



Changing Style: Rethinking Choreography in Broadway Musicals

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By

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of the requirements of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

I hereby recognize and pledge to fulfill my responsibilities, as defined in the Honor Code,
and to maintain the integrity of both myself and the College as a whole.

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Introduction: Questioning Style

Anytime I experience a show, whether it is a musical or a play, I always focus on the movement and what style of dance is on the stage. I naturally gravitate towards how people move and what choices the choreographer makes. Since I was young, I have been watching professional theatre productions on Broadway and focusing on the dances with each show I have seen. I watched over twenty productions in the span of sixteen years. From *Mary Poppins* (2006) to *Aladdin* (2011), and in recent years *The Great Gatsby* (2024). There is a consistent style with heavy influences from jazz dance, flashy moments with flips and tricks, and an overall spectacle that captivates the audience. Throughout Broadway musicals, there are certain dances, styles, and musicals, recognizable for their well-known choreography and movement.

Many musicals like *A Chorus Line* or *42nd Street* have choreography and specific dances that have been redone multiple times with the entirety of the original choreography or elements from the choreographer. When reviving a musical, the past choreography will still linger in the dances and influence the choreographic decisions. *Gypsy* has been revived five different times, *Cabaret* four times including a film adaptation, and *Fiddler on the Roof* five times on Broadway.¹ *West Side Story* has been revived on Broadway and recreated into several films with the choreography by and in the style of Jerome Robbins (1918-1998) even after he passed away. He is not the only choreographer whose original work is continuously redone and worked into musicals. Bob Fosse (1927-1987) and Christopher Gattelli (b. 1972) in addition to Jerome Robbins each have musicals that brought in a style of movement that is recognizable and actively redone whether on Broadway or in regional theatres.

¹ See Culwell-Block, "17 Most-Revived Musicals in Broadway History Since 1927."

These three choreographers have shows recognizable by the movement in their personal style. Bob Fosse is well known for his work on *Chicago* and the arrangement of one of the most popular songs within the musical, the “Cell Block Tango.” He implements a choreographic style consistently recreated in theatres with chairs, black clothing, and sensual jazz movement, including the use of hips and hands. Robbins is best known for *West Side Story* and the balletic dance fights between two rival gangs. His choreography comes from his ballet background as he worked with the American Ballet Theatre and the New York City Ballet. Similarly, Christopher Gattelli’s work in *Newsies* showcases the trained technique of male dancers with the turns, backflips, and jumps they do throughout the show. The special movement captures audiences and makes the choreography recognizable. Each of their styles made certain pieces of theirs original, either incorporating their own technique, having dance integral to the plot, or presenting men as strong and powerful through dance. Though each choreographer brought their own aspects into each of their shows, when redone, the dances stay within the same style and do not branch far from the original.

For this project, I will take one dance from each musical and choreograph it into a different dance genre than from its original form. I am choreographing the “Cell Block Tango” from *Chicago* as a ballet piece, “Cool” from *West Side Story* as a tap, and “Seize The Day” from *Newsies* as a modern dance. Each genre I chose will go with their piece musically and in context with the story while diverting from the original choreography. With these style changes, I will discover how they influence the context and meaning of the dance. I also will identify new meanings that will arise through my version of the piece, whether it adds or detracts from the original intention of the story. Through this process, I will also explore my own style of choreography within each genre and the process of creating a dance concert. As I create new

choreography in each piece, new meanings and ways of looking at the story will arise in addition to established elements from the original version of the dances.

Working on this project will lead me to consider musical theatre choreography in a different way than originally done before. As an audience, we are used to seeing jazz dance and upbeat pieces, however, that does not allow room for innovation. As Broadway musical theatre starts to shift away from this, I want to utilize my skills as a dancer and choreographer, creating work based on various dance styles. Demonstrating dance differently conveys how we can use dance genres to present new meanings, adding onto the plot and incorporating movement as a major storytelling component. Looking at revivals on Broadway, they can be used to reimagine stories over and over again, including dance. My goal is to reinvent these dances, continuing my growth as a teacher and artist. Through this project, I start my journey on re-envisioning dance in theatre, making movement a prominent feature in storytelling.

Additionally to my reconception of the choreography, I will explore what Broadway has been and what it is becoming in recent years. I then look into each choreographer and their own unique style. For *Chicago*, *West Side Story*, and *Newsies*, I will examine how it was created and the process of the original choreographers. I will discuss the original choreography and the choices the choreographer made in the context of the story. Through my analysis, I will explore not only the context but why certain dynamics, spacing, and other choreographic elements present the meaning of the piece. Understanding the connotation of the original piece supports my exploration in comprehending what they did when setting my own choreography. I will document the process as part of my discovery as a choreographer and if I successfully choreographed each dance in a different style. In the end, I will reflect on how my process went and if the choreographer's original movement still lingers in my version of the dances.

Chapter One: The Choreographers, Style, and Past Work

The dances on Broadway originally were based on elements of jazz, tap, and ballet. Tap was used as an entertainment tool rather than to further the plot like many dances in musical theatre. Musical theatre choreography, specifically for Broadway, offers spectacle movement, including choreography for entertainment than for the story. Broadway has been heavily commercialized for several years, beginning in the twentieth century to present day with the rise of social media and technology. When Fosse's original production of *Pippin* (1972) appeared on Broadway, there were ads for the show, presenting Fosse's choreography and style. Though spectacle can add to the story and convey emotion, big tap and jazz numbers offer more entertainment than contributing to the themes of a show. There are some choreographers, like Jerome Robbins or Agnes de Mille, who created movement for the plot. They made it an integral musical element, especially incorporating the dream ballet. Though some musicals on Broadway follow a spectacle pattern, several shows break away from what has been done before, paving the way for new dance styles.²

Broadway is known for its spectacle performances with fun, energetic jazz dances, however, the stage is changing with different styles influenced by concert dance. Broadway is incorporating new ways of moving by combining dance genres, using nontraditional styles, or utilizing social dance to tell the story. *Hadestown* (2019) incorporates contemporary dance into the musical along with letting the performers find their own way of moving. When an understudy is stepping into a lead role for that show, the choreographer wants them to find the natural movement of their body instead of copying what a different actor did before. In the most recent

² Information found in Donovan, "Style as Star: Bob Fosse and Sixty Seconds That Changed Broadway" (48); James, "Dancing Genre: Influences on Dance in Musical Theatre" (30, 41, 47); Martincich and Warren, "Everybody Cancan: Contemporary Musical Theatre Dance" (279); Oehlers, "Ensembles in Motion: Formations, Spectacle, and Unison" (72); and Olmstead, "Dancing Narrative: Storytelling through the Ensemble Body" (92).

revival of *West Side Story* (2020), the choreographer conveys the story through the use of modern dance rather than Robbins' style of jazz, seen in several other revivals and movies. Even with *Spring Awakening* (2006), Bill T. Jones, a concert dance choreographer, utilized gestures, allowing the actors to explore how to convey the story in the body. Broadway is starting to change, transitioning into new ways of thinking as I intend to do within this project. However, there is a reason each choreographer succeeded in their respective shows, demonstrating their own unique style, and furthering their career and work.³

Bob Fosse

Bob Fosse (1927-1987) started dancing at a very young age at Frederic Weaver's Chicago Academy of Theater. At the age of thirteen, his teacher, Frederic Weaver, started booking him at nightclubs and vaudeville performances. During his high school years, he was heavily inspired by dancers and choreographers like Fred Astaire and Paul Draper as they tapped with grace and light sounds. His early training focused more on tap than jazz or ballet. In 1945, Fosse stepped out of dance to join the Navy for over a year. He began performing again in 1946 and drew new inspiration from the father of jazz dance, Jack Cole. Jack Cole's movement featured elements of isolation and keeping a bent of the knee while moving. As Fosse's style developed, he would be recognized for these movements in his choreography from Cole's impact. These experiences he

³ Further musical theatre information found in Gennaro, "Dance in Musical Theater Revival and Adaptation" (246); Gold, "How New-to-Broadway Choreographers Are Changing Dance in Theater"; Heimlich, "What Does 'Broadway Choreography' Mean Today?"; Jablonski and Martincich, "Movement Direction in Musical Theatre: Physical Actions and Gestural Storytelling" (263); Martincich and Warren, "Everybody Cancan: Contemporary Musical Theatre Dance" (278, 279, 281); Nerson, "Postmodern Dance's Legacies on the Contemporary Musical Theatre Stage" (245); Sagolla, "A 'West Side Story' That Resets the Choreographic Balance."

had at a young age shaped his career as his choreography brought influences of vaudeville and burlesque dance.⁴

Fosse's first Broadway show he performed in was *Dance Me a Song* in 1950. Shortly after, he formally trained at the American Theatre Wing with teachers such as Anna Sokolow, Charles Weidman, and José Limon in modern and choreography. He also studied acting with Meisner for a brief period of time, contributing to directorial work later on. In 1954, he booked his first Broadway show, *The Pajama Game* (1954), as the choreographer. He struggled during the process and Jerome Robbins was hired to help if necessary to restage any choreography. Robbins did respace the large group numbers as Fosse never had that many actors to work with. The musical was a success and won Fosse his first Tony award for best choreography, especially with his number "Steam Heat." Fosse's choreography when the musical premiered was described as "to come so spontaneously out of the story," (Atkinson). He continued to work and in 1959, becoming a director-choreographer when staging the Broadway show *Redhead*. He carried on throughout the rest of his life to create, choreograph, and direct several other shows such as *Sweet Charity* (1966), *Pippin* (1972), and most importantly *Chicago* (1975). His choreography and style continue to be well-known within these shows and his works of movement.⁵

Fosse created his style based on the movements he could do with his own body. Some of his signature movements and elements include isolations, turned-in legs, an inward-facing body, and bowler hats. Fosse was naturally pigeon-toed so his technique created a bent knee and turned-in look. His isolation work produced angular movement throughout the entirety of the

⁴ Biographical information gleaned from Long, *Broadway, the Golden Years: Jerome Robbins and the Great Choreographer-Directors: 1940 to the Present* (145); Mrozowski, "Bob Fosse's Jazz Revolution" (98); and Winkler, *Big Deal: Bob Fosse and Dance in the American Musical* (17, 21).

⁵ Further Fosse biographical information found in Long, *Broadway, the Golden Years: Jerome Robbins and the Great Choreographer-Directors: 1940 to the Present* (147); Winkler, *Big Deal: Bob Fosse and Dance in the American Musical* (26, 39).

body. Fosse also has his own movement of the arm which is known as the Fosse arm. The arm slowly swings back and forth, articulating every part from elbow to fingertips. He is also known to use props like chairs that are seen within the movie version of *Cabaret* as well as the stage production of *Chicago*. His vaudeville background inspired his work, becoming the storytelling mode for *Chicago*. Fosse continues to inspire artists today and his influences live on in dance classes and on Broadway today.⁶

Chicago, originally a play written by Maurine Watkins in 1926, was adapted into a musical written by Bob Fosse and Fred Ebb with Fosse choreographing and directing. The show had previously turned into a Hollywood film by Cecil B. DeMille, directed by Frank Urson in 1927. At the start of rehearsals in 1974, Fosse struggled with his health, suffering from a heart attack at the very beginning of rehearsals. Fosse came back after a brief hold on the production wanting to work, creating a more sinister tone to *Chicago* than originally intended, “As if *Chicago* were a part of Fosse’s body,” (Wasson 406). Though set in the 1920s, Fosse left out recognizable dances from the time period, solely keeping the musical in his style. He did not have choreography planned before rehearsal, rather, he worked with the performers, choreographing and keeping the best phrases. Opening in 1975, the musical ran for about two years before closing in 1977. The original production is noted to have “almost monumentally inventive production numbers” and “have become the hallmarks of Mr. Fosse’s work and style,” (Barnes). In 1996, the musical came back to Broadway, running ever since as one of Broadway’s longest-running shows. Though the current version is in the Fosse style, it is not the exact choreography he did in 1975. The original dances were not recorded, making it difficult to

⁶ Fosse movement style found in Donovan, “Style as Star: Bob Fosse and Sixty Seconds That Changed Broadway” (49); and Leeds, “Slow Burn: Why Bob Fosse’s Influence Never Fizzles.”

present the same choreography. The musical, however, speaks to audiences today through its story's themes and meanings.⁷

Chicago is a satirical show that presents themes such as the idolization of criminals in media and the corruption of America's justice system. The musical takes place during the 1920s and focuses on Roxie Hart, a woman who recently killed her lover as he was walking out on her. She is sent to the Cook County Jail and we learn about the inmates in the "Cell Block Tango." One of the murderesses, Velma, is a woman who has been receiving sympathy from the press for her acts of murder. In an attempt to not get hung, Roxie hires Billy Flynn, a lawyer who paints his female clients as innocent women, justified in their acts. She makes the news headline, leading up to her trial where she is 'innocent' of her crimes. However, audiences are no longer interested in her and move on to the next new killer in the media. Roxie and Velma end the musical together as a double act in a Vaudeville performance, thanking the audience for believing in their innocence. Throughout the musical, these two women cheat and lie, gaining favor in the media and justice system, leading to their innocence.

For my project, I am focusing on the "Cell Block Tango," featured in the musical's first act. The dance features six women, the merry murderesses, who have been staying in the Cook County Jail for a period of time, recounting stories of why they were arrested. In each story told, the women recount how they remember their husbands or lovers treating them. At the end of each monologue, the murderess describes how they murdered their partners, presenting the action as a punchline. The women tell the murder as an accident and convey it was the man's fault why he is not alive. During Annie's monologue, she says to the audience "You know, some guys just can't hold their arsenic" (Ebb and Fosse 20). The blame is on the man for why he died

⁷ Information on the production found in Mordden, *All That Jazz: The Life and Times of the Musical Chicago* (66); Mrozowski, "Bob Fosse's Jazz Revolution" (100, 101); Wasson, *Fosse* (407); and Winkler, *Big Deal: Bob Fosse and Dance in the American Musical* (190, 206, 208).

and the prisoners describe it as if they are victims. This number in the musical centers itself on these six women to demonstrate how the audience should sympathize with their plights, making them innocent of their murders.

In the current Broadway version, there is not as much dancing as seen in other Fosse dances and musicals. The performance starts with the merry murderesses on stage posing on or around their chairs in a straight line across the stage. This is a classic Fosse element as seen in other dances such as “Mein Herr” in the movie version of *Cabaret*. The women are posed in various lunges or spread their legs out on the chairs. Throughout the piece, the dancers will drop their heels during the chorus on the beat of the music. All of the dancers are wearing black clothing that is revealing and tight in some way, adding to the idea that these women are alluring and sultry. Fosse’s movement is sensual with his past choreography including isolations of the hips, focusing on the movement of the pelvis. The choices he makes at the beginning of the piece characterize these six women as seductive through the exposure of the skin and indication of the pelvis. The visual aspects of the performance contribute to how alluring and promiscuous the women are, leading to their vicious acts towards their lovers.

Throughout the piece, the performers speak their monologues as the other merry murderesses watch and remain in open-legged poses. During the chorus of the song, they dance with heavy use of isolations. Either their heads are moving to look at each other or they are pointing at the audience with a sharp motion on the musical accents. There is a moment when they go into a flat back from left to right, making direct eye contact with the audience. Once Velma starts to speak, the remaining merry murderesses move from their chairs towards her. The dancers surround Velma making her known as the most important character in this piece. The moment she starts singing, the dancers move across the stage with their legs moving and

arms still. The arms are positioned over their torsos with one arm covering the chest and the other covering the stomach. At the end of the piece, they repeat the gesture right before the women circle the entire stage exclaiming about how the men “had it comin’” (Ebb and Fosse 23). They end the dance in the chairs with their legs spread, directing the last line at the audience.

The characters make direct eye contact with the audience, making them part of the act during the entire piece. The direct contact makes the audience feel as if they are the ones who need to be convinced the six women are innocent. The audience represents the jury, determining if these women are justified in their murders. The crossing arm gesture conveys the characters as vulnerable and trying to hide parts of themselves. It is a closed position making it evident there is a part of them they are withholding from the audience. However, it is a strong-held position with bound arms that come in sharply. These women are not weak but strong, bold, and angry when speaking or moving. They use this bold movement, invoking the audience to be angry with them, persuading their innocence even further. The audience is aware that none of the murders were accidents, but through their emotions, sensuality, and bold movement, the six merry murderesses directly attempt to convince the audience that their actions are justified.

The movie version of *Chicago* (2002) differs from the Broadway version, featuring movements from the tango style. Within the song, the movie cuts from the six women dancing to them casually speaking throughout the Cook County Jail. Instead of using chairs, they have jail cells that they walk out of to dance with a male partner. The film has a serious tone in this song compared to the musical version, utilizing partnering and heavy tango movement. However, the tango movement does not dispose of the anger and bold movement seen in the Broadway version. The choreography continues to be striking and sensual, especially doing lunges through

the male partners' legs. The musical and movie version of *Chicago* presents the "Cell Block Tango" as a promiscuous dance that evokes emotions of anger for the audience to understand their plights and be persuaded to believe their crimes were justified.

In the "Cell Block Tango," the women have power as they move, especially with their bound and direct movements. When envisioning this piece, I want to move away from the idea of sensuality and the allure the six merry murderesses have in the Broadway version by applying elegant movement and ballet costumes. I am putting this dance into a ballet to demonstrate the power these women have through grace and beauty. Their innocence will be emphasized through ballet, invoking the idea of how women are seen as dainty and delicate by society. The audience will not be convinced through emotion that the characters are justified in their crimes but by their light movement quality. I will continue to use direct and sharp qualities as it goes with the music and characterize the women as confident in their innocent murders. Switching the "Cell Block Tango" into a ballet will portray the merry murderesses as innocent women who have done nothing wrong through elegant and graceful movement.

Jerome Robbins

Jerome Robbins (1918-1998) was a dancer, director, and choreographer who influenced Broadway by bringing in balletic elements and movement from his past dance company training. He started in the arts by playing piano while his sister took dance lessons in New York City. Eventually, Robbins started taking lessons in 1935 at the Dance Center with Senia Glück-Sander. He was heavily influenced by classical ballet, studying the technique with Ella Daganova. In 1938, he starred in his first Broadway show, *Great Lady*. During this time, he spent his summers in the Poconos studying choreography and movement at Tamiment Playhouse where he honed

his style. When returning in 1940, Robbins was cast in the Ballet Theatre company, now known as American Ballet Theatre (ABT), and appeared in several ballets. Then in 1944, he choreographed a ballet titled *Fancy Free*, becoming one of his most well-known ballets. Robbins worked with Leonard Bernstein, the composer of the ballet, who later on became one of the main collaborators in *West Side Story*. *Fancy Free* contributed to the success of his career as the ballet launched Robbins as a choreographer.⁸

The ballet contributed to Robbins' choreography career as *Fancy Free* was expanded into a full-length musical, *On the Town* (1944). Robbins continued working at ABT until 1948, transitioning to the New York City Ballet as assistant artistic director in collaboration with George Balanchine. Robbins continued choreographing and directing for Broadway, working on shows such as *Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!* (1948), *The King and I* (1951), and *Peter Pan* (1954). He also contributed to other shows and was "in demand as a show doctor" (Long 93). In 1957, he created one of his most popular shows *West Side Story*, featuring ballet and movement as a major storytelling component. Robbins worked until the end of his life, directing and choreographing for film, ballet companies, and Broadway, including shows like *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964). His choreography and style are continuously recognizable between his revived or redone Broadway shows and ballets.⁹

Jerome Robbins' ballet background impacted his Broadway choreography and his teaching. He utilized the ballet technique, creating outward movement with extended reaches from the arms and the legs. The technique focuses on lines and shapes of the body while keeping

⁸ Biographical information gathered from Jowitt, *Jerome Robbins: His Life, His Theater, His Dance* (20, 22, 27); Long, *Broadway, the Golden Years: Jerome Robbins and the Great Choreographer-Directors: 1940 to the Present* (61-64, 66); and Vaill, *Somewhere: The Life of Jerome Robbins* (48).

⁹ Further biographical information found in Block, "West Side Story: The Very Model of a Major Musical" (245-246); Kislán, *Hoofing on Broadway* (97); and Long, *Broadway, the Golden Years: Jerome Robbins and the Great Choreographer-Directors: 1940 to the Present* (69-70, 80, 104).

the body square, straight back, and legs rotated. Robbins' movement within his ballets and musicals has a casual or pedestrian tone to how the body is carried. He played with shapes and angles that keep the body open and extended. When working on shows, Robbins extensively researched the topic or subject, especially for *West Side Story*. For *West Side Story*, he interacted with gangs in New York to create an accurate portrayal of the musical through different scenes and movements. This let him understand how he needed his performers to act and move. Robbins was known to be a perfectionist within the rehearsal space. He would get angry and yell at actors for performing incorrect movements or against what Robbins imagined. He would often treat actors like he would with dancers who were more used to being insulted and screamed at. His rudeness pushed the performers for perfection that Robbins always strived for. He especially attempted to perfect the choreography and direction in *West Side Story*.¹⁰

West Side Story was conceived by Jerome Robbins with music by Leonard Bernstein, book by Arthur Laurents, and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Robbins at first intended to only direct, however, his collaborators and producers would pull out of the production if Robbins did not choreograph. The musical is based on William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*. In the beginning, Robbins titled the story *East Side Story*, a musical about a Jewish boy and an Irish Catholic girl falling in love. The story changed as Robbins and his collaborators noticed gangs and gang violence rising within the United States. Many gangs in New York were separated by ethnicity, with groups consisting of young teenage men that fought against each other for territory. When discovering this, the *West Side Story* creators decided to revise the plot to make the show more relevant to the issues in America. In the rehearsal room, Robbins worked to perfection and utilized a method acting approach. He called the actors only by their character

¹⁰ Robbins style found in Jowitt, *Jerome Robbins: His Life, His Theater, His Dance* (276-277); Kislán, *Hoofing on Broadway* (98); and Long, *Broadway, the Golden Years: Jerome Robbins and the Great Choreographer-Directors: 1940 to the Present* (99-100).

names and constantly reworked movements. At lunch, the two rival groups could not sit next to each other. The musical opened in 1957 at the Winter Garden Theatre, becoming a success, noting how the story is “not in talked plot but in moving bodies,” (Martin). Since its first production, the musical has been revived several times on Broadway and two movies created, using Robbins style in most revivals.¹¹

The musical occurs in New York City between two rival groups, the Jets and the Sharks. The Jets are a group of white teenage men while the Sharks are Puerto Rican teenagers that recently immigrated to the United States. As an attempt to join the two groups in harmony, a dance is held. At the dance Tony, a Jet, and Maria, the sister of the Sharks leader, fall in love, creating a forbidden romance. Later that night, the Jets and Sharks agree to a fistfight between Bernardo and Diesel, however, Tony tries to stop the fight. This leads to Riff and Bernardo pulling out knives with Riff getting stabbed by Bernardo. Tony, defending his friend, kills Bernardo, resulting in the first two deaths of the show. Tony goes to visit Maria and they plan to run away together. As Anita goes to Doc’s drugstore to tell Tony that Maria is running late, she is attacked by the Jets. She instead tells Tony that Chino killed Maria. Tony finds Chino to seek revenge, however, he sees Maria before being shot dead by Chino. The Jets and Sharks are about to fight again, but Maria stops them by holding a gun, wanting the violence to end. In the final moment, the groups carry out the dead body of Tony as Maria follows behind.

Within the staged show, I am focusing on the Jets gathered in Doc’s drugstore directly after the dance’s conclusion. In this scene, the song “Cool” takes place with the Jets angry and bothered after arguing with the Sharks. The gang waits for the Sharks to show up for the group leaders to determine the type of fight to resolve the argument. The group is riled up and wants

¹¹ Production information found in Jowitt, *Jerome Robbins: His Life, His Theater, His Dance* (273-275); Long, *Broadway, the Golden Years: Jerome Robbins and the Great Choreographer-Directors: 1940 to the Present* (96, 100); and Wells, “The Real Gang History of New York” (199-200).

revenge, however, Riff, the leader of the Jets, tries to calm them down so they can be level-headed during the Sharks' arrival. He wants the Jets to save their emotions and anger for the future rumble against the Sharks. Throughout the song, the Jets try to contain their energy, but there are moments when they burst and the rage takes over. As the song continues, the Jets' anger explodes until the end, returning to remain 'cool' and collected for when they inevitably face the Sharks again.

The beginning of the song starts with Riff singing, but carries on into instrumental music for the majority of the piece with weird accents coming out of nowhere. Riff tries to get everyone in a level-headed state as they wait for the Sharks' arrival. Once Riff starts to snap and move around the stage, the other Jets follow his lead. The group casually walks around the stage, keeping in time with the rhythm of the music. The snapping since the top of the show has been a motif for the Jets and indicates when they are starting to move. As the dancers move around the space there are moments where they lose control and go into sudden, fast movements. The moves include turns, jumps, or the body coming in to then shoot out with the chest leading forward and the arms and head lifting into the backspace. As the music builds, so does the movement from the snaps, into gestures, and uncontrollable jumps and turns (Lesser 96). The anger and frustration evolve in each of their bodies, letting the movement escape with these explosive phrases.

As the piece continues, the dancers go into elongated movement, extending through the arms and legs, into a quick turn or jump that comes out of nowhere. At one point, the boys are in two different circles, hunched over, and doing chassés. Throughout this moment, they are jumping individually, saying "pow," and shooting their bodies into the air in a quick, swift motion. The music switches tone for a brief period with the Jets getting into slow movement

before speeding and traveling all over the stage again. The men are bouncing with their knees bent, arms out, and backs are in a slight curve, creating “the unity between the Jets, the conviction that each one would sacrifice himself to protect the others,” (Jablonski and Martincich 262). Once shouting the words “cool go crazy,” the characters are in a unified group, moving across the stage together. There is a constant flow of outward movement that does not stop with the Jets switching lines and places, weaving in and out into different formations. Once singing again, most of them are on the floor, audibly breathing after exerting their energy. Before concluding, Riff gets the Jets back into the snaps and a state of calm. At the end, the group releases the last bit of emotional energy yelling “pow” all together in center stage and looking at the audience.

Robbins utilizes the speed and the extension of the body, building the anger, frustration, and emotional energy of the Jets throughout the entirety of the dance. Even within the music, there is an attempt to remain calm before losing the cool nature of the beat (Block 269). The walks and snaps at the beginning keep a steady beat. This is the Jets’ breath as they attempt to keep calm within the snaps. However, any movement that comes out as an outburst of frustration affects everyone throughout the dance. The beginning presents “Robbins’s pedestrian movement merged with dance vocabulary to assist dancers in conveying the Jets’ suppression of rising anger,” (Jablonski and Martincich 262). It continuously builds and spreads until every dancer is moving, jumping, and kicking as far as their body allows them. Once the Jets start moving as a unified group, there is a group mentality that shares the anger and explosive energy. The flow of movement presents a perpetual cycle of hatred, fuelling the characters’ emotions. Though they try to remain calm the hate seeps through them and pours out into the uncontrollable,

high-reaching jumps. Concluding the piece, they retain some cooled-down state, gaining control over themselves right before meeting the Sharks.

In my version of the piece, I will use tap to play with sound and volume instead of jumps and outward movement that Jerome Robbins used to express anger and the release of energy. Tap is underutilized as a device to add to the plot in musical theatre. It is often a tool for entertainment value and spectacle. However, there are several shows like *Bring in 'da Noise*, *Bring in 'da Funk* that utilize tap to tell a story. When it comes to tap, I lean towards rhythm and elements of hoofing instead of big tricks and flashy tap steps. Hoofing uses stomps and stamps, helping to indicate the explosion of energetic sound within the piece. Playing with sound and volume will elevate the idea of hatred, anger, and high emotions. Using the softer sounds of tap, like flaps or shuffles, I will express a relaxed energy with a decrease in volume. The volume controls and tells the audience how much uncontrolled energy rises in the body that needs releasing. If tap were to be used throughout the entire musical, it could foreshadow the gun at the end with the various sharp sounds. Robbins demonstrated “Cool” with the ballet technique and the high space while I am using tap, the opposite of ballet, to present the piece, keeping the body heavy and low to the ground.

Christopher Gattelli

Christopher Gattelli (b. 1972) started his dance career training at his local dance school in Bristol, Pennsylvania. At fifteen, he began training at the Alvin Ailey School, going to his regular academic classes and taking a train to study dance in New York. Two years later, he performed his first show in New York in the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. Through his audition for the show, he booked his first touring production in *Cats* as Mr. Mistoffelees, later on

becoming a replacement in 1996 on Broadway for the show. The first time Gattelli choreographed was for the Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids benefit concert, where the cast members of *Cats* performed a jazz dance to “Fever.” Shortly after, Gattelli choreographed and directed for various Broadway productions such as *13* (2008), *Spongebob Squarepants* (2017), and *The Cher Show* (2018). In recent years, he also choreographed for film and television, such as *Schmigadoon!* (2021) and *Wonka* (2023). Gattelli continues to choreograph today and working on new productions such as *Death Becomes Her* (2024), the stage production of *Schmigadoon!* (2025), and *Take the Lead* (2025).¹²

His style of choreography is different depending on what is necessary for the show and what his performers can do, but his process is similar for each production. The choreography is constantly generated by the music as he will play each song on a loop. He has said, “I try to imagine the hits in my head, and where it will go musically,” (Cramer 101). In addition to the music, Gattelli spends time researching the musical and time period. He will learn traditional dances depending on the production to make it authentic. After researching and listening to the music, he develops different sections and phrases to workshop with the dance captain or assistant choreographer. Gattelli also collaborates with his actors and dancers, encouraging the performers to voice what they can or want to do. He is open to suggestions in the rehearsal room and asks for input from the actors as they are the ones performing the choreography. A move may work for one body, like the choreographers, however, that does not necessarily mean a step will work for all bodies. His creative process is based on collaboration with preparation beforehand based on music and research, as seen in several of his projects such as *Newsies* (2011).¹³

¹² Biographical information can be found in Cramer, *Creating Musical Theatre: Conversations with Broadway Directors and Choreographers* (91-95); “Christopher Gattelli,” *IMDb*; “Christopher Gattelli,” *Playbill*; and “Christopher Gattelli,” *Steps on Broadway*.

¹³ Gattelli’s process found in Cramer, *Creating Musical Theatre: Conversations with Broadway Directors and Choreographers* (101-105); Jones, “Playbill Brief Encounter With Christopher Gattelli, 2012 Tony Nominee for

Newsies originally was a 1992 Disney film subsequently adapted into a musical. The movie and musical are based on the Newsboys' strike of 1899 where the price of newspapers was raised. The boys went on strike for two weeks before Pulitzer gave in and agreed to buy back any unsold newspaper. The original movie based on the events was a flop as movie musicals were not being produced during the time. Disney also tends to create unrealistic stories based on historical events, making them more optimistic than realistic. In 2011, Disney decided to turn *Newsies* into a musical, intending for a short run at Paper Mill Playhouse. However, due to the popularity of the staged musical through fan marketing and the rise of social media, *Newsies* transferred to Broadway in the following year with a proceeding tour. The show became a success with "Christopher Gattelli set the bar high with his thrilling athletic and acrobatic dance numbers reminiscent of Golden Age movie musicals, à la Gene Kelley [sic]," (Causey). Throughout *Newsies*, he used the performers' abilities and incorporated them into the movement, making the choreography memorable and impactful.¹⁴

Gattelli utilized the established skills and talents of the boys to create the choreography for *Newsies*. In rehearsal, he asked if any of them had a special skill, choreographing unique movements that only some of the dancers could do. In *Newsies*, Gattelli wanted to demonstrate how male performers have unique abilities while remaining masculine in the dances. The choreography can be described as "energetic, athletic and most importantly possessing a kind of stamina or relentlessness," (Thomas 156). Gattelli conveyed bold and strong movements to demonstrate the masculinity of the boys as well as their strength to stand up for themselves. The

Newsies' Choreography"; and Rothenberg, "Interview With Choreographer And Tony Nominee Christopher Gattelli."

¹⁴ Production information found in Broda, "Newsies: Carrying the Banner Through Film, Live Theater, and Virtual Theater" (1-2, 9-10); Greenfield "Newsies (2011)" (189, 193-194); and Zaniello, "Newsies" (266-267).

musical presents a story of newsboys who fight against powerful men, using movement, especially jumps and flips, to demonstrate the newsboys' resilience and strength.¹⁵

The show takes place in 1899 in New York City, following Jack Kelly, the leader of the newsies, and the rest of the orphan boys, selling papers and attempting to survive with the money they get. However, Joseph Pulitzer, the newspaper publisher, increases the price of papers for the newsies. When finding out about the raised newspaper price, Jack decides to go on strike against the higher price. Davey, Jack's right-hand man, convinces the Manhattan newsboys to protest even if the other newsies in the different areas do not show. Katherine, a news reporter, documents the protest, but the authorities show up to take any of the boys away to the orphan refugee with only Crutchie being taken. The next day, the newsboys discover that Katherine published their strike in the paper, leading other newsboys to join the union and attend the upcoming rally. During this time, Pulitzer talks to Jack about stopping the strike to save the rest of the newsies from the refugee and disbanding the union. Jack rejects his offer and teams up with Katherine to publish more papers about the strike. In the end, Governor Theodore Roosevelt appears to demonstrate his support for the newsies and the union. This leads Pulitzer to agree to the newsboys' demands, lowering the newspaper price and buying back unsold papers. The newsies continue to survive selling newspapers with Jack securing a job as an artist for the papers.

In the stage production of *Newsies*, I am exploring the piece, "Seize The Day," which appears towards the end of the first act. The boys recently formed a union to strike against Pulitzer, however, some of the newsies are apprehensive. Davey convinces the newsboys to strike against the price raise and "seize the day." He persuades the boys to defy the men with

¹⁵ Gattelli process gathered from Jones, "Playbill Brief Encounter With Christopher Gattelli, 2012 Tony Nominee for *Newsies*' Choreography"; Rothenberg, "Interview With Choreographer And Tony Nominee Christopher Gattelli."; and Thomas, "Dancing toward Masculinity: *Newsies*, Gender and Desire" (156-157, 166).

power and stand up for themselves. While Jack physically puts the strike into action, Davey utilizes his words to bring all the boys to their side. He convinces several of the newsboys who just bought newspapers to throw them on the ground, protesting against the publishers. The boys produce an all-out strike, getting their story told through Katherine who is documenting the protest. As “Seize The Day” concludes, Pulitzer has a group of men attempt to arrest and take the newsboys, dissolving the strike. Throughout “Seize The Day,” the song speaks of standing up against those in power and refusing control from the rich.

At the beginning of the dance, Davey walks around the stage, making eye contact with all of the newsboys. He encourages them through words to strike and join the union. The boys start to form a clump before the upbeat music starts and the dancers repeat the words from Davey or Jack. The newsies stay clumped together center, singing at the audience in a powerful stance with their chests out and lifted. Jack starts the dance sequence, driven by actions, contrasting with how words motivate Davey. In a canon sequence, the newsboys stomp and pivot, turning with strength and power behind the movement as they look straight ahead in defiance. The boys do the movement one last time all together before breaking into the first dance sequence. The dancers move into many flips, turns, and jumps, pulling themselves high up into the air as the energy follows them. Throughout the different group sequences, the emphasis is on the high space as they perform switch leaps, pirouettes, and backflips.

One of the newsies comes back out with a piece of newspaper to gently lay it on the floor before breaking it apart with his feet. The rest of the newsies join in to go into a newspaper dance sequence. They do several coupé turns as well as partner with each other. The newsies slide in between the legs of another newsie before coming back up. They then pick up the paper from a handstand and chuck the crumpled paper into the audience. Another dance sequence breaks again

with the boys dancing together including strong, direct, and sharp movements. At the very end, the newsies are getting into a clump on stage right, ready to get their picture taken. Some of the boys are doing backflips, à la seconde turns, or jumping over their feet to get into the clump. The final moment of the song is the newsboys putting their fists into the air as the photo happens, creating a powerful image of defiance.

Gattelli uses the high space similar to Robbins in *West Side Story*, however, the jumps and turns have a different style for *Newsies*, making them more strength based than elongation of the body. The strong movement throughout, especially the stomps Jack starts, demonstrates their strength against Pulitzer and the publishers. They are determined to push through and not back down from the fight. As the dancers move into jumps and turns, there is a joyous and freeing energy behind the pirouettes and jetés. The jumps present their own power that the newsboys have as they start to unionize. Anytime they move together as a unified group, the formation represents the closeness and dedication the newsies have with each other and the strike. Gattelli describes it as “the boys’ ability, determination, skill, and passion to make their lives better,” (Cramer 110). The newsies are fighting for themselves and what they need to survive in the world. When dancing with the newspapers, it is an act of defiance against the rich. They are stomping, turning, and ripping the items that the men in power have created as a way to waste Pulitzer’s time, money, and effort. At the end, when the boys are doing their specialty moves, it demonstrates their high spirits for the strike just as a camera snaps a shot of the new newsies union. “Seize The Day” through its use of high space and unique tricks, demonstrates the boys feeling triumphant with their newfound freedom and power to stand against Pulitzer.

“Seize The Day” is an energetic and freeing Broadway jazz dance with heavy use of ballet elements. I want to switch the dance to a modern piece and bring most of the movement

into the middle and low space. I was inspired by the 2020 version of *West Side Story* as the choreographer, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, utilized modern and concert dance to reinvent what the choreography could look like (Sagolla). She played with the low space herself and how that could make an impact on the fight scenes with the Jets and Sharks. I want to use modern dance and floorwork as a way to present freedom and power. The floor within modern dance is a connection to the earth and being grounded. I want to use the low space as a way to demonstrate the newsies' strength and determination. The ground is where they can obtain their power, especially using the lower half of the body to plié before jumping off the ground or going into another unique, off-balance movement. The modern dance style is underused in musicals as it is a freeing way to move the body that is not under a strict style of technique like jazz or ballet. With modern dance and "Seize The Day," I can experiment with different ways of moving the body with the use of gestures, suspensions, and playing with unusual angles of the body.

Chapter Two: My Process and Choreography

Before the semester began, I created a form for anyone interested in performing in my senior concert, mainly advertising it to dancers. I was pleasantly surprised by the initial response, where five dancers signed up within the first week. I strategically made it during Orchestris concert week to announce it to all of the performers. I also sent out the form to groups like JaDE and other dancers I worked with in *Head Over Heels* and *A Year With Frog and Toad*. Professors helped me reach out to students involved with the Playshop or the Dance and Movement Studies performances for even more dancers to sign up. I ended up getting eighteen responses by the end of the fall semester. During winter break, I cast each dancer based on their dance experience and preferred dance. I cast six dancers for “Cell Block Tango,” five dancers for “Cool,” including myself, and nine for “Seize The Day.” I also cast a dance captain for each piece as I tend not to remember my choreography once teaching. They were there as someone I could go to and clarify any counts or movements. I chose experienced dancers who were older and used to leadership roles. I worked with all performers previously so I knew everyone I was accepting into each piece and how they function in rehearsal.

Throughout the semester, I planned two-hour rehearsals for each dance leading up to the performance in April. I could not have rehearsals for the first two weeks of class except for “Cool,” as many of the dancers involved were in the process of sorority recruitment. I met with two of the groups once a week for those two hours. I met with “Seize The Day” for an hour and a half due to many dancers’ conflicts. I could not afford to lose people so I accepted a dancer who I knew would need to leave early each week. It was a risk that I was willing to take as I wanted a bigger group for that dance and knew she would work hard in and outside of rehearsal. The piece itself has small group sections or parts with only the leads so I thought it would be fine if she had

to leave early during the rehearsal. In total, I had at least nine rehearsals for each dance to complete and clean.

With each dance except for *Newsies*, I chose my preferred versions of the “Cell Block Tango” and “Cool” to set movement onto. Selecting the version for the “Cell Block Tango” was easier than “Cool.” I listened to the soundtrack of the original and revived versions of *Chicago* before and I dislike them. They are older cast recordings so the mixing on them has constantly thrown me off. With the film soundtrack of the “Cell Block Tango,” there are slight differences but it is easier for me and the dancers to hear. I had a couple of different options for “Cool” as well. They all were relatively similar except for the tempo they were played at. I decided to use the 2009 revival cast recording as the tempo was not as fast as the recent film soundtrack version and you can clearly hear the musical accents throughout the mix. When choosing each version, I took into consideration how clearly the dancers could hear it and how fast the song is.

When it came to costuming, I did not branch far from the original musical’s costumes for each piece. I wanted the choreography to be different but for the audience to still recognize what musical the piece is from. For “Cool” and “Seize The Day,” I am keeping it similar to the original due to its time period. However, for “Cell Block Tango,” I want to pay homage to the original without going for the explicit and revealing clothing. For “Cool,” the dancers will wear button-downs in various cool-toned colors with jeans or nice pants. I want the Jets to be similar in color to signify unity with cool tones to keep cool. “Seize The Day” I will incorporate various long pants, button-downs, and various other accessories of suspenders or vests. *Newsies* is set in a specific time period so I wanted the costumes to reflect the era. The “Cell Block Tango” was slightly different in terms of costumes than the original production of *Chicago*. I am using black costumes that are revealing in some ways, however, they are contemporary dance costumes with

mesh covering and a flowy element. I want to honor the original costumes but incorporate delicate elements, making the clothing less striking than exposed skin which can be promiscuous. Throughout each dance, the costume supports the movement, implementing elements of the original piece, and staying true to the story.

The beginning of my process was choreographing the movement first and having my dancers learn all the choreography. My process was at times similar to original choreographers, Fosse or Gattelli, however, it was unintentional. I have been developing my process for over a year so I knew what worked for me. For most of the pieces, I would have formations planned out and then set movement depending on where everyone is spatially. Each week, I would plan one to two minutes of choreography for each dance, getting through most of the choreography I planned for that rehearsal. I listened to the music constantly, finding the accents for movement and inspiration of what qualities fit the tone for each piece. The music inspired me to generate choreography and what my body naturally was inclined to do. In tandem with the music, I had to balance the skill level of each dance so that the two complement each other. In rehearsal, there were times I did not like what I planned so I would change or add choreography in the moment. Most of what I added in rehearsals were different dynamics and speeds I wanted the dancers to play with.

When teaching the choreography for each dance, I accommodated what each group needed. I adjusted what I could teach each week, determining the amount of time necessary, and always keeping an eye on the clock during rehearsal. I am not only used to doing this as a choreographer but also as a teacher. I am a student intern at The Learning Center K-8, where I get the chance to teach and observe experienced teachers instructing younger students. There are times when we do not get through everything we want to teach in one lesson. With this prior

knowledge and experience, I never got upset that we did not get through my plans if it meant making sure we are solid on the material I have taught. I also understand that I am not the one learning the choreography, the dancers are. I constantly asked if my cast wanted to learn more or work on the material I just covered. These rehearsals are for the dancers, not for me. I wanted them to understand the movement, so I was never mad or upset that we did not get through everything I planned each week.

Every rehearsal, I would have them run the dance once at the very beginning to remember and get the dance back into their bodies. I would answer any questions they have about choreography from last week before I moved on with the new material. For most of each rehearsal, I focused on new choreography, trying to leave about fifteen minutes at the end to run the dance two to three times before ending. I recorded each dance for both the dancers and myself to see the progress and what the dancers were still struggling with. Recording the dance helped them remember the choreography and notice what they are doing compared to everyone else. Once finishing the dances, I would clean the piece minute by minute, focusing on one section at a time. I would have the dancers do the first minute of the dance, give them corrections, and run the same section again. I gave them any more thoughts I had before we moved on to the next section. I have constantly cleaned this way so that I am not overwhelmed with the whole dance and I can go into detail with each part.

With each dance, I also had the dancers play around with who their characters are, coming up with names, and what led them to where they are. Some dances and parts had more freedom than others. For most of my dancers, this was their first time doing this type of work, even though several of them have experience in musical theatre. At first, I asked the dancers to come up with verbal answers for their character. Some of them were really creative and thought

in-depth about who they were while others were surface-level. I decided to give them a dancer's checklist, similar to the ones I received in my acting classes to guide the dancers to be more specific about who they are, their given circumstances, and what prompts them to dance. It was a list of questions to think in-depth about the piece. I learned how some of my dancers could use the given circumstances and their imagination in tandem while others struggled with answering the questions in detail. I gave back the papers with questions and suggestions to aid the dancers' progress in this piece and any future character work they might do.

Throughout each dance, there were successes as well as challenges I had with music, movement, and at times, my dancers. I constantly took in my dancers' feedback and debriefed with my dance captains after most rehearsals. I asked if I needed to change anything or what each group needed for the rehearsals. Some weeks I could teach choreography quickly while other weeks, I took my time demonstrating certain sections. Though there were challenges, the performers always worked hard and created a positive rehearsal environment. I am happy with the dancers I had and how they were willing to work. They made the experience fun and enjoyable even during my moments of stress and fear. The dancers showed up and were ready to learn, always showing kindness to me and their fellow dancers. The rehearsal process in its entirety was a learning experience as I continued to discover how I work in a rehearsal room and the decisions I had to make for the betterment of the dance.

"Cool"

I started rehearsals for "Cool" on January 21st and finished the piece relatively quickly compared to the other two dances. I only had four dancers for this piece so it was a small but hard working group of dancers. I worked with all the dancers but one before in my 2024

Orchesis tap piece. I had somewhat of an understanding of how difficult I could make the movement, keeping the tap more intermediate and adding a couple of advanced steps or rhythms throughout the dance. In the span of four weeks, I finished the movement, preparing to then clean the dance as well as figure out spacing for certain parts of the piece. At the beginning of rehearsals, I decided to have the first fifteen minutes focusing on warming up and technique. Typically, this is not done during rehearsal but I thought it would benefit my dancers. When cleaning the dance, I focused on timing in coordination with the steps. The dancers had the steps, however, a major struggle was speeding the movement in time with the music.

Out of the three dances, this dance was where I felt most confident in choreographing. I choreographed four different tap pieces previously, making the choreography process easier than the other two dances. Throughout the tap piece, I intended to start with soft sounds and progressively get louder. I used the ball of the foot to create soft sounds with shuffles or flaps rather than using the whole foot. As the piece progressed, I incorporated stomps and stamps, having the sounds be as loud as possible. At the end, the sound dims down and we go back to being soft and on the balls of our feet. I did not choreograph any arms as I wanted them to be natural and move with the body. The body itself is grounded with a lean forward similar to how Gregory Hines moved or how Savion Glover moves. My intention for this piece was to have the sound go through different volume waves, as the louder it is, the less control the dancers have over their anger.

A difficulty I had at the very beginning of the process was the music in *West Side Story*. When I intended to do this piece as a tap, I did not think about the music, rather, I was focused on what is the opposite of ballet. After the first minute of the song, the rest of the song had many challenges with the counts. Typically, one count of eight for choreography took me much longer

than usual to master due to timing rather than the actual step. I can come up with movement quickly, especially for tap, but this took more time, listening to the music and making sure the tap sounds line up with the accents. Even the dance captain, Sara Margo, a musically gifted dancer, had difficulty counting the music with me. In prior dances, she would know the counts better as I base more on feeling and sounds than counting the actual music, while she is the opposite. Eventually, after listening to the song several times and practicing in rehearsal, I understood the timing enough to help and teach my dancers. The music was jarring at first for everyone, but with constant listening, we understood the timing better each week.

In addition to the music, I questioned myself a lot about the difficulty of the steps and rhythms incorporated into the dance. I understood that the strongest tappers in this dance were Sara Margo and myself. I did not put in a lot of trick steps for my dancers as my tap style is based more on rhythm and hoofing elements. However, in combination with the music and tempo, my dancers had difficulty learning the dance, taking longer to process the steps.

I also felt their fear of being loud in this dance, as we are a small group and many of us are used to blending in with the group. At dance studios, we are told not to be as loud so we can blend the sounds with each other and it is not as piercing for the audience. However, I wanted progressively louder sounds until the end of the piece where it would be soft again. During the process, I discussed when we need to be loud and what steps have a louder accent than others, adding volume dynamics. As the dancers got more comfortable, they started getting louder with their steps and gaining confidence. When cleaning the dance, I would tell them where the accent should be, helping with the volume and articulation of the steps.

Throughout the process, I experimented with different formations. I knew I wanted to stay together as a group for most of the dance to demonstrate the Jets' bond. I have not worked

with many small groups so I found it difficult to stage and choreograph formations. I first played with our entrance, trying different ways to enter or start on stage. I ended up having us enter through upstage left to go down center stage as it is a stronger entrance. Once the snaps came in the song, I could not figure out what to do with spacing. I tried a small clumped formation but I did not like the look of it. It felt too repetitive as we all just flap-heeled together upstage. Instead, the dancers walked around the stage but it did not look good with only five of us. In the different productions of *West Side Story*, there are typically about twelve dancers on stage in “Cool,” creating a full look. I wanted that full look but I did not know how to get there with a limited number of dancers. I tried to then have the dancers leave and come back on stage, planning for the lights to dim except for the dancers performing their solo. I ended up keeping that idea as it gave insight to the internal emotions of the characters, highlighting their inner thoughts. As a group, we then come back together and let the sounds run wild with frustration.

Towards the end of the process, I spent time cleaning the dance section by section, spending more time listening to the dancers than watching. My main concern was making sure the steps were together with both dancers and music. Throughout cleaning the dance, I would isolate certain steps and elements to work through the sounds and tap technique. By isolating the steps, they could break down sounds and hear themselves doing it outside of the piece. I could see improvement when starting the rehearsal with technique training as it carries into the dance. In relation to the piece, there were certain steps and sections I would drill with them without music. They could hear themselves and the others around them, honing on the sounds. I often had them do the steps by themselves to hear and see the challenges each dancer had. I noticed a difference after repeating sections over and over as the dancers understood the timing and steps.

Every rehearsal, the dancers continued to improve with the repetition of doing the dance, listening to the music, and hearing themselves tap.

“Cell Block Tango”

The ballet started rehearsals on January 29th with six dancers I previously worked with in Orchestis or JaDE. I was nervous when attempting this dance as it is the longest piece of the three I worked through. Each week I came in with at least one minute of choreography for the dancers to learn, most of the time teaching multiple different parts that happen simultaneously. I choreographed double the amount than I would for a dance, making me work fast in and out of rehearsal. When choreographing each dancer's solo, I asked about their strengths or any special moves they liked to do. Some of the ideas they brought in were focusing on legs and flexibility, turns, and one dancer said she could do a firebird, a jump with the front leg straight and the back leg bent. I wanted the dancers to feel comfortable in their solos and tell me if it felt awkward or needed adjustments. When choreographing the solos, I considered their characters, determining the qualities associated with each person. In the span of six rehearsals, I finished the dance and worked on running the dance multiple times in addition to cleaning. The cleaning process consisted of making sure the dancers were going in the same direction, arm strength and position, and consistent dynamics.

My intention for the “Cell Block Tango” was to express the innocence of the merry murderesses through the elegant ballet style. I decided to have the dancers do ballet poses in the beginning that they repeat, acting as a motif. I attempted to keep the dance strictly in the ballet style, excluding the incorporation of jazz or contemporary dance. Many times I was tempted to put in contemporary ballet elements, but I avoided it. I wanted to push myself to stay in one style

for this dance, specifically as Fosse's choreography and the "Cell Block Tango" are recognizable. Each dancer also had a solo with different repetitive elements such as turns, battements, or petite allegro. During the solos, the other dancers mimicked the simple movement of the repetition upstage. Anytime two different lines were sung in the song, I choreographed two parts to represent those lines. Many of my rehearsals were switching between two groups and piecing together each part in hopes that they would work together.

One of the successes during the process was my dancers' ability to pick up new choreography and remember it. All the performers have been dancing for many years and have primarily had a lot of ballet training at one point in their lives. I incorporated difficult steps, turns, and jumps as I could challenge and push them throughout the dance. Each rehearsal, I choreographed one to two minutes with multiple different parts happening. Since I was working with different dancers at various times, everyone had a break at some point during the rehearsal, helping the dancers remain energized and on task. It was stressful teaching two different parts and covering enough material in the two hours each week. However, the performers remained focused every Wednesday, learning new choreography on top of the established movement learned the previous week.

I knew this dance would be difficult on my dancers' bodies, but I did not realize how much I needed to run the dance to truly build their stamina. Most of my dancers are used to four-minute dances while the "Cell Block Tango" is a seven-minute piece in ballet, a difficult technique to master and perform. Part of rehearsals after the first two weeks was having them run the dance in the last thirty minutes. I did not realize until more into the process how much the dancers needed to run the dance instead of learning new material. I trained in a vocational high school dance program, where I was treated like a conservatory college dancer with technique and

performance. I learned to do ten-minute pieces but I forget not every dancer endured the same expectation. I did not need to train the dancers on steps, rather, I helped strengthen their stamina and endurance during the rehearsals.

In addition to building their stamina, throughout the choreography process, I was conscious of how much they were dancing. If they were moving upstage during the soloist part, I choreographed slow, simple movements to catch their breath. Towards the end of the dance, the dancers did slow walks during Velma's and Mona's monologues so their bodies recovered for the finale. I wanted to make sure there was a balance between movement and active stillness when necessary. In the past, I tried to fill every count with choreography. With this piece, I knew it would be long for the dancers so there needed to be time for active stillness or simple movement. Even with keeping the movement simple, I added dynamics, keeping the dancers in character. I also choreographed easy transitions for formations where the dancers could smoothly get to their next spot for the majority of the piece. I mapped out the spacing before choreographing so I understood how much time and space there was to get to each point on the stage. Throughout the process, I needed to be conscious of the dancers' exhaustion, incorporating simple moments within the dance.

This piece is special to me as I never choreographed ballet before other than simple combinations for class. I pushed myself out of my comfort zone as tap is my main dance style. I understand the terminology and the ballet technique of keeping the body square, pointed feet, and turned-out legs. Typically, I choreograph movements I can do in my own body but I set sequences that I know I cannot do for the "Cell Block Tango." When teaching the choreography, I would mark movements I could not do as well as my dancers. It was a new experience for me to set movement I would not do myself. I felt limited creatively at times as I was under certain

rules and restrictions with ballet, both with steps and my body. My dancers helped me, especially Lily Kons, giving suggestions for their solos or different ballet tricks to incorporate. I would take those suggestions and implement them as I prepared choreography each week. I would also be inspired by ballet videos and remember steps from my training. The choreography did become tricky at times, but I completed the dance in the ballet style, incorporating a variety of steps, turns, and jumps.

Part of the cleaning process was watching the soloist perform and walk through their solo so I could add dynamics, elevating their movement. I would then watch the other dancers in the back, giving enough attention to both sections. The performers knew the movement, but there was inconsistency in the arms and arm pathways. The dancers took notes well and incorporated them into the dance quickly. Another inconsistency was their head direction. I did not give specific head directions when choreographing so the cleaning process was the time when I set it. In addition to the head direction, I noticed a lot of dancers in this piece, as well as my other performers, looking down at the floor at various moments. This is a habit many dancers will get into, including myself. When pointing out the challenge, the dancers are able to correct themselves more and break away from the habit. One last issue I noticed when working on the dance was the direction of the body. At times, I saw more dancers facing the side when I wanted them to face the corner, especially during the solos. I wanted them to be seen so I adjusted each dancer to where in space they needed their whole body to face to be visible. During each cleaning rehearsal, the piece improved and the dancers were the most focused compared to prior rehearsals.

At the end of the process, one of my dancers sprained her ankle significantly, two weeks before the show date. There were two options if she was unable to perform: find another dancer

to learn the choreography or I fill in for the part. During the last two weeks of rehearsal, I learned the dance and her part, knowing that finding someone else to fill in would be difficult. Typically, once I teach the dance, I do not remember my own choreography so I had to relearn the whole dance. I did not feel confident when learning the piece as I am not a ballet dancer and the rest of the performers have been practicing for months with this choreography. I hoped the dancer who sprained her ankle would get better, but I prepared for the possibility of stepping into the role.

“Seize The Day”

Rehearsals for this piece began on February 2nd with a mix of skill levels between the dancers. All of them have dance experience from Orchesis so I had an idea of how difficult the dance could be while adding challenging movements throughout. The first week, I choreographed two and a half minutes so I thought I could teach a lot each rehearsal. I found out after that I needed to be slower with teaching choreography for these dancers, focusing on only thirty seconds to a minute for future rehearsals. We spent time each week reviewing what we worked on last week and solidifying the choreography. When demonstrating the movement, we had to work through it and use more time than I anticipated. I worked with all the dancers before in dances, but not as a choreographer. Even with teaching the choreography slower, I finished the piece in five rehearsals. I focused on formations and timing when cleaning the dance. I also had to make sure everyone was pointing or flexing their feet in certain sections as I had a mix throughout the dance. The process throughout this piece was discovering the abilities of all my dancers and what they need to be successful in each rehearsal.

The objective for “Seize The Day” was to turn the dance into a modern piece, using the floor and the mid to low space to demonstrate the newsies’ freedom and strength. When working

on the floor, I recalled my hip hop training. I trained in hip hop floorwork so I wanted to take elements from my experience into modern dance. Some of my modern training also has athletic technique and qualities. I choreographed planks, floor spins, and rolls on the floor with fewer jumps and turns when the dancers were standing. Within the modern technique, I focused on the back being used, especially rolling through the whole spine to stand straight. I incorporated suspensions and flexed feet with jumps. I knew modern is a similar style to the ballet technique which Gattelli used elements of in the original choreography. I attempted to create the opposite of ballet technique within the modern piece while remaining strong and powerful.

The original piece cast only young men to act as the newsies ensemble and my version only has women and gender nonconforming people. The men in *Newsies* are naturally strong and had powerful movement that they could naturally do. I wanted that athletic and strong movement quality in my piece, however, I had to build these skills in my dancers. Many of them have not been trained to move in this way compared to the original piece with all men. Part of the process was building my dancers' strength and stamina. Throughout I wanted more from my performers, especially sinking into lunges and plies, getting lower into the floor. I noticed how the dancers are not used to doing this style of modern. Modern can be flowy and fluid but I choreographed sharp and strong modern movement. The difference I noticed were my dancers at times not trusting they are strong enough to move the way I am asking them to. I believed they were strong enough to do these different movements but there was a mental block with my dancers and fear when demonstrating a unique floor trick. After a couple of weeks of practicing the dance and floorwork, the dancers built up their strength, becoming athletic dancers.

An unexpected challenge that arose at the beginning of the process was a dancer dropping out due to an injury. To my knowledge, the injury happened outside of rehearsal so it was

surprising to hear this news. I wanted a big group for “Seize The Day,” so the nine people I had dropped to eight. I spent some of my rehearsal changing formations and having my dancers walk through them instead of having the time to teach new material. I did get through enough material in that rehearsal, but I sacrificed run time to adjust everyone. Fortunately, no one’s choreography changed drastically. Some counts or add-on sequences affected certain dancers but nothing they could not handle. The only formation that I was upset about was any of the straight lines in the front. I wanted Jack Kelly, the leader of the group, in the center of the line, however, the even number made me split the center with Jack and Davey, who is Jack’s right-hand man. It did not look bad, but that is why I wanted an odd number, creating moments with Jack taking charge. I did not freak out from someone dropping out as I continued the dance and rehearsals as I normally would.

This dance was the most challenging to choreograph for me outside of the original style. I wanted to put in more jumps than there were. I felt in my body that is what I should be doing but I avoided the instinct. The jumps I did incorporate were not the typical *jeté* or jump in second. I choreographed jumps with flexed feet and bent legs, using the entire body in the jump. I put a minimal amount of turns to avoid the original choreography which was easier for me to abstain from. In past dances, I have not put many turns into my pieces so I did not feel the inclination as I did with the jumps. However, the turns I put in were low to the ground and never in the *passé* turned out position. Although I had some of these challenges, my floorwork is where I excelled. Anytime I wanted a jump, I went to the floor to combat those thoughts. I used my hip hop influences to create strength-based movement. Modern dance is not classified under one technique, allowing outside influences of other styles and movements to be incorporated into my own modern choreography.

I did not realize how quick the music could be until after a few rehearsals, where the dancers were rushing to stay on time and have full movement. This is another piece for which I took a step back and focused on running the piece more than trying to complete the dance as quickly. With each piece, I had the urge to swiftly complete it instead of taking a moment to look at what the rehearsal needed. With the stamina, formation changes, and fast-paced dance, I needed to let the dancers run the dance rather than throwing more choreography at them. It is the opposite of how I work as a dancer in rehearsal, but I would rather go with what the group needs than focus on my worries. It took the group longer to get the choreography and pick it up compared to past groups I worked with. I changed how I operated my rehearsal to incorporate time to answer questions and run the dance several times, adding less choreography than I originally planned.

One part of the piece I am most proud of is the newspaper section. The newspaper sequence is integral to the plot of *Newsies* as it signifies their defiance against the men in power. I first taught my dancers without the newspapers so I would not waste any materials. I had them going into a plank and ripping the papers on the floor. At the end of the section, the dancers slid through the papers to create a flying effect with the pages going everywhere. When trying it with *The Campus* newspapers, most of what I planned worked. There were not as many flying newspapers, however, the papers were left on stage if they were not thrown. Having the newspapers stay on stage for the rest of the dance improved the environment and emphasized the strike, defying Pulitzer. After breaking the papers, the dancers are moving on them, using all four limbs to push the pages against the floor. This sequence was the most different from the original choreography, keeping all the movement on the floor and incorporating the arms to rip the papers.

Towards the end of the process, I cleaned the dance as I had done with the two other pieces. The majority of the dance had movement together where I could watch the piece with everyone, rather than needing to isolate certain groups. During the cleaning process, I focused on the height of the legs and the position of the arms. I forgot to set arms for certain parts so there were moments that needed to be specified, while others I kept free, going with where the body goes. The formation spacing also became a challenge with cleaning. I would set the spacing and talk it through multiple times, however, some dancers would forget or revert to what they had been doing. What helped was having the spacing in relation to the tape on the floor, similar to the Rockettes' spacing, having toes or heels on the tape. The tape aids the dancers in maintaining a straight line, helping with spacing and keeping the formations centered. In each section I cleaned, the dancers continued to improve especially with their strength. They always asked questions, clarifying the movement and elements I did not think about. Throughout the cleaning process, some components needed fixing, however, the dancers came in ready to work and striving to improve.

As tech week and the performance approaches, I am feeling a mix of stress and excitement. There are several uncertainties about how the week will go and running the show that are out of my control. I am stressed about the potential of stepping into one of the dances and knowing the dance well. I am also worried about the technical aspects as this is my first time creating a concert. However, even with some of the negative aspects, there are positives. Since this is my first time choreographing a full dance concert, I am excited to present my choreography to an audience. I am eager to see the reactions from my friends, students, and professors. The cast has put so much time and effort into the concert that I am also thrilled to see them perform for an audience. The work I have devoted the past four months will soon be over

and I am proud of what I created. Though there will be some stress going into the final week, mostly excitement and enthusiasm to finally see my hard work on stage in front of an audience.

Chapter Three: Performance of Movement

The way I teched my concert is similar to how the Dance and Movement Studies department typically schedules the Allegheny Repertory Dance concert. I had one day of just lighting the dances, allotting thirty minutes for each piece, and two days of running the show. I had the sound operator record each day of tech, letting the dancers watch themselves, and I could send out notes. For the concert, I put up posters around campus as well as posted on social media, promoting the show to campus members. I also asked those in the local community if I could display a poster, presenting one at The Learning Center K-8. I presented the show to the public, inviting friends, family, Allegheny College students and faculty, and Meadville community members to the concert. The dance concert took place on April 17th at 8:00pm in the Montgomery performance space with about a hundred audience members. The concert went well and the guests enjoyed the performance, applauding loudly after each piece.

As I was setting up for the concert, I did not fully understand the other aspects needed for a dance show other than creating the dances. I knew I needed to find a technical crew, ushers, and someone to design the flyers, however, there were other elements I discovered how to do for the first time. I created and put together a program, printing out all of the programs through the Montgomery printer. In addition to creating a program, I had to think about what the lobby was going to look like. I decided to put up some of my research on the original choreographers and shows, giving the audience insight into the project. I also had to make decisions about what I wanted the lighting to look like. Usually, when I have been asked this question, I am not sure what I want. When asked for this concert, I did have ideas for colors or prominent moments for the dances that should have a cue change. Until the final week, I did not understand the several

factors needed to create a dance concert, the decisions I had to make, and what I had to do as a director.

The first day of tech was focusing on the lighting and sound cues of the show. I ran each dance twice with the first run-through as a mark for the dancers and the second going full out. There were minimal changes for lighting as the designer, Charlotte Feucht, and I talked a week before the concert about what I was looking for. The lighting was not the focus, but a way to contribute to the moment and overall story for the pieces. All the dancers either arrived at Montgomery early or on call time, allowing us to run slightly ahead of schedule. The tech day ran smoothly with no bumps or running behind, ending exactly on time. I was also able to have each piece recorded during the second run for the dancers to watch themselves. I watched the videos as well, seeing if there is anything I need to fix before the Tuesday and Wednesday run-throughs. After reviewing the videos, I gave out notes for the dancers to read through before the next day of tech. These consisted of clarifications of arm and head directions as well as any spacing issues I noticed. I was stressed at the beginning of the first day, but as the rehearsal went on, I felt calm as no problems occurred between the dances and technical elements.

The next day was the first full run of the show where I had the chance to see the transitions between each dance and flow of the concert. Dancers were called an hour before the run of the show with the dance captains leading a full company warmup at the start. I wanted to make sure the dancers were warm prior to the run, giving responsibilities to my dance captains, and incorporating company bonding during tech week. Before we started, I was anxious about talking throughout the show and how the quick change between “Cool” and the “Cell Block Tango” would work out. The run went for about thirty minutes with minor issues such as a dancer taking longer to quick change than anticipated or the lights coming up too slow when I

talked in between dances. Though there were minor bumps during the run, the dances went well and the lights for bows went on faster than the night before. After the second day of tech, I felt more confident and nervous as the show approached closer.

The last day of tech I had a couple of invited guests to watch as they were not able to come to the performance day. My guests consisted of a few friends, my professor, Rachel Hoey, and my mentor teacher from my Education internship. I was nervous and excited to see the first reactions of the pieces I choreographed with an audience who did not know the details of my project. This day of tech felt like a real performance with the audience members experiencing all of the dances for the very first time. The run-through went well even though I felt it was not my best show. There were times I messed up even though no one else noticed. After the run-through, I talked to the audience members, gaining insight into what they thought of the show and pieces. When talking with Rachel, we discussed how ballet worked for the “Cell Block Tango” and my mentor teacher said that it was his favorite piece. I also received feedback about other elements of the concert. I was told the lighting supported the movement and my explanations helped give context for each piece, allowing the audience to better understand my intentions. After the run-through and hearing my first feedback on the show, my dancers and I were ready to present all the pieces for a bigger audience.

When looking back at the technical rehearsals and run-throughs, I would not change many aspects. Since this was a short performance, the two run-throughs were enough for the dancers and the technical crew. On the first day of tech, I would keep running the dances twice as it helped the light board operator understand all the cues during the pieces. One struggle I had during the week leading up to the performance was some dancers not reading the notes after each night. The performers had video recordings of the run-throughs to watch themselves and I could

give notes each night after tech on a Google document. I wish I could have watched the performance from the audience, but I am thankful I had video recordings of the run-throughs. However, it was difficult for some of the dancers to read them before the next day or remember the notes I gave, having to repeat notes from previous nights or rehearsals. I would not change recording each night, but I need to figure out a better way for dancers to receive and incorporate the notes into each run. Other than dancers remembering notes, the technical rehearsals brought the show together, giving me confidence for the actual concert.

On the day of the concert, I continued to feel nervous and excited, but calm the morning of. The pieces came together the night before and I gave minimal notes to the dancers. Having a small audience helped me and my confidence, knowing that audience members will enjoy the performance. I checked to see how many people made reservations and made sure everything was prepared for the performance space as well as the lobby. There was a lobby display with my research about the choreographers and dances for the guests to learn more about my project. It was a weird feeling to have everything done but thinking there was something I was missing. I was very nervous coming on stage for the first time as there were more people than I expected. Once I spoke, I was slowly on autopilot, letting my muscle memory take over. After the first dance, I could not believe the reactions from the audience and how loud it was. I was overwhelmed with love, pride, and confusion at the sheer volume during the bows. Each dance took three bows throughout the performance and I noticed people standing up at the end during the full company bows. The entirety of the performance was wonderful with the show running smoothly and an incredibly engaged audience.

When looking back at the performance, I am so beyond proud of not only what I did, but what the dancers and production team contributed to the performance. The concert itself went

well with no noticeable mistakes or problems within the show. The audience was larger than I expected and fully engaged with the performance. I received a lot of positive feedback on the dances, my performance, and the choreography. Someone approached me after the show, saying how much she appreciated the show and acknowledging how she sees the same choreography in theatre. She loved that I presented how choreography can change, incorporating new styles into well-known shows and flipping expectations. I also had my other internship mentor teacher email me about the pieces, mentioning how well I presented the story and portrayal of the characters. Many guests appreciated the details for each dance, making sure movement and storytelling were emphasized throughout the concert. The first show I have ever put together myself went better than I expected, demonstrating a professional level concert.

Throughout the week, I learned several aspects about how to run technical rehearsals and how I function when putting together a show. I am a perfectionist with myself as a dancer as well as a creator. I push my dancers to continue to improve, always looking for something to work on before the show begins. I understand it is important to have high expectations, but I would try not to put as much pressure on myself next time creating a show. The high expectations stressed me out during the technical rehearsals more than I needed to be. My anxiety set me up to be well prepared for the concert, however, I was not as present as I would like to have been during performance week. The next process I go through I will trust myself and my abilities more. I have not created anything like this before and I was scared. I had a drive and passion to make it great, causing stress and pressure during the show week. Now that I know I can do this, I will give myself more grace and trust. This concert proved how I am a leader in addition to being a choreographer and director.

“Cool”

During the tech rehearsals and run-throughs, I was the least concerned about this dance. I gave minimal notes each night, focusing more on what the upper body was doing and our faces throughout the dance. On Tuesday, I asked questions for them to consider regarding their characters and how they feel in that moment. Since the beginning of the process, “Cool” has been the strongest piece. The dancers were constantly focused, worked hard in and out of rehearsal, and consistently refined their sounds. The performers put themselves into the characters, carrying the emotions throughout the dance and truly using their expressions during the entire performance week. The last run-through, I barely gave any notes, only telling the dancers a moment as a group we rushed a section. The day of the performance we were in sync, honed in on the story, movement, and sounds. We were connected throughout the dance, looking at each other and focusing on our sounds. The comments I received were centered around how well tap works for *West Side Story* and can be used to emphasize a story rather as I mentioned before the piece. Throughout the process, this was the strongest dance out of three with character, sound, and bodies with the performance emphasizing this.

When performing the piece, I was not as concerned about remembering the choreography. I find tap natural in my body and I knew I would be in this dance from the beginning of choreographing the dance. It is easy to give corrections about tap when I am performing as I notice on stage when the sounds are off and not together. I am used to hearing in the moment when we are off and making mental notes to tell my dancers after the run-through. Each day of tech, I got more into the dance, feeling the story and movement within my body. Before, I was worried about the other people, but during the run-throughs I focused on what I was doing. During the show, my body took over, not thinking about the sounds or what my face

was doing. My body knew the movement as I practiced the piece during rehearsals and constantly listened to the music. I never struggled with this dance so throughout the technical rehearsals and the performance, this piece came naturally to me without second thought.

The technical aspects of “Cool” worked for the piece, both with costumes and the lighting. The lighting was not distracting to the movement and elevated the setting of the piece. The lighting gave the piece a nighttime look as well as complementing the cool-toned costumes of greens and blues. The colors contrasted the rage as the Jets attempted to remain calm and collected, but the anger was seeping through in the sounds and movement rather than the lighting or costumes. The only element I would change with the lights is adding more magenta or purple, blending the coolness of blue and the anger of red, letting the two states conflict with each other. The moment in the piece I would keep is the very ending, especially as the audience sees the gunshot before the lights go to black. It is a powerful visual that connects to the story of *West Side Story* during the second act. Outside of the dance, the technical elements supported the movement, linking the characters to the story even further.

Within “Cool,” the new ideas that arise from the tap sounds emphasize the Jets’ emotions throughout, contributing to the growing hatred in the musical. The anger is more blunt than Robbins’ balletic choreography as the sounds are directly and blatantly heard. The audience hears their frustration and rage vocally, through the spoken and sung words; however, tapping offers a different audible emphasis of emotions. Hearing the Jets’ anger in a new way highlights the feud with the Sharks even more. The tap sounds build up to the fight, letting Riff’s emotions get the best of him. Tony can see the hatred rise for the Jets with the sounds, creating a noticeable shift between Tony and the Jets. The taps also demonstrate following each other as a gang, especially as the style asks dancers to time sounds together. The Jets’ connection

continuously grows as they get louder until the final gunshot, dissolving both groups to stick to their own beat. The sounds indicate to the audience the characters and gangs emotions, signifying when Riff, Bernardo, or any Shark or Jet strikes into violence.

When considering this piece, I would keep the choreography in the tap style and my own movement if I were to do this dance again. In the future, I would like to have the sheet music for this piece and musical. Counting the music became difficult throughout the process so having the sheet music would possibly benefit the dancers and myself when learning the piece. I would not change any of the choreography for this piece as even with a small group of tappers, we were able to understand the sounds and steps. If I were to do this dance again, I would want more tappers and create a bigger group. I would then change the solo moment to encompass the entire group, getting the picture I originally wanted of the stage looking full. For “Cool,” I do not want to change any of the choreography but adjust formations and add more dancers into the mix.

Comparing the dance to the original piece, I choreographed “Cool” completely different from Jerome Robbins. The tap genre is vastly unique from other styles of dance, focusing on rhythm and sound, and less on what the body is doing. The only turns I incorporated were a drag turn or a rhythm turn, keeping the body low and grounded. The spacing itself is different from Robbins as I kept the group more clumped together than spread out across the stage. Even though this piece is very different from its original form, the tap style works for “Cool” and potentially works for the entirety of *West Side Story*. The tap sounds truly conveyed the anger of the Jets and its intensity. With how Leonard Bernstein wrote the music, there are unique accents in each song that could be played with when setting movement. When thinking about the musical as a whole, tap could be used to demonstrate a fighting sequence, with the sounds being hits or punches. At the end of “Cool,” the tap sounds allude to a gunshot, seen at the end of the musical.

Jerome Robbins will always be associated with *West Side Story*, however, the dance style used can be changed and morphed, telling the story in various new ways.

“Cell Block Tango”

When running this piece during the tech rehearsals, I wished I had one more rehearsal with the dancers to really dissect each movement, especially the arm placement. Throughout the run-throughs, I noticed some inconsistencies in the piece. I gave specific notes during the tech rehearsals, asking for uniformity from my dancers with the arms and placement of the body. I needed the dancers to read the notes each night, specifically for this piece. I knew people were going to recognize this song and dance the most, so I wanted to perfect the dance as much as I could. On the last day of tech, I saw this dance come together, especially audience members telling me this was their favorite piece. The dancers were connected with their characters and the movement came through naturally for everyone. After the third day of technical rehearsals, I thought the piece was finally ready for audiences to see with clean movement and clear characterization.

The dance truly came to life on stage during the concert. At the very beginning, I heard audible reactions and surprised looks from the audience. A shocking moment for the audience was the spread eagle lift during Velma’s monologue. After the show, an audience member told me they were watching Lily, not noticing what was happening at the back of the stage. The goal when coordinating the two parts was hoping the audience focused on Lily, making her very prominent downstage so no one suspected what was going to happen. I received several comments on how surprisingly well ballet works for the dance, making the piece unexpected for the audience. I knew ballet worked for the piece since creating the choreography so it was

refreshing to see how an audience noticed it as well. When talking with audience members, I was reminded that this was the audience's first time seeing the "Cell Block Tango" as a ballet so the reactions were exciting and surprising for me.

I found out I was performing this piece on the night before the first day of tech, knowing this was a possibility. I made sure I knew the dance and her part the moment I found out my dancer sprained her ankle. I had to mentally prepare myself rather than physically. I felt prepared to do two dances back to back, as for the Allegheny Repertory Dance concert, I had four dances in a row. I was nervous about remembering the choreography and being in time with everyone else as they practiced the dance longer than myself. During the runs and show, I also had a quick change from tap into the ballet piece, making myself more exhausted for the last and hardest piece. However, I felt more confident with the dance after each run, only dancing with the group a handful of times in the last two weeks of rehearsals. I started to feel the character on the second day of tech rehearsals, understanding what my face and body needed to convey to get what I wanted. On the concert day, this was my best run of the "Cell Block Tango" out of the regular and technical rehearsals. Many people did not notice how I was not originally supposed to be in the piece. I was nervous for the dance at the beginning, but by the end, I felt confident in my abilities, successfully performing the piece on show day.

The technical aspects of the piece came together with the lighting complementing the lines of the body and the individual characters in the "Cell Block Tango." For ballet, it is important to present the lines of the body, demonstrating the technique and elongated shapes. Throughout the piece, each character had different colors, decided by the lighting designer. The colors carried each character's story, helping the audience transition from person to person during the piece. There was also a moment throughout where the lights centered on the soloist,

emphasizing the punchline at the very end. When the group moved together, the lights shifted into a red, connecting to the original piece and the merry murderesses together. Red represents passion, anger, and sexuality, contrasting the beautiful and graceful movement of the dancers. The costumes as well supported the elegant movement, differing the original ideas and choreography of the “Cell Block Tango.” The costumes had elements of the original piece, all black with mesh, however, my costumes were specifically for ballet and contemporary dance. Along with the lighting, the costumes reminded the audience of what they were watching, but forced them to rethink their expectations for the entirety of the dance.

When looking at the final product of the “Cell Block Tango,” there are new meanings that arise from this piece that contribute to the musical’s themes, impacting the characters for the rest of the show. For Velma, and Roxie by association with the merry murderesses, portray themselves as more innocent than they are. Women are supposed to act innocent from societal pressure and having the dancers in ballet emphasizes this standard. The piece contributes to the dancers being treated as frail and dainty, helping Velma and Roxie later on for their trials. There is an underlying viscous nature of the inmates, masked by the beautiful movement. The rest of the show, the graceful nature of the merry murderesses can be alluded to, reminding the audience of how they present themselves when with the public. The ballet also helps Roxie’s situation later on, especially when describing how she is supposedly pregnant. Roxie acting frail is emphasized as the ballet demonstrates these qualities in the prisoners. Though it is all an act to be free, the “Cell Block Tango” ballet emphasizes throughout the entirety of the musical for Velma and Roxie how it is a played up act, presenting the world with what society wants to see.

For the “Cell Block Tango,” I would change some of the choreography if I were to do it as a ballet piece once more. I want to incorporate different steps and research more difficult

moves to put in if I were to recreate the piece. My ballet vocabulary is limited, so I would spend more time finding various dances and discovering new ballet steps that I have never done before. With the solos, I would change them for different people as this version of the “Cell Block Tango” was created with these six dancers in mind. I want my choreography to work for different groups of performers so changing some of the movement might be necessary. I want the solos to be for that particular dancer, playing into their strengths and special skills. I would continue to use the formations I set as this particular piece only has six performers. With the “Cell Block Tango,” I would mainly change the solos to let dancers feel comfortable in what they are doing and demonstrate their personal skills.

Bob Fosse’s “Cell Block Tango” and my version are completely different, making the ballet piece successful in moving away from the original choreography. There was no jazz or sexual tones to my dance, rather, the merry murderesses were elegant and graceful. Each dancer exuded beauty in their movement, convincing the audience of their innocence. The ballet style captured more of what the characters ‘say’ and not playing their actions as jokes. This piece makes what the merry murderesses discuss more serious than the original version. When considering *Chicago*, I am not sure if ballet would work for the entirety of the musical. However, that does not mean other styles would not work that are not Fosse. *Chicago* could use a different jazz style, influenced by 1920s movement, limiting sensual undertones Fosse used in his choreography. There are moments where ballet could be incorporated for other sections, such as “We Both Reached for the Gun,” having some of the dancers move as ballet puppets. Ballet does not make sense of the entirety of *Chicago*, however, it can be a useful tool to convey innocence and beauty when needed for the female prisoners.

“Seize The Day”

During tech week, I saw this dance come together like I have not before. With the technical elements coming into place and my dancers using their voices more, there was so much life on stage. On the first day of tech, someone told me it was their favorite dance to watch, which was surprising for me as I felt people would enjoy the “Cell Block Tango” the most. Each time I saw the piece, I wanted more energy from my dancers as it set the tone for the rest of the show. The constant note I gave during the run-throughs was faces and energy as all of the performers had the movement, but I knew they could do more than they gave. During the show, there was so much life on the stage, especially during the newspaper section. I noticed backstage how much fun some of the dancers were having, finding that connection and unity that the newsboys have with each other. After the performance, I talked to an audience member about the dance and she truly did not expect modern to work for the piece. She told me how she could only see “Seize The Day” and *Newsies* in its original style, skeptical if modern dance would work without any flips or tricks. I am proud of how far this piece has come as at times I was uncertain how different it was from the original, however, the performance reassured me how my version is distinctly its own.

When looking at the technical aspects of the piece, the lighting added to the mood and tone of “Seize The Day.” Throughout the dance, the lights had shades of bright yellows and blues, conveying that the strike is in the morning. Having the piece during the morning demonstrates a new beginning for the newsboys, fighting against the oppressors through bold and strong movement. One moment in the piece, the lights were fully bright on stage, further pushing the resilience and radiant energy the newsboys shared as a group. The lighting presented how they are stronger as a group, determined to fight against the men in power by showing their

optimism and hope. With the costumes, not much changed between my version and the original piece. The costumes were important to keep during 1899 as the time period is integral to the story. The clothing the dancers wore continued to present the newsboys as a unified group working together. Throughout the piece, the technical aspects emphasized what was established in the movement and plot of “Seize The Day,” propelling the audience to notice the unity and strength.

My version of “Seize The Day” continues to demonstrate the newsies power, like Gattelli choreographed, however, there are new ideas that arise from the modern dance style. Modern movement supports itself through the ground, signifying all the newsboys are grounded together, working as a team. Choreographing the movement in the low space demonstrates how the newsies are part of the lower class as they fight against those in power, the upper class. However, that means the newsies are connected more to the world than the rich men like Pulitzer. This leads the boys to gain support from the other newsies in New York and Davey becoming more connected to them. Davey was at first hesitant, but when staying with the boys, he became one of the strong leaders of the strike. The newsies starting at the bottom forces them to climb up, fighting in defiance, grounded in their own morals. This forces Jack, Davey, and the rest of the newsies to not give over to power, rather, stand up for themselves and their beliefs. Utilizing modern dance for this part of the musical impacts how the boys stick together, demonstrating their strength to fight and hold their ground against Pulitzer.

There are a few aspects I would change within “Seize The Day” if I were to choreograph the piece. Within my version, there was not a lot of partner work or lifts. I would break the dance more into smaller groups moving and using more connection with the other dancers. I would also change some of the formations, making some more traditional lines while

keeping the interesting shapes that I created. In certain sections, I would incorporate more jumps or turns when redoing it as I would not be confined to the modern dance genre. However, the majority of the movement, especially the newspaper section, I would recreate. All the dancers ripping the paper up with their four limbs is a powerful moment. Though it is similar to the original version, the dancers are tearing the newspapers on the ground, putting their whole bodies into the movement. What I want to do more with this piece is have the dancers interact with each other and connect physically rather than dancing on their own.

When reimagining “Seize The Day,” I did not realize how many similarities there are between modern movement and Gattelli’s original choreography. I moved away from flips and tricks, however, my version of the dance has similar qualities to Gattelli’s choreography, making it integral to the plot and characters. I incorporated athletic movement and qualities, demonstrating the capabilities of the newsboys and strong defiance against Pulitzer. Even though my piece utilized the low space more than the original version, both had the same qualities of movement. When looking at *Newsies*, athletic, strong, and powerful movement needs to be part of the choreography. It is the only element the newsboys can use to fight against the oppressors. What was different about my piece was heavy use of the floor and minimization of tricks. However, “Seize The Day” lingers with Gattelli’s intentions, no matter the dance style one puts the choreography in as the movement qualities and dynamics demonstrate the newsies defiance.

Conclusion: Changing the Style

From start to finish, I discovered many different aspects about choreography, my own process, and the creation of a dance concert. The original choreographers developed their own style and practice gradually in rehearsal. The various musicals they have worked on impacted their style and creation of movement. Fosse created choreography based on his own body, developing his own unique technique. Robbins was heavily influenced by his ballet background, incorporating the style to push the story forward in his shows. Gattelli works with the other performers, discovering what they can do and taking great inspiration from the music. Through their processes, each choreographer created well-known choreography within each of the musicals they worked on. I examined “Cell Block Tango,” “Cool,” and “Seize The Day” to then demonstrate how the choreography can be changed, impacting and bringing new meanings to the show. Through several rehearsals, I choreographed three pieces that significantly changed from the original dance.

The rehearsal process gave me insight into how I would continue to run a rehearsal again and the process of creating a show. I organized the dances and cast the dancers well in advance so when I came back, not as many people were committed to other events or obligations. I would keep the two-hour rehearsals as I had enough time to create and clean the dances. I also always came prepared with choreography, speeding up the process instead of creating in the moment. In the future, I would have more choreography prepared than I might teach in rehearsal, as at times we got through more than I thought we would. For dancers specifically, I want to continue to use a dancer’s checklist to help them develop the character and themes of the piece. We are not told as often to think about the story, but rather what our face is doing, a question constantly asked in

my rehearsals. I want to continue to encourage dancers to think more about the story and who they are to then invoke those emotions in their own body.

There are a few aspects of the rehearsal process that I would change or adjust for the future. I would want to do a dance class with each group to get a starting basis of difficulty, understanding where each person is in their abilities. I would also want to set the rehearsal times before the semester even started. It was difficult to figure out rehearsal times with everyone's schedules being different. Setting it before the semester might have helped adjust other peoples commitments where I could hold rehearsals more easily. I would also emphasize for the dancers to warm up before rehearsal started as many of the rehearsals we took the time to warm up at the very beginning. In general, it was difficult to hold rehearsals and have dancers who do many other activities outside of the arts. I knew I needed to be accommodating to everyone's schedule, however, I would expect more from the dancers for the next rehearsal process I go through. I would emphasize more that they need to put in time outside of rehearsal to work through the dance.

For the technical rehearsals and performance, there is not much I would change in terms of the schedule and how the show ran. Focusing on the lighting cues the first day helped reassure me about the concert and the technical crew then understood the cues. Having two run-throughs of the show before the performance helped me, the dancers, and the production team understand the flow of the concert. The run-throughs also helped the dancers with quick changes, learning how much time they have and the speed needed to change for the next piece. If the show was longer, I would have another day for a run-through, but the two days were perfect for the thirty minute concert length. For this specific performance, speaking to the audience about my intentions helped those who knew nothing about the shows or dance. The information gave

guests insight of what I did and why I did it to better understand each piece they viewed.

Learning how many people came to the performance, I would want another day for the performance or a weekend, advertising the performance to more of the Meadville community in addition to the Allegheny College students and faculty. Overall, the performance and technical rehearsals went smoothly for my first time putting a dance concert together, instilling confidence in my abilities for the next show I work on.

When comparing my version of each dance to the original choreographers, the movement of the initial version somewhat lingers as the intentions remain the same within each dance. New themes, ideas, and meanings are added, however, the other factors of the dance, such as the music, continue to influence the piece towards the original creation. The movement itself is vastly different from my version in comparison to Fosse, Robbins, and Gattelli's choreography. The new styles add in various elements as well as a spark of invention. The contrast between movement is taken aback by the audience, letting the viewers experience the piece differently than before. The intentions of the dance will stay, as that is part of the musical and story, a commonality shared between each version of a show. Though each version of the pieces share similarities, the style changing offers new ideas brought into the musicals.

Through this project, I demonstrated how different dance styles can work for musicals and be used to reimagine an established show. These dance styles brought in new meanings for the pieces and presented new ways of looking at movement. Musical theatre choreography is not bound to the jazz style or the original dances. Movement is a versatile element in theatre that can constantly be rethought, not unlike changing the time period of a show or reconsidering the scenic design. Each dance I choreographed brought in new ways of thinking about the piece and the musical as a whole. "Cool" presented using sound as violence; the "Cell Block Tango"

utilized ballet to demonstrate exaggerated innocence; “Seize The Day” conveyed how the piece can use the floor for the spectacle element rather than flips or tricks. Though the original choreography will linger with the musical, the choreography can be shaped into different movement and styles, creating space for new ideas to take place.

Choreography and dance in musical theatre is not only for entertainment or spectacle, but it is used to tell a story. How we tell the story can constantly change and shift, allowing the movement to mold into new ideas. Changing the style is a way to revise the original choreography and audience expectations, allowing new experiences, ideas, and meaning to take place. What I created is one way to look at these three pieces differently, however, these too can be changed and developed into various versions. I successfully switched the style on the “Cell Block Tango,” “Cool,” and “Seize The Day,” but that does not necessarily mean these are the only ways to change these pieces. Movement and dance is a versatile form, with various genres and styles that can be used instead of only just jazz or tap. Changing style means shifting the way we view dance in association with the story, conveying new thoughts that can enhance the characters intentions, the plot, and themes of a musical.

Poster and *Changing Style* Program



A note from the choreographer:

Many musicals like *A Chorus Line* or *42nd Street* have specific dances that have been redone multiple times with the entirety of the original choreography or elements from the original choreographer. When reviving a musical, the past choreography will still linger in the dances and influence the choreographic decisions. As an audience, we are used to seeing jazz dance and upbeat pieces, however, that does not allow room for innovation. There are choreographers who demonstrate both innovation and entertainment.

I looked into the choreography of Bob Fosse, Jerome Robbins, and Christopher Gattelli, three choreographers who specialized in telling the story through movement. Each of them has their own unique style of creating and moving that transpires into their work. The musicals I focused on for each choreographer are widely known and popular, making certain dances recognizable. What I am attempting is to reimagine three well-known dances into different dance styles than the original version. I choreographed three dances: “Seize The Day” from *Newsies* as a modern dance, “Cool” from *West Side Story* as a tap, and the “Cell Block Tango” from *Chicago* as a ballet. When reconsidering these pieces, I explored what new meanings arise and how that impacts the characters and the rest of the story. My goal was to reinvent these dances, continuing my growth as a teacher and artist. Through this project, I started my journey on re-envisioning dance in theatre, emphasizing how movement is a prominent feature in storytelling.

Liz Driscoll

Choreography by Liz Driscoll

Seize The Day

Music: “Seize The Day” from the *Newsies* Cast Recording

Performed by: Michelle Allen, Willow Bowen,
Lilly Branthoover, T LaPlatney, Sara Margo,
Rae Robison, Molly Suppo, Ashley Swierczewski

Dance Captain: T LaPlatney

Cool

Music: “Cool” from the 2009 *West Side Story* Cast Recording

Performed by: Natalie Anderson, Liz Driscoll,
Ellie Jordan, Sara Margo, Casey Walowitz

Dance Captain: Sara Margo

Cell Block Tango

Music: “Cell Block Tango” from the *Chicago* Motion Picture

Performed by: Willow Bowen, Ella DeRose, Liz Driscoll
Destiny Gee, Lily Kons, Liv Pollice

Dance Captain: Lily Kons

Changing Style

Production Team:

Director/Choreographer: Liz Driscoll

Stage Manager: Owen Ranus

Lighting Designer: Charlotte Feucht

Lighting Operator: Sam Ault

Sound Operator: Garrett Paxton

House Manager: Nolan Kons

Ushers: members of FIJI

Costume Manager: Ellie Jordan

Program Cover and Posters: Charlie Schwartz

Videographer: Charlie Schwartz

Special Thanks:

The Theatre Department

The Dance and Movement Studies Department

Betsy Getschman

Mark Cosdon

Rachel Hoey

Uriel Gomez

Montgomery Monitors

Lobby displays



Script for *Changing Style*

Welcome:

Welcome to my senior comprehensive project Changing Style

Before the show begins some things to go over:

- Please turn off all phones and other electronics
- No video or photography
 - Performance will be recorded
- In case of emergency exits: the door just came from and two behind me
- The show runs about 25 minutes

Some things about the show:

- Started off the project wanting to create choreography
 - Looked at how Broadway and regional theatres stick to either the jazz style or similar styles to the original choreography
- Exploring how other forms of dance styles can be used to elevate a musical's story and present new ideas
- Looked into three choreographers and three of their dances
 - Fosse, Robbins, Gattelli
 - Cbt, Cool, Seize the Day
- Switching the style brings a newness to the piece, in addition to new meanings that influence the characters, the audience's emotions, and the story

First dance Seize The Day from Newsies:

- Newsies striking against the newspapers makers as they increase the price of newspapers
- Originally jazz piece with flips and tricks
- All men; using the high space; spectacle
- The high space used to show defiance against men in power
- The low space can do the same thing
 - Changing style to modern dance
- Modern is rooted into the earth and very grounded
- Strength coming from the floor than the air

- Grounded in unity

Cool from WSS:

- The next piece is cool from wss
- Takes place shortly after the gym dance: jets angry and heated from argument with sharks; training to regain cool when meeting them again
- Robbins choreographed this dance and rest of WSS in the high space
- Using jumps and turns to show the explosive emotions of anger and rage
- Taking that idea of anger and putting it into tap
- Tap underutilized for storytelling in mt
- Sound can create the emotions and carry them out into reality
 - Meshing audible and visual portrayal
- Using volume within cool to portray the anger, avoiding the high space

CBT from Chicago:

- Last piece in CBT
- The piece is about the six merry murderesses of the cook county jail recounting their crime of why they are there
- Fosse used sensual movements and use of props like a chair
- Sharp and direct movement within his style; inspired heavily by vaudeville background
- Completely changing the style into ballet
 - elegant form, focusing on the lines of the body
 - Use of the high space
- Making it beautiful movement to put a twist;
 - the portrayal of these women more innocent;
 - delicate on the outside, but underlying viscous nature on the inside
- Using different qualities compared to fosse to tell the story of these women

End:

Thank you all for coming. Please get home safely. If you have any questions for me, feel free to stick around and ask me anything. I would be happy to talk to you all. Thank you all again!

Tech schedule for *Changing Style* performance week

Monday, April 14th (lighting):

Cool: Call time 4:15, Light 4:30-5:00

Seize The Day: Call time 4:45, Light 5:00-5:30

Cell Block Tango: Call time 5:15, Light 5:30-6:00

Tuesday, April 15th (costume and hair):

Call time: 4:30

Full Company Warm Up: 4:45

Set Bows: 5:05

Run: 5:30

Leave: 6:15

Wednesday, April 16th (Costume, hair, makeup; Pictures):

Call time: 7:00

Full Company Warm Up: 7:15

Run: 8:00

Leave: 8:45

Thursday, April 17th (SHOW):

Call time: 7:00

Full Company Warm Up: 7:05

Show: 8:00

The full company of *Changing Style*.



Pictures of the third technical rehearsal of *Changing Style*. Photographs by Ed Mailliard.







The dancer's checklists of Lily Kons, Sara Margo, and T LaPlatney that every dancer filled out about who they are, why are they dancing, and the relationship between everyone else. These questions are derived from the acting techniques of Uta Hagen and Meisner, gleaned from Rosenfeld's "Uta Hagen's Technique," and Jacobs' *A Meisner Legacy*.

Name: Lily K _____

Dancer's Checklist (Due Week of March 9)

GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES

CHARACTER: Who am I? What is my present state of being?

Facts: age, physical and/or personality traits, tendencies. Imagine: What you are wearing and how you see the world.

- Velma Kelly is a vaudeville performer in her early 30s
- Charismatic and seductive charm
- She's glamorous, confident, ambitious, and ruthlessly manipulative when necessary
- Wearing a sleek, provocative black outfit that is stylish and attention-grabbing
- She sees the world as a stage where she must always be the star

OBJECTIVE: What is my immediate need? What do I want to convey to the audience? What are you expecting? What are you hoping or planning to happen?

Examples - I want: love, trust, forgiveness, respect, an apology, forgiveness, revenge, or to be left alone, etc.

- Velma wants recognition, admiration, and power
- She craves to be adored and seen as the ultimate star of the show
- Her current goal is to reclaim her fame and prominence despite being jailed for double homicide
- She wants to manipulate the public and the press to rebuild her reputation and secure her freedom

RELATIONSHIP: What is my relationship with the other people I'm with?

For instance: sibling, supervisor, spouse, etc. Expand, even to backstory.

- The Other Women (Murderesses):
 - They are her fellow inmates, but Velma considers herself superior to them. They share a common experience of being driven to murder, but Velma views her own crime as more glamorous and justifiable, making her the unofficial leader of the group
 - She has a sense of camaraderie with them, but it's built on performance and storytelling rather than genuine friendship. She uses their stories to enhance her own fame and

ENVIRONMENT:

Where/when is this moment set (time period/year, place, etc.)?

What surrounds me? What time of day is it?

Think when, where, the importance or impact of the location, even the power dynamics at play.

- Time Period
 - 1920s Chicago, during the Jazz Age—bold, dangerous, and indulgent.
- Place

- Cook County Jail, particularly the women's cell block, where murderesses share their stories
- Surrounding
 - Cold prison bars and darkened cells. But to Velma, it's still a stage—a twisted show where she shines as the lead act. The dim lighting, harsh shadows, and echoing voices enhance the scene
- Power Dynamics
 - Velma is the leader of the pack, commanding attention with her charisma and storytelling. Her confidence and control over the narrative give her power over the other women and the audience

ELEMENTS OF YOUR CHARACTER'S PERSPECTIVE & POINT OF VIEW

TRIGGER EVENT: “What just happened to make you do the thing you must do?” Why are you dancing at this moment?

- Velma's Motivation
 - Velma is taking control of the storytelling to establish her dominance and charisma among the women and to entertain herself while locked away. This performance is her way of proving she's still the star, even behind bars
- What Just Happened
 - The women are bonding over their crimes, and Velma seizes the opportunity to make her story the most compelling and memorable. She's both flaunting her own narrative and curating the others' stories to build a seductive, powerful performance.
- Why Dance Now
 - Velma performs as a way to assert her status, turning a dark reality into a theatrical moment. It's also her way of coping with the grim situation by turning her crime into entertainment.

HOT WHO: How do you feel about the other people in the dance? How do you feel about the people you are ‘singing’ about? *Formula: adjective + noun.*

Examples: they are a foolish child, slimy con-artist, vindictive asshole.

- The Other Women (Murderesses): Bitter companions
Their Victims: Deserving fools

Name: Sara Margo _____

Dancer's Checklist

GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES

CHARACTER: Who am I? What is my present state of being?

Facts: age, physical and/or personality traits, tendencies. Imagine: What you are wearing and how you see the world.

- Big Deal, 18 years old
- wearing striped pants and a button up
- personality: uninterested, stubborn, slightly aggressive, self absorbed, petty

OBJECTIVE: What is my immediate need? What do I want to convey to the audience? What are you expecting? What are you hoping or planning to happen?

Examples - I want: love, trust, forgiveness, respect, an apology, forgiveness, revenge, or to be left alone, etc.

- i want to get even with the sharks
- i want to go about it in a strategic way
- my fellow jets want to fight and escalate while riff wants everyone to stay cool, i want neither and to go about the brawl my own way

RELATIONSHIP: What is my relationship with the other people I'm with?

For instance: sibling, supervisor, spouse, etc. Expand, even to backstory.

- i'm kind of a lone wolf in the gang
- a little crazy and self absorbed, i laugh at my fellow jets because they're all fight-crazy
- i think they're all in over their heads and i know better than them, i think i'm above them

ENVIRONMENT:

Where/when is this moment set (time period/year, place, etc.)?

What surrounds me? What time of day is it?

Think when, where, the importance or impact of the location, even the power dynamics at play.

- in an alley, sunset
- sense of anticipation in the air, sunset symbolizing the approach of the fight between the jets and sharks
- everyone is on edge while i'm rolling my eyes at their naivety

ELEMENTS OF YOUR CHARACTER'S PERSPECTIVE & POINT OF VIEW

TRIGGER EVENT: "What just happened to make you do the thing you must do?" Why are you dancing at this moment?

- the jets are talking about how they want to fight the sharks, very aggressive and willing to kill if it comes to that
- riff is telling us to cool it
- i'm a reasonable guy so i listen to riff and play along to make it seem like i'm on board with the fight, but i see it as childish and i want to get even my own way

HOT WHO: How do you feel about the other people in the dance? How do you feel about the people you are 'singing' about? Formula: adjective + noun.

Examples: they are a foolish child, slimy con-artist, vindictive asshole.

- feelings about my fellow jets: eager fools, naive individuals
- feelings about the sharks: stupid gang, hostile people

feelings about riff: respectable dude, patient chap

Name: T. LaMotteyDancer's Checklist (Due Week of March 9)GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCESCHARACTER: Who am I? What is my present state of being?

Facts: age, physical and/or personality traits, tendencies. Imagine: What you are wearing and how you see the world.

- Davey/ David Jacobs, 15-17? y/o, talkative, strong sense of justice, family-oriented
- daydreamer + passionate, intellectual + educated (comparatively)

OBJECTIVE: What is my immediate need? What do I want to convey to the audience? What are you expecting? What are you hoping or planning to happen?

Examples - I want: love, trust, forgiveness, respect, an apology, forgiveness, revenge, or to be left alone, etc.

- security + \$ for family (safety, well-being)
- restored justice (righting wrongs)
- protection for brother, father
- determination
- allowing/forcing myself to be brave
- allowing brave/rough Jack to take the lead with me by his side
- persistent out of desperation + believe in friends/other boys

RELATIONSHIP: What is my relationship with the other people I'm with?

For instance: sibling, supervisor, spouse, etc. Expand, even to backstory.

- "voice of reason" Brains of the operation Persuasive + outspoken newcomer
- Book smart (street dumb) leader Family oriented - leaving school to support family
- Protective older sibling Business partner / close friend to Jack

ENVIRONMENT:

Where/when is this moment set (time period/year, place, etc.)?

What surrounds me? What time of day is it?

Think when, where, the importance or impact of the location, even the power dynamics at play.

- 1899, Summer
- Lower Manhattan
- industrial revolution
- busy city, class divides
- child work is normal, needed
- young boys, scrappy, need to fight to win/succeed

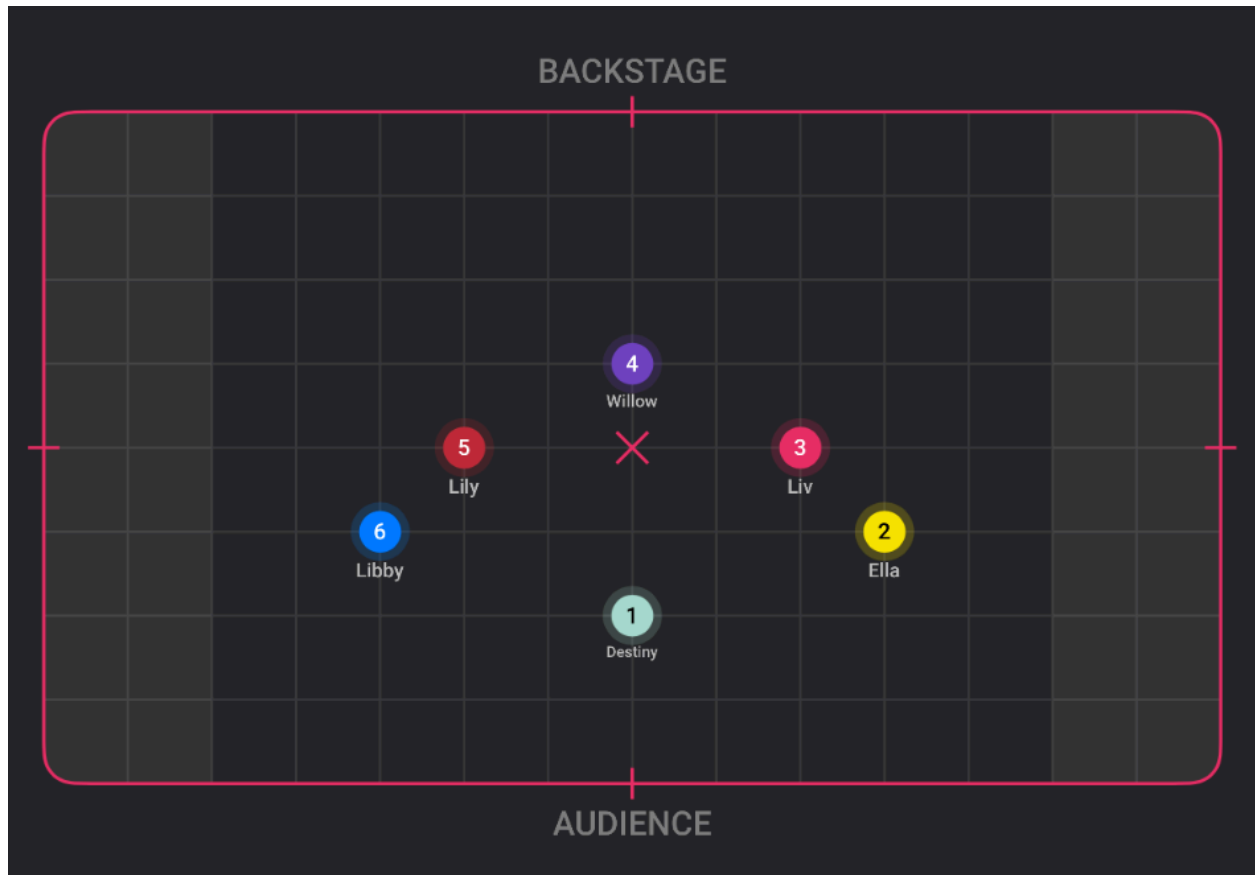
ELEMENTS OF YOUR CHARACTER'S PERSPECTIVE & POINT OF VIEWTRIGGER EVENT: "What just happened to make you do the thing you must do?" Why are you dancing at this moment?

- Father injured at work + kids (Davey + brother) need to support \$ for family
- after first day, need for strike (injustice) happens to natural urge to make the wrongdoing right again + used to persuade other boys to strike!

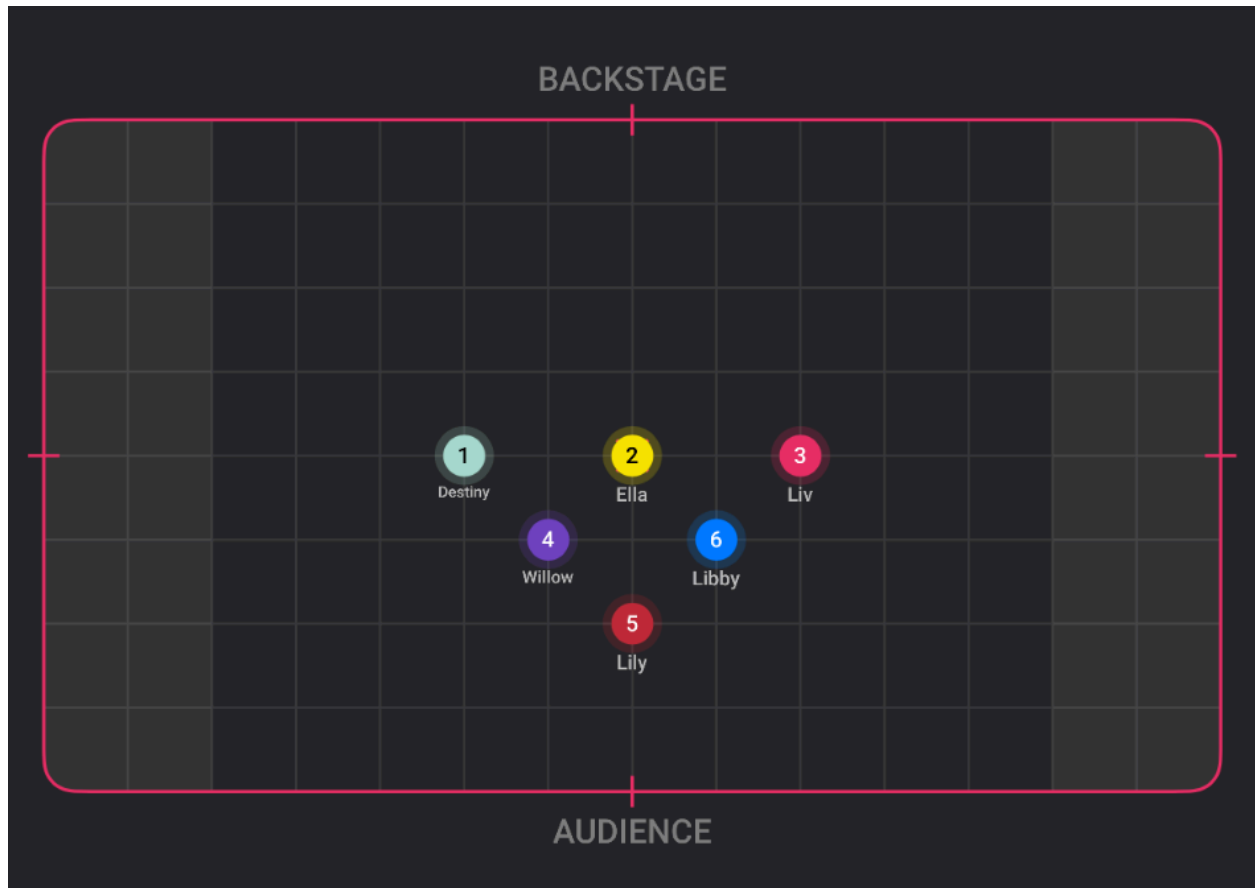
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Examples: they are a foolish child, slimy con-artist, vindictive asshole.

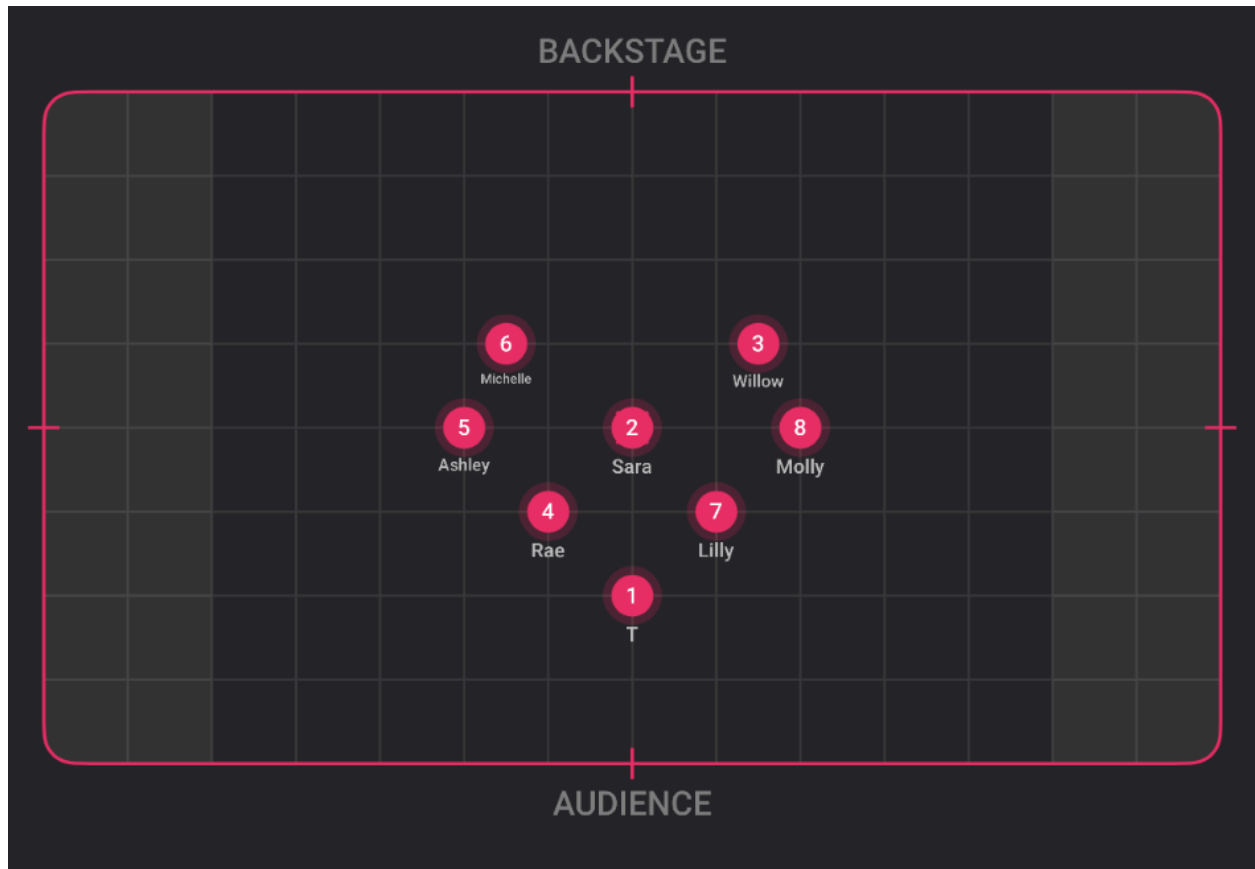
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| <p>A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experienced partners/brothers • passionate teammates • united friends/comrades | <p>B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greedy businessmen • out-of-touch aristocrats • capitalist villains |
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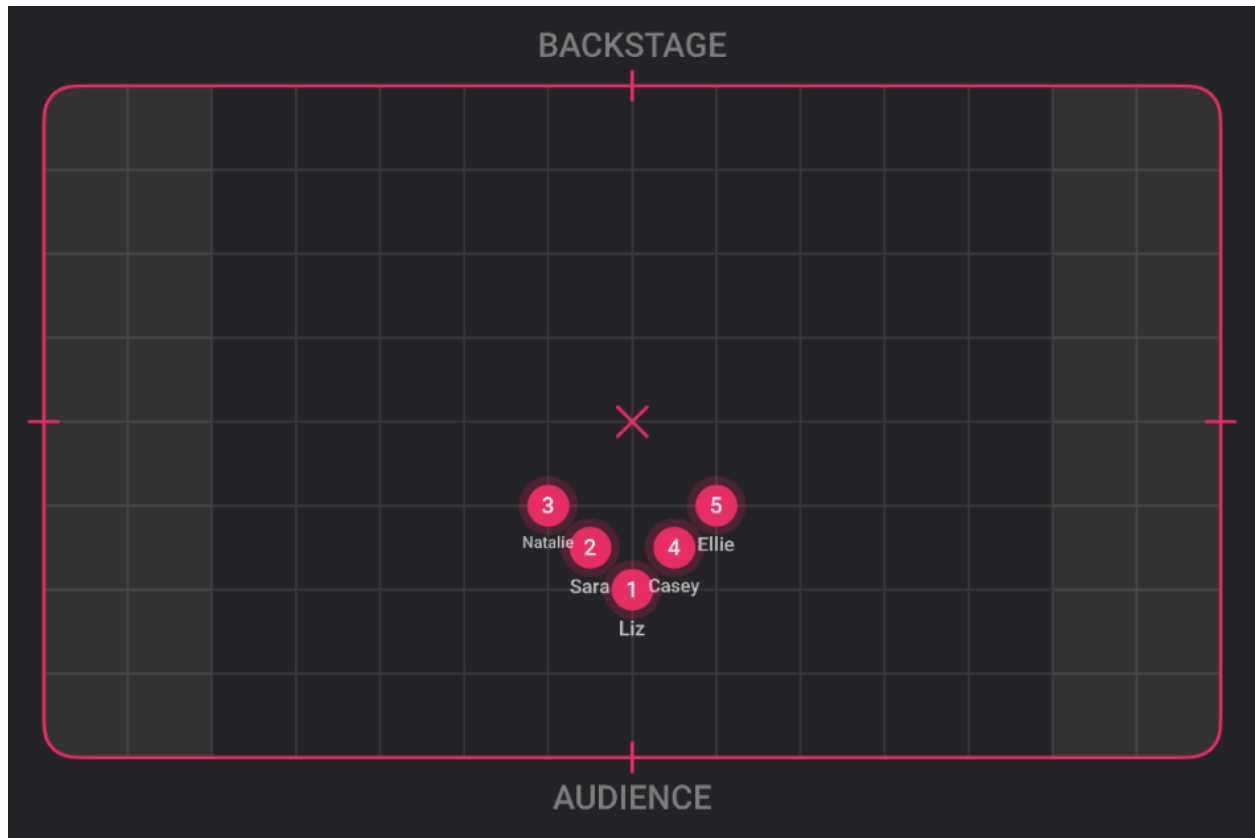
Formation for the "Cell Block Tango"



Formation for the "Cell Block Tango"



Formation for "Seize The Day"



Formation for "Cool"

Entries from my choreographer journal

1/22

I had my first rehearsal yesterday and it went really well. I really like the group I have and all of them are down to do whatever. I am discovering how the music is difficult to choreograph to. I am having Sara help me count as she is great with counting as both a tapper and a musician. She is also finding it difficult to count for that song. I am trying to play with spacing because there is such a small group of us. I wish I wasn't in the dance but there is no way I cannot be in it. There would then only be four tappers and I want a lot of sound for it. I need to figure out ways for them to get into character more and really get into the dance. It was the first rehearsal so it was difficult. I realized I rarely choreograph serious dances so it is a little challenging for me to do that. I have choreographed tap before but it has been campy and fun upbeat dances. I think we had first rehearsal sillies as dance groups tend to have. I also want them to get the movement first and then we can focus a lot more on character throughout the process. I am currently doing an independent study in directing and I think that is going to help me when prompting my dancers on the character portion because that is part of the dance. All of them have done theatre and been in plays or musicals in some capacity so they do have experience with characterization. I might need to explore the characters a little more as well and not solely the movement. I understand the intention of the piece but maybe I also need to explore what the characters want, their feelings, and what are they trying to accomplish through this song.

2/3

I had my first Newsies rehearsal and I got through a lot of choreography. I am about half way done which is a good place to be. I am happy with how each dance is coming along and getting done. I think I underestimated my dancers and myself. I did not think I would be able to finish the dances this quickly but I am happy that I am. I knew from Frog and Toad that I can work fast and create choreography quickly at times but I am impressed with myself with how well I am coming up with material and bringing it into rehearsal. The only dance I am concerned about is Cell Block Tango with how long it is. Most of the dance I am creating two different parts so I need to choreograph double the material at times. It is difficult but it will be rewarding when it is placed onstage. I also have a plan on what days I need to choreograph and how much do I need to get done. Cool is not a priority as half of the dance is done and I have about a minute to teach tomorrow so we will be done very quickly. It is way ahead of schedule than I anticipated. I rather give myself a lot of time though than feel like I am rushing to finish a dance as I have experienced several times before.

2/6

Last night I had my second cell block tango rehearsal. I got through most of the material I wanted to get through. I was missing one dancer as everyone is getting sick on this campus and I had a feeling she was not going to be able to come in. I feel like I am making somethings too hard or too repitive at times with this dance. I felt like my dancers had trouble processing the choreography last night and the timing of everything. I am hoping next rehearsal they come back knowing it. I know they can all

do it but maybe everyone was a little bit exhausted from the day. I am finding difficult with this dance is the constant shift of two different parts. It is double the work for me and I feel like I am rushing to make sure I can give my dancers all the choreography. I also need to build my dancers stamina with this piece as it is long. I think that includes constantly running it over and over again each rehearsal. This is my first time choreographing ballet so I am figuring it out as I go too. I do find ballet easier to choreograph as many of the steps have names and I have studied it very many years. I keep thinking about tap right now and if I need to change the choreography. I feel like I need to keep going and finish it because I have so much to clean and change the dance once I get it done this month. Maybe with practice they will get the moves. I will see how they are doing with the choreography when they come in next week and adjust what I need to. It would not be the first time. I think one of them is just tricky with the brain than the actual step. It is all steps they can do but I think it is just the order of it that can be troubling. I also need to figure out formations more with the dance. Maybe once I finish and start cleaning and looking at every aspect I might feel more confident with it. I do have time with this dance so I feel like I will be okay.

2/24

Newsies rehearsal went better than I expected yesterday. I decided not to do the newspaper section with actual newspapers as I and many others were tired from the Jade concert. It was hard to move and go full out for some of us but I am hoping the break will help us recover. We learned a little bit more of the dance and I gave some corrections for the piece. I think this piece is coming together better than I thought. Last

week I was nervous but each time they do it it is getting better. I do need to change some moments with one of the lines at some point because I do not think it is working for me. I am not sure if I try different steps or scrap the moment before the line all together. I will not have rehearsal for two weeks so I am hoping when they come back they remember the dance and it is the way we left it. I also had CBT on Thursday last week and it is getting better. I think each week the dancers are remembering the sequence of the steps. It was an easy day because it was the day before Jade concert and I did not want them to go really hard during rehearsal. This week I will be having two rehearsals on Wednesday. I had to change my Cool rehearsal but it should be okay and we are practicing and cleaning steps. I am handing my dancers the actors checklist this week so those will also be done after spring break to give my dancers time and if they have not researched anything about the show, they can.

3/12

I kind of liked starting the rehearsals with warmups and working on technique. It was good to have us warm up and listen to each other. I like doing warmups accapella so we can listen to ourselves and the other people around us. I spent the first twenty minutes doing that before moving onto cleaning the dance. I started cleaning the dance like I always do it, taking the dance minute by minute. I did not get through the whole dance as I wanted to make a small change with everyone doing a section instead of only two people. One of the big problems I am seeing is everyones eyes are looking down and even I have this habit. I also am trying to have everyone play with their faces and the emotion they are trying to express in addition to playing with reactions. The first half with

tap steps sounds fine however it is the second half of the dance that I know is going to need some work. I am going to continue to clean the dance and finish doing the minute by minute before I play the pause game or just have them keep running the dance over and over again.

Written choreography and corrections of the pieces

ye just line Stunt!
 get into line
 flip everyone
 flip to the side you need to be on
 2 jumps left right
 reach up to flip side *
 roll over to the side
 full bell forward flip line
 cener roll jumps run to front
 roll, forward cross
 -Stra run back & sides cross
 -Slide after crossing
 First 28 strikes:
 * - large strong walk
 hands to slide to floor
 * - reaching out then flip to back to run
 out
 Strikes: 2 walks, runs to spot,
 second place to look @ each other on this
 then slide to kick floor legs down
 if counts off before music change

number
 walks
 huge strong turn
 bare-first one to go
 everyone does it on even
 123456 (and 8) x2 1, 2
 12345 - want 3
 bamboo 5678 4
 12345678 → the clicky thing
 123 and 40
 in, out, left, in, right in, kicking
 2 down, sit up, forward, right, the back
 through, get back, ~~through~~, grab
 paper & stem on ground
 3 lemon sit up, grab paper
 1234 → red eye to standing
 kick left, right, throw in audience
 5 if Sara slides spin
 everyone goes to back & slides
 through to front
 do we have time to cleanup from
 there?

1001

- he tried upstairs like this room ✓
- Blue fire log more ✓
- 2 clunts between the pines ✓
- Casey great jump ✓
- Same stuff so say the lawyer ✓
- better timing stuff ✓
- big sequence work ✓
- + when we all stop ✓
- cut to peris ✓
- fine steps !! ✓
- See the wishes ✓
- Horse!! → thanks Nature ✓
- maybe be a little more outside ✓
- fly heels much less ✓
- same length ✓
- each solo play up to 10 minutes ✓
- better self work ✓
- any jump where feet same for ✓
- Hammer for break: time steps ✓
- 1500 I'll make you do push-ups ✓
- Patrick felt → start w left ✓

UBT

- arm push way
- leg up
- head down & sides & bird waste
- changing position in or out of the
- transition audience
- Eliza keeps & making steps to corner
- just have them do solo w/ the
- to back
- make sure spacing good
- for Libby's line ✓

- \$ - Posture & move of a leg ✓ ✓
- arms for well ✓
- don't forget arms for double press ✓
- line spacing ✓
- what to do for turn ✓
- willow page front ✓
- cone first to L ✓
- make sure finger distinct ✓
- arms down to up ✓
- some things to keep arms in bag ✓
- head direction ✓
- head & hand foot ✓
- take time to relax audience

Notes

- change in ending
- when I pick up the papers

- reach w/ arm ✓
- leg to front ✓
- follow hands going up ✓
- then feet ✓
- really jump favorite ✓
- left than right ✓
- hard placement ✓
- mark time ✓
- best placement ✓
- change transition ✓

- arm around T ✓
- timing for the jump up ✓
- shoulder roll more of back ✓
- in, out push up ✓
- keep ✓

I'm in back T → if I can have a good
✓ - don't let stand neutral in front of
enough, any down there to be in fact

- ✓ - ~~the~~ through body to arm to front
- ✓ - good shape movement for fun
- ✓ - make sure hand connected to head

Notes from tech

Seize The Day:

Make eye contact with partner right before the canon sequence

Faces and energy!!! I need all of it once we really get into it

2:47 in video: LOOK UP TO CEILING WHEN DOING THE JUMP IVE SAID THIS

2:53 in video: let go of hands once you've swung to back

Look up in the plank and push ups

Cool:

Great beginning

Think about what your arms and upper body is doing during flap heels

What takes you on and off stage? Do you want people to know your rage? Are you trying to hide it? Do you not care?

More anger once we all start tapping together and low bodies (look at me and Sara)

Cool go crazy is like egging each other. Convince the other people to get mad

Cell Block Tango:

EVERY SOLO: this is where you can play with faces. Let the words help you and do what makes sense. Listen to how the actor feels to fuel how you feel

Destiny what happened with the leg and putting it down during your solo?

Don't be early on accents (this is @ me but also general for everyone)

Willow wrong arms 2:17 in video. Please go over them or ask Lily

2:28: we are all doing different arms so please do what I'm doing. Opposite arm as leg for seasons. Remind me to go over this tomorrow

3:53: make sure the passes going up are very soft and light. Look at Lily for arms

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