

BOOSTING MY CREATIVE PROCESS IN CHOREOGRAPHY:
ANALYZING RELATED WORK, INTEGRATING METHODS OF SELECT
MASTER CHOREOGRAPHERS, CREATING A DANCE

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Integrating the Methods of Select Master Choreographers, Creating a Dance

During a ten-week period at the University of Oregon I created a socio-politically based dance work, *The Big Red Button*. I researched theories about the creative process, components of creativity, creative products, and creative people. I researched a selection of master choreographers in order to integrate their methods of creation with my own. Finally, I created a dance piece with students from the University of Oregon which was shared with the public in a live performance. In this document, I discuss this exploration into my creative process in dance with the intention of understanding more about it, expanding upon the processes I possess as a choreographer, and attempting to find out if the creative process can be enriched, yielding new methods, new products, and new perspectives on creating a dance work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis document details an investigation of my creative process within choreography, in order to come to a deeper understanding of how, when, where, what, and why I create the choreography that I do. It revealed many aspects of the process in regards to myself as creator. It also yielded new perspective into a broader context, beyond myself, of the creative process, products of creativity, and the creative individual.

The investigation was conducted through the creation, documentation, and analysis of *The Big Red Button*, a dance theater piece. The investigation, conclusions, and discussion were informed by existing theory, my thesis committee, and the related works cited. The investigation had three central components: myself as the artist choreographer, the choreography, and the methods used to construct the work. There were also supporting components that made the sharing and scope of the work possible, including: the dancers, the audience, the production, and contributors. The choreographic creation phase employed six student dancers, occurred over 10 weeks at the University of Oregon Dance Department, and concluded with a performance.

I will discuss the following threads: myself as artist/creator, theory that supported my research, select master choreographers who I chose to integrate their methods within my own, creating the work including the presentation of it, and my creative discoveries and further considerations.

Artist Background

I began dancing at 18 years old, late by most dance career professional standards. But, I was determined and motivated to become a dance artist upon seeing *The Hendrix Project* by Bebe Miller (1991) and subsequently meeting Kay Fulton, my first dance instructor, who that evening invited me to her dance classes at the Santa Barbara City College. I was also influenced/inspired by other choreographers in the early stages of my dance experience including: David Parsons, Alonzo King, Twyla Tharp, Jose Limon.

After seven years of studying dance in the US and abroad in Germany at the Folwang University of the Arts (FUA) and in Russia at the Bolshoi Academy of Ballet, I became a professional dancer in NYC with the Dance Theatre of Harlem's second company, Dancing Through Barriers Ensemble (DTBE). Up until that moment I had experienced many different genres of dance as a student and as an audience member. I went through at least three culture shocks in the seven-year span that preceded the beginning of my professional career: when I left from California to attend FUA in Germany, and when I arrived in Russia to study classical ballet, and finally when I returned to the US arriving in NYC to audition and begin working for DTBE.

I have since experienced more culture shocks, most recently when I moved from NYC after living and working there as a performer and as the director and choreographer of a small dance company, to Eugene, OR to begin graduate school. I realize now that I have been busy making artistic choices since I began dancing, even if nearly implausible in the beginning, but there were both internal and external reasons behind the path I have taken as an artist. In total, I have dedicated twenty-three years of my life to rigorous dance experiences. Fifteen of those years went into the development and practice of

dance pedagogy; for the last ten years I've rigorously attended to the practice of choreography.

This thesis examines the processes of creativity and the circumstances, logic, and reasons behind the decisions made in my choreographic project. I know that I must have established patterns as to how I make choreographic decisions, just as I did as a younger, less developed student of dance; so another vital thread to this thesis is to expand on the processes that I already possess integrating methods from select master choreographers and researching theories of creativity. Additionally, I enrolled in two courses outside of the dance department, "Lighting for the Stage" and "Motion Graphics" to gain new perspectives on the ways artists render their ideas in other fields, in hopes that the experience would offer new perspectives on my creative process.

Finally, for me to start the creation process is to have a problem to solve or a question that needs an answer, in this case it became a question of subjective sociopolitical relevance. It started with an image of a diverse America, "*The Star Spangled Banner*," and my contemplation of how I identify myself in that context.

Theory

Before embarking on the experimentation/creation phase of my thesis project, I explored: creativity, creative individuals, creative processes and products, and the internal components essential for creative processes and outcomes. I wanted to understand what creativity is, what it means to be creative, what is a creative process, and what makes me a creative individual.

Existing theory, Amabile, Teresa M. (1983), suggests that when an effective combination of the components of creativity reach critical mass varying levels of creative

potential can be realized in creative individuals, processes and products. There are also theories supporting the existence of different types of creativity within a field as well as ways of measuring them qualitatively and quantitatively, for example the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (1966).

And, although there are probably numerous systems created for measuring creative contributions, there is no known way to measure creative products and processes definitively.

I have also researched theory that addresses what factors lead to creative sparks/ideas and what catalyzes creativity and/or creative breakthroughs.

Theories to be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 are:

Teresa M. Amabile's *Componential Theory of Creativity*, Tina Seelig's model of creativity, *Innovation Engine*, Howard Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Sternberg and Lubart's *Investment Theory of Creativity* and Sternberg, Kaufman, and Pretz's *Propulsion Theory of Creative Contributions*. Each theory or model of creativity sheds light on the many dimensions in which creativity exists and as to the types of creative contributions into which they can be sorted.

In the next section I will discuss the choreographic masters I have selected to support my investigation through the review and applied integration of their methods to my own process of creation. So far, the theory discussed suggests that a set of criteria exists for an individual's creative capacities to be unlocked and realized. The question I pose is: If theoretical criteria for creativity are met or nearly satisfied, might integrating the methods of choreographic masters increase the odds of manifesting a creative breakthrough in choreography?

Select Master Choreographers

Next, I discuss the select master choreographers' methods that were integrated into the processes of my dance creation.

Pina Bausch

I used Pina's use of large props, and guided improvisations that search the dancers' personal experiences to be developed as anchor points for the work. Using improvisation and prop to explore the human condition.

Bill T. Jones

I used Jones' method of creating through text, first written and then spoken and integrated with dance movement. I will use short interview processes and movement improvisation to develop themes that create a sociopolitical framework/context. a social commentary where the content of the work comes from the experiences of real people's lives, often his dancers

Wayne McGregor

I used McGregor's (body-to-body transfer) (mental architecture) and (tasking).
Creating in the cognitive (mental) space

Twyla Tharp

I used Tharp's crossover method of incorporating two or more movement styles into one work, the use of pedestrian and other non-dancer movement. I will also use her method of discipline by creating a daily ritual to help keep me inside the creative process, in the form of a twenty-minute, daily meditation on the project. Mixing together movement from sports and other non-dancer movement.

Each of the choreographers and their methods selected for integration into my creative process has a unique approach to choreography through the individual nuances of their creative process. Their contributions to the field of dance are significant enough to be celebrated widely earning them international merit.

Each of their methods is novel to me before this investigation of the creative process in choreography. They all used the creative process in their choreography in very different ways in order to express their artistic visions. In each case they moved past conventional methods to create a new way of making dance.

I have attempted to do the same with this project. I integrated their choreographic processes into my creation. It might seem counterintuitive to use the methods of those who are well known because their methods and results are no longer novel years after their works have been made public and widely shared. But, it may be of interest to note that highly creative persons throughout history have a deep understanding of conventional methods prior to their creative breakthroughs. With this project, I anticipated finding myself in a new mindset that can allow for novel and meaningful perspectives of a creative process in choreography.

Statement of Purpose

An exploration of my creative process in choreography to expand my understanding of it, by: analyzing related theoretical work, integrating the methods of select master choreographers, and creating a dance piece.

Significance of Study

This is an investigative research study into my creative process in choreography. I will be using myself and my choreography as the subject. My hope is that I will gain valuable insight into how my creative process functions in choreography and expanding its potential by integrating the methods from choreographic masters with my own methods.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED WORK

In this chapter, I will discuss theory that supports the purpose of my investigation and then I will discuss the select master choreographers, whose methods were integrated into my creative process. This thesis is an investigation into my own creative process of choreography, in order to come to a deeper understanding of how, when, where, what, and why I create the choreography that I do. It has revealed many aspects of the process in regards to myself as creator. It also inspired a new perspective of the creative process and the creative individual. The investigation was conducted through creation, documentation, and analysis of a concert dance work.

The investigation, conclusions, and discussions were also informed by existing theory, and the related works cited. The investigation had three central components: myself as the artist choreographer, the choreography, and the methods used to construct the work. There were also supporting components: the dancers, the audience, the production, and contributors. The choreographic experimentation and creation phase that concluded in performance, occurred over ten weeks at the University of Oregon Dance Department.

Theory

Before embarking on the experimentation phase of this thesis project, I researched sometheory surrounding creativity. I wanted to understand what creativity is. What it means to be creative? What is a creative process? Are there different kinds of creativity? And, what makes us creative individuals and groups? Even though my research was

conducted in the field of choreography I looked at research and theory suggests about understanding more broadly: creativity, the creative individual, the creative group, and the creative process, which in turn has allowed me to think about creativity in broad terms.

Existing theory suggests that certain criteria catalyze creativity, creative moments, and sustained creative processes. The ability to call something creative requires that two qualities be present: it must be novel and it must be useful, (Morris Stein 1953). This definition is widely accepted but I will refer to the term, useful as, appropriate to some goal [Teresa M. Amiable], and keep the use of novel as it were.

I will discuss theory about: creativity, the creative process, the creative individual, and types of creativity in broad terms and as it applies specifically choreography.

Much of the research into creativity has been conducted by psychologists in their search to understand more about it as a cognitive process or combination of processes interacting with internal and external articles. There are many theories available on this broad topic but I have narrowed my selection to include theory that supports my thesis research.

Using one such creative process model identified by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) there are five steps: preparation, incubation, insight, evaluation, and elaboration. I will go through an explanation of each stage of the process but would suggest that this process is not necessarily linear, meaning the sequence of the steps can varied from one individual to another. Additionally, there are several models of a creative process as we will see later in this thesis document that reflect the many ways we as humans can think about problem solving and finding.

Preparation, is where a problem is identified or a question is formulated and information is gathered about the problem. Incubation, is the second step where the information you've gathered seeps into your subconscious about the problem you are solving.

Insight, is where the preparation and incubation have germinated effectively in your subconscious utilizing your cognitive processes to manifest a possible solution in your conscious mind. Evaluation, will require rigorous trial and error to get your solution right. Elaboration, is a final step in the process. At this point you have identified not only the problem you want to solve, found a solution, and synthesized its effectiveness, you will need to finalize it by sharing with an audience, the culminating result of the creative process.

I employed this model to help me keep track of my progress during the creation phase and form analysis

after concluding that a five-step model to my creative process would be useful. I wanted to understand more about what components would catalyze creative moments and breakthroughs.

Teresa M. Amabile is a Baker Foundation Professor at Harvard Business School, whose research in psychology led to her publishing the *Componential Theory of Creativity* (1983).

This theory has three components that are concerned primarily with the individual and one concerning the environment in which the individual exists. The first three components at the individual level are: "domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and intrinsic task motivation." The final component she suggests is an external

influence, “the social environment in which the individual is working.” Amabile’s theory suggests one should have a level of technical skills, knowledge, expertise, intelligence, and talent within the domain they are working. According to many researchers in this field including Howard Gardner (1993), ten years is a sufficient time to become masterful in a specific domain.

The individual should also have creatively relevant processes to bear on the problem. This would include their personality affording them the ability to take risks, think independently, access new perspectives on problems, and finally discipline work ethic and ability to generate ideas. A central tenet of the theory is intrinsic motivation, the will to solve a problem based on a personal interest as opposed to an obligatory action or to receive a form of compensation. Amabile suggests that those who are motivated internally are more creative than those who are not.

Finally, the last central component to the *Componential Theory of Creativity* (1983) is the social environment or work environment. Amabile, suggests that creativity can be blocked for reasons that are outside of the control of the individual. An example may be a work environment that only allows one method of problem solving; this wouldn’t leave much room for the creative mind.

Tina Seelig, a Professor of the Practice in the Department of Management Science and Engineering (MS&E) at Stanford University, gives lectures and presentations on being creative. She has proposed a model of creativity, the *Innovation Engine*. Seelig’s model suggests that similarly to Amabile’s that there are higher potentials for creative breakthroughs when certain criteria are met. Her model lies in two tiers. The first tier is personal and contains three central parts that interact to conduct creative fertility. Seelig

places attitude, knowledge, and imagination at the core and culture, resources, and habitat overlapping from the outer tier.

Using her own model, Seelig claims that rigidity in society can get in the way of creative breakthroughs or innovation. She identifies that mistakes, for example, and the way they are viewed should change. I agree with Seelig, because as she puts it a mistake is not only just the wrong answer, it is an answer. Even wrong answers are data that can be used to inform the wealth of information going forward in solving a problem.

This is in my view a critical component to solving complex problems where a lot of information is needed to find an answer. The creation of a dance is a perfect example, there are many ways to go about it and to find the way that makes the most sense may require a lot of mistakes to help discover the “right” and “wrong” direction to invest your creative resources in. When I arrived in Germany I was frequently lost. I couldn’t read, write, or speak German and this made for a traumatic experience. But, I learned a great deal each time I made a mistake, effectively building a kind of map of my German experience.

I would like to consider what theories about creativity suggest as factors that contribute to why some individuals are more prolific than others in their creative output. There are several different theories regarding what criteria catalyze an individual’s creativity. There are also theories on different types of creativity as well as measuring them qualitatively and quantitatively. If creativity can be measured by how novel and useful its processes or product are, how do you measure them effectively?

There are numerous schools of thought on how to measure the elementary components of creative products but depending on the level of impact a process or

product has on its audience/domain relates directly to the level of knowledge and understanding those judging these processes and products at the moment of judgment, as laid out in the Systems Model of Creativity, Abuhamdeh, Sami, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2014). This is not to say that this judgment cannot change as new information develops casting new light on previous judgment whether negatively or positively. It is to say however that at the time of judgment when a process or product is presented it's assigned a value by those other than the creator(s) and this makes judgment validating or undermining its value.

I want to look at the "Theory of Multiple Intelligences" by Howard Gardner (1983). Gardner's theory suggests that we possess individual modes and capabilities to learn, understand and interpret the world we live in order to help us yield creative solutions to very different problems. Gardner suggests that standardized tests, such as I.Q. tests, are not the all-encompassing way to measure one's intelligence but that by recognizing each individual's intellectual traits there could be large implications for altering the methods for measuring intelligence. This brings me back to discussing the ways in which we are creative.

According to Gardner (1993) we possess nine intelligences in unique portions; musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential. Collectively these intelligences help us to identify and sort information, I came to the conclusion that when we are creative there are also many types of creative thought processes from person to person. Finally, when thinking of all the artistic problems that are solved through a

creative process and seeing the variety of outcomes or products, I believe there is merit in Gardner's theory. It has a direct impact on the creative process and inherently its outputs.

All of these theories also rely on an individual's experiences to some degree. Where did you grow up? Who with? At what level of society? Were you poor or rich? listening to music frequently? And was it classical or jazz? These are questions that can help map our personal experiences and influence us greatly by tracing the roots in our existence that we can later access for future experiences or as Tharp call it an artist's DNA.

But wait, there is still the issue of why I would want to embark on such an artistic challenge and for that I want to discuss Robert J. Sternberg's *Investment Theory of Creativity*. In it Sternberg makes a case for creative individuals making a conscious decision to be creative by buying low and selling high in the arena of ideas. I will then discuss a second theory he calls *Propulsion Theory of Creative Contributions*, which occurs once the decision has been made to be creative, the creation can be considered sorted into eight different types of creativity. With investment theory, a confluence of components must work together to enable creativity.

The theory suggests that creative individuals find ideas that are unpopular or unknown to the domain. They convince others in their field to embrace their ideas through effective creations and move on to the next idea. Almost identical to Seelig's Innovation Engine Sternberg's theory has six components: knowledge, thinking styles, personality, motivation, environment, and confluence. Sternberg believes that creative pursuits are a personal decision that one must make as a first step, the willingness to

create. As one has identified that one is going to be creative, one must decide what type of creative contribution one will make.

Within Sternberg's *Propulsion Theory of Creative Contributions* there are eight ways creative outputs can be sorted: replication (proving that the field is where it should be), redefinition (an attempt to redefine where the field is), forward incrementation (moving the field in the current direction its headed), advance forward incrementation (attempt to move the field in the direction its headed beyond where others are prepared to take it), redirection (an attempt to move the field into another direction than its headed), reconstruction/redirection (an attempt to move the field back to where it previously was to start a new perspective from that point), reinitiation (an attempt to move the field into an as yet to be reached point and move forward from there), and integration (an attempt to bring together two previously separate processing phenomena into one new approach).

This brings me to a discussion of the master choreographers I have selected to support and assist my investigation into the creative process in choreography. By being in what I will call the "Goldilocks' zone" for a creative breakthrough, meaning that I have reached critical mass for the essential components of creativity, and then integrating the methods of select master choreographers, I should be able to expand on my creative processes and outcomes.

Select Master Choreographers

In this section I discuss the master choreographers I have selected to inspire my investigation through review and applied integration of their methods into my research experiments to generate creative ideas during my choreographic process. In each case

these master choreographers moved past conventional methods to create a new way of making dance.

Pina Bausch

Pina Bausch was a German choreographer whose work changed the modern dance by pioneering dance theatre or Tanztheater. She won several prizes for her choreography including the Kyoto Prize and the Goethe Prize before dying in Wuppertal, 2009. Her choreography incorporated large props and set pieces that the dancers would interact with on stage. She also worked with the dancers through guided improvisation to find, develop, and amplify their unique qualities and stories and add them into her pieces. They became what the dances were about as well as what Pina's overarching theme of the work was, which was universal aspects of humanity.

Often, Pina's work was about a place or a group of people, and always about relationships between men and women, often visiting those places or people to conduct research together with her dancers. Another of her methods for creating unique perspective in dance was the use of voice, spoken text, or singing from the dancers. She often found something she liked in one dancer and several other dancers in the group if not the entire group would learn that phrase. Famously, she would use simple gestures that would come from the dancers. In an interview, InamoriFoundationE (2009), Pina explains that discipline plays a major role to maintain creativity and adds that she thinks it's important to trust and listen to your feelings when you have an idea. Once you have an idea you have to begin with asking questions about it and trust your feelings.

Her message in the interview to other artists is to ask yourself why do you want to make something, to consider the basis of why you're making art, and instead of thinking of what others want you to make or how to make something other will like, to make something that comes from inside yourself. She adds that it's important to make art that shares something in common with others.

Her unique method of choreography was discovered when she was invited to create her own version of *Macbeth* in Bochum, Germany in 1978. Many dancers refused to work with her and so she worked with her own guest performers four dancers, five actors and a singer. She couldn't choreograph in her conventional methods, so she began to discuss the themes of the work with the cast and together discovered an associative way of creating the work. The premiere was received with large protest, but what became clear at that moment to Pina was that this was how she would make her work hence forth. This is important to me because I have to realize if I make something that is novel it may not be understood, appreciated, or accepted by an audience right away.

I used Bausch's guided improvisation, the dancers' experiences, and prop to explore the human condition.

Bill T. Jones

Bill T. Jones is an American dancer, choreographer, and author. Jones' work often takes a socio-politically charged perspective or context. He recalls in a lecture about his creative process at Vassar College how there was a period when he was in constant trouble for his art. He was referring to his work that confronted the public's homophobic views on society. He created a choreographic work *Still/Here* in 1994 that was highly

controversial and prompted critics to claim he was creating victim art, Arlene Croce (1994).

In his lecture, Vassar (2008) at Vassar College he explains how he is going about creating a dance with Abraham Lincoln's life's work in Jones' mind. Jones uses text, and spoken word to power his choreography. In *Still/Here* Jones used interviews with patients suffering from HIV or AIDS to create a work that incorporated spoken word text and movement. Watching a presentation on TED Talks he tells a story about how his life using words that correlated to certain movements. In the short piece, he creates 20 movement gestures to accompany the text. He then brings the two elements together in what could be described as storytelling through dance, always with a sociopolitical context with himself or elements from his life intertwined in the dance.

I used Bill T. Jones' social commentary as a basis, the content of the work is developed and explored through improvisation, text, spoken word and comes from the real-life experiences of the dancers.

Wayne McGregor

Wayne McGregor is a British choreographer who is known for his unique movement aesthetic and movement invention. He is an advocate for creativity and consistently collaborates with visual artists, computer technologists and biological scientists to expand his creative potential. McGregor is one of the most highly sought choreographers of the 21st Century. He has also been the subject of cognitive research on understanding how he leverages his creative process to produce exceptional choreography.

In a Ted Talks presentation, TEDtalksDirector (2012) on McGregor's creative process he demonstrates in real time three distinct methods that he has developed and uses to excavate materials for his choreographic content. In the demonstration McGregor uses creates a short piece at a lighting fast pace during his presentation on his creative process.

I used Wayne McGregor's (body-to-body transfer) (mental architecture) and (tasking). Creating in the cognitive (mental) space

Twyla Tharp

Twyla Tharp is an American choreographer and author of several books including *The Creative Habit* (2003), which discusses several topics around bolstering one's creative processes and products. She choreographed her first work, *Tank Dive* in 1965 in New York City. She became most famous for her crossover ballets which brought together ballet and modern dance movements, most notably for her work in collaboration with Philip Glass, *In The Upper Room* (1991).

Tharp has created many different types of work over her career as choreographer from the avant-garde to musical theater to crossover ballets. In her book, *The Creative Habit*, Tharp explains that her creative process has been evolving over her lifetime into a robust library of information and tools to utilize for creating choreography. Highly influenced from her childhood experience of helping run the family owned drive-in movie theater, Tharp explains in an interview that she understood theater at a young age.

Tharp's book, *The Creative Habit* is full of suggestions about how to start a project, "scratching," or how to escape from a creativity stifling rut and turn it into a productive groove. In her book, she describes a method of keeping all your ideas in

separate boxes, like a journal, where everything pertaining to an idea is documented or problem one is interested in focusing on. Tharp explains how some ideas are momentous and the box stays in constant use until the project reaches its conclusion. But in other cases, the box may sit for an extended period of time and if the idea is reinvigorated at some later point it's neatly archived and ready for a second chance.

I used Twyla Tharp's crossover method of incorporating two or more movement styles into one work, the use of pedestrian and other non-dancer movement. I will also use her method of discipline by creating a daily ritual to help keep me inside the creative process, in the form of a twenty-minute, daily meditation on the project. Mixing together movement from sports and other non-dancer movement.

The master choreographers I have selected use methods that in confluence present me with a novel method of making a dance work. That novel component is only half of the formula that makes something creative, Morris Stein (1953). What I wanted to find out during this investigation is whether or not it will become useful as well. Meaning, will this creative process conclude with a dance process and product that is both novel and useful.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I discuss here the methodology I used to explore my creative process in choreography through the creation and presentation of a dance theater work, *The Big Red Button*. I conducted two-hour blocks of rehearsals twice weekly for a ten-week period with 6 students from the University of Oregon. The finished work was presented to the public at the Dougherty Dance Theatre on March 16, 2018. Each 2-hour rehearsal block involved the integration of the methods of select master choreographers: Pina Bausch, Bill T. Jones, Wayne McGregor, and Twyla Tharp. For documentation and analysis, I employed written journal entries, audio recordings, video recordings, and photography. The initial rehearsal served as a methods sampler by dedicating 25 minutes to each of the methods of integration.

Following the initial rehearsal, the subsequent rehearsals were dedicated to the development of methods integration, the emergence of creative ideas that were developed around the subject matter of the work, sociopolitical commentary, and the total synthesis and presentation of my choreographic idea.

CHAPTER IV

REHEARSAL LOGS

In this chapter I discuss in detail key moments of creative development which occurred during the creative process of, *The Big Red Button*. I needed information beyond my initial moment of ideation to get started, *preparation*, which included information about sociopolitical commentary that I could engage with, I needed to know the dancers, and how to integrate the select methods effectively.

I needed to experience moments where I could meditate and release my mind from conventional thinking, in effect allow my processes of idea construction to expand by leaving the boundaries of reality behind, *incubation*. When an *Insight* occurred, it manifested itself in varying proportions, “little *c*” and “big *C*”, and occurred both inside the studio in process and outside of the studio during meditation/spinning-of ideas and when in unrelated moments from unconscious thought to conscious thought.

I needed to experiment with movement ideas and in the context of sociopolitical commentary in order to find effective ways to creatively synthesize emerging content into a coherent dance work, *evaluation*. I had reached the end of my time constrained ten-week experimentation phase and was ready to share my creation with the public, *elaboration*. The following description of key events is in chronological order.

In the Studio

In the initial rehearsal, I spent the first 15 minutes briefing the dancers on what we’d be doing over the course of the rehearsal. This gave me a chance to: meet them, start to dialogue, set the stage, and go over the rehearsal plan for myself. I began with a

method of Wayne McGregor, body-body transfer of movement ideas to the dancers. Here I chose images from my archive to inspire the movement I created in real-time in front of the dancers.

The dancers in turn had to quickly catch whatever movements they could. Then I would pause for short intervals to see what the dancers could retain and move on. At each interval, the dancers were asked to recall the previous movements until we had a 15-20 second movement sequence. Then we would start the process over again. We repeated this process with me changing the source images to inspire my movements until we had over a minute worth of 15-20 second movement sequences.

I had been collecting and reviewing socio-politically charged text, images, audio, and video from around the world but primarily content that was directly related to or originated in the US. Much of this content provided movement ideas either through translating a text into a rhythm that could be transferred to a part of the body or the whole body. I was able to recognize architecture in the images and videos that presented novel movement ideas. I will call these ‘physical translations’ of the content I was reviewing.

Day 1 Jan 10

This is the first method, I employed a Wayne McGregor method (body-body transfer). Before getting started with the dancers I began a 1 minute review of the most impactful images and video (subjectively) that were stored on my lap top. This was to have a fresh sense of them in mind as I was about to manifest some movement ideas in real time and transfer them in rapid succession to the dancers. I used techno music to help ramp up my internal tempo and got into the ‘zone’ Wayne McGregor (2012). Less than a

minute into listening to the techno music and physically syncing my movements to my mental imagery I was in it, the zone.

I asked the dancers to watch and catch the movement ideas that stuck with them. I was 'spitting' out movement gestures at a fast pace and I did not turn around immediately to see if the dancers were following me, I remained in the zone. But then after 30 sec I would run around and quickly see what they had retained, they would repeat what they retained and then we would start the process again. We repeated this process of body-body transfer until we had 15-20 second movement sequences. Then we would start over from the beginning to create more of these sequences until we had approximately 1 minute of content.

The second method I employed involved large props and guided improvisations. These are methods Pina Bausch used to create work for Tanz Theater Wuppertal. The large props used were 2 tables that could support the dancers weight and afforded a range of possibilities in an improvisatory approach. The music was atmospheric and in great contrast to the sound we had just used during the previous Wayne McGregor method. I asked the dancers to begin drawing their name, an imagined text, or symbols on the surface of the tables, which were brought together at the ends to create a buffet styled set up or one long surface. As the dancers drew their patterns on the surface using their distal ends of their fingers, I saw opportunities to provide prompts and guide their improvisations further.

I asked them to expand and shrink the size of the text they were writing and this made them travel farther across the surface or remain quite static but always writing. This intern gave me the impetus to ask them to use the underside and side surfaces of the

tables as well, which led to me asking them to use each other as surfaces to write on. I then asked them to play with tempo and then I observed without interrupting them for approximately 1 minute.

What happened as a result of the prompts was a chaotic scene in which the dancers were drawing away all over the surface of the table or each other. The image that manifest from this was an overcrowded system of people who had to negotiate constantly their pathways with each other. It conjured emotion without me asking the dancers to be emotional.

We then tried a second idea with the tables and simultaneously lost one of the dancers, due to scheduling conflict. This scenario left me with 5/6 cast members to continue to work with. I wanted to try moving the tables around in the space to see what ideas would manifest as a result, also referred to as 'scratching' by Twyla Tharp. I asked that 4 dancers operate tables (2/table) and the remaining dancer would be the odd one out. To guide the improvisation, I asked the dancers to imagine that there was a magnetic field that locked the tables in a close proximity but not to the point that the tables could make contact. I then asked the dancers to move around with the tables in any random order.

The effect was that each time one table was moved in a direction the other table would have to follow and vice versa. To add another layer to the improvisation I asked the odd dancer out to remain in between the tables and act as a nucleus. As all three parts moved, the tables, the four dancers operating them, and the odd dancer in the middle I prompted them to add a waltz rhythm to their feet. Suddenly the moving image was like something you would see in a Disney cartoon, "fantasia" perhaps.

Lost one more dancer, down to 4/6.

The third method we used was to create movement from text using the sociopolitical context and personal experiences from the cast members. This method is one of the ways Bill T. Jones creates content for his work, utilizing the human experiences through spoken word and text based improvisations. I asked the dancers to write down with pen and paper, answers to 5 questions:

1. What are you most fearful of?
2. What brings you joy?
3. What is the biggest challenge facing you at this time?
4. What is the plight of the world?
5. How do you feel about the direction the United States (US) is headed currently?

I watched as the dancers wrote down their responses and I could see at that point in the rehearsal they were very engaged individually in sorting out words to describe their experiences. When they had all completed their written text I asked them to read them out loud. One by one they read through and I found their responses genuine and revealing of who they were and how they felt as individuals in response to my prompts.

I then asked them to review their text and change anything they felt needed it, to become more nuanced or articulated while keeping in mind that I would next be asking them to find physical imagery within their text, moving or static. I then asked them to spend a few minutes physically translating their texts into movement sequences. When they completed the task, I asked them to show, one by one, their physically translated text sequences. After observing all 4 of their sequences I asked them to edit the physical

translation and essentially remove uninteresting bits of movement or smooth transition out from one movement to the next.

Now that we had nuanced and coherent movement sequences distilled from the original text source, I asked the dancers to, one by one, present their sequences while the other cast, simultaneously, read the corresponding text out loud and in sync. The effect was a narrated storytelling that had several voices in different keys with a dancer at the center providing the related moving images.

At this point in the rehearsal we were left with less than 10 minutes. I wanted to try a final method and decided to go back to a Pina Bausch idea of improvisation, using body 'manipulation'. I have seen in Pina's work many instances where a performer is being manipulated by other performers while attempting to complete a task.

I asked the 4 remaining dancers to form a group and walk around the space in a tight formation, akin to flocking. I instructed them to follow whomever was in the front of the group and each time they would change direction in excess of 90 degrees there would be a change in leadership of the group. This gave me an idea to isolate their path and so I asked them to simply walk in a tight formation in a straight line from the back of the studio towards the front, or upstage to downstage.

I prompted the dancers to nominate one from the group to be manipulated by the others and the manipulation was as follows: one dancer is centered and the other dancers were to take hold of an extremity or body part and move the dancer in the middle from upstage to downstage.

The prompt for the dancer being manipulated was to move in the direction that they were being pulled or pushed, and to operate akin to a wired stick figure or Gumby

toy, meaning when the thrust or pull stopped they would remain in that position until the next movement exchange occurred. As they took turns doing this I observed them and wondered if the roles were reversed, and so I asked for them to try. The dancer in the middle became the manipulator of the 3 dancers who were attached in desperate locations on the centered dancer's body. The effect manifested the idea of power struggles between the group.

I asked them to repeat the path and at the halfway point of the pathway to change roles within the manipulation. I then asked the manipulators (3) to engage in conversation that would allow them to manipulate the 1 dancer more effectively, just as a group of construction workers might do when build a house or at a busy dinner table where people communicate to pass items around the table effectively without chaos.

We ended the rehearsal and I journaled about my experiences. at the end of each of the sample methods I filmed distilled pieces or chunks of content that we had finessed. I then meditated for about 20 minutes to let my mind review what we had done without writing anything down, just letting my mind recall and browse the moments that had just passed.

Later that evening I transferred the video from the rehearsal to my laptop for review. The review gives me an opportunity to watch the footage without the pressure of a time constraint, the rehearsal block. It took time to create these pieces and now I could let my mind digest these pieces in a much calmer state of being. In the playback from rehearsal I can edit the footage to remove unsavory bits of content that I don't find effective or useful going forward. I can also compare the methods and content created to form new ideas in preparation for the next rehearsal.

Day 2 Jan 12

48 hours passed before our second rehearsal. I had time to think about how to proceed and I came up with a plan to continue to dig from where we had left off in the last rehearsal. I wanted to include the dancers who had left early in the initial rehearsal into the sections that they were absent for. I basically abandoned the notion that I would concentrate solely on one method for creation for the entire 2-hour rehearsal block. But when I arrived one of the dancers was missing and this forced me to alter my plans in the moment.

I had the same 5 dancers that were in the first rehearsal during the methods in which we incorporated large props/tables and decided we would continue to work in this direction. In the middle of reviewing and meditating about the previous rehearsals I thought about incorporating another prop, this time a table with wheels that could be locked preventing it from rolling anywhere.

I prompted the dancers to begin with where we had left off but to travel much more throughout the space with greater velocity, again with one dancer in the middle. I then tasked the dancers to experiment and find novel ways to use the tables. I watched as they flipped them on one side or upside down, as they travel backwards, or used the table like a moving wall. Observing this improvisational moment flooded my mind with ideas and I afforded me with a substantially insightful moment.

I could see the tables moving in such an erratic way which made it nearly impossible to predict which direction they would travel from moment to moment. This rang a metaphoric bell in my mind as a challenging moment. Like when an earthquake

strikes you try to maintain your balance but it's a struggle or in a wrestling match where your opponent is constantly trying to catch you off balance, the motion was very similar in my mind. I remembered one of the dancers mentioning, during the Bill T. Jones method, that they were faced with the challenge finishing a critical research document, so much of their future pivoted on this outcome, and that it was exhausting and unrelenting.

I then bridged the idea of making a moving image of this by taping a paper to the center of each table, asking the (4) dancers to operate the tables, while the 5 dancers attempted to write down the challenging aspects of their research onto the two papers. I had to make some concessions in order to make it slightly conceivable from my perspective as an observer and to make it slightly achievable for the 5 dancers.

The resulting image was both comical and tragic. I watched the dancer start to write part of the formula down only to have it whisked away mid-sentence and then she would try this with the other table as it was in proximity. This moving scene created a metaphoric bridge to the FBI agent, Robert Mueller, in charge of handling the investigation into collusion of the current sitting US president and Russia/Putin. I didn't need to tell the dancers this was my idea and I didn't because I didn't want them to suddenly act as if they were something other than themselves in the moment they were in together. I needed it to remain genuine and authentic in its experience.

I had the weekend to meditate and review rehearsal footage, which allowed me to imagine where what I had done in the previous week fit into the larger structure of the work. A tentative choreographic structure was formulated during that weekend. I was sensing in my gut that I had to use the Wayne McGregor method to continue making a high-powered dance scene, probably a finale. I knew the scene with the tables was

another action filled moment and should probably not be placed next to the finale that I imagined.

Day 3 Jan 17

After realizing that the finale section using Wayne McGregor method was definitely an incredibly important part of the piece (the ending) I decided to dedicate the 2-hour rehearsal block to this section alone. We started with a review of material we created on the day 1. To see what the material looked like at that moment. I realized that the movement was interesting but wanted to try another round of body-body transfer, to dig deeper with this method after having time to meditate about it.

I was more aggressive in my approach this time. Meaning, the movement I was spitting out to the dancers was larger, faster, oddly shaped, and idiosyncratic to the images that I had sourced before the rehearsal began. We were able to create a few movement phrases out of this process, refine the movements so that no one stood out as doing something completely different from the ensemble.

After clearing up the new movement phrases I moved to a new Wayne McGregor method, 'mental architecture'. Here I divided the dancers into groupings and patterns, still using the movements from the body-body transfer. I was using the source material again to inspire the design I was creating in space using the dancers as a tool to draw with. A diagonal angle that was inspired by the shape of the star or the stripes on the American flag. I imagined the dance happening on a giant flag that was being shaken out like a rug or bathmat. There is a kind of movement quality associated with this action that

was assisting my intuition at that moment. I concluded the first hour of rehearsal by filming what we had created.

We began the second half of rehearsal and worked in the same regard as the first hour generating more material and at the end I filmed what was created. After rehearsal, I sat in my office and meditated on the rehearsal that had just occurred. It was physically hard work and after two hours of rehearsal I had generated approximately 90 seconds of content. I was realizing that this process was slowed down in the moments that we had to clean up and clarify what the movement should look and feel like in the body.

Spitting it out was the easy part, dancers grasping it as a group was not nearly as simple. Then I thought back to the demonstration that Wayne McGregor gave in his Ted Talk, he had been working with professional dancers who he knew quite well and so my thought is the same as watching a professional ballet dancer, they make it look effortless. But, what you don't see is all the work that goes into building up to moments like these. In that moment, I started to strategize how this mixed level of skill would ultimately effect the creative outcome of this section and the entire work.

Day 4 Jan 19

I dedicated our fourth day of rehearsal to exploring with Bill T. Jones sociopolitical text based improvisations. I wanted to craft them into an entire section and to create characters for the dancers to develop over the remainder of the creation process. We began with their solos that were created from the 5-part questionnaire prompt on day 1.

One of the dancers who was not originally there for that portion of the first rehearsal was without a text and solo material so I gave time for this dancer to sort that out and also a chance for the other dancers to edit their answers to the questionnaire into more coherent and/or meaningful responses. This also meant taking some time to reassess the movement that coincided with the text.

I asked the dancers to go through their solos a couple of times as I observed. As they did this, I watched and strategized in real time. I began to see a logical way to start to weave the solos into a section. It started with one dancer's story about his military experience. I asked to see his solo again and picked out movements that I could see the other dancers would learn. I also asked him to elaborate in a physical sense his most vivid recollections of his military experiences. Out of this came a marching pattern, a cocking and shouldering of weapon gesture (without weapon of course), and a low crawling movement similar to the action on a battlefield.

We spent the next twenty minutes learning and combining these movements into a sequence and in a formation with the military dancer at the center. It started with marching in rank and file to another location in the room and ended with them crawling on the ground. I saw a chance to isolate and highlight the military dancer from the rest of the group by continuing his original solo material as the other dancers rolled downstage. Even in a rough form it was effective because it was not only physically satisfying it contained a story and conveyed an emotionally charged moment.

The military dancer was the beginning of the entire section that I would title *sociopolitical*, mostly as a choreographer's note to self. I then introduced some chairs to

the space and created a destination for the military man to go after his solo had ended. I treated this as a segue into the other dancer's stories.

- A PhD student trying to solve an impossible problem
- A woman that represented aspects of feminism/me too/times up movement
- A LGBTQ character who was experiencing a shift in identity
- A womanizing and privileged white man (this was completely fictional)

In making this section I realized that I did have a diverse cast in certain respects but in the broader image I have of the US I was lacking ethnic diversity and so this was limiting for me personally. It didn't match the image I experienced when I first thought about this work. Knowing that I would not be able to reach that image I utilized the stories that were present to make the work, from this section at this moment, about the individuals in front of me. It was becoming a story about these individuals' version of America.

I filmed our creative chunk and ended rehearsal with a journal entry and meditation in my office for twenty minutes.

Day 5 Jan 24

During days 2, 3, and 4 of our rehearsal, I was able to build upon the parts we had made in the initial method sampler. Three sections were becoming clearer and I needed to come back to the manipulation method we tried in the last section of our method sampler on day 1. I saw an opportunity to combine two different aspects from the sampler: the tables and the body manipulations.

Draft 1. After the first five rehearsals, I had created 4 distinct sections that were originated from the first day's method sampler session. I named them: *johanna and the tables*, *sociopolitical*, *ensemble*, and *bring it to the table*. After I began working in drafts of each section I would come back to them each week. In between rehearsals I spent at minimum 2 hours/day reviewing rehearsal footage and another 2 hours/day meditating about it.

Day 6 Jan 26

I dedicated the entire time to working on the *ensemble* section. There were two central factors that motivated me to this decision: 1) I had found a piece of music that I felt in my gut was the right fit, and 2) I felt that this section would require a lot of work because the music was up tempo and rich and I was using that to drive the choreography. This meant that I would have to create a rich dance movement/section to match the music. And that meant that I would need more time to create it and then to focus it. We ended the day with this section reaching at timed length of 3:40.

Day 7 Jan 31

I decided to concentrate on developing *sociopolitical* and creating a new section titled *balls*. These sections shared theatrical elements and plot lines. However, I approached the creation of these sections in very different ways. For *sociopolitical*, the creation was driven by the dancers' responses to my questionnaire, which was then turned into movement, and focused into dance theater. In the case of *balls*, I was impacted by the interaction of the characters I had created in *sociopolitical*. I took the

liberty of injecting my idiosyncratic reply to a plot question I set up between two characters (Me Too/Times Up and privileged white man).

Day 8 Feb 2

We spent the first hour working on *ensemble*. We spent the second half working on *Johanna and the tables*.

Day 9 Feb 7

We spent the first hour working on *ensemble*. We spent the second half working on *Johanna and the tables*.

Day 10 Feb 9

I was unable to rehearse with the dancers. I put one of the dancers in charge of running the rehearsal. It was a day of review for each section. I asked them to walk through or mark each section and then run each section twice.

Day 12 Feb 16

This day was dedicated to combining all of the different sections of *ensemble*. The length of this section reached 5:50 by the end of rehearsal.

Day 13 Feb 21

We started a new section titled *overture*, which finally gave me a chance to use the “Star Spangled Banner”. to create this section I sourced the characters, movements,

and atmosphere that had been developed from all previously existing drafts with the exception of *ensemble*.

Day 14 Feb 23

This rehearsal day was split into developing *overture*, and running through and refining *bring it to the table* and *ensemble*.

Day 15 Feb 28

This day was split into 3 parts: run-through of *ensemble* and *overture*, and develop *Johanna and the tables*. My thesis committee was in attendance for this rehearsal to observe and supply feedback on their experience.

day 18 March 9

This day was the first time that the piece would be run with all sections in sequence. My committee chair attended this rehearsal, aging to observe my process and offer feedback.

Day 19 March 14

This day I was able to run-through the entire piece and finish *ensemble* and begin to add a section that is untitled but follows *ensemble*.

Day 20 March 15

This day was dedicated to a technical run-through of the piece with lights and costumes.

Day 21 March 16

This was the final day of the project. I had a dress rehearsal planned and the performance would follow at 8:00pm. What I witnessed during the final draft of the work was my vision living inside the dancers. They were no longer measuring and analyzing their actions as they had been in previous rehearsals but were instead “living in the moment.” The dancers explained to me that this was their first time working in such a way and that it was compelling to take such an emotional and physical risk. And, what I witnessed during the performance of the work was a shift in my perspective of creating a dance.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this chapter I discuss ideas and questions that emerged from this thesis. I began this process with an idea, sociopolitical comment and finished with a dance theater work, *The Big Red Button*. I defined this project as an exploration of my creative process in choreography by integrating the methods of select master choreographers, using related work and existing articles to inform and analyze my creative process, and through the creation and presentation of *The Big Red Button*.

The purpose of this study was to expand my understanding and knowledge of my creative process in choreography. This was an exploration of my creative process in the sense that there was I was free to take an idea in any direction or allow it to take me in any direction. It became a study through documentation and analysis of a practice. I found myself experiencing creative ways to think about ideation.

I also found myself in the middle of swarming insights, big and small. The information I used to inform my analysis leads me to believe that a critical mass within the components that make up a creative process does exist for creative processes to function at high levels of effectiveness, in processes and outcomes. I will discuss the following points, myself as creator, integrating methods of master choreographers, and the creation of a dance theater work.

Self Evaluation

By integrating the methods of master choreographers, I was able to construct more complex scenes that involved a range of emotional and physical action that I hadn't

previously been able to amalgamate in an elegant way. I think back to my analogy of playing chess. To be effective you need to be able to think many moves ahead but you also need experience to know whether your ideas will work. And, in the end you have to take a risk. With this project, I was able to integrate the methods of master choreographers. In confluence, their methods went beyond my own conventions of creation. From this I gained new perspectives in making work that is powerful in its experience for myself, the dancers, and audience.

Accessible Components of Creativity

By researching the work of master choreographers and theory on creativity, I have found that criteria for creativity should be considered: motivation, skill, knowledge, divergent thinking abilities, environment, and some circumstantial luck or chance, or according to Dean Keith Simonton, the stochastic nature of creativity and creative persons. This is present in the literature I reviewed on the defining components of creativity.

This project has led me to believe that when all of the base ingredients for yielding creative outputs in dance (choreographic processes and choreographic products) are present meaning I am already in the “Goldilocks’ zone”. To increase the chances of breakthrough moments requires being more prepared for the task. This preparedness can assist in recognizing, understanding, synthesizing, and ultimately presenting a dance that departs from my conventional methods of creation.

Motivation

I can say, after completing this project, that the first step in my creative process is to be internally motivated by something, a question or problem. I chose to make work about the recent sociopolitical landscape in the United States. The original impetus was hearing, “*The Star Spangled Banner*” during a reflective moment I was experiencing about US history. In that moment, I had imagined a scene with a diverse cast of dancers in the nude, on stage as the national anthem played. This was the initial creative spark and a critical motivating factor throughout the entirety of this thesis project.

What makes this idea unique in contrast to other ideas I have, from day to day, is that this idea consistently captivated my imagination. Every time I would come back to the idea I would imagine it slightly nuanced. It became something that I questioned, commented on, and found myself in discussion about. I was motivated to try to render the images that were constantly on my mind as a way for me to communicate my felt experience.

Skill and knowledge

In terms of skill and knowledge that I could bring to bear on this project. I had over ten years of experience in the arena of choreography, witnessing the works of others, conducting my own experiments, gathering knowledge, and using it to sharpen my choreographic abilities. This, according to several of the theories, published articles reviewed, and master choreographers, was an essential amount of time required in any domain as a prerequisite to a creative breakthrough.

Divergent thinking skills

As I laid out in my introduction, I have been exposed to many cultural/environmental shifts/culture shocks, which have allowed me to think in new ways in order to function within society. This has allowed me to expand cognitive processes that interact with diverse cultural and environmental experiences. According to Howard Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* we each have different levels of processes we employ to render meaning and gather knowledge.

I asked my thesis committee to each describe their creative process as if it were a physical object. Each offered very different descriptions: a road map that involved navigating intersecting roadways to arrive at a destination, a system of tea consumption involving different types of teas that require different steeping times, and a scene in which water would permeate a vertical surface and run down to collect into a pool where others items that surrounded the pool could be manipulated to the creator's desires. Clearly, we have the ability to think about the environment and experiences we encounter, which allows us divergent thought processes.

Environment

The environment in which I have found myself since I was a young child was a nurturing one from a family perspective and a challenging one outside of the home. Being biracial meant often trying to figure out my identity, which led me to constantly question my surroundings including the people closest to me.

It also allowed me to imagine vast worlds where I would often escape to. I didn't consider this unique as a child but this ability is still very present in my life as an adult

and contributes a great deal to the ability to avoid conforming to societal pressures. I am constantly trying to experience different worlds through my art.

Random/Chance

This may sound mystified or unrelated, but there exists an infinite number of combinations of processes in the universe. Why two parts or several come into contact to form a larger more complex part is to ask a very large question, but I find that there is some form of chance that transcends the forces of society. I am, by the chances of natural circumstances in the universe, who I am. I could have been a lawyer, or a soldier, or a rat, or a tree but I am instead who I am and at this particular place and point in time.

If I had for example never seen Bebe Miller's *The Hendrix Project* would I have even been interested in dance? And, I wonder even further what kind of dancer would I be if I had never met my first dance teacher that very night, who seduced me easily into taking dance lessons after I had witnessed Bebe Miller's magical performance, double luck.

Being creative by choice

Making the choice to be creative may seem simple, just do it right? I have been in classes where the instructor has exclaimed, "now be creative" or "get creative." This may work, but what does it really mean when someone tells you to be creative? There are many possibilities to answer this question, but I believe first you have to be open to being creative, which largely means leaving convention and simultaneously keeping it in view.

We need convention to be creative. I often doodle or scribble, in the physical/dancing sense. I go over and over the same movement until I finally either can't stand it anymore and I suddenly find myself using the initial conventional moment to springboard to a novel experience. It's that process where creativity lives, the moment of leaving what you know in great detail into new territory. By applying experience and skilled analysis you can determine whether or not it's a worthwhile pursuit.

Integrating Methods of Select Master Choreographers

When I began to choreograph as a student I was able to imagine in great detail what I wanted to accomplish but I hadn't the experience or skill to realize these ideas. And, looking back to those moments many of the ideas were a bit silly because they were motivated heavily by the people around me. In other words, I wasn't thinking about what I wanted to make but what I thought others would like to see. This is still true today but in much smaller proportions or perhaps reversed proportions.

I am now more concerned about what I want to experience in my choreography. So, when I selected the choreographers, whose methods I would integrate I had evolved a great deal since the days of early experimentation. I knew much more about the rigor that is required to realize an idea. I also knew much more about myself and what I am interested in creating, and not solely under the pressure of what others want to see.

The only expectation I had in bringing the work of others into my own work was that I would run into new territory, that it would force my mind to consider new perspectives, possibly through the eyes of master choreographers. I certainly experienced new ways of working and obtained novel and useful processes and outcomes. This has

led me to consider other combinations of integration. What if in the future I integrate the method of a master musician, scientist, or writer?

The purpose of this thesis was to come to a deeper understanding and expand my knowledge of my creative process in choreography. I have gained new perspective that I will continue to evolve through further experimentation and analysis within choreography. Understanding more about your creative processes, how it is influenced by your experiences, and the environments and scenarios in which they are employed can only give you an edge to make bold decisions with lasting and meaningful outcomes.

The Big Red Button

There were numerous processes involved in realizing this work. Even though choreographic development that occurred inside the studio happened over a ten week period the process occurred in three stages: exploration/experimentation, development, and amalgamation or cohesion.

In the initial exploration/experimentation phase, I had an idea and the methods of master choreographers. I created 4 main sections that would act as anchors for the rest of the work and the evolving process. As the work developed and those 4 sections became clearer in the context of my overarching idea, I was able to develop emerging themes that fit into the whole picture of the work. Towards the end of the creation process the emerging themes, sections, and developing characters that the dancers would embody became pointed or corralled by what was already established. Although I wouldn't argue that I took the domain or field in any new direction, I took myself in a new direction. I also created new and meaningful experiences for the audience and the dancers who

performed the work. One of the students who attended the performance expressed to me that he had never seen or experienced a work like this one. And, most of the audience who wrote anonymously on the back of their programs their responses to the performance found it thought provoking and meaningful. I found that meant I had done something novel and useful in the context of the environment in which it was presented. In essence, I had been creative.

Thoughts on Future Work

Combining the methods of select master choreographers has offered me new perspectives on creating new worlds in dance. My experience has shown that it was useful for my choreographic purposes. I would consider this as a way of approaching other problems or questions in other lines of choreographic inquiry, but also in pedagogy, and certainly beyond the field of dance and the domain of art. While I believe this approach worked for my purposes I think it's important to consider convention in this context of being creative. Without convention, there is less to push against and be creative from. I had over ten years of experience as a choreographer heading into this project and so inherently I would have developed my own conventional approach to making dance. To break free of that convention means embracing new experiences and keeping an open mind to new methods of creation.

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