

Chapter 1: “Stepping Into Dance”: Finding the Joy

1941

March 16, 1941 Alcine Joseph Wiltz III was born into the magical world of New Orleans, Louisiana. His experiences in his youth shaped much of his character and values for his love of performance, teaching and service. His closely knit family supported his love for family and launched him into a search for the larger world of performance and education. The colorful Wiltz clan offered Alcine memories and material for his choreographic themes and love of storytelling.

A professional drummer and trumpet player rehearsed in the adjacent house on Eve Street in New Orleans. At age three Alcine played regularly with neighbors. Music would arrest his play and stillness came over him as he allowed these musical sounds to enter his body. He embraced the Trumpet’s Dixieland and jazz. Drummers called and responded with expression from the Caribbean. Often, rising above him and beckoning, soared the Gospel soprano. Alcine was literally surrounded and lifted by New Orleans music.

1944

Never feeling inhibited, Alcine tells the famous family tale of when his parents took him out to eat at a family restaurant. Only age three, little Alcine noticed a juke box in the lobby. He slipped away from the adult table, toddled into the lobby, and danced to the music. Customers tossed him several coins. Naturally, young Alcine picked them up. When his father became

aware of the attention to his son, he quickly scooped the boy up and left the restaurant with mother trailing in embarrassment. Alcine has since never stopped dancing.

As the eldest child of three, Alcine remembers between ages three and four that he was memorizing nursery rhymes with this mother's coaching. He remembers the audience of family members saying, "Have him do the elevator song." It became his star number for his family. "Hickory Dickory Dock" and "Three Blind Mice" as well as "The Elevator Song" were often requested at family gatherings for Alcine to perform and receive applause. Alcine III developed memory skills and ear training during these early life family recitals. The small 78 recordings tooled Alcine to train his ear for music. Much positive encouragement from home and his neighborhood in New Orleans nourished his lifelong love for music appreciation and analysis.

1945 -1946

Alcine began at age four with classes in tap dancing at an area studio culminating with his first recital at the Shriner's Temple. He and cousin Ann Rooney attended the dress rehearsal in the big auditorium. Alcine and Ann performed two duets: one on Hawaii and one on Alaska. Alcine wore a white satin shirt and pants with lei for their hula number. On the night of the performance, Alcine saw the darkness over the audience seats and then the "big light" pouring down upon him as he swayed with his hula flowing arms. His uncle, Ann's father, built the large igloo set piece for their number in Alaska. The children were to make a huge entrance coming out of the door of the igloo. Alcine remembers pushing reluctant Ann into her entrance through the igloo door as she was not sure about leaving their safety for the bright stage lights. He led her through this number with great joy, in the "big light."

Alcine III loved this first recital experience. This moment marks the beginning of Alcine's awareness of the connection to the power of light and the moving body. He became bigger than himself in performance. Also when he teaches, he performs. Being watched by classroom visitors, Alcine admits to a slight change in his teaching approach. In truth Alcine is in performance mode when he is instructing. His invitation to students to enter the "power of the light" ties deeply to his dialogue with the space: a conversation with technique, kinesiology, metaphor, cuing, musicality, and sequencing.

1946-1947

"Boys dancing" concept/issue occurred the summer following the Shriner Temple recital (his first) when a family member suggested that dancing was "sissy". Alcine reluctantly considered dance the following fall. However, during his first fall class, Alcine declared he did not feel well and decided to sit down. Before the second class, he announced that he did not want to go to dance class. The paradox is that his father and grandfather loved to social dance. He tried again to take dance classes at age nine when his sister stopped her lessons. He lobbied but his father made it clear that he had his chance and turned it down. Finally, he was allowed to take dance studio lessons, when offered free dance lessons, in high school. His father took him to buy his first dance belt and tights.

1946-1947

Prior to first grade, Alcine attended to a neighborhood filled with a love of music and culture. A nun, Sister Mary Edward, at St. Matthais Catholic School in New Orleans discovered him and put

him in elocution lessons and choir. Alcine considers that he was fortunate to have a community recognizing his abilities and talents.

1947-1948

In first grade, St. Matthias Catholic Church School's Spring Dance and Sing Festival, the teachers gathered about 20 of the young boys from 2- first grade classes and proceeded to teach them the song and dance of the "Bumble Bees".

1948-1949

By second grade Alcine began to recognize the music in his neighborhood. The sound of the trumpet spilled out into the open windows and mixed with the singing voices. Alcine loved this awakening experience of music.

Alcine's initial social dancing occurred during the first family wedding he attended at age seven. The reception offered a large jazz band with wedding guests demonstrating the foxtrot and the jitterbug. Ann, a close cousin throughout childhood and high school, and Alcine decided to mimic the dancing they witnessed in this New Orleans' wedding celebration. This experience was his first with a live band.

1949-1950

By the ages eight and nine during third grade, Alcine understood that the Marionette Theatre was acceptable. His grandmother gave him a clown marionette and Alcine began to create showcases. His grandfather built a marionette theatre, painted it bright colors, with velvet

curtains. Then, grandmother created a second marionette, a gypsy lady. Theatre, an acceptable art form in his father's eyes, offered Alcine a lifetime of passions; debuted with a marionette and backyard-directing career for this neighborhood. His mother encouraged him by being his light techie for the Marionette Theatre productions, applying recycled colorful cellophane papers over a flashlight/spotlight to serve as lighting gels providing mood for various scenes as decided by Alcine. She also provided popcorn for the audience members. He immersed himself into script writing and directing.

1950-1951

After age nine, Alcine recalled his grandfather frequently singing popular songs and doing soft shoe steps. His father, a marvelous ballroom dancer, enjoyed singing the songs of Dean Martin and Bing Crosby.

Featuring neighbor children, Alcine ignited the neighborhood with his organization of summer shows. First it was a Marriott theatre and later he organized real people performers, replacing the puppets. He started gathering the neighborhood children with enticements: "What can you do? Let's do it!" He pulled the pageants together, in a neighbor's backyard, by listening to the performers' desires and strengths; presenting the homegrown talents of his New Orleans's community. Alcine reflects, "I never thought of this gathering of community talent as teaching. Even when I began directing in universities, I thought of it as creating the product, not building community." This neighborhood show was a onetime event in the summer of 1951.

1951 -1952

Before sixth grade at age 11, Alcine's family moved to New Orleans suburb of Metairie, Louisiana and he began attending St. Catherine of Sienna Catholic School. He remembers enjoying the patio of his grandparents' house next door for his love of roller skating.

1952-1953

Alcine had significant middle school activities supported by many wonderful teachers. As a sixth grade boy, he saw what he loved and went after it. For instance, the drum major always wore a tall white fir hat in the 5-mile march during Mardi Gras parades. He wanted to do that.

Regardless of some peer bullies, Alcine successfully attained this honor and was recognized by several of the community adult males with praise. He was in the boys' choir and the band director asked Alcine to sing in the band concerts in the spring. It seemed as if Alcine had no fear to learn to twirl a baton so he marched in parades and sang at large public events. He went after experiences such as these along with social dance and square dance events that interested him. Alcine was self-motivated at the young age of 11 and 12.

During sixth grade, his father taught Alcine the jitterbug and foxtrot in preparation for his first social dance party. His father passed down to Alcine a love of social dancing that he practiced with his cousin. Alcine witnessed often his parent's love of dancing socially.

"My real dance training came in 6th grade when I began square dancing with a cousin. It was the first time I received dance lessons.

1953-1954

Alcine's first real theatre production experience occurred in seventh grade at the age of 12.

"We quickly worked toward a large performance with the Exhibition Square Dance group. We were participants in the cast of the Sesqui-centennial, 150th, celebration of the Louisiana Purchase. It was fall 1953 and I performed for two weeks, every evening in a huge baseball field transformed into an outdoor theatrical production. There were three huge stage spaces. The audience sat in the baseball stadium. We entered the field in covered wagons, we pitched tents, gathered with other settlers to perform square dancing in the section honoring the settlers from the time period before the Civil War. "

1954- 1955

The family moved to Brownsville, Texas.

"In summer 1954 my family moved to Brownsville, Texas when I was 13 years old. I joined a teenage square dance club prior to the start of school which helped me transition socially as I entered public school for the first time. I was a part of a big community celebration in early February, 1955. The city sponsored "Charro Days", a Spanish version of Mardi Gras, to offer people a release before Lent. I learned and performed South American folk dance forms through the school. I was being trained

with a group of eighth graders to perform a peasant work dance. We performed this pageant in the football stadium at the local high school. Sixteen couples were chosen by the choreographer/teacher and then I was selected to learn and perform a bullfighter's dance from Chile. It was the first time I was pulled out of the group and featured because of my form and style."

"That same spring 1955, I joined the eighth grade chorus at age 14. The school was having a talent show. So I decided to work with a piano student on my dance presentation. She was gifted at improvisation. So we collaborated on a solo interpretative dance based on my ideas of a 'rain dance'. She would repeat what I asked her to do and we basically improvised together. My theme showed an act of creating a rain dance. I directed another friend to flick the lights on and off when the storm section occurred. We performed in the Assembly Hall at the junior high school. I just discovered recently that Mother took my brother, Art, out of school that day to come see my solo.

Between 1954-1955, in eighth grade, Alcine formed a trio of singers called the "Shoe Strings". His work with the Chorus group provided him with a value: acceptance of different talents. The trio enjoyed singing pop songs like "Shaboom, Shaboom" and "The Naughty Lady from Shady Lane."

1955 -1956

As a high school freshman Alcine moved into many performance venues.

One time, I was in the Pan-American High School Organization conference competition for the entire state of Texas. I participated along with 18 other students from Brownsville High School. We traveled on a bus trip to Austin, Texas. I won in the dance competition division having performed the bullfighter dance learned for the 'Charro Days' event.

"It was a tradition each year in Brownsville high school to have a coronation of a King and Queen accompanied by their court and those chosen to be 'Most likely to...!' There was a huge procession of the entire court arriving at the coronation. Various high school groups with songs and dancing supplied entertainment. The local dance teacher, Alice O'Brien, worked with freshmen and juniors. I was asked to join the 6-8 freshmen couples for a staged choreography of waltzes. I was also asked to dance with the junior class in a duet with her daughter, a soft shoe number. I was not originally the one asked to do the duet, but when the other young man, a junior, had to be hospitalized for minor surgery, I had one week to learn the duet."

Mrs. Alice O'Brien was impressed and offered me free lessons in the fall 1956. I studied ballet, tap and jazz forms.

1956 -1957

In tenth grade Alcine joined the select-acapella high school choir. He was one of two sophomores selected to the accapella chorus. He was known as a good dancer and would give

the senior members of the court dancing lessons for the coronation party. The "Elevator Song" and the elocution classes have paid off with his acceptance into this recognition of highly skilled performers along with his drama class.

Alcine began with speech and drama classes. He competed in local and regional high school competitions in dramatic reading of an O'Henry story, a monologue that won him recognition.

Dancing for Mrs. O'Brien began like this:

"Her formal training taught me ballet, jazz and tap. She was clever with me as an older boy needing to catch up on my dance knowledge and vocabulary. She called me her assistant for the 10-11 year old children taking tap and ballet instruction. This opportunity gave me the basis of technique. She also let me take classes with the high school students. I performed in her recital at Fort Brown Civic Center housing over 1000 seats in spring 1957. I performed five routines (two tap and two jazz) plus a balletic role in a pas de deux 'Cinderella with Prince'."

1957-1958

The family moved back to Metairie, Louisiana.

"In fall 1957 (as a junior at East Jefferson High School), I joined the Crescent City Ballet Company for 'An American in Paris.' Every weekend was filled with rehearsals, but no formal classes. I just kept dancing. The opportunities were there. He continued to dance in such ballet productions as 'Coppelia', 'La Meri', 'The Nutcracker', and Pops Concerts with the New Orleans Symphony."

1958-1959

As a senior, Alcine gathered a group of seniors to perform for a talent show. This was his first group choreography. Using both men and women he designed a comedic ballet with girls in blue gym pants topped by tutus and boys in football pants. This piece was received with warm laughter and appreciation from the audience.

His work in the Crescent City Ballet continued and he enjoyed performing the grandfather role in the high school drama department production, "You Can't Take It With You." He loved the character's warmth and gracious calmness amidst the family with many oddities. The scene where he led the dinner grace was his favorite part.

1959-1960

With a looming military draft, Alcine at age 18 decided to join the Coast Guard Reserve. If drafted he would probably be called to the Army, ground troops. He preferred the water. For six months he went into training in Alameda, California then joined the Louisiana State University at New Orleans (LSU-NO) in January of 1960. While there he performed the lead in "Glass Menagerie" and continued performing with the Crescent City ballet. He was required to attend Coast Guard Reserve training for six years; one weekend per month and two weeks in the summer.

1960-1961 Alcine transferred to Southeastern Louisiana College in the fall of 1960. He entered as a Business-accounting major. He joined the Catholic Newman Club on campus and became an officer in the Newman Club.

“I stayed on campus during the weekends when all of my friends traveled to party back in New Orleans. I had to stay to catch up on my studies after a rigorous week of dancing and theater rehearsals. Like most young people I wanted some distance between my family and grandparents watching and commenting.”

Southeastern Louisiana College, Hammond is where he found “Miss Katie” Planche Friedrichs from 1960-1963. Dance Professor Ms. Katie taught Alcine the depth and breadth of meaning behind concert dancing and training. The rhythm of Alcine's young dancing life just kept building with great momentum as he became a young man. The musical theatre production “Oklahoma” was being planned and Ms. Katie was the choreographer:

“The first time I was dancing in modern dance class combinations I felt a different experience in my body. The Holm-based modern dance technique called me to deeper expression. It tapped deeply into my expressive self. It was the early 1960s and modern dance in the south then was not abstract. There were background stories and the music was mostly lovely, happy and pretty. All of this just spoke to me. Katie was a pied piper.”

“Miss Katie” modeled a way of life that allowed me to consider dance as a viable future career path. At the time, I was struggling with making a go at an accounting major,

which was considered by my parents as a responsible future investment of college time and money.” I felt the courses were a duty, not a passion.

“Charles Weidman was the first modern dancer I met, besides Katie. There was a dance festival hosted at SLC. Charles was coming a week early to offer eight college dance students an intensive week of study. This experience was my first exposure to a professional dancer of acclaim. Then, he was very senior and was doing fewer concerts. He was Director of a small collective company in New York, presenting concerts with reconstructions of his works. His rehearsal process, for the festival group, was steeped in class, concluding with learning excerpts of his works. Charles selected me to perform a duet with him. Through the process, he referenced art and choreography in a formal way that was new to me. The duet, ‘The Moth and the Star’ was really a physical and spiritual experience. During one moment, the dancers made physical contact with each other. The premise for the action was that the older moth approaches the younger moth from behind and makes contact with the back of his hands on the temples on the side of the head. I just remember there was such electricity coming from this man. When he touched me it was electrifying. I can still feel that. It was there and then it was gone. Charles was out of my life.”

“A few years later, Charles was doing little tours around colleges. In 1964, I saw him in a concert with a poet-artist. They were doing abstract movement improvisation based on poetry: gestural artwork. Charles was up in age and not moving with great mobility, but you could see his power and artistry underneath that.”

“When I was on sabbatical, 1975 in NYC, Charles was doing a performance in his loft. I was deeply shocked when I attended. His loft, in which he lived, was a small studio that allowed for 17 audience members. We sat on stools along one wall. The bedroom, off to one side, while dancers entered and exited from his kitchen. Young dancers danced his reconstruction in this dark, not well kept, loft space. I later learned he died about two months later. No money and no relatives. Dancers gathered money together to bury him.”

In 1961, Alcine was asked to finish the choreography of “Oklahoma”. Miss Katie had to take medical leave when she had completed only half of the choreography. She said Alcine should finish the choreography. This successful accomplishment led to an invitation for him to choreograph a production of “The King and I” for a local summer theatre. Alcine then continues to choreograph and perform for dance concerts presented on campus each semester. He acted in two drama productions presented by the Theatre Department: “Teahouse of the August Moon” and “Look Homeward Angel.”

Alcine and Katie’s friendship carries over a lifetime. She modeled for Alcine the balance of teaching, making art, and having a family. It could be done. As a tribute to Katie and (husband) Andy Friderichs, Alcine choreographed a duet (Yesterday, Toward Tomorrow, 1992) around the time Andy died of cancer. His motivation for this duet came after he attended a wedding (former UMCP student Wendy Warfield Kelly). Once again, Alcine demonstrates his lifelong friendships, generosity, and care for others. Alcine delivered the eulogy for Katie’s funeral, 2009.

Summer 1962

A huge transformation occurred in the summer of 1962 when Alcine attended Colorado College, Colorado Springs on scholarship, for an intensive with Hanya Holm:

“Hanya, about the same age as Charles Weidman, continued to move. When I saw her at Colorado College, she was vital as a teacher and a mover. She wore her hair in a long braid down her back which was tied up with a brightly colored yarn ball. She wore fully gathered peasant skirts and had clear, beady, piercing eyes. Hanya did not demonstrate during classes, Oliver Costock did. She walked around making corrections. Sixty of us were taking that summer workshop. I also studied choreography with Hanya and received Dalcroze Eurhythmic training with John Coleman, from the Julliard faculty.”

“In Hanya’s Choreography class, we had to produce a lot of material. We had to audition to work with Hanya. She would throw out ideas and we had to choose which concept to focus on and then develop. At the end of the course we offered a public performance. Hanya selected three students to choreograph to a suite of music she selected for presentation in the performance. The theme was based on a carnival. Each student would choreograph one movement. The first movement was to be a trio; the second a duet and the third a group of 8 was to be choreographed by me.

John introduced Alcine to the idea of rhythm-based structure, mixed meter, and polyrhythms. He was the educational guide who led Alcine to crystalize the intricacy of rhythms and the driving force of rhythm. Well known by his students is the Wiltz universal sounds, Alcine gives verbal cues during class instruction: “Ta ti ti ta ta, etc”. He used the Wigman drum and bongos

as his own accompaniment in his early teaching. But he found the immediacy of his own voice to be the most effective cuing for rhythm, dynamics and phrasing.

Actually rhythm and space attention was instilled in Alcine from Holm. She drilled her students in understanding the importance of experiencing simple weight transference during the intensive eight weeks he studied with her in 1962 (June to August). Wiltz philosophy on the simple initiations for locomotion began to form through his applications of this summer workshop with Holm.

“The simple beginning of locomotion rests in the understanding of the foot.

The movement outcome results in the clarity of how you transfer your weight across the foot of support onto the receiving foot.”

“Placing one foot in front of the other” was a metaphor for dancing and life he received from his brief time with Hanya Holm.

Alcine shifted from one project to another. He just had to perform. He knew he could do it all, just like Danny K., Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. Alcine worked often as a Director-Choreographer as did so many of his respected famous historical role models: Jerome Robbins in “West Side Story and Michael Bennet in “A Chorus Line”. Alcine constantly modeled for his students:

“I model an organic approach to movement and encourage the students to find their own organic way of moving. Transitions will be clear. This concept is a key to his approach in coaching any mover.”

“Between the age of 20 and 25 I was feeling my way to a future of commitment. Once I worked with Charles Weidman, Erik Hawkins and Hanya Holm and felt comfortable in their world, I realized they were comfortable with me and I began to believe that I did have the talent to pursue a career in dance.”

1962

“My first drive was the passion and joy of going to the studio to work. This (awareness) was new to me. I wanted to be in theatre production, but I did not have to do this to feed my passion. I felt I had to be in the studio and make dances right away. I decided to pursue a dance degree in the fall 1962. I also wanted the security of a teaching degree if I was not moving forward with the accounting degree. I transferred to the University of Southwestern Louisiana to earn a degree in Choreographic Design offered through the Department of Art and Design at that institution. During the three semesters at Lafayette, I was challenged by the many art courses required: costume design, choreography, and visual art techniques of drawing, painting and sculpting. I learned principles of design, line, texture, shape and compositional elements as they related to multiple arts. These principles were not taught in previous study of dance composition. Dance composition courses included the philosophy of Louis Horst and Doris Humphrey.”

In 1963 when Alcine transferred to University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, he was to graduate with a BA in Choreographic Design in May 1964. During 1963 and 1964 Alcine

choreographed and performed in two musical theatre productions for the USL Theatre Department: "The Music Man" in 1963 and "Kiss Me Kate" in 1964.

Alcine tells a story of his passion to see current art and his willingness to organize people around that drive; not unlike his early days of marionette and neighborhood theatre.

"In 1963 Southwestern Louisiana University had only four dance majors. I heard that Merce Cunningham was coming to Northwestern LA University, a three-hour drive. I gathered enough people to pay for a small bus for the trip by appealing to my fellow art students and house mates in the Newman House, a rooming house for Catholics on campus. I arranged for everything. During the concert I marveled at the dancing and choreography. John Cage created unusual sounds as accompaniment and the dancers did not look balletically trained. They were physical and quirky while wearing pedestrian clothes. Some of my friends were pretty upset that I had taken them to see "whatever that was".The concert was just strange to them."

Muriel K. Moreland, a Graham-based dancer, was the dance professor for the curriculum at USL. He was awarded the Aileen Lockheart dance education scholarship for his senior year, which offered him \$200 for the spring semester.

"This dance program introduced me to the concept of abstract dance forms. Muriel K. Moreland, was married to the head of the School of Art & Design, William Moreland. I learned that movement shaped choreography for design in my work 'Circle Plus Square

Equals'. I worked closely with a welder to create the steel rod props formed into a circle and a square. In the three semesters of studying in a wonderful art program, I learned about sculptured costumes and sets for dance. This concentration in art allowed me to be more aware of the visual compositional elements. My eyes were trained to see more distinctly. I then translated the art elements to dance/movement. For example, my final project for the degree, 'Mitosis and Cellular Development' was a clear demonstration of application of my art studies as evidenced in the sculpted sets and costumes and choreographies of group and three soloists. The three solos depicted water, vegetation and animal."

His capstone concert work, "Mitosis and Cellular Development" was his first extended choreography.

"In order to complete my BA degree, I needed to produce twenty minutes of choreography. Two of us were graduating so we shared a concert.

After two weeks of listening to music in the library, I returned to my dorm room. My roommate, an agricultural business major who shared the Cunningham experience, was taking biology and he was studying mitosis. I looked at his book and the illustrations and the concept came to me."

"I found a fascinating score, lush and big. Then I also found an electronic piece and liked the way it ended. Gongs began and ended the work to reference time going on. The choreography represented the splitting of cells (mitosis) in the first movement followed by three solos. The first represented water. The dancer, Rosalie, was rolled onto

stage standing on a rock formation constructed of paper mache with long blue shredded plastic strips hung from the ceiling. I built a ramp into the formation so the dancer could slide to the floor.”

“Clare represented vegetation wrapped around bamboo stalks. I represented creatures, man and beast, costumed in a mixture of textures; fur, animal prints, and sculpted shell carried on my back. At the time the theatre was for storytelling, bringing alive reality/life through the perspective of art. So much like the Mariette theatre of my childhood: ‘Let’s make something, what can you do?’”

Before 1964, Alcine thought that he needed an undergraduate dance degree in order to go to graduate school. When he arrived at University of Wisconsin Madison, he found that you did not need a dance degree at all, just an undergraduate degree and a dance background. Alcine went immediately into graduate school 1964-1967 at University of Wisconsin, Madison as a candidate for a Master of Fine Arts in Choreography and Performance. Faculty member, Anna Nassif, was a huge influence to him for many years. She initially led Alcine in the discovery of atonal music of Webern and Schoenberg. He remembers that he asked, “What was that noise? Where is the beat?” while rehearsing to a musical work by Anton Webern. Alcine danced in her huge mammoth works, bigger than life, using mixed meter. Because of his eurhythmic training, Alcine could find “kinetic phrasing” through understanding mixed meter structures. He was able to execute the complexity of the choreography by focusing on internal weight shifts.

One of Anna’s gifts to Alcine and Nancy was the “Tansman Duet” which offers the viewer a molding of space through the relationship of the two dancers. One dancer creates space for the

partner to explore and then the choreography releases the two dancers into a 'follow the leader' through the space, allowing for gathering and expanded of unison movement: subtle condensing, advancing, retreating guide the developing motifs.

"The 'Tansmen Duet' is seven minutes and represents the harmony between two figures. It is the second movement of a larger work by Anna called 'Tryptich' to a score by Alexander Tansman. Anna's style focused on moving from rhythmic and feet patterns. As you can see, the work is initiated from distal. As Nancy and I grew in the work we offered more flow within the individual phrasing. It was easier for us to sense each other's breath and attack as time passed performing this work. It became richer. We took Anna's work and made it our own, as she intended."

"For Anna, imagery from the German expressionistic tradition in modern dance was very important. The costuming changed in this work due to a skirt being added for Alcine's MFA concert as Nancy was pregnant with Michelle. At the time, Anna was on a Fulbright to India so she was not there to weigh in on the decision to wear that skirt. Alcine and Nancy's costumes were originally designed to be blue and white leotard and tights. Years later a dancer/sculpture artist suggested another skirt design for Nancy: a long torso leotard with skirt attached. She also added some geometric shapes (very Erick Hawkins-est). However, when Anna saw the costuming in a later performance concert, she said no-no-no to the skirt and demanded the return of the blue and white. Nancy designed some very nice white leotards with insets of a blue pattern on the ribs."

One example of Alciné's graduate school choreographies was the "Barque Duet", performed to J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto#1, and commissioned in 1966 by the Madison String Sinfonia. This work was the year before he earned his MFA and it was not influenced by Anna Nassif at all.

"I decided to use this dance as the subject for a lecture-demonstration I was presenting as my qualifying exam for my MFA candidacy. In the presentation I showed a physical representation of the choreography being influenced by developments in the Baroque period in music, art and architecture. It was performed in a sweeping big space which was not afforded us during the filming."

Three solo works of Anna Nassif's were made exclusively for Alciné: (1) "Cave", (2) "The Demon, A Dance Poem", and (3) "Point Omega".

"Cave, created in 1984, to a score by George Crumb, 'Voice of the Whale', is nineteen minutes long and carries the theme of Awakening. It has so much repetition. Anna returned from her trip to Indonesia and worked with the theme of being in a cave and seeing cave imagery. Also represented in imagery are the primordial themes of evolution, snake, and horse."

Anna sets this piece on Alciné along with a stage set of soft sculptural stalagmites on the floor. Alciné had not seen Nijinsky's "Afternoon of a Faun" at the time of the creation of "Cave" and only saw its reconstruction for Joffrey afterward. In this work, it was left up to him to create

phrasing. “She created these passages and told me to go here, back up, and over there. I videoed all rehearsals with her and then went over the video tapes to color in the architecture.”

In performance during “Cave”, Alcine states: “I got into a zone. I felt ‘other than’ and am now aware of my intuitive state (as defined by Laban) conjured through imagery. I communicate a persona larger than myself when I am in this performance state.”

“The Demon”, premiered in 1987, reflects Anna’s influences of the Noh Theatre. She worked with A.C. Scott who was brought to Wisconsin to teach Asian Theater. Anna took many of his classes. She worked thematically from concept. The dance began with Alcine moving across the front of the stage in front of the house curtain reciting a poem, “The Demon” written by Alexander Pushkin in a vocal distortion that hinted at a Noh Theatre chant. The curtain opened then the music and the dancing began. Anna choreographed the dance without any accompaniment. The rehearsals were videotaped. After Alcine rehearsed several months, a new video was made and the composer, Joseph Koykkar, made a score tied to that video. Anna used many chasses, lunges, and stomps with primitive intentions in much of her work. Folk movements were found in and were not dissimilar to West Virginia folk movements. Her movements spoke to an earthiness about family. She also loved sissones, Paul Taylor, and props. Alcine found dancing with props frustrating. “They did what they pleased. You had to figure a way around them and they limited your vocabulary of movement.” Alcine performed “The Demon” with his convictions that allowed him more freedom of interpretation. He

convinced her that his ways of interpreting was better. Clearly they had a strong trusting artistic relationship.

“The Demon” was also performed by Alciné in 1988 at the Cheverly Publick Playhouse. Placing Pushkin and Japanese together was the extraordinary aesthetic in this work. The rhythmic patterns were not complex and the props and costume carried the visual theme.

1964

In 1964, as he began to work on his choreography, Alciné began to see that rhythmic structure came out of the movement. When he makes a movement phrase, the rhythm emerges out of the execution of the multiple weight shifts in a movement phrase. For Alciné a movement pattern originates with the weight shift into a new direction. Accents are given the “1” and then he follows the undercurrent of rhythmic phrasing. Each new initiation can offer a new direction in attention or space for discovering the undercurrent.

Alciné states:

“Just as in speech, getting through your day, getting through the song, most transitions are at best when executed smoothly. Then there is an abrupt transition; there is something dramatic, a break in rhythm. That break is still a transition, an emergency or a drama. There are breaks and everything changes.”

If transitions are a key to unlock movement efficiency for the student, then Alciné calls attention to how the student can make a transition organic.”

Common themes in Alaine's late 1960's choreography reveals:

- negative and positive space designs
- architectural body shaping
- "painting" of the space with body
- focus upon momentum within individual phrases that are initiated by distal
- cannons resolving with unison
- space holds by one dancer to add to the architectural framing of the second dancer's movement
- musical visualization

1964-1967

During graduate school at the University of Wisconsin Madison (1964 - 1967), Alaine had experienced transformation during Professor Mary Fee's "*Movement and Its Rhythmic Structures*" course. This Physical Educator professor enlightened Alaine to the concept of "proprioception".

This cognitive label "proprioception" allowed Alaine to have a term affirming that which he knew so well in his body. It is much more than the muscle memory of dance rehearsing or the feel of the music in the dance. Proprioception articulated the body within space, time and force. This "feeling" was not named until his studies with Professor Fee. During this same period, he took a course from Professor Mya Shada, called "*Principals of Relaxation*".

“There were the five first year MFA dance graduate students taking this course with the fifteen physical education students. The physical education graduate students were able to relax readily. The dancers had difficulty allowing the limbs to release and even questioned the validity or relevance of a class on relaxation. What had it to do with their work as dancers?”

Alcine was faced with the challenge of not being able to do something with his body. In frustration, he declared, “I don’t need to do that.” However, these courses planted a seed in Alcine that bloomed later in his CMA work where he finally discovered weight. Alcine could not relax/release. However, in 1975, while studying with Erik Hawkins and his teachers in New York City, Alcine made a dramatic shift in his philosophy of movement training and teaching. This pivotal experience transformed his thinking and practice. He connected with the Hawkins training of free flow and with the application of imagery and body-mind consciousness taught to him in graduate school through the teachings of Mabel Todd. Alcine practiced the Laban language and anatomical awareness through the formal dance teachings of Holm and Hawkins long before he formally studied to be a CMA.

During his graduate school training at the University of Wisconsin Madison, Margaret D’Houbler returned to teach during two of the years for a short period. She often taught with the skeleton in the room and inspired him to take the skeleton into his introductory classes. Alcine remembers: “It was a revelation to see a skeleton articulate and to experience the weight and feel of the bones.”

1968 - 2007

Alcine produced 31 musical theatre productions between the years of 1968 and 2007. A total of 39 years of what he describes as "Service from the Soul."

Every August "Ms. Libby" would ask him to come to New Martinsville, WV and transform the community. He was in his first and only year of teaching at West Virginia University in Morgantown when he choreographed for "West Side Story" February 1968. The wife, Laura Getz, of a gentleman who directed the opera program was a good friend with Libby. Laura was excited when she saw "West Side Story" and told "Ms. Libby", "You need to meet this young man."

"Ms. Libby" did call about Alcine coming to town to direct and choreograph a production of "Oklahoma." Because the drive took 1 ½ hours through the mountains, Alcine could only visit on the weekends or during a break.

"I saw what was there Friday at 3pm until Sunday at 7pm. I worked the whole time. I went back for a second weekend, after they had some rehearsal time, to finish and adjust what I had done. I thought that that was the end of it. However, when I moved on to Illinois, in fall 1968, Libby contacted me about 'Carousel'. Could I possibly find the time? We were on the quarter system at Edwardsville, so I could come during the spring break 1969. I spent the week, then that became my pattern over the years. When I went in, I staged and choreographed. I always seemed to spend my birthdays March 16th with high school kids."

Libby saw her role in the community as one who gives people an art experience, a cultural experience. From Parkersburg, WV, her father was an undertaker and had very old money. She was her father's favorite. Her academic degree was in music education and she loved choir. Her husband was a prominent lawyer in the state and her two sons were a bit younger than Alcine. She was concerned about her children's arts education so she started teaching music in the elementary school. She followed her sons through junior high and went on to high school with them to form a choir. She loved musical theatre and had wonderful support from the principal. The area was filled with poverty and Libby always contributed to their exposure in the arts.

"I met those kids in 'Oklahoma' and 'Carousel', and then 'The King and I'. I saw what was happening to them over time. It grew once it got established; we needed more men so the athletes came in, football and basketball players. It spread through the town as The Spring Musical. After the first two shows, the principal told the faculty to allow these children out of classes for rehearsal when Alcine was in town. We didn't have to wait until 3pm to start."

Libby was the instigator of all of this.

For Alcine, New Martinsville was beyond collaboration and service from the soul. "Ms. Libby" was a mentor to Alcine in the spirit of teaching and stewardship. "I knew that I was feeding her too". Alcine recalls his time with Ms. Libby, as their working as educational pioneers together.

When Alcine makes art, he is driven by an aesthetic he is making. Beauty in art is a selection and bringing something together, making something that is communicating and uplifting.

Reflecting back upon “Stepping Into Joy”:

In his early teaching, Alcine sang while coaching, not through formal musical training, but in the act of movement training. Now working with Opera students, he hears them and watches them read for pedagogy class. This coaching has made him more aware of the reproduction of voice. He came back to singing through a multicultural church choir in 2008. Initially, his voice tired. Now over five years, he has applied techniques that he has heard, watched, and found while working in the Opera program that allowed him to go to an internal place anatomically. This methodology brought more power for projection in the voice.

Alcine learned through his own kinesthetic exploration of muscles and support systems about how to handle the carriage of the body from a kinetic/anatomical awareness. He is not dancing now as a performer; however, he loves to sing while driving. Singing is a satisfying kinetic experience he feels throughout his active diaphragm and core muscles. He feels it in the “four socket pockets” and it is a visceral experience. All of these years of dance training gave him a new sense about his performing voice. No longer is he singing in his throat. He can enjoy full days of musical performing as experience in his integrated dancing body.

With depth of maturity, Alcine offered to his Alma Mata his return to previous material created by Anna Nassif. Kathleen Cocklin in Nite Sights 2nd Sounds gives a report on the May 1991 concert “Exemplifies Intensity of Creative Process”:

“It is always true that dance, whether robust and spontaneous, restrained and ceremonial, or stilted and formal, will be an expression of the age that produces it. Now, as in the past, dance reveals the spirit of its own age.”.....Margaret H’Doubler

If that is so, the dances of this age should betray our disheartened lack of candor and our empty fatigue. But ironically and explainable, there is still optimism and potential in today's dancers and their work. In a stunning tribute to dance pioneer Margaret H'Doubler, producer and choreographer Anna Nassif staged an ambitious consortium of artists, choreographers, and students to two concerts at the Wisconsin Union Theatre. 'Distance Covered, Time Consumed, Energy Expended' was performed April 19 and 20, culminating several weeks of dance lectures, master classes and other activities at the UW Dance Department.

The concerts also provided the opportunity to showcase the talents of Alcine Wiltz, a graduate of UW-Madison with a MFA in choreography and performance. He is currently a professor and chairman in the Department of Dance, University of Maryland-College Park.

In his own 'Frag Mented,' Wiltz concentrated on the almost terrifying deep emotions characteristically motivating modern dance. Use of a mirror downstage produced fascinating fragments of light and energy. In that mottled shade and to the frenzy of many violins, Wiltz's frenetic itching and dodging was that of a man trying to crawl inside himself. It was almost easier to hope that what he suffered from was something like cocaine withdrawal, rather than the limitless pain, craving, dependency and self-loathing inherent in a man who does not know himself."

Anna herself gives a summary statement of Alcine as she has witnessed his stepping into joy throughout the decades:

Alcine Wiltz: Student, Teacher, Dancer, Choreographer, Administrator

by Anna R. Nassif (3 2014)

Alcine Wiltz was an exceptional graduate student and an outstanding dancer, teacher, choreographer.

Alcine was professional through and through. Alcine worked with me in my first company as a graduate student in the 1960s and thereafter served as a soloist and guest artist for Anna Nassif Dance Theater on the University of Wisconsin-Madison Campus. Alcine worked with concentration in rehearsal and danced in chamber works and performed with skill, artistry and musicality over a period of four decades. His duet work with Nancy Wiltz was outstanding. He also performed some poignant duets in a piece with Nancy and a work by Dello Joio called 'Meditations on Ecclesiastes'. I recall expressive duet roles performed with Nancy Wiltz and with Joyce Wheeler.

His performance work demonstrated ability to memorize complex phrases. Alcine was comfortable in complex movement sequences created for him on the floor, on the knees, standing and moving through space. He had a talent for group work and performed well in ensemble, technique, artistry and musicality. As he grew and changed as an artist, Alcine brought his knowledge, sensitivity and expertise to each role.

In the 1960s Alcine danced in many of my large group dances. He was especially responsive in a number of the abstract and dramatic and experimental roles of different lengths and dramatic quality that I created for him In the 1970s. Alcine took on diverse dramatic performance of roles such as the groom in 'Les Noces', George Washington Crossing the Delaware and Abraham Lincoln from 'American Suite'. I recall the importance of process and memory work along with his theatrical expertise in several big works that I choreographed for Alcine in the 1980s. He danced solo roles with commitment. 'The Demon' and 'Cave' in the 1980s were beautifully danced. Alcine had the ability to change as each role was presented to him. He had great understanding of the importance of dynamic rhythms, tension and

texture and had a strong core; and the movement flowed from within to outer space. In other words, Alcine brought himself to the role. He practiced until he got it right. In the 1990s, Alcine learned new cameo roles that I created for him inspired by the great dancer Harold Kreutzberg and by the painter Wayne Claxton in 'Distance Covered'. He was a figure of mystery and showed his ability in handling long pieces of cloth in 'Breaking Boundaries'; and Alcine brought his improvisatory skills to 'Dancing into The New Millennium'. He brought his Laban training in the realm of qualities to 'Point Omega' and other solo and duet roles in the 1990s.

I had an outstanding lifelong professional relationship with Alcine Wiltz. I often invited Alcine to perform roles inspired by travel throughout the world. And he responded with great enthusiasm and professionalism in the studio and on the stage. In later years, Alcine more than fulfilled his promise as a dancer, choreographer, director, teacher, administrator at the University of Maryland. Wisconsin is very proud of Alcine Wiltz's accomplishments in the field of dance and theater. Alcine is a great human being and had the humor, knowledge to make through any situation with grace. One time when Alcine was teaching students at Wisconsin, a young dance student remarked on Alcine's great teaching and his fun shirt with the figure of a spinal column. I congratulate Alcine for his perseverance in dance while also accepting the great responsibilities of serving as a leader and a caring administrator. I admire Alcine for his kindness, patience, flexibility and for his concern for others in life and in the creative process.

Interview with Anna Nassif Rawlesburg West Virginia 8 6 2015

Location: Old Bank building that is her art museum

Alcine, Nancy, Anna 2:30pm Thursday

Anna and Nancy talking.....5 minutes.

Discussion of "Tansman Duet" while looking at 30 year retrograde concert brochure.

Discussion of twelve tone composition.

Alcine enters.....

Alcine and Nancy were in Anna's first company as they performed her full night of works in Union Theatre, in 1965 at the University of Wisconsin Madison.

There were two orchestras. Alcine performed in almost every piece.

This was Alcine's first time to work with one choreographer for a full evening of work.

AW:

"The music and counting were extraordinary. Webern was the first thing we did.

I was from the south and it was a sound scape of sounds to hear when I was used to dancing to melody and predictable phrasings.

I was initially lost. I soon learned that in order for me to survive the rehearsals, I have to learn the movement phrases."

AN:

"We presented a big Webern concert with 6 pieces for 5 dancers. Mary Wigman suggested this concept to me. You and Nancy had a grasp of movement qualities. You could communicate the essence of the qualities in the structure.

For first year students in the MFA program, this concert was simple but very difficult."

NW:

"I remember walking in on the diagonal."

AN:

"Lots of control. Bound movement Laban called it.

Wigman and Holm.....sustained.

Joyce, Gene, Alcine, Delia

Al gave quiet tension to the movement, a subtleness, plastics.....each section.....to make it look right....."

AW:

"That was the first time in my dancing that I was so aware of shape.

The flow and rhythm...

You were so convincing that we could handle it."

AN:

"The graduates at that time were very advanced at Wisconsin, so mature.

They never asked when the rehearsal was over. I was very satisfied.

Your group was small enough and we had a close relationship."

AW:

"We became a strong community just in a few first weeks."

AN:

"Today the (dancers) are moving very quickly. We took time.

'Tansman' was a three-movement work. It was fall 1965 when we started.

Such a beautiful dance for the Madison Symphony. They were dumbfounded. The beauty of that material. To see the first movement with the lunges and those long costume pieces. 'Tansman' had the long heavy skirts....the weight and push....it was spectacular. There were shapes superimposed on top of those jumps. The space was too small. Perhaps a larger space may have given you more feeling."

AW:

"The third movement....furious jumping sequences.....shape, shape, shape..... In my second year we did 'Les Nos'....those were two big pieces."

AN:

"The 'dance for 10 figures in red'....1965.....sets by Robert Glenco. Nancy didn't dance in that. It was AL, Joyce, Dena, and John Wilson."

AW:

"From 1966-67, Anna was gone to India; my whole third year in graduate school."

NW:

"Those two pieces in 'Les Nos', we rehearsed with knee pads. That was before marley floors and we had splinters in our knees. Vance George orchestra and 4 pianos for 'Les Nos'.

AW:

"The orchestra was behind the dancers....we were dancing on the apron. We had to navigate. The walking around and throwing salt...."

AN:

"In 1980...that was Louise Kloepper's retirement.....Alcine was not there. The dancers danced for 23 minutes. It took great stamina to sustain those hard dances. You have to be a musician almost to do Stravinsky. Alcine's final piece was 'Baroque'. Johnny Ezell designed the costumes which were burgundy and pink with white leotards."

AW:

"John, Dena, Al, Nancy, Joyce, Delia and Gene went touring. That experience prepared me. I also try to bring the students back again and again to the work. My students re-did work for me while they were at university. If you don't get to perform a work more than once, the work and you never mature. Getting the feedback....."

AN:

"The first level, is to memorize, then to execute, then to gather options about it, and then you reenter the work. Your world and your experience you take and add to that. Al and Nancy did 'Tansmen Duet' for 20 years. You must have done it 100 times."

AN:

“That’s what you callget the maximum. You put a certain amount of effort in and you take it for the rest of your life. The 1960s had abstract forms.....less drama.....dancers did not dominate.....sometimes the characters changed..... You would come out as a soloist and then dissolve back in the corps.

NW:

“Do you still have you notebooks?”

AN:

“Yes I have them.

Mary Fee rehearsed my work while I was away....you always defended her.....she had that rhythmic focus.....I went to India.....I surpassed Merce Cunningham.....what do you think he was going to do.....Alcine was not in any of the Indian dramas?”

AW:

“Gene was back from the war. 1970---1971. That was the first time I saw you using props. Gene heavy frame could handle your props better than I did. Those 9 dance dramas was a new era for me. I would come in as a solo figure, the central figure.....”

AN:

“Much of it was dramatic....a sense of danger. There was an image for me. You certainly used your acting abilities to take it ...that was the early 70’s.....”

“In 1975 ‘American Suite’ (getting ready for 1776). You were Abraham Lincoln and Nancy was Mary Todd Lincoln. She was a real woman with many agitated states. Al also played George Washington crossing the Delaware.

Laura Crow made the costumes. It takes leadership in departments to have the wisdom to move forward. Elders have more maturity to carry the history.

‘American Suite’ was odd. People were so fearful of appropriation from other cultures. I did not take from them. I was taking a picture and my dances was a flashback of my travels. There were 7 themes. I was capturing Ruth St Denis for Liz Walden to demonstrate the evolution of the American modern dance. She was powerful.”

“In ‘Movie pieces’ I focused on the 1940’s movie stars. It was flirtatious between Al and Liz Walden. A lot of acting. The whole scene focused on love as a sickness, insanity. It was larger than life with the images pasted together....moving into collage. Some pieces you get right away and you get the gestalt. Other pieces you need to have time to develop. For that way of working we had to work very quickly. We needed to work and get it done under the gun. It was also important to have more costuming element in the 1970’s. Laura Crow did the costumes. She went to England and then to New York and then to New England. She did very well.”

AW:

“The next thing we did together was a series of solos. I did an intensive week with you and then I went home and worked on it.....then performed it later.

These were all collaborations with John Ezell. He brought much to the performance. The 1960’s, it was Vance George and his orchestra in collaborations.”

AN:

“In the 1970’s for ‘American Suite’, I came to you 2-3 times to work on it. We had rehearsal time and we grew the work. It was performed 3 times and it changed each time. The composer had a hard job and we had a wonderful repore. We worked with recordings, but on ‘Odyssey’ (Greek) we used live music and film. It was wonderful.”

“In the 1980’s there was ‘Cave’ with Margery Cralic as designer. Then ‘Demon’ in 1987. There was this Butoh voice....the makeup....it was beautiful. Driving the description of the choreography, a person becomes disenchanted with life and that force then becomes the demon.”

“In the Rite of Spring, there was the sun figure. Those were Russian themes...beautiful cloth. Al danced with the virgin, with the ropes. Deborah Sole was the virgin”.

“In the 1990’s, I created ‘Breaking Boundaries: Crossing Borders’ and performed it in the Union theatre at University of Wisconsin Madison. Ed Taylor designed the pieces. Al, in the 1997 concert, you didn’t want to wear the white leotard.”

AW:

“There was ‘Point Omega’ created after your Bali trip. I worked with you for 4 days. I went back to UMCP and worked on it, would video tape it and send it back to you for critique.

AN:

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There were two versions. It expressed Our Lord. In the Bible it says, ‘I am the Alpha and Omega’. That was my point of departure. Then the other version was of Lord Shiva. It was not literal. The gestures were for inspiration. It took a very mature dancer, like Al, to do that.”

“There was a Margaret D’Houbler piece. Wayne Claxton was the painter. The rhythm structure came from Mary Wigman.

Al was the chief male figure and there was a later version performed in 1997.

‘Tea for Two’ at the end was beautiful. It offered abstract principles and sports sequences. That work stirred up a lot of controversy. We studied D’Houbler’s qualities and she came back to Madison each year. ‘Distance Covered’ explored space. It offered weight and lightness and heaviness.

We tried to capture the essence. John Skzitky (?) put that music together.

Al did all the male roles. It was very powerful.”

AW:

“Her (D’Houbler) skeleton was my first reality of how the body works and I use that with my Opera students.”

“It was a wonderful challenge to do so many pieces in one concert. We worked with a mannequin.

AN:

“Most of my work was set. It is fixed in time and could be repeated.”
I invited you to perform “FragMented” and you wore very little clothes.”

AW:

“I came into class and demonstrated what Anna had taught me. You made a great contribution as a teacher and how to bring it to the performance.
You taught how to bring something to the material.”

AN:

I find it strange that Merce (Cunningham) didn't want dancers to interpret the material. And yet he didn't have to work so hard. He did his own thing on stage in his solos. Al, we lived through a wonderful period. Al, you are very special person. You were one of the great alums. Those were the days of glory. Every group (at UWM) thought that they were in the group of the great alumni. Success in education is to stay with the group and work on your success. Dance is an intimate living experience.
Wisconsin is proud of you. We cherish you. And we should....it is correct.
Nancy brought a huge intellectual approach to her dancing. Nancy was a fine student.”

AW:

“Teaching gives me so much more. I find myself looking at all those different instruments before me. It kept me educating myself more and more and deeper.
Wisconsin opened me up to be this kind of teacher. At Wisconsin you developed your own approach. I remember in the course ‘Principals of Relaxation’, I said ‘what is this?....that intellectual base.....I learned that what you are thinking effects how you move.”

AN:

“If you are stressed, you cannot do the work. So lay down on the floor and breathe!”
Kinesthetic awareness, you found it on the stage....movement and self-awareness is the fountain of youth. It's different if you are criticizing what the person is doing....
But to learn it and feel it....If you just go to the body, then sequence gives you all kinds of options. There is thinking. That is done before....it has a life of its own....
It breathes and you take it with you....Lifelong learning.....we were very lucky.”