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Control to Abandonment: Four Solos Exploring Dynamic Range and Character

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Abstract

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In today's melting pot of modern dance, it is necessary for performers to be versatile in order to adjust to eclectic choreographic demands. A dancer cannot simply be an athletic mover, a graceful performer, or a technical expert. To hone my own movement adaptability as a dancer and as a performer, I approached this idea of versatility via dynamics. In a series of four solo works, I investigated the role of dynamics in performance by exploring extreme ranges of movement qualities, while also focusing on the subtleties that are responsible for governing interpretation. "Maya," my first solo, featured quick, direct movements, never remaining on the same idea for long. "Solo for Pop Music #2" presented resilient and bound qualities, while "Solo for Pop Music #3" displayed bound moments interspersed with relaxed sustainment. Finally, I offered my understanding of dynamics in my own choreographic work, "Swallowed," featuring a more drastic spectrum of control to abandon. Through delving into each of these works, four separate character types emerged from the solos above, respectively: the tireless achiever, the nearly defeated, the outraged, and the suppressor.

Following the rehearsal process, my research culminated in a final performance, "A Question of Character," to directly compare these four works in the same evening. The challenge for me as a performer was to change between such varying qualities and reenter each work with a different character during the same concert. This performance revealed the ultimate goal of my research, discovering the ways in which I can be the versatile mover of today rather than a pre-labeled dancer from years past.

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I. Embarking

Prior to entering my college dance career, I was told by teachers that I was a "versatile dancer." At the time I received it as a fleeting compliment, content that I could move decently in a variety of styles. In high school, I had immersed myself in nightly dance classes in several forms, loving different qualities about each. After taking a few years of modern, I thought I knew what to expect when entering Emory's Dance Program. I quickly discovered that my apparent versatility on which I had once been complimented was not immediately carrying over to my college modern classes. I had been versatile in the sense that I studied and performed various dance forms, but I came to realize that being a versatile *modern* dancer was a newly presented challenge.

As an aspiring professional dancer, I knew I needed to expand my movement range, technical ability, and ability to adapt to choreography. After working towards this in various technique classes and choreographic works during my first three years at Emory, I was invited to embark on the journey of an honors thesis project. This was my opportunity to delve into my ultimate goal as a performer: increasing my dynamic possibilities. I needed to examine what this idea of versatility in modern dance truly entailed.

Dynamics appear to be at the core of this concept. Dynamics, according to Pauline Koner, address the "many varying gradations and relationships of three elements – time, intensity, and space range" (Koner 1993, 37). By altering the gradations of these components, many diverse qualities can be created in performance. Throughout this process, I have discovered that the ability to vary dynamics is one indispensible attribute of a versatile dancer, thus I have chosen to investigate this topic for my performance

research. From the other side of the theater, as an audience member, I am consistently drawn to movement that surprises me and presents changes in energy and intention. It is therefore my goal throughout this performance project to surprise my own audience members and challenge their expectations.

Initially, I focused on finding three pieces that featured a broad spectrum of dynamics, either within each piece or collectively. The entry point into my project was "Maya," an unrelenting, fast-paced solo work choreographed by Rob Kitsos. Offering a direct and quick movement vocabulary, I was attracted to the intense athleticism required for the piece and the necessary stamina which I would need to build. The next logical step was to search for a slow, sustained piece, which proved to be challenging. I watched Martha Clarke's "Nocturne," admiring the incredible sustainment of the soloist's deliberate movements. The performer's choices were so incredibly slow that at times it would be difficult to notice if she was moving at all. A slight shift in her white romantic tutu would be the only indication that she initiated a new movement (Maldoror26 n.d.). While I was drawn to "Nocturne" due to its complete opposite nature to "Maya," the likelihood of performing one of Martha Clarke's works within a limited budget was slim.

My search continued. I explored other possibilities such as Doris Humphrey's "Two Ecstatic Themes" featuring a comparative solo with its "Circular Descent" and "Pointed Ascent." The thought of learning a historical work from notation intrigued me. Although after inquiring about the rights to perform the piece, it was out of the price range again. At this point, however, I acknowledged that my search was revolving around solo works rather than pieces with varied cast sizes. By accepting this realization, I more consciously narrowed the focus of my project. Dynamics can be perceived

differently as cast size varies. For instance, the audience would likely have a very different reaction to a large cast performing a fast-paced, physically demanding work than they would to a slow, sustained solo such as "Nocturne." While the movement qualities are drastically dissimilar on their own, the variation in cast size causes the dynamics to appear even more extreme. Therefore, to truly compare my performance capabilities without adding other altering variables, I decided to continue looking only for solo works and keep the cast size unchanged. This would prove to be a decision that greatly challenged me and my confidence as a performer.

I continued my search by watching a series of solos choreographed by Emory Dance faculty member, Gregory Catellier. We decided upon "Solo for Pop Music #2" because of the wavering moments between release and tension. I was also attracted to the extensive amount of floor material in the work, a component that was not a focal point of "Maya." Unlike "Maya," this work also explored varying qualities rather than remaining in the same dynamic throughout the piece.

Still searching for a third work, I viewed Oxford College faculty member Gayle Doherty's "Daddy." It looked at dynamics from the standpoint of a character, narrating her story during the performance. I decided against "Daddy" because, from a subjective point of view, it was not something I was drawn to as an audience member. I was more interested in finding works which primarily focused on the movement, and I felt that that text in "Daddy" played a very significant role, perhaps too significant for the desired direction of my investigation. I also considered having a new work set on me for my project. The benefit of having a work set would be that I could dictate the preferred dynamic range I was itching to explore, assuming the choreographer accepted the

limitations. As my adviser, Anna Leo, was offering names of Atlanta-based choreographers, we realized there was quite a simple and available way to get a desired set of dynamics within a piece for my concert. My honors project in performance then shifted tracks to include both performance *and* choreography.

I decided to resurrect my music study from my Choreography I class, "Between Tides." I reasoned that the study already contained slow, fluid movement with moments of sustainment, the very qualities I was hoping to exhibit in one of my performance pieces, and I could rework the solo to include other dynamic ranges. Anna and I had also been discussing the idea of abandon, as it was an initial subject of interest in my honors proposal. To investigate this movement idea beyond the verbal, I planned to incorporate moments of abandon within the otherwise slow and controlled "Between Tides." In this way, I could explore a drastic spectrum that would require the ability to alternate between absolute extremes within the same piece.

Over the first few months, as I began to feel content with my final concert program of "Maya," "Solo for Pop Music #2," and "Between Tides," one of my committee members, Gregory Catellier, approached me in February with another suggestion: "I think you should do another solo." At the time this felt like it was only adding to the already packed schedule of rehearsals, but his proposal was sensible. He recommended undertaking another work from his series of solos, "Solo for Pop Music #3." The character in this work was more explicitly outraged than in "Solo for Pop Music #2," but often in a dauntingly relaxed manner. This dynamic was definitely foreign territory to me, as I would typically associate anger with direct, forceful movement. With this additional piece in the program, I embarked on my journey with

these four solo works, each presenting different dynamics, different challenges, and later to be discovered, different characters.

II. Acquiring

Entering the rehearsal process was a very different experience for each piece. In October, I started rehearsals with Rebecca Gose Enghauser to restage "Maya." Rebecca, an associate professor at the University of Georgia, performed the work in a faculty performance a few years ago. I viewed a copy of this piece several times prior to my first rehearsal with Rebecca as to obtain a general framework of the piece and to map out the beginning sequences. When watching her performance, I noted the gestural phrases, her exact and decisive movements, and the athleticism of the work. I particularly recognized and was drawn to the seemingly difficult moments: the successive jumps, the sudden spiral drop to the floor, the fast hand motions.

We rehearsed together in the mornings, allotting time for me to travel to the University of Georgia for rehearsals between Rebecca's classes. Over the first three meetings, I acquired a working skeleton of "Maya." She taught me the movement directly, while referring to a video of her own performance for details and questions. I discovered that learning this backbone of the material was actually effective when trying to delve into an incredibly fast-paced piece. I worked on this outline in my self-rehearsals at Emory between my scheduled rehearsals with Rebecca. Consistently running this sketch by myself helped immensely for my return trips to the University of Georgia.

Once I had the general outline underway, we could focus on the critical details during the next two rehearsals together. The direct movement was more natural for me to correct and perform, but I struggled for a longer period of time learning the indirect moments. I realized that even in the moments of improvisation or brief release, I still needed to execute a clear intention in my performance. I would continue to work on these moments that lacked sharpness in my maintenance rehearsals later in the semester. Rebecca also offered a piece of insight that changed the way I performed and retained the specific gestures: each gesture resembled a movement that one might execute in an office setting. I was turning door knobs, opening desk drawers, taking a pen out of my pocket, smoothing my tie, shutting my laptop, typing on a keyboard, and shuffling papers around my desk. While these gestures were all deconstructed and manipulated, understanding how they originated greatly clarified my understanding and intention in my performance.

While I did initially recognize the athleticism of the work when viewing Rebecca's performance, I had quite a different experience once I immersed myself in the solo. The required stamina for "Maya" was enormous. However, the required effort was not identical to that of a typical cardiovascular activity; it was more of a series of intense sprints. The starting, stopping, and re-initiation of movement were characteristics I noted in Rebecca's performance, but I did not appreciate the intensity of it until attempting to perform the piece myself. I also discovered that understanding the source of the gesture material helped me retain those sequences more easily than the grand, physical phrase material to which I was initially drawn.

With the learning of "Maya" under my belt, I entered December rehearsals with Greg Catellier to start "Solo For Pop Music #2." We worked by watching a video of

another dancer, Sarah Ash-Evens, perform it in a previous concert of Greg's works. I admired her flexibility, her relaxed nature interspersed with moments of directed attack. I noted her musicality and moments of groundedness (Catellier 2008, DVD), although Greg remarked in the first rehearsal that he would like the entire piece to be more weighted. We worked using the video of Sarah's performance; we watched segments together, Greg recalled the specifics of the material while I tried to absorb the timing, quality, and general sketch of the movement.

I quickly realized that I had entered the initial rehearsals for "Maya" more confidently. I was less inhibited due to the fast pace and fleeting ideas inherent in the movement material. If I missed a step, the music simply drove me right into the next moment without having time to question myself. "Solo For Pop Music #2," however, was significantly slower in time, and required a kind of confidence that called for me to really settle inside of the role, something I did not yet know how to approach. Also, Sarah was very flexible, and I did not take into account how challenging it would be for me to exhibit similar dynamic qualities in a less flexible body. Flexibility aside, I hold tension in my joints, especially with new material, and generally, I tend to prefer controlled movement. The required sense of release and floppiness was an immediate change to my usual disposition.

During this intensive learning period, I had approximately two rehearsals a day for a few days prior to leaving for our university's winter recess. At this point, I did not have all of the qualitative nuances of the work, but I had learned the movement and was aware of Greg's intentions for my progress. As soon as he told me to let myself be more weighted, I lost the moments of attack that were once present in my performance. I

needed to find the balance and ability to alternate the dynamics that were present in the choreography. There were also questions of initiation that I needed to address, which I had not focused on when acquiring the material. In both "Maya" and "Solo For Pop Music #2," I recognized this absence of understanding my intent and initiation, and I believe it stemmed from learning already set choreography rather than finding new choreography in my own body. Greg reiterated, and personally confirmed this notion, when he told me that a lot of the material was set on Sarah personally and he only entered those rehearsals with some set phrase material. However learning previously set choreography is a skill, and just like any other ability, it would only be a matter of more rehearsals for me to identify these aspects in my own body to provide a genuine performance.

Upon my return to Emory in January, it was time to revisit my solo "Between Tides" from my Choreography I course. Anna Leo and I discussed adding a more drastic contrast of control and abandonment to incorporate an element of unpredictability in a previously more even, sustained work. Daniel Nagrin comments on this need for contrast in his essay on solo versus group choreography. "It is unfortunately quite possible to create a solo dance that is monochromatic, one that does not in some way bring vitality to the 'that.' Without the other, without the contradiction, there will be an emptiness" (Nagrin 2001, 95). By creating stark disparity between control and abrupt abandon, I intended to find this "other" and keep the work surprising and engaging for my audience.

There had been an overarching ebb and flow of movement in the original piece, increasing speed into one movement, decreasing speed into another moment. I eliminated this tidal quality by making the sustained moments more even in time,

reminiscent of the beautiful qualities in Martha Clarke's "Nocturne" that I had previously admired. Then, I inserted sudden, albeit sparse, instances of abandon. During these initial rehearsals, I thought of abandon as, primarily, a flinging of the limbs. It was my gut inclination to include more abandoned material, but my attempt at performing it felt so forced and initially foreign, that I did not know how to approach it from a choreographic standpoint. Furthermore, while I was attracted to the idea of such a radical range of movement qualities, performing them proved to be yet another disconnect between my original impression and my physical attempt.

Altering between such extremes felt impossible at the outset. How was I to regain immediate control and suspension after completely releasing my body in a state of abandon? On one hand, if I focused on finding this control, my abandoned quality was compromised and subconsciously controlled as well. On the other hand, if I truly released and gave into the moments of physical chaos, I proceeded to struggle and wobble attempting to relocate the slow, even time. I realized these performance elements would need a significant amount of attention in subsequent rehearsals, and I needed to make more choreographic edits to help make this piece cohesive despite its qualitative disconnect.

February arrived, and I was working through all of these discovered challenges during my self-rehearsals twice a week. It was at this point that Greg approached me with the idea of learning a fourth solo. After my hesitations subsided and the initial sense of panic evaporated, I started rehearsals for "Solo For Pop Music #3." Aside from my general anxiety about assuming yet another piece, I was most nervous about figuring out how I would perform this solo well. Greg mentioned the angry nature of the character,

Anna thought the role would test my performance ability, but I really doubted my ability to be angry on stage. Moreover, as I watched the solo when Greg first inquired, there were seemingly relaxed, calm moments. At the time, anger to me implied direct, forceful, and punched moments; how was I supposed to convey anger during these moments of apparent composure?

Unlike "Solo For Pop Music #2," I learned "Solo For Pop Music #3" by myself from the video prior to receiving any feedback from Greg (Catellier 2008, DVD). While this was somewhat tedious at times, trying it by myself before receiving feedback helped ease my concerns regarding the qualities. Due to the nature of my project, I was always concerned with the dynamics of each piece immediately, rather than letting them develop over time. Learning "Solo For Pop Music #3" by myself gave me time to learn the general outline, then work on the qualitative elements with Greg in following rehearsals. While there was significantly less time available to work on this piece than the other solos, the process worked well and allowed me to develop a confident sense of the role in time for the March performances.

Molly Perez originally performed "Solo For Pop Music #3," and by observing her clarity in performance repeatedly via the video, I could comprehend some of the intentions (Catellier 2008, DVD). As dance is a three dimensional art, however, not easily translated to the two dimensional layout of a video, it was vital to have personal feedback from Greg in order for me to understand all of the nuances and impetuses. My first doorway into the piece occurred when Greg lazily made a physical reference to one of the arm movements and revealed, "It's like, I'm so relaxed, I could kill you." This image and disclosure of his thought process was exactly the information I needed to enter

into those calm moments of the work. I was able to connect the bound energy and more familiar, directed tension with this previously perplexing tranquility. The association was present in my mind; the key was rehearsing it enough to officially link the mind and body before the concert.

I found it interesting to reflect and determine that I learned each of these solos in a different manner. I learned "Maya" from a previous performer, "Solo For Pop Music #2" from the choreographer, "Between Tides" through self-discovery and choreography, and "Solo For Pop Music #3" directly from video. I do believe that learning the last solo from video was actually helpful in terms of building confidence, but each acquisition process had its own benefits. I found it advantageous to learn "Maya" from a performer's point of view because I could also learn her hints. I was also able to make some changes based on what Rebecca already explored in performance. Obviously, learning "Solo For Pop Music #2" directly from Greg may have been the most typical way to acquire choreography, and I was able to hear about the original creation of the work, the intention behind its creation, and what he would like to see change since its original debut. Finally, exploring my own solo work from a choreographic standpoint gave me the opportunity to put my understanding of dynamics into action. Since "Between Tides" was just a study in a previous class, it was useful to my research to rework it and experience the composition of dynamics in addition to the performance of dynamics.

III. Deepening

"To learn the tremendous potential of dynamics with all its subtlety is never-ending for it is ever-changing…with maturity the concept grows in understanding and nuance" (Koner 1993, 37). After "shedding the externals" of any lingering inhibition (Koner 1993, 2), it was time to start working differently in rehearsals. The learning had concluded and I needed to find a way to approach this section of my journey. More often than not, I was in the studio alone. Some days I invited faculty to give me feedback, other times friends volunteered to watch and relay their observations. Although in order to continue with productive rehearsals, even by myself, I had to develop a system of self-evaluation that would help further my progress.

I kept a detailed rehearsal journal with corrections, specific parts on which I worked, questions for the choreographer, and my general feelings regarding my status at that point in the process. I also formed goals for each rehearsal while I warmed up, giving myself a direction for the day rather than running each piece aimlessly. Usually, this included re-reading my previous rehearsal journal to jumpstart my new rehearsal. Lastly, I videotaped myself on occasion so that I could see my own body moving in comparison to the other bodies that I watched in previously recorded performances. This not only assisted in checking for similarity, but it also allowed me to specifically see my abandoned state. This type of movement is hard to envision on oneself and nearly impossible to see in its rawest form in a mirror, so the video shed light on this mystery.

With this general approach to rehearsals, I started to make new discoveries, allowing me to craft and deepen each of the works. I emailed Rob, inquiring about the history and origins of "Maya" that Rebecca either did not know or provide. "Maya" is

translated as "cosmic illusion," insinuating that what we experience in our everyday lives is only an illusion. Based on Hindu philosophy, we become closer to the truth when the characteristics that make up ourselves are in balance. He described this solo as one of these characteristics, known as Rajas, which encompasses certain qualities: fast, work, achieve, high energy (Rob Kitsos, February 19, 2010, email conversation with choreographer). With this insight from Rob, I could enter the role with new fervor that consisted of more than memorized hand gestures.

This idea of achievement was a particular catalyst for my progress in this solo. The concept of achievement or progress is inherently direct, as one who desires to complete many tasks would not do so lackadaisically. "Movement in which spatial attention in the body is pinpointed, channeled, single focused, we call direct" (Dell 1977, 29). I could use this understanding of dynamics and spatial intent with Rob's descriptor to further develop my performance of the solo. In a rehearsal with Rebecca, we spent several minutes clarifying how I was placing my hands "on the desk." The flatness of my palms was not realistic for the gesture, or I let my hands rebound upwards rather than keeping them pressing on the imaginary desk. These details were so particular, but they focused my spatial intents and illuminated these moments in performance.

During self-rehearsals, I started to examine the "in between" moments rather than the grand, difficult ones to which I had once been so attracted. These moments were key to performing "Maya" well, as these were the moments that increased efficiency. If I made an extraneous motion between two staccato moments, my timing would be late for the second movement. As a performer, I would feel frazzled and potentially display this unsettledness in my movement or face. I made three more trips to the University of

Georgia to rehearse with Rebecca, where we worked through very specific details together, such as focus, initiation, pauses, spatial patterns, and execution of gestures. I kept journals on these details to refer to when I set my goals for my self-rehearsals at Emory.

I had the opportunity to perform "Maya" at an Emory Dance Program informal showing of work in December. While I thought it was at performance level at the time, it definitely progressed since that first performance. By practicing it in front of a larger audience, I became aware of the adrenaline increase present in a concert setting, exhausting me much more than I had been experiencing in my self-rehearsals. I would not deem myself a lazy or unmotivated person in rehearsal by any means. This increased exhaustion and perspiration made me realize that performing it in front of an audience leading up to "A Question of Character" would be essential. Fortunately, I had the chance to perform "Maya" again at the Women's History Month Concert in Emory University's Carlos Museum the week before "A Question of Character." While I did have less space on stage and a more intimate audience, I was less drained than I had been after the first practice performance, indicating that I had built stamina. I had also started to run the piece twice in a row in rehearsals with one minute in between them. Somewhere in the second run, I consistently had to mark sections because I was so out of breath. I knew I could not always depend on the presence of an audience to prepare myself for the concert, thus by physically challenging myself in rehearsals, I discovered a successful way to increase my stamina for the actual performance opportunities.

Continuing with rehearsals for "Solo For Pop Music #2," I received numerous physical clarifications, both from Greg during rehearsals and through my personal

connections between these rehearsals and my research. He used adjectives to change my performance at certain points, such as carving, kicking, poking. By sensing the "space as density" (Koner 1993, 51), I could alter my intention of my movements and create dynamics by interpreting these descriptors. I also recalled Greg's request for groundedness in this solo. In an attempt to find this weightedness, I adopted this very relaxed and lazy quality. The piece became rather monotonous, requiring me to reevaluate how I interpreted Greg's feedback and rediscover those punched and direct moments. As Franklin remarks, "feeling your weight does not mean letting your body sag. It means allowing the balance of weight and counterthrust to do its work most effectively without interference" (Franklin 1996, 10). During my first rehearsals, I was too controlled to let my body release, but then I went to the opposite extreme in an attempt to loosen the screws of my joints. I needed to find a balance within this delicate scale that would allow me to maintain enough control to still attack those important punched movements.

I worked on emulating the basics that Sarah demonstrated in her performance of "Solo For Pop Music #2," while later finding the specifics within my own body. It was very beneficial to watch her resilient nature. I recognized the choreographic variation between limb movement causing the body to react, and later the core of the body forcing the periphery to fling in reaction (Catellier 2008, DVD). The other dynamic quality inherent in this piece that I needed to master was bound flow. "A forward action with Bound Flow has a quality of holding back, while a forward action with Strong Weight…has a quality of impact, of pressing weight forward" (Bartenieff and Lewis 1980, 57). This distinction clarifies the intention of the performer. The moments of

exhaustion during the piece are characterized by bound flow's feeling of holding back rather than strong weight's active press forward. Bound flow, therefore, is a holding of energy, rather than an active execution of movement.

"Solo For Pop Music #3," however, contained a mixture of both bound flow and strong weight. Perhaps it is the contrast between bound and free flow, the juxtaposition of that slow, rising fist, and the utter release into an indulgent arch back that defines the essence of this work. "Both free and bound flow require muscular tension; all movement requires tensing of muscles, and it is the relationship among the muscles tensed, rather than the presence of tension in the body, which determines the quality of flow" (Dell 1977, 14). In rehearsals, I noted that bound flow requires an obvious tensing of all nearby muscle groups. For instance, when I tensed my fist and slowly lifted it by my shoulder, every muscle in my right arm tensed to the point of shaking, with additional activation of the surrounding side and back muscles. I would even venture to say that during the performance, other muscles in further appendages such as my leg may have engaged during that commitment to tension.

During free flow, however, it seems that dancers are focused on the release of muscles. Although as I have learned in my supplementary studies in the sciences, when one muscle flexes, or tenses, the opposite muscle is extending, or releasing. This flexion allows the opposing extension action to take place. Therefore, while arching back and releasing my fist and gripping bicep, my lower back and triceps were actually flexing, or holding tension, to provide this primary sensation of release and free flow. This relationship of muscular work was yet another way in which I was able to approach dynamics in rehearsals to keep the material personal to my body and way of thinking.

The next obstacle to address was the emotional quality inherent in this piece, which would likely assist in further understanding of this bound and free flow concept. Koner acknowledges that "there are many possibilities of dynamic nuance within a single emotion" (Koner 1993, 44). Understanding Greg's thinking behind the relaxed movement provided me with an entry point to this fluctuation between what I deemed calm anger and directed anger. Generally speaking, I am far from an angry person. I am more prone to almost any other emotion before pure anger. Nevertheless, I found a way to relate it to my life, although small, personal, and probably cliché to any outsider. It was not directed towards some larger social issue, nor towards a political figure I despised, but rather towards a friend who had betrayed me after years of the strongest friendship. I cannot convey the magnitude of this betrayal without fully digressing from the topic at hand, but it hurt me to a point past sadness, past anger that I could direct, to this feeling of calm anger. I had no energy or desire to address her directly, but the lingering anger that remained inside of me was probably greater than any fleeting anger of the direct form. By channeling my focus back to that experience, I could relate to what Greg was asking of me in my performance.

If a personal association with a role was one way to engross myself in the performance, understanding the lyrics was yet another way that Greg suggested I connect. Originally performed by The Clash, "The Guns of Brixton" was written by the bassist, Paul Simonon. Rarely receiving any credit or money for his involvement with the band, Simonon ironically composed one of their greatest hits with this song. The lyrics preceded the racial riots of the 1980s in Brixton, England, highlighting the discontent of the area at that time due to the oppressive nature of the police force. The reggae

undertones allude to the extensive Afro-Caribbean population residing in Brixton at this time (*Times Online*). The song is filled with references pertaining to the political environment. For example, the phrase "the harder they come" (Simonon, 1979) references a Jamaican crime film, and "no need for the Black Maria" (Simonon, 1979), hints at the slang term used for the police vehicle that carted prisoners (Black Maria, Wordnet). Understanding the origins of the lyrics made me much more aware of them musically, affecting my emotional investigation in the work, and therefore further shaping my role and dynamics.

The relaxed knee crawls on the diagonal to downstage left was my first physical point of entry into this calm anger. This sequence of five crawls provided me with time to investigate the quality fully without immediately juxtaposing the carefree movement with held tension. I was experiencing trouble portraying strong weight and bound flow, of which Greg reminded me in subsequent rehearsals. Ironically, that was the quality I initially associated with anger, and I thought I understood better than the calm anger. Physically, I discovered that I was drawn to the opposite.

While I was still trying to get my bearings for "Solo For Pop Music #3," I needed to solidify "Between Tides" for its performance at the American College Dance Festival in March. I seemed to be in a state of choreographer's block after those initial rehearsals. With the help and resources of Emory Dance faculty member, George Staib, I changed the music from a sparse, environmental score by John Cage, to an eerie, haunting piece by Plastikman. The echoing sounds of the new music were interspersed with a whispering voice, contributing to this new mysterious atmosphere. The change in music,

which I eagerly made after struggling to make a connection with the John Cage piece, launched a series of other significant changes.

First I needed to address this trouble I was experiencing choreographing abandoned movement. I watched portions of Dance Black America to see how culturally-driven movement approached this idea, and how I could use these findings to spark my own piece. In a Charles Moore solo, "Ostrich," it appeared as if something else, apparently animalistic, was inhabiting his body. Katherine Dunham's "Shango" appeared to be more possessed than abandoned. I determined that possession was a quality affected by an outside source, perhaps other dancers, music, or something supernatural. Eleo Pomare's "Junkie" seemed to share this type of possessed quality, perhaps because I already knew that the work was about mind-altering substances (Ross 1984, DVD).

However, viewing these examples of possession contributed to my developing definition of abandon when I watched Chuck Davis' "Lenjen-Go/Mandiani." Abandon referred to the release or letting go of something, whereas possession suggested the overwhelming effect of something. In abandon, there was sudden flexion and extension of the torso, a disconnect in the cervical spine between the head and back, and an utter release of the joints so they could react when limbs were flung. Moreover, there was a shooting of energy and weight into different parts of the body in rapid succession. I noted enough release in the body to allow this flinging and reaction to occur, but enough control to initiate quickly and repeatedly (Ross 1984, DVD).

With the visual aide and ability to articulate a working definition of abandon, I returned to the studio. Recalling Koner's advice to "never forget the words nuance and

contrast" (Koner 1993, 47), I inserted more moments of abandon to juxtapose to the sustainment as well as to the isolated gestures. I discovered that it was very difficult to choreograph abandon exactly, as it was more of a state than a placement. I then determined a general outline for those moments and was sure I knew where each successive initiation resided, but when I choreographed the entire sequence, it felt too controlled and shape-oriented like the rest of my choreography. In order to find a more genuine sketch for these moments, I spent time improvising to stumble upon this state hopefully more organically than if I were to really think through all of the spatial patterns.

As soon as I felt I was making progress with finding an abandoned quality, the seesaw of the choreographic process swung right back in the other direction. I received faculty feedback that my piece was still too short and underdeveloped. I needed to open up my vocabulary, clarify my focus and intentions, explore abandon in different ways, and change this "study" to a "piece." After experiencing the woes of a momentary setback, I recognized that I was not clear in my own decisions, and my performance did not hide this lack of complete exploration of my piece. The feedback sent me into a renewed mode of determination. According to Daniel Nagrin, it is best to "accept uncertainty. It is the best guarantee against the shock and disappointment that follows on the heels of being sure of almost everything" (Nagrin 2001, 162). With an improved outlook, I reentered the studio for "stretches of prolonged tedious labor" (Nagrin 2001, 162), and set to work making clarifications, decisions, and extensions.

While alternating between these states of indulgent control and utter abandon in rehearsals, I settled on a new title: "Swallowed." I was drawn to the idea that I was

swallowing this movement during the indulgent parts of the piece, that I was absorbing this sensation of moving to my fullest capacity. More importantly, however, I felt that as a performer I was swallowing these moments of abandon in order to maintain my control. I thought of it as a form of suppression in both a physical and an emotional sense. The hand gestures previously included in the piece became more important, apparent, and repetitive in the work as a means of physically containing. "The hands are often very expressive and are often forgotten" (Koner 1993, 57), and while I previously incorporated these gestures haphazardly, they developed into an essential element of this piece, adding a specific isolated movement to compliment the actions of the larger choreography.

I needed to decide what my intentions were in my body in order to contrast the dynamics effectively, and clarifying my focus would help with this immensely. "Focus is not just about where one is looking in space – this is only one part" (Koner 1993, 5). I had to determine where my center and concentration were directed in order to effectively use my focus in my choreography (Koner 1993). There are six focus types, according to Pauline Koner, and the three I touched upon in "Swallowed" were directional, magnetic, and body. Directional focus is not just staring in a certain sightline, "but looking, seeing" (Koner 1993, 6). I personally feel this is the most typical use and understanding of focus, as it pertains to the focus of the eyes at an object or imagined object. In "Swallowed," I shifted my directional focus to particular regions of the space. I especially looked towards the upstage left corner as a way of foreshadowing the closing section of complete abandon, hopefully making the audience wonder why my attention was repeatedly behind myself. Magnetic focus directs the eyes and body to an "area of tremendous importance to the performer" (Koner 1993, 25). Parts of my choreography involved the body being

drawn towards regions of the stage, with the important detail here that this focus includes an attraction of the body towards that area as well. Repeated head turns lured my focus and body to certain areas at various points in the piece.

Lastly, I added body focus, where the "performer and audience attention is to a certain body part" (Koner 1993, 29). I consciously chose to look at my hand many of the times that I enclosed my palm with curling fingers. By doing so I hoped to make the audience simultaneously move their attention to this crucial image of my work. Koner insists that "simply turning the head at a particular moment can have tremendous significance both emotionally and dramatically" (Koner 1993, 57). I discovered that isolating the part of the body that has the ability to display facial expressions or eye shifts is one way the choreographer can direct the majority of the audience's attention.

Daniel Nagrin writes that "both [choreography and performance] of a solo demand a rigorous discipline; the structure must be solid and the inner life of the performance sustained throughout" (Nagrin 2001, 96). By developing my phrase material, making it less predictable with varying timings, increasing the length, and creating an ambitious ending, "Swallowed" had a fairly solid structure in my opinion. At this point, there was about a week left before the adjudication concert at the American College Dance Festival. Anna advised me to perform it for as many people as possible before then to become more comfortable performing it, filling it with this inner life to which Nagrin refers. Performing it for small audiences would also provide me with initial reactions from peers and faculty. I rehearsed on a daily basis that week, which led me to indulge and discover subtleties within the choreographic framework. I could regain control in the suspended moments by activating my core as I was about to exit an

abandoned state. I could highlight and expand upon the abandoned movement by allowing my breath to be audibly affected and visibly affected in the rise and fall of my chest. I determined the particulars of my focus with each run, noticing where my shifts were between directional, magnetic, and body foci. With these final realizations, I felt prepared for the adjudication concert at the American College Dance Festival.

Prior to the performance, George Staib advised exaggerating some of the gestures since the stage was in a larger auditorium than the space in which I usually performed at Emory. In this seemingly exaggerated performance, I was hyperaware of keeping my focus apparent and my gestures tactile. The result was positive feedback from the adjudicators, remarking that the "qualitative change was clear and well done," the piece was "an experience of the senses," and a personally satisfying closing remark: "She swallowed it." The relief I experienced exiting this feedback session was palpable. I had affirmation regarding many of the choreographic and performance choices which I consciously made. Relief turned into a mixture of excitement and butterflies when I discovered that "Swallowed" made it into the Final Gala Performance. Absolutely thrilled with the extra performance opportunity and honor as an undergraduate choreographer, I performed the work again during the final day of the festival. The overall trip, feedback, and performance opportunities solidified any lingering fears I had about this work. It had been a slow moving, and a trying process filled with doubts and questions. Once I experienced the personal satisfaction of completion and thrill of performance, I was able to more clearly recognize that those doubts and days of choreographer's block are just a part of the process, and dance would really be quite boring and anticlimactic if the process itself was short and irrelevant.

As I explored the various challenges within each solo, I started to run the pieces back to back in maintenance rehearsals. It was with this step that I felt more of the dynamics come to life. Koner states that "very dull movement becomes more and more interesting as the different aspects of dynamics are layered upon it" (Koner 1993, 41). While I was already performing a contrast of dynamics in most of the works, running them next to each other, creating further contrast as the layers piled, was challenging but illuminating. Anna noticed in rehearsal that a floor moment in "Swallowed" had a similar quality to the released nature of "Solo For Pop Music #2." Performing all of the works back to back may have muddled some of the initially distinct intentions and dynamics, but with an outside eye, this rehearsal helped steer me in the direction of deeper clarity and separation of qualities. Rather than adapting movement that was familiar from other pieces on which I was working, I needed to differentiate the dynamics in my mind and body, despite rehearsing them consecutively. After all, I would have to successfully do just that in the culminating concert.

During this deepening phase of my project, I needed to maintain my physical condition, technique, and training so that these components did not inhibit my performance in any manner. I was taking modern three times a week, and ballet and jazz twice a week for a few months leading up to the performances. I almost felt like my modern technique class was structured for my own personal research in the beginning of the semester. Blake Beckham, an Atlanta-based choreographer and teacher, gave us opportunities to perform the same combination multiple times while personally changing one element each time. I used these exercises for my research, varying dynamics during technique class. I varied the amount of energy and weightedness, the timing, and the use

of space. Sometimes she directed us more specifically, asking us to look for particular opportunities to clarify our focus, other times she told us to perform the phrase from our backs rather than the front of our bodies.

These physical experimentations during class allowed me to work out nuances in varying choreography, therefore keeping the qualities genuine and fresh in my body. These were beneficial self-experiments to confirm that I understood the dynamic qualities themselves and not just how to perform them within the specific choreography for my concert. Koner expresses, "It is of great value to see how different dancers interpret the same phrase and how that phrase differs in impact on the viewer" (Koner 1993, 42). As Koner notes here, it was advantageous for me to watch how other students approached Blake's exercises in addition to attempting them myself. I found that observation is another component of active participation, as it is possible and probable that a person can learn a great deal just by watching.

Ballet and jazz techniques helped compliment other parts of my training for this concert because these techniques often require varying dynamics within the body simultaneously. Often in these classes, the upper body and torso is executing one dynamic while the lower body is doing something completely different. In addition to contrasting aspects in the same piece and in the same concert, these techniques forced me to explore contrasts in the body at the same time. Furthermore, taking various technique classes sharpened qualities that are typically associated with each particular form. For example, Koner refers to ballet as the "realm of air" (Koner 1993, 50), honing one's skills in lightness and buoyancy. Modern on the other hand, she refers to as the "realm of the earth" (Koner 1993, 50), pronouncing weightedness as a primary component of this form.

While she does not designate a specific "realm" for jazz, I find it increases my awareness of timing and phrasing.

In terms of additional training, there was a need to increase and maintain my stamina. I realized solo works took extensive emotional, mental, and physical energy, and while I practiced some cardiovascular exercise once or twice a week, I found that it was more effective to run my pieces consecutively. It is entirely different to execute varying physical movement when dancing than it is to complete a mindless, repetitive motion on an elliptical machine. However, while I was on winter break and did not have access to a studio, I did make it a priority to perform cardiovascular exercise five to six days a week, in addition to strength training three days a week. When the spring semester commenced, I was glad to reenter my rehearsals in decent physical shape. I found it beneficial to start rehearsing my solos more often during the week for peers, in addition to my usual two, one and a half hour rehearsals.

On this extended journey of deepening leading up to "A Question of Character," I was developing my dynamic range intellectually and physically, I was making choreographic choices, and I was discovering and breaking personal tendencies. I was pleased with the steady progress on a personal level and from a research standpoint, another dimension of my project started to emerge and present further challenges.

IV. Emerging

As I continued my rehearsals and meetings with Anna, I realized that in both journal entries and in conversations, I started to refer to my solos as characters.

Subconsciously, I was using these personae to describe my dynamic investigations of each work. According to Franklin, "[A performer is] a personality, an individual with a background," and giving an imaginary story or identity to performance "should add richness and depth" (Franklin 1996, 223). Assigning characters to each of my solos was another way in which to access the pieces from a performer's perspective. I could access the necessary dynamic qualities from a more human viewpoint by addressing personae. I can read about dynamic qualities and their definitions and articulate them well, but the ability to relate to a role has the potential to be much more personal onstage. By emotionally connecting to a character, a dancer can take her performance further than if she were to solely analyze dynamics through a more academic approach.

The unrelenting nature of "Maya," both due to the movement vocabulary and the driving rhythm of the music, created an environment in which the performer could not rest until the final drum beat. Although, the audience never even sees this collapse from exhaustion since the lights go out mid-jump. The quick, direct moments and office-like gestures remind me of a frenzied office employee trying to get everything done before the end of the workday. These personal interpretations in rehearsals along with the informative emails from Rob caused me to focus on the idea of achievement and drive. With all of these considerations, *The Tireless Achiever* emerged. She never stops, only pauses suddenly until she shifts her focus to the next task at hand. In terms of personally relating to this character, I am very driven and tend to over-commit myself. I never have time to slow down if I want to fit all of my obligations into my schedule. I do not think I often visit this point of complete frenzy that this role entailed, but I can understand the task-oriented, meticulous personality that it required.

The characters for "Solo For Pop Music #2" and "Solo For Pop Music #3" were perhaps the most set because Greg described them to me as I was working on the material during rehearsals. "Solo For Pop Music #2" resembled a teenager wavering between rebellion and exhaustion. There was a feeling of angst associated with this role that did not come as easily to me. As rehearsals continued and I still struggled with the qualitative nuances, I wondered if perhaps it was because I did not have a way in which to relate this character to some element of my personal life. This is not to say that if as performers we cannot access such roles, all hope is lost. It just requires a more patient approach and a different entry point. Personally, I kept listening to Greg's feedback and tried to break into this role via dynamics first, and then let the character, *The Nearly Defeated*, develop within my performance. For "Maya," however, I was able to use an aspect of my own identity to connect on this emotional level simultaneously to the application of dynamic intent.

"Solo For Pop Music #3" presented a more explicitly angered character, which I was able to relate to my personal life by recalling a painful disintegration of friendship. The character, *The Outraged*, originated, and I worked with this character very directly from the outset. Perhaps I delved headfirst into the role since I learned this solo later than the other works, or perhaps my immediate association with that persona allowed me to connect more quickly. Unlike "Maya," however, this character connection was due to an experience rather than a component of my everyday personality. I am not an angry person day to day, but I recalled an emotional event that triggered this part of my being.

Finally, the character for "Swallowed" was much more personal than I originally intended, but I did not create this character for the sake of exploring something highly

personal through choreography. Rather, I set parameters and limits for my investigation, knowing that my desire to contrast extremes on a specific dynamic spectrum was my primary goal. Alternating between the two drastic states of control and abandon set the scene for some sort of conflicted character. I cannot honestly say if the character formed purely from the movement itself or if I created her in my head based on my emerging connection to the role. Nevertheless, *The Suppressor* developed. The movement lent itself to this notion of suppression; as soon as the character lost control, she regained her composure either through the explicit containment of her hand or the overall command she exhibited in her body.

Personally, this is a way in which I tend to handle stress. When something becomes too overwhelming in public, my innate reaction is to swallow in order to restore my sense of calm. This is yet another more individual and literal application of my title. Should I start to lose my composure, and enter into some emotional state of abandon, it is usually brief and conquered by a deep breath and reminder that I can manage the situation with some degree of ease. This seesawing of emotions occurs, but I always feel the need to appear, both to others and to myself, that I have the situation under control. I chose the past tense of the verb, which can again, lend itself to various interpretations. On one hand, the character is swallowed and manipulated by this coping mechanism, and she cannot escape the constant oscillation of these emotions. On the other hand, swallowed can indicate that the character surmounts this encroaching feeling by the end of the piece because she successfully recovers from a final prolonged state of abandon. These interpretations of the title are more dramatic and go further than my personal

relation to the character, but as a performer I need to relate to and embody my role, not adopt it in my everyday being.

When rehearsing the pieces back to back for a small group of peers, one commented that "Solo For Pop Music #2" and "Solo For Pop Music #3" seemed to have very different characters when performed back to back than they did the first time she saw them rehearsed separately. While both characters are somewhat angst-driven, there is a definite distinction. After a few other opinions, I changed the program order for "A Question of Character" to perform "Solo For Pop Music #3" immediately following "Solo For Pop Music #2." Greg did not do this in his previous concert containing this series of solos, but since my primary concern for my own concert was demonstrating dynamic range and variations in personae, I wanted to put them next to each other to highlight the differences.

While the emergence of characters helped open a window into my performance, it also presented a new challenge. It was my responsibility to connect to these roles and perform them authentically as a soloist. For many of the works, I could "[pick] different facets of [my] own persona in an attempt to reveal [my] whole self" during the performance (Steinman 1986, 29). Lori Teague, another Emory Dance faculty member, suggested that perhaps we are drawn to this idea of a soloist as a character, because as audience members, we can more readily relate to a single moving body. The experience in itself is automatically more intimate, the audience's attention is focused on one being, and a connection or interpretation is made regarding her state since there are no relationships to other dancers to decipher.

Steinman comments, “Being an independent performer does create character” (Steinman 1986, 40). She further advises that “if you’re going to do solo work, you have to be everybody. The craft of transformation, the control one evolves to shift from role to role then is, most essential to the performer” (Steinman 1986, 40-41). I determined that this is absolutely essential. When I rehearsed “Maya” and “Swallowed” back to back, I needed to be able to physically transition between dynamics, but this transition would be impossible had I not transformed my character state mentally as well. This immediate transformation would be tested with “Solo For Pop Music #2” and “Solo For Pop Music #3” in the culminating concert.

With this additional dimension of my project, I started to wonder whether dynamics was still the crux of my project or whether it was just a starting point to reach this new investigation of characters. I believe the two are related, but I think the development of characters surfaced due to the solo aspect of the works, not exclusively due to the dynamic variations. Steinman argues that “if one understands the range of one’s energy, the range of personae and characters one contains within oneself, the potential for using that range is enhanced” (Steinman 1986, 31). I feel it is this combination of both comprehending the roles and addressing dynamic subtleties, no matter which is the predecessor, which leads to a successful performance.

Daniel Nagrin, however, has a different viewpoint, “Performing the inner rhythm of the character stirs up the animality that lurks in the shadows of everyone. The inner rhythm stirs up elements that cannot easily be reached by reason or analysis” (Nagrin 1997, 69). I am not downplaying the importance of this inner rhythm and the performer’s understanding of a role at a deep level, and I found that this understanding can indeed

instigate a closer connection to a role. I do side with Steinman in my own research, however, because I could not digest the role necessary for "Solo For Pop Music #2" until I spent more time exploring and analyzing the qualitative elements. In this example, I needed to locate this "reason or analysis" in order to find the character and its "inner rhythm."

By detecting these emerging characters, I developed a greater connection to each of my works. I was ready to step out onstage to perform a role, not simply a series of movements with varying qualities. Furthermore, this new outlook on my pieces enhanced my attention to dynamics; there was a purpose behind executing movements a certain way or shifting my focus or intent. To quote Rudolf Laban, "'Man's inner urge to movement has to be assimilated to the acquisition of external skill in movement'" (Bartenieff and Lewis 1980, 49). With a link between my intellectual and emotional comprehension of each work, and a connection between my mind and body, I was mentally and physically equipped for my performance.

V. Performing

The week of the concert commenced with a smooth-running technical rehearsal. It was undoubtedly helpful that Greg, both the choreographer for two of my works and the Dance Program's lighting designer, already knew what he wanted for his two pieces. Rob previously requested specific lighting requests for "Maya," and Greg had also lit "Swallowed" a few weeks prior at the American College Dance Festival. The need for

extensive experimentation with lighting cues was not necessary. The efficient technical rehearsal started show week off well.

Bringing "Maya" to the stage proved to be harder than I anticipated, considering that I had performed it in two different settings and had also been with that piece the longest. On Tuesday night's rehearsal, we began to run the show, opening with "Maya." There was a moment about a minute into the piece when my mind went blank and I felt my body trying to continue with half-attempted motions I knew were incorrect. As Koner insists, "dynamics need to be "so ingrained…that [they] are there as reflex action, not as mechanical analysis" (Koner 1993, 45). All of these qualities had indeed been ingrained in my body. If I started the music halfway through the piece in rehearsals, I could always find the movement amidst the persistent rhythms. Why then, if the direct impulses were truly reflexive at this point in the process, did I come to a standstill and let it affect me so considerably?

I came to three conclusions: the driving nature of the music sent me into a state of panic that I otherwise may have been able to avoid, the solo nature of the work did not let me recover the movement through observations of other performers, and perhaps most importantly, I did not enter this rehearsal of the program connected to my character. Koner further asserts that a performer "must maintain that sense of total involvement on stage to be an artist" (Koner 1993, 3). As soon as I let my persona falter, my entire performance mode evaporated. This was a lesson in performance preparation as well as in flexibility. There is always the possibility that something may not go according to plan. Nagrin discusses this necessity to tolerate uncertainty, "The hazard wrapped up in…planning is rigidity. There are artists who resist the slightest change. They cannot

face the reality that no two performances are alike. The flexible ones delight in surprises and literally gain energy when things 'go wrong'" (Nagrin 1997, 27). This does not mean, however, that a performer is any less talented or accomplished if she makes a mistake on stage. In order to move past this error, I needed to understand that it is about the recovery from a mistake that makes a great performer, not the absence of a mishap.

After a post-run discussion with Anna, she suggested a plan should such an incident occur again: insert a walking sequence to the upstage, a pathway I already make at another point in the piece, until I find the music and reenter the material. With this plan, I never forgot the material again, but it was a reminder how to handle such a moment of mental freezing that has the potential to interrupt any performer's focus. The next evening during dress rehearsal, I had succinct lapse in "Solo For Pop Music #3, perhaps lasting all of three seconds. Rather than reacting with stationary shock, I inserted a finger-curling hand gesture that occurs another time when I am in the same position in which I blanked. By the time my thumb was curling, I knew where I was and continued with the choreography. While there was a brief moment of explicit thinking, I maintained my connection to the character, a personal improvement since the previous evening.

Before the concert on Thursday evening, Greg asked that I make the slide forward in "Solo For Pop Music #3" more intense and direct, as if I were going right off stage into the audience's space. This note made me question my relationship to the audience in this work. Steinman mentions, "How a performer engages the audience, how they think of and relate to their audience, is an issue for each performer to resolve for himself or herself" (Steinman 1986, 46). While I was not directing my anger towards the audience

members, it was imperative that I hold this infuriation confidently in front of them for the sake of portraying my character appropriately. I was not outraged *at* them, but I was actively presenting my anger *to* them. Obviously the forceful slides forward and potential for eye contact rubbed my rage right in the audience's face, but a more subtle moment in which this presentational aspect was apparent occurred during the hip and arm swings in a circle facing front. I kept my eyes downcast when shifting my focus from right to left and back again. While this could be seen as a detachment from the audience, it was a moment in which I was proving to them how little I cared during this temporary relief from directed anger.

Entering "Solo For Pop Music #3" immediately following "Solo For Pop Music #2," with no piece in between, was a consistent challenge during all of performance week. I was rushing to change in a timely fashion and stepping out onstage still settling my breath as the new music and lights surfaced. As the week progressed and the concerts arrived, I had my ritualistic routine intact. I focused solely on my breathing while mindlessly changing the pre-set costumes. When I stood in front of the backstage assistant after changing, I would say, "one more minute," while I took a few more stationary breaths and envisioned my role in the next piece. After she called "places," I would walk to the wing, take one more deep breath as I tried to return to the inner rhythm of *The Outraged* I had so often embodied in rehearsal. I found it essential to my performance to "[discover] an immediate and effortless identity with the role and its inherent energy" prior to stepping onto the dark stage (Nagrin 1997, 90). Once the music and lights started, it would be too late. As a performer, I needed to make my entrance before the lights came up, not as an afterthought.

On Friday afternoon prior to the second performance of "A Question of Character," Greg noted that I needed to find the musicality in my movement. I knew the lyrics to the songs, I knew the rhythms by heart, but my movement was not responding to this knowledge and familiarity. Preston-Dunlop writes that "counting [music] inhibits experiencing dynamic change and it is the ability to experience that has to come first in effort mastery" (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg 2002, 95). For both of Greg's solos, I knew precisely where I needed to be on what counts, but I think a lack of musicality came from disconnected transitions between these memorized counts. The second evening, I focused more on the lyrics than the counts, as Greg told me to "sing them to myself" while performing. From a performer's standpoint, I cannot tell whether or not this changed the way audience members read my movement, but it felt more indulgent and satisfying personally.

More specifically in "Solo For Pop Music #2," I felt that my movement affinities were perhaps inhibiting my musicality. Franklin suggests, "Body habits create pockets of unawareness" (Franklin 1996, 4). Typically, I tend to prefer moving in even time, I like to be in control of my body, and I am very shape-oriented. This solo called for a variation in timing, an awareness of initiation and emphasis rather than picturesque shapes, and the ability to shift between bound flow and release, all aspects that went against my innate movement style. As a performer, I needed "the craft to understand what is needed and have the tools of analysis that [would] make an awkward and difficult role every bit as beautiful and as successfully realized as the one that came spontaneously" (Nagrin 1997, 33). I had in fact developed these analyzing tools in rehearsals. I understood the movement qualities, I had explored them physically, and

from these investigations I found a portal into the character, but now it was time to integrate all of these discoveries into performance. Greg's suggestion to "sing [the lyrics] to myself" was the way to access the dynamics and persona in performance. Performing is about being in the moment and using all of my gathered tools and knowledge; it is not the time for a re-analysis of the movement or efforts. Singing the music helped to fuse any disjointedness between my movement, role, and music.

Furthermore, I did not have the opportunity to perform either of Greg's works prior to the culminating concert. I did not have opportunities to receive as much feedback on performance aspects that are sometimes missing in a rehearsal studio despite any dancer's best attempt to present themselves as if it were a performance. I have found that there is a heightened level that a dancer reaches in performance, perhaps due to the larger audience, perhaps due to the rush of adrenaline, which is difficult to reach in the simulation of a performance in rehearsal. While I missed this opportunity for Greg's works, he did provide me with helpful notes during technical week prior to the shows. It made me more appreciative of the opportunities I had to test the other solos in performance settings prior to "A Question of Character."

Finally, bringing "Swallowed" into this final concert was particularly gratifying for me. By reworking the piece from its original version in the fall semester of 2008, it felt like a symbolic offering of my growth not only through this project, but over the past few years. I was very pleased with my initial performance of the piece at the American College Dance Festival, and to my amazement, when it made the Gala Performance, I was more nervous than I had been for the initial adjudication concert. I was so proud with my first result that I was anxious about performing it again to the same caliber. In

actuality, however, neither of these performances were the "results" of my project, they were yet another component of my process. Furthermore, I reminded myself of one of Greg's statements following an Emory Dance Company concert in November 2009. He complimented his cast on a great first show, and told us that the second performance that evening would be no better or worse than the first night, "just different." This is precisely how I needed to approach the Gala Performance, and eventually how I needed to approach my two-night performance in "A Question of Character."

Daniel Nagrin furthers Greg's already insightful comment, "Never expect a repeat performance. Go out curious. What will you find there and how will you deal with it?" (Nagrin 1997, 100). The abandon in this solo readily lent itself to "different" performances. If I truly let myself be abandoned, I could never perform it the same way twice. Also, since it is a solo work, there was the potential for nuances and timing to change slightly in the moment without altering the integrity of the piece. I loved indulging in this opportunity as a performer, and the structure of the work allowed that to be a possibility. "Swallowed" was different every time I performed it. There was less pressure when approaching it with Nagrin's curious point of view. I was able to stay more engaged in the role by experiencing the movement as it happened rather than evaluating it for correctness.

An example of one of these in-performance changes was the closing moment of abandonment. I knew where in the music the final sound would come to a halt, and I had to continue my upstage left "freak out," as I came to call it, until that music cue arrived. In "A Question of Character," these freak out sections lasted longer both nights than they had in the performances at the American College Dance Festival. I am sure more

exhaustion read in my performance before I could recapture my control, and while this is no better or worse necessarily, it definitely reads differently to an audience. In "A Question of Character," I personally felt like I was more desperately grasping for control at the end. My breathing increased, and I was so dizzy by the time I caught myself in that contracted position that I had to steady myself on two set feet instead of keeping my weight back on one leg like in previous performances. Did my performance suffer because I needed an extra foot to stabilize my body after being utterly abandoned? Probably not. If anything, the genuine need to put my foot down at that moment made my thoughtfully planned and staged moment more human, realistic, and accessible to the audience.

I had been so focused on the qualities of movement and their subtleties that I never addressed the moments of stillness in my self-rehearsals. A dancer "must retain an energy flow and intensity even in stillness… [to prevent] a frozen appearance" (Koner 1993, 56). It was evident that I was only addressing dynamics in terms of motion prior to the concert, because both Anna and Greg pointed out uncommitted moments during stillness. In "Maya," I rush upstage and stand abruptly for a short-lived moment. Greg highlighted that in dress rehearsal, this stance was clearly a moment of rest rather than a stance ready to erupt at any moment. Anna commented that the lighting at the end of "Swallowed" fades out very slowly, and the audience is left with the final image of me twisting my torso and looking back past the audience. I needed to understand that stillness should be "pregnant with motion" (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg 2002, 94). It requires feeling as if the inside is still moving while the outer shell has appeared to stop; if I stay engaged as a performer, so does the audience. For "Maya," this meant

adjusting my focus and posture of my sudden stance. Confidence is essential to stillness, as it is very easy to sink back into oneself when residing in a stationary position. Dancers move confidently across the stage all of the time, but the ability to remain still with dynamic intent was something I discovered as I reached performance time.

For "Swallowed," the engagement required a lift of the sternum during the torso twist. If I simply turned my head back slowly, there was only so far this rotation could go before anatomical reasons inhibited further motion. If I let my shoulders and torso twist as well, however, this gave the rotation a greater range of motion. Not only could I rotate at the cervical vertebrae, but I could also rotate at the thoracic vertebrae. The additional room for rotation gave me more space to grow into the twist, rather than hold the twist, as the lights faded. Moreover, this opened my sternum to the audience. Permitting the audience to see my lifted chest portrayed the image of continuous growth and commitment to the end of the work. The elevated image, again, presented confidence, and in terms of this character, exuded a greater recovery of control.

I was originally attracted to dynamics because I believe the use and alteration of them is the essence to maintaining audience involvement and investment in a work. Koner bluntly states that "monotony is hypnotic – contrast is stimulating" (Koner 1993, 58). By exuding a myriad of dynamics in the concert, I hoped to retain the interest of the audience members every time I entered the space. In addition to uncovering, addressing, and conquering these dynamic challenges for each work specifically, I was also learning the demands placed on a solo performer in general. Nagrin warns, "There is an inherent fragility in solo work. It is under great pressure to be 'interesting' through every moment of its time" (Nagrin 2001, 96). This realization made me hyperaware of my intention in

performance, but the problem remained that 'interesting' was a subjective word. What if some audience members were engaged with the character in "Solo For Pop Music #3," but were not magnetized by "Maya" because the pace disoriented and frustrated them? This questioning led me to a conclusion: I cannot interpret Nagrin's use of the word interesting in terms of the audience's interpretation. I as a performer must remain committed to my roles, which will in turn be ultimately more interesting than an undedicated soloist.

By "[opening] the channels" between mind and body (Franklin 1996, 17), between character and movement dynamics, I experienced performances beyond a simple regurgitation of choreography. I lived with most of these identities for so long, that they had enough time to resonate with me emotionally and develop into genuine portrayals. Changes in emotional intensity and connection do not come from emoting, but rather "the change comes for the inner experience, the inner focus" (Koner 1993, 45). This distinguishes an artist and a performer from a dancer. A dancer could be technically brilliant, but be unable to exude the integrity of a character onstage. I realized that this artistic ability was yet another facet that could contribute to my goal of increasing my versatility as a dancer.

"A Question of Character" confirmed the incredible necessity for this research project to culminate in a performance. Steinman notes, "Performance is a vehicle by which the performer may be transformed into a heightened state of consciousness, into someone or something else. It is also a means to transform aspects of their lives, their dreams, their experience in order to give them meaning or to find meaning" (Steinman 1986, 27). This "heightened state of consciousness," like the rush due to adrenaline and

audience presence that I mentioned previously, can lead to discovery not otherwise possible. I was not aware of the place I could take these characters until I was in performance. It is a sensation that is difficult to articulate, but that is why we perform. I did not know I could push my dynamics to such extremes as I did while sharply isolating gestures in "Maya" or while calmly and eerily sliding on my knees across the diagonal in "Solo For Pop Music #3." It was a huge responsibility to command such a presence on stage as a solo figure, "but a good soloist has the facility to create an all but palpable world on stage" (Nagrin 1997, 65). After rehearsing pieces which would contribute to a contrasting and stimulating program, locating the "inner rhythm" of each of my characters, and allowing all of the work to exist in the "heightened state of consciousness" of performance, my research culminated with what I felt was an immense amount of personal and artistic growth.

VI. Reflecting

When embarking on this journey, I knew there was great potential for dynamics to shape and enliven a work. Referring back to Pauline Koner's definition, the elements of dynamics are the use of space, the use of time, and the use of energy and weight. These components are each "independent and [do] not automatically condition another (Koner 1993, 38). It took me slightly longer, however, to decipher the difference, if any, between the term dynamics and Rudolf Laban's term, Effort. As Dell suggests, "It is not merely the presence or absence of the factors of weight, time, space, and flow, but the many ways in which their elements combine that provides the endless variety of

dynamics with which people move" (Dell 1977, 41). Here, Dell is referring more specifically to the factors of Laban's Effort, yet using the term "dynamics."

During my research, and in light of knowledge gained through other coursework at Emory, I questioned the difference between the use of the word dynamics and the use of the word Effort. Pauline Koner's components of dynamics are very similar to Laban's analysis of Efforts. The only difference lies in the word choice between energy and flow, which upon evaluation can even be very similar. It is the restriction or the release of energy that causes bound or free flow. Dell furthers my assimilation of these term choices:

> [Movement analysts] refer to their work in different ways, according to their own application of ideas. For the most part, however, regardless of what they are called, applications of Effort theory remain related to one another, drawing from and contributing to a common framework of ideas, although the organization and degree of detail may change from field to field. (Dell 1977, 7)

Here, the terms are Effort and dynamics, and the common framework of ideas is weight, space, time, and flow or energy. I believe a difference remains in that Laban created very specific terminology to distinguish his elements, whereas dynamics can encompass a broader range of vocabulary.

Having defined this term during my process, I can enter my reflections with greater clarity. Dell continues and discusses the impact on the viewer, "Some observers look for changes among effort elements, for how many times they are recreated in movement, while others look for changes within elements, how they diminish and intensify and combine with other elements" (Dell 1977, 33). In my research, I adopted the latter of these two methods. In a choreographic work, it is unusual for one effort element to exist on its own. As I discovered through choreography and performance, the

interest occurs when components are combined and contrasted. There is, of course, "only a limited number of aspects [that] can change – but changes create many differences" (Dell 1977, 8).

The combination and alteration of elements are responsible for the diversity of my concert program. Audience members completed feedback forms after the performances, which simply asked for noted dynamics or characters as a way to give me insight as a performer and choreographer. This verbal and anonymous method of receiving feedback was much more helpful for my research than the beaming congratulatory smile post-performance, never truly revealing how well the dancer actually performed. Choreographers and performers shape the overall interpretation in various ways, and according to Preston-Dunlop, "Personal intention transforms into public impression…it is the inter-relationship between these two that leads to interpretation" (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg 2002, 16). Whether or not a choreographer creates a work intentionally for the sake of the audience or simply for himself, it is useful to know how these choreographic endeavors are perceived. As a choreographer and performer searching for ways to improve both crafts, I was itching to read audience interpretations to compare with my personal intentions.

As a performer, "Maya" lived in a quick, direct, and strong environment, with interspersed bound jumps and hesitations. The sharp, staccato nature was exhausting from a performer's perspective because the repetitive stop-and-go nature of the movement required more energy than if I could continue with my generated momentum. Gestures needed to be completed with crisp exactness, as faltering would not only affect the choreography, but it would also affect the way in which this meticulous character was

interpreted by the audience. Audience members, however, did grasp this perfectionist role. They described the dynamics as "exhausting, in a flash, intense, clean, sharp, determined." One audience member noted the lit "corridor [producing] a sense of direction" for the character. A few people admitted to relating to this frantic, busy, and overwhelmed person in their own identities.

"Solo For Pop Music #2" really spans the efforts spectrum, but if I had to focus on the components most essential to the performer, I would highlight the play between bound flow, sustainment, and occasional directness. The audience saw the performance of *The Nearly Defeated* as "broken, very grounded, struggling, disquieted, beaten down, and committed." One commented that the "dancer seemed to be the 'you' in the song," and the piece exhibited "strength and emotional hardship combined." A personal favorite from Friday's feedback forms stated that the "music and dance [were] perfectly integrated." While this could just be a compliment on Greg's choreography, my performance must have exuded some quality of cohesion between movement and music, suggesting that Greg's note to "sing [the lyrics] to myself" during the Friday performance may have indeed worked.

Dynamic qualities that I identified in "Solo For Pop Music #3" were directness, sustainment, strong weight, and an alternation between free and bound flow. Audience members also noticed this combination of a "strong" yet "relaxed" character. They further described the solo as "confrontational, confident, and realistic." One person appreciated the "understated tension of the music reflected in the movement of the arms," while another audience member recognized the movement tendencies of the choreographer for both "Solo For Pop Music #2" and "Solo For Pop Music #3," but

remarked that qualitatively they were "very different." This was a reassuring statement to read since the consecutive placement of these solos was to allow the audience to make a more direct qualitative comparison. A final audience member believed the solo was a "commentary of what's really going on inside." I could not ask for a better observation considering I was very preoccupied with connecting to my characters on a deeper, personal level.

The final version of "Swallowed" contained sustained free flow moments juxtaposed with indirect, quick flinging movements. When receiving feedback on this work, I felt considerably more vulnerable than I did when reading about the pieces I performed. There was no real justification for this anxiety; perhaps I was just nervous about performing my first finished choreographed work. More likely, I had become more connected to it emotionally since I worked on it for such an extensive period of time, and I had an intimate link to this character's identity. Audience adjectives regarding the dynamic qualities included, "surprising, desperate, out of control, unexpected." A few audience members hinted at the belief that the character was "dealing with psychological issues," while one even ventured to say that she was "mentally disturbed in a beautiful way." Another person commented that "she brought to life the feelings and emotions that were expressed in the music." I appreciated the audience's recognition of my attempt to connect with many facets of the performance: music, environment, my character, and with the audience themselves. One honest audience member admitted that she "became very emotional and drawn to the dancer," perhaps the most rewarding and personally satisfying of all of the feedback. Every performer strives to have that moment in which they affect someone on a visceral level. It is an indication that I was able to push past the

movement, past the technique, and that my bond to the character allowed me to share it with the audience in performance.

I felt that my performances were successful on several personal levels even prior to reading audience feedback. It is reassuring, naturally, to receive affirmations regarding my performance and choreographic research. It is necessary, however, to take into account that the majority of my audience was not directly involved in the dance field. Therefore, their need to search for a meaning within works tends to be pronounced, and responses may have been exaggerated. For example, many people insisted that they could really notice the "primitive, tribal, Mayan character" in "Maya," even though they most likely assumed the title to have a literal connection to the soloist and then deduced their own storylines from there. This lack of exposure to or extensive knowledge of dance may have skewed some of my feedback, but generally I was searching for descriptors to see if my performance was readable and relatable. After all, how often are professional dancers performing to a house full of dance scholars?

As my performance project morphed into a performance and choreographic investigation, it seems necessary to compare these approaches to dynamic exploration. Both aspects provided an added dimension to the project. It was advantageous as a performer, to embody something that I choreographed on myself. I could physically experiment with material, while already knowing my body's tendencies, limitations, and capabilities. It was especially beneficial to work on abandon in an improvisational and experimental manner rather than trying to articulate the sensation and set it on someone else. It helped significantly to watch Dance Black America, and the inspiration continued when Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet visited Emory University and performed excepts

from Ohad Naharin's "Decadance." The opening contained a downstage line in which company members individually lost complete control of their bodies in an abandoned state (excerpts from *Decadance*, by Ohad Naharin, Schwartz Center Dance Studio, Emory University, Atlanta, February 19, 2010). This up close and personal experience highlighted the deductions I already made after watching Dance Black America. Visual aids and inspirations aside, I still could not execute this state myself until physically practicing it.

Performance requires an immense amount of concentration to embody the dynamics, but with choreography, I had to compose and structure these movement dynamics myself. It was very challenging to edit an existing work, as it forced me to evaluate and determine what was necessary and vital to the work, what could be eliminated, and what could be adjusted to have a greater effect. The performance component, on the other hand, had its own challenges. I could not just change a decision because the material did not feel right, I had to learn and work with set pieces. Depending on the choreographer, it is not always acceptable to change the choreography or intention so that it feels comfortable in the performer's body. Therefore, I had to determine how to rewire my body in order to break usual habits and access the appropriate qualities. Furthermore, I have to decipher what it is that a choreographer wants through visual examples or verbal descriptions, and then reproduce them physically. In this case, the ability to articulate what it is that another choreographer wants is only helpful to some degree. I can research and completely comprehend what a dynamic means in terms of effort qualities, but I found that physically understanding it is quite another test.

Throughout this journey, I have observed an improvement in my personal growth as a performer. Nagrin writes, "We as dancers have in the course of our training accumulated a mass of neuromuscular patterns. Without them we would be untrained – unskilled. With them, it becomes a challenge to come up with fresh and personal movement" (Nagrin 2001, 160). I had trained in various techniques for years prior to entering this project, allowing ample time for these "neuromuscular patterns" to develop in my body. Performance is not meant to take away from these acquired skills, but it can be a doorway for adapting these already inherent skills or accessing new ones. This project required attaining new qualities in order to project the appropriate dynamics without returning to the "crutch of personal style," a reference Nagrin makes in another one of his books. He persists, "You open [your range of possibilities] up by your unrelenting need to observe others, your skill in imitation, and your faith in the boundless range of your imagination. You free yourself…by not protecting and defending one way" (Nagrin 1997, 21).

Throughout this process, I was following this advice. I observed others in classes, especially in Blake's modern technique class, surveying how other people approached her instruction to try the movement in novel ways. I imitated previous performers of my solos, to the best of my ability, from videotape. Although I recognized that this two dimensional, impersonal way of acquiring material was helpful from a memorization and observational standpoint, I needed to work out the initiations, intention, and character identity more organically in my own body.

The obstacle I encountered on Nagrin's list of advice to avoid the "crutch of personal style," was having "faith in the boundless range of…imagination." Although, I

believe that the rehearsal atmosphere and choreographic demands required me to develop confidence in myself in this process. There was no time to have qualms about how I was performing a role. I came to terms with the feedback process, and I actually came to appreciate negative criticism because I knew it came from an honest place unlike the sugar-coated feedback sometimes given by peers in the field. Reflecting back to my initial place of self-doubt, I realize that it is important to keep the big picture in mind when questioning my performance abilities. I wanted to have my characters and dynamics intact by the culminating concert, but I learned that it was okay taking time to get to that point of performance. I learned that I needed to throw out this idea of "correctness" in the beginning of the rehearsal process, and just let myself experience the ups and downs that are only natural in any artistic endeavor.

The self-rehearsals increased my level of curiosity as a dancer as well. By developing my own way to evaluate my progress, I was asking myself more questions, occasionally audibly, in an attempt to work through problematic areas alone. This curiosity has transferred to other areas my dance life. I am more actively involved in technique classes, thinking through combinations in various ways. I am more observant of my peers, interested in their approaches to movement with which I may struggle. I ask more questions and formulate opinions more readily when watching works in my courses or at professional concerts. A simple, positive attribute that developed during my, sometimes lonely, rehearsals has transferred to many other areas of my art.

Personally, I know that this project has broadened my dynamic range. Recalling my hesitation in initial rehearsals was a matter of confidence, but it was due to the unfamiliarity of the movement qualities that caused this inhibition. Reflecting back, I

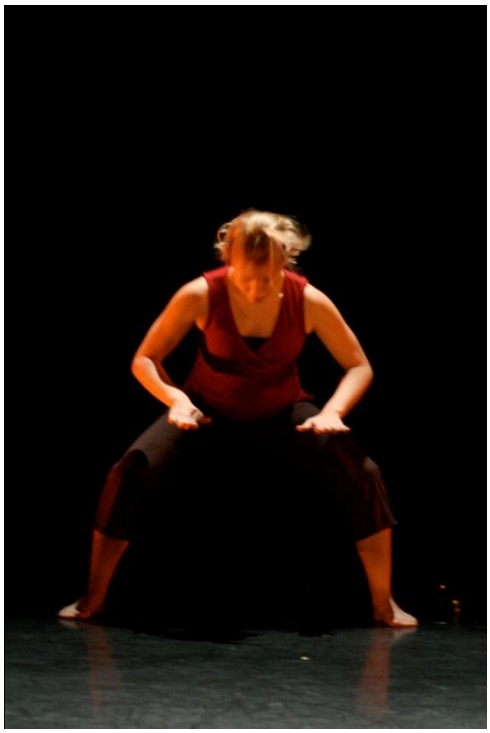
have not just adapted these specific dynamics for each of my four solos, because I have acquired the skills with which to approach dynamic differences. Analytically speaking, I understand the definition and components of dynamics and their effects when used in varying gradations and combinations. From a physical perspective, I have explored juxtapositions of extremes and learned how to maintain the integrity of each quality in performance. It is this developed improvement in dynamic range that has contributed to my personal growth and increase in versatility since the commencement of this research.

Learning to connect to a role or identity on stage was emotionally taxing, but again, pushed me to progress as a performer. I committed to each performance, and I was more willing to immerse myself completely and hope my efforts were apparent. Some audience members left general performance feedback, and one commented that he or she could "feel the passion in [my] pieces." Another mentioned that I had a "really impressive knowledge of [my] body, [and knew] how to evoke intensity and feeling." These are remarks I would not have expected to receive entering this project. I struggled relating to the character in "Solo For Pop Music #2," I took risks drastically altering "Swallowed," and was generally concerned with authentically portraying any of the characters because of this necessary emotional connection – Nagrin's so called "inner rhythm." Nevertheless, the feedback reaffirmed my hopes and intentions of this project. I increased my dynamic ranges, my clarity in performance, my ability to shift roles seamlessly, and because of this investigation in personal research, I ultimately became a more versatile mover.

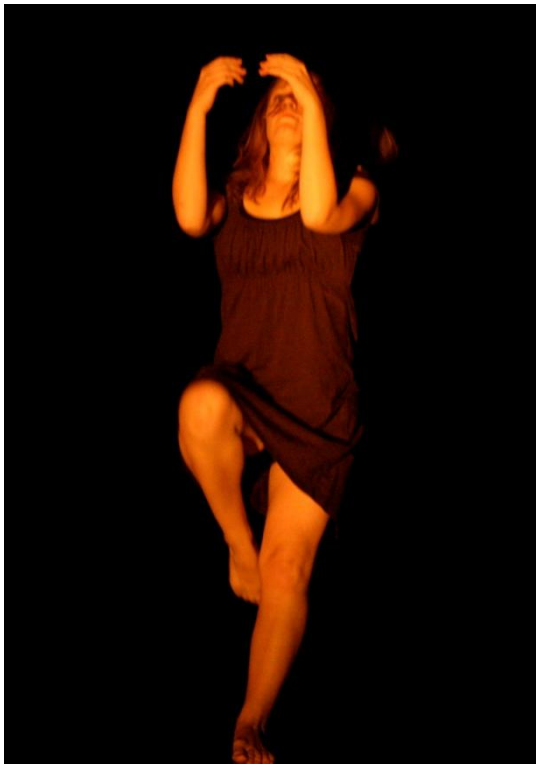
Appendix A: Performance Photographs

All photographs by Lori Teague

"Maya"
Choreography by Rob Kitsos



"Solo For Pop Music #2"
Choreography by Gregory Catellier



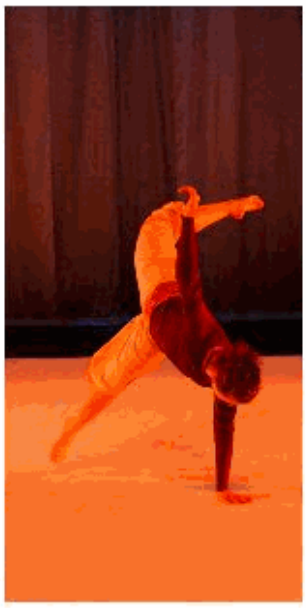
"Solo For Pop Music #3"
Choreography by Gregory Catellier

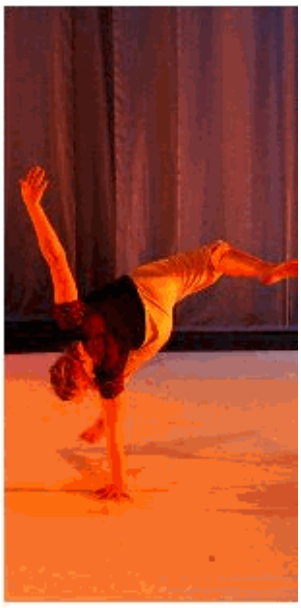
"Swallowed"
Choreography by Kaitlyn Pados

Appendix B: Promotional Flyer

A Question of Character

March 25-26, 2010, 8:00pm





Emory College seniors Alyssa Bruehlman and Kaitlyn Pados present an evening featuring their honors thesis projects in choreography and performance.

Dance Studio . Schwartz Center for Performing Arts
1700 N Decatur Road . Atlanta, GA 30322
404.727.7266 . Free and open to the public
No reservations required

This concert is funded in part by SIRE Undergraduate Research Grants as well as in-kind donations from the Emory Dance Program.

Appendix C: Self-Rehearsal Process

The following system helps keep self-rehearsals productive when rehearsing solo works.

AFTER EACH REHEARSAL:

- Keep detailed rehearsal journal including:
    - Corrections
    - Specific parts worked on during rehearsal
    - Questions for choreographer
    - General feelings regarding self-progress and status

PRIOR TO EACH REHEARSAL:

- Reread previous journal entry.

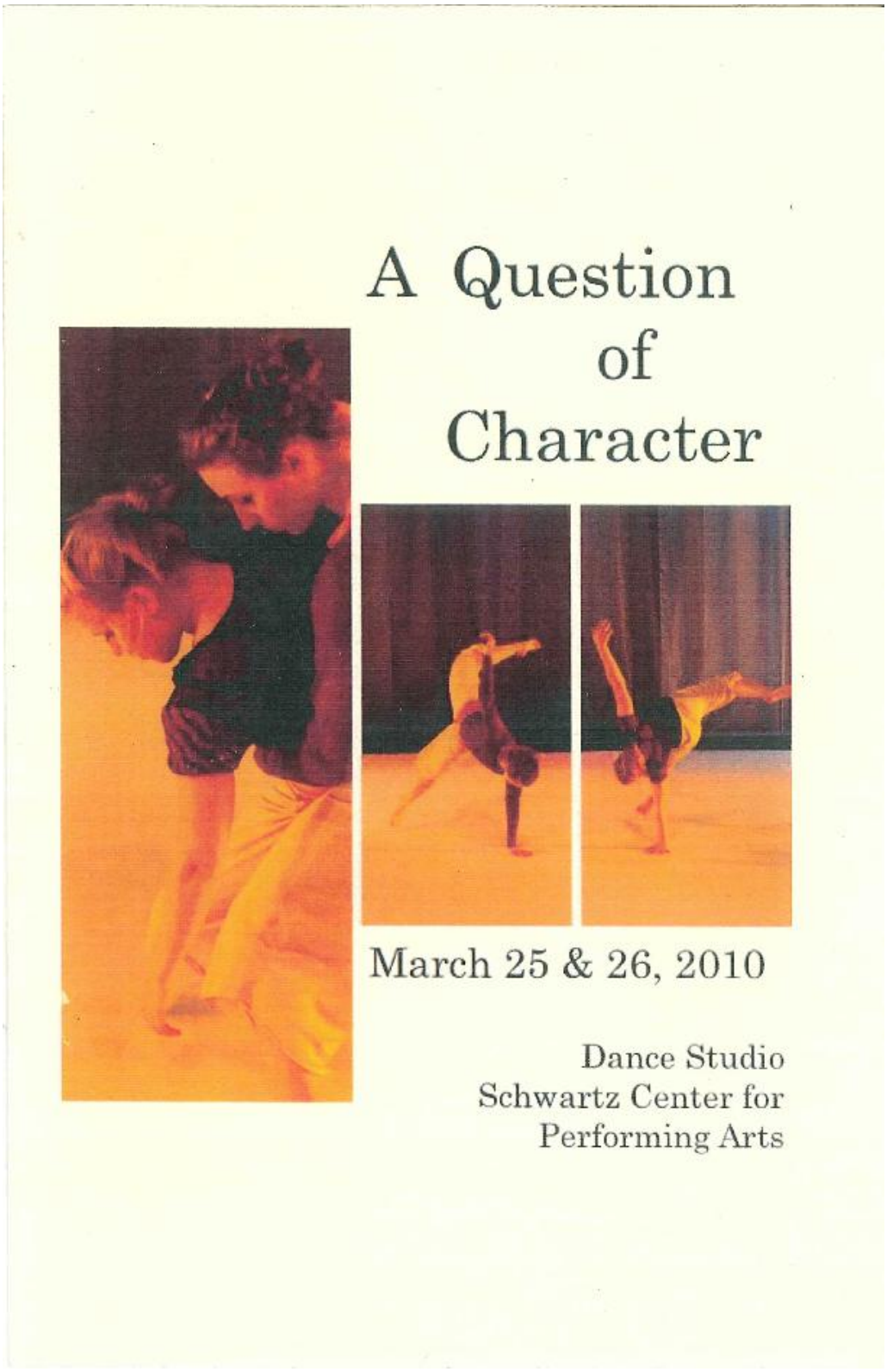
BEGINNING OF REHEARSAL:

- Based on previous rehearsal, form goals for current rehearsal.

DURING REHEARSAL:

- Videotape parts of rehearsal to self-observe without the use of a mirror.

Appendix D: Concert Program



A Question of Character

Alyssa Bruehlman presents work as a melding of three perspectives—ordinary pedestrian, dramatic dancer, vulnerable self—and considers how each persona enters and exists within a performance. Through this dual-media and mixed-cast presentation, Bruehlman scans the spectrum between the theatrical and the everyday, questioning how the performer interacts with both stage and reality.

Kaitlyn Pados investigates the use of dynamics in this choreography and performance project. In four solo works, she delves into a wide range of movement qualities, exploring the subtleties within each. Shifts between sustained movement and sudden abandon, limiting tension and uninhibited release, decisive clarity and wavering disposition—all create stark contrasts within various characters, revealing the broad spectrum of her research.

The pieces within this concert investigate a variety of characters. Italicized subtitles are provided to give insight into each role.

Maya
The Tireless Achiever

Choreography: Rob Kitsos
Music: "Ceremony of Passage" by Vas
Restaged By: Rebecca Enghauser
Performer: Kaitlyn Pados

Sociokinetosis
The Academic

Performers: Emory undergraduate students
Music credits included in presentation

Solo for Pop Music #2
The Nearly Defeated

Choreography: Gregory Catellier
Music: "Come As You Are" by The Mammals
Performer: Kaitlyn Pados

Solo for Pop Music #3
The Outraged

Choreography: Gregory Catellier
Music: "Guns of Brixton" by Nouvelle Vague
Performer: Kaitlyn Pados

Here It Is
The Ones Who Heard the Music

Choreography: Alyssa Bruehlman and cast
Music: "Grazing in the Grass" by Friends of Distinction,
"Got to Give It Up" by Marvin Gaye,
"Grazing in the Grass" by Hugh Masekela
Performers: Alyssa Bruehlman, Kirsten Cooper, Hannah Frankel,
Chelsea Gatcliffe, Tiffany Greenwood, Sophie Slesinger,
Chelsea Spencer

Swallowed
The Suppressor

Selected for the Final Gala Performance at the American College Dance Festival Southeast Regional Conference

Choreography: Kaitlyn Pados
Music: "Stealth Disturbance" by Plastikman, Kendall Simpson
Performer: Kaitlyn Pados

On Falling
The Oft Alone and Unattended

Choreography: Alyssa Bruehlman
Music: "Sweet Dreams of You" and "Strange" by Patsy Cline
Performer: Alyssa Bruehlman

Production Staff

Technical Director/Lighting Designer: Gregory Catellier
Stage Manager: Haley Scott
Assistant Stage Manager: Audrey Christiansen, Ellen Lyle
Light and Sound Technician: Richard Burnett
Technical Assistant: Kasey Davage
Costume Coordinator: Cynthia Church
Dance Program Director: Anna Leo
Music Coordinator: Kendall Simpson
Dance Program Office Manager: Anne Walker
Promotional Assistance: Sally Corbett, Jessica Moore
Arts at Emory Box Office: Stephanie Patton, Katie Storey
House Management: Dorothy Sheffield, Nina Vestal
Videographer: Lily Ransijn

This concert is funded in part by SIRE Undergraduate Research Grants as well as in-kind donations from the Emory Dance Program.

Thank You

Thank you to Anna Leo and Gregory Catellier, our honors thesis advisers, for your endless support and guidance throughout this process.
Thank you to Rebecca Enghauser, George Staib, and Lori Teague for your instruction and creative insight in rehearsals.
Thank you to Cyndi Church, Kendall Simpson, and Anne Walker for your helpfulness and availability.
Thank you to Linda Armstrong and Rosemary Magee for agreeing to take on these projects with us.
Thank you to the people of the Emory Dance Program, faculty and students, who have contributed countless hours toward deepening our experience during this project and over the past four years.
Thank you to SIRE and the Emory Dance Program for making this concert possible.
Thank you to friends and family for your love and unconditional encouragement, without which we might not have made it.
Thank you for coming!

Ever Grateful,

Allie and Kaitlyn

Appendix E: Audience Feedback Form

A Question of Character
Feedback form – Kaitlyn Pados

This project includes four solo works that vary greatly in terms of dynamics (timing, use of space, and use of weight and energy). Different personas also emerged and developed during the rehearsal process. Please comment on any character or role you detected in the performer, and any reactions you had to the dynamics in each of the following works:

Maya

Solo For Pop Music #2

Solo For Pop Music #3

Swallowed

Please provide any additional feedback, comments, or reactions. Thank you!

Appendix F: Arts at Emory – Spotlight Article

EMORY | arts

Arts at Emory
Season Brochure
Creativity & Arts

Creativity & Arts Spotlight: Performing Arts Honors Projects

A closer look at some of Emory's performing arts undergraduate honors students' projects in theater, dance, and music.

Dance

A Question of Character

March 25-26, 2010, 8:00 p.m.
Schwartz Center, Dance Studio
Free and open to the public.

Emory College seniors **Alyssa Bruehlman** and **Kaitlyn Pados** present *A Question of Character*, a concert featuring their honors thesis projects in dance. In this evening of eclectic work, Bruehlman and Pados offer two unique approaches to the study of choreography and performance.

Bruehlman's research is an active and philosophical inquiry into the role of the performer within contemporary society. With a combination of live and video-recorded performance, Bruehlman investigates interactions between the presentational and the mundane. In moments both staged and improvised, she attempts to capture the possibility of being both a pedestrian and a performer. This is Bruehlman's first experimentation with video, and she uses the camera as both a creative and examinational tool.

Bruehlman presents movement from three perspectives - the everyday pedestrian, the dramatic dancer, and the vulnerable self - and considers how each persona enters and exists within a performance. Through a dual-media and mixed cast presentation, Bruehlman questions how performance relates to the real and unreal and how the worlds of the ordinary and extraordinary ultimately relate.

Pados investigates the use of dynamics in her own choreography and performance project. In four solo works, she delves into a wide range of movement qualities, exploring the subtleties within each. The first piece is choreographed by Rob Kitsos, currently an assistant professor at Simon Fraser University in Canada. This work, entitled *Maya*, portrays a frenzied individual relentlessly interrupted by a new idea. The driving nature of this work pushes the character to finish all of her tasks before the percussive music comes to an end.

In her second and third solos, Pados performs two works choreographed and re-staged by Emory dance faculty member Gregory Catellier. *Solo for Pop Music #2* presents a persona reminiscent of a teenager, wavering between anger and exhaustion. Resilient movement is interspersed with moments of debilitating tension. *Solo for Pop Music #3* is from the same series of Catellier's solos, however this piece presents a more explicitly outraged character.

Pados finishes the evening with an examination of extreme dynamic range in her own choreographic work, *Between Tides*. Originally performed in 2008, she has reconstructed the piece to further question the presence of control in dance. Shifts between sustained movement and sudden abandon create a stark contrast, revealing the broad spectrum of her project.

The concert is funded in part by a Scholarly Inquiry and Research at Emory (SIRE) grant.

Appendix G: The Emory Wheel Review

DANCE REVIEW

Seniors Dance Way to Graduation

COURTESY OF EMORY DANCE

BY ALICE CHEN
Asst. News Editor

The intellectuals and the hard workers merged with the angry and the alone in an honors thesis showcase that broke conventions and presented research on, yes, a nonexistent infectious disease.

"A Question of Character" was the final culmination of College seniors Kaitlyn Pados and Alyssa Bruehlman's work throughout the year. Playing characters such as "The Academic," "The Outraged" and "The Oft Alone and Unattended," Pados and Bruehlman presented their dance theses to packed audiences last week at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts.

Taking on the character of "The Tireless Achiever," Pados opened the show with "Maya," a solo choreographed by Canada-based choreographer and performer Rob Kitsos. Her movements, which were sharp and impeccably clean, were primarily linear and signified the sort of drive that her character would hold.

Pados said that her thesis focused on the different styles of movement in modern dance.

"Modern dance includes such a broad range of movement qualities today — it is not like in years past when modern dancers studied with just one particular choreographer. A dancer cannot simply be an athletic mover, a graceful performer or a technical expert," Pados said. "To hone my own movement adaptability, I chose to tackle this need for versatility by investigating dynamics in four very different solo works."

Bruehlman came on stage next, dressed in business casual and gave a mock lecture behind a podium on "Sociokinetosis," a fictitious illness which she described as a "highly infectious condition marked by a sudden desire to dance within a social setting."

In a presentation rife with humor, Bruehlman set up a powerpoint presentation to introduce the audience to the concept of her work, which focuses on the "melding of three perspectives — ordinary pedestrian, dramatic dancer, vulnerable self," according to the program notes.

"I wanted to examine the multiplicity of the performer in this project. In concert dance, there is a potential for the performer to be many things at once. He or she is almost always obligated to be perfect in some sense, yet there does need to be some relatable person or humanity to the performance," Bruehlman explained in an interview with the *Wheel*.

Audience members laughed throughout Bruehlman's presentation, which defined "good times" as a risk factor for sociokinetosis and explained that 75 percent of college students experience this disease but that this year's statistics were modest "due to the H1N1 outbreak, which prevented many students from dancing."

To illustrate her research of the

See HONORS, Page 10

Honors Theses Employ Humor, Versatility and Grace

Continued from Page 9

pseudo-illness, Bruehlman showed clips of people with sociokinetosis and who were victims of "Limbs Akimbo Syndrome," or LAS, which involves the flinging of the limbs.

Videos displaying individuals dancing wildly at parties, of females with the "Beyonce effect" or women dancing to "Single Ladies" and of groups of people going through the "clapping phase" and the "get low phase" were presented as examples of those affected by the disease.

Pados performed three more solos during the show to portray "The Nearly Defeated," "The Outraged" and "The Suppressor."

"Solo for Pop Music #2," choreographed by senior lecturer

"I wanted to examine the multiplicity of the performer in this project. In concert dance, there is a potential for the performer to be many things at once."

— Alyssa Bruehlman,
Emory College senior

in the dance department Gregory Catellier, featured much floorwork to portray Pados's defeated character. Catellier also choreographed "Solo for Pop Music #3," to showcase the "Outraged" which began with a shaking of the hips that was almost comical but harsh.

Performed in jeans and a T-shirt, "Solo for Pop Music #3" quickly evolved into something confrontational when Pados slid across the floor with her foot kicked out, inches away from the audience. An extreme attention to detail, such as the curling of her fingers and toes, made even the smallest movement seem more significant and large than it might have otherwise appeared.

Pados' "Swallowed," a self-choreographed solo portraying the "Suppressor," was performed with an emphasis on sustained choreography, which exaggerated her sudden outbursts of uninhibited, wild movement.

The juxtaposition of movement styles kept the audience in suspense because it was difficult to tell what was coming next. The layers and chunks of fabric on her costume stood still during Pados' sustained moments and flew with her choreography when she erupted into movement.

Rehearsing as a soloist was challenging, Pados said, because it involved a self-evaluating process with which she was not familiar.

"During the rehearsal process, these characters started to emerge," she said. "It seemed as if there was a different persona in each of my solos. Perhaps this was because they were solos rather than group works, and people are more likely to associate a character type with only one body on stage, but nevertheless, that was a development mid-rehearsal process that gave me something new to explore."

Bruehlman showcased both a group piece and a solo, both choreographed by herself. "Here It Is" focuses on the characters, "The Ones Who Heard the Music." A video played as the backdrop of the piece, which made it difficult at first to focus on what was happening on stage, but with the strategic use of repetition, soon began to complement the dancers.

The video showed footage of the

"On one hand I can't believe all of the time we spent working...is done forever, but on the other hand I'm relieved"

— Kaitlyn Pados,
Emory College senior

performers dancing on the lawn by the Goizueta Business School, in CVS, on the street and other locations. The choreography was an exploration between pedestrian-like actions and dance vocabulary, mixing the action of typing or drinking from a cup with more conventional dance movement.

According to Bruehlman, "Here It is" changed dramatically from the beginning of the process to the end. Rehearsals began with "small, impromptu performances of simple phrase material" but evolved into something with a greater meaning.

In her solo titled "On Falling," Bruehlman took on the character of "The Oft Alone and Unattended." Dressed in a prim-looking dress, Bruehlman came on stage unexpectedly, giggling first and then doubling over laughing every time she looked towards the audience. After several minutes of composing herself, she began to dance in the center of the stage, maintaining her silly, giggly character without sacrificing the integrity and the technique of her dancing.

She interacted with those watching by making eye contact unabashedly as she danced and crawled towards the audience, stopping to retreat only when she was inches from the front row.

Although Bruehlman and Pados performed separate research projects, Bruehlman said that as they worked on their theses, the overlap in the presentation and examination of particular characters between their work became evident, which led to the title of the concert.

After dedicating so much time to her work, Pados said that it is hard to believe the concert is over.

"On one hand I can't believe all of the time we spent working on the pieces, the programs, the costumes and the publicity is done forever, but on the other hand I'm relieved that it is over and that it personally went well," Pados said.

The thesis show may be over, but it proved to be a memorable one that incorporated strong dance technique and serious choreography alongside humorous performances that both gripped the audience and left them laughing.

— *Contact Alice Chen at*

COURTESY OF EMORY DANCE

Appendix H: Application for SIRE Research Grant

Control to Abandonment: Three Solos Exploring Dynamic Ranges

Proposal

The dynamics used in dance performance require an awareness of subtleties and a clear intention in movement. It is this core component that I will investigate for my honors research in dance performance and choreography. An alteration in dynamics has the ability to completely change the mood of a piece. But can expressivity be displayed physically in the body via energy shifts rather than relying on facials expressions to explicitly feed emotions to an audience?

I am proposing an exploration of dynamic ranges by contrasting various extremes used in modern dance performance. Rudolf Laban and Irmgard Bartenieff, two well-known dance theorists, have placed significant importance on the use of efforts, energy, and dynamics. With background knowledge of these efforts, I will look at the use of energy in three specific pieces in my program. I will delve into my own investigation of these qualities by challenging myself both physically and mentally as a performer. While the culmination of this process results in performance, this project will also allow me to explore particular dynamic qualities in my own choreographic work.

As part of my project, I will perform three pieces that drastically contrast dynamics and energy usages. I have proposed a combination of existing works and a developing work, although each piece will be a solo**.** The first work, *Maya*, was choreographed by Rob Kitsos at the University of Georgia. This athletic piece focuses mostly on sudden and direct movements, which sets one of the extremes in my program. While Rob Kitsos has recently transferred to Simon Fraser University, Rebecca Enghauser, another faculty member at the University of Georgia, has performed this solo several times. She has agreed to help stage and coach me through the piece, and we have already worked together for several rehearsals.

A second solo work, in significant contrast to the first piece, is *Between Tides*. This is my own choreographic exploration that I started in a Choreography I class here at Emory University. Originally, the piece lived primarily in a slower timeframe, emphasizing the sustained movements with occasionally interspersed sudden moments. I plan to rework and extend this piece so that the sustained quality is even more of an extreme compared to *Maya*'s sudden nature. It is essential to the project that each work has unique features to better investigate the crux of my research. Furthermore, *Between Tides* introduces an added challenge of developing a work with very particular and set parameters. These additional choreographic limitations will aid in my understanding of performance dynamics, and it will add yet another dimension to my project.

The third and final solo will be one of Gregory Catellier's works, a senior lecturer in dance here at Emory University. He previously choreographed a set of three solos, and with the help of my adviser, Anna Leo, we will choose the one of these solos that adds the greatest diversity to the performance program. The leading contender, *Solo for Pop Music #2*, lives in the same even timing throughout the piece. Unlike the other solos in my program that do primarily focus on timing, this work concentrates on weighted and released movements contrasted with direct, abrupt shifts. While the timing of this piece

lives between the other two solos that I will be performing, other effort components such as flow and weight are explored here.

Rehearsals for *Maya* are already underway, and the basis for *Between Tides* is already intact. As I continue working on those pieces, I will soon set a time to rehearse with Gregory Catellier. This will likely take place as an intensive rehearsal schedule before I go home for winter break. As the spring semester commences, I will schedule maintenance rehearsals to hone and clean all of the performance material. I have begun background research on my topic in addition to journaling my rehearsal notes for the purpose of assessing the process at a later time. In January, I will meet with Cyndi Church, our costume designer. Come the beginning of March, costume decisions will be made, and I will meet with Gregory Catellier to discuss lighting and theater choices. There will be technical runs in the theater from March 22-24, 2010. Finally, the project will culminate in an honors thesis concert with two evening performances on March 25 and March 26 in the Schwartz Center Dance Studio. This spring concert will also be produced in conjunction with Alyssa Bruehlman and her honors thesis dance project.

In addition to the physical element of this project, I will be completing research this semester and a significant amount over winter break. Over winter break, I would also like to begin the writing portion of my project. As this is a performance and choreography oriented project, a significant portion of learning occurs by physical investigation and experiencing the process. Therefore, I will continue my writing into the spring semester, and I will add finishing touches after the performances in March prior to the University deadline for honors thesis submissions. The majority of my research will be done using the resources in the Woodruff Library here at Emory University. Another dance faculty member, Lori Teague, has extensive background in Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff Fundamentals. She will be an excellent person with extensive knowledge to guide me to specific resources perhaps not found in our library's collection.

In summary, the ultimate goal of my project is to investigate the role of dynamics in dance performance. By using extremes to portray these differences in a culminating production, I will be physically challenged to transform the quality of my performance within the same evening. Pushing my capabilities as a performer and developing my own choreography will lead me to a greater understanding of how dynamics shape a performance.

Control to Abandonment: Three Solos Exploring Dynamic Ranges

Budget

"Maya"

$300 staging and coaching fee for Rebecca Enghauser to set and coach the piece

"Solo for Pop Music #2" (or another work from this set of solos)

Gregory Catellier is offering to both set and coach this piece free of charge.

"Between Tides"

As my own choreographic work, there is no setting or coaching fee associated with this piece.

Transportation and Parking (University of Georgia)

$40 for visitor parking (6 visits)
$80 for driving to and from the University of Georgia to rehearse with Rebecca Enghauser (6 trips)

Total: $120

*Backstage assistant**

$250 fee for one backstage crew member during rehearsal week and two performances
* Two backstage crew members are necessary to produce this performance. Only one is included in my budget because Alyssa Bruehlman and I have split this production cost for a proposed combined concert. She has also included a backstage assistant in her SIRE grant budget. Should only one of us receive SIRE grant support, $500 would be necessary for that recipient to cover the cost of two backstage crew members.

Programs

$25 for performance program materials

Costumes

$225 for three costumes at $75 each

Theater space, light gels, stage tape, program printing

All of these production components will be provided in-kind by the Emory Dance Program.

Stage Manager, Light and Sound Board Operators

These people are offering their services for rehearsal week and two performances free of charge thanks to the Emory Dance Program.

TOTAL: $920

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