

Chapter 5 University of Maryland College Park Independent Work as Choreographer/Teacher

It just so happened that in June 1983 MADCO scheduled to bring in National Association of Regional Ballet Mid-West Regional Festival to be hosted in St. Louis. Ross Winter, Nancy Dyer Wiltz, and Alcine attended a planning meeting. Alcine happened to look through a NARB publication and he discovered an ad for a vacancy at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) for a Chairperson in the Department of Dance. He applied and by January 1983, Alcine was asked to the interview. Without telling anyone at MADCO or SIU-E, Alcine interviewed.

Dance Professor Miriam Rosen met Alcine at the National Airport. Dr. Charlie Rutherford . Professor of English was the acting-chair of Dance and the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities was Dr. Shirley Kenny, Professor of English. Alcine met with the search committee: the Chairperson of Mass Communications served as Chair of the committee. Alvin Mayes, representing the Dance Department and Dr. Roger Meersman, Professor of Theatre were on the search committee. Dance Professors Ann and Larry Warren were in rehearsals that day with Maryland Dance Theatre (MDT). Alcine met with Dance students, met with faculty, and met Vice President Brit Kirwin.

Alcine thought he was a good fit for the position. The breadth of his background was attractive and he understood that he would need to smooth out departmental tensions. Alcine called friend Cynthia Reynolds , who had taught at UMCP in the early 1970's for a

short time. She gave him insights into the personalities and dynamics of the departmental culture.

Alcine was called and offered the job. He made it clear in the interview that he was not interested in having a dance company again.

A stressful moment occurred with an additional phone call from the Dean, amending the offer to the rank of Associate Professor instead of Full Professor. The university committee felt that SIUE was not a peer institution and questioned the validity of Full Professor rank.. Now Alcine was a tenured Full Professor for 5 years with the additional appointment of Artist-in-residence. Alcine received the Dean's call just hours before a huge concert opened. He called Nancy for help. She and Michelle went into high gear. They created a "Red Box" resource book with copies of reviews, articles and other evidence that demonstrated the artistic excellence and stellar reputation of Alcine throughout the Mid-West. The "Red Box" was shipped to UMCP and within a few days, a final call informed Alcine that their offer was approved at the rank of Full Professor and they wanted him to take the position.

What a stressful time, especially since SIU-E had just made public announcements celebrating Alcine and his decision to move east. Alcine remembers that retraction phone call so clearly. He went into his performance and his calf locked up in a solo. He barely could dance through it. He just could not perform anymore that evening. This retraction was like his world unearthed beneath him and his somatic grounding could not be accessed. Those were a few very long days for the Wiltzs.

Nora Ambrosio

“Alcine and I arrived at the University of Maryland at about the same time; me as a transfer student from a community college, and he as the newly appointed Department of Dance, Chairperson. From the start, it was apparent that Alcine had an uncanny ability to identify and utilize a student’s strengths, as well as a kind, thoughtful way of delivering a critique. He was a wonderful advocate for students, and his quiet, unassuming manner would prove to have a huge impact on the department for years to come.”

Alcine choreographed primarily to frame students and to be presented at a university. His classes in choreography were pragmatically structured to create a well presented, aesthetically pleasing concert. He enjoyed the collaborations with the School of Music people. He encouraged the students to engage with fellow students in that experience.

“My driving passion was and still is the education of the student.”

Alcine was driven to create laboratory experiences for himself with the students in West Virginia, Southern Illinois at Edwardsville, and University of Maryland College Park. He is blessed to have had opportunities to work with different arts and different environments and students at different levels.

“It is very exciting to me to have a program that has an end of the year, with a deadline, and then to find interesting ways to fill that time line.”

Upon arrival at the University of Maryland College Park, Alcine received many reviews articulating his performance abilities. Linda Dinsmore from The Montgomery Journal offers a perspective from November 23, 1984:

“(UMCP) Department head Alcine Wiltz could have been Pan with his devilish grin and obvious love of dancing. He is a riveting force on stage. In the solo, ‘Parable: An Inward Sun,’ choreographed by Cathy Ward of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company, Wiltz proved to be a master of phrasing with sudden tensions and abrupt changes echoed by a sparse trumpet score. In Wiltz’s own work, ‘Quotes and Misquotes,’ his errant mischievousness broke free. He leered at his three female partners while they preened with complimentary and unison movements until he demonstrated a complex combination. At this the girls stared at him, shook their heads and walked off. I could have seen more of Wiltz, too.”

George Jackson from The Washington Post comments on the same show stating:

“Alcine Wiltz, new chairman of the department, resembles a faun on stage – long ears, curly hair, and taut torso. He exploited this image in his own ‘Quotes and

Mis-quotes,' a gambol with three leotard nymphs, as well as in a Cathy Ward solo. Yet the point of these pieces isn't the body's sensuality but its ability. Wiltz likes choreography that flatters the dancers' capacity to move."

Three dances stood out for Alcine as he remembers his solo performances in Maryland/DC area: "Paralleling Phrases", "Cave", and "Point Omega". Alcine's choreography "Paralleling Phrases" allowed him to perform with live musical accompaniment by violin and piano. We watched video recordings of a University Maryland lecture demonstration in 1985 and also 1988 live music version at the Hand Chapel in Mount Vernon. Negative/positive use of space offers a three dimensional viewpoint (not captured on tape) of the dancer's internal exploration of space while navigating the unmetred score of the live musical duet. Alcine explored Hawkins language through works created and performed with MADCO from 1980 - 1983 after he studied the Hawkin's technique. However, he never set this solo on anyone else. "I would like to set 'Paralleling Phrases" on someone else.

"I thought about it for Liz Webb Lincoln as I was departing MADCO. Breaking out on my own, away from university work, I began to find my own performing voice."

In the live accompanists version of "Paralleling Phrases" at Hand Chapel, Mt. Vernon, Isaiah Johnson played piano and the violinist was Robert Spates. It appears that more

harmony between music and dance was accomplished. The musicians had their individually scored phrasings with different timings each performance. Alcine states:

“The work was so alive. I am trying to find and ride the intersection where music and dance come together. When you dance like this, you are on that high wire as a performer. Movement phrases are driving the dancer and I am trying to be with them as the performer with the musicians. Actually, when I have the chance to perform with 2 live musicians in the space, I think of the dance as a trio. When performed with recording, it is a solo to a fixed accompaniment. Not as challenging or exciting.”

“Point Omega” is a dance based on a legend from the Bali culture relative to the development of the universe coming on the back of a turtle and evolving. It is filled with imagery that Anna Nassif brought back from her travels to Bali and reflects response to the experience. She had selected a score composed by Josph Koykkar as we began to work on the choreography. Alcine developed the phrasing on his own and then sent video recordings to Anna for feedback. The work contained Asian gestures, which is an elaborate language.

“The directions included the use of the four points: north, south, east, and west. The dancer comes up out of the mud. Motifs are slowly executed in silence then as the music begins I move as a shaman crossing hot coals and the dance builds,
.”

'Cave' is really rather dank with sustained little moments of rhythmic dynamic explosion.

"Point Omega" is more energized, driven with many more rhythms. The concept is based on a quote from the writing of Teilhard de Chardin in his 'The Phenomenon Man.' This solo character evolves and is on a journey, without resolution."

Under space, lunges, and reaching motif studies connect "Cave" and "Point Omega"

The viewer experiences the work with the character as a theatrical performance, inviting the audience to enter the characters experience.

Alcine enjoyed being very intimate with his audience.

Former students give testimonials to Alcine's impact upon their dance practices and habits for a lifetime: Andrea (Gray) Pozzi, Wendy (Warfield) Kelly, Nora Ambrosio, and Leonard Wood.

Nora Ambrosio

"In my years as a dance professor, I have relied on Alcine's wisdom and advice on a number of occasions. Soon after I began to teach at my University, I asked Alcine to come and do a consultative visit. Alcine offered many great suggestions, but he was not at all happy with the fact that we had to use recorded music in our classes. As I noted, Alcine has a kind, unassuming

personality, but he is very passionate in his ideas, and that passion so swayed the administrators that we have had live music in our classes ever since.”

“Another great memory that I have is that I wrote and received a faculty development grant that allowed me to commission a work from Alcine. He decided to teach me ‘*Frag Mented*’, a dance that he himself had performed, and that he would now set on me. Our time in the studio was wonderful, and I was thrilled to be in a teacher/student situation once again, with the person whom I considered my mentor. That visit was not just about me learning a dance, but the residency also allowed him to teach master classes to my students. It was lovely to see my students form a bond with him, and it was apparent that they valued and respected him as much as I did.

Andrea (Gray)Pozzi

“About half way through the year we were moaning about yet another set of plies and another series of simple walks across the floor. Alcine faced us all and said something along the lines of ‘as dancers you will do a million plies. Every movement starts and ends with pli  . It is the most fundamental movement and if you are not ready to do pli   after pli   after pli  , then you are not ready to seriously dance.’ It was something like that, but I realized he was right – about that and about walking. We walked like oafs. Alcine glided soundlessly across the floor. He could leap and land with such ease that I finally understood what

he was trying to teach. And Alcine could leap out of nowhere so effortlessly and quickly.”

“I was touched (and nervous) when Alcine asked me to be in a trio -myself, him, and Sharon Butcher. This was post-graduation and we performed it (‘Alone in Reverie’) at the JCC in Rockville and also at the Dance Place. It was about relationships- a man settled in a relationship until the entrée of another woman and the resulting confusion and inter-twining of the characters. The choreography –especially the partnering - was so fluid and quick. We were warming up back stage one evening and talking about massage (Sharon was a massage therapist). I mentioned that I had never had a massage before. Alcine told me that as a dancer, our body is the instrument and that massage is not a luxury but should be considered necessary maintenance. He impressed on me the need to take more attention and care instead of abusing the body as a badge of effort. I remember the costumes, the music, and feeling a part of something beautiful.”

Leonard Wood

“In class Alcine's body would bubble in front of class as he'd encourage us to ‘smell the fresh baked bread.’ Whether choreography or movement in class it seemed (that) no movement was arbitrary nor taken for granted. It also seemed that there was a transition from doing movement to being movement. When he interacted it was evident that he was invested, others were not foreign to him.”

Alcine enjoys teaching a class of students who wish to know their instrument. They must be interested in the mind/body connections. These movement lessons can be life changing. He stopped teaching dancers in 2008 when he retired. Between 2008 and 2014 he worked with University of Maryland College Park's opera students. These six years brought Alcine to the very essence of what he believes as basic truths from the Hawkins work.

This teaching of non-dancers allowed Alcine to tap into sources for the deeper body/mind relationship. His strategy: keep it all very simple so that he can see the individuals and the group before him. He moves them out of old patterns and then stops them and reminds them and then begins again. Warm-up is a little different each day as he takes time at the beginning of class to assess the state of the individuals for the day. To re-enforce the instruction he watches rehearsal and coaches their movements for the opera productions. The next class he then brings phrases from the coaching session into the technique class. He hones them on specifics within a movement pattern that they take back then again into a rehearsal: technique informing art making with specific coaching.

Wendy (Warfield) Kelly

“My first experience of working with Alcine was in Freshman Modern I technique class (University of Maryland, 1985), the Hawkins technique. I remember this class as focusing on dropping away/stripping/giving up old habits. We learned to initiate our movement primarily from the pelvis and the core. The image of

moving from the bones, allowing the muscles to follow without gripping, was tremendously helpful to me. There was a lot of spiraling, and Alcine helped us to imagine our muscles wrapping around our bones, the muscles themselves spiraling.”

“I remember the peaceful and supportive environment in the studio that Alcine created, one of non-judgment, encouragement, experimentation, and learning to know your body- what works, what doesn’t, what is extraneous. This was true when working with Alcine on his choreography as well. It was a wonderful experience to put what Alcine had taught me into practice within an artistic endeavor. “

Andrea (Gray) Pozzi

“Alcine was not only my teacher but also my advisor in the (UMCP) Dance Department. I remember sitting in the studio waiting for the first day of Modern 1. I was nervous as I had not had modern dance training before. I had studied ballet and more recently tap and jazz so that I could perform in music theatre. I had not seen Alcine dance before and when he entered the room he had a sprightly way of moving. He was so soft spoken I wondered how he was going to control the huge group of students who seemed baffled at his lack of tights (myself included). We sat on the floor with our legs crossed and began the first of a million series of ‘tah’s’ that we were to do that year in his class. In the beginning I was wondering why we were beginning so simply. We spent so much

time in our warm ups talking about the relationship of the coccyx to the heel, the head and spine... where was the difficulty in the movements? But it was hard for me. Alcine would tell me to shed the affectations of ballet, stop the posing and positioning and to experience movement originating from the spine and continuing out the arms, hands and fingertips. It felt like I had movement on the periphery. When I think of Alcine in class I always have an image of him starting warm up with a smile.”

Leonard Wood

“It was during the fall concert in 1984 that I was preparing to perform in my first dance performance. This is my first remembrance of Alcine. He stood out not only because he was crouched in a deep lunge with barely anything on, but also because of the non ‘dance’ movement he was exploring. Over the years the sense of exploration, and appreciation of movement moments has been infused in his choreography and those dancers that have had the chance to work with him. Alcine has a way of guiding no matter what movement is done.”

Nora Ambrosio

“Alcine’s background in the Hawkins Technique greatly informed his pedagogy, and since I was from the “muscle through every movement” school of dance, his way of moving not only intrigued me, but posed a great challenge. To my surprise and pleasure, Alcine cast me in a dance, *Quotes and Misquotes*, which

featured a live score by David Frivogel. Alcine choreographed the dance using mixed meters, a first time experience for me. Not only did I have to learn to release all tension in my body, moving from the bones and not the muscles, but also had to count movement phrases in fives, sixes, sevens, and so on. I can remember coming back to rehearsal from a long break and trying to get the counts back into my body—it seemed impossible! What was helpful, and one of my favorite memories, was that Alcine also danced in the piece, and the dancers were able to embody those counts by following his lead. I can remember watching him dance—it always looked like he was just skimming the floor, almost hovering over it as he moved.”

As a performer, how does Alcine Prepare? Rehearsal for Alcine is like a school yard. “We find it and polish it. It is not the same intensity as performance preparation, but it is hard work. I have a respect for everyone’s time and I am sensitive to the energy that ebbs and flows.”

Performance for Alcine is described:

“Performance is NOW. I am alert and attuned while receiving and sending.

‘Find the light’ is what I learned when I was 4 years old in my first stage experience.

I do prepare for a performance whether it is acting, singing, or dancing

Performance for me is special. I energize at a very different level.

The process is like putting on a teakettle. You put it on and it slowly perks and then it is time to go and it is ready. All systems go and all pistons fly. It is a real buzz. I come into a theatre early. I want that time that I can go onto the stage. I look at the empty house and feel myself in relationship to that space that day. I move around the space, walking the space. My ritual sense starts there. I ask myself, 'What do I feel like today? What does the space feel like today?' It starts and that is the beginning and the clock is green. I try to stay calm by focusing methodically on what I do. My energy slowly builds. Doing makeup brings me into the focus on me in mirror. As I come to the moment with a final check of costume and into the wings, I wait and perform. I go to a very far place. I started that ritual as an undergraduate with a theatre background then later as my dance background informed me."

Choreography and performance blurred together in 1983 as Alciné ventured into the freedom from MADCO and his new east coast opportunities. Sarah Kaufman from the City Paper June 27, 1986 comments on this blend of choreographer and performer:

"Alciné Wiltz's 'Urban Estrangement' made a sharp statement on a common theme, the dehumanization of our society. Many have labored on this concept, yet Wiltz's vision is finely-honed, swift, and structurally strong. The dancers' legs and torsos twisted as if controlled by strings; marionette-like, they lunged, spun, and kicked each other. Each dancer developed a tic, a pattern of movement repeated compulsively as fear and confusion separated them. The score, by First

Avenue, accompanied the frenzy aptly, with horns and strings trying to out-shriek each other. Next, Wiltz had a strong encore in hand with the coldly surreal 'Nocturne.'”

Lisa Trager reported from the Washington View October 25 and 26, 1985 from the Castle Performing Arts Center, Hyattsville, Maryland:

“Closing Maryland’s program was department chair Alcine Wiltz’s ‘Continuance’, a movement piece to Steve Reich’s minimalist composition ‘Octet.’ This dance (was) for five included two performing arts scholarship students – Kristen Kerr and Peggy Kolling – the only students in the program. As its title suggests, the work has an ongoing quality that is easy to watch. The liquid arms, cushioned landings from leaps and sweeping swings are kinesthetically pleasing, evoking images of seahorses, soaring birds and wind-carried leaves. The technique used to attain this fragile but everlasting quality is based on Hawkins’ principles of flowing over curves and under curves. The performance by the quintet, including Wiltz, was a convincing study in motion.”

In 1999 Joseph Mills and Alcine presented a shared concert at the Dance Place in Mills/Wiltz Works. Jim Evans from KWMU radio St. Louis, Margot Botirff from the St Louis Dispatch and Linda Dinsmore from the Montgomery journal offered the following comments:

“Wonderful self- possession and trustfulness of his performance.....all his talent and animal instinct were there.”

“Wiltz....is a charming, engaging, elegant performer.”

“A master of phrasing with sudden tensions and abrupt changes.....he is a riveting force on stage.”

What was the challenge with being a solo performer?

“I was trying to be as clear as I possibly could be in execution of the choreography. I hoped to articulate well so that the viewer stays engaged. I could rely on nothing else. The dance requires stamina. In rehearsal, I needed to be able to run the dance twice, back to back to know that I would have the energy required at the end. She always had very difficult endings. The climax builds and she liked big movement at the end that quickly quiets and sustains into suspension.

“The last solo I made for myself was in December 1990 on a university concert, but I performed it in a number of other places. I titled it ‘Frag mented’, created before my sabbatical January 1991. It was created for Joseph Mills who was then dancing with MOMIX . I told him I would work with him to create this dance, then he could take it (reflecting how I worked with Anna) and I would also take it and develop it in my own way. Our bodies do move differently, with integrity. I never expected the works I created to stay the same. It begins organically in the moment of creation, and then it is expected to be adapted. This experience is

organic to the life of any dance, especially a solo. The performing arts are ephemeral. Every performance is different, depending on audience and performers.” I later set the work on Nora Ambrosio in summer 1995.

Alcine sees that what he really lacked was an outside eye, a coach, to encourage him to perform broader.

“I had that coaching with Ross (Winter) in MADCO but I didn’t ever have another source that I could rely on to be honest. I wished that line or that gesture to be better. It could have been with a coach.”

Jewish Community Center

BunneyLevy, Director of Dance at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, brought Alcine into the Dance Ensemble to teach and choreograph. She presented his work in a local theatre, supported with publicity, and introduced him to a new audience.

On Wednesday May 24, 1989, George Jackson, in a Special to The Washington Post, reported about Alicine’s work with the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington Center Dance Ensemble:

“Works by two guest choreographers were worthwhile. Alcine Wiltz, in ‘Viatic,’ listened carefully to his music, a Tibetan bell composition by Henry Wolff and Nancy Hennings. He seems to have heard two types of sound, the chime of short

duration as a bell is struck, and the seemingly eternal after hum. To match the temporal sounds, Wiltz used the technical vocabulary of modern dance to create swaying movement, quiverings, strokes and rebounds. To complement the endless sound, the dancers continuously but minutely changed their balance and muscle tone.

Despite this musicality, 'Viatic ' wouldn't be out of place in a program of Merce Cunningham dances. Sleek, subtly patterned leotards, designed by the late Kelby Fries, contributed to the Merce look."

Andrea (Gray) Pozzi

"Alcine was the choreographer for the Theatre department's production of 'A Chorus Line.' He may have directed as well – I don't recall. But I do remember the choreography, and most of all I remember his warm up. The first rehearsal he faced the cast and basically told them that they were out of shape! He started each rehearsal with a series of calisthenics – at first the theatre majors complained and groaned. But Alcine insisted and by the show time quite a few of the cast had gained some musculature and were doing dance moves that seemed impossible at the start. I remember the guy who played Reggie ('Gimme the Ball') seemed least likely to slim down and be graceful on stage, but Alcine motivated him to work hard and the results were impressive."

As of May 2014, Alcine was thrilled by the recent UMCP performance of "Die Fledermaus" by the Opera 2nd year students he was coaching.

“They were so integrated. They just simply flew around the stage...in and out of chairs....across the stage....using three dimensional movements. There was dynamism in the articulations they were doing...singing was integrated with their physicality...they were integrated with orchestration.”

“The nature of this particular opera was light and carried momentum. The music was very danceable. Of course, it was Strauss...which might have served them well.”

The Director wished to inform the audience of a pre-equal event that is a back-story for the Opera. He wanted to stage the overture in movement/dance for the telling of that story. Two professional coaches on dialects commented that Alcine’s choreography was delightful. One coach called it more sophisticated than what she witnessed at the Metropolitan Opera earlier this year. She had never seen such integration of moving and singing ever before. This opera had no explanation in the beginning. The director wished to show the incident through the choreography, and with Alcine, it was a success.

Creating a new libretto for the overture allowed the audience to see motion and acting in the beginning. The New York coach had not seen any opera singers perform like this, certainly not young performers. This assessment from such a professional was very rewarding for Alcine.

The opera students deepened their roles and expanded/invested more into the characters that brought richness and playfulness to the relationships. These second year MA opera students delivered the highest level of professionalism Alcine had witnessed

since working in the program. He would love to see a replication of this group by another co-hort. Alcine expresses the tension observed when teaching singers:

“Dancers by nature learn to listen better. They have to move with multi-sensory awareness. It is whole body attention. Singers just don’t realize it. They practice exact pitch in the “right” place. They hold their throats. They memorize where that pitch is in their voice box. Violinists can use the Feldenkrais and Alexander methods to learn to relax shoulder, wrist and neck and then find the sequences.

Teaching University of Maryland College Park Opera Students

Fall 2014, Alcine is very excited about teaching his first class with his 2nd year Opera students now only one month since his back surgery.

“The connections were being remembered. They all seem hungry to move. And my body just kept going. The music came on and we all were warmed up. We put the chairs away and I started demonstrating combinations across the floor. I got into jumps and there was a real momentum for what we were doing. I thanked them for pressing to move and I was not sore the next day. Somehow by all of that movement, the area of staying, the lower ribs were tight, but it became integrated with movement. Once that pelvis really moved through space the surgery shaped arrow (cut) is released more and almost gone. My doctor says that is remarkable, almost exactly to the day Sept 5th, one month to the day (of surgery).

Several 2nd year students declared, 'This is the dance year.' They were so excited and asked if we will do some jazz. The energy of this group is different (from previous years).

It is a progression. Each year there is more understanding of what our classes are about. The new Opera director was there and he says he wants to drop in and is anxious to have the opportunity to see what this class offers to the MA Opera students.

Alcine restates his love for movement at this stage of his career in teaching:

"It is one foot in front of another. And here it is again, another door opens. I want to work at the depth that I am working with seeing change with individuals, finding the way to unlock their movements. It's the thing that fascinates me now; to watch for it; to see these people take this cue and let go; to walk by them. It magically happens."

Jarrold Lee

"Alcine is a wonderful teacher who took the time to watch, and learn more about my movements and actions on stage. He didn't say a lot about a specific technique but he would always encourage me to bring my natural self to each of my performances. During my two year studies with the Maryland Opera Studio, he not only assisted me from moving to one space to another. He assisted me with realizing how much space I can take up on stage. He reminded me that when one bows one offers an openness as a thank you without apologies. He insisted focus and concentration during weekly exercise and worked with me to listen to my body. Through our

sessions of laying on the floor, walking, falling, standing, lifting arms, and bowing, I realized I didn't have to be a trained dancer. I just needed to listen, be open, and focus.”

Alcine recalls his experiences recently teaching the University Of Maryland College Park Opera Students. His 2nd year students have experienced Alcine’s teaching before. He observed their opera lessons to know their perceptions on tone, color, texture, and vibrations. They report freer more expressive performing when using Alcine’s techniques. They express their breath has increased and their performances are less stressful.

An example based on a class session where students perform an aria, then Alcine ask the student to begin again, he stops the singer after a short time and begins to coach with movement and body alignment suggestions:

Alec, one second year student, talks about how Alcine’s “loops” connect him to expressivity and freedom. He looked comfortable and displayed contentment about what he was doing. When coaching him, Alcine asks Alec to start aria over again. During the second time singing, Alcine watches more intently on alignment. He asks Alec to walk. Alcine notices that while Alec was walking and singing he was also gripping with his gluts. Alcine worked coaching Alec to rotate his pelvis anteriorly to help release the gripping muscles. The adjustments happened several times. Then Alec said he couldn’t sing the aria. They both realized that the tuck of the pelvis was the support and power of Alec’s singing. After several attempts, the sound was not sailing into higher registers. Alcine had an idea. He placed a little beanbag on the top

of Alec's skull. Alcine asked him to walk and sing again focusing on the upper back part of his skull. Suddenly Alex and Alcine realized the immediate freedom. Alec's aria was sailing and free.

The accompanist for the class, Justina Lee, was amazed at her observation of the transformation of Alec and others. She reported how in tune Alcine is to the vocal training for Opera students. His direct affect is clear to everyone as they experience in themselves and see in others performance changes.

Next Katie Baughman sang. Alcine observed in her several problems in posture. He walked and talked her around the room. As she complained she was holding on to her body and having vocal issues, her hand pressed upon her head. She claimed she could not make the connection because her shoulders were in her way. Alcine worked with her, insecurities appeared to lessen and she began to relax. Her shoulders were tight. With the beanbag on the further back of her skull, after a while she began to breathe more and her singing improved.

With humor Alcine recalls that he did not hear his voice on a recorder until he was a freshman in high school practicing speeches. His voice just did not sound like himself. The first time he saw himself on video was in graduate school in a TV promotional for campus. He comments that it does not look like how he feels when he is doing the movement. He just keeps expecting the two experiences to be similar. However these many years of many rehearsals and performance tapes, he has learned from observing his movement and voice on tape. In this process of watching himself talk, he was uncomfortable. "Where was that 20 year old that I

feel like inside?" His saw his discomfort on tape and then it diminished to reveal a more authentic comfortable Alcine.

Since watching video of himself teaching the Opera students, Alcine has changed his approach. He is now spending more time, one-on-one with each student. He has admitted that our discussions have elicited a change in his teaching approach as to how he handles these students. By adapting to who is in the room on the specific day they are in the room is a real key approach to his teaching process. He never taught like this with dancers because of the numbers of people in those classes and the more body information they bring to the work. Alcine believes that most young dancers do not have a great interest in letting go of what they know already.

In working with Opera students, Alcine focuses on the "four pocket sockets and contralateral work." Their gestures and limbs moving come from that key understanding. He responds to all of the tensions and energies in the room, so he tries to hone into 2-3 things a class. "There are a 100 things I am teaching around the 2-3 keys. One focus point can teach seven things as a subset." He uses the metaphor of a telephone company to describe the body with its tiny threads (synapses). If he can get the students to give physical attention to the joint, then the joint sends out messages to the muscles and tendons and other joints to respond to the messages given. "The work is not simple at all. Some bodies are available to respond and some bodies just cannot coordinate or they are blocked. I try to find a way to help them." As he watches himself teach with his body in contact with the students' bodies, it reminds him of movement therapy. He appears to wrap himself

around their bodies to guide them. In teaching dancers he only used his hands. The opera singers do not appear bothered by his close body language.

The second year students told the first year student that Alcine is a “miracle man”. So it appears Alcine’s reputation is set. The trust precedes Alcine and they then really do want to get down to the work of the class quickly. They are willing to walk, run, leap, hop, jump, and skip. When Alcine asked them to distinguish rhythm and weight shifts of a slide, they got it immediately.

By week eleven, first year students were establishing-the-foot locomotion. It took them 10 weeks of floor work to develop an awareness of core, torso organization, skull / bean bag sensation, and the energy paths of the loops. The looping imagery came from a yoga illustration. For Opera singers starting with the torso and singing is an organic beginning. Alcine asks them to feel where they are holding.

One example is with Greg. He was having this hardest time singing from the floating feeling of his shoulder girdle. Alcine got him to release his clavicles from the sternum and find the weight of humerus in the shoulder joint: allowing the natural pockets to open rather than shaping them into some hollowing.

“Allowing” is never simple. It is not helpful to just tell a student to “just do it.” He asks the students to come to the idea of something, and then listen. This approach is a bit Zen and reminds Alcine of how Eric Hawkins would ask for the free flow of movement, rather than resisting space. Erik was doing release technique before

there were the popular release techniques. Allowing the body information already present is the goal.

Opera Student Appreciations:

Alec Donaldson, UMCP MA Opera Performance

Age:23

1. When you are taking Alcine Wiltz's class, can you describe your experience?

To try to describe working with Alcine is no easy task. This is because each class, Alcine assesses where the class is that day, and shapes his instruction to fit what he sees, frequently departing from his intended plan to do so.

2. When you practice your art form, how has Alcine Wiltz's work informed your work as an artist?

Alcine has brought to my attention various postural and movement based hitches, which impede my ability to perform at the utmost of my ability. He has also worked on giving me the tools to be able to work on those issues whether I'm in class, lessons, or rehearsals. He has also provided me with tools that allow me to use movement, and my body as just one more vehicle for my artistic expression.

3. Has Alcine Wiltz's work informed other areas of your life...please explain if yes.

I have had chronic knee pain for many years, and while it still haunts me from time to time, its occurrence has reduced dramatically since I began working with Alcine.

4. What is the most important thing you have learned under the direction of Alcine

Wiltz?

I think that the most important concept that I have learned from Alcine is that the body functions in sequence, and not in isolation.

5. What more do you wish to learn from Alcine Wiltz?

It would be almost impossible to list all if the things that I would love to learn from Alcine but I think that most simply, if I could just learn how to stand and walk in balance and efficiently. As modest as that seems, it is no small mountain to climb.

Patrick Kilbride,UMCP MA

Dearest Alcine,

It's Patrick Kilbride. I am writing you to let you know how grateful I am for your movement training at UMD while I was in the Opera Studio. There is an Alumni Spotlight coming out about me in the coming days, and I tried my hardest to include you and your invaluable training into their write up but they weren't able due to lack of room/text allowance. Just know that I am so grateful for you and your training. Hoping I can get some body work in with you in the coming month or two on campus. I hope you are so well!

In love and song,

Patrick :)

1) When I am in Alcine's class, the experience is really eye opening. We take so many basic movements that we do in everyday life for granted...movements that we don't normally associate any tension in our bodies with, but then we analyze and examine them in Alcine's class and we discover a much more efficient way to do them, and it's so freeing, but also frustrating sometimes, because it takes a lot of practice and concentration to change lifelong habits of physical movement and posture.

2) Alcine's work has been integral in my development as an opera singer. I am conscious of his work on my body every day when I'm in the practice room. How our body is aligned and, by extension, how it moves, is directly tied to our air. Alcine's work has not only positively impacted how I take in my breath, but also on how I use my air. His work with my alignment has harmoniously interacted with my voice teacher's idea of vertical release of air. The idea of connecting to the kinesphere around me as well as feeling not only a sense of forward space, but back and up and down space as well has totally helped in the full release of my air and releasing any unwanted tension in the throat.

3) Alcine's work has influenced my confidence as a person. Our work on the stage is often deeply tied to who we are as people because our job as performers is a vulnerable one. My voice is who I am. To have more confidence and comfort in my voice and in my body movements on stage is a big thing.

4) Gosh.....the one thing?! Probably that nothing is ever "dead". Even when we are still, we are still constantly "moving" internally. The idea of constant activation of "loops" so we are never stuck. Also the idea of the kinesphere, and that we can actually expand

within the space we take up and make ourselves bigger and fuller, through our perception, awareness and attitude. The idea that there is a whole world behind us that we need to "see" while we are facing the world in front of us.

5) What more do I learn to wish? Gosh, I don't know. I've learned so much from him...ways that we can maintain our work together in our bodies after we've left.

Brian Wallin, UMCP MA Opera

Hi there Alcine!

I hope this email finds you well! How have you been doing?! Enjoying the summer season so far I hope!

I wanted to write to you for a couple reasons. One being just to check-in and see how you have been and the second, and more important reason, is to just say thank you!

Your teaching has continued to follow me since leaving school in many ways! I can't begin to tell you how much your class has prepared me for what has been thrown my way in the "real world!" In Fort Worth Opera's production of *La Traviata* this past April/May I was casted as Gastone and had a very large pantomime dance during the second scene of Act II. I'm sure you know but in the story there is a matador who is after the heart of a young gypsy woman but must slay five bulls in one day in order to win her heart. It was choreographed by Kyle Lang, whose husband is currently the artist in residence with the UMD School of Theater, Dance, & Performance Studies.

Throughout the whole process of choreographing the number there were countless

times that techniques you had taught me helped in making the dance a success. I have to say that there is no way in hell I would have been able to pull off this pantomime dance without the two years I spent in your class!

And it doesn't end there! I was fortunate enough to be selected as a Young Artist in the 2015 Glimmerglass Festival to be a part of *The Magic Flute* and *Candide*. While *The Magic Flute* does not have any dancing, *Candide* certainly makes up for it! Since it is so close to being a musical there is much dancing in this production as well. Once again I was able to pick up the choreography fairly quickly all thanks to you and your teaching! This production is being directed by Francesca Zambello and choreographed by Eric Sean Fogel.

I just really wanted to let you know how much your class has changed my everyday thinking of how I move and how I perform and I think it's such an important aspect of this business! While I definitely can do better at the everyday exercises I do want you to know how much influence you have had on me in even just the first year after school!

Alcine speaks about coaching:

“When I try to help a student with an issue, I try to get us in a conversation to talk around it; not get overly involved. I am committed to everything I have done with trying to coax, to coach, illicit, excite, reach potential, open up the one

person. If I see one person in the class who is less than engaged , I ask why that one person cannot get the lesson of the day. I am a zealot. I have to convert them; the lost lamb. I feel called to gather people and then say, 'what can you do?''what can you do?' I remain curiously hopeful. I believe in the transformation that is the beauty of seeing that movement....to see it even before they see it. Then when they see it, it is so wonderful. They can build on it."

"I want them to accept my gifts of awareness, not my way. But we first have to understand the instrument. It is complex...every changing...ever growing.

The key to advancing as a mover is simplicity; just put one foot in front of the other. Pay attention to the moment, the people, and the project. This process is very rich. It offers opportunities to do such varied work."