

EDITING IN THE CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS:

“I AM A WORK OF FICTION”

by

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I will speak about how I supplemented film editing techniques, such as the “Rule of Six” and montage, among others, to the choreographic process for the development of my dance piece “*I am a work of fiction.*” This paper will tell the story of my process in constructing an original and imaginative dance piece using my experience in the fields of film and dance to bring this piece into existence.

I also will extend my view of montage and editing in other artistic genres such as illustration in the graphic novel and other forms of animation. I will also look at the work of other modern choreographers with whom I feel kinship in relation to collage choreographic techniques, such as Pina Bausch.

I will speak to my process of ‘editing’ in choreography, bringing to light the benefits of following Walter Murch’s “Rule of Six.” Along the way, I will analyze how other artists and choreographers have used similar techniques to spin their yarns and weave their worlds, and how these works of art have possibly influenced my process and preferences, thus attuning my artistic intuition. I will argue for the combination and influence of film editing and the montage to the choreographic creative process.

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CHAPTER 1

WHERE WE MEET THE AUTHOR

In my closet, under my bed, and hiding at the back of dresser drawers, I keep shoe boxes, hat boxes, and other various cardboard boxes of all shapes and forms. In these, I store a treasure trove of ticket stubs, old photographs, broken jewelry, tattered and refolded letters (of friendships, relationships, and all manner of ‘ships’), as well as journals that I have kept on and off throughout my life. I cannot bring myself to simply tip the whole thing into a fire pit and dance around the flames. As much as I want some sort of fresh start, I cannot destroy my artifacts. To do so would be harder than pulling off fingernails, though this seems a little dramatic for the mere lightness of taking out the trash. As I roll my eyes at my inability to throw my past away, I realize that is just it: throwing my past away. For me, these physical reminders of the past keep my memories alive, a literal verification that my experiences did indeed occur. I fear forgetting because I fear that these memories are what make me unique, and without them, I will gradually disappear into the masses.

Perhaps I am clinging to memories too dearly. However, by my own admittance, I live not in the past, nor am I stuck in some kind of vicious cycle of repeating my mistakes or obsessing about memories of the “good ol’ days.” I am, however, quite captivated by the pieces that make up the jigsaw puzzle of my life. I have often fantasized the scenario in which someone comes along to free my memorabilia from their

cardboard homes to intermix the memories together. Magically, all the pieces of this gigantic puzzle would fit together perfectly and instantly that someone would completely and intimately understand who I am. Ladies and gentlemen, live (!) and in the center ring (!), I present to you... my immediate soul mate, my immediate best friend.

Or perhaps if one would add all my scraps and notes together, would another Claire be born of the chaos, a paper Pygmalion? The Roman Poet Ovid once said, “Habits change into character” and moms everywhere tell us that “You are what you eat” and somewhere amongst this advice and warning I start to understand the unmistakable truth: we are what we keep closest to us.

My personal interest in memories and artifacts led me to create my thesis piece, “*I am a work of fiction.*” This piece became an embodiment of a real-life, real-time montage, despite the limitations of the proscenium stage, because of a different method I discovered for myself during the choreographic process. I am a choreographer, as well as a film editor, and for many years, have had my feet in both camps of creative art. Film editing and choreography, though seemingly different artistic genres, have many similarities that are recognized in the action of creation. During the creation of “*I am a work of fiction,*” I researched and investigated the use of film editing tools to develop a different way of looking at and working with dance choreography. In doing so, I have found a successful way to develop a piece and tell a story in a creative and personal way.

The Thesis Statement

In this paper, I will speak about how I supplemented film editing techniques, such as the “Rule of Six” and montage, among others, to the choreographic process for the development of my dance piece “*I am a work of fiction.*” This paper will tell the story of

my process in constructing an original and imaginative dance piece using my experience in the fields of film and dance to bring this piece into existence, from the bare bones of ideas, to the performance made flesh. I have begun to understand, and develop for myself, this different way of addressing the art of making dances, and I want to share this experience with other choreographers.

Not only will this paper discuss my process in bridging the genres of film and dance, I also will extend my view to other genres of art. I am investigating the use of montage and editing in other artistic genres such as illustration in the graphic novel and other forms of animation. I will also look at the work of other modern choreographers with whom I feel kinship in relation to collage choreographic techniques, such as Pina Bausch. The parallels between film editing, choreography, and other artistic genres and artists strengthen the similarities between the editing and choreography.

I want to first identify why I brought my passion for choreography and film editing together. In doing so, I will speak to my process of ‘editing’ in choreography, bringing to light the benefits of following Walter Murch’s “Rule of Six” as a choreographer, as well as explain my process behind each step. Along the way, I will analyze how other artists and choreographers have used similar techniques to spin their yarns and weave their worlds, and how these works of art have possibly influenced my process and preferences, thus attuning my artistic intuition. I will argue for the influence of film editing and the montage to the choreographic creative process.

CHAPTER 2

“I AM A WORK OF FICTION”

My thesis work, “*I am a work of fiction*” was greatly inspired by my personal interest in the memories and artifacts that are used to define ourselves and our lives. As I look at my finished thesis piece, I realize that my fixation with personal details has been beneficial to the narrative and reality that I originally set out to illustrate in the piece. The inspiration acquired by memories and artifacts gave my piece a sentiment of complexity, the beauty of fantasy mixed with reality. This interplay of fact and fiction, of what one remembers verses what actually happened, brings forth a touch of irony as well as a healthy dose of earnestness - things that I believe make a life well-lived. By drawing inspiration from the memories and artifacts from my life and the lives of my dancers, I, with encouragement and collaboration from my cast, was able to craft a semblance of a collective biography. We brought in stories and memories, our personal artifacts of childhood and growing up, anything that we felt was an inspiration for who we each became. Watching this piece was similar to the experience one might have looking through the keepsake boxes, full of memories and important moments of a singular person. By using a montage of sections as the form for this piece, a depth and breadth of information conveyed details that helped construct this portrait of a person. To the audience, I left the choice of whether these moments and memories were meant to represent myself or someone else entirely.

My program note, for the graduate concert, *Bare Bones*, read as follows: “This piece is a one-thousand piece jig saw puzzle. It is the collection of moments, a mélange of details, a gallimaufry, pastiche, a mixed-bag of people, places, and things that when fit together form the soul/body/breadth of a singular person's reality (or the semblance thereof). This piece is my montage of non-fiction battling fiction, reality vs. fantasy, my circus, my mess, my party.” I wrote this program note to perhaps better explain this piece to my audience, perhaps help them to understand the use of montage in conveying a breadth of information in a short period of time. A new life, a new history is being built while the piece is performed due to the audience’s presence and attention to the piece. The memories and details spin together in a collage to create a veritable golem, my beloved Frankenstein’s monster.

Influences

My choreographic inspiration is the montage, which examines the idea that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Many artists have utilized this idea in their own creative and meaning-making process. My thesis piece could not have happened if it had not been for the influence and evolution of these artists who had crafted work using montage. Pina Bausch, a contemporary German choreographer, was of great influence to my work. I will briefly explain how her work has made my work possible today.

Pina Bausch was an artist who I hold in great reverence. Her work has opened Pandora’s Box to the world, giving permission for more to happen on stage. She helped push the boundaries of what could be beautiful on stage, using collages, montages, and a sense of repetition tuned with wit and poignancy. The presence of her work gives permission to other choreographers to also explore similar elements. Bausch’s

“*Kontakthof*” (a rough translation would be “Contact Zone”) (created in 1978, and recast in 2000 and 2008) led me to discover the world of staged montages. I feel as if Bausch created this piece with a great sense of understanding for human life and memory, which is conveyed through the layers of dramatic and entertaining sections and vignettes.

To help me illustrate this sensibility, I want to add the flesh of description to the bones of my introduction of “*Kontakthof*,” and will describe a few scenes that I have found striking and impactful. This piece begins with the dancers sitting in a line across the back of the stage, staring out to the audience, void of emotion, but dressed to the nines. A woman stands and directly approaches the front of the stage as if compelled. She stands, turns and displays her back for a beat, then her face, teeth, fingernails, and other details of her body. It as if she is the show horse and auctioneer rolled into one. As she turns and walks back upstage to her chair, more women approach the audience to display their “goods.” This emotionless formality in exhibitionism is reminiscent of the choosing of a courtesan in ancient Japan, or a brothel, and I am reminded of a seemingly related term, another rough translation of “*Kontakthof*”: “courtyard of contact.” The piece continues on from this point, arranging itself in layered scenes, reminding me of a loosely structured dating game of disconcerting chemistry ranging from innocence to blatant sexual overtones. The next scene that greatly impacted me begins with the lone image of a woman, standing as if she were empty. Men begin to approach her, seeming to tenderly worship and touch her as if in reverence. As more and more men glom to this female figure, their touches become more and more frenzied while exploring her face and body. Their touches become more punishing to this sleeping doll, this hollow woman figure, tossing and grasping her limbs, hair, and clothing. This wit and irony forms the

well-timed rhythm of this scene. At first, one laughs at the hilarity of the image, a women adored at every angle, which gradually pulls the spectator deeper into the horror of this dominance, all the while keeping a bizarre sense of wit about it. Do I keep laughing? Is it not “OK” that these almost-horrible actions make me shiver in nervousness as well as keep my eyes wide to see what happens next?

Bausch’s subtle wit seems to guide her audience through the complex emotional and sensual journey of her choreography, and stands as a testament to her understanding of the human condition. Her works, to me, are dances that are not about the dance. They are about displaying emotion in the rawest of forms. According to Bausch, “*It’s not dance, but only a dancer can do it.*” It is my aspiration to create dances that utilize the layering of elements, which read as coherently, creatively, and wholly as beautiful as Pina Bausch’s work does.

CHAPTER 3

MY MOST LOYAL FRIENDS, CHOREOGRAPHY AND FILM

There are many identifying terms that I can claim for myself. Of course, all the obvious, familial terms such as sister, daughter, and wife. But then we start adding on the identifiers that come from living my life, things that are put into place by my choices and actions, what I choose to do every day: dancer, student, aspiring photographer, film buff, and so on. These accumulate and play together, and finally are entwined to a point where they can be read out like a road map, a resume of who I am and what I am striving to become: teacher, film editor, choreographer, and artist. For the past few years, the combination of film editor and choreographer has deeply interested me. I often feel the innate need for something on which to spin my yarns and further explore my passions: a sprung floor or Final Cut Pro.

Film and dance, and the means to the end - editing and choreography, could be described as cousins. In both film editing and choreography, one takes pieces and moments from the provided goods, be it film or sound or the dance elements, to piece together a particular puzzle. From this act of montaging, a lively mosaic of elements appears as a sort of organization, a sagacity of wholeness and synergy springing from the depth of the fragments. Through the action of both film editing and developing choreography, I find similarities that class them both as methods of discovery.

When choreographing, I take the various pieces to my jig-saw puzzle and assemble together something/anything from the movement language I have created for this task, also utilizing any additional elements I have in my choreographic arsenal. These other elements include an improvisational score, theatricality, and musicality. When creating a film edit, I can take either the “goods” (film, sound recording, sound and film effects) brought to me from an outside director or source, or the goods of my own creation, and build with the pieces. They say that the first step in creativity is always the hardest. When creating a film or dance choreography, the creator is faced with similar decisions, such as: “How does one best frame a moment? How can the transitions between scenes/sections be carried out? Should a transition be noticeable or invisible?” and of course that anxiety-filled quandary of, “What will my first step be?” Like most ventures in creating something out of relatively nothing, such as creating artistically in film and dance, the initial approach can seem daunting.

I am very interested in combining the two artistic genres that excited so much of my creativity. While working on the choreographic section of this research process, I would often refer back to the time in my life that I spent in front of a computerized editing bay as a film editor. During my experience as a professional film editor, I would have to carry out editing tasks that would have to be accomplished in a short and specific time limit. This meant that I had to learn how to make good choices quickly, and not become too attached to ideas that did not work for the greater good of the edit. These are ideals and lessons that I had not before utilized in my choreographic process. These are lessons that I can clearly see would have benefited me long ago, for when I tapped into that source this time around, I was able to move past the ‘preciousness’ I have had a

difficulty with in my past. In the book The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film, by Michael Ondaatje, there is a particular conversation that addresses this point exactly:

Murch: "... as I was removing the scene, at two in the morning, it began to speak to me, as if it were Job, saying, Why are you removing me, me of all scenes who has been so faithful to you, who has tried so hard to accommodate your every wish? And I said, I know what you're talking about and believe me, I've spent many hundreds of hours on you and yet I'm willing to throw all that work away for the benefit of the whole."

Ondaatje: "It's so similar to editing a book, in those final stages of trying to find the right balance for the emerging organic form. It's like pruning trees in a landscape. You've got fifteen trees and you take out numbers 3 and 7 and 9, and once they're gone you realize that --"

Murch: "You see a whole different thing."

Ondaatje: "You can see a different possible form and you discover that a whole new set of trees can go, or should be moved to a new place..." (Ondaatje, 2002, p. 136)

Something that has been categorized as "precious" is something which is "highly esteemed or cherished." The good people of Merriam-Webster liken this to something one would feel towards a most beloved friend (Merriam-Webster, 2013). With this in mind, we easily see that "preciousness" can be a road block for creation. Experiencing such a deep and emotional response for each and every morsel of what I create is quite irrational. This also applies to the idyllic world in which absolutely everything, every single moment of created material, must be put to use. This anxiety is a direct reflection on my collection of memories stowed under my bed, which I keep in order to prevent a loss of self. This irrational behavior, this anxiety to hold on so tightly, hurts no one but me. To define my regular choreographic attitude, I would use the term "pathos," from the general summary from Aristotle's Appeals. Emotional appeal is a comrade to pathos, though a more comparable statement would be to say that pathos plays one's sympathy, causing one to react emotionally. I am played upon again and again by emotion, a slave

to pathos. It is, it was, and will always be exhausting to care so deeply for every single one of my creative babies.

I had an interesting conversation lately, where the discussion turned to this very problem of preciousness. The general consensus seemed to be that all artists seem to tango with this issue at one point or another along their career. All involved in this discussion agreed that no artist can truly move forward in their work until they learn to rid themselves of this preciousness, or rather learn to “kill your babies.” A violent description, but learning to tame your appeal to pathos, and become less emotionally attached to one’s creative “babies,” does not start out with a pleasant feeling.

When I edit film, it seems as though my more relaxed side takes hold. I forget the “preciousness” of each and every moment and break the beast down to a more manageable, and thus more artistically effective, work of art. I let the pathos fall away in lieu of “logos,” another category in Aristotle’s Appeal.

Logos refers to the internal consistency of the message--the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence. (Ramage, Bean, & Johnson, 1998, pp. 81-82)

I suppose the urge to cherish is not present in my emotional toolbox during film editing because of the very nature of working with insubstantial material, a.k.a. computerized film clips, which can only be captured and held onto by a machine. In the real world, these film clips are merely a series of zeros and ones trapped on a memory card, and cuddling up to a memory card is a cold night, indeed. This fragile and transitory state of the artistic “goods” does not flip any emotional switches on in my film editor’s head.

Of course, this calm collectedness in the face of editing becomes warmer when one works with their own creations. Whether the creation is being crafted with an

editor's own hard-gotten footage, or it is the reality of a choreographer's creative babies, preciousness creeps in. For me personally, during my time editing my own film projects, the logos of the editorial mindset are still in effect. But, yes, there is a softening by the pathos of "preciousness," which does make the emotional journey of the idealistic choreographer to the harsh difference of the logical/editorial mindset a hard course to take. I will later discuss this point later on, when I reveal my more recent projects concerning this research.

Throughout my years of professional experience as a film editor, I was more often than not separate from the physical filming of a movie, thus making me unattached to the experience of first creation. I was able to understand the ideas and intent of a project and turn them into something that logically made sense, despite what happened during the initial capturing of the film. Whether or not I used the cinematographer's most hard-to-achieve shot, the shot the director and crew took hours to set up and 30 takes to finally nail down, was never something I fretted over. If that shot was right for the overall intent of the film, I made sure I used it... but if it was not right, I threw it away without a second thought. The film editor has a responsibility to assemble the clips in the most artistic and orderly fashion, to develop an edit that simply *feels* right.

In the book *In The Blink of an Eye*, Murch (2001) helps us become aware of the emotional differences of the editor verses the director (or anyone who worked directly on the film during a shoot). This book allows the reader a glimpse into the editor's unique reality. An editor is able to have an incredible condition of having an incredible amount of influence on the film without ever fully understanding or knowing the history of the conditions that influenced the filming:

If you have been on and around the set most of the time, as actors, the producer, director, cameraman, art director, etc., have been, you can get caught up in the bloody practicalities of gestation and delivery. And then when you see the dailies, you can't help, in your mind's eye, seeing around the edge of the frame – you imagine everything that was there, physically and emotionally, just beyond what was actually photographed. “We worked like hell to get that shot; it has to be in the film.” You (the director in this case) are convinced that what you got was what you wanted, but there's a possibility that you may be forcing yourself to see it that way because it cost so much – in money, time, angst – to get it. (Murch, 2001, pp. 23-24)

I am well acquainted with this feeling, especially when working on choreography that I have invested in emotionally. I cannot see the sky for the clouds. This is why my editor's attitude helps me greatly:

The editor, on the other hand, should try to see only what's on the screen, as the audience will. Only in this way can the images be freed from the context of their creation. By focusing on the screen, the editor will, hopefully, use the moments that should be used, even if they may have been shot under duress, and reject moments that should be rejected, even though they cost a terrible amount of money and pain. (Murch, 2001, p. 24)

This is an attitude that has helped me sort through my process of collaboration with the dancers of “*I am a work of fiction.*” Despite all the improvisation and choreography being terribly important to the individual who created it, I had to use my less emotional and precious side to cut and paste where I felt like it would benefit the piece as a whole.

CHAPTER 4

THIS IS HOW WE GET THINGS DONE AROUND HERE

I take a very visual approach to my research. However, before I launch into the research process of combining the creative elements from film and dance, I want to discuss my role as a physical artist, especially during the embodied nature of the movement development for *“I am a work of fiction.”*

The dance is full of movements, phrases, and gestures that originally came into being because it felt amazing to execute with my own body. Take, for instance, the balletic attitude-like turns, which are threaded throughout the entirety of the work. That movement came about from a motion I became entranced with: a backwards, spoking gesture, performed by the threading of the toes behind the opposite leg at an extended angle. Feeling that magnificent pull, which reached from the tips of my toes, cross-laterally stretching through my torso, up through the shoulder, and arcing into the sky from my out-reached finger tips, thrilled me. I became inspired by this feeling, of letting the movement build and pull my body in such a luxurious way, till the turn was realized and I could waltz-step my way to starting it all over again on the next leg. This movement inspired me to imagine an image of a perfect, pristine, and innocent music box dancer, encapsulated in time by childlike whimsy. Another example of movement built in this personal sense is a repeated gesture sequence coupled with the constant rise and fall of relevés. Initially, I gave myself the question of what would I do if I lost the ability

to move forward. The answer came back at me, “Rebel... you can still move up and down.” In answering this movement question, I found that the relevés were the most interesting means of solving the riddle. I became absorbed with the burn my muscles felt at having to perform this repetitive balletic movement, and so I kept the rise and fall going. I enjoyed tasting the pain of exhaustion, and the driving strength I felt when I was able to keep pushing away from the pull of gravity was exhilarating. To top off these relevés, I wanted to perform gestures that would tell the story of breaking away from something. The gestures start so clean and classical, again exploring the idea of beauty and perfection. Then, I would use my hands to distort my face and mess up my hair, mushing and stretching everything in a very satisfying and tactile way. To punctuate the end of this gesture sequence, I would yank my mouth violently downward, opening my mouth with a “pop,” leaving me distorted and unattractive. I enjoyed this stretch of my gaping mouth. Perhaps this is why I would repeat it over and over again, enjoying this stretching and enlivening of my facial muscles, moving those muscles in a way that felt like waking up.

I develop movement in this way simply because it feels good to do. A dancer could be taught to feel similar details and emotional cues from the movement, deepening the connection between dancer and movement. I teach this type of embodied movement to dancers because I believe that the shared physicality of the sensations found in the executing of the movement could become translated and developed as emotional content and intent for a dance piece. This brings me back to the process of meaning making in the dance, and how I became entranced with my research topic.

During the choreographic process of working on "*I am a work of fiction*," I found that though the choreography was well-danced and exciting for me as the choreographer, the structure of the piece, in the long run, was not working. The spark of deliciousness just was not there, and the work took on an even-keeled blandness. The vicious cycle, of holding onto absolutely everything that I created, was becoming realized. This was a stubborn problem. I was not completely enamored with all my "creative babies," but I didn't quite understand how to dig out the choreographic gems. I wanted to free myself from the constraints of using all the material I had created, but I didn't understand how to best 'shake up' the piece in a way that would strengthen the flow of the work, and thus the intent. I was at a stalemate of "preciousness" and anxiety, having created a glut of good elements and a lack of understanding to juggle them all. Having basically forced myself into a corner, I decided to try something drastically new for myself. I decided to try editing "*I am a work of fiction*" as I would a film. In this process, I consequently realized new life inside the creative process of choreography.

When I first threaded together choreography and film editing, I developed a very tactile way to "edit" the overall arc of the piece. I realized that I needed something more tangible, like a puzzle piece, which would serve as a proxy for each specific section. To start, I named each section of my choreography, and wrote those names down on separate flash cards (for example: "Chaos Carousel," "Corridor," and "Family Portrait," just to name a few). This happened at a time after I had done a great deal of sculpting and manipulating with our collective movement vocabulary and individual improvisations. At this time, each section of the piece was starting to crystalline the form it would finally take, settling into a distinct personality and beginning a life inside the world of "*I am a*

work of fiction.” Although there was much subsequent choreographic crafting necessary to finalize the piece, the sections were ready to find their place inside this piece’s make-believe realm.

In retrospect, I have found this “naming” to be quite significant to my overall process. Being able to encapsulate a bigger picture or idea with a name of its own gives the one doing the naming a power and strength. With one magic word, I can recall the images, emotions, and muscle memory needed to fully remember that particular fragment of history. With this power, we had an instant recall of everything that section had undertaken during its journey through production, from the moment of inspiration, through maturation and fruition. This “naming” happened quite naturally for me as the choreographer as well as for my dancers, who had to live inside this make-believe world for me, since I couldn’t be in both places at once. We were able to take command inside this choreographic process, probably because I had already been so focused on accumulating pieces into a whole. I feel as if “naming” gave my cast and me a shared power of memory. In the end, the task of naming was completed without pomp, perhaps even without a second thought. But for me, giving the section its name was like giving each of the sections permission to truly find its life inside the dance, an epiphany that speaks beyond the sections of the piece.

After each section had received its name, I spent a moment envisioning the bare floor in front of me as a Final Cut Pro timeline. I then laid these cards out on the floor on the makeshift timeline as proxy film clips to be edited, and was able to move these “clips” around each other, trying out different patterns and possibilities. This somehow opened my mind up to the piece in a new and different way. This card game, although

new to me and my creative process, I have recently discovered is often used by other choreographers. Using this tool, I no longer thought of my role as just the choreographer, but now I was able to see myself as an editor. Envisioning the dance in this new light gave me a newfound sense of freedom to really play with the way this piece was to be seen. With it also came the independence to drop the characteristic preciousness I have often had in previous choreographic experiences. I spoke before of the characteristic clear-mindedness that comes with the logos of a film editor. My film editor side was more apt to dismiss the chaff from the wheat, to see what logically and artistically worked for the edit in terms of design. Was it following structure principles of shape and form that were personally visually appealing? I had protection from using each and every moment of choreographic material I had in my arsenal. Under this mantle of Editor, I had found a way to forget and forgive the process and myself if I hypothetically “killed my babies.”

The process of editing with the flashcards went something like this: using my “timeline” I would arrange and rearrange the “clips” into whatever order was the flavor of the moment, then try out this new piece in real time. This was done by using the tool of “instant playback,” meaning that the dancers would physicalize the new edit. Instant playback worked well, but I also tried to rely on my own innate sensibilities for the piece. I would refer to my timeline, with its new choices of what the “should be, could be, may be” was, and then I would mentally do the calculations to the practicality of the choice to the emotional and narrative flow. Either way, a choice was made and then remade, until I could trust a choice against the other options. Trying the possibilities in many different ways helped me restructure my piece. The choices I made were dependent on whether or

not the piece could transition invisibly into the next “clip,” a process of trial and error. This was an intuitive action based on my aesthetic sense of whether or not the transition made choreographic sense. I didn’t want the dance to feel choppy or unlinked, despite the idea of montage. A large contributor to what I equated to be transitional “gold” came from the advice and editing techniques as outlined by the film editor’s Bible: Walter Murch’s, In The Blink of an Eye (2001).

CHAPTER 5

MARRY ME, WALTER MURCH (OR WHY YOU SHOULD IMMEDIATELY READ IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE)

In The Blink of an Eye is a book I initially picked up as required reading for a university film editing class. Unfortunately, I didn't have the good sense to really dive head first into the good words of this book until I started reading Michael Ondaatje's book, The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film (2002). Only after devouring that particular book did I make the connection that the fascinating artist and the man who wrote my text book were one and the same. In both books, Walter Murch discusses something he has coined "The Rule of Six." The Rule of Six is a brilliant list of rules Murch created to advise other film editors in the task of creating an entertaining and artistic edit. These rules are something I have adapted for the task of editing choreography. These "Rules" became a set of inspired instructions that I found quite beneficial when editing the movement sections of my choreography.

Murch introduces "The Rule of Six" by dismissing the preconceived notion that, in editing, one must precisely and completely follow a character from point A to point B. Early film editor's rigorously held to this rule, keeping sacred the ideal of continuity of "three-dimensional space of action." The following is an example of three-dimensional continuity: *"In shot A, a man opens a door, walks halfway across the room, and then the film cuts to the next shot, B, picking him up at that same halfway point and continuing*

with him the rest of the way across the room, where he sits down at his desk, or something” (Murch, 2001, p. 17). In actuality, Murch has placed the importance of “three-dimensional space of action” at the very bottom of “The Rule of Six,” instead looking at a very different element to place at the top of these regulations. Emotion comes to the lead of this list, with Murch asking the question:

How do you want the audience to feel? ...If they (the audience) are feeling what you want them to feel all the way through the film, you’ve done about as much as you can ever do. What they finally remember is not the editing, not the camerawork, not the performances, not even the story – it’s how they felt. (Murch, 2001, p. 18)

After reading these words, I was greatly impressed and wanted to somehow figure out how I could apply this knowledge to choreography.

“The Rule of Six” reads as follows:

1. Emotion
2. Story
3. Rhythm
4. Eye-Trace
5. Two-Dimensional plane of screen
6. Three-Dimensional space of action

To better understand my use of these principles inside my choreographic experience, I will outline my use, rule by rule, starting with Rule 1: “Emotion.

Rule 1: Emotion

Emotion has always been a constant guide in my life. I find myself greatly ruled by my emotions, which, at times, can make me too passionate. However, I have found that my emotions have also been a loving companion as well, allowing me to choose my

pathways of life with authenticity as well as mental and spiritual honesty. Walter Murch has made emotion the king of “The Rule of Six.” According to Murch, emotion is the “... *thing that you should try to preserve at all costs. If you find you have to sacrifice certain of those six things to make a cut, sacrifice your way up, item by item, from the bottom...*” (Murch, 2001, pp. 18-19).

When the question of how to proceed with the editing of my choreography arose, I knew precisely what I had to keep with life and limb. Why wouldn't I use emotion, something that would ring with authenticity, the very thing that could grasp the hearts of my own audience? To me, the task of pulling out the emotional content was easy. What elements of my piece will do the most to *immediately* draw my audience in? I had to think of what first reaches out to me as an audience member, remembering what is the most instantaneous in manipulating emotions. To me, the answer was obvious: the sound. To this point, Walter Pater has said, “*All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.*” (Durant, 1984, p. 8) Personally, I find this quote helpful in describing the immediacy of emotion that music can bring forth.

I have often felt that the best dance pieces I have witnessed have employed music as a tool of punctuation and underlying guidance. The music neither drowns the movement, nor does the movement dwell in a world separate from that of the sound. The music is there to help draw the choreographer's emotional intent, not to spell it out letter by letter. I am an avid music listener and performer, having spent time in many musical groups ranging from the symphonic orchestra to many a small town band. Not only have I felt the instantaneous emotions that sound can bring, but I have watched the emotional

flow thread its way through the crowd of watching upturned faces, wrapping itself around hearts and throats. The influence is almost tangible.

Personally speaking, when I hear a song that moves me, I cannot help but move. It must be one of life's truths: good music, good sound, can pull you onto your feet towards inspiration. This is a feeling like no other. The only way I could begin to describe the impact a good song has is that it is as good as waking up from a good nap or breaking through the surface of the water after a free fall from a high dive. It is like falling in love. Bob Marley described this feeling perfectly, "*One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain*" (Moseley, Butler, Beames, & Giles, 2012, p. 108).

In "*I am a work of fiction*," I wanted to model the emotional flow on something I felt connected to personally and emotionally. As I worked out the order of the movement and sections, I had to also figure out an appropriate way to keep my intent alive and the emotional narrative flowing. I did this by comparing my piece to an album of music, or rather, a "mixtape."

Montages are everywhere. We find another example of this in the montage of the mixtape and the professionally mastered album. Crafting a "mixtape" or an album is an art form, and the creative process of each can be very personal, despite the level of formality or informality used in the creation. "Mixtapes" and albums are examples of complex puzzles, or edits, with separate pieces coming together, complementing one another. Professionally mastered albums can be fantastic examples of a well-arranged montage. Often, the album uses motif, theme, and variation, which is used in the making

of each song as well as the album as a whole, so the result is a highly effective developmental device.

So, music and the soundtrack can help to build the emotion. Another method of pulling certain emotion(s) to the foreground of the audience's experience is to utilize spoken word and monologues. Part of the process in creating this piece involved the dancers bringing in past writings, or emotionally responding to a writing prompt in rehearsal. From these writings, I pulled poignant moments, such as the moment a dancer confessed her pure unadulterated hatred of her mother, or the time a love note was read out loud by a blushing giggling dancer, telling her boyfriend for the very first time that she loved him. The intensity and importance of each moment was genuinely felt while the dancers read their essays to the group. I wanted to somehow capture this moment in the dance, and how better pull that moment to the foreground but to read that moment out loud, for all to hear and react to again and again? Spoken word is felt so literally upon reception.

I utilized this in the "Valentine" section of the piece. Two dancers had made the shape of a heart with their arms, perpendicular to the floor, so that the other dancers could unabashedly bat their eyes at the audience through the heart, creating a sort of "valentine." A dancer delicately pushed her way to the front of the group and softly opened up the "heart" shape to be handed a microphone. Then she found her voice to shyly tell "Kyle" that she loves him, citing the content of a love note written by another dancer. I then followed the "Valentine" section by a selection from another dancer's 2nd-grade diary, a new love story, told in a series of diary passages and read by the author herself. Behind each of these monologues was a quiet desperation of secret telling, as if

the uncovering of the truth inside the moment would make the speaker finally “OK.” Each story was backed by a creation story inside of the piece, again being backed by real life stories and emotions. This layering of history added depth and poignancy to the presence of the monologue.

Layering music and spoken word, as well as the “in-the-moment” sounds of play and delight, became a foundation for the construction of the fictional realm of “*I am a work of fiction.*” The musicality extracted from the dancers for the choreographed movement also emphasizes the emotion of my intent. I strongly believe in the musicality of dance, but not in the ideal of “mimicking” the music, as a drill team or studio dance might. This is something I find distasteful in large quantities. “Mickey Mousing” the music is a tool that should be used sparingly, especially if one wants to show a sensibility to the artistic nuances of the narrative. According to Dika Newlin, the term “Mickey Mousing” is used in animation and film as:

... synchronized, mirrored, or (general) parallel scoring... it is a film technique that syncs the accompanying music with the actions on screen... The term comes from the early and mid-production Walt Disney films, where the music almost completely works to mimic the animated motions of the characters. “Mickey Mousing” may use music to “reinforce an action by mimicking its rhythm exactly...” Frequently used in the 1930s and 1940s, especially by Max Steiner, it is somewhat discredited today, at least in serious films, because of overuse. However, it can still be effective if used imaginatively... (Newlin, Dika, 1977, pp. 25-35)

Musicality, not “Mickey Mousing,” is the aim of most choreographic giants. George Balanchine, who has been regarded as one of the foremost ballet choreographers of the 20th century, was a truly musical choreographer. As a choreographer, Balanchine largely pushed for the dancing to be “the star of the show,” rather than a focus on other elements, such as plot and music, considered to be there to purely serve the dancing. His most celebrated ballets were often choreographed to modern music, such as “*Agon*,” with

music by Igor Stravinsky. In “*Agon*,” Balanchine explores more modern choreographic themes that are beyond just a reflection to the music. Though the dancers’ positioning on the stage at times seemingly reflects the perfected symmetry of the classical art form, the movement often takes the dancers into layered canons or mirrored movement, all of which is driven and punctuated by the discontented strings of Stravinsky’s work. The energetic and explosive nature of certain sections of the movement, which includes the initial “Pas de Quatre” of male dancers as well as the following section of long-legged, high kicking ballerinas in the “Double Pas de Quatre” and “Triple Pas de Quatre,” shows off Balanchine’s understanding of the edginess and anxiety built by the unorthodox sound (at least it was considered to be unorthodox by some at the premiere of “*Agon*” in 1957.)

Throughout the years, Balanchine approached Stravinsky’s music with an understanding of the sound that abstracted visually, though he also, at times, would approach it in juxtaposition. Balanchine himself wrote:

We must first realize that dancing is an absolutely independent art, not merely a secondary accompanying one. I believe that it is one of the great arts. Like the music of great musicians, it can be enjoyed and understood without any verbal introduction or explanation ... The important thing in ballet is that movement itself, as it is sound which is important in a symphony. A ballet may contain a story, but the visual spectacle, not the story is the essential element. The choreographer and the dancer must remember that they reach the audience through the eye — and the audience, in its turn, must train itself to see what is performed upon the stage. It is the illusion created which convinces the audience, much as it is with the work of a magician. If the illusion fails, the ballet fails, no matter how well a program note tells the audience that it has succeeded. (nycballet.com, n.d.)

Balanchine’s ability to craft work that is both influenced by music but not ruled by the music allowed him to successfully create an extraordinary body of work. This in mind, one does have to consider that there are times and ways that “Mickey Mousing” can be a helpmate to a choreographer.

Mark Morris is another choreographer who is known for his ability to join movement and musicality in a wholly remarkable and interesting way. In her biography on Morris, Joan Ancocella states,

... in most cases what is shocking – or surprising, unexpected – is simply the quality of the dancing, which is often slightly awkward or in most cases, just very deliberate. Even when the dancers are doing something beautifully, you can still see their intention, their effort. You can see the exact thing they are doing; it doesn't elide into a nice smear of dancing. This deliberateness gives the movement a disturbingly direct quality. It is a little too close to physical reality, and hence to certain emotional realities. As Morris has said, there is always something "a little uncomfortable" about his work. (Ancocella, 1993, pp. 10-11)

His creations have often been described as visual representations of the music, though this seems to just be a very nice way to say that Morris “Mickey Mouses,” though I believe, however, that his success lies in his ability to not be slavish to the music at all. Take for instance his piece “*O Rangasayee*,” a solo, originally performed by Morris, to an Indian raga by Sri Tyagaraja (Ancocella, 1993, p. 52). Clad solely in a loincloth, Morris/the dancer would fall further and further into a grotesque frenzy. His lunges and large spherical pivots would follow the shifts in music as he traveled up and down a diagonal, shaking and nodding his head, shifting an accent here, shortening the phrase there, all in tune with the music. The dance would grow more abandoned and suggested gestures and images reflect a deep pain, and the dancer would fall further into the shocking dark character of his device, consumed by the pulse of the mixture of movement and sound, a rhythmic engine towards a sort of hypnotic reverence. Though the musical score is revealed through Morris’ choreography, he has an ability to appropriate the sound in his own personal movement creation, twisting the rhythms with his movement to enhance his intent. His creativity and wit over-rules the ‘Plain Jane’ formality of simply being led by the sound.

Morris and Balanchine are examples of creative minds crafting dances that are underscored by the sound. To better understand musicality, I have analyzed a work of Pina Bausch, “*Café Müller*,” which has been known as one of Bausch’s most remembered and referenced pieces.

“*Café Müller*” was set to the music of Henry Purcell’s “*Fairie Queen*.” If one pays attention to the musicality of the dancers, it is revealed that Bausch has used the music to underscore the emotion felt inside of the movement, and not the other way around. Take for instance the “Sleepwalker” soloist role (danced originally by Bausch herself). The dancer, eyes closed and wandering, stretches herself through the space, as if to gather up the entire room into herself, defining the overall world Bausch builds in this piece. The music underscores the dancer’s blind grace, though we never see an exact replica of movement and music. The music is the thread that holds the emotion in front of us, but the movement develops the emotion further. The ‘Sleepwalker’ is juxtaposed to the sometimes frenzied action of the other dancers, who increase the drama by repetitive urgency. This builds the action to what Purcell’s opera promises in dramatic heights, though the dancing never occurs exactly in time with the phrasing of the music. I believe that Bausch’s success in “*Café Muller*” lies in this work’s ability to hold attention, without spelling out each and every detail. We see the understanding of Bausch’s musicality in the way her choreography brings forward the intensity of the music, without a strict “Mickey Mousing” of the musical form. Her creativity lies in her ability to hear the music and let it underline the vivid language of the movement, with its emotional and very sensory detail.

I developed the emotion for "*I am a work of fiction*" in other ways. I established emotion through the "edit" of positioning each section and how the juxtaposition of each section to another would ultimately read as a narrative. I would consider each edit I could make to the piece, at each particular moment, and tried to find the best choice that would give the appropriate emotion to that moment, even if it meant sacrificing elements that were lower on the list of the Rule of Six. I crafted my transitions in order to give the piece the flow it needed to best convey the emotion of the intent, using the seamlessness of the invisible transition as well as juxtaposing ideas to portray a feeling of a "jump cut." An invisible transition is one that effortlessly takes the narrative or intent forward, as if it were a sentence without a punctuation mark. An idea flows directly into the next idea, a steady rhetoric rather than a stilted conversation. Creating a seemingly transition-free edit is an art form unto itself, though I often found myself worrying less about an invisible transition if the emotion between the two sections (or "edits") didn't hold true inside that option. Often, a dramatic shift in the emotion held the audience's attention better than another invisible transition.

An example of this is found at the end of the "Family Portrait" section. The dancers each dive across the stage, to roll into a line behind a soloist, coming to a standstill. The soloist, who has been tucked into the downstage corner, has also been performing a variation on "French Duet," which includes gestural movement and the repetitive relevés. The athleticism of the movement, as well as the strong build in the music (a powerful, yet sorrowful, mix of strings, drum machine, and electronic synthesizer) is contrasted drastically by the smallness of the soloist's movement. The dancer only becomes truly noticeable after the rolling dancers have frozen behind her,

and their low level stillness is juxtaposed against her height. The music changes to a whimsical music box chime and the soloist steps through the still bodies. Her motion to the upstage area becomes the impetus for the resting dancers to slowly curl inward, gradually rise to their feet, and follow behind through a corridor of light. In this moment, I am catapulted from an emotional high, to a new emotional thought, which almost becomes the swan song for the athletic frenzy that the piece just experienced. This example of layering, of going from drama, to stillness, to a simple emotion of innocence, was compelling. The ability to cut and paste moments together gives the choreographer an ability to heighten and emphasize these emotional moments. They do this using either the juxtaposition of a drastically different moment, or a seamless transition. In this regard, I was able to keep Walter Murch's "Rule 1: Emotion" at the top of my choreographic and editing priorities.

Rule 2: Story

Once upon a time, the middle, the end; Rule 2 is "Story." The Rules state that the "*top two on the list (emotion and story) are worth far more than the bottom four (rhythm, eye-trace, planarity, and special continuity)...*" (Murch, 2001, p. 19). I am a sucker for a good narrative, be it literature, movies, music, and eavesdropping on others on the train. I love the feeling I get when immersed in the story. This is especially the case when it comes to watching a dance piece, modern, contemporary, or ballet. My best experiences as an audience member have been during pieces that take me on the emotional journey, while simultaneously expressing a narrative. But to me, there is a balance of symbolism, metaphor, and outright storytelling inside a gripping narrative.

On crafting a narrative, Will Eisner said,

All stories have a structure. A story has a beginning, an end, and a thread of events laid upon a framework that holds it together. Whether the medium is text, film, or comics, the skeleton is the same. The style and manner of its telling may be influenced by the medium but the story itself abides. (Eisner, 1996, p. 9)

I would like to add the dance to the list of mediums. For any of these mediums the arc of the story has limitless possibilities, dependent on the artist's creativity and intent. In Will Eisner's book, Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative (1996), we are presented with a graph of a typical story arc, which reads as follows: "Introduction or Setting," "Problem," "Dealing with Problem," "Solution," and finally "End." This typical narrative layout, a basic skeleton in storytelling, can be utilized and manipulated at the artist's will. A story is pulled from the series of ideas in a creative way, and finds its home in a structure of focused order. Once the structure is established, the story/arc of the work becomes a "*vehicle for conveying information in an easily absorbed manner*" (Eisner, 1996, p. 11).

In dance, film, and animation (in both film and comic book/graphic novel form), there are similarities in the vehicle to convey the message. Each of these art forms uses imagery to transmit the story or intent, though the use of words (a.k.a. actual dialogue) as a way to convey the message differs from piece to piece, art form to art form. In graphic novels, the communication of the intent is based on the interplay of both words and the images, both in an equal importance and chemistry between the two. This communication influences the way the story is conveyed to the reader, and the manner with which or through which the story is delivered.

One of my favorite musicals, *Urinetown*, mentions this matter, saying: "*...nothing can kill a show like too much exposition.*" (Hollmann & Kotis, 2003, 1.1.19-20) Too much of an explanation of the work, during the work, can quickly turn me off to the

experience of the piece. This line applies to literature, movies, music, and eavesdropping on others on the train. I do not need an obvious story to feel the impact of the emotion. To have the entire subject matter spelled out can seem too desperate, or it can seem like the choreographer does not have the chops to support the piece in more artistic ways. Too much exposition can ruin a story, making it too easy to understand, and by my personal standards, boring.

I stayed away from spelling out the rules and regulations of the world of "*I am a work of fiction*" by appealing to emotion through the use of symbolism and repetition inside the choreography. An example of this is found in the movement phrases found in the initial solos of the "Our Next Winner Is" sections. Each solo is used again and again throughout the piece, sometimes hidden in a larger set of movement, sometimes performed en mass, ever present and gradually more familiar. Take the choreography performed initially in a beginning solo, characterized by traveling balletic movement of chaînés (a ballet term meaning a series of rapid sequential turns), followed by a high leg arcing through the air, and topped off by a low to the ground capoeira-like shift. We see that later in the synchronized group movement, which serves as a transition from the "Carousel" section to the "Family Portrait." This portion of traveling choreography draws the focus away from the previous moment of chaos to a moment of familiarity and togetherness.

We again see this phrase towards the end of the piece, when the dancers run up the middle of the stage in pairs to perform the phrase in a canon. This movement serves as a change from the chaos that preceded it. The intent of this movement can be described as a sense of gathering or ingesting the space as much as possible. Through the

use of symbolism in the imagery, and repetition in the movement, I could further link my jigsaw puzzle-esque narrative, adding to the overall fluency of the piece by bringing forth images that could be recognized by the audience again and again.

The choreography of the “French Duet” (named for the music that scored the dancing of this section: “*Sous le ciel de Paris*,” by Edith Piaf) was the source of a great deal of the repetitive imagery and choreography throughout the piece. For example, there is a specific movement sequence that is found often throughout the entire dance that haunts me. The movement of the in-place relevés, accompanied at first with very specific balletic gestures, would then morph into stretching, seemingly past the dancer’s own limits of their own skin. This would then transform itself into a desperate grasping gesture, mashing the face and mouth, until the dancer would figuratively pull her own jaw off and drop it carelessly to the next dancer. This dancer, who would be either curiously watching and waiting, or frantically running towards their partner, would catch the falling (imaginary) object. I love the drama of that moment. It was clear and had the ability to be a flexible section of choreography, which is why this, despite the dramatics, became a root of many other movements, with their own meanings and histories. Repeating and altering this image, as well as other significant movement phrases, either with exactness or a variation on the theme, helped link the overall narrative of the piece. This repetition was an attempt to possibly bring an audience to a place of familiarity, involving them in the world, invoking their sense of emotion, which was built in the previous viewing(s) of each particular moment. My goal for my audience, upon experiencing the emotions and seeing the familiar choreography, was to build for themselves what the narrative could be, without having to have “too much exposition.”

Rule 3: Rhythm

Walter Murch gives a practical side to following his set of rules, which is “... *if emotion is right, and the story is advanced in a unique, interesting way, in the right rhythm, the audience will tend to be unaware of (or unconcerned about) editorial problems with lower-order items...*” (Murch, 2001, p. 19) Murch also points out the fact that the top three items in the Rule of Six (emotion, story, and rhythm) are tightly linked together. “*The forces that bind them together are like the bonds between the protons and the neutrons in the nucleus of the atom*” (Murch, 2001, p. 20). In her book, Cutting Rhythms, Karen Pearlman defines the importance of rhythm as:

Rhythm is how we understand the meaning of information, interchanges, and images in relation to one another... Rhythm is part of the sensual experience of film and a core means by which we interpret and understand what we see and hear. So the “dynamical changes in time” that are the core of the choreographer’s art are also the core of the editor’s rhythm shaping art. (Pearlman, 2009, p. 28)

In this book, Pearlman also brings forth a question that I have often thought about inside my own research on rhythm: “*What can be said about the shaping of a film’s rhythm beyond saying ‘it’s intuitive’?*” She researched the tools and methods editors use to craft timing, and how that timing, or rhythm, functions in film. She also addresses what type of thinking is occurring when editors refer to their intuition:

... I found that what an editor is doing when creating rhythm is creating something that “feels right,” but that that sense of feeling right – that rhythmic intuition – is an explainable psychomatic phenomenon and not a veiled and indefinable one. Making an edit feel right is the editor’s contribution to a film, her signature, but it is not just a gift or talent. Knowing when something feels right is an awareness that can be trained and developed. (Pearlman, 2009, p. 247)

Pearlman states that sensitivity to rhythm is a “body thing,” and that rhythmic intuition is acquired physically, through “*kinesthetic empathy and mirror neurons*” (Pearlman, 2009, p. 10) (mirror neurons are certain nerve cells that activate when both

doing an activity and observing another perform the activity). Rhythmic thinking can also acquire knowledge through the body's own natural rhythms, such as the pulse.

Pearlman addresses rhythmic thinking further:

In the process of cutting a film, knowledge of rhythms of the world and rhythms of the body support, extend, and enhance the creativity, judgment, expertise, and sensitivity that editors use to cut rhythms. Knowing what some of intuitive knowledge are, and how that knowledge is assimilated, opens to the editor the possibility of actively developing and articulating her rhythmic intuition. (Pearlman, 2009, p. 247)

Pearlman recognizes the art of choreography as a way film editor can further their knowledge and understanding of rhythmic intuition because of the similar way dance makers and editors manipulate movement. She understands that the art of making dances contains consideration towards the shaping of movement and energy over time, and that this is one way of understanding the craft of cutting rhythms.

Part of Pearlman's research investigated a study named Choreographic Cognitions (2000), written by a team of Australian researchers and choreographers. This study addresses how dance is made and how it can be perceived by audiences. Pearlman argues that this cognition of rhythm in dance is similar to cognition of rhythm in film. The Choreographic Cognition team explains how time is an expressive and artistic medium of dance, much like film, and one might understand what movement means due to its use of time and energy (again, like film). In the Creative Cognitions team's words,

The artistry of movement is in trajectories, transitions, and in the temporal and spatial configurations in which moves, limbs, bodies, relate to one another... change to a single component can affect the entire interacting network of elements. (Stevens, 2000, p. 4)

We begin to recognize the parallels of rhythmic understanding as Pearlman furthers her argument in saying that editors, like choreographers, "*shape the trajectories*

of movement between shots” (Pearlman, 2009, p. 27). An editor works with time-based and space-oriented dynamics to create a stream of images that carry significance.

I earlier addressed Pearlman’s belief that the body’s natural movements instruct a choreographer and/or an editor to acquire rhythmic knowledge, speaking directly to “pulse.” Personally, I find this research interesting because before investigating this aspect, I hadn’t thought that one’s intuition for rhythm in dance and film editing would be positioned so directly with one’s automatic and most natural self. Pearlman claims that,

Pulse is the smallest, the most constant, and perhaps the most ineffable unit of rhythm in film. It is ever present, just as in your body. Pulse in film has a few other characteristics in common with a living body – it tends to stay within a certain range of speeds, it organizes the perception of fast and slow, and it keeps the film alive. Just as in a living body, if a film’s pulse stops, slows, or speeds too much, the results can be dire for the rhythm, the story, or the experience of the film. (Pearlman, 2009, p. 28)

Think of a beating heart, with its continuous off and on, emphasizing with precision. This, when reflected back to an edit, can define and establish the dynamics in timing within a cut, as it does within a single shot. This punctuation of this pulsation can be used to place extra effort on a part of a movement or shot. This juxtaposes the less active points of the movement or shot. The dancers or actors can develop their personal movement, musicality, or character to hold a distinctive energy or pulse that is used to carry the movement phrase or scene. This energy/pulse is the intention behind the creation, and perhaps is what is most distinguishable to a viewer or audience. Because it centralizes the moments and motions that encapsulate key information, the pulse accomplishes this lead role in expressing significance.

A choreographer, like the film editor, has to make choices about the pulse of their piece, sustaining, altering, and harmonizing the pulses into movement sections.

Movement phrases in both choreography and in film editing are “*compositions of*

movement into perceptible and intentionally formed rhythmically expressive sequences” (Pearlman, 2009, p. 29). These “expressive sequences” contain a series of interrelated movements and assembled emphasis points that relay the intent of the phrase. Doris Humphrey’s book, The Art of Making Dances (1959), is a guide in shaping qualities of movement into phrases. Pearlman greatly acknowledged Humphrey’s abilities by utilizing inspiration from The Art of Making Dances to develop questions for film editors about their choices in shaping phrases. Two of Humphrey’s methods, as emphasized by Pearlman, struck me as most important to shaping rhythm: “Symmetry and Asymmetry” and “The Phrase.”

“*The phrase,*” Pearlman states, “*is a composition of movement into a perceptible and intentionally formed rhythmically expressive sequence*” (Pearlman, 2009, p. 38). Her questions for editors regard the shaping of rhythm in the edit: “*What is the cadence of this rhythm? What is the rate and strength of its pulse? Where are its rests and high points? Where are its breaths and shifts of emphasis? Does it have even or dynamic variation of accent by stress? What about accent by duration?*” (Pearlman, 2009, p. 38)

The next method I want to focus on is “Symmetry and Asymmetry,” as outlined by Humphrey. Symmetry and asymmetry can be used to create tension by both choreographers and editors alike. In both cases, the editor needs to reflect on rhythm needed to convey the appropriate emotional intent, or “style.” A disruption, like an asymmetrical cut, can break up the normalcy of a smoother, more classical style of symmetry (characterized by an even pulse), bringing drama to a rhythm. Considerations to the rhythm styling, such as this, emphasize the question of balance versus unbalance,

measure or manic, the overall scope of how you want your phrase to establish your story and emotional content.

Anytime a film editor works with time and energy, they are valuing the distribution of movement. Perhaps unaware, the editor also undertakes attentiveness to phrasing and spatial organization. The choreographic sensibility is useful to the film editor in shaping story, creating an experience of time, energy, and movement. The film editor, in crafting the given information, is also responsible for the qualitative experience of the story. They are the choreographers that craft the time and energy from which the intent emerges, molding the images into cohesive emphasis pulsations. They craft phrases that can be “*varied, juxtaposed, interpolated, and shaped within themselves and in relation to each other to make the overall experience of time, energy, and movement in a film that is known as rhythm*” (Pearlman, 2009, p. 39).

Pearlman also discusses two specific ways that a choreographer might take in shaping movement phrases, ways that provide an illustration for the commonalities of editing and choreography, ways that I found myself using during my own process in creating “*I am a work of fiction.*” The first technique provides for the choreographer to build a movement sequence using “*inherent timing, spatial organization, and emphasis, and then teach that phrase to the dancers*” (Pearlman, 2009, p. 30). It would be as if an editor was given indisputable self-contained sections created by the film director, making the editor’s job to realize the director’s set rhythmic intent, rather than create their own rhythm out of the goods provided. In this case, the pulse is not what establishes the transitions for the editor, but the preset phrase. Therefore, the time must be already present in the shot, before the editor starts their job of making the edit feel the intended

rhythm. The second method in which a choreographer might work is to give their dancers a movement problem, an improvisational element of sorts. This action of collaboration is something that I found useful when trying to bring my piece a more in depth sensitivity to who my dancers were inside the created world of “*I am a work of fiction.*” A choreographer can take the pieces and fragments, the collection of “clips,” created by their dancers, and sculpt them into phrases. In connecting and shaping the fragments and phrases, there grows a chronological flow to the piece, a spatial organization, and the determination on the emphasis. This is an overall more montage-like process, with the time being realized in the cutting of the piece.

Editors, like choreographers, take pieces and fragments of action and connects them together in a cohesive and artistic way to make phrases: “*Rises and falls of emphasis, direction and speed changes, size, shape, and performance are all shaped into the dynamic flow that is the ‘cine-phrase’s’ meaning*” (Pearlman, 2009, p. 32). Whether it is in the creation of a film or dance phrase, the phrasing of movement’s rhythm will convey a majority of the movement’s meaning. “*Choreographers make dance phrases, and editors make cine-phrases, but both are shaped by the tools of timing, pacing, and trajectory phrasing*” (Pearlman, 2009, p. 248). “Trajectory phrasing” is a term Pearlman uses to describe the phrasing of movement energy and direction. It directs the choices for which an editor manipulates a selection of shots/scenes, determining the whether the phrasing will be conjoined smoothly, or linked in an abrupt juxtaposed collision, and how the pulse of the action will be punctuated. The trajectory phrasing, along with timing and pacing, are part of an editor’s (or choreographer’s) intuitive somatic intelligence, and are part of the choreographic shaping of the narrative arc of a piece. To create a readable

story, shaped with cycles of emotion and tension, to build a rise, fall, and release, is the purpose of rhythm in film and dance. The punctuation rhythm brings can immediately indicate meaning and probable intention at a physically recognizable level. The audience might follow the story and emotional intent because their own pulse/rhythm can become in sync with the film's/dance's rhythm. Perhaps this rhythmic ride gives the spectator focus and unity for the duration of the piece before them.

Rhythms can be crafted by the editor (or choreographer) according to the priority of the scene. For my piece, I focused on the emotional integrity of the intent, but one could also focus on the physical movement or the event as a whole. To distinguish the build of the rhythm, an editor must understand the differences between the priorities of rhythm and how to best shift between priorities if more than one is present in the work. For example, if an editor/choreographer needs to articulate a priority of physical movement, then they need to understand that they are dealing primarily with physical rhythms. The cadence of the edit pertain to the pulse of the energy, the degree and attentiveness assigned to the movement, and the cycle of tension that is brought with the movement of the action and/or shots. If the emotion is the priority from the rhythmic intent, then the choreographer/editor must direct the rise and fall of the content to help form the emotional intent. As discussed in the earlier Rule of Six, "Emotion," the emotional rhythm is sculpted by the physical image and sounds. An editor/choreographer can train themselves to better see/craft emotion by understanding the cycle of *"preparation-action-rest, actions and beats that course through the physically visible performance, and use the movement of these cycles to throw the emotional energy from one shot to another"* (Pearlman, 2009, p. 250). In this way, the editor/choreographer

gives distinction to the emotion of a piece or phrase, using time and energy to form the performance. The last rhythm to define is the shaping of event rhythm. To understand this type of rhythm one has to understand the audience they are addressing, how they will assimilate information, and their expectation of change. To this, Pearlman states,

To shape event rhythm effectively, the editor has to continually refresh and retune her awareness of her own kinesthetic responses to the movement of the events in a film. Editors sculpt the tension and release in scripted events by working with the timing, pacing, and trajectory phrasing of ideas and information across the flow of the whole, not just the individual scenes or parts. (Pearlman, 2009, p. 250)

The three kinds of rhythms, physical, emotional, and event rhythms, are often joined to create the rhythm of the film or dance. A rhythm and its components might not be experienced cognitively because rhythm becomes a felt phenomenon with the intake of the finished product, an intuition, just as it was during the process in editing it. In Gabriella Oldham's book, First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors, there is a quote by renowned film editor, Merle Worth, which sums up the cognition of understanding rhythms:

It is not cognitive in the conventional way that we understand the word. You are looking from inside the bloodstream of what's going on. Initially you are working exclusively in the realm of intuition. (Oldham, 1992, p. 320)

I noticed this as I began to edit my thesis piece that the job was made easiest when I would maintain the proper allowance of time to pass for each section. This ideal timing made the story work, which made the emotion work, and vice versa. I would notice when a section would become stale or when it needed more time to spin the world and intent out in a more detailed and thoughtful way. For me, a section of "*I am a work of fiction*" became stale when my focus would drift, pulling the detailing away from what I had originally intended. I was keen on the idea of keeping the timing fresh and varied.

Rhythm is so important to the artistic integrity of a piece. This is not exclusive to dance works, but many other genres of art and entertainment as well. The pacing of any “lived” piece relies on the movement or action happening inside of the piece. As a choreographer, I am often trying to determine the rhythm by trying and retrying different ways for the movement phrases to live inside the piece. I do this by experimenting with the movement. How does it need to end? Does the movement require more time to support the overall intent of the piece/of the moment? Does it look right, and why? These questions are playing inside my mind as I sculpt the piece, seeing each moment as a unique element, to be deliberated as an individual supporting the whole. I have noticed a great connection between choreography and film, as well as other genres of art, in which this spirit of investigation and examination of the timing is present. Richard Williams, famed animator of “Who Framed Roger Rabbit?” and writer of The Animator's Survival Kit, described his development of the rhythm of an edit for an animation piece by using a tactile and movement-based method using a coin to determine the action of a ball he wants to animate:

So we have spacing and timing. The two basic elements of animation. To experience this, take a coin and film it under a video camera. First plot out the timing – where you want the ball to hit the ground. Then push the coin around – taking a picture at each frame. – and see what looks right or wrong. Try it with different timings and spacing. You’re already animating. You’re already dealing with the important fundamentals and you haven’t even made a single drawing. You’re doing pure animation without drawings. (Williams, 2001, p. 37)

Here we see that a tactile sense of movement is keenly sensed by the artist in moving an object around the frame in order to find the best fit for each unique moment. The creation of an animation is spaced in time either on a page or on a screen; much like a dance or film is spaced in an area of performance. There is a fellowship to other forms

of art that I gain when I see how that animation requires a similar spirit of research that has helped support my own choreographic process.

Finding a rhythm, the pulse that directs one's craft, is a very personal matter. My feelings toward the amount of time spent on a certain section of the piece will be quite different from another choreographer or editor. Perhaps there is something about understanding rhythm that can be learned from studying the nuances behind comedy, which is known for working well only through the use of good timing. When does a comedic sketch stop/start being funny? What would you do to make the sketch work, using only the characters and scenario at hand, and not breaking the physics and rules set up by the scene? The practice of perfecting a set scenario is something that could be useful, but perhaps this form of editing is a talent that only comes with hours of practice, miles of ink, years of critical analysis, as well as personal intuition, honed by years of understanding that experience. Perhaps understanding this type of rhythm is also something that takes a lifetime to learn, and in the case of comedy, natural talent.

**Rule 4: Eye Trace, Rule 5: Two-Dimensional Plane,
Rule 6: Three-Dimensional Space of Action,
and (what this all has to do with) Framing**

During the choreographic process of "*I am a work of fiction*," I was able to understand the importance of directing focus in regards to keeping the rhythm, story, and emotion as key items of regard. I have decided to combine the last few rules of the "Rule of Six" in order to better describe my process in choreographing the focus and framing of the piece.

If carried out properly, a good transition should be invisible to the audience (unless otherwise intended by the choreographer). Hiding the seams of one's work is a

hard job for any seamstress. The seams, or transitions, are the beginnings and endings of each section, crafted in this way to build a narrative or to show individual intent of the section. This is precisely why it is hard for some choreographers (and editors!) to craft their transitions with ease. For me, a good transition in film has a great deal to do with the how we experience framing.

Picture the proscenium stage as a movie screen, as if the dance piece you were about to watch was actually a film. In envisioning the theater as a screen, you give the space a “Two-Dimensional Planarity,” which perhaps gives the viewer or editor/choreographer a less complicated ideal to contend with, though this should only be regarded once the piece has been three-dimensionally built and rehearsed. This technique should only be used once decisions have been made, and one needs to sense whether or not the focus and framing is ‘working’ for the piece. In this imaginary film, try and concentrate on what is directing your focus during each point of the piece, and why. Where do you naturally want to look, and was it where you originally intended the gaze to be?

Surprisingly, I found that logic, even common sense, takes a back seat when directing the audience’s focus. For example, sometimes the most common sense thing to do would be continue along the vein of following an entire song, from beginning to end, but that was not the appropriate artistic choice to be made. Despite having laid out the blueprint of the music myself, I found myself cutting into the mix, ending the sound at unexpected moments, consequently finding a good emotional edit as opposed to the more logical choice. Note that a choreographer or an editor can only do so much to direct an audience’s focus. The audience will look where they may, and in the end, that cannot be

controlled. I was, however, able to do what I could to direct the audience's "Eye Trace" by determining what section layered against the next, ultimately deciding what part of the stage held the importance by how I ordered the sections. This element was also upheld by stage lighting. I believe that the audience could possibly more easily believe in the 'cut' as long as it is made believable. This decision was made by understanding entrances, exits, and what had to happen next to keep the emotional narrative present and pushing forward.

I was able to leave behind the ideal of following a character completely through each logical step, which is what Murch refers to when he talks about "Three-Dimensional Space of Action," for example, following a character from the moment they reach a staircase, each individual moment of stepping up each and every stair, followed by a shot of the character reaching out, finally grabbing a door handle, turning the door handle, pulling the door open, and so on. This step-by-step process can become exceedingly boring, especially since audiences raised in the last 10 to 20 years have been molded to expect jump cuts in their entertainment, from watching TV, and commercials, to the patterns of modern film. In a way, jump-cutting the action of the piece might actually help modern-day audiences to understand or retain the piece better. Perhaps the quick or invisible transition invokes persistence of vision, the phenomena of the brain to perceive visual continuity. Watching every single second of time can take away from the appropriate rhythm of the edit, as determined by the emotion, story, rhythm, and our audience's intake of the image.

The truth is that time happens in a relative manner to whom is experiencing it, taking into consideration how it is experienced. "Three-dimensional space of action" is

how a dance naturally occurs. However, throughout my creative process, I did not feel as if the “here-and-now” nature of the live performance had to completely be bound to the deliberate nature of “three-dimensional space of action.” In divorcing myself from this idea, including the preciousness that comes with the action of the ideal, I was able to further promote the montage-like quality of the piece, juxtaposing scenes and emotions next to another. Also, in leaving behind the rigorous “three-dimensional space of action” ideal, I found a way to fine tune my skill at building invisible (or rather, next-to invisible) transitions, further juxtaposing the emotions, thus adding to the montage effect. This separation is a specific way I was able to help keep the top rules of the Rule of Six prioritized (emotion, story, rhythm).

Animation, another form of a framed entertainment that is spaced in time either on a page or on a screen, shares an interesting likeness to the creation and editing process of film and dance. In each of these three genres, framing stands out as an important aspect. The frame, the box that holds the action or life of the work, is the entire world of each character. Beyond the edges of the frame, into the blind field, the audience is left to build onto their framed reality using their own imaginations. For most of the time, the audience does not need to see past the edges of the clip to understand the intent of the piece, and they take that extension past the edges for granted. It is an unconscious act, which happens when the story, structure, and intent can hold the audience enrapt. This happens in successful dance works. The audience becomes absorbed into its world.

The idea of framing is the basis on which graphic novels are enjoyed. The story is carried out through a series of panels, typically stacked in strips in a very constricted way. Graphic novels rely on the format in which the graphic novel is structured (the page

or ‘strip’ layout): “*Stories told with graphic narration must deal with transmission. This has an influence on the manner in which the story is told and the influence of the story itself... [Here the] readers and viewers identify the content with the package*” (Eisner, 1996, p. 14). The way the graphic novel or comic strip is formatted has an influence on the way the focus or intent is framed and carried forward in the story arc. The reader or viewer of the graphic novel can “*identify content with its package,*” but “*a story told in an unconventional format may be perceived differently. The format has an important influence in graphic storytelling*” (Eisner, 1996, p. 14). The size, shape, and format of the framing does so much to shape the reader’s understanding and overall experience of this type of art entertainment.

As a choreographer and a film editor, there is much to learn about framing from studying the format and framing of animation, most specifically the graphic novel. I am most interested in learning from the limits of the graphic novel, and how the graphic artist understands framing an image or the action of the moment to tell the most dynamic story. How can I translate this form of editing to the way I choreograph a dance work? Aspiring young artists have often sought answers to their framing and formatting questions from comic gurus Stan Lee and John Buscema, who teamed up to develop the book How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way. In this book, Lee and Buscema address compositional topics to help artists understand the importance of design:

Call it composition, call it layout, call it design – it all adds up to one vitally important point: you’ve got to put your picture together so that it’s pleasing to the eye and it gets its message across clearly and interestingly. The one crucial rule you should never forget is – the simpler the design, the easier it will be for the reader to understand and enjoy it. Make your designs exciting, startling, powerful – but keep them simple. (Buscema & Lee, 1978, p. 110)

This book has given my choreographer's mind some great pointers on framing a scene in a more dynamic way. In this book, the artists give a few examples of a normal comic book scenario, read normally, with nothing standing out to give the reader a sense of drama: "*Dr. Strange is entering the room. It's a flat, simple, obvious camera angle. Nothing really dramatic or unusual about it*" (Buscema & Lee, 1978, p. 116). They then show the same few panels redrawn, this time thinking of each frame as a new "camera angle," which they determine to be a vital element of design: "*Same situation, but by changing the camera angle see how the scene has a sense of urgency, of impending drama*" (Buscema & Lee, 1978, p. 116). These new frames are undoubtedly more dramatic, thus becoming more enticing to the reader/viewer, keeping them entertained and excited to read onward. Like film, camera angle is addressed as a way to optimize the story visually: "*Obviously you, as the artist, can draw a scene from whatever angle you desire. You can look at a scene head-on; you can tilt the "camera" (the viewer's eye) upward, or down, or sideways, or any way you wish, just as a movie director can arrange his camera shots to his own taste*" (Buscema & Lee, 1978, p. 118). The viewer is directed in the focus of each frame, pulled into different details, giving the reader/viewer a more emotionally charged moment to sink their teeth into.

The motion and the drama of a scene can be emphasized by the way you look at it. This is something that Lee and Buscema stand by in their writings. These techniques stand true in animation, and I am certain that these principles would hold up in dance as well. These instructions that Lee and Buscema give to other illustrative artists are a reflection on techniques utilized when editing or choreographing. These concepts hold up in choreography and film, despite having real motion in and out, and all over the

frame, as opposed to the stasis of the set page of the graphic novel. In each of these mediums, the artists try to best utilize the space within their frames in order to tell their story or convey their intent. Learning these points on framing a scene (such as the “Rule of Thirds” and other visual art design principles) has opened up my choreographer’s mind to different possibilities in staging my own scenes. Understanding the editing involved in animation, and in other forms of visual and performance art, is research that I hope to incorporate in my next projects, as I quest to better understand editing used in other art forms.

Because of the nature of a piece performed on a proscenium stage, one has spatial elements that contribute to the “cutting” of the edit. Of course the dancers are performing in a three-dimensional plane of space. The nature of dance is to be present and accountable for every moment presented, unlike film which has the ability to cut out certain moments, and move forwards and backwards through time and space. The dance is not undertaken in different dimensions of time and space. It is alive. At the same time, we have the ability to disappear off the edges of the three-dimensional space of action, falling off the frame, into a place that may possibly take on a metaphorical sensibility in which the audience is left to their own design for what exactly is happening around the edges of the space.

For the initial performances of “*I am a work of fiction*” I chose to pull up the edges of the curtains and wings, showing the audience the backstage area and the presence of the dancers in their various states of repose or in their preparations to move again onto stage. When I rid the stage of that metaphorical off-stage area, I felt as if I took a further step in giving information on as to whom each these dancers were inside

this made-up world. I did this to provide a way to widen the world of this piece, giving the audience more details to taste and images to connect with. In a way, the dancers became another sort of audience, witnesses inside this world to whatever action or story unfolded on the stage.

As I mentioned in talking about framing in graphic novels, the audience may not be fully aware of their ability to see past the frame. Perhaps there might be some truth in the statement that the audience might be unaware of their own imaginations at work. It is left up to the “suspension of disbelief,” a term that rules most forms of theatrical performance, and contributes to the mindset that the play is somehow continuing just outside the frame of what the audience perceives.

Artists of graphic novels have figured out a way to emphasize what exactly is important for each panel drawn. They know that by grouping together the important elements of each scene, they can better draw the audience’s eye to their intent. If the end result of the picture drawn is that too many of the important elements fall too far from where the artist intended the focus to pull, they will try again and again until “*everything falls within a pleasant, unified mass*” (Lee & Buscema, 1978, p. 110).

In choreographing “*I am a work of fiction*,” I often relied on similar techniques intending to manipulate framing to draw in focus. I was intent on keying the audience in on the ‘main attraction’ of the moment, as well as the idea of framing in a more dramatic sense. To clarify, I wanted to pull the focus to the moments that were important to the progression of the intent, as well as to the moments of action or poignancy that I personally believed would be most entertaining. I tried to stay away from a framing layout that was too narrow in its view (upstage to downstage, which often can feel flat if

used too often) by juxtaposing the action of the scene, as well as the transitional movements or sections, on diagonals. By shifting a dancer, pointed more to corners, an audience is better exposed to a more complex view of the body and movement. I found that layering in the vertical/upstage-downstage manner made the dancers, and subsequently the movement performed, almost too tidy, and lacking in power and dynamism. I wanted to keep the audience champing at the bit to see what happened next, and these diagonals became my way of ‘tilting the camera’ like one would see in a film edit or even in a more dynamic graphic novel layout. I personally feel that finding the variety of the space/framing on stage helped me better pull the focus in a more direct manner, keeping the action and story flowing. To this point, Lee and Buscema stated, *“Once you train your eye to find such patterns, the most complicated picture will lend itself to similar analysis as soon as you look at it”* (1978, p. 110).

I aimed to direct the eye to where the center of attention is. This could mean the stage en mass, or any particular point, right down to an extremely narrowed and framed moment, such as the split-second occurrence the “Corridor” section breaks loose into frenzied running and pushing, which then spills across the stage, until the dancers stop at the edge of the apron, hands touching, arms shaping a heart, in which the rest of the dancers trip to freeze their very pleased faces inside the negative space of this living valentine. This is followed by another section of spoken word, backed with background dancing, which was still very frontal and framed. Unlike the previous sections, this monologue section had a keen awareness of the front of the house. This gathered a large percentage of the focus, despite the scattered chaos of the “Playtime” section the rest of the cast was performing far upstage.

Lighting also had a great deal of importance as to how I was able to direct focus. Adding this element into the whole completed the world on stage in a very comprehensive way. Together, the lighting designer and I were able to devise a plan that would emphasize the important features in the piece. Having an outside eye look at the piece was interesting. It told me what an outsider would consider important. We emphasized and narrowed in on the important pathways of the piece, where the key entrances and exits would be taking place, and built an atmosphere that would set the emotional tone for each section of the piece. The finishing touches of lighting assisted in fine-tuning the focal points of the piece, punctuated the intent, and perhaps even had a hand in guiding the audience towards a deeper understanding of the piece.

CHAPTER 6

THE END IS NEVER THE END

My process throughout working on "*I am a work of fiction*" has taken my choreographic process into some new territory. Not only did I find out much more about choreography and my creative process utilizing a film editing background, but I also had a chance to begin a new part of this research process.

I have begun a new process of investigation using my choreographer's eye to look at the way I treat the film editing process. To do this, I decided to take the "French Duet" section from "*I am a work of fiction*" and film it as a Screendance. The experience of looking at this choreography in the mindset of a director and film editor became a whole new journey. My hope is that through writing about this process, I can come to a better understanding of how filming and editing a film through a choreographer's eyes could help promote the creation a whole new world to "*I am a work of fiction.*"

Essentially, movement was the same, the dancers were the same; the difference in making the "French Duet" a dance for camera piece was and is in the way an audience would now see the piece. I wielded a camera, capturing the movement in a way that brought the piece to a more intimate level. I was not stuck in the frontal space of the piece, as one would be sitting in a theater seat. I slid around the movement, looking at it from new spaces and angles. I looked at the piece more closely, using tight shots and detail shots, shots that would have entirely been missed when the piece was originally

performed on the proscenium stage. Being so close to the movement, feeling the air as limbs flew past my eye in the camera, and feeling the more intimate moments and connections between the dancers, gave me the sense of being a new dancer suddenly thrown into the fray. Of course, this new dancer was not ever seen on camera, nor was she/he manifested in any substantial form in the narrative arc. This new dancer became the eyes through which the piece was brought into consciousness.

The “new dancer’s” role is important, vital to the existence of this new piece. The camera/dancer directs the focus of the piece, pointing out exactly what needs to be seen, in the order in which it is seen. Through the new dancer’s eyes, the subtle details and artistic nuances were manifested, giving the film an intimate and almost introverted arc.

To be perfectly frank, this new dancer is you. The new dancer could be anyone who has seen or will see this new version of the duet. By absorbing oneself into the experience of a dance for camera piece, like any other type of film, you (the audience) are pulled into the journey of being the eyes behind the camera, directed to see what the film directors and editors place before you. I feel this relationship, of audience to camera, to be both dependent and circular. The audience is there to see, just as the film is there to be seen. Just as the film relies on the willingness of the audience to be guided through the journey of the film, the audience relies on the film to take them on that journey. The film should to entice them, guide them in that way it was meant to be seen.

During the film editing process of this new piece, I keenly felt my choreographer’s eye take hold of the process. I felt like this was the case because of the three-dimensionality of the original choreographic experience of the duet. The choreographer’s eye helped me edit the filmed version of the duet in a more tactile and

embodied sense. The filmed movement became a more living and breathing entity, something that is alive and sensate. The linear sensibility of editing on the computer software can still be there, but now the very organized structure of a timeline seems to open up to more possibilities. I can approach it in a more three-dimensional way. Starting at the middle, or anywhere at all inside the piece, and working out to towards the edges now seems like a more viable process than the simple institution of the one-way linear edit.

My choreographer's sensibilities have broadened my mind towards the possibilities during the editing process. Because of the way I originally knew the choreography, I could use the process of filming and editing the piece to more directly narrow in on my intent. I was able to direct the audience's focus of the piece by specifying precise movements. As a choreographer, crafting with film, I was able to direct the audience's eye in a way that would move the piece forward scene by scene, using edits that shaped the choreography with clean, almost invisible, transitions. I have also started playing with the sense of imagery, and visual keystones, something that I enjoy seeing and employing in the development of live choreography. I believe that if I use this sensibility, it can further my intent in the screendances I will make in the future. The images developed in the choreography, captured in the film-making process, and emphasized in the editing process will be crucial to the way I spin the stories and build the worlds of each piece.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Here I am at the end of this journey, looking back with a sense of pride in my choreographic work. I can sense how my choreographic skills have been sent through the refiner's fire, identifying the growth because of the journey it took. Along with this furthering of my dance creativity, I have also broadened my grasp on film editing. I called this the end of the journey, but in reality, this is a new beginning. I have opened doors for myself because of the research done in working on "*I am a work of fiction*" in a theoretical sense as well as in practice. Because I have gained a better understanding of the bridge between the mediums, I have gained a new level of depth to my perception.

I faced some real challenges during the creative process. Not only did I battle with my sensitivity in holding on to all my creative babies, having to overcome the plague of the "preciousness," but I also found challenges in working in collaboration with other dancers. Once I had got over my need to be "precious," I had to deal with my dancers' own need to be precious. During my creative process, I would sculpt and craft from the other dancers' improvisations and movement creations. I had to hold my dancers to the same standards I held myself, and at times, this was in conflict with egos and personalities that were less apt to follow my editorial zeal. I had to be confident in my convictions, and take charge of all the movement created for this piece. This is

something that I will continue to work on, as I more finely tune my choreographic eye and leadership position in creative projects that include collaboration.

There are a few key insights that I have gained. I have begun to reflect on the ways and means in which I create in both art forms. I have gained a new lens through which to see possibilities in creation. I also hope that this research might bring other choreographers more understanding of the possibilities that come with utilizing film editing techniques, such as the “Rule of Six” and the creative possibility of the montage. Another insight I have gained is my ability to better understand alternative modes of storytelling. My eyes have been opened to the world of spinning tales, weaving my story net, doffing the narrator’s cape. I have grasped a better understanding of the work I have to do to make a story, edit, or piece of choreography unique, interesting, and appealing.

Each of these insights has helped to support my excitement for further investigating the combination of choreographic elements and film editing. I am excited to better understand how the montage influences my art making, and how I can later use this tool with more skill and dexterity. I have the tools necessary to make art that is meaningful and evocative. I now feel as if I have the tools necessary to throw open all the boxes and drawers, those which keep my memories dear, and finally begin to share the mess that montages me.

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