Megan Wurtz December 3, 2017

Final Paper:

Course Concepts Used in Live Performance

This course has covered a large variety of choreographic concepts and movement generating techniques over the semester. The assignments given presented me with many challenges, and I truly learned so much about my successes and difficulties faced as a creator, performer, and a viewer of dance. The handful of performances I viewed for the course brought together the concepts covered in class used in a professional setting, and helped me discover what it truly is that I enjoy to view and want to create. I watched Rosas’ *A Love Supreme*, the collaboration between the Ohio State Dance Department, BalletMet, and The Wexner Center for the Arts in *Parallel Connections*, and the Ohio State Dance Department Faculty Concert. These shows have provided real dance-world examples of how course concepts covered this semester are being implemented in live performance works.

The course began with what I still believe is the hardest concept for me and many other dancers to embody. The idea of using clock time to set movement as opposed to musicality or a piece of music’s beat was untouched to me before this year. Luckily, I had been studying and rehearsing Cunningham technique since January, and Merce Cunningham did not choreograph based on music, but on internal rhythm and clock time. In the show Parallel Connections, a Cunningham MinEvent was staged by Daniel Roberts and Karen Eliot on twelve Ohio State Dance Department students. For the MinEvent, dancers were told that solos were to be 90 seconds long, duets were two minutes long, and group works could be any length longer. We had to develop an internal rhythm true to the choreography that completed the movement on time. In composition class, we saw the struggle of students to find the internal clock time of 30 seconds and maintain a sense of time or speed while performing. On stage, as Cunningham performers rehearse with live musicians the first time, the internal rhythm of clock time is thrown off by the new rhythm of accompanying sounds. It is quite easy to see in Cunningham technique that music is not in a close relationship to the dancers or choreography. The piece of music could change and the section of movement will continue unaffected. There was no recognizable beat to the music that matched the movement unfolding on stage. This stems from the fact that, similar to the assignment in class, the dancers rehearse in silence and are given clock time as the driving force behind their movement. This concept does not seem to be commonly used in choreography in general, and I believe that is why Cunningham was such an innovative technique that maintains its importance in the dance world today. With the separation of music and movement, the uniting idea that all dancers can come together on is clock time.

### In Rosas’ *A Love Supreme*, choreographed by Salva Sanchis and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, I learned a lot about what I do not enjoy about modern dance. I was not consistently intrigued by the movement, the arrangement of dancers, or the stage setting at all. The aspect of the piece that I did enjoy though was a concept that was played with in our class later in the semester. *A Love Supreme* worked together with the music, and distinctly the sections within it. In our class, we were given the assignment of listening to the sections of a piece of music and writing down our own idea of a “map” of the piece. Being very literal to the arrangement of the music gave me a new way to think about exactly how I hear music. If we heard a distinct ‘A’ section, and we heard that ‘A’ section repeated throughout the piece, we were to choreograph either the same movement or similar movement for that ‘A’ section in a way that a viewer could recognize the repetition. This was the focus of the arrangement and qualities of the dancers in *A Love Supreme*. While the music built layers of instruments ebbing and flowing in and out, the dancers accumulated on stage and moved on and off with the music. As each instrument played a solo, a dancer would have a solo or highlighted part with the qualities of what that instrument was playing. This set up a label for each dancer, and when the group danced together after the instrument-dancer relationships were established I was able to see their individual qualities within the movement and recognize the reference to their previous section. This created a narrative not to a story outside of the work, but to the music and dancing itself. It is much more typical in choreography to see a relationship to the music like in this work rather than the lack-of relationship that existed in Cunningham performance. These two works, the MinEvent and *A Love Supreme* are actually polar opposites when it comes to this concept of music driving the movement.

### Ann Sofie Clemmensen’s piece *Color in the Dark,* choreographed with the dancers and performed in the department’s Faculty Concert, showed many of the compositional devices for exploring phrase material that we played with in class. At one point in the semester we had been focusing on one assignment for a few classes and still had more time before a final performance of the assignment was due. The concept we then played with was taking the choreography we had and seeing where else it could go. Concepts like repetition, isolation, accumulation, and inversion were introduced to us. It helped my choreography a lot as I used some of this newly generated material in my completion of the assignment. I am not sure if this process of creation was used in *Color in the Dark*, but what could be seen as the resulting choreography from many of these concepts was found in the performance. Repetition was seen in a sort of book-end fashion to open and end the piece. As the dancers performed the same movement, it tied the whole piece back into itself at the end and emphasized this section. I saw the use of splicing or insertion as one dancer was often separated from the rest of the group, doing movement that stood out from the rest going on. It served to contrast large unison and solo individuality from each other, as well as separate these sections from those where the whole cast was together. Within the separation of a soloist from the group, augmentation was seen as movement began small and quickly grew into a farther reaching, more energetic movement through repetition. These concepts found in our packet prepared by V. Blaine serve not only as a way to explore new aspects of existing phrase material, but also as a lens through which to view dance and take in movement.

### Composition 2 has proven to be very different from the composition class I took last year. It has provided me with new challenges on how to think about creating movement, and through this allowed me to view live performances differently. Pieces such as the Cunningham MinEvent, *A Love Supreme*, and *Color in the Dark* demonstrated the use of many concepts covered throughout the course. Although the exact process of creation for these pieces are not fully known to me, the resulting performances showed how many different choreographic and creative concepts provide usable outcomes.