

Creating *Pause: Reset* - Fostering Connection Through Dance

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Visual and Performing Arts with a concentration in Dance at George Mason University

by

Shaun B. D'Arcy

Master of Arts

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, 2010

Bachelor of Fine Arts

New York University, 2004

Director: Dan Joyce, Associate Professor
School of Dance

Summer Semester 2021
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

Copyright 2021 Shaun Boyle D'Arcy
All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my loving husband James, our wonderful son Alistair, and our sweet dog Luna.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the marvelous cast of dancers with whom I had the honor of working: Dareon Blowe, Isaiah Cavallero, Chaslyn Donovan, Holly Harkins, Hadiya Matthews, Carlos Martinez, Hope Spears, and Isis Thomas. I would also like to thank the College of Visual and Performing Arts and the School of Dance, as well as the following individuals for their support during this project: Dan Joyce, Elizabeth “Buffy” Price, James Lepore, Karen Reedy, Marjorie Summerall, Jasmil Perez, Daniel Hobson, Julie Thompson, Lisa Kahn, Julia Norman, and Anna Ticknor. Finally, I must thank my wonderful husband, James D’Arcy, for the love and encouragement he always provides, as well as the extra hours of parenting he graciously accepted to support me in this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	vi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Project Overview	3
Chapter Three: Inspirational Overview	7
Chapter Four: Research Methodology.....	20
Chapter Five: Findings	39
Chapter Six: Reflection & Evaluation	43
Appendix I	50
Appendix II.....	51
Appendix III	52
Appendix IV	54
Appendix V.....	55
Appendix VI	58
References	62

ABSTRACT

CREATING *PAUSE: RESET* - FOSTERING CONNECTION THROUGH DANCE

Shaun B. D'Arcy, MFA

George Mason University, 2021

Thesis Director: Dan Joyce

The thesis project, *Pause: Reset*, was an outdoor dance event that took place at the A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza at George Mason University's Fairfax campus on April 22, 2021. The 25-minute work was the culmination of research on the topic of social connection and its impact on health and well-being. Developed during the global pandemic Covid-19 in collaboration with the cast of eight George Mason University School of Dance majors, *Pause: Reset* arose in response to the unprecedented events of 2020. Though the study's principle focus was navigating a community centered choreographic process during Covid-19, other factors that influenced the work included the United States presidential election, national efforts to dismantle racism and more, as well as the personal experiences of the cast and choreographer. The project involved several months of ongoing dialogue and movement research leading to a site-specific work aimed at portraying the resilient nature of the human spirit and the power of connection in times of collective uncertainty and challenge.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As a graduate student, the dedication of time to furthering my understanding of dance has afforded me ample opportunity to grow as an artist and educator. Culminating my studies for the purpose of this thesis presented a welcomed chance to stretch my artistic practice in new ways. I was eager to explore different methods for developing my choreographic practice by blending the fresh knowledge gained from my MFA studies with the professional experience I held prior. Yet, despite my initial thesis plans, I could never have foreseen what would ultimately influence the nature of my research and push me to take greater risks with my creative work.

The arrival of the global pandemic, Coronavirus 19 (Covid-19), slowed time and scrambled the familiar and expected modes we use to engage with others and our work. With the implementation of physical distancing guidelines, in-person social interaction and gatherings were inherently limited. The restrictions imposed by Covid-19 provided such unique and unusual parameters for my creative research that it seemed futile not to embrace these challenges and confront them head on. Accordingly, the pandemic both inspired and directed the course of this project. The social impacts of the virus gave way to a personal interest to examine the relationship between social connection and well-being. This in turn provoked me to investigate dance's ability to foster such human connection through community building and as an outlet for artistic

expression. Finally, the pandemic stripped away the traditional resources and venues for dance making, nudging me out of studios and theaters and into more innovative spaces.

CHAPTER TWO: PROJECT OVERVIEW

In my view, Covid-19 has reminded us all not only of the fragility of humanity, but also of the importance of human social connection. With social interaction restricted or removed altogether, a new appreciation for connection could be felt. In their article “Social Connection and Compassion: Important Predictors of Health and Well-Being” authors Emma Seppala, Timothy Rossomando and James R. Doty define social connection as “a person’s subjective sense of having close and positively experienced relationships with others in the social world.” The article asserts that social connection is “a critically important human need,” first established at infancy in the form of attachment between child and caregiver. It is a need that stays with us throughout life and shapes our adult relationships. Social connection is also subjective. Positive and affectionate connections must be perceived as such if they are to lead to emotional and psychological health benefits. Therefore, our perceived sense of belonging is fundamental to the efficacy of social connection for our wellness. Social exclusion on the other hand, or the feeling of not belonging, “is one of the main sources of anxiety for the general public, after fear of physical harm.” (Seppala, Rossomando and Doty, 415) Accordingly, our awareness of feelings of social exclusion influence our well-being as much as our perceived sense of connection.

When individuals do feel a sense of connection, studies show the positive implications for subjective well-being are many. These benefits include reduced levels of anxiety and depression, more optimal intellectual performance that include the ability to be flexible and think creatively, higher resilience to stressful life situations and greater ability to socially connect with others. Furthermore, higher social connection has also been noted as leading to improved interpersonal relationships whereby “people high in social connection tend to see others in a positive light, and as trustworthy and nonthreatening.” (Seppala, Rossomando and Doty, 422) Higher levels of social connection also form prosocial, compassionate, and empathetic feelings towards others which in turn feed back into an individual’s perceived feeling of connectedness. Lastly, social connection has also been linked to defending against stress and improving cognition and emotion regulation. However, for individuals low in social connection, the opposite appears to be true. Outcomes arise such as hostility, lowered self-esteem and interpersonal trust, jealousy, and anxiety, and individuals are often more prone to mental health disorders.

With the advent of Covid-19, connecting with others became a challenge. However, even before the pandemic, social connection already showed signs of decline. Seppala, Rossomando and Doty suggest that social connection has been “waning at an alarming rate in modern American society.” (Seppala, Rossomando and Doty, 412) They cite reasons such as decreasing household sizes, and geographical and emotional disconnection between biological family and friends as causes in the fraying of social

connection and the rise of isolation, alienation, and loneliness, all factors which lead people to seek psychological care. The quarantine and social distancing measures, implemented for the sake of safety and curtailing the spread of the virus, removed so many of the typical encounters and events that bond us and promote social engagement.

Nevertheless, humans have proven to be creative in finding ways to connect during the pandemic. Since Covid-19 first began spreading throughout the United States, people have quickly adopted different ways to connect safely with each other - from Zoom meetings to online workout classes to virtual performing arts events. In March 2020, *The New Yorker* quoted evolutionary anthropologist at the University of Notre Dame, Agustin Fuentes, as saying, “What is so important to humanity is connection. The kind of quarantines - in New York and Seattle, and what will happen in thousands of other places in the United States - will require people to connect in other ways.” He goes on to state that “over time, we have become very creative. We’ve adapted to survive. That’s what people will rely on now - coming up with incredibly imaginative ways to find connections even when they’re not in the same physical space together.”

(Wright)

As a dance artist, my interest has been examining how dance can provide us with an outlet for connection during the Covid-19 pandemic. Having the opportunity to teach in person in a university dance program during the pandemic has made it very clear to me, both in my own experience and hearing from those around me, how beneficial this form of connection can be. This thesis project afforded me time to further

examine social connection through the experience of making art. Embarking on this research has meant confronting the challenges and limitations of dance making during a pandemic in order to create a work that is an expression of human connection and personal experiences of this time. This project's aim was to cultivate a collaborative creative process that could foster connection and build a sense of community amongst the cast.

CHAPTER THREE: INSPIRATIONAL OVERVIEW

Historical Overview

Historically, some professionals in the field of dance have utilized dance as a “healing” art form, as well as harnessed its power to strengthen connection and build community. Numerous examples exist of artists recognizing value in taking dance off the stage and bringing it into the community. One example is world renowned dance company, the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG), which brings dance and the company’s repertory to individuals afflicted with Parkinson’s Disease through its MMDG Dance for Parkinson’s Program. The program was conceived by Morris, Nancy Umanoff and Ollie Westheimer of the Brooklyn Parkinson’s Group in 2001. Former dancers with the company, David Leventhal and John Heginbotham, were also instrumental in developing the program and leading many of the program’s classes. In their view, the classes are about “music and community and expression.” Leventhal states:

That deep communal resonance, which can happen when people dance together, occupies such an important place in the lives of the people with PD, who often experience a turning inward or closing off. By sharing this experience together, with us, they regain that thing that many of us have forgotten about - that dancing in a group gets at the essence of what makes us human. (Young-Mason)

Another healing arts program that has used dance to benefit the community by strengthening social connection is titled *Dancing Well: The Soldier Project*. It was designed for a group of veterans living with brain injury and post

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) associated with their service in the military. The program provided veterans and their loved ones a chance to enjoy live music and social interaction, free refreshments and then the opportunity to come out onto a dance floor where an instructor would lead the group through a series of simple movements.

Participant “Steve” shared that, “*Dancing Well* helps me deal with PTSD symptoms.” He adds, “Instead of becoming isolated, I’m making connections with other people. That’s what this is all about.” (Cathers)

Yet another example of dance’s power to build social connection and improve the health and wellness of its participants is Lucy Wallace’s *Dance to Be Free*. Wallace, a dancer who went on to earn her masters in psychology, co-founded *Dance to Be Free* in order to bring dance to incarcerated women. The program involves not only jazz, hip-hop, and lyrical dance classes, but also writing exercises and group discussions. It is intended to help the inmates cope with PTSD, depression, complex trauma, and despair. Since teaching her first class in 2015 at the Denver Women’s Correctional Facility, Wallace has expanded *Dance to Be Free* to eight states and thirteen prisons.

Intersecting Social Connection and Art Making

These examples showcase the power of dance in building community, its accessibility to individuals with little or no dance training, and its ability to improve the health and well-being of community members. However, these programs were not necessarily designed to become works of choreography or live performances. In other

words, these examples are not associated with art making, but rather stand independently in the form of classes and outreach events. Nevertheless, art making also can have an impact on social connection, community building, and wellness. Though innumerable examples exist, I will cite two dance makers that have provided inspiration to me during this study: Liz Lerman and Pina Bausch.

The Shipyard Project

In their book *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, authors Robert D. Putnam and Lewis M. Feldstein surmise the value of social connection not only for good health and general wellness, but also for productivity and common good. They present the term *social capital* which refers to “developing networks of relationships that weave individuals into groups and communities” bringing about “social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness.” (Putnam & Feldstein, 2) The authors believe that social capital has many positive effects including offering individuals a sense of community, well-being, and even greater success in companies and organizations due to the power of social connection. They also draw the distinction between networks that connect people of similar backgrounds (*bonding social capital*) and networks that connect different types of individuals (*bridging social capital*), suggesting that bridging is often more difficult to create. For the purpose of this project, I focused my energies upon bonding social capital by drawing together a group of dancers already acquainted with one another.

One example of social capital which Putnam and Feldstein put forward is the *Shipyards Project*, a dance event choreographed in 1996 by American choreographer, performer, teacher, writer, and educator Liz Lerman. The *Shipyards Project* came about in response to a difference of opinions amongst community members in Portsmouth, New Hampshire over a vacated naval shipyard visibly positioned on the city's Piscataque River. Many residents viewed the shipyard as an outdated eye sore that no longer belonged in Portsmouth amongst the cafes, bookstores, and thriving cultural scene of theaters and artisan shops sitting opposite on the river. Some residents disliked seeing a location that once housed nuclear submarines known for carrying weapons of mass destruction and also disapproved of the shipyard's pollution. Conversely, many residents in Portsmouth held a personal connection to the shipyard's long history, having had family members and relatives who once worked at the site or were submariners.

The *Shipyards Project* aimed at drawing together these two groups of community members with the intention of humanizing the shipyard and educating the public about its history. Lerman was selected for this project due to her experience working with diverse populations and her ability to connect people of a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. In other words, Lerman knew how to build social capital. Widely known for her work with her company Liz Lerman Dance Exchange which she founded in 1976, Lerman understood the power of social connection and how to bring people together through dance. Putnam and Feldstein state that "Lerman had a reputation for a spirit of open inquiry, discovering and respecting people's varied points of view

rather than imposing her own or listening only to the voices that echoed hers.” (Putnam and Feldstein, 57)

Lerman established an inclusive and collaborative process from which the resulting *Shipyard Project* arose. Her democratic approach involved all who had an interest in participating, from middle school children to elders to clergy. Twenty-five out of 125 former shipyard workers that had been contacted agreed to attend an initial gathering in October 1994 and consider working with Lerman. Along with a few Dance Exchange company members, Lerman met with these participants and invited them to share their experiences of the shipyard. During this introductory meeting, the participants were asked to describe any images that came to mind and come up with physical gestures inspired by the images, later to be used in the dance.

For instance, several participants shared an image of a crane that existed at the shipyard docks, towering over the buildings there. Lerman encouraged the group to explore this image through movement, stating, “If you were to make a picture of a crane with your body, what would it look like?” (Putnam, Feldstein, 59) In this way, Lerman summoned the creativity of the former shipyard workers, offering them an opportunity to come together and share their stories through dance. Through the hosting of meetings such as this, discussions, workshops, and rehearsals with the Portsmouth community, her company members, and even city officials, Lerman proved the value of dance in building community.

Yet, Lerman also recognized the distinction between, as she said, “the all-accepting creative process and art making.” (Putnam, Feldstein, 61) Though the early stages of her collaborative creative process entailed accumulating as much material as she could, she later determined which movements to include in the finished work. This phase required her careful eye in order to distinguish which material held interest, could add meaning to the overall work, or simply could best be formed into a dance. In short, this period of the process called for Lerman to select and refine movement for the purpose of making art.

Though the *Shipyards Project*’s development spanned almost two years, it was presented over the duration of one week of performances in a number of different sites centered in and around the shipyard. The social impacts of this work were vast and varied with the most obvious being how it brought together the Portsmouth community in a lasting way. The *Shipyards Project* also roused recognition that the arts are central to community life. The social capital and connection achieved by the *Shipyards Project* showcased Lerman and her team of collaborators’ ability to bridge communities through the use of dance. As explained in *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, “the project awakened an understanding of the arts as part of the fabric of community life.” (Putnam and Feldstein, 73)

1980 and Bandoneon

Another example that showcases the healing power of dance and art making is found with German choreographer Pina Bausch, arguably one of the most prolific and influential choreographers of our time. In 1980, Bausch's partner Rolf Borzik passed away of leukemia at the age of 35. Bausch and Borzik's relationship was not only personal in nature, but the two artists also worked extensively together at the Tanztheater Wuppertal while Bausch was director there. Borzik's role was that of set, lighting, and costume designer. He had a significant impact on Bausch's choreographies and provided her with great support. With his passing, Bausch lost an important confidant and collaborator, and she grew anxious about continuing her work. With the encouragement of friend and dramaturg Raimund Hoghe, Bausch kept making work including *1980* and *Bandoneon*, produced shortly after Borzik's death.

Lutz Förster, who began performing with Tanztheater Wuppertal in 1975, commented upon the experience of creating *1980* with Bausch. He states:

After the death of her longtime partner and closest collaborator, Rolf Borzik, it took some time for her to decide to work on her next piece, which became *1980*. It was a difficult time. All the people involved in its creation tried to entertain and distract Pina. I felt freer to do anything stupid to cheer her up. And then I was surprised that she put many of those things into the final piece. Some people find *1980* hilariously funny; some very melancholic. It depends what you focus on. (Wiegand)

As one can gather from Förster's remarks, Bausch had built a community, one that surrounded her and supported her during a challenging time. Like Lerman, she too worked democratically. She collaborated with her performers to develop a physical

language, often providing creative tasks that called upon the artists to come up with movement. This allowed the performers to make artistic choices and infuse their own perspectives. Bausch is said to have led with a quiet authority, using a voice so low in volume that “everyone had to be quiet to understand what she said.” (Wiegand) Also similar to Lerman, Bausch distinguished between the process of developing material and art making. She filtered through the material constructed with her cast, being the one to decide which to incorporate into the finished work and ultimately how to compose a meaningful work of art.

Hoghe explains in *Bandoneon: Working with Pina Bausch* that, “1980... and the following work, *Bandoneon* (1980), remained close to Bausch’s heart, because through them she managed to deal with her trauma; and by holding onto her work, to carry on with her personal and professional life.” (Hoghe, 50) Though these two choreographies may not be considered Bausch’s most notable works, they no doubt aided her ability to cope with loss and showcase the bond she had with her dancers and artistic colleagues.

Contemporary Overview: Dance Makers Responding to Covid-19

Both the Lerman and Bausch examples cited above shaped my understanding of dance’s power for enhancing social connection and well-being. The *Shipyards Project* illustrated how dance united a community. In the case of Bausch, I recognized dance as a vehicle for healing during times of personal grief or trauma. Both

also proved useful by influencing the choices I made about how to democratically lead my cast and foster community throughout this project.

Nonetheless, it became evident that I would also need to grasp how to conduct and present my creative research in the context of a global pandemic, an ongoing situation that seemed to upend all sense of normality. How were other dance artists responding to Covid-19? How was dance adapting and continuing to provide outlets for expression and human connection?

Like other professions, the unprecedented effects of Covid-19 sent the dance world spinning into foreign territory, upending its typical routines and practices. The affects of the pandemic on artists and audiences worldwide could be seen and felt in the empty studios and theaters that echoed an overwhelming uncertainty about how and when dance might recover. However, in the midst of this uncertainty, abounding resilience and creativity surfaced. The innate power of dance to heal and connect people was no less apparent throughout Covid-19. Dance artists found multiple ways of carrying on, using dance to help cope with the realities we all collectively faced.

By the middle of March 2020, the dance industry, much like the rest of the world, had come to a halt. Across our nation, theaters like the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and those on Broadway went dark and tours were cancelled. Often these closure decisions occurred abruptly, leaving so many dance professionals and audience members in shock and confusion. Renowned modern dance company, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, for instance found out only two hours before its March 12th opening night performance that

Illinois governor J.B. Pritzker had mandated all public gatherings over 1,000 people to be closed. With many ticket holders unaware of the show's cancellation, the company's executive director stood ready outside of the theater in order to relay the sobering news.

As the world grappled with safety measures and ways to combat the spread of the virus, dance artists everywhere got busy doing what they do best - creative problem solving. Tactics for developing and presenting dance quickly changed, giving rise to new methods of engaging with the public and advancing our timeless art form.

With pandemic restrictions put in place during the spring of 2020, many dance makers and presenters took advantage of the agreeable weather and quickly got to work re-envisioning their programming for outdoor and public spaces. From rooftops in New York City to neighborhood sidewalks in Florida, no stone was left unturned in relocating live performance to safely accessible places. For example, acclaimed modern dance company Pilobolus staged a site-specific performance at Spring Hill Vineyards in Connecticut, a historic farm situated on the Shepaug River. For what they called an *art safari experience*, the dance occurred at six stations within the vineyard and audience members would drive and park at each station to witness the performance.

Another example bringing dance outdoors occurred in the summer of 2020 when the city of Paris established a multidisciplinary month-long program that provided both well-known and emerging dance artists space for rehearsal, research, and creation. The project was housed at the Parc de la Villette, the third largest park in Paris, with multipurpose indoor halls, extensive grounds and modular spaces that typically presented

local, national, and international artists. Not only did the program known as Plain D'Artistes give large, open, and safe spaces for artists the work, but it also provided an opportunity for the public to come and view the action in limited numbers through a system of time slots.

The digital arena also became a hot spot for sharing dance, and one that could survive in any climate, season, or time zone. From ballet companies to contemporary companies, many directors and choreographers recognized the appeal of digital programming to keep their organizations afloat and stay connected with their communities. For instance, venues like the Baryshnikov Arts Center and companies like the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, both in New York, presented many archived performances on their websites.

As preexisting staged dances found a home online, several artists and directors recognized an opportunity to leap into the future by creating new works and programming intentionally made for virtual presentation. Even process oriented aspects of dance creation took shape digitally with choreographers virtually entering studios and even the homes of dancers to rehearse and make work. In Philadelphia, contemporary ballet company Ballet X, led by Artistic Director Christine Cox, was one such group to spring ahead with virtual programming in mind. After the initial decisions to shut down performances were made, Cox began envisioning a big and bold new season for her company - world premieres by fifteen choreographers, a subscription-based film festival with nine short ballets, and six feature length ballets to premiere live or turned into films

if necessary. The subscription also included access to a rotating selection of archival dances and behind-the-scenes documentaries.

To achieve this ambitious goal, Ballet X sent each dancer ballet barres and dance flooring to their homes for staying in shape. They also permitted small groups of dancers to come to the studio to rehearse with artistic staff via Zoom. Even the dancers were asked to film themselves during the creation process, often developing film and editing skills to adapt to the new technological demands they encountered. In the words of Christine Cox, “We’re excited to view this as a wonderful learning opportunity and learning curve, and a chance to potentially meet new audience members in their city in their homes and just actually broaden our audience if we do it right ... So the glass is half full here for us.” (Dunkel)

Other professionals like Olivier Wevers, the artistic director of dance company W’him W’him, also recognized a need to maintain dance’s role “as part of the fabric of community life.” (Putnam and Feldstein) Early on during the pandemic, he too launched a virtual season with that goal in mind. He stated, “We need to keep a presence in the community, to say that we are still here, to give back and help with the healing.” Wevers also noted dance’s connection to wellness, saying “This is also for the mental health of my dancers, they need to feel that adrenaline.” (Wozny) Even those more reluctant to modify dance for film, like Joffrey Ballet Artistic Director Ashley Wheater, gave into presenting small-scale digital works. He stated, “I’m embracing it because there’s nothing else.” (Warnecke)

Dance classes also got displaced as training centers worldwide closed and instruction shifted to online platforms. The age of Zoom classes and staying in shape at home instantly came to be. Professional dance institutions and companies offered technical training and movement workshops online, often at no financial cost to participants. With this came greater exposure to a more diverse pool of artistic voices, styles, and practices. Furthermore, this new form of dance practice enabled connections to be made amongst students and professionals of dance that may not have existed prior to the pandemic.

The numerous ways in which the dance industry adapted to Covid-19 significantly impacted the choices I made during my own creative research. The development of my choreography for this thesis took direction from what I observed nationally and internationally by other dance makers and leaders. From working digitally in rehearsals to my selection of a performance site, I was guided in my creative decision making by the ingenuity of others and by observing how dance evolved during the pandemic.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The original concept for this project came about at the start of 2020 before any presence of Covid-19 existed in our lives. My initial goal had been to choreograph a work for the stage born from ongoing group dialogue and collective movement research that would involve both trained and non-trained dancers. By March of 2020 when the pandemic's direct impact on our lives became more apparent, I soon realized that my creative plans would need to change. Assembling a large cast and community of participants to work together in close contact seemed to be both impossible and irresponsible. Therefore, during the summer I recalibrated my plans, allowing the ever-changing nature of Covid-19 to guide the study. I would no longer gather a large cast that would include inexperienced performers, as Lerman had done with the *Shipyards Project*. Instead, I would take inspiration from dance makers like Pina Bausch, forming a close group with whom I could create a work that could help us cope and respond to the events and challenges of 2020, in particular the global pandemic.

From the onset of researching and developing this project, it was evident that the safety measures put in place due to Covid-19 would significantly influence the creative process. What is more, these restrictions continually changed depending upon local infection rates, recommendations made by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and decisions made by our university. Therefore, any hope or expectation of

choreographing in a typical fashion - auditioning dancers, holding consistent rehearsals, practicing in studios, presenting the final work on stage- were upended. If ever there was a time to “go with the flow,” this was it. Nevertheless, this very minefield of uncertainties and unknowns gave way to an opportunity for artistic growth and ultimately the creation of *Pause: Reset*.

Imposed Restrictions of Covid-19

When George Mason University’s 2020-2021 academic year commenced, many new safety protocols and measures were in place to ensure a safe learning environment for students, faculty, and staff. Many of the university’s programs opted to only offer online instruction known as distance learning. Others like the School of Dance chose a hybrid model of instruction that included both in-person and remote learning modalities. This meant that some dance majors would not return to campus, and that the dance studios would need to be equipped to support the technological demands of virtual instruction. In addition, all members of the campus community would be required to wear masks, maintain a physical distance of at least six feet between individuals, and regularly be tested for the virus. To accommodate these guidelines, the dance studio floors were taped to create boxes whereby students could maintain separation from each other. Consequently, fewer students could occupy the space at one time. It also meant partnering work and any physical contact were prohibited. Classes (i.e. freshman, sophomores, etc.) essentially formed “pods” in an effort to minimize intermingling across

groups. Studio availability was limited in large part to accommodate a necessary and aggressive cleaning schedule in between all classes. Furthermore, in the fall semester no students were permitted to hold studio rehearsals which required them to explore other avenues for making work, typically rehearsing outdoors or digitally.

Perhaps the greatest looming threat throughout this project, apart from a cast member or myself contracting the virus, was the ever-present possibility of all university instruction pivoting to online only. For many departments and courses already operating solely online, a “pivot” might have seemed somewhat less consequential. However, for physical practitioners like those of us in the School of Dance, such a pivot carries with it significant impacts on how we engage with our students and our work. In terms of developing a new piece of choreography, the loss of in-person contact with your cast, especially when the timing is unexpected, can cause major interruption and delay. The threat of this unforeseen interruption throughout the 2020-2021 academic school year created an overarching sense of unease. Due to the unpredictable ways in which Covid-19 had unfolded in our society, such interruption often felt inevitable. Accordingly, it was paramount that I devise accomplishable project plans amidst these precarious circumstances.

Choreographic Process & Methods

Since social connection was at the heart of this study, coming up with research methods that would honor and promote bonding and community building came

to the forefront of my creative design and decision making. From the start, I recognized the importance of establishing ways of connecting with the cast and rehearsing virtually, even when in-person meetings were an option. This would allow both the work to progress and the connection of the group to continue if ever we were forced to pivot our work online. This endeavor had some degree of trial and error, but I eventually settled upon a few strategies that enabled me to effectively integrate group dialogue and movement research through digital formats and ultimately work collaboratively with the dancers.

One resource that I utilized was the website collaboration tool known as Zoom. This online conferencing platform was introduced to me, as it was to many, during the early months of the pandemic lockdowns. Both the dancers and I were well versed enough with Zoom to employ its use for this project. I scheduled our first meeting for Saturday, September 12th for a period of two hours. During this time I explained the details of the study, my interest in working collaboratively on this project, rehearsal scheduling, as well as acknowledging the many uncertainties we would face as a result of Covid-19. Furthermore, I expressed the importance of our ongoing group dialogues, as well as my desire for them to share their perspectives and ideas on discussion topics as often as they felt comfortable doing so. Establishing a safe space for these conversations, free of judgment and criticism, was crucial. I therefore reminded all participants that we had a responsibility to one another to maintain such an environment for honest and rich discussion.

This first Zoom meeting on September 12th proved not only useful for laying out logistics, but it also gave us the opportunity to begin our creative work. Because of the social nature of this research, I was intent upon including regular conversations with and amongst the cast throughout the process. Thus Zoom provided a relatively ideal space for this to occur. Though holding discussions together in a dance studio may have afforded us a more familiar way of connecting, meeting virtually withdrew the temptation to cut short conversation in order to give into our innate hunger to move. That said, I was still conscious that movement research was equally necessary and would need to be incorporated as well.

A second strategy for progressing my work on this project without in-person rehearsals was devising creative tasks for my cast. These tasks would essentially serve as a vehicle for movement generation that the dancers could accomplish on their own time in any space available to them. I designed a series of tasks, calling each a *Creative Prompt*, and varied them over the course of the process. The prompts typically followed the group Zoom discussions and related specifically to the topics of those conversations. For example, in our second Zoom meeting we discussed events and issues of 2020 and then brainstormed a list of words we felt best described represented our dialogue. *Creative Prompt #2* asked the dancers to select a word from this list, describe what it meant to them and then develop a short movement phrase (gestural or full body) or physical response to convey this meaning. I requested that these responses be

approximately 30 seconds in length and no longer than one minute and that each cast member send me their videos by a specified date.

One dancer selected the word *accountability* and commented upon how humans have the ability to both make mistakes and grow from them. Her physical response reflected this duality, showcasing not only sharp, bound arm gestures, but also more fluid and expansive full-bodied movement. Another dancer chose the word *hyperaware* and generated movement that was explosive, nuanced, and performed with intensity and speed.

The movement phrases generated from these creative prompts formed extensions of our discussion, a physical language born from our dialogues. They would not necessarily be used for the finished work of choreography. These responses helped me better understand the individuals in my cast, both in terms of how they communicate meaning with their own bodies and how they are engaging artistically with the discussion topics. At times some physical responses inspired me to further develop and manipulate the material generated by the dancers, devising movement sections that could potentially be used in the finished work. Here again I used Zoom which allowed me to occasionally rehearse one-on-one with a dancer for this purpose.

Finally, a third strategy I employed to overcome disruptions caused by Covid-19 was to hold outdoor rehearsals. Conveniently, a vast and unoccupied paved area of campus existed just across from the Center for the Arts, not far from the School of Dance: the A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza. It seemed natural to utilize this location for

outdoor rehearsals, and I did so in the month of October when the weather was neither too warm nor too cool to dance outside. These rehearsals gave us the opportunity to connect in person, and I soon recognized the excitement and spirited energy of the dancers when given the chance to chat, laugh, and work together in ways that felt familiar and unifying. In short, I witnessed the power of social connection firsthand in these moments. In some instances, I even had dancers work in small groups to tackle new *Creative Prompts*, hoping to further build community and connection amongst them. These rehearsals also provided time to view some of the individual *Creative Prompt* movement phrases in a larger, more open space. It reminded me that generating and developing material in the limited spaces of our homes could be beneficial, but that ultimately these locations were confining. Therefore, I would eventually need to address the realities of negotiating space, making a greater effort to create movement that could travel and cover space in ways that the at-home physical responses might not achieve.

The outdoor rehearsals also made clear limitations for movement vocabulary. Much of the dance material I usually create involves floor work whereby dancers slide, roll, and travel in, out, and along the floor. Once I realized that the finished piece might likely be presented outdoors, I was forced to reassess the types of movement I could expect my dancers to perform. Working on a hard, rough surface such as pavement could not only be physically harmful, but could also change their confidence and ability to perform certain movements successfully. In response, I decided to be particularly mindful of jumps, as well as minimize if not altogether eliminate the style of

floor work I generally call upon. For me, this proved to be a challenge. In the process of researching new movement, I hit frequent creative blocks. With my natural tendency to move in and out of the floor removed, I had no choice but to figure out other ways of dancing. Reduction of floor work also presented an obstacle in that I would need to construct alternative methods for utilizing low, medium, and high planes of space to avoid making a visually flat dance.

By November 2020, the School of Dance reinstated permission for faculty to rehearse in the studios. I therefore had a couple of weeks to plan a few indoor rehearsals before the end of term. This shift in the process proved to be both refreshing and daunting. Having devoted September and October to investigating new methods for making a dance, those described above, my cast and I had grown comfortable with these once foreign practices. Though I looked forward to returning to the familiarity and security of a dance studio, I was aware that I may neglect the efforts I had made to stretch my artistic practice. Nevertheless, I took advantage of the opportunity to choreograph in a studio and aimed to retain what I had learned from our Zoom and outdoor rehearsals. Inevitably, these final weeks leading up to the holidays focused more on movement than it did on dialogue.

Over the course of the winter break, I developed my own movement inspired by the many dialogues had with my cast throughout the fall. I was intent upon creating material that could travel through space and demonstrate my own movement sensibility and voice. Though I did not chose to work with specific words, as the dancers had done

with the *Creative Prompts*, I did build a series of phrases aimed at encompassing a range of physical dynamics - from grand, sweeping steps to more minute, constrained actions. Often music served to motivate me, as I spent time improvising alone in a studio to various musical scores that I felt emulated the meaning of the work. Each of these phrases I planned to teach the cast once the Spring semester commenced.

Returning to school in late January, I approached rehearsals with eagerness and excitement, knowing the weeks leading up to the performance would pass quickly. After a successful Fall semester with zero Covid-19 cases amongst dance faculty, staff, and students, new policies were put in place in the School of Dance for the Spring. Both faculty and students gained the opportunity to hold regular rehearsals in studios each week. My cast and I picked up where we had left off before the winter break, working in the studio on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Hoping to complete a first “draft” of my choreography by the end of February, I put my full attention on movement development and structuring the piece. Inspired by Lerman and Bausch’s democratic approaches to working with their casts, I continued to call upon my dancers to actively participate in rehearsals and share their voices. This took the form of discussing creative options with them, providing times for them to generate and make choices with movement, as well as occasionally having the dancers work with one another. I felt constantly inspired by the social bonding that I observed with my cast. The aim of fostering a sense of community with my dancers occurred without much effort. I looked forward to my rehearsals and the joyous feelings that came with working alongside them

in the studio. The creative work we embarked on together gave us opportunities not only to move and dance as a group, but also times of laughter, sharing of personal stories and experiences, and a communal sense of support for one another.

Casting

Due to the circumstances of Covid-19, auditioning dancers to take part in this project could not occur. For this reason, I selected dancers from the School of Dance that I had previously taught or knew through the program's events and activities. Fortunately, the School of Dance attracts dancers of a high calibre, so I had no shortage of capable performers from which to choose. I narrowed my search to mainly third and fourth year students in the hope that they would possess the maturity and responsibility to commit to what essentially might be a year-long project. I sought dancers who seemed comfortable voicing their perspectives and opinions if asked, as well as finding a small but diverse group of cast members that could represent a variety of life experiences. All whom I invited to take part in the project accepted, forming my cast of eight (four seniors and four juniors).

Regrettably, within the first couple of weeks, one senior expressed concern that he might be unable to commit due to his already busy schedule and living far from campus. Therefore, he left the cast early on. Though I had thoughts of replacing him right away, I did not invite a new dancer into the cast until the end of Fall semester. The new cast member was a sophomore who drew my attention because of his exceptional

movement quality, musicality, and general enthusiasm to join the project. Over the winter break he completed a few of the original *Creative Prompts* in order to better acquaint himself with the concept and process of the work.

Musical Score

The music I selected for *Pause: Reset* came from an album titled *Last Leaf* by the Danish String Quartet. Of the album's sixteen tracks, I selected seven for use in this project (*Despair Not, O Heart; Shore; Polska from Dorotea; Drømte mig en drøm; Tjønneblomen (Arr. for String Quartet); Intermezzo; Shine You No. More*). I happened upon this music through an online search for string quartet scores and ordered them in a way I felt supported the flow and journey of the work. At first, I had entertained the idea of using live music to accompany the choreography and believed a string quartet might work nicely. Though my sobering sense of reason nudged me to let go of the fantasy of live music, I did stick with the initial idea of string quartet music for this project.

The origins of the Danish String Quartet, a group of Danish musicians who bonded in their youth over their “above average interest in classical chamber music” (danishquartet.com), reminded me of the passion, youthfulness, and social bonding I had been witnessing in my cast. I was instantly intrigued to learn more about these talented musicians and felt overjoyed when I first listened to *Last Leaf*. A review of the album by Kendall Todd of *Classical Radio Boston* remarks that, “The album *Last Leaf* treads a careful line between cheer and melancholy.” The album's depth of feeling convinced me

to select this music for my project. I believed it supported and matched beautifully the complexity of meaning emerging in the developing choreography. Furthermore, the music seemed as if it were made for dance. Todd articulates this by stating:

The liner notes for *Last Leaf* emphasize that ‘Nordic folk music is traditionally music with a defined function: to accompany dancing.’ But the pieces on this album aren’t like any dances I’ve ever heard — an undercurrent of loneliness runs through even the liveliest ones. (Todd)

This sentiment of “loneliness” seemed appropriate for this project in that it captured the social disconnection frequently experienced during Covid-19, as individuals self-isolated and quarantined as part of global safety measures. And yet, the liveliness of the music balanced the moments of melancholy and provided tempos that suited much of the energetic dancing. *Last Leaf*’s “undercurrent of loneliness” and liveliness seemed just right.

Nevertheless, the Danish String Quartet did not find their way into my process until late November, meaning that several other songs and musical artists had first been considered. At the beginning of my creative process, I gravitated to American popular music from the 1960s that reflected the national issues and events of that time including war protests, the civil rights movement, and so on. To me, this music paralleled much of the national turmoil and push for social change occurring throughout 2020 alongside Covid-19. Therefore, it resonated greatly with me. Some of the musicians and songs that I employed in the early stages of rehearsals were: Bob Dylan (*Don’t Think Twice, It’s Alright*), Nina Simone (*Images, The Human Touch*), and the Beatles’ *Here Comes the Sun*

covered by Richie Havens. I also called upon modern day singer-songwriters like Conor Oberst (a.k.a. Bright Eyes) whose music I have admired for years due to its poetic lyricism. His music often comments upon political and social topics of our time and subsequently also felt relevant for use in this project.

Some of these examples inspired movement that I came up with for this dance, while others guided decisions I made about structuring sections of the material. For instance, a solo for one cast member arose in response to systemic racism, an issue that George Floyd's death in the summer of 2020 showed is still so deeply rooted in our culture and has yet to be adequately addressed by our nation. The dancer's own experiences with racial injustice were shared within group dialogue and subsequently led to the development of a solo with the music of Nina Simone's *Images* providing a backdrop. In another example, I used a song titled *At the Bottom of Everything* by artist Bright Eyes to assist me in generating a portion of movement for the cast. Though these songs never ended up in the final version of this project, both pieces of music propelled the development of the work.

Performance Site

With dance makers worldwide creating works for the camera and outdoor sites during Covid-19, I too desired to think beyond the limits of the proscenium stage for this project. While self-isolating during the summer of 2020, I had time to revisit the 2011 documentary film about Pina Bausch titled *Pina*. Directed by Wim Wenders, the film

presents Bausch's dancers bringing to life her most famous choreographies in various outdoor locations, as well as on stage. In my opinion, Wenders captured the beauty and humanity of her choreography. Owing to his expertise, I believe he transcended the limitations of presenting dance on film and honored the corporeality of Bausch's work.

Pina stirred my imagination, igniting my own interest to bring dance to natural settings outside of the theater. At first tempted to design a dance for film, I soon foresaw the limitations I would inevitably encounter having no training or experience in creating screen dances. I was not Wim Wenders. This project may have presented an ideal opportunity to experiment with dance for the camera, but in the end this was not the direction I wanted to head in with my research. Therefore, after weeks of careful consideration, I decided to focus my energies on creating a dance for an outdoor space and eventually settled upon the A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza on the Fairfax Campus of George Mason University.

For several months I had refrained from committing to a site, in part feeling uncertain about what locations I would be permitted to use and which would have availability. Nevertheless, A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza had already served as the site where I held early rehearsals. It had proven ideal in terms of the amount of paved dancing space, proximity to the School of Dance (quick access to studios, dressing rooms, restrooms, etc.) and was surrounded by beautiful landscaping. The picturesque Mason Pond and surrounding greenery of grass and trees provided one possible backdrop for the dance. On the other side of the plaza were many trees that might likely be in bloom, as

well as paved walking paths and campus buildings that painted an architectural backdrop that could also offer a suitable environment for the dance.

As the weeks and months of rehearsal passed and the choreography took shape, I concluded that having the audience face away from the pond and grassed areas would be best. I considered ways of incorporating the use of the brick walls and paved walkways into the dance, as well as how to take advantage of the wide space while keeping it active with dancing bodies moving in and through it. One of the greatest challenges with this location was determining how to handle “off stage” moments. Without wings to disguise dancers who were not performing, I wrestled with what to do with these performers. How could I keep the audience’s attention on a focal point and prevent distraction by those not dancing? I felt the solution was to establish the entire performance site as an environment in which the performers *existed*. In other words, this was not simply a dance, but rather a world the performers inhabited together. Though they might leave the main dancing area, they would continue to perform by occupying the space, interacting with each other on the sidelines, and directing their attention to the centrally located dancers.

To achieve this, I staged some moments of interaction within the choreography, but also gave choice to the performers as well. This stage of the process pointed to the importance of each dancer fully knowing and committing to the meaning and personal journey within the work, as well as recognizing their relationship to others in the cast. A collective sense of understanding and purpose was necessary for the cast to compete with the expansive environment in which they were performing, as well as the facial masks

they were required to wear. The masks and vastness of the performance space called upon me to more acutely prioritize coaching *how* the movement was embodied in order to capture and hold the audience's interest.

Costume Design

Similar to other creative aspects of this project such as the selection of music and a performance site, the final determination of costumes took place in the late stages of the process. Early on I envisioned the cast clothed in tailored and structured top layers (i.e. jackets, coats) made of heavier fabrics, military or steam punk in style. Over the course of the performance the dancers would shed layers, revealing lighter clothing (in texture and color) that would also show more of the dancers' bodies. With the removal of these cumbersome articles of clothing, I hoped to depict a sense of liberation from the challenges, injustices and perpetual hustle of modern day life. By trading in the tough exterior shell for a softer look, I aimed to portray greater depth of the human experience.

However, as I attempted to implement this concept in rehearsals, I soon found both the coats and the shedding of the coats to be unnecessary and ineffective. Furthermore, I encountered difficulty in locating outerwear that offered the look I wanted without appearing too kitschy. After trial and error of purchasing various garments, I eventually abandoned my original concept. Admittedly, letting go of this idea felt freeing. The work in process no longer matched with this initial design idea, nor could I locate the desired garments.

With but a few weeks remaining before the performance, I began again to conceive of looks for my dancers. Knowing I would not have an experienced costumer on hand to design or fit pieces specifically for my cast, I went shopping for clothing off-the-rack. Though at times enjoyable, this experience occasionally felt overwhelming. Due to the pandemic, I feared spending too long inside stores and often failed to find items just the exact size to fit each dancer. Suffice it to say, I became well acquainted with store return policies and have a greater appreciation for costume support. In the end, I clothed each dancer in garments such as blouses, trousers, and dresses in varying hues, skin tone face masks, and canvas jazz boots that served a dual purpose of protecting the dancers' feet and completing the outfits. This choice of costume was practical and achievable within my limited timeframe and budget, but also showcased the cast as real and relatable people. Presenting the work outdoors in close proximity to the audience would break one barrier of separation between performer and spectator. Clothing the cast in attire that audience members might themselves wear would hopefully further draw a connection to the dancers.

Production

Several university events were scheduled at or in close proximity to the A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza during the end of the Spring semester, therefore limited dates and times were available for presenting *Pause: Reset*. With guidance from the Center for the Arts Executive Director, Julie Thompson, Saturday, April 17th was identified as a

suitable date for the performance. However, this was called into question only weeks before the performance when three senior cast members notified me that professional dance company auditions occurred on the same date. With support from Thompson, School of Dance Director Karen Reedy, and program coordinator Marjorie Summerall, a new date was quickly secured: Thursday, April 22nd with Sunday, April 25th as a rain date.

With the performance date settled, managing the final details of producing the event remained. Having selected an outdoor location for this project, I did not know if any production support such as lighting and sound equipment, production crew, or guests services and marketing personnel would be available. In a production meeting on March 12th, I learned that the college could provide sound equipment, set up of audience seating the day of the concert, and have ushers present for the performance. In the absence of lighting equipment, the performance would need to be held during daylight hours. Further information gained in this meeting pertained to Covid-19 guidelines. For instance, Covid-19 restrictions would require guests to comply with wearing masks and completing an online health check survey in advance of the event. Also, no playbills could be distributed as per Covid safety guidelines. Therefore, with help from my husband, we created a digital program with a QR code that guests could scan upon entry to the concert.

One other factor related to the performance space that required my attention was the university's self-driving robot delivery service known as Starship Deliveries. The

fleet of motorized robots traveled throughout the campus including the A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza. With assistance from the college's Production Manager Daniel Hobson, we made a formal request to divert the robots from the plaza for the duration of the performance. Handlers of the robots, Starship Technologies, agreed to this request but kept one pathway leading to the plaza active for robot deliveries. This meant that although it was unlikely robots would enter the performance space, it was possible to see one pass by along the periphery.

To accommodate socially distanced seating for patrons, a limit of 63 chairs could be positioned in the space, meaning the performance would be by invitation only. In the weeks leading up to the concert, I designed and sent out digital invitations, disseminated information pertaining to Covid safety measures and parking, corresponded with guests, and formulated a final list of attendees. In these final stages of preparation I also gained support from senior dance majors, Anna Ticknor and Julia Norman. Both had expressed interest in gaining practice in arts administration and marketing, therefore I gladly welcomed their input and aid. Ticknor and Norman attended the final rehearsals to film and photograph, assemble a promotional video of the dance, and write up a press release. Additionally, Julia Norman also served as the sound operator for the performance. I was incredibly grateful to them for their enthusiasm and support. In these final days of pre-production and attending to finishing touches, we all grew excited about finally sharing *Pause: Reset* with an audience.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

The day of the performance occurred on a Thursday in the final weeks of the Spring semester. Therefore, the cast and I attended our regularly held courses during the day and came together later in the afternoon. Beforehand, I finalized the guest list, emailed attendees with a reminder about Covid safety protocols and event details, arranged costumes, and organized a reserved seating area for special guests. I also connected with Julia Norman to ensure she was properly set up to run sound for the performance.

The dancer call time was 4:00 p.m. followed by a warm up from 4:15-5:15 p.m. The performance was set to begin at 6:00 p.m. which gave ample time to check in with the cast, handle any last minute issues, and greet guests as they arrived. This time also allowed me to direct student volunteers who would be monitoring video equipment and recording the event. The cameras were positioned in the rear of the audience with one situated in the center to capture a wide angle and another in a corner that would serve as a follow shot. Additionally, Anna Ticknor proposed hosting a live stream of the event on social media in hopes that the work might reach a broader audience, specifically family and friends who were unable to attend the performance. She operated a third camera for this purpose. Unfortunately, I learned afterwards that the live stream cut out during the event and the follow shot camera's memory card ran out of space midway through the

performance. Nevertheless, enough footage was captured to document the entirety of the work.

Chairs were placed in rows along both sides of the plaza, as well as in front of the designated dancing area and were positioned in accordance with social distancing guidelines. The limited number of chairs available were all booked in advance, meaning seating for the event was at capacity. Nevertheless, several guests who had not secured a place on the guest list, mainly School of Dance students and staff, attended and stood along the perimeter of the plaza during the concert. Thankfully, the outdoor space offered both comfortable grass and extended areas of pavement to accommodate these standing room only guests.

The greatest obstacle of the day, and one beyond my control, was the weather. With an April 22nd performance date, I had anticipated springlike conditions but instead was met with cold temperatures and harsh winds. Visiting the plaza during the daytime, I witnessed chairs topple over in the wind and debris such as leaves and branches blown into the space. Feeling conflicted about presenting the choreography in these conditions, I sought advice from my Thesis Chair Dan Joyce and School of Dance Director Karen Reedy who were on campus the day of the concert. Both reassured me that the weather was forecast to improve, giving me renewed hope that the show could go on as planned.

At 5:30 p.m. the “house” officially opened and guests entered the plaza. A gradual increase of patrons brought the space to life with sounds of conversation and the movement of mingling bodies in and around the plaza. By 5:45 p.m. the dancers were

positioned in the entryway of an adjacent college building where they kept warm and awaited their call to “places.” At 6:05 p.m. when it appeared that all guests had arrived, the cast and I made our way into the site where I delivered a brief introduction before the performance commenced.

Despite the cool temperatures, the performers danced with confidence and ownership of the choreography. I sensed a connection amongst the group that I believe reflected the nature of the community centered process we had engaged in. Though my eye detected one or two missteps in the execution of the choreography, I felt pride in watching the cast. In my opinion, they showcased not only their exceptional skills as dancers, but also brought a sense of humanity to each movement. I had hoped to present people inhabiting the space more so than performers - *presentation* of humanity versus *representation* of it. Dance was the form, but the content was the richness of life experienced throughout the past year.

Being so immersed in the work, it is difficult to say whether or not this goal was successfully achieved. Throughout the final developmental stages of the work, my main focus had revolved mainly around manipulation of movement and choreographic form. Therefore, unanticipated ways in which the site contextualized the dance refreshed my eye and assisted me in looking beyond form. For instance, during a solo by Hadiya Matthews, one of the female dancers of African American decent, she runs directly upstage with a compelling sense of purpose only to retreat downstage immediately afterwards. In the studio, this run served to dynamically break up the space, create more

extreme linear pathways, and contrast the horizontal line of seated dancers in the background. However, in the plaza this run took her straight to the bronze statue of George Mason. The symbolism of a young black woman running towards and away from this statue in my mind triggered images from so many of the Black Lives Matters protests and conversations calling into question the presence of some historic monuments in our nation.

The unforeseen blustery weather also added dramatic effect. The whipping winds created a moody atmosphere while the sunshine breaking through the clouds illuminated the performers in such a real way that perhaps even stage lighting could not have achieved this effect. For example, in the middle of the dance one female soloist, Chaslyn Donovan, stands atop a brick wall and removes her face mask while the other cast members stand below observing her. In that moment, the sun peaked through the clouds, the winds calmed and Chaslyn was bathed in natural light. As one of the onlookers, I perceived a collective exhale as if we all longed to feel liberated not only from masks, but also from the the pandemic itself.

Upon completion of the performance, I had hoped to host a post-performance question and answer session with the cast and audience. However, due to the cool climate, I decided against extending the concert with this discussion. Instead, I concluded the event and invited guests to contact me directly with any questions or comments they wished to share. The plaza then filled with performers and audience members, socializing and celebrating, before the crowd eventually dispersed and emptied the space.

CHAPTER SIX: REFLECTION & EVALUATION

The time devoted to researching and developing *Pause: Reset* in contrast to the duration of the performative outcome underscores the focus of this study, fostering connection through the making of a dance. From the beginning, I concentrated on building community amongst the cast and myself. Though the process would inevitably lead to a live performance, I stuck to the aim of prioritizing group connection.

Within the parameters of a global pandemic, I believe I managed to build social capital with my cast and establish an environment that was inclusive, safe, and allowed healthy social connections to be born. Essential to this success were the dancers and how they interacted and contributed to the process. The relatively small group of eight included individuals of different genders, races, and ethnicities, all of whom were also generously willing to share their perspectives. Consequently, dialogues were rich, and respect towards one another came about naturally. We formed connections with one another beyond our preexisting familiarity, and the work flourished as a result of this.

Additionally, I periodically checked in with the dancers to ascertain how they were personally handling the news headlines and the pandemic. Throughout the duration of this project, there seemed to be no shortage of social, political, and environmental events taking place. From hate crimes that targeted the Asian American community to the severe weather that struck Texas in February to the trial over George Floyd's death, so much occurred throughout the timeline of this project that impacted the well-being of the

cast even beyond Covid-19. I believe these “check ins” further enhanced our collective sense of trust and care for one another by providing another opportunity for dialogue and connection.

In my opinion, the community we built provided a safe haven for us to intertwine our lives in the context of our shared love of dance, as well as seek comfort during a time that tested us all. An example that I believe demonstrates this bond happened when one cast member experienced a death in her family. On the day of her grandfather’s passing, I encouraged her to stay home from rehearsal, but instead she chose to attend. Later, she communicated that being in the presence of our community and giving herself over to the work provided the consolation she felt she needed. This dancer expressed that connecting with the group through movement enabled her to regain enough strength to reconcile her grief. She shared that the rehearsal reminded her of her grandfather’s own passion for his work, and she therefore felt in touch with him even in his absence. Though the focus of this project had always been to foster ties amongst the artists involved, I had not anticipated connections forming with those we have lost.

I too gained strength from the process and community built with my cast. I left every rehearsal for *Pause: Reset* feeling uplifted. The joy of talking and laughing with the group, moving and creating together, cannot sufficiently be put into words. Throughout the year, news headlines often eroded my energy and state of well-being. Furthermore, fearing exposure to the virus on and off campus, beginning a full-time position, adjusting to the challenges of hybrid instruction, dancing in a mask, completing my MFA

coursework and research, parenting a four year old during a pandemic, and other day-to-day demands stretched me thin, no matter how grateful I was for my health, family, colleagues, and career. This project anchored me. It gave me an outlet to artistically express all that I was experiencing while simultaneously amplifying my empathy for those in my community.

Artistically, I believe my practice also grew throughout the journey of developing *Pause: Reset*. I found new ways of collaborating with a cast such as rehearsing digitally and designing creative tasks that could be accomplished remotely. Choreographing for an outdoor site further pushed me to explore different movement vocabulary, as well as strengthened my ability to design work for a unique space. I also learned to accept factors beyond my control and embrace the unexpected in ways I had not done before.

Throughout this project I also gained a much deeper appreciation for the power of dance. I began this study by investigating dance and its role in cultivating social connection. However, by the end, I recognized the significance that dance and community play in my own life. Dance has been my passion since I was a child, and my love for it has never wavered. Dance has always inspired and challenged me. It has afforded me opportunities to travel the world and meet a multitude of fascinating individuals. Dance allows me to transcend ordinary life and venture into real and imaginary worlds that are physically invigorating and creatively gratifying. Dance and the social connections it provides have shaped me into the person I am and continue to support my well-being.

Throughout the pandemic, citizens across the globe evaluated what is *essential* - essential workers, essential services, essential businesses, etc. On a personal level, this project showed me that dance and community are essential to my life. To that end, I not only took pride in seeing *Pause: Reset* come to fruition, but also found great joy in watching members of the community gather for the performance. After a year that had often kept us separate, live performance was bringing people back together and fostering connection.

Looking forwards, I would be excited to remount *Pause: Reset* and have an opportunity to extend its reach. I could see presenting this dance again as a site-specific event whether at the A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza or elsewhere. Watching *Pause: Reset* come to life outdoors, adorned only by music, unembellished costuming, and the natural elements of the surroundings, I recognized beauty in what was a relatively stripped down performance. Often dance artists find ways of dressing up our art form - placing it atop a stage, adding lighting, elaborate costumes, video projection, and more. In some ways, I found it refreshing to see the dance exist not on stage, but in the world - ornamented only by trees, buildings, pedestrians, the weather - woven into the fabric of campus life.

That said, I would also have an interest in recreating *Pause: Reset* for a more traditional setting such as on stage. In that instance, I would look forward to coaching the performers to embody the movement with greater vigor and physicality. I did not feel comfortable rehearsing the cast in this way during the project knowing they would be

dancing outdoors on hard, uneven surfaces. I would also be excited to utilize lighting to create mood and guide the eye of the spectator by defining the space and groupings.

In addition to restaging and performing the full work again, I believe *Pause: Reset* also has the capacity to act as a vehicle for community outreach. For instance, excerpts of this dance could be performed alongside panel or group discussions that focus upon topics like the impacts of the pandemic, racial disparity, and mental health as it relates to social connection and belonging to name a few. Involving experts in these areas, perhaps other members of the George Mason University community, could further enhance the effectiveness of *Pause: Reset* as an agent for community outreach. I would be excited to share this work in schools, senior centers, and more locations that gather diverse populations.

Conclusion

To understand what I am saying, you have to believe that dance is something other than technique. We forget where the movements come from. They are born from life. When you create a new work, the point of departure must be contemporary life -- not existing forms of dance. ~Pina Bausch

The year 2020 encapsulated a vast array of events that served to awaken us all. Perhaps the most stirring and bewildering was the global pandemic Covid-19, a virus whose reach altered ways of life across the globe. With the pandemic came a new engagement with time - more time isolating at home, less time in places of work or learning, time to slow down, time for reflection, time to recognize privilege and

inequality, time to listen, time to be heard. This period of collective pause presented an unusual opportunity for mankind to reevaluate the trajectory of our existence. It offered us the chance to review and reset our ways of inhabiting the earth and coexisting with each other. It called upon us all to examine what is essential, and what is not.

Throughout the past year and over the course of this project, I took part in this endeavor to reflect upon and ultimately reset my own goals and ideals as an artist, an educator, a wife, a mother. This study and the creation of *Pause: Reset* allowed me to form a community, albeit a small one, and invest in movement exploration and conversation with a group of talented young artists. The cast astonished and inspired me with their forthright points of view. My own perspective expanded due to our open and honest exchanges, and often I felt like the fortunate beneficiary of these encounters.

For me, the project shed light not only on the link between social connection and well-being, but also highlighted the value of connection particularly during times of unrest. Furthermore, dance functioned as an ideal mode for propelling this line of research. It revealed itself to be a natural conduit for bringing people together, and I would be keen to further pursue dance's potential for fostering community.

In the words of Pina Bausch, "dance is something other than technique;" it is "born from life." The cast and I brought our lives to this work, synthesizing an intricate web of perspectives and experiences through the form of movement. As a result, *Pause: Reset* was born. I am grateful to Dareon, Isaiah, Chaslyn, Holly, Hadiya, Carlos, Hope,

and Isis. The collaborative process we shared was memorable, and I am proud of the choreography that emerged.

To end, I share a selection of words the cast and I generated following one of the first group discussions. Looking back at this list now, I recognize how well it affirms the complexity of responses we had to the events of 2020. The year was unforgettable and encompassed challenge, hope, and a great deal more. I gained so much from this study and will always cherish the special connections I formed with the cast of *Pause: Reset*.

Accountability

Empathy

Resilience

Acceptance

Injustice

Truth

Forgiveness

Growth

Healing

Love

Human Connection

APPENDIX I

Digital Program

<https://www.eamodules.com/pausereset/>

Video Recording of *Pause: Reset*

Thursday, April 22, 2021 at the A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza on the George Mason University Fairfax Campus. Recorded by students in the School of Dance.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_p9PRx6aoy88eKNN8-hDO4QP3dc5SiI/view?usp=sharing

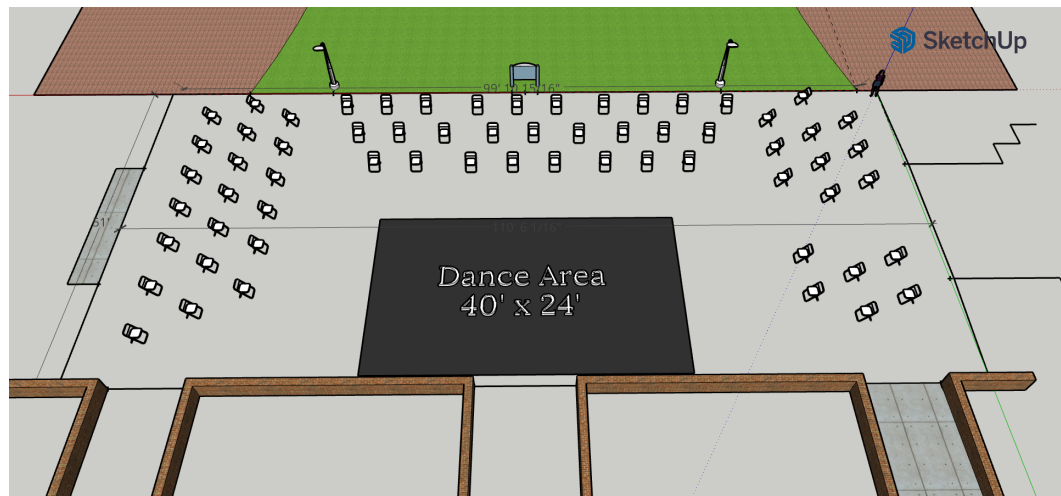
APPENDIX II

Venue Image - A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza



Seating Diagram

Created by Daniel Hobson, Production Manager for the College of Visual and Performing Arts



APPENDIX III

Pause: Reset Invitation

PAUSE : RESET

THURSDAY, APRIL 22 AT 6:00 PM
FREE (reservations required)

Please join us for the premiere of *Pause: Reset*, an outdoor dance event taking place at the A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza at George Mason University's Fairfax campus.

Pause: Reset is the culmination of thesis research by School of Dance MFA candidate and Assistant Professor Shaun B. D'Arcy. This new contemporary dance portrays the resilient nature of the human spirit and the power of connection in times of collective uncertainty and challenge. The work arose in response to the unprecedented events of 2020 including the global pandemic Covid-19 and developed through a collaborative process between the choreographer and cast.

Limited seating available. Please reserve your place by emailing sboyleda@gmu.edu.

Pause: Reset Performance Reminder

PERFORMANCE REMINDER



This is a reminder that you have a reservation for this upcoming event at George Mason University:

PAUSE: RESET
MFA Dance Concert
A. Linwood Holton, Jr. Plaza
Thursday, April 22 at 6:00 p.m.

Before the Performance

Prior to your arrival on campus, all visitors must complete the Mason COVID Health ✓ (<https://www2.gmu.edu/mason-covid-health-check>). A “green” result must be displayed upon arrival at the plaza. Patrons may display their results digitally or on a print-out.

What to Expect

- You must present GREEN Mason COVID Health
- Face coverings must be worn at all times
- Audience members will be seated at a safe distance

Parking

Free parking will be available in Lot K on the Fairfax Campus of George Mason University. Parking in Mason Pond Deck is also available at an hourly rate.
Map Available Here: <https://info.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Parking-Map-Fairfax-Campus-2018.pdf>

APPENDIX IV

Costumes



APPENDIX V

Creative Prompts

Creative Prompt #1

Please send no later than the end of day Wednesday, September 16th.

Email written and video responses to sboyleda@gmu.edu.

Select one word from below:

Truth
Hope
Despair
Connection
Love
Heartache
Trauma
Healing
Struggle
Resilience

Now answer:

...with words. (typed, or spoken on film)

1. To you, what is (your selected word from the list above)? (i.e. To you, what is hope?) What do you think of this word? What does it mean to you?
2. As a child, what do you think this word meant to you? How do you think you would have described this word?
3. Tell us a personal story in which you felt or experienced this word.

...with movement.

In your opinion, what is at the heart of your story? Use this to develop a short movement phrase or physical response to convey this meaning. (approximately 30 seconds in length, no longer than one minute)

Creative Prompt #2

Please send no later than the end of day Tuesday, September 22nd.

Email written and video responses to sboyleda@gmu.edu.

Select a word from below: (List contains words generated by the group from our last rehearsal)

Realization	Mistrust
Accountability	Human Connection
Empathy	Self-Happiness

Change	Injustice
Improvisation (of life)	Division
Tenderness	Community
Forgiveness	Acceptance
Challenge	Humble
Grateful	Wisdom
Hyperaware	Complex
Optimism	Self-love
Determined	Human
Chaos	
Growth	
Education	

Now answer:

...with words. (typed, or spoken on film)

To you, what is (your selected word from the list above)? (i.e. To you, what is hope?) What do you think of this word? What does it mean to you?

...with movement.

Use this to develop a short movement phrase (gestural or full body) or physical response to convey this meaning. (approximately 30 seconds in length, no longer than one minute)

And now:

...find one item - poem, song, photograph, lyrics, piece of artwork, etc.- that you feel connects to the word or idea. Please bring it to your next scheduled rehearsal. (You do not need to email this part to me.)

Creative Prompt #3

Please send no later than the end of day Monday, September 28th.

Email video responses to sboyleda@gmu.edu.

Using the timed written exercise and accompanying Break Out Room group discussion as inspiration, develop a physical movement response. This week responses can be but do not have to be longer if you feel it necessary to convey the full meaning of what you hope to express.

Creative Prompt #4

Please send no later than the end of day: Monday, November 2nd.

Upload responses to Google Drive (Shaun's Thesis) AND please email to sboyleda@gmu.edu.

With your partner/group use the quote and rehearsal discussion to develop a physical response that involves all of the group. These may or may not include dance movement. In other words, you may choose to explore alternate ways to convey meaning in a physicalized way.

Environment

Film in a setting that connects in some way to the meaning behind your response. Your selected environment may even inspire choices you make in developing your physical response. Explore and enjoy!

Creative Prompt #5

Please send no later than the end of day Tuesday, November 10th.

Email video responses only to sboyleda@gmu.edu.

Consider the notion of "finding hope" or what makes you feel hopeful from our rehearsal discussion for the following tasks:

4. Find a place where you can sit quietly and reflect upon things that bring you hope. Then spend 5-10 minutes doing a stream of conscious writing on this topic. These will be for your use only and will NOT be shared.
5. Use this to develop a movement phrase or physical response to convey this meaning. (approximately one minute)
6. Completed videos can be sent to my (sboyleda@gmu.edu), as well as uploaded to our Google Drive.

Creative Prompt #6

Please send no later than the end of day Thursday, January 14th.

Email video responses only to sboyleda@gmu.edu.

Using the timed writing exercise and accompanying Break Out Room group discussions as inspiration, develop a physical movement response.

Since this topic might include a wide variety feelings and thoughts associated with it, I am requesting that your physical responses are at least one minute in length.

Lastly for this prompt, challenge your "go to" ways of moving and see what arises. Notice if it's difficult to stay true to your ideas when you are testing new ways of physicalizing meaning.

APPENDIX VI

George Mason University: Safe Return to Campus

Message from President Gregory N. Washington, PhD (August 10, 2020)

Dear Fellow Patriots:

We are fewer than two weeks from the start of the Fall semester and soon will be welcoming many of our faculty, staff and students back to George Mason University's campuses. We do so with a mix of excitement that accompanies every fall return to campus – and trepidation, because this is 2020 and the pandemic has changed just about everything.

My leadership team and I have been watching the ebb and flow of the COVID-19 virus in northern Virginia, and have determined that it is best to stay the course with our modified re-opening of campus, with continuing flexibility for faculty with respect to the format of their classes. Faculty members who will be delivering their curriculum in person or via hybrid experiences should continue to use the [Safe Return to Campus Plan](#) to guide their efforts.

Tracking pandemic conditions

While most public discussion centers on COVID-19 cases nationally and statewide, we are closely monitoring Northern Virginia pandemic conditions, because they give us a more accurate understanding of what is occurring in the communities in which we live and serve. Specifically, our decisions are driven by data from Fairfax, Arlington and Prince William counties.

One data point we track particularly closely is the Positivity Rate, the percentage of those receiving COVID-19 tests who test positive for the virus. Virginia's seven-day rolling average as of Monday afternoon was 7.4 percent, while Fairfax County's was 5.1 percent and dropping, and Arlington County's was 4.2 percent.

Changing of conditions, change of plans

Unfortunately, Prince William County's rates have headed in the other direction, and stood at 9.0 percent on Monday. And that trend has troubled us, particularly because we operate the Science and Technology Campus there, and many who work at Mason live in Prince William County. Therefore, we have made two decisions that affect classes this fall:

1. ~~We will continue to provide faculty at all Mason campuses flexibility to offer their classes through face-to-face, hybrid or fully online formats.~~ By applying the public health and safety best practices set forth in our Safe Return to Campus Plan, we have confidence to deliver our academic programs as had been planned and given evolving circumstances. However, if individual faculty member circumstances have changed, and individuals want to request a change in their course format, they should immediately be in contact with their academic program chair/director and dean.
2. ~~We will move to all-online instruction on November 30, following the Thanksgiving holiday.~~ We have decided to do this upon recommendation of our Emergency Management Executive Committee and public health advisors, in order to minimize the risk of transmitting both COVID-19 and influenza, both of which are expected to begin seasonal surges around then.

Why not just keep campuses closed and go all online?

This is a very reasonable question, and one I am asked often, especially because many other universities have opted for online-only instruction, though no public university in Virginia is requiring all online instruction.

The reality is, there are no good solutions to carrying out our academic mission in light of the pandemic. Every solution carries a host of negative side effects that threaten people's ability to stay healthy and safe, and to remain affiliated with Mason.

Quality of instruction – For many classes, online instruction is just as effective as in-person teaching; in fact, we are seeing excellence in online instruction that we could not have predicted pre-pandemic. But that is not universally true, for environments like laboratory learning, or for disciplines like the performing arts. Of course, we will adapt as necessary, but driving all courses to online environments is an option we will avoid until it is necessary.

Inclusion of international students – By going fully online, we could exclude international students from coming to our campus, because the federal government is refusing to process student visas for international students whose course content is all online.

Human toll for university faculty and staff – Closing the campus to all instruction would come at a significant financial loss to the university – a devastating loss if we were to re-close residence halls. Such measures would cripple the university's ability to deliver on its education and research mission, not just for this academic year, but for years to come. The numbers of furloughs and layoffs that would be necessary to balance our budget would be staggering, made all the more challenging in an economy of 10 percent unemployment. Those employees' ability to keep health insurance, pay their rent or mortgage, and meet basic living needs would be imperiled. Furthermore, the impact would extend beyond our campuses to surrounding communities where the affected employees live.

Should evolving public health conditions make it necessary to fully close our classrooms, or even our residence halls, of course we will do so. But each of us should be mindful of the devastating impact this will have, not just on the university, but on the people who rely on it for their education and their livelihoods.

The academic calendar remains the same

Classes will begin on August 24 and end on December 16 as scheduled, with all-online instruction starting on November 30, following the Thanksgiving holiday. As part of our effort to minimize the risks that increase in the winter months, we plan to hold Winter Graduation online.

Staff on campus

As the campus reopens, staff should work with their unit leaders to determine the proper balance of their work to be performed on campus versus from home. With the goal being to de-densify the campus and observe all health and safety protocols, every department has been required to submit its own safe return plan. As a general guideline, employees should avoid spending more than 50 percent of their time on campus. Social distancing rules will be in effect for all offices, just as they are in classrooms.

Residence halls will stay open throughout the semester

Mason's residence halls will remain open under all of our planning scenarios. We will reduce occupancy from 6,200 students to approximately 3,350 students to achieve appropriate physical distancing. In the event of another Governor's stay-at-home order, we anticipate considering residence halls to be our students' homes away from home. We will take appropriate measures to keep them as safe, hygienic, and comfortable as possible, as well as offer appropriate public health and safety measures to the university employees who staff residence halls and dining facilities. In addition, University Life has planned a robust line-up of programming to ensure residential students continue to experience a full and satisfying on-campus experience.

Pre-move in testing required for all residential students

All students planning to live on campus in Mason's residence halls have been recommended to self-quarantine two weeks ahead of their arrival. In addition, Mason has contracted with a vendor to provide comprehensive at-home testing kits to all students who plan to live on campus. Residential students are in the process of receiving and returning their test kits. Starting August 15, at move-in, every student will be required to have both a health screener green light as well as proof that they have taken a COVID-19 test to be cleared to stay in a Mason residence hall. We anticipate that residential students will be tested again periodically throughout the semester.

Daily health checks required for all who step onto campus

All students, faculty and staff who come to campus must complete an online health survey every day before arriving on campus. This tool – the Mason COVID Health Check™, an online health screening protocol developed by the College of Health and Human Services – will serve as a quick and effective way to track the health conditions of all students, faculty, staff and contractors who will work, study or live on campus.

Voluntary testing throughout the semester

Throughout the semester, students, faculty and staff working on campus will be asked to engage voluntarily in random COVID-19 tests. This protocol, recommended by Mason faculty experts and in collaboration with university leadership, will help to track the spread of the virus, should cases emerge. We encourage all members of the Mason community to agree to be tested if requested to do so. Working in partnership with our local public health officials, case investigation and contact tracing protocols also will be in place.

Safety measures being taken in our classrooms

Our classroom spaces will look and feel different this fall. Classrooms and instructional spaces have been modified such that seating has been spaced out to allow for six feet of distance between students; faculty have been allocated more space, up to 100 square feet. Some classrooms will have seats noting they should be left empty to ensure physical distancing; others will simply have fewer seats. High-contact surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected with an EPA-approved disinfectant twice each day during normal operation hours, in addition to regular overnight cleaning. In addition, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer stations are available in or near classrooms.

Reminders to do our part

Signage will be posted throughout campus to illustrate required physical distancing and point to hygiene practices such as frequent hand washing. All students, faculty and staff will be required to wear face coverings. Everyone will be given two reusable face coverings to use. And a multimedia communications campaign is planned to encourage all Mason community members to do their part to stop the spread of COVID-19.

This will be a Fall semester unlike any other we have experienced. The unknowns far outnumber the certainties. But together, we will continue to deliver on our academic mission, and I deeply appreciate the dedication and innovation of each and every one of you at this historic moment for George Mason University, the nation and the world.

With gratitude,

Gregory N. Washington, PhD

President

REFERENCES

- Basco, Sharon. "Dance Goes Digital During The Pandemic." *The Artery*, June 9, 2020.
- Borstel, J. (2005). "Liz Lerman Dance Exchange: An aesthetic of inquiry, an ethos of dialogue". In P. Korza & B. S. Bacon (Eds.), *Dialogue in artistic practice: Case studies from animating democracy* (pp.1–32). Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts.
- Cathers, Chris. "The Healing Power of Dance." no. 11, Lane Communications Group, Inc, Nov. 2018, pp. 39–39.
- Danish String Quartet - Official Website. <https://danishquartet.com>. Accessed April 2021.
- Di Mento, Maria. "Taking the Healing Power of Dance to Prisons." *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, vol. 31, no. 8, Chronicle of Higher Education, Inc, June 2019, p. 6–.
- Dunkel, Ellen. "Philly's daring BalletX taps choreographers around the world for subscription-based film festival." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 21, 2020.
- Grau, Andrée. "Why People Dance – Evolution, Sociality and Dance." *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities*, vol. 2, no. 3, Intellect, Dec. 2015, pp. 233–54, doi:10.1386/dmas.2.3.233_1.
- Iuliano, Joseph E., et al. "Dance for Your Health: Exploring Social Latin Dancing for Community Health Promotion." *American Journal of Health Education*, vol. 48, no. 3, Routledge, May 2017, pp. 142–45, doi:10.1080/19325037.2017.1292875.
- Kaufman, Sarah L. "Renowned Choreographer Moves Rehearsals to Zoom." *The Washington Post*, Apr 26, 2020. ProQuest, <https://search-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/docview/2394622199?accountid=14541>.
- Martin, Rose. "Syria, Dance, and Community: Dance Education in Exile." *Journal of Dance Education*, vol. 19, no. 3, Routledge, July 2019, pp. 127–34, doi:10.1080/15290824.2019.1519252.
- Mendrek, Adrianna. "From Depression to Parkinson's Disease: The Healing Power of Dance." *The Canadian Press*, Canadian Press Enterprises Inc, 5 Dec. 2019.

Pina. Directed by Wim Wenders, Sundance Selects, 2011.

Purser, A. "Dancing Intercorporeality: A Health Humanities Perspective on Dance as a Healing Art." *J Med Humanit* 40, 253–263 (2019). <https://doi-org.mutex.gmu.edu/10.1007/s10912-017-9502-0>

Putnam, Robert D., et al. *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*. 1. Simon & Schuster paperback ed, Simon & Schuster, 2004.

Roy, Sanjoy. "Bouncing back: European dance is kick-started with huge state support." *The Guardian*, July 16, 2020.

Seppala, Emma, Timothy Rossomando, and James R. Doty. "Social Connection and Compassion: Important Predictors of Health and Well-being." *Social Research*, vol. 80, no. 2, 2013, pp. 411-430,650,C3. ProQuest, <https://search-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/docview/1445001708?accountid=14541>.

Todd, Kendall. "Once and Future Folk Songs in 'Last Leaf.'" CRB, 24 July 2019, www.classicalwcrb.org/blog/2019-01-28/once-and-future-folk-songs-in-last-leaf.

Warnecke, Lauren. "The Return of Ballet." *Chicago Magazine*, February 22, 2021.

Wiegand, Chris. "Performing Pina Bausch's 1980 - in her dancers' words." *The Guardian*, February 7, 2014.

Wozny, Nancy. "Companies Are Rethinking Live Performance—and Coming Up With Many Creative Solutions." *Dance Magazine*, June 20, 2020.

Wright, Robin. "Finding Connection and Resilience During the Coronavirus Pandemic." *The New Yorker*, Mar 12, 2020. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/coping-camaraderie-and-human-evolution-amid-the-coronavirus-crisis>

Young-Mason, Jeanine. "Art, Body, and Soul: A Conversation With Dancers David Leventhal and John Heginbotham." *Clinical Nurse Specialist* 24.6 (2010): 323–326. Web.

BIOGRAPHY

Shaun B. D'Arcy is a dance practitioner and educator with research interests in classical and contemporary ballet, modern/contemporary dance, and choreographic practice. Shaun's choreography has been showcased nationally and internationally at venues such as the Joyce Soho Theater and Ailey Citigroup Theater in New York, The Bonnie Bird Theatre and The Robin Howard Theatre at The Place in London, Officina Giovani in Italy, Markgrafentheater in Germany, and Dance City and St. Mary's Heritage in Newcastle, England amongst others. Her work has been presented at several national dance platforms including The DanceNOW Festival (NY), The Dance Gallery Festival (NY, TX), Breaking Ground Contemporary Dance and Film Festival (AZ) and The Women in Dance Leadership Conference. Shaun has also been a recipient of The Field's Artist Residency grant in New York, the Djerassi Resident Artists Program in California, and the prestigious choreographic initiative DanceLines at the Royal Opera House in London where she received direct mentorship from choreographer Wayne McGregor.

Shaun's performing credits include dance companies such as Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, BalletMet and Cherylyn Lavagnino Dance, as well as freelance projects like David Dorfman's 'Underground' at the BAM Nextwave Festival and in the London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay performances in England. Shaun has danced a broad spectrum of classical and contemporary roles in works by choreographers including George Balanchine, Edwaard Liang, Jodie Gates, Larry Keigwin, James Kudelka, Alonzo King, KT Nelson, David Nixon, Marius Petipa, Emily Molnar and Benoit-Swan Pouffer.

Shaun graduated summa cum laude from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, earning a BFA in Dance with Honors. She also holds an MA in Choreography with Distinction from The Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London. Additionally, Shaun is a graduate of the William Esper Studio in New York City where she studied Meisner acting technique with Bill Esper.

Shaun has served as a full-time faculty member in the Dance Department at the University of California, Irvine and the University of Utah and has taught at several other dance institutions in the United States and United Kingdom.