



Theses and Dissertations

2001

Because of Thy Exceeding Faith: A Choreographic Portrayal of Women in The Book of Mormon

Wendy L. Bone
Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Dance Commons](#), [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Bone, Wendy L., "Because of Thy Exceeding Faith: A Choreographic Portrayal of Women in The Book of Mormon" (2001). *Theses and Dissertations*. 4540.
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4540>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

BECAUSE OF THY EXCEEDING FAITH: A CHOREOGRAPHIC PORTRAYAL OF
WOMEN IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

by

Wendy L. Bone

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Dance

Brigham Young University

August 2001

Copyright © 2001 Wendy L. Bone

All Rights Reserved

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Wendy L. Bone

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

June 28, 2001
Date

Pat Debenham
Pat Debenham, Chair

June 28, 2001
Date

Catherine H. Black
Catherine H. Black

June 26, 2001
Date

Caroline Prohosky
Caroline Prohosky

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Wendy L Bone in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

June 28, 2001
Date

Pat Debenham
Pat Debenham
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

B. Lee Wakefield
Lee B. Wakefield
Chair, Department of Dance

Accepted for the College

Robert K. Conlee
for Robert K. Conlee
Dean, College of Health and Human
Performance

ABSTRACT

BECAUSE OF THY EXCEEDING FAITH: A CHOREOGRAPHIC PORTRAL OF WOMEN IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Wendy L. Bone

Department of Dance

Master of Arts

This thesis is a choreographic exploration that illuminates and defines moments in the lives of women who are mentioned in the Book of Mormon. These women are Sariah; the wife of King Lamoni and Abish, her servant; and the Ammonite mothers of Helaman's two thousand stripling warriors. It is through these stories that their faith was evident. By understanding the roles these women played in the history of the Book of Mormon, we can use their example to strengthen our own testimonies.

It was discovered through this process that, although one can read about the life of another, a deeper understanding comes through the creation and expression of movement. Communication skills were also developed as choreography was created depicting a specific moment without being flamboyant and disruptive. The greatest discovery, however, came from the overwhelming positive response received from the performers and the audience. Many expressed the emotions they felt during and after the

performance, describing it as “one of the greatest spiritual experiences they have had through dance.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to express my appreciation to my graduate committee, Pat Debenham, Cathy Black, and Caroline Prohosky, for all the time that they sacrificed on my behalf. Their insight and opinions truly helped me gain a better understanding of my work. Thank you to the entire faculty at Brigham Young University and Ricks College who, in one way or another, have motivated and encouraged me to complete this process. This experience never would have been the same without the friendship of Jana Shumway.

I appreciate Contemporary Dance Theatre 2000-2001, who made this dance leap off of the stage and touch the hearts of many. For the long hours in rehearsal, your love, and your support, I will forever be indebted.

Lastly, I would like to express my love and appreciation for my amazing husband, Michael Bone. Without his selflessness and generosity, I would not have been able to complete this process. I will never forget all he has done. To Breann, Alayna, and Marisa, mommy loves you. You can do anything to which you are truly committed.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Statement of Purpose.....	2
Justification.....	2
Delimitations.....	4
Limitations.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	5
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	
Women in the Book of Mormon.....	7
Sariah.....	7
Abish and the Wife of King Lamoni.....	8
The Mothers of the Two Thousand Stripling Warriors.....	10
Other Mediums of Expression.....	12
Poetry.....	12
Visual Art.....	18
Music.....	19
Chapter 3: Procedures.....	20
Chapter 4: Choreographic Process and Presentation.....	27
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	40
Works Cited.....	43
Appendices	
A. “Expressions of The Spirit” proposal.....	45
B. Artwork.....	50

C. Poem used during performance.....	54
D. Spoken script.....	58
E. Programs.....	59
F. Photographs of the performance.....	62
G. Artwork display.....	70

Chapter 1

Introduction

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can draw strength from the Book of Mormon by gaining a greater understanding of God's plan and by following examples set by those in this book. The Book of Mormon contains hundreds of examples of faithful followers with over one hundred and fifty passages that refer to women. Of these references only six are mentioned by name, three of them being biblical women (Williams and Bowen 37). The limited writings about these women may give the reader the illusion that women are somehow less important because of the dominant focus on male figures. This is not the case. Former president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Howard W. Hunter, said, "whether it be Mother Sariah or the simple maid Abish, servant to the Lamanite queen, each made contributions unacknowledged by the eyes of men, but not unseen by the eyes of God" (67).

The impact of these women through their example of faith, love, kindness, and virtue can help build our own testimonies today. Men and women can find comfort and strength in the example of the unnamed Lamanite queen who believed in her husband as he lay struck down by the Spirit. She sought counsel from a spiritually reliable source, and with great faith and devotion, watched over her husband through the long dark nights as he lay unresponsive. When teaching our own children about faith, we can ponder the accounts of the Ammonite women and their conviction to teach their children the truth. Sariah went into the wilderness with faith and trust in the worthiness of her husband. This great example can be a guide to us in having faith in our leaders. There is much to learn from each one of the trials these great women experienced. If we can learn from

their examples and follow in their footsteps, we too will be blessed with the strength to make a difference.

Art, is a way to open our senses to the lives of these great women. Through art, we can communicate spiritual truths through symbols, which will enlighten our own understanding of who we are. Through a process of blending of art mediums throughout this thesis, created by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I hope to bring a greater understanding of these women, finding a place where artistic endeavors and religious beliefs can become one in spirit.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to choreograph a dance that interprets and illuminates defining moments from the lives of women who are mentioned in the Book of Mormon. These women were Sariah, the wife of King Lamoni, Abish their servant, and the Ammonite mothers of Helaman's two thousand stripling warriors. The choreography was a religious work that integrated visual art and poetry which members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints created using these women as inspiration. This work was entitled, "Because of Thy Exceeding Faith."

Justification

Since the beginning of the last dispensation during the early 1800s, dance has been encouraged and supported by the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Even as early as the migration to Salt Lake City, dance was implemented in worship. During one of the darkest hours of the journey in the harsh winter months, Brigham Young received a revelation which reads in part, "If thou art merry, praise the

Lord with singing, music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving” (Reynolds and Sjudahi 32).

Past and present leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have taught us the importance of dance in building the Kingdom of God. Dance can be a way to enhance our worship. Joseph Hovey shares an experience in his autobiography that describes Brigham Young’s dedication of a meetinghouse. President Young called together a band to pay tribute to those who had helped in the construction. Young then took the floor in a jubilant celebration of music and dance, setting a pattern for the rest of the spectators to follow, after which he knelt in prayer. Hovey states, “I can truly say that the prayer that was offered up and the music and the dance were controlled with the Spirit of God that caused me to shed a flow of tears of joy. Truly I was led to say this was the way the ancient fathers praised the Lord in a dance” (Reynolds and Sjudah 63).

We are reminded in the Articles of Faith, written through revelation by Joseph Smith, “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Pearl of Great Price 61). It is through creating a religious dance using these principles that I seek a greater understanding of these women from the Book of Mormon.

In more recent years leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have come forward and encouraged artists to create religious art. In 1967 Boyd K. Packer as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, wrote in his address entitled *Arts and the Spirit of the Lord*, “go to, then, you who are gifted; cultivate your gift. Develop it in any of the arts and in every worthy example of them [. . .] increase our spiritual heritage in music, in art, in literature, in dance, in drama”(65). Spencer W. Kimball, a recent

president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also stated in 1976, “the story of Mormonism has never yet been written nor painted nor sculpted nor spoken. It remains for inspired hearts and talented fingers yet to reveal themselves” (4). President Kimball encouraged those worthy members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have the means and ability, to create to go forth and produce great works of art. He went on to teach that the creation of such work is a form of praise to our Lord for the gifts with which we have been blessed.

By developing religious art, the artist can share with others his or her testimony of the truth and knowledge found in the gospel. Through this choreographic exploration, I hope to be able to follow the teachings of these leaders by expressing the admiration I have for the women in the Book of Mormon through my choreography. These women have enriched my own testimony to the extent that I feel compelled to share with others my perception of their greatness.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to an interpretation of specific moments in the lives of Sariah; the wife of King Lamoni and Abish, servant to the queen; and the Ammonite mothers of the sons of Helaman’s two thousand stripling warriors. The dancers performing the choreography were members of the Contemporary Dance Theater at Ricks College. The choreography portrayed experiences in the lives of these women that undoubtedly had a tremendous effect on them and others. The choreography was created as a suite and become a part of the Contemporary Dance Theater repertoire. The choreography was also supported from inception to production by a variety of artwork. These pieces of art were used to gain inspiration for movement, to clarify images for the

performers, and to help enlighten the audience as to the intent of the choreography.

Although there is a variety of visual art and poetry that represents or complements this subject matter, I chose pieces that best supported the work.

Limitations

Although the stories of these women are powerful and inspiring, their impact often comes as a result of their interaction with men. However, the Contemporary Dance Theater, in general, has few men who audition and participate in the company. As a result, the company alone was not be able to provide sufficient numbers of men to fill these roles. Therefore, it was necessary to represent certain episodes containing large numbers of men in a creative fashion. Second, there is little suggested about the personalities or the mental and emotional states of these women, so it will be up to me to portray these intimacies through associative experience, assumption, or inspiration.

Definition of Terms

Articles of Faith - statements which summarize some of the basic doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Book of Mormon - a volume of holy scripture; a record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas containing the fullness of the everlasting gospel, as does the Bible (B of M)

Contemporary Dance Theatre - a modern-based dance company at Ricks College

Dispensation - a period of time during which the Lord reveals or dispenses the doctrines of the gospel to men so that reliance need not be placed on past ages for this saving knowledge (McConkie 200)

LDS – an acronym for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or its members

Pure Movement - that which comes directly from an emotion

Religious dance - dance based on religious or sacred themes intended to acknowledge and praise God

Spirit - a gift that each member of the church receives which gives promptings to guide one to truth; also known as the Holy Ghost (McConkie 752-753)

Worship - a process that expresses joy, gratitude, praise, or acknowledges our Heavenly Father, which can be performed in any setting

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Women in the Book of Mormon

Sariah

The book of Nephi, located in the Book of Mormon, teaches about the lives of Lehi and his family as they were instructed to leave their home in Jerusalem and travel into the wilderness (2 Ne. 1-2). This story is often referred to as “Nephi’s account,” or “Lehi’s story.” However, one cannot forget the many others that traveled with him. Sariah was the wife of Lehi and the mother of eight children including Nephi, Laman, Lemuel, and Sam. She was extremely trusting of her husband who had been led into the wilderness through a vision. Camille S. Williams and Donna Lee Bowen wrote on this very subject in a 1992 Ensign. They state; “Sariah was obligated to move with her husband. There is no evidence that she was less than supportive during the move, but neither is there evidence that she received visions” (39). It was through her faith and trust in her husband that she was able to leave the land of their inheritance, as well as her gold, silver, and precious things (1 Ne 2.4).

Leaving a comfortable life must have been difficult for Sariah, yet she remained supportive, respecting the desires of her husband until the moment she thought she might have lost that which is dear to all mothers, the lives of her children. Lehi sent his sons Nephi, Laman, Lemuel, and Sam back to Jerusalem to retrieve plates of brass that contained the writings of his people. This return to Jerusalem to get the brass plates may have taken more than a week. During the absence of her sons, Sariah mourned for them. Despairing that they were lost, she complained against her husband saying, “my sons are

no more, and we perish in the wilderness” (B. of M., 1 Ne. 5.2). Sariah was well aware of the dangers that faced her sons, causing her great concern. This overwhelming grief consumed her as she went to Lehi for comfort. Lehi bore testimony to Sariah that God would deliver their sons “out of the hand of Laban” (1 Ne. 5.5). He also pointed out that those who stayed in Jerusalem would perish. It takes great faith to trust not only the Lord, but also those through whom he speaks (Williams and Bowen 36). This was the stewardship of Sariah, to follow the teachings of her husband, the prophet.

When her children later returned from the journey, Sariah bore strong testimony of Lehi’s calling stating, “Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the things which the Lord hath commanded them” (B. of M., 1 Ne. 5.8).

Abish and the Wife of King Lamoni

Ideals of love and faith are taught through the story of Abish, a Laminite servant, and the queen of King Lamoni. Although the name of Lamoni’s queen is never mentioned, her example of immediate and instinctive knowledge demonstrates faith in God’s servants. Ammon, who was a prophet of God, was working for King Lamoni as a shepherd. An experience with a wicked group of Lamanites allowed Ammon to prove his faithfulness to the king, causing the king to question Ammon about his beliefs and intentions. After Ammon taught the king the plan of redemption, the king realized that Ammon’s words were true. The king then fell to the ground as if he were dead, becoming overwhelmed with the Spirit (B. of M., Alma 18.36-42). The queen had such

great love for her husband that she stayed by his side for two days, believing he was not dead. Learning of the greatness of Ammon through rumors of the servants, the queen summoned him to her husband's bedside affirming, "thou art a prophet of a holy God, and thou hast power to do many mighty works in his name" (Alma 19.4). Ammon came forth and assured her that her husband would rise the next day. After doing this he asked the queen if she believed that her husband would rise. She replied by saying, "I have had no witness save thy word, and the word of our servants; nevertheless I believe that it shall be according as thou hast said" (Alma 19.9). Due to the remarkable faith of this woman, Ammon said, "blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites" (Alma 19.10). Shortly after this account the king did rise. As he rose he stretched out his hand and said, "blessed be the name of God and blessed art thou" (Alma 19.12).

We read on in the Book of Mormon of how Ammon, King Lamoni, his wife, and all their servants prayed mightily unto the Lord until everyone was overcome by the power of the Spirit, everyone except Abish. Abish did not fall because she had already been converted by the Spirit through the teachings of her father. Abish had gained great faith through his teachings following his experience with a "remarkable vision" (Alma 19.16). Although no one else in her community shared her faith, Abish held her testimony close to her heart until the day came when she was inspired by the Spirit to reveal her knowledge of the gospel (Alma 19.17).

"Draw Strength from the Book of Mormon," an article written by Ruth B. Wright, identifies the conversion of Abish many years in advance as having prepared her to be able to recognize the Spirit (79). After being overcome by the Spirit, Abish took the

hand of the queen to raise her from her sleep. As soon as she did, the queen rose to her feet crying, "O blessed Jesus, who has saved me from an awful hell, O blessed God, have mercy on this people" (B. of M., Alma 19.29). Williams and Bowen described the actions of Abish in bringing the land of the Lamanites to an understanding of the gospel stating:

Later, when Lamoni, his wife, and the Lamanites were all overcome by the Spirit, Abish's long, faithful vigil bore fruit. She alone, of all the Lamanites in the palace, was prepared to recognize the Lord's hand in these events. As servants in the palace reacted in confusion, she hoped that if others saw what was happening, they along with their king and queen would believe Ammon's words. She rushed out, calling people to assemble in the palace of the king. (38)

It was through the faith of these woman, along with their ability to be guided by the Spirit, that an entire nation was converted to the gospel.

The Mothers of the Two Thousand Stripling Warriors

Helaman's two thousand stripling warriors are known for their bravery, courage, and willingness to fight for an adopted country. Helaman called these men his sons due to the fact that they were so young. He once stated that his sons were "exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity" (B. of M., Alma 53.20). He wrote to Captain Moroni saying they were, "men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted. Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him" (Alma 53.20-22).

In a time of great distress during a battle between Helaman's army and the Lamanites, we witness one of the most significant stories in the Book of Mormon.

Helaman, knowing he did not have the sufficient numbers in his army to stand against the Lamanites, asked his sons, “What say ye my sons, will you go against them to battle” (B. of M., Alma 56:44). Darwin L. and Kim Thomas write, “there followed one of the great scenes of the Book of Mormon, and one of the great lessons Mormon was using this space to teach” (Youth 11). Moroni recaptured the account in a letter written to Helaman stating, “never had I seen so great courage, nay not amongst all the Nephites.” His sons’ response to his call for duty humbled Helaman as they replied, “Behold our God is with us, and he will not suffer that we should fall [. . .] we would not slay our brethren if they would let us alone; therefore let us go.” Helaman knowing that they had never fought in a battle before, was overwhelmed with their commitment and lack of fear of death. Helaman continues in his letter writing, “they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” (Alma 56.44-48).

Helaman thus paid one of the greatest compliments in all scripture to those courageous women. They had provided a foundation of faith with which their sons could enter the battlefield inexperienced and outnumbered. That faith was rewarded, for Moroni’s sons “fought as if with the strength of God [. . .] with such miraculous strength and with such mighty power [. . .] that they did frighten the Lamanites.” Helaman explains further with great joy that, through their exceptional faith, not one soul had fallen to the earth. (B. of M., Alma 56.56).

The teaching of the warriors’ mothers gave them strength and faith to fight battles they were not otherwise prepared to fight. Eugene England writes in his address, “Moroni and His Captains: Men of Peace in a Time of War,” that these marvelous mothers taught their sons to put on the whole armor of God, to place their trust in the

Lord, and to doubt not. By so doing, not one of these young men was lost (29). We also read in the Commentary of the Book of Mormon,

Their mothers' teachings and their mothers' prayers were weapons of destruction to their foes and shields of defense to themselves. They went forth conquering and to conquer, and only the All-Seeing One knows how much the teachings of those saintly women effected towards the preservation of the Nephite Commonwealth from imminent destruction.
(Reynolds and Sjodahl 250)

Other Mediums of Expression

Poetry

After an extensive search in church magazines, books, and articles, I was able to find poetry about these specific women. Through a study of these poems I was able to enhance my knowledge of these women through another person's perspective. Using these poems as a resource, I found inspiration within the written words.

The following poem is entitled "The Mother of Nephi" written in the early 1900s by Louisa L. Green Richards.

Sariah, mother! How thy heart was torn,
As o'er thy sons' long absence thou didst mourn!
With thoughts of Laman thou might'st well he tried,
Knowing his vengeful spirit and his pride.

Why shouldst thou not be fearful he might slay,
In his fierce anger, Nephi, by the way?

Or, that averted, thou wouldst ponder then,
Laban, with ease, might slay thy four young men!

Except the Lord, to show, had deemed it best,
To Nephi's mother, how he should be blest,
How could she know that he should surely live,
That god to him would such great favor give?

Though Lehi told her all these things would be,
Blind with anxiety, how could she see?
He named, to comfort her, their promised land,
And strove to soothe, and help her understand.

Ah, Sariah's faith was tried, when she was left,
To feel herself of all her sons bereft!
When we consider that sore, chastening touch,
We must believe the father loved her much.

Sariah, mother! How thou didst rejoice,
To hear again the sound of Nephi's voice;
To hear him breathe once more the sacred name
"My mother!" as into the tent he came.

Let mother hearts assume to count the cost
To mother heart that mourns her sons lost!
Her joy unmeasured let them try to tell,
When God returns her children, safe and well. (39)

Two poems were found on Abish, the first by Donnell Hunter who was awarded the Eliza R Snow poetry contest winner in 1977. This poem depicts Abish reflecting on the teachings of her father as is found in Alma 19:16.

this must be the day...
Lord has reasons, my father said,
why we see signs
no other Lamanite knows;
if we hold fast
someday he'll show us why.

He clung to his hope
faithful to death:
Abish, the sign must not have been for me
but you.
Remember what I saw.
Be true.
Someday someone will need
to show the way.
Be there believing
and when that day comes,

you'll know. (7)

Mildred Hunt's poem on Abish describes a discussion Abish is having with herself at the moment King Lamoni and his wife are struck down with the Spirit. Hunt has titled this poem "Abish." There is no publication information available for this poem.

Dare I? Dare I touch her?

Stay back, I say!

There lies my queen as in death,

Her arms across the king,

And the Nephite close by,

All overcome, all silent, inert.

Oh beautiful lady, my queen,

But an hour ago I plaited your abundant hair,

Black as the condor and as sleek.

I wove the plaits around you dead

To hold your golden crown

fastened emeralds among them.

The jewels live in this morning's light,

While my queen lies lifeless.

Stay back, I tell you, don't press!

They live! They live, all three!

Yea, the Nephite too.

Sheath your swords, you flocks-scatterers!

The Nephite's god has eyes that see through stone

To guard his own.

Now can ye doubt and see

Mogonah lying there

Still grasping sword in his still hand?

Back, I say, back! Cease threatening!

Ah, sweet lady, my king,

My dear Nephite, who smiles yet in his sleep.

Dear God, who loves us all,

Both dark and fair,

Help me!

Sweet mistress, arise!

Through Jesus' name and through his love,

I say "Arise."

Oh see! Attend ye, one and all!

The queen rises!

She calls the king!

Ah blessed hour!

Ah blessed sunrise for my people! (19)

Olive MaFate Wilkins captured the story of Helaman's two thousand warriors in a section of her epic poem written in 1950 entitled "From Cumorah's Lonely Hill."

Moroni received a long message
About the two thousand young men,
How they clung to the faith of their mothers
And God was indeed leading them.

It was Helaman wrote of their valor,
And spoke how his sons noble fought;
They were glad to defend their own homeland
God's love they continually sought.
They had been in the midst of thick battle
The Lamanite gave up in vain
When the Nephites again were all counted,
Not one of these young men was slain.

One could hardly expect such a blessing
That none of the two thousand died;
It was only through God's holy power,
Upon which these boys had relied.
Many battles were fought and were ended
Great cities were lost and reclaimed
Many thousands had been slain and wounded
God's spirit in Nephites remained. (113)

Visual Art

In order to find visual art that would complement the choreography and represent certain moments in the lives of these women, I went to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Museum of History and Art located in Salt Lake City. This museum has the most extensive collection of artwork created by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At the museum I was able to locate several paintings that represented moments in the lives of these women which I have chosen to explore in the dance.

Although there were several paintings depicting Sariah, Nephi and His Brothers Return With the Brass Plates by Gary Smith was the only painting found to represent Sariah's longing for her sons. It is a beautiful painting that captures the excitement of Sariah as she sees her sons for the first time after they were sent back to Jerusalem to retrieve the brass plates.

Four paintings portray moments in the life of Abish. They are Abish and the Queen by Sherrie H. Thomas, Women of Exceeding Faith: The Queen and Abish by Ann Croft, Lamoni's Queen by Blanche P. Wilson, and Because of Thy Exceeding Faith by Sherilynn Boyer Doty. Because of thy Exceeding Faith was the painting I chose to support the story of Abish and Lamoni's queen. It was chosen for its color and detail, but most importantly it contains all four witnesses of that account, Ammon, Lamoni, Abish, and Lamoni's queen.

Farewell my Stripling Warrior by Del Parson, Taught by Their Mothers by Judy Cooley, and What Power a Mother's Teachings by Elaine Smith were all helpful in

providing images about the account of the stripling warriors; however, I selected What Power a Mother's Teaching for its distinct uniqueness of lines and symmetry.

Music

Music was reviewed by way of the internet, catalogs, and library and bookstore listening stations. While no music compositions were found that had been specifically composed for these particular scenes from the Book of Mormon, there were several compositions by various LDS composers that would compliment the choreography, too many to list in this study. During my search I became aware of the work of Jay Richards. His music assisted me in creating a mood and atmosphere conducive with the lives of these women. I chose to use combinations of selections taken from the CDs entitled Journey Home, and Passages.

Conclusion

Through studying these women I have come to further understand the power of their stories and how their example of faith can help strengthen our own testimonies. It is through creating a religious dance integrating art created by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that I seek to share this knowledge with others.

Chapter 3

Procedures

The following is an outline of the procedures that were used in preparation for this master's thesis.

Selection of Theme

Through a great deal of prayer, study, and research I chose specific women from the Book of Mormon whom I felt had made a tremendous impact on those with whom they associated. I carefully studied the Book of Mormon in search of an event that inspired me spiritually and emotionally, along with scenes of dramatic intensity that could be recreated through movement.

Visual Art

A great deal of time was spent locating pieces of artwork created by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which would represent the specific moments, I had chosen. Three separate paintings were chosen, framed, and displayed in the lobby of the auditorium preceding the performance. Each painting represented a section of the choreography and was framed accordingly. A frame specialist was consulted for help with style and color choice. Each framed artwork was unique in color and design and appropriately complemented the choreography.

The artwork was displayed in the lobby of the performance space on a long table draped with fabric similar to that of the costumes. Silk plants, poetry, and small frames containing the names of the artwork and the artist were placed on the table to create an atmosphere resembling that of the choreography. During the welcome and introduction of the concert, the audience was invited to view the artwork in order to have a better

knowledge of the dance. These paintings helped the dancers and the audiences gain a greater understanding of the significance of this choreographic work. A picture of this display can be found in appendix H.

Music

Music played an important part in the development of the choreography. Originally I had selected only the music of Jay Richards from his CDs titled, Journey Home, and Passages to accompany the movement. However, amid the process I became concerned with the lack of dynamics found within the music. At this point Sam Cardon gave me a CD entitled Earth Cinema. This music perfectly fit the theme and style of the choreography. By using music from both composers and the artwork to enliven the choreography, a sense of unity and clarity was developed throughout the movement.

Poetry

Selected poems written by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were used to enhance my understanding and for inspiration for the choreography. I also included sections of the text in the performance. Full text of the poems are found in Chapter 2, Review of Literature.

Program Notes and Introductions

Program notes were used to introduce the topic of the thesis and each individual section. It was hoped that by doing this, the viewer would have a better understanding of the scriptures from which the movement was taken. Before the performance began, a scripted introduction was played over the sound system which introduced the thesis and the importance and significance behind this study. After the performance, another script

was read which identified the important role these women played in bringing the gospel into the hearts of many.

Choreography

The choreography was approached through a number of methods. Due to the spiritual nature of this piece, I attempted to immerse myself in the lives of these women from the Book of Mormon, hoping to be led intuitively by the Spirit to create movement that captured and represented brief moments from their lives. By striving to maintain a worthy and humble state, there were moments that I was able to enjoy the blessings of inspiration. It has been written that truly spiritual beings walk in the light of personal revelation and enjoy the frequent promptings of the Holy Ghost (McConkie 760). With this knowledge, I felt blessed to be able to receive promptings that guided the choreographic process to show the faith of these women and the sacrifice they had to endure. I also investigated methods of narration, representational movement, and imagery to find ways to enhance the understanding and clarify the intent of the choreography.

Once movement was developed, I used specific techniques developed by Ann Dirksen, a writer and choreographer of liturgical dance, to direct the dancers through this choreographic process (14-16). First I chose a quiet time in the studio to listen to selections of great choirs and orchestras. The dancers and I then read passages from the scriptures, inspirational books, poetry, and spiritual messages in keeping with that which was to be symbolized. Second, in an effort to feel the beauty of the music, the dancers and I listened to the chosen compositions opening our minds to visual images and then discussing them. Third, we studied religious paintings in order to become more sensitive

to the need for dignity and beauty of line and detail. Finally, we analyzed the true meaning of each movement phrase, discussing and clarifying in detail the intent (15).

Throughout this choreographic process I felt it prudent to keep in mind the words of Walter Sorell, a dance writer and critic who addressed the theme of liturgical dance for many newspaper and magazine publications. Sorell felt choreographers must be extremely careful not to produce movement that is boisterous and flamboyant. The use of excessive movements, costumes, lighting, and props can take away from the sacredness of the dance. Sorell stated that successful dances that have been created using religious themes communicate "based on utter simplicity rather than cliches of movement" (Sacred Dance Revisited 17). It was the use of these methods when creating this religious work of art that heightened and clarified the performance.

This project was presented in its final stage at Contemporary Dance Theatre concert on March 8-10, 2001, at in the Ricks College Kirkham Auditorium. Over 1,570 tickets were sold, making this a memorable occasion for both the performers and myself. All three performances went extremely well, as each dancer successfully portrayed the spirit and essence of the piece.

Selection of Dancers

The dancers were selected from members of the Contemporary Dance Theater of Ricks College. Other dancers were brought in for the purpose of completing certain scenes. In order to properly represent the women, I specifically chose dancers who were, not only technically proficient, but also capable of connecting emotionally and spiritually with the women they portrayed.

Rehearsals

Dancers were chosen in September 2000 as part of the Contemporary Dance Theatre's fall auditions. Rehearsals began Tuesday, January 9, 2001. They were held every Tuesday and Thursday from 8:00-11:00 a.m. and Saturday from 8:00-12:00 p.m. The first section choreographed was the solo, "A Mothers Journey," and was rendered in two weeks. After the completion of this dance, rehearsal for "Taught by Their Mothers" began and continued until February 9th. At this time I traveled with the performers to Brigham Young University to gain feedback on choreography from my committee. After returning from BYU, rehearsal for "Because of Thy Exceeding Faith" began. At this point I became concerned with the limited time remaining until the performance and held extra rehearsals in the evening for the soloist. The final staging and light setting occurred one week before the performance.

Lights

Special lights were used Four Wall Entertainment Company Las Vegas NV, in to create the desired effects. Six scrollers, which change the light tree colors, along with three "intelligent lights," which can be programmed to focus anywhere on the stage, were used to enhance and accentuate the mood of the piece. The "intelligent lights" were also used to draw the audience into a specific moment onstage. A general three electric wash was hung overhead using red, blue, and amber. Lavender highsides were placed on the first two electrics to enhance the facial features, along with general pink and blue face lights. The scrim and cyclorama were used several times to create a background of color and dimension.

Costumes

The costumes were designed through a collaborative effort between Ricks College Dance Department and costume shop, and myself. The paintings found in Appendix B were studied for design, color, texture, and style in developing the designs for the costumes. The fabric was chosen to match exactly that of the clothing in the paintings. Stencils were created to replicate the floral design on the dress of Abish and the geometric shapes located on the bed of king Lamoni in the painting. Located on all figures in each of the paintings was an extensive adornment of jewelry and headpieces. This specifically represented the time and culture and was therefore used in the costuming of this piece. The costumes created for the warriors deviated from those seen in the painting in order to meet the costume standards held by Ricks College. Props were created to enhance the performance and closely replicated objects depicted in the paintings. Spears, pouches slung over the shoulder, and protective fur were used to represent the warriors in battle.

Publicity

I prepared posters and flyers that were used to aid in the publicity for this concert. There was also an article in the Ricks College newspaper, as well as radio advertisements. Concert announcements were sent to all dance faculty at Ricks College.

Funding

A grant of \$4,845 through the Ricks College Fine Arts Division entitled "Expressions of the Spirit" provided financing for this project. The Ricks College Dance Department and the Contemporary Dance Theatre also assisted with funds totaling \$1,600. The grant detailing the cost and need for support can be found in the appendix A.

Evaluation

An informal gathering of selected audience members and committee members in attendance was held directly after the performance. The participants were asked to evaluate the work for choreographic content, clarity of intent, and believable representation of the selected women from the Book of Mormon. Observations made during this discussion were used to illuminate the evaluation sections in Chapters 4 and 5. I used a video recording of the work to analyze and critique the performance.

Chapter 4

Choreographic Process and Presentation

The emphasis for this choreography was to develop movement that would capture the essence and emotions of specific moments in the lives of women in the Book of Mormon. I approached this choreographic process differently than any of my previous works. The majority of my preparation came from studying the lives of these women. Due to the limited writings and information found, I chose to make speculations and conclusions regarding how they might have reacted during crucial moments in their lives. By doing this and focusing on the impact they had on the lives of the people around them, I believe I was able to gain a greater awareness of who these women were. I then placed myself in the specific moments by using visualization and intuition. I found it beneficial to portray not only the individual, but also all of those involved in the scenario. Through this process, I felt more connected and was able to better imagine the impact and depth of the story. In order to stay clear and focused when I finally began to create movement phrases, I continually referred back to the information I had gathered. For a more complete understanding of this work, it is suggested that the performance videocassette be viewed in conjunction with the reading of this thesis.

Preparing the Dancers

As part of the choreographic process, I felt it imperative to share with the performers all the information I had gathered to help them grasp the significance of the choreographic and performance journey on which we were preparing to embark. The methods of Ann Dirksen, a choreographer and writer of liturgical dance, were used to set a sacred tone that was maintained throughout the rehearsals. These methods included

listening to selections of great choirs and orchestras, reading spiritual messages, studying religious paintings, and analyzing the meaning of each movement phrase (14-16). Each dancer was also asked to study, on their own, the specific written accounts of these women in the Book of Mormon. By doing so, the performers brought their own perspectives and insights to the rehearsals. This allowed for individual testimonies to be shared with the group, and in the final steps of the journey, for these testimonies to be shared with the audience during the performance. Along with these readings, the performers and I studied the chosen artwork, analyzing the emotions, commitment, and intent found within. Through the study of these paintings, the dancers were able to identify with a character they had never met before. The influence of these paintings provided certain information regarding the feelings of the people they were portraying and the importance of their lives.

Midway through the choreographic process I took the performers to Salt Lake City to view The Testament. This is a film developed and produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints focusing on the life of Christ and his visit to ancient America. The film was viewed in hopes of enlightening the performers concerning the lifestyles, cultures, and mannerisms of the people of this time. It was also viewed to demonstrate the fact that testimonies can be shared through an artistic product. This was a very positive experience for the performers, as well as for me. I was so deeply touched by the power of the images seen on the screen. This was a perfect example of art being used to express a religious and sacred story. I came away from this film believing that, if I could create a work of art that would in some way touch the lives of people the way this film had, this process would truly be a success. Following the film, the performers had

the opportunity to present an informal showing of the work to my graduate committee. It was at this time that one of the greatest transformations took place, as the dancers began to recognize with deeper convictions the stories of these women and the potential these stories had to strengthen their own personal testimonies of faith. They began to personally relate to the characters they were portraying, taking ownership of the dance and thus empowering the performance.

Choreographic Description

The following is a brief description of the choreographic process in which specific examples of movement will be used to illuminate certain choreographic concepts. Following the discussion I will evaluate the performance using feedback from the performers, the audience, and the graduate committee.

The first section was titled "A Mother's Journey." This title was chosen for two reasons. First, it represents the physical journey Sariah was asked to take as her husband Lehi was commanded to travel into the wilderness. Second, it represents the spiritual journey of Sariah as she was tormented with doubt about leaving her home and following her husband. The choreography for this section represents several moments as Sariah fears she has lost her sons. She is confused as to why her husband, their father, would sacrifice the lives of their children. She is also concerned for her own safety, as well as the others that were traveling with them.

The curtain opened on a set depicting the painting, Nephi and his Brothers Return With the Brass Plates, by Gary Smith. A tent draped with fur, large boulders, ceramic pottery, and foliage adorned stage right, while Sariah stood downstage left facing upstage. The music began as she walked toward the tent with heavy feet and a limp

upper body representing an aged woman stricken with grief. The movement continued to express sorrow with intermittent moments of disbelief as she stared off into the distance or gazed heavenward. Throughout the piece, movements were used that reflected moments of raising a child. Images of cradling a baby, embracing, and caressing the brow of a sick child helped to bring honesty to the choreography. The most powerful moment came when Sariah collapsed with grief, which is shown using shoulder contractions and body convulsions to represent weeping. The dance ends with Sariah walking back toward the tent as she had done in the beginning. She places a scarf on top of her head, very slowly, with a clear intent of bereavement. As she does this she hears someone coming, and she turns to see her sons walking towards her. With disbelief in her eyes, a conversion takes place in her heart and she reaches out with her arms to embrace her lost sons.

During the choreography of this piece I was challenged with the fact that the dancer I had chosen to portray Sariah (who was an elderly woman with grown children) was only nineteen. Because she had not yet experienced motherhood, I found myself having to explain moments in great detail in order to help her grasp the depth of feeling I wanted embodied. Although this was a time consuming process, it forced me to know exactly what emotion I wanted for each choreographed phrase. This clarity allowed the performer to be articulate and convincing in her execution of the dance. Stylistically, movement for this section was soft and delicate, yet weighted and grounded. It was my intention to create an image that represented Sariah being surrounded by nature, both its beauty and its challenges, in order to create movement both powerful and picturesque.

The second piece was titled "This Must Be the Day." This title represents the words Ammon spoke to queen Lamoni after being asked if she believed his teachings (B. of M., Alma 19.12). The piece opened with Ammon standing over king Lamoni, who has been stricken down by the Spirit. The great love of the queen was evident as she sat clasping the hand of the king, while Abish, the queen's servant, stood faithfully by the bedside. Ammon danced using clean, strong lines as he glided across the floor. Due to the many years that had passed since the days of Lehi and Sariah, along with the loss of gospel influence, Ammon's movement differed dramatically from that of the previous section. It was my intent to choreograph this section as more angular and flat, representing a change in time and culture. This change also allowed for a different mood and feeling among the performers while they danced.

The movement continued, representing the powerful strength of a young man as Ammon boldly stood with his arms outstretched, gazing heavenward. Ammon then reached for the queen, which represented his sharing the gospel with her. The queen advanced toward Ammon, and together they danced the phrase Ammon previously performed with only small direction and timing changes. These changes were used to express the individuality and unity among the performers as they experienced the power of the priesthood. The music faded as the lights drew the audience to the bed of Lamoni. Lamoni rose as Ammon had promised and reached out with his arms to express the joy he felt receiving the gospel (B. of M., Alma 19.8). Lamoni then beckoned to his wife and was again overcome by the Spirit. The queen reached toward Lamoni and was struck down by the Spirit (Alma 19.13). Ammon carried the queen to Lamoni and placed her on his chest. Ammon then became filled with joy as he fell to his knees in prayer. During

this time Ammon was also overwhelmed with the Spirit and fell to the ground (Alma 19.14).

I found this portion of the dance extremely challenging to choreograph. With so many being “struck down with the Spirit,” I had to discover ways to represent the story without being comical. This was achieved through the use of light changes, silence, and complete commitment from the performers.

Abish alone remained standing. She observed the three of them lying motionless on the floor and began to truly recognize her stewardship while she recalled the voice of her father and his teachings of the gospel (B. of M., Alma 19.17). Abish had been converted many years earlier due to a “remarkable vision” experienced by her father (Alma 19.16). This moment was portrayed through the reading of a poem written by Donnell Hunter and spoken by Becky Foster (see appendix F). As this poem was read, Abish circled the bed of king Lamoni and contemplated the words of her father. The following is a section of this poem, at which time Abish’s movement became more direct and determined: “Abish, the sign must not have been for me but you. Remember what I saw. Be true.” The music to this point carried a slow and melodic tone that enhanced the internal movement struggle of Abish. As her determination grew, the music instigated an underlying percussive fugue that followed Abish as she ran from one side of the stage to the other, representing the words written in Alma: “And supposing that this opportunity, by making known unto the people what has happened among them, that by beholding this scene it would cause them to believe in the power of God, therefore she ran forth from house to house, making it known unto the people” (Alma 19.17). As Abish ran from side to side, twelve dancers entered from stage right. This entrance represented the rushing in

of king Lamoni's people, who were frightened and concerned for the well being of the household (Alma 19.18). Through the dancers' execution of a set phrase with several directional changes, broken by random walking at different timings, a feeling of chaos was established. The dancers then broke into two separate groups representing those that believed in the words of Abish and those that did not. The scene ended in silence as Abish, desperate to prove the truthfulness of her words, reached for the hand of the queen in the hope of bringing her to her feet (Alma 19.29).

The queen arose and ran to center stage with her arms outstretched in joyous celebration and gratitude to God for his mercy (B. of M., Alma 19.29). The music began again as the queen reached her hand toward Abish and together they danced. The following section was a moment not found directly in the scriptures; however, it represented a bond and a love felt between two women as they together shared a monumental moment. The performers embraced with one arm circling around each other and the other delicately placed to the side. They circled the stage in opposite directions, came back together, and clasped hands. This gesture was used throughout the performance to represent strength and love between the women. The movement continued with subtle gestures of support as they leaned on one another once again, reaching for each other's hands. Following the dance between the queen and Abish, the queen went forth to her husband and by touching his hand caused him to rise to his feet (Alma 19.30). The dance ended with all four characters, Ammon, Abish, the king, and the queen, in humble contemplation of all that had taken place.

The third section was titled, "What Power a Mother's Teachings," and depicted the story of Helaman's two thousand stripling warriors. My intent was to demonstrate

the beauty and splendor found in the mothers of these Laminite warriors, beginning with three women in a tableau upstage right. As the music started one woman lifted her hand and placed it on the shoulder of another. This action continued until all the women were bound together using the touching of hands to represent their unity. This beginning scene was portrayed several times throughout the choreography and was influenced by the painted images.

As the choreography continued, the tableau began to express a much stronger meaning. The clasping of hands depicted the love and bond that is passed from mother to daughter from generation to generation. It took many rehearsals and suggested imagery from my graduate committee in order for this image to become clear. However, when it finally happened, it was a powerful experience for both the performers and the audience.

The dance continued with the addition of five more dancers entering stage right and six entering from stage left. The movement was fluid, incorporating the use of long lines of the legs and arms, soft circular images carved through the space, and gentle leaps through the air. Although the movement in this section was soft, it also represented a sense of groundedness through a strong connection with the floor. Circular pathways were used in order to create images of unity and strength. Movement phrases performed in a canon added interest to the choreography through level and spatial changes.

Throughout the choreography, movement phrases were introduced by the women and then seen in a later section performed by male dancers. This was used to demonstrate the teachings of mothers to their sons and will be discussed in more detail during the description of this section.

The mood and music of this piece created a lighthearted change as five boys entered from stage left. Their movement was juvenile and filled with laughter as they pushed and pulled one another in playful wrestling. The images on stage were reminiscent of young teenage boys testing out their newfound strength, yet still influenced by the love of their mothers. The music has a folk dance feel to it, which influenced the choreography into quick footwork, using turns and weight changes to manipulate the rhythm. The mothers never made physical contact with the boys, yet they wove in and out among them, following the boys as they moved from one side of the stage to the other. At one point, all of the women joined hands and, using modified grapevine steps, traveled in a pathway that encircled the boys. This moment represented the fact that it took an entire community of mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and neighbors to influence these boys in making the right choices. The boys repeated movement phrases performed by the mothers in the previous section, adding their own strength and commitment. They also manipulated the spatial direction where movement was previously performed, which represented their own way of thinking. This section ended as the women formed a circle around the boys and together danced one more time before the boys left for war. The music ended as each boy was embraced by a woman representing his mother, saying goodbye as she placed a war spear in his hand. One by one the women left the stage, encouraging the young men as they passed with a gentle touch, a soft embrace, or a look of pride for the brave and courageous young men they had become.

The scrim turned a bright red, balanced out with blue over headlights that produced an exciting lighting effect that seemed to separate the warriors from the stage.

The movement was influenced by my years of growing up in Arizona observing Hopi and Navajo Indian festivals. With bent knees and hunched shoulders, the boys poised and prepared for battle. The music changed dynamically as the warriors picked up their spears and shook them at the audience, drawing them into the performance. Adding an element of danger and excitement, the warriors, each one taking on a different character, spun their weapons and jabbed them into the ground as if in the middle of a battle. Using different timing the warriors fought, creating a sense of chaos and adding a true sense of war to the scene. During this section the lights on the scrim changed to black and the face lights changed to red, producing the effect of late night, even early the next morning. The lights helped to express to the audience the length of time the battle was fought, having started at dusk and now approaching early morning. As the dance came to an end, the warriors all approached center. Facing upstage they raised their weapons over their heads, with not one soul having fallen to the earth (B. of M., Alma 56.56). At this moment the scrim lit up again; this time the mothers stood in between the scrim and the cyclorama facing forward, each holding the hand of another as they had once done before. I believe this to be one of the most powerful moment of the choreography as the influence of the mothers could truly be seen (Alma 56.47). The lights finally faded to black as a verbal conclusion was played over the sound system summarizing that acts of faith can make a difference, and strength can be found in ordinary women.

Evaluation

It was intended that this would be a personal journey with the intent to impact lives. However, in order to assess the development of the choreography and judge the effect it had on myself, those who participated in it, and those who viewed it, evaluation

was inevitable. An informal process was used to gather information. After the work was performed, the students participating in it were asked to write a brief paper on their experiences. A dinner was held after the last performance, at which I was joined by my graduate committee and other dance colleagues. The project was then discussed and feedback was given. This session was videotaped in order to help recall specific comments. The actual performance was videotaped as well, and viewed several times in order to analyze the works. Using the information gathered, I will address the success of this project along with suggested improvements.

As the choreography began, it was my hope that those who would be involved in the performance of this project would be as touched by the strength and faith of these women as I had been. I had no idea of the depth of discovery this experience would bring to those who danced it. As the performers shared their feelings about this piece, I was humbled. They expressed not only the testimony of faith they had gained from these women, but the faith they had in my choreography and me. One student, after being chosen to play the role of Abish, wrote, "There had been no previous discussion, or audition, which is what I thought would happen before you would choose the best dancer suited for this part. It was then that I became very humbled, realizing you had picked me for a reason, and that you would not carelessly pick just anyone for something so important. I was supposed to do this, and I was anxious to get started and find out why." This same performer also expressed her newfound knowledge in the scriptures as she related the strength of Abish to go forth and share the gospel, adding her own personal desire to do the same.

The discussion between the committee members and myself following the performance helped to illuminate details of the choreography and brought insight into the work. Pat Debenham, Cathy Black, and Caroline Prohosky were all pleased with the outcome and overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work. All three members agreed that the third section, "Taught by Their Mothers," was the most successful in its consistency from beginning to end, having complete sense of connection between movement and scenario. Prohosky addressed the use of stylistic spatial patterns and movement choices, which allowed for clarity throughout the piece. Black believed the most successful aspect of the performance was the combination of music, visual art, poetry, and choreography, stating, "The balance between all elements was a perfect fit." Debenham suggested changing the order of the three sections so that the solo was in the middle of the two group numbers, thus breaking up the large numbers and giving the piece more variety. Prohosky, however, did not agree completely with this change, believing the solo with its "gripping" beginning "transports you to another time and place." Prohosky continued by commending the level of maturity I was able to pull from the performers, which allowed for a feeling of completeness. "It was very fulfilling," she stated.

As I began to personally evaluate the work, I reflected on two questions asked by the committee: (1) "How is this piece different from the works you have done before," (2) "Did you accomplish the goal of depicting the faith of the selected women from the Book of Mormon and, if so, how?" The challenge I found in choreographing this piece was to always stay true and honest to the theme. The movement had to depict the images I intended to create in order to represent the characters chosen. If I allowed the movement to be created by shape and design only, the depth of the intent would have

been lost. It was imperative to allow the emotion of the stories to influence the motion of the choreography. I also found it challenging to synthesize all of the artistic elements in a way that would compliment each section, yet allow for distinction.

Depicting the faith of these women was the primary goal of the choreography. This was done by representing moments of their lives when they demonstrated great faith in challenging circumstances. I believe that it was through these stories that the audience experienced this faith, thus strengthening their own testimonies. The use of program notes and scripted text, along with the dancers' personal conviction to the choreography, only heightened this experience.

I truly believe this choreographic project was a success on all levels. Not only did I grow from this experience, I believe those who participated in or viewed it came away from the performance with a better understanding of the faith of these women.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this thesis was to research and choreograph a dance based on the following women in the Book of Mormon: Sariah, Lamoni's queen, Abish, and the mothers of Helaman's two thousand stripling warriors. I had a desire to more fully understand the great faith of these women and hoped that, by experiencing their lives through movement, I would in some way understand the depth of their faith. Writings about these women were researched and other artistic interpretations of specific moments in their lives were used to accent and influence the choreography. Specific music, visual art, and poetry created by LDS artists were inspirational in the development of the final product. The choreography was presented on March 8-10, 2001, in the Ricks College Kirkham Auditorium. Chosen to perform the choreography were dancers from the Contemporary Dance Theatre, along with three additional men.

Conclusions

I discovered many wonderful things through the process of this choreographic thesis. As I began this journey I had no idea of the impact it would have on me spiritually, emotionally, and physically. By embodying the use of pure movement, which immediately comes from emotion, I was able to develop my communication skills through a dance vocabulary. I struggled to create choreography that would depict a specific emotion without becoming flamboyant and distracting. I found that by using unembellished movement to depict the stories of these women, I was able to maintain the sacredness of the dance.

The challenge to stay clear and focused on the intent was one of the hardest obstacles to overcome. With so many things influencing the outcome of the choreography, I sincerely tried to trust my instincts and follow inspiration as it guided me through this process. Although I used many choreographic components to create this dance, I found that the more I studied the scriptures, prayed, and relied on the Lord, the more pleased I was with the outcome of the movement phrases. I was also able to gain insight into the meaning of faith as I studied the lives of these women. Through the challenge of choreography, I was able to connect with these women and develop an artistic presentation that I believe explained what constituted faith for them. Although one can read about the life of another, I have discovered that true understanding for me comes through the creation and expression of movement. By developing movement with the intent to better comprehend a concept or scenario, one is forced to look at it from many different perspectives.

I was also humbled by the overwhelmingly positive response I received from the performers, the audience, and my committee. Many expressed the emotion they felt during and after the performance as one of the greatest spiritual experiences they have had through dance. The performers were particularly articulate as they expressed how they felt about the choreography and the opportunity they had to share their testimonies through dance. The ability these dancers have to bring the Spirit into their performance is what truly made it a success, as they became living testimonies of the strength of these ancient women. The feelings of these performers and the experience they gained can be summed up in two insightful quotes: "This process gave me such a desire to thank my Heavenly Father for the talent that has been given to myself and CDT and the chance that

we had to perform this sacred work” and “My spirit joined with the company’s testimony as we portrayed the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, the strength of righteous women, and faith in all things.” Reading the words of these dancers instills in me the desire to continue to create religious works.

Recommendations

“Go to, then you who are gifted; cultivate your gift. Develop it in any of the arts and in every worthy example of them,” states Boyd K. Packer. Due to the positive feedback received on the concert and my own personal growth, I agree with this recommendation. I found the methods listed and discussed in these writings to be pertinent in the success of the dance, thus encouraging any and all artists who feel inspired to create religious works of art to take this knowledge and continue to explore new ways to create scripture-based dances. Choreographic possibilities to create religious-based works are limitless and are an effective tool in teaching others about the gospel. With this in mind, I feel as though there should be more support for this type of religious-based work, not only in creating opportunities for it in the future, but also in expanding its exposure through more performances to a broader audience.

Works Cited

- Arrington, Georganna Ballif. "Dance in Mormonism: the Dancingest Denomination." Focus on Dance X: Religion and Dance Ed. Dennis J. Fallon and Mary Jane Wolbers. Reston, VA: AAHPERD, 1992.
- The Book of Mormon. Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981
- Dirksen, Ann. "Introduction to Religious Dance." Dance Magazine March 1962: 14-16.
- Doty, Sheri Lynn Boyer. Because of Thy Exceeding Faith. 1999. Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City. 2000.
- England, Eugene. "Moroni and His Captains: Men of Peace in a Time of War." Ensign Sept. 1977: 29-31.
- Hunt, Mildred. "Abish" Book of Mormon and Other Poems. [Sacramento?]: n.p., n.d., 19.
- Hunter, Donnell. "Abish." Ensign Aug 1977: 7.
- Hunter, Howard. "Out of Limelight." New Era Sept 1991: 66-69.
- Jack Elaine L. "Look Up and Press On." Ensign May 1992: 98-101.
- Kimball, Spencer W. "Education for Eternity." BYU Devtional. Brigham Young University, Provo. Sept. 12, 1967.
- The Pearl of Great Price. Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981.
- Meads, Marjorie. "My Book of Mormon Sisters." Ensign Sept 1977: 66-69.
- Packer, Boyd K. "The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord" Ensign 1976: 60-65.

- Reynolds, George, and Janne Sjodah. Commentary on the Book of Mormon.
Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1955.
- Richards, Louisa L. Green. "The Mother of Nephi." Branches That Run Over the Wall. Salt Lake City: Magazine Printing, 1904. 41-42.
- Schmidt, Julie Fairbanks. "The Spirit of Dance." Insight. Fall 1992: 10-12.
- Smith, Gary. Nephi and His Brothers Return with the Brass Plates. LDS Visual Resource Center. Salt Lake City. 2000
- Sorell, Walter. "Sacred Dance at the Crossroads." Dance Magazine August 1964: 24-25.
- . "Sacred Dance Revisited." Dance Magazine June 1962: 17.
- . "The Sacred Dance." Dance Observer Feb 1961: 21.
- Thomas, Darwin L. and Kim "The Book of Mormon and Today's Family." June (1988): 37-39.
- . "Youth and the Book of Mormon." New Era Sept 1977: 9-12.
- Wilkins, Olive McFate. "Moroni Used Strategy." From Cumorahs Lonely Hill. Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Pres, 1950. 113.
- Williams, Camille, Donna Lee Bowen. "Ordinary People in the Book of Mormon." Ensign Jan 1992: 36-38.
- Wright, Ruth B. "Draw Strength from the Book of Mormon." Ensign June 1990: 78-79.

Appendix A

“Expressions of the Spirit” proposal

November 29, 2000

Dear Committee:

I am submitting this letter to Expressions of the Spirit in hopes of obtaining partial funding for a project I will be presenting in March of 2001. This choreographic project is a thirty-minute religious work integrating LDS music, visual art, and poetry, in order to interpret specific moments in the lives of the women from the Book of Mormon. These women are Sariah, the wife of King Lamoni, the servant Abish, and the Ammonite mothers of Helaman's two thousand stripling warriors. This work will be entitled, "Because of thy Exceeding Faith: A Choreographic Portrayal of Women in the Book of Mormon". At the conclusion of this project I will write a paper detailing the process and outcome of the work. This paper will then be published in the BYU Library.

In studying the Book of Mormon I have come across many examples of women who faithfully followed prophets who led them. In fact there are over one hundred and fifty passages referring to women, though only six are mentioned by name, three of them being Biblical women. The limited writings about these women may give the reader the illusion that they are somehow less important because of the dominant focus on male figures. This is not the case. Howard W. Hunter said, "whether it be mother Sariah or the simple maid Abish, servant to the Lamanite Queen, each made contributions unacknowledged by the eyes of men, but not unseen by the eyes of God."

In reviewing the requirements of Expressions of the Spirit you will be pleased to know that this project meets all of the proposed objectives. First, this choreographic project uses the arts to strengthen and increase ones testimony of faith by providing

examples of faith exercised by women of the Book of Mormon. Second, through research previously done in preparation for this project, I have come across several talks, quotes, stories and testimonies by leaders of the church of the greatness of art and the impact it has on the Gospel. This knowledge will then be passed on to those individuals involved in the choreographic process, those who view the project, and those that may read the concluding writings. Third, as this project is viewed, I believe that it will have a great impact on not only members of the church, but non-members as well, for faith is a nondenominational element for all to obtain. This project will be performed on campus, as well as part of the Extravagance Tour to the Southwest states and Mexico. It is my hope that the audience who views this work will gain a greater understanding of these women and how their lives can be used as an example. Through this understanding, testimonies will be strengthened and a greater knowledge will be gained of how we can incorporate the gospel and arts into our lives.

Whether a viewer of the project or a participant of the creative process, it is hoped that those involved will come away with a greater understanding of the strength found within ordinary people. This project encourages all to turn to the Book of Mormon not just for stories of prophets overcoming adversity, but for ordinary people who showed faith in the prophets by supporting their teachings.

I have recently spent eight weeks at the BYU campus and the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City researching this topic. I have located artwork and gained consent from the artist for it to be used in this project. I have researched original writings in the form of poetry on these women and I have selected the music to be used. I now intend to begin the creative stage of this project for which I am asking

assistance. The Ricks College Dance Department is showing support through faculty load and through the use of the dancers, which are members of the Contemporary Dance Theater. I have also give open invitations to others that have shown interest in performing in this project. This project will be performed on March 8-10, 2001 as part of CDT's Spring Concert.

I have spoken with a costume and lighting designer to gather an estimate of what this production might cost. I am also asking for assistance in the framing of the artwork already purchased. To assist in the evaluation and concluding writings on this project, I intend to bring three individuals to view this work that I feel are well educated and experienced in choreography of this nature. I will also be taking the performers to Salt Lake City to view "The Testament" and present and informal showing at BYU. There will also be an array of miscellaneous items such as a fee to edit the music, copy cost, for the small gathering to be held after the performance, cost to videotape the performance, and three light lunches to be served to the participants during rehearsals that may last four hours or longer. I am also requesting finical support for the creative aspect of this project. The Dance Department has agreed to assist in the framing of the artwork and funds from CDT will be donated to help in the costume construction. The following is an itemized list of the remaining needs.

Costume design and construction	\$1500
Production design, renting lights, and construction of props	\$1000
Framing of the artwork	\$1000
Specialist to critique the project, and trip to BYU, travel, food, hotel	\$750
Miscellaneous	\$650

Creative fee	\$1500
Support from Dance Department	-\$350
Support from CDT	-\$1200
Total	<hr/>
	\$4850

I am very excited to begin this project. If you need any further information I will be glad to provide it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wendy L Bone

Dance Department

Appendix B

Artwork

Nephi and His Brothers Return With the Brass Plates

By

Gary Smith



Because of Thy Exceeding Faith

By

Sheri Lynn Boyer Doty



What Power a Mother's Teachings

By

Elaine Smith



Appendix C

Poem used during performance

Appendix D

Spoken script

Because of thy Exceeding Faith

Latter Day Saints can draw strength from the Book of Mormon by gaining a greater understanding of God's plan, and by following examples set by those in this book. The Book of Mormon contains hundreds of examples of faithful followers, with over 150 passages referring to women. Although there are many references to women, only six of them are mentioned by name, three of them being Biblical women. The limited writings about these women may give the reader the illusion that they are somehow less important because of the dominant focus on male figures. This is not the case. Former President of the Church, Howard W. Hunter said, "whether it be mother Sariah, or the simple maid Abish, servant to the Lamanite Queen, Each made contributions unacknowledged by the eyes of man, but not unseen by the eyes of God."

The following is a choreographic exploration representing moments in the lives of Sariah, Queen Lamoni, Abish, and the Ammonite mothers of Helaman's two thousand stripling warriors.

The stories of these women show that acts of faith can make a difference, and that strength can be found in the ordinary person. It was through the faith of these women that countless numbers were brought into the Gospel. These women should be an example in our lives as we embrace their experiences to strengthen our own testimonies. These growing testimonies should then be shared with others. Throughout time, dance has been a way to do just that. It combines the mind, body, and spirit, in celebration for all that we have been given, and allows us to share the passions, beliefs, and convictions that lie within each of us. Lloyd D. Newel writes, "sometimes as we consider the

goodness of God the joy of his creation fills us with immeasurable delight, and with the urge to express that joy by rising to our feet and dancing.”

Dance can also be a way of worship, of expressing joyfully our delight in the gifts of God. Above all, dance expresses love. Love of movement, love of beauty, love of music, and love of life itself. Brigham Young commanded us to “praise the Lord in the dance, with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.” The Contemporary Dance Theatre would now like to share with you their testimonies of the truthfulness of the restored Gospel, and show gratitude to Heavenly Father of the gifts they have been given. CDT invites you to join them in praise as they humbly present “Majestic Morning.”

Appendi

Progra

Contemporary Dance Theatre In Concert



CDT Backup
 Lori Beth Bullock
 Megan Gasser
 Selina Guzman
 Rachel Hardie
 Andrea Hawkes
 Teawna Houston
 Martha Hullinger
 Tiffany Kearl
 Skye Oakey
 Erika Ostergaard
 Rob Ostermiller
 Jenna Powell
 Patricia Selman
 Jaquel Turner

CDT
 Traci Anderson
 Josh Barnes
 Nicole Carter
 James Cleaver
 Rachel Dinning
 Ashley Hoopes
 Lisa Jensen
 Cindy Jones
 Eden Litchfield
 Kellie Mack
 Jacquie Matheny
 Kimi Maruji
 Sarah Murdoch
 Natalie Stratton
 Jen Walker
 Alisa Wares
Guest Dancers
 Joe Jarvis
 Chris Latta
 Rob Ostermiller

Special Thanks
 Dance Department Costume Shop
 Machel Platts--Designer
 Elyse Cardno, Vernina Mangus, Marcie Matthews, Tacy Oberan,
 Manelle Oliphant, Lori Robertson
 Tech Crew--Jay McGregor, Joe McGregor, Jordon Allen,
 Joel Andrews
 Voice-overs--Becky Foster and Michael Bone
 Graduate Committee--Pat Debenham, Cathy Black,
 Caroline Prohosky

To My Husband Michael and my three precious girls who make me want to be a better person.
 To my dancers, friends, family members and co-workers who supported me through this process. Thank-you.

March 8, 9 & 10, 2001

Because of Thy Exceeding Faith

THE FOLLOWING IS A CHOREOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION REPRESENTING MOMENTS IN THE LIVES OF WOMEN IN THE BOOK OF MORMON. THESE WOMEN ARE SARIAH, QUEEN LAMONI, ABISH AND THE AMMONITE MOTHERS OF HELAMAN'S TWO THOUSAND STRIPLING WARRIORS.

A Mother's Journey

Choreography--Wendy Bone
 Music--Sam Cardon
 Dancer--Jennifer Walker

Sariah faithfully followed her husband who had been commanded by God to journey into the wilderness. She continued to respect the desires of her husband until the moment when she thought she had lost her children to the hands of Laban. Despairing that they were dead, she complained against Lehi saying, "My sons are no more and we perish in the wilderness" (2 Nephi 5:2).

This Must be the Day

Choreography--Wendy Bone
 Music--Sam Cardon & Jay Richards
 Dancers--The Contemporary Dance Theatre
 Abish--Lisa Jensen
 Queen Lamoni--Ashley Hoopes
 Ammon--Josh Barnes
 King Lamoni--James Cleaver
 Poetry--Dannell Hunter

Lamoni's queen, having such great love for her husband and believing he was not dead, stayed by his side for two days. The queen summoned Ammon to the King's bedside after hearing rumors of his greatness. Ammon came forth with assurance that her husband would rise the next day. Due to the remarkable faith of this woman, Ammon said, "blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites."

The next day the king arose as Ammon had prophesied. The entire household then became overwhelmed with the Spirit of God, causing everyone but Abish to fall to the ground. Abish had already been converted to the gospel through the teachings of her father. However, she was troubled by the contention among those she had gathered, and it was and it was at this time that she was inspired by the Spirit to reveal her knowledge. Due to the great faith of these women, many Lamanites were converted.

Taught By Their Mothers

Choreography--Wendy Bone
 Music--Sam Cardon & Jay Richards
 Dancers--The Contemporary Dance Theatre

Helaman called them "his sons" because they were all very young as they went into battle inexperienced and outnumbered. These young boys had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. With such great faith these young men fought with the "strength of God," not one soul having fallen to the earth. Helaman wrote, "They had fought as if with the strength of God; yea, never were men known to have fought with such miraculous strength" (Alma 56:56).

Majestic Morning

Choreography--CDT Company 97-98
 Music--BYU Chorus & Orchestra
 Dancers--CDT

Would You Like Butter with That?
 Choreography--Wendy Bone & CDT
 Music--Enoch Train
 Dancers--CDT

I'll Follow You

Choreography--Wendy Bone
 Music--Melissa Ethridge
 Dancers--CDT

Together

Choreography--Jennifer O'Farrell
 Music--Harry Connick Jr.
 Dancers--Patricia Selman & Rob Ostermiller

This Day

Choreography--Wendy Bone
 Music--Point of Grace
 Dancers--CDT

Rockit

Choreography--Wendy Bone & Ashley Hoopes
 Music--Herbie Hancock
 Dancers--CDT

Sense of Light

Choreography--Jennifer O'Farrell
 Music--Gabriel Yared
 Dancers--CDT Backup
 Solo--Andrea Hawkes

Movin' On Up

Choreography--Wendy Bone & Michelle Henriksen
 Music--Mpeople
 Dancers--CDT

Hope and Waiting

Choreography--Amy Margraf
 Music--The Nudes
 Dancers--CDT

INTERMISSION

Appendix F

Photographs of the performance

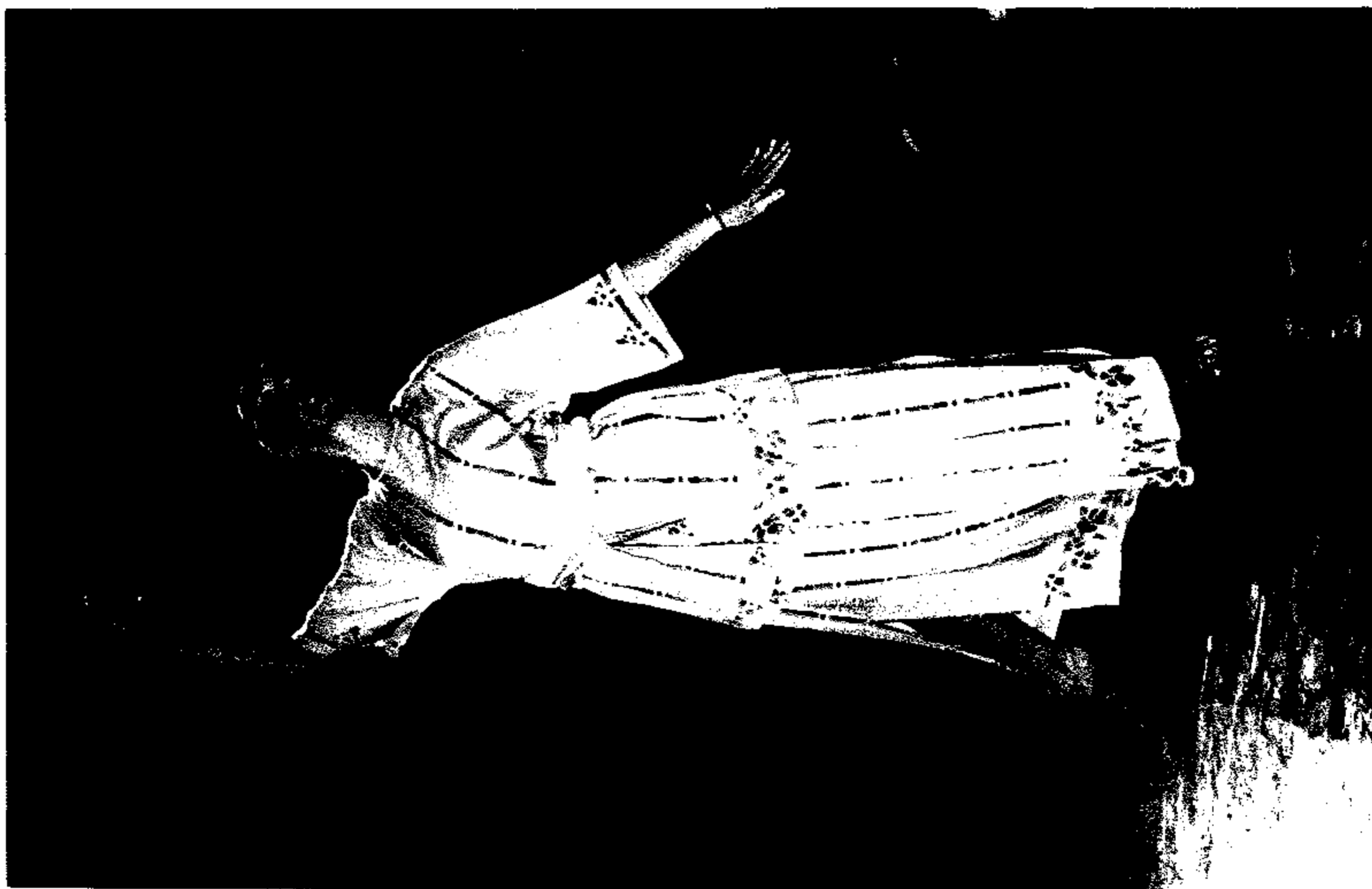
A Mother's Journey





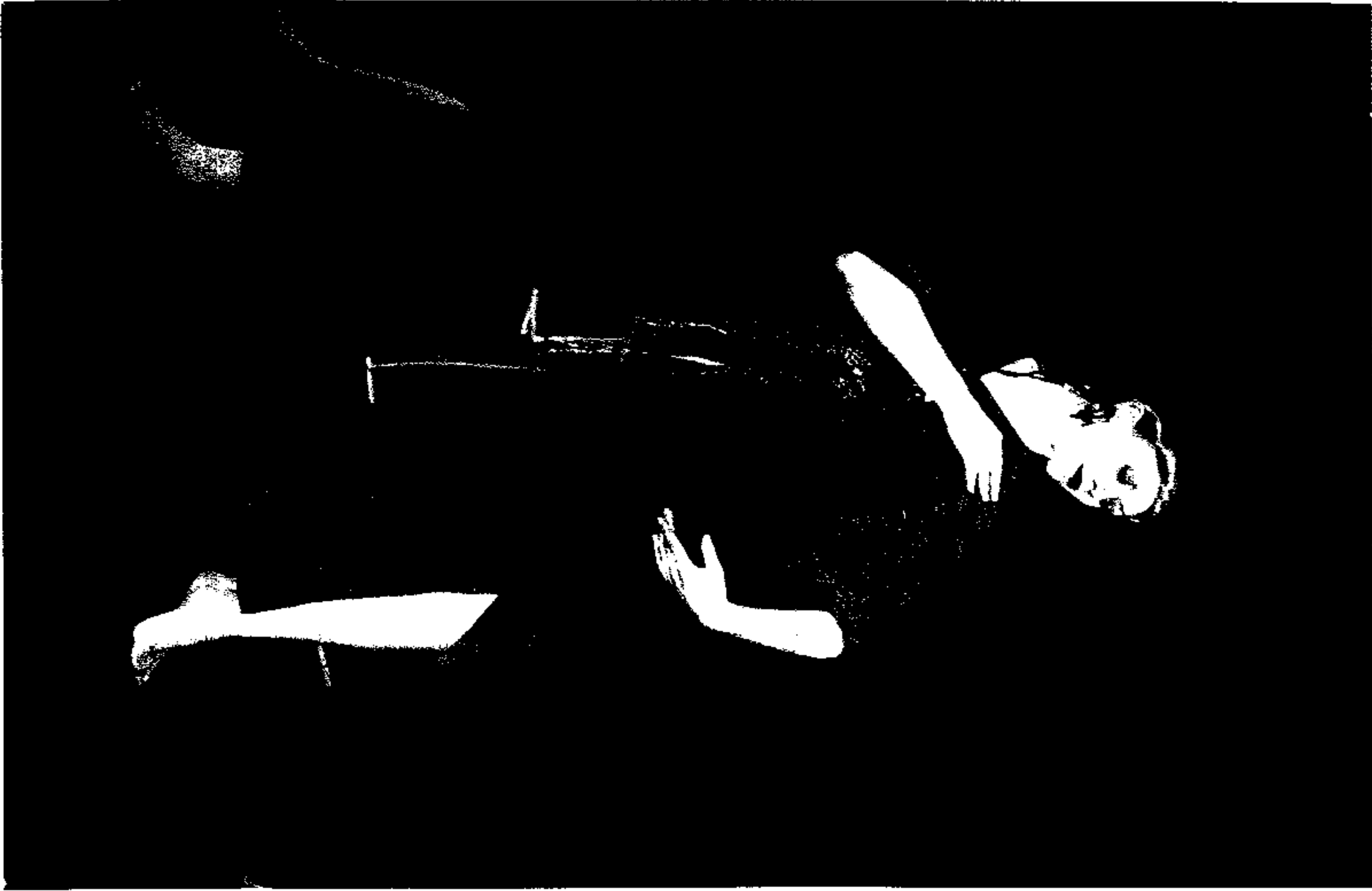
This Must Be the Day

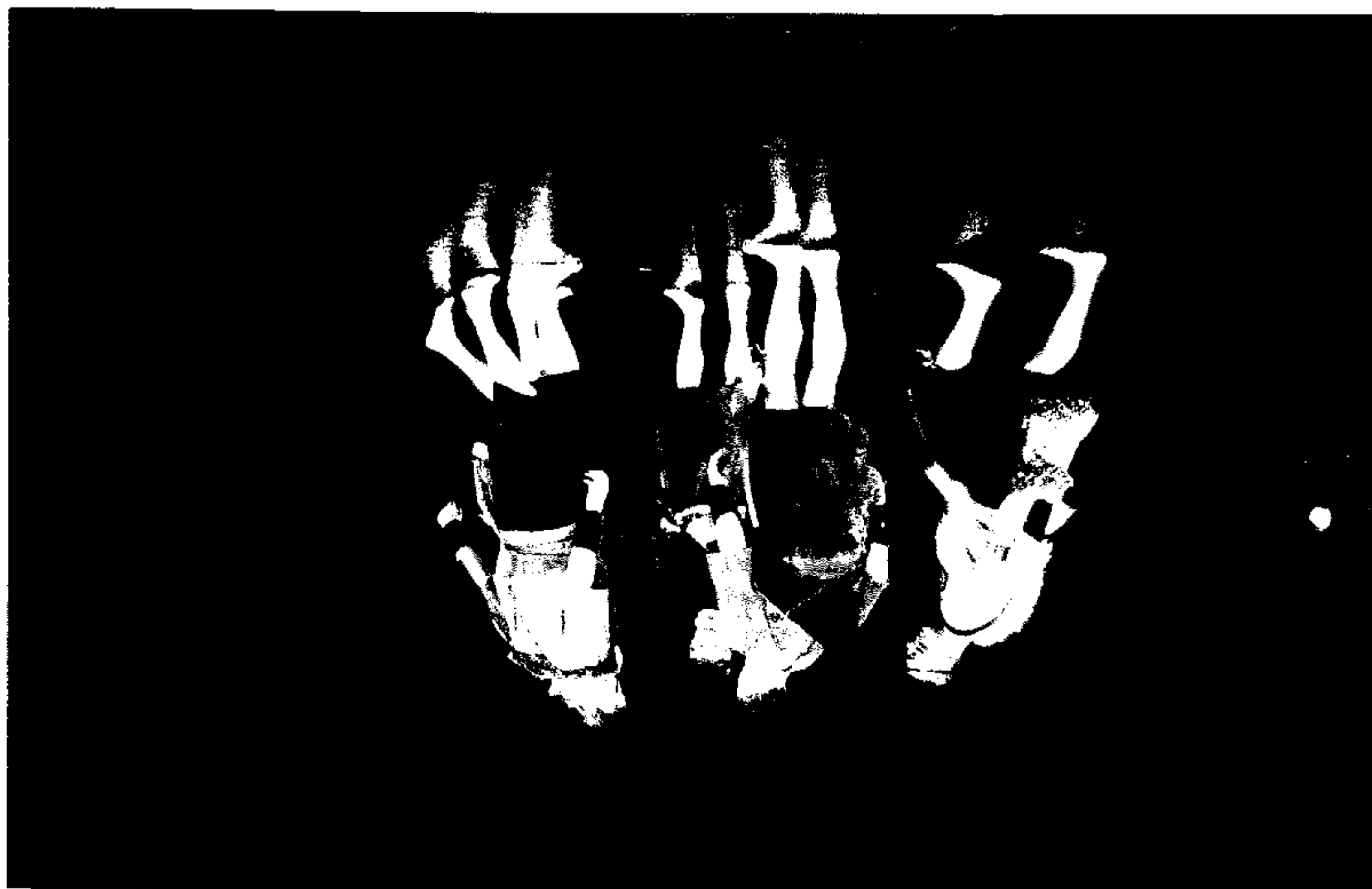
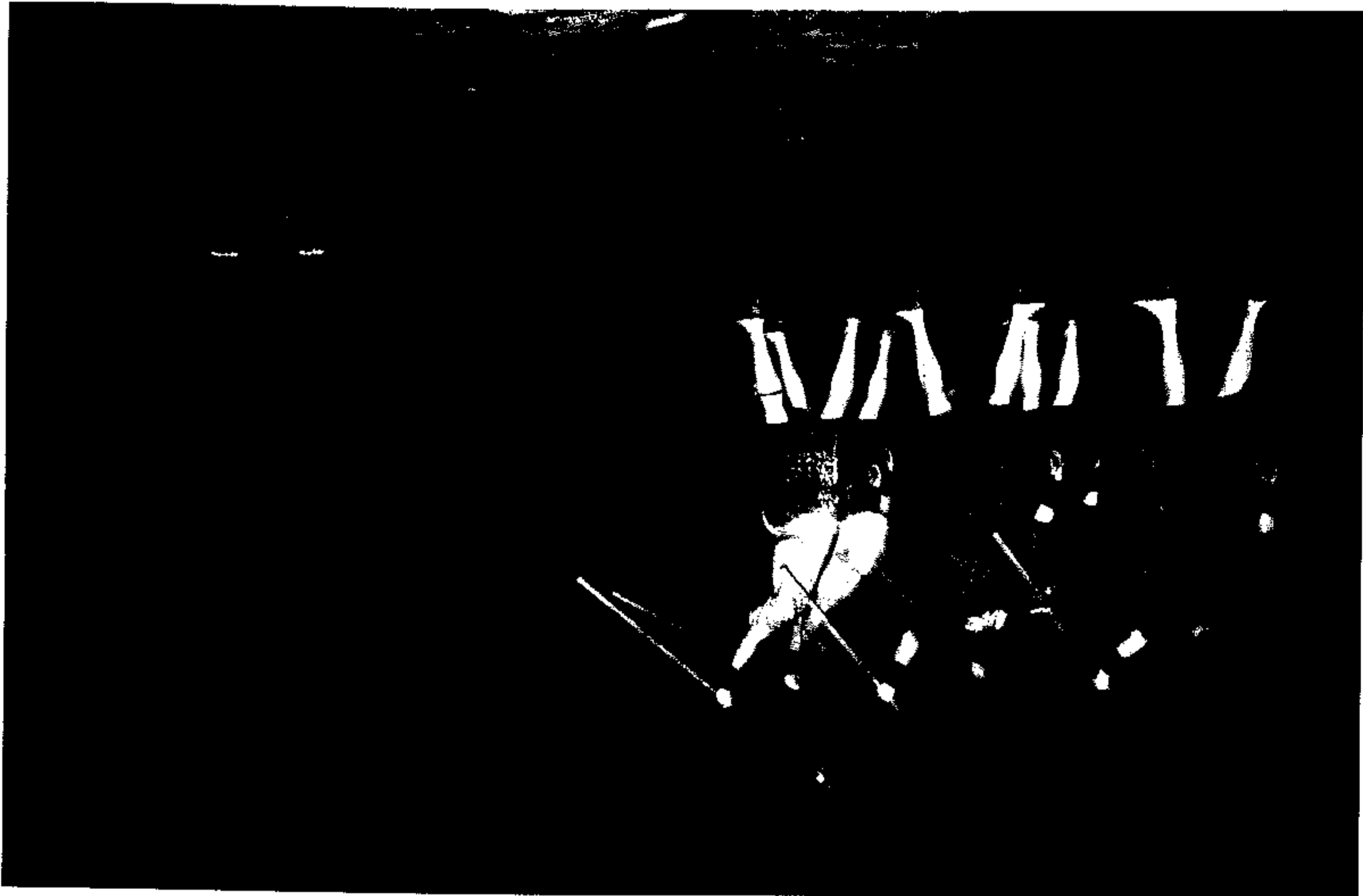




Taught By Their Mothers







Appendix G

Art work display

