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“The Ties That Bind Us”: The Creation of a Dance Film

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“The Ties That Bind Us”

The Creation of a Dance Film

By
Jade M. Mong

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Abstract

This project centers around the creation of a dance film about my sister and I. Though this piece was originally intended for the stage, the pandemic changed my plans and forced me to adapt it into a dance film. This thesis describes my process as I attempted to adapt my original piece into a dance film, as well as examining the influences which made this work possible.

In this thesis, I examined the artistic influences which brought me to who I am as a choreographer today, paying homage to the pioneers of modern dance who inspired generations of dancers like myself. In addition, I included a brief history of the relationship between dance and film, and the benefits and challenges which come with putting dance on film. All of this research and background information lays the groundwork for my summary of my creative process, and my reflections on the work and process.

Ultimately, this project is about my personal creative process and journey. Through writing this thesis, I was able to analyze my work and my process thoroughly, and learned more about the process of creating a dance film and how to improve when I create my next work.

Introduction

“The Ties That Bind Us” is a dance film that tells the story of my little sister, Jasmine, and I. For most of my life, she was the person who knew me best in the world. However, our relationship wasn’t always smooth. The piece is intended to reflect the ups and downs of our relationship, has a five part structure, and tells a story that is both chronological and cyclical. There are periods of unity interrupted by periods of strife and conflict, but our bond remains unbroken and we always come back together in spite of our differences. The bond between us is symbolized by a twelve foot piece of chiffon fabric which we each hold at opposite ends. Each section takes place in a different location around Salem, where we grew up, which was not the original plan. “The Ties That Bind Us” was originally intended for the stage, and was supposed to have a cast of seven dancers. The global pandemic and resulting lockdown and restrictions made that impossible, so I was forced to rechoreograph and ultimately decided to make a dance film so that I could still complete this piece. The work is performed by my sister and I, and it’s my attempt at capturing the unique power of sisterhood. The story of my sister and I could have been told in many ways, through many different mediums. Dance is a particularly powerful medium for communicating kinesthetic experiences, and tells stories in a way no other form can: solely through the expression of the human body. I chose to tell this story through dance because not only is dance my primary art form, it’s also something that I shared with my sister for fifteen years. Dance is an integral part of our shared history, so dance was the perfect medium through which to tell our story.

Artistic Influences

Personal Background

I first began dancing at four years old. I started with ballet, then after a few years I began taking modern dance and then tap, jazz, hip hop, and some West African dance. I spent most of my childhood in the dance studio with my two primary teachers, Sara Alvarez (ballet, tap, and jazz) and Jena Rennick (modern, hip hop, African, and jazz). At Premiere Academy of Performing Arts, I found a community and a passion for dancing and later, choreographing. Once I got to the upper levels of modern, Jena had us create choreography projects once a year, where each student chose a theme and created a short dance that explored our range of physicality and pushed our movement innovation. These projects were one of my favorite things that we did at my studio. I learned to push myself creatively, get used to performing my own choreography, and practice giving and receiving creative critiques.

As an advanced modern student, I also helped choreograph and teach recital dances for the younger classes. Though the creative process and requirements for children's dances are quite different than those for collegiate dance works, helping make these recital dances helped me get comfortable with creating within certain parameters of theme and technical ability, incorporating my work with that of others, and teaching my work.

My experiences with choreographing at my dance studio inspired a love of creating in me. I loved the innovation of trying to outdo my past self, I loved that my style wasn't quite like anyone else's, and I later learned that I loved giving my work to other advanced dancers and letting their bodies interpret my movement in their own

unique way. All of these things laid the groundwork for my most recent work and biggest undertaking: this dance film about sisterhood, danced by me and my sister.

Isadora Duncan

When I first learned about Isadora Duncan, I was in awe of her spirit and her strong sense of self as a person and as an artist. Though she was eccentric, her boldness and revolutionary ideas made her something of a role model to me, and I knew I had her to thank for so much of what makes modern dance wonderful to me.

Of all the pioneers of modern dance, Isadora Duncan is the one whose style and beliefs resonate with me the most. She balances freedom and artistry, rejects the stiffness and formalism of ballet but still embraces the power of good technique. Other pioneers, such as Martha Graham, seemingly rejected ballet but in its place created a technique just as stiff and hard on one's body. Still others, such as Ruth St. Denis, relied on exotic imagery of the East (cultural appropriation, though she didn't know it at the time) and acting ability rather than sound technique or innovative choreography. This is not to say that these pioneers didn't also have valuable contributions to modern dance, because they did. However, none of their ideas and styles stuck with me quite like Isadora Duncan did.

Both a fascinating woman and an accomplished artist, Isadora Duncan is known as the mother of modern dance. She rejected ballet as ugly and formal, and instead created a form of dance that was free and natural. She believed that "the dancer of the future will be one whose body and soul have grown so harmoniously together that the natural language of that soul will have become the movement of the body" ("Isadora"). She believed in teaching her students to dance in ways that were natural expressions of

themselves and their own thoughts and feelings. She hoped to create a new generation of dancers, who represented “the highest intelligence in the freest body” (“Isadora”). She was particularly inspired by the grace and beauty seen in the depictions of the ancient Greeks, and by the rhythms and movement of nature itself.

Though Duncan rejected the formal technique of ballet, there was still a technical basis to her style. To her, technique was a means to an end, not the ultimate end goal. “In Duncan dance -- when performed properly -- the technique is invisible” (“What”). Duncan’s ultimate goal was a style that was full of grace and a technique that is so practiced it can be done with ease and a sense of naturalness and individuality.

Unlike Duncan, I have trained in ballet for the past 17 years and though it is incredibly difficult, I find the strong technical basis to be a comforting foundation to return to. Though our technical foundations are different, her ideology of natural, individual movement and technique as a mere tool in the creation of art is one I completely agree with. When I choreograph, I rarely use any actual ballet steps. But my ballet and modern technique training are what gives me the strength and coordination to create my own kinds of movement. As my ballet teacher always said, “first you have to know the rules before you can break them.” I believe that this balance I strive for between a technical foundation and creative expression is exactly what Duncan hoped to foster in her students.

Duncan was very liberal for her time, and she wasn’t afraid to show it. She strongly supported the revolution which created the Soviet Union, she refused to marry and had children out of wedlock, she was bisexual, and she danced in thin, flowing tunics and dresses that were considered quite scandalous for the time. She wasn’t afraid to be

revolutionary or controversial, and she made work about the human condition, about social injustice, and about her personal struggles and her pain.

Her ability to create highly personal and topical work is inspiring to me, as it was to many others. Topical, personal, and political themes became one of the many hallmarks of modern dance that we can thank Isadora Duncan for. I love seeing work that is about something specific and real, and Duncan was a champion of this kind of work. One of her most tragic works, "Mother," was created during a time of intense grief, after the loss of her two children. "Mother" is a relatively short and simple work. It's only about two and a half minutes long, to simple piano music, and compared to most dances Duncan hardly even moves. Rather than reducing the power of the work, it is precisely this simplicity which makes it so powerful. The piece is characterized by heavy use of the arms in slow reaching and embracing motions. Her arms are often in a circular shape, as though wrapped around her lost children, and she repeatedly brings her arms in close to her heart. Her choreography is repetitive and serves to emphasize the way her grief keeps her trapped in a cycle of sadness and suffering. She is constantly reaching for something that is no longer there, and throughout the piece she travels down the golden diagonal (from upstage right to downstage left) and goes from standing to seated on the floor. As she travels down this diagonal, she seems torn between the two directions (upstage and downstage) and constantly looks back and forth. Perhaps this line which she dances upon signifies the past which she held dear and the painful present/future without her children which she must continue forward into. Though this piece was about her personal heartbreak and tragedy, she was able to express her pain in a way that connected with many people and many different kinds of pain.

Modern dance, and dance as a whole, has an incredible power to move its audiences. Duncan tapped into this power seemingly effortlessly, and inspired many who came after her to do the same, including me. Duncan is not some outdated pioneer of an old fashioned dance form, she is a revolutionary who helped future generations discover what dance can and should do. She was one of the first modern dance pioneers I learned about and her work, her story, and her strong values have always inspired me.

Twyla Tharp

I read Twyla Tharp's *The Creative Habit* for my Composition II class. Tharp is a choreographer, but her book is a guide to practicing creativity for all creatives and artists. I have always thought of creativity as this ephemeral spirit that comes and goes when it pleases, and that some people are blessed with more of it than others. That idea of creativity allows complacency, because it's easy to just think, "well I don't have the gift of amazing creativity" or "I just have to wait for inspiration to strike." This book taught me to redefine how I thought of creativity, and empowered me to take my creativity into my own hands.

Much of what artists do is based upon paradoxes. In this book, Tharp outlines these paradoxes and uses real examples to show how they work and how artists can use these paradoxes to our advantages. Some especially important paradoxes she discusses are: 1) the power of routine in generating creativity, 2) the idea that "luck is a skill," and 3) the rule that plans are essential, but overplanning is the death of creativity.

Tharp begins this book addressing the power of routine and ritual, and throughout the book she returns to this idea of the power of routine. She describes her own routines

and the routines of others, and points out how these routines are comforting in their familiarity. “By making the start of the sequence automatic, they replace doubt and fear with comfort and routine” (Tharp 18). Essentially, adding routine to your creative work helps make creativity itself feel routine and natural.

Since I am not a full time choreographer, I don't have any daily routines related to choreographic creativity, or many creative routines in general. However, I do have some dancing routines that comfort me and make me feel ready to dance. Ballet barre is one such comforting routine. I often come to ballet class feeling lazy and uninspired, but by the time I finish barre I am transformed; I am ready to dance and choreograph in any style, and am awakened once more to the joy of movement. Without knowing it, I was already applying the ideas Tharp laid out in her first chapter, and once I realized I already knew how to use routine to support creativity, it became easier to establish more routines like this.

One routine that Tharp's book gave me is reading pages 22-23 of her book. She lists her five fears when making new work in these pages, and they are exactly the things that I worry about when making work. Her fears include: someone has done it before, and “once executed, the idea will never be as good as it was in my mind” (Tharp 23). She then goes on to dismiss these fears in a no nonsense manner. Someone has done it before? “Honey, it's all been done before” (Tharp 23). Tharp describes how dismissing these fears is just another ritual/routine she uses to support her creative process. Reading her dismissal of fears has become a routine for me; when I doubt myself and begin to allow myself to give in to these fears, I read her words and am reminded that even

famous successful choreographers feel the way I do sometimes, but what makes her famous and successful is her ability to get past these fears and create in spite of them.

Like her idea of practicing creativity, the idea of luck as a skill comes from the fact that creative people are people who are good at consistently finding something most people view as ephemeral and random: inspiration. Though luck and creativity are temperamental and fleeting mistresses, they aren't so difficult to find if you know where to look. Tharp emphasizes that artists have such luck and creativity because they are constantly seeking it, and they have learned to recognize it and use it when it comes to them. This ties back to an idea she references earlier in the book, which is "scratching." According to her, "scratching is what you do when you can't wait for the thunderbolt to hit you" (Tharp 98). Scratching is digging for a small idea, because two small ideas can add up to one big one. Tharp points out that there are many different ways to scratch. There is reading, everyday conversation, viewing other people's work, the work of mentors and heroes, and nature. This idea of scratching is based upon actively seeking out inspiration, rather than waiting for it to come to you. When you are actively working to find ideas, it's easier to be ready when that big idea or flash of inspiration hits you. The idea of scratching and luck as a skill have helped me work my way through "choreographer's block" and are exactly how I came up with my idea to make a dance about me and my sister.

The third important paradox Tharp brings up, planning versus overplanning, is the one I have struggled with the most. Tharp emphasizes that artists must find the balance between thoroughly planning their artistic endeavors and leaving space for inspiration to strike, problems to occur, and changes to be made. When I first began making my sisters

piece for the stage, I tried to walk the fine line between under-planning and overplanning, and it felt like I was just hopping back and forth across the line, never quite landing on the mark. The foundation of my plan was strong, but the details I laid out were not working, and I felt like I was unable to stray from my plan and the work I had already created even though it wasn't working out in the way I intended.

The cancellation of Spring Dance Concert, where I was originally going to have my work performed, threw most of my plans in the trash. However, it also gave me a chance to essentially start over with this work, only keeping my favorite choreographic phrases and dumping all the sections and phrases I had felt obligated to include in the piece simply because they were what I originally planned to have in it. This was the ultimate lesson in adaptability. I was forced to redesign my entire plan in order to convert my dance into a duet (eliminating tons of choreography and floor patterns and interactions between dancers) and into video format. Rereading Tharp's book reminded me of the pitfalls of determinedly sticking to a plan, and helped me see my forced changes in a more optimistic light. I created an entirely new plan for my piece, and even after this massive change, there were still continual changes to my plan. Even though my plan was less cemented than my original plan and it continued changing up through the filming and the editing of the film, I felt much more comfortable in what I was creating. I still had the same solid bones that I've had since the beginning, and I felt like I finally found a balance between making a strong plan and leaving room for surprises and changes. There are many other chapters in this book that were helpful to me throughout my choreographic process, and the ones I've discussed are only some of the highlights. When I am feeling stuck, I can peruse this book and find some gem of knowledge, some

exercise to help me with the choreographic problem I'm facing, or even just an anecdote to pique my interest. It's not a comprehensive guide to how to choreograph, but rather Twyla Tharp's personal insight into and advice about practicing creativity.

Alvin Ailey

Alvin Ailey is one of the most iconic choreographers to grace the scene of American dance. His most famous work, *Revelations*, was created when he was just twenty-nine years old, in 1960. *Revelations* is a thirty-six minute work divided into three parts, each section focusing on a different aspect of African American culture and struggles. The first section focuses on themes of rising from the ground, the second on baptism, and the third on the joy of the gospel church. Each section is beautifully coded not only by theme, but by color, movement quality, and emotion. I see each section as an element: the first is colored in browns, and centers on being rooted to the earth and rising from the earth. The second section is blue and white, and the waters of baptism run through this section and shower down upon the dancers. The third section is yellow, expressing the fiery joy and passion of the soul and the power of a community.

Revelations is one of the most popular contemporary dance works in America, beloved by virtually everyone who sees it. To me, *Revelations* is the standard for excellence in dance and choreography. Watching it with the perspective of a budding choreographer, I learned a great deal about what makes a dance successful. Ailey supports his themes (and differentiates the three sections) through movement quality and style, music, motifs, canon, speed, and many other choreographic devices. These devices are incorporated smoothly and intentionally into his work. One of the most wonderful

things about *Revelations* is that even though I was watching it with the intention of observing choreographic devices, I was so often lost in its beauty that I forgot to look for the details and devices that made it so beautiful.

Another particularly inspirational Ailey work is *Cry*, a sixteen minute solo that centers on the strength and oppression of black women. *Cry*, like *Revelations*, is divided into three sections. I decided very early on in my process that I wanted to divide my dance into distinct sections in order to tell my story. I didn't think about it at the time, but it's more than likely that these two Ailey works are what inspired me to organize my piece in this way, though my work is organized chronologically rather than thematically. In *Cry*, unity is created between the three sections by focus on a central theme, subtle repetitions of movement, and consistent movement quality and style throughout. While *Revelations* is the first Ailey work I fell in love with, *Cry* is the one which inspires me the most in the creation of my senior project.

One of my favorite things about this piece is the subtle use of repetition. Many current dances use repetition and modification of entire phrases liberally. Though that often works quite well, I prefer to use smaller examples of repetition in my work. *Cry* is the perfect example of how repetition of very short phrases or even singular movements can still create a sense of unity without overdoing it. At times we can see motifs--clear, short, often gestural movements repeated again and again throughout the work--but more often we just see simple repetition of a movement once or twice throughout. One easy example is the knee crawling, which we see in the beginning of the first section of the piece. This crawling is repeated in the middle and at the end of the second section, and though the sections have different focuses/themes, bringing the soloist to her knees and

having her repeat that striking movement reminds us of what came before, and of the themes of hardship and struggles that unify the different sections of the work. Repetition of certain movements throughout the piece subtly tie the piece together and create images that impact the viewers. Even if the audience doesn't notice what exactly is being repeated, they will notice the sense of unity created in the work as a whole. Perhaps the work is made even more brilliant for its subtlety of repetition, as viewers cannot put their finger on why, but they still get a sense of familiarity and unity from the movement.

Cry also uses gestural and pedestrian movement to connect with audiences, something which I often struggle with. I feel the need to dance through every part of a dance, but what I often forget is how powerful a pause can be, or a simple gesture. *Cry* is an excellent example of the power of simplicity and rawness. There is a moment near the end of the second section in which the dancer stops right as the dance is starting to “pick up.” We see her energy still extending forwards with her momentum even as she stops traveling, until gradually she curls in on herself in a series of silent sobs, burying her face in her skirt. Then comes the scream, an aching, wounded sound in the music given even more impact by her open mouth and her twisted, reaching arms. While this entire piece is powerful and a clear showcase of the soloist’s technical ability, it is the pedestrian, human movement of a sob and a scream that we as an audience relate to and recognize as something we’ve felt inside ourselves. Many of us may have never experienced the grinding oppression of the black woman, and most of us don’t have the physical ability to move the way the soloist does, but when we see that sob, that scream— that resonates in our own bodies long after the piece has finished. This is the impact a choreographer can create through the skillful utilization of emotion and gesture.

If there's one thing I learned from watching Alvin Ailey, it's that there are certain kinds of movement that resonate with certain themes. If a choreographer taps into these archetypes of movement, they're more likely to create work that resonates with audiences in a more instinctual and emotional way. The two Ailey pieces I've discussed both have a religious subtext to them, as much of Ailey's work does, and Ailey references this subtext and this appeal to a higher power through his movement. There is a lot of reaching heavenward, not only with the arms, but with the whole body, and the dancers freely use their backspace to create an open chest and sense of vulnerability.

Ailey had the ability to create work centering around a powerful theme for a specific group of people, yet still connecting with audiences who weren't the subject of the work. I believe his success in doing so was largely due to his use of archetypal movement and gestures that all people can connect to. This is what I seek to do with my work. Though my theme centers around sisters, the heart of the piece is simply about bonds that cannot be broken, and I know that even people without siblings can connect to that idea. The difficult part for me is finding movement that evokes this idea of an unbreakable bond for a wider audience, and incorporating this movement seamlessly into the larger work.

Ailey sought to use physical movement to emotionally move audiences, and that is the heart of what dance should do. So often in the world of dance I find myself trying to elevate my creativity to this pseudointellectual idea of dance as an elevated and formal art form. Watching Ailey's work reminds me that the true power of dance is not in its formal choreographic tools and use of patterns and technique (though all of these things

are useful in making dances); the true power of dance is in its ability to evoke a kinesthetic and emotional response in its audience.

Royal Flux

Royal Flux is a relatively new company, based in LA and founded in 2013 by Jaci Royal. They have been on NBC's *World of Dance* twice, and toured with the show all over the U.S. and Canada. Royal herself has also choreographed for *So You Think You Can Dance* multiple times. Royal Flux's strong media presence means that though I have never been to one of their performances, I am still able to see their dancing and Royal's choreography on TV shows, Youtube clips, and social media posts. It is through videos of their work (some of which I watched over and over, trying to figure out how she created such effortless transitions) that I came to admire this company so much.

Royal Flux is known for dynamic movement, gravity defying choreography, and effortless partnering. Royal's movement style, athleticism, and creativity embodies everything I want to become. Her choreography isn't just visually impressive, it also demonstrates her understanding of the emotional power held within human movement. Her choreography both amazes and emotionally touches viewers. I have always struggled with tapping into the emotional aspect of choreography, preferring to focus on creative and interesting movements rather than emotional gestures and expressions. However, one of dance's great powers is its emotional potential, and it is this potential which Royal, Ailey, and my professors and peers have inspired me to explore with this project. Royal perfectly balances her need for beautiful and dynamic movement with the audiences' desire for emotion and narrative to hold on to.

This balance can very clearly be seen in her choreography for *So You Think You Can Dance*. In this show, choreographers must create works that are technically challenging and show off the dancers' skills, while simultaneously showing a clear narrative and/or theme for ordinary viewers (who don't know much about dance and who have a short attention span) to connect with.

One such dance that Royal created was *Undertow*. After coming up with the idea for my piece and beginning to create it, I found myself struggling to communicate my themes and getting caught up in simply creating cool movement. Then, searching Youtube for inspiration, I found *Undertow*. *Undertow* not only shows off Royal's trademark flawless partnering, smooth transitions, and emotional impact; it also represents exactly what I wanted to do with my piece, down to the use of the prop. The dancers use a long loop of rope material as a prop, and the male dancer continuously binds and catches the female dancer in the rope, signifying his control over her and the things he uses to draw her back into him. Though this isn't exactly the relationship I wish to communicate in my piece, it is an excellent example of using a prop similar to mine to effectively show the binding nature of a relationship. This piece shows an excellent incorporation of props into the dance, and uses the prop to further the theme rather than simply as a cool gimmick. Using a prop walks the fine line between artistic expression and gimmickry, and *Undertow* gives me a guideline for walking on the former side of the line.

The choreographers I've previously discussed--Duncan, Tharp, and Ailey--are pioneers and revolutionaries of modern dance and choreography. Jaci Royal is a contemporary, popular example of successful contemporary/modern dance today. There

are a lot of modern dance choreographers who are very successful who I could draw inspiration from, but none of them have movement styles and choreography that resonate with me the way Royal's choreography does.

Translating Dance to Film

“The Ties That Bind Us” was originally a seven person dance work designed for the proscenium. Due to COVID-19, I could no longer move forwards with this work in the way I had originally planned. I wasn’t able to finish my piece, and even if I was, performing it for a live audience was virtually impossible. Filming the piece was the best way to document and publish my work.

There are two distinct ways to approach filming dance. There’s filming for documentation purposes, which consists of all wide shots that attempt to capture the dance exactly as it was intended for the proscenium. Then there’s using the camera to create a film as a work of art. Since I could not finish my work with the full cast, filming for documentation purposes wasn’t possible. I cut the work down to a simple duet and decided I would make it into a dance film. I was not going to simply film the original choreography in a studio to document it, I was going to transform the work into something that might be considered a work of art to both filmmakers and choreographers.

There are many difficulties involved in translating a dance originally made for the proscenium into a dance made for video. “The limitation of the video window is that if we see the entire space, the dancer is ineffectually small and if we come in close enough to see the dancer fully and strongly, we lose awareness of the surrounding space and so the impact of spatial action is not experienced by us” (Nagrin). Making a dance video involves a completely different eye for design than is required for choreographing a dance. As someone who was attempting to become a dance film director, I had to learn a whole new set of rules and techniques to make my dance come across the way I wanted. Dances made for the proscenium generally present forwards, towards the audience, and

the dancers and their set create an image that the audience can see in its entirety at all times. The camera is different. The camera can give the audience an intimate, close up connection with the dancers that the proscenium never could. The camera can also show a dancer from all angles, above, below, and behind; it can draw the viewer's focus to a certain spot or image with ease, whether that be the subtlest twitch of the fingers or the beauty of the wide horizon beyond the dancer. "Thus allowing movement within the frame becomes the equivalent of movement within the proscenium. Alternately, cutting strategically between closeups and wide ranging shots can maintain the dynamic of a vibrant personal presence moving in wide space" (Nagrin). In a dance film, the dancers aren't the only ones who need choreography, the camera's movements also had to be choreographed, as well as designing the way the different shots would come together to make a complete film.

Translating my work to a dance for the camera meant I had to design my dance in a different way. Unlike a traditional dance work designed for the stage, a dance film can utilize the aspect of location in many different ways. "The camera can facilitate a heightened level of intimacy between the camera, dancer and environment, an intimacy that can translate directly to screenic space and make the human-place connection resonate" (Kloetzel 34). Location has a special power in dance film, because these films allow the dances to take place in locations that the audience has connections to or preconceived notions about. "Our experiences in similar sites layer our viewing and cause a sympathetic response that adds to our personal connection to the work" (Kloetzel 26). Thus dance films gain an advantage over traditional proscenium dance works due to their unique ability to use location. Location can give context to the choreography and

intended theme of the work, and the atmosphere or mood of the location heavily influences that of the dance/scene. Use of location can also enhance the audiences' immersion in the dance, since both the dancers and the camera can interact with the environment and each other. "Dance films have allowed dance as an art form to connect more readily to narrative, and the siting of dance films on location is an important ingredient in this narrative turn" (Kloetzel 25).

In a dance film, time and space is ours to create and reorder. "All such mediated images are memories of something that did occur, but memories that, via the production process, have been recast into the illusionary time and space of the screen. This illusionary time – which may include such alterations as extreme slow motion and/or accelerated events, reordered episodes, flashbacks or even retrograded sequences – impacts our sense of space and *vice versa* in a dance film" (Kloetzel 32). The use of editing and location allows dance films to create their own sense of reality, their own little worlds in which to immerse the viewers.

Historical Context for Dance on Film

The best dance films are a marriage of film and choreography. When dance works first began being filmed for television, there was no communication or understanding between the choreographer and the filmmaker. Maya Deren is quoted saying: “In most dance films the dancer, knowing little of the possibilities of the camera and cutting, works in terms of theatrical composition; the film-maker, knowing little about theatrical choreographic integrity, refuses to sit still and concerns himself with photographic-pictorial effects which usually have nothing to do with the intentions of the dancer. The usual unsatisfactory result is neither fish nor fowl, it is neither good film nor good dance (cited in Snyder, 1965, p. 38).” This issue pervaded the world of dance and film because choreographers created work for the proscenium and then tried to have it be videoed in that way, when really what they needed was to choreograph for the camera and understand the world of possibilities which the camera’s constantly moving eye could present.

In the 1930s, Busby Berkeley revolutionized the way dance was filmed. Berkeley’s work was characterized by using lots of dancers to create geometric shapes that changed in a kaleidoscope like fashion. He did not make dances, he created beautiful images that captivated the audience. “He was the first to pan the dancer’s faces and the first to shoot dance from overhead. Always shooting dance with one camera, Berkeley never concerned himself with intricate dance movements or choreography” (Carter 28). Berkeley used the camera to its fullest, utilizing a combination of wide shots, aerial shots, and close ups that showed dancers in a way that could never be seen in a proscenium theater. However, it could easily be seen that Berkeley’s dancers hardly danced at all, and

though he had a brilliant eye for design, he was not a choreographer. Luckily, there were true choreographers out there with Berkeley's eye for design as well as a passion for dance and film.

Fred Astaire was a contemporary of Berkeley, but he had a very different perspective on dance and film. Berkeley was a director who liked pretty dancers; Astaire was a dancer who had a talent for singing, acting, and directing. Astaire made many musicals in which he starred, directed, and choreographed. Astaire created integrated musicals, which means that the dance numbers contributed to the narrative of the movies. Additionally, the dance scenes were filmed in a way that gave the audience a greater sense of kinesthesia, rather than making the dances seem flat and two dimensional. Because of his role as both the director and the choreographer, he eliminated many of the issues seen previously with dance on film. In Astaire movies, the dances never felt out of place or irrelevant to the story and the integrity of the choreography was never lost, because the man who choreographed it was also the one calling many of the shots when it came to the filming and editing process.

Astaire's lead was followed by such legends as Gene Kelly and Jerome Robbins and many others, and over the next couple decades the Hollywood musical prospered and arguably reached its highest peak. Gene Kelly took the Hollywood musical one step further and integrated space and location into his movies, dancing with his surroundings rather than just letting his surroundings fade into the background. He had excellent and creative use of props, using anything from street lights to trash can lids to create more visual interest and take advantage of the freedom the camera gave him. He also gave special attention to how the camera's perspective affects the viewers' perception of the

dance. Today, the movie musical remains an excellent example of the success that can be achieved by a union between choreographers and filmmakers.

In the 1960s, dance and film went a different direction. The '60s saw the invention of something called cinedance. Cinedance was based on the idea that everything is dance and anything can dance, including the camera. It was a form that lent itself well to modern dance. Maya Deren created one of the first cine-dances, "A Study in Choreography for the Camera." "She found dance and film so closely connected because of each medium's ability to communicate through a stylization of movement in time. Scenes created without people dancing were sometimes considered to be dance. This concept was developed during the cine-dance era. Here dance is the stylization and relationship of movements that are choreographed, which could include visually projected movements created solely by film techniques" (Carter 37). The camera becomes a part of the dance, and its movement contributes to the story and themes of the dance just as much as the dancers themselves. When I first began learning about choreographing for the camera, cinedance was one of the first things I learned about. Cinedance takes all of the lessons about dance and film that were learned during the era of the Hollywood musical and takes it one step further. The filmmaker and the choreographer are one and the same, just like in the best Hollywood musicals, but cinedance isn't restricted by mainstream popular culture desires. Cinedance, like modern dance, did not care about pleasing mainstream audiences; it only cared about expression through a new form of art. This freedom and sense of rebellion against what dancing was created an entirely new and different way of putting dance on film.

Though my work is neither cinedance nor a Hollywood musical, the techniques and styles of these genres of dance film have a clear influence on all dance films that follow them. The spirit of cinedance and the idea that anything can dance is particularly inspiring to me, especially when it comes to my use of props. I use a twelve foot piece of pink chiffon fabric to represent the bond between me and my sister, and as I filmed I found that some of my best shots focused on the way the fabric danced with us as we moved. The independent nature of the fabric was not only beautiful to look at, but it also emphasized the fluid and unpredictable nature of our bond.

Reflection of the Creative Process

This piece was originally created as part of my senior capstone project for my dance major. It was a seven person dance that would be performed at Spring Dance Concert, along with all the other senior pieces. Before I could even begin choreographing, I had to do a lot of initial planning. I had to choose my theme, then I had to plan the structure of my piece and choose music. Finding music was actually one of the most difficult parts of the initial planning, because Spring Dance Concert required that the music has no lyrics. I ended up choosing a lo-fi song and then adding part of another song to the beginning and end to add length and variety. Choosing a theme was also difficult because at first I was going to go a completely different direction: I wanted to make a piece about mob mentality. However, the problem with that was that mob mentality interested me, but I wasn't passionate about it. I wanted to make a piece about something I knew a lot about and cared a lot about, and had the authentic experience to make a piece about. Sadly, that list of things was really short. My relationship with my sister is one of the most complex, difficult, and defining things in my life. So I decided that's what I would make my work about.

Creating the structure of the dance was surprisingly easy; one of the most powerful aspects of the sibling bond is no matter how much we fought, we would always be in each other's lives. To represent that bond, I wanted to use a long piece of fabric as the literal embodiment of our bond. To represent how we often fought and eventually came back together, I wanted the piece to have a back and forth feeling. I think in very linear and narrative terms, so I decided to follow a somewhat chronological structure that divided each phase of our lives together into sections.

Even though my piece was about the relationship between two sisters, this relationship doesn't happen in a vacuum. I wanted other dancers on stage to show how other people affect the sisters' relationship. I decided my piece would have a cast of seven: two sisters and five cast members who represented the other people in our lives. I was able to choose my cast at auditions for Spring Dance Concert. Every senior making a piece got about fifteen minutes to teach a short phrase and see their options for cast members, and then after auditions we all picked our cast members. I already had a pretty good idea of who I wanted in my piece, and had already asked my friends Jesse and Mikaela to be my sisters. I ended up with seven amazing dancers who I had a lot of fun working with.

I used my sister to help me come up with choreography, because it's very difficult to choreograph a duet with a prop all by oneself. We met a few times throughout the process of making this piece and worked together on coming up with movements that looked cool and matched my intentions for each section. I choreographed the material for the group on my own and tested out my ideas for formations and pathways during the rehearsals with the group.

When I began the rehearsal process with my cast, I already had some choreography ready for them from working with Jasmine and preparing on my own. They were quick learners, so each week (on Fridays, usually) I would set aside time to choreograph more material for them and/or plan formations and pathways. Then I would meet with them on Saturdays for 4:30-6:30 and Tuesdays 8:30-9:30 to rehearse. I didn't want to waste my dancers' time, and I generally had less material for the group, so I would have my sisters come on Saturdays at 4:30 so I could work out their material first,

and then my group would come at 5:30 to learn their choreography. Then on Tuesdays we would mainly clean or make small adjustments to the choreography they learned on Saturday. I really enjoyed running these rehearsals, I loved my cast, and I was proud of how I had managed my time.

The problems came when my piece was shown at Preview #1. For Spring Dance Concert, there were two previews, which were basically showings of our progress in our pieces where we could get feedback from our fellow choreographers and the faculty. The first preview occurred a few weeks into the process, and I had a good section of my piece done (probably about half). The faculty and my fellow choreographers were less than impressed with my piece. They were all polite and thoughtful in their feedback, and by the end of preview it was clear to me: my piece was chaotic, and there was too much happening onstage for the theme to come through clearly.

I was really discouraged after the preview, of course, but I pressed on. I tried to address the issues that had been brought up by the faculty, but no matter how much I tried I knew that I was not truly fixing the real problem: there were too many people onstage. I knew this might be a problem from the beginning, but I didn't want to just do a simple duet. I thought I needed other dancers to show how other people and influences pulled my sister and I away from each other. Now I realize that I just wanted other people onstage because I was afraid the stage would look too empty with just two dancers. I was afraid my choreography wouldn't be enough to fill the space. Ironically, it soon became clear that I had in fact overfilled the space, both with bodies and choreography. However, it was too late to take my choices back, so I just made the best of them.

In the following weeks I essentially finished the piece. However, due to one of the sisters, Mikaela, being on tour I never got to film the whole cast doing the finished piece together. Then COVID lockdown began, and Spring Dance Concert was cancelled. I immediately went into planning mode, and tried to figure out the best way to still get to do this piece while following the lockdown rules. Luckily, I had just finished a Choreography for the Camera class the prior term, which focused on making dance films. I decided that making a dance film was exactly what I needed to do to reimagine and complete this piece. I would cut this piece down to the simple duet it was always meant to be, my sister and I would dance it, and it would be filmed in various locations in Salem.

Creating the Dance Film

Losing so much of my original work and planning and my dream of seeing my choreography onstage was difficult to deal with, but in a way, starting over was freeing. It was like spring cleaning; I took out all the choreography I didn't need or couldn't use and kept only the original theme phrase and beginning choreography, the duet choreography I'd made with my sister, and one other phrase (which actually ended up being barely used in the end product).

Even though I was able to keep the core structure of the piece, a lot had to change. No longer would it be taking place on a stage, so I had to figure out where exactly it would take place. As I've discussed, location is an incredibly important aspect of dance films, so I was able to use location to help enhance the theme and mood of my piece. I chose places where my sister and I have spent a lot of time together, as well as places that I felt represented the mood of each section. I also had to choose costumes. Originally I had planned on getting jumpsuits for the sisters, one matching the pink of the fabric and the other matching the purple tones in the fabric. Since that was no longer possible, I went with simple black and white, so as not to contrast with the fabric or the settings. My sister wore black shorts and a white tank top, and I wore the white/gray shorts and a black tank top. I liked how these costumes went together because of their similar designs and colors, while the fact that we were wearing the reverse colors showed the contrast between us.

The process of restructuring the choreography and planning the dance film was a slow one, mostly because I was busy with school and my sister was busy with work. I created a document where I kept track of my ideas, and worked on planning a little bit at

a time. My sister and I both lived at home during most of the creation of this dance film, yet it was still surprisingly difficult to get her to rehearse. We managed to rehearse probably once every couple of weeks in my tiny living room or out on our crowded deck, and we even created some new material for the piece.

Once spring term ended and COVID rules started lightening up, we were able to begin filming. As I mentioned before, I'm a very linear and narrative based person, so we filmed the sections in order, filming one section per shoot. Each shoot was one to two hours, and for each hour filming I probably spent two editing afterwards.

It was at this phase of the process that my best friend, Sarah, became integral to the creation of this piece. Not only was she my videographer who put up with me making her reshoot things many many times, but she also let me borrow her Mac to edit the footage. I had previously learned to edit on WOU's Macs and wasn't familiar with any other editing software besides iMovie, so Sarah lending me her computer made the editing process much easier than it could've been.

The Structure and Filming

Childhood

As children, my sister and I were very close. The first section of the piece represents our childhood, and takes place in the morning in the backyard of our childhood home. This section introduces the relationship between me and my sister, as well as the main movement phrase, which recurs throughout the piece and which I will refer to as the “theme phrase.” The mood of this section for me is nostalgic and peaceful. Each shot is bathed in sunlight and the gentle flowing of the fabric, and our movements are soft and complementary. My process for the creation of the first section of the film was very different from my process for the rest of the sections. For the first section, I had a very clear idea of what I wanted, and I carefully planned each and every shot and camera angle that I would need. Because of this, the time I spent planning beforehand was quite long, while filming and editing were relatively quick. However, the disadvantage was that I only filmed what I needed, and when I found later during editing that there were some shots that I wasn’t happy with, I didn’t have extra footage to substitute. For each subsequent section, it feels like I planned less and less and filmed more and more, which had the opposite benefits and disadvantages. I had plenty of footage to choose from, but I also had longer shoots and longer editing time sifting through footage and reorganizing clips to create a narrative and flow.

Polarization

For the second section, I had a general plan as to what I wanted, and then gave myself room to play within that plan. This section is about polarization. When we became

pre-teens, we began fighting a lot and struggled to distinguish our identities from each other. This struggle for individuality is known as polarization (Abramovitch 19). The concept of polarization in sibling relationships is based upon the idea of ecological niches; in order to survive and reduce competition, siblings must occupy different niches. “Each sibling is formed in the shadow of another; the identity of one becomes the negative identity of the other” (Abramovitch 19). This polarization is particularly strong in siblings that are of similar age and gender, like my sister and I. However, we had one major thing in common that prevented us from polarizing as effectively as we might have otherwise: we both loved dance. We were similar in age, appearance, interests, and we shared everything, including our friends. By our own choices, we had almost nothing that was separate from the other except our temperaments. This made having our own niches exceptionally difficult, and because of that we fought a lot, particularly during puberty.

In this second section I wanted to show the turmoil of that time, and how even though we were in conflict, our bond tied us together. The section was filmed in multiple locations around downtown Salem, and I wanted our surroundings to be cement and brick to contrast the warmth and greenery of the first section. My sister and I had a lot of trouble acting for the camera, mostly because we tend to laugh every time we make eye contact. To compensate for our weakness, I tried to have most of the conflict come from our body language and the editing. This strategy was only partially successful, and this section of the film would certainly be stronger if my sister and I were better actors.

This section was the most difficult part to translate to film because it was the section that my other five dancers were originally in the most. Cutting them out changed the sisters’ choreography considerably. Not only that, but this section was already the

worst section of my dance before the pandemic. Taking away the other dancers only further revealed the flaws in my choreographic design. At first, I tried to stick as close as I could to the original plan and choreography. The first time we shot this section, it was very choreography heavy, with my sister and I performing the same phrase, then performing it again with modifications and increasing physical distance between us to show our polarization. However, as I edited the footage, I found that though it looked very cool, it meant nothing. My intentions did not come through. The emotions of that time in our lives did not come through at all. I was dissatisfied with it, but I pushed forwards and filmed the next couple sections. Once I edited the third section, I became even more dissatisfied with the second part. It was a clear weak spot in the piece, and it was one of the longest sections. It had to be fixed. As I sorted through the footage, I realized some of the best material I had was the stuff that Jasmine and I had improvised. That's when I realized that maybe improvisation was the key to creating authenticity in this piece. We were, after all, the subjects of this film. Our authentic improvisation and interactions with each other were exactly what I had been trying to capture with all of my choreography that I put on Mikaela and Jesse, and now I had the real thing right here. I needed to use it.

We had a reshoot, and I found a new location: a brick wall painted half black and half yellow. It was a striking contrast, and I had my sister and I stand in opposite colored sections to emphasize the contrast between us. For this shoot, I didn't plan anything. My sister and I just brainstormed and improvised movements that looked like we were fighting or pulling on each other, and I instructed Sarah on what angles I wanted. By the end of the shoot, we had lots of short clips for me to put together. Editing was a

nightmare of sorting through hundreds of five to fifteen second clips and cutting and splicing them together into some sort of cohesiveness.

Unlike the first section, this section came to be characterized by quick, sharp movements and lots of abrupt cuts between different shots rather than a cohesive or continuous flow. I wanted it to feel jarring and chaotic (but intentionally so). At the end of this section we are seen dancing at a red brick wall, which is footage from the first shoot, and we do a modified version of the theme phrase. The phrase is done standing and in canon (one person does the same choreography slightly after the other, not simultaneously), with a more thrown quality to it. The reshoot and re editing process really improved this section, but it still doesn't have the strong emotional content that I wanted. If there was one section of this piece I could redo, I would choose to redo this one (again).

Reunion

In the third section of the piece, my sister and I reunite. This represents our late teens, when we became incredibly close again. This section was filmed in the late afternoon at our old dance studio, which was where we spent most of our time when we weren't at home. The studio is also where we fostered our close relationship, creating choreography and practicing dances together every day. In spite of our differences, dance was a passion we always shared, and our history together in that studio, like our sisterly bond, will always be a part of us. This section is similar to the first section in mood. There's a sense of closeness and familiarity, and again the sunlight streaming into the shots creates a sense of warmth. There are fewer cuts, and when they do occur they don't

interrupt the flow of the choreography. The movement is soft and we often mirror each other, and there's also a moment where we do a small portion of the theme phrase while standing, again referencing back to the beginning of the piece. This section had clear choreography but we played around a lot with different shots and angles as we filmed. I really wanted a bird's eye view shot to contrast the worm's eye shot that I had in the first section, so I created a very precarious stack of stools for Sarah to stand on to film us. I really liked the way that turned out, though I do wish I'd been able to incorporate more bird's eye shots throughout the piece. One limiting factor we had to deal with was that the front of the studio we were filming in was covered in mirrors, so anytime Sarah stood behind us she could be seen. This meant that I didn't get to do any shots where the camera circles us like it does in the first section, and we had to be more careful about our angles. I thought that having so much filmed from the front angle would make this section boring, but luckily I think that there is enough variety in the movement and camera angles that this is not the case. At the end of this section, I leave Jasmine, backing away and exiting the frame. This is the only part that wasn't choreographed ahead of time. We brainstormed and played around with different options during the shoot. I basically wanted this last eight count or so to be a "goodbye for now" without being too mimed or acted out. I think that the choreography we do gets the point across, but a little more acting, like a close up of Jasmine's face or of us hugging goodbye might have added that something extra this scene needed.

Overall I am happy with this section. The footage from this section is, in my opinion, really beautiful, and not much editing was needed, just stitching together the

different parts. Like the first section, this one came together and just felt easy and natural to create.

Separation

My exit from the studio scene brings us to the fourth section, where Jasmine and I are seen in two completely separate locations. I am in a field, off to a new adventure (symbolizing college) and am always seen on the left of the fabric. Jasmine remains behind in our studio, and is always seen on the right of the fabric. The camera alternates between shots of Jasmine and I, and though we do not interact directly, we grab at and lift the fabric, grappling with our relationship even as we are separated physically. This is the only section where we do not use the theme phrase, and also the only section that I did not remotely plan. Pretty much all of the movement seen is actually the result of lots of footage of improvisation that I put together by finding the common threads in our spontaneous movement. Jasmine has always been my favorite dancing partner, and I believe that our shared history and DNA is evident when we dance together even if it's improvisation. The use of improvisation may not be obvious to the viewer, but I think our opposing and complementary styles of movement and the striking similarities between our spontaneous movement serve the theme of this section well. Even separated we are connected, not only by our bond, but by the pieces of each other we hold in ourselves and our movement.

Jasmine's part in this section was filmed on the same day that we filmed Reunion, since they take place in the same location. Since Jasmine was dancing, I was actually able to film some of it myself, or at least give Sarah better directions as to what I wanted when

she filmed. My part was filmed on the same day that we filmed the final section, because they both took place at Minto-Brown, a park in South Salem. We filmed my solo in the evening right before we filmed the final section, so there's a nice continuity in lighting between my solo and the end section because the sun was just starting to set at the end of my solo, and the sunset progresses throughout the final section.

Though my solo and Jasmine's were filmed at separate times, the different shots from the solos are juxtaposed to create contrast and a feeling that they are happening at the same time. At the end of this section I fall to the ground, which was my plan, but the actual fall that I used in the film was an accident that I just went with. My fall symbolizes a more metaphorical stumble, like a breakup or failing a class or a similar low point in life. In my moment of need, Jasmine comes to my aid, thus beginning the final section.

Beginning Again

The final section begins with Jasmine appearing in the field, gathering up the fabric, and walking towards me. We do an exact repeat of the theme phrase, sitting in the grass at sunset, and the last shot is of our backs as we hold the fabric around us and look out at the sunset. This section ties back to the beginning and is meant to really emphasize the cyclical pattern of our relationship. It was also filmed at sunset, whereas the beginning scene was filmed in the morning and the middle scenes were filmed in the afternoon. Our story progresses as the day does. I chose to add the element of the progression of the day because I felt that it added to the idea of a continuous cycle. After the sunset, the sun rises again and the cycle continues. We alternate between periods of strife and closeness, and we always come back to our theme phrase, which represents the

best of who we are together. The final section was all pre-choreographed, but the angles were not, and we had to film very quickly and in chronological order so that the sun would be setting more and more as this section progressed. We filmed my solo around 7pm, then the ending duet was filmed as we neared 8pm, so we had a very narrow window to get all the shots we needed as the sunset progressed. The shots are fairly simple because we took too long to get the shot of Jasmine gathering up the fabric and started running out of daylight, but I think the simplicity works in our favor. The sections where Jasmine and I's relationship is close are characterized by more mid range shots, fewer cuts, and smoother transitions between shots, so this section ended up fitting into that definition perfectly. The ending shot didn't turn out exactly how I planned because I gave Sarah directions very quickly and she didn't do exactly what I wanted. Maybe this worked out for the best though, because in my dissatisfaction with the ending during the editing process I looked through all the footage again and found one of the takes where we messed up a little and were laughing at our mistake. I decided to use that shot because I liked how real it looked (because it was real), and I think it was exactly the ending this film needed.

Conclusions

Making a dance film simultaneously gave me many opportunities and presented its own unique challenges. The fact that my piece was cut down to a duet and that I could use the camera to control what the audience sees helped lessen the chaos that I struggled with in my original piece. The use of the camera to control the viewer's perception also helped me to create a stronger sense of intimacy between the audience and the dancers, and I no longer had to worry about my two dancers being dwarfed by the lights and large space of the stage. Additionally, filming in different locations added meaning to each section and helped differentiate them more clearly from each other than they were in my original piece. One of the biggest struggles I faced was just the planning of the film. Since I didn't have much experience creating dance films, it was hard for me to figure out how to execute my vision. I knew what effect/mood I wanted for each section, but I had trouble planning how exactly to create it. I spent a lot of time playing around with filming and editing, and while the experimentation was really helpful, it was an incredibly time consuming and inefficient way to create and I look forward to being able to streamline this process in the future.

Due to my lack of experience and planning, many of the most beautiful moments in this film were just happy accidents or the results of guided improvisation. Since the making of this piece relied heavily on improvisation and just going with whatever ideas we came up with in the moment, I couldn't have made this piece with anyone but my sister. Our similarities and our shorthand as dancers made it easy for me to get the shots I needed and the authenticity that I wanted. The one disadvantage of using my sister is that she's a terrible actress, I'm not much better, and we're even worse together. Every time

we tried to make eye contact and have serious faces we just burst out laughing. Our movement had emotion and obviously showed our sisterhood, but our faces just didn't always communicate what I wanted. One of the incredible strengths of dance films is their ability to get up close to the dancers and really see the details of their expressions and body language. This allows the films to have really strong emotional content that viewers can easily see. I did not play to this strength, and I think our lack of facial expression is one of the biggest and most preventable weaknesses in the film. In spite of this issue, I still think a dance film was the perfect format for this piece.

Though I put a lot of work into this piece and am proud of it, there are so many things I wish I could have done differently. If I could go back and do it again, I would put more emphasis on showing emotion in our faces, no matter how many takes it took to get through the laughter and silliness. I would rechoreograph the polarization section entirely. I would make sure my videographer's shadow and unwanted clutter and people weren't in the shots, and I wouldn't be so afraid to reshoot. Creating this film was an amazing learning experience, and now I know what works for me and what not to do moving forwards. Even after this pandemic ends and in person performances are able to happen again, the dance film is still a growing art form that will continue to flourish, and knowing how to create a successful dance film will be an incredibly valuable skill.

In my opinion, "The Ties That Bind Us" is a lovely film. But it's not perfect by a long shot, and it is a watered down version of what it is to have a sister. I don't know if it's even possible to portray the depth of the rage, annoyance, jealousy, pain, laughter, strength, joy, and love a sister brings to one's life. If it is possible, I certainly did not

accomplish it. What I did accomplish was making a dance film with my sister emphasizing the strength of our bond, and that is enough for now.

“The Ties That Bind Us” Video Link

<https://youtu.be/NU0hJL3xeXw>

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As stated in the title, this article primarily focuses on the importance of location in dance films, as well as how location can contribute to a sense of narrative. One of the big benefits of dance films over live dance performances is that the dance can occur in

multiple locations. The article points out how different locations can be used to create a narrative, and that dances filmed in familiar locations (places similar to those that your audience sees every day, such as a kitchen) “lose a level of abstraction and gain personal, referential meaning” (p. 26). It also points out the close relation between site specific work and dance film, as well as the difficulties of transferring a work that is all about the physicality of a space onto the two dimensional screen. The author suggests that perhaps the solution to the distance created by the screen is the camera which captures images for the screen. This article teaches a lesson I have learned from every dance and film resource I have found in different ways, and offers a new perspective for that lesson. The camera can capture intimacy that the audience cannot, and I must learn to use that to my advantage.

Another thing I learned from this article is that humans naturally crave narrative, especially when viewing something on screen as a film and in everyday locations rather than placed up on a proscenium stage. This article discusses attempts to break away from narrative, and the inevitable result of people searching for narrative within the work anyways. I am interested in leaning into the narrative, and how I can use place to further my narrative. This article gives a closer and specific look at how place and narrative are interrelated in dance film, helping me to think through my artistic choices as I go through both the filming and editing process.

McPherson, Katrina. *Making Video Dance*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2019.

This was my textbook in my Choreography for the Camera class, which I took Winter term 2020. This book is a great introduction to not just filming dance, but literally choreographing your camera’s movements so that they compliment your dancers’ choreography. It starts with the very basics, which were much needed for me. It teaches readers about the basic angle options, basic camera movements, etc. However, it also goes into the basics of more advanced or “high budget” film production, such as working with composers, producers, camera assistants, and more. It is mostly the first half of the book that helps me, such as the sections on using improvisation, filming hand-held, continuity vs montage, locations, and the importance of storyboards. In particular, the chapter titled, “Creating Your On-Screen World” is of use to me, as I struggle to find the perfect locations to film my piece. This section gives advice on how to choose a location or decide if a location is right for your work, on integrating your location into the video rather than ignoring it, and maintaining the integrity of your choreography and large movement while working in unusual locations.

Maya DEREN: A Study In Choreography for Camera (1945). Youtube, uploaded by PolymediaTV, 24 Aug 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dk4okMGiGic>

Carter, Vana Patrice. *Choreography for the Camera: An Historical, Critical, and Empirical Study*. Western Michigan University, 1992, https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1859&context=masters_theses

This masters thesis is based on a study examining the relationship between choreographers and film and the importance of videography knowledge (on the part of the choreographer) to making successful dance films. It is not a textbook that teaches one how to make a dance film; however, it contains a plethora of useful information about the difficulties of translating dance to film, common mistakes that are made, and celebrated successes and achievements in the field of dance films. I intend to use this information to inform my own decisions regarding the filming and editing of my dance film.

This thesis poses three major questions which it then seeks to answer:

1. What has characterized, historically, the relationship between the choreographer and the film and television production process?
2. What shooting and editing theories would most benefit the film and television choreographer?
3. What encompasses today's choreographers' perceptions and knowledge regarding film, television, and/or video production process for dance?

The historical analysis was really helpful for putting the kind of work I want to create into context. Like the other resources I've found discussing dance and film, this thesis emphasizes the importance of camera movement and the camera and the choreography working together to create a kinesthetic response and energy in the viewers. It combined this emphasis with the history of dance film through purely notational dance film, cinedance, Hollywood films with dance, etc, and helped me to contextualize the success and failures of different approaches to dance films.

The sections discussing specific techniques/areas of focus such as framing (p. 39-47), use of set and props to give a sense of space, juxtaposition, and continuity principles (p.47-58) were also very helpful to me. These sections gave me practical and in depth information about these techniques, allowing me to dig deeper into the details of how I will frame each shot, rather than just helping me with a general overview of how to create the looks I want. I appreciated the specificity provided in this thesis, though some of the knowledge and information was perhaps a bit advanced for me. I believe that this thesis will be useful for me in approaching both the filming and editing process, as well as how I must film with my future edit in mind.

Nagrin, Daniel. "THE ART OF VIDEOTAPING DANCE Translating the Poetry of Living Dance to a Poem on Videotape." *Daniel Nagrin Theatre, Film, and Dance Foundation*. Adapted from How to Dance Forever by Daniel Nagrin, William Morrow, 1988, pp. 341-353. <https://nagrin.org/the-art-of-videotaping-dance/>

This is a relatively brief article giving an overview of filming dance as an art form. Like a book, it's organized into sections for clarity. Some sections are less relevant than others, so the clear organization is helpful. The section "The Eye of the Camera" was the most helpful to me. This section explains why the differences between filming and live performance require different treatment than most videographers naturally take. Not only can the camera move, but it must move. It's a difficult lesson to learn, and this article does a great job explaining the necessity of camera movement, close ups (and early close ups), and when to use high and low angles. The other sections were

interesting and educational, particularly the section on “Equipment,” which explained different setups you can do with different numbers and placement of cameras. Though that particular section was not relevant to my specific project, it could definitely be useful with future projects.

Choreographing

Bloom, Lynne Anne. *The Intimate Act of Choreography*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982.

This book acts almost as a textbook on how to choreograph. It contains definitions of many terms and tools a choreographer may use, advice and explanations of basic choreographic principles, as well as many exercises/activities one may try in order to practically understand and apply the concepts outlined in each section.

The book is arranged into simple, short sections that give brief and essential information about choreographic concepts/devices. It is helpful to my choreographic process because I can simply flip through the index, find the area I would like to know more about or am struggling with, and then have a clearer understanding of the basic concept. This book is definitely one that I would bring with me to the studio for inspiration when I get stuck or need help remembering all the choreographic resources and tools available to me.

Humphrey, Doris. *The Art of Making Dances*. Edited by Barbara Pollack. Princeton Book Company, 1959.

Doris Humphrey was a famous choreographer and pioneer of modern dance. She wrote this book right before she died, and it contains the basics of everything she thought was important to making a dance. It is divided into three sections: an introduction to choreography as a whole, different aspects of the craft, and a summary of her most important points (including a checklist of common mistakes to avoid). Reading the summary and checklist alone provides plenty of good advice and important points to remember as I begin my creative process.

In comparison to Bloom’s book, this book is less of a textbook on choreography basics and more of a choreographer’s experienced musings on the craft and her advice to future choreographers. It goes more in depth into specific areas of design, but doesn’t have as much variety of information as the Bloom book. The second section contains the bulk of the information, with chapters on different aspects of choreographic design. These chapters are helpful, but not exactly short and to the point. Each chapter in the second section does end with an assignment, which lends it an almost textbook-like feel, but the assignments don’t seem to be all that helpful, especially not for my particular purposes. Overall, this book is a valuable resource for reflection upon choreographic design, and it is full of much needed reminders for a beginner choreographer.

Nagrin, Daniel. *Choreography and the Specific Image: Nineteen Essays and a Workbook*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.

Tharp, Twyla, with Mark Reiter. *The Creative Habit: Learn it and Use it For Life*. Simon and Schuster, 2006.

This book is not organized like a textbook or instructional guide. One cannot glance at the index and then flip to the section they want to learn more about. It is a book of advice on the general field of creativity; though the writer is a choreographer/dancer, her book is designed to help any artist, which makes it more general than other choreography books. The book is as its title declares: a guide to developing a creative habit and using that habit to create work.

The book contains Tharp's ideas of what steps and components are crucial to a creative work, such as "scratching" (looking for an idea, seeking inspiration), and her explanation of these things and their importance. Each chapter centers around one of these components/steps, and at the end of each chapter, there are reflection questions and exercises designed to help the reader look deeper into their own creativity. There are many options, so readers can pick and choose which ones will be most helpful to them.

Sibling Relationships

Abramovitch, Henry. *Brothers and Sisters : Myth and Reality*. Edited by David H. Rosen, 1st ed., Texas A&M University Press, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wou/reader.action?docID=1894282>

This is one of the only books I have found discussing the psychology of siblings and how they can affect each other's development. Much of this analysis was related back to sibling mythology and stories. The majority of the mythology material isn't as relevant to my work, since a lot of it relates to brothers or brother-sister pairings. However, siblings are siblings and any glimpse into sibling psychology is useful, considering the lack of information out there.

Chapter two (p. 14-23), titled "The Sibling Archetype," is the most useful for my purposes. It discusses the different levels of closeness/codependency siblings can have, as well as explaining how different siblings can be through the metaphor of ecological niches. Siblings occupy different niches, and polarization is key to survival. Additionally, the closer they are in age and gender, the more different they must become. As I read this chapter, I could relate so much of it back to my sister and I and how different we became. The sibling archetype and the idea of polarization is the backbone of my creative examination of my relationship with my sister, I just didn't realize it until reading this book. I will definitely be using this idea to strengthen the narrative of my piece, in particular the development of the second section of my dance which I originally thought of as individualization, but I now understand to be a polarization as well.

McHale, Susan M et al. "Sibling Relationships and Influences in Childhood and Adolescence." *Journal of marriage and the family* vol. 74,5 (2012): 913-930.
doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.01011.x

This article discusses the body of research available which pertains to sibling relationships. It cites a wide variety of sources and contains data and statistics on siblings in America as well as conclusions that can be drawn from that data. It is clearly organized into sections focused on different factors that can affect sibling relationships, and each section contains a brief and efficient summary of the data. There's a lot of information contained in this article, so the different sections help organize it.

The large amount of data is very informative and helps me get a broader understanding of the way sibling relationships can affect sibling and family dynamics. The main issue with this article is that due to the large amount of broad information and statistics provided, it's not very specific to relationships between sisters, which is what I am focusing on. However, it was difficult to find any other scholarly sources that provide this level of information and actual data on sibling relationships.