technique (Susan Klein), the Skinner Releasing Technique (Joan Skinner), Body Mind Centering (BMC), Authentic Movement (Mary Starks Whitehouse connecting body and psyche) and Feldenkrais technique connecting body thought and body feeling.

[81] Alexander worked with H'Doubler in New York.

To follow the history of dance pedagogy, I created a list[82] of contemporary dance educators to help me imagine and reveal possible visible or invisible kinetic patterns and/or ethos of movement of contemporary dance, which has directly or indirectly influenced the Greek contemporary dance idiom. Koula Pratsika met and was influenced by Laban; likewise, Wigman at the Dalcroze School of Hellerau and Rallou Manou met and were influenced by Martha Graham. Interestingly, over the course of the following years there were no direct links other than Pratsika's and Manou's transmissions. Although contemporary dance was thriving during the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, none of the current techniques were incorporated into the Greek contemporary dance curriculum of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools until 1983.

Bodies both shape and are shaped by cultural, aesthetic and pedagogical systems but they can also resist these frameworks. Gilbert (2014) challenges the notion of a fixed, universal "bodily truth" in the context of dance training and education. He argues that what is often presented as natural or authentic is in fact "constructed and result from dominant cultural values" (Gilbert 2014, p.2). This argument emphasises the idea that bodies and especially dancing bodies have the ability to reshape those systems and those values.

Gilbert focuses particularly on Somatic techniques as a pathway for dancers to reclaim the ownership of their own movement. Thus, dancers for Gilbert act as agents, "as social 'actors' construct sensations meaningfully intertwined with various dimensions of their

[82] For personal guideline.

culture" (Gilbert 2014, p.45). In other words, the body is not only an object but an active subject that produces knowledge and expresses resistance.

Following this idea, movement becomes a site of cultural negotiation and as for Gilbert (2014) "a cultural site of meaning making" (Gilbert 2014, p.35). Similarly, Thomas (2003) argues that dancing bodies shape society while serving as agents, engaging actively within it. Both scholars argue that the "body is not a passive receptacle of meaning (...) but rather [positioned as] social actor achieve agency by rearticulating the significances that they inherit" (Gilbert 2014, pp.47-48). In other words, the dancing body becomes both a site of political significance and a pedagogical force resisting norms and reshaping aesthetic values through embodied practices.

Helen Thomas (2003) and Duncan Gilbert (2014) along with other dance scholars, such as Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou (2013), Sondra Fraleigh (2023) and Susan Leigh Foster (2009), have explored the politics of embodiment within institutionalised dance training. They critically examine how certain aesthetics are often imposed within dance education reinforcing norms of body stereotypes, gender and social hierarchies. Gilbert (2014) particularly focuses on how dance training can produce bodies that embody social power and hierarchy. He argues that institutional frameworks often reinforce dominant cultural values. For Gilbert, dance institutions not only transmit technique but also participate in social construction of bodily identity. This idea is relevant to the Greek context where the formation of contemporary dance bodies continues to be shaped by inherited hierarchies and pedagogical norms.

Both Margret H'Doubler, an American physical educator, and Martha Hill, an American dance educator, actively supported the placement of modern dance within the framework of higher education during the 1930's. Hill and "her modern dance colleagues at Bennington College reoriented the nature of college dance during the 1930s towards a vocational and professional model, reshaping dance as an arts-based discipline" (Vertinski 2010, p.1113).

However, H'Doubler and Hill argued about "investigation and understanding above success in professional dance" (Gilbert 2014, p.205). Dancer and choreographer Anna Halprin, student of H'Doubler at University of Bennington, confirmed that H'Doubler's pedagogy was inclusive, while she argued that the "established modern dance [during the 1930's] was a tyranny in which the specific body of the choreographer was imposed upon every dancer" (Gilbert 2014, p.80). H'Doubler supported modern dance as "a personal, non-competitive, democratic activity" (Vertinsky 2010, p.1120).

Between 1960 and 1970, the Contact Improvisation movement originated by the pioneer dancers of Judson Church "reject[ed] hierarchical and commercial modes of professionalization" (Novack in Gilbert 2014, p.199). As Banes (1963) observed Contact Improvisation technique embraced anti-hierarchical values and pluralism, emphasising collective decision making and egalitarian creative processes. Although these dance practitioners and educators were widely connected with anti-hierarchical collectivism, which could be a political position, Trisha Brown, and particularly her work Glacial Decoy (1979) were judged as apolitical. However, as Skura argues (1990) in 'Politics of Methods', the methodologies of artistic practice carry political and ideological values even if they are not addressed as a theme in the artistic work.

What those scholars suggest is that dance is never truly apolitical because the way our bodies are treated, used, exposed, performed, and communicated always reflects social dynamics. Movement is not a result but the values and ethos that guide the work. Therefore, even if the political dimensions of a performance are not visible to an audience, these dimensions are embedded in the way the piece is made.

An example of "alter[ing] and reconstruct[ing] the dance practise towards a caring for the body and nurturing autonomous creativity integrating" (Gilbert 2014, p.205) was at the foundation of the SNDO in 1975, The School of New Dance Development, in Amsterdam, Netherlands. At SNDO the values of contact improvisation and Somatics were implemented within higher dance education. By giving space to creativity, "dance students in higher education found themselves configured as researchers in their own body" (Gilbert 2014, p.205). Besides that, the transnational connection of the educators of the SNDO endorsed the idea of "body in flux" (Gilbert 2014, p.171 & p.232) a process-based pedagogy, where every dance student could find their artistic integrity as H'Doubler argued in 1930 (Ross 2020).

This approach continues even today, while the SNDO shapes contemporary dance practices with educators and directors such Trude Cone (1954 -) and Ria Higler (1950-2023) who "continued to use Somatics in opposition to pre-given vocabulary" (Gilbert 2014 p.246). To this day, the school remains a vibrant environment for experimental choreography, emphasizing self-exploration and interdisciplinary collaboration.

2.2.5. Release Techniques, Anatomical Motion and Dancer's Empowerment.

Through the decades following on from the 1970s, Release technique has provided new horizons for contemporary dance movement. Self-awareness, imagination, somatic focus and connection with the anatomical function/position of the body became of interest to more than just the virtuosos in the field (Neuhaus 2010). Learning from the body became more important than its actual product - the movement. Therefore, this "new pedagogy naturalized physical aptitudes" (Gilbert 2014). The "letting and flowing [of the energy and the dynamic of both body and movement] were physical metaphors in class that became known as release technique" (Gilbert 2014, 121). Gilbert (2014) describes Release as a technique including elements like kinaesthetic awareness, muscular ease, and releasing unnecessary tension. Likewise, this technique allowed dancers to act through forces (like gravity) by using momentum. The metaphors (anatomical physical and mechanical) seemed to also be a central part of the contemporary dance transmission (Gilbert 2014); an element that is still very significant (see dance ethnographies chapter 3.3).

The shift from the imitation of form and aesthetics towards this individual body investigation, described also as "body in flux" and the unique way of using energy could be observed as a medium of empowering dancers' bodies more than technique itself. While a "body in flux" could be blamed for promoting individualism over collectiveness; an alternative view could be that it gave dancing bodies a sense of freedom after decades of choreographers' tyranny as Halprin argued[83]. Furthermore, the

[83] See also Foster 1986.

collective goal could be achieved through the individual and these intimate roots of "embodied truth" as Gilbert stated (Gilbert 2014 p.125).

Worldwide, there are growing examples of shifting transmission (teaching and learning) cultures and pedagogies in dance. As Roche and Huddy state, "The challenges is of implementing systemic change from within the university environment when teaching praxis is significantly influenced by traditional teaching styles" (Roche & Huddy 2015, p.12). However, according to Calamoneri, Dunagan & McCarthy-Brown (2020) "dance in the university raises political and ethical questions regarding the process of cultural transmission" (Calamoneri, Dunagan & McCarthy-Brown 2020, p.55). Together, these two perspectives highlight the tension between tradition and transformation in tertiary dance education.

Summarising, after investigating the timeline of contemporary dance within higher dance education, we can identify the contemporary dance ethos and its progression spanning 88 years of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece.

Over these decades, a repetitive cycle has both emerged and become established within Greek dance education: students enter higher dance institutions, pursue professional careers as dancers, and then return as teachers. This cyclical motif has cultivated a distinctive embodied oral tradition coexisting alongside a fossilised written curriculum (Presidential Decree 372/1983). The continuity of this pedagogical lineage is evident in the trajectory that links Koula Pratsika's teaching, as documented and preserved through personal testimonials of her early students in Barbousi (2014), to more recent research in dance education by Panourgia (2017, 2025). These sources highlight that personal experience and institutional frameworks remain deeply interconnected within the Greek dance training and education.

Despite the curriculum's official emphasis on Wigman's and Graham's techniques, today's educators both incorporate and prioritize the Limón-Based Release Technique, shaped by decades of evolving somatic influences. This shift reflects a quiet, on-going and significant transformation in dance pedagogy, illustrating Giroux's (2020) notion that "critical pedagogy becomes a project that stresses the need for teachers and students to actively transform knowledge rather than simply consume it" (Giroux 2020, p.3). It reveals the relationships between tradition and innovation, formal structure and lived experience.

In the following Chapters 3 and 4, we will delve deeper into these dynamics, illuminating daily rituals, teaching methodologies, approaches and pedagogical ethos, which define contemporary dance education in Greece today.

2.3.Oral Traditions of Contemporary Dance and Somatoralities.

> Oral history is a simple and straight forward technique for gathering individual interpretations of events (…) which are of contemporary historical significance… It is a powerful procedure that captures recorded information and archives spoken history" [through an interdisciplinary approach that] "facilitates a unique articulation of the memories and life experiences of a people whose stories might otherwise have been lost or ignored.
>
> (Cuxima – Zwa 2019, p. 2)

Cuxima – Zwa advocates for the documentation of an "in danger" or "ignored" orality. Therefore, its capturing could provide a form of continuity over longer periods of time.

Following Hardt (2020), I consider a contemporary dance class as a "constellation in which students assemble, and my own watching of the space" (Hardt 2020, p.44) creates a field of embodied orality. I ponder over Hardt's question,

> If the "becoming" (Manning 2014), the "emerging" (Klein and Noeth 2011), and the "un-doing" (Brandstetter 2007, Foellmer 2009) of bodies and their boundaries, and the "resistance" to regimes and hierarchies of attention and senses (Lepecki and Banes 2007) have been so paramount for the theoretical and interesting development of dance (studies), why are these studies so little concerned with how these bodies are actually learning how to become (undone) or partake in their formation and artistic production?
>
> (Hardt 2020, p.44)

Somatoralities in my research are viewed as an "investigation [of] heterogeneous bodily as well as highly reflective practice of what it entails to learn, train, transmit, communicate, teach, facilitate, appropriate, and share how to move and dance requires a different methodological approach" (Hardt 2020 p.45).

Furthermore, O'Shea (2003) approaches dance transmission as a form of told histories creating tradition, often including resistance to colonial or current establishments. As Hardt also notices, O'Shea's (2003) work along with Novack (1990) reveals "models of teaching and learning practices of precise empirical work" (Hardt 2020, p.48), an

argument that supports further research in somatoralities within the framework of contemporary dance.

Orality is commonly associated with folklore and folkloric studies (Nitsiakos 2018, Potiropoulos in Van Boeschoten 2023). In his article, *From oral tradition to oral narratives: The creative dialogue between folklore and oral history,* Paraskevas Potiropoulos states that "Oral tradition is a basic object of study and approach to traditional culture" (Potiropoulos 2023 in Van Boeschoten, p.59). Within Greek territory, oral traditions were commonly used as living monuments of Greek population connecting the ancient past with the present. Despite the archival richness, this methodology followed the dominant, 'ethnic' directions and its documentation related to the notion of ethnic continuation (Nitsiakos 2014, Potiropoulos in Van Boeschoten 2023). This situation placed oral traditions as "authentic carriers of tradition" (Potiropoulos in Van Boeschoten 2023, p.61) and people as "authentic representatives" (Potiropoulos in Van Boeschoten 2023, p.61) of a specific social body.

However, moving away from dogmatic pathways, related with creation or recreation of ethnic traditions, this research consistently acknowledges that every description and archive "contain[ed] elements of selectivity and partiality" (Tsiolis in Van Boeschoten 2023, p.21). As a researcher, partial insider and observer, I approached this study "from a specific position and theoretical perspective" (Tsiolis in Van Boeschoten 2023, p.31). I am aware that this research could reveal "actions, beliefs, aims and desires" (Lambropoulou in Van Boeschoten 2023, p.32) of the people in the field of an on-going change, and could also provide a starting point for further ethnochoreological research on contemporary dance, rather than a final document.

As a sociologist Judith Stacey argues, “ethnographic writing is not cultural reportage, but cultural construction, and always a construction of self as well as of the other” (Stacey 1991, p.1). Thus, I tried to be “conscious of the effects” (Raleight Yow 2005, p.1) this research process could bring about, especially when verbalizing embodied experiences, and forming words based on participants’ narratives.

Likewise, Pr. Walter J. Ong highlighted the significant differences between orality and writing, suggesting that writing gives “a power far exceeding that of any purely oral dialect” (Ong 1982, p.7) without reducing orality, but enhancing it instead. He underlined the notion that “oral art forms were to all intents and purposes simply texts” (Ong 1982, p.10) and distinguished orality in two sections: primary orality (non-written in any form) and secondary orality “sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print” (Ong 1982, p.10). In the context of contemporary dance transmission, orality could be viewed as a “traditional oral narrative [practice within] in [contemporary urban] culture(s) untouched by writing” (Ong 1982, p.11). Ong recognises that oral cultures “produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche” (Ong 1982, p.14).

Ong also posed a central question regarding my research: “An oral culture has no texts. How does it get together organized material for recall?” (Ong 1982, p.33). In the case of contemporary dance, the equivalent question would be: how does the contemporary dancer recall oral narratives? The answer, as I experienced it in this research, lays in-

between a mnemonic and a corporeal/embodied experience. Thus, orality and soma are supplementary to each other, a single entity creating a solid framework for researching contemporary dance transmission.

The notion of transmission in dance was also an inquiry for ethnochoreologist Mats Melin (2012). Although his research focused on step dancing, he makes it clear that dance transmission is a holistic environment "where the processes of sights, sounds, and kinaesthetic awareness, all often subconsciously, work harmoniously together to inform each actor in this cultural context" (Melin 2012, p.V). Transmission for Melin, "occurs over long periods of time and develops into an on-going process that forms an integral part of daily life for those involved" (Melin 2012, p.V). According to Melin, "transmission of dance (…) occurs in community contexts that provide meaning and identity and cultural understanding to the learner" (Melin 2012, p. 59).

Melin (2012) also explores the notion of aurality in dance transmission. Like Melin (2012), both Adshead (1982) and Hahn (2007) advocate for multimodal learning processes that include aural elements like sound, music, spoken word, and visual stimuli. Hahn (2007) in particular, emphasises the human's ability to "hear" with the entire body, supporting a holistic sensory engagement with dance. This aligns with Lawrence Barsalou's (2008) theory of embodied cognition which support that cognitive processes are rooted in physical experiences, the mental re-enactment of bodily actions during self-other interactions. Accordingly, for dancers, visual stimuli can serve not only as isolated input but also as a powerful trigger for mnemonic cues reproducing (re)experienced embodied responses (movement).

While Melin underlines both aural and visual stimuli, including the importance of mirroring in the dance learning process, Hahn (2007) highlights the visual element as an ‘entry point’ for comprehending dance transmission processes and its cultural context. This does not contradict the multisensory model but rather reinforces the idea that the visual perception plays a central role, though not exclusive role in accessing and transmitting embodied knowledge.

Nick Crossley argues that “One of the key ways of accessing the knowledge and understanding embodied in body techniques is by analysing their transmission in learning situations” (Crossley 2007. p.91). Therefore, in an attempt to capture the full range of experiences in dance transmission [the dance/ing body (soma) during the oral process (orality)], I introduced the merged term somatoralities, which refers to the multifaceted and multilayered ways of contemporary dance transmission as explored within the context of higher dance education in Greece for the purpose of this research. However, the term’s relevance may extend beyond this specific setting. In this framework dancing bodies are ‘living archives’ embodying kinaesthetic experiences, performing meanings, and communicating, via kinetic thinking, within social situations by participating in rites of passage, from contemporary dance student to contemporary dance educator, while unconsciously creating new forms, norms, and traditions in the field. This leads me to advocate for a multimodal approach to researching and archiving dance, one that values embodied, oral and experiential knowledge alongside written records.

As Timmi De Laet (2020) argues, “The body and the archive are profoundly imbricated and complementary in their ability to preserve and transmit”. However, he underlines

the significance of "anarchive" which "leave[s] behind the classical archival principles of order, accessibility, and tangibility in favour of regeneration, submediality, and embodied memory" (De Laet 2020, p. 178). This notion brings the archive from papers and virtual spaces back to its materiality – the body. To complete this argument, I draw on Maxine Sheets - Johnstone (2009) *The corporeal turn – reflections on awareness and gnostic tactility and kinaesthesia* article where she states:

> What is experientially felt both in an affective sense and in a kinaesthetic sense clearly poses a challenge to language not only because such experiences are dynamic, but because language is not experienced in the first place. Indeed, we experience the world and ourselves in wordless ways before we come to language our experience (…)
>
> (Sheets - Johnstone 2009, p. 364)

Following these reflections, I consider how genealogies, tales and histories of the body could be unfolded and transmitted via visual documentation and transformed again into an academic text. Although we experience the world wordlessly, language is always part of the kinetic experience, particularly in the contemporary dance transmission process.

As a result, the difficulty lies in the transformation process – from what is felt on the body, to what is captured by camera to what is written down on paper, in order to provide a usable archival form for a contemporary dance practice. As De Laet also explains, "the ever-changing nature and physicality that typify dance" (De Laet 2020,

p. 177) poses challenges for archiving, but also offers opportunities for regeneration. As he argues, “an embodied art form such as dance can be archived in a way that is not only enduring but which can also accommodate” (De Laet 2020, p. 177). This research finds itself situated in between the notions of the body as an archive, and the archive of a physical body itself.

In conclusion, this research classifies contemporary dance transmission within Greek higher education both as a living experience and an embodied oral practice that I term somatoralities. Moving beyond strict archival frameworks and limitations of language, it explores how memory, experience, and knowledge are encoded in the dancing body. Drawing from oral history, ethnography, and somatic theory, the study advocates for a multimodal approach to archiving dance, one that acknowledges both the ephemeral and enduring qualities of movement. Therefore, it situates and anchors the body not only as a site of performance but as a living/dynamic an/archive, capable of transmitting, transforming, and regenerating corporeal tradition.

2.4. Archiving Contemporary Dance Transmission.

This research investigates how contemporary dance transmission could be archived both through embodied and sensorial practices, with a focus on the Higher Professional Private Dance School in Greece. By conceptualizing the dancer’s body as a living archive, the study enforces the significance of embodied and experiential transmission within higher dance education.

Dance has been archived in various ways over centuries, across different countries[84] and continents. The forms, tools and purposes of dance archives have changed over time, from ancient pottery to folkloric museums and dance companies; from medieval choreographic scores and sketches to academic research. The tools of archiving also vary widely, from personal fieldnotes and informal diaries to biographical narratives, interviews and complex dance notation systems, still in use, such as Labanotation (Kinetography Laban), Benesh movement notation, and Beauchamp–Feuillet Notation. Others such as the Stepanov system are no longer in use[85]. Less commonly used systems include the Eshkol-Wachmann dance notation - 1958 or the "stick figure notation" (Akinsipe 2015) among others.

In the past century, dance notation has gone a step further, incorporating high technology motion-capture recording sessions. Projects such as the WhoLoDancE project involved 3D avatar technology[86] in order to document movement. The purposes of a dance archive are diverse, varying from notation and preservation of heritage and legacy archives to potential recreation of tradition, and from academic endeavour to political uses. As dance archiving evolves, utilizing available tools and technology, it intersects with numerous disciplines such as neuroscience, philosophy, folklore and anthropology.

According to Jacque Derrida (1995) archives are not passive, neutral repositories of memories – rather, they are shaped by power, authority and interpretation. At the same

[84] https://tanzfonds.de/en/magazin/overview-dance-archives-around-the-world/
[85] Stephanov Notation System was used to record the choreography of the Imperial Russian Ballet around the turn of the 20th century. These dance scores preserved Petipa's choreography for many classics, such as Swan Lake and The Nutcracker. That collection of scores is now held at the Harvard Theatre Collection.
[86] http://www.wholodance.eu

time, he questions whether archives are truly all about preserving the past, while also posing the question as to who has the 'authority' to decide whether a certain embodied practice, in this case transmission processes of contemporary dance, must, or deserves to be preserved, or whether it can act as an authority which can be interpreted. According to Michell Foucault (1972), archives are subjected to hierarchies and power relations that form what is archived and what remains unarchived – a notion that also creates the question as to what is "valid" to be archived. At the same time, I recognise the limitations of working as a single researcher and the subjective nature of my perspective. Therefore, this research should not be seen as something conclusive but rather as a contribution to an on-going process. This approach advocates for establishing a platform for further dialogue and research.

According to archivist Marianna Kolyva (2010), the word archives etymologically derives from the ancient Greek word αρχή (archi = beginning), namely the ones in power – the governing body. This also relates with Erica Charalambous' (2022) argument that,

> The process of archiving determines 'what' will be archived and remembered and 'what' will not be archived and therefore potentially forgotten. This archival stewardship is a professional practice and follows a set of rules according to the purpose and service that an archive provides to the governing body to which it belongs and its stakeholders.
>
> (Charalambous 2022, p.42)

For decades, this perspective tended to overlook somatoralities, oral traditions and corporeal/experiential memories. As a result, the body was frequently excluded from

archiving while memory was wrongly separated from the corporeal experience and/or presence.

The debate surrounding viewing the body as a 'tool' versus perceiving the body as an 'entirety' is a discussion that bridges the fields of psychology, philosophy, aesthetics and dance. From Cartesian Dualism to current contemporary body politics, which reflect on identity complexities and their representation in social norms, the body remains a holistic sensor of its surroundings. In art, especially in dance, the notion of archiving encloses various mediums of capturing, not only the body as it is seen but also its embodied knowledge, memories and identity.

André Lepecki (2010) emerged as one of the most influential proponents of the concept of the body as an archive, building on earlier work in performance studies and critical philosophy. In between Dianna Taylor's (2003) distinction of archive and repertoire and Rebecca Schneider's (2011) exploration of performance material and temporal remains Lepecki positions the body as a site of embodied memory. For Lepecki, the body becomes the performance when it enters or re-enacts the performance. Therefore, for Lepecki the body has the dynamic of simultaneously being a tool, a medium and an entity. Although Lepecki only refers to performance, we could easily apply this argument to dance transmission – to teaching and learning practices - where we have a body that constantly re-engages with a performative state (Bassetti 2009a, Marion 2020). In other words, dance transmission as a practice contains the engagement with the experiential embodiment/re-enactment and embodied learning.

In the same vein, dance practitioner and scholar Erica Charalambous in her article *Dance Genealogy: Tracing the Unarchived Epistemology of Practice* (2025), describes herself as a 'self-archive', a body that has stored or archived knowledge. For

Charalambous, a self-archive body is a "an organism and is also associated with how [the] body and [one]self, relate to the environments within which [they] move and work" (Charalambous 2024, p.3). Charalambous continues "The 'body/self' is a place where events happen, (…) archived 'material memory' of its becoming" (Charalambous 2024, p.4). Combining Charalambous' notion of 'self-archive' with Tim Ingold's concept of the body as a place, we can look at body/self-archive as "a locus of ideas, plans, memories and feelings, [that] seems to exist as a substantive entity, quite independently of where it is and what it does" (Ingold 2000, p.103).

Similarly, Arike Oke (2017) argues "that dancers' bodies contain knowledge about a dance work, not only because they have rehearsed, repeated and memorised all the information of a dance work, but also in some cases present marked and cut skin that could be considered a 'live document' as evidence of a performance" (Oke 2017, pp.5-6). While Oke argues about knowledge gained by doing, Etienne Wenger (1998) argues about knowledge gained by seeing in his words "seeing practice itself as a form of knowledge" (Wenger 1998, p.141).

Sarah Pink (2009) stretches the above argument, by also combining Marvin Harris' argument that knowledge is influenced by "place and moment" (Harris 2007b, p.4), and she concludes that observation, in my case observation in the context of research field work, is also a form of knowledge that is "always produced and lived in situated specificity, it can be interpreted as having a different relationship from the directness of experience associated with the concept of emplaced knowing" (Pink 2009, p.35). Therefore, as Pink summarises knowledge in practice involves interaction "between the idea that our emplacement and direct relationship with a sensory material and social environments is necessary made meaningful in relationship with the politics of space

(…) that are also entangled in the 'local' places where ethnographers know through their practice" (Pink 2009, p.35) This understanding of the body as a document and observation as a practice of placed knowledge has also informed my dual role in this research.

During my study, I inhabited a dual identity – that of a dance practitioner, and that of an ethnographic researcher. As a dancer, I saw myself as a "body specialist who is well-versed in embodied knowledge, collecting information and (…) understanding how to transmit this knowledge in various contexts" (Charalambous 2024, p.4). As an observer, I used autoethnography and participant observation as a tool for multilayered documentation of the sensescapes in class. Sensory anthropology, a term which emerged and was developed during the 1980's and 1990's, focuses on sensoriality in ethnography.

Balandina notes:

> Anthropologists who pioneer and follow a 'sensory ethnography', as Sarah Pink (2015) has called it, or a 'sensing/sensuous ethnography', as Paul Stoller (1989) has called it, believe that each culture should be approached based on its own senses, which are historically, socially, and culturally determined.
>
> (Balandina 2025, p. 262)

This aligns with David Howes' (2019a) argument that sensory perception must be contextualized through emplacement.

> The sensory turn has introduced the concept of "emplacement" which refers to the construction of a body-mind-environment sensory interrelation (…) The meaning of sensory perception must be studied in a specific context – that is, in an environment (a point that the somatization paradigm tends to overlook).
>
> (Howes 2019a, p.32)

For Howes our sensory perceptions are not simply a psychosomatic phenomenon. (Howes cited in Balandina 2005).

Following this vein, my senses played a vital role throughout this research. During the observations, both my mind and my body were actively engaged while following students and educators in the classroom environment. Often, I found myself mirroring their behaviour either on the teaching transmission or on the learning process. Initially, this mirroring mechanism was performed unconsciously. However, after several months, especially after accidently filming myself during a class observation, I became aware of my physical reaction while observing. This realization aligns with what neuroscience refers to as 'mirror circuits'.

From a phenomenological perspective, the human body (including the body of the researcher/observer), is "perceptible and perceiving, sensible and sentient" (Crossley 2007, p.82) while it can think and feel at the same time. As Denise Nuttall also argues, a sensory-informed ethnographic approach pays attention to all of our sensory systems (visual, auditory, tactile, kinaesthetic, gustatory, olfactory), all of which are part of our embodied existence in the world.

Barsalou in her article *Grounded Cognition* (2007) notes that according to social neuroscientists "mirror circuits provide a general mechanism for understanding diverse mental states in others (e.g., Decety & Grezes 2006, Gallese et al. 2004, 2007)" (Barsalou 2007, p.7). She further explains, "Simulation provides a general mechanism for establishing empathy (…) imitation and social coordination" (Barsalou 2007, p.7).

In this context, both my physical reaction and unconscious simulation became a significant aspect of my field work as part of an autoethnographic process and engagement. This embodied response not only facilitated a deeper empathetic connection with the research participants, but also highlighted the importance of corporeal involvement in the contemporary dance transmission process. As Crossley also noted, "My experience is embodied but it is not an experience of my body. It is an embodied experience of the world around me. And for the world to be perceived by me it is necessary that my body, as a site of experience, sinks into the background and does not become the object of its own experience" (Crossley 2007, p.83).

To clarify this distinction as regards the differentiation of embodied experience and experience of the body, I draw on Edward Casey (1987), who differentiates between the body memory as remembering – habitus (see also Mauss 1979) and memory of the body as recollecting reflection. Consequently, in this sense, my own dance experience aligns with Casey's notion of body memory, while my researcher's identity aligns with Crossley's argument about reflecting on the body sinking into the background. The embodied memory transmitted through observation and orality became a methodological key and an epistemological element in this research, by supporting the role of a lived/felt experience, while reflecting on the dance transmission process.

Therefore, “Body techniques facilitate both the depth of ethnographic interrogation and the breadth of survey and archival analysis” (Crossley 2007, p.93).

This study contributes to emerging scholarship on embodied and hybrid dance archives arguing that the recognition of the dancer’s body is both as an archived knowledge space, and a site of active agency.

Furthermore, this research emphasises the significant shift from traditional, text-based documentation to embodied, multisensory informed archives of contemporary dance transmission. In examining the evolution of dance-archiving practices, it is evident that various methods were implemented throughout the years, which acknowledge the body as a subject or entity, while others consider the body as a tool, a site of knowledge. The philosophical, anthropological, and neuroscientific perspectives reveal that a body functions as a multilayered site of expression, while at the same time it functions as an archive of lived experience, memory, and identity, where the historical trajectory of archiving reveals power structures and hierarchical systems of preservation.

Situating myself both as dance practitioner and ethnographic researcher, I employed autoethnography and sensory ethnography to explore dance transmission within the framework of higher dance education in Greece. The duality of my role allowed for a deeper engagement with the field of contemporary dance. During this research, the classroom became a site of performative knowledge exchange. In the course of observation, practices of mirroring, simulation, and empathetic responses became tools of multisensed understanding. This thesis contributes to an emerging discourse that values embodied knowledge as an essential element for preserving pedagogical contemporary dance practices of transmission, while researching dance heritage by employing a dynamic and holistic approach.

2.4.1. LEAP, IDOCDE (International Documentation of Contemporary dance Education) - LACE (Symposium for Dance and Other Contemporary Practices).

The notion of dance archives and shared embodied practices also concerned the 'International Documentation of Contemporary Dance Education' (IDOCDE), which was developed as a pilot project in 2011 running until 2022, under the umbrella name of "REFLEX Europe", financially supported by the European Union. REFLEX Europe consists of two European partnerships, "LEAP" and "IDOCDE". LEAP "focused on diverse practices in teaching contemporary dance throughout Europe"[87] while IDOCDE "created an online and offline network of contemporary dance teachers to show their work, and create a shared legacy."[88]. According to its founders, IDOCDE "is a community-driven project, designed to develop and document practices of contemporary dance education", "to improve networking among contemporary dance educators and increase visibility of this vibrant art form"[89].

IDOCDE encapsulates several actions, such as workshops (Mind the Dance Lab), annual residencies (initiated in 2013)[90], annual symposia, along with a website (www.idocde.net) and a digital publication (www.mindthedance.com)[91] of articles concerning documentation. Moreover, Mind the Dance Lab and IDOCDE provided

[87] www.idocde.net [accessed 10 Aug 2024].
[88] www.idocde.net [accessed 10 Aug 2024].
[89] www.idocde.net [accessed 10 Aug 2024].
[90] www.idocde.net [accessed 10 Aug 2024].
[91] 'Mind the Dance: A (movement for) Guide to Documenting Contemporary Dance (Movement). Teaching is a digital publication. It is a collection of essays, manuals, scores, exercises, and maps, giving voice to a multitude of stances, ideas, and applications in and around documenting movement. It aims to motivate and empower the reader-teacher-artist to use creative documenting to enhance the teaching and artistic practice [accessed 10 Feb 2025].

space and time to document the process of dance teaching and learning in the dance making.

Ethnochoreological documentation serves the purpose of unfolding the multilayered and diverse phenomenon of dance by disseminated knowledge, providing access, offering informed feedback (Sheehy 1992), while expanding the ephemeral limits of oral tradition/performance and teaching of contemporary dance. On the other hand, hybrid, heterogeneous, multinational, multicultural, and multidisciplinary communities ensure dance's polymorphic substance acts as an engine for empowering not only a multisensorial understanding of contemporary dance and dance education, but also of dance practitioners in the field of academia. In the next section, I share my experiences in this context to illustrate how this environment fostered significant insights of my practice as an educator, through an embodied engagement.

2.4.2. Mind the Dance Lab - A Brief Dance Autoethnography[92].

The Mind the Dance Lab Vienna took place on 20-21 July 2018, at the ImPulsTanz Vienna International Dance Festival. The Mind the Dance Residency took place on 23–27 July 2018, and the 6th IDOCDE Symposium concluded the sequence on July 27-29, 2018, also part of ImPulsTanz. All three initiatives were components of the IDOCDE annual symposium. The Main theme of the lab was the digital publication of 'Mind the Dance' and the IDOCDE website.

[92] See appendix No.13, Figure 24.

The workshop focused on two axes: physical memory - the corporeal process of archiving, and the individual practice of documenting one's role within a shared and collective dance experience. After a brief introduction, Anouk Llaurens [93], the instructor on the first day of the MTD lab, invited us (the participants) to "dive into physical and intellectual content of MTD Lab through the collective practice of the breathing archive"[94]. We were provided with A4 sheets, pens and articles from the MTD publication referring to practices of documenting contemporary dance and education. We were also free to interpret the notion of documentation and dance-education practice as well as the concept of a 'breathing archive'.

I wrote the following (personal notes are in italics),

> *It is my first visit to Vienna, Austria. It is summer, 20th of July 2018. I am inside a vast dance studio with a yellow floor during the IDOCDE preparatory workshop which is held in the Arsenal (International ImPulsTanz festival space), filled with more than thirty dance practitioners from around the world. We are trying to understand and document contemporary dance in various ways and dance education while also attempting to capture the process of teaching and learning in the making, in the doing and in the becoming. We are looking to create and sense a 'breathing-living archive'. What does this mean? We gather, share and exchange the ephemeral experience of movement through our bodies. How can we integrate 'the other' in our experience?*

[93] Anouk Llaurens is a freelance artist, teacher, researcher and shiatsu practitioner. She led the research on poetic, polyphonic and live documentation. (Biography information in www.mindthedance.com [accessed 01 Mar 2019].
[94]Class notes.

(M.Panourgia, personal notes 20/07/2018)

The central question of ethnochoreological studies is the analysis of what a dance process is within a specific context (Foley 2012). Dance is performed, experienced and taught. The primary aim is to provide access to and the dissemination of multisensory and corporeal knowledge, alongside efforts to understand others and ourselves through dance practice and various processes (Foley 2012).

> *Thoughts, notes, sketches, discussions, refrain of songs; Mind the Dance articles were about scrunching and unscrunching pieces of paper, in an attempt to be incorporated literally within the dancers' bodies. This process makes a sound, a noise, one very difficult to ignore. A couple of short contact improvisation routines are deriving. (...) Who is the other? Who are you? Who am I? What can I learn from the other, from you, from me? (...) A sentence seen from a piece of paper on the floor draws my attention. It read: how are you? bored? curious? Can you integrate what other people are doing around you into your experience? I am questioning myself about the same thing. Can I? Can I interpret their dance experience through mine? (...) Voice, vision and sense. Bodies are lying down, papers too, on the floor. Bodies and papers are forming a mosaic of an illusion. What happens is a certain action, documentation, interpretation and understanding.*
>
> (M.Panourgia, personal notes 20/07/2018)

The three questions from the article – How are you? Bored? Curious? Can you integrate what other people are doing around you in your experience?[95] triggered my interest. I then focused on capturing as much information as possible to artistically create my own archive. Yet, it didn't take too long to feel overwhelmed. There were too many people and too many processes going on at the same time, which where impossible to capture. I could not see, hear or write anything. I stepped out. I leaned on a wall and let my eyes wander.

On the second day, Sabina Holzer[96] (instructor during the second day) and Anouk Llaurens invited us to revisit our experience of documentation and share questions, or utter what inspired us in relation to day one. My contribution to the discussion emerged from my notes:

> *What was visible and almost tangible was the interconnection of the people in the room. The dynamic created by physical and mental concentration on a common goal - creating a breathing archive - was powerful. The way bodies reacted through this process triggered my interest as to document this, since the concrete process of documentation became a new-born living organism nourished by the existence of moving bodies. I also sketched what I perceived to be an important element for documentation; the connection between bodies,*

[95] Llaurens, A. (2016) 'Moving Drawing Writing: Re-visiting Drawing as a Tool for Poetic and Polyphonic Dance Documentation', *Mind the Dance Lab* www.mindthedancelab.com [accessed 22 Jan 2024].

[96] Sabina Holzer is a performer, choreographer and author. She facilitates interdisciplinary gatherings at the intersection of the theory and dance practice. She is a certified practitioner in the systemic-integrational movement study. She is an editorial member of www.corpusweb.net who writes, publishes and performs texts relevant to contemporary dance and performance. Biography information in www.mindthedance.com [accessed 01 Sep 2024].

minds and (soul)/motivation,[97] *in other words, to unleash human behaviour through movement.*

(M.Panourgia, personal notes 21/07/2018)

We were also introduced to the notion of scores and automatic writing[98]. The scores served as choreographic instructions for a dance piece. Automatic writing is the process of producing texts without self-censorship allowing flow in writing.

Dance notation and reflexive writing are methods used in an ethnochoreological approach. Automatic writing also relates to the autoethnographic method. However, I questioned these methods. Can writings replace a living experience? Or are the texts just "cenotaphs" (Brandstetter 2020, p.1), texts without corporeal senses? Non-places where the body is replaced by words?

Multiple scores were spread across the space[99]. We had to choose at least two and perform them.

The scores do not look like scores; at least they do not look like choreographic scores. Most of them are random instructions, unshaped lines; sketches or random thoughts such as 'Erase what you have written down'[100]*. What a contradiction! Erase. We are trying to document by erasing? I am so troubled*

[97] I use the word soul in my notebook, since my research theme as an artist in residence was the holistic platform of dance, encompassing the ancient Greek notion of the body, mind, and soul triptych. However, I do believe that the word motivation describes my intention best.
[98] Holzer, S. (2016) 'Tracing the Invisible: Writing as a Trace', *Mind the Dance Lab* www.mindthedancelab.com [accessed 04 Mar 2019].
[99] See appendix No.14, Figure 25.
[100] See appendix No.15, Figure 26.

by this score that I refuse to go away from it. A chaotic movement is released around me, inside the huge studio. Everyone is moving. I look around trying to find the missing piece of paper. What could it be? I cannot find it. I run to my bag, grab my phone and I take a picture of the score.

(M. Panourgia, personal notes 21/07/2018)

I placed my feet beneath the score proposing myself as a three–dimensional living archive of what was erased; trying to connect with the intangible and the ephemeral; trying to imagine, sense, perceive, and comprehend what was there before me. The misplaced…Was it truly erased? How could I perform it? Does it exist in someone else's body, memory or skin?

Although archiving seems to be a problematic term, I based my interpretation on Foucault's suggestion that it is a system of transforming simultaneously past, present and future (Foucault 1972). As McFee argues "there is no such thing as a complete knowledge of what dancing is" (McFee 1999, p.81). However, it is possible to document the closest process to it, which is what we experienced, sensed and perceived to be while dancing.

The second day closed with a lengthy discussion on what happened during the workshop. Although a lot of thoughts were expressed, I personally can include them all in a quote by Rogers, "The goal of education is the facilitation of change" (Rogers, 1969, p.104). Therefore, terms, names and study approaches need to transform, unfold, mix and evolve in order to facilitate the needs of the field and the people within it.

The IDOCDE project and its associated initiatives, such as the Mind the Dance Lab and Mind the Dance digital publication, offer a crucial contribution to dance documentation. These projects expand conventional archival forms and emphasize the multisensory process and ephemeral nature of contemporary dance education. Moreover, practices like automatic writing, score-based performance, and ethnochoreological inquiry deepen the project's multimodal base. Ultimately, these practices highlight how digital and embodied archives can coexist, supporting, enriching and completing each other, ensuring that dance can be both preserved and researched within pedagogical and artistic contexts.

2.4.3. Digital Dance Archives and Institutional Initiatives for Documenting Dance.

This section refers to institutionalised practices of dance archiving, digital archives in particular. During the last decade, several prominent institutions have contributed to the development of digital archives. In particular, I will give a brief description of the paradigms from the University of Limerick (National Dance Archives), the Coventry University[101] with Siobhan Davies archives, C-DaRE (motion archives), WhoLoDancE and Motion Bank digital projects.

The National Dance Archive of Ireland [102](NDAI) is the first of its kind in Ireland, which I was lucky enough to visit early in my research as a master's degree student at Irish World Academy of Music and Dance – University of Limerick. It is a public archive providing access to multimedia dance recourses. Its aim is to link older dance

[101] https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/centre-for-dance-research/ [accessed 18 Apr 2025].
[102] https://www.ul.ie/library/explore-collections/national-dance-archive-ireland

history archives with present-day ones, and shed light on research undertaken by dance scholars, in Ireland and internationally.

While it has a significant role for Dance heritage in Ireland, it is not considered to be a cutting-edge digital archiving practice. Institutions such as the New York Public Library for Performing Arts (NYPL)[103] or Dance Collection Danse in Toronto employ more diverse and technologically advanced methods of digital archiving. NYPL's Jerome Robbins Dance Division, for example "has amassed and preserved one of the largest collections of dance documentation in the world" (Yu 2016, p.218) including moving images, notation scores, oral histories, photographs, costume designs, and ephemera" (Yu 2016). The aim of the collection is "to legitimize dance as both art form and academic subject by developing and circulating now widely recognized terms to describe the field of dance knowledge and by creating its own documentation of dance via oral histories and performance videos" (Yu 2016, p.218).

Similarly, Dance Collection Danse, as Natalia Esling (2013) notes, moved beyond the static preservation into the creation of dynamic interactive platforms that encourages contributions from practitioners, choreographers, and researchers while making the dance heritage accessible (Esling 2013).

In contrast, the University of Coventry (2009-2021) created a digital archive solely focusing on the work of Siobhan Davies' Dance Company. Siobhan Davies' RePlay is a free-access archive online, providing material for dance researchers concentrating on choreography approaches.

[103] https://www.nypl.org/locations/lpa/jerome-robbins-dance-division

In addition to the above, there is also the Centre of Dance Research (C- DaRE) at Coventry University. C-DaRE aims to map and preserve Europe's dance heritage – it specializes in interdisciplinary approaches of artistic and scholarly dance research. Moreover, it explores such themes as cultural heritage, computing, Artificial Intelligence and digital performance among others. C-DaRE has a digital publication, including performance documentation (films) and other research projects such as DanceMap[104] seeking to promote dance heritage.

From the perspective on the digitalized era of archiving, the WhoLoDancE project, a three-year EU-funded project bridging dance with research in movement computing also extends the possibility of archiving. As a result of this research, a web-based Movement Library was formed, including a large number of motion-captured sequences of contemporary dance, ballet, Greek folk and flamenco, allowing users to annotate the content by selecting predefined tags or creating new ones. While annotating the captured dance – reflections on the role of tool-creation, both Katerina El Raheb and Yannis Ioannidis (2021) argued that this project was a digital archive that could not only preserve dance practices, but could also enhance pedagogical methods by allowing educators to interpret, and reflect on movement patterns. In addition, it helped deepen one's understanding of dance as an embodied and performative practice along with critical engagement and personalization in the learning process.

On the other hand, the Motion Bank,[105] a project by Scott deLahunta (project leader) and William Forsythe (artistic director), was a four-year choreographic research

[104] https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directories/projects/2025/dancemap-european-dance-heritage/ [accessed 18 Apr. 2025].
[105] https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directories/current-projects/2015/motion-bank/. See also deLahunta 2016.

development funded by the German Federal Culture Foundation**,** intending to create online digital scores, in collaboration with guest choreographers, making them publicly available via the Motion Bank website. This project brought together partners from Australia, Europe, and North America. Motion Bank is rooted in choreographic practices emphasizing annotation and other technical counterparts of the choreographic process, such as spatial design, temporal structure etc. Although both projects utilize digital technologies in order to extend the boundaries of dance knowledge, WhoLoDancE puts emphasis on education and movement analysis in teaching, whereas Motion Bank focuses on choreographic inquiry.

Together, these examples demonstrate the range of institutional and project-based approaches to digital dance archiving. NDAI provides national resources for Irish Dance, WhoLoDance, Motion Bank, Siobhan Davies archives, where RePlay and C-DaRE, push the boundaries of capturing and analysing dance. In the broader international context, institutions such as NYPL and Dance Collection Danse reveal the possibilities and the gaps in digital dance archiving.

To sum up, institutions such as the University of Limerick (National Dance Archives), Coventry University[106] (Siobhan Davies archives – RePlay), C-DaRE, and digital initiatives such as WhoLoDancE and Motion Bank are shifting dance archiving into the digital era. Their digital platforms enable interactive engagement with dance while supporting interdisciplinary research. These efforts highlight the significance of a dynamic documentation and archiving of dance, allowing for critical reflection and active participation in dance studies.

[106] https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/centre-for-dance-research/ [accessed 18 Apr. 2025].

2.5 Ethnographic Filming.

Susan Manning (2017) argues that digital approaches could potentially widen dance research and contribute to dance heritage. Could digitised ethnographic films support Manning's argument?

For visual anthropologist and dance practitioner Jaynie Aydin (2007) "dance on film is an end product that exists beyond the space and time of its original performance separate (apart) from the performer. Because the nature of the film detaches the dancing body from the lived experience of dance" (Aydin 2007, p.1). She argues that the "in-depth investigation of the researcher's relation with the material" could provide insights into "how movement becomes inscribed in film and consequently re-incorporated by future generations of dancers" (Aydin 2007, p.3). Likewise, scholar and filmmaker Andy Lawrence emphasises the value of ethnographic filmmaking in research, highlighting its dual role as a tool for documentation and a resource for analysis. For Lawrence, filmmaking serves not only as a recording device but also as a form of research itself, facilitating a deeper engagement.

Although this research initially included creating a short ethnographic film as an archival product accompanying the dissertation, due to time constraints potentially jeopardising the quality of the film, and completing the dissertation, the film was postponed as a project for further research. Nonetheless, important audio-visual recordings will be included in the appendix. These recordings serve as valuable raw material that could contribute to the development of a refined ethnographic or archival film in the future. Furthermore, this material could evolve into a form of archive for further reflection and analysis.

2.6. Chapter 2 Conclusion.

In this Chapter, I critically engaged with relevant literature concerning the central axis of this dissertation. This research illustrates the evolving nature of contemporary dance transmission within higher education in Greece, highlighting embodied oral practices while introducing the term somatoralities. Ultimately, it relates to a multimodal understanding of documentation beyond narrow text-based frameworks (Varvantakis & Nolas 2018, 2019). This study is a continuation of embodied oral tradition emerging from the classroom acting as a sensorial space of knowledge exchange, while at the same time mirroring simulation and empathetic engagement, all of which allow for a truly dynamic archive.

This research emerges from the participants' somatoralities and the wider socio-political contexts such as the Presidential Decree 85/2022 triggering massive response from the art world in Greece. This event underlines the interconnection between dance, identity and politics. A key finding of this study is the on-going cyclical model of dance education where students train, then become dancers who return back to Higher Professional Private Dance School as educators. This model has created a specific tradition of corporeal knowledge that is transferred and anchored in memory and experience in Greece.

Additionally, this research examines international archiving and documentation initiatives and institutional digital archives that expand traditional forms of archiving. Incorporating digital tools, embodied documentation and communal approaches offers new possibilities for preserving the ephemeral qualities of dance while offering fertile ground for critical reflection and pedagogical innovation. All these paradigms highlight the need for a hybrid living archival model that can be well rooted in the human body.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY IN RESEARCHING CONTEMPORARY DANCE TRANSMISSION AS ORAL TRADITION: A MULTIFOLD, MULTISENSORIAL, MULTI-SITED INVESTIGATION

3.1. Introduction.

Methodologically this research used multimodal forms of gathering and analysing qualitative data in the field of contemporary dance transmission. "Using my insider awareness (emic perspective) and my researcher position role (etic perspective)" (Pike 1954, p.8)[107], I approached the contemporary dance transmission process acknowledging the limitations related to the subjective experience of the field, particularly concerning embodied orality. I applied multilayered strategies for capturing, documenting, archiving and vocalizing the actions of the people in the field, contextualising them in a holistic form with relevant literature on body politics, dance pedagogy, historical points of reference in the contemporary dance ethos, testimonies from the people in the field, and self-ethnographic techniques.

This chapter is dedicated to analysing the methodology used in the research. Section 3.1. introduces the chapter. Section 3.2. provides an analysis of autoethnography and self-reflexivity as methodologies employed. Section 3.3. presents the ethnographic interviews divided in two subsections: 3.3.1. Course Directors' and Contemporary Dance Educators' interviews, and 3.3.2. Students' Focus Groups Overview. Additionally, Section 3.4. outlines the methodology regarding dance ethnographies and

[107] See also Loutzaki 1989, Headland, Pike, Harris, 1990, Koutsouba 1997.

Section 3.5. describes the methodology used for the ethnographic filming. The final Section 3.6. concludes the chapter.

3.1.1. Literature.

During the research process, I was critically engaged with relevant literature on the topics of contemporary dance transmission, oral tradition and documentation/archiving of artistic practice particularly through ethnographic filming. The Greek bibliography encompasses dance scholars such as Vaso Barbousi (2014), Steriani Tsintziloni (2012, 2015), Pagona Bournelli (2008), Natalie Zervou (2015), and Erica Charalambous (2022, 2025) among others.

I also engaged with the work of Eirini Loutzaki (1989, 2008, 2022), Paraskevas Potiropoulos (2018), Nandia Seremetaki (1994), and Alexandra Balandina (2025) among others. Moreover, the international bibliography includes well-known dance scholars such as Duncan G. Gilbert (2014), Cynthia Novack (1990), Sally Banes (1963), Stephanie Skura (1990), and Jennifer Roche (2021) among others. Concerning the notion of embodied movement experience, this study focuses on scholars such as Marcell Mauss (1935, 1945), Nick Crossley (2007), Lawrence W. Barsalou (2008) and others.

In addition, autoethnography and sensory ethnography were both informed by research with anthropologists and ethnographers namely Sarah Pink (2007, 2009, 2010), Tim Ingold (2000, 2011), David Howes (1991, 2019), Heewon Chang (2008, 2013) among

others. Embodied orality in this dissertation is supported by scholars such as Walter J. Ong (2012), Nick Crossley (2007), Mats Melin (2012) and others, while documentation and archival inquiry draw from scholars such as Jacques Derrida (1995), Michel Foucault (1969) and more recent ones including André Lepecki (2007, 2010), Timmy De Laet (2020), Scott deLahunta (2013, 2016), Sarah Whatley (2008, 2013, 2020) among others.

Pedagogical forms and the notion of institutionalisation within higher contemporary dance education were informed by scholars such as Marc Augé (1992), Yvonne Hardt (2020), Smith-Autard (2002), Douglas Rinser (2008, 2010), Henry Giroux (2020), John Dewey (1916) and others. Ultimately, the ethnographic filming process was informed by scholars like Metje Postma (2006), Christos Varvandakis and Sevasti -Melissa Nolas (2018, 2019), Jaynie Aydin (2007) and others.

3.1.2. Autoethnography.

I emerged from the same institutional framework that is now under investigation in this research. Seventeen years ago, I experienced the same training with some of the educators/course directors whom I currently research. This created a vivid flashback of personal memories, sensations, thoughts and even subconscious corporeal reactions triggered during the observation of the transmission processes. It felt impossible not to use my personal view comparing and contrasting differences and/or similarities in situations between now and then.

In addition to this overwhelming experience, I had to go through my own feelings both as a dance educator and an artist at a specific historical turning point. The emotions I dealt with during the four years of this research, are deeply anchored within the contemporary dance somatorality I share with the people in this field, without meaning that this communication, this "embodied co-performative participation" (Papachristoforou 2022, p.173) was an easy task, or that it would automatically be deemed as light or uncritical.

The senses also played a significant role in this research. As Balandina (2025) also describes in her book Ethnographic Research in Ethnomusicology:

> The ethnographic process is an embodied practice and the everyday experience of the field is an embodied experience. (…) Think (with) your body. The researcher's body, senses and emotions constitute a place of experience and a tool for research, communication and understanding of cultural meanings.
>
> (Balandina 2025, p.158)

Being a dancer verbalising thinking bodies - both those in field bodies and my own body – in turn creates a tension between what is seen, what is felt, what is remembered, what is related, what is shared and what is a common ground of understanding of the other and oneself through the other. Therefore, the autoethnographic method was considered an important element of this research as a form of integrating, positioning and at the same time expressing myself in and out of the field (see also Ellis & Bochner 2000, Anderson 2006, Chang 2008) .

3.1.3. Fieldnotes – Personal Notes.

A part of the ethnographic research closely relates to the auto-ethnographic process are the fieldnotes. The notes for this research allowed me to engage with thick description of Clifford & Geertz (1973), corresponding interpretation and abstract texts related to the sensescapes of the field. However, a couple of questions that kept coming up, particularly during the first months of field work, were as to whether the notes would be sufficient, and how long it would take to convert text into digital format. During the research this procedure started to take shape, in this way facilitating both the actions observed and my reflection.

All ethnographic fieldnotes[108] were created throughout the research. They were all done in a multimodal structure, including brief scratch notes (Balandina 2025) in verbal form, namely words and notions of interest, and non-verbal form like sketches, diagrams, and analytical notes. Apart from fieldnotes, however, a detailed diary was kept as well, in order to organise class timelines, interview dates, times and places accordingly. "The fieldnotes also included detailed accurate reproduction of real events" (Madden 2017, p.117) incorporating reflections with links to relevant literature, documentation of verbal instructions, anecdotes of situations occurring during classes while the camera was off and notes related to intrapersonal relations.

According to Barz (2008), "Field notes are our attempt to understand, document, and ultimately interpret our experience in the field" (Barz 2008, p.210). Therefore, a second notebook was used later during research to categorise relevant points of interest and

[108] See appendix No.16, Figure 27..

create a type of choreographed draft, a form of dramaturgical narrative of the field. Looking back at the fieldnotes, I suggest that whole dance classes could be reconstructed piece by piece creating an archive that is not based on a series of technical exercises but rather on sounds, sensations, dynamics in space, and correlations between verbal instructions, corporeal feedback and performativity.

In particular, for this research, the observations and the note-keeping procedure created a sense of continuation, from the participants' body movement to my body, and from there to the written artifacts. The notes were categorized as follows,

- Observational (writing down what I saw)
- Audio-visual records of classes (connecting notes to videos)
- Points of interest (notes connected with literature)
- Senses (how I felt while being in the field)
- Questions (thoughts for interviews)
- Music lists (music accompanying classes)
- Sketches (mapping of the space/class – or when words would not suffice)
- Photos/videos (captured on camera, when possible, while respecting limitations as regards space, or as to whether participants were comfortable with the above).
- More information about classes informing dance ethnographies ensuing from participants).

3.1.4. Ethnographic Interviews.

Interviews were an important element for documenting the ethnographic research for this investigation. Moreover, interviews varied depending on the person I was interviewing. For example, there were three different types of interviews organised, namely targeted (structured) interviews, semi-structured ethnographic interviews and informal communication.

Although I'd already prepared a draft with the questions and the interview form, it was obvious that every discussion was based on what the people of the field brought to the table. Therefore, most of the time it was uncharted territory for me. The interviews complemented the audio-visual recordings and visual material such as videos and photographs taken via camera or mobile phone. Moreover, it is important to point out that although the interviews only took place once, there was daily communication - informal discussion with all participants who actually filled any information gaps.

Interviews were divided into three different target groups. The first were group interviews with all students, from all focus groups and all three years of studies. The second cohort were dance interviews with educators (six in total). Each educator could teach more than one year group, for example an educator would be appointed to teach only during the first-year group, or first and third-year groups, or second semester of the second-year group. The decision on the above permutations was based on various factors, including the vision of the course director had for each year, each year's students' needs, or more practical reasons like the complexity of the performance

schedule during the final year. The third group pertains to individual interviews with course directors.

Likewise, questions for the educators were divided into three different but interrelated parts. In the first part, there were questions that educators could both reflect on and elaborate on the description of the technique they use, the goals they have set for each year, the preparation for the course, perspective on their teaching process, and methodology approaches of contemporary dance used in Higher Professional Private Dance Schools.

The second part refers to my observation during their classes. The questions were based on what they verbalized as instructions during teaching. These questions gave an outsider view of their teaching skills, leading them to an in-depth introspection during interviews. The third part refers to the themes that surfaced from the students' focus groups. Surprisingly, the themes were almost identical throughout all focus groups, regarding the consent for touch during class, the use of gender pronouns, issues of fatigue, pain and injury during the three years of studies, and hierarchy within the framework of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools.

Furthermore, in parallel meetings and in addition to observing classes, I conducted a series of ethnographic interviews with the students focus groups (nine in total – three from each school). The groups varied in number, between seven and twenty-five students depending on the school, the year and the daily schedule. These interviews explored each group's perception of the contemporary dance technique they were being taught, their experiences of the learning process of contemporary dance, and their

responses to overall feedback (verbal, tactile, imaginative). The discussion also delved into their sensory experiences during classes and corporeal awareness, amongst others, differing from one focus group to another.

After completing the above interviews, I then interviewed the course directors. Their questions focused more on the institutionalised framework of contemporary dance teaching while also emphasising their viewpoint on important qualities that educators must have, and what their future vision is on the transmission of the contemporary dance idiom in Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. Beyond their analytical value, these interviews also constitute part of the oral living tradition through which contemporary dance knowledge and practices can be transmitted to the next generation. Even though in the dissertation informal communication was not integrated as written text, it was still taken into consideration throughout this research.

3.1.5. Audio-visual Recordings and Ethnographic Filming.

Audio-visual recordings and photographs were also part of this research. The way I used the video-camera was totally different from the way I used the photographic camera and my mobile-phone camera. The video-camera was used as an 'audience' – an "extra eye" (Menning & Murris 2023, p.4) that acts as a 'conversation partner' (Menning & Murris 2023, p.4) rather than as an active agent seeking a specific action from the people in the field. This reflexive mirror allows the filmed material to escape objectivity and become "an emergent kind of data…in need of deeper and deeper layers of interpretation" (Menning & Murris 2023, p.2). Therefore, the camera captured the dancers' position, their dance/practice, their imprint in space and time, and the

performed ‘rituals’ in class. Through this landscape recording, contemporary dance transmission emerged both as oral and corporeal practice.

However, the photographic camera was used clearly as an active agent, as a projection of my I/eye. The camera lens followed and chased, adapting accordingly, creating a framework, while deliberately choosing a series of shots. I as Marianna the researcher, the observant, was photographing what I found appealing, interesting and fitting the moment, the class, and the theme of the research. Consequently, being able to use both the semi ‘objective’ landscape captured on video camera, and the intense ‘subjective frame’ seen with my own eyes, was a very concrete and defining moment for me (Panourgia 2024).

At this moment, it is important to primarily remember that the field of research is not homogenous, although at times it seems to have some distinctive traits. Moreover, all information is interpreted through the lens of the research questions and the ethnochoreological methodology. As Lincoln and Guba argue “The inquiry and the object of inquiry interact to influence each other; knower and known are inseparable” (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p.15). From this perspective another researcher from a different field of studies, having different research questions or different artistic, academic, cultural, national, or even linguistic background, would probably have a non-identical understanding and interpretation of the field (Tedlock 2000). Even though this diversity in interpretation could be perceived as chaotic, it is this multiplicity that enriches the research, providing meaningful feedback to the community being studied (Geertz 1973), especially in terms of dancers’ kinaesthetic awareness and the interpretative engagement with their embodied practice (Ehrenberg 2021).

Personal orality, the spoken remembrance of an embodied experience is conveyed through an individual corpus/body, by way of vocalizing the individual's corporeal understanding, becoming then a collective corpus (in this case, from a contemporary dance educator to the contemporary dance students). At the same time, in a progressive pedagogical form, the exact opposite occurs. The collective corpus of information, already built from individual somatoralities[109], feeds back into the dancing community: initially through the interpersonal relations between dance students and dance educators in class, and then as new dance educators start their practice on contemporary dance transmission.

Thus, we can draw attention to the phenomenon of bifurcation and exponential augmentation of variations within the stream of what is supposed to be 'tradition'. These shared and interconnected passages through time and space inaugurate a chain reaction that is repeated in its general form, which could shape the construction of a tradition through the years – a tale traveling from bodies to words, and vice versa, infinitely.

I must underline that in this research, I do not analyse the function of this tradition, but I do highlight how significant it is to the lives of the participants. Hence, the focus of this ethnographic fieldwork and research corresponds to important on-going concerns of the field members (Nadai and Maeder cited in Falzon, 2009). More specifically, I do not envision reconstructing or deconstructing the history of contemporary dance transmission within higher dance education in Greece, but rather contributing to the

[109] See more in Chapter 2.2.

methodology and qualitative research of dance while creating both solid literature and hopefully an archive, towards further study.

In addition to the above viewpoints from dance educators and dance students, my own perspective as a researcher, an observer and a part-time participant, also merges with the field through autoethnographies and self-reflections. My multifaceted role and status in a dance class were both visible and accepted. Due to my pre-existing studies in the same environment, the people in the field think of me as a person of understanding, a former insider who comes back to understand more. That allowed my memories, thoughts, poetries, and sketches to be present during conversation with the actual insiders. As it is commonly said, working with people you cannot but influence, and be influenced by them in a mutual and spiralling form of connection and communication. Indeed, as Spradley underlines, "Wherever the ethnographer may go and whatever the size of the social unit (...) all participant observation takes place in social situations" (Spradley, 1980, p. 39).

At this point, I would like to share an anecdote from the research, which came up after approximately five to six months in the field, referring to the 'social situations' mentioned above. As a researcher in one of the Higher Professional Dance Schools, I was sitting on a wooden floor at the side of the room while taking notes, with my camera on. At the end of the class, one of the students approached me and gave me a chocolate candy[110] because I kept working while, as they stated, "We didn't give our best performance during class today"[111], and "We are sorry that you captured that, probably

[110] See appendix No.17, Figure 28.
[111] Students' quotation from class.

is not worth enough"[112]. This gesture toward me, revealed more about the actual landscape of the field than the video recording ever could. By this I mean, this gesture revealed what is perceived as being important in the field rendered admirable from an insider's point of view.

The multimodal ways of filming were important since my aim was to conduct a multi-dimentional, in-depth investigation of the sensed experience in the field. As MacDougall argues "Visual anthropology must deal not only with what people say and do but also with the sensory and affective dimensions of experience, which film is uniquely equipped to convey" (MacDougall 2006, p.3). Similarly, Pink emphasizes the importance of audio-visual media in grasping sensory, embodied and affective aspects of ethnographic experience (Pink 2013). She noted that "Visual ethnography is not simply about producing images but about using visual methods to explore, represent, and communicate the multisensoriality of experience" (Pink 2013, p.4).

Therefore, my personal ethnochoreological fieldnotes were also closely connected with the audio-visual recordings of classes. As this material becomes involved with the overall research, it simultaneously highlights the human intraconnections, interconnections and dynamics within the field while creating an archive of body-mind testimonies.

[112] Students' quotation from class.

3.2. Autoethnography and Self-reflexivity.

In this research, I used the method of autoethnography as an approach to combine description and analysis of personal experiences (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011, Gleiman, Knolton & Mokhtarian 2015) related to the topic of contemporary dance transmission. In other words, I used my pre-existing involvement in the field as a dance student, dancer and educator, in order to unveil the cultural substrate of contemporary dance within higher education and produce new knowledge. As it is also stated in Gleiman, Knolton & Mokhtarian (2015) this can be seen as "a form of narrative inquiry further legitimizing the personal stories and experiences we share" (Gleiman, Knolton & Mokhtarian 2015, p.3).

My personal journey as an active contemporary dancer and educator was informed by people in the field, through artistic meetings and engagement with other dance researchers, artists and scholars during the four years of this investigation, as well as this, autoethnography and self-reflections were a significant part of the research. That is to say, my ethnographer's perspective and experience of reality (Pink 2007a) produced knowledge of the field. Likewise, the reflexivity between theory, field experience and ethnographic writing is an extremely fertile ground for the dance field to expand (Poulakis in Papakosta & Loutzaki 2022).

In addition, this research was influenced by my participation at the annual IDOCDE (later renamed Lace) symposium and residencies at the ImPulsTanz International Dance Festival (Vienna, Austria). My will to explore the everyday practices, identity formation and ethical questions (Pink 2010) of contemporary dance transmission led me to

embrace the importance of a multimodal methodology capturing the intimate storytelling of the performative/dancing bodies in the field (Loots 2016).

I now describe an encounter and a practice that influenced this research, called 'Blind learning', from Lisa Nelson's *Tuning Scores*, which created a paradigm shift for me regarding ethnographic documentation of the sensed learning experience. In July 2023, I participated as a guest dance artist and dance educator in the residency Ecotone 2, hosted by Anouk Llaurens, Julien Bruneau, and Eva Maes. The residency was part of the Lace#1: Topographies of Touch – Symposium for Dance and Other Contemporary Practices.

This was my fifth time participating in this annual symposium. However, this year the symposium was renamed from IDOCDE: International Documentation of Contemporary Dance Education to Lace#1 ImPulsTanz Symposium for Dance and Other Contemporary Practices in an attempt, as the funders underline "to address the fact that the symposium outgrew its original design and is ready to look towards new horizons"[113]. While the name changed, the symposium was still "organised using familiar methodologies: experimental, state-of-the-art methodologies resourced from the field of knowledge-making emergent from the study of embodiment, improvisation, and Somatics"[114].

The theme of the 2023 symposium was "Topographies of Touch" since the organisers stated they "aim[ed] to examine the challenge of place, the restriction of its specificity,

[113] *www.idocde.net*
[114] *www.idocde.net*

and explore strategies for successful interpersonal cross-cultural contact-making in the age of gentrification, polarisation, and segregation"[115]. Embedded in this umbrella theme, the residency Ecotone#2 - an ecotone is a transition zone between several ecosystems as A. Llaurens described during the residency - was based on the framework of *Replays* or variations of Lisa Nelson's *Tuning Scores*. According to the host artists, the aim of the residency was to "open a transitional zone between *Replays* and the participants' research"[116] by drawing on the artistic and pedagogical diffractions of Nelson's original scores.

I found it more than comfortable to participate, since being a PhD researcher I was working on the dipole of teaching/learning and transmitting of movement, and on documenting oral traditions in contemporary dance teaching. Additionally, based on my current research between multimodal ethnography and contemporary dance teaching, I strongly wished to reconnect, re-experience and possibly capture points of meeting or points of friction between personal and shared ecosystems. That is to say, the dynamic negotiation occurring between an individual and a collective body within a dance class, during and/or through a particular dancing methodology, in this case the choreographic score.

Lisa Nelson is an American dance-maker, choreographer, improviser, and videographer/video-maker. She was born in New York City in 1949. In 1973, she began a ten-year investigation of video and dance from which she developed an approach to spontaneous composition and performance under the name *Tuning Scores*. In 1974, she

[115] *www.idocde.net*
[116] *www.ImPulsTanzSymposium.com*

collaborated with Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith and many other artists of the first generation of contact improvisation.

Lisa Nelson in her working draft 'From one to the other, compose, learn and share in movements' (Nelson 2010) states,

> Tuning: [is] the activity of bringing one thing into a sensible relationship with another. (…) The Tuning Score is an on-going research process. This writing offers fragments of explanation, describing a practice that is designed to teach itself by doing. Tuning Scores arose from a desire to understand how dancers make sense out of the dance inside, around, and before them. […] I wanted to know how dancers think, what they value—what's at stake in their spontaneous performance. I wished to unveil an improvisational dance language while preserving the mystery of human expression and unite the choreographic act with the experience of dancing. This has kept me busy.
>
> (Nelson 2010, p.4)

As an ethnochoreologist, I align with Nelson's thoughts, particularly regarding this sensitive relationship with the "other", in my case contemporary dance educators and contemporary dance students, and the on-going research process of making sense out of dance while revealing what seems to be valued by the people practicing it, in my view within the framework of higher contemporary dance education. Pondering on Nelson's wish for "unveiling an improvisational dance language" (Nelson, p.4), I believe that there is a contemporary dance language (aside from the technical

terminology) emerging in that respect, in which improvisation plays a central role. I intend to connect this 'dance language,' including oral and somatic experience, with the process of dance teaching and learning.

Nelson continues saying,

> In a study of the process of sensorial perception, I found a filter for looking at the roots of our dance behaviour. Genetic and learned skills of survival - our deepest patterns and habits - give instruction for what we need to know, how we look at things, and the subconscious process of editing spontaneously in order to make meaning out of any moment. The Tuning Score is extrapolated from this study.
>
> (Nelson 2010, p.4)

The 'roots of our dance behaviour' is what intrigues me the most in my research. Could we define our dance roots? Could we divide the genetic from learned dance skills? Could we separate the academic/conservatoire/technical patterns from our personal moving/dancing habits? What is important to know while dancing and how should our dance look? Is our dance practice defined by our dance education? Could we deviate from that learned pattern? Could the learned pattern carry a cultural context or pass on a movement genealogy?

Pondering on these questions, brings me to a discussion regarding the active body and the activism of the dancing body. I now wonder, how can a dancing body, capable of

affecting, and being affected, reject or undo its own embodied/embedded educational pattern? Is it a vessel containing the educators' transmission of ideas and practices, or is it an agent through which the educational process of the transmission of ideas and practices ensures "constant reweaving of the social fabric"? – as Dewey ([1916]2008) argues. Thomas Kampe and Glena Batson in 'Dancing Critical Somatics – An Emancipatory Education for the Future?' (2020) also ponder on this question:

> What facets of somatic practices with their origins in humanist reform body - cultures are necessary to be transmitted in a somatic dance education for the 21st century? How do we preserve and translate emancipatory dimensions inherent in somatic pedagogies into relevant critical pedagogies for a century that faces increasing new totalitarian and hyper-technocratic dominant social imaginaries that shape the psychosocial structures of the contemporary individual?
>
> (Kampe and Batson, 2020 p.11)

And they continue quoting Castoriadis,

> How do we articulate the potential for transmission of creative corporeal imaginaries through somatic pedagogies against a neoliberal 'capitalist imaginary' based on unlimited expansion of 'rational mastery', 'unlimited expansion of consumption' and 'autonomized technoscience' in a world of increasing inequality?
>
> (Castoriadis 2005, p.199)

I argue that body, movement and dance are an inevitable meeting of conscious personal and collective processes, causing sociopolitical, geopolitical, educational and institutional ecosystems to coexist.

Moving on to the sensorial perception to which Nelson refers[117], I continue to questioning the importance of the landscape surrounding us as contemporary dance educators/dancers. How do the senses infuse our dancing and sensing body? Dancing bodies are human bodies that perceive the world through sensory systems and senses (vision, touch, auditory, olfactory, taste, and proprioception). Hence the process of teaching/learning, transmission of movement and dance is a multi-sense and multi-stimuli experience that cannot be extracted from its environment. To illustrate this, Nelson introduced the term/practice "attentionography" of the body.

> Practices include tuning the senses to follow features in both the "inner" and "outer" environment, measuring stillness and movement through each of the senses, and shifting from sense to sense and sensing to action, activities we engage in every waking moment.
>
> (Nelson 2010, p.5)

[117] Parts form interview text between Lisa Nelson and researcher of Lisa Nelson's work Silvia Pinto Coelho. Also appeared in Gaspar, A. (2016) 'Attentiography of the Body: Correlations Between Lisa Nelson and Gilbert Simondon's work from a Narrative Fragmente', *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença,* vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 205-221.

She elaborates, “Attentionography is the sensitive mapping of attention as support of the imagination of the body that is positioned in space and prepares to respond to stimuli of the elements through which it moves” (Nelson 2010, p.5). The practice of attentionography could be a form of autoethnographic practice emerging through the embodied experience, a practice involving the self, the body, and the sensed experience.

Nelson describes a session of Tuning Scores:

> A woman is entering the space. Or I notice a woman entering the space. Her walking has kidnapped my eyes. Or she has inserted herself into a recently empty room. My eyes have met her there. Or I see her now, she's entered my image space. I arrive behind my eyes, join her here, see what's on my plate. I am watching a woman walking away from me. Or I am watching walking. Or my eyes are stalking her heels. I notice I have leaned forward. Or I notice I have begun. I look at her retreating hips. Or I observe her breezy walk. This space is deep. Where is she going? My curiosity, taking its cue from her, is breezy too. I take time to look out a window. And back. I detect her elbow lifting slightly, a small crick of the wrist. She is banking a turn towards where I stand, soon I will see her face.
>
> (Nelson 2010, pp.1-2)

During the Ecotone #2 residency, I connected my own writings to the tuning score titled “Blind Learning”. I will offer a brief contextual overview supported by an autoethnographic perspective.

The Score:

Two participants individually make movement phrases out of sight from each another. One closes his or her eyes, and the other teaches the 'blind' learner, without speaking. Once the phrase is learned to the teacher's satisfaction, they shake hands to indicate completion. The partners switch. This is called "Blind Learning".

The execution of the score:

I performed this score with an older co-dancer, considerably taller than me, with no previous academic/technical studies in contemporary dance but with tremendous experience in contact improvisation and instant composition, particularly in public spaces. The score we performed had several small variations in the instructions. For example, the suggestion was to create a movement phrase "that we had never done before" A. Llaurens. That simple phrase dragged me into a labyrinth of heavy thinking. "How can I move outside my habitus, without using my already assimilated movement patterns?"

We began performing the score with my partner. I was the first one to have my eyes closed. I stood very close to him. I turned my head to the side so I could carefully listen to the sound of the movement and maybe its duration, its direction or even its dynamic. I had a slight sense of how the movement was flowing in space. Next, I began touching my partner's body with the palms of my hands, while he was moving. By chance, I touched one of his arms. I followed the up and down movement of his arm. I placed my

hands on my partner's joints several times, in an attempt to understand the mechanism of his movement. I followed his movement to his legs and torso. It felt difficult to understand the whole extent of the movement. I was trying not to mimic the posture – the form of the movement. I was wondering how to perceive in a holistic and preconceptual way (not based on my former education). I forced myself to think: Where does the movement derive from? Where does the movement end? What is the direction of the movement? Instead of concentrating on the image/form of the movement, I tried not to take my pre-existing technical contemporary dance education for granted. After looking deeper into it, I realised that my partner just did a 'pelvis drop' or a 'spin roll down'.

At first, I concentrated on the small scale. Scanning, analysing, decoding and archiving every single movement manifestation. Eventually, after having a minimal sense of the movement, I tried to fill in the big picture. In my attempt to fill in the movement mosaic of the entire body, I was placing my palms as soft barriers, resisting the movement that I already by now knew, more or less. That gave me the opportunity to test the limits of the movement, in addition to a specific reference point concerning the special alignment in relation to my body. For example, I know that my partner had a straight arm. The arm started moving from the side of his pelvis toward his head. By placing my arm as an obstacle, I assumed that his arm was completing the movement approximately at a $45^{-\text{degree}}$ angle (frontal diagonal). This I could re-enact. After that, I tried to compose the whole frame in the time and the space given by my partner by touching not only with my palms and hands but with my whole body, trying to interfere the least in my partner's execution but rather to synchronise. This process went on for a while until I could capture the full extent of all the movements performed by him.

After approximately ten minutes, I was very confident that I could re–enact the full sequence in terms of posture, form, shape, speed, duration and direction. Although all my senses were very alert, I could not comprehend the actual movement initiation, neither was I able to follow facial expressions, nor eye movement. Wondering why that was, I thought that it perhaps had to do with whether the back of the knee was fully stretched or slightly bent during the arm movement. As far as I'm concerned, I was so far able to decode about 70% of the movement. All I knew really, was that my partner's head was upright, looking straight ahead.

As regards the score assigned, we had to perform the taught phrase three times with our partners and then discus giving each other feedback. Consequently, we could not perform the next score until we met our partner's/teacher's "satisfaction and shook hands to indicate completion"[118]. The phrase I performed with my partner I'd already taught in the "Blind learning" score. Surprisingly so, both my partner and I found that I performed the phrase almost in the exact same way as before. Then my partner/teacher performed the initial phrase. We shook hands.

However, as I mentioned above, there were blind spots. For example, my face was completely still while my partner's face was involved with small movements/expressions that in my opinion added a completely different aspect to the phrase, making it more personal. Even though it seemed to me that I executed the phrase almost technically perfect, at the same time I ignored the person who taught me the phrase in terms of their personal way of movement. I failed to incorporate the initiation

[118] A. Llaurens – Quotation from class.

of the movement, in this way exuding a completely different quality. For example, when you bow and look to your right, this has a completely different context than when you bow and look into your partner's eyes or down. This slight difference could give mixed messages about the context of the movement; is it a movement having a cultural reference such as a bow to a king, queen, or elder person, or is it really your partner saying I respect you?

Leaving this context behind, focusing on the technical part, a slight difference as regards the initiation of the movement could give a completely different variation in the execution of the sequence. For example, there is a movement initiating raising of an arm, by extending the fingers toward the periphery, and a completely different movement engaging the back, raising the arm with no extending exaggeration. More so, it is different to exhale using chest breathing while an arm movement is being initiated.

The last remark was about the composition of all movement in synchronisation. I must emphasize that it was very difficult to follow the timing of the sequence with my entire body movement without using the sense of sight. Even when the phrase was very simple, there were times where movements overlapped – a challenging task for me since I was performing this score for the very first time.

As reflective feedback, I must acknowledge that I am a performer with no physical disabilities, which informed my sensitivity about my body. During the score, I could not stop thinking of how important the sense of sight was, while at the same time being aware of how very pleasantly intensified the rest of my senses were. Furthermore, what

struck me was that there were gaps in movement succession which could have been avoided only through verbal instructions. For example, when teaching how I'm raising my arm, I demonstrate the starting point, the direction, and the ending point of the movement. Then, the rest of the information, which I consider to be details of the movement, is given (by me) through verbal input. Therefore, I use both visual and vocal input. The sense of the movement usually follows and becomes important only after the student has conquered the basic structure of the movement. In conclusion, I am wondering which way of teaching gives a better insight into the movement core.

Continuing on the opposite end of the score, that is, my being the educator, I felt the urge to go slowly while performing the phrase. I also felt that I had to break up the phrase from movement to movement. That means I was fully aware that I changed the overall dynamic and energy of the phrase in order to make it easier and clearer for my partner. As a result, I must say, I engaged more with my partner. That made me notice that even though the purpose was to teach the phrase, I now was more sensitive as to how my partner was receiving my movement. More so, I became gentler with my movement, I was exaggerating all the movements, and somewhat guiding my partner towards what to sense, so that there was a deeper understanding of the entire movement. I seemed to care more for my partner's understanding than the phrase itself. However, I must underline that this exaggeration sometimes felt as an over-performance on my part. Meanwhile, I was thinking, am I 'teaching' now or am I 'performing'? There were times I felt I did not give my partner the opportunity or choice for further movement exploration. In other words, I was questioning my very own intention. Did I pre-assess what was important, or what the right way was for my partner to explore and understand the phrase?

During the score my partner navigated his intention in a similar way to mine. First by listening to the movement, and then by analytically going through each haptic movement in each part of the body. At this point, he tried to define the overall spatial limits of the movement by using his whole body in extension.

When the time came to perform the phrase with me, I was again very surprised by how precise the execution was. However, I noticed that one particular movement was different – one of which. That was one of the movements I did not try to 'teach' him. I had wrongly assumed that since he understood the spiral and the leg-lift, he would also understand that there was a lift of the right side of my pelvis involved. However, that particular pelvis movement could have been eliminated because, a) it was not important in the movement mechanism, in other words, this movement was my own aesthetic decision, since I could have lifted my leg using the spiral, not using the pelvic lift, b) it was the initiation of the movement (before the lift and the spiral), although as I noticed in the first part of the score the initiation of the movement was not always clear, and c) that particular movement was a characteristic personal movement, that is, a movement that I myself like to perform. It feels easy and "natural" to my body, though I have observed through my years of teaching that this is one of the most difficult movements for my students to re-enact.

Consequently, I again detected that even if the technical part – form, duration, direction etc. – could be easily performed, the personal/individual execution of the movement was an issue. It was at this point that due to my teaching experience I realised I was allowed to employ verbal analysis. It seems that, orality arises when one body cannot

understand the movement mechanism of another body. Both my partner and I began by imitating the movement we were given. We explored it by using all our senses, analysing and decoding the movement in terms of place, space and time. Then we attempt to imitate the sequence again, talking about how we could better understand and learn the movement from each other. We adapted the movement to suit our own bodies and then we performed a variation of our partner's movement by developing our individual interpretation.

In view of this, how do we teach movement? What is important to teach about movement? Do we teach movement, or do we also convey all the things we were taught? Do we teach according to the analogy "while we teach, we learn"? Do we teach in order to learn/explore in depth, or do we teach in order to perform the same algorithm we ourselves were instructed to learn, and how we were, respectively, instructed to teach? Actually, what we do in a contemporary dance class, for example, in the Limón-Based Release Technique, is analyse our personal way of dancing, instead of creating a pathway for developing the teaching/learning practice. This was the paradigm shift mentioned earlier. The question "who is teaching and who is learning?" kept resurfacing while performing the score.

Reflection:

As Margit Galanter (2004) explains in her thesis related to Tuning Scores, "Blind Learning" in particular:

> The task elicits unfamiliar ways to communicate and move. When touching, without vision, one has to induce an image from the localized information that one receives, blind, and mobilize unfamiliar sensory feedback. This develops and cultivates a multisensorial imagination. Each attempt at this is unique.
>
> (Galanter 2004, p.1)

Having taught this score in the past, I have seen a wide variety of timings, speeds, techniques and approaches to teaching and learning. Some people create new languages out of sound, or techniques regarding touch. Others cannot just not talk. Some students move their partners guiding them to specific parts of the exercise, whereas other educators let partners lead each other using touch only. The actual movement phrase, in this context, is equally as important as the learning process. The movement phrase is the material around which all the exercises occur, and to actually watch this is to witness a meaningful dance of unusual movement. Undeniably, it is true that many of the tuning scores offer a context within which to observe human behaviour.

In numerous tuning scores, the eyes-closed movement is embedded into the structure. New sensory feedback emerges when the predominant sense is removed. How, then, does one read the space, and function? Multiple senses must be employed and be in collaboration thereof. More so, closing the eyes attunes a person to a non-habitual set of stimuli. Touch, and all of its components, becomes the main sensory feedback. In scores I have mentioned so far, the world of imagination and attention that comes with the sense of touch is a primary element in tuning, interlinked with the eyes-closed movement.

Attempting to describe multisensoriality, we come closer to a definition of what an image is, in accordance with tuning scores. An image is a multisensorial unit and a "poetic imagery, that goes beyond tissues and accesses the subconscious to explore the unexplored in individual movement creation" (Gibson 2011, p.210). Unlike common conceptions regarding image, leaning more toward a visual representation, the image encompasses the whole experience of a great range of perceptual ability. Hence, what is perceived at the end of this practice, was an image that permeated through normal boundaries of daily physical activities. Accordingly, Gibson and Roche (2021) refer to "imaginary spaces" (Gibson & Roche 2021, p.77) created during choreographic processes.

3.3. Ethnographic Interviews.

Accompanying self-reflexivity, I felt the need to include O'Reilly's description of, "direct and sustained contact with the human agents" (O'Reilly 2005, p.6) in the field, acting as dancers, contemporary dance educators and course directors of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools within their context of their daily practice (Clifford 1988, Marcus 1998, 2012, O'Reilly 2005, Riessman 2008, Pink 2009).

3.3.1. Course Directors and Contemporary Dance Educators.

During the second year of my PhD research, I contacted almost all of the Higher Professional Dance Schools in Greece. I informed them regarding my investigation, topic, methodology and aims, inquiring as to whether they would be interested in participating. Three of the Schools confirmed, though two declined due to various restrictions.

More specifically, my initial intention was to include a broader range of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece in order to gather information and ethnographies for most of these institutions. However, practical limitations — such as long distances from my research base, demanding daily schedules in the schools, my own teaching hours as a professor in secondary and post-secondary education, communication difficulties, and some directors or educators were unwilling to participate for understandable reasons – meant that I focused on three institutions that offered full access to my investigation, providing support and clear communication. These schools were Choros, Moragemou and Aktina with whom access and communication were also easier due to my previous contact with them and earlier investigation during 2015–2017 (Panourgia 2017).

Furthermore, I contacted the course directors meeting them on the premises. After lengthy conversations, they suggested that contemporary dance educators might also be interested in participating; as a result, I contacted all educators as well. In collaboration with the course directors and educators, and with the students' consent, I then selected the classes for observation. I observed first-, second-, and third-year classes across all

three schools, focusing on daily routines, teaching techniques, and classroom interactions and intrapersonal dynamics. This approach enabled me to capture both the pedagogical intentions and the social dynamics within each institution.

Finally, after addressing the complex scheduling, I teamed up with Chara Kotsali (contemporary dance educator) teaching first and second-year students, and Aliki Kazouri (contemporary dance educator and course director) teaching third-year students, at Moragemou. Moreover, I collaborated with a number of other contemporary dance educators, namely Markella Manoliadi, teaching first, second, and third-year students at Choros. Maria Foundouli, teaching second and third-year students, Anthi Theofilidi, teaching first-year students, and Sandra (Alexandra) Grimma, teaching third-year students at Aktina. This engagement with multiple institutions and educators aimed to capture diverse pedagogical voices within a shared framework of contemporary dance education, reflecting core principles of qualitative research and ethnographic fieldwork (Spradley 1979, Hammersley & Atkinson 2007).

Incidentally, Aktina uses the rotation model with contemporary dance educators throughout the year, so that educators change every semester. As a result, according to course director Betty Dramisioti, students receive various artistic and technical inputs throughout the three years of their studies. At Moragemou, course director Aliki Kazouri supports the idea of having a main educator teaching the majority of each year's classes, and another educator – teaching fewer classes – for support. On the contrary, at Choros, there are two educators teaching all classes throughout the three-year programme, in this way providing stability, as the course director mentioned. It is worth noting that contemporary dance educator Markella Manoliadi uses the Limón-Based Release Technique, where contemporary dance educator/course director Maro

Grigoriou uses the Cunningham technique. Moreover, all educators and course directors/interviewees signed the ethics form, willingly giving consent for use of their names in this thesis[119]. These varying institutional structures offer insight into how pedagogy is shaped balancing continuity with diversity of instruction (Smith - Autard 2002, Butterworth 2012).

Furthermore, I must underline how important it was to incorporate the direct voice of the people in the field of contemporary dance education. Interviews provided a point of view from those charged with the responsibility of dance education in Greece. Likewise, the sum of their voices could be valuable material for further artistic, educational anthropological and sociological studies. By exploring the perspectives of practitioners, this research draws from traditions of practice-as-research and critical ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, Nelson 2013).

During interviews with course directors (B. Dramisioti, M. Grigoriou, A. Kazouri), and contemporary dance educators (M. Foundouli, S. Grimma, C. Kotsali, M. Manoliadi, and A. Theofilidi) we discussed the following wide-ranging themes:

- contemporary dance techniques they use,
- aims for each class/year of studies,
- algorithms/patterns of teaching,
- way of forming classes, in terms of technique, exercises and/or influences,

[119] See Ethical Consent Forms and Information Letters for research participants in appendix No.18, Figure 29.

- what they consider important to deliver to their class, aside from dance techniques they use,
- methods of preventing and coping with injuries (their own, and/or those of their students),
- students' use of touch consent, and gender policy in class,
- the influence the political scene has had in the field of higher dance education in particular reference to the Presidential Decree 2022, and art protests 2022-2023.

It is at this point worth noting that all three course directors were asked questions relevant to the establishment of each building, location, and facilities. These structured open ended interviews approach formed an environment that enabled participants to articulate their practices as narratives while leaving space for insights to emerge (Riessman 2008).

Moreover, when it came to issues like injuries, touch consent, and gender policy issues associated with interviews related to students' focus groups, I purposely incorporated those issues in the course directors'/educators' interviews questionnaire, as they seemed to be significant for students. Regarding issues about the political scene, the questionnaire was based on the notion of understanding dance according to its cultural, political, social and economic framework as Cynthia Novack (1990) argued, since dance does not exist beyond a historical and cultural context. Additionally, each interviewee was asked a number of targeted questions deriving from my observations during classes throughout the research. Therefore, the data collection was shaped by

participants' priorities and researcher's inquiries forming a dialectical research structure (Tedlock 1991, Denzin & Lincoln 2011).

Interviews were audio recorded only. Even though the initial plan was to use a camera, I felt responsible to reduce potential stress for participants, and therefore opted for not using one without asking first. Also, before starting the interviews, I asked everyone (course directors and contemporary dance educators) to pick a space they felt comfortable with. In most cases, we used the school office space, although this was not always the best idea. In most cases, it was a busy place with a lot of noise both from indoors and outdoors. Usually, there were on-going classes (since interviews were conducted during regular School hours), telephone or school-bell rings, and traffic jam noise from the city centre.

Even though all participants were notified a month in advance of the interview about its content and form (audio-visual recordings), I also paid special attention, before starting an interview, to remind participants of its content, aims and form again. When I asked whether it would be ok to turn the camera on, I immediately noticed this was making them feel uneasy. In other words, I realised that an interview about their personal teaching approach was a more intimate matter than I had thought. Their reflection on the transmission process was valuable insight into their daily life choices, their thoughts on dance, and their dreams about contemporary dance education. Hence, no visual material was taken. In this way respecting their personal space, while also concentrating on somatorality and human interaction. I believe that even though I do not have film shots, I do have a profound understanding of participants, both directors and educators. As Pink argues "Ethnographic knowledge is produced through the

researcher's embodied, emplaced, and sensorial engagement in the field. It is not only about what we see or hear but about how we feel, move, and relate within specific social and material contexts" (Pink 2009, p. 25).

3.3.2. Students' Focus Groups Overview.

During the second year of research, I also held an open call for students of the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools who had agreed to participate. The students that were willing to participate formed small focus groups, varying in number of participants and formation, due to issues like work schedules, participation in rehearsals, or participation in other classes.

The conversations of the focus groups were anonymous. However, most of those conversations I filmed on camera. All students/participants signed a form stating they were willing to participate in recordings, and were asked to maintain anonymity during this process. In case a student did not wish to be filmed but audio-visual recorded only, he or she could participate by staying off camera. In case a student changed her/his mind after being filming, their face would be covered during post-production[120]. The camera was placed in close proximity to the students, giving them the opportunity to use it – if they wished – in any way they felt appropriate. In other words, I only provided the tool for documentation purposes, but students were free to use it for capturing what they felt was important during conversations. I wanted to release myself from the role of a dynamic and hegemonic interviewer orchestrating everything while I felt

[120] Blurring technique in order to protect the privacy of the participants.

compelled to go with the flow of the conversation and be as present and alert as possible.

The research aims to bring unwritten practices of the contemporary dance world to light and create a vibrant archive of individual and collective contemporary dance histories of individuals in the field in the form of a "sensescape" – a world of sense and sensing (Appadurai 1991, Pink 2010, Howes 2010, Ingold 2011). Apart from questions on the technical syllabus and teaching/learning methods of contemporary dance, students were also asked to provide personal memories, intimate thoughts and feelings and maybe recall, or even re-sense, and describe how it felt to dance contemporary dance. Their responses concerning the senses ultimately created a puzzle of a multisensed shared experience. As a result, a collaborative autoethnographic archive was formed (Toyosaki, Pensoneau-Conway, Wendt and Leathers, 2009, Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez, 2013), including storytelling and personal narratives delving into or representing parts of culture, in this case contemporary dance.

This collection of re-visited and re-experienced feelings and corporeal memories re-enacts a form of communal and community-based archive (Stringer 1997) that can serve academic and social purposes. This archive was shared among the students of each class. The sum of class archives created a separate archive of each Higher Professional Private Dance School, and exponentially a main archive of all Higher Professional Private Dance Schools participating in this research. For me as a researcher, looking at this process, it was obvious that there was the potential of creating a communal archive, open to all participants of these institutes. The goal of gathering these narratives was to create an open archival environment (Gleiman, Knolton &

Mokhtarian 2015, Panourgia 2024) of contemporary dance transmission algorithms, with this eventually becoming more widely available after completion of this research.

As regards the focus groups, I devised forty-two questions in total, divided into three categories. The first category included general introductory questions in order to understand the students' general background. The questions referred to their academic background, their connection with dance in general, particularly contemporary dance, their perception about the dancing body in present day, and ways they identify within a contemporary dance learning process. The second category of questions had to do with their relations/communication with their classmates, their dance educators and course directors. This involved how they perceived hierarchy in class, their thoughts about the Presidential Decree and their participation in the 2022-2023 art protests. The third category of questions referred to the technique of contemporary dance they practice, the notion of mistakes and feedback in dance education, issues regarding fatigue, pain and injuries during studies touch consent and gender policy (use of preferred pronouns in class, for example). Finally, there was time to talk about what they find important for documenting and archiving in this study of contemporary dance transmission and to give feedback on questions posed.

In general, the questionnaire was used to collect as much information as possible about the sensescape rituals of contemporary dance in class. Students elaborated on their intimate feelings, thoughts, images, sounds, smells and personal ways of being present in a contemporary dance class. They also revealed their daily routine and practice rituals. Furthermore, students spoke about their personal views on the theme of dealing with touch during their contemporary dance classes and their understanding of personal

space. Besides this, they talked about power relations in the dance field, and within the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools' framework.

Additionally, most of students referred to the sensitive subject of consent before physical touch during classes. They also discussed how there should be democratization of the contemporary dance technique and deconstruction of the stereotypical 'dancing body', referring to the body that moves and the body as a wholeness, the body that connects with others and not merely a physically 'fit' body with extraordinary flexibility etc. Finally, the students elaborated on challenges faced when working under extreme tiredness (both physical and mental), the psychological stress of being present and creative on a daily basis, and having guilty feelings when not being able to participate in a class because of an injury and/or pain.

3.4. Contemporary Dance Ethnographies.

Before engaging with this section, it is important to clarify that I use the term "participant observation" to refer to the process of gathering ethnographic material through my presence during classes as a method of research, whereas I use the term "dance ethnographies" to refer to the textual product of participant observations.

Participant observation played an important role in this research. Although most of the time I didn't participate as a dancer due to limitations in the studio, my body resonated with the bodies in space due to my pre-existing dance education (Poulakis in Papakostas & Loutzaki 2022). I heard the same music then as students did now in class, the same

directions from educators, and in my mind performed the kinetic combinations together with the rest of the students, while seated at the side or the back of the class. There were also moments where I had the opportunity to either perform an exercise or adjust my body by following an educator's directions. Therefore, by utilising multisensorial embodied engagement, I consider myself an embodied and emplaced dance ethnographer (Howes 2005b, Pink 2009). Likewise, on many occasions, I found myself preparing an answer before the student was done posing a question. I observed in depth, and in real time, all actions/rituals taking place during the transmission process of a contemporary dance class in these schools and tried to make a thick description accordingly (Geertz 1973).

It was crucial for me not only to hear the views of the people from inside the field[121] but to also observe the field and interpret it respectively. Although I emerged from this institutional framework and this field as a dancer and dance educator, for this research, I entered the field as an 'outsider' (Loutzaki 1989, Koutsouba 1997) using an etic perspective. There were many leading factors and circumstances that led me to consider myself an outsider[122]. Without a doubt, I experienced situations where I wasn't emotionally detached from the field. There were a couple of times where I resonated emotionally. The first time was a case of a knee injury that occurred while I was taking notes in a class. This incident resembled my own injury seventeen years ago, making me feel very stressed. Furthermore, I participated in a feedback session during a class that was very emotional for third-year students, which was a very emotional experience.

[121] Course directors, contemporary dance educators and dance students.
[122] I graduated in 2009, which means that I was an insider twelve years ago. I re-entered the field in 2017 with ethnochoreological training for my Master's research and these two factors have helped me develop a fresh look in the field.

During this time, I felt I was sharing both the students' stress before the diploma exams and the educator's agony to help them.

The objective of dance ethnographies, as Potiropoulos underlines, "is to prioritize at a methodological level the research feedback that results from the repetition of the research and aims to restore a form of duration in depth of time to maintain continuity in contact and the monitoring of performance" (Potiropoulos in Papakostas & Loutzaki 2022, p.90). Also, these ethnographies intent to imprint the role of oral traditions or unwritten stories of the bodies within contemporary dance contexts. Likewise, through these long-term oral traditions a collective identity of this particular group is expressed, confirmed and formed (Bart 1969).

During my research years between 2021 and 2025, there are twenty Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. Two are state supported and located in the capital of Athens. Eleven are located only a few kilometres from the urban city centre while seven are situated across the Greek in the periphery[123]. This distribution reflects the centralisation and urbanisation of these institutes. Moragemou, Aktina and Choros are the three institutions which participated in this research.

The fieldnotes and the audio-visual recordings cover more than twenty dance ethnographies of contemporary dance classes. At least four were conducted for each educator per year of studies. However, for this section of dance ethnographies, I prioritised ones that could represent the ethos of the course director, the individual educators' uniqueness and student's input. As regards these ethnographies, I argue that

[123] See map in appendix No.1, Figure 12.

classrooms are not only part of the dancing community but also part of the wider community. I do not consider classrooms as "non-places", as Mark Auge (1992) asserts; they not only serve the purpose of education or entertainment, but are also places integrated into the community, reflecting and constantly interconnecting with current socio-political, cultural and historical events.

I rejected the idea of conducting one-dance ethnography for each Higher Professional Private Dance School early on this research, as every dance educator had a very different approach. Nevertheless, this variety creates a syncretic system of overlapping methodologies in contemporary dance transmission. This mosaic, formed originally by the schools themselves through the choices of the course directors along with their individual vision, provides a clear image of the movement ethos, the vision of each School, and the oral traditions that flourish within training. I then selected specific ethnographies from this framework to highlight key points of interest.

Currently, I must emphasize that at these three schools there were also other contemporary dance educators contributing to the contemporary dance transmission using very interesting approaches to contemporary dance and the Limón-Based Release Technique. However, as previously explained due to time/schedule limitations we were unable to create space for all teachers to participate in this research.

In particular, the five classes of contemporary dance in Aktina are shared between three educators during the first year (Foundouli with 2 classes per week, Kalivas and Kalogerakis each with 1 class per week), three during the second year (Foundouli with 2 classes per week, Efstathiou with 2 classes per week, and Kalogerakis with 1 class

per week) and three during the third year (Foundouli with 2 classes per week, Grimma with 2 classes per week, and Kalogerakis with 1 class per week). Furthermore, at Moragemou, there are three educators during the first year (Fovou with 2 classes per week, Antonakos with 2 classes per week, and Kostali with 1 class per week), four educators during the second year (Kostali with 2 classes per week, Fovou with 1 class per week, Antonakos with 1 class per week in contemporary dance repertoire, and Tornaritou with 1 class per week in the Graham technique), and during the third year there are three educators (Kazouri with 3 classes per week, Kostali with 1 class per week, and Fovou with 1 class per week). Finally, at Choros, there are two educators throughout all the three years of studies: Manoliadi with 3 classes per week during the first year and 2 classes per week in the second and third years, and, accordingly, Grigoriou with 2 classes per week during the first year, and 3 classes per week during the second and third years.

During observations in class, I placed myself as an "emplaced ethnographer" (Pink 2009, p.25) taking account of the sensuous body-mind-environment interrelationship (Howes 2005b, p.7) through which I got to know different aspects of both educators and students. This revealed their intentions, thinking process and vision for contemporary dance education in Greece, and hopes for their own students. During my research, between class observations, interviews and documentation processes, I kept pondering on how I could relate to the topic of contemporary dance education. How was I taught contemporary dance during my 2006-2009 studies at Rallou Manou's Higher Professional Private Dance School? This research also made me ponder on values, aims and desires I bring to class for my own students, who certainly influenced my own practice as a dance educator indeed.

It is worth noting that, all contemporary dance educators participating in the research welcomed me into their classrooms, giving me essential feedback related on each class, their practice, their methodology and my research. They embraced me in their classes, shared their notes on the research, but most importantly expanded my horizons in the field of contemporary dance education in Greece.

3.5. Ethnographic Filming.

A significant number of the research was filmed using a camera, an important aspect to note. In the contemporary dance education field, there is a limited number of ethnochoreological studies conducted, and even fewer have been conducted in the field of documentation of contemporary dance education practice. Unfortunately, the same applies to the field of ethnographic films documenting contemporary dance education. Therefore, it was a challenge to define the role of this uncharted documentation process via camera. It's also worth mentioning that I am not an expert in video recordings.

However, I did feel the need to support my fieldnotes, the autoethnographic reflection of my (participant) observation, by documenting them on film. This tool seemed appropriate at the time, handy and useful like an *aide-mémoire*, a verification of my notes and a possible archive for further research in the future.

After establishing my identity both as a former dancer and a current dance educator, and placing myself as a non-invasive researcher in the field, the next step was to use

my camera as a filter between me and the field. This device changed the dynamics of the field. For example, as mentioned earlier, the camera's presence made educators more self-aware leading them to occasionally justify their words or actions when it was on. Similarly, the students questioned their position in space, or asked me if I would like to change my position in space, in order to capture more of the action. The camera was used as an audience – as another open eye, and not as an 'active agent' seeking a specific action from the people in the field. Therefore, the camera captured the position of the dancers, their dance/practice, their imprint in space and time, and the performed daily rituals and activities in class (Grimes 1982). With this landscape recording, contemporary dance transmission emerged both as oral and corporeal practice.

Nevertheless, a dilemma arose: how could the camera capture senses, emotions, thoughts, and the overall experience of the participants? Furthermore, are the emotions it captures the ones participants experienced, or does the lens become a filter for my sense-making? In this case, the empirical substance of dance transmission was left behind.

At this point, I questioned the need for the camera and oscillated between the data received from the camera and the power of the sensescape – the overall sensed experience of the class. In other words, what is seen though the camera lens cannot capture what the participants and I feel while being present in class. Could the camera capture more than what the participants felt, and if so, how? Could the camera give a more accurate impression without being hegemonic or an extension of the researcher's eyes, thoughts, and beliefs? (Postma 2006, Larcher & Oxley 2015). It seems that the camera could capture only small parts of the lived event. The adaptation of the camera

in fieldwork and the ethical framework in which the camera could navigate in this particular research are still under question.

The use of a camera during classes captured oral tradition rituals/practices of contemporary dance transmission. Likewise, during interviews it captured different encounters with the people in the field and their personal narratives/testimonials. Although, there was a specific list of questions, most of these personal narratives transformed into a form of a single biographical narrative. However, this was not considered a drawback. On the contrary, as Giorgos Tsiolis argues, *"*A biographical narrative approach is appropriate for studying the ways in which social - actors appropriate social changes, as they are refracted through their socially and historically constructed subjectivity" (Tsiolis in Boeschoten 2023, p. 19).

During the filming process, there were points that I missed. As I review class videos and focus groups' interviews, studying them carefully, I notice that I should have made sound adjustments on many of them. I should have also checked the camera-lens focus. There were times that the frame was so wide that faces of students were not clear, nor were their expressions visible. Likewise, I didn't get video footage of school buildings exteriors, thinking that this would have been irrelevant to this research. I did take some photographs of interior spaces though. Many times, I felt that I turned the camera on when it was too late, missing interesting informal conversations among students. Other times I felt emotional, turning the camera off earlier than I should have, in an attempt to be respectful and sensitive to students and educators.

More so even, during filming, I experienced equipment difficulties. Most had to do with sound due to loud music noise and echoes inside classes. Likewise, I experienced troubles with floor vibrations, while not having a professional tripod destabilised a lot of frames. In addition, battery power was a constant issue, due to long and continuous hours of filming. Therefore, I was forced to use the camera from a bird's eye view, without a shot plan.

While I was in the process of transcribing the focus groups, I noted a point of interest related to this research both for the dissertation chapters and the possibility of creating a film. Consequently, my notebook had a catalogue of scenes that reflected on the themes emerging during this study, regarding contemporary dance techniques, contemporary dance politics and dance rituals. Moreover, I noticed bridges between course directors/educators and focus-group interviews and students repeating educators' phrases (see section 3.2). I did notice autoethnographic elements as well. For example, during a focus group conversation, I explained to students how my body reacted when seeing them dancing and how their energy in class made me sense the movement in depth.

As I was initially writing this section of the dissertation, I had not yet decided if there would be enough time to create an ethnographic film. And if so, what would this short film include? Should I only use videos from dance ethnographies? Should I go back and capture footage only for the making of the film? And, if I did decide to actually make one, which themes should be included? Or, should I pre-decide on the themes, or write a certain type of script or narrative? Or, should it be experimental?

Furthermore, I was contemplating post-production, montage, how videos serve as oral history, and what feedback the film would give to the people of the field.

Initially, as the previous paragraph describes, the thought was to create a film which would be part of the dissertation. The film would not only act as archival material, but also as a shared communal archive brought back to the field to course directors, educators, and dance students who shared this process. The film aimed to create documentation, while fuelling my epistemological inquiry. However, this was not possible to implement at this time.

Although the camera might not fully capture the complexity of the embodied experience in the field, it certainly opens a door for further research into how oral traditions, movement transmission and embodied experience can be translated or lost in visual representation.

3.6. Chapter 3 Conclusion.

This research embraces a multilayered ethnographic methodology rooted in embodied observation in the field of contemporary dance education in Greece. The in-depth interviews with course directors and contemporary dance educators intended to record their individual voices, pedagogical philosophies, and personal narratives. Concurrently, the use of focus groups and participant observations added depth to this exploration, revealing the students' sensory experiences and emotional realities, while providing a detailed portrait of the power dynamics within the classroom.

These elements are often left undocumented in formal education, thus excluding somatoralities from contemporary dance training. The idea of a sensescape became essential in understanding contemporary dance as a lived, taught, and transmitted discourse, an embodied and socially embedded experience.

Despite technical and ethical challenges, the camera became a tool for witnessing and archiving lived experiences. The use of a camera also raised questions about the nature of representation and the researcher's presence. This multifaceted methodological approach not only supports a deeper understanding of dance transmission in contemporary Greece, but also opens pathways for future research in dance pedagogy, ethnochoreology and communal archives in contemporary dance education both in Greece and abroad.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction.

This chapter provides a thorough overview and detailed explanation of the topic at hand. It delves into the subject matter with comprehensive coverage and analysis of the research findings, drawing on thematic analysis of ethnographic interviews and dance ethnographies, which are the core of this study. More specifically, the chapter extracts and synthesizes the most significant themes emerging from interviews and participants offering a detailed account of ethnographic and autoethnographic insights. It focuses on exploring the somatoralities of contemporary dance educators and dancers within the framework of contemporary dance transmission, and oral traditions of dance education in Greece. In addition, there is a section related to the autoethnographic process during research.

Section 4.1. introduces the chapter. Section 4.2., part A outlines contemporary dance in Higher Professional Private Dance Schools. Furthermore, Part A is divided into four distinct subsections. The first, Section 4.2.1. is dedicated to ethnographic interviews with course directors. The second, Section 4.2.2. refers to the Ethnographic Interviews with the Contemporary Dance Educators. The third, Section 4.2.3. refers to the Students' Focus Groups in the field. Section 4.2.4. refers to the Autoethnographic reflections. In part B, Section 4.3. provides the dance ethnographies, listed according to each school and educator as follows: Section 4.3.1. Aktina: Theofilidi, Foundouli, Grimma. Section 4.3.2. Choros: Manoliadi. Section 4.3.3. Moragemou: Kotsali, Kazouri. Finally, Section 4.4. concludes with a synthesis of all research findings.

4.2. Contemporary Dance in the Field of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools.

4.2.1. Ethnographic Interviews with Course Directors of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools.

Prior to undertaking this investigation, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science at the University of Limerick[124], Ireland. In addition, I received approval by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports[125], as well as full consent of the course directors of the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools (Maro Grigoriou, Aliki Kazouri, Betty Dramisioti), the educators (Aliki Kazouri, Maria Foundouli, Markella Manoliadi, Chara Kostali, Anthi Theofilidi & Sandra Grimma), and all the students participating in the focus groups. The names of these students are concealed for anonymity and confidentiality purposes, but their voices were recorded.

It is important to clarify that I'd initially excluded two Higher Professional Dance Schools, that is the State School of Dance (KSOT), and the Greek National Opera, due to their public status. Furthermore, I have had to exclude three more Higher Professional Dance Schools for the same reason, namely the Athens Conservatoire, the Municipality of Thessaloniki Municipal Public Benefit Enterprise for Arts and Sports (K.E.T.A.- Prefecture of Thessaloniki), and the Municipal Enterprise of Tourism and Culture of Larissa (D.ET.POL.L.-Δ.ΕΤ.ΠΟ.Λ.), since they also had an administrative council and Municipal participation. Consequently, there is no representation of these

[124] Ref: 2021-12-10-AHSS
[125] Αρ. Πρ. Υπ.Πο.Α. 546517/11-11-2021

Higher Professional Private Schools in the research. Likewise, due to other reasons, the remaining Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece were not included in the research.

During the study, course directors were asked questions pertaining to School buildings and facilities. The buildings of all three participating Schools used to be industrial spaces[126] with non-load-bearing walls, featuring high ceilings, and located only minutes away from the city centre, providing easy access to all means of public transportation. Their industrial style was kept, including grey-tone cement surfaces, stone walls and wooden floors (in some cases covered with linoleum for extra protection). It is also important to note that, these buildings adhere to high safety standards, and are accessible for people with reduced mobility.

The three course directors, Maro Grigoriou, Aliki Kazouri and Betty Dramisioti, (all well-known, former contemporary dancers) shared their perspectives on contemporary dance education within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. They each elaborated on different themes, even though the majority of the questions were almost similar, and provided information regarding the ethos they instil in their Schools.

[126] The Choros building was a former textile factory, the Aktina building was the former administrative office space of a travel agency, reconstructed as a theatre space, eventually becoming a Professional Dance School while the Moragemou building was a former glass factory.

Maro Grigoriou (Course director at Choros Higher Professional Private Dance School, interview via correspondence on 22/07/2024).

Due to Grigoriou's heavy schedule, the interview was conducted via emails with very insightful input. Maro always welcomed me at Choros with motherly care, and enthusiastically engaging in conversation each and every time. I participated as a researcher in Markella Manoliadi's classes, having informal but rich conversations on the development of the research. Her interview section is shorter than others, as I only focused on her role as a course director[127].

For Grigoriou, dance education is essential. For that reason, she stated that she wanted to *"create space for students to learn how to learn"*[128]. For her,

> *Everything is important in dance. The purity of movement, the knowledge, the willingness to offer this knowledge, the ability to explain everything with words, to give images and sensations as examples. I use a lot of tone of voice, tender, loud, abrupt, strict or calm to help with a specific quality. I believe that corrections should primarily concern mistakes that can lead to injuries. I give group and individual corrections. That is, something that everyone will hear and will be addressed to the entire department, but also something more individual, a nod, a look, a whispered instruction, which is usually a reminder.*

[127] Maro Grigoriou is also a well-known contemporary dance educator teaching Cunningham technique.
[128] Quotations form interview via correspondence 22/07/2024

I try to make individual corrections "personalized," that is, to correspond to the most efficient way for each student.[129]

For Grigoriou, the performativity and extraversion of students are both considered key elements. As she noted: *"I think it's very important for children to do performances – to be exposed to people and gain stage experience, as well as to become familiar with the whole process and know all the extra work that a performance requires".*[130]

Grigoriou's pedagogical approach highlights the significance of vocalisation and personalized verbal expression forming soundscapes of learning environments. Her emphasis on individualized approach underscores a commitment to safe technical dance - development, pedagogical precision and the cultivation of performative awareness. Through her feedback, she fosters a dynamic educational atmosphere that supports both the technical and expressive development of her students.

[129] Quotations form interview via correspondence 22/07/2024
[130] Quotation from interview on 22/07/2024

Aliki Kazouri (Course director at Moragemou Higher Professional Private Dance School. Interview conducted on 19/04/2024).

Aliki Kazouri has been a consistent point of reference in this research. From one perspective, Kazouri was my contemporary dance educator during the third year of my studies at the Rallou Manou, now Moragemou. She choreographed the class for my diploma exams in 2009 while also being a course director. From another perspective, Kazouri participated as an informant during both the first ethnochoreological study between 2015 and 2017[131] and the current research, between 2021 and 2025.Therefore, her long-lasting role as a contemporary dance educator/course director and a key informant renders her as a pivotal figure in the development of this ethnochoreological research.

The interview was conducted outside the school's office, on the staircase of the second floor, where there was some privacy. However, during the transcription, I noticed that the music from classes was quite loud. Although this did not affect the quality of Kazouri's interview, it did make me aware of the ambient sounds during the rest of the interviews.

Kazouri actively cultivates classroom dynamics encouraging kinship relationships between educators and students, in this way, nurturing an environment for both individual and artistic growth, and explains that,

[131] See Panourgia 2017.

> *I try to be the intermediary between the students and the educators. I want the students to be able to come to me and tell me everything. This is regarding the humanitarian part. The humanistic part. But I also want them to have a full-time education.*[132]

Kazouri believes that the use of kinaesthesia, self-awareness and self-evaluation of the educator within the teaching process are key elements for an effective contemporary dance transmission.

Kazouri mentioned about her class,

> *My courses are pure technique classes. That is the goal, the development of the* [students'] *skills, always with a dance approach and that is what I believe a teacher should do. The student should leave the class having danced. It should not just be pieces of information.*[133]

She further elaborated on partnering techniques,

> *I use a lot of partnering techniques. I can dedicate two or three classes per year for basic partnering. Because the students really don't know each other's bodies (...) It's very important to learn. And I always include a bit of partnering in the exams choreographed class, because it gives and creates a nice relationship between the students.* [134]

[132] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024
[133] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024
[134] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024

Kazouri believes that the learning process should build concentration, risk taking, and everyday technical research. Kazouri maintains a close relationship with music and hybrid forms of contemporary dance as she admitted: *"I like fusion, as they say, where I borrow things from many techniques".*[135]

When discussing the broader artistic and social context, Kazouri as a course director at the time underlined that the Moragemou stood by the students and, *"didn't report absence marks during protests - instead they created tools for communication and mutual l understanding".*[136] However, she acknowledged that these protests seem to have had a negative impact on the most recent entrance exams, since participation was at the lowest level ever recorded.

In summary, Kazouri's pedagogical approach at Moragemou integrates a humanistic ethos prioritising trust, interpersonal connection and mutual respect between educators and students. Simultaneously, her approach relies on, and emphasises, kinaesthetic awareness, self-reflection and collaborative practices. This holistic methodology encourages both individual and collective development within the field of contemporary dance education.

[135] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024

[136] In this part of the interview, Aliki Kazouri describes the formation of an online site for reporting abusive behaviour among the dance community, organised and administrated by the Dancers Union (Σ.Ε.Χω.Χο).

Betty Dramisioti (Course director at Aktina Higher Professional Private Dance School. Interview conducted on 25/06/2024).

Betty Dramisioti also holds a key role in this research, like Aliki Kazouri, as she was one of my contemporary dance educators during my studies and she also actively participated during the first research (2016-2017)[137]. As a course director at Aktina, Dramisioti was exceptionally supportive, granting unrestricted access for communication with educators, and facilitating all phases of this study. She is treated solely as a course director here, even though she also participated as an educator at the choreographed classes of the third-year diploma exams.

We conducted the interview in the school's office during the afternoon break, at a rather quiet space. Dramisioti compared contemporary dance educators to *'researchers on a continuous journey of exploration'* of multi layered and in-depth work of the body. She views the educational inquiry as a pedagogical tool of technical improvement. Her educational aim, as a course director, is *"to awaken consciousness* [corporeal] *so that every dancer can have the tools to bring* [gradually all] *movements to the conscious level".*

She noted:

> *The choice of what we will teach is constantly being adjusted, but essentially because the majority of the educators here* [in Aktina] *happen to be around my age. Or at least, I know that they have been taught. (...) I know their knowledge*

[137] See Panourgia 2017.

of the subject. They've already been taught the contemporary techniques, the techniques that I teach, like Graham Cunningham Limón. So, we've all kind of filtered everything that we've been taught and redefined it in relation to the material [the students], in relation to their needs in the present time.[138]

According to Dramisioti, studying at a Higher Professional Private Dance School *"gives navigation tools to begin to study".* Thus, she constantly builds *"a supplementary base during the week (...) with one basic educator and two supplementary ones".*[139] Hence, *"Each student can filter and then build their own toolbox in relation to what they collect* [from the educators]"[140].

Dramisioti advocated that a hands-on approach in contemporary dance training is essential and provides important kinaesthetic information to the students. However, she drew the line in terms of personal somatic boundaries that must be respected.

Additionally, she referred to the role of dance education within society. Dramisioti reflected on the positioning of the Higher Professional Private Dance School during art protests, and her active role as course director stating that it was a role of *"thesis and antithesis"*[141].

Moreover, she argued that the profession of dancer in Greece *"Cannot be a profession, something that lives here* [in Greece] *artistically, it could only be an existential position.*

[138] Quote form interview 25/06/2024
[139] Quote from interview 25/06/2024
[140] Quote from interview 25/06/2024
[141] Quote from interview 25/06/2024

You are a dancer because existentially you need this identity. You need this identity and you claim it by using any means"[142].

To summarise, Betty Dramisioti's pedagogical approach at Aktina describes contemporary dance education as a dynamic, research-based process embedded in corporeal awareness. She emphasises multilayered corporeal exploration that aligns dance instruction with a form of embodied research, where both educators and students engage in a reflective dialogue. She aims to empower students to construct individualized toolkits of movement knowledge.

Dramisioti also positioned Aktina as a space of critical engagement within broader socio-political contexts. She argued that, in Greece the identity of a dancer is a deeply existential situation, actively claimed and continually negotiated through both artistic and political expression.

The information gathered from the course directors' interviews illustrate diverse but interconnected pedagogical approaches partially shaping contemporary dance education in Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. Each director focuses on different priorities. However, all three emphasise the importance of being creative, establishing a conducive learning environment, and use of a strong technical background. Collectively, their perspectives illustrate a pedagogical ethos expanding beyond the curriculum, corresponding to socio-political frameworks. Dance education to them is seen not only as transmission of movement but also as a complex process of identity construction. These interviews underscore the necessity of a multilayered, embodied approach to dance transmission traditions.

[142] Quote from interview 25/06/2024

4.2.2. Ethnographic Interviews with Contemporary Dance Educators of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools.

Markella Manoliadi (Contemporary dance educator at Choros Higher Professional Private Dance School. Interview conducted on 15/4/2024).

Markella Manoliadi hosted our interview in the theoretical classroom of Choros, in between her classes. We were warmly welcomed by course director Maro Grigoriou, who offered us some scrumptious nuts and crackers. Manoliadi was punctual and organised. Even though the interview was not recorded on camera (she was not keen on that), her confidence and strong mindset were both quite evident throughout our discussion.

She described her technique as a combination of approaches based on the Limón technique principals. She explained, *"I use the pulses, the swinging, the falls* [of the Limón technique] *as concepts but I will place them within the aesthetics of Release"*[143].

Her teaching method is not a fixed system but a personal response to her students' needs,

> *The teaching technique I use is a method that has emerged from my own needs to explore body technique. (...) I don't want to label that Markella Manoliadi technique. I simply do a mix of concepts in relation to the educational goal of*

[143] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.

each year, on how I need to build and define the [teaching] system for the final result of each year. [144]

Manoliadi underlined that,

> *The release technique is not limited and because the system is not written - there is no coded system of writing movement. Therefore, it is up to the teacher's choice how to structure it per year in order to reach a dense form, a dense system of* [technical] *elements in the end. That's how I perceive it.*[145]

She prepares each class thoughtfully, adjusting her teaching according to the group, noting that, *"The technical difficulty remains and I tend to set specific goals for each exercise"*[146].

Manoliadi's pedagogical intend targets the movement itself rather than its form.

> *The ultimate goal for me is always for children to be able to dance and for children [dancers] to be able to move. (...) My main goal is to see their bodies move and dance without focusing only on the narrow form and technique but navigate through these* [form and technique]. *The final goal is to see each one of them move with their own effort. I respect their bodies very much, each one with its own limits and potential. (...) I want the form and art to lead them to dance.*[147]

[144] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[145] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[146] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[147] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.

Even though Manoliadi relies on technique, she admits not using improvisation during her classes. She also believes that the three-year study does not allow adequate time to cover both contemporary and improvisation techniques. Improvisation, she claims, should not be a separate, but a supplementary corporeal study.

She uses long, high-speed and high-energy exercises, as she explained,

> *I never believed in short, warm up exercises. We don't have this time privilege the body should be ready in no time". (...) I gradually increase and magnify and accelerate every exercise more and more and more. Because I am interested in seeing the student being able to reach the full energy at the beginning of the class. You cannot reach the full energy in two eights slowly. How do you make a person run a thousand miles without proper training? You do not make someone take five steps and then run in the stadium at peak speed and energy. That is why the exercises are demanding. To take the body through all the stages and to energetically manage the body to reach peak performance.*[148]

Manoliadi argued that the *"strict framework of structure and knowledge"*[149] of the Choros Higher Professional Dance School provides students with essential qualifications. She underlined that this framework helps students become ready for the workplace. As she noted, "*to graduate from the* [Higher Professional Private Dance] *school and know what it means to work professionally* [as a dancer] *is professional education. The dance world is a quite strict workplace itself"*[150]

[148] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[149] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[150] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.

For Manoliadi, communication is a key feature in her class. She argued that it is important to learn how to communicate and to build a reciprocal relationship between the educator and the students.

> *If this* [communication] *works, you say great, but if it doesn't work, the space* [class] *is there to remind you of what you have to do. No matter what, we as educators are there to observe and to remind students how* [the communication and teaching] *should be done*[151].

With this reflection, she aligned her personal teaching theories and pedagogies with those of course director Grigoriou[152], aiming to build bonds of trust with her students. Even though she believes in technical precision, she also places great emphasis on love, care and honesty. More so, she believes that an educator should give truthful feedback based on mutual respect, echoing Paolo Freire's (2020) argument that "Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (Freire 2020, p.52). She emphasised, *"I don't believe that we should teach without having personal relationships with our students. I don't believe that at all. Should we be like robots? I don't see, I don't speak, I don't feel, I don't express myself. No! On the contrary"*[153].

On the theme of injuries, she reflected, *"Injuries may be normal or it may not be normal because there are factors* [physical/psychological] *that we* [educators] *don't know about"*[154] and she continued, *"For me, injuries arise because bodies are not ready to*

[151] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[152] *"Create space for students to learn how to learn"*quotation from the interview with course director Maro Grigoriou on 22/07/2024.
[153] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[154] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.

cope with the technique. The educators also could cause injuries to students. We may apply psychological pressure the students are not ready for"[155].

Manoliadi conceptualised the dancer's body as being more than an instrument, as *"a body that understands the notion of energy (...) Secondly, a body that decodes movement mechanisms (...) Then, a body that has corporeal perception in relation to space [kinaesthesis] but also has the ability to pass the oral instruction (...) Lastly, is the fantasy part (...) to make space, to communicate with space and others"*[156].

She also assessed the disconnection caused by a digital lifestyle, pointing out that *"we entered the screens and lost* [human] *contact"*. She proposes that her students *"find new codes of communication"*[157] with each other both in and out of the classroom. She advocates for a dance scene where dancing bodies create *"relations in space and time"*[158].

In order to support students' learning, Manoliadi created a small handbook[159] including the key technical notions. This text can also be used by the students as an *aide-mémoire*. Manoliadi explained, "*It's something you know that they will work on and I'm kind of getting into the process of encoding it with their minds, in an attempt to help them*

[155] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[156] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[157] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[158] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[159] See Drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 4th Dance Ethnography, Markella Manoliadi, 20/11/2023, photograph IMG_8525, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?viewid=435f8965%2D346c%2D4726%2Db8f2%2Dbb8926f36e64&login_hint=Marianna%2EPanourgia%40ul%2Eie&source=waffle&id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F4th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Markella%20Manoliadi%2C%2020%2E11%2E2023%2FIMG%5F8525%2EHEIC&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F4th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Markella%20Manoliadi%2C%2020%2E11%2E2023.

identify themselves. [The handbook] *is there to remind them what they saw* [in class]. And she continued, *"As teachers also, you have to know where you lead* [the class and the students in terms of technique][160]. In other words, Manoliadi provides guidelines regarding the technical ethos she instils in her classes, and what is practiced and sensed through technique.

In the final year, Manoliadi prepares students for the diploma exams with a choreographed class. She portrayed again a clear outline of her goals as an educator,

> *I give the* [technical] *material as exercises. Each exercise works on a specific technical notion. And then* (…) *I create a composition so that the children* [students] *can communicate it and* [dance it] *in relation to each other in space and time.* (…) [This pathway] *helps them* [students] *get into the process of dancing. It's very important to be compatible with the other person, we separate, we won't bump into each other but we connect.*[161]

Manoliadi argued that the institutional and educational framework should be under consideration and possibly upgraded. Furthermore, she noted that,

> *We need to assess what we provide in education in order to upgrade it as a system. Because we haven't changed anything for years, we* [educators] *are also not honest about what it means to upgrade degrees. (...) We are all* [in dance education] *operating incorrectly, if we want to be honest.*[162].

[160] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[161] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[162] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.

She strongly advocated for the establishment of a public university for dance, *"I believe that if a public dance university is not established, no substantial upgrade will take place".*[163] For Manoliadi, *"Higher dance education has an infrastructure and a framework. But as we now know, all things are economics and we have lost sight of all the rest, what does it mean to be human? Human contact is an essential thought… We approach everything in relation to money. So, for what art are we talking about?"* Therefore, for her, an upgrade towards a public humanistic dance education is necessary.

In summary, Manoliadi's pedagogical approach merges technical rigor with humanistic values. She bridges the gap between the teaching-learning process and professional readiness, insisting on the importance of structured, demanding study and corporeal trust. Her classes embody a shared responsibility between educators and students, while considering communication as a fundamental axis both in class and across the broader societal landscape. This insight mirrors Manoliadi's commitment to a mutual responsibility, co-creation and shared embodiment in the learning space.

For Manoliadi, the dancing body is not an instrument of execution but a dynamic entity of energy in space – a site of awareness and spatial functionality. She critiques the disembodiment of the digital age, by advocating for new modes of embodied communication, away from screens and into common space and time. At the same time, she evaluates the current institutional framework and is in favour of public, human-centred higher dance education. Her perspective on dance education reflects her values and the politics that exist both in her educational and artistic practice.

[163] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.

Chara Kotsali (Contemporary dance educator at Moragemou Higher Professional Private Dance School. Interview conducted on 19/04/2024).

I was excited to conduct the interview with Kotsali, and thrilled to participate in her class. She provided a wealth of information both for students and me as an educator and a researcher.

The day of the interview, unfortunately, all spaces in the school were occupied. As a result, we conducted the interview in a small changing room. A few students interrupted in between – we both laughed. It is not a common sight to open a changing-room door, seeing two educators in deep thought holding voice recorders. She was particularly energetic and highly engaged throughout our discussion.

Kotsali described her technique as a blend of dance forms and improvisation. She noted, *"In the broad sense, I use some technical elements - let's name them technique and improvisation. Additionally, I like to use, let's say, a more hybrid approach. That's how I understand it. But also, I improvise a lot in class using certain exercises".* [164]

She teaches all three years of studies at Moragemou, instructing one class per week for both the first and third years, and two classes per week for the second year. As she noted, her goal in class *"has a flexible intention"*. She explained,

> *The goal also depends on where the group wants to go. (...) Some things need to be done, and this has to do with technical elements. But I think each group shows you what it takes to go deeper. Personally, I don't have any particular*

[164] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.

preference, to achieve this 'barrel' [a jump with a turn]. *The most important thing for me is to have the freedom to edit a kinetic phrase on our own.*[165]

She underlined that her goal is to make students confident enough, *"To take a piece of kinetic material in their hands, and 'let me out of the frame'. I want them to be able to perform it* [the movement, the combination] *on their own and take care of it themselves"*[166]. For Kotsali, the first year of study is the year to get acquainted, while the second year is a foundational year during which each student can find their kinetic identity. The third year, she believes, is the year during when she achieves a high quality of communication with students, and they are now free to experiment with movement. She described this experiment using the following phrase: *"Whatever the body does in order for a movement to happen, we accept it, we use it"*[167].

Kotsali believes that imitation is only the first step to get in touch with, and identify the movement. After that, it's up to the student to experiment, create and imagine new pathways to achieve it. *"The goal is not to achieve something. It is to know the steps you have to follow in order to achieve it".*[168]

Kotsali reflected on her methods of transmitting contemporary dance. She noted that she uses different ways of giving the same instruction. She uses technical terms, sensorial inputs, and/or imaginary descriptions; she might also add different filters on to the instruction, potentially helping students understand the movement in depth. She argues that this approach is based on the fact that everyone has a different way of

[165] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.
[166] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.
[167] Quotation from both the interview 19/04/2024 and comments frequently used during her classes.
[168] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.

perceiving information and/or movement. Kotsali emphasizes multilayered exercises of movement transmission. As she noted,

> *"I use positive feedback (...) I also use the 'training between the group' during which all of them follow one person's pathway of movement to experience by themselves what works and what fits them as a learning and executing process. (...) Music is also used as a tool to modify or understand movement by its music phrasing".*[169]

For Kotsali,

Contemporary dance class is not a class to learn a choreography, or to reproduce and perform an absolute imitation (visual reproduction) of a movement because by doing so you exclude the notion of embodied experience and pleasure that emerges from within.[170]

For her, the pleasure of movement in a class relates to the idea of sharing an embodied experience, engaging with each other in a common place, space and time, as this creates a feeling of trust. She strongly argued that,

> *Sometimes a movement succeeds because it was the togetherness* [dancer-educator relationship] *that succeeded. I try to cultivate a situation where no one expects me to see something perfect or to reproduce it. I want the students to feel safe to experiment with movement and risk.*[171]

[169] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.
[170] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.
[171] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.

She also pinpointed that in a class, *"We cultivate a policy that is rather sensed by students and by educators as an empty time between exercises, and this should change"*[172]. In other words, every minute that a movement takes place - whether it's our own or someone else's - our eyes are constantly recording and storing the information. Our vision creates an archive of movement interpreted based on what we know and what we understand. With this in mind, I asked Kotsali how does she relates to the process of "exposing" her body by demonstrating exercises to the students, and what are her thoughts on educators' performativity within the class?

> *What I want them to share with me is information. But I need them to take that information and travel with it further, not just 'recycle' it. (...) I don't believe that the educator is flawless or perfect. I'm interested in being in a constant state of experimentation* [as an educator]. *And this is performativity. However, we should not overdo it because then we lose the relationship* [of educator and student] *and we become performer and audience waiting for applause*[173].

Kotsali believes that a calm classroom environment is a supportive and creative space for students. This atmosphere also gives her a sense of acceptance, feeling a connection with her students and being safe to experiment while rejecting the narrow and rigid notions of the established dance hierarchy. Kostali underlined that the primary instrument she offers to her students is technique which for her is viewed as a pathway to solve kinetic problems.

Kotsali advocates for a classroom that does not exist in a vacuum. She believes that it is both normal and human to bring one's feelings into the classroom (either as a student,

[172] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.
[173] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.

or as an educator). She argues that this emotional presence might give a sense of relief *"by using the movement in a therapeutic manner"*[174] or a new pathway of movement. Through this process, students could safely overcome their personal psychological boundaries.

Kotsali differentiated the notion of engaging in class and performing in class. For her, these are two different concepts. In terms of psychological issues, she supported students in discovering modes of engaging with, rather than imposing on, the performative state. She admitted that at times she has misjudged students because of her own preconceptions, and now she embraces the different realities each student brings to class.

During our interview, Kotsali constantly used the feminine gender in her speech (See also Stinson 2005). When I asked her about this choice, she explained that it is a conscious decision related to language gender. She explained that the class I participated in as an observer, consisted of twenty-seven female dancers and one male dancer. Consequently, for her the use of feminine gender represents the majority. However, she remained very supportive as regards gendered language use in class, in an attempt to decolonise or rather decongest language from gender stereotypes. Kotsali acknowledged that it was not an easy decision to make, in terms of her own bias, considering that during her own studies the masculine gender use was a prioritized norm. She also referred to the constant need of consent in the classroom, particularly while physical contact is required for giving instructions, making corrections or for demonstration purposes.

[174] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.

Throughout the interview, Kotsali brought examples from the professional dance field and the wider socio-political context in Greece and abroad. She argued that,

> *There must be a need and a connection that fuels this study* [dance]. (…) *And it's very important to me that they* [students] *connect a little bit with the arts, with what's happening in the arts scene. I want to open this "ocean" for them. (...) Moreover, my main experience is the performative one. I am a performer.*[175]

While supporting the point of view that, *"The students should not try to be heroic with movement, it is not needed. Pause and calmness are also fruitful"*[176]. She acknowledges that injury is often – unfortunately – part of this embodied study.

And she continued,

> *I would like to see the next generations of dancers enjoy the study of dance. I mean the joy that springs from within. The joy that does not rely only on having fun but on keeping our childlike curiosity alive. (...) to keep asking questions, to get bored, to be in pain, to be interested in dance as a complex process.*[177]

To summarise, Chara Kotsali's pedagogical approach in contemporary dance education shifts from visual imitation towards embodied knowledge, positioning the body as a site of knowledge production. She actively challenges hierarchical and performative norms within a dance classroom, while building her teaching on sensorial and experiential modes of engagement, in this way promoting a practice embedded in perception and lived experience. Her methodology combines a multilayered

[175] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.
[176] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.
[177] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.

engagement with technique, allowing students to engage with movement through personal exploration. This practice cultivates a sense of individual freedom and autonomy but also critical reflection. As Susan Stinson (1995) argues, “It is this internal sensing of oneself in stillness and in motion that turns what would otherwise be standing or sitting, walking or running, into dancing. (…) The kinesthetic sense allows us to go inside the dance, to feel ourselves as participants in it, not just as onlookers” (Stinson 1995, p.43). This aligns with Kotsali’s emphasis on students as embodied agents rather than mirrors of form.

Furthermore, Kotsali places emphasis on care, consent, and trust within the class, which reflects ethics of pedagogy that are deeply related to students’ centre teaching. For her, a dance class is not isolated from social or political reality. On the contrary, the classroom becomes a site for negotiating identity, language, and vulnerability. Kotsali sees injury as potentially being material for creativity and self-awareness. She views the body as a space of narration, a medium for sensory perception, and dance education, as a transformative space where the dance practice becomes a platform of co-creation.

Anthi Theofilidi (Contemporary dance educator at Aktina Higher Professional Private Dance School. Interview conducted on 12/04/2024).

I conducted the interview with Anthi Theofilidi both of us sitting on the floor of a first-level classroom. While we were talking, we took things out of our handbags, like a water bottle, a notebook, a t-shirt, a pair of socks and a book on philosophy. It seemed that with every question asked, something triggered us to share experiences of our everyday lives. Theofilidi shared that she felt anxious about answering my questions, and I felt her reassuring and nurturing spirit.

She described her technique as being a combination of Release techniques and the Limón-Based technique. She noted, *"I mainly rely on release but I also take a lot of elements from Limón to work on the clarity of the movement because I believe that when something is very clear, then you can spoil* [change] *it easily. I also use techniques for endurance and stamina".* She continued saying, *"That's because I notice a lot of injuries probably because of the lifestyle nowadays, the constant use of mobile phones, tablets, and laptops. I think there are more injuries now than in my time*".[178]

In an attempt to avoid injuries, Theofilidi provides information about foot placement and knee alignment. She also referred to the negative impact the Covid lockdown had on the dancing body, as well as the intensive physical and mental fatigue that students face during secondary education final exams.

[178] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.

Theofilidi teaches first-year students, and explains that,

> *The main goal is being aware as to how I step, how I move the centre* [of the body], *how I connect with others in the space and how I connect with the space itself. I work mainly with paying attention to the soles of my feet, the centre, and maintaining clarity, staying in the movement. I try to introduce these elements during the first year.*[179]

The use of space is an essential element in her methodology. She places great emphasis on the space in the back of a dancer's body, and, as she explained,

> *In our mind, we usually work with what is in front of us - within our field of vision. Hence, we forget what is behind us. This is important to know, because it is from the back that we control many things through the spine. So, we usually try to have control of everything that happens in front of us, while we neglect to think and use the technical points of the spine that help us a lot with balance, elongation and succession of movements. Moreover, the 'back space' is also a stage element. To connect with the space in a peripheral sense, we have to talk about the gaze. I see, I connect therefore I am present on stage.*[180]

Theofilidi carefully prepares her class by devising and using exercises aimed at different technical elements. She noted that she initially performs/demonstrates a movement many times on her own. Additionally, she uses contact techniques (hands-

[179] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.
[180] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.

on exercises and touch) as well as improvisation but *"not always",* she added, *"as much as the students need it to be calm and able to connect".* Theofilidi argued that this combination helps students develop a holistic/somatic awareness in relation to others and the space. She also underlined how she always introduces the notion of consent before any exercise involving touch.

For Theofilidi, teamwork is essential in dance education. She further explained,

> *Art is a team effort because it relates to people. (...) When you feel safe in a group, you can make mistakes, you can expose yourself, you can rely on the team to support you at a difficult moment. This also applies on stage. If something goes wrong, everyone is there, alert to support you.*[181]

She also argued that mistakes are not considered a bad thing. Instead, *"Mistakes can be very creative. Mistakes can lead you down to paths you never imagined. A technical 'mistake', can make you stubborn - can make you work more"*[182]. Mistakes are also linked to consistency. As you try, you might fail – therefore, consistency and honesty with your body and movement are both essential elements in her classes.

She noted,

> *When you are consistent and honest with yourself then you are ready to learn to expose yourself to the teacher, to the choreographer or to the colleague. By doing this, you connect and the others are able to connect with you, to go with*

[181] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.
[182] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.

> *you. Usually, we are afraid to expose ourselves, and we operate either by isolating ourselves or by attacking others. By exposing who we are at that moment, we will always find a solution.*[183]

For Theofilidi, recognising and sharing difficult moments with others is what makes dance work on a group level, whether in class or on stage. It is not wrong to follow your own path in movement, as long as you do it with honesty, consistency and communication, so that the group can support you towards the shared goal of learning.

When asked about participating in the recent artistic protests against the 2022 Presidential Decree, Theofilidi expressed her distress, arguing that,

> *The truth is that this predicament had a negative impact on our mood, not necessarily in class per se, but definitely affected the whole dance community in numerous ways. Due to this Decree, I advised my students to go* [to follow dance studies] *abroad. Now, I am even more of a fervid believer in that. I say this maybe because of my age, maybe because I am in pain, maybe because I don't have a second degree.*[184]

She continued, discussing about students who are concurrently enrolled both in Greek universities and at Higher Professional Private Dance School.

[183] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.
[184] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.

> *I am more indulgent with the students' absences too. I cannot force them to be present at their university. It is important nowadays to have a second degree. However, I do notice that the students use excuses more often than not to not show up in class. I feel like the younger generation is a little more evasive than we were. During my time, educators were very strict and demanding, to the point of being offensive. I do not do that. I am afraid of pushing students to the limits. I take a step back and at the same time I feel inadequate. I feel that I'm not getting my students where I want them to be. This is a sadness of mine that I still haven't found a solution to.*[185]

Theofilidi believes that injuries, often caused by the students' demanding daily life, lead to fatigue and possible burnout. She also referred to the South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han and his book "Pain and algophobia in the 21st century" (2021)[186], which she'd recently read. According to her, Han argues that today, people are afraid to experience pain. For Theofilidi, this argument relates to what she observes in class. She believes that pain is part of human vulnerability and corporeal expression.

Consequently, Anthi Theofilidi's pedagogical and artistic approach reflects a deep understanding of the demands placed on a contemporary dancer's body. She places great emphasis on conscious movement and corporeal awareness as essential elements to the learning process. As Deidre Sklar notes, though kinaesthesia "we seek deeper understanding of movement itself as a way of knowing, a medium that carries meaning in an immediately felt, somatic mode" (Sklar 2000, p.70). She nurtures clarity, grounding, and spatial connectivity. The use of improvisation and teamwork supports a

[185] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.
[186] Byung-Chul, H. (2021) *The Palliative Society: Pain Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

holistic understanding of movement, helping students develop consistency, honesty, mutual respect, trust, and collectivity. In her methodology, mistakes are reframed as valuable creative opportunities that allows "bodies [to] become laboratories for experimentation with kinetic details" (Sklar 2000, p.72).

Theofilidi's reflections also reveal broader concerns about the future of the dance profession, particularly in relation to recent socio-political developments such as the Presidential Decree of 2022. She acknowledges the need to balance and connect artistic and academic pathways. By referencing Han's philosophical ideas, she underlines the importance of embracing pain and vulnerability. Her approach is based on an ethical framework that cultivates corporeal resilience and interconnection.

Maria Foundouli (Contemporary dance educator at Aktina Higher Professional Private Dance School. Interview conducted on 26/03/2024).

Maria Foudouli and I conducted the interview at one of the desks in the office of the Aktina. Unfortunately, all other spaces were occupied at the time. From the beginning, it was obvious that the space would be challenging. The office was used by the school's secretary, and frequently students and educators also entered the space, interrupting. As a result, we had to pause multiple times mostly at the beginning of our conversation. Despite the interruptions Foundouli's calmness and supportive presence created a sense of safety, a sensescape allowing this meaningful interaction.

Foundouli described her technical approach as a combination of the Release and Limón techniques, with particular reference to two of her educators, Charis Mandafounis[187] and Timos Zehas[188]. Foundouli explained,

> *I give emphasis on the sequence of movement and flow, on how all parts of the body are connected and how one leads the other. This generates movement. I use floorwork during the first part of the class as a short skeletal warm-up. Just to understand and remember the relationship between the pelvis, the spine and the head. So that they* [students] *will be able to use their core to move and to connect the body parts into a whole. And then I usually work on the axes, swing, and trunk movement. How can the body move with the pelvis staying in a neutral position and so on. And then I use the space, dynamic jumps and different qualities.*[189]

[187] See also Panourgia 2017.
[188] See Axis Syllabus technique.
[189] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.

Foundouli noted that she has developed a sense of a class structure that she constantly returns to, and explains,

> *After some years, I have come to a structure. Many times, I have tried to leave it and change it somehow, but I always come back. So, something draws me to this structure. I don't prepare most of the course. Sometimes, I prepare the last combination, at least the beginning of it. Thus, I can think about it in terms of music. I use music to get inspired. But I have designed this structure a little in my mind and thought of some technical elements that I would like to work on. For example, lately I have been working on the pelvis and spine, the transfer of the pelvis in space. So, I may think of a theme to somehow run through the class. And since I see them* [second and third-year students] *twice a week, I start something on the first day and I will keep it throughout the week or weeks*[190].

Foundouli differentiated the aims throughout all the years of study, noting that,

> *In the first year I start with simple combinations. I insist more on technique, on the purity of the movement, on understanding how the mechanisms of the body work from the inside. In the second year, I start with clear technical elements, combinations. In the third year, my intention is to always become more liberated. Between the second and third years, there is not much difference. (...) I usually add a little more technical difficulty in the third year and work on combinations so that I don't get bored and we can have some variety.*[191]

[190] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.
[191] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.

Reflecting on the current academic year she noted that, *"In this third year* [2024], *I would like to work more synthetically, and less technically, with let's say more flow, expressiveness, qualities and so on. But in the end, it didn't work out for us* [her and the students]. *It was mutual*. *They had other needs*" [192].

Foundouli viewed the choreographed class for the final exam as a "loop" that limits students' technical growth. She argues that during the third year of studies there is insufficient time to refine the students' technical abilities because most of the classes are dedicated to continuous rehearsals for the choreographed class.

However, she strongly supported the idea of teaching each group throughout all three years, as this allows for developing both technical skills, interpersonal relationships while also building a strong artistic foundation over the years.

Foundouli instils her class with clarity, as clarity through somatic awareness is a central axis in her teaching, and she explains,

> *A very clear succession in movement reveals truth that comes from within. (...) The experiential anatomy of the body makes you understand where the movement comes from. For me, it comes from the earth, then passes to the feet and continues its travels. This is purity, clarity and grounding, that organic succession with continuous flow. So yes, I ask for clarity* [from the students] *as an in-depth understanding of the movement*[193]

And she continues, *"I want more research, more study of the body. Because then the movements become procedural and the first sensation is lost. Movement becomes only*

[192] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.
[193] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.

a vehicle for performance and seems empty, boring and superficial to me"[194]. Foundouli admitted that she works on sensory awareness both as a dance educator and as a dancer[195].

> *I deal with movement emotionally and sensory. (...) As a dancer, I also seek enjoyment, I think it's something that keeps me going and keeps my interest alive. So, I try to instil that in them* [students] *too. (...) The students must learn to use their imagination, they need to use the sense of touch, the density of their bodies, and the hardness of the floor (...) to feel the air on their skin. Otherwise, there's no pleasure in this thing* [dance], *so when you don't seek it out* [the sensory pleasure] *you lose it and you lose the opportunities to enjoy it.*[196]

For Foundouli, it is essential to keep the sensory element active in order to overcome boredom, injuries and stiff, superficial movement, and maintain curiosity. It is one of her primordial aims to keep the students interested and happy within this sensorial experience. She reflected on her pedagogical approach thinking whether her gentle method could be perceived as soft. She underlined that she is demanding in her own personal way. She emphasized that,

> *I don't do this in my life, I don't demand from people. It's a bit foreign to me to put it in the class. But recalling my student years, the truth is that people who might have been intensely demanding, let's say, they pushed me forward. Could*

[194] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.
[195] Maria Foundouli is an active contemporary dancer with numerous performances in her career.
[196] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.

a milder, softer approach work better in dealing with boredom and fatigue? I don't know, I question that.[197]

Foundouli believes that being present while injured is an essential procedure and can be a creative place to be at, as she further explains,

To watch and hear information during class is important. It is also important to watch your fellow students attend the practice in class. The teacher as an educator leads the way, makes corrections and gives instructions. [Then] *you watch whether the connections were successful. Even if you don't dance, everything penetrates the students' bodies. You also imagine your own lesson as a dance educator in the future. It's a great benefit. Even for me as an educator it is important. An injury can be a limitation but it can also be a creative process.*[198]

When asked what she considers most important to convey to the next generation of dancers, Maria Foundouli replied,

The sensory part… I think the way dealing with the movement in an emotional way, with psychological depth without making it dramatic. At least that moves me in dance. (…) This connection between soul and body. However, I think that this cannot be transmitted, cannot be given. It's probably experiential, I don't know... It relies on how you experience the movement. I don't know that I actually offer this [to the students] *or I just release an emotional part of them.*[199]

[197] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.
[198] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.
[199] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.

She concluded with a reflection on the subjectivity of the movement,

> *There are some movements (...) that 'fit' my body. Then, I see the same movement in other bodies and it looks strange. But if they understand the intention and the mechanism of the movement, then it transforms in their bodies and it is adapted in a creative way.*[200]

Summarising, Foundouli's classes are grounded in the notion of clarity through somatic awareness. This clarity does not correspond to the superficiality of the form, but rather to the internal understanding of how movement emerges, related to gravity and tactile engagement with the floor and space. Her intention is to use imagination and bodily sensitivity. Her teaching reflects a sensuous pedagogical ethos that values movement both as a technical element and a means to personal discovery and growth. Movement, for her, is a site of transformation and adaptation. This approach reflects Jill Green's (2002) argument that "somatics focuses on an inner experiential body not on a body as an objective entity or mechanical instrument" (Green 2002, p.115).

A central axis in Foundouli's practice is the sensescape of the moving body – how the dancer refines movement through sensory pleasure and emotional input. She critically engages with the tension between technical repetition and creative fatigue, questioning how structured learning can remain vivid without becoming mechanical, even if injuries occur. Foudouli's teaching approach advocates for a sensorial approach to dance education where technique and pleasure co-exist.

[200] Quotation from interview on 26/03/2024.

Sandra Grimma (Contemporary dance educator at Aktina Higher Professional Private Dance School. Interview conducted on 07/06/2024).

Sandra Grimma welcomed me tenderly into her studio on a warm day of June. Due to intensive rehearsals with third-year students, and even more rehearsals with her own dance company, it was impossible to conduct the interview at Aktina. During our conversation, I found a profound resonance with her, both on a professional and a personal level, as we were both experiencing challenging life events at the time. Although her intimate thoughts and personal incidents are excluded from this research, it is important to acknowledge the human dimension behind her role as a contemporary dance educator. Her openness was a reminder that our pedagogical approaches are also influenced and shaped by our personal experiences.

Grimma describing her technique argued that,

> *My class is based on the technical material of release technique. However, in recent years, I have been trying to work on the basic structure of the lesson by using improvisation. (…) I am interested in the children's* [students'] *personal movement and input. I believe that teaching the technique through improvisation, give the children a sense of fulfilment. My technique is also influenced by martial arts. I practiced for many years Kung fu and Yoga, I use these techniques for strengthening the students.*[201]

[201] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.

For Grimma,

> *Dancers as humans are beings of imitation who need to primarily copy a movement in order to understand it. However, it is important to understand the mechanism of the movement in order to be able to use the body accordingly and then reach the point of expression. (…) Thus, I want the students to understand what moves them. I am interested in the intention of the movement. I am giving them space to use the whole extent of their body as a tool for personal expression.*[202]

Grimma argued that improvisation is *"one hundred per cent technique,"* not just a tool or *"just free movement"*. Through the improvisation technique Grimma asserted, that *"students understand what is actually happening internally and often, emotionally"*[203].

She outlined her pedagogical goals according to each year of study. Regarding the first year Grimma explained,

> *In the first year, the biggest bet I make is for the children [students] to understand as quickly as possible the logic of the movement, to take this first step. So, I create phrases that are more functional and organic, so that they understand that the body can move and give it space and all that we said before and understand that movement is what moves them.*[204]

[202] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.
[203] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.
[204] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.

And she continued,

> *In the second year the main goal is for the children* [students] *not to be sucked into the study, because this happens during the second year. So, I give them more creative motivation/stimuli within the technique, in order for them to make a leap forward.*[205]

Regarding the third year, Grimma placed great emphasis on collective thinking among the students.

> *In the third year, I really want them to go through transitioning from the phase of "I" toward "our group". To communicate, to reach out. I give them more information about performing and how they enter, or stand* [on stage]. *In the first year you will hear me say, don't dance. In the third year, it is the exact opposite!*[206]

Grimma admitted that she constantly observes and studies her own body throughout the years, noticing changes in movement and intentions. As she noted,

> *When I was younger* [as a student], *my goal in class was to achieve, to achieve every single movement. I was feeling good, satisfied and happy only when I achieved it. This has changed. Observing my body and other bodies in space, I realise what input, what stimulus, I want to receive as a body. I want to*

[205] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.
[206] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.

understand the intention and the meaning, not just to achieve a form. That's what I am trying to transmit to students, with improvisation to observe beyond the image, to go further from imitation.[207]

She continued,

I am a person that absorbs every stimulus. I get my inspiration from everything and everywhere. That's why the deconstruction – the critical engagement is also very important throughout that time [studying years]. So, when I abandoned this process and deconstructed things, I felt 100% creative. And only then, I realized that was not creativity. I was being trapped in form. I am proud as an educator, that I ask my students not to imitate the movement, but to try to understand it. I want to see their uniqueness.[208]

She further reflected,

For years, I was practicing the 'no external stimulus method', I was in the studio, alone, no mirrors, without music, with the curtains closed, for more than three hours. I wanted the stimulus to emerge from within. Nevertheless, I see that the fatigue makes students need a tiny stimulus, hence I use music. So, for me music is a driving force.[209]

[207] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.
[208] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.
[209] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.

Aside from improvisation, Grimma also uses the partnering technique not only to reinforce contemporary dance techniques, but also to reconstruct students' relationship with their own body, and that with the "other body" (others' bodies). Grimma assesses the students' distance/disconnection from their own body and its physicality in general:

> *They have lost the connection with their own body, the communication between them* [themselves and their body]*, they haven't empathised with their bodies, there are not one, yet. Therefore, it is understandable that they have trouble communicating with another body. That's why touch is important. Touch manifests a way to meet each other.*[210]

For Grimma, the coronavirus pandemic was a major corporeal and educational "block". She noted that students developed almost an aversion towards touching, which she related to her discomfort in class since she is an educator with strong use of the 'hands-on technique'. She underlined, *"I work with touch. I work with touch between bodies. So, how am I supposed to work? I was blocked. When the students relaxed from Covid fear, we started enjoying the practice*".[211]

Touch, for Grimma is essential to the practice of contemporary dance. After establishing a clear and honest communication, she creates a safe environment built on mutual trust. She explained,

[210] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.
[211] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.

> *Of course, I do not touch without consent, even though I sometimes do, as that might be necessary, especially during the partnering technique. I watch, I observe the bodies and the movement. I touch when it is needed to guide, to solve or to prevent* [an accident] *not to dictate, to impose on or abuse. And this is what I advise. I do not criminalise touch. We are not robots, we are humans, we need touch it is essential but always under mutual respect.*[212]

On the subject of injuries, Grimma expressed her opposition with societal stereotypes associated with a dancers' body,

> *Injuries, unfortunately, are part of the job. (…) But you* [as a dancer] *cannot identify as an injured body… We are not the image of our bodies. Or the image the society creates for us. (…) The Society expects us to be what you see… I mean an injured body can still be present. Even an injury can give you something to work on* [during dance studies].[213]

When asked about the recent art protests against the 2022 Presidential Decree, Grimma again expressed opposition to that. She argued that she experienced division between students and Schools due to hierarchy issues, colleagues within the work place, and even in wider societal landscapes. As an educator, she empathised with her students' difficulties during this unprecedented moment in dance education.

[212] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.
[213] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.

Grimma noted that during the protests,

> *The students felt the need to compete, as regards to who was most involved in the protests, and that was because the enemy in this case was something vague. It was the state, it wasn't one particular person. When they couldn't blow off steam in the streets they had to 'battle' each other.* [214]

For Grimma, nothing changed after the issuance of the Presidential Decree. She had no expectations that the government would improve dance education. However, she deeply understands the frustration and disappointment of young people starting their lives and careers in dance. She believes that protest should be an everyday life attitude. *"I do not believe the state will give us recognition. But I hope it does. The protests gave us an incentive to become stronger as a dance community, to come together. I believe in togetherness. I trust that we have each other",* she said.

It was with this notion of togetherness that Sandra Grimma concluded our interview, whereas for me it was the conclusion of a four-year journey within Higher Professional Private Dance School, seeking common grounds of communication within somatoralities and embodied oral tradition of past and present in contemporary dance education. I returned home and closed my interview notebook thinking of Grimma's quote: I trust that we have each other's somatoralities.

Consequently, Sandra Grimma's pedagogical approach reveals a profound merging of personal experience, somatic awareness, and critical engagement with contemporary

[214] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.

dance education. She places great emphasis on improvisation technique which cultivates corporeal awareness. For Grimma, touch reflects a humanistic and holistic aspect of dance training. She supports the embodied pedagogy which develops technical skill while at the same time nurtures self-awareness, empathy, and collective creativity. These qualities, she believes, are vital for training both dancers and educators; in addition, she demonstrates a conscious positioning within broader socio-political contexts. She resists formalistic methods and invests in critical individuals. Her practice highlights the political and ethical dimensions of pedagogy rooted in solidarity. Indeed, as Albright (2011) argues, "There is a connection between how we think about the world and how we move through it" (Albright 2011, p.17), that resonates strongly with Grimma's embodied pedagogy.

These contemporary dance educators illustrate diverse and profound interpretations of transmission in contemporary dance within the framework of higher education in Greece. The pedagogical approaches of Grigoriou, Kazouri, and Dramisioti intersect with those of Grimma, Foundouli, Theofilidi, Kotsali, and Manoliadi. All shared the notion of commitment to somatic awareness, critical reflection, and student-centred learning. However, each educator cultivates a unique methodology informed by personal, philosophical, and socio-political orientations that shaping the educational experience in distinct ways. Therefore, all interviews were equally important for the research, providing me with insight into the educators' thoughts, practices and aims.

In particular, Grigoriou's concentration was on technical feedback through voice and performance (auditory input, and voice as an integral component of corporeal presence), while Kazouri and Manoliadi centre on humanistic ethics, kinaesthetic

awareness, and ‘relational’ learning. Additionally, Dramisioti views dance education as an embodied enquiry, while Theofilidi integrates that with emotional honesty. Kotsali explores corporeality and embodiment by reframing the classroom as a site of negotiation. Moreover, Grimma and Foundouli prioritize somatic improvisation, sensory awareness, and creative autonomy. As for Foundouli, her pedagogical axis aligns with Dramisioti’s concern about maintaining corporeal presence. As we can see, pedagogies mix together. These layered approaches reflect a dynamic and evolving landscape in Greek contemporary dance education, one that balances technique, ethical care, creativity, and political consciousness.

The interviews were conducted during the first and second semester of the third year of research, allowing a sufficient time to fine-tune the interviews. Moreover, there was everyday informal communication with the participants. During our discussions, I felt welcomed, secure, trustworthy and important for the interviewees. Throughout this process, I realised that using a verbalizing practise was crucial. The participants not only exposed the depth of their work but also mentioned institutional limitations. Their contribution was vital for cultivating a responsive and reflective dance-education system. At the same time, I felt their anxiety, their agonies, and their will to provide the best for their students, within a dated and inadequate institutionalised dance education practice.

As a dancer, educator, and researcher, I saw their true devotion to this multifaceted profession [dancer, performer, choreographer, and dance educator], their passion and vulnerability. These qualities need to be recognised, and their pedagogical voices must be heard. Moreover, they all acknowledge the importance of documenting oral

traditions in an attempt to not preserve them, but to reflect on them instead, to communicate and address them for critical engagement and broader dialogue. Likewise, it was evident that educators acted as agents of the educational culture they transmitted, and their input in this study will contribute to the understanding of the field they participate in (Nettl 1985, 2010). The pedagogical approaches of these Greek contemporary dance educators align with global dance education scholars such as Albright, Sklar, Shantel Ehrenberg, Green and Stinson in their shared emphasis on embodiment, critical reflection and student-centred practice.

4.2.3. Dance Students Focus Groups in the Field.

This section presents research findings with reference to interviews with Higher Professional Private Dance Schools focus groups. Throughout these discussions, several key themes emerged: students' perception of dance as a core part of their life path, their perception of the body and touch, the emotional and physical complexities of training, the impact of institutional structures and the effects of the 2022-2023 protest. These themes that illuminate contemporary dance education as an embodied, relational and politically situated practice will be presented in this section.

Often, after a few initial uncomfortable moments, the students take control of the filming process creating a narrative they wanted to capture on film. Their actions on camera and the way they engaged with the camera often mirrored the impression I had formed of them during classes.

For example, one of the focus groups treated the camera playfully, passing the camera from hand to hand, letting it travel around the room while zooming in and out with a feeling of exploration. On the contrary, another group treated the camera as a significant devise. They positioned it on a high spot, like a ubiquitous observer. For another group, the devise was perceived as a tool thorough which they could be heard, or as a kind "ear" to which they could confess their exhaustion.

Reviewing the video recordings, I not only recalled, but also sensed and re-experienced the atmosphere that each group created, the 'lightness' or the 'heaviness' embedded in the students' somatoralities. These group interviews proved to be the most challenging yet the core element of this research. As Elyse Lamm Pineau (2002) suggests, there are *"inter-sections among storytelling, the performance turn, and pedagogy".* He further argues,

> *Each time that a student explores her or his presentation of self through an autobiographical monologue . . . educators find . . . evidence that when students engage their physical bodies, they "come to know" things in a uniquely personal and heuristic manner.*
>
> (Pineau 2002, p. 50)

This notion strongly resonates with my own findings. The students' presence and performance during the research process were not only essential elements to its development, but also generated knowledge related to contemporary dance transmission. Furthermore, in order to understand the complex relationships between educators, students and the transmission process, I too adopted the role of a learner, *"I*

become a student myself through participatory observation" (Eftymiou 2022). Similarly, Patricia Campbell (2003) emphasizes this interconnection between learning and teaching as fundamental to pedagogy, arguing, "*This student perspective served to raise an awareness of the teaching-learning process, referred to ethnomusicologically as 'transmission and acquisition', which is in fact akin to the 'pedagogical practice' of music educators' on-going attention"* (Campbell 2003, p.25).

Thus, both my methodology and findings are aligned with broader discourses in performative pedagogy emphasising the mutual embodied nature of knowledge transmission.

The participation rate of focus groups at Moragemou was approximately at 80% for first-year students, 70% for second-year students, and 65% for third-year students. These high percentage rates indicate that students trusted both the study process and their course director. Course director Kazouri was both very specific, and very informative to students, as regards my presence in class, and my study, while facilitating full access for my communicating with educators. She scheduled interviews at times she knew would be convenient for students. Also, she treated this analysis as a significant academic investigation, underlining that students' participation was an opportunity for them to broaden their horizons on dance as an academic discipline.

Similarly, at Choros, course director Maro Grigoriou, and contemporary dance educator Markella Manoliadi, after receiving a detailed explanation about interviews, suggested that participation of focus groups was an essential element for the success of this investigation. As a result, participation of all groups reached the percentage rate of

almost 100%. Both course directors, Kazouri and Grigoriou, demonstrated a strong hierarchal presence, in the sense that their authority was well-respected by the students without any hesitation.

In contrast, the situation at Aktina was a bit more complex. Although the course director was a strong advocate of this research, communicating with the students was mediated by the secretary and conducted via email. The absence of the course director's active participation lessened the significance of attending interviews, and how important this was for conducting this research. This case highlights the influential role (agency) of the 'gatekeeper' in qualitative research. As Shenuka Singh and Douglas Wassenaar (2016) note, gatekeepers can introduce biases or limitations that could impact data collection. Although the secretary was more than willing to provide all necessary assistance, her role as gatekeeper did not allow her to persuade students to participate in the focus groups.

Additionally, at Aktina, focus groups were interviewed close to the end of the first semester for first and second-year students, due to scheduling constrains. The research timeline did not allow for students' full participation, but only up to 50% per group. As a result, many students perceived interviews as an extra work, rather than a meaningful opportunity.

Despite these variations, the focus groups shared similar behavioural patterns. For example, the first-year students exhibited a joyful and open-minded attitude. They were expressive, willing, and direct with their answers, while playfully engaging with the camera and the microphone like playing a game. Most of them had not participated in

the art protests but heard about them through either social media or a Secondary School of Arts.[215]

The second-year students appeared timid and cautious. They needed more time to feel comfortable, even though they were more curious about the study overall, and as to how I was going to evaluate or interpret their performance. These students had participated in the art protests as groups of dance students and described this felt like being in the eye of the storm, while literally negotiating over various issues between ministries and the dance community.

Third-year students were more focused and introspective. They engaged in interviews as if they were talking to a friend sharing the same interests, concerns and agonies. The interview process was described as a relief for them. They were interested in the opportunities for an academic career and were aware of social changes within the dance community, expressing feelings of disappointment, betray and loss of hope as regards the future of dance as a profession in Greece.

Points of Interest on Students Perspectives:

In this section, the words and phrases *in italics* represent students' voices transcribed from the focus groups discussions. In order to maintain the narrative flow, I incorporated their phrases into the text. I have preserved dialogues as transcribed, in an attempt to be as accurate as possible. For anonymity reasons, I intentionally avoided

[215]Approximately, two students in each first-year of studies had previously attended one of the Secondary Schools of Arts in Greece.

identifying the names of participating schools and students. The following part was structured thematically - each group was analysed separately in order to avoid direct comparison between Schools.

A striking yet understandable observation was that I heard words and phrases in students' answers echoing those of their educators. This could be interpreted as evidence of ethical, technical and philosophical elements of contemporary dance being both present, and orally transmitted from educators to students, forming a living narrative of contemporary dance. Furthermore, this observation also gives a strong sense of continuity of this art form.

A strong example seen at one of the schools was where three different focus groups independently used the exact same phrase while explaining why they "*Dance has no ceiling*"[216].

A significant number of students, if not all, when asked *"why are you studying dance?"* gave various answers along the lines of *"Because I can't imagine myself doing anything else! It's what gives me happiness".* This response suggests an internal urge to create through the body. Many students expressed the belief that they did not deliberately choose to study contemporary dance, but rather that dance was already inherent to their nature. For them, the only way "*to understand the deepest mechanisms of movement"* is *"to devote your life to study it".*

[216] Ceiling in this phrase means limit, «Ο χορός δεν έχει ταβάνι».

Most of the students identified themselves through dance. A first-year student states, *"I cannot imagine myself without dancing"*. Another adds, *"I feel that there is no ending to this study. It's fascinating"*. And another one concludes, *"I know nothing. I am satisfied that I can respond through my body, expressing only what the embodied knowledge of dance feels like"*.

"For me, it makes sense, you know, dance and I are not two separate things. It was meant to be" argues a second-year student. Another one noted, *"it's like a second language of communication, I express myself easily with my body"*. A third-year student commented, *"I see beautiful things. I see me beautiful"* and another one describes, *"I have constructed all my life and my personality around dance (...) I left everything else behind so I can follow dance, and I am confident, I will not say happy, but close to that. I'm fortunate for that, even if I wake up grumpy or in pain (...) except from the technique, I get to know myself better"*. Concluding, contemporary dance is not simply something these students just do, it is how they define and understand themselves.

<u>Conscious body and body perception:</u>

A first-year student vividly described the feeling of studying contemporary dance and developing a deep corporeal awareness, *"When I am in the metro* [underground transport] *among people, I think that I am a dancer and that makes me feel different from the crowd. I feel powerful, like I have a hidden superpower"*. Another student added, *"The exploration of my body is a mystical voyage of creation". "My corporeal perception has changed. I observe consciously each contact with another body",* confesses another. *One explained, "I feel that I exist after the* [contemporary dance]

class. "It's a mystical ritual, its sacred the research that is being done with the body" adds another.

A second-year student reflected on that, *"I believe that it's difficult not to be in defence during a contemporary dance class, for many reasons. I am thinking that studying contemporary dance makes me a better person, I'm opening up". "Being together in the dance class is relieving"* confessed another student.

A third-year student described that *"we touch each other, we realise the 'here and now'. It is us together. We feel without stimulus. Just being, it feels nice to be part of the group. Just say, 'How do you feel?' - 'Terrible!' - 'Me too!' And that's okay"*.

As we observe, the perception of the dancing body expands through interrelations and sensorial processes. It is experienced not only through dance technique but also through physical touch, shared experiences and acceptance of vulnerability. Therefore, it becomes a common ground for communication both on an oral and an embodied level.

<u>What is a dancing body?</u>

The following section refers to students' perception on the dancing body.

A first-year student described that, *"My father* [a non-dancer] *and I* [a trained dancer] *can both dance contemporary dance – now that is a dancing body in contemporary dance, everyone"*. Another student added, *"A 'dancing body' is any, every, and each body that dances". "A healthy body"* added another one. One other student described the dancing body using a spatial reference, *"A dancing body is a body that has full*

awareness of what is happening in front and in back of it". Another commented, *"A body is the performing tool of a choreographer".*

Among second-year students we observe a slight turn towards a critical engagement with body stereotypes. *"We are not in favour of specific silhouette; we are in favour of 'open' bodies"* notes one of them. At the same time, students critically reflected on their progress, *"We haven't yet achieved the freedom in movement",* one notes rather puzzled.

Third-year students related the dancing body to love and probably pleasure and emotions. *"A body that loves what it does"* one argued. Another emphasised the *"ability to feel", "to listen itself and others"* added another and someone else fills in*, "A body that can adapt, that has qualities and consciousness, that is a dancing body".* A student from a different group described *"It is a body that has perception, a multifunction machine that has the ability to perform everything". "To be clever, to be able to endure a lot…"* interjected another one. *"A body that has lucidity…that wants to co-exist"* someone else adds, as another one confesses, *"Dance holds me when I want to leave, makes me verbalize what I can't with words".*

Another student reflected, *"When I am at home, I want to go to School. You want to be in constant movement even if in great fatigue, because you do something important. That's a life question. We will be looking for this answer until we die".*

These descriptions reflect the evolution of the embodied experience, from literal definitions by first-year students, to critical engagement by second-year students, and

finally to philosophical introspections by third-year students. These descriptions illustrate the deepening relationship between self, body and movement.

Fatigue, pain and injuries:

In this section, the students reflect on fatigue, pain and injuries during their three-year dance studies.

"Fatigue is treated with more fatigue", a first-year student stated ironically*".* One shared, *"it is scary to think that whatever you build can be ruined if you have an injury".* [overlapping dialogue] *"I was crying because I didn't want to stay at home if I knew the duration of the rehabilitation, I would have felt more secure".*

In another group, a student stated, *"When I step out due to an injury, I feel guilty. I feel that I let down people, my educators, my co-students who support me".* One added*, "When someone is out due to an injury, I feel empathy. It is tough. Stepping out and observing is very useful but most of the time is heart-breaking and harrowing. You don't want to step out. You want to be 100% in".* Another described the dual role of participant and observer, *"When you have an injury, you observe the one group [of students] observing the other group. When I am in, I observe the educator, the feet, the arms; when I am out, I observe the glances, the outward direction of the energy". "To be a dancer means that the creation is interwoven with the wearing down, you marry the fatigue and at the same time you feel proud of yourself", "Sometimes you have to accept it, to work with it. Not go against it".* Another added, *"Most of the time, it's your mind that needs rest, not the body".*

A second-year student said, *"To be honest, injuries are criticised"* and another student admitted, *"I don't want to say I am tired or in pain. I don't want to be considered as soft. It is still a taboo, the acceptance of pain".* Another student explained, *"There are three types of tiredness: the corporeal, the mental and the psychological. And we've experienced them all. The corporeal you act like you don't experience it, the mental happens when the classes are demanding with complex combinations, the psychological is collective. It happens when all the individuals are not okay. It's about the team".* The students noted the absence of structural support, that there is no solidarity or *"common reaction for injuries only a loose legal framework that is ironically applied".*

In a different group a student commented, *"Love-Patience-Tears. What else can you do?".* Another adds, *"You have to listen to your body and move on. But also look for what went wrong".* Another student added, *"You need to be aware of your body, to be connected with it as a whole. To recognise different kinds of pain. You learn to distinguish them through time".*

A third-year student stated, *"It's okay that they exist* [fatigue/pain/injury] *you can find a way in between. To dance in between pain. To see, to experience what you can and what you can't perform. To see what you need".* One commented*, "I feel a tremendous force to explain my corporeal and mental fatigue and pain to others* [non-dancers] *as this was not obvious to them. I think it is a social issue. Its only understood by other dancers".* While another added, *"Injuries are an inner battle. You might be in horrible pain and still when you hear the music you start dancing. I don't know how to explain it. It happened to me. While dancing I didn't feel the pain. When I stopped, I collapsed".*

One reflected, *"It's a burden when one of us is sitting down, we all feel for this person. This is nothing to laugh about"*.

The students' reflections reveal pain as a multi-dimensional experience physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. Despite students themselves finding a balance between creative pain and their body limitations, the lack of institutional support is evident.

Touch and Consent:

In this section, the students explore the notions of touch and consent during contemporary dance practice.

"At first, I felt awkward to dance with someone else. If the touch has ambiguous intention, it can be uncomfortable", stated a first-year student. *"But if the intention is clear, it can be very useful for the study"* noted another student. *"The way I experience the sense of touch has changed. I consciously notice how my body feels in contact"* shared another one.

A second-year student noted, *"Touch helps you understand the movement".* Another elaborated, *"it makes you overpass the surface of mimicking and go to the feeling* [of the movement]".

A third-year student asserted that *"Consent is needed even before making corrections".* Another added, *"The way I perceive touch has changed. I consciously notice how my body feels in contact".* A few days later in a different group, a student noted, *"Nothing*

[referring to instructions] *is lost. Even without the sense of touch, I can still hear my body".*

In a different group a student summarised, *"These issues* [consent, gendered language] *have started to impact all professions, and the dance field also".* Students have used this argument even for contact improvisation; emphasising that consent must precede physical contact.

As regards gendered language use in the classroom, a third-year student commented, *"The absence of men changes the dynamics in the classroom, but still, consent must be mandatory."* In another group one noticed that there is a discussion related with issues of gender, in the beginning of the year – a statement that also aligns with the educators' comments.

The students' reflections revealed a heightened awareness of physical boundaries, and the importance of consent in their everyday practice of contemporary dance. Even though students recognise that the sense of touch enhances their corporeal perception, they still express feeling uncomfortable in cases of consent absence.

<u>Contemporary Dance Class Through the Senses:</u>

In this section the students describe a contemporary dance class involving their senses.

First-year students described their experiences in a playful and humorous way. One of them said, *"I feel like I'm rolling on the floor like I'm always searching for something,*

and obviously I never find it". Another one added, *"I feel like a clown! Though, I do feel safe to be exposed at the same time".*

For a second-year student the sense of contemporary dance was, *"The goose bumps you get, when you feel the floor, and you breathe". "The childlike sense, the inspiration, the tension"* commented another. In a different group a student noted, *"The smell, the familiarity, the sense of class.* [Most of the time students do not respond using full sentences, but rather single words]. "*See, hear… texture…", "You feel",* said another. Another described, *"Stretch… warmth… touch of the wooden floor… swings… suspension".* At the end, a student added, *"The dirt on the floor! The common dirt!",* closing with laughter.

For third-year students the sensory experience becomes more reflective. One described, *"Breathing, movement, warming, soft articulations, standing, opening of the eyes, kinaesthesia, clarity, desire to be with others".* Another student stated a similar sensation saying, *"I breathe, I feel the floor. In the morning it is cold. I feel like I have a ''thermostat in my body. This 'thermostat that turns the heat on' (…) It's my personal ritual".* Another one states, *"The sensation of being together with the floor, with my sensations, with others, with my inner self".*

These diverse reflections highlighted contemporary dance not only as a physical discipline but also as a sensory and emotional journey.

If contemporary dance did not exist tomorrow, what would you save to transmit to the next generation?

This question served as an imaginative reflection, a moment of lightness and a relief - a form of *catharsis* - following the intense engagement with themes of physical pain, socio-political turbulences, institutional critique and struggle. It invited students to consider what embodied knowledge would still wish to carry forward and share beyond the formal structures of contemporary dance institutes.

"The quintessence of the contemporary dance is to walk, to breathe, to carry yourself in space, to be in touch, to be real" stated one student happily. One added smiling, *"The bare feet, the sensation of the bare feet on the floor"*. *"The groove from inside*" commented another. *"Doing something together, to feel this sense of connecting with another being".* Another student with a hint of irony said, *"The parallel position!" "The jumps the feeling in the air",* said another. Words and voices are now overlapping each other *"Yes, the childish feeling", "The feeling of being lost", "Sinking in the floor". "The suspension, the flow, the succession the taste of the classroom". "I would let everyone dance as they wish".* And the conversation ended with the phrase, *"We must transmit the limitless imagination of the body".*

Second-year students shared these emotions, *"The connection with the floor". "The imagination*, *the childlike feeling"* argued another. In a different group a student stated, *"The experience of the sense of the classroom"* and another one added *"The weight… the freedom… the succession…The hand-stands, the turns, the spiral, the cracking joints*, *the swings…The point where you are not touching the ground and you are in the air and you feel no pain".* The third-year students commented, *"The grounding!", "The*

turns, during a turn everything is possible" and *"Melting on the floor, letting go through breathing".*

There were other points of interest that emerged within the focus groups. However, these were isolated comments which didn't fully develop nor were they discussed during interviews[217]. In all interviews, I tried to focus on what students found importance in and prioritise those points in this study.

The focus groups offer a rich ground for understanding contemporary dance education within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece, as a practice grounded in personal expression, freedom, and embodied connection. The students' thoughts and reflections highlighted the importance of transmitting both individual and collective creativity through sensory engagement, while perceiving contemporary dance not only as a technical discipline but also as a liberating practice. Contemporary dance is described both as a self-discovery process and a collective ritual of understanding each other. Students' responses presented a multilayered and multisensorial landscape as to how contemporary dance is perceived by them, based on their own lived experiences. Notions of corporeal awareness, touch and consent, fatigue, injury, and the dancing body, all emerged as central axes of the students' reflections.

Moreover, issues like gender, power, consent, and identity indicate an increasing awareness in students, whose reflections advocate for more inclusive pedagogical

[217] For example, some students spoke about improvisation. A third-year student shared, *"Improvisation is a form of corporeal research it helps me understand in a creative way".* In a different group, a student commented, *"The improvisation scores make me feel a tickly sensation in my guts. It's my chance to do 'whatever I want'. It's a state where it doesn't matter how I look, how the movement looks".*

practices. Although these issues were not evident in the beginning of the research scope, they were addressed later during individual interviews with course directors and contemporary dance educators. Through focus group discussions and auto-ethnographical engagement, the study was based on personal testimonies, and shared embodied experiences revealing not only a multifold understanding of contemporary dance education, but also the entanglement between embodiment, identity, pedagogy and socio-political context.

Art protests of 2022-2023:

The imprint of the students' participation in the 2022-2023 art protests is hard to definitively map[218]. The focus group interviews were conducted almost two years after the protests occurred. Yet, still, I often felt emotionally charged while having a conversation on the subject. In particular, this transpired when a third-year student stated, "*The occupations were stressful and the outcome of the protest was devastating".* The student confessed with an emotional tone which affected me profoundly, "*I was crushed psychologically. I lost contact. They took my hopes away. It became an everyday action to speak about dance, about art and then we stopped. There was silence".* I remember sitting on the office couch and silently shedding tears. I experienced the same silence that resembled shame. That moment was so painful, where it was easier to pretend it never happened.

Students described participation as both individual and collective. A third-year student

[218] Unfortunately, there is not enough information to examine this subject in detail. I would only be touching the tip of the iceberg. Perhaps an in-depth analysis of the impact these protests had on contemporary dance education and community would be more adequate.

notes, *"We didn't abstain from class just to abstain from class, we did it to be present in something collective".*

A first-year student indicated that even though they participated as a group, they felt a *"disunion"* in terms of communication and organisation. A second-year student vividly described that, *"We took position on an issue that we were not even aware of. We were separated before we found the key to communication".* Another second-year student noted, *"Our participation for me had the sense of humanity".* While another one added, "*The indignation* [against the Presidential Decree] *teamed us together…Our generation took dance seriously. It was intense and that reflected in the protests".*

In a different group, a third-year student stated, *"Issues of hierarchy were posed* [within the framework of Higher Professional Private Dance School], *I was supposed to do what I was told. That had a negative impact on me".* Another one stated, *"Dance is not accessible to the community. I feel we could change that. We must find ways to communicate it outside…I wish to change how our society looks at dance".*

Hierarchy was a recurring theme especially for third-year students. Students perceive hierarchy as a boundary that emerged during the protests. A third-year student argues that *"Hierarchy is self-evident in the school…However, it creates a safe environment".* However, another student argued that, *"Hierarchy is so structured and the roles are so defined and formal that it is impossible to feel free".* In a different group, a student commented on an experience of a student in a public Higher Professional Dance School where, *"We were paying our tuition fees, and at the same time losing classes. At this point, the issue of hierarchy became clear. I was told that my place was to dance, and*

my participation in the protests would impact my performance, even my diploma exams, in terms of losing my mind-set. But the protests were beyond that".

The students critically reflected on the 2022 art protests, their comments revealing that these protests had a deep emotional and intellectual impact on them. Even two years later, the events were still present in their minds and bodies. Participation, both individually and collectively, created a sense of political awakening, while at the same time, infrastructural hierarchies were grimly criticised. This experience seems to have had a long-lasting impact on their understanding of dance and its place in society.

The 2022 protests emerged as a pivotal moment, having a strong impact on the students' political position and consciousness, and emphasizing that dance does not exist in a vacuum but interconnects with broader institutional and social frameworks. These critical events in the history of dance education in Greece reveal tensions around hierarchy, access and agency within educational structures. Moreover, the inclusion of autoethnographic reflections reinforces the need for embodied research in this field.

Ultimately, the focus groups confirmed that contemporary dance education is a field of resistance, care, and creativity, where bodies learn to move, think, feel, protest, and as Maro Grigoriou stated, *"to learn how to learn,"*[219] while its complex pedagogical framework needs to acknowledge the students' voices, their hopes, struggles, and visions, as co-constructors of knowledge.

[219] Quotation from interview on 22/07/2024.

4.2.4. Autoethnographic Reflections.

In this section, I reflect on the insights emerging from students' interviews. Although the entire study is infused with my own biography and embodied knowledge, the interviews evoked powerful triggers for mental and corporeal memories.

Because of my dual role as a researcher and contemporary dance educator, with prior experience as a student in a Higher Professional Private Dance School, these reflections offered a vivid picture in reference to the continuity of contemporary dance in Greece. The students' emotions, thoughts and embodied experiences provided valuable insights into how contemporary dance is lived, taught and perceived today.

In addition to the students' narratives, I include relevant autoethnographic reflections that emerged during interviews. These reflections are profoundly connected with my own embodied memories and sensations, either forgotten or re-experienced, which bridged my own somatorality with the students' lived experiences.

During a conversation with a second-year group, I shared a reflection on 'group energy'. This group, among others, was one I felt a deep connection with. From the very first day, the students welcomed me as a member of their team. They shared their experiences not only during interviews but also in informal conversations during class observations.

In one of these interviews, one of the students recalled an intimate dialogue between two classmates from a few months back. The students did not remember my being

present at the time, yet I remembered it vividly. At that moment, I realised I had become part of their group. I said to them, *"I consider myself as an outsider as you already know. However, I must confess that your energy is utterly vibrant. The sense I get from your group is so strong and your movement is deeply touching. I have the sensation of a strong tasteful energy. Thank you for including me in your team as a member"*. This was a powerful realisation: the ethos of teamwork in a dance class can be absorbed even by someone positioned as an outsider, a non-member, an observer/researcher.

Another moment triggering a deep corporeal connection with the students occurred during a third-year focus group when certain students discussed about injuries forcing them to be absent from class. In 2008, I had a serious knee injury. I remembered struggling to find the will to continue attending school without being able to dance or even walk. For me, as for other students, this situation felt like a form of rejection, a mandatory exclusion of my body from the group. Although, my group was supportive, the emotional weight was at times unbearable. For me as a student, the pain wasn't an issue. The difficulty relied on the fact that I was feeling disconnected from my dancing body. During the 2024 class observations, I often felt emotional due to recalling corporeal memories and an embodied sense of being "left at the side of the class".

A final reflection emerged during a first-year focus group session, highlighting the complexity of my presence in the field both as an insider and an outsider. At the end of the conversation, some students asked me to comment on their progress, since I had been observing them for months. I kindly declined to "giving feedback", accessing their progress or their technical ability, explaining that my role was to observe the dynamics

and the relations between educators and students and the oral traditions of transmission of contemporary dance.

However, I did share that I had noticed their progress and I was happy for them. One of the students responded, *"I would like to comment on what you said because for me (...) I don't see myself dancing but doing a form of ritual. I feel like I am doing some movements in order to make an invocation, in order for something to emerge".* I felt that this statement was the whole essence of this research.

In summarising, through autoethnographic reflection, personal memories and embodied responses shaped the research process as a co-constructed site of meaning. The reflective engagement allowed me to connect with and interpret the students' experiences, emphasising the notion that dance knowledge cannot be dis-embodied. Comments such as those shared reinforced that dance knowledge is inseparable from the lived experience and should be approached with attention to the body being both as a source and a site of meaning.

CHAPTER 4 - Part B

4.3. Contemporary Dance Ethnographies.

In this section, I present the dance ethnographies that form a central part of this research. The format of these ethnographies is based on the following outline: a general introduction to the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools where the ethnographies were conducted, including a characteristic photo of each school. Furthermore, there is a brief introduction of each ethnography together with a photo of the class, the students and the dance educator, a detailed class structure highlighting key points of interest, and a conclusion. Also, each ethnography is informed by themes emerging from the contemporary dance transmission process in the field.

See below Figure 1. which is a detailed table of participants as appeared in the research:

School name	**Director**	**Educator**	**Interview, Page in text**	**Levels taught**	**Dance Ethnography Levels**	**Dance Ethnography Date, Page in text**
Aktina						4.3.1 p.210
	Betty Dramisioti		25/06/2024, p.148	3		
		Anthi Theofilidi	12/04/2024, p.164	1	1	07/02/2024, p.211
		Maria Foundouli	26/03/2024, p.171	2+3	2	28/11/2023, p.216
		Sandra Grimma	07/06/2024, p.177	3	3	30/01/2024, p.221
Choros						4.3.2 p.227
	Maro Grigoriou		22/07/2024, p.143	1		
		Markella Manoliadi	15/04/2024, p.151	1+2+3	2+3	20/11/2023, p.229
Moragemou						4.3.3 p.234
	Aliki Kazouri	Aliki Kazouri	19/04/2024, p.145	3	3	01/12/2023, p.236
		Chara Kotsali	19/04/2024, p.158	1+2+3	1	08/12/2023, p.243

Figure 1.

I must underline that the following dance ethnographies represent what Clifford described as “partial truths” (Clifford 1986) of contemporary dance ethos within these institutions. It is stated as “partial”, since it was not possible to research all the contemporary dance educators, but also because in view of my investigation questions, aims and biases regarding dance education, it would potentially not be feasible to thoroughly cover the entire range of themes. Nevertheless, this research/archive could act as a starting point for further rigorous *in situ* investigation.

The next section refers to the dance ethnographies at Aktina with educators Anthi Theofilidi, Sandra Grimma and Maria Foundouli. The themes related to these ethnographies mark the importance of teamwork in contemporary dance education, the use of non-Western philosophies, duet work (including Contact Improvisation technique) in contemporary dance transmission, and the construction of a shared sensescape during a contemporary dance class. The section then continues with the dance ethnographies of Choros and educator Markella Manoliadi whose ultimate goal was to inspire students to go beyond their corporeal boundaries. Additionally, there are the ethnographies of Moragemou with educators Chara Kotsali and Aliki Kazouri. The key themes were dance and its connection with the greater community and society, and the highlighting of the concepts of continuation and tradition in the contemporary dance transmission process.

4.3.1. Aktina Higher Professional Private Dance School.

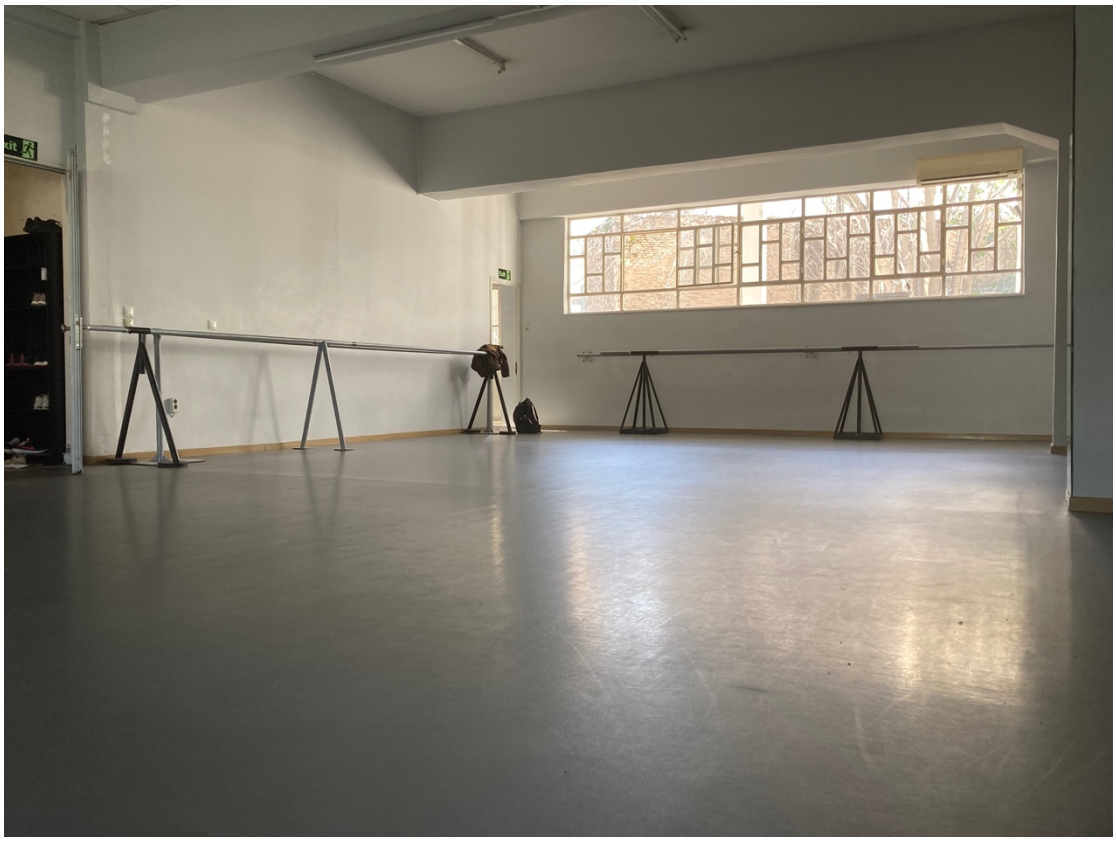


Figure 2.

The following three dance ethnographies represent the moveprint, the ethos, and the sensescape of contemporary dance transmission during the time of this study. Although this mosaic of principals may vary from year to year, it appears to sustain the core values adopted by the Aktina Higher Professional Private Dance School. All contemporary dance educators interviewed stated that they use the Limón-Based Release Technique. However, it is obvious that individual variations and personal input create a multitude of distinct approaches to the art form of contemporary dance.

Anthi Theofilidi at Aktina Higher Professional Private Dance School.



Figure 3.

The following ethnography is based on the class I attended on 7 February 2024 at Aktina, taught by contemporary dance educator Anthi Theofilidi. My aim was to illustrate this dance practice using ethnographic materials such as fieldnotes, sketches, and an interview with the educator. In addition, audio-visual recordings of the class are available[220]. The reason I chose this particular class was because of my interest in teamwork – specifically, Theofilidi's kinetic teaching approach.

[220] See Drive, folder Dance Ethnographies, 1st Dance Ethnography Anthi Theofilidi 07.02.2024 https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F1st%20Dance%5FEhnography%20Anthi%20Theofilidi%2007%2E02%2E2024&login_hint=Marianna%2EPanourgia%40ul%2Eie&source=waffle.

She incorporates numerous exercises based on improvisation methodologies, the use of breathing in relation to movement, and exercises to increase endurance. I will refer to the choreographed class designed for the second semester exams, as it reflects her teaching principles. As she emphasised in her interview, *"Art is a team work. If you feel safe you can learn from your mistakes because you are allowing yourself to experience them".*[221]

I entered the ground-floor classroom once again. Over the past five months, I have been joining the classes at Aktina three to four times per week. Fatigue is beginning to settle in. I am already at my usual spot in class, near the piano, next to the entrance door. I see familiar faces, we talk, we laugh, we hug. One of the students in this class is also a former secondary school student of mine.

Today is the week before the students' first-year exams. The room has a different energy than usual. The students are obviously tired. I can sense exam anxiety. Theofilidi tries to ease them making them laugh. She gives clear instructions for the spatial arrangements of each exercise. She insists. She gives the same instructions over and over again. However, due to students' absences (through illness and injuries) the placement of the exercises has to be adjusted again. These last-minute changes make the students restless.

[221] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.

The class begins with high energy stamina-building warm up exercises involving muscular strength, speed, and rapid changes for limb support. Theofilidi uses a timer to maintain a safe duration of each exercise, preventing injuries[222].

Every exercise is accompanied by different music. The students are divided into groups so that they have enough space to perform and maintain sufficient visibility during the upcoming exams. The exercises increase gradually in technical complexity. In general, she concentrates on the relationship between the bodies in space, the direction of each movement, and the surroundings (the space the bodies move around in, or the space they leave behind as they move). Theofilidi also works on technical precision, and she insists on the clarity of each movement. She analyses each combination in detail, paying great attention to counting musical phrases – an indispensable method for transforming individuals (dancers/students) into a cohesive team/group.

Listed below is the exercise sequence: The first exercise is a whole-body warm-up, focusing on hip joints. This combination includes successions of movement, spinal waves, limb isolation, coordination, and knee drops. Each group performs the exercises on both left and right sides. After each round, Theofilidi offers detailed feedback. Although her feedback refers mostly to spatial placement and technical clarity, her tone of voice remains gentle and tender, as if she is narrating a fairy tale about a travelling body.

[222] See photograph in drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 1st Dance Ethnography Anthi Theofilidi, 07.02.2024 https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F1st%20Dance%5FEhnography%20Anthi%20Theofilidi%2007%2E02%2E2024&login_hint=Marianna%2EPanourgia%40ul%2Eie&source=waffle.

The second exercise emphasises momentum and movement succession. Both the dynamic and the speed are increased. The exercise incorporates walks, slides and pulses, leg swings, foot isolation, spinal twists and turns, and level changes from low to middle.

The third exercise focuses on the middle level with spinal twists and spirals, arm swings, turns, torso drops, and pulses. It involves exchanging support points, and increasing the use of pivots.

The fourth exercise is a slow-paced adagio with high technical difficulty combining thoracic curves with grand plies, spinal recovery and long side-bends, followed by hip-joint bends and full-body ripples. Long balances in arabesque, first on bent, then on straight leg, with coordinated arm and pelvic drops.

The fifth exercise is a study on full-body suspension. Theofilidi encourages students to explore this concept individually, underlining the importance of weight transfer and dynamic suspension, expanding the bodies in space. She believes that mistakes are valuable learning tools, contributing to individual improvement and group cohesion. They are a test for the team unit and the group reflex. In a prior class she advised, "*Keep in mind your mistakes to solve them after the exercise. You will make mistakes but you have to keep on dancing. Support the team".*[223]

The following exercise focuses on jumps. Here, the element of rhythmicality dominates: small jumps, transitions from two legs to one, and alternation between the

[223] Class notes on 31/01/2024.

right and left legs. The group in unison must change direction almost every four small jumps – this demands an enormous amount of concentration. This pattern involves forward and backward moves in a straight line, including side rotations, accompanied by upbeat music – this helps students maintain rhythm.

The last exercise is a short arrangement combining all previous elements. This fully choreographed class lasts approximately twenty minutes. The students have ninety-minute rehearsals twice a week, before performing it in the first semester exams.

In Theofilidi's class for first-year students, movement precision and clarity are the primary goals. As she explained in her interview, she gradually develops the movement from the centre or core, projecting it through the whole body in space. She uses her voice and touch to draw students' attention to the unconscious aspects of their movement. The students are very receptive.

For Theofilidi, the space is not limited to a classroom – that is not the only space to dance in. The space can extend beyond classroom walls onto stage, into life and society. She emphasised in her interview, *"This is important to see how we co-exist with our bodies with others. How do we connect with them?"*[224]. This notion of connection relates to her tendency to inspire students to develop a kinaesthetic and empathetic sense for one another. For Theofilidi, as well teamwork is not just an aspect contained only within the class, it extends beyond that. To achieve this, she requires *"students to be consistent* [with their study] *and honest with their bodies"*[225].

[224] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.
[225] Quotation from interview on 12/04/2024.

Maria Foundouli at Aktina Higher Professional Private Dance School.



Figure 4.

This ethnographic account is based on a Contemporary dance class I attended on 28 November 2023, at the Aktina, led by contemporary dance educator Maria Foundouli. My aim was to illustrate the class, the atmosphere, pedagogical dynamics and embodied experience using ethnographic materials, such as fieldnotes, sketches, and an interview with the educator. Audio and visual recordings of this session are also available as supplementary documentation[226].

[226] See drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 2nd Dance Ethnography Maria Foundouli, 28/11/2023, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F2nd%20Dance%20Ethnography%20Maria%20Foundouli%2C%2028%2E11%2E2023&login_hint=Marianna%2EPanourgia%40ul%2Eie&source=waffle.

The choice to elaborate on this particular dance class stems from my interest in Foundouli's pedagogical approach, particularly her engagement with sensory and emotional awareness which provides a more expansive sensescape within a learning environment. I am also intrigued by how much emphasis she places on the anatomical function of body movement. During this session, I documented the class by taking notes, sketching and dancing while seated. This was recorded by camera capturing my embodied presence and my dual role as an observer and a participant[227].

My observation began at 13:15 in the ground-floor studio. This was the second session with second-year students; I was already present in the space beforehand, having observed the first-year class. The studio had a warm and humid atmosphere.

Foundouli's class was entirely different in structure and points of movement interest compared to Theofilidi's class. Foundouli used a sequence of exercises starting from the floor and gradually ascending to the middle and upper levels. Her exercises also increased in complexity and dynamics as the class progressed. Foundouli used a soft and calm tone of voice to analyse and explain each exercise while maintaining eye contact with each student in order to transmit her intentions. Her voice created dynamic variations in each movement. As an observer, it seemed that Foundouli's energy travelled through her voice, and was transformed into movement via the students' bodies.

[227] See more in Chapter 3.4.
See drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 2nd Dance Ethnography, Maria Foundouli, 28/11/2023, video IMG_7183, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/personal/marianna_panourgia_ul_ie/_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna_panourgia_ul_ie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F2nd%20Dance%20Ethnography%20Maria%20Foundouli%2C%2028%2E11%2E2023%2FIMG_7183%2EMOV.

Foundouli's exercises followed the patterns of the Limón-Based Release Technique (a methodology I practiced as a contemporary dance student eighteen years ago). The first exercises were slow-paced, used to warm up the entire body. She emphasised body coordination and movement succession, incorporating elements of the Axis Syllabus a method introduced to her by educator Timos Zehas[228], which concentrates on the anatomical awareness of the movement.

Foundouli introduced the initial floor exercises step-by-step. Her movement was fluid and powerful, without being aggressive or heavy, each flowing organically and effortless to the next. The exercises had an inner peace, like a quiet river of energy running from core to periphery and back. She used the floor not just as a plain surface, but as a partner allowing space for the body to stretch and move around.

The following exercises employed contractions to activate the core muscles, such as the abdominals and to increase mobility in the hip joints. The students followed Foundouli's movement while maintaining focus on their own bodies. Foundouli continued describing her movement using verbal imagery with motion-based verbs, spatial directions and anatomical terminology. The exercises were relatively long, consisting of approximately seven, eight-count phrases. She often repeated the phrase *"Listen to your body"* referring to the initiation and succession of an organic movement, and, *"From the inside out",* from the internal organs to space, with movement flowing through the fingertips.

[228] Maria Foundouli referred to this technique in her interview on 26/03/2024.

Foundouli encouraged students to feel their body while practicing the sequences. She often commented to *"Use the movement as convenient as can be for your own body"*[229] while dancing, which appeared to minimise the imitation process, focusing on the individual's corporeal exploration.

Throughout the class, Foundouli repeated parts of the sequences, emphasising the sensations behind each movement, aiming to give depth to it. It is evident that, as she also commented during her interview, she pays great attention to the pelvis and its connection with the spine and limbs. Furthermore, she used grounding – the connection between the body and the floor. This idea of grounded communication nurtured a calm environment targeting an inward exploration.

Her combinations worked like a smooth linked chain of movement between complexity and simplicity, providing the observer with a sense of magnificent sensitivity towards the body. This sensitivity had its roots in her concept of *"the sensation of addressing the wholeness of the body into space"*[230]*,* as Foundouli described it in class.

This class consisted of four primary exercises. The last exercise was the final extended combination students had been practicing on for the second consecutive week. At the end of the class, they performed the final combination several times. Foundouli often retains the same final combination for three to four weeks, while varying the warm-up exercises from class to class.

[229] Class notes on 21/11/2023.
[230] Quotation from class on 12/03/2024.

Foundouli's class creates a rich sensory and imaginary environment – a floating, yet grounded space for movement exploration along with individual growth. The constant use of her voice over movement supports a sensation of safety through calm guidance. The repetition of the combinations allows students to delve into layers of movement, experiment with details and sensations while increasing their range of corporeal and dancing ability.

Her teaching approach does not concentrate on form but rather on feeling that creates an atmosphere of somatic awareness and corporeal engagement. Foundouli cultivates not only technical development but also autonomy and intimate sensory input. She encourages students to imagine and create while moving and dancing from within. Her approach is related to ideokinisis[231], a somatic practice introduced by Mabel Elsworth Todd (1880 – 1956), concentrating on imagery to enhance movement quality through internal visualisation but also *"in the connection within the body and between the body and the earth".* (Gilbert 2014, p.154)

[231] See Sweigard, L. E. (1988) *Human Movement Potential: Its Ideokinetic Facilitation*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Sandra Grimma at Aktina Higher Professional Private Dance School.



Figure 5.

The following ethnographic study is based on my attendance at the contemporary dance class on 30 January 2024, at Aktina. The class was led by contemporary dance educator Sandra Grimma. I aim to illustrate this dance practice using ethnographic materials such as fieldnotes and an interview with the teacher[232]. I chose this class because of my interest in Grimma's teaching approach particularly in incorporating Contact Improvisation, storytelling, and non-Western philosophies into contemporary dance transmission.

[232] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.

After two months of observing Grimma's classes, it became clear, as she also said in her interview, that Contact Improvisation functions both as a movement practice and a pedagogical approach. She often uses contact improvisation at the beginning of the class, to engage the students' bodies through tactile stimuli. According to Grimma, "*Touch improves the understanding of the other body, builds relationships and helps the learning process through tenderness and caress"*[233].

Grimma places great emphasis on devising a personal kinetic vocabulary based on each student's anatomical structures through improvisation, and supporting each student's individual input – this also aligns with somatic values based on Judson Church's Theater legacy (Gilbert 2014). She encourages students to have *"devotion in their bodies."*[234] She uses "devotion" as another word for trust in corporeal intuition, even in moments of boredom during movement research and improvisation.

Another key element in her pedagogy is intention. Grimma sets the notion of "clear goal" in movement execution and communication. She encourages students to pre-decide their movement's goal, so that they can give clarity to the form and the direction in space. Grimma incorporates non-Western somatic practices in her classes like yoga and Kung Fu. In general, she downplays the significance of technique as being the sole or primary objective in contemporary dance. As she often saying in class, "*What is technique? "You are not dancing if you only focus on technique"*[235].

[233] Class notes on 31/10/2023.
[234] Class notes on 05/12/2023.
[235] Class notes, various dates.

At 13:15, I entered the ground-floor studio. It was the fourth class of third-year students I was participating in. The room was relatively warm. I went into the space while the students were changing clothes. The second-year students were still in the space. The weather outside was gloomy and the space was dark. The heavy atmosphere was worsened by the black PVC (synthetic plastic material) flooring. The room resembled an old garage[236] or warehouse, with a stone wall on one side, a contrasting grey wall with small rectangular windows, black curtains covering some mirrors in front of me, and tiered metal bleachers behind me.

I greeted the educator and spent a few minutes chatting with the students. They asked me about the progress of my study, which made me slightly nervous, considering the ethical implication of "using" their labour and energy to create a "diving board" for researching contemporary dance transmission. As I sat in my usual place, I gathered my thoughts, opened my notebook (the blue one dedicated to fieldnotes) and turned the camera on. I sat on my knees, with my back to the entrance wall, next to the piano, an excellent spot for a full view of the classroom.

The class[237] began with Grimma asking the students about their mental and physical state. She asked how they felt and how they felt in their bodies. She used this initial dialogue, verbal feedback of embodied experience, as a pedagogical tool, allowing her to understand the class energy and adjust accordingly.

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[236] See drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 3rd Dance Ethnography Sandra Grimma, 30/01/2024, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F3rd%20Dance%20Ethnography%20Sandra%20Grimma%2030%2E01%2E2024&login_hint=Marianna%2EPanourgia%40ul%2Eie&source=waffle.

[237] In this class, Grimma used soft background music, even though she usually uses strong, loud music with traditional, jazz, rock and punk influences.

The warm up included partner work, initiated through gentle movement across the space. The students began in pairs, with one partner initiating movement after receiving touch from the other partner. They moved in a straight line. The exercise then turned into a question-and-answer sequence. Grimma emphasized the notion of "tuning" through touch and sensitivity. The exercise evolved, the task being to react to the touch through avoidance by moving the body part that was touched away from the partner's hand, in this way simultaneously creating both space and tension between the two bodies at the same time. Grimma gradually introduced the use of the spine and the feet to awaken the whole body. Neither initiated the movement but rather assisted the moving bodies through the space. At the end of the exercise, she gave feedback about the sensation of the movement traveling through the entire body before being performed by a single body part.

The next step of the class elaborated on eye contact. Grimma introduced a magnetic relationship between partners. The students continued without touching maintaining a specific distance between them. "*How can you travel with touch without losing eye contact?"* became a central question.

Next, she introduced a game called "hunting" in order to break the monotony of rhythm. Instead of using pauses she instead used a game to intrigue the students. The students responded with changes in speed and movement dynamics. Changes of levels and the use of balance to avoid falling created a non-verbal dialogue. Grimma emphasized breaking the rhythm without breaking the communication, an instruction that seemed

to puzzle many students while they tried to combine all four elements, touch, magnet-like pairing, hunting and eye contact.

The fourth exercise focused on the idea of dragging or pushing the partner off balance. This exercise involved maintaining continuity, often resembling tango choreography, or a gentle Jiu-Jitsu fight while focusing on core activation and softening the periphery[238].

Next, the students improvised while using all the above elements. Grimma encouraged reflection on the idea of manipulation. "*How do I incorporate manipulation in this duet? Do I want it? How do we communicate without verbal input?"*[239]. The final step was kinetic storytelling. The duets provided a narrative not through pantomime but through somatorality, emerging from mutual communication.

The session concluded with each duet performing for the rest of the group, followed by collective feedback. The students willingly reflected on technique, flow, dynamic, connection, communication, relationships and sometimes on the agency of the bodies as done in duets. They also commented on felt experience, that is, what it felt like to observe and be observed[240], coinciding with Grimma's argument, *"The observation of another body is as important as touching the other body to 'unlock' their movements*

[238] This reminded me of the duet "Couple Dancing" (2022) by D. Zambrano and M. Herich, where the dancing couple was exploring the idea of continuous balance through touch. The duet also had references to ballroom dances. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQpNvowGeC8 [accessed 09/02/2025].
[239] Class notes on 30/01/2024.
[240] See also Fraleigh, S. (2019) A Phenomenology of Being Seen in Grant, S.; McNeilly-Renaudie, J. & Wagner, M., eds., *Performance Phenomenology: To The Thing Itself.* Cham: Springer Verlag.

into a vast variety of expressions".[241] Grimma agrees with Fraleigh's argument, "Being seen (being witnessed) by a partner in non-judgemental supportive somatic explorations is an antidote for depression and builds confidence. Being seen is ultimately about seeing as well" (Fraleigh 2019, p.91).

In Grimma's classes, Contact Improvisation is used as a pedagogical tool (Barbour 2011, Cooper Albright & Gere 2003, Minton 1997, Panourgia & Boumpaki 2022), primarily intending to improve technique and support research, while forming somatoralities – stories told through bodies in motion around the space. In general, Grimma prioritises the *"freedom of personal movement"*[242]. She uses creative dialogue between the students' bodies strengthening the core and highlighting intention rather than the performance of movement.

[241] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.
[242] Quotation from interview on 07/06/2024.

4.3.2. Choros Higher Professional Private Dance School.

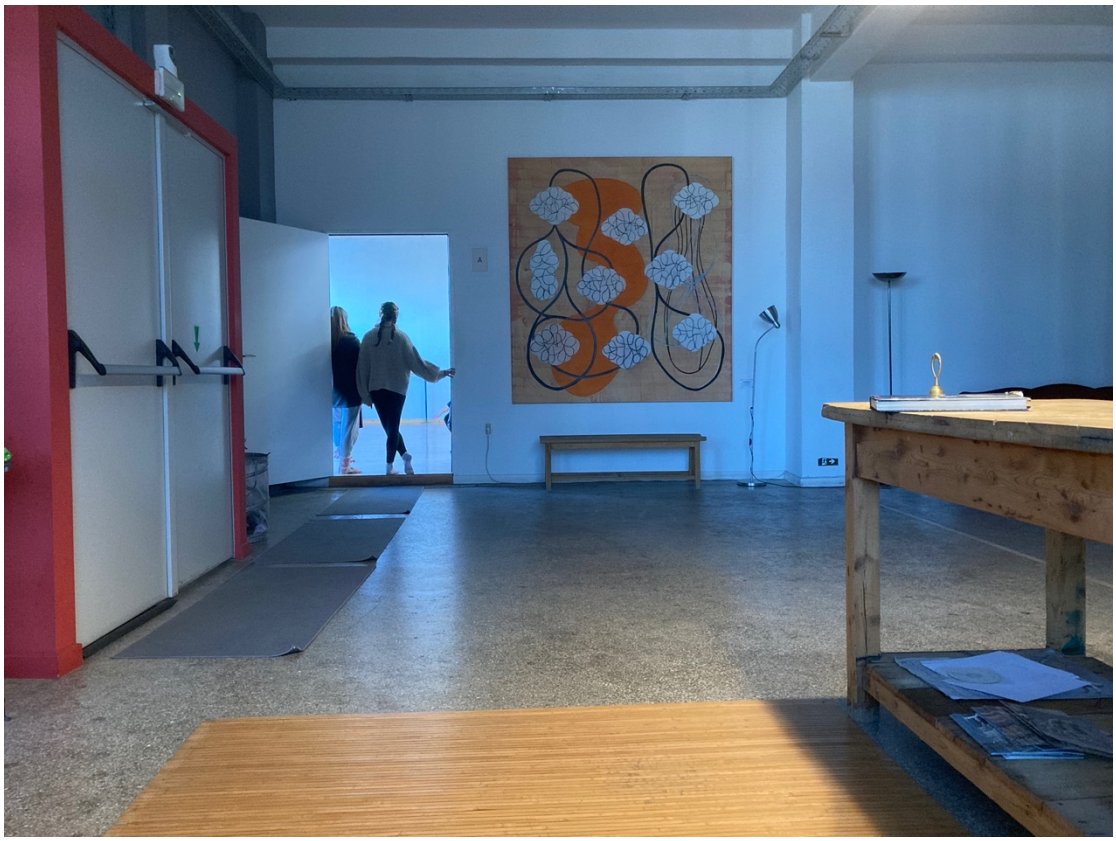


Figure 6.

The following ethnography encapsulates values, transmission methodologies, and pedagogical approach of Markella Manoliadi, one of the two contemporary dance educators at Choros. Markella Manoliadi and Maro Grigoriou share the contemporary dance classes during the entire three-year study programme. Manoliadi uses the Limón-Based Release Technique, whereas Grigoriou uses the Cunningham technique.

Although Manoliadi follows the Limón technique, she emphasises that she adapts her technical focus for each group according to the intended objective she would like her

students to achieve.[243] Due to schedule limitations, and after having an extensive conversation with both educators, I observed Manoliadi's class. The second and third-year classes are often combined; as a result, technical difficulty in exercises increases for third-year students. As Manoliadi explained in her interview, her goal is *"to make the students perform as dancers and survive the artistic scene".*[244]

[243] Quotation form interview on 15/04/2024.
[244] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.

Markella Manoliadi at Choros Higher Professional Private Dance School.



Figure 7.

The following ethnography is based on the Contemporary dance class I attended on 20 November 2023, at Choros led by contemporary dance educator Markella Manoliadi. I aim to illustrate the pedagogical structure and transmission methods of this dance class by using ethnographic materials and insights drawn from the educator's interview. Audio-visual recordings of the class are available as supplementary data[245].

[245] See drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 4th Dance Ethnography, Markella Manoliadi, 20/11/2023, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F4th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Markella%20Manoliadi%2C%2020%2E11%2E2023&login_hint=Marianna%2EPanourgia%40ul%2Eie&source=waffle.

Although, I had the opportunity to observe Manoliadi's teaching across the three years of study, I selected this particular dance class because it fully reflects her practice. The class included second and third-year students. While the first year is typically considered as an introductory year, Manoliadi applied the same principles regarding technique, class structure and movement aesthetics as she does in the second and third-year classes. These principles contribute to her personal moveprint.

During the month of November Markela Manoliadi, like Anthi Theofilidi, works on the choreographed class for the first semester exams. Through this practice, the students engage with technique and performance elements, particularly the execution of exercises in the form of choreography presented before an audience, in this case the board of educators of each Higher Professional Private Dance School.

While participating in this class, most of the time I sat on the left corner, where I had a full view of the students and the educator. The room was a spacious parallelogram-shaped space with white walls and a bright brown wooden floor. The industrial-style windows on the sides betrayed the previous use of the building as a textile factory. The classroom was chilly and there was a sweet smell of coffee coming from the main room used as a rest area. Manoliadi was already in the room planning her class. The third-year students were also in the room. The second-year students would be late today due to an extended dance history class.

The class began immediately. Although the first exercises were done as a warm up, they were fast-paced and physically demanding. Each consisted of more than nine, eight-count phrases. Manoliadi's class was well-organised and every detail demanded the

students' full attention, quick reflexes, strength and stamina. Reduced or lost co-ordination could lead to falls. Core muscles had to be fully activated to maintain balance and timing. As Manoliadi usually underlines during classes, *"Balance is not a pause balance should be in motion".*[246]

The most distinct elements in Manoliadi's class were speed and intense vibration[247]. I could feel the floor vibrating from the students' powerful dynamic transmitted to my body through the wooden floor. The music was loud, yet Manoliadi's voice could distinctly be heard over it. I could follow the exercise with my eyes closed, merely by following the students' vibrations and Manoliadi's voice. Every movement had a different pattern of vibration accompanied by a different voice texture.

Manoliadi approached each exercise with her focus on primary technical elements, while embellishing the phrases with secondary technical elements. Improvisation was not an option in her class. As she argued in her interview,

> *The method of improvisation, as I have it in my training and as I have studied it, is not within the framework of a contemporary dance technique course. It is within the framework of an improvisation course (...). Because my course is very structured and because I know it's the final stage. I also know what it takes to get there. I methodically create exercises to get to the final sequence. I don't*

[246] Class notes on 04/12/202.
[247] See drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 4th Dance Ethnography, Markella Manoliadi, 20/11/2023, Video: IMG_8804, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/personal/marianna_panourgia_ul_ie/_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna_panourgia_ul_ie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F4th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Markella%20Manoliadi%2C%2020%2E11%2E2023%2FIMG_8804%2EMOV.

believe in warming up with improvisation. I believe in the improvisation course.[248]

Although her aims varied depending on the year of study, Manoliadi was dedicated and devoted to a series of principles for her class. Technique was one of them, as she often underlined during classes: "*What you do is not dance; it is technique?"*[249].

The first two exercises were centred on floorwork, including pulses for warming up, and successions that instilled flow into the combination. The third exercise transitioned between low and middle levels, placing emphasis on moving around the space, concentrating especially on the lightness of the pelvis. Then, the centre of focus shifted to the middle level. Here, Manoliadi worked with balances and sagittal axis (anteroposterior) movements. The next exercises focused on strength, swings, hand stands, and pivots. The class concluded with high jumps initiated at the classroom corner. The goal of the entire practice was to achieve effortless continuous flow of overall movement.

Despite the lyrical quality of the music,[250] where one might expect to see soft and lyrical movement, Manoliadi's routines were well beyond from that mode. Exercises were so intense and fast-paced, it seemed almost impossible to describe and analyse them step by step. Nevertheless, this complexity is a personal moveprint of Manoliadi's choreographic work[251].

[248] Interview on 15/04/2024.
[249] Class quotation on 04/12/2024.
[250] Leonard Cohen – Never mind.
[251] See drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 4th Dance Ethnography, Markella Manoliadi, 20/11/2023, Video: 6733_2, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/personal/marianna_panourgia_ul_ie/_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna_panourgia_ul_ie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Record

Manoliadi's intention and goal were clear. She trained students to build strong energetic bodies, so well trained with perfect timing, defining the space, and forming connections with other bodies and their surroundings, through movement.

During a feedback session, months later, Manoliadi argued, *"One of the dancer's abilities – among discipline and diligence – is to surpass the limits of movement*"[252]. And this in fact is the essence of her training, helping students overcome their limits and insecurities.

Throughout the class, Manoliadi used her voice constantly. She accompanied the continuous flow with extended sounds, and accents with short, high-pitched, scream-like sounds. At the same time, she gave tempo instructions. The students were exhausted following her rhythm and pace while Manoliadi performed each movement effortlessly. Her transitions were smooth, with flow, strength and stability, technically flawless marking a distinct, personal moveprint.

Manoliadi and her students used video-recordings in class. For her, this worked as an *aide-mémoire,*[253] while for students it served as a method to study each movement in detail, whether performed by them or by Manoliadi herself.

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ings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F4th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Markella%20Manoliadi%2C%2020%2E11%2E2023%2FIMG_6733%202%2EMOV.

[252] Quotation from class on 12/02/2024.

[253] Although she carried her notebook at all times, and always prepared every class many days in advance. (Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024).
See also Risner, D. & Anderson, J. (2008) 'Digital Dance Literacy: an integrated dance technology curriculum pilot project 1', *Research in Dance Education*, 9, 113-128. 10.1080/14647890802087787.

Manoliadi's idiomatic kinetic vocabulary and persistency using this particular technique and form create deliberate spatial limitations for individual creative exploration in this class. However, as she states in her interview, *"I want the form to lead the students to dance"*[254]. Her approach is in the opposite direction from many previous contemporary dance educators. Nevertheless, as her students' experience "*the highest peak of their energy in class"*[255] that will lead them to exceed their technical abilities, a process that will ultimately force them to create their own unique kinetic identity.

[254] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.
[255] Quotation from interview on 15/04/2024.

4.3.3. Moragemou Higher Professional Private Dance School.



Figure 8.

The following two dance ethnographies represent the movement ethos observed during the period of this study at Moragemou, with educators Chara Kotsali and Aliki Kazouri. Both educators in their interviews stated the use of the Limón-Based Release Technique.

Chara Kotsali - Moragemou Higher Professional Private Dance School.



Figure 9.

The following dance ethnography is based on the Contemporary dance class that I attended on 8 December 2023, at Moragemou taught by educator Chara Kotsali. Although focused on a single session this ethnography is informed by multiple classes I have observed. I will illustrate this dance class by utilizing ethnographic materials and an interview with Kotsali. Audio-visual recordings of the class are available as supplementary data[256]. Due to the school's schedule, I was able to observe her teaching in all three years of studies.

[256] See Drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 5th Dance Ethnography, Chara Kotsali, 08/12/2023, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F5th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Chara%20Kotsali%2C%2008%2E12%2E2023&login_hint=Marianna%2EPanourgia%40ul%2Eie&source=waffle.

Kotsali's classes were always a revelation to me; a constant reminder that dance education does not exist in a vacuum, but it is interwoven with the community, politics and the wider society overall. Her teaching interplays between micro-body politics and method-politics,[257] where corporeal instructions challenge systems of authority, power and knowledge. Kotsali is an active dancer, choreographer and administrative member of the Dancer's Union[258] in Greece.

Kotsali always connects her teaching with the professional world. She does not contain her teaching in the narrow frameworks of the classroom. Although she's physically in class, her immense presence can be felt well beyond classroom walls. Her torrential oral communication, also filled with images and similes, keeps the students' interest undiminished. Kotsali has a playful, an almost childlike way, to connect with her students. Although she often reflects on her own teaching in terms of language, performance and movement transmission, it is obvious that this self-doubt is expressed as a continuous quest for reinventing herself; it is not a flaw but a central component in her methodology. As she also argued in her interview,

> *Most of the times, I will describe the same thing in three or four different ways. And often not even using the same code. That's because one of those* [codes] *could be more fanciful or weirder, or one could bring an image* [to the students] *… Then another could be straight forward and technical and another one could be more sensory. That makes it feel somehow that you are giving the same*

[257] See Skura 1990 and Gilbert 2014.
[258] Σ.Ε.Χω.Χο.

information, but every time through a different prism... I always want to give positive feedback.[259]

Her performativity in class cultivates students' trust, inviting them to get adventurous and creative. During class she is entirely present – highly active, with an extreme sense of corporeal empathy. Kotsali often says, *"If I were you, I would move the right side of my pelvis, or not"*[260]. This ambiguity in language, for me as an outsider, seems like a self-acquired educational tool that creates a continuous negotiation of power relations in class. She is fully aware of the power she holds as an educator, always providing space for hierarchical deconstruction.

Through her classes Kotsali insists on replacing words and phrases that she feels were too sharp for her. For example, instead of saying *"I want you to do this…",* she says *"I propose you to…"*, and instead of *"You must…"*, she prefers *"I think it would help if..."*. Similarly, she replaces the term "*educator"* with "*facilitator"*. She works towards an egalitarian classroom culture. These linguistic choices became embodied ethos allowing for a space of mutual approval and respect (see also Stéphanie Janaina's work on Meteoritas)[261].

Kotsali's class took place in the school's large studio, featuring enormous perimeter windows looking over the city. As the class began, the students pulled down the beige shades, perhaps in an effort to maintain their focus within the classroom.

[259] Quotation from Interview on 19/04/2024.
[260] Class quotation on 26/10/2023
[261] Meteoritas is an experimentation lab series using body arts to deconstruct and challenge perceptions of fragility and anger as creative, self-educational tools. This collective endeavor seeks to explore and empower our bodies' possibilities in a world that often underestimates their potential and restricts their freedom.

The students arrived already warmed up from a prior 90-minute ballet class. After a short break of 15 minutes, they began the contemporary class prepared to bypass warm-up exercises and focus on the main routine of the class. Today's class focused on giving students space to experiment. Kotsali explained,

> *The most important thing, for me, is to be able to edit a kinetic phrase by ourselves. That is, for students to take a material in their hands and for me to step back and leave space, as much as possible. It's important* [for them] *to be able to run it* [the material] *by themselves and take care of it*[262].

The warm-up began in circle. Each student gave a short activation of the core before expanding the activation to the periphery. Kotsali asked them to imagine themselves being like a *"ball of energy",* insisting on continuing the flow of energy between each exercise. This, would happen as she underlined, with *"Concentration and by being alert to the present moment regardless of mistakes"*[263]*,* as for Kotsali, "*The goal is not to succeed in something. It is to know the steps to follow in order to succeed"*[264].

Then she divided the class into two groups (A and B). Each had to prepare an exercise for the other group. Kotsali paid close attention to the way the students prepared, delivered and communicated the exercise to the other group. She emphasized the transmission of kinetic information, insisting on listening to the wisdom of the body while encouraging students to transition from a sole focus on assessment to embodying their learning. Incidentally, she underlined that group B needed to pay more attention

[262] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.
[263] Class note on 08/12/2023.
[264] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.

to their co-students' bodies rather than trying to prove that the exercise was not well-planned and delivered, whereas group A needed to pay more attention to the transmission and the physical learning process of the other group. Kotsali insisted, "*I have to hear with my body what has happened in the room",* in her attempt to make students aware during the construction, delivery, performance and feedback phase of this practice.

The next exercises were based on partnering. The students formed duets, maintaining physical contact while moving across the floor. Kotsali often used the phrase "[Move] *like you want to narrate a story, let your leg be the narrator".* On this note, she redirected the students' focus to the embodied sensation. After this, she repeated a demanding combination (one she works with in detail and uses in several courses) concentrating on speed, strength, spinal spirals, turns and constant changes of levels.

During class, Kotsali often took handwritten notes[265]. At the end, the students formed a circle again, this time for feedback. Kotsali began the conversation by sharing that during her studies she wasn't taught "dance didactics", explaining that she didn't learn how to teach but rather discovered this through teaching. As a result, *"I want to share my thoughts with you, to find a common ground in communication".* Gesturing towards

[265] See Drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 5th Dance Ethnography, Chara Kotsali, 08/12/2023, IMG_7398 https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/personal/marianna_panourgia_ul_ie/_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F5th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Chara%20Kotsali%2C%2008%2E12%2E2023%2FIMG%5F7398%2EMOV&referrer=StreamWebApp%2EWeb&referrerScenario=AddressBarCopied%2Eview%2E867927b1%2Dcc97%2D41e8%2Dadfc%2Dbd76a6815943.

me at the corner, she added, while pointing at me[266], *"It's time for the next generation of dance educators, to fill this gap".*

Her feedback emphasised the learning environment not only on technical elements. She categorized her notes into key themes: touch, mistake, and language. Kotsali argues that physical touch should not be assumed or be an automatic convention. It requires consent, communication, clear intention and sharing a reciprocal exchange of energy within the group. She notices that in class there are voices – bodies that "speak louder" than others, and bodies that are almost silent. Therefore, it is an imbalanced equation which had to be resolved. Kotsali asserted that mistakes should not be accompanied with awkwardness or embarrassment. Instead, they should be welcomed with humour and/or self-sarcasm. She underlined that, "*Educators could also be wrong and it is a sense of relief to acknowledge this fact",* as this diminishes hierarchal status. Kotsali, discussed about the gendered language in Greek, proposing a sensitive use that honours diversity.

It was challenging to just choose a single class to observe Kotsali's teaching. Each class was a powerful energetic force, fuelling not only the contemporary dance scene, but also political, philosophical and educational frameworks. I often tried to capture her structure, yet her verbal and embodied input was so intense that it drew my attention away from the form. Even though her teaching challenges contemporary dance as a

[266] See Drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 5th Dance Ethnography, Chara Kotsali, 08/12/2023, IMG_7402, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/personal/marianna_panourgia_ul_ie/_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F5th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Chara%20Kotsali%2C%2008%2E12%2E2023%2FIMG%5F7402%2EMOV&referrer=StreamWebApp%2EWeb&referrerScenario=AddressBarCopied%2Eview%2E670c8a92%2D2018%2D49ef%2D9b39%2D02ccb0b17fe9.

cultural and political statement, rather than a class of technical virtuosity, it actually is a physical in terms of stamina, strength and pace, rhythmical in terms of phrasing and counting, and demanding practice.

Kotsali invites students to support their unique physical expression, and often says, "*If I have a word to say - it must be my own, one size does not fit all*"[267]. She works toward balance through imbalance, between technique and individuality, precision and exploration by creating space for *"customised movement,"*[268] embracing mistakes and ambiguity. As she says, *"We like whatever the body does"*[269].

[267] Class notes on 16/02/2024.
[268] Class notes on 26/10/2023.
[269] Class notes on 20/10/2023.

Aliki Kazouri - Moragemou (formerly Rallou Manou) Higher Professional Private Dance School.



Figure 10.

Aliki Kazouri is one of the longest-serving course directors in Greek Higher Professional Private Dance School with over twenty years of experience. Throughout this time, Kazouri has also been a contemporary dance educator at Rallou Manou[270]. I studied under Kazouri from 2006 to 2009. Later, she participated in my ethnographic investigation between 2016 and 2018 (conducted at Rallou Manou and Aktina) focusing on contemporary dance curricula. Thus, I am well aware of both her pedagogical approach as an educator, and her intention as a course director. Her long-lasting role in dance education in a single institution gives a strong sense of continuation in the

[270] Now Moragemou.

movement ethos. Kazouri's status positions her as a key person in contemporary dance education in Greece. Her classes are characterised by detailed technique and strong rhythmicality. While I previously documented Kazouri's choreographed third-year exams class (Panourgia 2017), this ethnography focuses on the continuity of the educational transmission and students as future educators.

The following dance ethnography is based on the contemporary dance class that I attended on 1 December 2023, at Moragemou taught by Aliki Kazouri. I will illustrate this dance class by utilizing ethnographic materials and an interview with Kazouri. Audio-visual recordings of the class are available as supplementary data[271].

The class was held on a Friday, and was the students' second class of the day. December classes were dedicated to teaching skills to third-year students. During these classes, students worked in small groups collaborating in preparing exercise sequences as educators themselves and teaching contemporary dance classes in full. The students were also responsible for analysing each exercise/combination technically and rhythmically, teaching the exercise and giving feedback to their co-students, while being creative within the specific technical framework.

Additionally, students had to select music for each exercise including an appropriate tempo and meter, also conveying all this material to the pianist. Each group had to select

[271] See Drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 6th Dance Ethnography, Aliki Kazouri, 01/12/2023, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F6th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Aliki%20Kazouri%2C%2001%2E12%2E2023&login_hint=Marianna%2EPanourgia%40ul%2Eie&source=waffle.

an appropriate tempo and meter, also conveying all this information to the pianist. This process added a valuable layer of knowledge for dance educators.

Kazouri emphasises this method, in an effort to build students' confidence, by giving a contemporary dance combination accompanied by selected music, and also being in the position to identify mistakes, providing clear instructions and fruitful feedback. As she also argued in our interview, *"Students must be aware of what is happening in their bodies, they are not just imitators"*[272].

During class, Kazouri sat on a chair with her back to the wall mirror, next to the pianist. The "student-educator" of each group sat close to her. Kazouri had everyone[273] under her visual control. At the same time, she followed "student-educators" carefully, while boosting their confidence[274], helping with counting music beats, and assisting with phrasing. While students were executing/performing the exercise assigned, she physically followed each movement, even though she was seated. When necessary, she provided brief instructions on spacing, pace and technique. Students were free to ask questions or request further instructions from the "student-educator", though Kazouri often reminded them, "*This should not be a situation where you give your co-dancers a hard time, instead it's a time to realise how difficult the process of transmission of a contemporary dance class is"*[275].

After each exercise, the students received feedback from both Kazouri and the pianist. She focused on technique, creativity and the transmission process, while the pianist

[272] Interview on 19/04/2024.
[273] The pianist, the student delivering the exercise, the support team within each group, and the full class in motion.
[274] There are no male students in this year's classes.
[275] Class notes on 01/12/2023.

concentrated on rhythm and musicality[276]. In our interview, she underlined that "*These classes are essential for the students. The classes have approximately 30 students, and because of that they are divided into groups of five. One group has the warm-up, the next the floor work and so on"*[277].

And she continues,

> *It came to my attention, over the years that it is more useful to structure a class divided into groups rather than having each student work alone. So that they* [the students], *make a clear plan of a class without unnecessary repetitions in structure or in technical elements. Thus, every group of five has a day of class exhibition. At the end of the class all groups get feedback from me. The students structure a) a contemporary dance class for children, b) a Eurhythmics class with contemporary orientations, c) a beginner's contemporary dance class and d) a first-year* [in a Higher Professional Private Dance School] *course*[278].

[276] See Drive, folder: Dance Ethnographies, 6th Dance Ethnography, Aliki Kazouri, 01/12/2023, Video 7242, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/personal/marianna_panourgia_ul_ie/_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F6th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Aliki%20Kazouri%2C%2001%2E12%2E2023%2FIMG%5F7242%2EMOV&referrer=StreamWebApp%2EWeb&referrerScenario=AddressBarCopied%2Eview%2E899de077%2D460a%2D4fe3%2Da7ed%2De4405a7f2ea7 and 7258, https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/personal/marianna_panourgia_ul_ie/_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FDance%20Ethnographies%2F6th%20Dance%20Ethnography%2C%20Aliki%20Kazouri%2C%2001%2E12%2E2023%2FIMG%5F7258%2EMOV&referrer=StreamWebApp%2EWeb&referrerScenario=AddressBarCopied%2Eview%2Eb7712e23%2Db166%2D4021%2D893f%2Dd5a592f6e44a.

[277] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024

[278] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024

For Kazouri, "*They must be prepared to teach, to obtain a dance teaching diploma,"* especially when she provides *"everything they need to become dancers"*[279].

The students, as she noted, are not obliged to structure a class with combinations learned during studies, but they are encouraged to create out of the box as regards the assigned technique and age/level framework (see above a, b, c or d). However, during classes, the power relations were obvious. Kazouri's class has a very clear hierarchy. She holds the status of the course director, along with accumulated experience, both of which give her a huge space in the classroom environment. At the same time the pianist is also a very important figure in the classroom. She and the particular pianist have collaborated for more than seventeen years. As a result, there is sense of a communication space within the shared space in the class. Although she is helpful and encouraging, there is a clear line between her space, the space of the pianist and the space of the students.

This dance ethnography along with the ethnography of 2017 (Panourgia 2017) creates a kinetic/ethnographic description of Kazouri's classes. The first ethnography gives a sense of the students as dancers preparing to perform demanding technical choreographed classes. In contrast, the second ethnography (2023, included in this study) focuses on students' development as contemporary dance educators.

Although Kazouri advocated for her status in class, she also argued that *"It is very helpful that the course director is not the same person as the director/owner*[280] *of the*

[279] Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024
[280] Moragenou Voula.

Higher Professional Private Dance Schools. This gives me freedom to pay attention only to the needs of the students. I want to be the person that each and every student will come and talk to"[281]. Her class has a highly hierarchical structure. Kazouri's position gives her a significant role in one of the most well-regarded Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece, with a long history of training dance instructors for over seven decades (1951-2025).[282]

The selection of the dance ethnographies was challenging, as each class and encounter with the people in the field offered a rich terrain for exploring educational values, pedagogical tools, and movement vocabularies, while relational dynamics were formed and nurtured in class, in short, the ethos of contemporary dance.

Every class that I participated in was documented and archived even though due to time limitations only six of the ethnographies are presented in this dissertation. The chosen ones illustrate the wide spectrum of teaching methodologies and embodied practices that form contemporary dance education in Greece today. The observations portray how contemporary dance education becomes an "anarchive" (De Laet 2020) of the lived and embodied experience.

[281]Quotation from interview on 19/04/2024.
[282] Up until 2023, the institute operated under the name 'Rallou Manou'. Since 2023, it is called Moragemou Higher Professional Private Dance School.

4.4. Chapter 4 Conclusion.

In this chapter, the research findings are analysed, while divided into three different sections: a) individual ethnographic interviews with course directors and contemporary dance educators, b) Higher Professional Private Dance Schools focus groups with the students, and c) dance ethnographies. This study highlights the diverse and interconnected pedagogical approaches shaping contemporary dance education in Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece.

Through the voices of course directors and contemporary dance educators, a shared ethos emerges, one that could be summarized as an embodied transmission cultivating technical rigor, somatic awareness, and a safe learning environment. Even though each educator differentiates their approach due to personal biases and orientations, their methods collectively advocate for dance education incorporating not only a technical curriculum/syllabus aspect but also dealing with notions of identity formation, political consciousness, and emotional engagement. Altogether, they represent the evolving ecosystem of Greek contemporary dance education, where tradition and institutional legacy coexist with experimental, somatic and critical pedagogy, constantly being negotiated in real time. These multilayered pedagogies highlight how contemporary dance transmission in Greece is in a state of on-going transformation.

Equally significant are the student responses and embodied experiences emphasizing the importance of interpersonal relationships, identity construction and personal negotiation of space and expression. The students often prioritize collective and sensory practices over technical elements. Their narratives were influenced, if not shaped, by

the recent socio-political context and art protests, which reflect once again the interconnection of dance with broader societal issues.

Ultimately, this research not only documents pedagogical practices and reveals the lived realities of participants of contemporary dance education in Greece. The integration of autoethnographic elements within this study advocates for dance research as both an embodied and political act, highlighting the role of the researcher's somatorality and subjectivity in the process of knowledge production.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS.

5.1. Introduction.

In this final chapter, I draw together significant arguments and discussions that have developed throughout the four preceding chapters. This final chapter concludes my critical analysis and reflections on this doctoral research. I begin by revisiting the historical and theoretical frameworks presented in Chapters 1 and 2, unpacking their significance and exploring their relevance to the oral tradition in contemporary dance transmission in Greece. Then, I reflect on the methodological tools presented in detail in Chapter 3, assessing their effectiveness and suitability for this particular qualitative research. Moreover, I synthesise the analysis and interpretation of the research findings presented in depth in Chapter 4, highlighting key points. Finally, I conclude with recommendations for further research in the field of contemporary dance in higher education and contemporary dance transmission, in Greece and the challenge of archiving an embodied knowledge as such.

5.2. Historical and Theoretical Framework.

This study is grounded in institutionalised contemporary dance training in the 21st century, reflecting on its complex interaction with history, political influence, and evolving pedagogical ethos and core values, specifically within the Greek territory. Moreover, it explores body politics while presenting brief reflections on themes such as nationalism, elitism, and modernism illustrating dance as a site of continuance in cultural negotiation and resistance.

Furthermore, this thesis offers a chronological narrative of contemporary dance or pedagogy rooted in the central European legacy, investigating key figures such as Wigman and Graham in relation to Koula Pratsika and Rallou Manou, who influenced the shaping of the contemporary dance curriculum in Greece, while illustrating how contemporary dance education is an urban-centred practice, particularly for Greece.

Additionally, this research extensively maps the response to and impact of the 2022 Presidential Decree (85/2022), which downgraded dance education and triggered nationwide protests, revealing tensions between the dance community and the government. Finally, the study presents a large-scale analysis of the on-going unspoken ethical values of contemporary dance pedagogy, shaped by geo-political influences and somatic practices of course directors, contemporary dance educators and students at the Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece (See Chapter 1).

5.2.1. Orality and Oral Tradition.

This study explores three intertwined concepts those of oral tradition, embodied knowledge, and contemporary dance transmission, within the framework of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. The pedagogical structure of the institutes explored in this research are all shaped by a recursive model namely students entering the institutions, pursuing careers as dancers and/or educators, and ultimately returning to teach the next generation. This form of education may be described as 'orality as pedagogy', where dance practice has been cultivated by unwritten values and ethics through oralities of the soma. Verbal instruction, observation, imitation and sensory knowledge become the primary tools of contemporary dance transmission (See Chapter 2).

Contemporary dance educators utilize a variety of oral techniques, such as precise technical terminology, metaphorical language and sensory environments, as well as rhythmic vocalization – for example, counting movement phrases and verbal corrections – to achieve not only the correct movement but also a shared spatiotemporal sense within the classroom.

Although there are correlations and similarities in approach across contexts, educators such as Maria Foundouli and Sandra Grimma primarily use sensory awareness, while others like Aliki Kazouri and Markella Manoliadi mostly use kinaesthetic awareness, and 'relational' learning and perception during classes. Anthi Theofilidi focuses on corporeal and emotional consistency and honesty, where Chara Kotsali highlights

corporeality as space for societal and political negotiation. Their processes create continuous narratives of embodied demonstration (see Chapter 4).

At the heart of contemporary dance education in Greek Higher Professional Private Dance Schools there is a unique pedagogical environment that is simultaneously oral and embodied – I perceive and term this as somatoralities. This term refers to the combination of *soma* (the body) and the orality (spoken, auditory, non-written form of contemporary dance knowledge and everyday transmission practices). The term indicates a non-text-based teaching and learning system, one that forms a dynamic foundation of knowledge.

Rooted in embodied oral practices, this pedagogical model based on verbal instructions, metaphors, timing cues, neurological processes of mirroring and sensory engagement, cultivates an on-going transmission of kinetic knowledge. This cyclical structure transforms the dancing body into a "living archived" (Lepecki 2007, 2010) or "anarchived" (De Laet 2020) –a vessel of memory, creativity and possibly cultural continuity.

This also aligns with De Laet's (2020) and Sheets-Johnstone's (2009) arguments on the body's archival capacities. Therefore, orality can be seen not as a drawback but as a rich unwritten communicative modality. The term somatoralities is not only a methodological term characterizing Greek algorithms of contemporary dance transmission, but also an ontological context through which contemporary dance transmission can be interpreted and understood. The contemporary dance somatoralities

highlight the necessity for multifaceted and multimodal forms of documenting dance practice.

Contemporary dance could be understood as an embodied oral practice – a living performative archive that interacts with contemporary dance educators and students through both verbal and non-verbal processes. Educators often see this performativity as part of their teaching practice. For example, Chara Kotsali (19/04/2024) in her interview argues that a constant state of corporeal experiment in class is both an exposure and performativity. By "exposure", she refers to the process of making herself vulnerable in front of the students, sharing not only her technical knowledge but also her mistakes. This links back to her claim that the educator is not flawless but rather in a "constant state of experimentation" (see interview p.187). Thus, transmission in dance is not perceived only as visual or physical stimuli, but also as an affective and performative communication practice.

To conclude, this study highlights how contemporary dance transmission is shaped by the recursive embodied and oral pedagogy within the Greek Higher Professional Private Dance Schools framework. The term somatoralities captures the mixture of corporeal knowledge and oral communication. These practices transform the dancing body into a living archive of continuous knowledge exchange that challenges traditional text-based methodologies while emphasising hybrid ways of documentation.

5.2.2. Embodied Knowledge.

Drawing on scholars like André Lepecki (2007, 2010) and Erica Charalambous (2022, 2025), this research explores the body not merely as a site of inscription where choreographic and cultural experiences are stored, but also as a medium that becomes triggered through action, movement and performance. Charalambous, looks at the dancing body as a "self-archive" (Charalambous 2022) that carries both memory and epistemology. Through this lens, the body becomes a keeper and a transmitter of knowledge, reinforcing the concept of the living archive.

The notion of "self-archive" emphasizes the subjectivity in the generative nature of embodied memory, extending the limits of how personal embodied memory can offer knowledge within dance practice. Charalambous' theory also includes the notion/of "habitus" as it is introduced by Marcell Mauss (1941, 1973), Pierre Bourdieu (1990a) and later expanded upon by Edward Casey (1987). For these scholars, the concept of habitus as corporeality refers to the capacity of the body to hold past learning and present action in the moment of moving. The dancing body's lived knowledge stores material memory. In other words, the body remembers and reinscribes through doing. Therefore, dance knowledge is not only shaped by formal dance training but also by the sensorial and corporeal memory encoded during the process of transmission. (See section 2.4).

This research also draws from sensory anthropology and embodied ethnography both of which are essential tools for understanding how knowledge is situated and can be retrieved from the lived and sensed body. More specifically, I draw on the work of

Sarah Pink (2009, 2010, 2015), David Howes (1991a, 2019a, 2003), and Nadia Seremetaki (1997). These approaches argue that a body not only observes but also creates, interprets and negotiates meaning through sensory engagement in situ, namely in space, time and socio-cultural and anthropogenic ecosystems. In this research, corporeal perception is not an abstract phenomenon but rather an emplaced experience.

Pink (2009) highlights that sensory knowledge is created in practice and embedded in place. Howes (2019a) introduces the notion of 'emplacement' to highlight that mind, body and environment function as a whole – as a system of knowledge. This argument reinforces the importance of multisensoriality during the transmission process involving both physical elements like vision, hearing, touch and sensorial memory, and cognitive elements such as analysing and interpreting knowledge inputs. Therefore, the classroom becomes not just a space for instruction but a sensorial field of meaning-making through shared corporeal presences.

While I am not a neuroscientist, I acknowledge that cognitive neuroscience could offer an in-depth understanding of how dance knowledge is transmitted through mirror-neurons and simulation during co-presence or participant observation. The discovery of mirror neurons suggests that observing movement activates brain pathways in a similar way to actually performing the movement (Decety & Grezes 2006, Gallese et al. 2004). This process, known as "embodied simulation" (Decety & Grezes 2006, p.3), creates kinaesthetic empathy (Reynolds & Reason 2012) allowing the observer to feel and understand the dancer's movement from within, as a shared experience.

Barsalou (2008) argues that this capacity for simulation is important for social

coordination and particular to physical activities. In the context of contemporary dance transmission, corporeal knowledge is transferred not only through imitation but also through unconscious mirroring that occurs during co-presence and participant observation within shared time and space (Melin 2012). This embodied mirroring – the observer's body resonating with the movements of others – plays a vital role in how movement is perceived, remembered and subsequently performed, linking back to early discussion of mirror neurons and kinaesthetic empathy. (See section 2.4.).

For me, both as a dance practitioner and an ethnographic researcher, the understanding that knowledge is embodied and co-produced through physical participation underlines the significance of corporeal involvement in the fieldwork process and builds directly on Charalambous' (2020) concept of the dancing body as a "self-archive". My embodied engagement transformed over time, shifting me from being a passive viewer to an active participant - a site of empathetic learning (Decety & Grezes 2004, Gallese et al 2006, Barsalou 2008). Through this active corporeal engagement, the somatorality of each participant (educators and students) could be received, perceived, processed and interpreted while exploring deeper levels of knowledge processes. These experiences revealed deeper levels of knowing, which are accessible only through shared bodily presence and doing, rather than through observation alone.

Therefore, this exploration emphasises that bodies are not merely repositories of movement and memory, but living archives capable of storing, generating and re-activating knowledge, while interacting with other bodies in space, and time. Thus, dance archives could be approached as dynamic, lived processes, where observation, embodiment and co-presence are essential tools in the epistemology of the

contemporary dance transmission process, broadening the conversation on embodied archives in the dance discipline.

5.2.3. Contemporary Dance Transmission.

This study illuminates key dimensions in shaping contemporary dance transmission within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. Primarily, it looks at re-enactment as a form of dance pedagogy while teaching is also approached as a practice, and knowledge is not simply transferred from body to body – it is re-lived through a shared embodied process in the classroom. As discussed by Lepecki, the body becomes the performance when it re-enacts it; similarly, in this context, re-enactment refers to the body's engagement with a performative state within dance transmission—where the act of teaching and learning involves experiential embodiment and embodied learning (as also mentioned earlier in Section 2.4).

This model of transmission is characterized by mutual reciprocity between the teaching and learning process, in which students and educators are active participants in a dynamic, spiralling (see following sketch – Figure 11) embodied knowledge exchange, also highlighted in dance ethnographies and interviews.

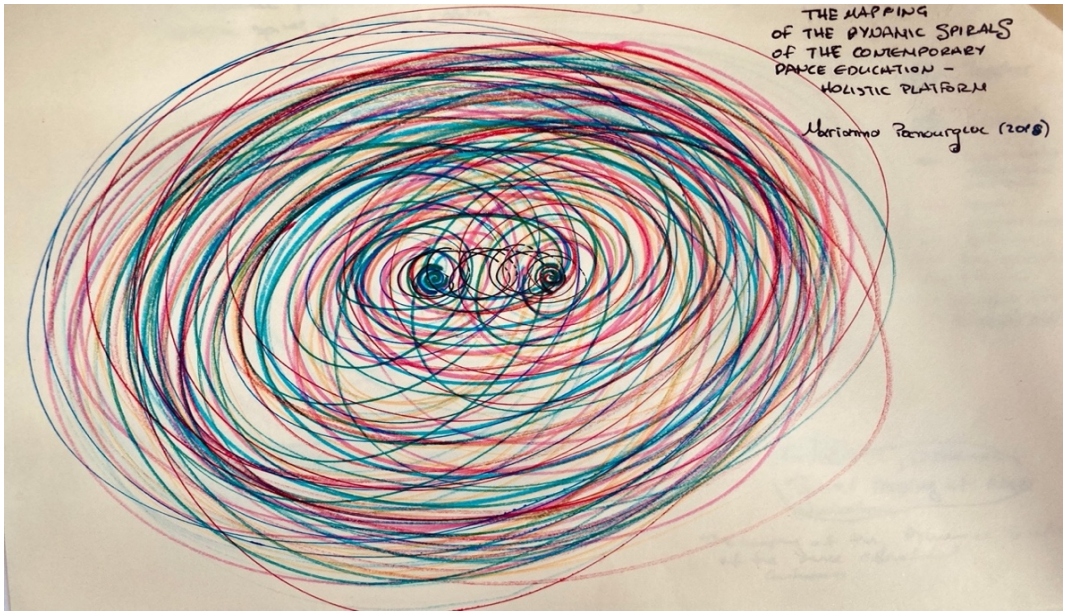


Figure 11.

Moreover, this aligns with Bonnie Spatz's (2015) idea of 'techniques of the body,' as knowledge acquired through doing, and Freire's (1998) argument that "Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning" (Freire 1998, p. 31).

My role as an ethnographic researcher expanded from observer to active agent in knowledge transmission, embracing corporeal engagement, emotional reactions and reflective presence. By evolving my understanding of this turn towards embodied ethnography informed by scholars like Sklar (1991, 2001, 2020) in the field, I gained access not only to the performativity of contemporary dance transmission but also to its affective nature. This in-depth synchronization of bodily experience, emotional engagement, and reflective awareness created fertile ground for expanding the experiential understanding of the learning ecosystem, characterized by mutual reciprocity between the teaching and learning process and further underscoring the value of autoethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011).

Taking into consideration the ephemerality of contemporary dance, it is evident that a multimodal approach to documentation is required. Through multimodality, contemporary dance can be archived through bodies (corporeal memory), voices (direct interviews, oral traditions, personal or academic verbal reflections), texts (personal or academic), scores (teaching, choreographic or improvisational), films (artistic, experimental, or ethnographic), and digital platforms such as IDOCDE/LACE. These multilayered practices and hybrid methodologies are essential for capturing dance.

It is to be noted, however, that the digital era forces institutions to implement new, hybrid and promising technologies, expanding the notion of documentation, archiving and interacting with various formats in dance. Therefore, multimodal documentation becomes an essential tool for research, pedagogy, and artistic endeavour including the process of creating dance choreography ensuring that embodied practices are not lost, but instead made accessible for future and further research. Initiatives such as LACE Symposium for Dance and other Contemporary Practices and Modes of Capture Symposium[283] illustrate how this practice is actively being explored and applied in the field, offering platforms where digital technologies intersect with embodied modes of knowledge production, archiving, and sharing.

In summary, this research highlights that contemporary dance transmission in Greece is a deeply embodied process. Teaching methods are continually influenced by educators in collaboration with students. As an ethnographer involved in this research,

[283] This symposium, curated by Jenny Roche, Róisín O'Gorman, and Liz Roche, was an annual event held as part of the IntraSpaces residency at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. It's delivered in partnership with Dublin Dance Festival and Dance Limerick. https://dancelimerick.ie/news/modes-of-capture-symposium/ [accessed 30 May 2022].

I found myself becoming an active participant – a process supporting the value of autoethnographic methodologies. Finally, the study reveals a dynamic, living and breathing ecosystem where elements like relational pedagogy, affective presence and methodological innovation were all necessary in order to document this paper in multimodal ways.

5.3. Significance of the Multifold Methodology in the Field.

The purpose of this research was to highlight the somatoralities of contemporary dance transmission within the framework of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. In order to achieve this, I employed multiple methodological approaches that could illustrate the complex relationscapes in this specific pedagogical dance environment.

This study utilized a fusion of autoethnography, self-reflexivity and ethnographic fieldnotes, reflecting my dual role as a contemporary dance educator and an ethnographic researcher. These methods provided multilayered lenses through which to observe and interpret the dynamics of contemporary dance transmission both as an embodied knowledge and as an oral tradition. Additionally, an unplanned element, namely autoethnographic documentation, offered a visual imprint through video recordings – in this case, moveprint, a body-to body movement transmission.

Moreover, fieldnotes formed a multidimensional map of raw data, including temporal and spatial notations, interpersonal relations, sketches, audio-visual recordings, and blocks of spontaneous in-situ thoughts, often written on ‘post-it notes,’ later connected

with relevant literature. Nonetheless, this chaotic mapping, resembling a tuning score, formed fertile ground for multilayered notations of dynamics, perceptions, intentions and interpretation to occur. Furthermore, this way of documentation enabled a more in-depth mapping, leading towards broader investigation.

In an attempt to give more space for voices in the field to be heard, I conducted structured, semi-structured and ethnographic interviews with contemporary dance directors and educators. The questions posed were related to, a) their point of view on contemporary dance teaching processes, b) my observations during their classes, and c) questions based on students' issues, emerging from the focus-group discussions.

In addition, I conducted interviews regarding small-numbered focus groups of dance students from the schools mentioned above. The questions posed were relevant to their perception on the contemporary dance technique they had been taught, how the learning process of contemporary dance was for them, and what their sense was about classes and corporeal perception. Finally, I interviewed contemporary dance course directors, answering questions about their own vision for the continuation of the transmission of the contemporary dance idiom in higher dance education in Greece.

To accompany this rich qualitative data, I created written dance ethnographies together with equally rich audio-visual material. Specifically, I included six key dance-ethnographies, substantial enough to illustrate the multilayered and complex process of contemporary dance transmission. Moreover, there was a strong intention to produce a short ethnographic film, based on this investigation. At this point, it is worth noting that there seems to be an increasing need to create ethnographic films (for documentation purposes) in dance, in the sense that there is a fine line between ethnochoreology and

visual anthropology. However, due to time constraints, the film could not be completed at this time.

The multifaceted approach proved to be highly suitable for capturing the ephemerality and somatoralities of contemporary dance transmission. However, several limitations emerged during the research. That is, the research took place during a historical moment in dance education, marked by nationwide protests and troubling changes in the dance education workplace, as discussed in Chapter 1. I found myself dealing with a number of issues going on at the same time, like art protests, unemployment and schools being under occupation, rendering this investigation almost impossible to conduct. However, instead of suspending the study, I chose to continue documenting on-going changes, staying within the field, in situ, while protesting in the streets of the capital. This decision eventually contextualised the research in this specific socio-political and temporal context.

Furthermore, time constraints also limited the range of data collection, especially as far as getting in touch with participants (contemporary dance educators, course directors and dance students). Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, Although I am not formally trained in audio-visual recording, documentation, or editing, this did not significantly impact the overall quality of the material collected. Nonetheless, I do believe that the recorded material transmits the 'sensescapes' (Appadurai 1990, Howes 1991a, 2003; Classen 1993a, Pink 2010, Ingold 2011) of moving and dancing bodies connecting with the environments that define contemporary dance education.

My dual identity as an educator and a researcher created challenges and advantages. My positioning in both roles enabled the combination of emic (insider), and etic (outsider) perspectives, which allowed for a creative integration between embodied

knowledge, through embodied documentation of the contemporary dance transmission, and analytical observation. As Seremetaki (1997) describes, I emerge as that "Hybrid figure called the native anthropologist" – a figure who is the very embodiment of imperfect, heterogeneous modernization, and therefore occupies more than one subject position and sees the same social object from many perspectives simultaneously" (Seremetaki 1997, p.72).

As a result, my position evoked subjective and embodied documentation of contemporary dance transmission. Therefore, the documentation of this research incorporates the lived experiences, both mine and those of the participants, into formal ethnographic data, in this way creating a rich quality of somatoralities.

To summarise, I must emphasize that this multifold methodological approach offered fertile ground for understanding contemporary dance transmission in Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. By combining different methods like autoethnography, interviews, audio-visual documentation and fieldnotes the research captured both the lived experience of the participants and the transmission processes.

5.4. Summary of the Research Findings – Discussion.

5.4.1. Course Directors.

This section discusses research findings deriving from ethnographic interviews conducted with three course directors of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece, namely Maro Grigoriou (Choros), Aliki Kazouri (Moragemou), and Betty Dramisioti (Aktina). These course directors shaped contemporary dance education in Greece through their perspective on how curricula were and are implemented, while offering their individual pedagogical approaches.

Grigoriou emphasizes individualised teaching through personalized feedback as she notes in her interview: *"I try to make individual corrections 'personalized,' that is, to correspond to the most efficient way for each student"*[284]. She expresses the intention to prevent students' injuries, highlighting that her School focuses on performativity readiness and corporeal awareness.

Kazouri as dance director conceptualises a dance class as a space of kinship, being the central space of teaching and learning experience. She positions herself as a mediator between students and educators, and as she noted, *"I try to be the intermediary between the children and the educators… regarding the humanitarian part"*[285]. Kazouri's pedagogy as dance educator, focuses on kinaesthetic awareness, her teaching being informed by socio-political interconnections.

Conversely, Dramisioti, compares contemporary dance educators with researchers pursuing the quest of *"awakening* [corporeal] *consciousness"* and creativity. Dance

[284] Quotation from interview with Maro Grigoriou 22/07/2024.
[285] Quotation from interview with Aliki Kazouri 19/04/2024.

education for her is a lifelong process of identity formation and manifestation, as she strongly stated during her interview, *"You are a dancer because existentially you need this identity"*[286].

Although dance directors' perspectives might vary, all three placed great emphasis on the individuality of teaching processes – expanding dance movement beyond technique, in this way positioning dance as a practice interconnecting with the wider socio-political context. These philosophical variations also reflected on the way dance directors structure their teaching team, consisting of contemporary dance educators.

Grigoriou collaborates with Manoliadi, both sharing a strong will for technical development, while focusing on students' performative skills. On the other hand, Kazouri works closely with Kotsali, forming a communicative ecosystem by transforming the classroom into a space of artistical and societal exploration and negotiation. Moreover, Dramisioti's personal approach, rooted in an on-going (re)search of artistic and personal identity through movement, aligns with Theofilidi, Foundouli and Grimma.

This "tessellation pattern" – this mosaic of pedagogical approaches illuminates an extended range of contemporary dance transmission within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. Both these teaching and learning ecosystems move beyond sterile methods of movement imitation, surpassing the boundaries of community and society. As a result, dance directors, educators and students participate in a dynamic, reflexive and spiral model of education.

[286] Quotation from interview with Betty Dramisioti 25/06/2024.

5.4.2. Contemporary Dance Educators.

This section discusses research findings derived from ethnographic interviews with eight[287] contemporary dance educators. Their diverse perspectives revealed key methods of transmitting contemporary dance, while emphasising a rich multimodal teaching landscape.

Although Manoliadi argues that a classroom is a communicative space based on mutual respect, she prioritizes technique as a means for preparing students to go on stage. Kotsali, on the other hand, places great emphasis on students developing an individual pathway, associated with movement-understanding, and performing, while at the same time she advocates for strong political awareness. Theofilidi concentrates on corporeal and emotional honesty and consistency, as both form bonds of trust between students and educators. Foundouli's approach is rooted in somatic awareness and sensory engagement, including exercises of organic flow of movement, grounding and clarity. Grimma, influenced by Eastern Philosophies (such as embedded in Kung Fu and Yoga), incorporates Contact Improvisation as a technique and research methodology supporting each student's individual artistic growth.

Kazouri, as an educator, puts emphasis on technical training, merging the partnering technique with various other dance styles and techniques in order to further develop students' skills. Dramisioti fosters a research-based learning environment, where students can re-invent their own kinetic language while supporting the quest of each student's individual artistic identity. At the same time, Grigoriou advocates for a multi-

[287] All three participated as course directors. Even though Dramisioti and Grigoriou initially participated as course directors, their voices still offered insights into their practical approaches to teaching. As a result, they were included in this section.

stimulus teaching approach, making it highly personalised to each student's specific needs.

Indeed, teaching approaches include various forms of inputs, namely, visual stimuli via observation and imitation, orality, in a form of verbal input like instructions, vocalisation or counting, or other forms of verbal communication and sounds, such as whispering, murmuring, whistling, singing, or the use of terminology. Likewise, the use of a tactile approach, a hands-on technique, raises important questions regarding issues of touch consent. Ultimately, sensorial inputs are significant stimuli, helping students internalise the sense of movement. Educators often use both language and movement to create, perform, and transmit the sense of movement, and the sense the body has while moving (for example a sense of 'being in flight'). This sensorial engagement enables students to perceive the movement performed by another body, by creating a multisensorial net of understanding, communicating and performing.

Contemporary dance transmission, as presented by educators, operates as an extensive field of multisensorial and multilayered holistic communication focusing on the actual process, rather than the end result, in this way providing space for personal growth, critical reflection and artistic development. Moreover, educators promote mutual and open communication, multilayered connection, respectful intimacy and self-awareness, while interconnecting with students, and co-existing in a broader social framework.

Therefore, the findings reveal a diverse and dynamic field of contemporary dance pedagogy and education in Greece. There are similarities and differences between all eight contemporary dance educators. However, the common thread here is the

embodied learning pushing the boundaries of technique, while providing fertile ground for critical reflection, evaluation and creativity. For these educators, contemporary dance transmission is not a fixed, lifeless text-based knowledge, but an everyday co-constructed and evolving practice.

5.4.3. Students' Focus Groups.

This section discusses research findings that emerged from students focus group interviews. Despite different answers given by each group during interviews, all groups exhibited similar behavioural patterns and often almost mirroring the power structures of their schools.

A significant finding is that language and movement, as a single entity, create a continuous thread of teaching and learning cultures and processes, as Dragon suggests (2008, 2015). As a result, moveprint, then, reflects the ethos of contemporary dance within these Schools. Contemporary dance is presented both as a transmission and a communication process gradually embracing changes over the decades, while, at the same time shaping form, identity and artistic development. According to research findings, contemporary dance education is based on oral traditions, whereas the text-based formal curriculum is marginalised and it has remained unchanged for decades. Interestingly, contemporary dance is not just a hobby for these students. It is an everyday practice, forming, as they describe, "mystical rituals". Through this practice they define and understand themselves. All participants form a live picture of embodied experiences, merging with personal and collective memories, all of which develop individual and collective somatoralities. These lived experiences affect students'

behaviours even outside the classroom. In fact, working with collective dynamics fosters vulnerability, emotional and corporeal honesty, and group trust, having an impact on their social behaviour.

Indeed, students approach everyday life as an on-going quest, a wish to gain further knowledge, or to explore deeper dimensions of corporeality, and sense the world in a multi-dimensional way. They criticise the current dance education framework, particularly after having been involved in the recent 2022 protests. Consequently, their disappointment triggers their political consciousness and awareness through their bodies.

Moreover, students advocate for a dancing body that rejects stereotypes, while pursuing freedom and demanding clear consent, trying to cope with fatigue, pain and injury – in other words, to maintain a dancing body able to overcome hierarchical institutional and societal boundaries. The students, perhaps unconsciously, make certain minute slight alterations, potentially leading to substantial changes in how contemporary dance is disseminated in Greece.

Furthermore, students experience contemporary dance as a multisensory journey shaping the transmission process itself. Through time, this has become a language including their educators' and their own somatoralities, formed by an interconnection between educators, students, and society. In this case, students envision contemporary dance "with freedom, openness and limitless imagination" as they noted.

Through the interviews, it became clear that students were capable of distinguishing the fine line between feeling and sensing, by differentiating between types of fatigue a dancing body can experience, while confronting Hardt's argument that, "Students might not yet be familiarized with this difference between feeling and sensing" (Hardt 2020,

p.51). In fact, students' voices raise critical questions like, how can a curriculum incorporate inclusive practice? What institutional changes should be made to support a holistic contemporary dance curriculum, one that is viable in the 21st century? (see details in section 4.2.3.)

5.4.4. Contemporary Dance Ethnographies.

This section discusses research findings deriving from a series of dance ethnographies. These ethnographies offered fertile ground for further discussion, and deeper reflection on current pedagogical landscapes of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece.

Each dance ethnography illustrates a one-and-a-half-hour contemporary dance class, during which educators implemented their pedagogical approaches and transmission processes. Throughout these classes, students, unconsciously, demonstrated pathways of acquiring embodied knowledge. Participant observations conducted during these classes revealed the dynamics and processes of knowledge transmission. As far as I'm concerned, and as Hardt argues, "I [felt] awake, engaged, and free in mind to let myself be drawn into the subtle movements that focus all my attention on their sensation" (Hardt 2020, p.54).

Ethnographies, also form a "tessellation pattern" of pedagogical variations, educational methodologies, corporeal knowledge, memories, individual narratives, and somatoralities. Moreover, the ethnographic prism revealed a "nexus of practices" (Reckwitz 2003, 290) intertwined with "the social fabric or the complex constellations" (Reckwitz 2003, 290). As Hardt elaborates on Reckwitz, "For researching dance and

dance education, this means that it is crucial to take complex pedagogical constellations, and their social organization into account. This includes participants and things they say and do. This might not always be easily visible, as it also includes the implicit rules of the field" (Hardt 2020, p.50).

In the Greek context, each private school develops its own teaching environments and value systems. This creates a fragmented yet dynamic educational landscape that these ethnographies helped illuminate.

Additionally, the ethnographic findings related to dance ethnographies aligned with insights gathered from contemporary dance educators' interviews. Each dance ethnography illuminates each educator's pedagogical tools, and different unique value systems within a classroom. These variations are significant findings, as they reflect the complex diversity of the contemporary dance nature, and should definitely be taken into consideration when updating contemporary dance curricula overall.

Ultimately, these dance ethnographies provided insights going beyond form, structure and technique, including feelings, emotions and sensations, while also exploring the role of language. Metaphors, similes, imaginative language and neologisms were frequently used, both by educators and students in a collaborative practice of meaning-making. In many Greek classrooms, the switching between Greek and English further revealed how contemporary dance pedagogy is shaped by international influences as well as local linguistic and cultural nuances.

As Latour (2007 in Hardt 2020) suggests, "Co-author the practice and reinvest in the rules and principles, and performatively bring about the practice of teaching and learning dance. This includes all participants and actants" (Latour 2007). Hardt further emphasises that participants' "doings and sayings" (Hardt 2020, p.52) also actively

contribute to this co-authorship. I argue that everything presented in class is a co-created, co-invented and co-shaped process within the specific social and pedagogical framework of a dance classroom. In the Greek setting, this process is also shaped by the informal hierarchies and norms that operate within these institutions. Likewise, this process offers epistemological reference revealing how embodied knowledge is constructed, negotiated, and influenced by orality within the Greek territory.

5.4.5. Autoethnography.

Autoethnography applied in this research, in a multi-dimensional way, goes alongside both this academic inquiry and my evolution as an artist. Transitioning between roles, from dancer to dance educator to researcher, my autoethnographic writings became more than just part of my research; they formed an internal space, serving as the backbone for this four-year investigation.

These personal notes and reflections functioned as connective tissue, the fascia, so to speak, preserving all findings through my embodied experience, concurrently allowing flashbacks to different time and places, while maintaining coherence of structure. In this research, autoethnographies are intertwined, from brief dance ethnographies during the 2018 IDOCDE – Mind the Dance Lab (ImPulsTanz –Vienna, International Dance Festival) - to personal emotions noted in the 2023 field diary, and from memories of a 2008 knee injury to a 2025 reflection on a socio-political landscape of contemporary dance education in Greece.

All these elements formed a personal lens through which I perceived, documented, analysed and interpreted research findings, with the hope to delve deeper into my own somatorality while observing the vibrant community of contemporary dance within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece.

5.4.6. Research Questions and Findings.

The following paragraph links research questions with findings.

Question 1: What are the key methods of transmission of contemporary dance within higher dance education in Greece throughout the 21st century?

The key methods presented in this dissertation concern embodied oral transmission. The dominant method was characterised by verbal instructions, rhythmical vocalization, mirroring, sensory inputs and the use of metaphorical language through a non-text-based teaching practice (showing exercises and using orality, touch, and improvisation). Repeated structures and everyday ritualistic forms of contemporary dance classes also added to dance transmission (see dance ethnography Theofilidi p.236, and Foundouli 241 p. and interviews p.190 and p.195). Educators, like Manoliadi, emphasise how technical form must precede students' artistic expression, whereas others like Kotsali and Grimma customise and explore the artistic body, while engaging with technical elements. The educator's gaze (Fraleigh 2019) also plays an important role in that it is a strong presence functioning as a pedagogical tool (see Kotsali's ethnography p.261 and interview p.183). Ultimately, repetitive cyclical

educational models enforced the embedded oral tradition in contemporary dance transmission within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece.

Question 2: How do individual (educators' and students') somatoralities in the field of contemporary dance education transmit, and receive, kinetic/corporeal knowledge?

The term somatoralities, is a synthesis of somatic corporeal knowledge and oral transmission as tradition, transformed into a concept in which both students and educators serve as embodied living archives encompassing the continuous cycle of contemporary dance transmission within dance education. Through the observed ethnographies, somatoralities are expressed and transmitted through a range of embodied interactions including voice, touch, imagery, structure and/or improvisation, revealing that knowledge is not only taught but also experienced and sensed.

Each educator develops and applies pedagogical methodologies shaped by their personal experiences, embodied ethos, training backgrounds and socio-political perspectives while students tend to respond more effectively to sensory, emotional and relational stimuli rather than to solely technical instruction.

Theofilidi employs the voice and physical contact to bring students' awareness to unconscious movement patterns, promoting precision from the body's core while remaining rooted in empathy. Foundouli, in contrast, guides students inward, using ideokinesis and repeated sequences to deepen somatic awareness and creative autonomy, making the transmission of corporeal knowledge an internalised process.

Grimma uses Contact Improvisation to reveal somatorality as a co-authored and dynamic communication between bodies that negotiate and reflect each other's intentions in motion. Manoliadi offers a paradoxical form of freedom: by moving within kinetic limitations, students access high-energy states, developing personal vocabularies. Kotsali emphasises political and philosophical engagement through physicality and expands somatorality into a terrain of resistance, where ambiguity and "mistakes" are pedagogical tools. In Kazouri's highly hierarchical environment, somatorality manifests in the negotiation between institutional authority and personal mentorship, enabling a different kind of relational learning.

Through these encounters, it becomes evident that somatoralities are not fixed or uniform; they are dialogic, responsive and deeply tied into the ethos of each educator and their interconnection with the students. Consequently, contemporary dance education in Greece emerges not as a singular method, but as a living, breathing "anarchive" (De Laet 2020) of embodied exchange and understanding.

Question 3: Could the above processes of oral everyday rituals and traditions of the ephemeral form of contemporary dance be captured and archived through ethnographic processes?

The findings of this research strongly support that oral, everyday rituals and traditions of contemporary dance can be captured and archived through ethnographic processes, despite the ephemerality of contemporary dance. Multiple methods such as ethnographic interviews, participant observation, detailed dance ethnographies, and autoethnography processes facilitated the documentation of the transmitted embodied

knowledge within Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. These ethnographic tools allowed not only the preservation of verbal instructions and pedagogical choices, but also the affective, relational, and sensory elements of teaching and learning dance processes to coexist.

The concept of the "living archive", as discussed by Charalambous (2022, 2025) and others, emerging as a central axis in this research, illustrates the dancing body as a space of memory, creativity, and cultural continuity. In addition, educators and students actively contribute to a dynamic oral and corporeal archive through their shared spatiotemporal sensescapes. Furthermore, classroom practices, metaphorical language, vocal cues, and interpersonal connections all acted as common thread, reinforcing contemporary dance transmission as an oral tradition.

While Taylor (2003) distinguishes between the archive and the repertoire, this research proposes that the live and performative exchange within the classroom operates as an archival process in itself. Through repetition, co-presence, and reflexivity, the classroom becomes a site where embodied knowledge is both transmitted and inscribed; resonating with Charalambous' notion of the "self-archive" - a site where memory, experience, and embodied knowledge are stored and reactivated.

Through this investigation, a need for hybrid and multimodal documentation processes, supporting dancers' corporeal voices, became evident. Concurrently, this research offers productive scope for analysis, reflection, and in-depth future investigation. Ultimately, this study places ethnography as a rich research method for preserving and

understanding embodied oral traditions of contemporary dance, particularly within the framework of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece.

5.4.7. Research Contribution.

This study contributes to the field of contemporary dance education both by offering insight into the current dance transmission practices and by providing text and literature for further research. Through this investigation, the concept of embodied pedagogy expands to include the transmission of somatorality through presence, oral tradition and body-to-body teaching and learning processes.

Also, this research introduces new terminology emerging from the core of embodied experience. The development and the implementation of the terms somatorality(ies), ethos of movement, moveprint(s) and sensescape(s) represent a significant and unique contribution. Indeed, these concepts further highlight the interconnection between orality of the body and language within the field of contemporary dance transmission.

Additionally, this study contributes to the discussion on how the ephemerality of movement could be captured by advocating for a multisensorial ethnographic presence, method, and epistemology. Contemporary dance in Greece could be seen not only as an artistic practice but also as a site of cultural negotiation, political reflection and embodied dialogue.

To sum up, contemporary dance education in Greece, as revealed in this ethnographic research, is neither a teaching process nor a sequence of learning steps. On the contrary, it is a multilayered and dynamic practice of transmitting somatoralities, whereby pedagogy becomes an archive, in fact, a living, oral and embodied archive, both

resisting and redefining the meaning of teaching and learning, while remembering through memory and creating through a moving body.

5.5. Research Limitations.

The theories discussed above served as tools for interpreting the transmission processes of contemporary dance within the framework of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece. Although there is relevant literature about the three major axes of this research (oral traditions, embodied knowledge, and dance transmission documentation), the lack of research in the field posed limitations in applying these theories on the research findings.

Classical dance notation places emphasis on codifying specific steps, instead of the lived experience. Therefore, the body, as somatorality, as a site of sensing, feeling and memory has been historically excluded from archives. Even though there are a lot of historical texts and visual dance documents, they often fail to capture the corporeal sensations, emotions and embodied memories of the participants. Embodied experience is subjective, tacit and difficult to verify or transmit, when that experience is not lived internally, but only observed. Translating such an observed experience into academic language, particularly within the format of Ph.D. research, brings on significant challenges.

Oral transmission deeply embedded in dance education is ephemeral, selective and shaped by each individual, and submitted to institutional and socio-cultural power structures (see also Derrida 1995 and Foucault 1972). Any attempt to capture and transmit the oral knowledge outside the sensing body provokes critical reflection on

body politics and power relations. As a researcher/observer, I approached somatorality with care and respect, within the current socio-political and cultural context. Nevertheless, I must acknowledge that autoethnography is often influenced by a researchers' personal bias, identity and memories that can shape the findings accordingly. However, since this research is the first large-scale study undertaken in this field, it was important that it be documented in a multisensory method, even though this was perhaps done, to a degree, out of necessity.

Regarding practical constrains, despite the richness of the material and its potential to offer profound visual insights, completing the ethnographic film had to be postponed due to tight academic deadlines and limited funding, in order to then focus on the multisensorial documentation.

Consequently, contemporary dance transmission in Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece is both embodied and oral. Although, existing theories provided a grounding for the research, they proved in many cases insufficient to fully address the particularities of this field. A larger scale of research might be necessary to capture the full extent of the complexity of contemporary dance transmission as oral tradition.

5.6. Suggestions for Further Research.

During the research, alongside potential answers, a number of questions, and possible future topics emerged. They were all related to various aspects of contemporary dance transmission, including the structure and content of the contemporary dance curriculum in higher education, as well as historical archiving and ethnochoreological documentation of contemporary dance practices in Greece.

Likewise, questions related to institutional policies, power dynamics and interpersonal relationships within the field surfaced. Reflections on the research process itself also appeared. Mainly, these reflections were related to chosen and applied methodologies as regards the positioning of the researcher, and the interpretation and limitations of research findings. In addition, these questions highlighted the complexity and the multilayered nature of the research field. It is evident that contemporary dance education requires interdisciplinarity and critical reflexivity to support future research.

The following recommendations are proposed for further research in the field of contemporary dance education in Greece. Primarily, expanding the scope and duration of the research is crucial. Long-term and large-scale investigations, involving multiple institutions and participants, would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary dance practices, their pedagogical role in higher dance education, and their impact in the Greek contemporary dance idiom.

Moreover, comparative studies of curriculum implementation in Higher Professional Private (and public) Dance Schools could provide valuable insights into the pedagogical diversity of contemporary dance education in Greece. These insights should directly inform the development of a national curriculum for contemporary dance, promoting coherence and raising the quality of education across institutions.

Additionally, further research exploring multifaceted and multimodal methodologies, sensory ethnography, video documentation, participant diaries, autoethnography and, conceivably, creating or using digital platforms could also support a holistic and dynamic research framework. These approaches could provide a detailed portrayal of embodied knowledge and oral transmission processes, though difficult to capture in full range in this study.

Although this study produces a significant point of reference in contemporary dance, it fails to fill the enormous gap in the ethnochoreological study of contemporary dance in Greece. Further research documenting and contextualising the Greek contemporary dance idiom within its specific socio-cultural context – especially research exploring somatoralities across different time periods – would contribute to cultural heritage, dance archiving and academic discourse.

Ultimately, further investigation of power dynamics, hierarchies and relational environments could illuminate the interconnection between pedagogical pathways of dance transmission and social structures. These investigations could also include gender-based research or identity discourses.

Contemporary dance education in Greece is a vivid, complex and dynamic multilayered field, demanding interdisciplinary and critically reflective research. Future studies should not only address these gaps, but actively support the establishment of BA and MA programmes in contemporary dance, which are currently absent from the Greek higher education landscape. Such developments are essential to legitimising the field both academically and professionally. Such research would benefit not only students and educators, but also policy-making bodies such as the Greek Ministry of Culture.

5.7. Conclusion of the Thesis.

The need to be understood not only as a dancer functioning as a tool, or an educator defined by notions of authenticity, but as also as a whole entity – an embodied subject that encompasses the roles of dancer, educator, and researcher – is central in my practice. I felt the need to reflect on, and express my movement experiences and my embodied voice, as forms of knowledge production.

Throughout this four-year research, I have been observing and analysing objectives in my approach, both as a researcher and as a contemporary dance educator. This journey has allowed for an in-depth and multilayered understanding of the field and my role in it. This enabled my viewing the field, and myself, from multiple perspectives, while at the same time allowing for me to remain open to the senses of field participants. I am grateful to have been given this opportunity to broaden my horizons, obtain more information and maturity both as a researcher and educator, through participating, observing and researching transmission processes.

This study constitutes the first large-scale ethnochoreological investigation in contemporary dance transmission processes in Greek territory. Its contribution sets the foundation for further research in understanding, preserving and academically grounding dance.

After completing this dissertation, the text will be given back to the community, the libraries, educators and students of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools participating in the research whether directly or indirectly.

As Seremetaki (1997) notes,

> Η πράξη της ανταλλαγής καταγράφεται πάνω στις αισθήσεις που την επισφραγίζουν ως μια κοινωνική σχέση. Στη συνέχεια, οι αισθήσεις συγχρονίζονται και διασταυρώνονται η μια με την άλλη και με τον Άλλο, έτσι ώστε αισθήσεις και υποκείμενα να μπορούν να μαρτυρήσουν και να μαρτυρηθούν.
>
> *(Σερεμετάκη 1997, σελ.8)*[288]

Through this "offering", I hope to vocalize our dancing experiences as valuable forms of embodied knowledge that can act as a threshold into new understandings for future generations.

[288] Translation of the Greek text: "The act of exchange is registered on the senses that seal it as a social relation. In turn, the senses are synchronized and crossed with each other and with *the Other,* so that senses and subjects can witness and be witnessed" (Seremetaki 1993, p.4).

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Appendix

No. 1:

Figure 12. Map of Higher Professional Private Dance Schools in Greece.

The large red arrow in the centre of the map is pointing to Athens (dark orange region on the map). The smaller red arrow on the right is pointing toThessaloniki (pink region). The four small arrows are pointing from up to down to Komotini (grey region), Ioannina (green region) , Larissa (yellow region) and Patra (dark green region).



No.2:

Figure 13. Timeline of Art Protests in Greece.

December 2022 ->

- 17 Dec: Presidential Decree (PD 85/2022) announced – downgrading artist qualifications
- 22 Dec: Students of the National Theatre School occupy the school – first public protest. First protest organized by the Association of Workers in the Dance Field outside the Ministry of Interior.
- 27 Dec: Government holds first meeting with art unions – no tangible results.
- 29 Dec: Art unions submit detailed proposals to government, demanding withdrawal of the decree and creation of a Public University of Performing Arts.

January 2023->

- 21 Jan: Expanded demands include housing, scholarships, staff, and curriculum updates.
- 26 Jan: Secondary educators and public art school students join protests. First mass resignations by art educators (theatre) begin.
- 29 Jan: Actors across Greece read the Presidential Decree and the Unions demands on stage after performances, urging audiences to support against it.
- 31 Jan: Government announces formation of working group

February 2023->

- 2 Feb: Second official meeting between government and art unions.
- 7 Feb: Human silent Chain Protest – thousands outside the National Theatre.
- 8 Feb: Silent March with mournful atmosphere. 41 educators and dancers publicly resign at NTG.
- 10 Feb: Start of performance-based protests and “anti-courses” (open art classes).
- 15 Feb: Third meeting with government – leads to Joint Ministerial Decision.

Throughout February: Protest methods include: vehicle parades, instant performances, funeral re-enactments, street exhibitions, and on-going “anti-courses.”

March 2023 ->

- 9 Mar: 23 artist unions co-sign intervention, invite all political parties to dialogue.
- 19 Mar: Occupations end after nearly 50 days, with students declaring, “Nothing ends here. We continue to fight.”

No. 3:

Figure 14. Mass protests, occupations and strikes.

(See more material in the drive https://ulcampus-my.sharepoint.com/my?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fmarianna%5Fpanourgia%5Ful%5Fie%2FDocuments%2FResearch%20Audiovisual%20Recordings%2FVisual%20Documentation%20of%20Protests%202022%2D2023&source=waffle)



No. 4:

Figure 15. Photographs (open archives) from reporter Marios Lolos (08/02/2023).



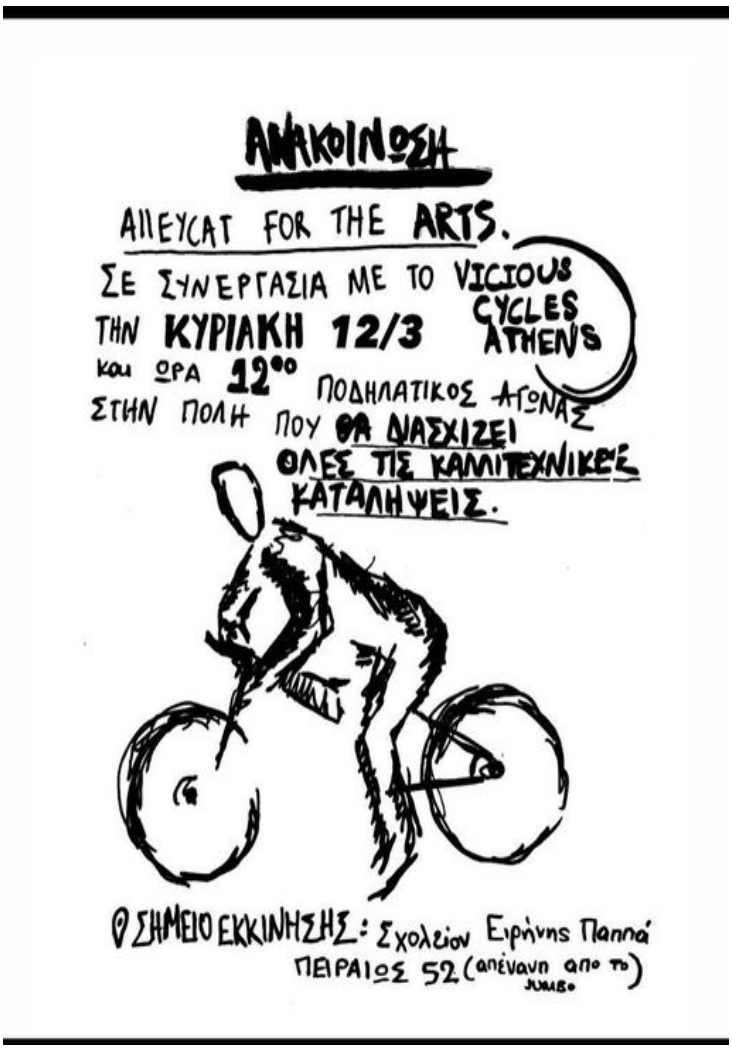
No. 5:

Figure 16. Posters of performances-protests on web and social media.



No.6:

Figure 17. Bike Protest Poster - announced on web and social media.



No.7:

Figure 18. Students from Fontys School of Fine Arts and Tilburg Netherlands support Greek Art protest.



No.8:

Figure 19. Silent March.



No.9:

Figure 20. Street Music Concerts as protest.



No.10:

Figure 21. Street art exhibitions.



No.11:

Figure 22. Occupation of National Theatre building.



No.12:

Figure 23. Human Chain Protest.



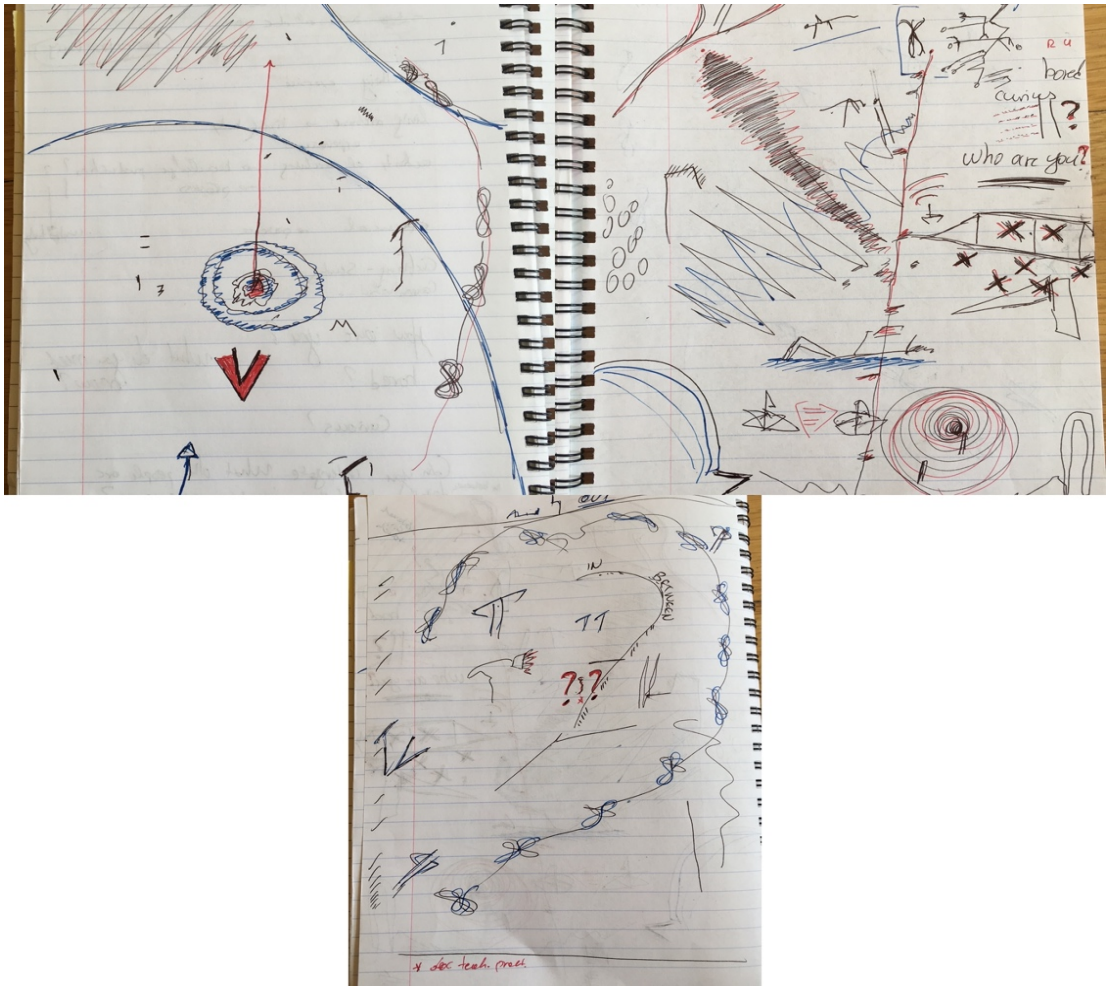
No.13:

Figure 24. Mind the Dance Lab (2018). Idocde Sumposioum. ImpPulsTanz Vienna International Dance Festival.



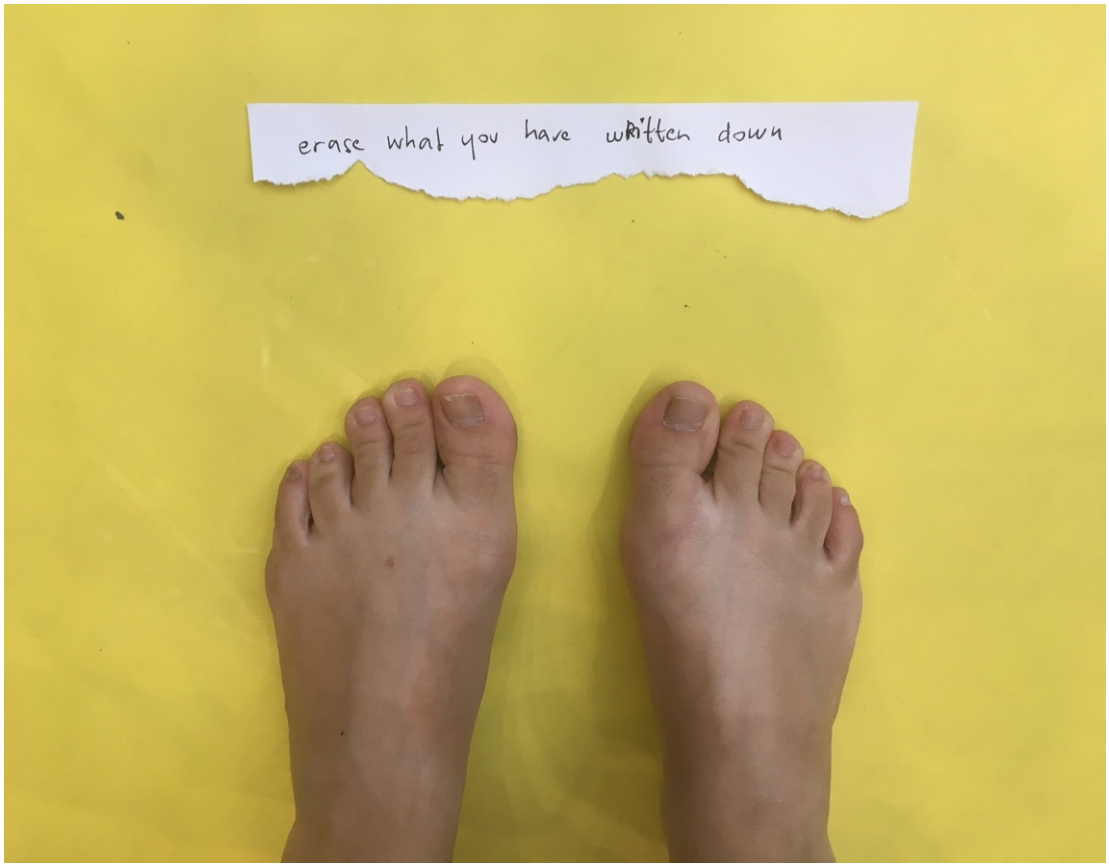
No.14:

Figure 25. Notes/Sketches from Mind the Dance Lab.



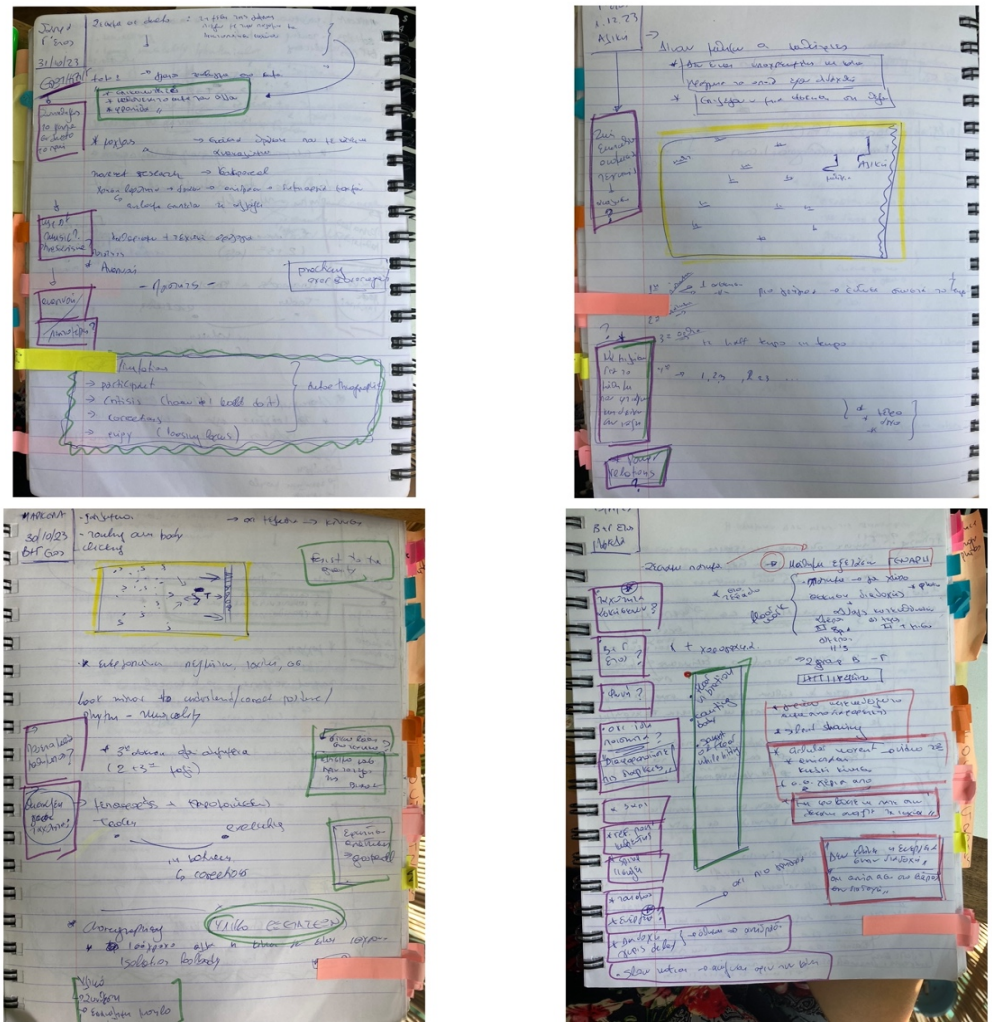
No.15:

Figure 25. 'Erase what you have written down' – Mind the Dance Lab (2018).



No.16:

Figure 27. Fieldnotes.



No.17:

Figure 28. Candy from student.



No. 18:

Figure 29. Information Letters for research participants and Ethical Consent Forms.



FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

INFORMATION LETTER

(class observation/recording)

Dear educators and students,

My name is Panourgia Marianna and I am a currently studying for a PhD in Ethnochoreology in the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. As part of my studies, I am carrying out a research Project entitled " An Ethnochoreological Investigation of Oral Traditions of Contemporary Dance Transmission in Higher Dance Education in Greece". The study examines the teaching and learning approaches of contemporary dance in Greece. As a contemporary dance student in Greece, you have knowledge that is very valuable to this study.

Your involvement in the study will be during your timetabled school day and concerns the contemporary dance class. You will be asked for permission to video/audio record the class to ensure accuracy and as a reference point for follow up interviews and focus

groups. If you agree to be video/audio recorded, you have up to a period of 14 days after the data collection is completed to withdraw from the study. Participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose not to take part or to stop your involvement in this study at any time. You also might decide that you don't want to be recorded. If this happens, you are not obliged to do so. While every endeavour will be made to protect your anonymity and confidentiality, full anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Finally, you understand that the data may be used for follow-up publications-presentations. All files will be stored in line with established University of Limerick's policy on data protection and will be stored under lock, or password protected computer with encryption, by me according to the regulations of University of Limerick for the duration of seven (7) years. There is no risk involved in these sessions on the contrary the findings of the study might help contemporary dance teachers to provide more positive and meaningful transmission experiences.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavours. The data collected will provide useful information regarding professional dance education in Greece.

If you have any queries or would like more information about the project, please contact:

* Marianna.Panourgia@ul.ie

* Jenny.Roche@ul.ie

This research study has received Ethics approval from Greek Ministry of Culture (N:546517, 11/11/2021) and the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics

Committee (Ref: 2021-12-10-AHSS). If you have any concerns about this study or your participation and wish to contact an independent authority, you may contact:

Chairperson Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

AHSS Faculty Office

University of Limerick

Tel: +353 61 202286

Email: FAHSSEthics@ul.ie

Best Wishes,

Marianna Panourgia

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

INFORMATION LETTER (Focus Groups)

Dear student,

My name is Panourgia Marianna and I am a currently studying for a PhD in Ethnochoreology in the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. As part of my studies, I am carrying out a research Project entitled “An Ethnochoreological Investigation of Oral Traditions of Contemporary Dance Transmission in Higher Dance Education in Greece”. The study examines the teaching and learning approaches of contemporary dance in Greece. As a contemporary dance student in Greece, you have knowledge that is very valuable to this study.

Your involvement in the study will be during your timetabled school day. You will be invited to take part in two forty five minute focus group sessions with some of your class mates. The focus groups will involve a maximum of 10 students in a group setting being asked questions about how they take part in contemporary dance class. The focus groups will be recorded. Once transcribed, they will be removed from audiovisual device. All files will be stored in line with established University of Limerick's policy on data protection and will be stored under lock, or password protected computer with

encryption, by me according to the regulations of University of Limerick for the duration of seven (7) years. There is no risk involved in these sessions on the contrary the findings of the study might help contemporary dance teachers to provide more positive and meaningful transmission experiences. You might decide that you don't want to answer a question. If this happens, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to. Moreover you have up to a period of 14 days after the data collection is completed to withdraw from the study. Participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose not to take part or to stop your involvement in this study at any time. While every endeavour will be made to protect your anonymity and confidentiality, full anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for focus groups. However, the members of the group are kindly requested to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. Finally, you understand that the data may be used for follow up publications-presentations.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavours. The data collected will provide useful information regarding professional dance education in Greece.

If you have any queries or would like more information about the project, please contact:

* Marianna.Panourgia@ul.ie

* Jenny.Roche@ul.ie

This research study has received Ethics approval from Greek Ministry of Culture (N:546517, 11/11/2021) and the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics

Committee (Ref: 2021-12-10-AHSS). If you have any concerns about this study or your participation and wish to contact an independent authority, you may contact:

Chairperson Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

AHSS Faculty Office

University of Limerick

Tel: +353 61 202286

Email: FAHSSEthics@ul.ie

Best Wishes,

Marianna Panourgia



FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Ethical Consent Form

I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to take part in research for the project entitled " An Ethnochoreological Investigation of Oral Traditions of Contemporary Dance Transmission in Higher Dance Education in Greece". I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate. The nature of my participation has been explained to me and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.

I am also aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (video & audio) and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can request that the recording equipment be switched off. I am entitled to copies of all recordings made and am fully informed as to what will happen to these recordings once the study is completed.

I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study.

I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason.

I am also entitled to full confidentiality in terms of my participation and personal details.

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date

Consent to Contact about Similar Future Research

Yes	**No**
□	□

I explicitly consent to the University contacting me as part of current or similar future research and holding my contact details on its database for the purpose of contacting me.

Ethical Consent Form

(focus groups)

I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to take part in research for the project entitled " An Ethnochoreological Investigation of Oral Traditions of Contemporary Dance Transmission in Higher Dance Education in Greece"

- I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate.
- The nature of my participation has been explained to me, and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.
- I am aware that my participation in this study will be audio/video recorded and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time, I can request that the recording software be switched off.
- I am aware that such information may also be used in future academic presentations and publications about this study.
- I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study.
- I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation without having to explain or give a reason, up to a period of two weeks after the data collection is completed.
- I know that I have been asked not to discuss the content of the focus group discussion, or the identity of its participants with anyone.

- I acknowledge that while the researcher has asked all focus groups participants to maintain confidentiality in the above manner, the researcher cannot guarantee that individual participants will adhere to this request.
- I acknowledge that the researcher does guarantee that they will not use my name or any other information,that would identify me in any outputs of the research.
- I declare that I have read and fully understand the contents of the Research Privacy Notice.

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator Date

Consent to Contact about Similar Future Research

Yes	**No**
□	□

I explicitly consent to the University contacting me as part of current or similar future research and holding my contact details on its database for the purpose of contacting me.

RESEARCH PRIVACY NOTICE

Introduction

This Research Privacy Notice governs the use and storage of your personal data by the University of Limerick (the "University"). The processing of this data is carried out in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) / Data Protection Acts 1988-2018 ("Data Protection Law") and in accordance with this Research Privacy Notice.

Any personal data which you provide to the University as part of this research project will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, in accordance with Irish and European Data Protection Law. This Notice sets out details of the information that we collect, how we process it and who we share it with. It also explains your rights under data protection law in relation to our processing of your data.

1. Title and Purpose of the research project

1.1 An ethnochoreological investigation of cultural traits and oral traditions of contemporary dance transmission within higher education in Greece.

2. Research Ethics Committee

2.1 Ethical approval was granted by FAHSS Research Ethics Committee on [insert approval date once available]. The research ethics approval number is [include REC reference number].

3. Identity of the Data Controller(s)

3.1 The Data Controller

- University of Limerick, Plassey, Limerick.

4. Identity and Contact Details of the Data Protection Officer of the Data Controller(s)/

4.1 You can contact the University of Limerick's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie or by writing to Data Protection Officer, Room A1-073, University of Limerick, Limerick.

5. The Identity of the Principal Investigator

5.1 The Principal Investigator for this Research Project is Marianna Panourgia, PhD student Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick.

6. How we will use your personal data

6.1 The University must process your personal data in order to undertake research relating to this project/study. The data for this research will be collected directly from the participants.

6.2 The personal data collected and used in this research will include:

Name

Email address

6.3 You provide us with your personal data to enable us to undertake the research project. Participation in this research project is voluntary and participants may withdraw without giving any reason. Should you wish to withdraw, you may do so by contacting the Principal Investigator at marianna.panourgia@ul.ie

7. Lawful Basis for University Processing Personal Data

7.1 Data Protection Law requires that the University must have a valid legal reason to process and use your personal data. This is often called a 'lawful basis'. GDPR requires us to be explicit with you about the lawful basis upon which we rely in order to process information about you.

7.2 The University is carrying out this research in the public interest and for scientific, historical or statistical purposes. In doing so, we are relying on Article 6(1)(e) of the GDPR. Where we are processing special category or sensitive personal data, we are relying on Article 9(2)(j) of GDPR. As required under Data Protection Law, we have appropriate safeguards in place in order to protect your personal data; these are set out in the next section.

8. Protecting Your Personal Data

8.1 We have the following measures in place to help ensure we keep your personal data safe:

- All researchers at the University must adhere to University policies and procedures that tell our staff and students how to collect and use your information safely;
- Training is made available to all researchers to ensure our staff and students understand the importance of data protection and how to protect your personal data;
- The University has security arrangements and technical measures in place that ensure your information is stored safely and securely;
- All research projects involving personal data are reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee in line with University policies and procedures;
- Where a research project may involve a high risk, we first carry out a data protection impact assessment to assess risks and ensure adequate safeguards are in place;
- Where your personal data is processed for health research, we will always obtain your explicit consent in advance (in line with the Health Research Regulations 2018).

8.2 Personal data collected for this research project will be pseudonymised within one hour after collection and will be fully anonymised after 24 months. Truly

anonymised data is not Personal Data. Once data is anonymised for the purposes of this research project, the terms of this Privacy Notice will no longer apply.

9. Sharing Your Personal Data with Third Parties

9.1 The University will not disclose your personal data to third parties. [Anonymous data may be shared with third parties. In this situation, you will not be identifiable from any data we share with the third party.]

We require that third parties only use or disclose such Personal Data as necessary to provide the requested services to us and in a manner consistent with the use and disclosure provisions of this Privacy Notice and Data Protection Law. Third parties that receive Personal Data from us must satisfy us as to the measures taken to protect the Personal Data such parties receive.

10. Transfer of personal data to Other Countries Outside the EEA -

11. How Long Will We Keep Your Data

11.1 All Personal Data collected for this research project will be retained for 7 years.

12. Your Rights

12.1 Depending on the lawful basis which we rely on to process your Personal Data, you may have the right to request that we:

- provide you with information as to whether we process your data and details relating to our processing, and with a copy of your personal data;
- rectify any inaccurate data we might have about your without undue delay;
- complete any incomplete information about you;
- under certain circumstances, erase your Personal Data without undue delay;
- under certain circumstances, be restricted from processing your data;
- under certain circumstances, furnish you with the Personal Data which you provided us within a structured, commonly used and machine readable format;

12.2 Requests for any of the above should be addressed by email to the Principal Investigator at Marianna.panourgia@ul.ie AND the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie. Your request will be processed within 30 days of receipt. Please note, however, it may not be possible to facilitate all requests, for example, where the University is required by law to collect and process certain personal data including that personal information that is required of any research participant.

12.3 It is your responsibility to let the Principal Investigator know if your contact details change.

13. Queries, Contacts, Right of Complaint

13.1 Further information on Data Protection at the University of Limerick may be viewed at www.ul.ie/dataprotection. You can contact the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie or by writing to Data Protection Officer, Room A1-073, University of Limerick, Limerick.

13.2 You have a right to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (Supervisory Authority). While we recommend that you raise any concerns or queries with us first at the following email address marianna.panourgia@ul.ie, you may contact that Office at info@dataprotection.ie or by writing to the Data Protection Commission, 21 Fitzwilliam Square South, Dublin 2, D02 RD28.