

YOU ARE THE MIRROR

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By

Wayles E. S. Haynes

Thesis Committee:

Gregg Lizenberry, Chairperson

Betsy Fisher

Kristi Burns

Peggy Gaither Adams

Sandra Finney

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## Chapter 1. Master Thesis Performance Proposal

As I near the final hurdle of my Masters of Fine Arts program, I begin to craft my thesis performance. Because this performance is supposed to be a culminating product of my learning in this program, I will endeavor to reflect my growth and experiences while challenging my boundaries. I have decided to propose a full concert of my own choreography. An evening of work comprised of pieces I have conceived during my tenure at UH yet not relating to a central theme. The proposed title *You are the Mirror*, taken from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran, reflects a personal belief. I believe that the audience is the mirror of the performance; their experience and response is one measure of how successful the concepts of the performance were expressed. I also believe that one significant goal of dancers should be to encourage discourse about and accessibility to dance as art. In my thesis performance, I aim address these issues by creating and presenting entertaining, thought provoking, and engaging work.

The work I chose to open the performance is *Audience Sit Study*. This piece is created from my ideas of the movements of a captive audience. When the audience attends a performance it is akin creating a contract. OK, you perform and I will watch. What experiences does the audience have in viewing a performance? This piece will explore some possible scenarios, from the mundane to the fantastic. I will explore the use of video in this piece to lend some depth of subconscious ideas the dancers might be experiencing. Perhaps

video of the movement or film from the dances in the program or other random ideas might be projected over the dancers at certain times in the dance.

*You are the Mirror* explores the idea of beauty through text and movement. Created in Advanced Composition Spring 2004, it follows an ABA structure that utilizes both recorded music and text from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran. The movement was derived through improvisation exercises inspired by the text, which expounds on the subjective nature of beauty. This is a slower paced piece with a wide range of technical backgrounds from the dancers. I hope to work with a composer to create an original score.

*Hypocrisy (working title)* is a solo created to comment on the patriotic and nationalistic mood in the United States. The first section will compare sound bytes from past presidents to those of George W. Bush. I will read the historical sections and hope to find actual audio of Bush's. The second section is a movement section, perhaps tap, to some faintly satirical, patriotic music, perhaps *Dixie* or *My Country 'Tis of Thee*. The third section involves minimal and pantomimic movement to a satirical sound score from David Cross's album *Shut up you Fucking Baby!*. The entire piece should run approximately 10 minutes and is more of a highly opinionated, performance art political commentary.

Following a short intermission, the performance will commence with a contrasting solo. *Fiesta Mo-Jo* is a tap number choreographed to closely reflect the music and its overall style is reminiscent of a 1950's Hollywood Musical. This second solo in the program is a Tap solo created in Advanced Choreography Spring 2004. It was my first experience in choreographing Tap and a perfect time

for me to explore tap composition. Since attending UH, I have renewed my interest in tap and discovered rich resources and encouragement from the faculty. Dizzy Gillespie's *Fiesta Mo-Jo* provides the sound score along with my taps.

*Love De Parton* is my attempt at creating a contemporary ballet and a tribute to the culture of my childhood. At UH I have experienced a ballet Renaissance in both teaching and performance. This inspired my country contemporary ballet that is set to three songs written by Dolly Parton, and sung by contemporary artists. I wanted to create a work that reminded me of my ballet roots and rural Tennessee upbringing. By incorporating the ballet movements of my early training years with my current modern movement inspiration and setting it to familiar songs of home, I hope to transmit in a some small way a sense of my Tennessee home.

My thesis piece will explore the relationships of mothers and daughters. I hope to investigate this relationship through movement and create a dance work inspired by this relationship. I know my relationship with my mother has many layers of complexity. Primarily drawing from personal experience, I aim to create a piece that reflects this complexity both emotionally and through movement. I will compile the material for this dance from movement sessions with my mother and movement inspired by these experiences. We will also discuss our relationship and utilize improvisational games to explore our emotional reaction and create movement from this experience. In addition, we will create some phrases together and my mother will create some by herself. As previously

stated, this movement will serve as the basic inspiration for the choreography of my piece. I will begin rehearsals, two times a week, on this piece in July. Due to the spatial constraints of the Lab Theatre stage, I will keep the number of dancers on stage between five and seven. I plan to find the music first and then craft the choreography to the music. I do not currently have a costume or lighting design.

The production element of *Your are the Mirror* is partially set. Angela Pierce is my lighting designer. We have discussed our goals for the performance and our desire to keep it simple. Angela is working to create simple lights with the best results. I have asked Meghan Leisher to be my stage manager and she is still considering the proposition. I will be designing the costumes with Jill Bowen and will begin searching for tech people when the Fall 2004 semester begins. Marley flooring will be put down as long as the tap piece does not damage it and I hope to use the standard proscenium arch arrangement with a thrust on the stage. The majority of my budget will go towards costumes, with the remaining for lights, programs, etc...

My tentative deadlines for the project are as follows. May 14<sup>th</sup> for the projected date of thesis committee formation. September 3<sup>rd</sup>, Friday evening, for the first showing of the choreography. October 1<sup>st</sup>, Friday evening, for the second showing of the choreography. November 2<sup>nd</sup> for the final showing of all of the choreography. Show dates are tech on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, tech and dress rehearsal on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> and performances from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup> of November. I would like to have the photo shoot for publicity purposes at the

end of September the 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup>. I will present the written component to the thesis on November 29<sup>th</sup>. The deadline for the submission of the video and written documentation to the Graduate Division for graduating is in November. Because of the time of my performance these deadlines will not be met for a December graduation. If I can have all of my materials approved before December 18<sup>th</sup> however, I will not have to pay tuition for Spring 2005 for a spring graduation. Consequently, my goal is to complete the written component of the thesis and have it approved by December 18<sup>th</sup>.

The University setting presents unique advantages and challenges. It is an appropriate place to take chances and explore ideas. In contrast, it provides the challenges of working within an almost exclusively student environment. In addition to providing necessary experience, the thesis performance should be a body of work that represents the student's time at the university, a model to show choreographic development, and a professional level product capable of being utilized as a tool to submit for future employment. *You are the Mirror* will address all of these aims, in addition, to creating accessible yet impacting dance that is both art and entertainment.

#### Appendix A

*Tentative Program Order: most times are approximate/ dance time 1h*

7min *Audience Sit Study*- projection+5

9min *You are the Mirror*- Izumi, Annie, Nicole, Marissa, Rosie, Sonya, Liz+1

10 min *Hypocrisy (working title)*- Wayles

-----Intermission-----

4min *Fiesta Mo Jo*- Wayles

14min *Love De Parton*- Jackie, Kiplinn, Valerie, Janie+1

15 to 20min *Thesis piece*- Chris, Jackie, Rosie, Marissa, Allie

## Appendix B

### *You are the Mirror*

Wayles E. S. Haynes presents an evening of dance including works created in the past three years and ranging many different styles. This concert aims to entertain while creating an event that challenges traditional ideas of the role of art maker and art watcher. By incorporating audience participation and response, Haynes hopes to emphasize the importance of the relationship of the performers to the audience. The act of art making is reflective and you are the mirror.

### *Deadline Schedule*

May14th	Thesis committee formation
Sept. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	First showing first third of choreography completed
Sept. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Proposed time for photo shoot
Oct. 1 <sup>st</sup>	Second showing 2/3rds choreography completed
Nov. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Final showing all choreography complete
Nov. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Costumes completed
Nov. 1 <sup>st</sup> on	Rehearsals in Lab Theatre
Nov. 13 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup>	Technical Rehearsals



Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> Technical Run of Show  
Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> Dress Rehearsal  
Nov 17<sup>th</sup> –21<sup>st</sup> Run of show  
Nov. 21<sup>st</sup> Strike  
Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> Written thesis and video document of thesis  
Dec. 18<sup>th</sup> Final acceptance of materials

## **Chapter 2. Thesis Critique**

### **Goals**

I began planning my MFA Thesis experience with three main goals in mind. The first was to produce an organized thesis with a realistic timetable. There needed to be sufficient opportunities for revision of the work and time to correct the inevitable mistakes. The second goal was to gain experience in producing a show within the constraints of the University of Hawaii setting. Working with relatively inexperienced students and working with the limited resources of the Earle Ernst Lab Theatre were major concerns. The final goal was to produce interesting, engaging work unique to my growth and experiences during my tenure in the University of Hawaii's dance program.

### **Goal One: Organization and Scheduling**

My thesis had to be produced in an organized manner with a realistic timetable. This goal was achieved by creating a reasonable time schedule that included plenty of time for all work to be completed at least three weeks before the performance. One of the most challenging components of the thesis process was the scheduling of dancers, rehearsals, showings etc. It takes rigorous advanced planning and constant modification of schedules to create and rehearse an entire show. The student dancers had other rehearsals and work commitments. I had my own school and work commitments. In addition, there were rehearsal space limitations. It took lots of planning to get the necessary people in the correct place at the right time.

Rehearsals needed to be organized so that there would be sufficient work done on the dances to get constructive feedback. I respect my dancers and the time they have devoted to my vision and came to rehearsals adequately prepared for the objectives of a given day, which made each rehearsal productive. However, the material we created was not always used. *You are the Mirror* includes various styles of choreography. One challenge was to create multiple dance pieces that were very different in movement style, technique and concept. The most successful aspect of achieving this creation of congruent works was plenty of time and organization. The design process for the costumes was also completed in a timely fashion with the help of the Kennedy Theatre costume shop.

Upon reflection, more time could have been devoted to my solo projects. *Fiesta Mo-Jo* should have rehearsed more intensely and earlier than one week before performance. In addition, *The Blame Game* should have been completed earlier so that the criticism from my thesis committee could have been applied. Because it was only presented at the last showing, there was not sufficient time to revise the work. In regards to scheduling, when other dancers were involved the schedule was clear and adequate. When it came to the solos, they were my last priority and consequently were short changed.

## Goal Two: Producing in the University Environment

*You are the Mirror* gave me experience in producing a show within the constraints of the University setting. This element of the production also required organization and planning. Although it was frustrating at times to work with students and to release control over some elements, it was nice to have the support of the production staff. Meghan Leisher was stage manager because of her past experience and practical leadership qualities. Under Leisher's guidance *You are the Mirror* ran very smoothly with few technical difficulties during the run of the show. The technical crew came from the Dance Production class and Daniel Anteau's Production class.

Graduate student, Angela Price worked as lighting designer and together we created several objectives for the technical weekend. In the past, Footholds technical rehearsals were sometimes long and disorganized. Price and I created a plan in order to avoid past issues of disorganization, lack of sufficient preparation and unrealistic technical expectations. In creating the lighting, the main objective was to create effective but simple lighting designs and to minimize gel changes during the performance. It was very challenging due to the limited resources of instruments, circuits and a defective lighting board. However, the lighting was effective and created an atmosphere for each piece. Also a pre-tech rehearsal was scheduled for each piece to evaluate various lighting designs before the final tech day. Another very valuable step was that light cues were written for each dance before the day of tech. Therefore, the lights already had a rough structure and mostly required minute adjustments. The final essential

element for success in the technical process was Price's expertise, management abilities and desire to work hard and get it right. All of these steps were key in having the easiest Footholds technical rehearsal weekend in which I was ever involved. The weekend of technical rehearsals was one of the greatest concerns for the *You are the Mirror*, and I believe it was not problematic because of my planning and Price's professionalism.

In contrast, other elements of the production were more stressful. I discussed with Dean Bellin, the Lab Theatre Technical Director, the laying the Marley dance floor, adding a small extension to the stage and the issue of the Lab Theatre cyclorama. The floor was laid and was re-laid because it was done incorrectly. The experimental cyclorama was the most problematic element of the production; Daniel Anteau suggested using heat shrink plastic as a new medium for the cyclorama. The lab cyclorama is very dirty, stained and ripped. Ultimately the heat shrink cyclorama was better than the lab theatre cyclorama. Unfortunately, insufficient time was devoted to the project by the technical staff and it was unready for the technical rehearsal weekend. When it was finally completed, several places had become too hot and had burned. This resulted in discoloration and darker spots on the white background. Consequently, after the technical rehearsals the color on the cyclorama changed as the cyclorama changed. There was not sufficient time to correct this before performance. In the future, I will be more conscious to make sure that work is done before deadlines instead of four days after deadline. Although the October floods and insufficient tools had negative impacts, there was still time to make alternate

arrangements before the concert. This was the most stressful element of the technical aspect of the show, because it was out of my influence or control and poorly managed.

Two other aspects of the production of *You are the Mirror* were the publicity department and the costume shop. Working with the publicity staff was easy except in relation to the production poster. One proof of the poster was submitted and I made some suggestions. Unfortunately, they were not implemented and the poster was put to press without a second proof or my approval. Another issue with the publicity department was the photo shoot. I was told to come to a previous concert photo shoot to have photos for the poster. Neither the dancers nor costumes were ready at this time. Consequently, another photo shoot was planned for later. When asked about this closer to the production time, the photo shoot for the cast had been cancelled. As a result, I had to pay for my own photo shoot. In contrast, the costume shop was efficient, skillful, organized and assisted the design process. All of the requests made of the costume shop were executed skillfully and in a timely fashion. Throughout the experience of working with students in producing *You are the Mirror* I tried to remain cognizant of everyone's many responsibilities. Overall, it was a very pleasant production experience and I learned that I don't have to control everything. It was great to have the support and experience of working in the University setting.

### Goal Three: Choreography

The most significant and time intensive element of *You are the Mirror* was producing interesting and engaging work. *You are the Mirror* is comprised of six dances, four group and two solo works. The title of the thesis concert is the result of an earlier concept. The initial proposal, around the deadline of the first press release, was to create a dance concert around the idea of challenging the audience's role as watcher and of the dancers as performers. The idea of a central theme was later discarded but the title remained. Consequently, the new focus of *You are the Mirror* is a concert of dance works that reflects my experiences in the University of Hawaii's dance program.

The *Audience Sit-Study* is the first piece in the concert. The objective was to create a dance predominately comprised of "pedestrian" movements that explore, through humor, various ideas of what an audience might feel or experience. In creating this dance I considered my own experiences as an audience member and selected five different ideas. Each dancer was given a major character idea: annoying, eager, amused, bored, and annoyed. I worked with the dancers to create a solo theme for each idea and then wove the solos into the group work of the piece. In this dance the relationships between the dancers is most significant. The emphasis is on the shared experiences and interactions of the characters in the piece. Much of the dance is dependent on the interaction that immediately precedes the next. It is an ensemble work in which each character is significant and must be entirely invested in the role. If the situations are true and honestly portrayed by the dancers then it is humorous.

*Audience Sit-Study* begins with the idea of the characters entering the space and waiting for the main event to begin. From this idea the dance evolves as each character exemplifies their persona through movement. Initially the dance was conceived without music and then later readapted to fit the music half way through the creative process.

Through the creation of *Audience Sit-Study*, there were several challenges. The first was the process of creating the work for one cast of dancers and later resetting it on a separate cast of University of Hawaii dancers. Each dancer brings a unique presence and performance to the work, because of its character driven nature. It became necessary to alter the movement created for one dancer to fit the personality of another dancer playing the same character. Another challenge was keeping the ideas and interactions between the dancers very clear and specific. I had to continually distill the movement into its most simple form. This created clarity for maximal impact of the ideas expressed through movement. The greatest challenge for this work however, was keeping the dancers really experiencing the interactions instead of acting them. Some of the dancers had an innate ability to just be the movement and situations, while others needed practice letting go of the idea of showing the movement.

Ultimately, I realized that I love “pedestrian” movement and character work and will definitely continue to explore this style of choreography. It was fun to create a work where the most significant idea was “if it’s funny, let’s keep it!” The major ideas were derived from real life experience and as each dancer became



more comfortable and immersed in their role, the characters came to life. In addition, it was almost freeing to work with a very defined space such as a row of five chairs. It seemed it would be very limiting, but the dance almost created itself as each idea essentially flowed from the previous idea. At times, it seemed natural to change the dynamic in the dance because of the clear ideas of the dancers' characters and the variations of the music. I believe that this dance successfully reached its goal of exploring various ideas of the audience's experiences through humor. *Audience Sit-Study* deviates from the proposal (section 1) because there is no use of video projection. Ultimately, I did not have enough experience in this medium to use it effectively. Another issue with the video projection was the fear that it would detract from the work and distract from the dance. As a result, the idea of video projection was discarded. In the future I might re-work the piece to incorporate more percussive movements and add more complex and interesting rhythms to the group sections and could also explore the idea of making the entrance and exit from the space improvisational. It would also be interesting to perform the dance in different contexts and settings. Could the dance occur in the actual audience of a concert hall or in a totally non-dance situation?

*Fiesta Mo-Jo* is the second piece in the concert. It was created in the spring of 2004 for the advanced choreography class. The goal for this work was to gain experience choreographing tap dance and to concentrate on creating interesting rhythms with footwork and with the entire body. In addition, the style of the piece should emulate the Hollywood movie musicals of the 1950s. The

process of choreographing this dance involved lots of improvisation, experimentation, and repetition. The first step was finding a piece of music that was upbeat, in the jazz style, and left room in the score for the taps to provide the percussion. The work follows an ABA thematic structure and expresses rhythms not only with the feet but also with the entire body. The choreography reflects different ideas in the music. At times the rhythms of the taps closely follow the music. In contrast, at other points in the work the taps create another layer of rhythm on top of the music.

It was challenging to create a tap dance for the first time. One major difference for choreographing tap is that the movements are almost completely driven by rhythmic considerations. Using a technique of extensive experimentation and repetition *Fiesta Mo-Jo* was born. The greatest challenge was discovering the correct performance quality for the dance. I struggled showing the movement in the dance instead of just doing it. Performing either as trying to communicate virtuosity with facial expressions or with the feet. Ultimately, it was extensive rehearsal that allowed me to become comfortable enough with the dance to just dance it without trying to show it and incorporate both ideas. Once I let go and just performed the work it was much easier to dance. In addition, I discovered that I need more rehearsal for a tap dance than for a contemporary piece because of the complexity and difficulty of the steps.

Overall, *Fiesta Mo-Jo* was successful in creating interesting rhythms in synthesis with the music and incorporating both footwork and full body movement. The exact style of the 1950's Hollywood movie musical was not

attained either in the musical selection or in the manner of performance. Dizzy Gillespie's *Fiesta Mo-Jo* is more sophisticated than the average Hollywood musical score. The manner of performance differed in the decision to *dance* the work instead of *performing* it. However, the feeling of sophistication and virtuosity from the 1950's Hollywood movie musical were maintained. If I continue to work on this piece, I will probably try to liven the dance up with some more complex rhythms at places where the movement gets a little too simplistic and repetitive.

*Mirror* is the third work in the concert originally created in Advanced Choreography class in spring of 2004. After choreographing *You are the Mirror* and halting rehearsal for the entire summer, I decided to completely rework the piece. Upon reflection the dance was flat, boring, and too simple in its choreographic structure. The revised goal for the work was to create an intensely physical, kinetically driven dance that was abstract in theme and drawing movement ideas from the previous work. New music was necessary and text discarded. Instead of using the music or text as a springboard for the movement, the movement was created first. Other elements such as music, costume and lighting were secondary layers to consider. Although all elements combine to create a whole, the movement is significantly the most important aspect of this piece. The relationship between dancers is impersonal and abstract. In choreography, spatial patterns, the shaping of the dancers and the stimulus/response relationship of the movement were of greatest concern. During this work dancers are utilized both as background and as the central

movement emphasis. This is a useful way to consider the space and manipulate the dancers around the stage. In creating the major movement themes of the work, movement phrases from the previous work were utilized. In the altered phrases, the dancers develop a kinetic stimulus/response relationship using body contact to show impulse and weight-sharing to show balance. *Mirror* became the new title, because the piece still had many different types of mirrors in the movement. Contemporary symphonic music by Krzysztof Penderecki was used that enhanced the movement. The costumes were chosen for their simplicity and to show a clean line of the body. The color grey worked because it was reminiscent of a mirror and would work well with the lights and still be flattering to the dancers' bodies.

The challenges in creating *Mirror* mostly lay in completely reworking the original piece. It was an interesting process to decide what to keep and how to change it to fit the new vision. Two new dancers joined the cast at the beginning of the reworking process. This presented the opportunity of having a man in the cast and created the question of how to deal with one man and seven women on stage. A duet with Morgan Cloud and Annie Pidcock evolved because they danced very well together. Although this may imply some gender issues, in the end the choreographic preferences outweighed the potential gender implications. The costuming was challenging because of the limited supply of the specific shirts. The greatest challenge was creating and rehearsing despite the marching band that rehearses within 50 yards of our dance building during our rehearsal

times. The dance was first performed with the correct music at the second showing.

Throughout the process of creating this dance, it was evident that it is sometimes necessary and beneficial to change ideas and movements. Taking risks can create great results as in the creation of the *Mirror* from *You are the Mirror*. It was beneficial for me as a choreographer to concentrate on the movement instead of the synthesis of the music and the movement. I rediscovered how much I enjoy working with movement as the driving force of a dance. Although the costumes worked, in the future a unitard might work better for consistency of color and to avoid issues of costumes creeping and exposing skin.

The process of creating *Mirror* was very long and involved using many dancers and various creative processes. Overall, the goal of creating a kinetically driven and abstract dance was achieved. In the future when restaging this dance, I will not leave the ending to chance and will continually remind the dancers to take risks in performance. At times the dancers became too complacent and comfortable with the movement and lost the exciting edge. This work could easily become part of an evening length work in the future.

*She Walks Alone* is the fourth work in the concert. The goal for this work was to gain experience choreographing a ballet and pay tribute to my Tennessee cultural heritage. The music, three songs written by Dolly Parton and performed by contemporary artists, was the first element chosen for the dance. This country music inspired visions of a beautiful dance but was ultimately the largest

conflict between my thesis committee and me. Despite considering issues of lyrics and their application to the theme of the work, I decided to keep the music. The synthesis of the music and movement was paramount in communicating the central idea of the work.

The dancers were proficient in ballet technique. Like *Mirror*, this dance underwent an entire reworking: new theme, new cast, and many choreographic changes. After proposing the work for the thesis, several committee members suggested not including *She Walks Alone* or that it needed great modification. As a result, when classes resumed in the fall, dancers were found to fill two empty roles and some ideas about the work reexamined. Originally the goal had been to choreograph a ballet, however my ideas about the choreography of *ballet* were limited. The old dance had lots of formations, repetitive motifs, themes and variations. There was little in the dance that stood out as interesting to distinguish it from other mediocre ballet attempts. It almost seemed like the choreography was mostly traditional ballet lower body movements with some abstract arms. Ultimately, I had to change my ideas about what made a ballet. This was a contemporary work and needed to use contemporary ideas and innovative movements inspired by the idea of the dance. As a result, a new theme for *She Walks Alone* emerged, the discovery of feminine power through the endurance of isolation or loneliness. The dance was re-choreographed with this theme and a new approach, at least for me, to what was acceptable choreographic innovation for a *ballet*. *She Walks Alone* maintained the basic structure of the music and some choreographic ideas but was greatly modified.

The themes of walking and falling and being alone, even in the midst of other people and conflict were explored. In each section of the dance, a walking section is included where one dancer is singled out as the central figure walking alone within chaos. In the end, the work concludes with each dancer's movement resolving to watchful stillness and walking off stage. Although this theme is rather abstract, I believe that the dance conveys the intended feeling. It is not necessary for the audience to completely understand the theme.

As my ideas about ballet choreography changed, so did the costume design. Originally, the dancers were to wear empire waist, cream eyelet, knee-length and gored dance dresses. The new costume design of old fashioned underwear and fake corsets in peach and cream was inspired by the country theme and the new feminine idea. The costumes are very beautiful, but not typical of an idea reflected in the movement of the dance. *She Walks Alone* was the most challenging dance to create. First, because of the evolving ideas about what a "ballet" was. Second, because I had to fight my own feelings of confusion about the work as well as fight for the work in the concert. More productive advice from the thesis committee on *She Walks Alone* could have made my process of creation easier, but not more rewarding. Ultimately, choreographing *She Walks Alone* was one of the most educational experiences in the thesis. I revised my ideas about contemporary ballet choreography, challenged myself in creating a different style of choreography outside of my usual work, endured the experience of creating a work that is not popular or desired by the thesis

committee, and ultimately created a beautiful dance. In the end, this worked perhaps because of the many obstacles I had to overcome to create it.

*The Blame Game* is the fifth work in the concert. The main goal of this piece was to create a contemporary solo that expressed my concerns about the current political climate in America through strong but humorous movement. The process began in Theory and Criticism class with a “Dance not Done” solo assignment. To a recording of the comedy of David Cross on *Shut-up You Fucking Baby*, I contrasted simple but specific movements to the controversial text. The third section of this work made for this class was successful and created a seed for an expanded version. I was also interested in making a very political work in the deeply divided climate of the 2004 Presidential Election. The work deals with themes of placing blame, being dissatisfied with government and Americans’ ability to fixate on trivial matters such as fake patriotism while our leaders blatantly lie to the public. This controversial topic is polarizing and in performance, there were both cheers and boos. Either reaction was acceptable because the objective was to inspire people to feel and think, instead of ignoring our societies injustice and hypocrisy.

Originally the work began with sound bites of George W. Bush’s lies and rhetoric then segue into a slightly abstract musical section of patriotic melodies such as *Yankee Doodle* or *Dixie* and ended with the David Cross stand-up comedy. Later, I decided that I did not want to dilute the specific politics of George W. Bush or have too many auditory mediums in the work that might confuse the message. Elvis Costello’s *Blame It On Cain* seemed to capture the



feeling of dissatisfaction and denying responsibility. This dance utilizes an ABA thematic structure beginning and ending with the David Cross recording and more specifically with the sentiment that George W. Bush was perhaps the worst president in the history of the United States. The beginning section was choreographed in the same manner as the final section, while the middle section incorporates more energetic, presentational, and familiar gestures and movements. The middle section relies heavily on the motif of finger pointing and placing blame in different directions. Ultimately the dance ends with the dancer kneeling on center, in profile to the audience seemingly without hope. The lighting for this work supported the ideas of patriotism with gobos of blue stars and red bars across the backdrop and the floor. At one point the Cyclorama is split in half with one side blue and one side red. This epitomized the split of ideology in the country and added another layer of commentary to the work.

The major challenge of *The Blame Game* was crafting the work to be specific, funny, but not too “over the top”. It was intentionally made absurd because the subject matter is supremely absurd. The objective was not however to create a work that was so absurd that it was dismissed as silly and irrelevant. Another challenge was in editing the music. I had to learn *Sound Edit* to cut the music in this work. In performing this dance, I realized that I want to take risks and make statements with art. Sometimes art can become too abstract and separated from the reality of life. Making a dance piece that is immediately relevant and incites strong reactions from the audience excites me to produce more work in this fashion. I will continue to craft this piece, especially focusing

on the middle section. It remains static in focus for too long and perhaps relies too heavily on the finger-pointing motif. This work is a joy to perform and I will look for places to continue to do so in the next four years.

*You're It* was the last work of the concert. The objective here was to create a dance inspired by my relationship with my mother. The creative process began with several rehearsals in the studio with my mother. We explored our relationship through different improvisational games, defining important ideas of our experience and making dances about them. The source material from these sessions was loosely referred to in creating the dance. One primary movement phrase from the sessions was abstracted to create the central thematic movement and appears throughout the work. Another phrase that closely followed from the sessions was the reading section with the dancers engrossed in their reading while assuming different shapes. Beyond these two examples, the work was choreographed around the ideas of different aspects of my mother's and my relationship rather than from the studio sessions. The music inspired the structure of the work. Consequently, it needed to be familiar, fun, and complex in short segments. I chose Peter Schickel's *Fugues in all the Major and Minor Keys, except the really hard ones* because it cleverly expressed the desired ideas. More than one or two musical ideas were needed to express our mother/daughter relationship. Therefore, multiple smaller and distinct musical pieces are used to express different facets of the relationship. When the choreographic process began with the cast of dancers in the studio, it seemed inappropriate to make a specific statement about relationships. Instead the work

moved more into a community and friendship feeling between five friends. Shared experiences and interests connect the dancers with an overall feeling of affection and play. The dance is closely related to the music and was choreographed to reflect the moods and rhythms of the piano. The ending of the work when the dancers walk off stage holding hands expresses acceptance and partnership. It was a good sentiment with which to end *You're It*, the concert, and my time at the University of Hawaii.

The challenges of *You're It* came mostly in the form of dancer conduct and clarity of message. The original cast included Christopher Quiocho, who was replaced two thirds of the way through the process. Working with dancers with a professional attitude is essential and saves time and energy in the long run. This problem was solved with the addition of Traci Chun to the cast. Ultimately, the dance was much better with an entirely female cast. Another challenge for *You're It* was in preventing the spontaneous interactions from becoming contrived through over rehearsing or over acting. This was another work where I struggled to have the dancers embody the movement instead of showing the movement. This was especially important in the use of facial expressions. At times their expressions became somewhat contrived. In the piece, the dancers are constantly reacting to each other as individuals in a group. This sense of identity as a person in the dance, rather than a dancer in the dance, makes the work unique and successful. The costumes also add to the idea of a cohesive group in the similar lines of the costumes and by using the same fabrics. The costumes also express individuality because no two costumes were of the same

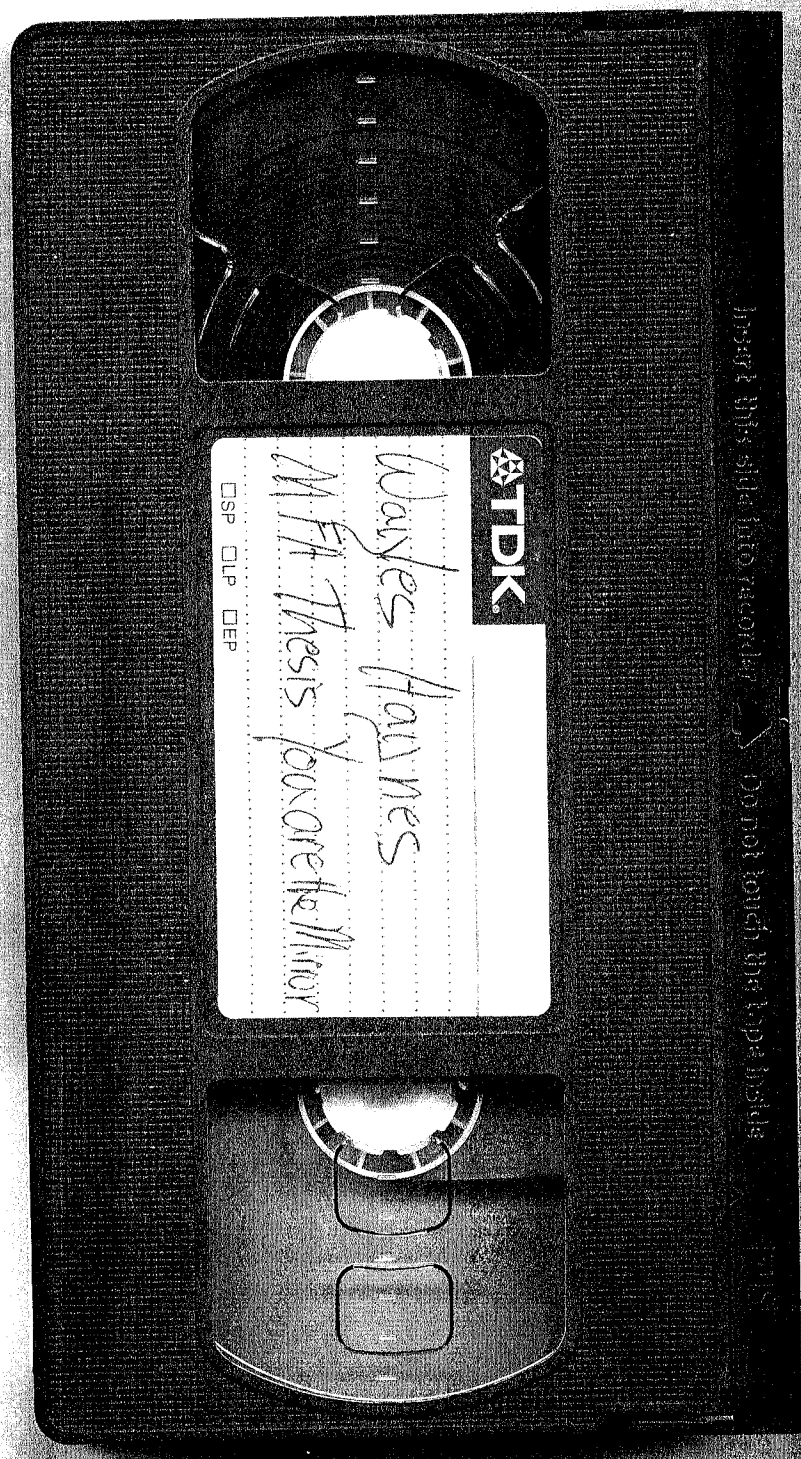
design. Overall *You're It* reaches the goal of expressing the feeling of my relationship with my mother. In the future, several sections may be eliminated, because they are unnecessary and detract from the piece as a whole. This work could be successfully set on a children's company or with young adults.

### Summary

*You are the Mirror* was a very successful concert in many respects. The choreography was well received, the tech rehearsals were timely and organized, and most importantly, it was a positive experience for almost everyone. I am most interested in relationships between people. In my choreography, I explore different types of relationships. Although the performance was the end goal, the rehearsal process was more rewarding in many ways. In rehearsal, the exciting and frustrating creative process occurs. Dancers form friendships, gain experience in choreographing and dancing, and individuals come together in a positive environment to create art. In *You are the Mirror* I accomplished all three of my goals and overcame many obstacles that arose with a mostly patient and pragmatic approach to problem solving. The MFA thesis experience was challenging. It required me to stretch and grow in organizational skills, creative and choreographic abilities and taught me how to produce a show in the University setting. The entire thesis experience was certainly a challenge but it was also enjoyable and educating.

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**TDK**  
Wayles Haines  
MFA Thesis You are the Minor  
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