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## **A TRIBUTE TO DANIEL NAGRIN: Russian Jewish Influences in American Modern Dance**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION.**

On the first anniversary of his death, this paper is a tribute to my former teacher and mentor, Daniel Nagrin. Nagrin (22 May 1917 – 29 December 2008), actor, Broadway dancer, and minor pioneer of American modern dance, was inspired and influenced professionally by three main people. The first major influence was Russian theatre director Constantin Stanislavski, whose method reached Nagrin through three New York-based acting teachers. The first was Miriam Goldina who studied in Moscow under Yevgeniy Vakhtangov, one of Stanislavski's best directors and considered his 'disciple.' And lastly, through two Group Theatre actors/teachers: Stella Adler who studied with Stanislavski in Paris and married Group Theatre founder Harold Clurman, and Sanford Meisner who taught at the Neighborhood Playhouse. The second major influence was that of his professional partner and modern dance pioneer, Helen Tamiris, who later became his wife. The third were the techniques of Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre (Cohen, 1998 Kissel, 2000 Moore, 1984 Nagrin, 1994 Schlundt, 1998 and Silverberg, 1994). It is argued that these individuals and their artistic processes contributed to Nagrin's worldview and aided in the development of his system of choreography, which I have termed 'The Nagrin Method.' As a result, Stanislavski's system has influenced American modern dance choreography and performance through the praxis of Russian-Jewish immigrants.

### **2. MAJOR INFLUENCES.**

Questions are raised as to what extent the Russian acting director Constantin Stanislavski influenced Nagrin's life and work; how far he unintentionally influenced not only American theatre and film but also modern dance; and the extent of influence that his acting methods had upon Nagrin's choreographic process. Stanislavskian traces in modern dance and the Russian-Jewish background and connection of many American modern dance artists have been researched and examined to limited but illuminating degrees by various scholars. Stanislavski's

work appears to have appealed to American actors and dancers of Eastern European Jewish heritage, which is an area for further investigation.<sup>1</sup> Although not of this heritage, Duncan was influenced by Stanislavski and his work regarding emotion and expression (Layson, 1987). Stanislavski's mutual association with and reciprocal admiration for Duncan and her work is documented (Layson, 1987 and Stanislavski, 1924). Finally, Stanislavski's influence reached Nagrin due to his association with Tamiris, the Group Theatre through Adler and Meisner, and eventually the Living Theatre and Open Theatre of Chaikin.

## **2.1. Constantin Stanislavski.**

Constantin Stanislavski<sup>2</sup> (1863 – 1938) was director of the Conservatory of the Opera Studio of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow and actor and co-founder with Vladimir Nemirovitch-Dantchenko of The Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) during the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century until his death. Later renamed the Stanislavski Theatre, MAT's focus was on popular culture and symbolism (Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, 1936 and Stanislavski, 1924 and 1961a). His method or system, as he preferred to call it (Stanislavski, 1924 and 1961a) was *a* means to an end, not *the* end, which is reverberated by Nagrin (2001). As a young actor, Stanislavski discovered improvisation by working alone to develop his character roles (Stanislavski, 1936 and 1961b), and both Tamiris and Nagrin used improvisation to find dances. The focus was not on dramatic form but based in truthful acting upon the character (Stanislavski, 1961a and 1961b Stanislavski and Rumyantsev, 1975 and Moore, 1984). This foundational, improvisational-based concept of form following content, or content-then-form, is a major premise in both Tamiris' and Nagrin's choreographic methods.

Some of Stanislavski's important principles were simplicity of action, the elimination of clichés, imagination, scenic truth, emotion memory, and communion with others. Stanislavski's methods are categorized as “elements” (Moore, 1984 and Stanislavski, 1936 and 1961a), and these elements played a central role in Nagrin's development of his choreographic methodology. Some of these are treated briefly here, due to restrictions of time and space, with their application and adaptation to Nagrin's method through my own experience of working under him.

Every action that happened on stage must be for a specific purpose or simplicity as “thoughts are embodied in acts” and are inseparable (Stanislavski cited in Stanislavski and Rumyantsev, 1975:4). It can be proposed that Nagrin also possessed an economy of movement

in which every movement was directly integral to the character or action. Stanislavski's method of 'Physical Actions' was based on his discovery that internal experiences and their physical expressions are inseparable and united (Moore, 1984 and Stanislavski, 1936). As a result, Stanislavski developed a series or system of physical exercises, largely based in structured improvisations, to find internal expression. The actor was to do the action and then the emotion would follow and was instructed not to think of feelings but to focus on the actions themselves (Stanislavski, 1936 and 1961a). Nagrin never focused on the emotion to create movement, but rather on the action or the *doing*, to explore the depth of character (Nagrin, 2001). Feeling and emotion come from doing; acting is doing, and these "are the same thing" (Adler in Kissel, 2000:44). Actions need to be believable and *specific* (2000). Tamiris and Nagrin both embraced this, and from my own experience Nagrin particularly worked with the specific image *doing* rather than feeling (Nagrin, 1989 and 2001). An example is the epic gangster cum hero in Nagrin's *Strange Hero* (1948).

For Stanislavski, overacting develops into mechanical acting which develops into clichés. In his autobiography *My Life in Art* (1924), Stanislavski indicated that arbitrary poses without spiritual connection to the inner truth are not believable. This is in contrast to Delsarte's theory which codified meaning through movement gestures. Nagrin, and arguably Stanislavski (1924), worked through clichés and was against the Delsarte concept that codified every little movement into specific meanings all its own (Nagrin, 1997). Nagrin quoted the line from the musical *Madam Sherry* but which is associated with Ted Shawn: "Every little movement has a meaning all its own, Every thought and feeling by some posture may be shown" (cited in Nagrin, 1994:99). Mimetic and literal gesturing was not acceptable. Duncan embraced this same concept (Layson, 1987), Tamiris called it working "too close to the bone" (in Nagrin, 2001:82) which was too close to the real image rather than finding a metaphor (Nagrin, 2004e), Chaikin emphasized working through the cliché (Chaikin, 1977), and Nagrin integrated this as well (Nagrin, 1997 & 2001). Both Nagrin and Chaikin worked through clichés to open up new possibilities involving an inner acting technique, or building "the life of the human spirit" per Stanislavski (Moore, 1984:8 and Stanislavski, 1961a:25).

Imagination is the inspirational key to stimulating the *if* which involves an activity (Stanislavski, 1924 and 1936). The "magic *if*" or 'what would I do if I were X?' brings the actor into the character and into the "realm of imagination" (Moore, 1984 and Stanislavski, 1936:43).

The *if* evokes a real and inner activity and is built upon the given circumstances which help create an inner stimulus (Stanislavski, 1924 and 1936). These are dictated by the script's contextual elements of stage, time, place, et cetera (Moore, 1984 and Stanislavski, 1961b). All movement and speech on stage are the direct result of the imagination of a correct focus, and Stanislavski developed six steps to follow to clarify the object of focus through the magic 'if': who you are, where you came from, why, what you want, where you are going, and what you will do when you get there (Stanislavski, 1936). To achieve the specific image, Nagrin schematically adapted the six questions to his choreographic process:

1. *Who or what?* (the subject)
  2. *Is doing what?* (the verb)
  3. *To whom or what?* (the object)
  4. *Where and when?* (the context)
  5. *To what end?* (the reason for the action)
  6. *The obstacle?* ([tension that]justifies theatrical viability)
- (Nagrin, 1997:34)

Stanislavski's "Always know who you are" (Moore, 1984:28) translated into Nagrin's "get to the core of X" (Nagrin, 1997:92). Nagrin's imagination involved improvisation and playfulness (Nagrin, 1994). "An actor develops a character from the things he does," says, and wears; and the action needs to be justified (Adler cited in Kissel, 2000:103).

Two kinds of truth were defined as actual and scenic. In life, truth is what really exists; on stage, it is a product of the imagination. Truthful probing of the inner life of a character creates a belief in that reality. Nagrin refers to this by the question, 'to what extent?' (Nagrin, 1997). "This process is what we call *justification* of a part . . . *Truth on the stage is whatever we can believe in with sincerity, whether in ourselves or in our colleagues*" (Stanislavski, 1936:122). An element of falseness resides in the sense of truth. On stage, most everything is invented and reality is constructed, and Stanislavski taught that an actor who thinks he is a character is emotionally unstable (Stanislavski, 1936). Nagrin also applied this to the role of a dancer (2001). Truthfulness and believability come from feeling and experience; believing in one's own internal actions and emotions within the context surrounding the character is important and was Stanislavski's method of approaching emotions. He advised to avoid

falseness and everything that is against nature, logic, and common sense (Stanislavski, 1936 and 1961a).

Emotion memory is an area that even today has caused a split in the interpretation of Stanislavski's teachings, as acting teachers in New York taught their own versions of their interpretation of Stanislavski's method.<sup>3</sup> A stage emotion is different from an emotion in life as the cause is different; one is re-created, the other is primary. Combined with the inner rhythm of the script, these stir the actor's emotions as it is not enough to rely on physical actions which need to have a given, imaginative circumstance (Stanislavski, 1961a and Stanislavski and Rumyantsev, 1975). Emotions inherent within the character help an actor to do this successfully (Kissel, 2000 and Stanislavski, 1936). Nagrin concurred in order to find or develop his characters or 'X' (Nagrin 1997, 2001 and 2004e).

On-stage relationships or communion first begin with the self, then others, and then objects that are unreal or imagined.<sup>4</sup> In communication with others and/or an object, the goal is to reach the living spirit by communicating either directly or indirectly and is always mutual (Stanislavski, 1936, 1961a and 1961b). The actor must communicate his actions to those on stage, and believe in the relationship rather than the object (Moore 1984, and Stanislavski and Rumyantsev 1975). This was reinforced through Chaikin's improvisational work and implemented as a primary focus by Nagrin into his Workgroup,<sup>5</sup> emphasizing the 'other' and the non-verbal exchange of communication between performers (Nagrin, 1994).

Briefly, the above are highlights of some of the major tenets of what Stanislavski calls his 'system' and what others refer to as his 'method' (Moore, 1984 and Stanislavski, 1924, 1936, and 1961a). Arguably the most important concept Nagrin gleaned was to work from content rather than form or emotion through the doing of a specific image.

## **2.2. Helen Tamiris.**

Modern dance pioneer Helen Tamiris was undoubtedly the greatest influence on Nagrin's life and career. Like Nagrin, she was born to Russian-Jewish immigrants. She is remembered as a "breathtaking panther" in performance, a "true popular artist" who added "glamour and vitality", and caused "excitement when she danced" (Nagrin, 1988:267; Siegel 1987:6; and Schlundt, 1972:28 and 1998).

Named after an Amazonian Queen who was known for her beauty and bravery by carrying the pickled head of a slain king into battle, Tamiris called her own work “Living Art” since it was meaningful only when viewed (Tamiris, 1989:3).<sup>6</sup> She pursued the quest to create American dances to American music using American themes, such as Negro spirituals and sports. This was undoubtedly a strong influence in Nagrin’s works. Nagrin recalled “she always probed and searched for new forms to express her central concern for human dignity” (Schlundt, 1972 Siegel, 1987 and Nagrin, 1988:267). In contrast to the “Big Four” (that is, Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman), she was willing to explore any method to attain her art form, was concerned with human dignity, and blurred the boundaries between high art and the vernacular. These Marxist ideologies, I assert, were evident in the MAT as well. The other American modern dancers would not incorporate the vernacular since ‘popular’ was translated as ‘not artistic’ at this time (Evans, 2002 Lloyd, 1949 Nagrin, 1994 and Siegel, 1987). Tamiris’ philosophy of dance is apparent in highlights taken from her “Manifest” printed in her second modern dance solo concert program of 29 January 1928.<sup>7</sup>

When Nagrin began to work with Tamiris in 1941, her way of working was to allow the dancer to work improvisationally under a directed framework to find the movement that she wanted (Gruen, 1988). Tamiris did not impose her own movement style on other dancers, but saw them as individuals who could create movement through improvisation out of their own bodies. She believed the body knew how to move and offered no theories, just an existential approach (Schlundt, 1972).

Tamiris was different in her choreographic method than the other founders of modern dance. The underpinnings of her choreographic method, reflecting Stanislavski’s influence through the Group Theatre, were to explore “who you were, where you were, what you were doing, and how you were doing it” (Adler, 1986-87 and Nagrin, 2001).<sup>8</sup> She used both improvisation to find movement and metaphors based in an accurate sense memory in order to distort and abstract movement and adapted these from Stanislavski’s sense memory as the key to the magic ‘if,’ allowing the dancer to take what is not real and make it real through the imagination. Nagrin borrowed his sense memory work from both her and Stanislavski (Nagrin, 2001). Literal gestures were handled by transferring movement to another part of the body through her dictum “Don’t illustrate,” and to go inside the body with the action (Nagrin, 1989, 2001 and 2004e). Nagrin cannot recall whether Tamiris ever indicated to him exactly where and

when she was first introduced to Stanislavski's methods (Nagrin, 1989), but I can attest that he continued to use improvisation to various degrees and metaphors throughout his professional work as well.

Nagrin confided that he never received any formal instruction from Tamiris on choreographic design or structure, either on Broadway or in his solo concert works (Gruen, 1988 and Newman, 1975). He never focused on design or form but followed the necessity of the action and assumed the work would have design (Nagrin, 2001). Instead, he privileged form or what I term 'form follows function.'<sup>9</sup> An example, which reverberates Judson's task dances, is his repetitive work *Path* (1965).

What was learned from Tamiris was combined with Nagrin's own contributions, and they both influenced one another. He affected her methods in ways that he cannot define precisely. In turn, he worked these out in his body and does not know where her teaching stops and his begins (Nagrin, 1989 & 2001). Tamiris continued to work this way with him, asking questions, talking about the Stanislavski method of acting, and paralleling it to dance. Instead of doing attractive movement, he began to work with inner conviction, movement metaphors, content rather than form, and combined virtuosity (Gruen, 1988). This method is based in Stanislavski's teachings to "find truth not in trying to *look* like something or someone but in *doing-acting*" (Schlundt, 1997:60). Thus, Nagrin's concept that the entire person is *doing* whilst dancing is a driving force and major influence in his work and teaching (Nagrin, 2001 Palfry, 1999 and Schlundt, 1997). Although he learned the "bones" of choreography from the many years of working with her, his method differs in that he works more consistently from a specific image (Nagrin, 2001, 2004a and 2004e) or act, a concept borrowed directly from Stanislavski (Nagrin, 1997). This image is so inherent and specific that I can still hear Nagrin instructing us to "get to the core of X." The specific image was central to Tamiris' later work which brought out a personal movement vocabulary. This methodological development came late in Tamiris' career and is probably due to the influence of Nagrin. As Nagrin stated that twenty years earlier, this was one of the aspects which differentiated their work (Nagrin, 2001).

The need to discover the inner life that fired movements was the most profound insight that Tamiris gave him. When this "conceptual door" was opened for him, Nagrin found a technical freedom which exceeded his training as well as an endless choreographic freedom. Its foundation is attributed to the Stanislavski method (Nagrin, 2001).

### **2.3. Joseph Chaikin.**

A final, but important, major influence on Nagrin was his working with Joseph Chaikin's actors at the Open Theatre in the late 1960s. Chaikin was born in 1935 to Russian-Jewish parents, moved to New York during his college years, and joined the Living Theatre. He founded the experimental Open Theatre in the early 1960s with the initial premise of abandoning speech and thus developed a series of improvisational exercises based in movement and sound to achieve this goal (Chaikin, 1977). Nagrin began to adopt and create his own improvisations for his Workgroup company based on what he encountered with the Open Theatre (Nagrin, 1994).

Nagrin recognized the importance of connecting internally with the others while working, the ability to exchange this inter-connectedness amongst one another, and the awareness of "*what the other person is doing*" rather than focusing on themselves which was the typical way of working with dance, improvisation, and theatre in general (Nagrin, 1994:13 and 2004e). This would develop into becoming what he called the 'other person.'

It is important to understand the influence of Brecht's epic theatre on Chaikin's work which was based on the premise that people can change. Brecht involved the audience as a partner, used irony, parody, humor, restraint and understatement, and allegory to "disturb our smugness and bend our fixed logic" (Chaikin, 1977:39 and Greenberg, 1961) to show we live by the choices we either make or accept. Brecht was known for his performance style of the 'A' effect, or alienation (*Verfremdung*) of the audience, in contrast to arousing pity. Tamiris and Nagrin also opposed the arousal of pity for the 'A' effect, which in turn causes the audience to feel, think, and reflect upon what was experienced in the theatre and apply it to their own lives (Nagrin, 1997).<sup>10</sup> Chaikin's intention was to make theatre events from juxtaposed images, or collage and montage, as used by Brecht's epic theatre. Nagrin employed these same concepts in his works as early as the 1940s with the essences in *Spanish Dance* (1948) and *Strange Hero* (1948), but were clearly evident in his works from 1968 onward and in my choreography classes under his tutelage.

Chaikin was influenced by and exposed to Stanislavski's method-acting involving tasks set up in the form of internal actions called 'Physical Actions' mentioned earlier (Chaikin, 1977 Moore, 1984 and Stanislavski, 1936). Nagrin was influenced by Chaikin's approach of relating to given situations, observing, and living; the actor began with nonverbal questions about experiences and later transformed these into the disguise of character; and the use of



imagination. Of importance in this process is where the impulse from a character is derived; who/what is the character, what is the context of the character, and what is the goal. No absolute principles are upheld in order to remain open and flexible (Chaikin, 1977). These are very similar to Nagrin's and Stanislavski's six questions. If the temptation to play the cliché is present, Chaikin believed it could be worked out through improvisation into what he termed as "emblems." Another similar device that was borrowed from jazz was jamming, the improvisational study of an emblem through storytelling using words, movements, sounds, and silence to clarify meaning and attention (Chaikin, 1977). I deduce that Chaikin's *emblem* is Nagrin's *metaphor*. Nagrin defined the term 'metaphor' as:

a transferring from one word the sense of another . . . a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, different thing by being spoken of as if it were that other.

(Nagrin, 2001:76)

As an actor, Nagrin found all his images and metaphors within the script after studying the character; as a choreographer, this process remained intact (Nagrin, 1997). From my personal experience, metaphors were central to his choreographic method. According to Nagrin, metaphors are so common that they are in every thought and every movement; every action can be seen as a metaphor for something else, and anything can be done in dance through a metaphor. Most dance metaphors cannot be articulated clearly but can be felt and experienced, and he suggests that "this ambivalence is a characteristic of metaphors" (Nagrin, 2001:80). The concepts gleaned from Chaikin inspired and were implemented into Nagrin's Workgroup. These are exemplified in Nagrin's *Duet* (1973) with his Workgroup.

### **3. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.**

Daniel Nagrin, considered a minor pioneer in American dance by scholars, historians, and critics, began his acting studies in the 1930s with several teachers from the Stanislavski-based Group Theatre. The Group Theatre's influence on both Nagrin and Tamiris was evident in their works. Decades later, The Living Theatre and eventually the Open Theatre grew out of the

embodied concepts articulated by the Group Theatre, and Nagrin worked with them under director Chaikin and implemented these into his dance works and teaching.

It is concluded that the major tenets of what I term The Nagrin Method are: form follows content, “get to the core of X,” working with a specific image *doing*, heavy reliance on improvisation to ‘find’ not ‘make’ movement, usage of metaphors to work through clichés, and a focus on ‘the other.’

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#### ENDNOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> Some of these Eastern European Jewish immigrants and/or their children and their connections are as follows. Tamiris studied briefly at the Duncan school in the 1920s (Tamiris, 1928 & 1989). Nahum Zemach founded Habima, a Jewish theatre company in Moscow, and was drawn to Stanislavski’s symbolic characterization, stage sets, and costumes – the essence of Jewishness rather than following a type of theatre which emphasized details of Jewish life. Vakhtangov, “Stanislavski’s top pupil” (Moore, 1984:9) worked with Habima on the staging of *The Dybbuk* in 1922, choreographed by Benjamin Zemach whom critic John Martin credits with choreographing the first Jewish ballet in history. After immigrating to America, Benjamin was instrumental in bringing Jewish dance and Zionist ideals (that is, the settling of a homeland in Palestine) to the YMHA in New York (Jackson, 2000) where both Tamiris and Nagrin performed. Many of the Stanislavski-based Group Theatre members of the 1930s were Jewish who saw the theatre as their religious obligation to the economic depression as they concentrated on themes of social value of the average person rather than on royal or military heroes (Kissel, 2000 and Nagrin, 2004e).
- <sup>2</sup> His given name was ‘Alexeyev’ but used his stage name instead in order to not bring shame to his father’s wealthy Moscow merchant business (Nemirovitch-Danchenko, 1936 and Stanislavski, 1961a).
- <sup>3</sup> As mentioned earlier, a dichotomy continues to exist in the teaching of Stanislavski’s technique of emotional memory led by two different groups of teachers, Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler/Sanford Meisner, all initially from the Group Theatre. Both groups have produced academy award-winning actors (Nagrin, 1997). Strasberg emphasized re-creating the emotional experience through a psychological approach using personal experiences to arouse emotion similar to those in the script. In other words, the actor needed to step out of character and into himself, delve into the memory of his personal background to obtain the emotion, retain the emotion while leaving himself behind, and then step back into character. All of this needs to occur immediately onstage during each performance in the role, and the focus is on feelings or emotions. Adler and Meisner taught that truth in the role was derived from an imaginative life within the text and that relying solely on personal experience to evoke emotions would produce distortion. They felt that the character itself provided a richness of depth which needed to be explored by the actor prior to the rehearsal process. This thorough examination of the character, or getting to the core, revealed and generated all the emotions needed and could be called upon immediately within performance, and the focus is on the portrayal or doing of the character. Meisner advocated a concentrated compassion on the character’s time and context elicited through the actor’s personal life experiences within the role. Adler advocated going outward into the audience through the character, as acting was based in actions which elicited emotions in both the actor and the audience. With both, the emphasis was on *doing* rather than *feeling* (Kissel, 2000). Adler (Kissel, 2000) stated that the reason she went to Paris to study under Stanislavski initially was for her own benefit to rectify the confusion that had arisen in the teaching of Stanislavski’s techniques regarding emotional memory. She further commented that many New York acting teachers began to teach their own versions or adaptations of Stanislavski’s methods. Nagrin stated that he studied with Adler and Meisner (Nagrin, 1997), and both he and Chaikin were influenced by these teachings and incorporated them into their ways of working. The question arises as to whether this provided a foundation for Nagrin’s method of choreography, of “getting to the core of X,” as early as the 1940’s and his non-use of emotion to find movement.

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- <sup>4</sup> The element of communion or unity is a hallmark of Chekhov's works which were produced heavily by The Moscow Art Theatre (Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, 1936 and Stanislavski, 1924). Thus, Chekhov's influence of awareness of the 'other' upon both Stanislavski and Nagrin is apparent.
- <sup>5</sup> Nagrin formed an improvisation dance/movement company, the Workgroup, from 1969 – 1974, which used the improvisational work of Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre.
- <sup>6</sup> Nagrin (2004e) told me that he never heard Tamiris mention her work as "Living Art," so perhaps this was an earlier designation that I took from her autobiography first penned in 1928.
- <sup>7</sup> Some of Tamiris' 'Manifest' highlights are (Tamiris, 1989:51[condensed and paraphrased]):
- Art is international, but the artist is a product of nationality  
 We must not forget the age we live in.  
 There are no general rules. Each work of art creates its own code.  
 The aim of the dance is not to narrate  
 Dancing is simply movement with a personal concept of rhythm.  
 A dancer must create his own reality, independent of the reality we live  
 in. The word, pattern has become a standard term for choreography,  
 decorative poses and external attitudes. Pattern is really what style is  
 in any other art:  
     an individual form of expression.  
 The dance of today is plagued with exotic gestures, mannerisms and  
 ideas borrowed from literature, philosophy, sculpture and painting.  
 Will people never rebel against artificialities, pseudo-romanticism and  
 affected sophistication? The dance of today must have a dynamic  
 tempo and be valid, precise, spontaneous, free, normal, natural and  
 human.
- <sup>8</sup> Adler, from NYU, does not say whether or not she attended this conference in her review in *Dance Research Journal*. The invited participants from the former Tamiris-Nagrin Dance Company were Marion Scott, Phoebe Neville, Elina Mooney, Cliff Keuter and Elizabeth Keen. As a graduate student at ASU at the time, I helped with various activities during this conference.
- <sup>9</sup> Nagrin commented that many of his procedures and methods are very different from those of Tamiris but discussed a specific turning point in his career at Unity House during the summer of 1942 when choreographing *Rhumba Bum* (1943). Tamiris took an interest and offered some advice, such as understanding to whom the dance was addressed. Although he had an acting background, he did not apply these skills to dance but focused on the technical aspects of movement instead, and her recommendation was to begin from an acting premise *when dancing* which would omit the majority of technical problems. Tamiris taught him that his acting craft and skill should be an integral part of his dance work; no separation was necessary, since he was a human being doing something and we danced it instead of talking it (Gruen, 1988 Nagrin, 2001 and Schlundt, 1997).
- <sup>10</sup> This correlates with Heidegger's *Dasein* (Hollinger, 1985:3).

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