

## Emerging Choreographers' Final Reflection

My creative process in preparation for the Emerging Choreographers' Showcase was a process full of trial and error, successes, failures, moments of joy, moments of anxiety, and lots of learning about myself as an artist and how I work best. Before embarking on the process, I didn't think I was capable of making a work that I would feel truly proud of, as I had all of these doubts that I wasn't creative enough. I am thrilled that I was able to prove myself wrong with a work that I felt was conceptually strong, layered, and that I was proud to present as mine. My biggest regret of undergrad is letting my doubts prevent me from diving into choreography earlier, and one of my biggest takeaways from this process is to not be afraid to try new things, and to enjoy the process rather than worrying about the final outcome.

The feedback and supportive encouragement that I received from the faculty, my peers, and the external reviewers was such an integral component of the process- as it helped me to think deeply about my concept and process, ask questions, and to keep going when I felt stuck. In my first meeting with my faculty mentor Fen, they helped me brainstorm ways that I could dive into my concept more fully, such as speaking with each of my dancers individually to discuss their character and intentions, and ways that I could spatially represent the idea of the different paths that Kylie was choosing. This feedback early on helped me to keep my concept at the forefront from the very beginning and make it clear to the audience, as well as make clear to my dancers what they were portraying. Advice from Sarah early on to continue exploring the structures that I had begun to develop in the beginning of the piece was also beneficial in giving me a direction to explore in- and the structures ended up becoming a very substantial part of the work that reflected many of the images/motifs from the source material and my concept. When I expressed to Hassan that I didn't know what to do next, he assured me that I had a lot to work

with and that I just needed to trust myself and start creating, which encouraged me to keep moving forward.

My cast was a group of incredibly talented and hard-working individuals that supported me, challenged me, and brought such life to the rehearsal space and the piece. I appreciated the active role they all took in the process, asking me questions about the concept and their character's specific intentions in the choreography which helped challenge me to be deliberate with all of my choreographic decisions and think about the "why" behind each movement. I still have lots of improving to do in terms of leading rehearsals, as I am not always great at articulating what I want in words, being confident in myself, or regrouping the cast when they get off topic. However, I'm glad I had the experience of choreographing on a group of my supportive peers- who understood that I was learning and didn't get frustrated with my process- to work on improving on these things before I go into future processes where the dancers may not be my peers. The cast expressed in their feedback that I created a supportive and encouraging environment in rehearsal, was prepared for rehearsal and used time effectively, and fostered teamwork and collaboration. This was such a great thing for me to hear, because I was always very nervous about leading rehearsals and how my dancers would feel about the process. They also expressed that they appreciated how I personalized their roles to their individual childhood dreams and strengths, and how this added depth and authenticity to their performance, which is not something that I was necessarily thinking would happen when I did this but I'm so glad that it helped them feel more deeply connected to the work. In future processes, I hope to keep cultivating a supportive and collaborative environment, as I believe this is crucial for the dancers' connection to each other within their work, their dedication to the work, and their well-being.

Receiving the external feedback and seeing how the reviewers were able to understand my concept without knowing anything about the work was really special. One of the reviewers specifically mentioned that the piece made them think of “feathers falling from a tree”, each representing a different choice in life, and wondered if the dancers were meant to represent these different possibilities- so they basically hit the nail right on the head in determining my concept. One person specifically mentioned how the different silhouettes of dresses helped to indicate variation or individuals, so it was nice to hear that the costume element of the work also helped to communicate the concept. The main critiques and suggestions that the reviewers had were to further explore how the bodies and facial expressions of the dancers react to movement and to the environment and to push movement invention more. I didn’t really direct my dancers much in terms of facial expressions, so that is something I want to think about more in future processes. I also think I focused a lot more on how I was shaping the space and the relationships between the dancers than on the movement itself, so I will definitely dive deeper into movement invention in future processes. I focused the most on movement invention when I was creating each of the dancers’ solos that reflected their characters, and I feel like that movement was strong in reflecting the concept but there were definitely parts of the work where the movement wasn’t as strong conceptually.

In future processes, I hope to pace myself better within the rehearsal timeline, because I was rushing a bit to finish the ending, and if I had more time with the ending there were definitely a few things I would have changed. From this process, I learned that I work best when I come to rehearsal with something prepared and use that as a seed that can develop and grow during the rehearsal- not feeling bound to stick to it but at least having something to begin from. As I embark on my career I want to always remember why I love to choreograph and dance and

try to bring joy and enthusiasm into every process. I also want to gain more confidence being in front of a room and leading rehearsals- which will only come if I learn that I am valuable and have valuable things to say. Finally, I want to dive deeper into movement invention and push myself to create unique movement rather than relying on codified steps and continue to explore architectural structures. I want to always embrace who I am and not be afraid to be weird (Thanks for the advice, Hassan). Next, I will be pursuing a performance career in concert dance, and I'm hoping that this will lead me to more choreography opportunities in the future.