

*The Music Stopped*  
**Dancers, Rehearsal Directors, and the Rehearsal Process**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a degree of Master in Dance Studies

University of Auckland

September 2020

## **Abstract**

Within professional contemporary dance, remounting dance repertoire in a rehearsal process can involve navigating a myriad of factors alongside learning and refining choreography. My research proposes the notion of a dancer-centred (Knox, 2013) rehearsal process as a means to deconstruct potential hierarchies present within dance culture and to highlight the experiences and needs of dancers in a rehearsal process. Through interviews, this ethnographic study has engaged seven professional contemporary dancers currently working within New Zealand's dance industry. My aim is to uncover potential affects a rehearsal director may have on dancer needs in a rehearsal process. To explore this notion, a dancer-centred lens is utilised to view the rehearsal process from the needs of a dancer. Themes of dancer agency, self-actualisation, wellbeing, belonging, and self-esteem are amalgamated with dancer-centred theory to extend meanings and understandings of dancers' needs in a rehearsal process and to present the potential effect a rehearsal director may have on dancers.

This thesis extends previous research on dancer-centredness (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013) into the realm of a rehearsal process and examines complexities within the rehearsal director-dancer relationship through seven participant dancer experiences of rehearsal processes. This study contributes to growing scholarly research into the voice and the role of dancers and rehearsal directors.

## **Acknowledgements**

There are many people whom I would like to thank for being a part of my master's journey in 2019 / 2020.

Firstly, thank you to my supervisors, Dr Nicholas Rowe and Sarah Foster-Sproull. I am immensely grateful for your support, encouragement, and patience throughout this period. Nicholas, thank you for your guidance throughout this journey and for helping me navigate my research in a way that allowed me to develop and grow as a researcher. Thank you both for valuing my contribution and experience and for helping me transition into dance within an academic landscape. Thank you for all the online zoom meetings and for adapting to master's supervision via physical distancing during the covid-19 pandemic. Sarah, thank you especially for your wonderful help with my writing; I really appreciate the time you spent considering my research.

Thank you to my research participants for coming on this journey with me. The generosity, time, and stories you shared are invaluable and my research does not exist without your experiences, knowledge, and insight. I would like to thank you for openly trusting me with your stories, perspectives, and honest thoughts. Thank you to Dr Dagmar Simon for proofreading my thesis with such detail, I am very grateful for your time and expertise.

Finally, thank you to my dear family for your unwavering support and patience during my writing process. I am very grateful for your generosity and care throughout this time. Thank you to my wonderful friends for taking interest in my research, for supporting me, for listening and encouraging me along the way. The support from you all was greatly appreciated.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

*The music stopped.*

*We stopped dancing and turned our attention to the rehearsal director.*

*She had her head in her hands.*

*The other dancers and I stood there trying to catch our breath, beads of sweat dripping down our faces, glancing at each other, wondering what we had done wrong. After what seemed like ten minutes but was probably only two, the rehearsal director slowly took her head out of her hands and looked up.*

*She looked at us with frustration.*

*“You guys don’t have it. You will never be able to do it like the work is supposed to be done. You will never be able to do it like the original cast.”*

*I recall thinking – we are different dancers, of course we cannot replicate the repertoire exactly, but also why can we not have slight differences that work for us as dancers and artists?*

*The rehearsal director went on in anger: As dancers we were replaceable; it is the choreographic work that can stand on its own; the work is more important than us dancers. I remember feeling inadequate, not valued as an individual, and that I was never quite good enough.*

## 1.1 Focusing on dancers' needs in rehearsal processes

Upon stepping out of the role of a professional dancer and into the world of academia I discovered literature discussing dancers' needs within choreographic processes and exploration into the dancer-choreographer relationship (Barbour, 2008; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013; Newall & Fortin, 2012; Parker, 2019; Risner, 2000). Considering dancers needs within dance processes interested me as I sometimes felt my needs as a dancer were not important. As a dancer I also preferred remounting repertoire rather than creative processes and considered experiences as a repertory dancer more enjoyable. Therefore, in the beginning of my master's journey, I began considering what produced my most memorable dance experiences within rehearsal processes? What impacted upon them? This led to me wanting to find out how other dancers have experienced this. I wanted to broaden my study beyond my own personal perspectives. I also wanted my own experiences to inform research that seeks to understand the rehearsal process and that contributes to the growing discourse surrounding the dancer's perspective in a professional context (Foster-Sproull, 2018; Knox, 2013; Martin, 2008; Roche, 2011, 2015).

My study values the experiences of seven professional dancers in rehearsal processes and how they perceived a rehearsal director to impact their needs. Furthermore, I investigated how these dancers perceived rehearsal direction to encourage their agency within a rehearsal context. My research has sought to understand and appreciate myriad approaches to how dancers can be valued within a rehearsal process and also unpacks some potential issues regarding how rehearsal direction might impact dancers' needs.

To investigate dancers' needs in rehearsal processes, I drew on the notion of a dancer-centred paradigm (Knox, 2013) and extended this practice into the realm of a rehearsal process. My study draws on scholarship discussing rehearsal processes, the roles of dancers and rehearsal directors within these processes, dancer-centred theory (Knox, 2013) and Maslow's (1943) theories of human needs and self-actualisation. Intertwining these sources of literature allowed me to extend dancer-centred theory (Knox, 2013) into the realm of rehearsal processes and looks to position the needs of dancers as a significant part of the rehearsal process. This allowed the analysis chapters to investigate how rehearsal directors can impact dancers' needs in rehearsal processes.

## 1.2 The research question

To guide my research, forming a question was essential towards discovering “meaning, cause, relationship, interpretation or significance” (Frosch, 1999, p. 27) within this study. When considering how dancers can be impacted in a rehearsal process and to highlight the needs of the dancer, a key research question emerged:

*How are dancers’ needs in a rehearsal process affected by a rehearsal director?*

This question evolved whilst considering my own personal experiences within rehearsal contexts. Contextually, my study centres upon experiences of Western concert dance (Murphy, 2011) within Aotearoa, New Zealand and abroad. My research seeks experiences of dancers and looks at whether the notion of a dancer-centred practice (Knox, 2013) can exist within a rehearsal process.

In consideration of these factors, three key sub-questions emerged. The first sub-query is: *What are dancers’ needs in rehearsals?* This question evolved when considering my own encounters where, as a dancer my needs often did not seem to be considered or significant within rehearsal processes. As I aim to bring further meaning to dancers’ needs in a rehearsal, this question allows me to explore how a dancer-centred approach to rehearsal processes may benefit dancers.

Secondly, I ask *What do dancers consider to be the role of the rehearsal director in relation to their needs?* This question is explored to highlight how dancers understand a rehearsal process as a controlled environment facilitated by a rehearsal director (Butterworth, 2012; Green, 2001; Knox, 2013; Tinius, 2017). To explore the rehearsal process further this question allows for exploration into how dancers want rehearsal directors to help them satisfy their needs, and this can bring further meaning to the complex nature of a rehearsal director’s role and the rehearsal director-dancer relationship.

The last sub-question in my research is: *How have dancers experienced the impact of rehearsal directors on these needs?* This question was formed to gain insight into how dancers have experienced rehearsal directors to either foster or compromise their needs in rehearsals. These three sub-questions are explored within the discussion and analysis chapters of my thesis.

### 1.3 Research aims and significance

The purpose of my research is to identify and examine the impact of rehearsal direction upon dancers' needs in rehearsal contexts. The research provokes consideration of how the rehearsal director-dancer relationship may be thought about differently to facilitate a dancer-centred relationship where "building rapport that supports this shift in power" (Knox, 2013, p. 33) exists. Through the lens of dancer-centred theory (Knox, 2013), this research is focused on decentering the authority of the rehearsal director and reconceptualising the dancer at the heart of a rehearsal process, which may offer various benefits to the dancer (Knox, 2013). As Knox's (2013) study proposes, dancers are highly perceptive about the environment and culture they dance within, as anything that may happen in the rehearsal process can become engrained in the dancers' experience of that specific dance work. This can provoke the following question: How can a rehearsal process impact a dancer's experience of specific repertoire being learned?

The importance of this research is that it introduces a consideration of how rehearsal directors can impact dancers' needs in rehearsal processes. There is still limited documentation exploring the role of a rehearsal director as well as dancer needs specific to a rehearsal process. Through my research, it is hoped that the understandings of how and what dancers need to work at their best can enhance a rehearsal director's practice. Addressing dancer needs could help pinpoint the aims and significance of my research and may consider how the dancer can be of equal or of more importance to the repertoire they are dancing (Knox, 2013). Additionally, research with professional dancers is considered important as it can expose more information regarding the entirety of skills needed for developing "as a dancer in the professional world" (Critien & Ollis, 2006, p. 182) and can further inform the process of "preparation and education that lead to an expert career in dance" (Critien & Ollis, 2006, p. 182).

### 1.4 Overview of the thesis

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 outlines the methodological approach used. This proposes a qualitative, post-positivist, and ethnographic method. The methods of data collection are discussed, as is my position as a researcher. The process of analysis is presented and ethical considerations are explored. The chapter is concluded by proposing the limitations and challenges of my research.

Chapter 3 examines the key terms and concepts for my study through a literature review. I draw on relevant scholarship to contextualise a rehearsal process and discuss the roles of a dancer and a rehearsal director within this. Additionally, through key research in the domain of dancer-centredness

(Knox, 2013), agency, and Maslow's (1943) theories of human needs and self-actualisation, this chapter extends a dancer-centred paradigm (Knox, 2013) into the realm of a rehearsal process. The review of literature also provides an indication of where my research is situated within dance scholarship.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 exist as the discussion and analysis elements of my thesis. These chapters explore a range of participant experiences compartmentalised within the four dancer needs of self-actualisation, wellbeing, belonging, and self-esteem. The participant experiences are explored to unpack specific themes aligned with my research question and sub-questions.

Chapter 7 draws together a concluding analysis of the experiences to articulate four key findings and contributions emerging from the discussion. Additionally, key recommendations for future practice and research are proposed as well as a reflection on how my masters journey has provoked deeper thought on the importance of the key themes pertinent to my research question.

## **Chapter 2. Research Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodology and way in which my study is designed for the purpose of investigating the needs and experiences of dancers' in the rehearsal process. A qualitative, post-positivist, and ethnographic approach has been taken in my study in an effort to articulate experiences within a community by "writing about people" (Frosch, 1999, p. 258). Within this section I firstly explain the methodological approach and research method's relevance to the research question and aims. Following this I discuss the modes of material collection, then I explore my position as a researcher and the challenges and inherent subjectivities my background as a dance industry professional may bring. Additionally, I discuss the ethical considerations the research requires and describe the process of analysis used to explore literature, to extend the theory of dancer-centredness and to discuss participant experiences. To conclude this chapter, I discuss the limitations of the investigation.

### **2.1 Methodological framework**

Outlined in this section is the methodological framework used to conduct my research. These frameworks are qualitative theoretical standpoints, a post-positivist paradigm within an ethnographic approach.

#### *2.1.1 A qualitative approach*

My research seeks to uncover the meanings people make of their experiences. It focuses on gathering and investigating un-measurable data through exploring feelings, behaviours, and experiences of dancers within the environment of a rehearsal room (Bryman, 2006; Malterud, 2001; Marshall, 2016). Qualitative research has been selected to understand the "meanings people bring" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3) through their experiences and allows flexibility for multiple themes, ideas, and experiences to emerge (Ryan, 2006).

Seven professional contemporary dancers were chosen for this study with the intention of a deep exploration into their experiences rather than a broad view into the wider dance community. A qualitative philosophy provides a framework to collect and produce descriptive data through the dancers' experiences (Taylor, Bogda, & DeVault, 2015). Qualitative research has been selected as it allows investigation of a diversity of personal experiences, and it aims to explore how the individual processes thought and action in daily life (Bresler & Stake, 1992). Additionally, a qualitative

approach may be relevant as this is “ideally suited to examining the world from different points of view” (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015, p. 26). Employing a qualitative approach may therefore encourage individual epistemologies, ontologies, and personalities to be honoured (Green & Stinson, 1999).

### *2.1.2 Post-positivist research*

A post-positivist approach has been selected for this research to allow individual experiences to be viewed as “rich in meaning” (Krauss, 2005, p. 758), and to examine how individuals may construct and view their realities through their own perspectives (Green & Stinson, 1999). A post-positivist paradigm does not aim to express a single unified perspective, rather it shares a range of opinions and subjective ‘truths’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Ryan, 2006). My research seeks to investigate the rehearsal process from the perspective of seven dancers, including their experience, views, and opinions within a professional contemporary dance context. A post-positivist paradigm may be an appropriate selection for my study as this approach highlights the research participants’ diverse perspectives of the rehearsal process that may be affected by environmental, personal, and professional experiences or preferences.

My research focuses on a small number of specialised dancers rather than studying a wide cross section of the professional contemporary dance industry. This allows for a deep investigation and meaning making process of each individual's socially constructed ontology (Green & Stinson, 1999; Ryan, 2006). This study does not seek to define or prove a singular truth (Mason, Andrews, & Silk, 2005), but it aims to enable distinct versions of different experiences to be shared. This places importance on investigating the diversity of realities constructed by the dancers involved, with no one voice being more valuable than another (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Post-positivist research recognises the complexity, interconnectedness, and multiple truths of participants' experiences and identifies that these perspectives may be intangible, imprecise, and inexact (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1989.). This perspective may intersect with the rehearsal process as this environment is not ‘clear cut’ and encompasses a multiplicity of complexities and socially constructed practices (Foster-Sproull, 2018; James, 2006; Knox, 2013).

A post-positivist paradigm appreciates that while there may be an objective ‘truth’, “research and theory reflect the limitations of human knowledge and conjecture” (Patton, Renn, Guido, Quaye, & Forney, 2016, p. 23). An additional layer of truth on the research process and influencing my voice as a dance researcher, is my own experience as a dance practitioner. Employing a post-positivist

paradigm allows the presence of my truth as equally valid to the numerous realities of the participants within the research (Ryan, 2006).

### 2.1.3 *Ethnography*

Within my research an ethnographic approach has been utilised to explore the socially constructed culture of professional dance to make sense of the world that dancers encounter (Frosch, 1999; LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Risner, 2000). An ethnographic approach may encourage understandings of the atmosphere and philosophies within particular communities or demographics and allows a comprehensive understanding around an individual's experience (Frosch, 1999). The ethnographic mode of inquiry allows me as the researcher to investigate personal accounts, narratives, and descriptions (Denzin, 1997) through interviewing and writing about a group of people, a particular culture, or environment. As Frosch (1999) explains, "descriptive in nature, ethnography pursues understanding through the layering of the specific and highly complex contexts of human experience" (p. 258). This offers layered accounts of experiences from the seven dancers interviewed.

Ethnography has been utilised by a variety of academic fields in research, and it looks to discover the multiple truths that exist in the various social worlds we live in (Denzin, 1997). Additionally, an ethnographic approach to research is often utilised within dance research and scholarship (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Kaeppler, 2000; Knox, 2013; Martin, 2008; Ness, 1996). Within an ethnographic approach, my research focuses on the narratives of the seven dancers interviewed as an oral "account of events told to others or oneself" (Smith, 2000, p. 328). As the researcher I have investigated the dancers' narratives through the multiple ways in which individuals experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Richardson, 1990), with the intention to comprehend the individual, cultures, and societies (Richardson, 1990) of a rehearsal process.

## 2.2 Methods of data collection

In the following section I present the methods of data collection through a literature review and participant interviews. Firstly, the literature review was conducted to appropriately situate this study and elucidate applicable theory. Secondly, semi-structured interviews with seven participants explored ethnographic data for the purposes of analysis and discussion.

### 2.2.1 *A literature review*

Literature was gathered to explore and assess the following three areas: the rehearsal process, dancer needs, and dancer-centredness. My study intends to build upon research by dance scholars Sarah Knox (2013) and Sarah Foster-Sproull (2017) who have explored dancer-centred theory within choreographic processes. My research is designed to investigate how rehearsal directors as the facilitators of a rehearsal process can impact dancers' agency towards dancer needs in a rehearsal process. The four dancer needs articulated in my study are self-actualisation, wellbeing, belonging, and self-esteem, and these align with Maslow's (1943) theory of human needs.

From here I searched for literature that might extend upon knowledge of dancer needs in the realm of rehearsals through a dancer-centred approach. I searched the General Library at the University of Auckland, New Zealand as well as online databases and journals including JSTOR, Taylor and Francis Online, and Google Scholar. My search focused on finding literature within the realms of a dancer's role, a rehearsal director's role, the rehearsal process, the dancer-rehearsal director relationship within contemporary and traditional contexts, leadership, and management literature, person-centred theory, dancer-centred theory, and Maslow's (1943) theories of human needs and self-actualisation. Key words examined through my literature included words such as agency, dancer needs, professional development, wellbeing, belonging, self-esteem, creative actualisation, professional contemporary dance, rehearsal process, dancer-centred, person-centred, client-centred, and student-centred. Various other terms were searched as significant ideas developed within the process of writing the literature review. The words were searched using multiple combinations and orders as the intention was to gather a wide range of relevant material.

The literature review seeks to assess previously conducted research as well as expand upon meanings and knowledge of the subject areas. The review of scholarship relevant to my research enabled a deeper investigation into a rehearsal process and the impacts on dancers. Collating this literature also presented the opportunity to contextualise the basis, direction, and significance of this study. A

significant aim of the literature review is to discuss and extend upon literature exploring dancer needs, self-actualisation, and extends dancer-centred theory into the realm of a rehearsal process.

### 2.2.2 *Semi-structured interviews*

As my research seeks deep understandings and perspectives of dancers' experiences within rehearsal processes, I chose to engage in a semi-structured interview process as the second method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews embrace "what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions" (Weiss, 1995, p. 1). Throughout this section I describe the interview procedure to articulate how the research participants' narratives were gathered.

A semi-structured interview approach allowed the research participants and I to be flexible and pursue the natural flow of conversation, which may have led to more in-depth discussions and story sharing (Brinkmann, 2014). Additionally, the conversational nature of the interviews allowed space for information and experiences that the respondent may have considered important to explore. These experiences may have not been considered or experienced within my own dance career and may therefore develop diversity in the research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). A topic guide was used for the interviews, outlining potential ideas or questions as a starting point (Brinkmann, 2014). The semi-structured nature allowed me as the researcher to respond to and support the dancers' experiences by changing or adapting pre-planned questions (Brinkmann, 2014) and encouraged open-ended and follow-up probing questions to focus the interview conversation on the intended areas of study (Galletta & Cross, 2013; Ricotta, Fan, & Dwyer, 2019). The interviews were approximately 60 minutes long and were one-on-one to allow for experiences to be shared in a way that suited each participant and allowed singular personal narratives to be extended and explored. In order to allow a relationship of equality and with the intention of promoting an interactive process (Vincs, 2004), I interviewed the dancers in informal settings, and these spaces and times for each interview were selected by the participants (Seidman, 2013). Allowing the place to be chosen by each of the seven dancers was aimed at building rapport and for the interviewee to feel at ease when sharing their personal experiences with me (Adams, 2010). Additionally, as a researcher I took on the responsibility of listening with intent and aimed to maintain a professional relationship to avoid laying emotional responses to the participants' experiences throughout the interview process (Adams, 2010).

Prior to the interviews, the research participants were given a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form which outlined and explained the interview process and expectations of my research. Before each interview commenced, I confirmed the dancers were comfortable for their voice to be recorded and described that at any time the audio recorder could be turned off. I digitally recorded the

interviews and later transcribed the conversations. The transcriptions were given to the participants for reviewing, and the opportunity to make changes was given. The opportunity for the participants to withdraw from the study was also offered. The interviewees' transcriptions highlighted emerging themes or ideas that could be developed further and highlighted the research participants' voices and experience as professional dancers. I then withdrew specific themes that arose throughout the transcripts to organise and structure the discussion chapters of my thesis. The experiences the dancers shared became the data for my research.

### *2.2.3 Contextualising the participants and the selection process*

My research is focused on the meanings and experiences of seven contemporary dancers of rehearsal direction, and my interviews were conducted in Auckland, New Zealand. The seven research participants in my study are professional dancers who have worked in both freelance and dance company environments. My aim was to interview contemporary dancers with a broad range of experiences between freelance and dance company contexts. Within their careers all participants have performed, pursued professional development, and have worked in various capacities within rehearsal processes internationally and here in Aotearoa, New Zealand. All of the research participants identify as being specialists in contemporary dance with diverse professional experiences within Aotearoa, New Zealand and abroad.

Within my research, importance was placed on sourcing interviewees with specialty knowledge of the research area (Gillham, 2005). The distinct area of contemporary dance concentrated on in this research is that of a professional level, focusing on dancers who identify themselves as sustaining a career in dance and who predominantly work on dance projects, performing works nationally and / or internationally (Barbour, 2008). Consequently, I searched for participants with at least five years professional dance experience within dance company or independent contexts and placed an advert on dance industry social media to source the participants. From the responses to the advert, I approached seven of the dancers to confirm their participation in the study and to arrange an interview.

## 2.3 Thematic analysis

The material presented in the literature review and the interview transcripts were the primary resources used in my analysis process. A thematic analysis endeavours to look for patterns in the interviewees' data, to then arrange the topics into main themes and concepts, which become the research findings (Aronson, 1995). Choosing a thematic analysis provided me with the flexibility to

view the data and choose which themes I thought can relate to each other (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Upon transcribing each interview, I drew on five emerging themes that appeared to be of importance to the interviewees and to my research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes were professional / personal development, wellbeing, relationships, confidence, and self-actualisation. In delving into the discussion chapters of my thesis I gathered further literature with the aim of unpacking the dancers' experiences. The literature provided an opportunity for additional exploration and understanding of the research question and the themes that had emerged (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). My study has drawn on a dancer-centred analytical paradigm (Knox, 2013) to provide a lens to view the dancers' experiences in rehearsal processes and also to direct the purpose of the study. Additionally, Maslow's (1943) theories of human needs and self - actualisation were amalgamated with a dancer-centred approach with the intention of extending dancer-centred theory into a rehearsal process.

## 2.4 Background and position as the researcher

The following section presents my history as a dancer and outlines my current role as the researcher in my study. I discuss the complexities and subjectivity my position may bring to the research, as these factors can significantly affect the research and provoke ethical considerations.

### 2.4.1 *Background*

Throughout my 12-year career as a dancer I have worked in company and independent environments in Aotearoa, New Zealand and toured extensively, performing nationally and internationally. During this time, I experienced diverse approaches to rehearsal processes. In addition to my role as a dancer, I have been a teacher of choreography and technique within a tertiary dance context in Aotearoa / New Zealand and have undertaken the role of a rehearsal director within various projects for dance companies. My experiences as a dancer and a teacher have formed a desire to unpack the rehearsal process from a dancer's perspective. As such, through my research I seek to investigate and understand dancers' needs within a rehearsal process and consider potential impacts the rehearsal director may have.

My career and the intimate nature of the New Zealand dance industry (Knox, 2013) has meant that I have worked alongside some of my research participants in a variety of ways. There have been instances where we have been part of a rehearsal process together, taught or been taught by each other and on several occasions I have been present within the experiences they spoke about during their

interviews. This has allowed me a unique insight into their experiences, and an appreciation of the contexts and complexities involved.

#### 2.4.2 *Position as the researcher*

As the dance community in New Zealand may be viewed as compact (Knox, 2013), my professional dance background within this industry meant that I have existing relationships with the research participants to varying degrees. Considering my background and these relationships I propose myself to take the position of an “intimate insider” (Taylor, 2011, p. 3) within this study group. Whereas outsiders may only “see typical behaviour” (Clifford, 1978, p. 53), an intimate insider position allows me to possess insider knowledge (Taylor, 2011). A deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences and the diversities between what the dancers chose to disclose can be understood, as I have similar experiences (Greene, 2014; Loxley & Seery, 2008; Taylor, 2011). It is understood as significant to maintain flexibility within the research process as to not pre-empt what might be revealed, however, it is important to note a researcher may never be entirely objective or neutral (Morawski, 2001). It was important for me to maintain awareness of my own potential biases and alliances as well as being self-reflexive, but due to my specialist knowledge of the subject area it seemed advantageous to purposefully bring my subjectivity prominently into focus in the research.

#### 2.5 Ethical issues and considerations

Ethical approval was gained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee prior to my research commencing. Ethical processes are to ensure that the research is morally considered and operates within the guidelines for a master’s research. Within New Zealand the dance industry can be considered intimate (Knox, 2013). Therefore, stories about dancers and rehearsal processes within this environment may have the possibility to impact people in various positive or challenging ways. To protect the identity of the seven research participants, the dancers remained anonymous and their identities were replaced with a pseudonym. The same was applied for any third parties or names of external details that relate to the dancers, such as dance company or dance project, and the names of the other dancers and rehearsal directors that were shared within the narratives.

Additionally, due the size of the dance community in New Zealand, there was a possibility that I would be familiar with the research participants. Given the complexity of the established relationships I have with each research participant, it is important to consider how I might ethically maintain these relationships throughout the research process (Denscombe, 2007; Taylor, 2011). Two perspectives

may arise, one providing an advantageous view that there may be a comfortability in the dancers speaking about their experiences. The other may propose the possibility that the dancers may not want to share certain stories with me, and their information sharing might be adapted, or their stories may have contextual details omitted. Additionally, existing relationships might have affected the way I understood the dancers' experiences. To manage the interviewer / interviewee familiarity, by acknowledging these relationships exist and unpacking the research alongside my inherent subjectivities can address this potential issue (Taylor, 2011). I acknowledge these limitations may have affected the material I was able to work with and the analysis process. Lastly, as a researcher I have intimate knowledge within the study area, and this might have affected the way I have viewed the research. It may be significant to identify that this exists, however this may not be perceived as a negative or positive effect.

## 2.6 Challenges and limitations of the research

There are a number of limitations to identify within my research that require discussion. My research is limited by factors such as time, scope, and word count appropriate for a master's thesis. To explore in depth the meanings and experience of the dancers within a rehearsal process, only seven participants were involved. This small sample size provided an insight into a selection of dancers' experiences rather than a broad overview of many. Additionally, the context of professional contemporary dance is small in New Zealand, therefore only offering a small number of dancers who may fit into the selection criteria. The limitation of the timeframe and wordcount of the master's research limited the scope of my research and resulted in many of the research participants narratives to be omitted from my study. It is intended that future research will explore additional factors within rehearsal processes and delve deeper into the rehearsal director-dancer relationship.

An unexpected challenge during my master's journey was the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The fluctuating lockdown of New Zealand during this time resulted in disruption of my study and supervision needed to take place online rather than in face-to-face meetings. This caused interruptions and my momentum was disrupted which presented a further challenge to completing my thesis.

## Chapter 3. Literature Review

This chapter pulls together scholarship relevant to the research question: *How are dancers' needs in a rehearsal process affected by a rehearsal director?* The review of literature has been designed to investigate and unpack a rehearsal process and what impact this may have on a dancer. It seeks to bring meaning to dancers' needs in rehearsal contexts and presents the possibility for a dancer-centred approach (Knox, 2013) to promote agency and self-actualisation for dancers. Framing the research using dancer-centred theory allowed themes of agency and self-actualisation within rehearsal processes to be investigated. In the first section I explore the meanings of a rehearsal process and discuss the roles of rehearsal directors and dancers within this research. In the second section I draw on Maslow's (1943) theory of human needs and self-actualisation. In the third section I consider how dancer-centred theory might be extended into the realm of a rehearsal process and how amalgamation with Maslow's (1943) theory of self-actualisation can extend dancer-centred research focusing on the needs of dancers.

### 3.1 Constructing meanings within the research

My research contends that rehearsal processes may vary, and that each dancer's experience within this process is diverse and unique (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). It is also proposed that processes may vary depending on context, approach, relationships, place, and ultimately that there is not 'one way' to view a rehearsal process (James, 2006). The following sections delve into understandings of key terms within this research to bring context and meaning to the research participants' experiences and to add to literature within contemporary dance.

#### 3.1.1 *Remounting contemporary dance repertoire*

My study understands contemporary dance as "movement deliberately and systematically cultivated for its own sake" (Stevens & McKechnie, 2005, p. 243) that can communicate and engage with thematic, narrative, emotional, and conceptual explorations (Behrndt, 2010). This movement can be refined with the aim of achieving and / or performing a work of art, as well as being a multimodal sensory and perceptual experience (Grove, Stevens & McKechnie, 2005; Stevens, McKechnie, Malloch, & Petocz, 2000). The cultivated movement may be augmented by feeling, communicative intent, and expressive nuance (Stevens & McKechnie, 2005), allowing contemporary dance to be a mode of expression (Schultz, 2017).

Remounting or reconstructing contemporary dance choreography may be a distinctly different process from the initial dance making. Reconstruction may be a broad generic term, including the recreation of dance works with or without the choreographer's participation (Ginsburg & Penrod, 1997). This process may be facilitated by a rehearsal director who might also be the original choreographer, a former dancer who has performed the work previously, an individual who has been authorised by the choreographer to do so, or reconstructed from an approved notated score or video in order to authentically duplicate the original (Ginsburg & Penrod, 1997). The process to remount repertoire may occur in a rehearsal process and can exist separately from an original choreographic endeavour as it skips the dance making phase (Ginsburg & Penrod, 1997). The rehearsal process may therefore exclude the dancer from witnessing how the work was developed, excluding construction of the movement material and aspects that are considered of importance by the choreographer (Ginsburg & Penrod, 1997). The following section will present understandings of how the rehearsal process may occur.

### *3.1.2 The rehearsal process*

Rehearsal processes may differ between dance companies and independent environments, and from company to company and in different cultural contexts (James, 2006), however, the process may include conventions that are universal within rehearsal processes in the arts (Knox, 2013). This research views a rehearsal process as a phase where repertoire may be remounted, which may include dance material to be learned, practiced, and refined according to the aesthetic and expressive choreographic themes contained in the work (Bläsing, Calvo-Merino, Cross, Jola, Honisch, Stevens, 2012; Critien & Ollis, 2006; Foster-Sproull, 2017; James, 2006). The rehearsal process may involve deliberate repetition of 'running through' and /or polishing dance material and may be focused towards an upcoming performance (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Fournier, 2003; James, 2006; Knox, 2013; Risner, 1992).

The rehearsal process might be understood as a social environment where learning takes place through the sharing and construction of embodied knowledge involving the co-ordination of multiple performers as a collective and organised effort (Hefferon & Ollis, 2006; James, 2006; Zeitner, Rowe, & Jackson, 2015). The process may include but not be exclusive to a rehearsal director and dancers, and not only involves merely dancing but may serve as an important means for "people to make meaning, to satisfy needs, to exchange ideas, and to share frustrations" (Risner, 2000, p. 156). Additionally, the rehearsal process can be a controlled environment that is facilitated by a rehearsal director, which might result in dancers having to adapt and take into consideration systems,

relationships and the particular cultural contexts of a rehearsal process (Butterworth, 2012; Green, 2001; Knox, 2013; Tinius, 2017). Dancers may bring their own personal meaning, experience, and creativity into a rehearsal process which may inform the way they dance and execute movement (Risner, 1992). Dancers may be required to swap roles or be replaced by other dancers through being promoted or demoted, to learn and understudy new parts, and to rehearse other or newer dancers into parts (James, 2006). Dancers may therefore be required to develop understandings of their new roles as well as deal with relationships within the group of dancers around restructuring of the cast.

In a rehearsal process dancers may have been part of the original creation of the work or it can be the first time they have danced the repertoire (James, 2006). Dance academic Sandra Parker (2019) states that even while the repertoire may be formed and set, “the rehearsal, re-rehearsal and performance of choreographic work, across time and through time, invite the dancer to re-experience at each stage of the process” (p. 72). Each rehearsal process may involve recrafting or re-editing the repertoire as choreographers may make changes through adding information about movement, musicality or pass on information that has not been heard before (James, 2006). Therefore, the meaning of the dance work and choreographic themes may be enhanced, developed, and refined through multiple rehearsal processes and the dancers’ and choreographers’ lived experiences (James, 2006; Parker, 2019).

Rehearsals can be considered essential for development of dancers’ understanding and comfortability of the repertoire and be an important means for the dance to become etched into their body and mind as “artistic property” (Bläsing, 2010, p. 172). Rehearsal directors may give dancers feedback and ‘corrections’ to enhance and develop the dancer’s performance and “personal artistic journey” (Knox, 2013, p. 43) within the dance work. Dancers may therefore rely on rehearsals as an opportunity to master a dance, to feel fully in control of their actions and build confidence for performance (Critien & Ollis, 2006). Because my research is looking specifically into how rehearsal directors may impact dancers’ agency and self-actualisation in order to learn, refine, and become comfortable with the repertoire, I look to unpack dancers’ roles within a rehearsal process.

### *3.1.3 A dancer’s role*

The meanings of a dancer can be diverse and complex as a dancer’s role may include and be dependent on a range of focuses, expectations, wants and needs within rehearsals (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). These are present throughout the interviewees unique perspectives, proposing different standpoints on what a dancer’s ‘role’ may involve. To present further complexities, defining a dancer’s role, in order to match a shifting and fiscally driven artistic marketplace, diverse skills may

be required from dancers as professional dance is constantly changing and diversifying (Zeitner-Smith, 2011). This requires dancers to adapt to the environments and demands of where they choose to work (Zeitner-Smith, 2011).

In this research I am looking at a specific role of the dancer, where the dancer is situated in a rehearsal process in an independent or company environment. Dancers are viewed within this research as professional performers, “intelligent beings” (Knox, 2013, p. 39) and highly skilled artistic athletes positioned as “unique, individual, and not generalizable” (Foster-Sproull, 2017, p. 24). In the context of my study, dancers may be required to endure a high physical work volume; this can include starting their day with a warmup class followed by rehearsals to learn and refine repertoire, and the workload can increase as the performance season approaches (Chirban, & Rowan, 2016; Wyon, 2010). Dancers may be understood to learn and perform a diverse set of repertoires, incorporating many different movements, techniques, and styles of dance (Weiss, Shah, & Burchette, 2008; Wyon, 2010; Zeitner-Smith, 2011). Additionally, dancers can be required to remain attentive to fellow dancers to “generate, observe, execute and coordinate complex movement patterns” (Bläsing et al., 2012, p. 301) and to synchronise movement with other dancers.

As well as physical expectations, rehearsal environments can demand dancers to encompass “an intelligent, dynamic, and adaptive understanding of their craft” (Birk, 2009, p. 167) and can be cognitively demanding (Warburton, Wilson, Lynch, & Cuykendall, 2013). Rehearsing a dance work requires concentration and memory skills to retain distinct aspects of the desired performance (Bläsing, 2010). These elements range from correct timing and accurate body positioning through to higher-level sections of choreographic phrasing, movement dynamics and performance qualities, as well as expression of feelings, emotions, and thematic ideas (Bläsing, 2010; Newlove, 1994), highlighting a cognitive workload.

Depending on the environment dancers may fluctuate between having an active or passive contribution to a rehearsal. An ‘active dancer’ refers to one who is supposedly “rational, imaginative, and contributive” (Arnold, 1988, p. 39), and may operate with a sense of agency, responsibility, and self-actualisation (Knox, 2013). In contrast, a ‘passive dancer’ may encompass a “blind obedience and mindless repetition that perfects a defined set of skills” (Birk, 2009, p. 167). Rowe and Zeitner-Smith (2011) describe that these roles or expectations may vary between rehearsal processes, proposing the complex and diverse nature of dancers’ experiences within rehearsals.

Dancers may be required to teach new dancers parts of the choreography and can be given responsibilities from the rehearsal director to help in refining the work (James, 2006). Additionally, new dancers that come into the environment “need to learn the dance and feel confident among the

other members” (James, 2006, p. 212). Therefore, the rehearsal director may play a significant role in the new dancers' understandings and expectations within the environment they are entering into (James, 2006). This raises the question: How might a rehearsal director's role be understood within a rehearsal process?

#### 3.1.4 *A rehearsal director's role*

A rehearsal director is viewed within this research as the facilitator or leader of the rehearsal process and their role may vary between processes, dance companies, and independent environments. My research views a rehearsal director's role as a flexible notion; it is not linked to one specific method or prescribed way but intends to draw from literature discussing various positions of a choreographer, a teacher, and a leader to further articulate the meaning of the role. Within this, my study understands there can be complex and diverse approaches. As James (2006) states to become a rehearsal director there are “no how-to manuals” (p. 205).

James' (2006) article *Unmasking the Role of the Rehearsal Director* explains that the focus of the rehearsal director can be towards “getting dancers and the choreographies ready for the stage” (p. 205); however, the role is also multifaceted. Rehearsal directors' responsibilities within rehearsals can include remounting repertoire, being the potential mediator between the choreographer and the dancers, taking into account any creative / technical support to the choreographer, structural or compositional detail, documentation, and pastoral care and technical training support for dancers, coaching and rehearsing, note taking and “ensuring open lines of communication with dancers, artistic and administrative staff in order to keep a positive working environment” (James, 2006, p. 205). Various other roles may exist within dance environments including, but not limited to, teaching company class, scheduling, staging the work, and attending performances.

According to James (2006), in order to “guide and navigate the works to completion” (p. 205) the rehearsal director might be required to have an in-depth understanding of the choreographic structure, the movement, imagery, counts and spacing, and musicality. Rehearsal directors can be required to conduct rehearsals in a way that ‘takes care’ of the work's integrity through directing dancers to ensure “the movement and emotional intention remains” (p. 212). James states an aspect significant to a rehearsal director's role is to ensure “dancers have a clear understanding of the original choreographic content” (p. 210). Linking this back to my research may highlight the importance of the rehearsal director's role in teaching the repertoire to feel confident that the dancers understand and can execute the choreography well.

Being understood as a leader or facilitator of the rehearsal environment, social responsibilities of intimately working with dancers and choreographers could be considered part of a rehearsal director's job as well as "provid[ing] a healthy, efficient, and productive working environment" (James, 2006, p. 208-209). Drawing on similarities with a choreographer, a rehearsal director may also set the tone of the room depending on how they manage the environment. In the same way a choreographer leads the dance making process, (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Gardner, 2007; Knox, 2013), a rehearsal director may lead in a rehearsal process. To further extend the understandings of a rehearsal director's role, and drawing from my own experience, a choreographer might also perform the role of the rehearsal director through rehearsing their work which may add further complexity to how a rehearsal process may occur. I have not yet found any research discussing this complexity, and although it is outside the scope of my study it may be identified as a gap in the literature requiring further investigation.

A choreographer may be considered to lead the environment in a myriad of ways, and these can range from a didactic to a collaborative approach, reflecting a leader-centred approach to a shared leadership approach (Butterworth, 2004; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Zeitner, Rowe, & Jackson, 2015). Choreographers can also be in control of designing "an emergent matrix of relationships" (Brown, 2010, p. 58) within a dance making process. These diverse approaches might be considered to provide a framework to extend the potential meaning of the rehearsal director's role. Therefore, a rehearsal director can be considered to exercise total control of the environment, while some may view their role as facilitators creating a more collaborative and community approach (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). Within each approach, differing communication and management between the rehearsal director and dancer/s may exist. My research suggests how a rehearsal director conducts a rehearsal process can be diverse; as James (2006) states there are "many ways to direct rehearsals" (p. 218). Considering the rehearsal director as the leader in the rehearsal room, communication may be of significance to their role. Zeitner, Rowe, and Jackson (2015) state that essential to leadership are "modes of expression and problem-solving approaches" (p. 170) through verbal and non-verbal communication. Additionally, a rehearsal director may require an intuitive responsibility of care and support through "possessing the ability to inspire, nurture, guide, and direct" (James, 2006, p. 210) dancers.

Presenting literature on the rehearsal director's role can present possible complexities and dilemmas of their job. As James (2006) discusses, they may be viewed as the caretaker of the dance work and as required to support and serve the choreographer, but also they are responsible for leading and supporting the dancers. My research therefore proposes the rehearsal director as an intermediary between the creative force of the choreographer and the performative force of the dancers, presenting

a dualistic and hierarchical relationship. This may further suggest facilitating the rehearsal process might be complex to navigate. My search revealed that there seems to be limited literature discussing the position of a rehearsal director and identified further gaps in the literature presenting the complex nature of a rehearsal director's role. Articulating the context of this study can reveal the complex nature of the rehearsal process as well as the diversity of the roles and experiences of dancers and rehearsal directors. This raises the following question: How might a rehearsal director as the facilitator of the rehearsal environment, impact dancers' needs, agency, and self-actualisation in the rehearsal space?

### 3.2 Agency, hierarchy of human needs, and self-actualisation

This section presents Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of human needs and theory of self-actualisation. These theories are articulated to further understandings of what dancers' needs in rehearsals might be and how self-actualising experiences can be considered significant for dancers in rehearsals.

It may be important to acknowledge that hierarchies can exist in the culture of dance, and rehearsal directors have been understood to exhibit controlling behaviour over dancers through reinforcing methods of judgment, power, and surveillance (Ang, 2019; Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Green, 1999; 2000a, 2000b, 2003; Knox, 2013; Lakes, 2005; Martin, 2008; Rowe, Xiong, & Tuomeiciren, 2020; Warburton, 2008). Dance scholarship has employed a Foucauldian framework to unpack hierarchical power relationships discussing how these relationships can train or correct individuals to behave in normalised ways as well as demote individuals from ongoing learning (Foucault, 1971, 1979, 1986; Green 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2003). It may be significant to identify that hierarchical power relationships can be present within the rehearsal director-dancer relationship and may be found throughout the dancers' stories in the discussion chapter of my thesis. However, due to the scope and limitations of my research engagement in a comprehensive Foucauldian analysis may require further investigations within the zone of a rehearsal process. This research will instead focus on bringing further understanding to dancers' needs in rehearsals and unpacking how rehearsal directors can impact these needs and a dancer's agency towards self-actualisation.

The following subsections firstly present Maslow's (1943) hierarchical theory of human needs and theory of self-actualisation. And secondly, the meaning of agency within the context of this research is articulated.

### *3.2.1 Maslow's (1943) theory of human needs and self-actualisation*

An individual's basic and higher needs have been discussed within leadership realms through Maslow's (1943) concept of self-actualisation. Additionally, dance literature focusing on the experience of the dancer considers self-actualisation to be beneficial through positioning and valuing the dancer as an individual (Foster-Spruill, 2017; Knox, 2013). This section articulates the meanings of Maslow's (1943) theory of human needs and self-actualisation in order to extend dancer-centred theory (Knox, 2013) into the realm of a rehearsal process.

Clinical psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943) theorised that humans are motivated by a hierarchy of needs. This hierarchy is often viewed in a pyramid form, where individuals' basic needs are required to be fulfilled before they can move to the next level (Maslow, 1971). The base of the hierarchical structure attends to humans' physiological needs considered to be fundamental to life and are often listed as "air, water, food, sleep and sex" (Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019, p. 10). The next order involves an individual's safety needs focused on security, freedom from fear, emotional wellbeing, and protection. The need for belonging sits in the third order and looks to social processes an individual requires for acceptance, deep affection, sense of affiliation and attachment (Maslow, 1943). Esteem needs are situated on the fourth level and encompass independence, achievement, mastery, self-respect, and approval of others and when satisfied the individual is enabled to grow self-esteem (Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019). To move towards the final order in the hierarchical structure representing self-actualisation, Maslow (1971) proposes a person's basic and secondary needs must be fulfilled.

The concept of self-actualisation triggers personal growth and is focused towards the desire for self-fulfilment (Maslow, 1943). Of particular relevance to this study, self-actualisation may be considered fundamental to a person's wellbeing through an individual's ability to innovate and to act autonomously (Maslow, 1943). A self-actualising experience may prompt individuals to realise their potential through a feeling of mastery (Maslow, 1962; Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019) and can refer to becoming all that one is capable of being through "the full use and exploitation of [a person's own] talents, capacities and potentialities" (Maslow, 1970, p. 150). To reach a sense of self-actualisation an individual's locus of evaluation needs to lie within themselves (Rogers, 1977; Zimring & Raskin, 1992). When an external force is controlling an individual's self-conception this can result in feelings of being coerced, feeling devalued, and feeling like they need to conform resulting in restriction of individual expression and uniqueness (Rogers, 1977; Zimring & Raskin, 1992). Within my research self-actualisation is utilised to bring understanding to how dancers may seek opportunities for growth, development, and creative expression within a rehearsal process.

### 3.2.3 What is agency?

Within this research agency may be understood as related to ‘action’ (Hitlin & Elder, 2007; Hutchison, 2018) or the ability to make “things happen” (Archer, 2000, p. 3). This may require a process of decision making and intentionality (Bandura, 2006) to first make a choice about what the action will be, how it will be undertaken, and why. The agent's intention may be derived from their constructed individual context and is a way for people to be “capable of exercising their will to shape their lives” (Hutchison, 2018, p. 236). In the context of this study a rehearsal director may have the ability to promote or restrict a dancer’s agency due to the possible controlled nature of a rehearsal process (Butterworth, 2012; Green, 2001; Knox, 2013; Tinius, 2017). This may impact on performance outcomes, and “ultimately the way the dancer ‘views’ themselves” (Foster-Sproull, 2017, p. 79). Promoting agency can impact a dancer’s experience and can lead to self-actualisation (Foster-Sproull, 2017). This raises the question: what are meanings of dancer needs within a rehearsal process that may promote their journey towards self-actualisation? The following section presents meanings of a dancer-centred approach (Knox, 2013) and how this perspective may enhance a dancer’s rehearsal experience. Exploration of dancer-centredness within the context of rehearsals may identify the myriad ways dancer agency and self-actualisation may be enhanced.

### 3.3 Dancers’ needs within a dancer-centred approach

Dancer-centred theory (Knox, 2013) evolved from the notion of decentring (Newall & Fortin, 2012) hierarchies in the dancer-choreographer relationship and provided a lens to view dancers' experiences of agency. This analytical paradigm builds upon person-centred theory, created by psychologist Carl Rogers (1939) that focuses to centre attention on the disempowered party in a relationship. Person-centred relationships focus on mutual respect, positive regard, authenticity, acceptance, bring the personal to the heart of social interactions, and can promote agency and self-actualisation (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013; Rogers, 1961, 1969, 1977). From this it is considered that a dancer-centred view does not intend to devalue to the position and role of a rehearsal director, but instead “highlight the value of the *people* involved” (Knox, 2013, p. 30, italics in original). By placing dancers at the centre of a relationship such as that of the rehearsal director-dancer, we might see that the entirety of what the dancer brings to the process can be “larger and more definitive than a smaller part, such as their psychological issues or artistic limitations” (Knox, 2013, p. 31). My research is extending upon notions of centredness to bring extension on literature focused on dancers’ needs and experiences.

Knox (2013) and Foster-Sproull (2017) are the major contributors to dance literature building on a dancer-centred approach through investigating a dancer's experience within a choreographic process. A dancer-centred approach features opportunities for "holistic" (Knox, 2013, p. iii) treatment and can focus on engaging the dancer as an individual as well as negotiate and deconstruct various hierarchies within dance environments (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). A dancer-centred practice can encourage dancers to be challenged, to grow, to transform, and may develop self-actualising experiences (Knox, 2013). A dancer-centred paradigm may view the dancer as essential, placing importance on dancer experiences, engagement, and contributions (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013) within a rehearsal process. The following section intends to further dancer-centred theory into the realm of a rehearsal process. My research brings consideration to how to optimise a dancers experience when agency is extended across the following four dancer needs: self-actualisation, wellbeing, belonging, and self-esteem. These needs are aligned with Maslow's (1943) hierarchical needs pyramid.

### *3.3.1 Self-actualisation as dancer-centred*

This section explores how self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943) can be experienced by dancers in rehearsal, to foster a dancer-centred rehearsal environment (Knox, 2013). This research views dancers' self-actualisation to be representative of professional development and creative actualisation through an individual's quest "to grow, to acquire knowledge, and to develop one's abilities" (Maslow, 1970, p. 22). Meanings of professional development in this research relate to the idea of "advancing one or more self-domains" (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009, p. 2) towards an individual's aspiration level and can be viewed as a process of self-maintenance. Creative expression can be part of an artist's job and may be a form of non-verbal communication and expression through an individual's point of view, emotional intention, and interpretation within artistic pursuits (Barnbaum, 2017; Dilworth, 2004; Hospers, 1954). Creative expression is often utilised within creative artistic activities and may require performers to access emotions and access performative states (Dilworth, 2004; Woody & McPherson, 2010).

Drawing the concept of self-actualisation towards the idea of professional development may be seen as aligning with a dancer's deep set desire for improvement (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015; Critien & Ollis, 2006; Knox, 2013). It has been discussed that dancers may consume a rehearsal process as a professional development opportunity (Van Staden, Myburgh, & Poggenpoel, 2009), a space to demonstrate skills and to master a complex section of choreography (Bläsing, 2010). Professional

development is valued by the dance industry as a “process to intentionally develop skills and experience associated with the role of being a dancer” (Knox, 2013, p. 77). This may include a multiplicity of elements such as “perfecting technique, or exercising creativity” (Vincs, 2004, p. 4). Professional development can be viewed as essential for dancers as they may view their careers as a way to achieve goals, to grow as a performer, to increase their own skills as well as fulfil the multiplicity of expectations and requirements of their role (Bennett, 2009; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Hefferon & Ollis, 2006; James, 2006; Knox, 2013; Van Staden, Myburgh, & Poggenpoel, 2009).

Creative actualisation within my research is viewed as “an individual’s quest to be creative” (Maslow, 1970, p. 22) through expressing their ‘complete’ and fulfilled selves (Maslow, 1943). A dancer's desire to creatively express oneself has been viewed as achieving a sense of self-actualisation and a fundamental quest that individuals “must be true to their own nature” (Maslow, 1970, p. 22). Creative expression can be found in dance where performers embrace signifiers of meaning “embedded within themselves as much as within the movement” (Barr, 2005, p. 6). Additionally, dancers are viewed as having characteristic ways of moving in terms of body, energy, and space, and this movement behaviour can be the manifestation of physical, emotional, social, and mental processes and experiences relating to their creative expression (Amighi, Loman, & Lewis, 1999). Rehearsal processes have been considered to limit dancers’ creative expression and individual contribution towards the dance work (Butterworth, 2012; Green, 2001; Haines, 2006). Dancers may be viewed as ‘instruments’ (Haines, 2006), expected to blindly follow, to learn every move and obey, or be discouraged to question and think outside the box, limiting the ability to self-actualise (Birk, 2009; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). This leads me to question, how can a dancer-centred approach in a rehearsal context present possibilities for extending dancers' experiences of professional development, agency, and creative actualisation when typically, a rehearsal environment is one of learning existing repertoire?

A dancer-centred approach highlighting the importance of the dancers over the actual dance itself may propose that within a rehearsal process the repertoire is not unimportant, but the process of learning and practicing the repertoire can be perceived by the “dancer to be a vehicle for other personal journeys” (Knox, 2013, p. 95). A dancer-centred approach might be understood as a rehearsal director fostering collaborative ownership and encouraging a high level of participation from the dancer to co-design the process of rehearsal (Foster-Sproull, 2017). This may mean rehearsal directors giving dancers freedom to decide how they desire to learn the repertoire, allowing dancers to lead rehearsals, encouraging dancers to ask questions, as well as talk and evaluate the progress of the rehearsal. Sharing responsibilities and being involved in co-designing the process may allow dancers to feel empowered through contributing and having opportunities to develop interpersonal skills and to feel a sense of collaboration (Barbour, 2008; Foster-Sproull, 2017; James, 2006). This can promote dancers’

feelings of being valued, trusted, and supported (Sheldon & Filak, 2008) and can therefore encourage a sense of self, personal competence, expression, independence, and creativity (Knox, 2013; Maslow, 1979; Rogers, 1963). When dancers are given opportunities to work independently or in a group, using their individual knowledge, intellectual process and comprehension, engaging in problem solving and employing their own individual preferences, they have the ability to develop themselves professionally (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013; Quested & Duda, 2011).

Within dance culture the perception that a ‘good’ dancer is a silent dancer might exist, and this can provide possible issues for dancers to feel if they speak, it can compromise their progress and limit self-actualising experiences (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Green, 2003; Knox, 2013; Quested & Duda, 2009; Roche, 2015). This feeling might come from the pressure to perform, not reaching expectations, and a feeling of judgement from choreographers, directors, and teachers (Hopper et al. 2020). Knox (2013) discusses that when dancers are enabled to use their voice, they can fulfil their role as a dancer more effectively. Therefore, a dancer-centred approach may be implemented to facilitate an environment that allows dancers to ask questions “to attempt to understand, listen and evolve closer” (Knox, 2013, p. 81) to what the rehearsal director and the repertoire might be seeking. Developing a deeper understanding of the repertoire can allow opportunities for personal and professional growth through physical and mental clarity (Hopper et al., 2020).

Extending creative actualisation as dancer-centred may view a rehearsal director discovering ways to challenge dancers individually and providing freedom and a sense of discovery when teaching movement rather than deposit the choreography through a didactic approach (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). A dancer-centred approach can therefore be considered to encourage dancers “to express and explore their genuine feelings” (Foster-Sproull, 2017, p. 80) within the repertoire. Although the choreography may be ‘set’, a rehearsal director may allow dancers to individualise and adapt movement through engaging with their own movement investigations, instinctual movement patterns and knowledgeable process by incorporating their personal desires and experiences into the choreography (Foster-Sproull, 2017). This approach may consider the value of the dancer’s knowledge and individual expression rather than rehearsal directors aiming to ‘fix’ or place their expert knowledge onto dancers through requiring dancers to passively reproduce the choreography (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013; Rowe & Zeitner-Smith, 2011). Allowing dancers to adjust the movement to what works for their body may highlight the dancer as an individual and values their movement proclivities and individuality through dancers’ comprehension of thematic ideas and adding “personal layers of meaning” (Barbour, 2008, p. 47) to the existing repertoire. A dancer-centred approach might therefore manage the potential issue of dancers feeling they have to replicate repertoire with an exactness, feeling they are compared to an original cast member, or to achieve an ideal body or form. This may liberate dancers “by finding their own specific ‘truth’ through personal

experience” (Green, 2001, p. 159) as well as promoting dancers’ agency towards decision making, self-initiated action, and feelings of independence and responsibility (Dinkmeyer, 2019; Knox, 2013). Individual-expression can allow dancers to co-design their own intention within the movement and bring all parts of themselves to the process which can promote intrinsic motivation, improve dancers personal satisfaction as well as improve performance (Butterworth, 2004; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Greene & Burke, 2007).

A rehearsal director who allows “freedom for personal expression and interpretation” (James, 2006, p. 207) might operate in contention with the choreographer's vision, however, and presents potential issues around negotiating the process of rehearsal. Contentions may arise as rehearsal directors may be expected to reconstruct the repertoire as close to the original as possible, or they may have freedom themselves to give dancers opportunities to alter the choreography in terms of movement qualities and dynamics when different dancers perform the work (James, 2006). Allowing dancers freedom to express their own “interpretations while keeping the artistic integrity of the piece” (James, 2006, p. 212) may be complex as this could be dependent on the choreographers wishes and their relationship with the rehearsal director as discussed (see 3.1.4). Potential study in this area may be beneficial to investigate further into a rehearsal director’s role, experience, and their needs in rehearsal contexts.

Ricotta and Dwyer (2019) argue the role of directors is to provide artists with encouragement and manage levels of satisfaction in order for artists to continually improve and to feel supported. To extend a dancer-centred approach to rehearsal, the role of a rehearsal director may be similar to that of a manager through inspiring employees “to surpass satisfactory performance minimums when employees cannot improve performance by themselves” (Ricotta & Dwyer, 2019, p. 166). When an individual feels secure and supported, they feel more free to explore their environment and their own internal processes which fosters self-development (Shahar, Henrich, Blatt, Ryan & Little, 2003). Therefore, the dancer-rehearsal director relationship can be considered an important factor for dancers’ professional development, creative actualisation, and sustainability. To achieve a sense of self-actualisation and promote professional development and creative actualisation, it could be considered that a dancer’s sense of wellbeing is significant. This raises the following question: How might a dancer-centred approach aid in sustaining a dancer’s physical and psychological wellbeing? The following section brings meaning to dancers’ wellbeing as a dancer-centred approach in a rehearsal context.

### 3.3.2 *Wellbeing as dancer-centred*

This research views wellbeing as something that all humans wish to attain in their lives through the fulfilment of needs (Caspersen, Powell & Merritt, 1994). Wellbeing can be understood as whether an individual feels ‘well’, both emotionally and physically, and can fluctuate from day to day and may depend on the individual's setting or environment (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs may view wellbeing to be situated on the first two levels of the hierarchical pyramid attending to physiological and psychological needs. These two orders are considered basic or deficiency needs (McLeod, 2007) and failure to meet these lower basic needs can compromise the individual's ability to move towards self-actualisation (McLeod, 2007).

Physical stresses of elite level dance through a high workload, fatigue, and injury have been discussed in depth in dance literature (Noh, Morris, & Andersen, 2009; Quested & Duda, 2010; Russell, 2013; Shah, Weiss, & Burchette, 2012; Twitchett, Angioi, Koutedakis, & Wyon, 2010). Of relevance to this study, constant repetition in rehearsals can result in dancers experiencing fatigue and overtraining and can lead to a high incidence of injury due to overuse (Bronner, Ojofeitimi, & Rose, 2003; Liederbach, Schanfein, & Kremenic, 2013; Solomon, Solomon, Micheli, & Kelley, 1995), and dancers can often continually dance while injured (Nordin-Bates, Cumming, Aways, & Sharp, 2011). Additionally, due to dancers' possible dependency on their physical ability, maintenance and managing fatigue and endurance can have a direct impact on dancers' risk of injury and career longevity, their ability to connect to the dance work and their agency towards self-actualisation (Acton & Malathaum, 2000; Hopper et al., 2020; Russell, 2013). Dancers' psychological health has been investigated through aspects such as the impact of injuries on their mental state, pressure from rehearsal directors and choreographers, anxiety, stress, and perfectionism (Aujla & Farrer, 2015; Chirban & Rowan, 2016; Critien & Ollis, 2006; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010; Quested & Duda, 2010). The social environment of dance has also been discussed to impact a dancers psychological wellbeing as rehearsal directors and choreographers can have the power to enforce obedience through instruction and may unjustly criticise dancers causing emotional stress (Green, 1999, 2001, 2003; Knox, 2013; Noh, Morris, & Anderson, 2009; Quested & Duda, 2010).

Wellbeing as dancer-centredness in the context of a rehearsal may mean a dancer's physiological and psychological safety is looked after through highlighting the value of the dancer (Knox, 2013). A common notion in dance culture is that dancers can feel silenced and feel they have to push through in rehearsals (Knox, 2013; Lakes, 2005). A dancer-centred approach in rehearsals may view a rehearsal director facilitating an environment that encourages dancers to speak up when they are fatigued or injured to be able to take care of their physical wellbeing and give dancers rest breaks. Open lines of

communication and transparency can be considered to be essential for dancers to express their need for a break or that they are feeling exhaustion (Hopper et al., 2020). Taking care of dancers' wellbeing can be considered to require an empathetic understanding from rehearsal directors. An empathetic understanding (Motschnig-Pitrik & Mallich, 2004; Rogers, 1961; Rogers, Stevens, Gendlin, Shlien, & Van Dusen, 1967) can be proposed in a rehearsal process as "complete acceptance of the dancer's experience as they attempt to face the challenges" (Knox, 2013, p. 95) and may require rehearsal directors to 'read' and listen to dancers through a visual or emotional sense. A dancer-centred approach might require rehearsal directors to ask dancers questions to gain an understanding around what dancers are feeling and to be sensitive towards dancers' physical and mental exhaustion (James, 2006). Rehearsal directors may encourage dancers when they are fatigued or injured to 'mark' the dance as this can help to manage dancers wellbeing. 'Marking' in dance is understood as being significant for dancers managing their bodies and also provides a beneficial learning tool (Warburton, Wilson, Lynch, & Cuykendall, 2013). By physically reducing the workload, marking also promotes a somatic, cognitive, and reflective practice (Batson & Schwartz, 2007; Green, 2002). This can provide opportunities for sustainability and allow dancers to maintain peak performance (Hopper et al., 2020) rather than constant repetition which causes bodily stress (Warburton, Wilson, Lynch, & Cuykendall, 2013).

Some dance cultures might encourage a mentality of 'don't think - just do it', which can emphasise dancers' physicality being of higher value and often neglects a cognitive or intellectual process (Barbour, 2008; Knox, 2013; Sharpiro, 1998). The idea of holistic functioning (Wapner & Demick, 2000) might further the idea of wellbeing as dancer-centred. As psychological and physical wellbeing are inter-connected, this may propose rehearsal directors can take care of dancers through taking in the whole individual (Hopper et al., 2020), referring to individuals functioning and developing "as an integrated whole" (Magnusson & Torestad, 1993, p. 436). Additionally, holistic practices have been suggested to foster opportunities for self-actualisation, autonomy, responsibility, and decision-making processes (Knox, 2013; Motschnig-Pitrik & Mallich, 2004; Pillay, 2002; Rogers, 1961). A dancer-centred approach may therefore be understood to value dancers through emphasising the significance of their intellect and psychological state as well as their physical wellbeing. In rehearsals dancers may be requested to access personal feelings and emotions and put themselves in vulnerable places in order to fulfil the intention and essence of the repertoire (Foster-Sproull, 2017). Knox (2013) discusses that dancers' agency towards accessing emotions and vulnerability may depend on how psychologically safe they feel in the environment. A dancer-centred approach could be considered to foster a reciprocal feeling of trust, allowing dancers to feel comfortable in taking risks and promoting agency to "discover something new about themselves or push past a 'comfort zone'" (Knox, 2013, p. 94). This may propose that when a dancer feels safe, they have potential to actualise themselves in new ways (Rogers, 1961).

Dancers' wellbeing needs can be considered significant, as Maslow (1962) proposes an individual's psychological health is compromised unless the "essential core of the person is fundamentally accepted, loved and respected by others and by himself" (p. 36). This can mean when a dancer's wellbeing needs are satisfied, this can promote agency towards belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualisation (Ivtzan, Gardner, Bernard, Sekhon, & Hart, 2013). The following section extends dancer-centredness into the realm of satisfying dancer needs for belonging and self-esteem in a rehearsal context.

### *3.3.3 Belonging and self-esteem as dancer-centred*

Within my research, belonging relates to individuals being involved in interactions, relationships, communities, and work groups. It can contribute to an individual's identity and social needs through feelings of inclusion, cohesiveness, and participation (Green & Burke, 2007; McClure & Brown, 2008). Positive work relationships can be significant towards how work gets achieved, can promote personal satisfaction, enhance performance, and can allow individuals to thrive (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Dutton & Ragins, 2017). My research views self-esteem as the extent to which one values oneself (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018). Self-esteem can affect "how you think, act or relate to other people" (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018, p. 413) and relates to the self-concept (Gergen, 1965; Rosenberg, 1965). Additionally, an individual's self-esteem may fluctuate and can be dependent on external evaluations (Blascovich, Tomaka, Robinson, Shaver & Wrightsman, 1991). Maslow (1943) views belonging as part of a human's social needs recognising that "humans want their lives nurtured through significant associations with others" (Greene & Burke, 2007, p. 118). When an individual's needs for belonging are satisfied, this can lead towards feelings of being understood and appreciated, and this can connect to an individual's need for self-esteem (Maslow, 1962). Maslow understands self-esteem as an individual's need for recognition and respect from others (Greene & Burke, 2007). Additionally, an individual's adequate self-concept is contingent not on "what you are, but what you think you are" (Rogers, 1963, p. 10) and this is "always in relationship to others" (Rogers, 1963, p. 10). Maslow (1962) states that "inadequate concept of self ... is crippling to the individual" (p. 10) and limits what one can do.

A feeling of belonging is understood to benefit dancers' experiences (Forsyth & Diederich, 2014; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Ginsburg & Penrod, 1997; Knox, 2013). Dancers often work with a small group within a particular society therefore it can be vital for them to establish and maintain networks with peers and other artists (Freakley & Neelands, 2003). Dance environments that foster a sense of belonging and relation to others can positively impact a dancers agency to access factors that might be

required of them in rehearsals. These factors can include dancers' agency to feel vulnerable, take ownership, take risks, and make decisions and can lead towards feelings of significance, security and safety (Aujla & Farrer, 2015; Cosgrave, 2020; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Gardner, 2011; Knox, 2013). Aujla and Farrer's (2015) study, investigating motivation in professional dance, states, "the sense of community appeared crucial" (p. 8) and dancers rely on social support to play a pivotal role in ongoing career development.

Self-esteem has been discussed as significant towards dancers' performance and career sustainability, feelings of achievement and success, and is understood to increase dancers' motivation (Aujla & Farrer, 2015; Chirban & Rowan, 2016; Eusanio, Thomson, & Jaque, 2014; Vallo, 2013; Walker & Nordin-Bates, 2010). Choreographers, rehearsal directors, and dance teachers have the potential to impact dancers' self-esteem through constant feedback and subjective evaluations that can perpetuate a dancer's self-esteem, which can be dependent on external standards and expectations (Ang, 2019; Chirban & Rowan, 2016; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010; Rowe, Xiong, & Tuomeiciren, 2020). Additionally, dancers can be described as having high expectations of themselves and can exhibit perfectionist tendencies, which can compromise self-esteem as they may be privy to harsh self-criticism (Bettle, Bettle, & Neumärker, 2001; Chirban & Rowan, 2016; Eusanio, Thomson, & Jaque, 2014; Green, 1999). As well as perfectionist tendencies, within authoritarian dance environments implementation of dehumanising, humiliating, and belittling feedback can occur where directors, choreographers, and teachers can exhibit control (Lakes, 2005). Judgements and feedback from teachers, choreographers, and directors might impact dancers through reinforcing self-doubt, eroding their state of mind, and can become part of their self-conception (Lakes, 2005). Dance scholars, Nordin-Bates, Thomas, and Madigan (2017) have highlighted that devaluation and a reduced sense of accomplishment can lead to burnout. They have also discussed that there are limited studies on how to effectively manage dancers' concerns, doubts, and implications of perfectionist tendencies. It can be considered that my study discussing dancers' needs and the potential impact of rehearsal directors on these needs may extend literature understanding a dancer's perspective and experience.

Aligning the goals of achieving the repertoire with the dancer's needs can increase dancer's self-confidence and self-worth, which in turn can increase motivation and can lead to a feeling of competence (Ricotta & Dwyer, 2019). Belonging as dancer-centred (Knox, 2013) in rehearsal contexts may view the rehearsal director allowing "dancers to do their work in the best way that they can, through feeling valued, and supported as individuals" (p. 34). Professional dance environments or 'climates' (Knox, 2013) that foster a sense of community have been discussed to promote dancer agency and self-actualisation (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). A dancer-centred climate within a rehearsal process may be understood where the energy of the environment is "established by the entire group rather than being dictated by the needs, wants or actions" (Knox, 2013, p. 91) of the

rehearsal director. This climate can encourage relationships to include authenticity, transparency, acceptance, and realness (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013; Rogers, 1961) when engaging in a collective goal of remounting repertoire. A climate can be perceived to take place within an environment and can include interactions and relationships (Knox, 2013) and can be proposed to encourage positive working relationships. James (2006) highlights the importance of rehearsal directors engaging in “good working relationship(s) with the dancers” (p. 212) through personal conversations, and acknowledging dancers' individuality and dance abilities. This may propose a rehearsal director encouraging “a holistic presence of each individual, including their personality, social skills, intellect, experiences and values” (Knox, 2013, p. 32) and fostering an environment that promotes positive interaction (Cosgrave, 2020). Additionally, directing dancers in a “respectful, personable, professional manner” (James, 2006, p. 213) may aid in facilitating a space where dancers feel comfortable in being themselves, are accepted and valued by the group, and are encouraged to contribute, which fosters a sense of belonging.

Connecting person-centred and student-centred factors towards fostering belonging in a rehearsal context may understand the rehearsal director focusing on a responsive attitude towards each person involved (Freiberg & Lamb, 2009; Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005; Rogers, 1939, 1961, 1963, 1977). This may mean rehearsal directors managing the environment through multi-levels of engagement with dancers, getting to know how each individual works best and focusing their leadership towards each dancer in the room. This can highlight that each person is unique and not generalisable (Ushioda, 2009). Additionally, an aspect of dancer-centred theory is that the relationships are not premeditated (Knox, 2013); this can be considered to be particularly useful when rehearsal directors work with new dancers.

Meanings of self-esteem as dancer-centred may understand rehearsal directors facilitating a space where dancers feel a sense of ownership and individual responsibility for their part in the dance work. When the environment promotes a sense of external judgement, dancers can become dependent on the rehearsal director's feedback and may feel threatened, which can be considered to compromise dancers' self-esteem (Rogers, 1961). Additionally, for self-actualisation to occur, people need to “feel able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career” (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). Drawing from Roger's (1939) theory of person-centredness and literature focused on a student-centred approach in dance (Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010) can be considered to extend self-esteem as dancer-centred in a rehearsal process. Amalgamating these two theories can propose the importance of a socially positive environment that does not insist on psychological control and may include a democratic attitude through acceptance, concern, compassion, and freedom, and can positively affect self-esteem (Ümme, 2015). A democratic environment in a rehearsal context can be understood to allow dancers to maintain a stable sense of

self-esteem that is less reliant on external surveillance through dancers trusting their own opinions and knowledge, leading towards dancers making personal discoveries and becoming fully human (Richards & Gardner, 2019; Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019). A dancer-centred approach might therefore consider the rehearsal director to take on the role of a mentor and nurturer (Mosston & Ashworth, 1966), employing praise and acknowledgment for a dancer's commitment, for their focused work and "incredible dancing or virtuosity" (James, 2006, p. 214). This can be considered significant as "dancers need to know when they are performing well" (James, 2006, p. 214) which may optimise a dancer's performance and build confidence and self-esteem (Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). Additionally, a dancer-centred practice may consider how a rehearsal director sharing constructive feedback through "breaking down or deconstructing movement" (James, 2006, p. 212) can allow dancers to understand what needs to be corrected as compared to using words such as "successful, failure, good and bad" (Knox, 2013, p. 95), which can be considered to restrict agency.

This section has extended ideas of the four dancer needs of self-actualisation, wellbeing, belonging, and self-esteem as dancer-centred practice in a rehearsal process. The meaning and understanding of how a dancer-centred approach may cater to these four dancer needs in a rehearsal context will be transferred into the discussion chapter of my research.

### 3.4 Literature review in conclusion

The literature review has explored meanings and understandings of a dancer-centred practice within a rehearsal process and significantly proposed a dancer-centred approach as a means of framing subsequent participant experiences within the analysis and discussion chapter of this thesis.

This chapter first presented meanings and understandings of dance rehearsal and considered the roles of the dancer and the rehearsal director specifically within this context. Various complexities within the rehearsal director-dancer relationship and within each of their roles were presented, highlighting space for further zones of research. The next section presented Maslow's (1943) theory of human needs and theory of self-actualisation to provide a framework to discuss potential dancer needs and desires with rehearsal processes. The next section explored the proposal of a dancer-centred paradigm (Knox, 2013). The final section proposed amalgamation of the theory of self-actualisation and dancer-centredness to allow extension into the zone of dancer-centred research focused on the needs of the dancer. In extending dancer-centred theory into the process of rehearsal and towards satisfying four needs of dancers, the literature review considered what this might mean for dancer agency and self-actualisation. In summary, the review of literature can be understood to add to literature focused on

dancers needs and present new ideas on how to optimise a dancer's experience in a rehearsal context and to subsequently bring meaning to the discussion and analysis chapters of my thesis.

## **Chapter 4. Discussion: Self-actualisation and the Rehearsal Director**

This chapter discusses dancers' needs in relation to self-actualisation within rehearsal processes and how these needs might be impacted by a rehearsal director. As discussed in the review of literature, 'elite' dancers are understood to exhibit characteristics towards growth and creative expression (see 3.3.1). Personal and professional development may also be necessary for dancers to cater to constantly changing demands of the industry (see 3.3.1). Having explored meanings and understandings of self-actualisation as dancer-centred in rehearsal processes (see 3.3.1), this is now investigated by unpacking the research participants' statements where they spoke of self-actualisation in rehearsal contexts.

The first section of this chapter unpacks what the research participants need to achieve self-actualising experiences. The second section provides a discussion on how the research participants consider the role of rehearsal directors in relation to their needs for self-actualisation. The second section presents how the research participants recognise a rehearsal process can be a controlled environment, and they share how a rehearsal director can facilitate the process and impact their needs. Section three and four investigate dancers' narratives where they perceived a rehearsal director to either foster or hinder their needs for self-actualisation. These two sections are broken into two themes: the first discusses how trust and a lack of trust can impact a dancer's ability to self-actualise, and the second unpacks how giving freedom or not permitting freedom can affect dancers' needs for self-actualisation. In unpacking the dancers' stories further complexities in the rehearsal director - dancer relationship are unveiled.

### **4.1 Self-actualisation in rehearsal**

In speaking to the dancers, three main themes emerged as being significant to feel self-actualised. These three themes are discussed as dancers' needs for physical and intellectual growth and maturity, then through the idea of sustainability, and lastly dancers' needs for creative actualisation. Dancers' needs for growth and maturity can relate to a sense of improvement where the individual's level of functioning moves closer to their aspiration level and in my research aligns with self-actualisation (see 3.3.1). Improvement can be considered significant for dancers to sustain their practice due to the constantly changing demands and expectations of the professional dance industry (Zeitner-Smith, 2011). Considered integral to the process of sustainability is meeting "the needs of all involved, as well as working to nurture and enable all for the future" (Barbour, 2008, p. 44) through consideration, respect, and acknowledgement of social and personal needs (see 3.3.1). Dancers' creative actualisation

is viewed as the prospect of self-actualisation through a dancer's individual expression and their desire to be creative which can lead towards personal and professional satisfaction (see 3.3.1).

#### *4.1.1 "Evolving maturity": Dancers' perceptions of maturity and physical and intellectual growth in rehearsal contexts*

This section unpacks the research participants' desires for professional development, to become better performers and artists, and discusses the diverse ways they want to improve. Significant to Natasha was a sense of continual growth. She articulated:

I have a high desire to achieve excellence in my work. [I want] an evolving maturity as a performer; a consistent practice that supports my development of moving and thinking.

Natasha's "high desire" to "achieve excellence" in her work may go beyond the need to simply be 'good enough', as she is exhibiting a strong desire to excel at her job (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015; Knox, 2013). Wanting an "evolving maturity as a performer" implies that improvement is not only valued by new dancers entering the profession. Natasha's experience proposes that mature artists desire physical and intellectual development, as well as consistency of practice. Additionally, Natasha's desire for continual improvement indicates that ongoing physical development is important to her experience of the rehearsal process.

A developing maturity may also be experienced by dancers when re-staging repertoire. Dancers in my study discussed how re-visiting movement they have performed previously provides an opportunity to develop themselves within the parameters of the work. Jordan expressed when dancing repertoire again he wants "to be better ... to be as crisp as I possibly can, ... to be strong, on the edge ... to nail this thing". Jordan's experience indicates he wants to be physically "better" from the previous time he performed the work. Natasha's experience reflects Jordan's positivity from a different perspective. Coming back to repertoire that Natasha has performed previously offers further space for development and exploration of the conceptual aspects of the work. Natasha notes that in re-staging work:

There is a comfortability in [the] kinaesthetic body knowledge ... you can just embody the steps and spend a lot of embodied intellectual power on the being and becoming inside that role.

Natasha is identifying that being comfortable in the physicality of the steps and movement allows opportunities for intellectual and conceptual growth. “Being and becoming” can refer to a self-actualising experience through becoming all that one is capable of (Maslow, 1970).

Jordan and Natasha’s experiences suggest that remounting repertoire can provide an opportunity for self-actualisation through building on existing knowledge and promoting growth as an artist, improving physical skills as well as creative and personal development (see 3.3.1). Improvement may be understood as striving to realise their potentialities through discovering new ways of being and developing skills specific to the role of a dancer (Knox, 2013; Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019). In addition to Jordan and Natasha’s experiences, another participant, Brendon, also desired improvement in rehearsal. He expressed “I am always wanting to better myself; I am wanting to level up and build all the time. It is always management and self-improvement”. Brendon presents the idea that self-management is a significant part of being a dancer, and may allow him to develop professionally. Self-management can refer to health promoting activity engaged in by individuals for themselves (Lorig & Holman, 2003), and within dance self-management is valued as important for promoting career development (Bennett, 2009). This leads me to consider how dancers might experience sustainability and self-actualisation within the rehearsal process. The following section discusses the significant value dancers place on emotional sustainability in rehearsals.

#### 4.1.2 *“More healthy ways”: Dancers’ perceptions of sustainability in rehearsal contexts*

Some choreographic processes may require dancers to access emotional performative states (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). Gary shared that when remounting repertoire, a sustainable dance-making practice is one that allows him to evoke deep performative states without detrimental emotional harm (Foster-Sproull, 2017). He questioned that there may be a lack of discussion around how dancers can approach performative states and that dancers may not be trained to manage this:

Relying heavily on your personal state of being in the moment to evoke the performative state ... that’s unsustainable. Do you subject yourself to [those feelings] ... or do you try and find ways of accessing those things in more healthy ways? It’s a conversation we don’t often have in dance. I don’t think this is something that we are necessarily prepared for as dancers.

Gary is discussing how performers achieve and maintain performative states to express ideas and emotions within dance work. Gary is implying that a healthy dance practice can exist and is questioning what healthy and sustainable ways there are of reaching that, particularly a performance state. Engaging with an authentic expression can expose dancers “to the spiritual aspect” (Leseho &

Maxwell, 2010, p. 20) of themselves and may propose the ‘inner’ context of the dancer to be viewed through expression of their own emotional experience (Foster-Sproull, 2017). Although this can be linked to a self-actualising experience through spiritual pursuits such as psychological exploration (Maslow 1943), Gary is suggesting he needs help to safely manage emotional expression.

Dance rehearsals that evoke performative states may require dancers to “navigate a large variety of emotions that are often contradictory to how they are expected to behave” (Knox, 2013, p. 49). Gary may be needing an environment that allows him to feel he can access vulnerability required to approach ideas or emotions as this may bring up uncomfortable feelings for dancers (Woody & McPherson, 2010). As a researcher, I ask the question: How does one access these vulnerable spaces in a safe way? A dancer's emotional investment can be confounded when they are required to access uncomfortable feelings, and therefore they may require an environment that promotes a feeling of psychological safety (Hopper et al., 2020; Knox, 2013). Dancers may be required to engage professionally with the dance work while managing personal feelings, but it can be proposed psychological skills and safe dance practice can aid in this management (Hopper et al., 2020).

Gary's quote may indicate a gap in rehearsal direction processes and raises the possibility that a dancer's experience of embodying performance states can be meaningfully supported by the rehearsal director's leadership. This rehearsal support may allow for deep emotional journeys to occur for dancers (Green, 2002; Knox, 2013; Pakes, 2009), and dancers are nurtured by the rehearsal director in a way that allows a sustained emotional performance practice to occur. Evoking performative states may also require artistry and individual expression, which within this study is referred to as creative actualisation (see 3.3.1). The following section will discuss the significance of the research participants' individual expression and artistry to be potential pathways to achieve self-actualising experiences (see 3.3.1).

#### *4.1.3 “Room to be yourself”: Dancers' perceptions of creative actualisation in rehearsal contexts*

Throughout the interviews it became apparent the research participants wanted to express themselves and to feel their individual expression is valued in rehearsals. Jordan describes as a dancer “the motivation is to ... feel and express”. Jordan might be articulating dance allows him to discover feelings and emotions and can be a vehicle to express himself (see 3.3.1). Annie furthers this idea stating, “accessing things ... already inside me [can] bring me to the full expression of myself... I prefer when I know it can come from me”. Annie may be proposing the importance of her own feelings and ideas to be incorporated into her creative expression and this allows her to extend herself

artistically (see 3.3.1). For Annie, desiring self-expression may be understood as a “source of meaning and experience” (Castells, 2004, p. 6) or a “self-reflexive process of self-formation” (Elliott & Du Gay, 2009, p. xiv), referencing a self-actualising experience.

When learning repertoire, the dancers also expressed the need to adapt movement to their bodies. Jared described when “there is still room to be yourself” within the choreography, this allows him to “feel part” of the work and gives him a sense “that [he] can own it”. He understood as a dancer you are required “to do [the work] a certain way” but he enjoys it when he feels “like [his] opinion [and] contribution matters”. Jared understands as a dancer he may need to fulfil the choreography, however he can still have creative input within the dance work “in a way that utilises personalities and experiences” (Knox, 2013, p. 67) and that allows him to enjoy what he is dancing. When dancers are not given freedom to express themselves they may struggle to access creative actualisation. Mary describes when learning repertoire “there is nothing worse [than] when you feel like you are imitating someone” and when you “don’t feel that comfortable ” dancing the work. Mary states this results in her “holding back”. Mary’s experience indicates that dancer agency is impacted by rehearsal processes that inhibit her personal creative expression. This may mean her ability to self-actualise is compromised (see 3.3.1).

In furthering the understanding of dancers’ needs towards creative actualisation, Brendon describes when he is “intuitively connected” to what he is dancing, he is “more willing to give” to the dance work. Brendon’s statement suggests that when dancers feel they can express themselves in the choreography their motivation to contribute to the dance work is increased (see 3.3.1). Through the lens of self-actualisation, dancers' freedom of expression may provide opportunities for emotional growth and increased levels of creative satisfaction and can motivate individuals and improve performance (see 3.3.1).

This section has identified the research participants' needs for continual growth and discussed how they desire this in diverse ways. The dancers articulated they had a strong desire for improving their technical capacity and to develop as conceptual artists within rehearsal processes. Natasha identified that improvement means for her developing as a performing artist. Gary identified the importance of healthy dance practice and identified that how the rehearsal process is facilitated by the rehearsal director is important for his emotional sustainability. The dancers also shared their intrinsic desire for self-expression in rehearsals and how this significantly impacts their level of personal satisfaction. Throughout our conversations the dancers expressed an understanding of the rehearsal process to operate in an environment that is managed and facilitated by the rehearsal director. The following section explores how a rehearsal director's actions within a rehearsal process may impact a dancer's experiences of improvement, sustainability, and creative actualisation.

## 4.2 Rehearsal direction and self-actualisation

As discussed in the literature review the rehearsal director's key role is to respond to the needs of the rehearsal process, taking into account any creative / technical support to the choreographer, structural or compositional detail, documentation, re-staging work, and pastoral care and technical training support for dancers (see 3.1.4). In viewing the rehearsal directors role through a dancer-centred lens, a rehearsal director might focus on supporting dancers' needs towards self-actualisation (see 3.3.1). How this shift may contribute towards a dancer's agency for improvement, sustainability and creative actualisation could be argued to not only benefit dancers' experiences but also might be argued to produce repertoire of a high standard (Butterworth, 1989). This section first discusses how the research participants desire to be supported in rehearsals and how this support can lead towards feeling valued. Secondly, the section discusses how the dancers want to be given feedback and want to be held accountable to the demands of the repertoire; however they also expressed they need freedom to explore so they can improve and feel creatively actualised. My research discusses how feeling permitted to explore the choreography can be significant towards feeling self-actualised within a rehearsal process.

### 4.2.1 *“Dancers need to feel valued and supported”*: Rehearsal directors role in supporting, motivating, and encouraging dancers

This section discusses how the research participants desire support, motivation, and encouragement from rehearsal directors. These desires can be significant as feeling supported can promote a sense of being trusted and valued (Sheldon & Filak, 2008). The desire to feel supported by the rehearsal director was a common theme throughout the participant interviews. Mary notes:

The more I move along in my career I realise how important [the rehearsal director] really is. Ideally I think the dancers need to feel valued and supported.

Mary's statement indicates that dancers of all levels of experience need support from rehearsal directors. The potential impact a rehearsal director can have on Mary and her desire to feel valued and supported aligns with a dancer-centred approach (Knox, 2013). In considering how rehearsal directors may show support, Jordan articulates “a good rehearsal director” is one that “helps to facilitate [through being] inspiring and motivating”. Jordan considers the rehearsal director to have the ability to inspire and guide dancers through an intuitive responsibility of care and support (James, 2006). When Jordan indicates that a rehearsal director can “help to facilitate” the rehearsal process, he

alludes to the potential for rehearsal directors to take a leadership role in how the dancers experience, engage with, and digest the technical and personal aspects of the rehearsal process (James, 2006). This could have challenging impacts on the dancer - rehearsal director relationship, especially if the dancer is frequently looking to the rehearsal director for extrinsic motivation. Jordan might be desiring support but also desiring a sense of freedom. Building on his desire for extrinsic motivation, Jordan describes how encouragement may be significant towards his development:

Even when [steps] are complicated, and I am rehearsed well, encouraged to keep going and give[n] tools to help accomplish it, ... that complicated step becomes the best thing in the world.

In this statement Jordan may be describing a self-actualising experience where he perceives a goal to be more achievable when he feels supported and encouraged. Being challenged is understood as important for dancers' sense of self-actualisation and growth (see 3.3.1), which may also highlight how rehearsal directors can foster these opportunities in rehearsals. Within the realm of leadership, encouragement is understood as a process that focuses on the individual's resources and potential, hence being "rehearsed well" might suggest the rehearsal director is fostering Jordan's individual potential (Dinkmeyer, 2019). Jordan might be expressing that the rehearsal director's support and encouragement can result in an 'optimal experience', a sense that he is making the most of his abilities and acquiring new knowledge (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). Through Jordan's statement, it might also be proposed rehearsal directors having an understanding and knowledge of each individual dancer can be important. This may allow rehearsal directors to understand dancers' individual weaknesses and strengths and tailor their leadership specifically to each dancer's needs.

This section has discussed how the research participants identify the importance of rehearsal direction to be encouraging and supportive. However, this does not necessarily mean that rehearsal directors always need to be encouraging, as the dancers also expressed they want to be held accountable. The dancers' expectations for rehearsal directors to give them feedback and to keep them accountable is explored in the following section.

#### 4.2.2 *"You want to be held accountable": Dancers need rehearsal directors to keep them responsible and to be clear with feedback*

Throughout our conversations the dancers expressed the need for rehearsal directors to give feedback. Mary noted "an outside eye to give feedback" is important because she wants to know she has "been

seen and checked”. It may be considered Mary wants to know when she is performing well and is desiring a clear understanding of the movement (James, 2006). Jared noted the importance of the rehearsal director being,

... really clear with the movement; I look to them for decisions if there is any uncertainty. As a dancer you want to be held accountable.

Jared’s experience suggests he may rely on the rehearsal director for clarity, decision making, and specific feedback relating to the choreography. A dancer’s proclivity to be “held accountable” might indicate that Jared wants a rehearsal director to take responsibility and provide him with clear goals and expectations (Dinkmeyer, 2019). Building on this, Jared expressed he wants the rehearsal director to tell him when he is “not doing it quite right”, which may demonstrate Jared’s reliance on the rehearsal director for accuracy and technical improvement. This approach may also emphasise a right - wrong dichotomy in relation to dance knowledge, where Jared becomes reliant on the rehearsal directors approval to identify the ‘correct’ way (Rowe & Xiong, 2020). It may be identified how limiting this reliance can be upon Jared’s agency (Zepke & Leach, 2010); however, for Jared this may make him feel confident when he is validated by a rehearsal director. From a rehearsal director's standpoint it can be understood that “one of the most important aspects of rehearsal direction is that the dancers have a clear understanding of the original choreographic intent” (James, 2006, p. 210), which may be what Jared’s need for accountability may refer to. It might be argued Jared feels he can satisfy the choreography to the best of his abilities when he is informed of the correct way.

Jordan offered the perspective that being “coached” and given “helpful” feedback from a rehearsal director can facilitate an environment where aspects of “being accurate and explorative exist in the rehearsal space”. Jordan might be expressing that feedback can also facilitate dancers to be permitted to explore and allow dancers to find expression within the movement (James, 2006). There is a sense that Jordan desires this feedback to be given in a supportive way through describing this as “helpful” and being “coached”. It might be considered amalgamating the idea of being held accountable and being given freedom to explore may satisfy Jordan’s needs towards improvement as well as his creative actualisation. The following section will extend upon how the dancers want rehearsal directors to allow a sense of freedom and permission to explore throughout a rehearsal process.

#### 4.2.3 *“You want to feel like your opinion and contribution matters”*: Dancers need rehearsal directors to allow freedom for individual expression

Dance can be understood as a vehicle for discovering emotions and personal expression (Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019), and dancers may consume dance for this reason (Foster-Sproull, 2017). This section investigates how the research participants want to be given freedom to satisfy their desire to express themselves within the choreography. When learning existing repertoire Mary expresses, “I hate when you are ... compared to the original [cast], because that’s not me”. It might be considered that by feeling compared Mary feels her individual expression and contribution within the choreography is overlooked and not valued. Engaging in “unfair or negative comparisons” (Lakes, 2005, p. 4) is understood to exist within authoritarian dance environments (Rowe & Xiong, 2020) and can be a way teachers and directors can control or humiliate dancers as well as promote unhealthy competition (Lakes, 2005). Therefore, it might be argued when rehearsal directors allow dancers “freedom to express their interpretations while keeping the artistic integrity of the piece” (James, 2006, p. 212) this may take care of dancers autonomy as well as promote self-actualising experiences (see 3.3.1).

Jared also highlighted a potential friction when rehearsal directors limit a dancer’s freedom by employing a didactic approach to the execution of physical movements. He says this results in “no taking in of you, you want to feel like your opinion ... [and] contribution matters”. Jared wants to feel he can be himself within the dance and wants this to be valued. Mary and Jared’s statements suggest that not given a sense of freedom can result in feeling that they are not valued and that what they have to offer is limited. Therefore, when a rehearsal director encourages dancer agency in decision making and self-initiated action in the rehearsal process, feelings of independence and self-responsibility are enacted (Dinkmeyer, 2019; Knox, 2013). In contrast, when a rehearsal director facilitates an environment that might be perceived by the dancer as confining, this can limit opportunities for self-actualisation. This might be because a didactic approach does not challenge or value dancers' own intellectual or expressive approaches or allow them to make their own decisions (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013).

This section has discussed the research participants' desires for rehearsal directors to facilitate an environment to foster self-actualisation. The dancers acknowledged they need support through being encouraged and motivated and that this support is also understood through being given feedback and being held accountable (James, 2006). The dancers also want to be given freedom to explore. In further understanding what dancers need for self-actualisation and how they want these needs met by rehearsal directors, the following sections unpack instances where the dancers’ perceived rehearsal directors impacted these needs.

### 4.3 Trust, rehearsal directors and self-actualisation

Trust can be identified as being essential towards an individual's ability to relate to one another and within dance rehearsals is considered significant to promote a democratic environment (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Hardin, 2002; Knox, 2013). This section unpacks instances where the research participants' perceived rehearsal directors to either foster a feeling of trust or showed limited trust in rehearsals. The first subsection unpacks Annie's experience to discuss how sustainability can require trust to develop self-improvement. Further complexities to the rehearsal director - dancer relationships are presented through the argument that trust may not just be a vanity of the dancers being told 'I trust you', but rather that when rehearsal directors allow dancers permission to explore on their own, this can foster trust. The second subsection unpacks two dancer experiences to explore different ways the research participants experienced limited trust. A discussion is presented on how perceptions of trust may impact dancers' ability to self-actualise.

#### 4.3.1 *"I got to take on a leadership role": Rehearsal directors promote a sense of trust*

When work environments provide individuals with responsibilities, this can encourage a feeling of being trusted (Clouder, 2009). It is understood that the more responsibility a person is given, the higher the effect is "on their perceptions of personal efficacy and professional development" (Clouder, 2009, p. 289). This section unpacks Annie's "enjoyable" experience where she perceived the rehearsal director trusted her and this trust may have led to an opportunity for development. In this example Annie was "part of the original cast" and the rehearsal director gave Annie the responsibility of "teaching" new dancers the choreography. She described that she "got to take on [a] leadership role and support [the new] performers". Giving Annie responsibility to teach new dancers can be considered to have encouraged a sense of self-initiated action (Knox, 2013) that allows Annie to feel trusted. Additionally, the rehearsal director sharing responsibilities may foster the development of Annie's interpersonal skills and teaching practice (James, 2006) by allowing opportunities towards rehearsing younger dancers (see 3.3.1). The sense of trust that Annie experienced might come from the rehearsal director giving her opportunities and responsibilities for self-exploration. It might be viewed that the rehearsal director is valuing and trusting Annie's ability and allowing space for knowledge creation rather than displaying behaviour aiming to 'fix' their expert knowledge onto the dancer (see 3.3.1). Annie's experience has led me to consider what impact it might have on their experiences when dancers perceive a lack of trust from a rehearsal director. To further investigate the proposition that a rehearsal director's trust can impact dancers' experiences of self-actualisation, the

following section will unpack contrasting encounters where the dancers perceived they were not trusted.

#### 4.3.2 *“They spoke to me like I was a junior person in the company”*: Rehearsal directors facilitating an environment where dancers perceive they are not trusted

In my conversations with Natasha, she shared various instances where she felt she was not trusted in rehearsal processes. Her following two stories are unpacked to illustrate diverse ways dancers may feel they are not trusted by rehearsal directors, and how this perceived lack of trust may arise. Other research participants also shared stories where it might be considered they did not feel trusted. However Natasha’s narratives were more specific to the thematic analysis. The first story discusses how rehearsal directors’ verbal communication can result in dancers feeling untrusted, disrespected and agentially compromised. Natasha recalled an instance where she perceived the rehearsal director to speak to her “in a very passive aggressive way”. During this rehearsal process Natasha also noted she felt this particular rehearsal director had “a personal problem” with her:

[The rehearsal director] would talk down to me, speak to me as if I didn’t comprehend what was going on, that I wasn’t an intelligent human being, [and] spoke to me like I was like a junior person in the company. [They] picked [apart] every single movement that I did.

Within this example Natasha perceives the rehearsal director to speak to her in a way where she felt judged as not being “intelligent” or perhaps having limited knowledge and experience. Having every movement “picked” apart may result in Natasha feeling that everything she did was wrong or not good enough, and she may feel the rehearsal director is not trusting that she is able to achieve the steps on her own. Natasha may be experiencing a sense of external evaluation from the rehearsal director, and this may have compromised her agency as well as resulted in her feeling threatened (Knox, 2013). Additionally, Natasha may be feeling a lack of trust as the communication from the rehearsal director could be considered to be patronising and condescending through talking to her as if she is not intelligent and a junior person in the company. This form of communication may have resulted in Natasha feeling like she was being personally ridiculed and was incompetent (Sprinborg & Sutherland, 2015). Viewed through the lens of dancer-centredness, it may be concerning that the rehearsal director fails to trust and understand Natasha’s “personal feelings and meanings” (Rogers et al., 1967, p. 54) and instead offers a judgmental summary without moving from their own position of power or difference (Knox, 2013). Referring back to the dancer’s need for support, encouragement, and clear direction from rehearsal directors (see 5.2), it may be considered these desires are not being satisfied.

To reveal further complexities of how dancers may perceive they are not trusted Natasha spoke of another experience. In this instance Natasha felt as if she was spoken about:

... there was this feeling that [the rehearsal director and the choreographer] had been talking about me. I know from personal experience more recently that that has an impact on the way that I am capable of being in a room, if I feel I am being talked about. That feeling of holding things in and being judged and observed, like you are an artefact and they are spectators.

In unpacking this story, it might be considered that a feeling of trust needs to go both ways and that Natasha's agency is impacted when she does not trust what the rehearsal director is saying about her. Natasha is expressing how being talked about impacted how she operated in the rehearsal through feeling "judged and observed". It may be argued that feeling judged has impacted Natasha's agency by changing the way she feels "capable of being in a room". Natasha might be expressing how her agency to push herself and to step outside of her comfort zone is compromised (Knox, 2013) when she feels she cannot trust the rehearsal director. This may limit self-actualisation, as dancers might 'shut off' and not take risks in the rehearsal process (see 3.3.1). Feeling judged and not trusted in a dance environment can result in dancers feeling out of control and is a major factor in causing anxiety (Walker & Nordin-Bates, 2010). This may inhibit self-guided development and can foster a dependence on pleasing the rehearsal director (Rowe & Xiong, 2020) and this behaviour could be understood as "conditioned reinforcement" (Fantino, 1998, p. 203) of dancers to 'obey the rules'.

The two examples of diverse ways Natasha felt judged in a rehearsal may be described to have controlled her behaviour and led to her feeling unsatisfied, unmotivated, and threatened (Knox, 2013; Rogers, 1961). Dance literature understands that when dancers feel judged this can result in dancers becoming fearful of negative judgments and can instigate an underlying behavioural compliance (Dryburgh & Fortin, 2010; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). Natasha's experiences lead me to consider how agency towards professional development and self-actualisation may be limited when responsibility for trusting her own judgment is limited (see 3.3.1). When dancers are not allowed to make choices, this may emerge not through being told they are not allowed but because they feel they are not trusted. This lack of trust might make dancers feel they are not permitted to explore, make decisions, and act autonomously (Rowe, McMicken, & Newth, 2019). Instead, they may feel they are being judged unfairly, which may result in dancers feeling unsafe in rehearsal environments (Quested & Duda, 2009, 2010). To develop this argument further the following section discusses that when dancers feel a sense of reciprocal trust with a rehearsal director it may lead to feeling they are given freedom to explore and discover on their own.

#### 4.4 Freedom, rehearsal directors, and self-actualisation

This section examines the impact on dancers when they feel rehearsal directors give them permission to explore their individual expression within the choreography. Contrastingly, when the opposite occurs, a lack of trust may result in dancers feeling they have limited freedom or permission to explore. My research argues that a dancer's feeling of freedom may not come from rehearsal directors telling dancers they are 'allowed' to explore their individual expression within the choreography, but because the rehearsal director creates an inclusive studio environment that encourages trust to occur. In conclusion, I present the argument that feeling trusted while having permission to explore can provide a dancer-centred approach (Knox, 2013) to self-actualisation in a rehearsal context.

##### 4.4.1 *“The ability and freedom to make a choice”*: Rehearsal directors give dancers space and encourage growth

Encouraging decision making, self-initiated action and individual responsibility can promote dancers intrinsic motivation and therefore may enhance performance (Dinkmeyer, 2019; Knox, 2013). This section discusses how Jordan perceived the rehearsal director giving him space and freedom to discover on his own, and how this promoted his personal satisfaction and intrinsic motivation (Greene & Burke, 2007; Juniu, Tedrick, & Boyd, 1996). In Jordan's example, it might be considered he felt a sense of trust from the rehearsal director, which led to him feeling he was permitted to explore and encouraged on a self-guided journey. In this experience the rehearsal director taught a phrase and the dancers would dance it one by one. Jordan recalled:

[The rehearsal director was] just observing, ...encouraging, not with any words, but with [their] spirit. It didn't feel like [they were] looking at anything to be wrong, or to fix something, [they] just wanted to see. [I had] the ability and the freedom to make a choice ... and to express myself within the realms ... of the choreography ... and I was encouraged to. [It was like] it's on your body now, which helped me grow. [It] helps one find what their voice is, what they like ... and what they feel.

In this example Jordan identifies that the rehearsal director did not give verbal permission to explore but it was a sense Jordan felt through the rehearsals directors “encouraging” “spirit”. This may have allowed him to make a “choice”, explore his personal preferences, “express” himself in the movement and to feel that his individual perspective is valued (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). Jordan feels empowered when given “the freedom to make a choice” and this experience can be understood as beneficial towards his professional development, contributing to his “sense of mastery and self-respect” (Yerxa, 1980, p. 534). Jordan feels the rehearsal director is supportive as it can be considered

the rehearsal director has encouraged a sense of self, personal competence, expression, independence, and creativity presenting a self-actualising experience through discovery and development of his artistic voice (see 3.3.1).

Jordan may have felt a sense of trust from the rehearsal director through being given responsibility, freedom, and choice (Freiberg & Lamb, 2009). Jordan's experience presents how dancer agency for self-actualisation is extended when rehearsal directors facilitate an atmosphere of trust which promotes a feeling of permission to explore on their own, which can be viewed as extending dancer-centred practice (see 3.3.1). Additionally, when people are permitted to be individualistic, it encourages true creative expression and subsequently the dancers may be gaining a feeling of personal satisfaction (Foster-Sproull, 2017). Jordan's experience has led me to ask the following question: When dancers are not permitted to individually express or to explore on their own, how might this affect their personal satisfaction within the rehearsal process? To extend upon the complexity of dancer experiences within rehearsal, the following section unpacks factors that inhibit dancers agency and self-actualisation.

#### 4.4.2 *"I always felt like I was colouring outside the lines": Rehearsal directors restricting dancers' opportunities to explore*

This section explores diverse dancer experiences of when they are not permitted to explore and how this can impact their agency towards self-actualisation. Jordan spoke of an instance in a rehearsal process where he felt he had to "fit into the mould". He described:

I always felt like I was colouring outside the lines. Sometimes I wanted to linger outside [the count], because that's how I wanted to express it for my body, for my own artistic voice. But based on everybody else doing it, I think I am doing it wrong; I think I am disobeying. [It] was a bit of a conflict in my body. I didn't feel like there was any room for [individual expression]. I felt like I had to fit into the mould. So really confining.

The important idea emerging from Jordan's narrative might be the confining nature of the environment as Jordan felt he was "disobeying" when he wanted to express himself. It might be possible that the rehearsal director is not allowing any freedom for creative exploration and there is limited taking in or appreciation of Jordan as an individual in the work. It might be argued that Jordan perceiving no permission to include his personal expression into the work shows that the dance and the steps are of higher priority than the individuals dancing it. Additionally, it could be pointed out Jordan is viewed as an instrument and his job is to replicate the movement with an exactness as he feels he is expected to "fit into the mould". This example may present approaches found within

authoritarian dance environments that can be understood to make dancers “mechanized or habituated into an ideal form” (Green, 2000, p. 156) as dancers may be required to passively follow movement directions (see 3.3.1). This may highlight a didactic approach to teaching repertoire as discussed extensively in dance learning and professional contexts (see 3.3.1). This leads to the following question: How are dancers' needs towards improvement, sustaining themselves and creative actualisation valued by a rehearsal director who limits opportunities for personal artistry and expression? From a self-actualising point of view, when a rehearsal director has full control over the dancers, it can be seen to enforce individuals to feel unworthy and unable to do what they otherwise might (see 3.3.1). Additionally, coercion and control may operate in contention to self-actualisation through promoting conformity which constrains an individual's uniqueness (see 3.3.1).

To delve deeper into the idea of dancers not being given permission to explore, Natasha's following story presents that dancers are not necessarily told they are 'not allowed freedom', rather the sense of not being given permission may come from feeling a lack of trust by the rehearsal director. Natasha said the rehearsal director,

... micromanaged me to the worst possible degree, ... even if we had run a section and I did three movements – I would have the most notes, I hated it! I was really compromised, my ability to be an autonomous human being within rehearsals was compromised. I didn't feel that I could speak, I felt that my body in space wasn't valid, ... Which made my ... own development [and] dancing suffer.

Within this experience Natasha perceives the rehearsal director to compromise her development through not allowing a sense of autonomy. However, it might be argued that Natasha's autonomy was not necessarily taken away by the rehearsal director telling her she is 'not allowed' or by not giving her permission; it might have emerged because Natasha felt the rehearsal director does not trust her to be responsible for her role through receiving “the most notes” and by being “micromanaged”. It may also be identified the rehearsal director's controlling behaviour presents a possible hierarchical power relationship, understood to promote dancers feelings of judgment and evaluation, which can lead to dancers feeling threatened (see 3.3.1). It might be argued Natasha felt controlled through the rehearsal director's judgment, impacting her agency towards speaking, her ability to feel valued, and possibly hindering her sense of self-ability and progress (see 3.3.1). Natasha's experience indicates when she feels limited trust from the rehearsal director, her agency towards self-actualisation is compromised as this requires an individual's locus of evaluation to lie within themselves rather than through an external force (see 3.3.1).

#### 4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has illustrated how dancers recognise opportunities for self-actualisation in a rehearsal process. The research participants expressed a desire for constant development through encompassing physical and intellectual growth and maturity (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013), by sustaining themselves and by developing as a conceptual artist as well as feeling creatively actualised. In recognising these desires, the research discussed how dancers may rely on a rehearsal director to help them improve physically, intellectually, and creatively through the way they facilitate the rehearsal. The dancers suggested ways they want support and encouragement (Knox, 2013), to be held accountable (James, 2006), as well as a sense of freedom (Knox, 2013). In analysing the dancers stories the research has presented ideas of how a feeling of being trusted or not being trusted by a rehearsal director can impact a dancer's ability to self-actualise. This can be related to the choreographer - dancer relationship, where it has been discussed that feeling trusted, or feeling a lack of trust, can impact dancers' agency to use themselves as a resource (Knox, 2013). Developing trust within the rehearsal director-dancer relationship might promote dancers to feel they are permitted to explore, and this can offer dancers opportunities for professional development and self-actualisation. Natasha's stories also revealed that when she is not trusted by a rehearsal director, this can compromise her needs towards self-actualisation.

This chapter may extend meanings and understandings of dancers' needs for self-actualisation through the extension of dancer-centred theory into the realm of rehearsals. Additionally, my research intends to present new ideas and complexities to the rehearsal director - dancer relationship that may not be discussed currently. This chapter has also unveiled that problematic rehearsal director approaches may require further investigation to extend literature to focus on the complex rehearsal director - dancer relationship. Self-actualisation however is just one aspect of dancers' needs in a rehearsal process; dancers also have concerns about their health and wellbeing. The following chapter will present dancers' needs towards sustaining their health in rehearsals, and how a rehearsal director can impact a dancers physical and psychological wellbeing.

## Chapter 5. Discussion: Wellbeing and the Rehearsal Director

During our conversations the research participants expressed the significance of maintaining their health and wellbeing and shared stories about the rehearsal process. Some participants perceived rehearsal directors to either foster or compromise their physical and psychological states (Knox, 2013; Quested & Duda, 2010). This chapter will explore dancer wellbeing and the impact of rehearsal direction. Firstly, I analyse the research participants' meanings and experiences of wellbeing and how they may value this in rehearsals. The second section provides a discussion on how the research participants consider the role of the rehearsal director in relation to these needs. To do this I explore how the dancers want support and care from rehearsal directors but also suggest dancers desire freedom to look after themselves. The final section unpacks the research participants' experiences when rehearsal directors showed concern or indicated limited concern for their personal wellbeing. To conclude this section, I will discuss the significance of the rehearsal directors' impact on dancers' wellbeing and provide further evidence on the complex nature of the rehearsal director - dancer relationship.

### 5.1 Wellbeing in rehearsal contexts

The dancers interviewed for this research valued maintaining their wellbeing in rehearsals through establishing healthy endurance practices and managing fatigue, negotiating injury and sustaining psychological health in diverse ways. In order to further comprehend the complexities and nuances of my research question, *how are dancers' needs in rehearsal affected by a rehearsal director?*, the following subsections discuss dancers' experiences of endurance, managing fatigue, negotiating injury, and sustaining psychological health.

#### 5.1.1 *“Not all about sweating and puffing”*: Dancers' perceptions of sustaining healthy endurance and managing fatigue in rehearsal contexts

Sustaining healthy endurance and managing fatigue can be essential for dancers to stay injury free and can contribute to their career longevity (Hopper et al., 2020). Mary identified her body as being essential to her job by saying “a dancer's body is equivalent to an office worker's computer; if it is not functioning at its best then it is such a liability”. Mary also stated the importance of a holistic approach in managing her body in rehearsals:

In the early days everything was hard out and ‘deal with the consequences’ kind of thing. Now it is a lot more holistic and conscious, it’s not all about sweating [and] puffing...

Within this example, by negotiating “with the consequences” Mary might be referring to a dancer's need to develop resilience to handle and push through physical exhaustion in rehearsals (Chirban, Rowan, 2016; Pickard & Bailey, 2009). This shift in process that Mary has identified connects with dance literature that has criticised overwork and identified fatigue as compromising performance (see 3.3.2). Building on this, Mary added “that is a much more productive way ... without wasting ... energy and doing it wrong over and over”. By referencing a productive approach to rehearsal, Mary might be suggesting a “holistic and conscious” practice which allows her to engage intellectually and to explore her own meaning making within the choreography rather than purely focusing on the physicality of the steps (Batson & Schwartz, 2007; Green, 2002). It is possible this approach allows Mary to conserve energy and maintain endurance in rehearsals (Hopper et al., 2020).

Mary’s idea of a holistic practice might be understood as a more effective and manageable process to instigate in learning environments, as holistic approaches have been suggested to foster opportunities for self-actualisation, autonomy, responsibility, and decision-making processes (see 3.3.2).

Experiences of fatigue for dancers can be complex. This is because it has been suggested that being fatigued can allow dancers to reach experiences of self-actualisation and sense of achievement (Fay & Hedges, 1997). This may be because a “culture of rigor” (Batson & Schwartz, 2007, p. 47) might exist within elite dance where there is the expectation that continuous practice is the most beneficial way to improve skills (Batson & Schwartz, 2007), and dancers can feel guilty if they do not feel exhausted at the end of a day of rehearsals (Fay & Hedges, 1997). However, fatigue can also lead to adverse problems such as injury, and this can inhibit a dancer’s progress (see 3.3.2).

In connecting to Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs pyramid (1943), it is possible dancers’ physiological needs are not met when they are fatigued, and this can result in compromised motivation (Das, 1989). Dancers may become concerned with sustaining healthy endurance rather than focusing on personal and professional development and requirements within rehearsals, including technical improvement, learning and retaining repertoire, connecting with other dancers, and artistic expression (see 3.1.3). Mary’s statement may relate to Brendon who acknowledged being a dancer involves a lot of inner reflection. He expressed, “you have to be able to take care of yourself; you are so internal, you are processing constantly ... how do I feel”. Brendon recognises that in order to sustain endurance in rehearsal, it is important to be able to instigate “health-promoting self-care behaviour” (Acton & Malathum, 2000, p. 806). Brendon’s need to take care of himself connects with literature proposing that it is the dancer’s responsibility to manage their health and wellbeing through their careers (Hopper et al., 2020). Therefore, it might be argued that Brendon needs a sense of

freedom in rehearsals to “take care of himself” in order to manage fatigue. Additionally, involving “inner reflection” on how he feels might suggest Brendon is engaged in a somatic awareness and seeking to establish or amalgamate his mind body connection (Green, 2000, 2002). Brendon’s experience may suggest a deep understanding of his personal bodily knowledge and wellbeing needs, however, further study may be required to explore how a somatic approach can contribute towards a dancer’s wellbeing from an ‘inside out’ perspective (Green, 2002; Hanna, 1988).

Maintaining endurance and minimising fatigue levels is viewed as significant towards dancers’ wellbeing (Acton & Malathaum, 2000; Hopper et al., 2020; Russell, 2013), as it can have a direct impact on their career longevity and can be essential in limiting the risk of injury (see 3.3.2). However, because dance can be a highly physical pursuit injuries might be prevalent (see 3.3.2). This prompts me to question, as injuries may be difficult to avoid, how do dancers negotiate injuries in rehearsals? The following section will explore this through dancers needing to have space and freedom to take care of themselves in rehearsals.

#### *5.1.2 “Being the overseer of your own body”: Dancers’ perceptions of negotiating injuries in rehearsal contexts*

This section discusses dancers’ needs when negotiating injuries in a rehearsal context. Jordan highlights how having an injury restricts his personal satisfaction and ability to develop. He identified, “if you are injured you can’t enjoy ... things you love to do. It clearly inhibits ... progress”. Jordan’s experience indicates that injuries can hinder and make dancing painful, and it might be argued that having an injury can impact his journey towards self-actualisation through inhibiting his ability for progression (see 3.3.2). Jordan extended on his experience by saying that being injured can inhibit “the future of your own career”, which emphasises how an injury may compromise a dancers ability to fulfil their potential (Acton & Malathaum, 2000; Hopper et al., 2020). Similarly, Brendon expressed that having an injury compromised his ability to “accomplish [his] job [as] the pain [takes him] away from doing it”. In this context, when Brendon says “doing it” he could mean the practice of rehearsing and/or performing the work. Building on this, Brendon identified that negotiating injuries is “super important” and “being able to have autonomy and being the overseer of your own body” allows him to manage an injury. Recovery is considered a highly individualised process therefore, Brendon is suggesting the need to be able to monitor and manage his own recovery and injuries (Blevins, Erskine, Hopper, & Moyle, 2020). It is understood that when dancers can themselves minimise the risk of negative outcomes associated with long-term recovery and stress they can consistently produce elite performance (Blevins, Erskine, Hopper, & Moyle, 2020). Brendon may

want freedom to manage his injury and have control of how he works in a rehearsal. Factors that can be significant for Brendon to feel he has freedom and control over negotiating his injury can include open lines of communication, feedback, and transparency as well as a rehearsal director - dancer relationship that promotes trust (Hopper et al., 2020).

Brendon's perspective potentially links to Hopper, Belvins, Erskine, Hendry, Hill, and Longbottom's (2020) statement that dancers in independent environments are understood to be required to take responsibility for managing their wellbeing. In consideration of how this might be different in company environments, Bronner, Ojofeitimi, and Rose (2003) propose that comprehensive injury management can be implemented to support dancers. Additionally, it is understood positive social support is significant for dancers with injuries to help maintain their psychological wellbeing (Russell, 2013). Through considering a holistic approach to wellbeing, the following section explores the significance of a dancer's psychological state and unpacks how dancers may value sustaining their mental and emotional wellbeing in rehearsal contexts.

### *5.1.3 "It's mind before body": Dancers' perceptions of psychological wellbeing in rehearsal contexts*

Throughout our conversations the dancers expressed diverse ways they value their psychological wellbeing and how this can impact their ability to do their job. Jordan communicated the importance of his psychological health in rehearsals by saying, "if your emotional spectrum is a bit all over the place, how can you effectively tell the story that you are being asked to tell?" Through this statement, Jordan might be expressing that dancers can be required to invest themselves emotionally in dance work to establish authenticity (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013), and that being emotionally stressed can compromise this practice (see 3.3.2).

Presenting how dancers valued their psychological wellbeing in rehearsals, Jared acknowledged, "I work better when it's not tense ... when it is all feeling good I feel more at ease". Jared's experience suggests that the social-environmental factors in rehearsals can impact his psychological state and his ability to "feel good". In his interview, Jared went further to explain that when the rehearsal environment is tense, he closes off and is unable to "unload emotions". Jared's feeling of "closing off" might be interpreted as protecting himself emotionally, which may inhibit his ability to continue to work at his best (see 3.3.2). Rogers (1961) suggests that psychological safety and psychological freedom are two key aspects of an environment that can impact an individual's self-actualisation. Therefore, dancers' potential for self-actualisation might only be possible under specific social

conditions (Das, 1989) and leads me to consider the significance of the rehearsal director's management of the rehearsal on dancers' wellbeing.

This section has discussed the value the research participants place on sustaining their physical endurance and limiting fatigue within rehearsals and how negotiating injuries is significant towards career longevity. The dancers' psychological state was also discussed to be important for their connection to the dance and their ability to work at their best. These needs indicate that dancers want freedom, however, the rehearsal process is complex, and dancers may rely on the rehearsal director's support to access these freedoms. The following section presents a discussion around how dancers desire freedom and support from rehearsal directors to promote a sustained sense of wellbeing.

## 5.2 Rehearsal direction and wellbeing

Within my research the dancers shared ways they wanted their wellbeing to be considered by the rehearsal director. This section will discuss three examples of what dancers need from rehearsal directors in rehearsals to aid in sustaining their wellbeing. The first subsection explores how dancers need scheduled breaks and want rehearsal directors to conduct rehearsals with fluctuations in intensity to help sustain their endurance. The second subsection discusses how dancers want to be given freedom to look after themselves in rehearsals and explores how they might prefer this to occur. The third subsection investigates that although dancers want freedom, they also need support and care from rehearsal directors, and this can promote a feeling of motivation and accomplishment.

### 5.2.1 *"Dips in intensity": Breaks and fluctuations in rehearsal intensity*

This section presents the dancers' needs for breaks as well as fluctuations in intensity during rehearsals. Mary discussed how "dips in intensity" are important as she "cannot be at max all the time" and this allows her to manage energy levels and combat fatigue. She wants a "balanced ... daily schedule" with opportunities for "pushing" her body through "good technique classes and rehearsal time", but she also wants space to "slow down and go over details". Mary might be acknowledging she cannot maintain 100% effort across a rehearsal process and that she wants rehearsal directors to allow her to balance her workload. Providing fluctuations in the rehearsal intensity may allow dancers to reach peak performance (Hopper et al., 2020). Building on this, Mary suggested a more "tactful training schedule that an athlete uses" might be useful for dancers' performance preparation. Dance academics Hopper et al. (2020) propose further investigation is required into how fluctuations of

intensity during a rehearsal process can build dancers' endurance and promote maximum efficiency and performance. Further research in this area may be beneficial for rehearsal directors' facilitation of a rehearsal process and for sustaining dancers' wellbeing.

Jordan connects to Mary's statements because he recognises the complex position the rehearsal director may occupy. Jordan acknowledged that even though "the rehearsal director [needs to see the repertoire] they need to understand the physical output" and that giving the dancers "a substantial break helps you as a dancer look after your body". Jordan identified that he understands the responsibility of the rehearsal director to remount the work to a certain standard, but he also expressed the need for rehearsal directors to understand how dancers are feeling. Considering sufficient recovery is essential for dancers to fully commit to the dance work (Hopper et al., 2020), it might be argued that it could be in the rehearsal director's best interest to show empathy by "understand[ing] the physical output", as Jordan suggested, and allow recovery time.

Rest breaks have been identified as significant for managing psychological wellbeing in rehearsals (Hopper et al., 2020; James, 2006). Jordan highlighted substantial breaks aid in his mental clarity; he wants to "have a moment to [himself,] just sit down and breathe [and then] come back into the space". It might be suggested that having "a moment to himself" can be a coping style that allows Jordan to reduce performance anxiety, to help manage stress, and to make it possible for him to come back into the rehearsal with a 'clear' mental state (Blevins, Erskine, Hopper, Moyle, 2020; Hopper et al., 2020). Hopper et al. (2020) suggest dancers may need to learn and develop psychological skills to help engage professionally in rehearsal environments as the feeling of fatigue can confound the work, and rehearsals can be psychologically demanding. This prompts me to question: how might a rehearsal director facilitate an environment that encourages dancers to look after their mental wellbeing? Linking to another participant's statement, Annie also stated the importance of "dancers just needing their basic needs, ... like having breaks". Annie identified that dancers can feel:

[We] don't have a voice, ... quite often we need to say something, but we feel like we can't, and we keep on pushing through. It's a tough job.

Annie's reflection identifies that dancers can feel silenced and feel they have to push through in rehearsals (Knox, 2013; Lakes, 2005). Additionally, Annie may feel judgement from rehearsal directors (Lakes, 2005). A dancer's agency to speak up and express the need for a break might impact a dancer's wellbeing and enhance their ability to manage physical workloads. However, this may require a rehearsal director to facilitate a space that allows dancers to feel they are not judged and that they are allowed to speak. Dancers may therefore need rehearsal direction to promote open lines of communication as this might be considered to be essential for dancers feeling they can express their

need for a break or when they are feeling exhausted (see 3.3.2). Annie's experience may also indicate she wants the rehearsal director to listen to her and care about her experiences (Knox, 2013). Dance academic Sarah Knox's 2013 study into dancer-centredness discusses the potential impact a choreographer can have on dancers' psychological health, and my study proposes a rehearsal director may have a similar impact. Knox (2013) suggests that dancers may want support, care, and trust within the rehearsal process. Through this lens, Annie's desire to speak up may provide her with an opportunity to take care of herself in rehearsals. The following section will discuss how the research participants want rehearsal directors to give them space to take care of their bodies as well as their psychological wellbeing and how this can relate to a dancer-centred approach.

### 5.2.2 *“You have to be able to take care of yourself”: Rehearsal directors allow dancers to take care of themselves*

Although social support can help dancers manage their wellbeing, the responsibility still falls upon dancers to maintain their health and wellbeing to sustain their careers (Hopper et al., 2020). This section explores how dancers want rehearsal directors to allow them to take care of their wellbeing. Jordan spoke about the importance of having agency towards looking after himself and how this allows him to negotiate an injury.

When you know you are injured or you know you need to take it easy – you do that, you take care of yourself.

Jordan presented the need to listen to his body and look after himself while injured. In order to do this, Jordan spoke about the necessity of 'marking' movement in a rehearsal:

A mark will indicate to the rehearsal director that I know what they need me to do. It is all about trusting that I will do what I need to do, so when it is time to go, I will go.

Jordan is saying it is important to be given permission to look after an injury through marking the movement and to feel trusted by a rehearsal director to do what he needs to do. Building on this, Jordan stated that marking allows him to “manifest the essence of what the movement is”, and this fosters “the longevity of what you are being asked to do”. Marking in dance is understood as being significant towards dancers managing their bodies and also provides a beneficial learning tool (see 3.3.2). Jordan's need to feel trusted in this situation is also important to recognise as this can allow Jordan to be responsible and accountable for his

wellbeing, giving him control and promoting agency towards his health (Acton & Malathum, 2000).

Connecting to another participant's perspective, Brendon discussed that as a dancer he felt accountable for other dancers' wellbeing and suggested he needs space to do this. Brendon noted, "you have to be able to take care of yourself first and then you can take care of others", because as a dancer "you are working intimately ... you are taking care of other people's bodies". Brendon might be suggesting when he is able to sustain his own wellbeing, he can also look after his peers (Murgia, 2013). From a dance partnering perspective, this may mean that a fatigued or injured dancer may compromise the safety and care of other dancers whilst in contact (Murgia, 2013). When Brendon is given space to take care of himself his agency towards taking care of other's wellbeing can also be promoted (Murgia, 2013). As well as wanting space to take care of themselves, the dancers interviewed expressed the importance for rehearsal directors to show support and care for their wellbeing. A dancer-centred practice can be considered important through the research participants wanting rehearsal directors to care for their wellbeing.

### 5.2.3 *"There is that fine line of needing help": Rehearsal directors support and care*

An important factor within a dancer-centred approach is how a rehearsal director can instigate an environment that is supportive and how they can care for the dancers' wellbeing (Knox, 2013). This section explores how the research participants suggested they want support and care from rehearsal directors. Jordan expressed that when he is injured he needs support and concern over his physical wellbeing:

There is that fine line of needing help, and not needing to be coddled, but needing some feedback ... an outside eye about what [can be done] to stop the injury.

Jordan's experience might indicate that there is a balance in negotiating injuries, where he needs space but also he needs external feedback to help him understand his injury and how to manage it. Jordan does not just want to be left to his own devices, but he wants some support (Blevins, Erskine, Hopper, & Moyle, 2020). Continuing on, Jordan expressed that,

When [the rehearsal director] doesn't seem to care, ... the thought of you taking care of your body seems insubordinate; it seems that you are being defiant even though you ... are just trying to [get to] the finish line.

Jordan is describing that a lack of care from the rehearsal director can create a feeling that he is disobeying even though he is focused on sustaining himself in order to do his job. Jordan may feel that when he is being judged by a rehearsal director, he is less permitted to take care of his body. Attaching Mary's statement proposes a lack of care from rehearsal directors can compromise her motivation. Mary expressed that when a rehearsal director does not care "that you are tired" she feels "an urge of resistance towards [the rehearsal director]". Considering that supportive behaviour can result in dancers feeling they are intrinsically motivated to continue (Quested & Duda, 2011), Mary's statement indicates that feeling limited care and concern from a rehearsal director can demotivate dancers and can create tension in the rehearsal director-dancer relationship.

In describing how he wants support, Brendon expresses it is important for rehearsal directors "to listen and ask ... how the [dancers] bodies are". Through gaining an understanding of how the dancers are feeling, a rehearsal director can use this information to determine how they plan the rehearsal, and this can show care for the dancers' wellbeing (James, 2006). Connecting to this idea, Jordan expressed as a rehearsal director it is important to acknowledge when "the dancers are not able to complete the task ... [and] to understand the physical output". Jordan noted: "that is respect and care". Similarly, Mary also noted she wants "exhaustion to be recognised" which may refer to an empathetic understanding and aligning with a dancer-centred approach as the needs of the dancers may be considered to be significant (see 3.3.2).

The research participants expressed a need for rest breaks as well as freedom and permission to take care of themselves, but also suggest they want to feel supported and cared for. The dancers acknowledge they are in a space that is managed by a rehearsal director, and the freedom they desire is controlled and allowed to happen due to this existing relationship which can present the complexity of the rehearsal environment (James, 2006; Knox, 2013). This leads into the following section which will unpack instances where the dancers perceived a rehearsal director to either show care and concern for their wellbeing or when they perceived limited care and concern, and how this impacted their agency towards self-actualisation.

### 5.3 Care and concern, rehearsal directors and wellbeing

This section amalgamates the two ideas of what dancers need to sustain their wellbeing and what they consider the role of a rehearsal director in relation to these needs is, in order to investigate how rehearsal directors might impact dancers' personal wellbeing. The research seeks to unpack

participants' rehearsal experiences by asking the key research question: *How are dancers' needs in rehearsal affected by a rehearsal director?*

This section is broken into two subsections. The first subsection provides one participant example, highlighting perspectives of rehearsal directors showing care and concern for dancers' personal wellbeing. This example proposes that when rehearsal directors recognise dancers' fatigue and adapt rehearsal plans to cater to dancers' needs, dancers can sustain endurance, and that this promotes a relationship of reciprocal trust and respect. The second subsection unpacks two instances where the dancers perceived limited care from rehearsal directors towards their wellbeing. The first example provides a discussion into how a limited concern for dancers' bodies can result in dancers feeling they are not trusted. The second example presents how rehearsal directors' limited care and empathy can impact dancers' psychological wellbeing.

### 5.3.1 *“Just take it as you need”*: Dancer experiences of care and concern from rehearsal directors

Mary shared an experience where she perceived the rehearsal director to show care and concern for her personal wellbeing in rehearsal. In this instance, Mary identified that the rehearsal director noticed the dancers “were really tired” from repeating “the same phrase over and over again”. The rehearsal director expressed they were sorry and allowed the dancers to have an extended break. When returning to the studio the rehearsal director adjusted the plan referring to use it as a “brain mark” saying “just take it as you need”. It might be proposed that by adjusting the rehearsal plan the rehearsal director considered the needs of the dancers and supported their wellbeing. The rehearsal director might have provided an opportunity for Mary to re-energise during a rest break and an opportunity for a somatic and reflective practice through suggesting a ‘brain mark’ (Batson & Schwartz, 2007; Green, 2002). It might be significant to note that the rehearsal director informed the dancers of the adjusted plan, and then gave them permission to take ownership of how they work. Being informed and having a sense of co-ownership of the work environment and authority over an individual's body might empower and encourage the dancer as an expert of their own body (see 3.3.2). Therefore, in this situation the rehearsal director's impact on Mary might allow space for reflective practice and allow Mary to modulate her effort, sustain her endurance with more efficiency, and allow “a deeper sense of commitment to her dancing” (Batson & Schwartz, 2007, p. 51). This might mean Mary feels she can pace herself in order to sustain her endurance and initiate how to approach the rehearsal in a way that works best for her.

It could be understood the rehearsal director is presenting an empathetic understanding (see 3.3.2) through reducing the demand and physical strain, allowing dancers “to act more effectively and with more personal satisfaction” (Knox, 2013, p. 32). In reflecting on this specific experience, Mary expressed the rehearsal director allowed her to work at a “more manageable pace” and “not at a high level of body stress”, which made her “really appreciate [the] recognition and respect [and felt] more willing to keep ... respecting [the rehearsal director]”. Mary might be suggesting that when the rehearsal director shows care and concern for her wellbeing this promotes a sense of reciprocal respect within the rehearsal director - dancer relationship (Knox, 2013). In considering the connection between given responsibility and promotion of trust in work environments (Clouder, 2009), it can be proposed Mary was given authority over her wellbeing, and this allowed her to feel a sense that the rehearsal director trusts her to look after her body in order to perform at her best. This experience may suggest Mary’s trust in the rehearsal director is promoted as she may feel they have her best interests in mind.

This example might be considered to have allowed Mary to decide how to manage her fatigue and be understood as a way rehearsal directors might enhance a reciprocal feeling of trust in their relationship with dancers (James, 2006; Knox, 2013). Mary’s experience has led me to question how rehearsal directors might impact dancers when they show limited care and concern for dancers’ wellbeing. To further present the complexity of the rehearsal director - dancer relationship, the following section unpacks stories where dancers perceived their wellbeing to be compromised.

### *5.3.2 “There was no time for questions, just do it again”: Dancers experiences of limited care for their wellbeing from rehearsal directors*

This section discusses potentially problematic experiences where the dancers perceived there was a lack of care and concern from rehearsal directors towards their wellbeing in rehearsals. These experiences present a discussion how not feeling cared for can not only compromise a dancer’s physical wellbeing but also make them feel disrespected, not trusted, stressed, and anxious. Mary spoke about a rehearsal experience in preparation for a tour where the dancers were “running each piece everyday”. During this particular rehearsal, the rehearsal director and the artistic director were watching the dancers run a “highly demanding ... high impact 8 minutes of non-stop jumping”. Mary remembers being physically exhausted:

My whole legs were just shot; it was one of those weeks where your thighs, calves, achilles were so tired. A lot of us were marking this section ... [because] our bodies were

screwed. And I remember [the rehearsal director] yelling “do it properly, you need to do it full out”.

In response to the dancers’ conscious decision to mark a section of the dance, the rehearsal director demands the dancers perform “full out”. Yelling “full out” might mean there is an expectation that the dancers perform at one hundred percent effort. This can propose limited care for the dancers’ wellbeing (Knox, 2013). This leads me to pose the question: What is the rehearsal director valuing in this moment, the needs of the dancers or the needs of the work? Mary’s choice to look after her body and her power to do this may have been taken away when she was instructed to do it properly (Smith, 1998). In reflecting on this experience Mary expressed:

I remember the feeling of is she serious? That is such an uninformed decision. [There was no] trust that we have made a decision on what level of energy exertion we are going to put in. It is ... about [the rehearsal director] having faith in us, especially when you have been dancing for them for long enough.

Although Mary felt she had built a relationship with the rehearsal director by working with them for a period of time, the lack of care might have resulted in her feeling disrespected and not trusted to make a decision regarding her body. It might be significant to note the presence of the artistic director in Mary’s experience, and it might be argued that several complexities may arise for rehearsal directors when an artistic director is present in rehearsals. The presence of the artistic director might have made the rehearsal director feel they need to be tougher on the dancers or show they have high expectations to prove they are doing a good job of remounting the repertoire. I draw on literature discussing mentoring teachers’ relationships with student teachers to make sense of this situation. It is understood that power in the mentor - student teacher relationship can exist, and this may control student teachers’ behaviours and encourage them to conform to what the mentoring teacher wants (Jones, 2000; Meyer, Louw, & Ernstzen, 2019). It might be argued this could be similar in Mary’s experience as the presence of the artistic director may have contributed to the behaviour of the rehearsal director. From my own experience, I have witnessed rehearsal directors change their behaviour when a choreographer or artistic director is present during a rehearsal. In a company environment this might be because the artistic director may oversee the rehearsal to ensure the work is at a high standard (James, 2006; Wyon, 2010). Therefore, the rehearsal director might need to feel the artistic director trusts them to do their job and to keep the integrity of the choreography (James, 2006). Further exploration into the rehearsal director - artistic director or choreographer relationship may extend discussion on the complex position a rehearsal director may inhabit. This may also present further complexities towards the rehearsal director - dancer relationship, however due to the word count of my thesis, this falls outside of the scope of my study.

A rehearsal director's management and facilitation of the rehearsal environment can also impact upon the dancers' psychological wellbeing. Jordan recalled a rehearsal process that "was very quick", and he felt the rehearsal director did not allow "enough time" to learn the steps which resulted in him feeling "panicked". In reflecting on the experience Jordan recalled:

It was very overwhelming, [and] was not acknowledged that it was overwhelming. [I said] "I just need a moment" and the rehearsal director said "again" .... There was no time for questions, just do it again. [The rehearsal director was] intense, standing up in front of me. It felt like this compressed environment, ... the pressure of feeling like why is it taking you so long. My body hadn't worked it out ... so I was very flustered; I was very panicked.

In this example Jordan perceived he is instructed to do the choreography repetitively without feedback or time to clarify movements, which may suggest the rehearsal director is expecting unquestioned adherence (McEwen, & Young, 2011). This may indicate Jordan's somatic awareness and physical autonomy are compromised in Jordan's "overwhelmed" state. Jordan might perceive a lack of empathy from the rehearsal director towards his "flustered" state through a lack of acknowledgement and limited care for what he needs to achieve in the choreography. Additionally, Jordan's perception of the rehearsal director's "intense" nature and demand for repetition may have "instilled fear, obedience and submission" (Rowe, Xiong, & Tuomeiciren, 2020, p. 5) in Jordan, resulting in him feeling stressed and panicked. Jordan's psychological stress may be evidenced through feeling overwhelmed, panicked, and flustered, and this can be related to Jared who spoke about how tense environments compromise his emotional state (see 6.1.3).

Both Mary and Jordan's experiences have presented possibilities of rehearsal directors behaving in a way that conforms to a dance ethic or specific sociocultural factors that might be found within dance environments and considered risk factors for increased stress in dancers (Blevins, Erskine, Hopper, & Moyle, 2020). These factors align with dance scholarship discussing power in relation to the rehearsal direction of dancers involving didactic instruction, control, personal criticism, and emotional stress (Aujla, Nordin-Bates, & Redding, 2014; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Green, 2003; Knox, 2013). It can therefore be important for dancers to identify coping strategies for stress in dance workplaces (Blevins, Erskine, Hopper, & Moyle, 2020). However, my study highlights that support from a rehearsal director can help manage this.

## 5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored how the research participants value their wellbeing and how they desire to sustain themselves in a rehearsal (Acton & Malathaum, 2000; Hopper et al., 2020; Russell, 2013). Further complexities in the rehearsal director - dancer relationship were revealed where the dancers recognised the importance of achieving the repertoire but also desired for their wellbeing to be recognised and supported. In unpacking dancers' experiences, I developed an argument around how care and concern can increase dancers' motivation and sustainability in rehearsals and might enhance the rehearsal director - dancer relationship catering to dancer needs. This chapter has also led to questions around how a rehearsal director's relationship with artistic directors and choreographers may impact their facilitation of the rehearsal process, and how these relationships can also contribute to how rehearsal directors treat dancers. Additional research might extend this idea to further add to dance literature discussing the role and expectations of a rehearsal director.

In aligning with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs pyramid, the following section will discuss dancers' concerns for their belonging and self-esteem needs. Jordan articulated his personal wellbeing as a dancer was "very important" and played a "crucial" role in being able "to build that positive relationship with yourself". Jordan might be acknowledging the connection that his personal wellbeing has on his self-esteem (Ivtzan et al., 2013). The following section endeavours to unpack this positive connection that Jordan has identified through investigating dancers' needs for belonging and self-esteem in rehearsals and the impact of a rehearsal director.

## **Chapter 6. Discussion: Belonging, Self-esteem needs, and Rehearsal directors**

Interlacing the personal and the social to the rehearsal environment, this chapter investigates the importance of the research participants' experiences of belonging and self-esteem. The need for belonging through relationships, and acceptance, and the need for esteem encompassing self-respect, achievement, confidence, and responsibility are discussed (Maslow, 1962). The chapter will first discuss the research participants' needs towards belonging and esteem and how they value these in rehearsals. The second section provides a discussion on how dancers consider the role of the rehearsal director in relation to these needs. The participants present the significance of rehearsal directors managing relationships and the importance of constructive and supportive feedback in rehearsals. The final two sections unpack dancers' experiences where they perceived rehearsal directors to impact their need for belonging through fostering or limiting a feeling of acceptance, and impacting their self-esteem through receiving supportive or unsupportive feedback.

### **6.1 Belonging and self-esteem in rehearsal contexts**

The dancers interviewed understood the social nature of a rehearsal environment and spoke of the importance of feeling a sense of belonging and of maintaining their self-esteem. This section serves as a means to understand the factors involved for dancers to sustain a sense of belonging and self-esteem within the rehearsal process. The following subsections will discuss dancers' needs towards establishing positive work relationships, to feel they are accepted and that they belong within a community and to maintain their confidence in rehearsal contexts.

#### *6.1.1 "You need that real honest interaction": Dancers' perceptions of positive work relationships in rehearsal contexts*

The dancers interviewed for this study expressed the importance of their relationships with other dancers and with rehearsal directors within a rehearsal environment. Mary acknowledged relationships are important because dance is "an interaction, [it is] social" and "you need that real honest interaction ... [and] mutual respect". By referring to "honest interaction" and "mutual respect" Mary might be discussing how a genuine dialogue can build a feeling of relationship and when respect goes both ways this allows individuals to feel more comfortable (Cosgrave, 2020). Connecting to another participant's need for positive relationships, Brendon described wanting "a connection that is open dialogue with no animosity". By referring to an "open connection" Brendon might want a

reciprocal sense of honesty in his relationships in the rehearsal environment. As a result of maintaining these desirable connections, Brendon described this allows him to be “vulnerable” and feels he is “not inhibited” in rehearsals. Understanding Brendon’s feeling through the lens of Maslow (1962), it may be that the feeling of close relationship “makes possible the security from which experimentation and creativity can occur” (p. 148). Additionally, interactions with others can impact an individual’s ability to access factors required within rehearsals, such as the ability to be vulnerable, to take ownership, to take risks, and make decisions (Aujla & Farrer, 2015, Cosgrave, 2020).

Jordan also articulated in rehearsals “relationships are very important” and can “help facilitate a good process”. This might mean Jordan values positive work relationships, and these relationships can be significant for the process of remounting the repertoire and also for Jordan’s personal satisfaction (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). Building on why these relationships might be important, Annie suggested “it’s a special relationship dancers have with each other, because we are so close on many levels”. This may connect to Brendon’s statement that when working as a dancer “there is literally no ... boundaries between us ... we physically touch and are sweating on each other”.

Annie and Brendon’s statements may be describing that positive working relationships can be important for dancers as they feel a sense of responsibility for each other’s bodies, and this may also need a level of trust (Knox, 2013). Therefore, it might be argued that rehearsal environments can fill a part of the dancers’ social needs and can foster close personal and professional relationships (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). Additionally, building positive relationships in the workplace can lead to feelings of security and stability and can be considered to contribute towards a feeling of belonging and self-actualisation (see 3.3.3). The following section discusses that building positive work relationships might result in a cohesive feeling of community and discusses the value dancers place on feeling accepted and a feeling of belonging in rehearsals.

### *6.1.2 “All about the people and community”: Dancers perceptions of acceptance, belonging and community in rehearsal contexts*

This section presents the dancer’s need to feel belonging and acceptance in rehearsal. Speaking with the dancers, there was a sense that to feel part of the group can be an important factor to building positive rehearsal experiences. This is illustrated by Annie who expressed dancing “is all about the people and community, those are things I love”. Being part of a community might be an important means for Annie to feel a sense of belonging and can provide motivation towards feelings of security, connection, and safety (see 3.3.3). As a dancer Jordan acknowledged, “shared experience, connection

... is really important”, and that this can “build a bond” which “is the difference of what makes community versus people in a group”. Jordan might be describing how experiencing the rehearsal process together can create a connection that can result in feelings of belonging to a cohesive collective (see 3.3.3) and “being an important part of a worthwhile whole” (Maslow, 1962, p. 148). Building on this, Jordan expressed this “bond” allows “the choreography [to] become heightened [because] the collective is gelling”. Jordan might be proposing how the sense of community can enhance the dance work. This might be because work environments that foster interconnectedness and enable individuals to express their ‘whole’ self are understood to enhance performance (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Dutton & Ragins, 2017). Additionally, Jordan expresses a sense of “belonging [and] respect [can] feed exploration and discovery”, suggesting a feeling of community might also promote growth and opportunities to fulfil his potential. Resulting from feeling accepted and a sense of belonging in a rehearsal process Jordan feels “trusted, ... cared for, looked after - all those positive feelings that go beyond the work that you are doing”. Jordan might be alluding that acceptance and belonging in the rehearsal process can serve as a meaningful factor for his personal satisfaction and self-actualisation.

It has been proposed by Knox (2013) that perhaps the approach within the dance-making process might be more important for dancers than the actual dance itself. Jordan noted a similar idea within the rehearsal process:

In a sense the choreography doesn’t have to be everything, ... I think it is more so ... the comradery and the relationships that you are building in the midst of the process with the dancers and the director.

For Jordan the meaningful connections and the group dynamic could serve as a more important aspect of the rehearsal process than the choreography that is being remounted. Jordan’s feeling of “comradery” might result from a “feeling of unity or oneness, a feeling of sharing a common fate, or of striving for a common goal” (Maslow, 1962, p. 52). This leads me to question whether how rehearsal directors facilitate a rehearsal process might be equally or more important than the actual dance work itself for dancers’ self-actualisation (Knox, 2013). Further questions around how it may be more difficult to develop a feeling of community within independent or freelance processes where dancers can be more transient (Cosgrave, 2020) comparative to a company environment where dancers and a rehearsal director may be more familiar with each other, might also be considered. This may also become complex when new dancers are employed and it might be considered to take time to build the group culture (see 3.3.3). Further research may be required to delve deeper into what embeds the dancer into the ‘culture’ of a rehearsal process and this may extend upon the rehearsal director - dancer relationship.

Building positive work relationships and creating a sense of community within rehearsals might be considered to promote feelings of being understood and appreciated, and this can connect to a dancer's need for self-esteem (see 3.3.3). The following section will present how dancers value feeling confident and how they want to maintain their self-esteem and self-acceptance in a rehearsal context.

### *6.1.3 "I don't have the most positive approach to my body": Dancers perceptions of confidence and self-esteem*

This section discusses how the dancers interviewed want to feel confident in rehearsals. Mary expressed, "I love dancing, but when [dancing] makes you feel [bad] then you don't want to do it", and she acknowledged she wants "to feel confident". Mary may be suggesting when dancing hinders her self-confidence this can demotivate her and decreases her passion for movement. Connecting to another participant, Natasha expressed the need to "feel capable" in rehearsals. This may propose Natasha wants to feel competent and experience achievement which can promote 'optimal experiences' and is also understood to increase a dancer's motivation (see 3.3.3). Building on a feeling of capability, Jordan expressed he wants to feel "like all the years of training ... has fuelled you" and desires the sense that he's "killing it" and can "feel accomplished". Jordan's sense of "killing it" can be considered a 'optimal experience' through feeling a sense of mastery and 'living fully' (Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1962) says that to achieve these incidences an individual needs "underlying confidence in themselves" (p. 32), which leads me to consider, how dancers who have high personal expectations and may be privy to harsh self-criticism might be easily impacted by a rehearsal director in rehearsals.

The dancers interviewed spoke about having high expectations of themselves and having intrinsic needs to "look good" (Mary). Brendon recognises a focus on the look of his body by expressing, "I don't have the most positive approach to my body, we are our own worst critics .... I always want abs or to look [a certain] way". Natasha related to this saying "lots of our conditioning as dancers, especially if you go through a balletic paradigm –you are getting trained that the exterior is the thing you are being judged on". Natasha may be referring to how ballet training can result in dancers developing dominant ideas and beliefs about the way their bodies should look. This may arise from dancers being required to wear tight clothing and to spend long periods of time in front of mirrors providing constant monitoring of their bodies (Buckroyd, 2001; Pickard, 2012). These high expectations as well as a dancer's perfectionist tendencies may compromise self-esteem (see 3.3.3).

This section has discussed how dancers value positive work relationships and how this allows a feeling of vulnerability and can promote personal satisfaction in the rehearsal room. The dancers discussed how building close bonds can foster a feeling of acceptance and belonging to a community which can enhance the repertoire they are dancing and promote professional development. Jordan noted a feeling of belonging and acceptance as more important for his personal satisfaction than the choreography. The dancers also discussed the significance of maintaining self-esteem in rehearsal processes. This leads to the following question: How can rehearsal directors facilitate an environment that fosters a community culture where dancers feel self-confident? The following section will unpack how dancers desire their needs for belonging and self-esteem to be considered by a rehearsal director.

## 6.2 Rehearsal direction, belonging, and self-esteem

The dancers interviewed understood that rehearsals are controlled environments and acknowledged rehearsal directors to facilitate and manage the environment. This section discusses how the dancers consider the role of the rehearsal director to impact their needs for belonging and self-esteem. The first subsection presents how dancers understand their relationships in rehearsal contexts can be impacted by a rehearsal director. The second subsection discusses how dancers desire constructive feedback and affirmations and how this can manage their self-esteem.

### 6.2.1 *“Managing [the relationships], that is massive”*: Nurturing positive workplace relationships in rehearsal

This section explores dancers' experiences of inter-personal relationship building within dance rehearsals. Annie noted:

Managing [the relationships], that is massive, to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Annie suggested an important part of the rehearsal director's role is managing the relationships in rehearsal and may include ensuring everyone is interacting well (see 3.3.3). Connecting to another participant view, Jared suggested how these relationships and the ‘climate’ of the rehearsal room are managed by a rehearsal director. He noted:

The rehearsal director sets up the environment, even without people saying these are the rules they set up the general vibe and how people can be.

Jared identified ‘unsaid’ rules where a rehearsal director is the leader in the rehearsal room and proposes that this can determine how he feels he can behave. Jared might be suggesting the rehearsal director can inhabit a similar position of a choreographer in the sense that they set up the protocols and can be in charge of negotiating the relationships and group dynamics within the rehearsal process (see 3.3.3). It could be considered somewhat problematic when a rehearsal director sets up the vibe that determines the behaviour of the dancers without allowing a sense of freedom. Maslow (1962) acknowledges individuals need opportunities to interact with others, and this can foster a democratic environment. Building on this, Jared expressed when there is an ease in rehearsals “there is more room for people to just naturally talk and communicate”, but when there is tension this “can trickle down and cause tension amongst all the dancers”. Open communication and having agency to behave in a natural way may enhance positive work relationships (Dutton & Ragins, 2017). Additionally, Jared might be wanting a democratic rehearsal environment that is “inclusive, open, non-hierarchical, non-judgmental and socially responsive and responsible” (East, 2016, p. 171) in order to encourage social relationships (East, 2016). It is possible that within a democratic environment Jared could become less fearful and more open-minded, thus feeding self-confidence and self-esteem (see 3.3.3). A democratic environment may require a sense of individual freedom and participation of members on equal terms (East, 2016) which leads me to question, how a rehearsal director might relate to dancers in a way that takes care of their confidence and self-esteem. The dancers’ ideas around how they desire feedback and affirmations to foster a sense of self-esteem are presented in the following subsection.

#### *6.2.2 “Having someone say ‘good job’ just does wonders for you”: Constructive feedback and positive affirmations in rehearsal*

Considering that a dance rehearsal is a facilitated event (Butterworth, 2012; Green, 2001; Knox, 2013; Tinius, 2017), the research participants discussed needing constructive feedback and support in order to maintain their self-esteem. Annie articulated that to feel confident she needs a “strong leader on the outside ... [to] give you feedback”. Additionally, Annie noted it is important to “continually have ... conversation” with a rehearsal director because “sometimes [rehearsal directors] don’t actually see what’s going on for the dancers”. Annie might want open dialogue in order to share what she is experiencing and embodying in the work and might desire an empathic understanding from the rehearsal director (see 3.3.3). This might be understood to allow the rehearsal director to understand

what is going on inside the dance from the dancer's viewpoint rather than relying on the rehearsal director's external perspective, promoting a bi-directional sense of feedback (see 3.3.3).

The dancers interviewed also desired positive affirmations and validation. Mary described that “when the rehearsal director is mindful of every now and then giving you something positive to boost you up” this reminds her that she is “not [terrible but] just getting things [she] needs to work on”. Mary might have referred to how being a dancer means she can be privy to almost constant feedback and sometimes she needs this to be about something positive that she has achieved (see 3.3.3). Similarly, Jordan expressed “having someone say, ‘good job’ just does wonders for you”, suggesting the significance of affirmations and validation from rehearsal directors and also suggesting dancers want to know when they are performing well (see 3.3.3).

Mary describes she feels “good ... when [the work] has been rehearsed to the level it needs to be”. Within Mary's statement there might be a sense of dependence upon being rehearsed and her performance evaluated (Eusanio, Thomson, & Jaque, 2014) in order for her to feel good. Considering dance feedback and evaluation have the possibility to either foster or diminish a dancers' self-esteem and self-image (Ang, 2019; Rowe, Xiong, & Tuomeiciren, 2020), it might be possible that the delivery of feedback is also an important aspect in how rehearsal directors communicate with dancers. The dancers interviewed understood that receiving feedback is important but desired it to be expressed in certain ways. Building on why the delivery of feedback is significant, Brendon expressed that sometimes you get told that you are terrible all the time, “that it gets normalised” and this can result in a “diminished ... appreciation of yourself”. Brendon might be expressing when negative feedback is given constantly, this can undermine his sense of self and his self-esteem (Eusanio, Thomson, & Jaque, 2014). Considering an individual's esteem needs “are dictated by the people they are in contact with, as well as by themselves” (Heylighen, 1992, p. 41), highlights the importance of rehearsal directors delivering feedback in a supportive and constructive approach as well as providing dancers with affirmations and validation that they are performing well.

This section has presented dancers needs for validation and constructive feedback from rehearsal directors. The dancers presented ideas around desiring a sense of bi-directional feedback through open dialogue and how being validated in rehearsals can maintain their sense of self-esteem (Knox, 2013). Validation may generate optimal experiences for dancers because they are being acknowledged for their demonstrated skill (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Additionally, the dancers presented the significance that the way feedback is communicated can also impact their self-view. This research may build on literature looking at how to effectively manage dancers' concerns and implications of perfectionist tendencies through discussing the dancers' desires for validation in rehearsal (see 3.3.3).

To develop the argument that belonging and esteem needs are significant for dancers, the following sections unpack instances where the research participants perceived a rehearsal director to impact their sense of belonging and self-esteem in rehearsal contexts.

### 6.3 Rehearsal directors, personal acceptance, and building community

This section unpacks instances where the dancers perceived rehearsal directors to facilitate a rehearsal environment of acceptance and community and when they felt the rehearsal director compromised these needs. This section firstly discusses how acceptance and community are promoted through the lens of inclusion. Secondly, the section unpacks an experience where Jordan perceived a rehearsal director preventing the dancers from building relationships, and looks at the impact of dancer ostracization in the rehearsal process. The impact and the significance of dancers feeling an important part of the group in rehearsal contexts is discussed and ideas extending the rehearsal director - dancer relationship are presented.

#### 6.3.1 *“Lots of jokes that everyone held in the group”*: Rehearsal directors promote acceptance and community in rehearsals

This section unpacks Natasha’s experience where she perceived the rehearsal director to foster a sense of acceptance and community in a rehearsal process. Natasha described how the rehearsal director implemented “fun stuff [during] rehearsal to [encourage a] community vibe”. This included “sweet treat Friday” where the rehearsal director would “bring in lots of sweet treats ... every Friday morning tea”. Natasha described the vibe in rehearsals as “quite fun, ... lots of jokes that everyone held in the group”. Building on this, Natasha noted the group “was very tight knit”. It might be considered the rehearsal director is promoting a culture where the dancers feel they belong through creating a “community” atmosphere (see 3.3.3). Facilitating a fun group activity on a Friday may allow the dancers and the rehearsal director an opportunity to deconstruct traditional power relationships typical in dance environments (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). It might be argued this can allow the dancers to feel an ease and comfortability in working with the rehearsal director and might promote a positive working connection and relationship (see 3.3.3). It might be identified how de-centring traditional hierarchy in a rehearsal process may encourage dancers’ agency towards self-actualisation (see 3.3). In further discussing this process, Natasha perceived the rehearsal director to be “quite community minded” and had “a very personal way of interacting with performers”. Natasha described the way the rehearsal process was facilitated was “one that seems to empower the people in the room to act as themselves”. Natasha might be describing how the sense of togetherness encouraged her to

maintain her individuality, and this may have allowed her to also feel valued (see 3.3.3). This can be evident as Natasha expressed she felt “a sense of acceptance and ... no judgement”. Through the lens of self-actualisation, the rehearsal director's facilitation of the environment may have enabled “an atmosphere where people are important” (Maslow, 1962, p. 124) and can be considered to have enhanced Natasha’s experience.

In continuing to describe this experience, Natasha noted the rehearsal director was “quite hands off; ... she is open to people doing the job that they need to do” and described that the environment encouraged “a feeling of responsibility toward being with the team ... not letting [each other] down”. From this I gained a sense that Natasha perceived the rehearsal director to foster collective responsibility and freedom for the dancers to work on their own and to do what they need to get the job done. The notion of collaboration inside the working environment might have allowed co-ownership and personal involvement within rehearsals and may have promoted healthy working relationships and encouraged a rich feeling of belonging (see 3.3.3). Additionally, when given sufficient responsibility individuals “may have the feeling that people really count on him” (Maslow, 1962, p. 148). Being given responsibility can promote inclusion by individuals feeling their contribution is valued and acknowledged by others (see 3.3.3). It could be argued that feeling an important part of the group might foster feelings of solidarity and significance and may provide intrinsic motivation for Natasha to work at her best in order to feel her contribution to the group is meaningful (see 3.3.3).

Summarising the experience, Natasha described this process as “one of the most positive” she experienced in her career. It could be identified that the amalgamation of a fun group environment and individual freedom promotes group responsibility, might enhance dancers' relationships with other dancers as well as the rehearsal director and may have created a positive experience. Natasha’s example can propose that the community feeling in rehearsal allows dancers to feel important as well as provide a feeling of motivation. It may also enhance the rehearsal director - dancer relationship. It might also be argued that this feeling of being responsible towards the group can also encourage development and high-quality work as Natasha feels accountable to the community and may provoke optimal performance (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). This leads to the question, how a rehearsal process where a rehearsal director provides limited opportunities for acceptance and community-building can impact dancers' agency. Considering a sense of belonging can be essential for self-actualising experiences (Maslow, 1943) and how relationships and the group climate can be managed by a rehearsal director (see 3.3.3), I unpack instances where the research participants perceived rehearsal directors to facilitate an environment that compromised their feeling of

acceptance and inclusion to present further comprehension to my research question: *How are dancers' needs in a rehearsal process affected by a rehearsal director?*

### 6.3.2 *“The jokes and the laughter seemed superficial”*: Dancers experiences of rehearsal directors limiting acceptance and community

This section unpacks an instance where Jordan perceived the rehearsal director to impact his ability to form relationships and to feel part of the group in a rehearsal process. Jordan's experience is unpacked to reveal complexities of dancers' experiences. In this example Jordan was a newcomer to the company, and the existing dancers were instructed by the rehearsal director to “not be friends” with him. Jordan spoke about how the environment felt like a “factory”. He felt that the other dancers had,

... an underlying [desire] to help, but [they couldn't] because [they are] told not to be your friend. The jokes and laughter seem[ed] superficial. It was really hard, it felt like it was that push and pull to be a human ... or to be a dancer.

Within this example Jordan perceived the rehearsal director to ostracise him through instructing the other dancers to not be friends. The control the rehearsal director might be exhibiting compromised Jordan's agency to form relationships with other dancers, as well as his ability to feel a sense of belonging within rehearsal. The rehearsal director could be holding the power in the environment through implementing “rules and regulations” (Maslow, 1962, p. 146) and might present a “rigid control” (Maslow, 1962, p. 144) over instructing how the dancers relate to one other. Jordan's statement, “to be a human ... or to be a dancer” may also highlight an absence of a holistic environment or dancer-centred approach (see 3.3.3) as Jordan perceives his role as a dancer is separate from who he is as a human. Practices of exclusion through socially isolating dancers has been rationalised within dance “as important for sustaining excellence in the art form ... or as simply a continuation” (Rowe & Xiong, 2020, p. 2) of the entrenched artistic attitudes of dance (Buckroyd, 2001). Considering the implications of exclusion proposes an absence of “emphasizing and appreciating the worth and contribution of each individual” (Maslow, 1962, p. 126). Hence, resulting in the individual feeling their contributions, meanings, and feelings are unvalued, restricting exploration and limiting trust in the individuals' own ideas.

Continuing on, Jordan expressed the environment was “stark and uncaring”, which made him question “am I important?” He spoke of needing,

... some interaction [with] people ... [but] I was left to my own devices. You don't feel looked after. Which nobody wants to feel, especially in such an expressive environment.

Feeling not cared for or looked after, suggests that relationships in the rehearsal room lack emotional closeness, social support, and a sense of communion, which work at odds with self-actualising pursuits and a dancer-centred approach (see 3.3.3). Being excluded from the group may result in limited feelings of self-fulfilment and “pressures that are repressive to self-actualisation” (Ivtzan et al., 2013, p. 121). Furthermore, without feeling as a part of what is going on, the rehearsal director may have compromised Jordan's personal involvement and his agency for learning to accept others or be accepted by others (Maslow, 1962).

One interpretation of this experience might be that the rehearsal director has compromised Jordan's agency towards positively interacting, sharing, and investing into the group (see 3.3.3). Building a sense of community can benefit both individuals and the work they are dancing (see 3.3.3), and it might be questioned what the rehearsal director's agenda was in this situation. Dancer ostracization can be present in dance environments where an authoritarian culture might exist (Lakes, 2005). The rehearsal director's reasoning for excluding a new member of the company might be understood as motivation for Jordan to prove his worth to achieve being accepted or initiated into the group (see 3.3.3). Building a sense of community hinges on reciprocal contributions and a sense of mutual benefit (Duchon & Plowman, 2005); therefore, it can be argued the rehearsal director has compromised Jordan's agency towards feeling part of the community.

Jordan felt that the other dancers had “an underlying desire to help”, however the leadership style adopted by the rehearsal director could have instilled fear to maintain conformity to the ‘rules’ of not being friends. Jordan may question his importance as a dancer in rehearsal because he did not feel accepted by the group. This might have an impact on his self-esteem. Belonging and self-esteem are intertwined through “the idea that one learns to trust himself because others trust him” (Maslow, 1962, p. 150). This leads into the following section which investigates how rehearsal directors can impact dancers' self-esteem.

#### 6.4 Rehearsal directors, feedback, and self-esteem

As discussed in the literature, a dancers' self-esteem may be impacted by “subjective evaluations” (Ang, 2019, p. 29) from teachers and directors who can be viewed as “gatekeepers to opportunity and self-esteem” (Stinson, 2016, p. 215). This section intends to unpack this phenomenon by investigating the connection between the rehearsal director's feedback and the effect on dancers' self-esteem. The

first subsection unpacks an experience where Savannah experiences praise in a supportive environment and discusses how this might be understood to impact her self-esteem. Within this section, ideas on how the atmosphere of rehearsal can be significant for a dancer's confidence are presented. The second subsection unpacks two dancer experiences where feedback from rehearsal directors was not constructive and discusses the potential impact on dancers' self-esteem.

#### 6.4.1 *"I felt invincible": Dancers experiences of rehearsal directors' feedback and affirmations*

This section unpacks Savannah's experience of supportive rehearsal director feedback. Savannah recalled after completing a run of the repertoire the feedback from the rehearsal director was "we had done a really good job". In receiving this feedback Savannah felt "really confident" and allowed her to "think really positively about the work done". In describing the atmosphere of the room Savannah recalled:

Although it was really focused, it was relaxed. It wasn't a stressful environment. [The rehearsal director] wasn't saying anything, [there] was a general sense about the room ... it was really supportive. Knowing the rehearsal director really well [I knew they were] quite happy with [the work]. I felt invincible, ... like I could do anything that day.

The praise received in the "supportive" environment may have resulted in Savannah perceiving a high evaluation from the rehearsal director. Feeling "invincible" could be considered a self-actualising experience (Maslow, 1943) suggesting a sense of enhanced self-esteem. Savannah's experience may suggest that the "general sense about the room" is also an important factor in maintaining dancers' confidence. This instance could be considered a stress-free environment that can allow dancers to feel useful and necessary and can foster risk taking (see 3.3.3). Consequently, Savannah's self-esteem may have positively impacted her self-belief and may have provided opportunities for growth towards fulfilling her potential (see 3.3.3). In contrast, Savannah may accept / rely on the rehearsal director's affirmations to feel good about what she is doing (Chirban & Rowan, 2016). This approach perpetuates the idea of the passive and docile dancer (Green, 2003). Savannah's existing knowledge of and her relationship with the rehearsal director may have led her to feel confident. This prompts me to question whether Savannah's self-esteem could be dependent on how the rehearsal director acts or how the environment is managed.

In the above narrative the rehearsal director may have the "authoritative voice" (Shue & Beck, 2001), that can determine if the dancers did well or not. I question how a more democratic environment may deliver feedback in a way that engages the dancers in a self-reflective and participatory manner and

may be of more benefit to building a dancers self-esteem through a dancer-centred approach (see 3.3.3). Implementation of a dancer-centred practice may foster a sense of self-esteem less reliant on external surveillance that encourages dancers to trust their own opinions and knowledge, leading to dancers making personal discoveries and becoming fully human (see 3.3.3).

In Savannah's experience, how feedback is delivered, as well as the atmosphere of the rehearsal, has an impact on her self-esteem (Ang, 2019; Rowe, Xiong, & Tuomeiciren, 2020). Savannah's story presents possible complexities in the rehearsal director - dancer relationship where dancers' existing knowledge and relationships with rehearsal directors can impact dancers' self-confidence in a rehearsal process. This raises the question, if positive feedback results in a dancer feeling good about themselves, what is the result from perceived negative feedback? The following section will discuss the impact of negative feedback on dancers' self-esteem.

#### 6.4.2 *“Being compared made me feel shit about myself”*: Impacts of problematic feedback in rehearsals

This section investigates how rehearsal directors may compromise a dancer's sense of self-esteem and might impact their journey to become self-actualised. Mary's experience is unpacked to provide a discussion of how comparative and unconstructive feedback can impact dancers' self-esteem (Lakes, 2005) and argues that compromised self-esteem can lead to a lack of dancer motivation (Chirban & Rowan, 2016), promoting stress and anxiety within rehearsal.

The dancers shared stories that were difficult to hear, although not too dissimilar to my own experiences throughout my career. The dancers interviewed described some feedback they received in rehearsals would “normalise to some degree how [terrible] you are” (Brendon). This left the dancers feeling “not good enough” (Jordan), “not physically confident” (Natasha), and “shit about myself” (Mary). Brendon recalled the rehearsal director yelling at the dancers saying, “you're shit, what are you doing, are you marking it? ...What is wrong with you?” and Natasha recollected getting “told I was failing” in feedback sessions. Verbal and physical abuse, exclusion of low-achieving dancers, screaming, swearing and insulting, and overworking dancers as punishment are approaches that can be found within authoritarian-led dance environments (Rowe & Xiong, 2020). This behaviour can be rationalised as important to sustain excellence in the art form (Rowe & Xiong, 2020). Natasha said the result of this behaviour was that it “made [her] dancing suffer”, and it is possible that her self-esteem was undermined (see 3.3.3). Two dancers expressed challenging experiences with negative feedback.

Their stories and the resulting personal self-doubt and lack of rehearsal agency resonated with my experiences as a practitioner.

Mary's following rehearsal experience is analysed. In this example the dancers had just finished a run of the work in rehearsal and were "sitting in a circle stretching" during a "notes session" facilitated by the rehearsal director. Mary recalled:

On this day I just got [a lot] of things to fix.... I felt like did I do anything right? ... it was very demeaning. [The rehearsal director said to me] "we have been rehearsing this for three weeks and you still haven't done that [movement] once without wobbling. ... You should be able to do that.... Why can't you do it like [the understudy]". Being compared made me feel shit about myself.... I went home feeling like I am a bad person and worrying about it.... It is amazing how it can really affect what I think about myself.... It was one of those shitty days where [I felt] like quitting, ... all that was in my head was I am a shit dancer, I shouldn't be in this company.

In this experience the rehearsal director is focusing on Mary's inconsistencies and expressing a judgmental evaluation that Mary should be able to achieve the step. This treatment from the rehearsal director might have resulted in a sense of diminished self-esteem and might have reinforced a sense of self-doubt (Lakes, 2005). As Mary stated, it affected the way she felt about herself and made her question her position in the company (see 3.3.3). The rehearsal director's comparative feedback might have caused Mary to feel like she is incompetent and not valued as an individual (see 3.3.3). Additionally, the rehearsal director might have limited room for development and critical thinking in this situation. Pointing out Mary's shortfalls, giving her "a lot of things to fix" and comparing her to another dancer does not foster an environment where Mary can build her confidence (see 3.3.3). I am curious how a more democratic feedback approach may allow Mary and the rehearsal director to work together to problem solve (Zeitner, Rowe, & Jackson, 2015), achieve the step without wobbling, instigate constructive feedback and allow an open dialogue between dancer and rehearsal director (Knox, 2013). A democratic and collegial feedback approach (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013) might allow the rehearsal director to understand why Mary is struggling with the step. It might also develop a self-actualising working relationship that encourages Mary to maintain her self-confidence (see 3.3.3).

The following day coming into rehearsal Mary described having a "horrible feeling of anxiety [and] stress". It is possible that the rehearsal director's feedback resulted in Mary feeling pressure, anxiety, and stress. Mary's agency to achieve the step might be considered to be compromised as competence usually unfolds when individuals feel self-confident and are not stressed (see 3.3.3). The unconstructive and comparative feedback from the rehearsal director may have caused Mary to feel inadequate and might mean the rehearsal director is controlling the way Mary feels about herself

(Lakes, 2005). It is evident in Mary's experience that the rehearsal director's view that she is not competent seems to be taken on by Mary and ingrained in her view of herself.

## 6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed how dancers value their sense of belonging and self-esteem in rehearsal contexts. The dancers interviewed discussed the importance of building positive work relationships (Dutton & Ragins, 2017) due to the intimate nature of their jobs. Building on this, feeling valued and part of a community was revealed to provide personal satisfaction and, as Jordan suggested, can enhance the group's performance. The dancers wanted to maintain their self-esteem in rehearsals (Mary, Brendon, and Jordan) and feel good about themselves (Mary and Brendon), which enhanced motivation and personal development (Mary and Natasha). In recognising these needs, the dancers considered the role of the rehearsal director in fostering relationships, providing generative feedback, and impacting dancer self-esteem (James, 2006).

The dancers' stories revealed further complexities in the rehearsal director - dancer relationship as well as some potentially concerning behaviour from rehearsal directors. The discussion presented how fostering belonging and self-esteem (Cosgrave, 2020; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013) might promote dancer agency and instigate self-actualising experiences. The dancers' narratives presented that when rehearsal directors promote a sense of belonging (James, 2006), a hierarchical dance making structure can be deconstructed in rehearsal (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013) and under the right circumstances horizontal working relationships may foster collective responsibility within the group (Foster-Sproull, 2017). Alternatively, when belonging is not encouraged, dancers can feel they are not valued or cared for and opportunities for self-actualisation can be limited (Knox, 2013). The impact of rehearsal directors' feedback on dancers' self-esteem can promote dancers' confidence (Chirban & Rowan, 2016; Knox, 2013), which raised questions of how a democratic environment might consider delivery of feedback in a way that might be more beneficial to dancers' self-esteem and self-actualisation. Although the dancers' stories may connect with existing literature, they perhaps present how a shift in process can allow dancers' desires to be more aligned with how rehearsal directors facilitate and relate to dancers in rehearsal. Furthermore, this chapter has delved deeper into the complex rehearsal director – dancer relationship and provides space for expansion in this zone.

## Chapter 7. Conclusion

Seven contemporary dancers with professional experience of rehearsal processes participated in this study. Their meanings and understandings of rehearsal processes were explored through a dancer-centred approach and presented complexities within the rehearsal director - dancer relationship. The following sections provide a summary of the research findings, pose additional questions for future research, and present a reflection on my research journey.

### 7.1 Summary of the research

My position as a researcher and a dancer encouraged me to consider how a rehearsal process can be facilitated to cater towards the needs of dancers. This study provides an original contribution into exploring a rehearsal director's role within a professional contemporary dance context and their impact on the self-actualisation of the dancer. The review of literature served as a means to contextualise the study and to highlight further complexities and factors of a rehearsal process that may not be present in recent scholarship. In recognising a gap in the literature on the rehearsal process and impacts of rehearsal direction on dancers' needs, the key theoretical contributions this study provides is an extension of dancer-centredness (Knox, 2013) into the realm of a rehearsal process. My study amalgamates the theoretical framework of dancer-centredness (Knox, 2013) with Maslow's (1943) theories of human needs and self-actualisation. Drawing these theories together proposes an original contribution of extending a dancer-centred paradigm (Knox, 2013) into the realm of rehearsal processes and in this rehearsal context is the first study focusing on dancers needs for self-actualisation, wellbeing, belonging, and self-esteem. A dancer-centred (Knox, 2013) consideration of rehearsal contexts allowed dancers' needs to become the focus of this study which investigated the research question: *How are dancers' needs in a rehearsal processes affected by a rehearsal director?*

My research employed a qualitative and post-positivist methodology, and an ethnographic approach to conduct the study. Methods of gathering data included a literature review and semi-structured interviews. From the analysis of the seven research participants' interviews, a diverse range of meanings and understandings of requirements within rehearsal processes and how these can be impacted by a rehearsal director were uncovered. Further complexities within the rehearsal director - dancer relationship were also presented. Though at times the dancer's narratives and anecdotes may have been similar, none of the dancers presented identical understandings of the rehearsal process and how rehearsal directors might impact their needs. The dancer-centred lens on a rehearsal process specifically focused on themes of dancers needs within self-actualisation, wellbeing, belonging, and

self-esteem. This emerged as pertinent to consider as the dancers communicated their perspectives and experiences within rehearsals. Each of these themes could be delved into with more depth.

## 7.2 Key findings

The discussion and analysis chapters of my research have revealed that dancers perceive rehearsal directors can impact their needs in multiple and diverse ways. Four key findings emerged during the analysis and discussion that attend to the dancers' needs for self-actualisation, wellbeing, belonging, and self-esteem. These findings can be essential for discovering how rehearsal directors can impact dancers' needs in rehearsal as well as present recommendations for future studies.

### 7.2.1 *Rehearsal directors and dancers' self-actualisation*

This study uncovered that dancers need physical and intellectual growth and maturity, a healthy dance practice to access emotional performative states and to express themselves within choreography to feel self-actualised. The dancers recognised the rehearsal director can impact their needs for self-actualisation in multiple ways. They want rehearsal directors to support, motivate and provide encouragement, to give clear feedback and maintain dancers' accountability to the choreography; however, they also want rehearsal directors to allow freedom for individual expression (James, 2006; Knox, 2013). The research participants' stories revealed that when dancers perceive the rehearsal director to trust them, opportunities for dancer self-actualisation are enhanced. This study has identified that trust may be an unspoken factor within rehearsals. Trust can emerge when dancers feel rehearsal directors give them permission to explore on their own, and this can promote professional development and self-actualisation (Knox, 2013). Alternatively, rehearsal directors can compromise dancers' needs for self-actualisation when dancers perceive they are not trusted. Again, this can be unspoken, and a lack of trust can arise when dancers feel they are being judged by rehearsal directors. This judgement may come from rehearsal directors limiting dancers' permission to make choices, speaking to dancers in a condescending way, and micromanaging the rehearsal environment (see Chapter 4).

### 7.2.2 *Rehearsal directors and dancer's wellbeing*

The dancers identified they need to sustain healthy endurance and manage fatigue, to negotiate injuries, and to maintain their psychological wellbeing in rehearsals (Hopper et al., 2020). In

considering the rehearsal directors role in relation to sustaining their wellbeing, the dancers wanted rest breaks and fluctuations of rehearsal intensity, to be given freedom to look after themselves but also wanted support and care from rehearsal directors. A key finding from the dancers' narratives is the acknowledgement that when rehearsal directors care and show concern for dancers' physical and psychological health this not only allows dancers to sustain their wellbeing in rehearsals, but this can enhance the rehearsal director - dancer relationship. This can promote a relationship encompassing mutual respect and trust (Knox, 2013) and can increase dancer motivation in rehearsals. However, this study also revealed rehearsal directors can restrict dancers' agency towards managing their wellbeing when limited care was shown. Potential problematic rehearsal direction approaches presented compromised dancer wellbeing. Mary and Jordan's stories revealed a rehearsal director's lack of care and concern for dancers' wellbeing can result in dancers feeling disrespected, not trusted, and having a sense of decreased motivation (see Chapter 5).

### *7.2.3 Rehearsal directors and dancers' need for belonging*

In considering the dancers' needs for belonging within rehearsals, it was revealed that dancers need positive work relationships, honest interaction, and to feel they are accepted and an important part of the group (Dutton & Raggins, 2017). Dancers in this study understood that these relationships and a sense of belonging can be impacted through how rehearsal directors facilitate the environment. The dancers' stories revealed that when rehearsal directors facilitate an environment where dancers feel a sense of community, a hierarchical dance rehearsal structure can be deconstructed, and this can allow opportunities for horizontal working relationships that can foster collective responsibility (Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013) within the group of dancers and rehearsal director. However, the dancers' stories also presented that rehearsal directors can restrict their need for belonging. This research proposes when a rehearsal director's leadership style is reflective of problematic entrenched artistic attitudes (Buckyord, 2000; Rowe & Xiong, 2020) where dancers are excluded or ostracised, this can result in dancers feeling they are not valued, that they are not cared for, and that their contribution is not appreciated (see Chapter 7).

### *7.2.4 Rehearsal directors and dancers' self-esteem*

The fourth key finding within this study proposes dancers need to feel confident and capable in rehearsals. In acknowledging rehearsals are controlled environments, dancers want rehearsal directors to help manage their self-esteem by providing constructive feedback and positive affirmations. Savannah's story revealed that when rehearsal directors facilitate a supportive environment and

provide dancers with validation, dancers' self-esteem was promoted (see 6.4.1). However, contentions arose of how feeling validated may promote dancers to rely on external feedback and surveillance to feel confident (Chirban & Rowan, 2016). Some of the dancers' experiences uncovered that rehearsal directors can impact a dancer's self-esteem through employing problematic rehearsal approaches that can be found within authoritarian-led dance environments (Rowe & Xiong, 2020). Mary's experience proposed when rehearsal directors deliver feedback that is not constructive, when they focus on dancers' inconsistencies, express judgemental evaluations, and employ comparative feedback, this compromises dancers' self-esteem (see 6.4.2). Additionally, a rehearsal director's judgment can be taken on by dancers inhibiting their self-conception as well as compromising their experience of the choreography they are dancing.

### 7.3 Recommendations for practice, policy, and future research

My study exposes a number of potentialities for practice, policy, and future research. The following paragraphs explore how my research might be contemplated within professional dancer practice, health and safety policies for dancers, and how my research established a platform for further studies.

Questions around dance training arose within the participants' interviews. Aspects of how to access performative states for dancers and how to safely manage accessing personal emotions in rehearsals was questioned by Gary. Julea also questioned how physical training and recovery in dance can be enhanced to cater specifically towards dancers' needs and that rehearsal directors may not implement focused training strategies. Hopper et al. (2020) have suggested that further research in training and wellbeing of dancers is also required to promote dancers' performance. Aspects that emerged through the extension of a dancer-centred approach to rehearsal may be equally useful within education contexts, specifically to pre-professional dance training. In furthering the understandings of what is required of dancers in the professional context and what dancers require to work at their best may provide useful information for the dance classroom and for dance educators.

My research proposes that rehearsal director's leadership and treatment of dancers can affect dancers' needs in rehearsal processes. In response to the findings, this thesis hopes to contribute to how rehearsal directors consider their role within rehearsal practice. The study may be recommended useful for dance companies in preparing and sustaining their rehearsal processes to optimise both the rehearsal directors and the dancer's experiences (Csikzentmahalyi, 2014). My research suggests ways rehearsal directors and dancers may interact and how fostering a democratic environment may support horizontal working relationships to provide dancers with the opportunity for dancer agency, self-actualisation, sustained wellbeing, a sense of belonging and maintained self-esteem. This thesis also

contributes to ideas of what can be regarded as health and safety practices within rehearsal processes and how a rehearsal process can provide a physiologically and psychologically safe environment for dancers (Hopper et al., 2020; Knox, 2013).

In highlighting dancers' needs in a rehearsal process and how dancers want support from a rehearsal director can provide a platform for future research. Further study in this area may inform how rehearsal direction approaches and facilitation of a rehearsal process can enhance rehearsals for both the rehearsal director and the dancer. My research has considered a small slice of dancers' experiences of how rehearsal directors can impact dancers' needs, and therefore many more themes may be present within dancers' voices. Building on Critien and Ollis (2006), further research may respond to the question: How might a comprehensive rehearsal direction guide be created to inform rehearsal practice and to create an environment which can promote the emergence of optimal performance?

By investigating how a rehearsal director might directly impact dancers, my research proposes the need for further investigation regarding the complex role of a rehearsal director navigating between choreographers and / or artistic directors and dancers. This study has opened up the importance of research in the domain of rehearsal direction as there is so much complexity within this role; further research may be needed to delve into more detail of how rehearsal direction functions. The dancers in this study understood the complex position of a rehearsal director and that this can be "a really hard role" (Jared) because "the rehearsal director is the conduit or the mediator between the dancer and the choreographer and vice versa; they are the voice for both" (Johnny). Julea suggested it is "a very specific role to be a rehearsal director". Additionally, I have unpacked rehearsal direction within the zone of contemporary dance, it may be significant to extend investigation into other genres of dance such as classical dance. Of particular note, my research has focused on dancers in rehearsal. In doing so, this has opened important questions as to the viewpoints of rehearsal directors. Future research might therefore investigate rehearsal directors and gather their needs, perspectives, and experiences.

#### 7.4 A final thought

Prior to undertaking this study, within my search in the literature, there seemed to be research discussing dance making processes and investigating relationships between dancers and choreographers, but limited research into the dancer - rehearsal director relationship. I wanted to highlight a rehearsal process as it seems this process may be overlooked within professional dance. It is hoped that my research might present possibilities for rehearsals to be an environment where dancers can develop personally and professionally and also to be an environment beneficial to both

dancers and rehearsal directors. This research may also provide valuable insight for rehearsal directors who are seeking to “get the most out of their dancers” (Knox, 2013, p. 99). Additionally, the extension of a dancer-centred practice (Knox, 2013) into a rehearsal process is not intended to undermine the role of the rehearsal director but rather to enhance the process for both the rehearsal director and the dancer.

Finally, in reflecting back to my opening narrative of this thesis, and in presenting this body of research, my hopes are that dancers embarking on a professional career in dance enter into an industry where they feel valued as individuals and where their needs are considered. I wanted to highlight a rehearsal process in my research as some of my most memorable moments as a dancer were long days in the studio working on repertoire with a tight knit group in an environment that was supportive, challenging, and enjoyable. Through the process of this research, my understandings of why these memories may have been cherished have been expanded, and this journey has provoked me to acknowledge my value as a dancer, something I did not consider enough throughout my career.

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