In the Care of Women: Dance in the Physical Education Department at Teachers College, Columbia University in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

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The advent of the twentieth century shocked America like the electricity that
drove it. Modern inventions made society quicker and more efficient, while the life of the
individual became increasingly sedentary and spiritually lacking. The doctrines of
Christianity weakened against the power of Darwin’s theory of evolution. Cities grew
stronger in direct correlation to the weakening of the female body. Women, with their
husbands, were exchanging rural life for the bustle of the city, and with this move came
the expansion of leisure time and other changes in lifestyle that were blamed for their
physical maladies: “It appeared to women that a frail constitution, whether real or
imagined, was inevitable among those who dared leave the old frontier life of service for
a new life with some culture, leisure, and even higher education in it.”

The remedies for these maladies traveled both extremes. For instance, well-
respected Dr. S. Weir Mitchell ordered his patients to be completely inactive both
physically and mentally, and to completely submit to his orders. In contrast, there was a
rise in the belief that both men and women should participate in physical activity in order
to maintain the highest degree of physical and mental acuity. This led to the rise of
physical training and, in time, to the introduction of dance in higher education.

Women were able to use this rising interest in physical health as the impetus to
change the world around them. By the early twentieth century, methods of movement
conditioning such as Dalcroze eurhythmics, calisthenics, and various forms of gymnastics
developed, under feminine guidance, into aesthetic, natural, and art dancing. These
forms of movement allowed women to embrace and free the physical form of their bodies
and explore their emotional and intellectual potential.
This exploration was best done in a private, socially acceptable manner. Dancing in the theatre and entertainment industry was connected to immoral behavior. Even a dancer such as Isadora Duncan, whose performances were often compared to a religious experience, was at times reprimanded because of her bare-legged and unbound body. The academy, however, offered a moral environment in which to develop movement and teach that movement to a larger population. As soon as dance lost its uplifting social and moral importance, it would be removed from the curriculum.

At Teachers College, Columbia University, women were able to use their newly discovered physical and intellectual capacities to attain positions of authority in the academic institution. This is significant because, at the turn of the century, women were only recently being admitted to institutions of higher education. For instance, it wasn’t until 1889 that Columbia University established Barnard College, a female counterpart to the all-male undergraduate Columbia College. However, Teachers College offered a coeducational environment since its official founding in 1887. As a caretaker, the teacher plays a role that is inherently maternal in nature, and it is therefore understandable why dance, a uniquely feminine art form, thrived in the care of teachers. Women utilized the experimental nature of Teachers College to introduce and develop new forms of movement and dance in a socially acceptable environment.

At the turn of the century, courses in physical training were available to students at Teachers College, but dance had not yet entered the curriculum. The primary aim of the department of Physical Training was “to insure health for students while undergoing their college course, to give them ease and grace in movement, and to teach them the
importance of physical development as a part of a complete education." Thus, the first
courses of instruction were within the early trends of physical culture. The few courses
offered were in gymnastics, with a particular concentration on the "Swedish" gymnastics
developed by Per Henrick Ling.

In the academic year 1902-1903, an important change was occurred; physical
activity was no longer referred to as physical training, but renamed physical education.
The new name recognized the new discipline as a field with theories, analyses, and
histories of its own. Through the name physical education, the body and its movements
were given a place in higher education.

This change in terminology coincided with the appointment of Thomas Denison
Wood as Professor of Physical Education. Wood, a graduate of Oberlin College and the
College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University, brought an academic
dimension to physical education at Teachers College that had previously been lacking.
Prior to his arrival, Wood had served both as the director of the Men’s Gymnasium at
Oberlin College (1886-1888) and as a professor of hygiene and organic training at
Stanford University (1891-1901). In addition, he was an American member of the
International Congress of Physical Education, a member of the Physical Education
Association and the American Society for Research in Physical Education, and a fellow
of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.5

In his first year at Teachers College, Wood taught Education 49 (School
Hygiene), Education 150 (Practicum in Physical Education), Physical Education 10
(Applied Anatomy and Physiology), and Education 90 (Theory and Practice of Physical
Education), which dealt with "the place of hygiene and physical training in modern
education . . . [the] educational value of different forms of muscular exercise [and]
adaptation of exercises (plays, games, dancing, gymnastic drills, corrective exercises, and
athletics) to the different grades and to the individual child.\textsuperscript{6} In addition, Wood co-
taught Biology and Physical Education 3 (Physiology and Hygiene) with two professors
from the Biology Department. Three courses – Physical Education 11 (Applied Anatomy
and Physiology), Physical Education 12 (Anthropometry, Diagnosis, and Therapeutics),
and Physical Education 13 (History of Physical Education) – were tentatively offered
pending the appointment of an instructor. Although Wood incorporated physical
education into an academic institution with great success, there was little advancement in
the actual physical activity taught. In the same year that so many new academic courses
were added to the curriculum, there were only two courses in physical training for
women (an elementary and an advanced gymnastics course). A shift in educational
philosophy was required before movement and the body could be more fully accepted by
the academic institution.

John Dewey, the “acknowledged leader for progressive change in education,”\textsuperscript{7}
taught at Columbia University beginning in 1904. Although Dewey himself was not
directly involved in the Physical Education Department, his philosophical approach to
education created an environment conducive to the idea that movement and an
understanding of the moving body was vital to the development of the individual:

Dewey’s conviction that there was an intimate and necessary

relation between processes of actual experience and education was

the perfect point of departure for the field of physical education . . .

. From the point of view [of early movement educators], the
physical self and the sentient, moving body was the perfect medium for experience.⁸

The Physical Education Department, in line with Dewey’s philosophy, worked to develop educators that moved beyond “sterile rigid teaching formulas . . . [and] would have the knowledge and skills enabling them to make contemporary educational institutions responsive to the needs of society in twentieth-century America.”⁹ Thus, the department remained at the forefront of the field’s development.

Thomas Hagood, in his book on dance and American higher education, proposes that Dudley Allen Sargent and his former students, William G. Anderson and Luther Gulick, were responsible for bringing academic recognition to folk, aesthetic, and “national” dance. In the shifting philosophical environment that Dewey had created at Teachers College, and in combination with Wood’s position as the head of the department, the work of these three men permeated the Physical Education Department.

By September 1905 all of the instructors of physical education at Teachers College had trained at Sargent’s Normal School, the Anderson Normal School, or the Boston Normal School. “Normal Schools” prepared physical education teachers in the areas of “aesthetic culture, physical training, and hygiene.”¹⁰ Anderson included national and social forms in his classes, while Sargent included aesthetic calisthenics, otherwise referred to as aesthetic dance, in his curriculum. Not coincidentally, these three men led a spirited convention held at Teachers College seven months prior to the addition of both “classic dance” and social dance to the curriculum of the Physical Education Department in September 1905.
In March 1905, under Wood's direction, dance was the central topic of the American Physical Education Association's National Convention held in the Memorial Building of Teachers College.\(^1\) (The president of the APEA, Luther Gulick, in addition to being one of the founders of the Boy Scouts of America, had founded the American Folk Dance Association and been Wood's roommate while at Oberlin.) For some time, gymnastics teachers had been including basic folk and social dancing as part of their lessons, and, thus, the APEA realized the importance of discussing the inclusion of dance as a part of physical training. Some felt that dance had "no place and no relation to formal gymnastics, its aim being primarily corrective, not aesthetic," while others argued that it was from the aesthetic point of view that dancing should be introduced.\(^2\) "For the purpose of giving the matter a good test, the Council of the [APEA]" arranged a series of lectures.\(^3\)

The lectures that followed were dominated by men (Sargent and Anderson included) all of whom held doctorates in their respective fields. "Miss" Elizabeth Burchenal and "Miss" Caroline Crawford were the only two women asked to be a part of this academic discussion. Both Burchenal's lecture, "Does Training in Dancing Contribute to General Grace and Carriage and Posture?" and Crawford's lecture, "The Arts of Motion as Related to Physical Education," foreshadow the dance forms, social and "classic" dancing, respectively, that they would introduce into the Physical Education Department the following September. Although this conference was led by men, it was women who physically introduced dance into the curriculum at Teachers College. Crawford stayed on to teach at Teachers College until 1918. However, Burchenal, at the
request of Gulick, would soon leave her job at Teachers College to disseminate her knowledge of folk dances and, eventually, establish herself as a leader in the field.¹⁴

Social dance was readily accepted as part of the curriculum because, as implied by its name, it was viewed as part of being a well-rounded individual in society. Classic dance, on the other hand, was a recent trend and, to some, a controversial one too because it went well beyond the masculine, mimetic exercises employed by Sargent. “Classic dance” grew out of an American enthusiasm for Greek culture. Women, either nude or dressed in a flowing robe resembling a toga, would mold their bodies into positions inspired by Greek art. Isadora Duncan, a classic dancer often misrepresented as a “Greek” dancer, had published “The Dance of the Future,” two years before Teachers College offered classic dance. In this 1903 manifesto, she spoke of the “mature Man, whose body will be the harmonious expression of his spiritual being.”¹⁵

For Sargent, Anderson, and Gulick, “a consciousness of Hellenic idealism [had] permeated all [their] outlooks on the value of physical training.” Like Duncan, “[their] goal was to attain for American society the Greek ideal of a sound mind in a sound body.”¹⁶ Thus, the feminine form of classic dance was able to fit itself into a largely male-dominated curriculum because the ideals of the classic dancer were clearly in line with the goals of the physical education program.

That year, the department’s Hellenist enthusiasm is verified in that the History of Physical Education course included a discussion of “physical education among the different civilized races before and during the Middle Ages, with particular attention to the Greeks and Romans.”
The Hellenic idealism that consumed much of American society at the turn of the century was not a desire to take on Greek culture, but a desire to use Greek history and culture as a model for the development of a new America. That is to say, there was a desire to learn what being an American was and what it could be. Through the American Pageantry Movement, all citizens (regardless of age, sex, economic, or social status) began "the search for grass-roots indigenous material to create an American art form as opposed to imported commercial spectacles." 17 Dance allowed people to abandon traditional puritanical negations of the human form and embrace their bodies, their health, their history, and themselves, and, therefore, it was one of the many art forms embraced in these festivals.

Early twentieth-century pageants were huge productions combining music, dance, and theatre that brought together entire communities. The casts were composed of hundreds to thousands of local citizens of all social and economic classes, many of whom had little to no training in the performing arts. In addition to providing entertainment, the pageants served to educate the public on issues of historical or political relevance: "Implicit in the idea of presenting a pageant was involving as many people as possible and relating the content to the history and needs of the community." 18 The pageant would easily fit into the philosophy of Teachers College with its emphasis upon the individual and the community, reformation, and the importance of process as much as product.

In her book on American pageantry, Naima Prevots asserts that the first university courses in pageantry were offered in the Physical Education Department at Teachers College in 1911. Although the first courses to use the words "pageantry" or "festival" in
their titles were in 1911, the study of movement, rhythm, and dramatic form began
almost simultaneously with the first pageants in 1905.

The ideals of pageantry fit into the educational philosophy at Teachers College,
but the direct source of this addition to the curriculum cannot be determined. However, it
seems to be reflect Crawford's position on the faculty and Wood's relationship with
Luther Gulick. Gulick was involved in pageantry as an outgrowth of his presidency of the
Playground Association of America. He believed that "democracy rests on the most firm
basis when a community has formed the habit of playing together," and, as "pageants
were an extension of creative play," it is not surprising that the first dramatic movement
courses at Teachers College began in a musical class for children. Taught by a Miss
Hofer and Helen Latham (a graduate of the American Institute of Normal Methods),
Music 11-12 (The School Song and Rhythmic Movement) strove to develop "feelings for
rhythms through the expressive interpretation of children's songs." Also in the
academic year 1906-1907, courses in the Physical Education Department began to
emphasize the importance of dramatic games, while Physical Education 119-120 (Play
and Games) foreshadowed the arrival of pageantry. This course, taught by Crawford, like
pageantry, considered the individuality of each participant, examined the historical
significance of drama, and brought dance together with music, poetry, and drama:

Considering the child's earliest activity as the beginning of the
more highly organized forms of expression, and studying its
relation to and development towards the subjects of the elementary
school curriculum, the course includes illustrations of historical and
constructive games of skill, as they develop toward the co-
operative occupations and include the earliest transitions to
symbolic forms; dramatic games, historical and constructive,
developing toward the arts of movement, and including the earliest
translations to music and poetry.\textsuperscript{21}

The presence of pageantry within the department grew exponentially with each
passing year. In the academic year 1909-1910, for instance, Physical Education 9-10
(Practice) taught by William Skarstrom, Crawford, Fotheringham, Maud March, and
George T. Holm was established. This course, in combination with the more advanced
Physical Education 109-110 (Practice) taught by Skarstrom, Crawford, and Edgar Fauver,
was based on ideas closely associated with pageantry. These courses, along with offering
physical training such as swimming and free exercises, taught pantomime, social and
classic dancing, dance composition and interpretation, looked at dance in a historical
context through teaching dance-dramas from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,
and followed the "evolution of dance through national dancing."\textsuperscript{22}

Most importantly, these courses began to look at dance as an art form in and of
itself: "The lecture course treats the dance as a form of art and presents the evolution of
the dance drama and its relation of the dance to the other arts of movement."\textsuperscript{23} Due to its
role in pageantry, dance within an academic environment was being transformed from a
physical activity into an art, and "the idea that dance was an art and that there was, in
fact, a history of dance to understand was an important conceptual bridge toward
considering dance academically substantive."\textsuperscript{24}

The following academic year, 1910-1911, Mary Porter Beegle joined the faculty
and co-taught the advanced course, Physical Education 109-110 (Practice). Beegle, who
would eventually co-author the book *Community Drama and Pageantry* with Jack Randall Crawford in 1916, was a leader of the American Pageantry Movement.\(^{25}\) Her presence at Teachers College solidified its contributions to pageantry and, consequently, the importance of dance in higher education.

In 1914, Beegle wrote, “the use of the word ‘Pageant’ has caused a great deal of confusion in the minds of the general public” and encouraged the American Pageantry Association (APA) to classify only those productions that promoted social service, artistic merit, and institutional change as pageantry.\(^{26}\) In *Community Drama and Pageantry*, dance is considered an essential part of the pageant, and an entire chapter is devoted to it. This sentiment is supported by the course that Beegle taught in 1915, Physical Education 81-82 (The Pageant and the Dance). Although dance is only briefly noted in the course description (“attention will be given to the fundamental types of dancing and their place in the pageant and festival”), the title of the course implies the importance of the dance in pageantry. Beegle’s work at Barnard College indicates that the dance aspect to this course was in folk, national, aesthetic, and interpretive dancing.\(^{27}\)

During the first year of Beegle’s arrival, Physical Education 123-124 (Conference), taught by Crawford, was offered. This course studied “constructive work in the dramatic game, the school festival, and pageant.” By 1913, the course, no longer taught by Beegle, would be more clearly defined as based on “folk dances, pantomime, and general rhythmic expression. [With] music and speech as incidental aids.”\(^{28}\) In 1910, courses in Play and Games and “The Dramatic Game,” which studied “children’s games from all part of the world, and . . . the simplest dance and dramas of primitive people and of the folk of Europe” were still offered and taught by Crawford.\(^{29}\) More
importantly, during the summer session of 1910, courses in a wider variety of movement forms were offered. Miss Ashcroft taught an elementary and advanced course in folk and national dances, and a course in advanced gymnastic dancing, while Mr. Woll offered a course in calisthenics. Clearly, the work of pageantry contributed to the growth of dance in the curriculum. Beegle never taught more than the one or two courses a year at Teachers College. However, because of her teaching position at Barnard, her presence on campus was clearly influential in expanding the dance curriculum of the University's various physical education departments.

Prevots notes that "the American Pageantry Movement legitimized leadership of women in the community and in the theatre in an unprecedented way." 30 Women were given respect in their roles as writers, directors, producers, pageant masters and leaders in the APA. For instance, In May of 1913, the leaders of the APA planned a conference to be held on February 21, 22, and 23 of 1914 in connection with the Columbia University Institute of Arts and Sciences. 31 Beegle was appointed secretary of the APA and gave a lecture on "Out Door Festival Dancing" at the conference. Moreover, pageants such as Beegle’s The Romance of Work were able to confront suffragists' concerns. Beegle was clearly one of the pioneering women who used the environment of the academic institution to develop and spread her work. Her precedence reflects a change at Teachers College in giving power to women and dance, a predominantly feminine movement form.

In 1913, Teachers College asked Gertrude Colby to establish a physical education curriculum for children at their experimental elementary school, the Speyer School. The course was to permit self-expression and be natural and free for children. A graduate of
Sargent’s Normal School of Gymnastics and trained in ballet, aesthetic dance, American Delsartism, Dalcroze eurhythmics, and American pageantry, Colby was able to draw upon her eclectic training to develop new methods for teaching dance to children at Speyer. When the school was discontinued in 1916, Colby was invited to join the faculty of the Physical Education Department at Teachers College. Colby had previously taught courses, such as advanced dancing, during the summer sessions at the college, but in teaching during the academic year, she had access to a larger student body and could further develop her work in dance.

In her first year as a part of the Physical Education Department, Colby co-taught a course in personal hygiene, practice, advanced practice (with Beegle), and dramatic expression in physical education. She taught Physical Education 77-78 (The Dramatic Game) by herself, and, through the course, showed “the relation of [the] material to the psychological development of the child.”\(^{32}\) Previously, the dance curriculum had been dominated by national and folk forms that connected the individual to his or her historical and racial background. However, the recognition of the psychological aspects to dance indicates a shift in the philosophy of what dance could be.

This shift eventually lead to the development of “natural dancing” which was first offered at Teachers College during the 1921 summer session. In her book *Natural Rhythms and Dances*, Colby considers the development of natural dancing to be a collective effort at Teachers College:

> At Teachers College, Columbia University, we have adapted the name Natural Dancing feeling that this term expresses more nearly the thing for which we are working. It is based on such free
natural movements as walking, skipping, running, leaping etc. By making ourselves free instruments of expression, rhythmically unified. . . “We dance ideas, not steps”. . . Our purpose in developing Natural Dancing has been to carry on the rhythms of childhood to a higher form of the art of dancing—“the only art in which we ourselves are the stuff.”

In truth, Colby developed the form by herself during her time at the Speyer School and only then brought it to Teachers College where it was named “natural dancing.”

Natural dancing had its counterpart in “natural gymnastics” that Wood had developed and integrated into the curriculum years earlier, but it was also largely influenced by the work of Isadora Duncan. Colby would have been able to read Duncan’s writings on dance and most likely saw the Isadora Duncan Dancers when they toured the United States in 1916 and 1917. Like Duncan, she believed that technique was “a means to an end, not an end in itself.” However, where Duncan believed that training was essential, Colby felt that one did not have to be trained in order to take part in natural dancing. Colby wrote:

In dancing it [technique] is sufficiently flexible to allow for individual variations of physique and temperament. Our standard is based upon art, especially as found in Greek sculpture and vases; upon the laws of line and mass, of balance and opposition. The living embodiment of our standard is, with the exception of a few minor details, in the Isadora Duncan Dancers.
The references to art, design, and physics indicate that Colby’s theories about
dance could be integrated into the academic institution. Colby’s theories behind natural
dancing bridged the gap between folk and artistic forms of dance, and brought dance as
an aesthetic form into the academy. Physical Education 159-160 (Natural Dancing)
was offered as a one-point course for the spring session of the following academic year.

Although the development of natural dancing indicates an embrace of the female
body and the empowerment of women, courses from this time do not reflect an equality
of the sexes. The rise in female power drew gender roles into question.

Prior to natural dancing, courses that offered dancing were open only to women,
had an equivalent course for men, or made no mention of gender segregation.
Nevertheless, there was little mention of dance in physical education for men. Physical
Education s61 (Folk Dances for Men), Physical Education s62(Athletic and Gymnastic
Dancing for Men), both taught by a male instructor, and Physical Education s63 (Dance
for Boys), taught by Mary Wood Hinman, offered during the 1915 and 1916 summer
sessions respectively, implied that dances suitable for men were different than dances for
women. More importantly, they implied that dance was appropriate for men in certain
contexts. The addition of Physical Education sZ (Social Dancing for Men and Women),
as implied by the name, demonstrated that gender roles in society should be upheld in
dancing. Almost ten years later, in 1924, a course in Natural Gymnastics and Dancing
for Men would be the first such course to be offered during the academic year. The
course served as “an advanced course in natural gymnastics, and beginning instruction in
clog and character dancing.” Men had yet to participate fully in the “new” dance.
The social issues about dance that the Physical Education Department was confronting were reflected in the Educational Sociology Department. For instance, as issues about gender roles and the female body revealed themselves with the development of natural dancing, the Educational Sociology department offered a course, “Problems of Advisers of Women and Girls,” which “concerned the control of the social life of young women and girls . . . [and] the adviser’s relation to the guidance of young women in matters of health, of religion and of thrift. . . . in all social relations in high school and college, vocational direction, and their training for leisure.”40 The philosophy of the pageant is reflected in courses such as “Education in Citizenship” and “Social and Industrial History of the United States.” Furthermore, as the dance-drama, folk, and national dances tied the individual to his or her history and race, courses in the Educational Sociology department included “Community Socialization,” “Assimilation of the Immigrant as an Educational Problem,” and “Training Supervisors for the Americanization of the Foreigner.” Clearly, issues surrounding dance were a part of larger questions in educational philosophy.

Simultaneous with Colby’s arrival at Teachers College, dance was given greater respect as an artistic form, and, instead of being one of many athletic practices in a physical training course, some courses were devoted to a single dance form. For instance, in the academic year 1926-1927, six physical training courses were devoted entirely to athletic, clog, folk, national, and/or natural dancing.

Ten years after her arrival, Colby brought dance theory into the academic institution, thus making another milestone in the incorporation of dance into higher
education. First offered in the 1925-1926 academic year, Physical Education 159a (Theory of the Dance) was a one-point course that concentrated on "the dance as a form of art in its relation to other arts," studied the meaning of the dance "in relation to its origin and place among primitive peoples, and its social significance in the cultural development of the race."41 Although these topics had been included in other courses, they had never been brought together and concentrated in one course. Colby also created Physical Education 10 (Music in Physical Education), a course that explored the place of music in physical education and was probably the first time the department looked at the relation of music to movement outside a dramatic context such as pageantry. In future years, this course would be integrated into dance courses that included both lecture and practice. The following year, Colby introduced a course that questioned the place of the form she herself had developed, natural dancing. Physical Education 159H-160H (Problems in Natural Dancing), was a lecture and studio course that discussed individual problems (such as motor rhythm) and the general problems of "natural dancing in a program of physical education."42

In 1928 Colby was teaching only one course a year, "Problems in Natural Dancing," and by 1931 she had left the program entirely. However, much of Colby's influence remained, and a younger generation of women would rise to meet the continuing challenges of developing dance in an institution of higher education.

As Colby had filled the absence that Beegle left, so Colby's departure allowed a younger generation of women to move forward and new forms of movement to be integrated into the curriculum. New women allowed for new developments.
Mary Josephine Shelly, a graduate of the Kellogg School for Physical Education joined the department in 1929 and continued to teach there while obtaining her Master’s degree in physical education.⁴³ Although still a student, Shelly was continuously creating.

In addition to dance technique courses, Shelly taught Physical Education 137 (Fundamentals of Rhythmic Movement) during the winter session of the 1930-1931 academic year. This course was a self-declared “experimental approach to the analysis of motor skills through a laboratory examination of rhythmic movement,” and the first to look for “basic elements of movement common to all physical education activities.”⁴⁴ (At an APEA conference held at Teachers College six years later, Shelly would go so far as to say that “the group with the highest sense of rhythm includes our best musicians, dancers and athletes. You see, there is no difference between a golfer’s sense of rhythm and a dancer’s.”⁴⁵) This course demonstrates Shelly’s innovative approach to movement in physical education. Accordingly, the course was reworked by Shelly and given a new name (“Mechanics and Rhythm in Body Skills”) and description the following year.

In 1934, three years after graduating from Teachers College, Shelly joined fellow Kellogg School graduate Martha Hill to found the Bennington Summer School of the Dance and revolutionize the teaching of the new modern dance. During her time at Teachers College, Shelly and Hill began “co-authoring a book on dance theory [that they would eventually abandon]. ‘At the time [dance critic] John Martin was defining modern dance. [They] thought it was terrible that he wanted to call it the modern dance,’’ and wanted to write their own definition.”⁴⁶ Like Martin, they were fervent admirers of the new dance, but they did not agree with its classification as “modern.” Regardless of its
categorization, modern dance would not enter the curriculum of the Physical Education Department until 1935, under the instruction of Mary O'Donnell.

Mary O'Donnell, a former student of Colby, joined the faculty in the academic year 1930-1931. O'Donnell quietly slipped into the department, and, at first glance, it appeared that her contributions would not be as revolutionary as Shelby's. However, this was not to be the case. Simultaneous with her first semester at Teachers College, tap dancing, an entirely American dance form, was added to the curriculum she was responsible for the very important addition of tap dancing, an entirely American dance form, to the curriculum. The following year, O'Donnell took over Colby's course, "Problems in Natural Dancing."

O'Donnell elevated the status of dance in physical education on a local and, more importantly, on a national scale. At the 1931 convention of the American Physical Education Association (APEA), a group of women (Martha Hill, Dorothy LaSalle, Ruth Murray, Mary Jo Shelly, and Mary O'Donnell) petitioned the Board of Directors to permit the organization of a dance section and grant it official status as a part of the organization. The entirely male Board denied this request. Subsequently, the group appointed O'Donnell chairman and made her responsible for leading the new, unofficial section during the academic year 1931-1932. At the 1932 convention, O'Donnell requested official status, and, according to LaSalle, "chiefly because of Mary O'Donnell's excellent presentation and argument, the request was approved." The National Section on Dancing became an official part of the APEA and the first national professional organization for dance educators. O'Donnell would continue her leadership
when she began to teach the first modern dance courses offered at Teachers College in 1935.

The addition of modern dance to the curriculum marks a very important change because it was the first time that dance intended for the theatre was included in academia. Although Shelly had fought John Martin’s naming of the new dance less than five years earlier, he eventually “became [Hill and Shelly’s] spokesperson for the new movement.” 48 According to Martin, modern dance was composed of four major principles: “substance (movement), dynamism, metakinesis, [and] form (as a result of movement, not dependent on musical or other forms).” 49

Modern dance was easily incorporated into the Teachers College curriculum because of its emphasis on the relation of music to dance. Since 1930, Elsa Findlay’s course, “Teaching Dalcroze Eurhythmics,” in the Music Education Department had been cross-referenced in the Physical Education Department. 1 Eurhythmics, developed by the Swiss composer and music teacher Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, translated sounds into physical movements in an effort to give music students a better sense of rhythm. 50 In 1935, Physical Education 137 (Survey of Rhythmics), served as a prerequisite to Physical Education 138 (Intermediate Modern Dance). “Survey of Rhythmics,” taught by O’Donnell and others, concentrated on the “fundamentals of movement and rhythm basic to all types of dance.” 51 O’Donnell’s course in modern dance used these skills to teach students how to compose dances with an emphasis upon the relationship of dance to music, particularly percussion instruments.

Other courses taught by O’Donnell that year included Physical Education 139-140 (Methods and Materials of Physical Education Activities for Girls and Women) which
included modern dance, tap dance, and folk dance, Physical Education 141-142 (The Teaching of Modern Dance), Physical Education 147A (Theory and Practice [of modern dance]), Physical Education 149-150 (Studies in Modern Dance), and Education 257F-258F (Festivals for School and Community). The course description for “Studies in Modern Dance” best reflects O’Donnell’s approach:

This course is designed for the student who will teach advanced class or direct dance clubs. It will include pertinent problems in dance such as: dance as a reflection of our social scene, movement the medium of dance, rhythm and accompaniment, design, the creative approach.\(^5^2\)

Whereas dancing had previously been used as a political and social tool in pageantry and festivals, the onus now lay solely on the dancer and the art to prove its worth in higher education. This was especially difficult as dancing was no longer included in the education of male students. Modern dance as offered at Teachers College was a form of dancing open only to women. Simultaneous with its introduction into the curriculum, all women students in the Physical Education Department were required to be familiar with the basic principles of modern dance. However, these elementary courses were only open to women, and no equivalent course seems to have been open to men. Physical Education 153-154 (Methods and Materials of Physical Activities for Boys and Men) seems to be the closest equivalent. Composed of three sections, this course offered training in gymnastics and sports, swimming and rhythmic. Although O’Donnell appears to have taught the class in rhythmic, the class only lasted for fifty minutes, thus indicating that it bore no relation to the ninety-minute modern dance class

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1 Of note, Elsa Findlay had recommended John Martin to the New York Times. (See Soares, 1.)
offered to women. Although some men did enter the modern dance world, albeit with difficulty, Teachers College could not accept them at all.

For years, the physical education department had been the source of innovation. It had produced leaders in dance education (such as Margaret H'Doubler) and had been the source of new forms of movement and educational philosophy. Soon pre-existing leaders in the world of modern dance would join the faculty, and, subsequently, dance was removed from the department.

In the mid-1930s, and in history, the pioneers of modern dance in America included Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Hanya Holm (sometimes referred to as the “Big Four”). Graham, Humphrey, and Weidman had left the Denishawn school in California and moved to New York City in the late 1920s, while Hanya Holm arrived in New York from Germany to direct the Mary Wigman School in 1931. Humphrey and Weidman were strongly associated with each other and formed a school and a performing group together, but otherwise the Big Four was composed of four very distinct personalities with four very distinct approaches to dance.

The Big Four came to be known as such through their work at the summer dance festival at Bennington College starting in 1934. Established by Martha Hill and Mary Jo Shelly, the Bennington School of Dance, at least in its first years, was geared toward teaching dance educators, not performers. These educators would then return to their respective schools and ask the artists they had met at Bennington to come and perform. This became known as the “gymnasium circuit” that helped to financially sustain the companies of the Big Four during the 1930s. Whether it was because of the need for
financial support, the college’s location in New York City or its affiliation with Shelly, the Big Four would soon come to Teachers College.

The group had been familiar with the program at Teachers College for a number of years. For instance, in February 1935, an all-day “Conference on Modern Dance” was held at Teachers College. After a morning of lectures, Louis Horst presented a lecture-demonstration on dance composition, while Martha Graham and her “Group” performed a program of dances, as did Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman.53

By 1941, each member of the Big Four plus Louis Horst (Graham’s long-time mentor and musical director), had taught or was teaching Physical Education 293G—294G (A Survey of Modern Dance for Men and Women). This course, “a cross section of modern dance in America and [a study of] its relation to the other arts,” was composed of four sections.54 The first section, “Theory and Technique of Modern Dance,” was essentially a ninety-minute, non-gender-specific studio class taught by Holm in 1940 and Weidman in 1941. Section II, not offered in 1941-1942, was Horst’s famous course, “Composition in Dance Form.” Section III, also titled “Theory and Technique of Modern Dance,” was a ninety-minute course, taught by Humphrey, that offered her approach to movement and composition. A notation in the announcement indicates that Martha Graham previously taught this course. Finally, Section IV taught the relation of music to dance in either Franziska Boas’s course, “Percussion in Relation to Dance,” a course in accompaniment for modern dance, or Findlay’s course in “Dalcroze Eurhythmics.”

This marks an interesting development at Teachers College. This was the first time that a man (Charles Weidman) was asked to teach modern dance and the first time that an “artistic” form of dance was open to men. Also, the Big Four, although all
talented teachers, were primarily performers from the theatre. These changes were presumably accepted by the institution because of the success of Hill and Shelly’s work at Bennington. The physical education faculty at Teachers College almost certainly met the members of the Big Four during the 1932 and 1933 Barnard Dance Symposiums that explored the techniques and function of dance in colleges. However, it wasn’t until after their success at Bennington, a respected institution of higher education, that they were asked to come to Teachers College.

On December 7, 1941, the United States entered World War II, and subsequently, World War II entered Teachers College. The college believed “the place of the educator is in the first line of civilian defense,” and thus created new courses that would “meet the needs of teachers in war time and prepare workers in certain areas of civilian defense and moral work” in addition to adapting regular courses to their present needs.55 The military had been shocked at the American man’s poor level of physical fitness.56 Therefore, when national responsibility shifted to the physical educators, dance was the first to go at Teachers College.

When America entered World War I in 1917, Beegle (still on campus although not at Teachers College) and Colby had been able to sustain the place of dance in higher education. Dance, as taught by these women, connected students with their national heritage and developed their physical body. However, as led by choreographs and dancers from the theatre, dance was a purely artistic form and, thus, was not valuable to the Physical Education Department during a time of crisis. The Big Four, although all reputable teachers, were from the theatre, and this is the place to which they returned.
By the start of the 1942-1943 academic year, all notable dance faculty (including O'Donnell) had left the department. This left a Miss Stewart to teach a course in dance for young children and another in modern dance. A survey of modern dance for men and women, although listed in the catalogue, was probably not offered due to a lack of instructors. However, social and folk dancing were still taught as they offered a purpose to the larger society. Dance courses were to be replaced by courses such as Physical Education 194E (Leadership in Physical Fitness and Recreational Skills for Civilian and Service Groups) and T.C. Fine Arts 172 (Art for the USO and Civilian Recreational Centers).

Dance in the Physical Education Department would never recover from the war. By 1944 its attitude toward dance was set. The courses in folk and social dancing remained unchanged as they continued to connect students with their heritage and create a sense of national pride. The only course that offered modern dance education beyond an elementary level was Physical Education 137G (Modern Dance: A Tool for Physical Conditioning). Modern dance in the Physical Education Department had lost its place as an artistic form developing in the female body and become just another conditioning method.

In a 1968 Research Quarterly, Christena Schlundt tested the claim of dance history literature that Gertrude Colby, Margaret H'Doubler, and Bird Larson were the "seminal teachers who introduced dance into the educational system of the United State."57 She interviewed prominent educators at twenty-four schools offering graduate work in dance. In her research, Bird Larson (a student of Mary Porter Beegle during her
time at Barnard College) was never mentioned. This can be attributed to her early death. Subjects named a variety of teachers (including Mary O'Donnell) who in turn named Colby or H'Doubler (a student of Colby during her time at Teachers College). If similar research were to be completed today, one could assume that although none would directly name Beegle, Colby, or O'Donnell, they would be in their educational lineage.

Women in higher education have not gained the same historical recognition as choreographers and dancers in the theatre, but their contributions are no less great. Beginning with the first dance classes taught by Crawford and Burchenal, to the pageantry of Beegle, the development of natural dancing by Colby, the innovative voice of Shelly, and the modern dance taught by O'Donnell, dance found a place in physical education at Teachers College through the bodies and minds of women. These women, although molding for themselves a new body, mind and place in society, remained deeply feminine through the nurturing nature of their profession and their involvement in dance, a uniquely feminine form. However, when men and non-academic women from the theatre, entered the department, dance could no longer fight against the social demands brought on by war. Dance flourished in the care of women.
Notes

2 Ibid, 20.
4 Teachers College Announcement, 1901-1902, p.?, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College (hereafter, MML-TC).
5 Teachers College Announcement, 1902-1903, pp.88-91, MML-TC.
6 Ibid, 88-91.
8 Hagood, 49.
10 Hagood, 52.
11 Ibid, 53.
13 Ibid.
17 Prevots, 131.
18 Ibid, 13.
19 Ibid, 90.
20 Teachers College Announcement, 1906-1907, p. 101, MML-TC.
21 Ibid.
22 Teachers College Announcement, 1909-1910, p.120, MML-TC.
23 Ibid, 119.
24 Hagood, 55.
25 Prevots,141.
26 Ibid, 95.
27 Barnard College Course Announcement, 1912-1913, Barnard College Archives, Barnard College
28 Teachers College Announcement, 1913-1914, p. 96, MLL-TC
29 Teachers College Announcement, 1910-1911, pp. 89-90, MLL-TC
30 Prevots, 49.
31 Ibid, 92-94.
32 Teachers College Announcement, 1920-1921, p. 120, MLL-TC.
35 Hagood, 62.
36 Colby as quoted in Hagood, 71-72.
37 Hagood, 64-66.
38 Teachers College Announcement, 1921-1922, pp. 120-121, MLL-TC
39 Teachers College Announcement, 1924-1925, p. 87, MLL-TC
40 Teachers College Announcement, 1921-1922, p. 50, MLL-TC
41 Teachers College Announcement, 1925-1926, p. 135, MLL-TC
42 Teachers College Announcement, 1926-1927, p. 173, MLL-TC
43 Hagood, 115-116.
44 Teachers College Announcement, 1930-1931, p. 211, MLL-TC
46 Janet Mansfield Soares, Barnard’s 1932 and 1933 Dance Symposiums: Bringing Dance to the University, 1997.
47 Mary O’Donnell, Petition to the American Physical Education Association, 1932.
48 Soares, 4.
50 Ibid, 245.
54 Teachers College Announcement, 1941-1942, p. 213, MLL-TC.
55 Teachers College Announcement, 1942-1943, p. 247, MLL-TC.
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Teachers College Announcements, 1901-1950, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College.