



Photo: John Maniaci

“I strive to explore the relationship between our common human spirit and its physical expression. I like to think of my work as a journey — a rite of passage that enables the dancer and the audience to mutually rediscover an often forgotten ground.”

ROBIN BECKER
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Photo: Whitney Browne

Robin Becker Dance

Company Description

Robin Becker Dance is a New York based dance company founded in 1987. The Company of seven dancers is distinguished by performances in New York City at the **Joyce Theater's Altogether Different Series**, the **inaugural season of the 92nd St. Y, Harkness Playhouse 91 Series**, **Florence Gould Hall**, **St. Marks Church-in-the-Bowery**, the **Fiorello Festival**, the **Merce Cunningham Studio Theater**, and the **opening performance series of The Joyce SoHo**. Other highlights include a collaborative work with **Roberta Flack** for Breast Cancer Research with costumes created by Nicole Miller.

The company's current work *Into Sunlight* premiered in the spring of 2011 at the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**, and at **Hofstra University**, where the dance was the centerpiece for interdisciplinary conferences: "*Into Sunlight: The Impact of War on the Social Body from Vietnam to the Present.*" Subsequent performances in 2012 included **Georgetown University**, the **92nd Street Y**, **Stony Brook University's Festival of the Moving Body**, and at **Holy Trinity Diocesan High School**, where it was the focal point of an extensive residency. In 2013 *Into Sunlight* made its full New York City debut.

The Company has been in residence at the **Omega Institute for Holistic Studies**, **The Abode** in upstate New York, and the **Zenith Institute** in Olivone, Switzerland. Robin Becker Dance spent one year as the dance company in residence for the public school system of **Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey**. The Company has also participated in numerous educational and performance workshops in public and private schools, as well as residencies in congregations, and community centers including a workshop at the Westchester County Department of Corrections for women and girls at risk. Robin Becker Dance was just awarded a residency at **City College** by the CUNY Dance Initiative for Fall 2014.



Biography

Robin Becker, Artistic Director, Choreographer and Teacher, danced with the **Martha Graham Ensemble**, the **Pearl Lang Dance Company** and as a principal dancer with the **Eleo Pomare Dance Company**. She also performed as a guest artist with many companies, most notably the **Denishawn Repertory Dancers** at the **Biennale Festival in Lyons, France**. Robin originally trained with **Bentley Stone, Walter Camryn**, and **Mia Slavenska**, and then continued her studies on scholarship at the **Martha Graham School** in NYC. She was mentored in choreography by **Bessie Schönberg**.

Ms. Becker's wide-ranging experience as a choreographer includes residencies at **Southold Dance Theatre** and at **The Yard on Martha's Vineyard**. She was elected to participate in the **Carlisle Project**; a residency designed to foster the creation of new ballet choreography. Ms. Becker was a guest artist at the **South Carolina Summer Dance Conservatory**, and was also in residence at the **Omega Institute** with musician **Paul Horn**. In 1998, she was commissioned to create a new work that was performed with **Roberta Flack** for a New York concert to benefit breast cancer research.

She served on the faculties of **American Ballet Theatre**, **Alvin Ailey American Dance Center**, the **Fiorello LaGuardia High School of Performing Arts**, the **Princeton Ballet Society**, the **Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health**, and the **Actor's Studio**. She holds a MA in Humanities and currently serves on the faculty of Hofstra University. She is an accredited teacher of the Martha Graham Technique. Ms. Becker has presented master classes for several prestigious dance programs, including the **New England American College Dance Festival**, **Wesleyan University**, and **Skidmore College**.

Her work is informed by her extensive training in numerous forms of dance, and by Continuum Movement, an innovative field of movement education based on the study of the body as a fluid system. Ms. Becker is an **Authorized Continuum Teacher**. She worked closely with founder and visionary **Emilie Conrad**, and **Susan Harper**, founder of Continuum Montage for twenty-five years. Ms. Becker weaves her foundation of classical dance training together with ongoing inquiry and discovery of contemporary dance. She teaches movement workshops nationally and internationally.



Photo: John Maniaci

Robin Becker Dance

What the Critics Say

"Into Sunlight" is a far-reaching...forceful, reverential remembrance of the lives lost in that era.

Sarah Halzack, WASHINGTON POST

Breathtaking.....It's always a pleasure to experience a work that truly shines.

Carmel Morgan, BALLET DANCE MAGAZINE

I commend Becker for using a sensitive touch. She is a master at creating shapes with the dancers' bodies and letting simple gestures resonate.

Katie Reiser, ISTHMUS

"Into Sunlight" (is) poignant and devastating.

Lindsay Christians, THE CAPITAL TIMES

One dancer not afraid of eloquent simplicity was Ms. Becker. . . This was this evening's loveliest performance.

Jack Anderson, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Becker possesses an eye, a feel, a love, and knowledge of movement, which she imparts to a splendid ensemble of dancers.

Phyllis Goldman, BACK STAGE

This sample suggested that (Ms. Becker) can translate (Rumi's) verbal imagery into motion..."Doorways"...was only for five dancers, but their gatherings and dispersals implied that a whole community was present. And the way Mr. Detrick combined flowing melodies with steady but unassertive percussion rhythms reinforced the choreographic sense of people moving onward without anxiety.

Jack Anderson, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Becker offers up a palpable spirituality that must capture something of the original appeal of modern dance.

Diane Webber, DOWNTOWN EXPRESS

Her quiet intensity made her always compelling.

Jack Anderson, THE NEW YORK TIMES

...This solo and duet, because of their relative simplicity, the clear relation of emotion to movement, and the restrained eloquence of the performing - rise above their traditional subject matter. Becker, a modest and very sensitive performer, really does make her outcry seem imperfect, aborted - stifled in her body the way terror can stop a scream already rising in the throat.

Deborah Jowitt, THE VILLAGE VOICE

(In "Kindred"), propelled by the elements of crisis and resolution, the choreography becomes a story that must be told.

Anne Tobias, DANCEVIEW

Again we had power, ideas, attention to detail, and stimulating groupings given smooth movement and free transitions. The extraordinary work of the dancers themselves...is strongly to be celebrated.

Bert Wechsler, ATTITUDE MAGAZINE

Becker's full-length piece (Naming) gave further proof of her original voice.

Phyllis Goldman, BACK STAGE



Photo: Johan Elbers

Robin Becker Dance

Funding History

Robin Becker Dance has been generously supported by the following institutions:

Philip Morris Companies, Inc.
Harkness Foundation for Dance
Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation
The O'Halloran Family Foundation
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Meet the Composer
Heilpern Family Fund
Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust/American Music Center
Manhattan Community Arts Fund
New York State Decentralization Grant
The Puffin Foundation
The Calderone Fund
Veterans Advantage



Robin Becker Dance

Photo: Whitney Browne

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Photo: John Maniaci

Robin Becker Dance

Repertory

Dances From Rumi

Dances from Rumi is a series of dances inspired by the poetry of the mystical Persian poet Jelalludin Rumi. The translations of this poetry are selected from the work of renowned Rumi scholars Coleman Barks, Andrew Harvey, Kabir and Camille Helminski and Shahram Shiva. Rumi is currently the most widely read poet in the United States. The poetry of this 13th century poet continues to have an impact on our modern world because of the layered and multi-dimensional images within the poetry.

Night

A Contemplative solo exploring the mystery and wonder of the night sky.
Original score by Bruce Detrick (10 minutes)

After

An acutely simple solo, this dance portrays the path to acceptance.
Music: Japanese Shakuhachi flute, (5 minutes)

Doorways

Exploring the possibilities and doorways of life, this work investigates the passages and portals of relationship. This work is for 5 dancers.
Original score by Bruce Detrick (7 minutes)

Arbor

As trees standing strong and generous even in the midst of their own destruction, 9 dancers expose human greed and its impact on the environment.
Music: Arvo Part. (15 minutes)

There is a Field

Longing for union, the duet revolves around the timeless connection of souls, a place beyond boundaries.
Music: *Prelude #4 in D Major by Rachmaninoff* (5 minutes)

Returning

A beautiful exploration of meeting and returning. Seven dancers move as part of the same river.
Music: Leonard Cohen, performed by Roberta Flack. (5 minutes)

Galaxies

Eleven dancers spiral as stars drawn together like gravity culminating in the Sufi practice of whirling.
Music: Morten Lauridsen (11 minutes)

Kissing

A joyful romp, this series of solos and duets plays with the infinite, and sometimes humorous, qualities of beauty.
Music: *Bach Suite #3 in C Major*. (12 minutes)

Courage

Inspired by the incredible story of renowned World War II spy Madeline, whose impact was crucial in overthrowing the German regime. She was posthumously awarded the *George Cross* and the *Croix de Guerre* with Gold Star. This dance narrative is a tribute to her strength, extraordinary compassion, and courage. This work is for 1 soloist and 4 dancers.
Original score composed and performed by Beth Craig and Akal Dev Sharonne. Narration performed by in English and Farsi by Shahram Shiva. (15 minutes)



Photo: Whitney Browne

Robin Becker Dance

Repertory continued

Naming

A response to Native American culture and its near destruction, this work evolves in sections: *Before, Naming, Chaos, Forms, Shadows*, and *Circles*. Danced by the entire company, it is a testament to the struggle of spirit against relentless odds. Performed in full (37 minutes) or as the opening self-contained duet (15 minutes), which delves into the mystery, and evolution of the male/female relationship. Original score composed by Valerie Naranjo as well as live or recorded music (15-40 minutes)

Cathedrals of Time

Surrealistic in quality, this work examines differing perceptions and experiences of time. The work is based on the book *Einstein's Dream*, by novelist and physicist Alan Lightman. Recorded music of Armand Amar and of Tibetan Bowls (10 minutes)

The Arms of Darkness

This work developed from the mythological theme of the descent to the underworld as a rite of passage. The choreography explores and embraces the light and dark aspects of the feminine principle. A duet comprised of women. Live or taped music with original voice score by Tiye Giraud. (15 minutes)

Kindred

Inspired by the communal and ritual behavior of elephants and by Ganesh, the Hindu elephant deity, this work is both powerful and emotional. Danced by three women and two men to a score composed by Tiye Giraud. Live or recorded music (25 minutes)

Landing

Inspired by a dream of celestial messengers delivering a soul to earth. This trio becomes a dynamic exploration of the struggle to rise and birth new life. The work is structured in three sections and is performed to an original score composed by Scott Steidl. Recorded music. (15 minutes)

Drinking From My Bowl Of Green Tea, I Stopped The War

A juxtaposition of the power of contemplative life in the face of war and destruction, this work for 15 dancers is to an original score composed by Matthew Ferry. Recorded and live music. (17 minutes)

Weaving

Explores the intimacy, interconnectedness and mutual support of three women, drawing from the ancient native mythology of spinning and weaving. Recorded music of John Adams. (11 minutes)

Autumn

A solo inspired by the paintings of autumn leaves by Georgia O'Keefe. The work explores the beauty, loss, and cyclical return of the fall season. Original score by Eric Edberg. (7 minutes)

Prayer

A meditative solo based on a Rodin sculpture, danced by Ms. Becker to the music of Anton Dvorak. Recorded music. (7.5 minutes)

Branching Waters

A sweeping lyrical work for seven dancers set to the music of Rachmaninoff's *Third Piano Concerto*. Romantic and full of feeling. Recorded Music (17 minutes)



Photo: Johan Elbers

“Like most authors, I’ve occasionally imagined my books as movies, or documentaries, or plays, but until Robin Becker came along I had never thought of one being transformed into dance. Of all my works, ‘They Marched Into Sunlight,’ with its themes of struggle, dissent, bravery, and overwhelming loss, is best suited for this art form, and I am absolutely thrilled by the prospect of seeing what a choreographer with Robin’s insight and emotional power will do with it. Dance is a universal language, which is also the language in which I tried to write this book.”

DAVID MARANISS
They Marched Into Sunlight

*“When I read *They Marched Into Sunlight*, David Maraniss’ powerful book on the Vietnam War, I immediately responded to the timelessness and universality of the themes and events he documented. I was deeply moved by the integrity, honor, and commitment of both those who fought the war, and those who fought against it. I embarked upon the creation of this dance, **Into Sunlight**, hoping that the universal language of the body would reflect and offer the same sense of healing that David’s words evoked in me. The dancers and I became deeply immersed in the lives and events described in David’s book. It has been an honor to invoke the spirit of those who lived these events, and to offer our embodied response and appreciation of them through dance. This work is dedicated to the 60 men of the Black Lions Battalion who lost their lives in Vietnam on October 17, 1967.”*

ROBIN BECKER
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Robin Becker Dance

Photo: John Maniaci

Into Sunlight

"To fully understand the impact of the Vietnam War and the splintering emotions it brings to bear, there are many places one need look: to the battlefield, of course, but also to college campuses, living rooms, cemeteries and the dark landscape of a veteran's mind. 'Into Sunlight' is a sweeping survey of all those settings."

- Sarah Halzack, The Washington Post

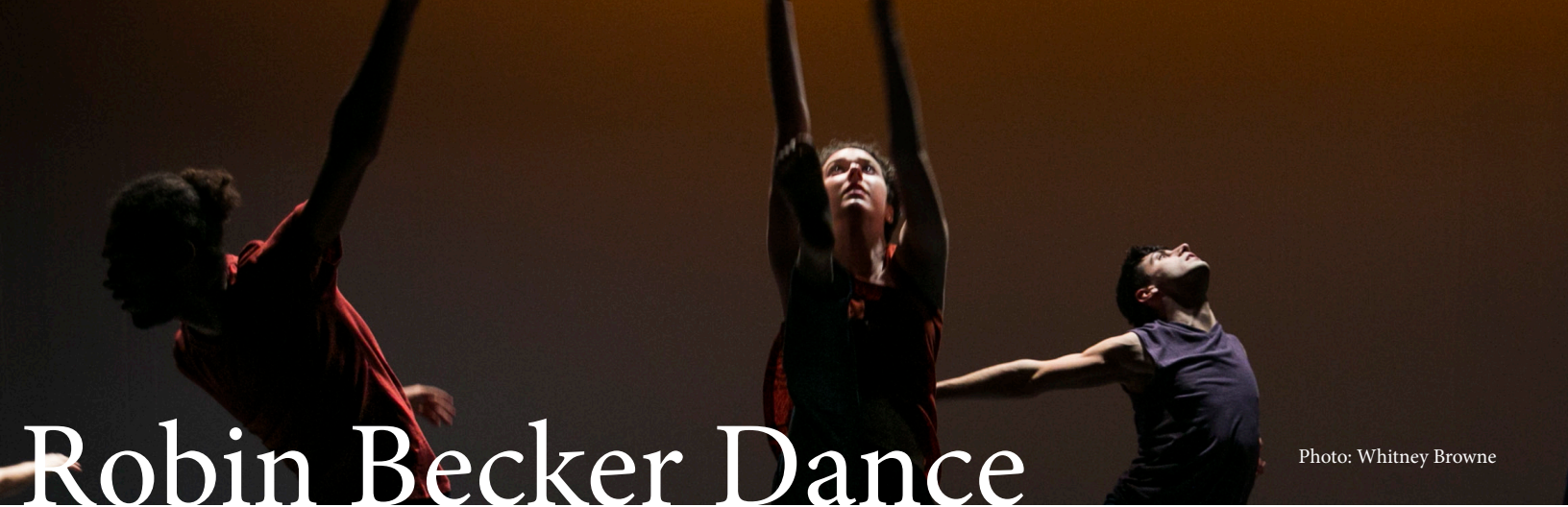
Into Sunlight is an evening-length dance inspired by the book ***They Marched Into Sunlight***, written by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and best selling author, David Maraniss. The book portrays the tumultuous shift of cultural perspective caused by the Vietnam War through the lens of events in October 1967. By weaving together stories about soldiers in Vietnam with growing social and political unrest on the campus of the University of Wisconsin, Maraniss explores the effects of violence on both those in battle and those at home desperately searching for peace.

The dance, *Into Sunlight*, premiered at the **University of Wisconsin, Madison** in 2011, and at **Hofstra University, New York**. At each campus it served as the centerpiece for an interdisciplinary conference examining the effects of war and violence on the individual body and the social body, from Vietnam to our present era. The conferences addressed perspectives of History, Psychology, Political Science, Trauma Studies, Anthropology, Visual Art and Theater through the lens of war's impact. After every performance, audiences, which included war veterans, engaged in discussion, expressing their emotions, concerns, interpretations, and experiences.

Subsequent performances in 2012 included **Georgetown University, the 92nd Street Y, Stony Brook University's Festival of the Moving Body**, and at **Holy Trinity Diocesan High School** where it was the focal point of an extensive residency. In 2013 *Into Sunlight* made its full New York City debut. The piece has received standing ovations from traditional audiences, students and faculty, veterans and their families, and has garnered stories in the **Washington Post**, the **New York Times**, **National Public Radio**, **Centerpoint Now**, a publication of the **World Council of Peoples for the United Nations** and the **World Policy Institute Arts-Policy blog**. Reviews from the **Washington Post** and **Ballet Dance Magazine**, among others, have confirmed the reconciling, healing effects of the dance.

The choreography of *Into Sunlight* draws on Robin's experience and practice as an authorized teacher of Continuum Movement, which is an exploratory study of the body as a fluid system, connected through fluid resonance with all of life. Robin and the dancers work with Continuum as a foundational process underlying technical training, choreographic process, rehearsal and performance. As a consequence performances have an extraordinary, felt impact for audiences. Veterans in particular have been deeply moved by the experience and have expressed gratitude for having their experiences honored in this way.

Into Sunlight constitutes a model for dance's fundamental role in addressing the individual and societal devastation of war by offering a medium for healing and dialogue. It has the potential to elicit within us a personal awakening to the field of possibility, which in turn inspires us to take action for our own betterment, and for a better world.



Robin Becker Dance

Photo: Whitney Browne

'Into Sunlight,' the Documentary

They Marched into Sunlight is a nonfiction account of two days in October 1967 when war was raging in Vietnam and the antiwar movement was raging in America. This book has given birth to a dance performance that resonates with the universality of the eternal sorrow of war.

It is rare to have a dance grow out of a choreographer's visceral response to a nonfiction book. And, it is rarer still to have a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author give a full-throated endorsement for the importance of an emotionally-charged dance performance based on his work. Fortunately, that is what has happened between choreographer Robin Becker and author David Maraniss through the marriage of his powerful book and her choreography, allowing Ms. Becker's integrative movement to re-imagine the book's text into a dramatic dance performance titled *Into Sunlight*.

An upcoming October performance of *Into Sunlight* will provide a perfect opportunity to produce a documentary that will examine the power of dance and story to embody the lasting legacy of war. Moving Pictures will explore this creative endeavor from multiple viewpoints. The impact of this dance will be seen through the eyes and words of the choreographer, author, dancers and many of the veterans, family members and protestors that are featured in the book, *They Marched into Sunlight*. In the film these interviews will amplify and intensify the movement on stage, showing the transformative power of dance as a medium for dialogue and communication with the hope of healing.

Author David Maraniss speaks eloquently to the central themes of his book and how this is the first time any of his work has been conceptualized as a dance. He states, "Dance is a universal language, which is also the language in which I tried to write this book."

Through Maraniss' ongoing relationships with several key people in *They Marched into Sunlight*, we will be able to highlight their immediate and authentic response to this work.

Choreographer Robin Becker can articulate her creative vision for *Into Sunlight* and the process she went through translating her initial inspiration into specific movement choices. While filming her rehearsal process, we will have the opportunity to speak to her dancers about their immersion into the lives and events described in *They Marched into Sunlight* and how it has influenced their dancing as well as their lives.

Robin Becker has said, "Throughout my life I have believed in dance as a powerful tool for transformation, providing a context in which we may discover our shared humanity through the moving, sensing body."

Moving Pictures will produce a documentary that juxtaposes this dance performance against compelling, provocative conversations. It will not attempt to tell the complete story or show the whole dance performance. Rather, it will reveal this singular moment in our country's history through the art of dance and film to tell the sadly repetitive story of war and its lasting imprint on all human beings.



Photo: Whitney Browne

Robin Becker Dance

moving**p**ictures

September 2013

To All~

As an award-winning director/producer team we are committed to providing the resources of our company, Moving Pictures, to produce a documentary based on Robin Becker's powerful dance *Into Sunlight*. We feel personally compelled to explore this moving dance performance based on *They Marched Into Sunlight*, the book by Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist David Maraniss.

We are passionate about filming dance. Our most recent dance documentary *Never Stand Still* garnered international praise in the press, had a national theatrical release and aired in July on PBS *Great Performances*. Many of the same production team members who worked with us on this film will bring their talents and expertise to this feature-length production. In addition, we have been in conversation with First Run Features, one of the largest theatrical distributors in the United States who has expressed their strong interest in this project. (Letter from distributor enclosed.)

As filmmakers we have a rare opportunity with the upcoming performance in NYC the final weekend in October at Florence Gould Hall to examine the power of dance and story to embody the lasting legacy of war and to interview key players of this story who will attend the performance. We will explore this creative endeavor from multiple viewpoints by juxtaposing the dance performance against provocative conversations with the choreographer, author, dancers and several veterans, family members and protestors who are highlighted in the book. We will also delve into this subject matter with current members of our military, health care professionals and returning veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Our documentary based on *Into Sunlight* will not attempt to show the whole dance performance or tell the complete story. Rather it will reveal this singular moment in our country's history through the art of dance and film, providing a window into the repetitive story of war through the generations and its lasting imprint on all of us.

With our best regards~
Ron Honsa and Nan Penman



Photo: Whitney Browne

Robin Becker Dance

My Full-throated Endorsement of 'Into Sunlight'

From Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author David Maraniss:

From the moment I heard that Robin Becker wanted to create a modern dance inspired by my book on Vietnam (*They Marched Into Sunlight*), I knew that it would be beautiful and interesting, like anything Robin undertakes. But it was not until I saw a workshop performance of parts of her dance, *Into Sunlight*, at a studio at the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan on the Friday evening of November 12, that I fully understood the power of what she is doing. Before that night, I wondered how she would connect her choreography to the storylines of the book and how deeply I would feel a connection to what I wrote about and what I would see in the movements on stage. That question dissolved as soon as her wonderful dancers began. From their first piece, I was utterly absorbed, feeling my book in a way that I never had before, and that sensation stayed with me until the night was done.

My book is about war and peace. It is a nonfiction account of two days in October 1967 when war was raging in Vietnam and the antiwar movement was raging in America. It is about two simultaneous events, a battle and a protest. They involved two very different worlds that were nonetheless about the same thing. In Vietnam, on the morning of October 17, a battalion of young American soldiers walked out into the jungle on what was known as a “search and destroy” mission and got destroyed themselves in an ambush set up by the Viet Cong; sixty men killed and sixty wounded in a few hours of fighting. Back in the U.S., at about the same time, students at the University of Wisconsin in Madison were protesting the presence on campus of job recruiters from Dow Chemical Co., the makers of napalm and Agent Orange, two of the horrific weapons of war. The protest turned into the first violent confrontation on a college campus during the war when local police waded into the sit-down protest and bashed heads with their billy clubs.

Those are the specifics of the story, but the themes are what drive the book, and what energize Robin’s amazing dance. As different as the young soldiers and the young protesters might seem on the surface, more bound them together than separated them, and it is the commonality of the human experience that Robin evokes – the fears, the questions, heading off to the unknown, young vs. old, brother vs. brother, love and hate, the meaning of loyalty and patriotism and the eternal sorrow of war. There is a scene at the beginning of her dance that evokes the first chapter of my book, of young soldiers on a ship sailing from the West Coast of the U.S. to the port of Vung Tau in Vietnam where they will march ashore – into sunlight, into war, many never to return. Watching her dancers move en masse in elegant slow motion across the stage, with one dancer standing above them, walking on their backs, hooked me completely, it was so simple, dramatic, symbolic, and real, and I was taken by the performance from that moment on.

Her work is powerful, and the themes are always relevant, alas. When my book came out in 2003, I said it was about a time when young American men were fighting and dying in a place where they didn’t know the language or the culture, where they didn’t know who was a friend and who was an enemy, fighting in a war that started under questionable circumstances and that no one seemed to know how to end, when there were serious questions about the meaning of patriotism and the role of dissent in American life. It was about Vietnam, but it had a familiar ring seven years ago, as it does still today. But it is one thing to hit on a timeless theme, it is quite another to bring true art to the stage. That is what Robin and the dancers are doing. This is a major work that deserves to be seen by as many people as possible on the largest possible stages. I have no stake in this other than pride and astonishment in what Robin and her troop are doing, and my deep hope that they get the support and acknowledgment they deserve.



Photo: John Maniaci

Robin Becker Dance



'Into Sunlight': Dance, Reconciliation and Peace

December 16, 2013

By Gloria Hage

The devastation of war reaches beyond political boundaries, inflicting trauma on the individual, society, and the environment. How do we create a lasting peace where there is a legacy of war? How do we embrace our shared humanity and find the common ground necessary to rebuild what hatred and war have destroyed? Reconciliation and healing are prerequisites for peace. Peace is a prerequisite for all of life. Movement is our primary language. Through this universal language, dance has the unique capacity to generate a deeply felt experience of healing. *Into Sunlight*, a performance by Robin Becker Dance, demonstrates how dance can help us bear witness to life, awakening us to our state of being, and to our shared humanity.

Robin Becker Dance is a New York City based dance company founded in 1987. The company's current project *Into Sunlight* is an evening-length dance inspired by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and best selling author David Maraniss's book, *They Marched Into Sunlight*. The book portrays the tumultuous shift of cultural perspective caused by the Vietnam War through the lens of events on October 1967. By weaving together stories about soldiers in Vietnam with growing social and political unrest on the campus of the University of Wisconsin, Maraniss explores the effects of violence on both those in battle and those at home desperately searching for peace. Artistic Director and choreographer Robin Becker describes her creative impetus for *Into Sunlight*:

"Throughout my life I have believed in dance as a powerful tool for transformation, providing a context in which we may discover our shared humanity through the moving, sensing body. Deeply saddened when the US invaded Iraq, and with a hope of contributing to the healing process, I embarked upon an evening-length dance that dealt with war, peace, and protest in our time. My initial research was to investigate images and mythologies from world cultures to find archetypes that would offer insight into the human activity of war. I discovered the book 'They Marched Into Sunlight.' When I read it, I immediately responded to the timelessness and universality of the themes and events documented. I was deeply moved by the integrity, honor and commitment of both those who fought the war, and those who fought against it. I embarked upon the creation of this dance, 'Into Sunlight,' hoping that the universal language of the body would offer the same sense of healing that David's words evoked in me."

The dance, *Into Sunlight*, premiered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 2011, and at Hofstra University, New York. At each campus it served as the centerpiece for an interdisciplinary conference examining the effects of war and violence on the individual body and the social body, from Vietnam to our present era. The conferences addressed perspectives of History, Psychology, Political Science, Trauma Studies, Anthropology, Visual Art and Theater through the lens of war's impact. After every performance, audiences, which included war veterans, were engaged in discussion, expressing their emotions, concerns, interpretations, and ideals for action. Our work in the dance and symposium addressed themes of cultural embodiment, the impact of war and violence, and the integrative power of art, with the dance providing a unifying process of reconciliation for those who experience the trauma of battle and for a culture engaged in its own battle of reconciliation.



Photo: John Maniaci

Robin Becker Dance

Subsequent performances in 2012, included Georgetown University, the 92nd Street Y, Stony Brook University's Festival of the Moving Body, and at Holy Trinity Diocesan High School, where it was the focal point of an extensive residency. In 2013 *Into Sunlight* made its full New York City debut.

Author, David Maraniss describes his book and the dance:

"My book is about war and peace. It is a nonfiction account of two days in October 1967 when war was raging in Vietnam and the antiwar movement was raging in America. It is about two simultaneous events, a battle and a protest. In Vietnam, on the morning of October 17, a battalion of young American soldiers walked out into the jungle on what was known as a "search and destroy" mission and got destroyed themselves in an ambush set up by the Viet Cong; sixty men killed and sixty wounded in a few hours of fighting. Back in the U.S., at about the same time, students at the University of Wisconsin in Madison were protesting the presence on campus of job recruiters from Dow Chemical Co., the makers of napalm and Agent Orange, two of the horrific weapons of war. The protest turned into the first violent confrontation on a college campus during the war when local police waded into the sit-down protest and bashed heads with their billy clubs.

Those are the specifics of the story, but the themes are what drive the book, and what energize Robin's amazing dance. As different as the young soldiers and the young protesters might seem on the surface, more bound them together than separated them, and it is the commonality of the human experience that Robin evokes – the fears, the questions, heading off to the unknown, young vs. old, brother vs. brother, love and hate, the meaning of loyalty and patriotism and the eternal sorrow of war. It is one thing to hit on a timeless theme, it is quite another to bring true art to the stage. That is what Robin and the dancers are doing."

Into Sunlight provokes discussions and considerations of how war and violence shape our experiences, transforming us physically, mentally and emotionally. The emotional reactions of countless war veterans and audience members underscores the importance of this work, and how it can be a catalyst for vital dialogue on post-traumatic stress in the individual body, as well as the rippling effects of war and violence throughout the societal body.

Robin Becker shares her hope as a dance artist and for *Into Sunlight*:

"My hope is, and what continues to lead me as a dance artist, is my belief that if people can feel more of themselves, if I can create something people can participate in and feel deeply about, then the impact of that might inspire new and hopefully heart-based actions. After seeing the work, Veterans have shared some very emotional responses. Many have expressed their gratitude and a feeling that something has been at last reconciled for them. Protesters from that era were also deeply moved. A colleague of mine, who was very much a part of the antiwar movement during Vietnam said, "Something just came full circle for me, a really important healing." I hear that a lot. From people who protested against the war, and those who participated in it. My goal was to provide a place for unity."

Into Sunlight constitutes a model for dance's fundamental role in addressing the individual and societal devastation of war by offering a medium for healing and dialogue. It has the potential to elicit within us a personal awakening to the field of possibility, which in turn inspires us to take action for our own betterment, and for a better world. *Into Sunlight* and its potential for healing and reconciliation is not specific to October 1967, or the Vietnam War; it is universal. Whether a country is at peace, in war, or recovering from war, this dance inspires us to our greater good and awakens all of us to our shared humanity. And only by acknowledging this shared humanity can we begin to heal from war's devastation, build healthy, productive communities, and choose peace-based actions to resolve conflict.



Robin Becker Dance

Photo: John Maniaci

The Washington Post

'Into Sunlight' a graceful reflection on Vietnam War

By Sarah Halzack

Published: January 22, 2012

To fully understand the impact of the Vietnam War and the splintering emotions it brings to bear, there are many places one need look: To the battlefield, of course, but also to college campuses, living rooms, cemeteries and the dark landscape of a veteran's mind.

Robin Becker's "Into Sunlight," a dance based on a book by Washington Post associate editor David Maraniss, is a sweeping survey of all those settings. Performed Saturday at Georgetown University's Davis Performing Arts Center, it's a forceful, reverential remembrance of the lives lost or upended in that era.

Despite the broad expanse of events it aims to capture, this evening-length work is remarkably focused. None of the vignettes feels superfluous and each choreographic detail is deliberate.

Becker has divided the dancers into two sets, one wearing purple shirts and trousers and the other dressed in icy gray. The dancers in the former group serve as our primary storytellers, while the latter group functions differently throughout the piece. Sometimes they are barely-breathing bodies strewn on a battlefield, other times they are agents of chaos at a protest. But always they are the inescapable ghosts of loss and disillusionment that haunt this dance.

Becker's choreography is defined by its smart construction. In a section that represents a woman trying to keep her lover from going off to war, long sequences of movement are repeated in a subtle nod to the fact that this pivotal moment is probably one that was relived over and over again.

And she cleverly sets up an effective contrast: Fast runs, high-flying lifts and driving music create an atmosphere of confusion and disorder in the protest scenes. But scenes from the front lines are quieter and more contemplative, with slow, weighted movement and ambient, ethereal music.

Many parts of "Into Sunlight" give the audience room to fill in the details. In the penultimate section, "Longing," one of the male dancers in gray sits immobile and straight-backed on the floor. Another dancer, Yoko Sugimoto-Ikezawa, throws her arms around him tightly, an image that looks almost like she could be clutching a tombstone. But as she continues, touching his steely face, sitting in his lap and finally lying beside him, different but equally wrenching stories unspool: Maybe she is a woman watching a loved one die, or maybe she's trying to connect with a withdrawn man who's coping with post-traumatic stress disorder.

It's that kind of layered composition that probably allows any veteran to see a piece of himself or his experiences in this work.



Photo: Whitney Browne

Robin Becker Dance

The New York Times

A Conference on War, Inspired by a Dance

By KARIN LIPSON, Published: April 8, 2011, Hempstead, N.Y.



Kathy Kmonicek for The New York Times

In a Hofstra University dance studio, a mixed group of professional and student dancers — all too young to have lived through the events they were symbolically recreating — recently rehearsed a work inspired by the turmoil and tragedy of the Vietnam War era.

As a laptop emitted music punctuated by soft, crackling sounds suggesting distant rifle fire, or perhaps jungle brush snapping underfoot, some dancers lay as flat as corpses; others sat upright, like tombstones. Still others ran, as on a battlefield. Finally, they came together as a living frieze, their bodies touching at tortured angles.

“I call it a wall of carnage,” said Robin Becker, the choreographer who created the hourlong work, titled “Into Sunlight.” Ms. Becker, an associate professor of dance at Hofstra, said that although she had wanted to depict horror, “I didn’t want to do something literal, like ‘fight choreography.’”

“Into Sunlight,” with nine student dancers and the seven members of the Robin Becker Dance company (and an original score by Chris Lastovicka), will be performed April 14 to 17 as part of the Hofstra Spring Dance Concert at the university’s John Cranford Adams Playhouse.

It is also a keystone of an interdisciplinary conference, “Into Sunlight: The Impact of War on the Social Body From the Vietnam Era to the Present,” to be held April 14 to 16. The dance performance will be free on April 15 at 3 p.m., also at the playhouse, as part of the conference.

Presented by the Hofstra Cultural Center and the department of drama and dance, the three-day colloquium features lectures, panels, performances (including an original play), an art exhibition and documentary screenings. “The overarching idea of this whole conference is to bring about more understanding of war, and also of our veterans,” said Ms. Becker, a co-director of the conference.

Topics like post-traumatic stress disorder will be explored through different disciplines, like psychology and drama. Programs encouraging veterans — including those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan — to speak of their experiences are also scheduled.

The conference evolved slowly from Ms. Becker’s dance piece, as did a separately developed symposium held last month at the University of Wisconsin.

At Hofstra, which hosts numerous interdisciplinary events, using a dance as a point of departure “might have been a unique path to a



Photo: John Maniaci

Robin Becker Dance

The New York Times

conference,” said Bernard J. Firestone, dean of the university’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

That path started some years ago with Ms. Becker’s concern over the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. “I felt heartbroken that we still need to choose war in this day and age,” she said. “And I felt called to do something as an artist.”

Ms. Becker found her source material not in Iraq but in “They Marched Into Sunlight: War and Peace, Vietnam and America, October 1967,” a 2003 book by David Maraniss. The book, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, juxtaposes the ambush of an American battalion in Vietnam with a contemporaneous antiwar protest at the University of Wisconsin, in Madison.

A friend of the choreographer’s, Mr. Maraniss (who won the Pulitzer Prize for national reporting at The Washington Post in 1993) welcomed her idea to translate his words into movement. “I thought that was a fascinating and wonderful idea,” Mr. Maraniss, an associate editor at The Post, said in a telephone interview.

Mr. Maraniss, who is from Madison, was instrumental in getting “Into Sunlight” performed at the University of Wisconsin. He also helped support the idea of a conference at Hofstra, and will give its keynote address on April 14. Members of Robin Becker Dance will perform excerpts from “Into Sunlight” as part of the keynote.

Another new work to be performed is “Undeclared History,” a play by Isaac Rathbone commissioned by Hofstra’s drama and dance department and directed by Cindy Rosenthal, a professor in the department.

Based on interviews, oral testimonies gathered for a university history project and archival material about the Vietnam era, “Undeclared History” is the fictionalized story of a disabled veteran enrolled at Hofstra during the tumultuous days of the school’s antiwar protests.

The production, with live music, incorporates elements of street theater and is confrontational at times. “Some of the imagery is disturbing,” said Ms. Rosenthal, a co-director of the conference with Ms. Becker and Robert Westley, an assistant professor of drama and dance.

Ms. Becker also used disturbing imagery to serve the creative process, she said. Working with her dancers on “Into Sunlight,” she showed them harrowing photographs of the Vietnam War.

It was all part of their training, she said, “so that they can really embody something that happened before their time.”

“Into Sunlight: The Impact of War on the Social Body From the Vietnam Era to the Present” will be held April 14 to 16 at Hofstra University, Hempstead. Conference fees, \$35 to \$65; veterans, free. Schedule and registration: hofstra.edu/intosunlight or (516) 463-5669. “Into Sunlight” dance performances will be presented April 14 to 17 at the John Cranford Adams Playhouse; the play “Undeclared History” runs through April 17 in the Black Box Theater, New Academic Building. (516) 463-6644, weekdays.



Photo: Johan Elbers

Robin Becker Dance

The Washington Post

From memoir of war and loss, 'Into Sunlight' seeks to heal

By Sarah Kaufman, Published: January 19, 2012

In the bright daylight of Oct. 17, 1967, a U.S. infantry battalion known as the Black Lions marched into an ambush in the Vietnamese jungle that left 61 of its members dead. Just 20 miles away, a young soldier named Scott Higgins, who'd arrived in country a few days before, was celebrating his 22nd birthday.

Half a world away in Elmhurst, Ill., a girl named Robin Becker was also having a birthday — her 14th — amid an omnipresent fear that her two older brothers might be drafted.

And in Madison, Wis., on that same fall day, a University of Wisconsin freshman named David Maraniss, his eyes stinging from tear gas, was watching fellow students clash with police in a bloody protest against a company that was recruiting on campus: Dow Chemical, the makers of napalm.

Coincidence, fate, luck: Who knows what force of randomness or design brought these three people together decades later and connected their lives and the events of that day? But a portion of that connection will be on view Friday night at Georgetown University, where a dance called "Into Sunlight" will grapple with questions of history repeated. Is there a way out of destiny's duet with humanity? Can we close the wounds opened in another age and re-inflicted in our own?

If the answers have eluded witnesses, historians and survivors, perhaps it's too much to hope that art can shed any beam of light. But then, hope is a kind of connective tissue here, too.

How it came together: After he left Madison, Maraniss went on to become a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. He wrote about the Black Lions ambush and the simultaneous campus demonstration in his 2003 book "They Marched Into Sunlight." Becker became a dancer and moved to New York, where she founded her own company, Robin Becker Dance. A few years ago, as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wore on, she was casting about for a way to shape her unease into a dance.

"I just felt devastated that we were doing this in the 21st century," she said, speaking recently by phone.

She had come to know Maraniss through a friend; after reading his book, she found her inspiration.

"I inhaled that book," Becker said with a laugh. "I am too embarrassed to show David how I've destroyed his book with highlighting and commenting on the side.

"I was so deeply moved by it. I felt it paralleled so many of the same themes happening now: going to another country, all the young people dying, not having the whole nation on board."

The book follows the entwined stories of American and Viet Cong soldiers, their families and the student protesters fighting their own battles back home.

"You really get the humanity of all of these players," Becker says.



Photo: Johan Elbers

Robin Becker Dance

The Washington Post

While Becker was working on the dance last spring, Higgins, the former soldier, happened to contact her about renting her house in Upstate New York. He lives in Connecticut, where he heads a group called Veterans Advantage, which arranges corporate discounts to veterans.

They were excited to discover they shared the same birthday — and a history with the Vietnam War. Higgins was captivated by the idea of a dance depicting some of the issues he was still grappling with, such as post-traumatic stress.

“I’d find myself waking up in the middle of the night on the floor, hugging a bedpost and sweating,” he said. He ended up helping Becker fund the work and attended its premiere at the 92nd Street Y in New York. He also bought tickets for about two dozen fellow veterans. He’s doing the same for performances of the work here.

Higgins said he was skeptical at first that Becker’s 16 dancers “could communicate the range of feelings through dance of an action that was so dramatic,” he said in an interview Thursday. “But I think at one point there wasn’t a dry eye in the place.”

Equally valuable, he says, is how the dance prompts connections of its own, with feelings that may be deep below the surface. He saw this in discussions among the veterans and other audience members at a reception after the New York premiere.

“I think talking helps,” he said. “It takes away the stigma. After Vietnam, there were no parades. People have wanted to forget about it, but they’ve realized that was a mistake.”

Maraniss, a Washington Post associate editor, will introduce the dance at Georgetown’s Davis Performing Arts Center and lead a panel discussion afterward. He will also introduce one of the main characters in his book: Clark Welch, who survived the ambush and will be seeing the dance for the first time.

Like his book, he said, the performance tells “a sadly universal and timeless story.”

“We’ve been dealing with that since the Greeks,” he said. “I’m not sure we ever totally learn.”

Becker, 58, has never made a dance about war before, but she has long been interested in trauma and healing. This is because of her own tragedy: 14 years ago, her husband went out for a jog and dropped dead of cardiac arrest. He was an architect, and at the time they were building a house in the country, which he had designed — the house that Higgins had briefly rented.

To help move past the loss, she immersed herself even more in dance — into the realm of images, where she could take the time to feel. This is what she hopes to share in “Into Sunlight.” The dance is an accumulation of images, she says: the boat that took soldiers across the ocean; the dead who haunt them. The sister of a soldier dreams that her brother comes to her with a hole blown open in his gut; this happened the night before the ambush, and later the sister realizes he came to say goodbye. A football star runs from his chopper to help the wounded at the ambush site and is cut down by bullets.

“People don’t take the time to feel,” she said. “The feeling capacity of the body is very slow, and we’re going faster than our thoughts.”

One way to slow down, and even to heal, she says, is to sit in the darkness with an unfolding tableau, which just may help bring emotional truths to light.

Into Sunlight performed by Robin Becker Dance. At Georgetown University’s Davis Performing Arts Center, Gonda Theatre, 3700 O St. NW. Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. \$18 general admission, \$10 students and veterans. 202-687-3838.



Photo: Johan Elbers

Robin Becker Dance

Robin Becker Dance 'Into Sunlight'

by Carmel Morgan, Ballet Dance Magazine

January 20, 2012-- Gonda Theatre, David Performing Arts Center, Georgetown University, Washington, DC

On a cold January night, Georgetown University presented a very special performance by Robin Becker Dance titled "Into Sunlight," inspired by David Maraniss's "They Marched Into Sunlight – War and Peace, Vietnam and America, October 1967." The performers consisted of the Robin Becker Dance Company, plus students and alumni of Hofstra University's Dance Department, where Becker is presently a faculty member. In the audience were several Vietnam War veterans. Maraniss, who authored the book that inspired the dance, delivered some short introductory remarks and participated in a panel discussion along with Becker and her dancers following the performance.

I've seen many, many dances that speak to the issue of war. However, it's quite unusual to encounter a dance piece based upon a work of non-fiction. "Into Sunlight" clearly benefitted from the book that inspired it. Becker explained that the book was rich with imagery, and indeed, her choreography was rich with imagery as well. "Into Sunlight" featured many interesting juxtapositions. Perhaps most significantly, the dancers embodied the two groups Maraniss concentrates upon in his book – young protesters and young soldiers. But there were also ghosts that interacted poignantly with the living. All of this adeptly reflected the conflicting feelings that surrounded the Vietnam War.

"Into Sunlight" opened with a breathtaking sequence of dancers walking slowly backward from the wings on one side of the stage. Dressed in pale gray, they were spirits of soldiers who had died in other battles. The departed individuals made an ocean through which a boatload of young soldiers on their way to Vietnam traveled. A beautifully sculpted grouping moved through the sea in anticipation of a war about which they felt uncertain. Yoko Sugimoto-Ikezawa often climbed high atop the shoulders of other dancers, seeking sight of what both terrified and fired up the group.

Throughout "Into Sunlight" there were, not surprisingly, multiple scenes of struggle. Dancers lunged backward and forward. The emotional thrust of war propelled them along. The stage sometimes literally boiled with dancers popping up and down, bodies flying and quickly shifting. Pain, sadness, fear, anger, unease, disagreement, disorientation, and utter disbelief – all were appropriately part of this important work. In addition, there was longing. In a section called "Longing," Sugimoto-Ikezawa and Joseph Jehle, in a stunning duet, ripped my heart to shreds. Jehle at first remained upright, like he'd sat up from a nightmare. In ghostly gray, he could have been a gravestone, erect and still. Sugimoto-Ikezawa clung to Jehle, hugging him from behind, but he was unmoved. She leaned heavily onto him. He stared straight ahead, solid as stone and empty of life. When he finally settled flat on his back, Sugimoto-Ikezawa placed her body on top of him, then placed her body snugly beside his. She manipulated his arms to rest around her, effectively eliciting my compassion for her loss (and the loss of everyone involved in the war). Becker's young dancers truly excelled. They impressed with their ability to deeply connect to the subject matter, and they conveyed the tragedy of war remarkably skillfully. Becker's expertly constructed choreography must be given credit, and Maraniss's book, too, but the absolute commitment of the dancers to "Into Sunlight" was, for me, the most moving part of the performance. It was apparent from the post-performance discussion that Becker spent a great deal of time talking with her dancers about the Vietnam War and that the dancers seriously explored the subject on their own as well. Stories of a war they were not a part of flowed through them with incredible conviction and composure.

It's always a pleasure to experience a work that truly shines. Not only did Becker, Maraniss, and the dancers stand out, but the compositions by Chris Lastovicka, music direction by Arthur Solari, lighting design by Burke Wilmore, and projection by John Goodwin perfectly complemented "Into Sunlight." The final moment of the work is apt to bring tears to anyone's eyes. Not to give too much away, but the dancers literally walked into the sunlight, and you could hear sniffles all around.



Photo: John Maniaci

Robin Becker Dance

UW Dance's 'March Into Sunlight' poignant and powerful

MARCH 28, 2011 7:30 AM • LINDSAY CHRISTIANS | THE CAPITAL TIMES |

"They Marched Into Sunlight," David Maraniss's history about a Vietnam War ambush in 1967 and the simultaneous Dow Chemical riots in Madison, has been translated many times.

But for the first time on Saturday, the stories of the soldiers and those they left behind were told in the language of dance. Two works — one by choreographer Robin Becker, of Robin Becker Dance in New York, the other by University of Wisconsin-Madison Dance Department Chair Jin-Wen Yu — made up a two-hour program Saturday night in the Wisconsin Union Theater. Common themes echoed through each work: camaraderie between soldiers, the chaos of student protests, the solace found in solidarity during political and emotional unrest.

Becker's piece, "Into Sunlight," ran for more than an hour and was overall the stronger of the two. Separated into a series of vignettes, it was abstract but clear, using strong, angular movement to evoke the depth of emotion behind Maraniss's stories. In "Leaving/Staying," a man running across the stage was stopped by a woman, who leaned toward him pushing with both hands — a universal "don't go" expression.

The dancers, including seven professionals from Becker's company and nine Hofstra University students, resisted the urge to overact. "Gathering Unrest" captured the turmoil of the students, as the dancers leapt frantically, echoed later in a barricade of drooped but connected bodies in "Until the Angels Came," a poignant and devastating image.

The most heart-breaking of the movements was "Longing," danced by Yoko Sugimoto-Ikezawa and Joseph Jehle. Sitting rigid on the floor next to other prone bodies (presumably his fallen comrades), Jehle never moved while Sugimoto rolled her head against his back, ran hands down his motionless calves and eventually, wrapped his limp arm around her own shoulders.

Jin-Wen Yu's 38-minute "Sunlit Fields" was just as imaginative, if less clean and focused than its predecessor. In comparison to the 15-minute version shown last fall at the UW faculty dance concert, this piece was less literal, with a new score.

Yu's previous piece ("March Into Sunlight") was stronger, emphasizing simultaneous action — soldiers leaping and rolling together while young protesters in '60s skirts clustered elsewhere onstage. Too often, this longer "Sunlit Fields" seemed to ramble, the disjointed score serving to confuse rather than meld each section with the next.

Still, despite the gap in skill level between the UW students and Becker's performers (or perhaps because of it), Yu's piece had a youthful energy. During a "panty raid" section, the women wiggled and shook, channeling "Beach Blanket Bingo." Even a section with crash helmets looked playful, as students cartwheeled onto the stage.

Moments of connection, as in Becker's "Longing," were the most powerful — a girl resting her head on another's knee, a group of women surrounding a single victim, who crouched and winced away from them. Yu himself descended from a cargo net hung from the ceiling, his movements quick and sharp.

Design elements, like spiraling, angular patterns that made it hard to see the dancers or a "letter" appearing word by word on a massive scroll, more often distracted than enhanced the movement.

But central to Maraniss's concept in "They Marched Into Sunlight" is the myriad of people affected by violence at home and thousands of miles away. With so many voices, some will be clearer than others.



Photo: John Maniaci

Robin Becker Dance

UW Dance concert makes evocative movement of 'They Marched Into Sunlight'

by Katie Reiser on Sunday 03/27/2011 10:58 am | ISTHMUS | The Daily Page

It's sad that the performance presented by the UW-Madison dance department and Jin-Wen Yu Dance was a one-night-only event. "March Into Sunlight" deserves to be experienced by more people.

Both department chair Yu and visiting choreographer Robin Becker, a dance educator at New York's Hofstra University, used David Maraniss' book *They Marched Into Sunlight* as the inspiration for their work, and Saturday's performance at Wisconsin Union Theater was part of the three-day Sunlight Project & Symposium. The book explores separate but connected events on two pivotal days during the Vietnam War, Oct. 17 and 18, 1967. UW students protested Dow Chemical's recruiting presence on campus, in what began as a sit-in and escalated into a violent confrontation with police. Meanwhile, in Vietnam, the ambush of the Black Lions battalion in the Battle of Ong Thanh became a massacre that left 60 Americans dead and many more injured.

Maraniss was on hand to help introduce the performance. He said his books have been translated into many different languages, but never before the "most soulful language of all" -- modern dance.

Becker's piece, "Into Sunlight," was thoughtful and evocative without being a verbatim retelling. It opened with "Meeting the Unknown," as students from Hofstra, clad in simple grey costumes, set a somber tone by carefully stepping backwards, then gingerly lowering themselves to the floor. They formed the orderly rows of soldiers being transported (I also thought of the tragic precision of Arlington cemetery). A group of dancers from Becker's company created an undulating platform of bodies to purposefully deliver Yoko Sugimoto-Ikezawa, perched on top, across the stage. The movement alluded to those heading to the massacre in Vietnam, and to those left behind. I commend Becker for using a sensitive touch. She is a master at creating shapes with the dancers' bodies and letting simple gestures resonate. In the section "A Dream of Goodbye," Paul Monaghan and Nicole Sclafani, both with long curly, red hair and a palpable connection, performed a dance of love and loss. The two were conspicuously set apart before Sclafani inserted herself into Monaghan's space, carving out a niche by his side, his back leg wrapped behind. The tone here, and throughout Becker's work, was one of sadness and reverence. Her restraint kept things from becoming maudlin.

Later, in "Holleder's Run," Chazz Fenner-McBride performed a solo that referenced the heroic efforts of former West Point football standout Dan Holleder to aid the ambushed soldiers. Fenner-McBride has a brawny build, so it was fascinating to see him balance that strength with real gentleness and quiet, using his impressive ability to shift dynamics (a skill he shares with many of Becker's dancers). As composer Chris Lastovicka's wonderful score crackled and rumbled behind him, Fenner-McBride propelled himself through space, his jumps soaring before he was felled.

In "Brotherhood," Fenner-McBride, Monaghan and Edwardo Brito danced. (All share a strong affinity for Graham technique.) You saw the bond of men serving together and what it might be like to enter a terrifying situation. When they removed their shirts, the presentation became more visceral and primal.

In "Longing," three dancers in grey lay still on the floor. Joseph Jehle's upright upper body created a frame for the grieving Sugimoto-Ikezawa to cling to and to drape herself around. When she first approached him, nuzzling her face into the back of his neck, the intimacy and longing of that stark moment shocked me. Again, the movement was slow and cautious, the emotions clear but never overplayed. After tenderly wrapping herself around him, Sugimoto rose into a gorgeous arabesque and lowered Jehle's torso to the ground. She skittered down his body in a crab walk before lying on top of him, then rolled to his side. Then, mostly obscured by his body, she lifted his still arm and wrapped it around herself, saying so much with one movement.



Robin Becker Dance

Photo: John Maniaci

At the end, many of the dancers were frozen in a death tableau, almost like citizens of Pompeii trapped as tragic lava statues. The group finally rose together and formed a triangle, with the names of those who perished shown behind them. I sensed hope: that we now know enough to never let a war like this happen again. It's a tribute to both Maraniss and Becker that this dance is clearly inspired by the book, but viewers should be moved by it even if they don't know the stories behind it.

I saw an earlier version of Yu's "Sunlit Fields" last fall and was touched by it, particularly the dramatic ending in which Yu, padding softly towards the edge of the stage, released handfuls of red petals. But this time I worry that the work, now expanded, seems too literal, with its soldiers in camo pants and students in 1960s garb, images of dog tags and helmets flashing behind them. The piece now reads as too heavy-handed, especially in comparison with Becker's more subdued elegance.

But there was some good dancing here as well, especially whenever Sarah Mitchell and Mary Patterson were paired. Perhaps the most wrenching and true moment came when Yu teetered precariously on top of a helmet, making me think of fragility, hubris and the senselessness of war -- especially now, as the U.S. is involved in so many conflicts.

Maraniss spoke of the works being poetic and not literal. I think Becker was more successful in that regard. But everyone involved should be proud -- those whose stories were told, and those telling the stories.



Photo: Whitney Browne

Robin Becker Dance

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Later, in "Hollender's Run," Chazz Fenner-McBride performed a solo that referenced the heroic efforts of former West Point football standout Dan Hollender to aid the ambushed soldiers. Fenner-McBride has a brawny build, so it was fascinating to see him balance that strength with real gentleness and quiet, using his impressive ability to shift dynamics (a skill he shares with many of Becker's dancers). As composer Chris Lastovicka's wonderful score crackled and rumbled behind him, Fenner-McBride propelled himself through space, his jumps soaring before he was felled.

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Robin Becker Dance

Photo: John Maniaci

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
West Point, New York 10996

Department of English and Philosophy

Letter of Endorsement: "Into Sunlight" - Robin Becker Dance Company

July 22, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to convey my strongest possible endorsement for an extraordinary artistic achievement that we had the great pleasure of hosting at West Point on November 7, 2014: An "Informance" presentation of "Into Sunlight" supported by the remarkably talented dancers of the Robin Becker Dance Company; Robin Becker herself; and David Maraniss, author of *They Marched Into Sunlight: War and Peace, Vietnam and America, October 1967*—the book that inspired the creation of "Into Sunlight." The performance was attended by cadets, faculty members (a combination of military officers and civilians), military family members (mainly spouses of those stationed at West Point), and guests from the local community.

There are two identities that inform my impressions and understanding of the importance and value of this moving and memorable event. First, I represent a career soldier (over 30 years) who has experienced combat during two deployments—Operation Just Cause and Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm—and who has lost friends and former students in the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I've served the full range of Army assignments—from the 75th Ranger Regiment as a staff officer and company commander to the Pentagon as a speechwriter for the Chief of Staff of the Army. My other identity is that of faculty member at the United States Military Academy. As Head of the Department of English and Philosophy and Founding Director of the Creative Arts Project at West Point, I have spearheaded the effort to bring artists, authors, filmmakers, actors, and dancers to West Point in order to highlight the ways in which artistic expression can shed light on and, in a sense, translate the experience of war. A key objective of the Project is to bridge the civil-military divide by engendering healthy dialogue around the difficult themes found in artistic work focused on the experiences and costs of armed conflict.

I am also very much aware of the range of artistic and theatrical programs seeking to give voice to the veteran experience. Indeed, I've spent most of the last several years experiencing first-hand some of those programs. For our own part, over the past three years we have hosted award-winning fiction writers, poets, filmmakers, and dancers—all processing their experiences and/or perspectives of war through their art. And all of those engagements were wonderful. But none came close to the power and beauty of "Into Sunlight." From my vantage point in the audience, I could sense that everyone was gripped by the performance itself. Its depiction of the pangs of separation between a soldier and spouse was a particularly affective scene, one commented on by spouses and soldiers alike during the "talk-back" after the show. Likewise, the wonderfully choreographed scene known as "Hollerer's Run" was brilliantly executed and captivated the audience. I had the benefit of speaking to cadets and other audience members days after the event, and each person expressed not only great appreciation for the show as a whole but also some deeper connection to a specific moment or scene. I taught a couple of the cadets who were there, and they told me it was the best event they'd been exposed to at West Point. But the appeal of this show, I should emphasize, is not simply for a cadet at an undergraduate institution like West Point. It has universal appeal, and the civilians in the audience were just as impressed and emotionally affected as others. The testimony of one soldier in particular who had returned from Afghanistan less than a month before the performance stood out to me as perhaps the most raw and honest. He talked about that scene of separation and how it recalled to his mind the feeling of knowing that he might not return. It was an emotional night for him, but because I know him personally, I also know that it was important in terms of his own emotional transition back into life with his family. He'd been dealing with some emotional difficulties—precisely the kind that redeployed soldiers face—and the performance enabled him to take a step in the direction of reestablishing his balance in life.

The performance itself was uplifting in terms of its grace and beauty, but it was also sobering for its unyielding exploration of social discord and the effects of violence. It was honest and unflinching—yet respectful and full of a kind of artistic humility that is a rarity in an age of overblown personalities. Robin Becker bares her feelings openly, unashamed of being so deeply moved by David Maraniss's book: moved by the brotherhood of war, the solidarity of protest—the entire sweep of war's manipulation of humanity.

Whether military or civilian, "Into Sunlight" is not just worth one's time. It's a necessary experience in today's society, for it reflects with rare sincerity on the echoes of Vietnam as they reverberate in American life right now. At its best, art has the potential to heal. This is art at its best. I cannot recommend "Into Sunlight" in strong enough terms.

Sincerely,

Scott T. Krawczyk, Ph.D.
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Professor and Head
Department of English and Philosophy
United States Military Academy
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Photo: John Maniaci

Robin Becker Dance

Dance Teacher Magazine

Robin Becker Dance toured Vietnam with *Into Sunlight*.



When Dance Heals

Hofstra professor Robin Becker brings a dance of reconciliation to Vietnam. **BY RACHEL CALDWELL**

A group of dancers charges across the stage, a frantic flock of bodies running to the building intensity of drumbeats. Suddenly, the stage is transformed into a virtual battlefield: The dancers duck, dive to the floor and cover their heads, launching their bodies through space. Later, they come together downstage center and stand in a final moment of unity to face the audience, as if in defiance of the horrors they've just endured.

These images are from choreographer Robin Becker's *Into Sunlight*—an evening-length work about war. In September 2015, Becker and her cast of 16 dancers toured *Into Sunlight* through Vietnam for 10 days. Though she had reservations about how the work would be received in Vietnam, Becker hoped it would be a healing experience. The tour coincided with the anniversary of renewed diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Vietnam.

A Citizen Artist

"I tend to take on big topics," says Becker. "I believe in an artist being relevant to their time. I heard Yo-Yo Ma describe himself as a 'citizen artist.' I love that phrase."

When she isn't making work for her contemporary dance company, Robin Becker Dance, Becker teaches at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. A dance educator for 40 years, she teaches technique classes, choreography courses and a somatic practice called Continuum Movement. She has balanced her roles as an educator and artistic director successfully for 29 years, setting 30 works on her company to date.

Out of Darkness, Into Sunlight

Her impetus to create *Into Sunlight* came in 2003 when the U.S. went to war with Iraq. "I was so heartbroken," she says. "I felt that I needed to make a statement." She found inspiration in

David Maraniss' book *They Marched Into Sunlight: War and Peace, Vietnam and America, October 1967*, about a devastating ambush of a U.S. battalion and a student protest at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The book's insight into the experiences of the survivors and the deceased's family members deeply affected Becker.

"I became aware that many of my students had no idea that wars were going on, nor were they very interested at the time," says Becker. "Because of the educator in me, I wanted them to become more conscious." She selected a group of Hofstra students to dance alongside her company members and got to work creating *Into Sunlight*.

From West to East

After reaching out to Maraniss, who was eager to help get the project off the ground, Becker and her company were able to meet with some of the people featured in his book. The author even arranged for *Into Sunlight* to premiere at UW-Madison in 2011. It was RBD executive director Gloria Hage who saw the healing potential of *Into Sunlight* and felt that it should be performed in Vietnam. Since 2015 marked the 20th anniversary of renewed diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Vietnam, it seemed the ideal time to embark on a tour of the country. A Vietnamese artist Hage knew connected Robin Becker Dance with Vietnamese modern company Together Higher, and the two companies decided on a joint tour through three cities to promote healing and reconciliation between their respective nations.

In September, Becker and her company set out on a 10-day tour through

Hanoi, Ha Long Bay and Ho Chi Minh City. Becker also taught a master class at Vietnam Dance College. "It's a platitude that dance is the universal language, but my experience teaching there, especially with such a language barrier, was the deeper truth of that," she says. "It was such a beautiful experience to feel the common bond of movement and how clear a language it really is."

The Power of Dance

The response to *Into Sunlight* was phenomenal—the shows in Vietnam were completely sold out. "Seeing young people trying to embody a historical experience that is still continuing today really touched a lot of people," says Becker. Perhaps most rewarding, though, were the discussions that arose. Performances at UW-Madison, Hofstra University, and, later, the United States Military Academy at West Point and Vanderbilt University were followed by talkback sessions with the company, audiences and Maraniss. "They were opportunities for veterans to give voice to their experiences," says Becker.

As for the future of the work, "my hope is that this would be universal," she says. At press conferences in Vietnam, Becker was occasionally met with resistance by reporters. "They often grilled me about, 'Why are you coming to Vietnam with this piece about war? Do you only think about war when you think about Vietnam?'" she says. "I would just explain to them that I didn't set out to do a work about Vietnam. I set out to do a work about war and conflict in the world." She hopes to bring the piece to other countries, and a documentary film about *Into Sunlight* is in the works, set for release sometime this year. **DT**



Becker (in blue) surrounded by students of Vietnam Dance College

This page photo by John Maniaci; opposite page by Ron Hensel, courtesy of Becker



Photo: Whitney Browne

Robin Becker Dance

'Into Sunlight' Listings



The New Yorker

October 28, 2013

DANCE

Robin Becker / "Into Sunlight"

Becker's 2011 work is a modern-dance meditation on the loss and torments of war, inspired by David Maraniss's 2004 book, "They Marched Into Sunlight", about Vietnam and the Antiwar movement. Discussions with Maraniss and other guests follow the performances. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 800-982-2787, Oct. 25 at 8, Oct. 26 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 27 at 2.)



Dance Listings

October 24 – 30, 2013

Robin Becker Dance French Institute Alliance Francaise, Florence Gould Hall, 55 E 59th St between Madison and Park Aves (800-982-2787, intosunlight.org) Subway: N, Q, R to Fifth Ave – 59th St; 4, 5, 6 to 59th St. 8pm; \$25-\$35. Becker's newest work, *Into Sunlight*, takes inspiration from David Maraniss's book *They Marched Into Sunlight*, which juxtaposes two events that occurred simultaneously in 1967: an American ambush in Vietnam, and the violent antiwar protests at the University of Wisconsin. The work will be followed by a discussion with Maraniss, Madison mayor Paul Soglin and Delta Company commander Clark Welch.



Photo: Whitney Browne

Robin Becker Dance

'Into Sunlight' Listings

WEEKEND **Arts** MOVIES PERFORMANCES

The New York Times

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2013

THE **Listings**

Dance

ROBIN BECKER (Friday through Sunday) Ms. Becker's "Into Sunlight" takes its title from the tome that inspired it, David Maraniss's "They Marched Into Sunlight," a history of the Vietnam era anchored in two geographically separate, culturally intertwined events of 1967. Ms. Becker will not try to reproduce those 500-plus pages but rather to evoke their most affecting moments through less story-driven means. Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 2 and 8 p.m., Sunday at 2 p.m., Florence Gould Hall, French Institute Alliance Française, 55 East 59th Street, Manhattan, (800) 982-2787, robinbeckerdance.org; \$25 to \$35. (Burke)