

ABDP PODCAST #5 Transcript - Draft

by romham p gallacher of the Radical Access Mapping Project

[GRAHAM] “... ‘Thanks’ is my word, and ‘share’. I have a note in my wallet that says ‘share’, and doing it in dance feels good. When you share yourself with others, it’s deeper sharing than what we usually share. And our leader has been just so in touch with herself [*voice breaking*], and she really wants to share, and it’s just marvellous dance; and thank you for listening.”

[Opening bright melodic piano]

[RIANNE ŠVELNIS] Hi everyone! Welcome back to the All Bodies Dance Project podcast. This is Rianne speaking. Today we have a special episode featuring a group of dancers from the All Bodies community classes at Carnegie Community Centre, and an interview with Lance Lim who co-facilitates those classes with me, The interview with Lance is full of beautiful, funny and challenging stories about growing up in Strathcona, Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside, and how the changing shape of those neighbourhoods is part of his and his community’s identity. We also hear about Lance’s journey in martial arts training at the SFU dance program, and how he has come to be an integral part of the All Bodies Dance community.

The dancers we hear from are Graham, Helen, Kadi, Karen, Kevin, Michaela and Wendy. Before we listen to all of that, let’s hear from Audrey Siegl.

[AUDREY SIEGL, speaking *hərɪdəmɪnəm*] I invite each of you: close your eyes, take a slow steady breath in, and let it out. Think about, say out loud if you know their name, the Indigenous people whose lands you're on, the ones whose ancestors are in the earth, the ones whose language is still whispered in the trees and that comes up out of the earth itself. For those of you in the Vancouver area, I say [*speaks hərədəmɪnəm*]. In the language of my ancestors, the downriver *hərədəmɪnəm* dialect, I say welcome to the lands of the *hərədəmɪnəm* speaking people. My name is [*speaks hərədəmɪnəm*] *sɪtɛmtənɑ:t*, *St'agid Jaad* [*speaks hərədəmɪnəm*], also Audrey Siegl. I am from Musqueam and am the granddaughter of the late Steven and Celina August.

I want to raise my hands to you all for creating a safe inclusive space, for creating a space where everyone can come and move and dance and be, for us to celebrate not just the differences between us, but the strengths we bring together when we gather, that, where we all meet, and where we're all sacred, and where we are all safe and where we are all included. This is a beautiful place to be, and I implore you: enjoy your movement, enjoy your connection, and again I raise my hands and I say *hay ce:p qá'* [*speaks hərədəmɪnəm*].

[Bright melodic piano/chimes, with periodic high-pitched drones]

[HELEN] Hello, my name is Helen, and I've been dancing with All Bodies on and off for quite a few years, but I've only just recently started coming to the Carnegie version. And it's amazing how each one has its own little flavour, and each one has its own kind of special touch; but I feel like the Carnegie Centre brings something really unique, where it's especially open, especially welcoming. It's very much

a surprise - you never know what's going to happen and that really brings some excitement and makes each dance really unique. I really appreciate being part of that and witnessing amazing moments that just happen every class - sometimes humour, sometimes profound, sometimes really kind of just bringing everyone together in a very very special way. And I think that... I just feel very lucky to have been able to just take part and be in the moment with the people in the room. It's really a special thing.

[RIANNE] OK, hi Lance!

[LANCE] Hello!

[RIANNE] *[laughing]* So Lance and I are co-facilitators of the All Bodies Dance Project community classes at the Carnegie. We are in our second session and today is our last week of six weeks. And Lance and I are sitting in the theatre at the Carnegie Community Centre where we lead the classes. And we're going to start class in about an hour, so I'm going to pass it over to you, Lance, so you can introduce yourself.

[LANCE LIM] Hi! My name is Lance, and I am a co-facilitator along with Rianne as part of leading classes, these dance workshops at the Carnegie theatre where we are at now.

And just a little bit about myself: I was born and raised in Vancouver and I've been part of the... I guess they would call it the Downtown Eastside. I mean, I've lived in the Strathcona area, and I've seen a lot of changes. It's been 60 years living here and y'know feeling honoured to be part of the Indigenous territories.

So one of the things that I remember growing up, really, was just the fact that I loved Indigenous art. And I would spend hours using my pencil trying to draw the totem poles, the symbols; I would make up my own symbols, which some of my Indigenous friends thought I was a little loopy for doing so [*laughing*], y'know? Something like my grandmother would turn over her rocks during... if she had heard that you had done that, and I'm like "Oh, okay, please explain", right?

So one thing that was really neat was I had friends that were Indigenous that I had an opportunity to experience their culture and to, unfortunately, see all their pain and see all the injustice that they had to go through.

And mind you, in some ways we were all in the same boat. My parents had come from China Kong, and in a sense English was already my second language because I have to speak to my parents in their language and think in their culture but yet feel like I was trying to understand what it was like to be Canadian, right? Trying to find my identity that way, right? But the beautiful thing is I lived and I still do live about a block away from the Ukrainian Center, the Russian people's home, we lived amongst immigrants we lived amongst, y'know, Indigenous minority... where really, in our neighbourhood, I would believe at least... I believe it was the caucasian people were the minority [*laughing*], right? And I'm not saying that to belittle them or knock because there were a lot of workers who lived... who worked in the docks and their children and families were trying to get by. But I think because of my age and because of the time I lived in... I got to see Japantown. Even though it was internment, there were still shops. I don't see the shops anymore so I'm really lucky to see that.

I've been a part of Oppenheimer Park, to see it in a different light, to have that baseball diamond - not only the diamond, they also had a little clubhouse with a famous Japanese Canadian baseball team there that did really well.

And y'know... and I was lucky to be part of a lot of festivals like you know my Mom was really an artist in her own way, and was a Mom's Mom, a farmers' Mom. So she really encouraged me to be in the arts; she knew I was sort of very artistic and as you know in my own way quite different than a lot of kids and wasn't trying to be ambitious, I think I really just loved seeing the beauty and trying to understand different cultures because I really wanted to communicate with friends. I think that's a general thing that I saw. One of the most interesting stories for me was... I guess it was back in 1974 there was a big hockey series between Russia and Canada, it was the first time communists vs capitalism... that was sort of how it was billed. I was in elementary school and I remember when they played in Vancouver, our class stopped and they had us watch the game. But in my neighbourhood there's no hockey rink at the time, there was not The Britannia Community Center, there was no swimming pool, no nothing, so we didn't even know what that really was, right? [*Laughing*] I mean, you could watch it on the TV, but we didn't have a TV, so we watched it at the school because they wanted us to see that, to be patriotic. When Canada lost, and people were booing them, I remember the captain Phil Esposito sort of saying that, y'know, we should try and y'know we should be ashamed, you should vote for your country and all that stuff. The next day the Russian people's home got bombed. So all we were thinking is why did they hurt our neighbours? So that was a very difficult thing.

So it's hard to say... to be Canadian was to have your identity but kind of not acknowledge that identity if you want to be successful as a Canadian. So that was really very strange for me, y'know... it... so I think that was an interesting point in my life... things that I remember.

[RIANNE] Totally. Thank you so much for that context of where you grew up and what it was like. And it sounds like you had artistic practices from when you were very young, and so, y'know, drawing, and it sounds like your Mom was also an artist in her own way; and so I want to ask you: at what point along the way did dance become one of your practices?

[LANCE] I think I was always a precocious kid, meaning that I'm one of those kids that... "Oh, can you get him off the monkey bar? He's going to fall!" And I didn't care. Kind of like... I would fall... I would do all sorts of crazy stunts. And I had... just maybe I had ADHD for all I know, for what was going on. So I didn't really know too much about dance at all really, I just knew that in my elementary school I loved to be involved with different... y'know... I got involved with the school play, y'know, and I enjoyed, sort of, the arts that way. But one thing my parents did... there wasn't really a daycare, so it's kind of what they call latchkey kids - when you're outside they just send you outside til you're tired and go back in, send you back outside, and late night, you gotta go to bed. So that was how it was, right? And all we did was play play play play play.

And of course I wanted to collect every animal possible, much to my mother's chagrin. She didn't really enjoy that. I remember my sisters...

when I say precocious, when they made mud pies they fed it to me, so “Mikey will try it! Lance will try it! Lance will try everything!”

We used to go to what’s known as Strathcona Park, and it was a big marsh back then, where the Strathcona gardens are, this giant marsh, and we thought this is an adventure, right? So we’d go as kids and and I would find this... sort of like this... what do you call those things that are kind of just flat wooden slats that you have, right? So we can... we could stand on this and swim like Huck Finn... while we sing, right? [Laughs] So we come home and my boots are full of tadpoles, and I go “look, Mom, I got tadpoles!” And boy, she wasn’t happy. My poor sister, elderly step-sister four years older than me, was always supposed to be responsible, so would always get heck for it, whatever happened to me. And she would sort of take it out on me: “you’re going to eat a mud pie now because of that!” It’s really funny because I ended up having a dog, cat, goldfish. One of the funny stories... the only reason why I remember these stories is my Mom would tell me that “oh yeah, one time y’know, your cat bit your guinea pig, your guinea pig was chasing the hamster, and then y’know, your ants ran all over the floor, and the dog was trying to get everything” [Laughs] “And y’know what? You thought you were taking care of it all? But I really was really tired...” That was Mom trying to do it all. It was just pandemonium, right?

And the first puppy my Dad got for my sister... he didn’t know what it was. He just went to this farm and they looked and as they were leaving, they thought they saw a horse going by. That was his mother. They ended up getting a Great Dane. Which in six months turned out to be the goofiest dog because it’s not like we trained it. It had no pointed ears that we could do, it looked like it was a purebred brindle,

had tiger stripes, so we named it Tiger. So one thing it would do, it would run and then it couldn't stop, and it would slam into the wall. It would put its head on top of my shoulders and drool all over my face, which I loved, much to the chagrin of my Mom. Just like "oh my gosh!" [*Laughing*] I'd take her for a walk... but anyways, that's just funny. I don't know if I answered the dance part yet? [*Laughs*]

[KADI] My name is Kadi and I am immensely grateful for this opportunity to come here every Saturday and participate in this community of dancers. Dance for me is my lifeline. When I was a little girl, I was doing ballet and very soon learned that I don't fit in because my hips started growing, I was too tall. So there are so many restrictions, and when the society defines the dance like something very limited, then all of the rest of us are out of this beautiful opportunity to dance. And through these very creative gatherings here in Carnegie Hall in the community of so many different people with so many different abilities, I have discovered that this uniqueness of every every person and dance movement that they bring into our community, how everybody every breath every movement everything becomes dance and is included, and this is quite overwhelming, this uniqueness of differences that we all bring together. And I have learned that, yes, dance is a movement, movement is life, so yes I am so grateful for this life line here in Carnegie Hall.

[RIANNE] [*Laughing*] Yeah, I'm going to thank you for that. It sounds like there was a lot of dancing with a lot of animals from early childhood, but I do want to ask you about where did you, like, start training in contemporary dance? Or how did you discover contemporary dance?

[LANCE] I actually knew nothing about that. So what happened was that I was just going to get to it that my parents there's no daycare so what they would do is when they had to go shopping in Chinatown. And that's not talked about about Chinatown, even though there are a lot of these. When the immigrants first came in my Mom's generation, they set up these benevolent associations, like non-profit societies, to help the transition. And a lot of the time they were listed under a family name or the area where you came from, the town. So basically, you come, you don't know anybody. "Oh we'll help you with immigration, we'll help you with different things". And they always had performing arts groups, social groups, right? So, pretty well, they left me there like a daycare and a bunch of old me. So the stairs were way up high. The reason why they did that was because earlier on there was a mob that attacked Japantown, then it was coming to Chinatown. Chinatown knew that was happening and they didn't do anything, so now you see in those old buildings, they're like... it's like going up to the sky in order to get to a building. So you'd go there, I'd see old men smoking pipes, and they would have this altar, and as kids we would run around just laughing up and down, nobody could chase us and finally they had I guess the martial arts teacher there - and I didn't know what that was - they just wanted... it wasn't so much that you had to learn martial arts. It was more that they would do something with you cuz you you're kids and you're running around rampant. So they would punish us, and one of the exercises they would do is... I guess at a ballet bar they would put your feet up and lean over and do that? Well what they did was lock our legs in four so if we moved we could break our legs.

[RIANNE] Wow.

[LANCE] So we had to do what is called “leg pressing” for an hour before we could do anything else. They would do all sorts of crazy things with us, right? But we... like... so we got to do dragon dancing, line dancing, and that was a lot of fun. And we got to see things and do things as a child, right?

And from there, I ended up wanting to... I realised that I liked movement, I liked doing anything with movement, so I continued that, and I sort of ended up wanting to learn contemporary... what is called Contemporary Wushu, which is pretty well sort of a performance version of Chinese martial arts. So I had a chance to train and compete. I did that cuz I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I just finished high school and I started to train and compete, and I got a chance to socialise and go across North America. And during one competition, we were late, so I had to enter the ring, and didn't warm up as much as I needed to. And one of the manoeuvres is like an aerial twist. But the thing is the floor was University of Washington, I didn't realise that's a rubber floor, it didn't give. I tore both hamstrings.

[Rianne gasps]

[Lance] So I had a serious serious injury and at the time, my instructors, I realised they didn't... they weren't really scientifically trained, they go “oh just workout workout workout!” And I was just injuring myself even further. So I stopped because I was a little upset, I was doing quite well. And I had just come back from L.A. We went down to L.A. That was my biggest trip somewhere from another country, and that was during the '84 Olympics, as part of the demonstration team. So basically I was in the Olympics *[laughs]*...

Canadian sort of thing... And the next thing was the first world Wushu championships in Beijing, China. So I couldn't go to that, I was injured. So I said well what am I going to do with myself? So I said well, y'know, for a while I was living, breathing training. I was training 8 to 10 hours every day, we would train outside on concrete - which is not the safest thing for gymnastic manoeuvres. But still, y'know, at one point we encountered the B.C. gymnastics team training at Langara. They saw us working out, and they let us work out there too. It's really interesting how things work out. So after I got injured I didn't know what to do. I thought well maybe you should go to university. And I thought... I never thought of any university. When I was a kid my parents just hoped that we would just graduate and just do what we did. So I decided to go to Simon Fraser [University] and take one course, a part-time one, I took a kinesiology course. And I loved seeing some learning about the body cuz I was injured and was like OK I need to do something. I said hm... I should do some movement. So they had an intro to contemporary dance at Simon Fraser. And Simon Fraser was way up on the hill, they have the Contemporary Arts Department there. So I did a class, and I'm goin' gee, y'know, I really love this, I loved choreography, I loved reading the book. And ballet... I used to think nah, that's not for me, y'know, that's for... I don't know what that was but then I started to understand that y'know how they treat your... I mean dancers have to learn how to take care of their bodies. And y'know, when you're young you don't think about that. You gotta complete, you gotta just go, you're meeting all your friends, you gotta do things... but this was a different thing. And then after that class, I applied for the program, and I got in the program. So at that time they had only four males that made it into the program. You usually don't have that many anyways, right? It was one of the strangest things I think I was... because of my training I was a little bit more athletically

gifted, and I think they had just never seen someone move the way I did, because it was very strange to them. It was not contemporary dance at all [*laughs*]. And of course I didn't know how to train. I'm thinkin' OK, I guess I have to learn how to do this *étendu* or something like that. OK I'll do it a thousand times! [*Laughs*] Because when you think of more performance, you do something repetitively over and over and over and over and over again. And I'll say "I'll try that!", and y'know, what's called a tour on air, the spin, right? I couldn't stop. I would spin two and a half revolutions without trying, right? So it was really really strange, right? So obviously the choreographer said "Do that!", and I felt like a circus animal sometimes. And I realised it's not about being a virtuoso performance. I admired that because I was taught let's try and do this, y'know, try and create that, so you have to work toward something, right? Which is great, but I think that it reminded me back of the artistic side that I really love. I loved working with different artists. I met theatre people, I liked theatre, I met piano people. One of the first pieces we choreographed was with... we just decided to hang out, and they had this... what is it... just a shell... and the started to blow on the shell and then all of a sudden we just ran across the lake area and slid and slashed and just created an improvised dance right there.

[RIANNE] Wow.

[LANCE] So it was kind of like... artists being free and hanging out together. And it's like the whole group knew each other, and we'd always hang out recreation-wise. I guess some sort of...

Those days were a lot of fun. But growing up was always a bit of a challenge. I understand... you know... in terms of understanding that the area we live in, there was a lot of poverty, a lot of pain, y'know?

But when I grew up, it was a lot of immigrants during the 80's around the 90's, 80's early 90's... that's when... y'know... we started to get more of the homeless problem. More of the things that I think when they let go of people at Riven... Rivendell... [Riverview Hospital, a notorious mental health facility in Coquitlam, BC, closed in 2012] and nobody else could deal with them, they were left in the street. But there were some horrible things that happened, that I just felt that just my heart sank, right? Hearing that before the drug dealers would just... they would... if you owed a debt they would just throw you out a window. That was just really painful. In High School I volunteered at Native Legal Education, so that used to be just on Main across from the courthouse. And we would go to the courthouse, and someone... they're about to sentence them... "oh, you did fraud, you tried to...", and I realised they were just trying to get some food, they were trying to get something for living. And of course the judge would... "well, what are we gonna do, put 'em in rehab? We're not going to put them in jail..." What are you gonna do? And we would argue that, like, how is that going to help? Is he going to learn anything from that? Is there any... so... I appreciate some of the models that the Natives have around their own justice when they have their own system of caring, y'know? And I guess that comes from just the idea of longing for a smaller community. Because even though I grew up in Strathcona, and it's a big urban city, I always felt it was a small community. 'Cause we kids, we hung out together, we looked after each other in our own way, we cared about our neighbours. And over time the area has changed; it's very artistic. So at first sight I want to just step back a bit to say how I got involved with All Bodies.

[RIANNE] Mhm.

[LANCE] I had had a split-up with my wife, and I was looking after my son, so I moved back into the Downtown Eastside to actually help my Mom who was struggling with Alzheimer's. And she would... inevitably I would get a call from her caregiver saying "where is she?", and then I would have to go back to Chinatown and locate her [*laughs*]. We didn't have money for GPS or something like that [*laughs*], or a fence or something that would find her. But it was... particularly one winter I was so afraid that she would burn down the house. It was things like that. So I told her to come down - I was living in New Westminster at the time, with my son - and I had to... she stayed with me in the winter. Then I realised that she couldn't really look after herself, so what I did was I had to make a difficult decision. My son was non-verbal autistic, he was just starting to get socialised, and I was going to move back to where my Mom was to help her out at the time.

They had removed the stove... we had no stove. So what I did was... I just would volunteer at every food place and just bring food home. So I used whatever I could to use whatever I learned or growing up working at so many food places to sort of help. So there was a backpack program. I went back to Strathcona school, they actually had a cafeteria. I was shocked [*Laughs*]. They had a breakfast program. I go "what's that?!" right? We never had those things growing up, right? So I just tried to create a sense... you know, as a parent you try to create a sense of community for your kids, and you not let them be afraid of community you tried to let them embrace it, and try to set a good example by living that good example for others, right? To show that the diversity... I grew up in diversity. I don't have to be afraid of it. But part of me *was* kind of afraid. I knew there were things that weren't that great in our neighbourhood.

So I think for me, how I got to All Bodies was that when I came down here I was looking for something to do again. I said “well what are my roots? What have I done? What have I done”? I had gotten away from dance, so y’know I said... I did my time and dance, I got married, I ended up doing technology work working all over in tech. And then later I got sick, and then I couldn’t do certain things. I’ve had neurological problems, and I just decided... I need to do something with my health, I need to do something, so I went over to Carnegie and... which I know of. I know where Carnegie is. And at the time Karen Jamieson had a class and Julie Lebel was leading it. And I was asking Julie about the class, and I went to maybe one or two classes, and she suggested to me “oh, y’know, there’s All Bodies Dance group”. She saw that I was in a wheelchair, and she said “well why don’t you try going there?” And I’m going... it’s not that they didn’t want me there... it was the time conflict. So I ended up going to Roundhouse - which is a little bit further for me, but still. I go “wow, this is a modern facility!” And I met Naomi, and, y’know, my first encounter with pronouns - which I’m really bad at remembering [*laughs*]. I’m good at it now, but I think growing up it... wasn’t so much that you would say the wrong pronoun, it was because you would try to remember you would say the person’s name. Because when you say a person’s name, you want to have that relationship with them more than just their pronoun. So I would apologise and just sort of say “y’,know, I have a really bad memory. If I do that, I don’t mean to disrespect you”. What I really want to say is that I grew up knowing ways to remember the person’s name. That’s all. And also, another cultural thing, I guess people thought I was shy but it was proper. My Mom taught me that you don’t look at someone in the eye. Whereas the western... [*laughs*] so they look at them directly in the eye. So there’s a whole bunch of things. So part of me... with all that... I think I really wanted to... and my son was autistic so I

can learn about how do I communicate; how do I communicate? And part of that...I think that I was just a dud.

So my biggest thing was I would try to learn different ways of communicating. So the biggest communication was non-verbal, which is dance! Y'know, movement.

And the funny thing is that in my teen years and stuff like that. Unfortunately in the 90's we had this thing... or fortunately depending on how you look at it, disco was king, right? [*laughing*].

So my cousins would sneak us out to the Commodore Ballroom where they would have this giant disco thing. And we're not legal... we're going into this thing and I'm going "what is this". I don't drink, but we liked dancing, so we just danced and it was fun. And y'know I remember seeing... who was that... a debut artist had this giant sort of jukebox, and it was a DJ booth. And it was a lot of fun, with all sorts of lights and stuff like that. And y'know, for someone... if I was autistic, it was like sensory overload, I love this!", right? So that was pretty funny. And I encountered someone called Bryan Adams [*laughs*] who did debut the songs there. So I met some pretty interesting people when I grew up. So now that I say these things, I'm not trying to drop names; it's more like when when the younger people talk about "this is the history of your neighbourhood...", and then I go "I *am* the history of the neighbourhood." [*laughs*] And I'm not trying to do that because I don't want to... like... talking about yourself... I was there, but somehow you are now history? I don't want to feel that way. I want to feel that I can relate to the younger generation, not because I *am* the younger generation, but I don't want to be stuck in just... ways that say 'Aha! We were better when we were like this.'" Sometimes you have to be able to see a situation and it's really challenging for youth today. Otherwise

we would just say “Well, if you were all like this, then we would be better”, but that doesn’t necessarily reflect the challenges that every generation faces, right? And I think for me, communication is a very important thing. So if you dance, you gesture through movement, do anything I could do to communicate was very important. So that’s what made me realise why I love dance, I love movement. Some things we can’t express with words.

[KAREN] Ok so this class has meant so very much to me, because I have been very ill for about 4 years. And I just had a year when I’ve been recovering. And so, I’m getting stronger again. And so this class, it just opened up my creative energy, which has always been strong and it embodied it for me. To be able to dance with young people... and y’know, at 76 it’s so meaningful for me to be able to do that. Y’know, when I talk about... I was talking with Louise about playing the piano, and she said “why don’t you play the piano here? And Rianne welcomed me to do that, which meant so much to me, because I played a lot for myself... I played the music to kind of help me heal. And so, to be able to share a little bit of that music in this class meant the world to me. I felt like I kind of stepped into myself at 76 and like, okay, y’know? I’m... I’m moving forward. And I discovered how much I can still move, which I didn’t know I had that still in me, and I do! So I’m great... really grateful for the absolutely great teaching from Rianne. Really am... yeah... so... very thankful for the whole experience.

[Interlude chimes]

[KEVIN] I’m really grateful to be part of the All Bodies Dance. I’m really happy that Rianne and Lance invited me to be part of this. It’s been really special to come here every week, and to share space with all

these different kinds of amazing people. Everyone's really different, and everybody's really go for it. To really see how they are themselves is really great. I'm hoping to have a chance to use my skills and help some Cantonese and Mandarin speaking people to participate. But I'm really happy to see all the different people that showed up so far. I look forward to this every week. I'm also going through... I'm going through, like, a recovery from a car accident right now, and concussion really affects me in really different ways. This is a really safe and welcoming space for me to be courageous and try out different things and participate to see how I can be with other people and move together in the same space.

[RIANNE] So I wonder if you want to speak to this particular class and what it's been like for you, and what you have witnessed over the last 6 weeks?

[LANCE] So what I witness is just as you were just alluding to, just that overall sense of caring for one another, non-judgmental. But it goes beyond just non judgmental or participating in class. Really just wanting to have connection. I think part of that comes from just being on zoom and being an in a pandemic world, and I've always stated I'm so honoured to sometimes when I'm dancing I don't know what it is, but we acknowledge each other, when you're moving we witness each other, and we see beauty through the dance, but we also see it through each other. And as a result there's sort of a natural connection, even though we are not physically touching one another, we are touched by one another. And I think that that is really something that inspires me to create more and to work with people and to see movement in a different way, the movement as how others

would help me to see them, y'know?

So I just think I'm very lucky, grateful right? So it's not always the movement in the movement, it's in the process and and from that what is created from that... so there is a lot of creativity here and sometimes they take it upon themselves, which I think is amazing... like when they... when they want to do sort of... their own healing. When Karen decides to go on the piano and play music, there's just this notion of wanting to come together. It's not like going to a class where he's like okay we're all anonymous here, but we know we're working out, and then we go back to the... to the next workout. It's... it's... it's like joining the Y[MCA] and saying "I was in choreo class. Ok, now I'm in weights! Now I'm in cardio! Now I'm in this class!" It's not like that at all. It really is like "wow! we're coming together". It's like a social event really. So it's pretty amazing. And every week there's been new people, and every week the new people come back, so it says a lot about what's going on, right? So what's funny is we're kind of beyond capacity [*both laughing*]
Y'know, in a good way.

It's funny when... I remember Rianne says "oh you can tell your friends about it, but don't tell them all to come at once!" And of course I still tell my friends about it and I say please come out and just give it a try. And a lot of times I think it's also to break the stereotype "I can't dance!" "What steps are you going to show me? What if I can't do it?" Or y'know even a member of the class who just felt... have issues with their body image and things like that, and maybe people would laugh at her? And there's nothing like that. We are so supportive here because this is not what All Bodies is about. It is about everyone dances out of their hearts, and they dance not just to see a result.

They dance to understand their own process within themselves. And from that we get beauty, we get things that may not be seen as beauty but yet are beautiful.

[Musical interlude]

[MICHAELA] Hi, my name's Michaela and yeah I've been a part of this All Bodies Dance class for the last 3 weeks. And I grew up dancing, ever since I was three it started off with this class called "creative" and it grew from there and it became my main art form and outlet of expression. And around 19 my body kind of sped up and aged quicker than I thought it would, and presented itself with a lot of limitations. And that grew over the last eight years and has grown into fibromyalgia and other health conditions. And it's kind of slowed me down from from dancing. And so for years I stopped completely and didn't really have so much of an art form, and I went into painting a little bit but it still wasn't the same, it wasn't this embodied experience for me. And I missed it. And so I started just a year ago after I took a month off work for a trauma that happened. I just started dancing in my room, and kind of having it just sitting on the floor started recording myself and just having kind of limited limited space movement and just kind of started embodying again and experiencing, and it's like figuring out my body again with its new limitations. And this class has been like a really cool opportunity for me to do that again and explore movement within my limited capacity. And it's hard sometimes. I get stuck in my head around comparison of what I used to be able to do and now where I'm at, but this class is has just been such a like hospitable and yeah just very open space to be able to do that; and just getting to witness and

connect with people again, yeah, has been really meaningful for me and so yeah I really enjoyed it.

[WENDY] My name is Wendy, and I consider dance freedom. It's total liberation. It's... uh... I can move about in this All Bodies Dance class at the Carnegie. I can move about like I can't move about normally, just with all the stretching and warm up exercises. And then the free gentle flow which can actually become quite invigorating sometimes [*laughs*]. But it's awesome, it certainly is All Bodies. I am an all body, and I love it.

[RIANNE] Thank you so much, everyone, for listening to the All Bodies Dance Project podcast. And a special thank you to our behind-the-scenes collaborators: Our soundscapes were created by MJ Coomber, podcast graphic by Kirsten Hatfield, and editing for this episode by Devalin Galloway. Episode transcription by romham pàdraig gallacher from the Radical Access Mapping Project.

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The transcription of the episode is available on our website along with info on upcoming guests and our other projects. Links to artists and organisations mentioned in the episode are in the show notes.

And finally, we would love to hear from you. If you have feedback, questions, ideas, please email us: info@allbodiesdance.ca

Until next time.