



Culture Creators and Interconnected Individualism: Rulan Tangen and Anne Pesata's *Basket Weaving Dance*

Tria Blu Wakpa

A basket is a basket because of how it's made, how it means. Like story, like poems, like novels, like legal briefs, like films, like songs, like dances, like paintings, like sculptures, like moccasins, like drums, like gardens, making one is an act of Native rhetorical practice. (Powell 2014, 483)

[The basket weaving dance is] just an artistic interpretation of a story. People choose different ways to interpret different things, telling stories through paintings, through photographs, through poetry, through songs, and [Indigenous contemporary dance] is just another thing. But it's not traditional. It's very contemporary, a modern art form. Because all of our dances are ceremonial and definitely not as expressive of the body or the face. (Anne Pesata, Interview with the Author)

[T]he profound capacity of the human spirit . . . is exemplified by the leadership of Native women. This is an ethics of survival, of connection to the past generations, of responsiveness to the needs of this and future generations. It is present in all Native cultures, and it is present in the leadership that I have studied. That spirit is what sustains Native peoples, what inspires us and gives us hope for the future. (Tsosie 2010, 29)

As an artist, I'm sure each one of these basket weavers is not just like, okay, here's how it's done. Here's how it's done. I'm sure every single time, they feel like they're recreating a creation story—like oh, how does this willow want to be today or oh, it's a little bit more red. Shall we work with the red? Or how does this weave in? So what we see is this industrialized mentality of

Tria Blu Wakpa (tria.andrews@berkeley.edu) is a Ph.D. candidate in Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley and a graduate of the MFA program in Creative Writing at San Diego State University. Her dissertation, *Fixing, Eclipsing, and Liberating the Body: Education and Incarceration for Lakota Youth on the Rosebud Reservation*, investigates educational paradigms at two total institutions for Lakota youth: St. Francis Mission School, an on-reservation boarding school (1886–1972), and Wanbli Wiconi Tipi (Eagle Life Center), the tribally run juvenile hall founded in 2005. Tria is also completing a poetry collection, titled *Dead Center of the Heart*, which focuses on Native Americans and Filipinos' similar experiences under U.S. rule. She has received support and recognition from numerous sources for her critical, creative, and embodied work, including Ford Foundation, Fulbright, Abigail Reynolds Hodgen Publication Funds, Berkeley Empirical Legal Studies, Joseph A. Myers Center for Research on Native American Issues, and *Dancing Earth: Indigenous Contemporary Dance Creations*.

oh, it's the tradition of basket weaving—as if it's the same each time—but they're recreating and reinventing every time they do it just in order to get from the beginning to the end of the process and stay engaged and constantly make the decisions that are needed in collaboration with the material. Dance is balancing that inner and that outer voice—what's existing versus what's coming from myself. (Rulan Tangen, Interview with the Author)

[Indigenous contemporary dance] projects . . . enact ways of accessing knowledges that have been disrupted through continuing European colonization of North America and New Zealand, and . . . strengthen ways-of-being in relational and mutually beneficial exchange that colonization elides. . . . Indigenous contemporary dance choreography, including that occurring both in and around these staged performances, expands colonization's unequal power parameters, transforming these—in however small a measure—into a lighter space in which reciprocal giving and taking, caring and caretaking, enact their own transformative possibilities. (Shea Murphy 2013)

This article meditates on the interconnectedness of the making and meaning of an Indigenous contemporary dance work¹ that draws on intergenerational Jicarilla Apache basket weaving practices. Rulan Tangen choreographed the piece, performed by Anne Pesata, which is inspired by Pesata's lived experiences as a Jicarilla Apache woman and fifth generation basket weaver.² Tangen—who identifies as mixed culturally, including Native, Polynesian, and European heritages—founded and directs *Dancing Earth: Indigenous Contemporary Dance Creations*, an intertribal³ company which originated in 2004.⁴ Tangen created the piece in February 2014 to honor Pesata and other Indigenous women leaders.⁵ The choreographer's commitment to undertaking projects that respond to Native elders' contemporary concerns and dancers' interests also guides its themes.⁶ Alongside music, the piece uses recorded voiceover that Pesata created and spoke.⁷ The voiceover makes transparent Pesata's familial connections with basket weaving and other Jicarilla Apache epistemologies and practices. The dance also elucidates relationships between basket weaving and Pesata's movements throughout, culminating in the creation of a figurative basket. According to Pesata, the dance “tells the story of the journey that you go through in making a basket from start to finish.”⁸

In this article, I ask: what work does the basket weaving piece undertake on personal, communal, and political scales to unsettle settler colonial cartographies?

Introduction

Indigenous contemporary choreographers such as Tangen, I argue, negotiate and contest mainstream narratives, which conceal the contemporary presence and ongoing contributions of Native peoples. Attentive to what Jacqueline Shea Murphy has called “an expansive and layered sense of time”⁹ (2015) in Indigenous choreography and applying Judith Hamera's concept of “dancing community”¹⁰ (2007, 1), this article uncovers the decolonizing work that Tangen undertakes through “resurgence” and innovation.¹¹ For Native peoples—whose identities and traditions colonial policies aimed to annihilate through disciplining the body and prohibiting embodied practices—“dancing communities” reaffirms their humanity. As others' have argued, these mainstream narratives particularly obscure Native women's presence and work. I discuss women dance makers not as “culture bearers.” (In Native American and anthropological discourses, women are frequently referred to as “culture bearers,” which insiders recognize in no way implies that culture is static or that Native cultures subordinate Native women by associating them with reproductive labor. And yet, given the mainstream's unawareness about Indigenous peoples and issues, the phrase “culture



Photo 1. Anne Pesata. Photograph by Paulo Tavares.

bearers” is easily misinterpreted.¹²) Instead, I propose the term “culture creators” to describe the dynamic work that Indigenous choreographers such as Tangen undertake in the present and for the future through embodied praxis,¹³ building upon past cultural knowledge in a manner so ingenious that even familiar subjects may appear “foreign” to those whom the piece represents. I follow Rebecca Tsoie, who describes a pan-Indian “ethics of survival” that centers Native women leaders. I am guided as well by scholars Shari M. Huhndorf, Cheryl Suzack, and Mishuana Goeman, who identify Indigenous women’s cultural production—which relies on individual and communal labor and fluid understandings of the past and present—as a means to counter settler colonial constructions. As Huhndorf and Suzack write in “Indigenous Feminism: Theorizing the Issues” (2010, 9):

[C]ulture has gained particular importance as it has confronted the silencing, marginalization, and invisibility of Indigenous women in patriarchal narratives and social practices. As they scrutinize the effects of colonialism and patriarchy, writers and artists render Indigenous women visible by shifting their voices and cultural authority to the foreground and by reimagining their roles within and outside Indigenous communities.

Drawing from and extending all of these scholars’ approaches, I argue that through praxis and performance, Tangen and Pesata illustrate the integral role of Native women’s leadership in shaping a future that safeguards the prominence of Indigenous peoples and practices.

The work of Tangen and Pesata, I suggest, does this, in part, by mapping a different terrain than that of settler discourses which have sought to erase contemporary Indigenous peoples and ways of life to advance the ongoing project of colonialism. I build on the work of Indigenous studies scholars who have attended to the ways Native artists have “(re)mapped” colonizing narratives. In *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*, for example, Goeman describes “(re) mapping . . . [as] the labor Native authors and the communities they write within and about undertake, in the simultaneously metaphoric and material capacities of map making, to generate new possibilities” (2013, 3). She discusses the ways that “Native narratives . . . mediate and refute colonial organizing of land, bodies, and social and political landscapes” (2013, 3). Similarly, though a focus on performance as well as writing, in *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*, Huhndorf observes that Native cultural productions have “defie[d] the colonial erasure of Native peoples exemplified by absences on the map, and . . . trace[d] a continuous indigenous presence on the land that challenges U.S. possession” (2009, 2). Huhndorf also identifies thematic parallels in Indigenous writing and performance, stating that Native performance “reprises a key convention of Native autobiographies in which acknowledging ancestors foregrounds connections between self and community, past and present—connections integral to indigenous identities” (2009, 125).

I extend these theorizations of “(re)mapping” to look at the way Tangen and Pesata’s danced narrative, another form of storytelling and community building, similarly challenges settler colonial constructions. Live performances of Indigenous dance deepen arguments about mapping that are usually focused on writing, given that audiences must confront the embodied existence of contemporary Native artists who tell stories by moving through and transforming space. I propose that, as exemplified by the basket weaving piece, Tangen and Pesata “(re)map” dominant narratives by centering a Native woman in the present whose Indigenous identity is interconnected to her female ancestors, a continuation that challenges settler colonial narratives of Native disappearance. This Indigenous contemporary dance work, like the practice of Native basket weaving, draws on past Indigenous practices, performs an individual artist’s contributions in the present, and imagines new futurities based upon the interrelationship of the individual and community, past and present.

The nearly two decade duration of Tangen and Pesata’s relationship provides a unique case study for understanding how Tangen forms enduring and meaningful relationships with her dancers (Tangen 2015). Tangen—who met Pesata while on residency teaching Indigenous Contemporary Dance on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation—began working with Pesata, who is now 28, when Pesata was in fifth grade (Tangen 2015). Pesata’s powerful piece was the first choreographed for the *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show: An Evening of Earth and Sky* in August, 2014, and Pesata performed it at the beginning of the 2014 Dancing Earth two-week Summer Intensive that lead up to that event. Dancing Earth artists have a variety of relationships with their cultural practices as a result of the ongoing effects of colonialism, and estrangement is a facet of Indigenous identity.¹⁴ While Pesata is certainly not the only Dancing Earth performer who has strong connections with her community and culture, the piece—through movement and voiceover—makes these familial and cultural narratives particularly evident. Alongside Pesata’s skilled emoting and dancing, this clarity—which reveals aspects of the making and meaning—contributes to the captivating quality of the piece.

Through close readings of the basket weaving piece and interviews that I conducted with Tangen and Pesata, I offer the theoretical framework “interconnected individualism” to describe Tangen’s pedagogy for teaching and creating Indigenous contemporary dance.¹⁵ Native American cultural values are often depicted as upholding collectivism in contrast to Western society, which promotes individualism (Smith 2007, 32). Yet, this may eclipse the ways that Native societies emphasize the necessity of individuality. The seemingly paradoxical concept of interconnected individualism underscores the group and individual without collapsing one into the other, and like the term “culture creators,” recognizes that Indigenous individuals have relationships to Indigenous communities in the present and

Indigenous ancestors and relatives in the past. I argue that though praxis and performance, Tangen, as a culture creator, makes legible the layers of connection that are both individual and linked through the “(re)mapping” of contemporary, intergenerational, and innovative Native women leaders on Native lands.

Methods and Embodied Positionality

This article centers close readings of video footage that depicts the basket weaving piece and interviews with Tangen and Pesata as primary sources. I intertwine these two different types of data and analysis with theory, which is its own sort of weaving.¹⁶ The personal interviews that I collected contribute to the Indigenous archive and illuminate Tangen and Pesata’s experiences as they relate to the basket weaving piece (including their motivations and insights and viewers’ responses) as well as Tangen’s praxis for creating and teaching Indigenous contemporary dance.¹⁷

My own positionality is as a writer and artist of color whose background includes Filipina, Native American, and European ancestries. Familial narratives and historical documents depict the complicated and contradictory ways that my Filipino and Native ancestors navigated intense racism and pressure to assimilate—both by denying non-Western heritages when passing as White was possible and proudly claiming their roots while actively seeking to reconnect with cultural practices. Alongside listening to these family histories, I grew up practicing and later teaching martial arts and yoga at my parents’ karate school. However, I did not begin to engage with “Indigenous contemporary dance” until Spring 2014 when Maori choreographer, Jack Gray, founder and director of Atamira Dance Collective, requested that I perform in *Turangawaewae* (Standing Place)—a production that he choreographed at the University of California, Berkeley—after we had met through my leadership in Native American activist work. Despite decades of training in embodied practices, I had never thought of myself as a dancer, and I was simultaneously thrilled and terrified about performing in Gray’s piece.¹⁸ My preconceived idea of Indigenous contemporary dance involved extensive dance training and rhythm—both of which I lacked—yet, as I quickly learned in our practices, for Gray, dance was something else: attention, intention, intuition, spirit, story. Gray’s expansive and inclusive understanding of dance contributed to my feeling that this I could do; this I loved.

Following *Turangawaewae*, I was reintroduced to Tangen, whom I had only briefly met, at the 2014 Indigenous Choreographers project gathering, held in Riverside, California. There, I performed a solo piece Gray choreographed. After the performance, Tangen invited me to participate in the

Photo 2. Rulan Tangen. Photograph by Yöeme Hömari.



2014 Dancing Earth two-week Summer Intensive, held in Santa Fe, New Mexico. This intensive culminated in the *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show*, held at the Skylight Music Hall, located in downtown Santa Fe, on August 24, 2014, which also included the basket weaving dance discussed here.

The Basket Weaving Dance: Synopsis and Analysis

The dance, like the basket, is connected, composed of multiple strands woven together to create a whole.

Often referred to by Tangen and Pesata as a “solo,” Pesata has performed the approximately eight minute basket weaving dance widely throughout the U.S. and in Canada, including for notable audience members such as Chung Hyun Kyung, Winona LaDuke, Gloria Steinem, and Alice Walker.¹⁹ By dancing this work in multiple locales, Pesata encourages audiences to consider parallels, such as the presence of other contemporary Indigenous peoples whom settler colonial narratives have attempted to obscure. Through these experiences, Pesata has transitioned from a Dancing Earth student apprentice to an artist-ambassador who has represented the Company in many engagements, which include performing, public speaking, and teaching. Pesata has danced this performance alone many times. However, when other Dancing Earth artists are present—such as in larger scale performances like the *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show*—they often join Pesata on stage or in the periphery to support the “solo.”²⁰ This reciprocal method is perhaps particularly beneficial to developing dancers, who receive additional support during their “solo” and stage time while others perform.

Pesata begins kneeling, posture erect. She takes a deep breath, as Tangen often teaches her dancers: to calm oneself, create focus, and connect with other artists. This practice simultaneously acknowledges the individual as well as those with whom the dancer shares the stage. As Tangen notes,

Each dancer is bringing their intertribal perspectives to the space . . . including the negotiation. What if this person is coming from the belief that women are the water carriers . . . and someone else on stage might be carrying a different cultural belief? How do we negotiate all those things into one space? Maybe that is the challenge of our world—to maintain the diversity of identity, but still be able to share space.

As this passage demonstrates, Tangen views the stage as a microcosm of larger society; therefore, interactions among the artists provide insight into navigating, negotiating, and reimagining the world.

Photo 3. Anne Pesata and Tria Blu Wakpa rehearsing for the Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show, choreographed by Rulan Tangen. Photograph by Yöeme Hömari.



Dancing with other artists or not, Pesata is always accompanied—by her foremothers, familial stories, the organic materials that she gathers—and this is the heart of the piece: illuminating the relationships that are not always visible, but nevertheless present. Pesata's fingers begin to work; small movements create folds at her thighs in the material of her long dress. Her expression remains largely dignified throughout with the exception of sections that reveal joy. She holds her neck long and her chin tilted slightly upward. The recorded voiceover narrates,

I don't remember the childhood I had being special. I came from a family of artists, so everyone had talents and gifts that they hold. Everyone is a part of this learning and a part of this creativity that didn't make art seem out of the ordinary, so the fact that we were basket weavers didn't seem like a stretch of the imagination. We were just living the life that we knew.

This passage portrays the concept of building community through artistic engagement in a manner that celebrates individuals' diverse contributions. A recording of Cree cellist Cris Derksen's "We Danced Movement 1" accompanies the piece and Pesata's voiceover (2010). Using Derksen's work exemplifies Tangen's inclusive approach to Indigenous contemporary dance, which foregrounds working with Native collaborators. The sound of the song rises and falls with notes long and plucked, like the quality of the human voice, as Tangen tells me. I will show how this simile represents the relationships that the basket weaving piece delineates by creating connections between the makers and their material, which, the dance demonstrates, can complement rather than compete with one another for sustainability and survival.

In this rendition, three male dancers crawl forward, their hands curled in fists, sprouting long, brown reeds. The reeds are living beings, as alive and embodied as Pesata herself. In the *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show* version, a younger man, Diné dancer Justin Giehm, follows. Giehm separates the reeds to create a path, then a hiding place, and crouches behind the reeds to watch Pesata, petite, yet powerful. His youthfulness lends a quality of innocence to his clandestine watching.

As Giehm observes, Pesata stands. She steps, high and slow, emphasizing length and precision. The voiceover continues, "I come from a line of Jicarilla Apache basket weavers, and of those women, I am the fifth generation." Pesata's steps are metaphorical and temporal, each taking her across a generation to embody one of her foremothers. This first step figuratively brings Pesata from the present to the past, which is also the present whenever Pesata performs the basket weaving piece. Through the dance, Pesata performs what Harvey Young, writing about Black bodies, refers to as "how the body touches history and how history touches the body ... how ... the passed become *futured* across present bodies" (2010, 138).²¹ Describing the relationships among the individual body and the ancestors whose labor produced it, Young writes, "[The body] represents, and indeed re-presents, the bodies and the embodied experience of ... ancestors whose previous actions invoked [a descendant's] ... current presence" (2010, 138). In this way, the body—which appears singular, but whose very existence relies upon the material and labor of its ancestors—is itself the creation and as a descendant, the present culmination of interconnected individualism.

The dance, like the basket, narrates a story of intergenerational resilience and survival.

By portraying herself as the descendent of an uninterrupted ancestry of Jicarilla Apache artists, Pesata embodies a narrative which combats dominant discourses that invisibilize Indigenous peoples and portray them and their practices as static and extinct (Huhndorf 2009, 17–18). Despite the destruction and violence of U.S. colonial policies, Pesata's family physically survived and thrived. While it is perhaps not yet clear to the audience, Pesata portrays each of her foremothers through unique gestures, weaving them into the movement fabric, which challenges typecasts that represent Native peoples as monolithic. Simultaneously, in embodying her ancestors, Pesata highlights the



Photo 4. Anne Pesata stepping across a generation in the Basket Weaving Dance, choreographed by Rulan Tangen. Film by Louis Leray.

strong bonds among these women. Each time that Pesata takes a step across a generation, she turns her neck back to look in the direction where one foot momentarily remains. In acknowledging the person and place of her emergence, Pesata illuminates the transmission of Jicarilla Apache practices into the present and ties these interactions to the land. The basket weaving piece thus establishes a multigenerational narrative of Native women leaders' resistance and resilience.

An embodied portrayal of Pesata's ancestor—using varied movements that I will discuss—follows each of the steps. Through the initial voiceover and repetition of steps, it becomes more apparent that Pesata is representing her foremothers. In the voiceover, Pesata does not describe her ancestors, because, as Tangen told me, Pesata did not want to her family members to feel uncomfortable. However, in our conversation, Pesata clarified that her ancestors appear chronologically in the piece, beginning with Pesata's great-great grandmother. Pesata related the gestures that Tangen created for these women, which would otherwise be indiscernible to viewers.

While Tangen initially had doubts about using English—a language tied to modernity, but also to colonialism—she recognized the power of clarifying the meaning of the piece to Native and non-Native audiences who predominately speak English, in order to “build more understanding, share more truth.”²² Tangen stated that her “first impetus . . . is to make work by, with, and for Native people . . . and by using the storytelling of Anne's own voice, [the narrative] becomes more accessible for tribal audiences who aren't as familiar with contemporary dance, but do have strong storytelling traditions.” Yet, the transparency of the piece is also important considering widespread unawareness about Native peoples. As she discussed, “When we have gone on tour . . . in some cases, [the audience] is meeting and seeing Native people for the first time in their entire lives. . . . Everything that [most viewers] have been taught [by the U.S. educational system] is inaccurate and makes them come across as ignorant when they're actually very caring and want to know more.” Tangen stated,

[Pesata] speaks in a very concise, measured way. . . . And as she was telling [the story], I could see the whole dance unfurl. . . . Before she recorded [the voiceover] we were doing [the dance] without the word. And I think [the choice to use voiceover] was my way to honor [Pesata], to sort of put her first. And that is an unusual choice, because in many of the other pieces, we're sort of moving ourselves out of the way to channel in something—whether it's ancestral or futuristic. But something beyond ourselves. But in this case, I wanted to call attention to her, to this small, strong, brown woman.

Providing Pesata with a literal voice further challenges settler colonial narratives, which frequently omit Indigenous women's perspectives (Huhndorf 2009, 4). By referencing the ancestors and the future, Tangen—like the scholars whose work opens this paper—recognizes the importance of drawing on the past to envision a world that includes Indigenous peoples and practices. For Tangen, individual sacrifice or “sort of moving ourselves out of the way” is, at least at times, necessary to create a powerful dance work. Tangen's artistic approach to the piece also includes juxtaposing voiceover and dance narratives, which encourages audiences to consider layers of interconnectedness. As Tangen told me, “I like to often sort of go against the spoken word, so that you're getting two different, but related stories.” Pesata elaborated, “[The piece] works really well, because it's not like pantomiming to the story being told. It's not a reaction to the story. The story came alongside the dance.” Creating the foremothers' gestures was a collaborative process between Tangen and Pesata; Pesata described her ancestors and Tangen created movements to complement Pesata's stories.²³

Tangen's vision for Dancing Earth is as an intertribal company, so it is through sharing individual and tribal knowledges in practices and performances that dancers are able to make important contributions to the group. Dancers may initially struggle with revealing their experiences, because they perceive that they are lacking cultural knowledge. However, through the process of working with Dancing Earth, artists frequently uncover cultural understandings that persist in their families. Tangen noted:

Many people initially might feel like they don't have any cultural contributions to make. And from that point, they usually contribute something in terms of movement, so I welcome that in whatever it is. Whatever it is. It's not for me to judge. . . . What I've found over this long course of time is that even if they don't have a direct connection to their culture, things start to come out. . . . In other cases, people might not realize what access they have. It might be a phone call to an auntie or grandma, and they're like, “Oh man! I found this out.” . . . People don't grow up learning about their culture. They just grow up who they are. And what eventually they come to realize is that what their life experience is does include their culture. . . . You sort of just make room for this exploration.

At the onset of working with Dancing Earth, Tangen has found that Indigenous dancers are most likely to contribute through movement, a realm in which they are competent. Through training sessions that include Indigenous practices—such as smudging—and cultural exchanges among the Indigenous artists in the company, Tangen creates meaningful opportunities for the dancers to learn more about both pan-Indian and tribally specific practices. Tangen further noted, “I even open the space for people who might say, ‘This is all I know, and this is as much as I need to know or want to know,’” thus respecting dancers' creative and cultural boundaries.

The dance, like the basket, carries, contains, and creates meaning.

Pesata kneels again, this time portraying her great-great grandmother. This portrait is the most restrained in terms of movement, and perhaps expectedly, for there is the most generational distance between her and Pesata. The kneeling also reflects familial stories that Pesata heard about her great-great grandmother “sitting a lot” (perhaps related to her great-great grandmother's status as an elder and the generational difference between her and the storyteller who passed the narrative to Pesata). Yet, when Pesata narrates, “and of those women, I am the fifth generation,” she kneels again. The piece, which opens and concludes with Pesata kneeling, highlights the transmission and relevance of the great-great grandmother's knowledge in the present day. Notably, Pesata not only bears her foremother's ancient understandings, but also innovates them through dance. In our interview, Pesata discussed that while her grandmother and mother are supportive of her

performing, the basket weaving dance transforms her familial praxis in such dynamic ways that the story is “foreign” to them.²⁴ Pesata stated,

[My grandmother and mother] haven’t really expressed a deeper meaning that they might feel [the piece] has. Because it’s kind of like a foreign thing in this way, and storytelling in this way is foreign to them, so they don’t know how to talk about it. And after they watched me perform, they said they were speechless; they didn’t have anything to say. And they said they were proud of me, and that was all that was said about that.

Denotations of the word “foreign” are both unfamiliar and from a country or language other than one’s own. Tangen combined two modes of storytelling—dance and voiceover—to make the meaning of the basket weaving piece more apparent. However, the reaction of Pesata’s grandmother and mother suggest that familial narratives have also been transformed through Indigenous contemporary dance, the pan-Indian collaboration between Tangen and Pesata, and perhaps even through the English language used for the voiceover.

While in the basket weaving dance, the voiceover and some representations of the foremothers indeed depict them at work, Pesata clarified that the embodied portrayals are about her foremothers “as people and their stories, the impression that they leave in my head—not the work that they did or their contribution to basketry.” As a culture creator, Tangen builds on past and ongoing Indigenous knowledges to choreograph inventive narratives that transform the familiar into the “foreign.” Conversely, Tangen also works as a culture creator to render the “foreign,” familiar. The choreographer noted that unlike Pesata’s grandmother and mother’s response, other Native viewers have “welcomed and beloved [the basket weaving dance for] being very culturally legible.” Tangen also noted that she follows some performances with a straightforward educational component designed to inform audiences about Native peoples and issues through: “meet-and-greet, discussions, lectures, questions and answers.” Tangen stated, “I think Anne’s story does come a bit out of that: sometimes you need to speak the language of the majority of the people who are in the room and really let them know what is going on.” Whether performance, presentation, or dialog, each of these interactions works to reaffirm the presence and humanity of Indigenous peoples.

The disjunction in the piece between the foremothers’ gestures, which suggest basket weaving, and Pesata’s description of the actions demonstrates the interconnectedness of embodied practices, for instance: domestic labor, art, and dance. Whereas mainstream narratives devalue household work—often performed by women—Tangen and Pesata’s piece celebrates these practices, which are essential to survival. After Pesata stands and steps for a third time, she portrays her great-grandmother, whom Pesata remembers, “always taking care of people, feeding, very attentive to her grandchildren, her great-grandchildren.” Pesata bends her knees deeply as if sitting and appears to make weaving motions with her arms and hands: over, under, over, under. Then she pats her hands. Afterwards, while smiling welcomingly, she seems to elongate some material that the viewer must imagine. Pesata extends her arm forward, toward the audience. Whereas the voiceover creates the impression that Pesata’s great-grandmother’s motions are associated with basket weaving, in Tangen and Pesata’s storyline, the great-grandmother “pours coffee, makes bread with a child, knead[s] dough, and serve[s] soup.”

After a fourth step, Pesata portrays her grandmother who, in Pesata’s words, is “the center of all things in our family, just everything; she ties everything together.” Pesata motions with her arms as if swimming through water, bringing both hands forward and drawing them apart. Her hands sweep towards her hips, and she holds them there, very much posed. She looks left and smiles broadly as if for a portrait. From her hips, her fingers begin to flutter, small movements from her waist to above her head—Pesata tells me “little children’s fingers crawling up her body, because

she has grandkids”—then sketching the shape of a short, full-bodied hairstyle. Pesata’s hands split apart in a swift horizontal sweep, signaling that this portrayal has concluded. Pesata’s embodiment of her great-great grandmother and grandmother thus showcases her foremothers’ confidence, dignity, style, and commitment to their descendants.

A fifth step follows, taking Pesata into an embodiment of her mother, whom Pesata describes as “very hard working . . . very diligent,” and who “produces immaculately perfect [bead]work.” Her knees are bent while she creates spiraling motions with one hand over a steady forearm. A horizontal motion ensues as if spreading material on a flat surface, another transition. Again, while this movement vocabulary suggests weaving, Pesata said the movements are an exaggeration of beadwork for the stage. Each of Pesata’s foremothers are unique, and yet—embodied by Pesata through movement, through organic material—they are connected, as are the disparate embodied practices that they perform. There is a slight pause here. Then Pesata’s voiceover continues, “I was given the name *ko’tsa* or water bird. It represents a sacred animal, because it can live in air and water and all of those places. Sacred because it transcends boundaries. It transcends water, air, and earth and can exist happily in all of those places.” Colonization institutes categories that sort and hierarchize living beings based on humanness, race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability. The piece conflates the sacred quality of the *ko’tsa* with Pesata herself, whose dance demonstrates her ability to transcend or “(re)map” the borders between the past/present and individual/community, a reconfiguring that has been necessary for physical and cultural survival.

The sixth step of the piece leads Pesata into sharp, linear arm movements—as yet the most unrestrained—that circle back into her body. The voiceover associates this representation with Pesata herself, whom Tangen described as having “fierce, warrior dedication” and the qualities of the water bird. Pesata referred to this part of the dance as “my own personal freestyle,” since this is the sole section of the dance that Tangen allowed Pesata to determine the movements and the number of counts. The amount of steps—excluding the first that brought Pesata from the present to the past—are symbolic of her role as a fifth generation basket weaver. In representing each of her foremothers and the water bird, Pesata shows the audience that she too “transcends boundaries,” as does the “solo,” which often involves other dancers. Pesata rolls her shoulders, rocking from side to side on the balls of her feet; her torso folds over her legs. Then her actions begin to resemble weaving, but with her whole body involved, energetic, direct, forceful movements with deep lunges, perhaps water bird-like, weaving as a dance. Pesata describes her gestures, which shoot outward and then spiral inward, as “taking a journey through one’s ancestors and then finding yourself and feeling complete and whole there,” illustrating not only the interconnectedness between group and individual identity, but also the ways that interactions with a community—past and present—enhance a person’s understanding of self.

Extending the concept of interconnected individualism through her gestures, Pesata transitions from her freestyle by drawing both hands into her low abdomen, her womb, evoking connotations of reproduction. Alongside culture bearing or creating, motherhood is an important identity for Indigenous women, particularly considering ongoing genocidal policies and practices that have attempted to exterminate Native peoples. Pesata folds over her legs and rises, one arm, bent at the elbow crosses her chest, the other, also bent at the elbow, rises upward like a reed, the implications of which I will discuss. The voiceover describes Pesata accompanying her mother to the riverbank, where her mother would gather sumac or willow for the baskets. Pesata narrates that sometimes she would watch; other times she would help. Her movements and words reflect each other as she dances lightly and quickly on tiptoe, playfully like a child, followed by low lunges, arms extended as if peering through reeds, a determined woman at work. Because Pesata both watches her mother and works alongside her, the movements conflate mother and daughter; these individuals are intricately connected. Here, the difference in embodied movements mark stages in a person’s life and map Indigenous presence onto the land.

Pesata's voiceover then describes the ways one might learn to make a basket: by practicing weaving or "sitting quietly and watching." Here, Pesata—the creator—becomes the material and acknowledges the audience, presumably "sitting quietly and watching." Pesata's body weaves. She stands tall, reaches her arms above her head, and arches to one side, lowering into a forward bend. From this position, she performs a series of stationary circles beginning with her head and radiating into full body spirals, reminiscent of water rippling after a pebble is tossed into a pond. These movements reflect the narrative arch of the dance, which begins and ends with Pesata kneeling, centered in the basket that she and her ancestors have mutually created, a circle encompassing a series of circles. The respatialization that Pesata performs through the spirals illuminates her interconnectedness to her female ancestors and their ways of knowing, which have shaped her own praxis. The circles, as multiplicities of connection (not one line of "discovery"), counter linear textbook narratives that relegate Indigenous peoples and practices to the past to articulate a narrative of progress. They also metaphorically exemplify how Tangen envisions these layers of connection, forged through Dancing Earth practices and performances, which center Indigenous peoples and knowledges, but also expand outward as "concentric circles [that] make bridges across cultures."

As the voiceover expresses the intensive labor required for sitting and making baskets, Pesata's pace and footwork increases. She again dances in circular patterns, which radiate outward with a series of quick steps that lead into a jump and low level, spiral sweeps. Her hands connect with the earth, and she lifts her hips above her chest, then holds them steadily in line with her torso. While her transitions are seamless, the effort and strength that these poses require is perceptible. As exemplified by themes of the dance, the individual and communal work of creating requires tremendous discipline and strength, which Pesata makes visible through her performance. Despite the challenges of their undertakings, culture creators continue to protect and transform Indigenous practices. The basket weaving piece celebrates culture creators and the vital importance of Indigenous women's work, which dominant discourses omit or depict as subordinate.

The voiceover continues as Pesata describes the differences between new and old shoots and the reasoning that she and her foremothers use for determining which sticks are selected. Pesata continues to arch her body in spirals, takes a wide stance—one thigh parallel to the ground, like a tabletop—and pounds her fists against the surface she has created with her own leg. While the voiceover narrates the work that must be undertaken prior to beginning the process of weaving, Pesata bares her teeth as if biting down to split sticks and extends her arms into a "V." Then imitating a stick splitting, Pesata extends both arms above her head in opposite directions as if she herself has become the material. She quickly brushes down the length of her body while describing scraping bark from a stick. Like the performers embodying reeds, Pesata has become the material; she literally handles the material as she does herself; what she inflicts on the stick also affects her. Here, Pesata "(re)maps" possibilities for human interactions with the land—premised not on dominance or destruction, but respect and recognition of an interconnected relationship.

She performs three low lunges, each leading into a standing position in which one hand is held palm up before her; the other hand rises above her head, and she places it with precision in the center of her palm, suggesting situating the core of something—perhaps a stick, the center of a basket, the methods that guide her embodied practices, Pesata herself. After she places one hand in the other, Pesata's body rocks and weaves before she transitions into the next lunge. The movement increases—seemingly a natural outgrowth from the rocking and weaving—and Pesata repeats an earlier motion, one hand spiraling over a steady forearm, which was evident in the earlier depiction of her mother. Pesata states, "We do all of this work, making sure everything is consistent, making sure that every strand is as close to being with the other strand as possible." Through her words and by repeating these earlier gestures, Pesata once again connects herself with the woman who created Pesata with her own body. The dance depicts a complex spatial layering of generational connection with one location that departs from the delineation of main-stream map-making.

Pesata kneels as the weaving motions become more complex and require more strength. The voiceover tells the care with which Pesata and her foremothers select a place to gather and the materials:

You also need to plan where you're gathering your materials. You can't go to the same spot every year. You have to consciously choose. Maybe take a little from here, a little from there. You want to be kind, so you don't overly extract. You want to make sure the plant produces again and again. You're keeping a healthy balance between what you take and in turn, receiving more next season.

Pesata's conception of interdependence transcends human-to-human interactions and presents an alternative to Western epistemologies, which hierarchize humans above plants. Here, interconnected individualism illuminates the importance of reciprocal relationships for sustainable living and the survival of Native and non-Native peoples and non-human animals and plants. By elucidating multigenerational relationships of Indigenous women with the land and the use—but notably not the destruction—of its resources, the dance refutes settler colonial narratives that represent the land as unoccupied and untouched as an attempt to conceal the violence of colonization or claim the land by drawing property-line boundaries on it.

Pesata stands again, rocking and swaying on the balls of her feet. Her whole body follows the weaving motions of her arms. The voiceover states, "And once you have all of your materials, prepared, you sit, and you sit, and you sit. This is where you labor. It's definitely not easy." Pesata's dancing—which grows more rigorous as she changes pace and levels—is juxtaposed to the seated work of completing a basket. This section of the piece further illuminates the relationships between dance and basket weaving and suggests that related qualities—such as determination, hard work, and joy—lead to success in these endeavors.

Pesata circles her arms inward as if gathering a bundle of reeds. She kneels again and shapes the space before her as if it were a basket. "And you sit until you're happy, until your work is what you want it to be." Pesata stands, pressing her hands towards one another as if continuing to mold the material. Her hands move upward until they rise above her head, and her back arches. There is a momentary pause that is reminiscent of the earlier image of her grandmother posing and smiling. Alongside the basket, Pesata herself has been created by familial histories, the method and process of weaving transmitted by her female elders, and the dance, choreographed by Tangen, herself a leader and culture creator.

The dance, like the basket, draws on the past, performs in the present, and imagines new futurities.

Pesata then circles the space as if around an oversized basket. Standing, she extends one leg as in a sweep, but hovering above the earth. She draws her knee into her chest and circles her ankle. Then she kneels in the center of the imaginary basket that she has created—with one palm facing up. Pesata has reconfigured the space in a way that is visible to the audience through her dance. The piece recreates the stage not only by asserting an intergenerational, interconnected, matrilineal Indigenous presence, but also by portraying the ancient and contemporary practice of basket weaving, which the piece demonstrates is inherently tied to the land. Pesata's dance honors Native women by centering them literally and figuratively, which refutes dominant race and gender hierarchies that render Native women inferior to men and their White counterparts. Pesata's embodiment of her ancestors in the present that she performs the dance challenges what Huhndorf terms "the progressivist racial logic that relegates Native peoples to the past and thus negates their contemporary claims to the land" (Huhndorf 2009, 145). Therefore, through interconnected individualism, Pesata articulates the political implications of her contemporary Indigeneity.

Tangen herself conceives of her choreography as a form of cartography, though one careful not to reinscribe colonial violence through the imposition of exact line or direction, but rather open to possibility. She explained,

When I walk into a rehearsal room, I'm rich with my own visions and dreams. But what I come in with is a map, so rather than impose my ideas or movements onto someone, which can be seen as a form of colonization—especially when you're first meeting a dancer, to just expect them to be what would be perceived as your instrument. Once you get to know a dancer and you all—as a group—go after one thing, you all are becoming instruments to a larger vision of culture, humanity, ecology, of planetary commune.

As a culture creator, Tangen offers a “map”—which through working with an artist becomes the product of individual and communal labor—to create a dance work and ultimately to transform the world. Unlike maps associated with colonization, this cartography does not erase Indigenous peoples or women, but portrays their intergenerational and contemporary presence and careful, continued engagement with the land. Further, both Tangen, as evidenced by this excerpt, and Pesata consider choreography as flexible, negotiable, and responsive. In our interview, Pesata prioritized mindfulness over perfectly performing movements and considered that her departures from the original choreography may actually improve a performance. She described, “If I misstep, it's probably because I was emoting or just lost in the story, and maybe it'll be an even better performance if something like that happens.” Written maps are authoritative documents that attempt to fix meaning; yet, dance allows for multiple layers of significance, and in Pesata's view, variations do not necessarily undermine, but instead may enhance a performance.

In the final section of the dance, Pesata then repeats the earlier motion of precisely placing her other hand into the center of her palm, likewise conveying that her dance—in making and meaning—is an individual and collective act. The dance, Tangen and Pesata's vision, draws on the past contributions of Pesata's ancestors and Indigenous elders, performs in the present, and, through the creation of the basket, images a future, one that relies upon and is possible because of “reciprocal giving and taking, caring and caretaking” (Shea Murphy 2013). As Pesata's voiceover concludes, baskets “hold perhaps water, food, or even something precious.” Tangen similarly revealed:

Baskets weave things together, and they're used to carry things, carry things that are shared, so more than one serving, more than one helping, more than one piece. They carry more for the group. And they're very selfless. . . . And I think dance can be the same way. . . . And you're responding to what's in place already as well as this inner spirit, this inner voice. . . . Especially with *Dancing Earth*, I find it's the selflessness of what we're carrying on behalf of the greater whole. We're honing our bodies, minds, and spirits to be able to carry messages from the elders, who are like, “This is what the world needs, and this is what our Native peoples need to survive,” and trying to make our stories as vital and compelling as possible. It's a huge sacrifice.

As in Tsosie's articulation of Native women's leadership, Tangen's embodiment praxis works for the survival of Indigenous peoples in the present and future. Tangen emphasizes elders—respected because they are culture creators and have gained wisdom from past experiences—yet their messages are also responsive to contemporary and anticipated future challenges.

During some performances, Pesata takes a deep breath, and the piece concludes here. In another rendition, Giehm—who has been visible to the viewer as he watches Pesata throughout the piece—approaches the stage with a basket while Pesata is in the process of concluding the dance. Giehm gestures as if shaping the basket before presenting it with both hands to Pesata. In this



Photo 5. Anne Pesata, Rulan Tangen, and Nichole Salazar. Photograph by Paulo Tavares.

mutually beneficial exchange, Pesata has allowed Giehm to watch and learn, and in return, he has bestowed her with the basket. In various pan-Indian approaches to art making, new practitioners are commonly instructed to give away the first piece that they make; in this way, the teaching of Indigenous practices and values—such as generosity—are intertwined.

Conclusion

In this article, I offer a framework, which emerged from my analysis of this dance work and interviews, for understanding the work of Tangen and Pesata in the basket weaving piece. I uncover how the dance preserves and nurtures relationships with Indigenous peoples and practices. Aware of the history and politics of mainstream discourses that have often overlooked and portrayed Indigenous peoples and ways as ancient and extinct, the work contributes to knowledges about Native peoples for the audience and the artists themselves by centering Indigenous peoples and representing them and their practices as contemporary and as relevant. The concept of interconnected individualism values the ancestral, communal, and lived understandings of the dancers, and difference is celebrated rather than suppressed. As a holistic praxis that strives to recognize the individual through communal, temporal, and non-hierarchical relationships, the dance promotes responsible, sustained action. Although here I present these findings separately, they function interdependently on two principal registers: commitment to working with and for the strength of Indigenous peoples and practices and responsibility to inform Native and non-Native audiences about Indigenous peoples and the challenges that threaten Native and non-Native ways of life.

Tangen and Pesata's basket weaving piece also encourages a reexamination of the socially constructed dichotomies and hierarchies integral to colonization. As Goeman argues, the 1887 Dawes Act—which divided tribal land into individual allotments—drew distinctions between the individual and community, the body and land (2013, 124–125). Yet, these understandings are misleading and damaging as communities provide support for individuals and vice versa, and we cannot live without the land. A critical understanding of Western hierarchies—which historically and contemporarily structure European Americans as superior to Native peoples (and people of color) and humans above non-human entities (animals, plants, and the land)—is necessary for liberation and sustainable living.

Whereas there is a tendency to view dance, basket weaving, and even domestic work as separate practices, this piece also promotes an understanding of embodied activities and the principles that guide them as interconnected. Alongside basket weaving and Indigenous contemporary dance, writing is also an embodied practice, and I was struck by the similarities between basket weaving—as represented by Pesata—and the writing process. Pesata narrates,

And once you have all of your materials prepared, you sit, and you sit, and you sit. This is where you labor. It's definitely not easy. It's very hard on your hands. Because you're taking this very, very stiff, very strong material that likes to grow in straight lines, and you're turning it into spirals, you're pulling it in a direction it doesn't want to be in. So you need to work with it as forcefully and as gently as possible. Because you're bending it to your will. And you're pulling it strand by strand into a container, into something that will hold perhaps water, food, or even something precious. And you sit until you're happy, until your work is what you want it to be. And when you're happy, you can close it with a braid.

While this article provides a case study of interconnected individualism through the basket weaving dance, this passage gestures to the broader implications of this theory. Through embodied practices, which take disparate forms, culture creators are drawing on past and working “forcefully” and “gently” with their materials in the present, evoking understandings for the survival and humanity of Native and non-Native peoples and the wellbeing of the planet.

Notes

This article—which centers a dance piece about women leaders and proposes the terms “culture creators” and “interconnected individualism”—was aptly shaped by the collective support of strong female mentors. I will always be beyond grateful to Dr. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Dr. Deborah Lustig, and the reviewers who offered their invaluable knowledge in strengthening this article. I give tremendous thanks to Rulan Tangen and Anne Pesata for sharing their insights about the piece and creative processes, which makes this paper possible, and artists Yöeme Hömari, Louis Leray, and Paulo Tavares, who generously provided the photos and films for this article. I will always appreciate my good friends and colleagues, Kate Mattingly and Shannon Toll, who shared their feedback with me in a near final draft. A publication, like a performance, is an offering at a particular point in time, and I take full responsibility for any missteps that I may have made. The love and care of my husband, Dr. Makha Blu Wakpa, and our family encourages and inspires me to undertake this work.

1. In her forthcoming article, “Dancing in the Here and Now: Indigenous Presence and the Contemporary Choreography of Emily Johnson/Catalyst and DANCING EARTH,” Shea Murphy illuminates that “Indigenous contemporary dance” is a contested term for a variety of reasons. While I recognize these tensions, because Tangen characterizes her work as “Indigenous contemporary dance,” I also use this term. Further, throughout this article, I interchangeably employ the words “Indigenous,” “Native American,” and “Native peoples.”

2. The name “Jicarilla” itself derives from the Spanish word for “little basket maker.” *Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, 1995.

3. As the term “intertribal” is complicated, in this paper, I, like Tangen, use this word to mean including members from more than one tribal nation.

4. Rulan Tangen, in discussion with the author, May 2015.

5. *Ibid.* Tangen stated, “I saw something in [Pesata], and I ultimately wanted to contribute to that legacy, who she was as a person and how did she get to be that way, so determined and strong and creative.”

6. *Ibid.* According to Tangen, Native elders from the Grand Canyon Trust identified water, food, and language preservation as critical areas that necessitate continued work. Dancers' interests—such as environmental studies and farming—have also influenced the direction of Tangen's art.

7. To create the voiceover, Tangen asked Pesata to discuss Pesata's familial histories regarding basket weaving; Tangen took notes, and together, the choreographer and dancer worked on movement improvisations. Tangen then gave Pesata the notes and asked Pesata to record a monologue based on the story that Pesata originally told, which in Tangen's words, became “the spoken word, biographical poem, and [Pesata's] movements evolved out of that.”

8. Anne Pesata, in discussion with the author, May 2015.

9. Shea Murphy (2015).

10. Hamera (2007, 1) writes, “Every day, urban communities are danced into being. This is more than a metaphor. It is a testament to the power of performance as a social force, as cultural poesis, as communication infrastructure that makes identity, solidarity and memory sharable.”

11. Corntassel (2012, 89) identifies “Indigenous resurgence” as necessary for decolonization, the former which he defines as “having the courage and imagination to envision life beyond the state.” Corntassel’s concept of “resurgence” evokes Shea Murphy description of Indigenous contemporary dance in “Transformative Moves: Indigenous Epistemologies in Indigenous Contemporary Dance” as “strengthen[ing] ways-of-being in relational and mutually beneficial exchange that colonization elides.”

12. Scholars in Native American studies have yet to contextualize the term “culture bearers.” According to Michelle M. Jacob in *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing*, “[a] central tenet of Yakama decolonizing praxis is that women are important as culture bearers and teachers” (2013, 108). I build on the work of Jacob and others by identifying “culture bearers” as an equivocal and perhaps even contested phrase. “Culture bearers”—today a tribally shared and widely understood concept among Indigenous peoples—is also prevalent in anthropology, a field that is recognized for having a contentious relationship with Native peoples. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith states in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, “many indigenous writers would nominate anthropology as representative of all that is truly bad about research, [however] it is not my intention to single out one discipline over another as representative of what research has done to indigenous peoples” (2007, 11). Although contemporarily, Indigenous and non-Indigenous anthropologists conduct research projects that employ decolonizing methodologies, these historical injustices also extend into the present day. The phrase “culture bearers” has further been applied to non-human transmission of knowledge as in W. C. McGrew’s *Chimpanzee Material Culture: Implications for Human Evolution* (1992, 79). While recognizing chimpanzees as “culture bearers” deconstructs Western hierarchies that portray humans as superior to non-humans, the association of the term with Indigenous peoples and people of color implies that they are subhuman.

13. The scholars whose work I began with illuminate the importance of considering praxis alongside performance. I use Paulo Freire’s definition of praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (1990, 33). Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird’s definition of decolonization also relies on Freire’s concept of praxis. The authors write, “decolonization is not passive. . . ; rather it requires something called *praxis*” (2005, 3).

14. See Shea Murphy’s (forthcoming) “Dancing in the Here and Now: Indigenous Presence and the Contemporary Choreography of Emily Johnson/Catalyst and DANCING EARTH.”

15. While at least one facet of interconnected individualism shares strong similarities with Tsosie’s articulation of an Indigenous feminist praxis, this paper is specifically interested in how these ethics operate in this realm of embodied practice (2010, 29).

16. I foreground a close reading of Pesata’s piece as performed at the 2014 *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show* (Shea Murphy 2014) from three video recordings. Videographer Louis Leray filmed two of these records—one shot from the ground level of the facility and the other captured from the upper. Shea Murphy, who attended the event, also provided me with a video of the basket weaving piece that she filmed from upstairs. During this performance, the recorded voiceover is sometimes difficult to decipher, so I further rely on outdoor footage of the piece that Leray filmed in August 2014 (Leray 2014a). Unlike the outdoor performance, in the *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show*, the basket weaving piece included other artists, which is a practice that I relate to interconnected individualism. Because I am committed to forming and maintaining accountable, ethical, and reciprocal relationships, I have shared this paper with Tangen, Pesata, and Shea Murphy prior to publication and implemented their feedback, which has strengthened this analysis.

17. I conducted both conversations, which I recorded, by phone in mid May 2015. Tangen’s interview is approximately fifty minutes and Pesata’s forty minutes.

18. Pesata discussed that despite previous experience with various forms of dance, she also did not consider herself a “dancer,” which she likewise attributed to a lack of “formal training” and “rhythm.” Pesata credits Tangen with “shap[ing]” her into a dancer through what Pesata termed “the Dancing Earth experience,” which Pesata described as understanding dance as a holistic practice. Pesata stated, “When I started to train with [Tangen] and develop skills like connecting your mind to your body and intentionally moving, it shifted something. . . . I built a sense of rhythm. My brain and my body were very disconnected, and [Tangen] helped join them. Through hard work and perseverance and a lot of frustration, I was growing into what I would finally consider being a dancer, an actual dancer. And I wasn’t able to say that until about a year ago even though I’ve been moving for years before then.”

19. Anne Pesata. Pesata has danced the basket weaving piece for the Seeds & Soul Festival: Indigenous Cultural Exchange & Festival, Lake Merritt Park, Oakland, California, October 24, 2015; National Bioneers Conference, Marin Center, San Rafael, California, October 16, 2015; McNears Beach County Park, San Rafael, California, October 15, 2015; Real Histories of the Americas Day, Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado, October 12, 2015; JG Indie Fashion Show, Indian Market, Encaustic Art Institute, Santa Fe, New Mexico, August 21, 2015; Grand Canyon Trust, Southern Ute Cultural Center, Ignacio, Colorado, August 12, 2015; Planet IndigenUS, Flechs Theater, Toronto, Canada, August 9, 2015; Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, San Francisco, California, June 21, 2015; Hey Event, Lake Merritt, Oakland, California, June 19, 2015; Indigenous Artists Gathering, Pangea World Theater, Minneapolis, Minnesota, March 28, 2015; SEED, Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado, November 14–16, 2014; Wisdom Sharing, Ghost Ranch, Abuequi, New Mexico, October 14, 2014; *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show: An Evening of Earth and Sky*, Skylight Music Hall, Santa Fe, New Mexico, August 24, 2014; Poeh Museum & Cultural Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico, August 11, 2014; Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, Private Fundraiser, Los Angeles, June 31, 2014. Performances of the piece are currently ongoing.

20. Pesata has performed the basket weaving piece in traditional and non-traditional theater spaces. Supporting artists have joined her on stage or “off stage,” in an area that is still visible to the audience. In this article, I refer to the perceptibility of characters to the audience “off stage” as “in the periphery.”

21. This article does not conduct a comparative analysis of Native and African American embodiment, but future scholarship might consider examining the experiences, performances, and epistemologies of both these groups.

22. In *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*, Scott Richard Lyons deconstructs the erroneous tendency to represent modern and traditional as a binary, stating instead, “Everything is relative and exists on a continuum that does not carve neatly into two separate and oppositional wholes” (2010, 10).

23. Regarding her role in the movements that Tangen created, Pesata said, “It’s all based on the essence that I interpreted from each of the people.”

24. Pesata’s grandmother and mother watched Pesata perform the basket weaving piece at the *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show*.

Works Cited

- Corntassel, Jeff. 2012. “Re-Envisioning Resurgence: Indigenous Pathways to Decolonization and Sustainable Self-Determination.” *Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1): 86–101.
- Derksen, Cris. 2010. “We Danced Mvment 1.” *Cusp*. Song. Performed by Cris Derksen. Vancouver: Independent. <http://crisderksen.virb.com/the-cusp#>.
- Freire, Paulo. 1990. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Goeman, Mishuana. 2013. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

- Hamera, Judith. 2007. *Dancing Community: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*. New York: Palgrave Macmillian.
- Huhndorf, Shari M. 2009. *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.
- Huhndorf, Shari M., and Cheryl Suzack. 2010. "Indigenous Feminism: Theorizing the Issues." In *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, edited by Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman, 1–17. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Jacob, Michelle M. 2013. *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- "Jicarilla Apache Nation History." N.d. Jicarilla Apache Tribe. http://www.jicarillaonline.com/History/jic_apachehistory.html. Accessed November 11, 2015.
- Leray, Louis. 2014a. *Basket Weaving Solo*. Film. Performed by Anne Pesata. Santa Fe, NM: Weblink.
- . 2014b. *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show: An Evening of Earth and Sky*. Film. Performed by Anne Pesata. Santa Fe, NM: Weblink.
- Lyons, Scott Richard. 2010. *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- McGrew, W.C. 1992. *Chimpanzee Material Culture: Implications for Human Evolution*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Powell, Malea. 2014. "A Basket Is a Basket Because. . . : Telling a Native Rhetorics Story." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature*, edited by James H. Cox and Daniel Heath Justice, 471–483. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shea Murphy, Jacqueline. 2013. "Transformative Moves: Indigenous Epistemologies in Indigenous Contemporary Dance." Presentation at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR, June 9.
- . 2014. *Dancing Earth Ten Year Anniversary Show: An Evening of Earth and Sky*. Film. Performed by Anne Pesata. Santa Fe, NM: Weblink.
- . 2015. "A Compelling Way of Understanding the World: A Conversation with Jacqueline Shea Murphy." *Triple Dog Dare: The ODC Theater Writer in Residence Blog*. By Marie Tollon. <https://thetripledogdare.wordpress.com/2015/07/31/a-compelling-way-of-understanding-the-world-a-conversation-with-jacqueline-shea-murphy-by-marie-tollon/>.
- . Forthcoming. "Dancing in the Here and Now: Indigenous Presence and the Contemporary Choreography of Emily Johnson/Catalyst and DANCING EARTH." *Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2007. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 10th ed. London: ZedBooks Ltd.
- Tollon, Marie. 2015. "A Compelling Way of Understanding the World: A Conversation with Jacqueline Shea Murphy." *Triple Dog Dare: The ODC Theater Writer in Residence Blog*.
- Tsosie, Rebecca. 2010. "Native Women and Leadership: An Ethics of Culture and Survival." In *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, edited by Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman, 29–42. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Wilson, Waziyatawin Angela, and Michael Yellow Bird, Eds. 2005. *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research.
- Young, Harvey. 2010. *Embodying the Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.