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# We Found it with Each Other: An Honors Study in Process, Choreography, and Improvisation

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**We Found It With Each Other:**  
**An Honors Study In Process, Choreography, and**  
**Improvisation**

By

Ruy Zambrano

An Honors Thesis In Dance

Connecticut College

This honors thesis is a year long exploration of improvisation, choreography and community. Through my studies, I have made many discoveries about process; both my own and others. I studied the preferences and techniques to improve my process of creating movement and art. First and foremost, I have discovered that although I love choreography, I am primarily an improviser, both compositional and contact improvisation. Improvisation has become a part of every piece of dance that I make.

My process has been a long ever changing experience. The piece was constantly changing structurally throughout the rehearsal process. The final form only became realized in the last month before the final performance.

I began my work by accumulating movements and phrases over the summer of 2016. I wrote down choreography any time I thought of a movement I would like to use in the piece. Most of these movements were in dreams or daydreams or while I was working for my internship at David Dorfman Dance. When classes began, I found myself in the studio, building a short piece, which I performed as a solo, but intended it to be included into the final piece. On top of this, I began a movement practice. This consisted of weekly improvisational sessions. I played a variety of music and moved in the space for two hours at a time, allowing my body to do whatever came to mind. I moved outdoors, in the studio, with my best friend and created set material. After each movement session, I wrote down everything I remembered in my journal. On top of this, I was reading books and articles on process, creativity and improvisation and used using those as sources of prompts for journal writing. Overall, I have accrued 101 handwritten pages in 4 journals.

For the purposes of this honors thesis, I am defining the following terms:

**Choreography** is movement material that is set and meant to be performed the same way each time it occurs in a dance.

**Improvisation** is movement material that is not set or planned until it occurs in practice or in performance.

**Truth** deals with genuine emotion. The moments that have truth in them are influenced by real emotion rather than performing emotion by imitating the way an emotion looks externally.

**Community** is a group of people who share a connection. The connection may be geographical proximity, political views, shared interests or identities. For this piece, community occurs because we are all dancers coming together to perform as a company.

## How We Found It: Excerpts From My Four Journals

### **11/19/16- *Movement Practice***

I am reversing the role of the male gaze using my own agency. In a sense, I am queering the eye with my gay male body. (pg.5)

### **11/20/16- *Movement Practice***

13 moments from a duet with Justine Collins, my best friend, that I would like to keep in mind for my thesis:

- 1) Sliding a foot through closed thighs, almost sexually
- 2) Lying on the ground, laughing at each other, full of joy
- 3) Forcing somebody to touch you by guiding their hands to your body, but never allowing them to make contact (“Touch me/ don’t touch me”)
- 4) Finding glitter on the ground, and being completely absorbed by it, forgetting the audience.
- 5) Holding the sides of somebody’s head, but not enough so they fall out of your grasp
- 6) Standing behind somebody, but retreating as they try to find you
- 7) Standing on somebody’s back as they are on all fours
- 8) “There’s a lady bug.” “Is it dead?” “Yes and it made me sad.” Have a funeral for the lady bug
- 9) Call and response improvisation

- 10) Guiding somebody in a direction, but immediately pulling them back
- 11) Using the bottom of the foot as a telephone
- 12) Breaking habits
- 13) “The military is so masculine.” “Well, it is about winning wars.” “Who really wins?”  
“Survivors?” (pg. 8, 9)

**12/2/16- Rehearsal Reflection**

An improvised score:

- 1) Be watched. Or watch.
- 2) Direct or be directed
- 3) Feel a Connection. Relationship
- 4) Find your center of gravity
- 5) (pg. 11)

I need to include laughter in my piece. (pg. 13)

I like the idea of an “in group” where the dancers feel to openly talk to each other without the feeling the need to perform for the audience. What is dialogue for? Who is it for? Who are we dancing for? I want to bring truth to the stage, like a slice of life. Therefore, everything is for the dancer; the audience is merely an outside observer of it. Is my dancing accessible? Am I using a vocabulary that every person can understand? I just want to teach the audience to accept my

movements. In this piece, I want to create something those who do not study dance or see it on a regular basis can understand. (pg 16)

An image I have in my head is a moment where the community breaks from a “rest phase” into something more ambiguous or taboo that breaks into laughter; laughing at our own power. We will be dancing as a community as an act of empowerment. (pg. 17)

Asking other people to join the community is an act of acceptance, intersecting communities. Community is a group of people. Within that, sub-groups form. For example, I myself am a part of the community at Connecticut College, but I am also in the dance community here, the queer community and my own friend group. (pg. 18)

I want the audience to enjoy this piece. I want the performers to enjoy this piece. I want the piece to be real, reflect real life, be truthful. (pg. 19)

### **12/20/16- *Showing Reflection***

At the Ho Ho Hodown showing, Senáit broke a nail and the performance stopped to care for her. It felt natural to check out and come close to her. It was a moment of love; we were all ourselves on stage and truly cared about each other; showing our true selves. We forgot the audience existed. (pg. 22)

### **1/6/17- *Response to Twyla Tharp's Creative Habit***

I am a person of intense ritualism. (pg. 26)

Preparing the mind for work is just as important as warming up the body for work. (pg. 26)

I enjoy exposing myself to audiences, but only with a storyline that is ambiguous enough to deny anything I don't want people to know. (pg. 27)

My theory of dance is based on the idea of trusting the body and skills learned to do exactly what is needed. I wish for something to happen, and it does. I allow my desires to let my subconscious mind tell my body what to do in order to get where I need. It works. I need to trust my choreography will do what I want it to do. I have to trust myself to know that I actually know what I am doing. (pg. 27)

It comes back to setting up a space and habit of coming into a space to work, not to be distracted, removing all aspects of distraction. Set aside scheduled time. Make it a ritual. (pg. 30)

**1/8/17- *Response to Yi-Fu Tian's Space and Place***

“Is it possible to argue that taste, odor and even hearing cannot in themselves give us a sense of space?” (Space and Place, Yi-Fu Tian) The five senses are entangled in our perceived world.

Together, they make up what we see as space. (pg. 31)

I became aware of visual space as light bulbs were suspended from the ceiling. The house and stage became populated by stars. I became aware of the depth of the space; which became the night sky, moving into infinity. The visual illusion inspired awe and the sublime. Art transports people through time and across worlds, into books and stories. How can I do this in my own work? (pg. 31)

I can ask my dancers to speak with audience members. “Meet the dancers.” (pg. 34)

“What does it mean to be lost?” (Space and Place, Ti-Fu Tian)

I enjoy the idea of being in a place that I do not know. It suggests being in a new place where I can learn and explore. My dream is to be in a forest, to be alone, and to wander. It is peaceful. But, am I lost? What constitutes lost? Must I fear it? Being lost forces us to make a choice- do we accept it and journey on, or do we panic and exert ourselves to rectify it? I accept being lost. It’s a challenge to find my way back. I get lost in thought, I lose myself in dance, in the book, the film. (pg. 35)

I can feel crowded easily; I am a dancer, mover. To be free, to be of power, I need two things; space and intimacy. Intimacy is sharing a soul with another. I find in intimacy, we no longer are separate entities, I see an intimate partner as an extension of myself. (pg. 36)

Place is a source of comfort, something that I look forward to experiencing. Like the child who never strays from a parent, for they are the only safety, consistency that the child knows. (pg. 37)

Performing, I feel connected to the audience. It feels intimate to share my movement with others. My movement comes from my soul, and I am exposing myself to anybody who watches me. (pg. 37)

Winter is a simulation of death for me. The temperature drops, snow covers the ground, suffocating the Earth. Everything dies. The air is no longer warm and inviting; it is cold, it bites and hurts. I am covering my skin. The skin is my entry way into understanding intimacy. I absorb information with the sensitive touch sensors in my skin. I become cut off. I cannot smell as well as I did in the warmth, the cold numbs my nose and it becomes clogged with mucous. My ears numb over and I cannot hear. Snow absorbs sound; winter is much more cold than the warm days. (pg. 38)

### **1/13/17** *Second Response to Yi-Fu Tian's Space and Place*

In U.S. culture, horizontal expansion relates to the future; the expanse of space suggests future prospects. This is represented in dance- specifically in classical dance. In ballet, we imagine bodies as shapes in space, directing the eyes with our limbs. Dancers are complimented on height only when their legs are longer than their torso. It implies the ability to travel horizontally through space with ease as well as longer body shapes. Another compliment given to dancers is that they “eat space”, which means that they travel through space. Dancers who are complimented on their jumping abilities are either complemented on the strength of their bodies or the way their bodies floated in space. To float is not to achieve height, it is only to achieve

weightlessness; those who float do not rise, yet they do not fall. Things that float can travel horizontally, but struggle to change vertical position. (pg. 39, 40)

In modern dance, the focus of bodies in space changes because we are influenced by many different cultures, hence the importance of the kinesphere. The changes in vertical and horizontal space significantly change the context of a movement. (pg. 41)

My proprioception is based on my relationship to the earth. I orient myself through gravity and the connection I have to the ground; I can tell if the floor is even because of how gravity is affecting me. My weight pushes against the ground, which pushes me back, allowing me to feel where all of my parts are. Being lifted, I can still feel this; I can still feel the ground through my partner. (pg. 43)

Being on a plane changes the way I feel my body. Planes have momentum, inertia and I am not used to it as being on Earth. As the plane tilts, I feel it tilt, and when it rectifies itself, I cannot perceive it. I feel that the plane is still tilting. How can I bring this to dance? Can I recreate a sensation of arriving at a moment, yet allowing my momentum to slowly continue moving until I topple? Isn't this the whole idea behind a suspension? (pg. 44)

“A place is a pause in movement” (Space and Place, Ti-Fu Tian). Is dance a place? Dance is where movement stops and re-begins with a new lens? Movement requires destination and we dance with no “destination” to get to. (pg. 45)

I find a home in dance. It is my place. It is vulnerable and intimate and caring for me. I find comfort in it. (pg. 45)

Being stuck is a choice. It requires processing to understand: 1) how did they get there? 2) how will they get out of it? 3) whose body parts are whose? I enjoy getting stuck, it suggests challenge and in group ideals. The only way we can get unstuck is through working together, empathy and teamwork. (pg. 45)

The act of touch in the modern college life is almost sacred- reserved only to those who are deserving of the highest level of intimacy. What is my intimate place? (pg. 46)

**1/15/17- *Observations from 40,000 feet***

I am sitting on the plane and I see a stewardess with a tray of drinks for passengers. She is always correct. My first thought was to understand the process of knowing which drink belongs to whom. My brain ordered the drinks into a pattern that was symmetrical to the seats of the plane; the bottom of the tray was for the first seats and so on. Then, the stewardess grabbed a drink from the middle of the tray and gave it to the customer. Each drink appeared to be completely randomized and I was drawn to watch each time the stewardess picked up a drink. I was interested because it betrayed my expectations; I had no idea what was next. The task was clear, the order was not. It became a puzzle that I was compelled to solve. On top of this, we were experiencing turbulence, another task to handle. I watched her counterbalancing the tray

with her body and pause. The whole task was internally motivated, she was only doing her job, but it was so specific, intentional and personal that I felt compelled to watch. The contrast between the task based movement and task based stillness was striking. The first served others and the second was self-serving. As she approached with my coffee, I watched her feet. The first half of her step was to find the ground, and the second half was to pour her weight into her foot in a safe and secure way. I overheard her tell a customer that she would be back with his ginger ale, having memorized his order. Everything about this performance was so full of care and present to the task that I was engaged for the whole time I watched it. (pg. 47, 48)

**1/18/17- Response to Ashley Montagu's *Skin: The Human Significance of the Skin***

According to Ashley Montagu, breastfeeding is the first lesson in "sex" (Touching, Ashley Montagu). I am not sure if I agree with the terminology that she uses in her statement. It is true that some women call the experience of breastfeeding "sexy", but I think this is the cause of our culture's inability to separate the concepts of sex and intimacy. For many people, the only way intimacy is achieved is between two lovers, or people in relationships. A song lyric: "She believes in the standard model of love in which two lovers are bonded into something greater than themselves." Although I prescribe to this model of love, monogamy, I understand that intimacy can come from something other than sex. Of course, being nude with another person does change perception. It is a metaphor: we are exposing ourselves, our secrets, the parts we keep hidden from the world. Bathing together, sharing a bed, lying on top of each other, are all moments of intimacy, for we are prone, in positions that show our weaknesses. This is similar to animals that expose their bellies to people they feel comfortable with. (pg. 50, 51)

The closeness we feel is related to the amount of skin contact we experience with a person. The more we touch, the closer we get. (pg. 51)

Other ways of finding intimacy: Eye contact, telling secrets, sharing meals together, sharing photos, doing chores together and sharing experiences. I see these as extensions of touch- light touching retinas, touching hearts, touching souls, touching cooperation. (pg. 52)

The act of doing physical activities together is working in synchronicity, doing the same tasks simulates similar sensations, effectively uniting their experiences. I call this experience touching souls. (pg. 52)

Why do we desire intimacy? Montagu speculates that we desire to return to the sensations we experienced in childhood and the womb. We want to be cared for. (pg. 53)

When was the last time I felt physically vulnerable? I was still dating Michael. I had injured my back during rehearsal and it was painful to move in any way. He had to physically support me by placing his large hand against my back and lower me into bed. At night when we slept, I would wake up in pain and immediately hear "are you okay?" I was dependent on Michael. He was always willing to assist me in any way possible showed compassion and a desire to care for me. It was truly a moment of intense intimacy for me. I guess that's why the breakup was so difficult for me. I guess that's why I still sometimes think about him late at night. I guess that's why I still

sometimes want to text him. ... I wonder what he's doing now. I wonder if he'll even respond if I text him. (pg. 54)

I want to tell this story. (pg. 55)

*2/4/17- Response to the SITI Company's performance of The Room*

I want to begin my dance as an emotion-sensation, then travel to music. I move because my body compels me to, not because the music dictates me to do so. This requires significant listening to my physical body, emotional body, and its relationship to the music and the piece intellectually. (pg. 58)

When I dance, I am acknowledging the space around me, and I carve space and move it around me. It keeps me present. (pg. 59)

*2/17/17- Reflections of the past year*

It was the year I put on the bandaid. Plastic, perforated and constricting. What the fuck does that mean? How can I heal something by oppressing it? The plastic bandaid smooths things out, but it creates a dead layer between the living substances. I cannot connect with things through it. (pg. 66)

*2/18/17- Heidi's feedback*

“You cannot stick weak contact in the middle of a codified piece and get away with it.” (pg. 68)

*2/26/17- Response to Philippe Petit's Creativity: The Perfect Crime*

The blank page before me inspires fear, excitement and want in my body. (pg. 72)

I tend to move first, think second. (pg. 72)

How to start? With an empty space, a blank page, empty room. Silent chaos. (pg. 72)

Creating art deals with amassing new material, and then choosing which material makes it into the final piece. (pg. 72)

At this moment in my piece, I have four sections to work with. I would like to make three more sections (a solo, a resetting of material and something else). That should be enough for a piece with four rehearsals yet. At this point in the work, it feels like chaos. There is a huge amount of material and no overlying structure or way to organize bodies in space. Chaos is daunting. I already have a mind that is all over the place. So begins the process of finding ways to organize swirling bodies and hoping that everything works well. (pg. 74)

There are several different ways I can organize movement into a structure; unison, repetition, counterpoint and translocation. Unison creates walls of movement. It highlights how people move differently. If I want this movement to look very exact, it should not be in unison.

Repetition familiarizes the audience with the movement. It increases attention to the subtle

changes that occur during each repetition. Philip Glass embraces this in his music. Counterpoint can blend these two into one. It employs having material used at different speeds and orders simultaneously. The focus is on where groups meet up into unison- moments of connection. Translocation is the most difficult for me. Most of my movements are based on full bodied movements, relying on gravity and momentum. (pg. 74)

I acknowledge that I may fail. I have to accept that sometimes things fail and I will survive it. I will find moments that work, moments that won't and I will learn from it. I will work on the moments, analyze, adjust and try again. Like in life and love, how can we grow if we don't take risks? Risk is what keeps art from stagnating. Risk is becoming vulnerable to criticism. I love artistic risk-taking, it's invigorating. In art, I do all of the things I am incapable of doing in life; challenge ideas and people, explode with rage, release anything that bothers me. (pg. 75)

### ***3/3/17- Response to a conversation with Ken Prestininzi***

I should leave a dancer in an audience to make the idea of inclusivity present. There will be people there who are unable or unwilling to go into the creative space. I do not want to punish those who cannot move. (pg. 78)

This ending does not feel quite right for me. I do not want an ending for this piece. I want the movement to end, but I do not want the ideas I am trying to express to stay in the performance space. (pg. 78)

My piece is political. It is based off of the idea of radical love. I do not see my dancers as just dancers, I see them as people who belong to a community, one that supports each other and plays together. Play brings us back to the sensations we felt as children. Childhood never disappears, it becomes a part of us. Everybody has an inner child that wants to come out and find joy. We can play like children. Adult life is not, to quote Hobbes, “nasty, brutish and short.” Life is full of love, joy and opportunity. When I create dance, I try to find positive sensations to guide me. When I find it, I am filled with euphoria. I am not afraid of hedonism- seeking joy is not something to be ashamed of. Dance is pleasurable and joyful and emotionally heightened. I use it as a safe space for healing, release and finding joy. (pg. 79)

**3/17/17- Response to Stephen Nachmanovitch *Free Play: Improvisation In Life and Art***

Stephen Nachmanovitch says that it is fine to have a prepared speech- as long as you are willing to throw it out as soon as the speech starts. This is a matter of empathic connection. When we address people, we connect with them on a level that appeals to the humanity inside of them. I believe that two qualities are available to us when we perform; acknowledging audience and ignoring them. (pg. 81)

Acknowledging an audience is separate from interacting with them. (pg. 81)

When I perform, the simple knowledge of an audience present is enough. Audiences do not need to be human. Skills are not choreography. They are tools that influence the way I move. (pg. 81)

If dance comes from the left brain and words and logic come from the right brain. How can I describe the way I move in words effectively? I find it difficult to do this. (pg. 82)

I take shapes and movement and develop them. If I start at point A, finding point B is dependent on the former. Dance is a line (Linear? Maybe?). Performance is linear, dance is not.

Performance can be based on randomness, but the audience always has the moment that happened previously in their mind. (pg. 82)

Intellecto is the deep seeing of patterns beneath appearances as described by Michelangelo. It is intuition, the knowledge of potential. The potential for movement is inside of me, and I unleash it by moving. I allow my body to move using knowledge of my own weight distribution, position and momentum at any given time. I know what direction my body is going in and trust my body to do what it needs to do in order to move safely. (pg. 84)

Tricks are not improvisation. Tricks need planning. Tricks have a beginning and end.

Improvisation only has a start and finish. To do a trick requires actively setting up the body in a way that will allow the trick to occur. To perform a trick, the dancer must stop the improvisation, executes the trick, and then moves back into improvisation. (pg. 85)

“Play is the spirit of exploration.” To play is to be fantastical, to pretend to know the limits of the physical world and bend them in the mind and press against them. Play is to create something

larger than life to explore in. It can be another world, giving into please and messing with comfort zone. (pg. 85)

Galumphing is one of my favorite words in the English language. It is the word I use to describe the floppy way that skunks run. It implies that they are both coordinated and clumsy. They can run, but their strides are large and all over the place. The skunk can fall without fear of getting hurt. Sometimes when I improvise, I take on this quality. I throw myself around and fall. I have trust in my body. I know that my body will take care of itself. I have training that helps me protect myself. I guess in these moments, I am using Samadhi- a “state of absorbed, selfless, absolute concentration.” I find a moment of zen, pure in the moment conscious release. (pg. 86)

Stephen Nachmanovitch says that improvisation causes the artist to disappear. I don't agree with this. I feel that improvisation augments ourselves to be a truthful part of the work that we are creating. Postmodernist thought states that the presence of an artist indicates the label of art. The act of organizing is art. If we try to disappear while creating art, it makes the art insignificant because it is not motivated(?) People make art for a reason, be it for art's sake or politics or passion. Forgetting is a terrible mistake. To create art, we must surrender ourselves to criticism. This is vulnerability. This is what I am searching for. (pg. 87)

“Dancing is not getting up painlessly like a speck of dust blown around in the wind.

Dancing is when you rise above both worlds, tearing your heart to pieces, and giving up your soul.

Dance where you can break yourself into pieces and totally abandon your worldly passions.

Real men dance and whirl on the battlefield; they dance in their own blood.

When they give themselves up, they clap their hands;

When they leave behind the imperfections of the self, they dance.

Their minstrels play music from within; and whole oceans of passion foam on the crest of the waves.” (pg. 89)

I often will move to the reflection of myself in a mirror. It is a fun pastime for me. I like watching myself move. It excites me to do a duet with myself. To have a movement partner that knows exactly what is going to happen and can move exactly as I can. I have a total connection with this partner. We work of each other very well. (pg. 90)

**3/18/17- Response to Margaret Ramsay’s *The Grand Union: (1970-1976)***

The processes and techniques that I use when I create are second nature to me, but seemed incredibly radical during the 70’s. (pg. 91)

Trisha Brown coined the term Performance Warp, which is the way in which performers go in and out of fantasy and reality during performance. In my improvisation, I think that I do both. I feel like they are essentially the same thing- reality and fantasy. (pg. 92)

I am a student working in his local Starbucks while wearing vintage bell bottomed pants. (pg. 92)

*4/6/17- Response to a conversation with Jess Spencer*

Technique is a form of extraction. Technique is a way to remove ourselves from ourselves. Yes, it is beautiful to see a long leg, but how can we truly embody movement when we don't create it ourselves? Modern dance acknowledges the modifications necessary to move. Everybody moves differently. They are still trying to be something other than themselves. It facilitates connection through similar phenomenal experience. Through improvisation we can find communication that is more personal and more meaningful. (pg. 95)

Improvisation, once it is made physical, becomes set. The perception of linearity is achieved by the audience members. So, the only difference between improvisation and set material is whether or not the performer knows what will happen next. So, why are people so afraid to pursue it? Do they fear that they won't be taken seriously as an artist if they are unable to repeat whatever they have just done? Do they use their technical skills and tricks to remove themselves from being in the moment? Do they fear the vulnerability of moving as themselves? (pg. 95)

When I am stressed or in a threatening situation, I try to protect my heart by softening the pectoral muscles and retreating my chest cavity in space. To accommodate this movement, I lift my shoulders and curve them forward. This is where I keep most of my emotional tension, the pectoral muscles. When they are massaged to the point of release, I will start crying. And laughing. Laughing and crying at the same time. A similar thing happens when my gluteus minimus is simulated. I think this tension is one of the reasons I am still struggling to release muscularity when I dance. (pg. 96)

*4/9/17- An Aurally Triggered Flashback*

Just now, I was listening to *The Phantom of the Opera* and I had an aurally triggered memory. In high school, I did a couple of days of service work in Kentucky. We stayed at a camp with another group in cabins. The other group was from Ohio. There was a guy with them that I was severely attracted to. I remember one night I couldn't sleep and I went to the porch to sit and listen to the sounds of the nature around us. He also couldn't sleep and came out, sat down next to me and talked to me. I asked him so many questions about Ohio. It was interesting to hear about the pastures and farms and culture of the town he came from. My memory of it was vulnerable and open and I feel like it was a very important moment in my pathway to who I am. At the time, I was obsessed with the idea of a movie-like relationship. A type of life where I would sit outside and bask in the sun and meet the perfect guy and have moment after moment of bliss. I wished that what I saw on television was what I was experiencing. I wished that relationships had structure to them. This was the moment that felt most like the life I fantasized about. The next day, it was as if that moment never happened. At the time, it just felt like something that just happened, but it is much more significant to me now. Thinking of the culture of closeted men in Ohio, this man might have himself been queer. Maybe I was a person of interest to him. Maybe he wanted to open up to me about himself. Maybe I was somebody he could use as a role model. Maybe if I can be myself and happy with it, he can too. I might just be projecting, but my memories as I perceive them are very important to the development of my psyche. That night, I was outed by somebody in my group to the Ohioans. They began to distance themselves from me. I was probably the first queer person they had ever met. That

scares me. I think that this is one of the reasons my work is inherently queer. My work is queer. My work is queer. I choose to pursue narratives and ideas that, to me, are manifestations of my queerness. Queerness to me includes ideas of breaking down barriers of masculinity, care, love and intimacy among peers and lovers (inclusive of all genders). I hope that by putting myself as me on stage, I am exposing others to queerness. I want to give us visibility. I also hope to provide support to other queer individuals. If I can put myself on stage as a queer image, I hope that others will feel empowered to express their true selves. I want to create work that inspires others to move and act. I want others to see my work and want to express love to others. (pg. 97-99)

#### **4/16/17- *The Day After the Honors Thesis Performance***

Before the performance of my honors thesis, we arrived physically in the space and prepared our bodies and minds. I was mostly focused on preparing the space with technology and physical preparation. (pg. 99)

Being in the space is a moment of meditation. It is calming. I was so excited to perform this piece. I love to perform. Being on stage is something I look forward to. (pg. 99)

I have recently made the discovery that audiences are out to get us. They do not want us to fail. Audiences come and sometimes pay to see us succeed. Seeing us succeed is pleasurable to them. This pronia is something that I hope to instill in every person that I work with. (pg. 100)

The performance itself was something that I have never experienced before. It felt somewhere along the lines of dance theatre. It reminded me of my days of doing improv comedy. (pg. 100)

The most peculiar aspect of the performance was our interaction with the audience. I have written about how the audience should be acknowledged and included in performance, but I have never experienced it until last night. I really felt it happen. I felt that they were there. The audience reacted to us, we reacted to them. And then, in the end, the audience entered the playing space. I didn't plan on touching each person in the space. I felt compelled to do it. It was a wonderful experience to be able to thank each person for being present in performance. (pg. 101)

It truly became a community. (pg. 101)

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## Appendix A

### The Structure of the Performance

This piece ended being comprised of six scenes and a finale. Each scene was structured differently and had a title. The music for this performance were selections from Dave Malloy's song cycle *Ghost Quartet*. To begin the performance, a grid of six boxes appeared in the corner of the cyclorama.

This is where the number of each scene appears to keep the audience updated on how many scenes have happened and how many are left. Each scene has its respective number projected on the middle of the screen as they occur. I speak to the audience to welcome them to the space and begin a text, "Any questions? What? The last time I felt physically vulnerable?" The piece begins before I can answer my own question:

#### Scene 1- Big Moves Dance Dance

This scene is a section of set choreography. It is large, sweeping and focuses on how the dancers reorganize the air molecules in the space rather than the shapes made by the movements. It is structured as a three part canon, but halfway through, two of the three groups change the speed of the dance. The canon becomes non-isochronous.

The scene was danced to the first musical piece in Dave Malloy's *Ghost Quartet*, "I Don't Know."

#### Scene 2- Glom/ Huggle

This scene is an improvised score. It begins as a glom in the middle of the space. I define

glom as a tightly packed space of dancers that are in continuous contact with each other.

Through this, the audience sees a mass of moving bodies that are in intimate contact with each other. The task is to give others support and ledges to lean on while attempting to find a single center of gravity. A ledge is a term used in Contact Improvisation to describe a surface on the body that is stable enough to take weight comfortably, like the hip joint. Emily Green breaks off and dances an improvised solo that focuses on smooth, flowing movements and suspension of the limbs. The rest of the group breaks off slowly and performs quick, explosive soli in the back of the space except Erin, who moves slowly for contrast. From there, the back line pairs into duets that focus on weight sharing. Jessica walks through the space and touches parts of duets that she finds beautiful.

The projection is a soft pulsating diamond of different shades of gray emanating from the center of the screen.

The scene is performed to the third piece in Dave Malloy's Ghost Quartet, "Starchild."

### Scene 3- Gestures

This is a gesture phrase with two parts. The gestures were built by imitating pictures of taxidermy that I found on the internet. The first part of the phrase is using the set gestures in an improvised order. The second set is a set order.

The projection consists of two solid bars of color, one at the bottom of the screen, one at the top, which change colors in response to the sounds my computer heard in the lighting booth. The lights fade to black over the course of three and a half minutes.

As the music ended, Ashley brings up the lights, steps out the booth and says, "Ruy, what

the fuck?” To which I reply, “I don’t know, I made that by looking at taxidermy on the internet.” Ashley says, “Just go to the Improv.”

The scene is danced to the 15th piece in Dave Malloy’s Ghost Quartet, “The Photograph.”

#### Scene 4- Open Score Improvisation

This scene is completely improvised as a community. The rules are:

1. Direct or be directed.
2. See or be seen.
3. Find a connection.
4. Find a relationship

The projection was a seven minute timer, but the minute and one second number are flipped 180°.

The scene is danced to the ninth piece in Dave Malloy’s Ghost Quartet, “Four Friends” and ended in silence. This allows the dancers to speak to each other and the audience. The dancers do not have a prompt for speaking, but we drew from and embellished moments that worked well in rehearsal.

#### Scene 5- Wildcard or “Just Pick Something and Do It”

This scene is an accumulation of every other scene in the performance. Emily was assigned Scene 1, Erin was assigned Scene 2, Senait and Jessica were assigned Scene 3 and Kelli and I were assigned Scene 4. When Jessica and Senait finish their section, the scene is over.

There is no music nor is there any projection other than the number 5 denoting the scene.

Scene 6- Book 7, Chapter 12, The Tale of Pearl, The Pusher, The Subway Driver and The Photograph

This scene is a structured improvisation. My score is to move to the music in an athletic way for the entire scene. The other dancers' score is to recreate my movement through repetition, holding shapes I form and variation or modification.

The projection is the title of the scene scrolling across the screen. Each section of the title moves at different speeds, creating an illusion of depth and scrolling.

The scene is danced to the 17th piece in Dave Malloy's Ghost Quartet, "Usher Pt. 3."

Finale

Emily Green and Kelli Carlson dance a duet that is a reworking of a solo that I created the previous semester. The duet suggests a relationship between Kelli and Emily Green that is strained, but resolves by the end of the dance. The dance ends in them sharing an embrace and kiss in shadow. I chose to use two dancers in a relationship because I want to emphasize their chemistry. To me, it is a truthful expression of the narrative they have because it comes from a true, loving place in everyday life. As they leave the stage into the audience, I enter the space and deliver my vulnerability text as well as opening the space for the audience to enter. I start to move as a way to process my emotions. The piece ends as the song ends.

The grid of six boxes disappear, leaving the projection screen empty.

The finale is danced to the last two pieces in Dave Malloy's Ghost Quartet, "Hero" and "Wind and Rain."

The Performance Ends.

## **Appendix B**

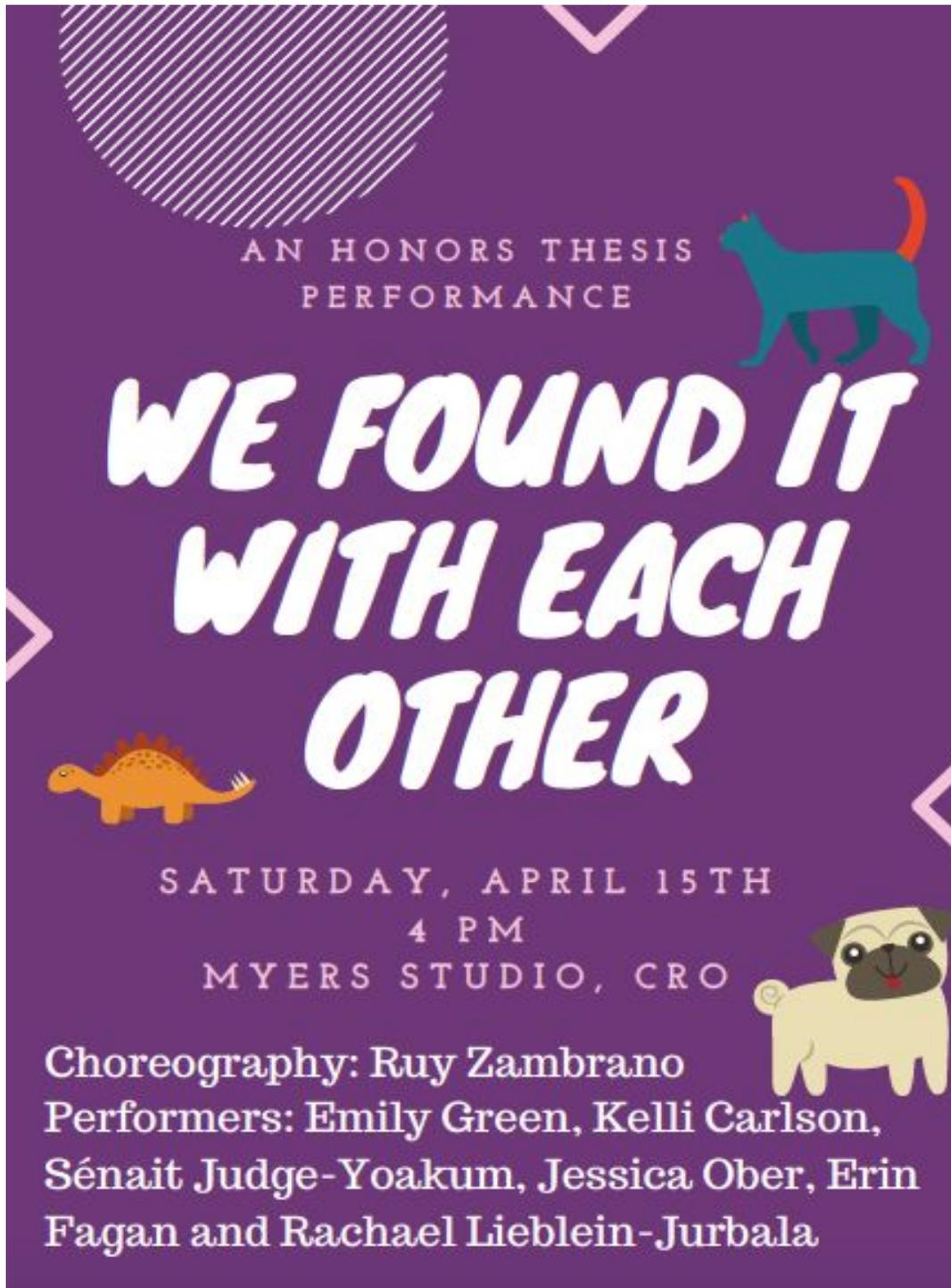
### **Link to Video**

This is a link to the final performance on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/uVFoqOnRDgM>

Appendix C

Poster and Program



AN HONORS THESIS  
PERFORMANCE

**WE FOUND IT  
WITH EACH  
OTHER**

SATURDAY, APRIL 15TH  
4 PM  
MYERS STUDIO, CRO

Choreography: Ruy Zambrano  
Performers: Emily Green, Kelli Carlson,  
Sénait Judge-Yoakum, Jessica Ober, Erin  
Fagan and Rachael Lieblein-Jurbala

# WE FOUND IT WITH EACH OTHER

An Honors Thesis Dance Performance

**Lighting Design:**

Erin Fagan

**Stage Management:**

Ashley Giordano

**Choreography:**

Ruy Zambrano

**Dancers:**

Emily Green

Kelli Carlson

Sénait Judge-Yoakam

Erin Fagan

Jessica Ober

Ruy Zambrano

**Music:**

*Selections From*

*Dave Malloy's Ghost Quartet:*

I Don't Know

Starchild

The Photograph

Four Friends

Usher Pt. 3

Hero

Wind & Rain