Conversations

An Honors Thesis (HON 499)

By

Adrienne DeWeese

Thesis Advisor
Sarah Mangelsdorf

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

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Abstract/Rationale:

A full-scale dance concert including lighting design, costume design and construction, sound editing, and of course, my original choreography comprised the concert Conversations. Along with the creative side also came the research into my family history. Even though they didn’t know it, family and friends were somewhat under the microscope at family gatherings as I was trying to engage them in discussions about their history, from my grandmother’s childhood and my father’s career. The purpose of this thesis presentation was to delve into my own family history as well as examine family structures in general. I used the topics that were discussed and the general feelings I got from these conversations and took them and used them as inspiration for the choreography and themes in my dances. I hoped to show how valuable and precious our time with our family is in addition to celebrating my family and all that I have learned being a part of it. The following five dances were chosen because of their ability to cover general topics as well as ones specific to my family. I wanted the presentation to still be something that the whole community could enjoy and identify with. Time was also a factor. I created as many complete works as I could in a year’s time and the following is what came from that time.

The Roads of Truth and Wisdom:

This dance took form primarily in style first. I decided I wanted an up-tempo piece to contrast what I usually do as a dancer. I usually dance slow lyrical pieces; I wanted something more fun and lively this time. As we worked on the choreography we began to establish the use of the diagonals as the main path to travel the choreography, hence the word "roads" in the title. There are a lot of changes in focus and direction. The corners of the stage represent different areas of life or situations. As I dance, I do not necessarily choose one place over another, but simply notice and observe all that there is to offer from each of these areas/experiences. In relating this dance to family and myself, the corners came to represent people or different times in my life. One corner could be where I’ve come from and another is where I am headed. Another corner could be experiences that I am reflecting on or learning from. It is a very abstract piece and can mold to anyone's experiences. It is an overall commentary on the archetype of the journey through life, along with the journey of understanding one's heritage and origin. I felt this was a fitting way to begin this concert.

Nexus:

This dance was first performed in the fall of 2003 as my Junior Choreography Project. I used it in this showcase because I feel that the theme is very relevant. This dance is about the interconnectedness of us all. It is about how we can share common experiences and not feel alone in our lives. It is also about the support that we are able to give and receive from one another to make our lives more full. This dance does not have to only relate to family, but I feel that it definitely addresses topics that are true in family structures as well. We are all connected
to our relatives through bloodlines. We are all connected to our ancestry and family history through stories and pictures.

**Sisters:**

This dance is pretty straightforward. Growing up I had a younger sister and this dance deals with a lot of the issues that come up among sisters. There are parts of this dance where the two dancers are alone and parts where they are trying to get along and work together. In my life, I was the oldest, so I had times when my younger sister was trying to do things that I was doing and follow me or spy on me. There is a moment in the dance that shows that as well. I've found that even though there was sibling rivalry when we were younger, as we've grown up my sister and I have learned to work better together and appreciate one another. That is why I chose to end the dance in unison and have them walk off stage together.

**Each Generations Gift:**

This dance is more abstract in its design. I wanted to design a dance that would portray the values and gifts that are offered by each generation. It is easy for the younger generations to think that the older generations don't understand or lived in a completely different world. I wanted to show the benefits of communication between these generations in order to move forward and not feel alone. I had interesting conversations with my grandparents about getting married and dating and all of those types of things. The feelings and emotions that we go through during those times are similar for us all. It is neat to think that the women that I viewed as old women who just did crafts or took care of their families actually had lives beyond what I knew. In this dance I have three different groups. The two dancers in short sun dresses represent the youngest generation. The group in the middle with the tank tops and short skirts represent the middle generation, perhaps the younger girls' mothers or aunts. Finally there are three in the back that represent the oldest generation; they wear longer more conservative skirts and blouses. I wanted to create a dance that didn’t just keep each of these groups confined to their traditional role. I wanted them to interact with the other groups of women. This would represent the passing down of heritage or stories or ancestry. I think it is an amazing and wonderful thing to be able to still talk with my elder family members and learn about life when they were my age. It's a comfort to know that my life isn't some uncharted territory. It is true for those that come before us, at least in my family, that being older means they definitely are wiser. The colors of their costumes also had symbolism. The darker the green color, the newer they are to the world and to life, the more faded the green color, the longer they've lived causing the color to fade away.
Special Thanks and Acknowledgements:

- To my family for the inspiration and stories to fuel my creativity and also for the support and means to compete these projects. Mom, thanks for helping make costumes and spend your money on my creative endeavors.

- To the faculty and dancers of the Dance Department, especially Sarah Mangelsdorf, my advisor and Michele Kriner, my solo choreographer. Thank you so much for your hard work and willingness to put up with my crazy ideas and also for offering your guidance.

- To my amazing technical helpers. Stephanie, you do beautiful work. Thank you for sparing the time to design my posters and program cover. Glen, you are a lifesaver. Thank you for taking on my lighting project when other people wouldn’t. I couldn’t have made this show performance quality without you. Well Done!

- Last but certainly not least, my amazing jack of all trades theatre/stage/production guru, my fantastic boyfriend Will Pfaffenberger. Thank you so much for listening to me and always helping me to see the light at the end of this long tunnel. To the person who was there every step of the way helping me edit my music, dye my costumes, and advise me on all kinds of other odds and ends along the way, thank you for keeping a smile on my face comic relief at the end of each day to help me enjoy this process. Thank you immensely!
A Note from the Choreographer:

I chose Adune Dewees, Willy Payneberger
Music: Charles Strouse
Recessors: Kate Solina, Whitney Spencer
Dancers: Kelly Clark, Jason Ford, Launa Nance, Tiffany
Choreographer: Adune Dewees

Hand in Life

Music: Adams, Kim Jenkins
Performer: Theehs Hannah, Christie Kaskanick, Lindsay
Dancers: Cynthila Berdey, Kim Blake, Danielle Carter, Sarah
Choreographer: Adune Dewees

Each Generation's Gift

Music: Vanessa Williams
Dancers: Joana Muniz, Angeles Miller
Choreographer: Adune Dewees

Sisters

Music: Rachel Forman
New York Sundra, Allison Williams
Dancers: Beverly Bangs, Babsy Prad, Lauren Fuller, Betty
Choreographer: Adune Dewees

Never

Music: F. Kauth, Joel Bell
Dancer: Adune Dewees
Choreographer: Michele Kisser in collaboration with Adune

The Roads of Truth and Wisdom
**Hard Doc Life:**

This dance was an interesting undertaking for me because, not only did it involve choreography, it involved singing, staging, lyric writing, and a lot of prop handling. This was a fun challenge for me. In my family there are two physicians, three nurses, and one medical administrator/therapist. Needless to say, conversations at our family gatherings frequently center around new regulations in the medical field, day to day work problems, and new patients. Listening to these stories turned me off to the medical profession because it seemed so serious and full of red tape. I wanted to create a dance that would poke fun at some of the day to day interactions of a doctor or nurse. I also wanted to create an environment that would allow my family to relax and laugh at all of the things that they take so seriously all the time. I wanted to use a Broadway musical song so that the audience would be more familiar with it and could follow along easily. I didn't make this dance too technical. I wanted it to be more about the lyrics and the funny situations created by the props. I actually had set design for this piece. I used the athletic training table and set it up to look like a gurney. The dance department also has a skeleton they use for anatomy demonstrations so that worked out nicely that I could borrow it. I had to locate many props for this piece including, tongue depressors, stethoscopes, syringes, latex gloves, clip boards, protective eye goggles, empty prescription pill bottles, and of course a sphygmomanometer as well as other miscellaneous medical supplies. Luckily, this was not too hard either because my father is a doctor and could get many of the props from work.

**Summary of Process:**

I learned a great deal from putting this production together. I finally got to work in-depth on a concert from start to finish and not just one work in someone else's concert. I got the opportunity to learn a great deal about the technology used in dance production like the light boards, music editing software and desktop publishing of posters. I am very glad I had this experience and I feel that it will serve me well in the future.

When I first began this process I had many different types of theme ideas for dances. I thought about doing a dance through the decades to honor the dance styles that the people in my family had danced when they were younger. I thought about doing a dance to honor the armed forces because of military background in my family. There are all kinds of things that can be done to celebrate one's family. The dances that I created developed out of time constraints and a desire for dances of universal nature. I ended up creating dances that were broader in scope for two reasons I think. One reason was that I wanted to create a concert that was universal in nature, and for an entire audience, not just something my immediate family would enjoy. I also think that these are the themes and topics that I encountered most frequently while reflecting on my family and learning about our history. I think that the topics of the women through the generations and of sisters especially are ones that many people can relate to. Even Hard Doc Life, which was specific to my family was able to involve the entire audience through comedy and shared experiences of being in a doctor's office.
One thing I was not prepared for with this project was the amount of money it was going to take to put together a complete show that I could be proud of. I chose to purchase only a small amount of my costumes, the rest were borrowed or made. Yet I still spent quite a bit on those few costumes. I also bought dye to make the costumes the color I wanted. I had to pay for posters to be printed. I had to buy the CDs that my music came on. I spent money on ink and paper for printing programs and notices to my dancers. There are always unexpected minor necessities that add up. I know that I could have probably done this show with less money expended, but I wanted to produce something that I could be proud of and could be used in my resume for years to come. I learned the importance of a strong support group to help make performances in the arts possible.

I must say that I had marvelous technical help from poster design to lighting design. My lighting designer came into the picture only a week before my concert and helped me for three days straight during tech rehearsal, dress rehearsal, and even stayed to run the light cues during the show. I was really lucky in that respect. The choreography process along the way did not run as smoothly, but I got everything finished and the audience was none the wiser. That is sometimes how it works in the performing arts. Most of my choreography was done during the spring semester of 2004. I had to share my rehearsal time with other dancers in the department as well as theatre rehearsals and certain school holidays. It is really hard to put together a dance when not everyone can be there. I was extremely flexible when it came to people missing rehearsals, but it wasn't easy. Sometimes dancers would forget material from rehearsal to rehearsal because it had been a week or two since we last met. That was frustrating. Also, sometimes dancers would forget to come to rehearsal out of carelessness. That was frustrating because it set us behind. I realize that this is a volunteer effort and I have no way of compensating these dancers for their time other than the satisfaction of a good show. The time constraints were a burden to deal with this semester. If I had this to do over again I would have taken an extra semester to polish the dances and try and alter and modify the choreography. That was a luxury that I did not get, but I think I ended up with a very nice program considering everything that I went through. After the show I heard many nice compliments about the show. Ultimately that is all that matters to me. I wanted to create a concert that would showcase my talents, as well as engage the audience with material that they could enjoy. I think that now I possess greater knowledge and skill should I ever undertake a task like this in the future.
versation
A Senior Honors Thesis by Ad

Saturday May 1, 2004
7:00pm
Ball Gym KDS 213

No Admission fee
Reception following the performance

"ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR ORIGIN KNOW YOUR
blackout

00: "silence" lights up

approx 10 secs - music up 00 "asam" lights up

0:25 - "change"

1:34 -

1:12 -

1:32 -

2:22 -

2:40 - fade out - black silence

4:13: center special - lift

4:25 - take it out - white - not warm or cool, neutral

4:55: blue edge center special w/ center fade to

5:05: fade to black

There are no endings, only new beginnings...
Black

2:00 - lights up - white cold

2:15 - cool diagonal

1:58 - side up

1:14 - center - out 1:27

1:27 - all lights

1:42 - white front

2:04 - change

2:20 - center cheesy and rose bright center?

2:36 - blackout

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blackout
lights up

final bow, I’ll say a few words
lights out.

Bow

There are no endings, only new beginnings...
Hard "Doc" life lyrics

It's a hard-Doc life for us!
It's a hard-Doc life for us!

'Beds of Patients,
All get Sick!

HMO says,
They can't pick!

It's a hard-Doc life!

Got no latex allergies,
Could you hold this needle please?

Plastic sheets in-
'Steada of wool!

Empty blood banks
'Steada of full!

It's a hard-Doc life!

Don't it feel like this pager's always beeping?

-This flu has them lined up at my door!

Once a day don't you wish that you were sleeping?

Did you know that you can study someone's snore!?!

Eight years in school spending all my money
-Using all my time to learn to cure
That blood pressure thing: it's name is funny?

Can you say: Sphygmomanometer?!
Noooo!!!!
Crazy busy life!
In a tizzy life!
Sterile bed pan life!
Medicine man life!

Prescription Drugs for free

That's why my friends call me
Betsey N-limb flyer
Betsey B-om-pilob
Alison L-limb pilob
Robin - om-pilob
Rebekah - pilob flyer
Brin - limb pilob fellows

Audition phrase

New music - during lift - others sit

Manner grasp lungs held hands.
All walk to corner trot, cross body
Passer block L, even contact return.
Beginning audition phrase corner front.
Now, back, raw, arms up over.
2 lines, grab hands, chase.
Left step l. develop R. step down. Click toe.
Grand lunge, circle head, lift back.
Welcome to the drawing window.

For chairs can be arranged like a.

Hand close around 3 red rover.

First, we must run back, please turn around it.

Second, lessons that Super Short rain.

Third, write R / keeping in mind.

From drill cut, pass counter twice five and back.

1.2.4: Start down.

3.4: Circle.

1.2.3.4: Run.
The Roads Of Truth and Wisdom
Sisters
Each Generation's Gift
Bibliography


