

...of the Muslim bowed toward Mecca, in silent and spoken reverence of the Holy Qur'an;

...of the Jew bowed toward the Torah, in silent and spoken reverence of the ancient word;

...of the Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Shinto, American Indian, Sikh, Baha'i; of the secular humanist, bravely defining a righteous path and bravely aspiring to walk along the path with confidence and a steady compass but not or not necessarily with a deity;

...of the noise of the demonstration, of impatience, of profound patience, of a goal in sight, of obstacles in mind, of certainty of purpose;

...of return, of evocation of memory and tears at the joining of voices and hearts with the alma mater: "Far Above Cayuga's Waters;"

...of despair and the end of life: in a bed high above the Upper East Side beneath bright lights and bright sheets; near, quite near to newfound hope and joy at discovery, treatment and cure;

...of problems conceived and solved and then explained;

...of first-year students pulled into the heart of the campus, of the family;

...of the impoverished child in a rural upstate school district, hoping for, dependent upon and deserving of the efforts of economic development, of extension, of extending hearts and business plans, and venture capital and the chance of education, no matter the cost;

...of steps on dusty road, cobblestone, or pavement in Doha, in Rome, in Arcibo, on Appledore Island, in Geneva, in Beijing, in Albany, in Washington, in New York City, in Singapore, in upstate counties, towns, cities, schools, vineyards, in Ithaca, in Darfur.

These are the silent, unknowable rhythms of Cornell University. It is a dance, no more, no less, a dance:

...of education and discovery, of serving each other and strongly disagreeing, of "thinking otherwise."

Today, September seventh, two thousand six, on the one hundred thirty-third anniversary of Carl Becker's birth near Waterloo, Iowa, as we near the two hundredth anniversary of Ezra Cornell's birth, as we glimpse the first, hazy outlines of our upcoming sesquicentennial, let us now accept all of the rhythms, music, planning, reconsideration, redrafting, replanning, restarting and consummation – the dance that is and must be – Cornell.

What is dance?

"A series of motions and steps, usually performed to music."

"To move rhythmically usually to music, using prescribed or improvised steps and gestures."
But beyond literal meanings, what are dances?

Symbolic rituals, modes of soulful communication, dance and music connect with our intellectual, subliminal, and spiritual selves. Can the arts and other culture bridge our conflicts, can they help us to know each other in some way, hard to define but undeniably true? Among all the other inquiry, discovery and creativity in our universities, there is dance, there is music, there is the seed of public culture that transcends the immediate, the routine, that of which we claim to be so sure but from which we are in truth quite disconnected.

In his book, "Dance: Rituals of Experience," Jamake Highwater concludes, "We stand on the horizon of a new century, when dance has achieved an unexpected reunion with the rites of our most ancient ancestry. It has emerged as something ever new and ever old."

What is the relevance of dance to our everyday lives and to our cultural, social and political milieu? Dance is a primary, not a derivative, expression of our interpersonal aspirations and dreams. As exemplified by the activist dance groups in New York City in the 1920's, 30's and 40's, documented and interpreted by Ellen Graff in "Stepping Left," dance has long been an effective political expression. More primal, dance may be viewed as an intimately personal mode of interaction with self and others, based on the most innate and ubiquitous of phenomena: rhythms.

Movement, rhythm, repetition and predictability, the primeval place of the cycles of our world, of our lives. The mysterious circadian rhythms of our days and nights, the cycles of the cosmos, of the deciduous trees, of our children, our parents, our creativity, our hearts. The science that underlies all of these: this is the stuff of inquiry, done passionately at our dear Cornell. Beyond the science, or perhaps underpinning it in ways not yet clear, are the movement and rhythm of the poem, the calligraphic journey, the dance, the music written by humans or nature. These rhythms, too, are part of our Cornell.

And the rhythm, the dance must go on...

An evening in May, a recital of "early music" at Barnes Hall, a recital for a student about to receive her Doctor of Musical Arts degree. "Early" instruments, too: viol, violone, theorbo, harpsichord. And, even on a rainy, end-of-semester Saturday evening, a small but enthusiastic crowd – lovers of quiet, thoughtful music.

That's the breathtaking symmetry of a university: a few blocks away from the 17th century music is Duffield Hall, a place in which resides 21st century technology and 22nd century thinking. All of this seeking, all of this discovery, if you will, under "one roof." Is there any place like a university?

I think not, but how? What are the elements that produce this magic?

Engagement of learners, mostly young, motivated by curiosity and by many things other than curiosity, but highly motivated, particularly here at Cornell;

Scholars of all stripes, attitudes, backgrounds; listeners, talkers, seers, seekers, complainers, calm, terrified, often driven, brilliant, always courageous;

Community people, an essential set of neighbors, colleagues, partners in the town, city, county and surrounding area;

Merchants, a lifeblood of the community, serving needs, creating opportunities;

Staff employees, scientists, library professionals, custodians, administrators, groundskeepers, planners, secretaries, administrators, carpenters, painters, the human structure that makes all of the education and discovery possible and that reaches out so effectively beyond the campus;

The place, the land, the campus, the topography, the peculiar sky, the same sky gazed at by the newest undergraduate and the grizzled president;

The idea: a concept, sometimes idealized, sometimes quite imprecise and difficult to resolve, the idea of a place of education, discovery and engagement, a place of dreams, whether those of the parent, the student, the alumna/us, the trustee, the legislator, the governor, the professor; and

...the most important element: optimism – the belief that there will be a tomorrow and more to follow and that, somehow, the actions and decisions taken today will affect that tomorrow. Yes, each application by a high school student, each grant application, each fresh, untouched canvas, each blank sheet of music paper, each empty computer screen, each dollar of philanthropic support, each course syllabus – is an act of great and profound optimism. This is, above all, our chief motivator and work product: optimism.

These, then, are the elements. By complex mechanisms, by interactions and catalysis sufficiently obscure to confound even a Cornell chemist, these elements combine to produce that most improbable and most magnificent of compounds: Cornell University.

My part in all this? What is the president – what role should that person play?

The chief, most reliably optimistic functionary – often, as a friend noted, one who is more optimistic than the facts may support;

The visionary? More like chief translator and transducer of the faculty's aspirations and vision, of the staff's commitment and creativity, of the student's unceasing and wonderful questioning – a reflection of the university's core, its people.

A translator: someone who bridges different languages, different cultures, sometimes far different perspectives on the same scene. Nowhere is that set of differences more profound and variegated than at a research university at its best, than at Cornell University. An institution whose faculty were so aptly described by Carl Becker as those who "think otherwise." A proud legacy of thinking otherwise within these walls. How fitting to reaffirm the beauty of that marketplace of ideas today, on the anniversary of Carl Becker's birthday. Happy birthday, Carl, and thank you.

The university, a place of differences, of enormous complexity, of traditions deep and proud, of promise. What can one person, what can I possibly add to this great ship, afloat these 141 years?

What can I possibly do to continue and even improve the course of this distinguished, highly valued, prestigious, and bewilderingly complex mix of 21,000 students, 14 colleges, some 10,000 faculty and staff, with footprints in North America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Europe and Asia, this web of dreams and skills and possibilities?

What can I offer? Two things and two things only: a careful listening, translation and support of the vision of Cornellians, and a re-establishment and strengthening of the optimism that underlies our every action.

But how can one be optimistic in our world? We may speak of multiculturalism, of the marketplace of ideas that is embodied in and by a university, but what can be done to translate that ideal of multiculturalism to a world in which the very differences that we celebrate on a university campus are often the distinctions that lead to territoriality, resentment, fear, violence, death? Not a new problem, not a new observation, but one that challenges us to find a path, a way toward each other. Is the answer in faith? In a particular view of what may be possible by surrendering to a common belief and a common direction? By surrendering to love?

According to McKenna and Cowan in "Keepers of the Story," there are repositories of local tradition that may give us ideas, pathways forward. They write,

"In every culture, in every geographical place, among every people, there are individuals who are entrusted with the words that belong to that place and group. They hold the heritage, the experiences, and the stories that express who they are and how they stand in the universe. These are the keepers of the Story. Their lives are dedicated to preserving, to keeping true, to guarding and protecting what is not theirs alone, but what has been given into their care by others."

The documentation of these stories and the conclusions and directions that may be derived as well as the constructs, cognitive and philosophical, have been accomplished in myriad ways. These ways responded to the human need for a direction to follow, a context into which to place the bewildering and sometimes painful varying circumstances of life.

To pose the question anew: What manner of paths have been developed to give a notion of deliberateness and of purpose, if not optimism, to life? One common path is that of religion, of belief, of the optimism born of trust and surrender, of belief in love, of a higher purpose and a higher plan.

[MUSIC PERFORMED BY THE COMBINED CHOIRS OF CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH AND ST. PAUL'S METHODIST CHURCH: "With A Little Love"]

Another path is that of surrender not only to a deity but to an even older tradition, to the long shadow cast by our families who have gone before, the wisdom of those who have learned from joy but also from unspeakable experiences. Those who have learned that life may go one way, or another, but that one must find a way to move forward – even, perhaps to be happy.

[MUSIC PERFORMED BY THE CORNELL KLEZMER ENSEMBLE: "Tzi Ozy"]

Yet another path results from the joining of cultures – in musical terms, the fusion –between the hearts of different traditions; in effect, surrendering to the reality that from each tradition, from each ritual, may and must come a fusion of worldviews, a bridge between cultures – an arch – in Arabic, a *qantara*.

[MUSIC PERFORMED BY SIMON SHAHEEN AND COLLEAGUES: "Saraab"]

What of those who do not believe, who share the philosophical underpinnings of the major civilizations, but who do not subscribe to a higher power or deity? One representation of this is the secular humanism movement and its seeking to "...develop secular and humanistic alternatives to theistic religion," to quote Paul Kurtz. Whatever one's belief system, the philosophical infrastructure of most societies has as its core the desire to care for one another and to develop a caring community. Can the concept of a mutually caring environment be realized and actualized? A brief perusal of daily headlines casts doubt on the likelihood of this occurring. Yet we in academia, by the nature of our endeavor, are inherently optimistic about our ability to effect a better future.

What is the appropriate perspective of the university? Inward looking? After all, we are a complex, large community of tens of thousands of students, faculty, staff, hundreds of thousands of alumni/ae, and millions who depend on our education and discovery, now and in the future, no matter that they have never stepped on the hill or even heard of our grand institution. At the core of this are the campuses, the very places that comprise Cornell.

But outward, that's where we are surely turned. To the imagination of the high school student, the hopeful parent, the patient, the client, the hungry, the terrified, the poor and the poorer, the refugee, the wounded soldier, the more grievously wounded heart, these, too, are our charges. Do we respond to these needs?

As all universities, we effect change in our world most importantly and most consistently by education of motivated, well-prepared students who will become more critical thinkers and by research and discovery relevant to the science and culture of our world. The chief architects of these contributions? Not presidents but the faculty, staff and students who comprise the university.

Although all are important, it is the faculty who turn the potential energy of millennia of scholarship and reflection into the kinetic energy of current education and discovery, of research, scholarship and creative activity. As the dancer turns the potential energy of the choreographer's concept into the kinetic energy of the dance. And make no mistake, the faculty dance is hugely improvisational, not to be constrained, not to be managed, but to be respected, nurtured, supported and set free. As our own Professor of Dance Joyce Morgenroth has said in describing the varied approaches of the innovative choreographers interviewed in her book, "Speaking of Dance:"

"No philosophy, style, or method unites these choreographers into a common pursuit, except that all are adventurers and visionaries. Their work is as different from each other's as a gurgling stream is from a torrent, as a crossword puzzle is from a poem. Cumulatively they have changed

the face of dance precisely because as individuals they have ventured out and invented previously unimagined ways of making and presenting dances."

So might it be said of the physicist, historian, linguist, scholar of gender studies, composer, pediatrician, poet, chemist, mathematician, philosopher, neurosurgeon, economist, molecular biologist, marketing professor and all of their colleagues. The context of each dance is the same, but the details of each dancer's movements are never the same and never predictable. For it is the unpredictability of discovery and creativity that defines Cornell and that will continue to do so, generation after generation. What a joy, what a privilege, what a dream fulfilled it is to be here among you and to be your colleague – to participate in the choreography.

Of the many humbling aspects of the opportunity to participate in Cornell's leadership, one is surely the legacy of those leaders who have previously served as president. Attention should be paid to their words, in the past, but still timely:

Dale Corson: "Somehow, we must discover new and better ways for more people to live together on earth, to preserve - and to create where they do not now exist - the human values which make life tolerable, to avoid excessive regimentation and at the same time provide adequate privacy and freedom for the individual."

Frank Rhodes: "Unless we honor our national commitment to make higher education attainable by all who can benefit from it, we face the possibility of a nation divided in fundamental ways – by race, ethnic group, educational background, economic achievement and social commitment. A nation so divided will be unable to serve the great ideals that brought it into existence and unable to realize its hope for the future."

Hunter Rawlings: "Cornell is a place where students are introduced to most everything they're going to meet in global society. It is an intellectual place, a cultural place, a social place, an entrepreneurial place. It is a place that brings together the young and the old. It is a place committed to the advancement of both scientific thought and humane values. It is a place of religious breadth, of racial and ethnic diversity, of academic endeavors that embrace the whole of human thought. It is the most vibrant and most complex of American institutions."

Jeff Lehman: "We must recruit and enroll the most talented students in the world. We must expose others around the world to the research and teaching of Cornell faculty. We must have outstanding faculty who study the histories, cultures, politics, and economies of every part of the world. Our curriculum must be rich with offerings about foreign languages and cultures as well as the many languages and cultures that are found within our nation. We must continue to expand our presence around the globe."

How better to lead the future of Cornell than to honor its past, to ensure the continuity of its leaders' visions? For this reason, it is an honor and pleasure today for Provost Martin, the Board of Trustees and me to announce the establishment of the Jeffrey Sean Lehman Fund for Scholarly Exchange with China. This faculty and graduate student exchange program will fund several projects per year involving substantive interaction between Cornell and the finest higher

education institutions in China. It is an honor to so recognize my colleague and predecessor, Jeff Lehman.

Now, looking forward, and particularly to this academic year, I respectfully ask the campus community to join me in conceiving and notating the choreography that will frame the future of our university. Throughout this year, I will explore with you, the faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends, critics and neighbors of Cornell, how best to express, through our individual and collective movements, the university's commitment to five basic propositions:

1. **To continue and accelerate the transformation of the undergraduate experience at Cornell, to achieve our goal of making Cornell the finest research university and provider of undergraduate education in the world.**

The goal is a worthy one, the steps taken already including decades of clear focus on undergraduate education, even within the most robust and comprehensive of research programs, conducted by enormously talented faculty engaging in research, scholarship and creative activity. The creation of the North Campus residential initiative, further progress on the West Campus, all are clearly in the right direction. But now, what specific steps should be taken to more meaningfully integrate the research and creative focus of the university into the undergraduate curriculum? Should we mandate a research or creative experience for every undergraduate, no matter their major? Should funds be raised aggressively solely to support those undergraduates who do seek a research experience? And what of our commitment to diversity within our student body? How can we further improve the climate of our campus so that all will feel fully a part of the Cornell family?

2. **To optimize the environment for our staff.**

The talented nonfaculty staff of the university are not only supportive of the faculty's endeavors, but represent the university in many critical endeavors. Whether in administration, extension, research, teaching or many other areas of our academic and programmatic lives, the staff is critical to the university's foundation. Are we doing what is needed to become the employer we aspire to be? Do our administrative procedures result in fair treatment of all employees, including recognition and rewards, professional development and work/life balance? Do we respond appropriately to the needs of dual-career couples? Does our campus climate support employee diversity? Are our employees' voices clearly heard in the dialogue creating the future of Cornell?

3. **To draw the disparate geography of Cornell's several campuses into one community – in essence, one campus.**

Cornell is indisputably one of the most distinguished institutions of education, discovery and service in the world. Yet, further improvement and innovation will undoubtedly occur in part at the intersections of disciplines, curricula, colleges and campuses. Even if a current academic cliché, nonetheless, interdisciplinarity is one of the paths toward the future of critical thought in every discipline. Surely not the only path, but one important one. If we accept this premise, then it follows that more must be done to meaningfully integrate activities of the superb Weill

Medical College of Cornell University and its campus in Qatar with the truly outstanding sciences on the Ithaca campus; those of the forward-looking activities of our Geneva campus with those in Ithaca and New York City.

And many other examples might be drawn. Are we putting up or tolerating needless administrative barriers to integration of the campuses? Is a Cornell student an enrollee of a comprehensive university or of a single college? Do our policies and procedures support or inhibit the potential to bring Cornell's many and various strengths together for an even more distinguished future? In the current, difficult funding environment for the sciences, further advancement and true distinction in the near term likely will occur not by growth in the national investment in research and development but by our achieving a greater competitiveness – if you will, a larger market share of those funds. While we do all within our power to effect a sustained increase in the federal investment in science, are we organized, managed and led so as to permit our talented faculty to realize the best outcome of its efforts?

4. To appropriately support the arts, humanities and social sciences on our campuses.

From afar and from within, Cornell's physical and life sciences are superb, universally recognized to be among the best in the nation and the world. Our stated initiatives should and do follow this distinction as do our fund-raising goals and capital projects.

But what of the arts, humanities and social sciences? From afar and within, these disciplines also show present distinction and the prospect of greater growth and improvement. Are we thinking broadly and specifically enough about the future of these disciplines? What strategies might be used to replace those distinguished colleagues likely to retire in the next 10-15 years?

In the last several years, enormous effort has been expended to enhance the social sciences, deciding upon key investments and soliciting faculty input regarding needed infrastructure. Are we now moving quickly and decisively to implement plans and generate appropriate funding? Do our aspirations include the value of the disciplines in the arts, humanities and social sciences as important in their own right?

It is another cliché to say that no institution can be all things to all people but, if there was ever an institution that continually strives to offer "any person...any study," it is Cornell and these offerings and distinction must include and emphasize not only the sciences, but the arts, humanities and social sciences. These disciplines need greater visibility at the highest levels of the university and, as in all other areas of our institution, they need focus and support.

5. Last and perhaps most important from a global perspective: How can Cornell draw inspiration and resolve from its land-grant mission to use its enormous and varied resources and talents to positively impact the world outside our gates?

The academic life of Cornell, as in the case of all institutions of higher education of which I am aware, is largely an inward-looking life. Great attention and effort are required to maintain such broad and deep distinction. Nonetheless, we are most actualized as a faculty, staff and student body when our efforts affect those beyond our boundaries. Whether the focus is on diversity and

the campus climate or on Ithaca, Tompkins County, New York State, the United States or the global community, Cornell must look ever outward, ever more broadly. Are we the neighbors we must be to those in our region of upstate New York? Are our myriad resources arrayed appropriately among internal and external opportunities and demands? How can we do our part to improve the environment for K -12 education in our region and elsewhere? How can we be more effective participants in the economic health of our community and region?

How can the expertise and heart of Cornell be felt in the inner cities of our country and in Darfur? Recently I announced the divestment of Cornell resources in oil companies operating in the Sudan. But as pointed out by wise colleagues in our Board of Trustees and elsewhere, divestment is not enough; Provost Martin and I are pursuing other avenues where Cornell can be a positive force in that and other troubled parts of our world. In the coming months, we will continue to seek the good counsel of our faculty, staff and students as to ways by which the Cornell community can effectively educate itself about this and other areas of Africa; sponsor serious discussions to include Sudanese academics and other knowledgeable colleagues; and contribute, within our capabilities as an educational institution, to the improvement of the educational and related environment in that country. This is a continuation of decades of carefully planned uses of Cornell resources to work with colleagues and neighbors in developing countries to raise the human capital of their societies.

Dance is a primary, not a derivative, expression of our interpersonal aspirations and dreams. Where is the end of the dance? Need it ever end?

As we work together to create a rhythm of optimism to catch us in our personal and institutional moments of doubt; as we explore ways to calibrate the various cadences that together guide the pace of our movement into the future, we must set our collective vision such that there will never be a boundary to where our imagination may wander, nor artificial limits to what we might accomplish.

One alone, a dyad, more, many, a society of dancers are we.