

Shape and Space

Welcome to *Shape and Space*. This is the fourth level of Healing Dance to come into existence. In 1999 the original Healing Dance course divided in two to form the *Basic* and *Advanced* surface levels. In 2000 Inika Sati Spence and I put together the first underwater training, now called *Above and Below*. *Shape and Space* has been added this year, 2004, as the second of Healing Dance's underwater trainings.

In the summer of 1993, I was full of inspiration from studying WaterDance with Arjana at Harbin Hot Springs. My friend and teaching colleague, Minakshi, and I secluded ourselves at her pool in Aptos, California. Working every day with her as my model and muse, I innovated a vocabulary of original underwater moves, variations and transitions. Arjana and I subsequently co-taught WaterDance II at Harbin, integrating my material with hers. Later I taught this body of work as WaterDance III in Europe with IAKA and at Harbin. Now this same work forms the greater part of the material in this training.

Back in the early 90's I saw my surface technique, The Healing Dance, as a branch of Watsu, and anything that I might create underwater as part of WaterDance. Today, rather than integrating into Watsu or WaterDance, Healing Dance stands as its own technique, distinct in its vocabulary and approach. Over the last six years the concept of what Healing Dance is has broadened. It now encompasses the sum of aquatic bodywork, whether on the surface or underwater, that is rooted in my background as dancer, choreographer and therapist.

Healing Dance is an approach that calls forth the dancer and invites him to meet the therapist. It is for those who believe in dance as a transformative experience, who see a value in sharing movement. The receiver, according to her receptivity, will allow this 'received dance' to touch her, setting off processes on different levels.

In Healing Dance, movement may be passive, that is, bestowed upon a receptive bodymind, or interactive, initiated by the receiver. The power inherent in either mode is considerable. It derives from movement's intimate links to human consciousness. Take it underwater into a zone of three-dimensional freedom with the dive reflex entering the equation, and we see the power of movement increasing exponentially.

Overview

Through this training you may add a deeper understanding of the concepts of shape and space to your repertoire of therapeutic tools. Why single out these two aspects of movement? They lie at the nexus; all elements of aquatic bodywork tie directly into them, as we shall discover.

The *Shape and Space* material is a collection of dives arranged in a viable sequence, one that could be used outside of class time practice in a real session. In their internal construction, the dives embody a language with its own grammar and syntax. They provide the means to learn and polish the skills that bring certain principles into action. This course gives you a chance to see if these principles appeal to you.

The key idea in *Above and Below* is the integration of surface with depth in a rhythmic flow to reduce duality and increase the sense of totality. *Shape and Space*, on the other hand, is dedicated to learning how to create pure, generous movement shapes that can speak their embedded messages to the receiver. It is an approach to relating and to execution that honors the transforming power of movement and holds a space for the emergence of a variety of phenomena.

The Origins of the Moves

The movements of *Shape and Space* are rooted in human developmental movement, in animal-inspired movement, in elemental patterns of movement seen in flowing water, and in archetypal templates that mirror our relation to spiritual realities. The principle of chaos is honored in movements of a dynamic, random quality. These chaotic movements serve as a deconstructive counterbalance to the formed, rhythmic elements in the technique. An approach to working with interactive receivers also forms a part of this level. Let us look more closely at each of these movement sources.

Developmental movement

Self-generated movements and movements originating in the environment are a part of our prenatal existence. What, then, is the first movement to register in human consciousness? Is it the powerful flagellating spiral of a sperm's tail or the serene, expectant stillness of

the oocyte? Is it the sense of burrowing as the blastocyst implants into the endometrium of the uterine wall? The pulsing heartbeat of the embryo is defined as its first movement, beginning in the third week after conception. The first full body movement, as differentiated from that of a single organ, occurs in the sixth week of pregnancy when the embryo, only a third of an inch long, spontaneously arches and curls its entire body. This movement is mediated solely from the spinal cord, as the brain is not yet fully formed. (Eliot) Thus, the body moves before it can think; movement predates thought. But in reference to our question, can the body have memory independent of a brain?

The ontogeny of each human being consists of a miraculous step by step physical growth, but also of an unfolding sequence of reflexes and movements serving to strengthen muscles and bones and to improve motor responses. The developing fetus enjoys a phase referred to as the "Golden Age", when it has plenty of space to move, like a goldfish in a large bowl. Its movements begin as isolated twitches and over time become rhythmic, coordinated, purposeful and finally responsive to external stimuli. Between the sixth and tenth week the fetus gracefully stretches and rotates its head, and limbs. At week twelve, its movements are "so fluid they look like water ballet". (Leach) Here is another description:

"In his dark, watery cradle of amniotic fluid, the fetus swims gracefully about, weightless, as buoyant and active as an astronaut on a spacewalk, capable of free-floating movement and reflexive action" (Rice 1975:61).

From the 20th to the 30th week a fetus is most active, playfully pulling the umbilical cord, kicking, rolling, and somersaulting until the womb becomes too crowded. (Leach) The similarity between fetal movements and those of interactive receivers is striking. I suspect these interactive movements take origin from our prenatal movement explorations.

The opened-mouth fetus is swallowing amniotic fluid at first and later 'breathing' it in and out of its lungs. In week 26, it begins to respond to touch and its still closed eyes start to respond to light. In the following week its eyes open. There is evidence that during the 28th week the fetus begins to dream. (Leach) These behaviors parallel those of

aquatic receivers who open their mouths and have the feeling that they can breathe underwater; who enjoy the play of light across their eyelids or open their eyes underwater; who pass into dreamlike trance states.

The tidal rocking of the womb environment from the mother's breathing, walking, exercising and lovemaking are duplicated in both the gentle and more dynamic wave movements of *Shape and Space*. The emotional states associated with these activities appear to be visited upon the fetus.

"In the third trimester, when prenatals are monitored during parental intercourse, their hearts fluctuate wildly in accelerations and decelerations greater than 30 beats per minute, or show a rare loss of beat-to-beat variability, accompanied by a sharp increase in fetal movement (Chayen et al, 1986). This heart activity is directly associated with paternal and maternal orgasms!" (Chamberlain)

As somatic memories, these experiences could contribute to receivers' present day reactions of delight and exhilaration in some of the more dynamic rhythmic movements underwater.

Developmental movement patterns, as have been established by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, form an overlapping progression of coordinations beginning in prenatal life and continuing through childhood. They insure the natural development of the nervous system with normal perception, memory and learning ability. *Shape and Space* offers still moments of cellular breathing, navel radiating undulations, spinal originating waves, and frog-like homologous patterns. Any of these developmental patterns that were skipped over or rushed in a receiver's personal history will make a strong impression upon her nervous system during the session, a completion that is intriguingly familiar.

The Embryo and other inversions recall the fetus' inverted pre-birth presentation. Furthermore, the Monkey Frisbee grip and Third Eye Vortex grip with their pressure on the forehead can evoke the stage of uterine implantation of the blastocyst. All in all, the *Shape and Space*

vocabulary is rich in evocative developmental material.

Animal-inspired Movement

Human developmental movement closely parallels animal movements. It has this phylogenic nature, mirroring the evolution of species on this planet, demonstrating how animal lifestreams form the foundation upon which ours rests. Humans, unlike animals, are born without 'hardwired' movement instincts. We take quite a while learning how to stand, walk and run. The wildebeest stands and suckles on average six minutes after birth; within hours it can run with the herd. (Joseph) The toddler, on the other hand, will age eighteen months before knowing the exhilaration of running unassisted across the living room, and this only after much trial and error.

Animals are our inspiration: they run, leap, fly and dive with abandon and ease. It is as if the Divine wishes to have a presence in every element--legs, wings, fins and eyes to savor the natural world in as many ways as possible. There is a distinct pleasure in partaking of animal movements. As a ballet dancer, the panther was my ideal. Its combination of grace and power were the qualities I aspired to in my dancing. Today I would reckon the eagle as my "totem" animal.

There is a resonance in our beings when we draw closer to our animal relations. It can lead us to appreciate and honor them as fellow voyagers on starship earth, deserving of their space and role in the family of God's creatures. *Shape and Space* has much of the animal world in it: the delicate suspension of the amoebae, the rapid undulation of the water snake, the dolphin's ecstatic leap, and the spiraling dive of the seal.

Although humans may feel much affinity with dolphins, and notwithstanding that they may be our teachers and the guardians of the seas, it is seals that are the greatest aquatic dancers. Galit Amiel, one of the supervisors at the Dolphin Reef research center in Eilat, Israel, told me how seals were once introduced into the dolphin pools as playmates, but the dolphins simply couldn't keep up with them. Extremely supple, seals dart and twist in playful trajectories that delight the eye. The spontaneous, unwinding movements of interactive receivers often resemble those of seals.

Watery Movements

Water ever seeks to form a sphere -- the shape requiring the least energy for it to maintain. This it achieves when it falls as rain or condenses as dew on blades of grass. Most of the time, gravity compels water to flow, but even then, as in the sideways meandering of a river across a plain, it shows this tendency toward the sphere in how it circles back on itself. (Schwenk) The other ways in which water moves are equally an expression of this desire to complete the circle. The water in ocean and river currents spirals around itself. As waves travel across the ocean's surface, they set water spinning in circles. In an aquatic session, moving bodies generate turbulence in the form of spiraling vortices that spin away in their own trajectories.

These movement patterns of sphere, meandering current, spiral, wave, circle and vortex are elemental in the truest sense of the word. The movement forms of *Shape and Space* are precisely these, how water behaves in the natural world. They are for the most part hydrodynamic, working with the water, inviting the body to flow and transform. Body, movement and medium become one as would be impossible on land. For instance, in spinning Whirlpools and Parachutes the body rounds in flexion, becoming a segment of the circle it describes. In spirals such as the Arm Roll into the Vortex and Spiral Journey it takes on a spiral twist from head to foot. In the various waves of *Shape and Space* it rounds and arches to make the wave visible to the eye. In all these examples the water guides the body into the shape necessary for the movement.

One of the most important 'movements' to appear during *Shape and Space* sessions is the physical counterpart to water's spherical drop. The receiver's body comes to stillness and expands out like a flower, beautiful and innocent. The body may be face-up, facedown or sideways, but always at peace. This position appears interspersed through the session on the surface between dives and underwater following releases. It is where the body naturally returns to when relaxed. The knees are bent, the thighs are slightly flexed, abducted and rotated outward (the physiological position of the hip joint). The spine is slightly flexed so that the lumbar curve is reversed and no pressure is felt at the L5-S1 joint. The arm is slightly flexed, abducted and rotated inward (the physiological position of the shoulder joint),

and the elbows are bent. On land it is the position the body assumes lying in a chaise lounge. On the surface, in the pool, the head is supported in one palm and the backs of the knees by the other forearm (the 'Egyptian' Free Float).

In this 'sphere' position the phenomenon of cellular breathing arises as the receiver releases stress at the beginning of the treatment or later on integrates the movement experiences she undergoes. Her energy can come into balance as the relaxation of the periarticular muscles of the shoulder and hip favors meridian flow.

The approach in *Shape and Space* differs from that of *Above and Below*. Instead of maintaining the body in a constant flow, the movement is allowed to subside on the surface. The time between dives is understood to provide a balance to the richness and intensity of the underwater time. In a one-hour session, a receiver can easily spend 30 minutes underwater and experience hundreds of movements. There is a real need for such pauses.

The same sphere position underwater, usually facedown or sideways, is equally beneficial. The muscles of the neck and upper back are able to release because the head and cervical segment of the spine are completely supported by the water. Staying in the position, and not merely passing through it, is of most value. For instance, after an underwater release when the body expends its momentum, we are tempted to surface it immediately or initiate the next movement in the flow. By letting stillness overtake the receiver, the flow internalizes as self-awareness, communication on the cellular level, and absorption of the most recent influences.

Water is beginning to be understood as a living substance with consciousness, capable of absorbing and transmitting any energy to which it is exposed. What exactly is going on with the pool water on this subtle but powerful level is a question of growing interest in our profession. The presence of chemicals will reduce its potency as a healing medium. Research with Flowform fountains has demonstrated that such deadened water may be purified and energized with rhythmic movement. (mind.net) Can it be that Healing Dance movements would be enlivening to the therapy pool? The shape of an oval or circular

pool allows its entire volume to flow, but a rectangular pool has dead areas. Exposure to sunlight, wind and fresh air cannot help but have a positive effect. Heavier energies of fear and sorrow discharged by receivers into the water could be supposed to adversely affect the 'mood' of the water; feelings of joy and peace to uplift it. Givers working with compassion and acceptance seem to elevate the vibration of the water, as do group meditations of gratitude and playful games during trainings.

Who can say what the sum of the equation is at any given moment? Perhaps the best way to measure the health of the water is to look to results. Are ear infections and skin rashes rampant? Is healing occurring during the session/training? The safest and 'friendliest' waters I have worked in were mineral springs and pools with Grander devices submerged in them. The water seems to flow more easily and is full of micro-movements, tiny vortices that appear spontaneously even when the pool is empty.

Archetypal templates

What is it about arching the back? The lover arches back in sexual ecstasy. The seated meditator lifts his face up to the Light. The sundancer suspends from hooks by his chest. In each instance we see a position of openness and surrender to a higher power. In *Birthing the Self*, David Sawyer explains how spinal hyperextension or arching can represent nostalgia for a divine, out of body state. This archetypal position appears in popular consciousness, as the hero lifted up on a beam of light, his back arched, in *The Highlander* movies, the Disney *Beauty and the Beast* and other animations. *Shape and Space* carries the symbolism of arching one step further, for it adds the element of movement. It features sustained underwater arches in which the receiver is swept chest first through the water. He will typically open his arms and chest and savor the metaphor of meeting all that life presents. In the arching Vortex he ascends into the Light.

Another archetype occurring in *Shape and Space* that touches on universal meanings is in The Seal dive, when the receiver's arms are folded across his chest so that he hugs himself as he swims forward and rolls. The giver's hands keep the embrace from dissolving,

affirming the feelings of self-love and acceptance that arise from the position.

At the beginning of this same dive, the receiver is pulled via a handshake grip from a single arm extended above his head. From feedback we know the themes most often evoked from this move have to do with the 'hand up' extended to one lost or in need, with deliverance from darkness into the Light.

In Inika's Spiral Journey the receiver's fingers are interlaced into the hand mudra signifying prayer in our culture. The position becomes the means by which she is spiraled forward, upward, and inward toward a better world, toward the object of her devotion.

None of these positions are static--they are all moved. They deliver a symbolic content to be interpreted by each receiver. With this added element of movement, they carry her more surely into a private past or future, or into the living moment. In the following section on shape we shall see that these archetypal patterns could also be termed *body mudras*.

Shape

Everything visible has a shape. Even something as amorphous and mutable as a cloud has a shape in any given moment. Shape is a quality not only of physical objects, but also of their movements. If something moves, its trajectory can be traced and has a shape.

The vocabulary of *Shape and Space* illustrates this dual nature of shape; it treats the receiver to *body shapes* and *movement shapes*. A body shape is simply a position. It must remain still for a few seconds to qualify as a position and to register as such in the receiver's awareness. In Crowning and Presenting, for example, we fold partner into the fetal Deep Back position and hold her there for a stretch.

The movement shapes of *Shape and Space* are those of water: waves, spirals, circles and figure eight's. The movement shapes are of two

kinds. In the first, the receiver's body is undulating rhythmically, not pausing long enough to create a set position. The continuous wave of The Jellyfish, The Dolphin and The Head Snake are examples of this. The second kind of movement shape features a relatively stable body shape conveyed through space along a curved trajectory. The "Long Arch into Eternity" illustrates this type of movement shape, exploiting water resistance to create a strong stretch to the front of the body.

Movement shape and body shape may intertwine even more intimately when they match each other. In the Knee Head Parachute, for example, the receiver rounds forward hydrodynamically as she circles headfirst in the parachute. She can feel herself to be the movement. Thus, the dancer becomes the dance, literally embodying the movement.

Idea and transmission

Shape is in evidence throughout the cosmos, from atom to galaxy. All is built upon the spatial and geometric relations between the energy units that make up matter. Some would see the forms and movements of the universe as the expression of an intelligent design. In any case, they are pure, determined by function, and beautiful. Our bodies are part of this creation with its tangible and intangible shapes. Shapes are something we understand because they are innate to us. Thus we are able to create shapes in our imagination and to manifest them in art and movement.

In aquatic bodywork, as in art, shape begins as an idea in the imagination of the giver. The receiver is his paintbrush, the water his canvas. The shape enters the perception of the receiver as it is experienced through her kinetic sense. The idea, then, transmits from giver to receiver through their two intermediary nervous systems.

Visual and tactile pleasure

A portion of our sensory nerves, our proprioceptors, is designed to provide us with feedback about the position of the body. With the eyes closed in a trusting state of receptivity, a heightened sensitivity arises to touch, movement shape, and rhythm. We can tell if we are being waved, circled, spiraled or rolled. Coming to our aid are many cues, such as turbulence, water resistance, differences in water pressure, light on the eyelids, the sensing of gravity and the occasional brush

against the giver.

Our senses go beyond mere recognition of body position and movement, however; they open the doors to sensual pleasure and aesthetic appreciation. We look at a painting, taking note of its color, rhythm, line and content, and think, "This is a beautiful painting." We experience a movement in the hands of the giver, sensing a good dynamic, a full shape and a sensitive finish, and think, "This is a beautiful movement." The sensation lingers agreeably like the aftertaste of chocolate or of a kiss.

People are longing to experience the fullness of movement, round and voluptuous. Another way to say this is that movement wants a shape--big and clear. This is the movement people have been waiting to feel without even knowing it. Only when it is experienced or almost experienced does their sense of the ideal awaken. "That was just right, perfect," goes the feedback, or "If you had taken it just a little bit farther.."

How to administer

Our role in Healing Dance is to arrange the body into a shape and then maintain that shape against water's tendency to dissolve it. The "sphere" position is an exception. It arises when we step back and allow the water to open the body. Some positions can serve the additional purpose of providing a stretch when we take them "just a little bit farther." The art is in how we adapt to the receiver's physique, pre-stated wishes, and actual mood during the session.

Curved shapes and paths have more to do with the structure of the body and its movement possibilities than angular ones.

So we give the body a direction; we send it off in an arc. The receiver needs the movement to last long enough to be experienced, to be truly felt. So we slow down and let her have time to inhabit the shape. We 'enunciate' the movement slowly and clearly, as we would speak to someone learning our language. We follow the Healing Dance concept of the 'rhythm of awareness'-- finding for a given receiver and movement a tempo that is effective bodywork, delivers the message within the movement, and allows the receiver to assimilate it without

pain or fear.

Some people and experiences come in 'under the radar' and we find ourselves sweetly disoriented and touched. The totality of the underwater work does not allow us to remain the aloof observer, the detached witness. We are *in*, immersed in the flow. The giver has melted his touch into us and we no longer feel him. Effortlessly we fly through space. It is magical: continuing on beyond the reasonable time and distance of a voluntary movement, changing directions and accelerating. The wave has energy to spare; the whirlpool is inexhaustible. Surrendering to their force it is as if we ourselves create them. Our wish moves us.

Mudra

The highest expression of the concept of shape in the context of Healing Dance involves *body mudras* and *spatial mandalas*. Both are states of mind. Mudras consist of hand gestures and finger positions for the purposes of communicating and expressing oneself. It is not so strange an idea; gesture belongs to every culture. Speakers of Mediterranean tongues, in particular, like to gesticulate. Sign language for the deaf also comes to mind as a fully developed system of communication using the hands and fingers.

The Buddhist spiritual traditions of the Far East employ a system of hand mudras in painting, sculpture, ceremony and meditation. Here is an expanded definition of mudra:

"In its highest form, (mudra) is a magical art of symbolical gestures through which the invisible forces may operate on the earthly sphere. Every position assumed and every gesture performed by our mortal body may be said to imprint its seal on the Ether, and sent forth a continuous stream of vibrations that impress the atmosphere. But to be really effective there must be a deliberate and intended arrangement of the body or parts of the body. Such an arrangement is nothing but the yoga of mudra. It is interpreted as being able to bring the physiological system in harmony with the cosmic forces and so form a magical microcosm through which the macrocosm can be represented, channeled, and utilized. The mudra in all its variations is, therefore, a traditional body pattern; an archetypal posture of performed occult significance." (Kumar)

Healing Dance recognizes the power of the body mudra and expands it to include archetypal patterns not decreed by religion, but with an even deeper resonance rooted in the psyche. These postures include arching, the fetal position, self-embracing, reaching with one arm, opening both arms to sky or to the sides, and holding the hands in prayer position or over the heart. The aquatic receiver, even though not intentionally assuming these positions as in mudra practice, may discover a personal meaning once placed in them. Just as we offer movement, we offer body mudras with an understanding of their potential to see if they have relevance for the receiver. We hold a space for meanings to emerge.

Mandala

The word mandala stems from the Sanskrit word meaning circle. It is a geometric design symbolic of the individual and his place in the universe. Mandalas bridge between the lower and higher worlds, serving as "inter-dimensional gateways linking human consciousness to the realms of archetypes and the infinite." (Quintin) As objects of meditation, they appeared as sand paintings in Native American culture and in Buddhist and Hindu religious tradition. In more recent times the psychologist Carl Jung discovered their value in revealing the self. As his patients created and interpreted mandalas, he saw the same patterns appear again and again, leading him to formulate the concept of the collective unconscious and universal archetypes.

Healing Dance utilizes the primal form of the mandala, the circle, in several moves such as its Whirlpools, Matador, and Vortex. In the *Shape and Space* vocabulary the circle appears in the form of parachutes. Contemplating the circle and experiencing it spatially we may understand that life is not a linear process, but a cyclical one, that the beginning is the end, and that our destiny is to return to source. Each finds his own meanings.

The figure eight is a spatial mandala created from two circles. In *Shape and Space* it is represented by the Knee Head Parachute, the Knee Hand Parachute and the Shark Eight. The lessons of the figure eight are endless; it is, after all, the symbol of infinity. It might tell us that as life carries us to the heights and depths, the dualities flow into each other, and conscious and subconscious forever alternate. What does

the figure eight say to you?

The giver conveys the receiver through spatial mandalas with an awareness of the potency of their sacred geometry. She experiences the mandala through her kinetic rather than visual sense. Indeed, mandalas may have originated from the Buddhist ritual of walking around the circular stupa, and only later developed into a seated open-eyed meditation on a representative design.

As the receiver becomes receptive to higher influences, all that occurs in a water session takes on a symbolic dimension and reaches deep into her being. If the giver wishes to evoke these influences, body mudras and spatial mandalas are powerful tools. The Vortex, for example, then offers not only the stretch and exhilaration of the move, but also meanings arising from the arching body mudra conveyed in the arc of the mandala circle.

Chaos

Chaos and order exist as phases of a whole. Out of chaos form coalesces to eventually dissolve back into chaos. The two poles are not antithetical to each other. In *Shape and Space* there exists a creative tension between chaos and order. Random, chaotic movements provide the balance to the choreographed, rhythmically structured sequences.

The chaotic underwater movements of *Shape and Space* tend to be quick, angular, and arrhythmic. They set parts of the body moving in counterpoint to each other. Sudden direction changes, releases and gripshifts from one region of the body to another are the rule.

Some receivers would not benefit from any measure of such movement, although most do. Some thrive on an entire hour of it. The determining factor seems to be the measure of fear residing in the psyche. I am reminded of receivers of table work over the years who wanted only light, non-invasive work and who could not tolerate deep tissue massage. To my mind, they seemed unready to engage with their personal truth, the very truth residing in their tissues.

A colleague of mine who has had the opportunity to work with both surfers and swimmers confided that the surfers are far more adept at letting go in the underwater modalities. The reason, she thought, was that they are accustomed to relaxing and waiting following a wipeout, when they are getting pummeled at the bottom of the wave. The swimmers, on the other hand, have a control over their breath and body that can be hard to relinquish.

Chaotic movements shake us up, rattle our cage. They dissolve established holding patterns lodged in the central nervous system that maintain muscular tension. It is like turning up the heat to boil water. The faster moving water molecules can no longer cohere to each other through their hydrogen bonds and fly apart to form steam.

A group process we do in the water has a receiver with noseclip surrounded by the rest of the class, ready to submerge her in any way she wishes. Some ask for gentleness, but a substantial proportion want it "rough", longing for a chance to surrender, even symbolically to something chaotic and irresistible.

A bit of yang forcefulness catches our attention; it is the antidote to the mindset that lives through safe, predictable routines. It can promote a more alive state of psychic freedom in facing uncertainty. There's fun to be had in surrendering to a greater power and coming out just fine! It's the exhilaration of the roller coaster ride. We look for that smile and breath release of our surfacing receiver to tell us she has been refreshed by her wild and crazy dive.

Space

The overflowing abundance of nature is awe-inspiring. Everywhere we see a generosity, a superlative quality. The biological design of the body, for instance, is not simply good, it is *a marvel*. As a man I can assure you that women are not just attractive, they are *breathtakingly beautiful*. The universe is not merely a big space, but an *infinitely vast* one beyond the capacity of the mind to grasp. We behold the heavens in awe -- an infinity of energy operating within an infinitely greater

void. Physics tells us that even matter, which is apparently solid, is overwhelmingly empty space. We must conclude that the prime ingredient in all of Creation is space.

Perhaps space is the necessary counter balance to the supreme power of Love that would draw all things closer together. In any case, there's lots of it around. The approach of this class lays special emphasis on space--creating it, utilizing it, and honoring it. Space manifests itself in a variety of ways in this work, from the simplest to the most esoteric.

Physical Distance

In *Shape and Space* we first of all pay attention to the physical distance between giver and receiver.

1) To allow space for the receiver's movement we will take a step back away from her. In the Swoosh surfacing movement this step serves to clear the feet, extend the spine and spiral the pull rather than just roll it. In executing the Head Snake we take multiple steps backwards. This ensures that the wave movement comes out streamlined, not overly arching the back and neck.

2) To motivate certain movements we lean backwards, using our weight more than muscular force. The best examples are the Parachutes and the Capoeira Knee Snake. This withdrawing away from the receiver could be seen as a compensating balance to how forcefully the knee snake impacts her.

3) To avoid secondary contact we also lean backwards. As the Shoot 'em Past release completes, we 'limbo' around the head to avoid brushing against the near hand as it passes across in front of us. This pivoting, circular fall repositions us on the other side where we want to arrive.

4) To show respect for the receiver's space, we keep her at arm's length, literally. Physical distance in this instance equates with privacy. We see this best in the "Egyptian" Free Float or "sphere" position.

Minimizing the Hands

The hands serve as our physical interface with partner. By reducing

their presence in her awareness, she is able to focus more on herself and her movement and less on us. There are several ways to do this:

1) Find grips without fumbling.

To develop eye-hand skills as a healing dancer we ask ourselves, "What is the simplest, most direct way to change the grip? Where's the weight? How buoyant is partner? In positions do I need to hold from below to keep her from sinking, or from above to keep her from bobbing up?"

2) Check to see if the hands can hold more with the palms and less with the fingers; if they can soften and melt into the receiver more.

These are principles from Trager Work, remembered when arriving in positions, so that as the receiver's nerves adapt to our hands' presence, they disappear.

3) Learn to lever the body with one hand or arm instead of two.

This implies moving partner in the water's tempo and not rushing the body. The one-armed rolls into the Knee Snakes require this understanding in order to work.

4) Pre-set the hands to accomplish two movements with one grip.

Usually a crossed arm grip uncrosses to accomplish a direction reversal, as in the Knee Head and Knee Hand Parachutes.

5) Use the Sun Moon technique.

To do multiple somersaults or spirals, one hand remains in steady contact while the other lets go and hops over the arm of the hand in contact to re-align on the body where it just was. The name comes from Sun Moon massage circles on the abdomen. An example from the *Shape and Space* sequence is the Sun Moon variation of the Shoulder Roll at the end of the Head Snake. Another would be the Alley-oop that can be 'sun-mooned' for extra somersaults.

Releases

Releases of a leg, an arm or of the entire body provide some of Healing Dance's most powerful experiences of space. In *Shape and Space's* full body releases the receiver flies through the water, completely free of

contact, support, and the presence of the giver. Her attention is focused intensely into the sensory moment, the kinetic feast of lightness, nothingness and freedom.

Releases are used in *Shape and Space* preparatory to submerging, between underwater moves and as a surfacing technique. They add the spice of space into the movement flow. A release can be as simple as letting go of the arm after a Vortex peaks on the surface, seasoning the thrill of acceleration with a dash of freedom.

The release is symbolic of the divine management style--not overly controlling and granting us Free Will. This floating free fall with sure guidance close at hand is symbolic of our estate in the universe. The release teaches us that life, even if unpredictable, is ultimately benign. We come to no harm; we are caught and held in the end.

Timing

The timing of movements in *Shape and Space* is utilized to create a heightened sense of inner space. Arches and roundings of the back are sustained so the receiver has time to inhabit and savor them. Somersaults are passed through slowly and inversions are held long enough for their full psychological impact to implode into consciousness. This is the Healing Dance concept of the 'rhythm of awareness', seeking the timing that is effective bodywork and also allows space to feel.

Allowing movements to complete conveys a sense of respect and sensitivity to the receiver. She feels that the giver listens to her body. After a movement completes there can be a quiet moment of suspension before the direction changes. Such transitional phases have a magic to them, like the hours of dawn and dusk, when all the natural influences are imperceptibly shifting.

Moving Big

So, which is it for you? The motion of the ocean or the size of the ship? In Healing Dance it is both. Size matters. It is a quality of movement in which the ideas of shape and space overlap, for big shapes are spacious. The fullness of movement is one of the yang aspects of Healing Dance. Gals may excel in the graceful 'how' of movement, but

guys embody the fundamental 'what'. Watching a male and female dancer of equal ability onstage, the eye is drawn to the man. He will jump higher and move with greater power and clarity. Speaking in generalities, men have longer limbs and stronger muscles, good for creating movement. If you could line up next to each other the founders of Watsu, WaterDance, Healing Dance and Jahara Technique, you would see four tall, lithesome fellows.

Healing Dance is a traveling technique. We dare to take catlike, impactless steps across the pool. We move big and fast, devouring the space in order to entrance and exhilarate our partner. She feels the thrill of turbulence across her skin, of strong water resistance stretching her body. As givers we have the pleasure of interacting not only with our sensitivity but also with our power.

The Illusion of space

Shape and Space dives create the illusion of space in pools of any size through infinity moves. These are circles, spirals, waves and figure eight's that continue without break from the moment of submerging to the moment of surfacing. The Capoeira Knee Snake and the Parachutes, for instance, can all be executed in a 10' diameter pool. In the spiraling Sun Moon Shoulder Roll, Spiral Journey and in traveling wave movements such as the Head Snake, one can circle around the borders of a 16' diameter pool to create the illusion of boundless space. The giver may also travel a wave movement back and forth across the pool, making a discreet direction change at the wall during the rounding phase of the wave.

Disorienting moves create the illusion of space in a different way. Quick rolls such as the Unwind and the Near Thigh Roll Away, as well as somersaults, such as the Off Shoulder Somersault and the Leg Aikido Somersault, leave the receiver unsure of where up and down are. Have you ever awoken from an afternoon nap not knowing where you are for a moment, keeping your eyes shut and relishing the sensation while it lasts? In a similar way this loss of orientation in the pool allows the receiver to surface into a fresh, new space. It constitutes a psychic 'reset' button.

The Absolute Space.

This is that zone, fully underwater, that invites the receiver to journey beyond the physical bounds of the pool into other dimensions. When no part of her body brushes the bottom, bumps against the wall or breaks the surface, the illusion remains undisturbed. Maintaining the absolute space for the receiver is a part of the technique of Healing Dance that enhances the receiver's experience. Once under, stay under; don't surface until the end. Exceptions are dives with built in breaching, like The Dolphin, and frothy white-water moves at the surface, like the Thigh Rolls into the Capoeira Knee Snake.

Attaining the absolute space is an accomplishment for the receiver that we do not wish to thoughtlessly revoke. In submerging, vertical distance is not the same as horizontal distance. To travel from the surface to the pool's bottom is more than the feet and inches it might measure; it is a physiological and psychological distance. This distance is even greater at the outset of a session when the first few inches may be the longest distance of all.

Stillness

In meditation or prayer, when one is still and centered, a single moment opens up into a world of experience. In *Shape and Space*, still positions set the stage for consciousness to expand into an inner spacious. If the movement flow does not subside at times, the receiver will remain focused only on input, rather like chewing and swallowing without digesting. This was touched upon in the earlier section on watery movements, speaking of the sphere position. This is an ideal position in which to hold the receiver still, whether on the surface or underwater. There are however, other still poses, such as the Leg Aikido Inversion, the Embryo in Crowning and Presenting, and the embrace in Klimt at the end of the sequence.

Psychological space

One of the prime directives behind underwater work is to offer the receiver to the water so that she may have her own experience, her own relation to the water and herself. In *Shape and Space* the intimacy and sense of bonding between giver and receiver is still present, but de-emphasized in comparison with Watsu. Instead, it takes the form of trust in the giver to read the breath. With this trust,

the receiver may leave her body in safekeeping and embark on an underwater voyage.

Virtual Spaces

Space is not a neutral medium. Carlos Casteñeda, in his books about the teachings of Don Juan, spoke of locating one's power spot within a room. During a training we might do a sensitivity exercise, walking at random in the group room, noticing our reactions to different areas of it to discover the 'right' spot in which to be. These reactions are subtle to detect, but real, for the human energy field or aura is influenced by earth and cosmic energies, and certainly by other auras.

Sitting in the circle to share, the geometric relation of ourselves to others influences our relating style to them. Like planets aspecting each other in an astrological chart, we tend to be oppositional to him who sits 180 ° across from us, harmonious with the persons at 120 °, and blending in viewpoint with the person immediately to our right and left. It would appear that human energy fields follow the same rules as do planets in their interrelations.

We seem to be able to experience space, like time, subjectively. How we conceive of a space determines our consciousness within it. In our minds, any space may be transformed into a virtual field, which we imbue with symbolic content. An experiential approach to astrology lays out the natal chart in a room. The subject stands in the place of each planet to feel its essence and relation to the others. Family Constellation therapy, developed in Germany by Bert Hellinger, also utilizes a spatial enactment with surrogates standing in for one's parents, siblings and other relatives. The patient determines where each person stands and which direction they face, altering the arrangement until a balance is reached. (Stiefel) Another example is the Native American ritual of walking the medicine wheel. A clockwise direction helps to strengthen thought patterns; a counter-clockwise circuit works to release them.

Labyrinth

One of the more fascinating examples of virtual spaces is the labyrinth. They have appeared in cultures for the last 3,500 years around the world, from India across Europe to Scandinavia.

"At its most basic level, the labyrinth is a metaphor for the journey to the center of your deepest self and back out into the world with a broadened understanding of who you are."
(lessons4living.com)

Typically a labyrinth features a clear entrance, a spiraling path inward to a central goal, and the same path outward. There are no false turns or dead ends, as in a maze. Rows of low stones define the borders of the path. One can see the goal at all times and where one is in relation to the whole. Right brain activity is said to be enhanced by walking the labyrinth. It is one of the world's most ancient tools designed for meditation.

Pool as Virtual Space

A pool is not a labyrinth or medicine wheel, but we can conceive of it as a symbol, a virtual space. We can assign meanings to its various elements and our movement through them. These meanings will become available to the consciousness of the receiver.

For example, could not the pool itself be seen as the mind of the receiver, the water as its contents? The pool water has a small surface area and extensive depths below the surface, like the conscious and subconscious mind, respectively. The entrance steps, the shape of the pool, and depth gradients could also each be given a symbolic significance. And what of areas of sunlight and shade, the direction in which we face, traveling in circles and traversing the pool to connect its different areas?

A session is indeed a meditation on the self. Warm water is the ideal medium for physical and emotional transformation; body and mind enter a flow, and the receiver's psychic house sets itself in order. Visioning the session and the pool as a sacred space cannot help but beneficially influence this healing process.