

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: *“TELEPATHIC MAPS”: A STUDY IN ONGOINGNESS*

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“Telepathic Maps: a study in ongoingness” is the written thesis prepared as research and reflection of the dance performance of “telepathic maps” in January 2021, a requirement for the M.F.A. in Dance at University of Maryland. The process of creating and writing about the dance was undertaken during the CoVid-19 pandemic. Using my own personal experience as a triathlete and dancer, I posit that endurance, usually associated with athletics, can behave differently when explored through the dynamics of dance. The collaborative process and performance of “telepathic maps” are put in conversation, demonstrating how endurance provided multiple entry points to manifest the physical and artistic research. Though the original performance was cancelled due to the pandemic, the writing process revealed answers about the performative nature of endurance; that even with a finish line, the step beyond it is more meaningful than the perceived endpoint. An accessible structure was created,

allowing the dance to surpass notions of performance as product and therefore representing the inherent ongoingness of my artistic and pedagogical practice.

“TELEPATHIC MAPS: A STUDY IN ONGOINGNESS”

by

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Dedication

To my Grandma Ann. I always see new things when I “get lost”. Thank you.

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Chapter 1: Determination

Introduction

I am circling my arms. I feel the whip of the air, the lift of my ribcage and my shoulder blades as they slide against each other; a burn beginning. I will do this. I must do this. The muscles in my shoulders ache. It is not comfortable, but it is also not uncomfortable. My breath becomes audible as my feet loosen their foot print every now and again as if I will take flight. I do not stop. It is a test. How long can I physically endure and how long can the audience stay with me? Circling, circling, breath, burn, blood. The eye can only take in a process so long and I am constant, obstinate in ongoing. People watch waves, fires, their metric and non-metric movement in nature. What is the difference in watching another body endure? Because they must, and somehow, feel it too. There are social factors we have lived with, of not making others uncomfortable, of being “OK” of being able to keep the peace but the physicalizing of my needs, wants, desires, and curiosities keep coming back. I will not be nice about it. Art in its very word allows for these tests, these curiosities. A simple act of swinging my arms becomes an act of defiance, becomes an act of “are you willing to go the distance with me?” Here, we begin.

Going the Distance

Endurance is a loaded word. Once heard there is a visceral reaction to its meaning. In most instances it is deployed to describe highly physical events that take place over a long period of time and require sustained concentration and physiological effort. It is a word often connected to marathons, ultra-running, triathlons, stage bike racing and long-distance swimming.

My personal connection to endurance is as a triathlete and a coach. I had a career in dance and lived in New York City for eighteen years but starting in 2005, I got hooked on triathlon.

I have completed three Ironman distance events, one of which was the World Championships in Kona, Hawaii. A full distance Ironman means completing a 2.4-mile swim in open water, a 112-mile bike race, and a 26.2-mile run or marathon in succession as a race. I have also done seven half Ironman events, one of which was the World Championships, the New York City Marathon, and many “shorter” events of Olympic distance triathlons, and a 200-mile team relay race that lasted over 24 hours. After my first Ironman, I cried the next day because even though I crossed the finish line and was handed a medal and told I did well because I finished under 12 hours, I didn’t feel *it*. The *it* being the expectation that I would feel some sort of change in myself, one that had heft, where my cells emerged new and shiny, where I had proved to myself I could do hard and painful things.

Even though I had experienced an unsettling feeling after my first race, I was determined to continue. My curiosity along with my stubbornness kept me striving in the world of triathlon, by increasing my race distances and personal challenges for

myself. I am grateful that I kept going despite my first experience. I found a feeling of groundedness that I had not experienced before. It took the aftermath of my first Ironman race and continued perseverance to understand that it wasn't the accomplishment that made me who I was, it was the manner in which I applied myself to get to that race in the first place. My time as a triathlete and eventually, a triathlon coach, instilled in me a confidence that I had been lacking before beginning Ironman training. Training and racing gave me insight into how far I could push myself and how to navigate obstacles with more emotional intelligence. I found that I was good at this sport that to many seemed crazy but for me was fulfilling. The fulfillment came from the nuances of training for and executing the race, not the heaviness of the medal around my neck. I felt "success" for the first time in my life. I was part of a team which offered a camaraderie reminiscent of my lifetime of dancing but the thing I loved was being within myself fully when in physical motion. I can only explain this as an engaged presence when working on the techniques of swimming, biking, and running. Each practice having their own secrets to unlock to develop speed, strength and efficiency of my physical being. It was not lost on me that my love of getting to finesse a particular part of my swim stroke had deep roots in the practice of dance technique. The routine of refining and embodying movement concepts until one does not have to think about them is part of any training regime. It was satisfying to be able to connect to what I developed as a dancer in triathlon.

The lure of triathlon was how it opened up my life through adventure and curiosity. It provided a structure to my life that I couldn't seem to find with dance at the time; and supplied tangible evidence through winning medals and getting the right time on the race clock. Triathlon and its training devices allowed me insight into who

I was as a guide, a teacher, a performer and also a seeker. I understood that my curiosity in this strange and masochistic sport helped me see my innate resilience, willpower, and creativity.

Toward the end of 2014 the power of the sport that I had left dance for had lost its luster. I had done all I could do and didn't feel enticed to continue. The structure of training and racing were the same each year. The path that I was on was limited and linear. What I had liked about triathlon, knowing what to expect, I started to feel restricted by. I yearned for something else, something more. Over time I felt trapped in a hamster wheel of achievement. I also had a sense that I was being seen for something that I did, not for who I was. I started to dream about dance, about taking a class, just to feel it again. I had developed a keen anatomical intelligence through my years in triathlon but also through my practice and work as a Pilates Instructor and teaching the neurofascial technique called MELT.

I took my first modern dance class in 8 years in May 2014. I did not quit triathlon straight away but I was finding more freedom and curiosity in dance than triathlon. I returned fully to dance in fall of 2014, leaving triathlon life for good. I felt in my gut that this was the right decision. Dance was providing me with infinite trajectories of investigation where triathlon just had one. Swim, Bike Run. Repeat.

Dance has no finish line and requires a lifetime of inquiry, refinement, failures, and redemptions. The last of which are shared in triathlon but are experienced differently in the linearity of swimming, biking and running. What both have in common is that the body is willingly engaging in an activity that calls upon physiological functions such as strength, muscle memory, efficiency, gross and fine motor skills, proper rejuvenation, psychological resilience and self-awareness. What

triathlon does not offer is the opportunity to express beyond the task at hand. Triathlon does not ask one to notice the sensation of a transfer of weight and how the pelvis drives most modern dance movement. It does not ask for imagery, embodiment or rhythm in a manner that guides deepening one's artistry. I no longer sought to rely on a finish line of time-based goals for stability, but to have a space to be multidimensional in the way I felt the interiors of my anatomy and psychology. I wanted to create dances again. I wanted to know more about what I had begun to cultivate in being fully engaged within my body but through dance. So, I did. I danced as much as I could. I danced with a company. I made work that I loved. I found mentors. I took classes that weren't about achievement but understanding, about honoring where you are, and about inquiry without immediate answers. I began teaching. I saw how others responded to how I was teaching material and realized that there was a greater richness to my interior life as I connected to my fellow dancers. I found my voice again as a dance maker and artist.

The Turning Point

"When I am able to claim all aspects of myself, I have access to the energy I would otherwise spend denying who I am and what I am becoming. Full wattage is my way forward" -Chani Nicholas, Astrologist, March 2021

Dance brought back the dormant parts of myself that weren't about data, linear thinking, or hard and fast goals. My life in endurance sports was informative to who I am. I was left with the question of how to incorporate my understanding of triathlon and dance in a manner that felt representative of my artistic self. It felt possible but I

had no idea how I was going to answer anything until my first semester in graduate school at University of Maryland.

I found as I entered graduate school in Fall 2018, that my experience in Ironman events was preceding me and defining who I was for others as it had in my past. I felt that I was being pigeonholed. I went inward, feeling misunderstood and unsure of how to proceed with my ideas. I felt conflicted in my initial thoughts of how endurance might guide me in making dance. I felt these two practices related but I didn't want to do what was expected in exploring these together. I did not want to create a narrative about triathlon. As these feelings were percolating, I was in the process of deciding how to do my research while making a solo. It took one small thing (doesn't it always) for me to understand that I didn't have to run away or deny endurance, that I had freedom to figure out what I wanted from it. My professor of research at the time, Dr. Maura Keefe, mentioned that perhaps I might look at choreographers who made work that focused on duration and endurance in order to see where my own curiosities lay within this form. Just this one sentence broke open the proverbial door. I began to investigate what duration meant to me in looking straight on at endurance and eschewing expectations in how the concepts might behave in process. I tapped into a level of experimentation that I would not have found if not for the one small sentence of advice.

Artistic Influences

The type of durational works that I analyzed ranged from performance artists to dancers. I narrowed my focus to three influences due to how they utilized and performed endurance and duration in their work.

Marina Abramović

The concepts of duration and endurance are often integral to Abramović in her performances. She uses her body to convey ideas about ownership, spectatorship, the female body, and the psychology of humanity.

The performance of *The Artist Is Present* used duration as a tool so that the audience could actively see her rather than passively look upon her from afar.¹ Her endurance resides in the emotional and physical fortitude needed to remain still yet also absolutely present as a performer. Her performance is herself seated at a table across from one visitor at a time for a couple of minutes for 8-10 hours a day at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. She did this performance for four months every day. Endurable duration is a concept to acknowledge for Abramović and the witness. The concept is also one that I wanted to bring into my own research. The notion that she trained in a functional way for her art was something I recognized as an athlete and a performer. She speaks about her seminal work in 1974, “Rhythm 0” describing it as, “One of my most extreme pieces when I really pushed my body to the limits, because, I didn’t ever want to die, I’m not interested in dying, but that interest in how far you can push the energy of the human body, how far you can go.

And you see that actually our energy is almost limitless. It’s not about the body, it’s about the mind to push you to the extremes that you never could imagine.”² I found

¹ Marina Abramović. *The Artist is Present*, Directed by Matthew Akerman, Performed by Marina Abramović, (2012; Sundance, Utah: 2012, HBO Documentary Films), Film

² Marina Abramović. *Marina Abramović on performing Rhythm 0 (1974)*, Directed by Milica Zec, Performed by Marina Abramović, (March 6, 2016: Marina Abramović Institute), video. 3:07. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTBkbseXfOQ&has_verified=1

in Abramović a kindred spirit. She named, in her interest of extremes she went to, what I had continually done as a triathlete. I wanted to push myself to see how far I could go. It is a feeling of compulsion and fear. In overcoming it you feel that you know yourself more. I did come to realize this but only toward the end of my racing career. I began to understand more so in my research regarding dance in how art was able to enact endurance.

Maria Hassabi

Internationally recognized choreographer Maria Hassabi uses duration as a way to highlight the shift and shape of the body against space and time. Endurance acts for Hassabi as simply what is needed to perform the work as it is not incredibly fast yet is of the body and therefore, physical. I was drawn to Hassabi's methods of using the space between the bodies and how this allowed for shifting viewpoints for the audience that facilitated time as movement or quality, not as metered or quantity.

The concept of duration and endurance play prominently in “PLASTIC” performed at The Museum of Modern Art in 2015.³ She explored time through the performing bodies, revealing space with deliberate relational positioning of the performers to each other, the performers to the spectators (who were

inadvertently part of the work or watching) and the performers to the space. The integration of patterns, forms and positions in space created a different meaning of time.

³ Maria Hassabi. *PLASTIC*, (Museum of Modern Art. September 22, 2016), video. 7:41. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otx5yO6YHX4>

RoseAnne Spradlin

I was inspired by choreographer RoseAnne Spradlin in her work *g-h-o-s-t c-r-o-w-n* in her use of rhythm and choreographic patterning of the space as exploration of duration.⁴ In using repetition she draws the viewer into trying to understand the pattern. As one is pulled into the wave of percussive rhythm and virtuosic kicking and polyrhythmic shifts, the concept of time passing becomes irrelevant even though the section takes place over a 20-minute span. I felt that her use of subtle mathematical shifts in the repetition of rhythm could be a tool to utilize in pairing endurance and dance.

These three performers and choreographers provided me with a jumping off point in figuring out my own relationship to duration and endurance. Abramović creates environments that ask to endure with her as well as present her as performing endurance. In her I can see the functional and physical demand for endurance. Hassabi delineated duration through spatial pull and arrangement, allowing movement to take the time it takes to reveal new connections between audience and performer. She commands that attention be paid to space and that movement does not have to be large to be endurable. Spradlin pushes the rigor of repetition and pattern through surprising polyrhythmic scores that return and redirect themselves to distort time and duration. She reminds me that simplicity can be complex and convey ongoingness.

⁴ RoseAnne Spradlin. *g-h-o-s-t c-r-o-w-n*, (New York Live Arts. October 2014), video. 55:00. <https://vimeo.com/145632163>

Chapter 2: Initial Explorations and Concepts

Redefining Endurance

Endurance held a particular potency for me. My embodied definition of endurance was blocking me mentally when considering combining it with dance even as I looked at other's work. I sought to redefine endurance as a means to free up the limitations conjured by the word itself. As I was excavating how endurance functioned in art and dance I was inspired by the work of Anne Bogart, revered American theater director with the SITI Company.⁵ Bogart reorients what violence means in relationship to art making in "A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theater".⁶ Her ability to transform the word into something that took on a positive aura enabled me to do the same with endurance.

In her essay about violence, Bogart states that "Distortion is a partial destruction and it is a necessary ingredient in making the vague visible."⁷ Distortion and "making the vague visible" became choreographic tools I actively employed in making "telepathic maps". Distortion, for my purposes, as a way to shift perception

⁵ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theater*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001)

⁶ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theater*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001)

⁷ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theater*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001),52

“Making the vague visible” was a device used to disrupt expectations for the audience and myself. Together these devices could be implemented as a device to reveal or

obscure movement. The concept of how dance can reveal visual information is an integral part of the work I made and is utilized in much of “telepathic maps”.

Endurance was further redefined for me when Bogart utilizes Aikido, a form of martial arts, to explain how concise choices create work. There is a term in Aikido called *irimi*. *Irimi* means “to enter” but is also literally translated to “choose death.”⁸ It is in the choosing of death that Bogart describes the experience of entering the work by making a choice without analyzing whether it is good or not. Through this concept I was freed up to not overanalyze everything I was making, deepen my experimentation and to embrace the words of American choreographer Heidi Henderson, “there are no bad moves”.⁹ In compiling physical research with the freedom to reorient endurance, I was able to create a vision of how to invite dance into the conversation.

Reorienting Spectatorship

Subverting expectations of viewing dance is a distortion of preconceived ideas in how the audience takes in the action being presented. The audience is engaging

⁸ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theater*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001),49

⁹ Heidi Henderson, “Informal Lecture for Graduate Choreography”, (in person, The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, Madden Project, November 13, 2019) <http://elephantjandance.com>

with spectatorship, a term that arose with the invention of cinema but has transferred to dance over the past several decades.¹⁰ Judith Lynne Hanna describes spectatorship

in relation to dance as considering the viewer's historical context, social structure, and the processing of the event to "shape expectations that create meaning."

¹¹ Reorienting spectatorship for "telepathic maps" was about creating an active and ignited space shared by the audience and performer alike. The traditional presentational forms for dance structured as dancers onstage and the audience passively viewing from afar did not speak to the shared experience I was seeking in my work. I imagined the perseverance of the performers to be witnessed without a separation from the audience. I also sought not only to shift expectations for the audience through *where* they physically viewed the dance but also in *what* they were seeing. I wanted to engage and invite the audience through choreographic devices. I chose, for the most part, to use movement that I will define as "heightened quotidian dancing." Yvonne Rainer purposefully blurred the line between spectator and performer through her methods that are described as "quotidian."¹² Running, walking, standing and sitting: actions that most people have access to or recognize.

¹⁰ Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship*. (London: Routledge, 1993)

¹¹ Judith L. Hanna, *The performer-audience connection. Emotion to metaphor in dance and society*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 17

¹² Emily T Simon. "Scholar Asks 'How can we know the spectator from the dance?'" , Arts and Humanities, *The Harvard Gazette*, December 18, 2018. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2008/12/scholar-asks-how-can-we-know-the-spectator-from-the-dance/>.

Repetition was a tool Rainer used also to allow people to “see” the dance easier.¹³ I used repetition to establish ideas about endurance and duration but also provide patterns and specific spatial arrangement that provided “touch points” in the dance.

Patterns and shifting space would behave as a problem-solving device for the audience, the discovery of which continues to invite them into the performance.

Redefining Time

I did not have the luxury of unlimited time to explore duration and endurance in a performance. Thesis works are capped at 35 minutes. I was not interested in moving slowly, performing endurance and duration as a long, drawn-out process. I wanted to challenge myself to perform endurance that used my own personal movement style and proclivities. Measured time was not an instrument I wanted to use to cultivate my movement inquiry. It was by chance that I was able to recalibrate my understanding of time that informed my choreographic methods in the dance.

My ideas regarding how to manage this constraint in “telepathic maps” shifted toward a redefinition of time in reading the work of Carlo Rovelli, in particular his book, “The Order of Time.”¹⁴ There is a particular passage in the book that explains how time as we know it, behaves. In reading this passage it supported the possibility of looking at time differently as a developmental resource for

¹³ Emily T Simon. “Scholar Asks ‘How can we know the spectator from the dance?’”, Arts and Humanities, *The Harvard Gazette*, December 18, 2018. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2008/12/scholar-asks-how-can-we-know-the-spectator-from-the-dance/>

¹⁴ Carlo Rovelli. *The Order of Time*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018).

choreography. Rovelli refers to Albert Einstein and his curiosity about the “attraction” of the sun and the Earth and how they actually act *upon* the space around them, not directly on each other.

“Einstein asked himself a question that has perhaps puzzled many of us when studying the force of gravity: how can the sun and the Earth ‘attract’ each other without touching and without utilizing anything between them? He looked for a

plausible explanation and found one by imagining that the sun and the Earth do not attract each other directly but that each of the two gradually acts on that which is between them. And since what lies between them is only space and time, he imagined that the sun and the Earth each modified the space and time that surrounded them, just as a body immersed in water displaces the water around it. This modification of the structure of time influences in turn the movement of bodies, causing them to ‘fall’ toward each other.”¹⁵

The research of endurance and dance dynamics brought me to consider the construction of moving bodies and how they design/act upon the space. I tried to discern how I might use the idea of space to indicate time in a choreographic way. I wanted to extrapolate the visual element of duration. The concept that each dancer is acting upon the space around them and “falling” toward each other is what creates the energy and “wonder” of a performance. Einstein’s theory would indicate that human bodies are in conversation with space and time without being conscious of it. Rovelli’s analysis of time as space through Einstein supported my ideas about how

¹⁵ Carlo Rovelli. *The Order of Time*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018), 12-13

the audience is complicit in the event of a dance. The audience's eye is naturally directed toward movement while subconsciously taking in the space between the moving bodies. Therefore, utilizing the spatial arrangement of the dancers as patterns in a repetitive score created a visual construction of elongating time.

Evidence of the Ephemeral (making the vague visible)

During the summer of 2020, I began to miss, like many dancers, the simple things of being in a studio. Aside from the connection and energy of dancing with others, I missed the smell of the marley floor, dust, and the mixture of clothing and sweat hanging in the air after people had been long gone. I missed the particular marks that get left on the floor, inevitably left without someone knowing it, evidence they were there. For someone who doesn't dance for a living, these elements would most likely be imperceptible. I believe for dancers, they are tangible, especially the floor. It is what supports us, allows us to play within the realm of gravity. We use it for support, for lift, for travel, for play and sometimes for rest.

I began drawing again over the past year, something I have done my whole life. I am an avid visual artist. I had almost enough visual arts credits during my undergraduate education to earn a degree. I studied photography, Italian Renaissance architecture and art history, and painting, but my love was always rooted in the medium of pen, pencil, and paper. I draw the way I enter into making a dance, not

pre-dictating or judging what I draw; a free form of what my nervous system expels from the pen onto the cream heft of the drawing paper.

I had the idea of introducing a painter's canvas to be the space upon which "telepathic maps" would be danced. The canvas would be the evidence of our presence, of our work, of our spirit. Evidence can provide the most physical form of 'vague as visible' that I can think of and I wanted the artifact of what happened to exist after the performance. This is why the scenic element of the canvas is so important. I wanted to make the ephemeral nature of dance supremely visible by using ink and marking the canvas through the dance. The dance and the dancing floor co-exist. The canvas aligns with my concept for how the space is presented, as a gallery, as a space within a void so that the curation of the event and the viewpoint of the audience is much like that of a museum.

I liked the idea that we would be creating two-dimensional art with our physical art and that it would remain in the performance space after the dance is over, a nod to ongoingness. Unlike other choreographers that physicalize art through dance such as New York based Shen Wei and artist/dancer Tony Orricco, the driving intention and whole of the dance was not predicated on drawing on the canvas.^{16 17} When the canvas was made available, we decided upon black tempera powder on our shoes specifically for the last part of the dance. I didn't want the audience to figure out or reveal that we were "drawing" on the canvas until the end. It was about the

¹⁶ Shen Wei, "Connect Transfer", 2004
<http://www.shenwei.art/connecttransfer>

¹⁷ Tony Orricco, "Penwald Drawings." Performed by Tony Orricco. (Graphite on Paper. 2009-2015).
<https://tonyorricco.com/penwald-drawings/>

evidence of what we did, showing how we acted upon the floor that supports us, and taking the “stage” and making that the final focal point.

The culmination would be the display of the canvas after the dancing is done, the evidence of us remaining. Again, reorienting the visual aspect of the dance, the floor becomes the art.

Support of Sound

The rehearsal process revealed the importance of the sound score coming from the sound of the phrase itself. I originally became engaged with the idea of having a live looped sound score when I was developing my proposal for “telepathic maps”. I had a foot injury for most of the second year of school and during the first semester I had to develop new ways of expression that developed into a piece in which I placed a wireless mic inside of my clothing while I crawled around the perimeter of the studio space. I couldn’t use my body in the visual way I was accustomed to so I chose to have the sound “speak” the movement. The effect was riveting in that it was simple yet so rich. I wanted to continue with this idea of capturing the sound of the dance live and looping it in real time, a device used by Faye Driscoll in *Thank You For Coming: Space*.¹⁸ Music did not present itself as capturing the immediacy of being in an endurance event. Music transports where live sound roots you to the moment.

¹⁸ Faye Driscoll, “Thank You for Coming: Space.” New York Live Arts, New York, January 8-11, 2020. video.00:32 <https://www.fayedriscoll.com/performances-exhibitions/project-one-dh8pa-bnaxs>

Chapter 3: The Performance of “telepathic maps”

Telepathic Maps: what’s in a title?

Telepathy: : communication from one mind to another by extrasensory means¹⁹

Telepathic: adjective-how one communicates to others by extrasensory means

Map: a : a representation usually on a flat surface of the whole or a part of an area

b : a representation of the celestial sphere or a part of it c : a diagram or other visual representation that shows the relative position of the parts of something²⁰

In considering the title for this piece I came to it through a series of affinities and understandings about myself and my relationship to the process of making the dance. In my life, triathlon provided me a clear linear path forward with a decisive endpoint. Dance is endless explorable terrain. They overlay each other, creating a map. If I

¹⁹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Unabridged. Established 1828. Springfield, MA: 2021
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/telepathic>

²⁰ Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Unabridged. Established 1828. Springfield, MA: 2021
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/map>

look from above, it is a pattern. If I look from within, it has a rhythm, a resonance and resilience, if looked at in retrospect, it contains all the molecules of who I am. I feel that the dancers and I took a profound journey in the process and performance of making the dance. We all approached the work living under the umbrella of the pandemic which felt at times like a giant unknown. Even the creative act of making a dance is an “unknown”. Within the restraints of the landscape in which we were living, we put trust in the dance and the co-investigation. It is a type of telepathy, that

we sensed the oncoming dance, we just didn’t know yet what it would look like when we got there. We followed our map as we made that map together.

The Performance

The dance “telepathic maps” was performed on January 15th, 2021 at 1pm in Studio 1 in The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park. The performance was in actuality a showing of the work that concluded our weeklong intensive preparation for the thesis performance that was ultimately cancelled due to the CoVid-19 pandemic. The dancers in the piece were Rebecca Hill, Hana Huie, Christina Robson and, myself. The audience viewed the dance via Zoom from the perspective of the camera on my laptop. There was one person in live attendance, Gabriel Ortega-Mata, who was rehearsing for his thesis at the same time.

The space was arranged with a twenty-by-twenty-foot square of a cream colored, raw canvas placed in the center of the studio. The canvas helped us navigate

distance mandated by the pandemic and served as the arena in which the dance was performed.

The dance was choreographed to be viewed in the round; however, for the purpose of the description of the piece, I will use the stage terms of downstage, upstage, stage right and stage left when necessary to guide the reader.

The showing through Zoom allowed for the piece to be viewed from what I will refer to as downstage. The setting was informal and the dancers wore rehearsal clothes and low-profile sneakers.

The dance as a whole has six sections. Each section has a name that is named thus as it became shorthand between myself, and the dancers to refer to in the rehearsal process. The dance was performed during CoVid 19 and the health policies and precautions of the university were upheld throughout and in this performance. All performers are wearing masks and all had negative CoVid tests. One thing for the reader to know is that there is a section of the dance, a duet, where Rebecca Hill and myself are in direct continuous contact with each other. I want to note that we are roommates and were made aware that we would be able to do this duet. I do not want there to be any surprise for the reader or sense of irresponsibility on our behalf. We both, Hill and I made sure to quarantine away from others in the 2 weeks before this showing.

Arm Circles

I begin in the center of the space facing downstage left. The music begins and I begin to circle my arms with the momentum of their weight as if trying to throw them around my body. My arms circle together forward to back whipping by me, my focus

on a point on the edge of the canvas. The song used in this section is titled “anthem berlin (for the kingdom of elgaland-vargaland)” by alva noto. It is a repetitive drone that rises slightly and falls with a subtle reverberation reminiscent of the sound of the blades of a helicopter against the air. I cannot titrate my energy to the song because it has no sonic markers. I have to keep going and continually reconfigure how to stay with it. My intention is to perform willful ongoingness and subvert expectations of what is durational. The swinging increases in tempo slightly, as the blood collects in my fingers and hands almost immediately. I allow the movement to have reverberation through the body, my spine springing upward with the upward swing of the arm, my feet pressing into the floor to push the arms forward. My breath becomes a counter rhythm. It feels that my entire body is throwing my arms. I perform this for an entire six minutes and forty seconds, the duration of the song. I establish resilience in repetition for myself and the audience. The question of whether I will change the movement or when I stop draws the audience in. When I do stop, it is with my arms precisely by my sides. I walk off the canvas, my task completed, endured by myself for and with the audience.

The Square Dance

The Square Dance is unique in the whole of “telepathic maps” as it encompasses the themes of endurance and duration through the use of pattern, repetition, rhythm and continual movement. Performatively, The Square Dance seems simplistic yet connotes duration through unexpected spatial design. Internally the performers are negotiating the section through willpower, resilience, and selfnegotiation while externally it exudes exactness and restraint.

The section on its own comprises of fifteen individual interwoven sections that are danced within and among four equally sectioned off squares upon the twentyby-twenty canvas. The dancers perform the same phrase fifteen times, moving in shifting pathways that invoke a kaleidoscopic effect, a quilting of the space or bodies as planets orbiting around and through each other. The rounds of The Square Dance are continual but the restart of each section is made clear through the standing posture of each dancer, a moment of acknowledgement before continuing yet again.

The phrase itself is simple and clear, with movement that relies on uncomplicated shapes, directionality of gesture and emphasis on spatial clarity. Utilizing a strong diagonal within one's square of the canvas, the path of phrase directs and redirects itself inward and out. The effect is as if the dancers move toward, away and through each other. The choreography is dynamic and sharp with contrasts that transfer into swoops and curves. The movement is not big or loud or emotional or overly ornamental. It is purposeful and provides moments of surprise. The movement tends to the sagittal and vertical plane most often with turns and gestures within the horizontal. The phrase is repeated fifteen times with variations in starting points in the grid of the square, facings, intention of direction, size and kinesphere.

Examples of The Square Dance Phrase

Figure A. Toe and Arm Reach from the phrase of Square Dance. January 15, 2021



Figure B. Jump landing in personal “boxes” on the canvas. January 15, 2021



The repetition of the phrase connects the performers and the audience in that they are complicit in problem solving in their own way. Circling arms for 7 minutes

may draw one in through mesmerization, wonderment, or derision of duration. However, the shifting repetition of gyroscopic patterns provided the opportunity for visual and visceral engagement. Once the pattern is recognized, the audience may invest in as to *what* changes and *how* it changes. The ever-present rhythm of the footfalls and swipes of the dancers on the canvas creates the sound score. There is always an anchor of sound for the dancers and audience alike even as one round of The Square Dance shifts to reveal a new configuration of the bodies.

The upright visual of the dancing in The Square Dance is mesmerizing and guides the eye for rediscovering the pattern of the dancing, but the overhead offers a new view, one that was intended to be seen. I offer here as a gesture toward seeing the logic of the moving parts some examples of the floor patterns.

Figure C: Guide to the Floor Patterns (drawings: Renee Gerardo)

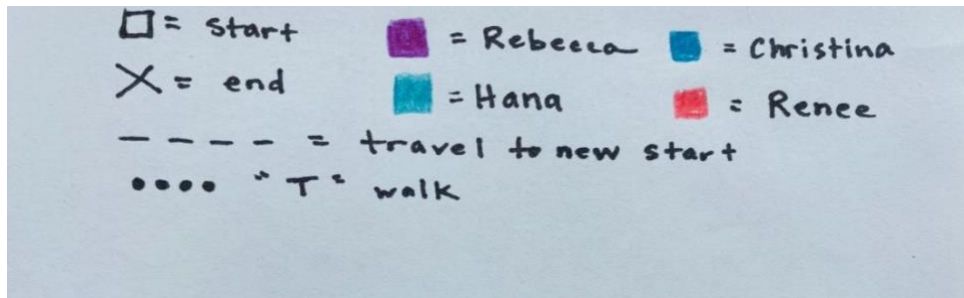


Figure. C1: Round 1 (Phrase)

Figure C2: Round 4

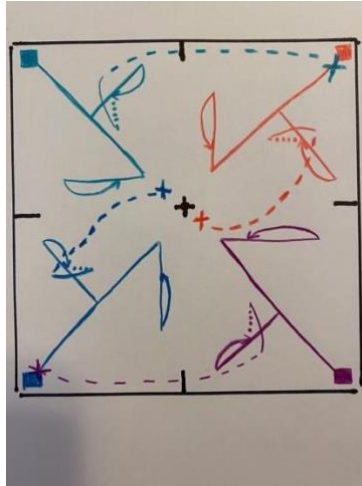


Figure C3: Round 8 (new kinesphere)

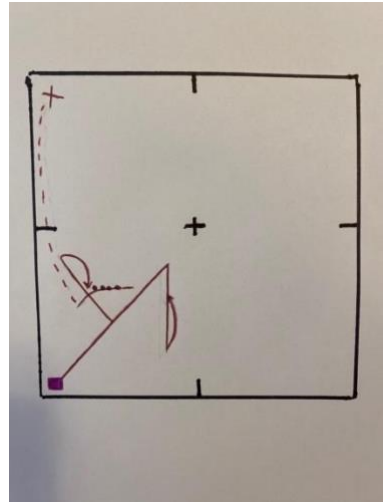
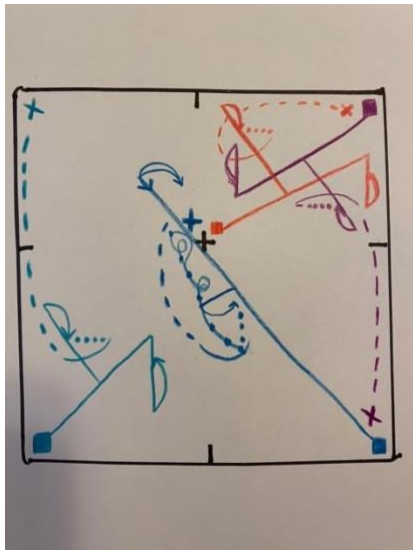
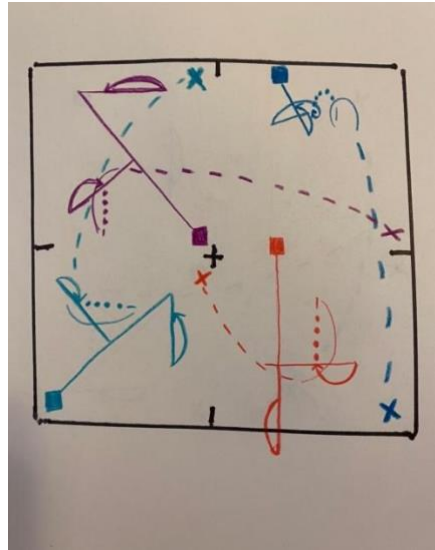


Figure C4: Round 11 (new kinesphere)



Figures C6: Round 13

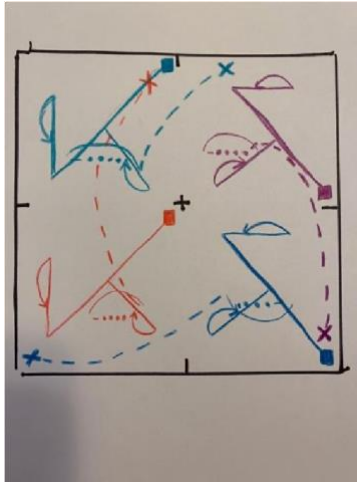


Figure C7: Round 14

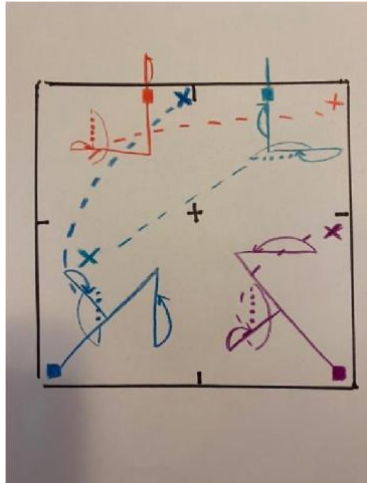
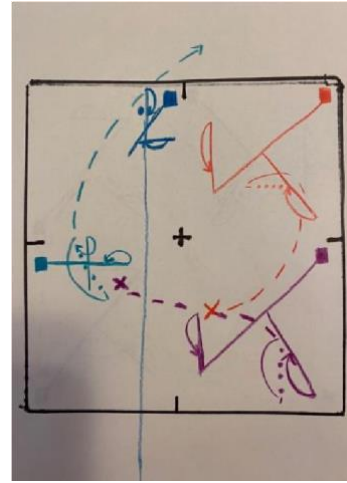


Figure 85: Final Round



The Square Dance ends when dancer Hill and I begin a simple shape shifting duet, alluding to our connection later in the piece. This transition serves as a reveal of future sections as dancers Robson and Huie perform small movements from The Big Phrase that comes at the end of “telepathic maps”. At the end of the duet, I follow next to Hill in a crawl as she walks off the canvas and away.

Shoulder Dance

“In this acausal world, scientists are helpless. Their predictions become predictions. Their equations become justifications, their logic, illogic. Scientists turn reckless and mutter like gamblers who cannot stop betting. Scientists are buffoons, not because they are rational but because the cosmos is irrational. Or perhaps it is not because the cosmos is irrational but because they are rational. Who can say which in an acausal world?”

*In this world, artists are joyous. Unpredictability is the life of their paintings, their music, their novels. They delight in the events not forecasted, happenings without explanation, retrospective.”*²¹

²¹ Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams*, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2004),31

Excerpt from Einstein's Dreams by Alan Lightman, Read Live by Hana Huie during the performance

The tone of this section generates a new texture to "telepathic maps". There is an ongoingness and repetition but it is tethered in space as opposed to charging or defining the space. I crawl to the upper right corner of the canvas, landing on all fours facing away from the audience. All the other performers turn away and leave the space. It looks like I am giving up, but I am not. I slowly shift from side to side, as if calming myself. Huie begins to read from "Einstein's Dreams" and I begin to express through my torso and my shoulders. I use what I can to show articulation of my heart, my guts, my spine, as the sources of intention, stability, and emotion. My shoulder blades sink in and out forcing my chest and head up and down while my spine reverberates or re-directs the movement into the floor. The quality is like my heart pinballing around through my body, leaping like lightning bolts. My spine curves and arcs, bucking the space. I try to lift my right hand but press it down again. My elbows tumble, as if giving out. I redirect my body to face toward the words

being spoken aloud. My movement is paired with a reading from a book that has been an influence and intrigued me from the first time I read it 25 years ago. "Einstein's Dreams" by Alan Lightman is about possible perspectives and dreams of Einstein on the function of time and how people perceive it.²² It presents metaphysical ideas regarding the function of time and how multiple worlds of different facets of time could exist. In having the words of a book on a big idea set against a solo in which I

²² Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams*, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2004)

perform small internally driven movements, I am trying to highlight the dichotomies of how time can feel enclosed and expansive all at once. Halfway through, I begin attuning my movements to the words being spoken by Huie. I asked her to choose any section at random for the performance that day. I reacted to what was being said, which elevated feelings of frustration, sadness, and futility. I end with my right arm reaching underneath my body, toward where Hana stands in a gesture of wanting and of listening to the ground, the very thing that has supported me the whole time.

The Running Section

My intention in the fourth section of the dance was to continue the use of repetition and pattern building but highlight physical rigor over the mental rigor of earlier in The Square Dance. The result is reminiscent of children making up a game on the spot and over time, changing the rules. The movement is visually more “sport like” than anything previous. The tactics we utilized were running, catching rhythms from each other, mimicry, redirection and ongoingness and “glitching”.

** A note on glitching: This is a term I used as a shorthand in rehearsal and through the rest of the performance and process to describe a way of moving that is repetitive but lacks follow through. It snags itself back like a skipping record but can also evolve. Choreographically, glitching serves as a device for the performer in that it provides a tactic that allows for a high level of physical rigor within the running. Performatively, the glitches serve as a contrast to the rhythmic structure of the running and provide new spatial structures for the audience to navigate.*

The section begins with Robson running onto the canvas. I join, and we run backwards in a circle together. Huie and Hill enter and redirect the group to run in a circle together. The running acts as a sweeping of the space, a rounding up of the energy back into the arena of the canvas. We are tending to the rhythm of our footfalls. Huie pauses to glitch her movement, jerking her elbow out and away from her body as the rest of us continue to run in circles, arcs and diagonals, tracing each other's path or trying to redirect each other. Throughout the section, the rhythm created and communicated to each other becomes a new touchpoint to tend to, a new rule in the game. The movement choices develop into building and shifting structures that rely on repetitive sonic rhythms. The glitching within the ongoing play of running and mimicry creates an aesthetic texture that provides choice within the game. One dancer pauses and commits to a swinging motion glitch, one that elongates its inherent rhythm. Three dancers give rise to a cacophonous clapping, slapping, and snapping mélange of syncopated running, the effect like a band playing different sheet music but still trying to commit to one song. Hill and Huie pause together, Hill's arms languidly glitch overhead, Huie shifting a wide lunge in a taunting pelvic thrust. Robson and I collect them until we all join in emulating Hana with our version of her lunging pelvic shift that travels through the space, no one dancer sure who they are mimicking or redirecting.

The circling run begins again, as if this section may start over, attuning to any expectations the audience now has of the ongoingness of our play. Instead of continuing, we downshift our energy and jog back and forth on a diagonal until only Hill and I are left on the canvas, wandering in our own personal circles.

Duet

Hill and I stumble out of the running, falling into circular patterns around each other. A moment of touch happens briefly, seemingly accidental. Music starts with our first touch as if we set it off. The song is “Sweep” by Michael Wall. The music reverberates with the sound of a low underwater thrum, struck with higher elongated piano notes that soar through the composition. The duet is guided by a tactile curiosity of each other through touch and the support it initiates. We gently “test” the touch again with Hill’s arm catching me on the back and mine to hers. We move away and back again, this time connected and remaining so with my shoulder to her chest. Our eyes close as in relief at finding support and they stay closed throughout the rest of the duet. Our only guide is each other and the light we can sense coming from a window. We move constantly, feeling our way through the terrain, moving toward what we sense of the light. We touch indiscriminately as if understanding the other’s surfaces for the first time. We have to maintain our listening skin, our own telepathy. The quality of the contact vacillates between pressing, pulling, searching, softening, directing, and following. We find ourselves sitting side by side, heads together and rocking gently. We continue to lift and guide each other to the light, with Hill darting towards it, while I catch her to stay connected. We arrive at the downstage left corner connecting the crown of our heads as if sending each other our knowledge and appreciation.

The duet at four minutes long is just enough to pull the viewer in. If it was longer I feel the magic of the touch would be lost. It is in this section of “telepathic maps” that I noticed the presence of the question, “how can we endure? In presenting

it in the pandemic, it reflects the reality of enduring a lack of contact and touch among other things. The duet asks the audience to feel and consider duration differently. What we have been waiting for, or felt that might not even happen, gets to happen, and then highlights all the times we did not touch or if we did, it was to quickly reveal something in another.

Figure D. Rebecca Hill and I in the Light Lab, University of Maryland, January 13th, 2021



The Big Phrase

The final section of the dance is the integration of themes of repetition in phrasing, re-patterning and restructuring space as The Square Dance. However here it is paired with the concept of the more traditional cardiovascular movement within the Running section. The Big Phrase section is pure high-octane dancing, and by placing it at the end it is synonymous to the thrill of the big finish of a dance and the triumph of completing a race. The section is where all of our heart and energy are pushed to the limit. The choreography is a transference of a phrase from an old duet, all of us using its language to manipulate and create parts as our own. The movement is a

large and lush ongoing sentence with exclamation points. It is curving, throwing, cross lateral redirections into and out of the floor. Limbs swing, sweep and reach, sending energy out from the body. The essence is a wave of flight of the dancers as we move upon the canvas.

The power of the section comes from the layering of the phrase, with one dancer moving with swift vigorous brushstrokes. She whirls around with follow through and then redirects herself in contrast to the simultaneous movement of two others dancing in unison, their quality strong, slower, wider, and deliberate. Gestures pop in and out of the space, bodies seeming larger than they are. We rotate our movement amongst and around each other almost like animals. We swivel and smack the floor. We push and dance with fervor, our ongoingness apparent in our unstoppable effort. There are continual conversations in movement choices. One dancer is swirling and painting the space while another is swinging and punching. We gather together, returning to a circular run. We collect our energy reserves to dance the final phrase in unison, the fabric of space between us holding us as we pull, push and swipe against it. Performing the final part of the dance together, joined in the camaraderie of willpower, feels palpable. We connect through the space between us, sending our energy from our movement and out to each other. We breathe and are strong together. This is our last chance to show all we have worked for. We finish and run in a circle again, one last victory lap before we exit.

Chapter 4: Creating Endurance through Multiple Entry Points

An Invitation

The opening of the piece was inspired from a piece I created about dealing with a parent going through illness and divorce during my first semester here. The dance I made reflects a time in my life that I was vulnerable, yet felt I had to hide it through sheer willpower. In one small section of this piece, I swung my arms over and over; I wanted to play with the expectation of when I would stop the motion and also how it would feel to endure the sensation. The swinging lasted maybe 2 minutes, enough for me to feel physical exertion and surpass the expected duration of the movement. I found that themes of enduring and willfulness arose from that 2 minutes. In “telepathic maps” I wanted to push this further.

The section of circling my arms is symbolic to me in that it plays with the expectation of how time passes in a performance and what the performer is doing to “entertain”. It also provided a way to bring the audience into the mental state of being present with me.

In my physical research I found that if I did it for 4 minutes I started to get a sensation in my arms, but it felt manageable. In the studio one day I played a song, knowing it was almost 7 minutes long, and I decided to swing my arms until it was over. The song was a continual drone with no clear sounds that would indicate where I was within its duration. Therefore, I could not tether myself to the sound elements of the song to guide me. The result was that initially it felt I could do it a long time, then my shoulders felt sore so I sought various internal shifts and tactics to continue. These came in the form of how I initiated movement in my arm circles and also where I

placed my focus, both ways to redirect my thinking back and forth from the internal and external. I found if I sped up my arms, to their natural pendular state, I could keep going with a bit more ease than if I slowed down in reaction to adjust the muscular strain.

The arm swinging is not anything new in the dance world. Repeated motion over and over is paramount in postmodern dance and especially in that of trance culture. However, this felt more performative and reminded me of Marina Abramović's piece, *Expanding in Space* (1977) where she flings her naked body into a wall with increasing momentum as the distance of the wall grows farther from her starting point.²³ The piece progresses, the momentum of Abramović's body increasing to keep the metric rhythm of the sound of slamming into the wall. The visual and visceral reaction of the audience is that she is self-immolating and therefore assumed it is more painful for her. In comparison to my own experience of circling my arms, the speed and momentum make what is painful easier to continue. In performing the Arm Circling section first, I had set up an expectation of physical willfulness and an invitation for the audience to experience endurance with me.

Resilience in Repetition and Pattern

Viktor Schklovsky, famed art theorist, wrote that "everything around us is asleep and...to awaken that which is asleep you turn it slightly until it awakens...the

²³ Marina Abramović and Ulay, "Expanding in Space", Performed by Marina Abramović and Ulay, documenta Kassel, 1977, Video (excerpt): 3:04
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEQUC0-AIUo>

function of art is to awaken what is asleep”.²⁴ My strategy was similar, to shift a phrase in space over and over to “re-awaken” the audience by repeating and reframing set choreography more times than would normally be expected.

Engagement with the use of repetition-based scores align within the framework set up by Anne Bogart with *irimi* or “to go through.”²⁵ The structure of this section asks the dancers to continually go into the phrase, repeating the pattern more than may seem necessary. Tactics of repetitive movement are endured by the dancer. Then habits materialize from physiological and psychological functions.

My experience in endurance sports had given me an understanding of the physiology of what the human body is capable of and how the mind drives us toward and beyond our perceived thresholds. I was curious as to how the dancers might figure out how to manage the repetition for themselves. Learning how to titrate the energy needed for the task at hand is inherent in both endurance athletes and dancers. Early in the rehearsal process I wondered what the sensation of ongoing movement does to the performers sense of endurance and of performance tactics, to enable a space for resilience to occur. Hana Huie remarked about the Square Dance that “The first time I do the phrase I want to get it perfect, by the fourth I am wondering why I want to get it perfect, by the seventh I am tired and I think my movement is a bit more

²⁴ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theater*,(London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 53

²⁵ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theater*,(London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 50

sloppy.” Christina Robson at one point said she considers the repetition soothing, in knowing what the outcome of each performance of the phrase is. I found myself

thinking that naturally the dancers “needed a break” as I was concerned about the physical safety of them in terms of overuse injuries. However, I found in the Square Dance section that it was the exhaustion of the mind, not the body that needed to be tended to.

I discovered that the shifting of pattern of the repetitive score in Square Dance was a visual representation that acts as an elongation of time.

The experience of making and performing the Square Dance became informative in how I approached the rest of the dance. It answered an initial question regarding how resilience functioned for other dancers, and the result was through a mental standpoint. I wanted to see if this held for other choreographic choices.

Endurance as Play

In an effort to create a contrasting movement section that diverged from the structured visual form of Square Dance and would open up the space of the canvas, I began to create the Running Section. Using feedback from the dancers in how the Square Dance was more mentally taxing to perform, I wondered if a fuller physicality of running with the high energy of devised play would be tiring in a different way and what tactics would the dancers use to endure it? I created a structure of a loose improvised score to start the process. The tasks of the score were to run and try to redirect or mimic the rhythm of another person’s running pattern. The running was as

all out as we could go while maintaining personal space and remaining on and around the twenty-by-twenty canvas. The establishment of running in a circle harkens back to the rotation of Square Dance but acts to disrupt the confines of the square with a strong driving rotational force of bodies. As we explored the score, we expanded our choices. For example, adding new directional patterns for running, varying quality of glitching and redirecting, the mimicry within the body. The overall goal was to never stop moving no matter what, but you could only choose glitching to leave the running. There always had to be at least one person running. We then started to play with shifting our attention, listening to each other and our choices in direction, rhythm, and movement volume. At this point we began orienting our internal needs to each other, trying on what the others were offering.

In our initial rehearsals the sets of play were 15-20 minutes, untimed. We were tired but felt noticeably lighter, in comparison to the Square Dance. We all expressed that the score was less mentally demanding and therefore, felt less physically demanding even though we were always moving quickly. We tried the process again but in a shorter amount of time to see what things stuck from the first time. I set a rule that there had to be three full circles of running before anyone could glitch out. Collectively we decided to alter this section by having someone step out and watch. It was a choreographic device, but also allowed a bit of rest. When one dancer stepped out, they were also given the task of calling out the elements they saw that intrigued them. We would literally yell out to each other “yes, that part, keep that!” We would tag in and out at least once. I found it an effective device as it provided varied viewpoints into what we saw from different sides of the canvas, since the audience was intended to be in the round. Switching out performers also gave rise

to different sets of trios, each dancer having their own innate way of running and glitching.

I wanted to keep the freshness of play alive in the section, but I decided to set the choreography because of the time limit for the performance. We went through videos I had taken and combed our memory to pick up and create the chronology of events within the section. When we set the section, the initial joy we felt in the process remained in connecting to each other with these strange games. It felt like a Rube Goldberg experiment where one thing sets off another over and over.

Endurance as Emotional

During my second year at the University of Maryland, I injured my right foot and then the left. I had little motivation in my creativity, but I certainly had limits to play within as I had to be off my feet for a considerable amount of time. I felt angry and disheartened with being unable to dance fully and stuck creatively which certainly clouded my emotional outlook. I used my experienced emotional endurance of this time to create a section of the dance that harkens to that time of enduring frustration and loss. The Shoulder Dance grew out of a somatic based exploration of initiation and reaction of the whole body from my armpits. During one rehearsal the task of trying to write my name with the palm of my hand while remaining stuck on all fours recalled in my body the frustration I had when I was injured. The shoulder dance also reflects the similarities of triathlon through dance. Triathlon and dance both require one to maintain foundational aspects of the task at hand with the possibility or inevitability of needing to shift/improvise or react in some way to the

changing environment or internal state. In triathlon this presents itself in a myriad of ways in dealing with a flat tire, readjusting expectations because of weather, and even readjusting your mechanics of running to remain feeling efficient through the creeping exhaustion. Dancing, especially performing, requires that one adapt to new performing spaces, issues with cues, and even momentarily forgetting material. I understand now how the Shoulder Dance is symbolic to enduring the box I had put myself in as an athlete and then felt I couldn't get out of.

Endurance as the Collective Conscious

I was reading an article early on in the pandemic in *The Atlantic* in which the author wrote "Bodies and their collisions are the fabric of our world."²⁶ It sparked thoughts for me about people having to shift the patterns of living that they have come to use as their identity. Patterns that usually intersect in people's lives, now could not.

I was reminded of a study I constructed in the late fall of 2019 with Rebecca Hill in which we had our eyes closed and explored what attuning to light, sound and the sense of someone nearby would do to movement choices. Eventually contact was made and explored but was not necessarily the goal. Rebecca and I both have experience in Contact Improvisation so we continued with moving in and out of touch on this initial exploration.

²⁶ Helena Fitzgerald, "Coronavirus Doesn't Stop at Your Front Door", Family, *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/03/what-does-social-distance-mean-withina-family/608044/>

I decided to revisit the duet in order to be in the nowness of the pandemic landscape and to understand endurance through possible visceral reaction of the audience in seeing dancers touch. This section is metaphorical in our current

landscape, in how we are finding new ways to connect when something is lost. In the pandemic our lack of touch is heightened, the things we have lost sense-wise or what has shifted is now regular for us. Hill and I are lucky to share a home together. I wanted to try to make sure this moment happened, to show that enduring is sometimes felt as yearning. These feelings co-exist in the bodies of the performers and perhaps the audience.

In our rehearsals Hill and I moved through the studio space tuning into hearing each other and following the light from the windows. The initial practice lasted 20 minutes until we felt we had found our end. We discussed the experience and what was highlighted was how as dancers we orient and use our vision to take in the other, the space and to connect. By taking something away, we needed to find a new way to connect to our environment. The movement of the duet consisted of seeking and exploring surfaces on the floor and each other as if encountering them for the first time. We moved slowly at first but over time became able to listen and feel how the other might need support. We filmed our sessions so that we could see what we felt happening and how it read for an audience. Sometimes movement that felt a particular way fell flat in terms of its effectiveness of conveying support, care, purpose and direction.

Light was our guide and a necessary part to build this section of “telepathic maps”. With our eyes closed we had to really listen and sense each other while being directed by the light. The process of working with light as our dancing partner is reminiscent of the work Dana Reitz and Jennifer Tipton did together in the early to mid 1990s. The work “Necessary Weather,” performed at Jacob’s Pillow in 1997, was a collaboration with Tipton and Reitz and Sara Rudner.²⁷ In the show at Jacob’s Pillow, it is only Reitz dancing. I was inspired when I first saw this piece performed when I was at University of Colorado, Boulder in 1994. Reitz was in a weeklong residency and speaking with us about collaboration with atypical mediums or inspirations. Malory Hartman, the Light Designer for “telepathic maps”, mentioned one day after a rehearsal that she always wanted to do a direct collaboration with a dancer and herself as an improvisation. I mentioned “Necessary Weather” and we felt this would be a great inspiration to the lighting of the duet. Hill and I would know our main light sources to guide us but Hartman would pull in other light sources improvisationally.

We were able to work with Hartman in the Light Lab in The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center to figure out how the duet felt in a dark space with Hartman’s lighting choices guiding us. Hill and I choreographed our movement on a specific pathway, a diagonal as dictated by a choice made with Hartman of light placement that highlighted our movement.

What I found in this duet is that the present moment exists in every interaction. It is not a performance of contact with eyes closed but a true expression of who we are with each other and how to move, guide, cajole, and embrace each other, finding the haven of another.

²⁷ Dana Reitz and Jennifer Tipton, *Necessary Weather*, Performed by Dana Reitz, Jacob's Pillow, June 29, 1997. video: 1:52
<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/dana-reitz-jennifer-tipton/necessary-weather/>

Endurance as Re/Connection

The lush and full dancing at the end of “telepathic maps” came to fruition through a process-oriented discovery or in other words, a happy accident.

In the previous sections of “telepathic maps,” I was using multifaceted concepts of endurance to generate new material. The processes I used up until this point were more collaborative. The material I use in the final section was choreography I generated on my own that resides in the cellular fabric of my mind and body. It is familiar to the core of my being. My choreographic instinct led me to revisit material I had made for a duet. The movement is rich, big, bombastic and representative of my personal artistic sense and aligned with the challenge of researching endurance.

My original intention for the choreography that I used was not meant to be a large part of the dance. I was using it in the early stages of the work as a sort of placeholder. I wasn't sure where the exact unfurling of the sections of the dance would be so I decided to revisit material from a duet I made “mimeomia” in Spring of 2019 with Suzanne Creedon. I chose to revisit this specific work because the base phrase aesthetics were potent for creating new choreographic terrain, and it was a strong contrast to the restrained shape-based choreographic signature of *The Square*

Dance. I was also being opportunistic in the use of my time as Robson had performed Creedon's role in the duet in Fall 2019. I wanted to capitalize on her knowledge of the material but still attune it to the theme of "telepathic maps".

In the effort to generate "new" material, I taught the phrase from "mimeomia" to Hill and Huie. It took several rehearsals to learn the whole phrase. Once they had established it within their bodies, I liked watching their choices and how they danced the choreography. I decided at this point to use the phrase in its entirety but to rework it into different but recognizable permutations as this would be keeping with the premise of repetition and pattern. When the time came to cultivate it into something new, I decided that I wanted Hill and Huie to do the original phrase together. It links into a transference of sorts, of guiding them on the map of our dance, of a path gone over before, but now, it was their journey. Once everyone was on the same page with the phrase, I chose to have everyone change it in some way I wondered what new visual landscapes utilizing chance methodology would offer in pairing people's movement together. I asked each dancer to divide the work into three sections and then to reorder those sections. The quality of the movement is that there are no real clear stopping points so the three sections, when performed with another, would have unified and contrasting moments but made out of the same fabric. Robson traversed many different avenues in her restructuring of the phrase and I began to see how in using the material, it still could be edgy and surprising. I reveled in what I was seeing in Hill and Huie and how they took ownership of a phrase established 2 years ago. The work now had depth, speed, intricacy; the section was different visually from all the material thus far in the dance. I discovered that the high physicality of our bodies dancing was the visual epitome of embodied resiliency. In watching the

choices and full physicality of their movement unfold, I felt strongly that this was what needed to be the last thing we did together. It felt that the release into full-out dancing was what the piece was building towards. Hence, the happy accident.

I wanted us to do the original phrase together, in unison, as the very last part of the dance. Hill, when speaking of The Big Phrase remarked that up until this last section she felt singular in her role in the dance, as if her job was more internal, especially in The Square Dance and even in the Running Section. With the larger, full dancing done together she felt that she shared the responsibility with all of us, therefore tuning to a more outward energy. Robson remarked that The Big Phrase felt like “stamina for exertion” in comparison to The Square Dance which was a practice in “stamina for restraint”. Both parts inherently ask for endurance but The Big Phrase asks for continual movement and momentum where The Square Dance is “more stop and start”.

The dancers and I felt that the choreography of the last section lent itself to a freedom that was ready to burst and be quantifiably expressive and free even with the energy reserves needed to perform it. There are tenets that rise for me from the depths of my triathlon training. They surface when I am in this space with the dancers, together. They are the camaraderie of a type of ecstatic suffering, the knowledge that we will not let each other down nor the audience. The trust that we will carry each other. We have all come this far. It is the display of our tensile connectivity, the resonance of the continual movement of our bodies, of what we have endured. It is the tangibility of our ongoingness.

Chapter 5: The Process of Making a Dance During a Pandemic

The process of making “telepathic maps” was enacted not just by myself but in connection with a team of designers. Now that the picture of the dance is clear, I will speak to the ideas that were to be implemented in the dance and also the process of collaborating with each individual designer. Most conversations were held via Zoom meeting as a group or one on one.

Design Collaborations

My collaboration with each designer was different in how much time I spent speaking directly with them or via email. I established after several production meetings a weekly email to notify of any developments and progress for myself and for them. I found this useful because I did not have to be tracking so many people separately, and I could remind certain designers that they needed to touch base with each other. I invited the designers via ZOOM to our Saturday rehearsals. I would always upload the rehearsal to BOX so they could see how the dance was taking shape to help inform our meetings.

Scenic

The element of the dance that was integral was the canvas upon which I wanted to draw or paint upon during the dance, so this was the idea around which Connie Dai, Scenic Designer and I connected on first. I also envisioned the audience sitting in the round, on all sides of the canvas. I wanted to convey the essence of a raw, museum-type space. I didn't want it to feel industrial, but simple enough so that the dancing would be highlighted. Dai had the idea to create benches for seating that

were reminiscent of the wood framing used for a painting. In understanding a minimal approach, she proposed the visual influence of hanging filament curtains in order to connect the canvas to the vastness of the space. I liked the idea of the lines as spatial abstract art. The “upstage” curtain would be cut on the bias, with a strong diagonal line down to the far upper corner. It would also behave as a projection surface. The other curtain was mid stage right, narrower and hanging to the ground. There were four colors of string attached on the diagonal at the corners of the canvas which connects the dancing space to the vastness of the black box around it. The overall design was contrasting soft, yet eccentric vertical lines with the strong horizontal center. We were able to get the canvas and use it for the performance.

Projection

I admittedly did not have a huge vision for projection at first until after the first design meeting for the Spring M.F.A concerts in September 2020. There were two main ideas that were a through line for me. Hill and I had our eyes closed during our duet, and I wanted the audience to make sure they were aware of this aspect. I wanted to lean into “making the vague visible” by slowly revealing it. Projection Designer Sean Preston proposed to create this reveal over the course of “telepathic maps,” and coordinate the full realization during the middle of the duet between Hill and I. Preston extrapolated my idea of subverting expectations of spectatorship through use of what we called “moving from macro to micro”. We both agreed that back and white and grey with some hints of color would provide texture and the tone we were going for. We connected over imagery in Preston’s design ideas regarding fractals of pictures, the dissonance of a stoplight in the middle of nowhere at night.

The imagery was in tune with how we don't always see every part of something until we take a step back. This aligned with the way the audience was invited to view the piece: a singular dancer may attract one's attention until the whole comes into view. The projection style we settled on was inspired by the "glitching" choreography in the dance. The lines would be overlapped and deconstructed and move in a similar manner. Preston proposed filming the duet, slowing it down and using an effect on it called "dot generator" so that when the projection is first revealed it looks like one or two big dots. The audience would see the projection as an abstract design that would be shown at particular moments through the dance as opposed to continually, keeping the focus on the dance. The final projection would be Hill and me as we are doing the duet.

Sound

The sound of the Square Dance phrase took on the anchoring role in the sound score by accident. I had filmed myself doing the phrase so I could teach it to the other dancers who were not on campus. I played it back and my phone was still connected to the speakers of the studio. The amplification of small brushes of the foot, loud resounding booms of a jump and the layered static of the heating system were so alive. I decided that I wanted this to be recorded by everyone and we recorded it on the canvas in our shoes and also on the floor along with the sound of breathing and clothing moving on the microphone.

Roni Lancaster was the Sound Designer and she offered me a lot of tips on how to collect the sound of The Square Dance. Unfortunately, with the pandemic it was not as easy to collaborate in person with her. We were in agreement on having

live microphones on the floor to catch the sound of the dancing and being able to have the sound collected looped.

I wanted to add in the sounds of our breath and other elements of texture to the score that were not percussive. I asked Robson to record herself in December reading horoscopes in different inflections and I sent this to Lancaster to use in a particular section. The words of the horoscope had the quality of absurdism and abstraction with the movement of the piece. They provided a complement to what we were doing with our bodies.

Lancaster ended up recording all the dancing sound during the first day of our intensive in January. She collected the sound of The Square Dance which through the rehearsal process early on felt like a strong sound anchor. We also recorded breathing, Hill and Huie reading excerpts from *Einstein's Dreams* by Alan Lightman and the sound of fabric dragging over the microphone.²⁷ We met to discuss how and where this would build while watching a video of the piece on Wednesday January 13th, 2021. Her intention was to have a working sound for us by the week of January 19th.

While the ability to bring the entirety of this sound score to life was not able to happen due to the pandemic, in our performance of telepathic maps on January 15th, 2021, the sound of our dancing was heard and felt alive along with the dance.

²⁷ Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams*, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2004).

Lighting

The collaboration with Malory Hartman, Lighting Designer, was one that felt symbiotic. In our conversations regarding design ideas, we connected on themes of simplicity, the unexpected, and the role of spectatorship. She asked questions and involved herself in researching concepts and artists that inspired me in my own research. In our duet Hill and I have our eyes closed, and we needed Hartman as a guide. I also wanted her to use the light improvisationally to enact as another performer. We found connection in our adoration of French choreographer Christian Rizzo's dance work "Mon Amour."²⁸ His use of light in atypical ways such as flooding the outer part of the stage while the center became a large black void was something that was of particular interest. I wanted to play with reorienting the spectatorship of the dance. One particular idea from Hartman was to light the audience in a reversal of performative lighting. She proposed placing television sets around the space so that the audience could experience "seeing" each other while pulling the light away from the canvas. While this idea was innovative, we found that it would clutter the space around the dancing and obscure viewing the dance fully when filmed.

Costumes

Costume Designer Stephanie Parks' designs were functional, artistic and supportive of the work in that they were restrained yet unique. The costumes were to be made of the same fabric for each dancer and color of a light grey and light blue.

²⁸ Christian Rizzo, "Mon Amour." Opera de Lille. 2008. Video. 1:30:54.
<https://vimeo.com/25410437>

Parks ran with my idea of “making the vague visible”, and also, how the dance would reveal new ways of viewing endurance. She proposed that each dancer have a panel on the costume that could be opened at some point in the dance to reveal a bright color of fabric. Initially, the dancers would be interacting to do this reveal through touch, but because of the pandemic, we were to do it ourselves before The Running Section. I appreciated her willingness to keep the shape and line of the costumes simple, to not distract from the choreography. I recognized each of us performers as unique, and therefore I wanted us to all have slightly different cuts of tops and pants. The colors of the revealed fabric were fuchsia, yellow, aqua blue and dark blue. These colors were also the same as the filament at the diagonals of the canvas. The idea to mirror colors in the costumes with elements from the scenic design grew from a conversation between Dai, Parks, and myself. A visual connection would be made between the dancers and the support of the canvas which later would be revealed as evidence of our dancing.

Rehearsal Methodologies

The ability to work in a studio during this time was very much appreciated. Precautions were taken of mandatory university check ins before coming to campus, negative CoVid 19 tests and masks worn at all times.

All four of us would not be in the studio until January so efficient strategies needed to be crafted to make the work. The advent of Zoom was fortuitous in the making of this dance. While not always easy, the platform was helpful so that we

could “be together” when we couldn’t. September through October the rehearsal process was a bit piecemeal due to people’s schedules so I had to be opportunistic and prepared for each meeting. Preparation for my rehearsal was about what I wanted to see on other bodies, what I was curious about playing with and also about how my movement style was transferred to other dancers in person or on Zoom. The pandemic took time away from dancing together so I found that I couldn’t be too precious with what I was making and it actually gave me freedom in its limits for no second guessing. However, I still had to be mindful and concise in my decisions. We, the dancers and I, were all working with a yes mentality.

The weekly schedule for the most part was that I had one session a week on my own or with Hill and one on Saturday with all the dancers, with Robson being on Zoom because she was in Massachusetts. It was necessary to have a goal for each rehearsal and strategize the steps to accomplish it. An example would be that if I wanted to teach something to others via Zoom, I would send a recording of me doing the dance ahead of time with the expectation that the dancers would go over it before the rehearsal. Then when we met for Zoom rehearsals we would go over facings, the Zoom dancers using their own space for markers.

The downfall of Zoom is that computer fatigue is real and having classes and rehearsal via this format can be a drain on energy. In being conscientious of the amount of time spent on a screen, I wasn’t able to experiment with a variety of options for the work like I might have in person. In person rehearsals offer ways to quickly discern if what you are trying has the desired effect. With only myself, or one other in the room and one on screen, I couldn’t always tell the exact visual effect. The

good thing about this is that it made me less precious or judgmental about my material and to follow my instinct on movement choices.

I used improvisational scores to experiment with material. A score is where you create a series of tasks that need to take place for a given amount of time. I would typically use phrase material we had created already. In doing this I discovered the glitching idea worked really well amongst the material. It created a sense of ongoingness and stuckness all at once. Scores also offer a way to work by choice and with the limit of home-based studios, choices became different than in a rehearsal studio which led to dynamic choices. I work with scores in person and not just in a pandemic as it gives rise to chance methods that I am fond of using.

I am a performer as well as choreographer of the dance which made it a little harder for me to make quick changes or choices in choreography. Having the dancers in the space and Robson on Zoom watch and offer up what they saw was incredibly helpful. I am someone who values the feedback from the people I work with. Knowing their thoughts on what they felt and what they saw, even via the internet was necessary and possible in a multifaceted approach to rehearsal.

It is important to me that trust and connection is made between myself and the dancers and they amongst each other in any dance I make. I found this especially needed in this piece that is looking at how endurance functions dynamically in dance. Their physical and verbal feedback was key in figuring out the transitional flow of the dance. Rehearsing a spatially constructed phrase through Zoom meant that Robson, based in Massachusetts, had to create her own seven by seven square and determine facings of her own based on what was downstage, upstage, right and left in the studio.

Tracking on Zoom is not easy so there was a lot of reviewing of the video to see what I could ascertain. I relied on the ingenuity of the dancers I was working with, knowing that we would have enough time together in January to track the spacing. Zoom provided a way for me to see myself in the dance and what Robson's choices were. I could then navigate and shift parts that felt dull to me aesthetically.

I admit that I was asking a lot of them physically but I made sure to attune to how much energy they had mentally or physically. If the mental energy was zapped then I would work on The Big Phrase, because it could ignite their mental state through its physicality. I found that it was helpful to have the dancers workshop things without me so that they could learn from each other, not just me. I also then could see my own choreography and how they made choices in it for their bodies. Often, I would have us commit to doing a particular movement the way someone else did it because aesthetically I liked it more than what I had made. We worked intently and regularly every Saturday in November through December and were able to finish it to a point that I felt satisfied during a mini-3-day intensive December 19, 20 and 21, 2020, before the winter break. I am very happy I decided to do a mini-intensive as a suggestion from Hill. It gave us all the chance to work without the distraction of school and also gave me peace of mind before returning and rehearsing in-person. There was a lot we wouldn't know until we finally were brought together for our January Thesis Intensive, but I felt confident in knowing we knew all the choreography and the order.

January Thesis Intensive 2021

The week of January 11th-15th was our first time physically together in the studio.

We had put all the sections of the dance together in December but Robson was on Zoom.

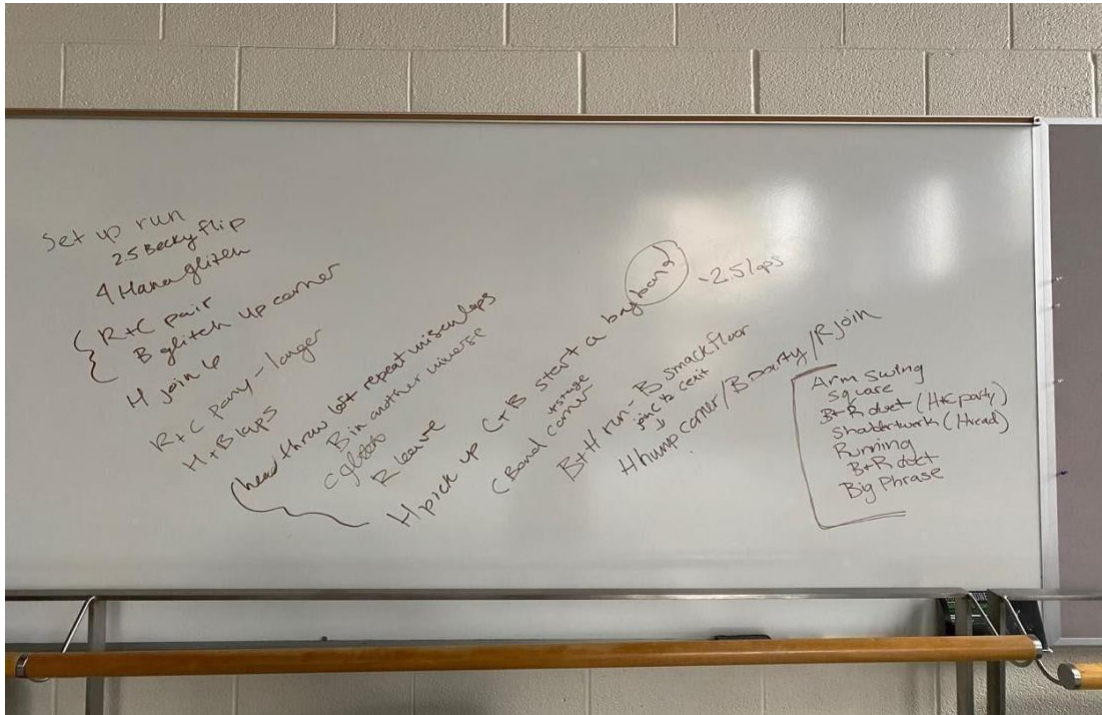
The goal for the week was to integrate Robson and work on each section one day at a time to build the dance into a cohesive piece. We went over specific choreographic elements that when together we noticed we were not all doing the same thing. Uniformity of the movement is important in The Square Dance to define the spatial variations. The week provided training for us to feel how each section transitioned and what energy was needed to perform it. I developed a strategy of starting from the beginning and then adding a bit on of the next section each day until we had the dance as a whole in our bodies. It was a stair-step approach which considered the physical toll of dancing 4-6 hours a day for a week.

It felt like play the whole time to be together in the studio. We would laugh and egg each other on. Comedic moments were had by all. Despite the apparent levity of the atmosphere, we were all serious about making it a strong piece. Our collective energy really helped to keep us going, even when we were tired. We recorded the run-through and also throughout the week wrote down a chronological order of the piece on the white board using our own vernacular. It was helpful and interesting to see how we came to learn the piece so quickly and create a language for it through the process. It also was our “evidence” of making the dance for that week. (Figure E.)

We put everything together in one week, running the piece, and stopping to clean, and then rerunning from that point. The piece came together rather quickly, and we were able to do a full run through twice before showing it on Friday January 15th, 2021. Even if the dance hadn’t fallen into place quickly, I had to keep going and the

only way I can explain this part of the process was faith in my experience and the belief in my choices and in the dancers.

Figure E. Whiteboard used during January Intensive



Chapter 6: Closing Thoughts and Future Hopes

I didn't know how I would make a dance in the time of a pandemic. My work before has always been about connection and play and developing rapport in the studio over longer periods of time. I didn't have the luxury of time in the studio with others. I did, however, learn to choose who I worked with based on their willingness to experiment and roll with whatever the conditions threw at us. The dance

exemplifies the ongoingness of its foundational theories but also in that it never came to be performed with a capital P.

Endurance as an investigatory tool figures into how I view the process in total. I started working on this piece with four dancers over a year ago. The process was an act of endurance in itself in that we didn't know how anything would turn out. First there was a quarantine that barred us from continuing work in person, and once we were back together in the fall, there were the questions of how the final show would look or be viewed. Even as the rules kept changing, we kept reconfiguring our possibilities of making and performing.

During quarantine, I was in New York City and others were scattered about the country. The way the piece begun before quarantine didn't resonate anymore once away from the dancers. I found myself stopping and starting with online rehearsal. Nothing was connecting for me thematically or in what I was making. I admit to feeling uninspired, but I had trust in the process of making a dance. It never goes how you imagine, which allows the dance to reveal its value to you. In making dances for 20 plus years (especially in the last 8 years), I have learned through experience that it will all work itself out. It is not without lack of hard work and dedication to the craft by any means. It is that as a dancer and choreographer you know that if you keep going, something is going to show up.

Making a dance in a pandemic that was not performed as a School of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies production as all M.F.A's have done before me solidifies the essence of what I know. Dance is always there. "Telepathic maps" is in the ether. It is in my body and the bodies of Rebecca Hill, Christina Robson and Hana Huie. It is in the mind and visceral sense of those who witnessed it via live video feed

on January 15th, 2021. It represents how we as artists deal with the expectation of our art and the audience's expectation of our art as product. "Telepathic maps" feels portable in that I could take it anywhere. I like the idea that my dance could be a catalyst for work that places itself where it can land and then move on as needed. I am not speaking of touring, but a recognition that we all share in the dance. We all have pieces of "telepathic maps" and those pieces could come together at any time even though it will never be exactly the same. And that is ok. If I learned anything it is that I proved resiliency in making, writing and showing my work without fanfare but full of triumph.

Dance as endurance is ongoing. It has been how we worship, tell stories, socialize, connect to others and to the universe as well as being something that all can do. I recognize in saying that *all* can dance, which I truly believe, it is not represented currently in "telepathic maps". I chose dancers that were trained and with which I had a working rapport for over a year or more. I knew our time would be limited so I had to be opportunistic in who I invited into the process. I appreciate my cast more than anything for their support, fortitude, and amazing dancing. I am content that in the process and performance we were able to convey exactly what I wanted under the guide of my research.

In the process of writing this paper I happened upon an article by accident. The article spoke about triathlon and was literally titled "Why Do Rich People Love Endurance Sports?"³⁰ Aside from the obvious, that it takes money and time to participate in triathlon, I recognized what the unsettling feeling I had was after my first race and why I returned fully to dance. In a study conducted in *The Journal of Consumer Research*, titled "Selling Pain to the Saturated Self," the authors state,

“When leaving marks and wounds, pain helps consumers create the story of a fulfilled life.”³¹ The “create a story of a fulfilled life” struck a chord. In pursuing pain and overcoming it, I could tell myself I was fulfilled. However, I kept going back to the proverbial well; overcoming pain wasn’t what sustained me or stayed with me, it was how I found my own way to define it and understand its use. While I am grateful for what being a triathlete provided me, I know that it was not sustainable. I wasn’t because of my age or motivation. Perhaps it was because it wasn’t available to everyone. It doesn’t even try to be. Dance, as a living breathing medium that is usually the first to invite those in that otherwise do not feel welcome, helped me

³⁰ Brad Stulberg, “Why Do Rich People Love Endurance Sports?”, *Science of Performance, Outside*, August 3, 2017.
https://getpocket.com/explore/item/why-do-rich-people-love-endurance-sports?utm_source=pocketnewtab

³¹ Rebecca Scott, Julisn Cayla, and Bernard Cova, “Selling Pain to the Saturated Self” *Journal of Consumer Research* 44, no.1 (June 2017): 22–43, Accessed March 17, 2021
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucw071>

understand that the pain of a triathlon is nothing compared to the pain of not being able to be yourself.

I reconnected to myself and I feel that what I learned might also offer something to the collective. Enduring is something that is a part of life that offers itself up in so many ways. For myself, sometimes that way is in keeping the dance living and letting it land where and when it needs to. I found that in working on finding the resilience, the endurable through dance dynamics, I learned the lesson that

nothing is certain, and everything can change. It is the response that determines the next step.

Addendum

After presenting my research and paper, I came to acknowledge that the practice of ongoingness is just as important as the performance of it. My continued revelations about what I had created artistically and how that process translates beyond the performance space was apparent after seeing how each artistic choice was, also an entry into a new way of considering my teaching. The different facets of endurance that I employed to create a dance translate into a practice that feels

accessible for pedagogical application. In terms of accessibility, I consider this piece to be conceptually based rather than rooted in virtuosic “phraseology”. One does not have to do a triathlon in order to experience resilience. You can find it in dance. As dancers, this is something we already know and I believe that other movers can find it too. The dance is mutable and able to fulfill an understanding of how one may endure in a way that is unique to them. I own my identity as artist but also as teacher and guide. I imagine the pathways that I used to create the dance may provide rich structures to investigate in the classroom. I wonder how I can engender resilience in my teaching and how that will support and ignite the development of dancers. I hope to continue my research and use my discoveries to keep investigating and evolving the usefulness of repetition, glitching, play, and mental and physical equity.

Glossary

Chance Methodologies: Chance methods or chance scores were introduced to dance in the early 1960s in Robert Dunn’s choreography classes. The structures of which were taken from musical composers, primarily John Cage. The premise is task-based scores that value indeterminacy in order to allow structures evolve without predetermination.

Ephemeral: Lasting a very short time or fleeting. In speaking of the medium of dance it is regard to the immediacy of what one sees and the trace effect or memory of it afterwards, often not physically tangible.

MELT: MELT is an acronym that stands for Myofascial Lengthening Technique. It is a well-developed practice that works to rebalance, reconnect and establish renewal within the nervous system through the basis of regenerating the tensile integrity of the connective tissue throughout the body. It is a science backed method invented by Sue Hitzmann and practiced around the world.

Neurofascial: This term is used in conjunction with explaining how the nervous system is directly connected to the fascia or connective tissues of the body. The connective tissue in the body surrounds, supports, protects and connects the muscles, joints and organs. This establishes that fascia is a conductor of our nerves and nerve signals.

Pilates: Pilates is a method of body conditioning created by Joseph Pilates and is meant to strengthen and tone the musculature of the body in a systematic way that enables improved posture, flexibility, joint mobility, stability, and balance. The exercises focus on the core muscles or “the center”. These connect to the spine and pelvis and are where all movement is generated from.

Physiology: This is a branch of biology that deals with the functions and activities of life or of living matter (such as organs, tissues, or cells) and of the physical and chemical processes involved

Somatic: Means relating to or affecting the body and is often used when speaking of practices or events that are experienced as physical.

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