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A Poetically Embodied Out-Of-Body Experience

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by

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ABSTRACT

The choreographic project *Euphoric Dysphoria* emerged as a response to the choreographer's gender dysphoria and personal observations about the way that feminine-presenting people are perceived and approached in dance spaces, particularly in comparison to masculine-presenting people. The dance originated as a choreographic exploration of extreme femininity and masculinity, and it evolved into a manifestation of performative gender and experiential gender. The choreographer was guided by her poem "Uneven Envy" when developing movement and building relationships among the dancers. She considered the contributions of Judith Butler, a scholar who writes about gender manifesting in the body due to socialization, and Laura Mulvey, a film theorist known for her conceptualization of the male gaze, along with other academics. This paper offers insight into ways of thinking about gender, embodiment, queerness, and movement that may empower dancers who have felt misplaced in their own bodies because of dance.

Keywords: dance, choreography, embodiment, gender, performance, experience, male gaze, queerness, poetry, poetic embodiment, femininity, masculinity

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all who have helped me find a home in dance and who inspire me to live authentically. May you continue uplifting other artists' unique voices and perspectives so that they can do the same.

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I would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Candice Salyers and to all the dance artists, teachers, and mentors who have graced my life with their meaningful and life-changing presence. To list each and every one of them would produce a list equivalent to the length of this document. However, I want them all to know the impact they have had on my unique artistic blossoming, whether they were a teacher, choreographer, or peer to me. I also extend many thanks to my wonderful parents for their continued, loving support of me in all of my dance endeavors and for their constant belief in me. I could not be where and who I am today without them. I also want to thank the cast of my piece—Meagan Cobb, Caitlyn Diamond, Sara Grace Duplessis, Natalie Davis, and Seana Rains. Their dedication to and belief in my artistic process have been invaluable. Lastly, I want to thank my grandfather for the inspiring life he led. As a professional musician, his example showed me that I can pursue dance as a career with intelligence, courage, and longevity.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

USM	The University of Southern Mississippi
RDC	Repertory Dance Company

CHAPTER I: CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH

Arts do many things well, including bridging social inequities connected to race, gender, accessibility, and sexuality. Nonetheless, the professional dance world is permeated by patriarchal ideas and dynamics, as is the world outside of dance. Such dynamics and roles hinder honest inclusion in dance spaces, especially in terms of gender and sexuality. As a queer woman, these observations have led me to the following questions: Why might dancers have a difficult relationship with their bodies and gender expressions within dance? How do dancers truly escape preconceived notions and perceptions of the feminine body in dance so that they may arrive at the sense of freedom and individuality that creative movement is so capable of offering? Addressing these questions can open dance spaces in liberating ways, encouraging new considerations and inclusions of diverse identities.

The Male Gaze in Dance

To investigate such complex ideas, it is important to define relevant terms, such as the "male gaze" and its influence in dance. The concept of the "male gaze" was firstly introduced in Laura Mulvey's work, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). In this essay, Mulvey describes the relationship between the male presence in film and how women are viewed and objectified by men in entertainment. Mulvey describes the almost invasive nature of an audience member's gaze in the setting of a dark movie theater, stating that "Conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world" (7). For the purposes of this research, I consider her analysis of the male gaze in film and translate it to the field of dance.

With Mulvey's analysis in mind, the male gaze in dance can be understood as the patriarchal, cisgendered, and heteronormative way that movement, bodies, and images in

dance are often perceived, labeled, and used. It is seemingly impossible to separate dance, as seen through the lens of the male gaze, from the male presence, whether men are physically present or not. Patriarchal ideas about the ways that gender ought to be performed and understood permeate even the most seemingly inclusive, progressive dance spaces. This truth even applies to contemporary ballet spaces that have successfully abolished binary gender roles, as well as contemporary companies that present movement expression in particularly androgynous or non-binary ways. The influence of patriarchy could contribute to the ways that many dancers, particularly feminine dancers, may develop a sense of dysphoria within their physical experiences of self in dance. For the purposes of my research, I use the term "feminine" to describe certain individuals. When doing so, I am referring to those who either identify as women or who consider themselves to be feminine, regardless of identity. These individuals are people who see themselves as feminine in their appearance and expression and therefore may experience a sense of dysphoria as a result of patriarchy and the male gaze. Patriarchy and the male gaze permeate and control dance spaces, and both are rooted in misogynistic ideas. When feminine individuals occupy such dance spaces, their experiences are, in part, shaped by patriarchy and the male gaze.

Queering Dance Spaces

Another key concept to establish in the context of this research is the idea of queerness as it relates to artistic performance spaces. The term "queer" literally means "strange; odd" ("Queer" 2022). Many dance scholars have explored the idea of queering dance spaces in their own way, offering their perspectives of what queering dance means. Clare Croft, a noteworthy example, suggests that to queer dance is to approach it in a way that negates heteronormative and cisgendered expectations and expands possibilities

across identities (57-62). To add to that conversation, my research defines "queerness" as the idea of varying from what is normalized or expected, regarding binary gender expression and roles. It refers to "difference" or "otherness." Understanding this term is key to understanding how we can make dance spaces queer spaces. When I discuss queering dance spaces, I am not advocating for all dance spaces to become "gay," which could imply ideas such as promoting only same sex partner work and never practicing traditional gender roles in classical ballet. Contrarily, my intention in queering dance spaces or cultures is to achieve an opening up of those spaces so that all people can exist freely as their authentic selves.

Performance and Expression of Gender

My creative work also aims to clarify and explore the difference between performance of gender and gender expression to offer insight so that dance communities can become more liberating for all participants. While the ideas of gender performance and gender expression often may be considered synonymous, and in certain contexts they certainly are, this research serves to differentiate between them as a way of highlighting the notion of authenticity versus inauthenticity in dance. Scholar and noteworthy philosopher of gender studies, Judith Butler articulates a critical perspective on the outward performance of gender, describing its socialization and institutionalization. She discusses how gender is sculpted onto the body through certain social acts. In her words, "Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 519). For the purposes of my research, especially in the context of dance, performance of gender can be understood as the way

that gender is presented outwardly, to be consumed by others or to fit into a physical aesthetic standard.

Gender expression, contrarily, can be understood as the inward experience of gender, unique to each person and constantly evolving. It is important to note that these two concepts can coexist but can also contradict one another. The way an individual performs their gender outwardly may not always reflect their inward somatic experiences of gender, but the two could potentially match. In general, there is no definitive way to determine this discrepancy, since each person's experience of gender expression is so personalized and often difficult to articulate. Butler's work corroborates the need to encourage an experience of gender in the body, as opposed to a performance, by highlighting the ways that gender often contradicts itself:

> Gender, then, can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent. And yet, one is compelled to live in a world in which genders constitute univocal signifiers, in which gender is stabilized, polarized, rendered discrete and intractable. In effect, gender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity, but serves a social policy of gender regulation and control. Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all. That this reassurance is so easily displaced by anxiety, that culture so readily punishes or marginalizes those who fail to perform the illusion of gender essentialism should be sign enough that on some level there is a social knowledge that the truth or falsity of gender is only socially compelled and in no sense ontologically necessitated. (528)

As Butler effectively communicates, there is a certain reality and illusion to gender. Its realness provides comfort to those who want to reclaim gender in their own bodies, and its fabrication creates unease for those who want to escape gender as it is policed by society. The distinction between gender's performance and experience has significant implications in the field of dance because it offers the nuanced understanding that dance spaces may unintentionally contribute to gender dysphoria for individuals by forcing outward performances of gender that do not align with their personal, internal gender expressions.

The Creative Process as Research

In considering all of these ideas and how they might connect to my dance making, I am in conversation with several scholars, artists, and choreographers, as well as my own choreographic process. In creating a choreographic work titled *Euphoric Dysphoria*, I considered the research of Larry Lavender, a choreographer and dance scholar who asserts an idea termed "provoking forward" as a means of trying new things within the rehearsal process with the intention of exploration and discovery (117-119). Since this dance is outside of my comfort zone as a choreographer in nearly every possible way, the creation and development of this piece was a means of "provoking forward" in itself (Lavender 117-119). Another way that I understand this idea in the context of my own practices is allowing the creative process to serve primarily as research and secondarily as choreography.

When I began my creative process, I had clear interests, but I was not sure of what exactly to research outside my rehearsals. The evolution of my piece presented a very interesting potential for research in a specific area of thought. As the process of creating this dance unfolded, I was able to clearly articulate what exactly I was hoping to research

specifically because of the conceptual ideas that emerged from the creation of *Euphoric Dysphoria*. This instance demonstrates that practice as research is not only a valid research tool in the arts, but also a powerful one. Artistic practice as research has been heavily discussed and debated among artistic scholars. As a collegiate visual arts educator and scholar, Julia Marshall argues that a research-based perspective of creative practices "modifies conventional notions of art practice as self-expression or object-making to cast it primarily as an exercise in knowledge construction: the process of coming to know" (24). With such complex ideas about challenging binary gender in dance in mind, it only makes sense that discoveries must be made through practice, since the experience of gender in dance is inherently physical.

By using my creative process as research, I quickly came to know and understand new interdisciplinary connections that held significant meaning within my dance making. As a creative writer who specializes in poetry, I was able to further my understanding of artistic practice as research through a medium outside of choreography. The experimental act of interlacing my poetry and choreography for the first time allowed me the opportunity to enhance this understanding. My writing and choreography became perpetually in conversation with one another. My poem "Uneven Envy" (See Appendix A 40) was written in response to my choreographic work-in-progress, my newly written poem guided my movement generation in rehearsals, and my finished dance has since informed my revision of the poem and subsequent poems.

This conversation between creative products has inspired me to create many other literary and choreographic works and marriages between them. For example, my self-choreographed solo titled *Lucid Murmur* emerged as a physical manifestation of my poem "Heavy-Eyed Escapades," which explores the odd feeling of becoming self-aware

in a dream. The ideas within the poem are random and humorous, as dreams often are, while still evoking a haunting sense of unease. An attempt to embody these juxtaposed ideas produced a unique movement vocabulary. *Outside of the Realm* is another dance that I have choreographed on a soloist, Alanna Lee, and it is an embodiment of my poem "Celestial Mind." This poem and dance explore the feeling of being an artistically driven woman in a patriarchal society that operates through capitalism, often minimizing the importance of art. The poetic language in "Celestial Mind" uses cosmic imagery and metaphors to encapsulate this alienating feeling, and these cosmic images are physicalized through the choreography. This newfound curiosity and series of creative investigations all began because of *Euphoric Dysphoria*.

Poet and literary scholar, Vincent Broqua beautifully upholds the role of poetic writing as a research practice, describing it as a "Mode of inquiry close to the investigations and experiments fundamental to literary research" (115). Through collaborating with my own poetics, I came to know something new about how I approach both choreography and writing. In both forms of creative process, I aim to articulate something that cannot be expressed through standard language, focusing on creating a unique experience for my audience or reader. Broqua explains this potential for discovery and knowing through practice as research:

> Just like any form of practice-based art, practiced-based literary research *investigates*, it is a form of practice-based inquiry. In her book of essays called *The Language of Inquiry*, the US poet Lyn Hejinan argues that "the language of poetry is a language of inquiry, not the language of a genre." She states that poetics is "a pragmatic realm," since "the reasons and reasonings that motivate

> poet (and poem) are embedded in the world and in the language with which we bring it into view. (115)

This perspective introduces a significant connection between the image-driven worlds of both poetics and dance making. Both involve the artistic task of world-building, which is a skill that must be practiced and developed by the artist in the same pragmatic way that a scientific experiment must be repeated until the results are perfected. It is truly a practiced skill to compose words with sonic intention that are driven by imagery, use musicality, feature a strong command of language, establish a clear voice, and create a meaningful relationship among vowels and consonants. Using poetry as a research practice allows the writer to discover many ways to accomplish just that. It also allows for the discovery of new ways to understand and relate to the world. Poetry is dance-making, and dance-making is an embodiment of poetry, which highlights the complexity of embodiment as a concept. Embodiment can encompass ideas as tangible as intentionally arranged words on a page and as theoretical as gender identity.

Provoking Gender

With the idea of "provoking forward" in mind throughout my rehearsal process, I was engaged in an effort to provoke gender as much as possible, or to make it blurry (Lavender 117-119). The notion of blurring gender allowed me to generate a very distinct movement vocabulary throughout the dance that resembles being under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Such movement vocabulary subsequently produced a particularly bold and personally unexpected choreographic work with a tongue-in-cheek attitude about it. To me, provoking gender in choreographic practice involves finding movement expression in my work that reaches all extremes of the gender spectrum, whether that be forms of extreme femininity, forms of extreme masculinity, or using both ends of the

spectrum to find androgyny. Exploring androgyny has been a curiosity of mine in movement, but defining it is not within the scope of this research.

Appropriately addressing sexual expression in dance in a way that validates all gender identities presents a further challenge in this research. In examining the work of Judith Lynn Hanna, a scholar and anthropologist, I came across the thought-provoking notion that for some dance communities, being sexualized is empowering and essential to their understanding of dance. For others, sexuality is not relevant to their art form, and being sexualized is offensive (Hanna 220-222). These ideas brought up a new point for me to consider in my in-studio creative process research: How can feminine dancers balance the ideas of both being empowered through sexualization and holding a sense of ownership over our own bodies? Perhaps achieving this balance of ideas may not even be entirely possible. While this consideration emerged because of practice as research, and addressing this point is valuable in itself, I have come to the conclusion that doing so does not necessarily provide information that falls within the scope of my current work. However, it will possibly be relevant for future creative processes. While my research aims to provide a means for liberation in dance spaces, it does so from the lens of how dancers are approached as participants within their dance communities, as opposed to how dancers decide to express themselves sexually within their dance communities.

The Feminine Circumstance

Regarding feminine objectification and empowerment in dance spaces, separating preconceived notions of gender from choreography, particularly for women, is an inherently queer and inclusive approach to performance, choreography, and teaching. Such preconceived notions exist primarily because of the way women are socialized to physically embody femininity. Iris Young offers an insightful take on the female body's

physical socialization, describing “feminine comportment” and various “modalities of feminine motility” (142-145). Young argues that understanding oneself as feminine is physically limiting, due to the “situation of women” in society, over which women have no control (140):

> Typically, the feminine body underuses its real capacity, both as the potentiality of its physical size and strength and as the real skills and coordination which are available to it. Feminine bodily existence is an end with an “I can” and withholds its full bodily commitment to that end in a self-imposed “I cannot.” (Young 146)

Young furthers this argument that young girls are limited by society’s notion of what it means to exist in a female body, a notion that is increasingly emphasized as they reach adolescence and beyond. By contrasting herself and other women to men, she states that “As lived bodies we are not open and unambiguous transcendences which move out to master a world that belongs to us, a world constituted by our own intentions and projections” (Young 152). Young’s thinking about how women are led to navigate the world through our bodies guides my understanding of how our physicality may be limited by thought patterns that are imposed upon us. The way that we come to understand the relationship that our bodies have to the world around us is inherently different than our cisgender male counterparts. Thus, in an athletic craft such as dance, it only makes sense that feminine artists are at a particular risk of experiencing a separation between how they want to physically express and how they feel capable of physically expressing.

As a woman who has experienced a sense of bodily dysphoria due to my petite frame and gender, only within the context of and because of dance, I also find Young’s perspective on feminine objectification and its correlation to dysmorphic experiences

particularly noteworthy and impactful. The ideas that she offers connect directly with my experiences in dance settings and provide insight as to why other feminine dance artists might have similar experiences. Her description of feminine people highlights that as human beings, our existence spans far beyond the physical realm, asserting our transcendent nature (Young 154). As physical beings who exist in a complex reality that encompasses so much that is not physical, to be objectified is to be limited by an outside perspective to one aspect of our multi-faceted existence. Not only is objectification clearly invasive by nature, but the "objectified bodily existence" of a feminine person also promotes a sense of distance from the body and inadvertently fosters a learned embodiment that is not fully open and expansive (Young 154). Young even argues that moving in contrast to these learned patterns is dangerous for a woman, claiming that "To open her body in free active and open extension and bold outward directedness is for a woman to invite objectification" (154). This institutionalized fear of objectification with which feminine people are raised becomes a learned behavior in our physical relationship to the space around us. We become hindered from fully and unapologetically embodying our movement, and our identities become distanced from our bodies. This hindrance and distance create the possibility for unease and discontentment, especially for people involved in an art form in which bodies are the main vehicle of expression.

Both in and outside of dance contexts, feminine individuals may tend to move with less ambition, risk, and boldness subconsciously because, through the societal institutionalization of gender, they have been conditioned to think of themselves as slightly less physically capable than men. It is not because they are inherently less capable or powerful, in actuality. More so than others, they also may face the fear of objectification which is connected to the ever-present male gaze in dance (Young 154).

I have always wanted to be seen as powerful and expansive when I dance, but I have felt a sense of disconnection from my own body because of dance. The types of dance movements that come to mind when considering this disconnection are large jumps and grounded, wide movements that showcase strength and vigor. Jumps come to mind because of the power and height that I have observed male dancers achieve in their jumps. Grounded, strength-filled movements come to mind because of the athleticism and range that I have observed male dancers achieve through such movements. This physical disconnection that I have experienced is largely a result of the nature of feminine self-perception as it is cultivated by society over time. It is a disconnection that manifests when I watch other dancers move with vigor and expansive ambition, especially male dancers. I watch myself perform the same movement in a mirror or from a recording, and I find that I look much different than these dancers. This difference feels like it is the result of some inexplicable bodily limitation. My personal experience of and research surrounding this feminine dysphoric experience emphasize that the relationship of gender to creative movement must be carefully considered if all dancers are to feel enriched by and liberated within their dancing.

Viewing each dancing body as a neutral canvas onto which gendered or sexual movement can be painted with the dancer's consent allows for dancers of all identities and physical appearances to enter artistic spaces with ease and comfort. Of course, layering in a gendered or sexual identity to choreography with the intention of manifesting certain themes or expressions is a valid choreographic choice. As long as it serves a purpose within choreography and the dancers are not seen primarily as sexual beings simply for existing in a dance space, it can still be a queer and inclusive approach. Separating gender from an approach to dance choreography and teaching encourages a

queering of dance spaces, removing the subconscious perception of a dancer's bodily appearance as yielding a specific performance of gender, especially if the performance is undesired by the dancer.

In drawing from all my research practices, I aim to address the intersection of gender, bodily dysphoria, poetry, embodiment, and deeply internalized and externalized misogyny within dance. In exploring the intersection of these subjects, I want to encourage others to consider the male gaze in dance, queering dance spaces to foster ease and authenticity, as well as furthering the distinction between gender performance and gender expression through choreography. I propose that dance spaces can become more open in the ways that gender is viewed and approached as a means of addressing dysphoria in dance. Examining contemporary ideas about gender in dance and how those ideas can be more fully manifested will allow for a conversation that may change certain harmful preconceived notions in dance, freeing many dancers.

CHAPTER II: CREATIVE PROCESS

Research in the School of Performing and Visual Arts can take many forms and utilize a variety of perspectives. Students may approach their research from aesthetic, anthropological, historical, philosophical, cultural, pedagogical, and creative perspectives, as well as a combination of these methodologies. Qualitative data collected in students' research may include information obtained from written texts, movement observation, film analysis, participant observation, and from their own creative processes. When the written component of a thesis emerges primarily from the artist's creative project, we expect that the writing both reflects and expands upon the work carried out by the choreographic or performance portion of the thesis project. Following the work of the Practice as Research in Performance initiative, which originated in 2001 at the University of Bristol, we regard artistic processes to be significant in and of themselves as well as vital approaches to learning and theorizing. As Dr. Vida Midgelow, long-term chair of the Conference of Dance in Higher Education in the UK, proposes, "Practice as a mode of research acknowledges that there are fundamental epistemological issues that can only be addressed in and through practice" (Bacon and Midgelow 6).

Below is documentation of the dance "Euphoric Dysphoria." The Dance Program regards the choreographic and performance process as half of the thesis project. This written document reflects on the dance itself and fulfills the other half of the thesis requirement. Note: Viewing this recorded documentation is not the same as witnessing the live performance: however, it contextualizes this thesis.

Recorded Documentation of "Euphoric Dysphoria": https://youtu.be/_6GT0nJsLtM

"Uneven Envy"

You hold me like a standard.

My mind sheds

Like my delicate, decorative skin

On a floor that you dominate.

I'd like the chance to be challenged,

To change your objectifying

Mind about my physicality.

An out-of-body experience, finally free

From the envy and fake pleasantries

Of being your muse.

Enveloped by your hefty gaze.

Always watched, rarely seen.

These hips sway with faux freedom

In the pendulum that is my frame.

Frame of mind—you're one of a kind,

a necessity for balance.

But I'm a different kind of surplus.

Instability.

Throughout my creative process, I have gained several insights that have contributed to my researching embodiments of poetry, gender, and queerness as they relate to dance. This work has guided me in my endeavor to discover what interests me as a dance scholar. One of my most significant discoveries from my creative process is the idea that dance, in its physicality, is an embodiment of words, images, sounds, rhythms, and personifications. Dance is poetry manifested in the physical realm. This idea of physical

manifestation through dance also guided me in considering that gender is significantly connected to embodiment and experience. Discovering this concept presented a new need for me to define and differentiate between the performance of gender and the experience of gender, both in my writing and in my dance called *Euphoric Dysphoria*. In learning these lessons from the act of choreographing my dance, I began to understand the concept of practice as research in the dance field. Rather than picking ideas to research, the creation of art served to guide me in a direction that quickly became interesting to me because of my connection to it through the dance that I was creating. Choreography became an essential tool for the crafting of my research through the many lessons that it taught me, which might otherwise have been missing from the complete body of my research.

After beginning to experiment with poetic creative writing as a means of inspiration for my choreography, I came to discover a new way to think about poetry as it relates to dance making. Rather than only serving as a source of inspiration for the movement that I could generate, my poem "Uneven Envy" became a blank canvas of sorts on which I could create and manipulate movement in space and among bodies. This poem was written initially for one of my creative writing classes at USM, as part of my English minor. My main intention in crafting this poem was to create something that could deepen my relationship to ideas that I was already exploring through my senior choreographic project. However, throughout my creative process of writing the poem, the text evolved into more of a personal reflection of my occasional gender dysphoria within dance, as opposed to the broader exploration of perceptions of gender within dance that guided my choreographic work. The title became "Uneven Envy," since the idea that I wanted to encapsulate did not quite fall within the realm of envy. Rather, a dysphoric

experience created a feeling that was almost but not quite comparable to envy. In my abstract envisioning of this feeling of "almost envy," the feeling was approaching being level with envy but teetering on its edges, making it uneven. The twenty-one-line-long poem comprised of a singular stanza is an artistic articulation of my feelings about the way women, particularly queer women, are approached by and in contrast to men within the dance world.

Poetic Manifestation

Through creating this work in tandem with my choreographic project, I have come to discover connecting threads between the composition of dance and of poetry. Perhaps my greatest insight gained from the comparison between the two processes is that it is important to bring concepts—both literal and abstract—to life through my artistic medium. Ideas such as gender dysphoria are more concrete and real, and ideas such as instability are more abstract, in the context of everyday life. They both work together to create cohesive poetic ideas. In dance, the same is true. Literal images and shapes created with and among bodies within a piece of choreography are fully integrated with ambiguous and abstract movement ideas to create a cohesive choreographic thought. Like poetic writing, dance making often involves starting with a few scattered ideas and images; my process for producing choreography from these loose ideas includes play, experimentation, trial and error, and "provoking forward" (Lavender 117-119). It is only through being open to letting the dance or poem take me in expected directions that I produce something interesting, fully developed, and cohesive. The idea of essentially re-writing this poem through movement manifested itself throughout an entire section of the dance, because of my open-mindedness in generating movement.

After a dynamic shift from the loud, boldness of the first section of the piece, which encapsulates the performative, sometimes inauthentic aspect of gender, the music abruptly stops. The dancers seem to acknowledge that they are in a dance. They look around and to the audience, as if they know they are being watched. They then recite a section of "Uneven Envy" aloud, as the music shifts into a bluesy, soft tune[1].

As the choreographer of the dance, I became interested in physically manifesting certain words and ideas present within "Uneven Envy." Implicitly referencing the male gaze, the poem mentions a "necessity for balance" and someone who is "one of a kind" in a place where they are outnumbered, yet dominant. The speaker[2] refers to their self as being a "fragile body" who is unstable without the male presence, which is a reference to traditional gendered partner work in dance. For instance, women are frequently lifted by men, and men assist women in turns and leaps in classical ballet. Traditionally and stereotypically, men are the stabilizing base in any partner work between men and women. These ideas, particularly balance, instability, and individuality in terms of gender, became ideas that I hoped to clearly embody in both individual groups and among bodies in the performance space.

Soloist Meagan Cobb begins to leave the group, watching and observing their actions from the outside. As she walks backwards and away from the group, she keeps eye contact with the remaining trio. They move almost as if in response to her movements, pulling the arms up and back slowly so that the shoulder blades kiss. As this pull happens in the arms, the trio rock and sway as if entranced by the music and by

[1] This chapter will be framed by italicized text that describes movement experiences in moments of the dance.
[2] In poetic analysis, a poem is understood to be written in the voice of an unidentified speaker, not necessarily in that of the writer.

Cobb, who represents the "one of a kind, necessity for balance" masculine energy referenced in the poem. The pulling up and out of the arms from the trio and soloist climaxes due to muscular tension reaching its peak, and it is followed by a staccato release of all tension in the upper body initiated by the elbows. This release causes a sustained melting of the arms downward. Cobb's slow walks backward continue as her arms melt downward, before briskly turning to run offstage. The trio then starts a movement phrase which is done in a canon[3], during which the right arm snakes up the body to create a vertical line, and the pelvis thrusts slightly forward. The right hand then snakes downward and around the body, which causes a spiral-like rotation of the body. This rotation leads to a grabbing of the flexed right foot, bending the torso over to do so, and then letting it go and jumping backwards as if surprised by the foot. They kick backward and forward repetitively with flexed feet and one arm behind their backs.

The description above highlights a section of my dance in which the movements intentionally show asymmetry, a sense of being off-balance, and finding balance again. This choreography is conceptually relevant to both the overarching theme of *Euphoric Dysphoria* and the total body of my research because without Cobb, who in that moment represents the male presence in dance, the trio is unstable. Because she is a woman, Cobb's solo presence does not equate to a male presence in this dance, although it is representative of one. This symbolic movement dynamic between the trio and Cobb thus encapsulates the poem's notion that men dominate professional dance spaces. Although they may be outnumbered in such spaces, in my piece, men are depicted as a stabilizing presence on which non-men have become involuntarily reliant.

[3] In choreography, a visual embodiment of a ripple or reverberation made possible by multiple dancers, during which one dancer begins movement and another begins the same movement shortly after the first has begun

Binary Chaos

In my creative process, I discovered that the vibrant, theatrical nature of the first section of my piece represents gender performance, or inauthentic embodiment, and the more relaxed, sober nature of the second section represents gender expression, or an authentic embodiment of gender. Within the first section, there is a moment when the group is sucked into a clump close to the downstage left corner, evoking the theme of being entrapped by societal understandings of binary gender. There are only a few moments in my piece during which the group moves in unison in such close proximity. The rarity of this occurrence was a choreographic choice that became artistically important to me in order to thoroughly investigate the harmful chaos of conformity to gender expectations and the beautiful chaos of authentic individuality in feminine expressions of gender. In my dance specifically, the harmful chaos caused by gender conformity is manifested through the aggression that the dancers show toward one another in the beginning. They drag each other across the floor, manipulate each other's movements, and fling each other around in the partner work. The beautiful chaos of authentic individuality in femininity is manifested after the climax of the piece, through more individualized movement among the dancers onstage that is still cohesive and unified, as well as a more spread-out use of the stage space that reflects the liberating nature of feminine expression when it is authentic.

As an artist, I see unison and uniformity as representing a calm sense of equanimity and a lack of unison as representing chaos. Out of the few unison moments during which the group moves in such close proximity, this clumped-together moment is one of the most prominent and arguably striking. The sharp uniformity and intricacy of the dancers' movements make this moment stand out from others in the piece, and it has

become a favorite part of the dance to watch for both my peers and me. In generating movement material for this section of my piece, it was important to me to encapsulate the intensely polarized nature of the gender binary, specifically how it manifests in gendered dance. Thus, I explored movement that starkly contrasts two opposites that are present within the same moment, conceptually resembling the vastly different qualitative and choreographic expectations of people who are perceived as masculine or feminine in dance. For instance, cisgender women are perceived as feminine in dance, especially if they have a small frame or a curvy figure. Cisgender men are perceived as masculine in dance, especially if they are particularly tall or muscular. Non-nonbinary people are often perceived as either strictly feminine or masculine in dance, depending on which gender they were assigned at birth. Similarly, many transgender people are often still perceived as strictly feminine or masculine in dance, depending on which gender they were assigned at birth.

Within this section of choreography, there is a recurring theme of juxtaposing free-flow (e.g., indirect, light, sustained, and breath-filled movement) and bound-flow (e.g., direct, grounded, controlled, and strength-filled movement). When witnessing this section, the free-flowing movement and bound-flowing movement could be interpreted as representing feminine and masculine energies or authentic and inauthentic femininity. Alternatively, they could be interpreted as the freeing feeling of releasing gender within the body through dance movement and then being contained into rigid societal expectations and understandings of gender, the latter being embodied via the repetitive abrupt neutral stance following the recurring free-flow. This ongoing change between free-flow and the boundedness of being sucked into a neutral stance embodies the unpredictability of subscribing to a performance of gender as prescribed by society, since

gender is embodied in the physical sense through what society deems acceptable (Butler 519).

The group is connected initially by a pull and release in space, which results in a spiraling of bodies as they are sucked into the clumped-together unit. This movement is punctuated by a staccato, grounded clasp of the hands below the waistline in all different directions. This collective clasp is released all at once, and the group becomes free flowing before returning briskly back to a neutral stance. The dancers then billow outward with three of their four limbs, each limb moving in different directions in space with the same free-flowing feeling, only then for everything to be sucked back into a neutral stance once more. From there, they abruptly drop into a seated portrait-like pose, bending one leg as the other crosses in front of the knee, mimicking a cross-legged seated position. They return to a neutral stance again just as abruptly. As they begin to take grounded, wide strides further toward the downstage left corner, the head initiates the first stride in a snake-like motion from up to down, and the fingertips initiate the second stride before rippling in a wave through the arms. They pull their limbs in and then out, creating an awkward yet stylized pose before flicking their wrists twice.

This section of choreography also represents the striking differences in terms of societal expectations when it comes to the gender binary. There is a sense that the dancers are being pulled back and forth between movement qualities and dynamics, as if the dancers are prisoners to the tight unit that they comprise. From a societal standpoint, labels pertaining to one's own identity can be liberating from an outside perspective. However, even within the community of a particular label, internal pressures often exist, and one is expected to adhere to unspoken rules in order to be validated by their

community. Similarly, the intimate movement of this clumped-together unit is grounding, yet controlling, for its members.

Awakening Embodiment

In using my creative practice as research (See Chapter I: Contextual Research 5-6), I was led to discover new ways of thinking about embodiment, regarding poetic embodiment and gender. Before creating this piece, I did not fully understand how dance practices could serve as research tools. If, in an alternate reality, I was not studying dance, I may have chosen to write about a similar topic, but I would not know and understand the depth of the subject matter as well as its meaningful connections to dance and literature. The act of creating *Euphoric Dysphoria* led me to unforeseen discoveries about the ways in which embodiment is tied to movement and experience, two concepts which can effectively be captured through an artistic composition of words (e.g., poetry) and a physical composition of ideas (e.g., choreography). With a different disciplinary focus, my research work would not have been as comprehensive and interdisciplinary as it has become through this creative process. To my surprise, dance composition, poetry, and gender theory have become collectively meaningful disciplines within the full body of my research, each giving and taking in meaningful ways from one another.

Considering the idea that my rehearsals were an essential component of my research, I made a choreographic choice in my piece that I otherwise would not have, since it initially seemed aesthetically displeasing and even cliché to me. I knew that my poem would assist as a choreographic tool in the work, but never did I expect to integrate it into the piece via live spoken word. It was only after receiving feedback from peers that perhaps I should try to integrate my poem vocally into the work that I found the courage to try what I thought might seem choppy and misplaced. I was at a point in my creative

process in which I needed to smooth out the transition in the choreography between my two selected pieces of music, and experimenting with my poem breaking the silence between Heart's bold "Magic Man" and Cymande's bluesy "Dove" helped me to find a transition that compositionally made sense in terms of the development of my piece. While some movement occurs when the dancers are back-to-back in a circle in the downstage right corner, the movement that was choreographically created as an exploration of the words and ideas in "Uneven Envy" occurs after the spoken word.

The group shifts from darkness into a spotlight in the upstage right corner, slowly orbiting around themselves before the trio melts into the floor and begins to trace Meagan Cobb's movements. The dancers in the trio push and pull through one another, both while on the floor and standing, remaining connected the entire time as Cobb leaves the group. They weave through each other like a knot being untied.

The tracing of Cobb's movements reflects the idea of embodiment and manifesting abstract ideas in the physical realm. These movements embody becoming fully aware of surrounding space and bodies and moving through that space and those bodies. Thematically, this moment represents a sense of coming into oneself or gaining a new consciousness within one's identity, similar to the experience of a queer awakening, both in terms of gender and sexuality. When sculpting this section, I considered how it might feel to have that experience only through and within dance, as opposed to within the reality of everyday life. The manifestation of this idea directly relates to queering dance spaces and experiences that occur within those spaces (See Chapter I: Contextual Research 13).

My creative process helped me to better understand and identify the concepts that have become critical to my research. These concepts include poetic embodiment through

movement, embodied performance and experience of gender, and the overarching idea that dance practices serve as valuable research tools. My movement invention and discoveries, both on individual bodies and among the group, guided me in defining these concepts. They also allowed me to see the manifestation of these concepts in my finished product. *Euphoric Dysphoria* offered me new insights into ways of thinking about embodiment, both in terms of gender and literature.

CHAPTER III: PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

Making space and creating opportunities for live dance performances to occur is vital in terms of achieving the fullest sense of authentic embodiment through dance practices. Live dance performances matter because they create an immersive experience, both for the performer and the viewer. Neither can be fully immersed in the world of a dance without experiencing it in person and in real time. For me, as my piece slowly unfolded before me during my creative process, the audience's presence in a performance space in which the dance could be fully produced was a crucial point of compositional and conceptual consideration.

Euphoric Dysphoria needed to exist as a live performance to allow for the piece's boldness to have its intended effect on the audience. The choreographic work's bold spirit existed both in the choreography and the performance of the dance, and its vibrancy would not reach the audience in the same way through film. Unexpectedly, the piece's climax is a long pause between the two selected pieces of music. I use the word "pause" because it is almost as if the dance was interrupted. There is an awkward silence, during which the dancers stand back-to-back looking around and beginning to show a sense of awareness that they are in a dance. This moment is pivotal to the dance's development, and its striking discomfort would not exist without the tension created in the performance space. It is something that needs to be felt by audience members, not only seen.

The live audience also plays a significant role, conceptually, in influencing the dancers' performance of the beings who exist within the choreographic work. Each audience member is present and witnessing first-hand the performative aspects of gender. Without the audience's physical presence, there would be no one for which to perform gender. Similarly, without established societal perceptions of gender and without people

observing our behaviors from day to day, gender might not exist in the way that it is societally understood. At its core, gender is performative until one removes a social audience. The audience's physical presence is also essential because once the dancers acknowledge that they are being observed, emulating "An illusion of looking in on a private world," they make the collective decision to stop performing for their audience through their movement (Mulvey 7). Their mutual resolution allows the audience to observe the experience of gender, which becomes distinct from its performance. In this way, the audience also plays the role of the ever-present male gaze described by Mulvey within cinema, to which the production and performance of my piece responds.

In considering my previously produced choreographic works, I typically prefer a more fully lit stage space with minimal shadows, aside from the occasional moments when I use silhouette lighting. However, in this piece, the shadowy lighting present toward the beginning of the dance emerged because of my mental image of the dance's time and location. In my senior choreography class, I was asked to determine where and when my dance would take place in my imagination, if not on a stage during a concert. I came to the conclusion that a speakeasy, a nightclub, or an abandoned warehouse-turned-club during late hours of the night would best suit the atmosphere surrounding the piece. Thus, I chose several shadowy lights, and I was drawn to deep purples, reds, and pinks in the beginning of the choreographic work because they evoked a nightclub atmosphere and reflected the overall look of the costumes.

Additionally, I was drawn to these warmer colors because of the heat that radiates from the dance for me as a viewer. This consistent presence of colors that are connected to heat makes the choice of cool, deep blue lighting during the piece's climax the most striking lighting choice, creating a stark contrast. A single pool of cool, blue light

highlights the ensemble clumped tightly together in the downstage right corner. They stand in a circle, their bodies facing outward. The rest of the stage is dark. They travel slowly upstage orbiting as a unit until they arrive in another pool of light that awaits them, as the dance begins to pick up momentum again. The blue lighting creates a sudden moment of shift in the dance's development, mirroring the sense of interruption as the dancers abruptly stop to recite lines from "Uneven Envy."

The shift in lighting from a deep blue to sunset oranges shows a sense of newness and being refreshed, and it is a callback to the warmer colors in the dance's beginning. This sense of being refreshed is significant because, in shifting from performing gender to experiencing it, the dancers embody a sense of awakening and beginning anew. The sunset oranges brighten the atmosphere of the piece, while still fitting into the warmer color scheme from the piece's first half.

In terms of costume, I originally wanted a business-casual look to play into the idea of women breaking gender expectations, since, for women, joining the workforce has not always been socially accepted and respected. I envisioned my cast in men's blazers contrasted by very form-fitting, stereotypically feminine clothing underneath. Due to budgeting and time constraints, the final look included various dress pants and burgundy-colored shirts that were more stereotypically feminine, meaning that they emphasized lines and accentuated shape. I decided on the burgundy because many of my peers mentioned that they saw deep reds and wine colors when watching the piece as a work-in-progress. The various form-fitting shirts included V-neck lines, spaghetti-straps, cropped designs, and long sleeves. Each look was chosen to highlight the dancers' necklines, collarbones, stomachs, shoulders, and arms. Accentuating these specific physical features mattered because of their association with the way women's bodies are

highlighted through clothing in twenty-first century fashion. The dress pants and conventionally feminine shirts merged to create the final look, which was intended to accomplish the appearance of both masculinity and femininity in one singular costume.

The color of the shirts also influenced my lighting choices. Normally, I would prefer that the lighting be very different from the costume. However, in this work, the boldness and ostentatious quality evoked by matching the exact shade of the shirts to the cyclorama[4] worked perfectly for the performative half of my piece. In my opinion, allowing the lighting to compliment the costume's color is a tasteful approach to lighting design that allows the dancers and costumes to be highlighted. My choice to match the two seemed to emulate the commotion and theatrical atmosphere of the first portion of the dance.

My ideas for the choreographic work's music were very scattered. I originally wanted a slow and soft sound when envisioning the completed work in the early stages of my process, but as my concept changed and evolved in my mind, I became drawn to a 70s rebellious, feminine musical tone. I thought of punk rock musical icons of that era such as Stevie Nicks, Heart, and Shocking Blue. I settled on the song "Magic Man" by Heart to get me started in my process, ironically enough, because it is a song about a man. I took interest in such an ironic choice, given that the piece was going to explore the idea of women breaking free from patriarchal notions of binary gender. Something about that contradiction seemed like a playful and snarky way to tell the story that I was hoping to tell through my piece.

[4] A white cloth draped behind a stage space, providing a backdrop that can be altered through lighting design

As my process advanced and my piece was quickly taking shape, I was considering additional music to use to help capture the experiential aspect of gender. Visions of burgundy, smoke, and a speakeasy atmosphere began to emerge, so I decided that a jazzy, bluesy mood would be most fitting in terms of my second musical selection. I knew that this type of music would have to be carefully selected, as it needed to keep the dance in the same universe that “Magic Man” by Heart had already very clearly established. After an exhaustive search, I stumbled across the song "Dove" by Cymande, which allowed for a cohesive, upbeat conclusion to my choreographic work.

My staging and spacing choices were less strategic than other design choices. I relied heavily on instinct and the feelings that certain spacing choices evoked for me in the development of my piece. I was previously told by a choreography professor that I had a way of using the stage space as architecture in an earlier work of mine, meaning that I was successfully and effectively using the dancers to construct a complex design of movement within and through the stage space. I was creating shapes that moved, morphed into other shapes, and were broken via my positioning of dancers in relation to one another onstage. That strength is one that I have tried to further in my choreography over the past few years. For this choreographic work, I was more intentional about building and sculpting the space between and among dancers to further establish relationships within the piece, as opposed to only sculpting the larger stage space. This focus created much more intimacy between dancers in this dance than in my previous pieces, which is significant because it captures the vulnerable essence of my dance’s subject matter. My previous choreographic works also tended to demonstrate symmetry. This dance, on the other hand, explored asymmetry, which was an important aspect of embodying the ideas present in “Uneven Envy,” such as being off-balance and uneven.

CHAPTER IV: POST-PRODUCTION

In considering the final product of my creative research, many aspects of the rehearsal process could have gone differently. The potential for variation within the process does not necessarily suggest that anything should have happened differently, since the unique reality of each creative process is essential to the very nature of the art that is produced from said process. For the purposes of artistic reflection, personal choreographic development, and using the creative process as research, it is important to reflect upon how things could have gone differently within the process (Marshall 24).

In an ideal world, I would have choreographed *Euphoric Dysphoria* much more quickly so that I could have had more time to further coach movement and performance qualities. I would have started with my poem “Uneven Envy” as a compositional tool to inspire movement generation from the very beginning, as opposed to inserting it later in the process. Looking back on my process, I am curious how the entirety of my dance could have been an embodiment of "Uneven Envy" if I had used it earlier in rehearsals to inspire movement. I fully investigated the poem through movement, but my exploration conceptually could have been even deeper had I thought to work with my poem from the very beginning of my rehearsal process. Taking more time to experiment with musical choices might have yielded an even richer, more fully realized artistic result as well.

As far as revisions that I would make to the dance itself, I would expand the piece if possible. Arguably, I feel that there is more to be said through movement and more to creatively explore, although my time to do so was limited. In any creative process, there will always be more to say and investigate; nothing is ever truly finished. The possibilities within dance, choreography, and research are endless, so a creative process could also be endless, in theory. Considering this idea, I could potentially expand the

piece and my research by writing more poetry, perhaps in response to what I see in *Euphoric Dysphoria* and make more choreography that embodies poetic voice. I could possibly create another piece that exists in relationship to *Euphoric Dysphoria*, with a cast made entirely of dancers who identify as men, to help me in exploring gendered poetic embodiment through a different perspective than my own.

Outside of revisions that involve expansion, I might change my aesthetic approach to movement invention within the existing choreographic work. The dancers featured in *Euphoric Dysphoria* move very differently than I do and embody movement in a way that was slightly unfamiliar to me as a choreographer when I began my rehearsal process. During the rehearsal process, I found myself including movement that looked aesthetically pleasing on the dancers' bodies, rather than adhering to a movement vocabulary that I enjoy dancing. If I had more time, I would challenge them to embody movement that is more aligned with my typical movement vocabulary.

After having undergone this creative process and producing this piece, I have made discoveries and insights that are actively guiding me toward being the fullest, most enriched version of the artist that I envision myself to be. This creative process gave me a new avenue for creative exploration as both a dance-maker and writer. In the back of my mind, I always knew that the concept of dance being an embodied form of poetry was true for me, but this process opened my eyes to that truth and clarified it for me. From my process, I also received a simultaneously simple, deep, lighthearted, complex, and nuanced understanding of my own experience of gender within my own body and within my dancing and dance making.

Distinct from the gifts and insights that I have been exposed to throughout the process, the dance itself has given me gifts and insights that also allow me to fully realize

my artistry. *Euphoric Dysphoria* exemplifies the idea that good choreography can be so many things at once, which I always envisioned but never before attempted to manifest in my choreography. A dance can be playful, stark, odd, sexual, provocative, silly, whimsical, abstract, and literal all at once and still be a cohesive work. I have always wanted to successfully reveal this multi-dimensional energy in a dance, as it has always lived in my imagination. However, I was much too intimidated by and uncomfortable with the notion of even trying it. In taking a risk and trusting this creative instinct of mine, the finished product of the dance taught me to trust my artistic impulses. I found a new sense of security and confidence in my creative intuition. If I have a vision or an inexplicable feeling that requires artistic expression, there is always a way to make it a fantastic reality, no matter how foreign it may initially seem.

APPENDIX A: CREATIVE PROCESS

1. Link to “Magic Man” by Heart:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vlAdMeZSfw

2. Link to “Dove” by Cymande:

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcL8SvyKtE4

Figure 1. Questions to initiate conversation between the cast and choreographer; Captured from choreographer’s journal

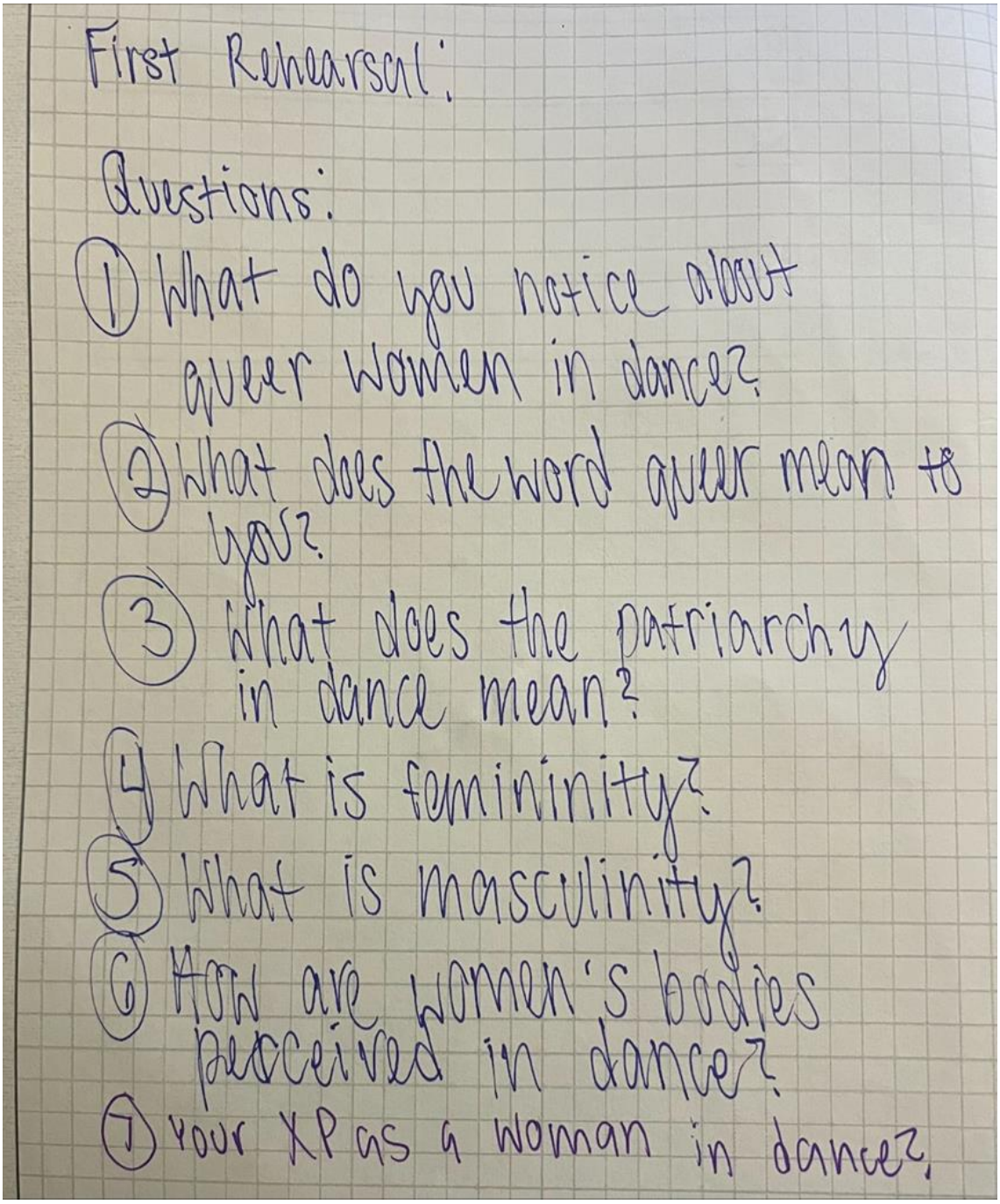


Figure 2. Significant revelations generated by the creative research process; Captured from choreographer's journal

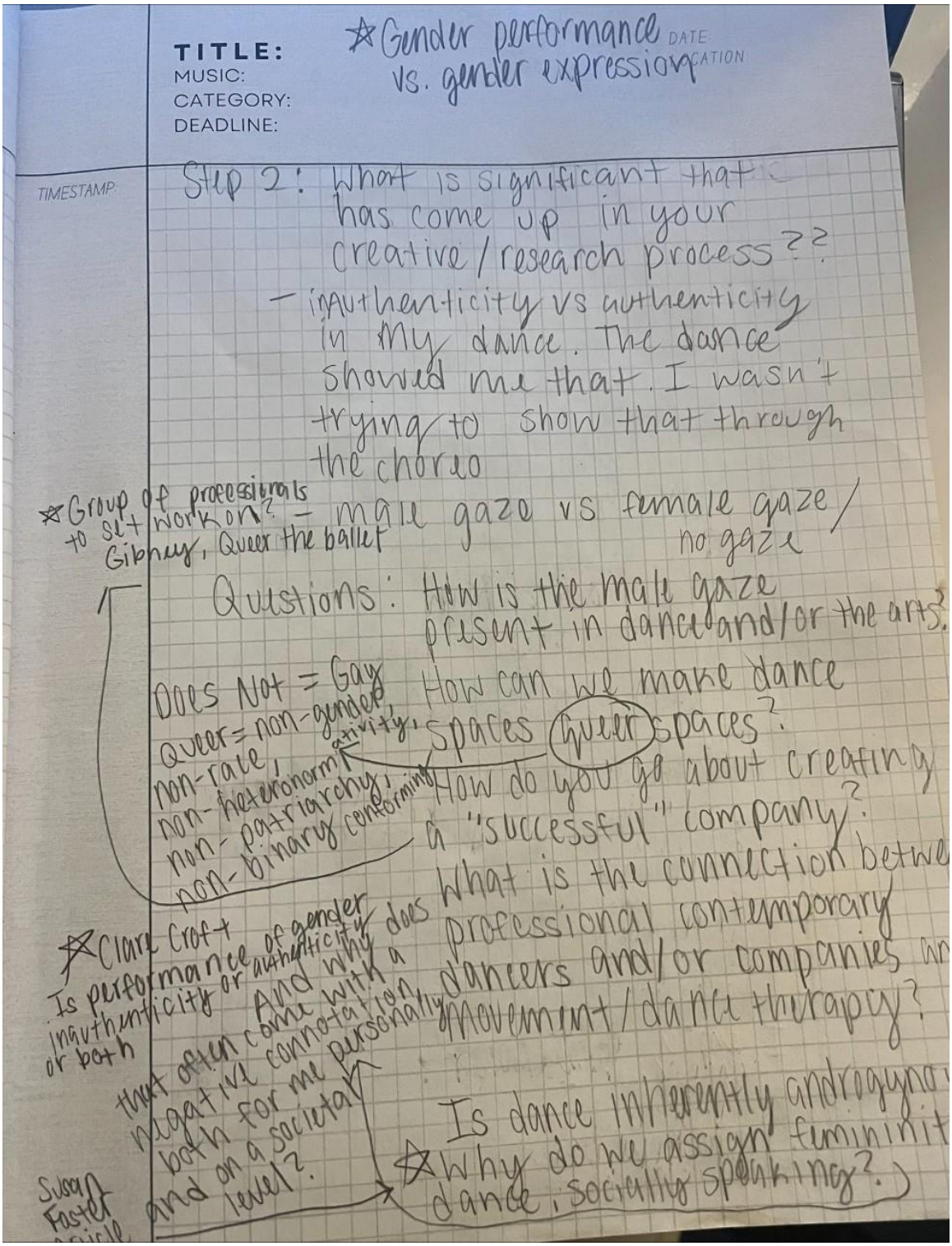
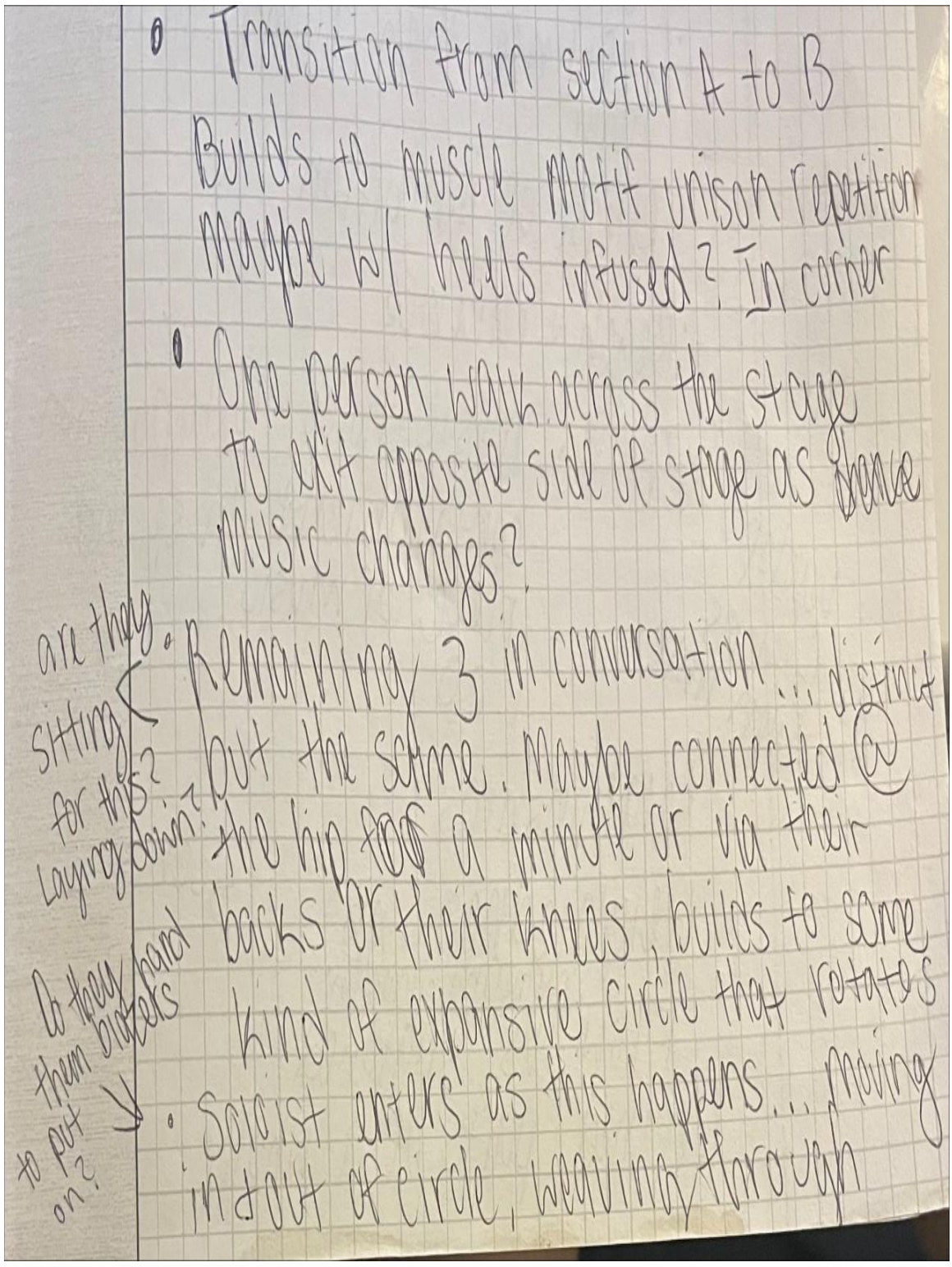

TITLE:
MUSIC:
CATEGORY:
DEADLINE:
☆Gender performance vs. gender expression
DATE
CATION
TIMESTAMP:
Step 2: What is significant that has come up in your creative/research process??
- inauthenticity vs authenticity in my dance. The dance showed me that I wasn't trying to show that through the choreo
☆Group of processionals to set work on? Gibney, Queer the ballet
- male gaze vs female gaze/ no gaze
Questions: How is the male gaze present in dance and/or the arts?
How can we make dance spaces queer spaces?
How do you go about creating a "successful" company?
What is the connection between professional contemporary dancers and/or companies and movement/dance therapy?
Is dance inherently androgynous? Why do we assign femininity to dance, socially speaking?
Does Not = Gay
queer = non-gender non-race, non-heteronormativity, non-patriarchy, non-binary conforming
☆Clare Croft
Is performance of gender inauthenticity or authenticity or both
And why does that often come with a negative connotation both for me personally and on a societal level?
Susan Foster

Figure 3. Choreography plans for the transition between first and second part of dance before the integration of poetry; Captured from choreographer's journal



“Uneven Envy”

You hold me like a standard.

My mind sheds

Like my delicate, decorative skin

On a floor that you dominate.

I’d like the chance to be challenged,

To change your objectifying

Mind about my physicality.

An out-of-body experience, finally free

From the envy and fake pleasantries

Of being your muse.

Enveloped by your hefty gaze.

Always watched, rarely seen.

These hips sway with faux freedom

In the pendulum that is my frame.

Frame of mind—you’re one of a kind,

a necessity for balance.

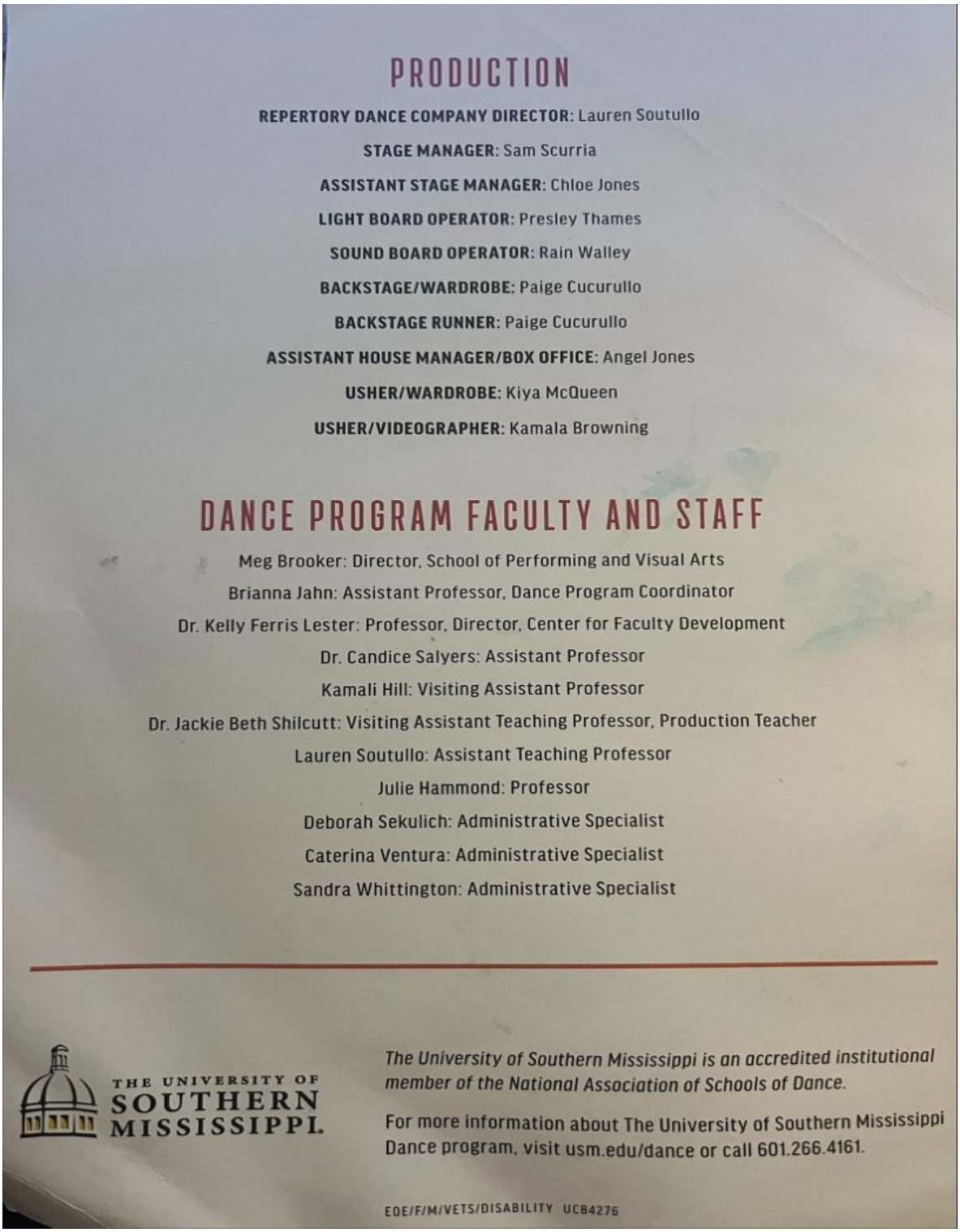
But I’m a different kind of surplus.

Instability.

APPENDIX B: PERFORMANCE PRODUCT

Figure 4. Front of RDC concert program

Figure 5. Back of RDC concert program



PRODUCTION

REPERTORY DANCE COMPANY DIRECTOR: Lauren Soutullo

STAGE MANAGER: Sam Scurria

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER: Chloe Jones

LIGHT BOARD OPERATOR: Presley Thames

SOUND BOARD OPERATOR: Rain Walley

BACKSTAGE/WARDROBE: Paige Cucurullo

BACKSTAGE RUNNER: Paige Cucurullo

ASSISTANT HOUSE MANAGER/BOX OFFICE: Angel Jones

USHER/WARDROBE: Kiya McQueen

USHER/VIDEOGRAPHER: Kamala Browning

DANCE PROGRAM FACULTY AND STAFF

Meg Brooker: Director, School of Performing and Visual Arts

Brianna Jahn: Assistant Professor, Dance Program Coordinator

Dr. Kelly Ferris Lester: Professor, Director, Center for Faculty Development

Dr. Candice Salyers: Assistant Professor

Kamali Hill: Visiting Assistant Professor

Dr. Jackie Beth Shilcutt: Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor, Production Teacher

Lauren Soutullo: Assistant Teaching Professor

Julie Hammond: Professor

Deborah Sekulich: Administrative Specialist

Caterina Ventura: Administrative Specialist

Sandra Whittington: Administrative Specialist

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For more information about The University of Southern Mississippi Dance program, visit usm.edu/dance or call 601.266.4161.

EOE/F/M/VETS/DISABILITY UCB4276

Figure 6. Program information for RDC concert

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome! The Southern Miss Repertory Dance Company (RDC) is proud to present the first of two fall dance concerts. Our concert this evening features dances choreographed by senior dance majors, faculty and guest artists.

We hope that tonight's performance inspires you to attend more of our events this year. Look for the upcoming season on our website at usm.edu/dance and follow us on Facebook and Instagram!

Lauren Soutullo
Repertory Dance Company Director

TECHNICAL DIRECTION AND LIGHTING DESIGN FOR ALL DANCES BY EMILY COLEY

[EBB, FLOAT, RESET, RESTART]

CHOREOGRAPHY: Dr. Jackie Beth Shilcutt (Visiting Faculty), Gabby Bass, Carley Elliers, Saryah Jones, Aki Moon

DANCERS: Gabby Bass, Carley Elliers, Saryah Jones, Aki Moon

MUSIC: "La Boca Race" by Tangerine Dream

TESTIMONY UNVEILED

CHOREOGRAPHY: Francie Davis

DANCERS: Gabby Bass, Natalie Davis, Camea Dixon, Grace Dugas, Allison Reihl

APPRENTICE: Seana Rains

MUSIC: Grave Clothes, Tribl and Maverick City Music

TOGETHER-APART

CHOREOGRAPHY: Brianna Jahn in collaboration with the dancers

DANCERS: Jamison Carroll, Francie Davis, Mikail Samuels, Natalie Sunseri

MUSIC: "A Wonderful Day" composed by Anna Clyne and Bang on a Can All-Stars with vocals by Willie Barbee, and "Replay" by René Aubry

EUPHORIC DYSPHORIA

CHOREOGRAPHY: Natalie Sunseri

DANCERS: Meagan Cobb, Natalie Davis, Caitlyn Diamond, Sara Grace Duplessis

APPRENTICE: Seana Rains

MUSIC: "Magic Man" by Heart and "Dove" by Cymande

FEATURED POETRY: "Uneven Envy" by Natalie Sunseri

JOY IS...

CHOREOGRAPHY: Jazelynn Goudy (Guest Artist) in collaboration with the dancers

REHEARSAL DIRECTOR: Brianna Jahn (Faculty)

DANCERS: Meagan Cobb, Taylor Coffee, Francie Davis, Caitlyn Diamond, Camea Dixon, Sara Grace Duplessis, Michayla Flowers, Al Mims, Allison Riehl, Seana Rains

MUSIC: "Mirror Dance" [Yoruba Soul Remix Feat Oveous] by Afefe Iku, Osulunde

Photography by Kelly Dunn

Figure 7. Sara Grace Duplessis performs bold, aggressive solo as the dance begins

Figure 8. Dancers haphazardly drape themselves over each other

Figure 9. Dancers perform bound and free-flow phrase, embodying a collective grasp in various directions

Figure 10. Dancers perform bound and free-flow phrase, striking the seated position pose

Figure 11. Dancers perform bound and free-flow phrase, striking the awkward yet stylized pose before flicking their wrists upward in unison twice

Figure 12. Dancers look around in confusion and acknowledge the audience's presence during the awkward silence

Figure 13. Dancers recite lines from "Uneven Envy" aloud, orbiting slowly and moving to the upstage corner

Figure 14. Meagan Cobb performs the "one of a kind, necessity for balance" solo

Figure 15. Trio traces Meagan Cobb's movements after melting into the floor

Figure 16. Meagan Cobb backs away from the trio while they "untie" themselves from each other

Figure 17. Trio performs the "balance, instability" canon phrase

Figure. 18 Caitlyn Diamond and Meagan Cobb balance in an awkward position before performing a duet

Figure 19. Caitlyn Diamond jumps in rotation during the duet with Meagan Cobb

Figure 20. Natalie Davis and Sara Grace Duplessis slide powerfully in unison

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