THELMA

AWAITING CHANGE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

DANCE

AUGUST 2008

By
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Thesis Committee:
Gregg Lizenbery, Chairperson
Betsy Fisher
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We certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Dance.

THESIS COMMITTEE

[Signatures]

Chairperson

[Signatures]

[Signatures]
For my Grandparents, Thelma and Howard Redmond

And

For Nesan, Thank you.
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CHAPTER I. THESIS PROPOSAL

In partial fulfillment of a Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Hawai‘i, I will present three new pieces of choreography that will be showcased in the Spring Footholds 2008 dance concert. Spring Footholds will take place at the University of Hawai‘i, Earle Ernest Lab Theatre, April 30, May 1, 2, 3 and 4, 2008.

Prism

One of the pieces I am working on entitled Prism contains three sections: two ensemble sections and a solo section in the middle. The first and last sections will consist of an ensemble cast of seven dancers. The theme or inspiration for this piece is the properties of light. I am particularly interested in how light allows us to see color. White light contains all colors of the spectrum, when white light passes through a prism, the colors of the spectrum are separated and visible to the human eye. We perceive an object to be a specific color because the surface of that object has absorbed all the colors in the spectrum except the color that we see, the color that is reflected back to our eyes. This is why the sky is blue or the grass is green. When light is not present we see only black because there is no light, therefore no color. We perceive an object to be the color black because its surface is absorbing all the color, therefore no color is reflected back into our eye. For this piece, I am mainly concerned with what light allows us to see, how it reflects off surfaces and how it changes as it passes through crystal that has been cut into different shapes, a prism.

The first section of this piece will deal with the absence of light, darkness. Black is the absorption of all colors. The movement for this section will focus on the action of consuming, absorbing or trapping not just color or light, but a person or object. Like a black hole or a gaping void in space, you can be sucked into it. The dancers will be sucked into each other, become a part of a moving clump, they may escape as individual
or dual shadows in space but eventually are reabsorbed back into the group. In the end
the ensemble cast will be absorbed into the darkness as they exit the stage.

Transitioning from the first section to the second section, a solo dancer will
emerge from the darkness representing a single point of white light. At the end of this
section, just as white light transforms into a rainbow as it travels through a prism, the
soloist exits, and the ensemble cast enters the stage in an explosion of sound, movement
and color. The last section will focus on the shapes and movement of light after it has
passed through a prism. I have purchased several prisms of various shapes and sizes and
will be studying how these prisms refract and manipulate light. I will be paying close
attention to how different shaped prisms cause different patterns to appear when the light
is reflected off a wall after it has traveled through a prism. For example, frequencies
(color wavelengths) of light travel at different speeds, a prism causes the frequencies to
disperse at different angles allowing us to see the entire spectrum as the light passes
through the prism and reflects off a surface. Also, if the prism is spun or moved closer to
or further from a wall, the shapes produced move in different directions and through
different spatial patterns.

To begin the choreographic process I will teach my dancers phrases of movement
based on my studies of light, mainly focusing on: the behavior of white light when
refracted through a prism, the absorption of color and the reflection of light off different
surfaces. After teaching these phrases I will take my dancers through a series of
structured improvisation exercises that will incorporate pieces of the original movement
phrases. During these structured improvisations, I will use LMA terminology, color, and
changes in facing and floor patterns as a catalyst for structure and movement inspiration.
LMA terminology will be used as a tool for clearly describing or changing the quality
and dynamics of the movement. Images and descriptions of color and patterns made by
light passing through a prism will be used as verbal and visual aids for my dancers, to
inspire movement that represents these ideas.
Much of the movement in the first and third sections will focus on partnering work inspired by the partnering class I participated in last semester. The partnering for the first section will concentrate on moving together as a large connected group, almost as one piece. The partnering in the last section will focus more on duets and trios. This piece will be approximately ten minutes long.

The music that I want to use for *Prism* is a combination of three pieces of music. The first section is an instrumental piece of mostly tabla drumming performed by the progressive rock band Tool. For the solo section I have found an instrumental version of another Tool song called *Parabol*. For the last section I am not sure yet what music I will be using. I have found yet another instrumental version of another Tool song that I may want to use, but I have not tied myself down to anything yet. I would like to use music from the same musicians for all three sections. This may or may not work. I am prepared to try different pieces of music with the choreography throughout my process.

For costumes, the first section will wear all black. Most likely black leotards and black leggings or tights. The soloist will wear a similar costume but in white.

In the final section, I want the ensemble cast to wear a variety of different colors representing all seven colors of the spectrum visible to the human eye when white light travels through a prism: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and purple. For this section the tops and bottoms will have more flow and movement to them then the first section. Perhaps we will use scarves draped over different styles and colors of leotards with short skirts over leggings or pants. All dancers will be barefoot.

Lighting, obviously, is an important element. The first section should be as dark as possible. I'd like the dancers to look like shadows, possibly by lighting them in silhouette for the very beginning of the piece. At specific points in the choreography I would like to have a corner of the stage left very dark while the rest of the stage is lightly lit so that it looks like the dancers become absorbed into these dark areas and slither out.
from the darkness and then are reabsorbed back into it. Toward the end of the section all
the dancers are absorbed into the darkness as the soloist enters.

For the solo section I would like the dancer to look like a single point of white
light moving throughout the space. The areas around her are dark, but as she moves she
slowly lights up the entire stage.

It is my intention that so far in this piece the audience has seen mostly black and
white, very little color. For the last section, as the ensemble enters and the soloist exits, I
want there to be as sudden rush of bright red, orange and yellow. I want the entire third
section to be filled with color, changing from reds and oranges to blues and greens. I will
have to pick the costumes for this section carefully and discuss possibilities with the
lighting designer. I don’t want the lighting to make all the dancers look like they are
wearing the same color at any time throughout this section.

Many of the pieces I have created in the past have been to the music. I usually
start with a song and block out sections, concentrate on rhythms and the structure of the
song to inspire movement. My challenge this time is to choreograph without the music.
Obviously I will be thinking of the music I have chosen continually in the back of my
mind, but I do not want to be tied down to the meter or structure of the music. This may
change as the piece evolves.

_Thelma_

A second piece that I want to present during my thesis concert is a duet that
describes a romantic relationship. A typical “boy meets girl” narrative: they fall in love;
they get married and have children. This piece is a dedication to my Grandparents. My
Grandparents are no longer with us, but they always supported my dancing habit and my
desire to go to college. They came to every one of my dance concerts up until they
passed away when I was in high school. Also, I attribute my natural dancing ability to
my Grandfather, who apparently loved to dance and often went out dancing with my
Grandmother (Thelma) when they were young. This piece is about their relationship. I
also want this piece to reflect the time period in which they meet, the late 1940’s. I want
the movement to be fun and flirtatious; joyous, like walking into a dance club during this
time period when everyone knew how to do the Charleston and the Lindy Hop. The
piece will be approximately four minutes long.

Music has always been a huge part of my life. Mostly because of my mother,
father and my stepmother. When I was younger my mother would always have a record
on while she was doing housework. At her house, we didn’t have cable television, so
most of the time music ended up being our entertainment. We would sing and dance
along to the radio while sitting in the living room or washing the dishes in the kitchen.
One of my fondest memories of my mother is an occasion when we were listening to Paul
Simon’s *Graceland* album (it had just come out on CD) while we were washing the
dishes in the kitchen. As she washed and I dried, my mother taught me how to sing
Linda Ronstadt’s part on the “Under African Skies” track.

My father loves Classic Rock music. Whenever a song comes on the radio, my
father, to this day, quizzes me on whom the artist is and what the song is called. I did
not always answer correctly but the constant questions have instilled a passion for music
that I carry with me today.

My stepmother encouraged me to join the choir when I was in 5th grade. Seeing
that I had some musical talent or at least an intense enthusiasm for learning, the following
year she enrolled me in the band program at my elementary school. I learned how to play
the clarinet and to read music. I stayed involved with band from 6th grade until my senior
year of high school.

In the car on the way to school, walking around campus listening to my iPod or
even when I’m doing homework, it seems that I am always listening to music. Thinking
about this now, its only natural that, for me, the inspiration to choreograph comes mainly
from music. In this way, *Thelma* is no different than any other piece that I have set on
the Earle Ernest Lab Theater stage. The inspiration for this piece comes from a Paul
Simon song entitled, *Thelma*, which tells the story of a man pursuing a woman’s (Thelma’s) affections.

In the interest of challenging myself as a choreographer and stepping out of my comfort zone, I will attempt to use the Paul Simon song as inspiration for creating movement and then find a different piece of music (possibly an instrumental piece) to accompany the movement. When I say inspiration I mean in the way that this music makes me think of images, colors, motifs, movement and setting. This is how music inspires me; I see a vision of what I want to create when I listen to music.

During the process of choreographing this piece I will not be using the music in rehearsals. I will, however, use the lyrics as text to inspire movement. But, mostly I want to be able to step back and look at how the movement conveys meaning without the assistance of the music to tell a story.

For this piece I want the dancers to wear late 1940’s era costumes to represent the time period in which my Grandparents met. The male dancer will be in slacks, suspenders and dress shirt. The female dancer will be wearing a dress in the style of that time period. Both dancers will not be wearing shoes.

**Solo**

For my third piece, I want to choreograph a solo for myself. I do not know yet what music I will use, what the costume will look like or even the basic structure of the movement, because, for the first time, I want to start with a completely clean slate. I want this solo to focus solely on the movement. I will use my knowledge of LMA and Labanotation to construct improvisation exercises. In these improvisation exercises I will use Labanotation symbols and LMA effort/shape terminology to influence the creation of movement phrases. In particular I want to use LMA to help me move away from my normal movement tendencies in order to create movement completely different from anything else I have done before.
**Rehearsals**

I will begin rehearsals the week after the Fall Footholds concert closes and will continue until the Spring Footholds concert in May. I plan on having approximately two-hour rehearsals once a week for the ensemble cast and hour and a half rehearsals once a week for the solo section of *Prism*. We will rehearse *Thelma* once a week for an hour and a half. I also plan on scheduling studio time for myself to work on my solo twice a week. I will be keeping a weekly journal of my process for each piece. Rehearsal times and days may increase as needed.

**Cast**

**Prism Ensemble:**
Isabelle Brosnahan  
Malia Bowlby  
Sarah Evans/Sarah A. Hartley  
Stephanie Gumpel  
Nicole Lam  
Jennifer L. McGowan  
Shannon M. Yamamoto/Tiana Krohn-Ching

**Prism Solo:**
Becky Helfert Wedll

**Thelma Duet:**
Travers King  
Mikaela Brady

**Budget**

UH Funds: $500.00

- $400.00 Costumes

- $100.00 Miscellaneous - Used as necessary
Projected Timeline

September 24, 2007: Audition Dancers with fellow MFA candidate Becky Helfert

October 24, 2007: Begin Rehearsals

November 5, 2007: Turn in revised proposal to committee

December 10, 2007: 1st faculty showing

February 13, 2008: Design Meeting

February 18, 2008: 2nd faculty showing

March 19, 2008: Photo Shoot

April 1, 2008: Press Release

April 7, 2008: 3rd faculty showing

April 9, 2008: First Production Meeting and Program Copy Deadline

April 23, 2008: Second Production Meeting

April 26 - 27, 2008: Tech Rehearsals

April 28 - 29, 2008: Dress Rehearsals – 5:30 Call for crew, 6:00 Call for dancers

April 30, May 1, 2, 3, and 4: Spring Footholds Concert

April 14, 2008: Submission of first draft of written work

May 5, 2008: Submission of Final draft of written work to thesis committee

May 16, 2008: Deadline for submission of video and written document to graduate division for graduation in May 2008

July 2, 2008: Second deadline for submission of video and written document to graduate division if not approved by committee the day before Spring commencement.

Rehearsal Times:

Prism Ensemble - starting Oct. 24, 2007:
   Mondays 7:00 – 9:00

Prism Solo - starting Nov. 18, 2007:
   Sundays 10:00 – 11:00

Thelma Duet - starting Nov. 18, 2007:
   Sundays 1:00 – 2:30

Movement Solo/extra rehearsal time - starting Jan. 14, 2008:
   Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00 – 2:00
   Rehearsals will be every week on these days and times, with the following exceptions (unless absolutely necessary):


   Mainstage Concert Tech/dress week: Feb. 23 – Mar. 2 and Mar. 7 – 9

   Spring Break: Mar. 22 – 30
CHAPTER II. THE CREATIVE PROCESS

**Prism**

I began work on *Prism* during the fall semester of 2007. The initial structure of my weekly two-hour rehearsals was to work on the first section of the piece (*Absorption*) during the first hour and the third section (*Refraction*) in the second hour. Separate rehearsals were held for the second section (*Reflection*). This structure worked for the first few rehearsals, however I soon realized that shifting my focus from one section to the next within the one two hour period was very difficult for me. The two sections are opposite of each other in theme, special patterns and movement that I could not shift gears effectively. When we began rehearsals in the spring semester of 2008 I decided to focus my attention on *Absorption* until it was completed and then use the remainder of my rehearsals to work on *Refraction* up until the Footholds audition. Video documentation insured that material from the initial rehearsals was not lost.

In order for me to come up with ways to interpret light properties into movement and special patterns I needed to have at least a basic understanding of the science behind the subjects I wished to address in my work. I began reading online tutorials on light absorption, the Law of Reflection and light refraction. I took text from these online physics tutorials that I felt would translate into movement easily and constructed improvisation exercises around the words. The following are examples of text used for inspiration from physics tutorials for each section:

Section 1 (*Absorption*) -

Absorb, process, energy, taken up, levels,
transition, destroyed,
re-emitted, radiant, transformed, leading
Section 2 (Reflection) -
Reflecting off of, approaching, flat, leave, strikes, perpendicular, surface, divides the angle between, equal, travel

Section 3 (Refraction) -
Break, disperse, components, angle, wave, wavelength, high, rotary, platform, incident, deviation, beam, apex

The choreographic process began with a movement phrase I based on my interpretation of light absorption ("absorption phrase number one"). I taught this phrase to the cast and then structured an improvisation exercise around the text for section one and "absorption phrase number one." I wrote the text on a chalkboard and instructed each cast member to pick three words and create a new phrase of their own inspired by the words they had chosen. Then I asked them to incorporate movement from the phrase I taught them and to focus their movement on the themes of enclosing, covering, sinking and sucking in.

From these solos I developed partnering work. I split the cast into three groups and decided to cannon the partnering sequences so that each group eventually traveled to center stage in a large clump. Once in the large clump I developed a section I called the "amoeba" section. For this section I brought in visual aids (pictures of amoebas, sea anemones and shadows). The focus of this section was to make the whole group look like it was reaching out and then sinking back in on itself; like a mass of pulsing, black material that eventually oozed away from center stage to be reabsorbed into another corner of the stage. I brought in pictures of sea anemones to explain a particular part of this section. I placed all seven dancers in a circle, seated and perched on their ichial tuberosities and holding this position, told them to unfold their legs and arms up toward the ceiling in a ‘V’. The movement of a sea anemone inspired this section; an
anemone blooms outward to catch unsuspecting fish and then encloses when its tentacles find purchase. One of my cast members could not perform the aforementioned movement because of an elongated tailbone. At first this was a disappointment, but eventually turned into a blessing because it gave me the idea to have a soloist in the center of the circle whose movement accentuated the theme of reaching out and absorbing back into the group. I realized that working around a dancer’s physical limitations could be very rewarding. This is how the very beginning of section one was developed.

At the first showing of section one my committee felt that the choreography was interesting and dynamic. However, they wanted to see the beginning evolve a little more slowly. They challenged me to take the concepts I already had and develop them further. Their input inspired me to focus on extending the partnering work in the beginning. I decided to move the entire unison section (including the amoeba section) to the very end of the piece and fill the space between with asymmetrical non-unison movement focusing of various groupings that eventually evolved into the unison section at the end. Knowing the direction I was working toward made finishing this section a quick and smooth process.

I followed a similar method for the second section of the piece. I taught the soloist (Becky Helfert Wedll) a phrase that began seated and slowly rose to standing. This movement was derived from my interpretation of light reflection. The soloist represented a beam of light in a hallway. Her movements focused on being contained within that hallway and reflecting off the walls of the hallway. Then I gave Ms. Helfert Wedll the same improvisation exercise I used in the first section. Ms. Helfert Wedll came up with a short phrase based on text for section two and the phrase I had taught her, which I manipulated and combined with the beginning.

At first the combination of my phrase and Ms. Helfert Wedll’s improvisation, traveled on a diagonal line toward downstage center facing the audience. The idea was to
base the soloist’s pathway on the Law of Reflection. The Law of Reflection states, “When a ray of light reflects off a surface, the angle of incidence is equal to the angle of reflection” (http://laser.physics.sunysb.edu). In other words, when a ray of light hits a reflective surface such as a mirror, the light that reflects off the mirror into your eye is at an equal angle making a kind of ‘V’ shape. Imagine that the apex of the ‘V’ is the point at which the light has hit the mirror and the two arms represent the ray of light, one traveling toward the mirror and the other reflecting off at an equal angle (See Figure 1).

In our first rehearsals the ‘V’ pathway that I wanted Ms. Helfert Wedll to make traveled toward the audience with the apex of the ‘V’ located downstage center. I was not happy with this facing so I decided to reconsider what I wanted the audience perspective to be. Did I want the audience to represent a giant reflective surface? Or, did I want to accurately depict the Law of Reflection by changing the placement of my figurative mirror so that the audience is ‘looking’ into the mirror? I decided to go with the later perspective and placed my figurative mirror in the upstage left corner with the ‘reflective’ surface facing on the diagonal. The pathway was now altered so that Ms. Helfert Wedll moved in a straight line upstage and parallel to the audience. This slight change in facing helped clarify the movement.

The choreography for the remainder of the piece came easily because I took the beginning phrase work and retrograded it as the soloist traveled down the ‘reflective’ arm of the pathway. I did this for a very specific reason. The elements that make up the reflecting light off the mirror are the same as those that traveled toward the mirror. I wanted the movement to represent this by being essentially the same movement but reflected, almost a mirror image. However, in order to keep the solo engaging to watch, I did not want the movement to be an exact replica. Attempting to retrograde the movement served this purpose. Once the soloist traveled the entire ‘Law of Reflection’ pathway, I introduced a circular traveling phrase and a phrase that traveled on the
diagonal. The point of this was to illustrate that the dancer represented white light that started as a single beam and then radiated out to fill up the entire space.

I was very pleased with how this section of the piece came together. Once the second section was finished Ms. Helfert Wedll and I continued to rehearse the solo separately from the other two sections in order to continue to clarify the movement and play with the dynamics.

The last section of *Prism* ended up being the most difficult to choreograph. I believe this was because I based the choreography on two separate perspectives. This section represents both the science behind what happens to light as it passes through a prism, and what the human eye actually sees as the ray of light is refracted and then reflected off of a surface (See Figure 2). I spent some time experimenting with different shaped pieces of crystal, glass and plastic. I used the natural light of the afternoon sun to shine through my collection of prisms and studied the patterns the refracted light made on the walls of my bedroom. Spinning the prism as the light shone through caused the patterns on the wall to spin in a spiral pattern. I loved working with this visual aspect of my process. I used these visuals to inspire the spatial patterns in the piece while the science behind what I saw inspired the movement. Diagonal lines represent color spectrum lines created on a wall after light has passed through a prism, spiral pathways represent the spiraling movement of refracted light when a prism is spun and random placement of the dancers on stage represents fragments of light and individual points of color.

For movement inspiration I used the same improvisation exercise that was used in the first and second sections. However, for this section I taught my cast three phrases of movement instead of one: a traveling phrase, a modified version of “absorption phrase number one” and another traveling phrase I based on light refraction. During this time I also assigned a color to each cast member. Each color in the color spectrum vibrates at a different frequency (Red having the longest wavelength and purple the shortest.) I
decided to represent this concept through tempo. Red would move very slowly and then the pace of the movement would increase through the spectrum causing purple to move the fastest. Each cast member's individual phrase represented the wavelength of their color through the speed of their movements. I then combined solos to create unison phrase work and partnering work. In each phrase that I taught my cast I intentionally incorporated movement from the first and second sections to make sure a motif was established and continual. However, I modified some of the movement to fit the theme of the last section. For example I took “absorption phrase number one” and changed the focus and dynamics of the movement from enclosing inward to opening outward.

Creating an ending was a challenge. I wanted a sudden shift from random placement to a diagonal line in color spectrum order across the entire stage. The Lab Theater stage barely fit seven dancers in the elongated position I wanted them to finish in. Also, I had a hard time getting the dancers to move together and then finish moving at the exact same time. My committee suggested that I cannon the movement and allow the final position to grow gradually. I chose to take this suggestion and it worked beautifully.

When all three sections were completed I began the process of cleaning the entire piece. I used my knowledge of LMA to clarify dynamic changes and focus. I am always amazed how easy using LMA can be for making my intentions clearer. It helps that almost all of my dancers knew LMA as well; however using the terminology also assisted those dancers who had not taken a course in LMA. I realize now that it would have been beneficial to use my knowledge of LMA throughout the process of creating this and the other pieces I endeavored to create included in this thesis. It would have made the entire process develop more smoothly and cut down on cleaning time.

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It is always a challenge to schedule rehearsals around several individuals. Each cast member was in at least two or three other pieces preparing for Spring Footholds, plus
busy school and work schedules, makes adding another rehearsal almost impossible.

This semester presented another challenge. I had to change members of my cast twice during the course of working on this piece. The first casting change occurred in the beginning of the semester. The original cast member (Sarah Evans) could no longer participate because of personal issues. I replaced her with a friend and colleague, Sarah Hartley, who integrated herself into the piece very quickly and smoothly. The second casting change happened just two weeks before opening night. Shannon Yamamoto suffered a serious concussion during another rehearsal that caused her to back out of the concert entirely. I replaced Ms. Yamamoto with another talented colleague, Tiana Krohn-Ching. Ms. Krohn-Ching memorized her part within two rehearsals and was fully prepared for performance long before opening night. I was very fortunate to have a replacement cast that could learn movement quickly. Their focus and commitment allowed me to continue to work toward my original intentions and visions for the piece instead of having to completely remove a dancer or replace that dancer with myself.

I anticipated that finding costumes for all three sections of this piece would present another challenge. However, costuming this piece ended up coming together very easily. I started with the third section of the piece because I knew that it would be the most difficult section to find costumes for. I found bright colored wrap pants in the costume shop in every color I needed except red, indigo and purple. A trip to the local fabric store yielded fabric in the colors I needed and the costume shop was willing to make the extra pants for me. I had seven white unitards ordered which the costume shop agreed to dye to match the wrap pants.

The solo section ended up being the most difficult section to costume. It was a challenge to find a costume that would complement Ms. Helfert Wedd11’s body type. Originally I ordered white pants and a long white sweater for her to wear. The pants did not fit, and combined with the sweater, was not flattering on Ms. Helfert Wedd11’s body.
She and I eventually found a dress in the costume shop that fit her extremely well and only needed a few alterations.

My only challenge costuming the first section of this piece was to find leotards and leggings that were the same shade of black. This is a lot harder than it sounds; I ended up ordering black camisole unitards.

The costumes were completed by technical rehearsal and looked wonderful onstage. The costume shop staff did an excellent job on the dye work for the third section unitards. I received several comments from faculty and those who came to see the show on how beautiful the colored costumes looked under the lighting.

Lighting this piece, however, did not go as smoothly as I would have hoped. The lighting designer (Asuko Endo) and I had difficulty communicating. She attended one of my rehearsals and I thought I had been clear with her about my vision for lighting each section. At technical rehearsal it seemed that Ms. Endo was still unclear about the ideas I had presented to her. I realize that this particular piece is a challenge to light because of the diverse costumes. Ms. Endo tried her best to accommodate my ideas even though it took us a while to come to a complete understanding. This experience taught me how to communicate with a lighting designer more effectively. I realized that I could have helped the situation by providing imagery or sketches of what I wanted the lighting to accomplish. By the time the lighting was set and the stage manager called the cues correctly, I was happy with the design. I still feel that a little more creativity on the designer’s part could have highlighted the themes presented in the dancing more dramatically. However, I also feel that the simplicity of the design allowed the dance to speak for itself. In the end, simplicity was the more appropriate choice for this piece.

**Thelma**

I began rehearsals of *Thelma* in January of 2008. I expected this piece to be the easiest to choreograph out of all three new works I originally proposed. This short duet
ended up being the most difficult. I had challenged myself to experiment with using a separate piece of music for inspiration than the piece of music the dancers would actually dance to. I settled on a piece of Big Band music called 's Wonderful played by the BBC Big Band Orchestra. This process started out well in our first rehearsal. I was happy with the beginning I chose, and felt that the movement and gestures fit the Big Band music well, even though a Paul Simon song had inspired them.

At the first showing of this piece the faculty expressed their concern that I was not following the structure and focus I had presented in my original proposal. In my proposal I stated that I wanted to illustrate a sense of time and place as well as construct a narrative revolving around the love affair and life story of my grandparents. This was not coming across in the choreography or the performance by the cast. The piece had taken on the personality of a happy-go-lucky musical theater romp. The faculty commented that this was okay but I had to make a choice; I could continue to focus the piece in the direction of a just-for-kicks musical theater piece, or I could take the piece in the narrative direction I had originally proposed. At this point I decided to return to the original proposed intent.

When we reentered the studio for our next rehearsal, I almost completely changed the beginning of the piece. I tried to focus my attention on creating a connection between the dancers from the very beginning. I instructed my dancers to take a personal interest in the choreography and I created an internal monolog for each of them as we went along. My cast was helpful and insightful during this process. We talked about gestures and posturing during moments of attraction between two people. This process was very slow and tedious, but I feel produced the best work in the piece.

Unfortunately, the following rehearsals did not go as smoothly and did not produce quality choreography. Even though my cast consisted of only two people, I had difficulty scheduling rehearsals with them. They are both very busy individuals in the UH dance department as well as the dance community outside the department. Also,
rehearsals for the UH Annual Mainstage concert cut into my rehearsals twice during the semester. As the Footholds audition approached, I became overly concerned with finishing the piece. I choreographed some lifts I felt would work with the music as well as two movement phrases the dancers and I manipulated in different ways. I became so focused on finishing the piece that I lost sight of my original intent. Toward the end of the piece, I included too much choreography that did not connect to the narrative I had built in the beginning.

After the audition my committee and the rest of the faculty felt that this piece needed a lot of extra rehearsal time and felt that my time was better served focusing on the other two works I auditioned. Thelma was not included in the Spring Footholds concert.

Although I understand why this piece was not accepted as part of my thesis work, I am disappointed that the faculty did not give me the chance to continue to work on it for the concert. Had I been allowed to fix the faults found in the choreography and shift my focus in the direction the choreography seemed to be gravitating toward instead of trying to fit the work into the mold of a narrative, I feel I could have transformed Thelma into an entertaining, fun and dynamic duet.

_Awaiting Change_

Choreographing a solo is always a challenge for me. This particular solo presented a greater challenge because I was attempting to choreograph movement purely for movement sake. Usually, my choreography is inspired by music, an emotional experience or a concept derived from something existing in nature. The other two pieces included as part of my thesis proposal represent these inspirational tendencies. Prism is purely conceptual, inspired by the scientific nature of light, and Thelma was intended to be musical and emotional. This solo was my first attempt at creating a work that was purely movement based.
In the beginning, I tried to use my knowledge of LMA and Labanotation to inspire movement. I videotaped myself improvising and picked out movement from the video that I felt was interesting and motivational. During this process I discovered that the simplest of movements could be the most inspiring. Two main motifs from the videoed movement (crossing the arms and legs, and walking) stood out to me. The simple act of walking became a main focus for this piece. I asked myself questions: what happens if I emphasize the natural twisting of the spine during the act of walking? What does walking or running in place look like? I decided to create three phrases, all beginning with a version of ‘walking in place’ and including the motif of crossing the arms and legs. For each phrase I tried to allow the movement to evolve naturally from the ‘walking in place’ movement. I ended up with a low level phrase (mostly floor work), a phrase that focused on traveling on the diagonal and a phrase that moved on a circular pathway. I linked the three phrases together, back-to-back, changing the facing for each one in order to completely fill the space.

After completing this first stage in my process I decided to start looking for music. Coincidentally, I was invited to attend an acoustic guitar concert that featured musicians Don Ross and Andy McKee. Both guitarists proved themselves to be very talented composers. One particular piece of music composed and played by Don Ross, entitled Robot Monster, stood out above the rest. Robot Monster featured a fast paced driving rhythm and a melody that repeated several times over. For unknown reasons, I was drawn to this particular piece of music and immediately decided that I would use it as accompaniment to my solo.

The following week I presented the unfinished solo, with music, to my committee. Even though the inspiration for this solo was purely movement motivated, my committee felt that the work evoked an internal struggle. The specificity of the pathways and direct focus I created illustrate feelings of intensity and an internal longing for release. While constructing this piece I was struggling with two conflicting feelings:
the desire to complete my education, and a longing to move on with my life. I often felt like I was running toward a goal, but never able to realize the goal I was reaching for. My choreography reflected this personal conflict. After realizing this, I felt motivated to continue to allow the piece to develop as a representation of my current emotional state. I also began considering different titles for the piece that revolved around a theme of anticipating the future. I finally settled on *Awaiting Change*.

I returned to the studio and continued to work on finishing the piece by focusing on direct spatial patterns, repetition, additive movement and contrast. I worked on contrast in timing as well as contrasting the movement with the music, often utilizing slow movement on top of the fast paced rhythm of the music. I was happy with many of the changes and additions I made by the time I performed at the audition. However, I was not completely comfortable performing the dance. I knew it lacked dynamics; the fast movement was not fast enough and the spatial patterns that once were direct and focused were unclear. My committee could see these faults in the choreography. They suggested I concentrate on each directional change, making sure I was very clear about my pathway through space and the intent of the movement behind traveling within space. Also, I tend to use a lot of peripheral movement in my choreography; my committee challenged me to include more torso-initiated movement throughout the piece.

When I returned to the studio I began utilizing LMA and Labanotation. I discovered that using LMA action drives as inspiration for changing and creating movement dynamics was extremely helpful. Drawing Labanotation floor plans made the spatial intent of the movement more clear. Referencing Bartenieff Movement Fundamentals helped me clarify the movement even further. I asked myself questions: is this movement centrally or peripherally initiated? Do I intend to perform a body half or a lower to upper sequence? All of these methods of movement analysis greatly improved the dynamics and structure of this piece. I became more and more comfortable
performing the work because I felt confident that the movement, focus and pathways were very clear and accurately represented the overall intention of the work.

I had a hard time deciding what the costume should be for this piece. At first I wanted to wear casual rehearsal clothes because I felt the costume should reflect my current situation, which for me meant wearing rehearsal clothes everyday. After deciding on the title, I thought the costume should represent the internal struggle portrayed in the movement by wearing a red leotard underneath something gray and mesh. After getting feedback from the faculty and my peers I decided to find a costume that represented strength and power. I found a long black skirt with slits on both sides and a blood red and black top in the costume shop. I felt very fortunate to be able to find this costume combination in the UH costume shop. It fit the piece extremely well and I received multiple compliments from the faculty and my peers.

Lighting this solo was more of a challenge than I had expected it to be. The lighting designer (Asuko Endo) met with me once before our technical rehearsal and I explained to her the overall theme and felt the piece would be better served by warm colors rather than cool colors. I encouraged her to be creative and only gave two very specific suggestions. I wanted my entrance to be lit by a beam of light across the floor, almost like a pathway for me to walk on as I entered; and I suggested a slow fade for the end as I walk off stage. The first suggestion was not included in the design. At technical rehearsal, Ms. Endo did not have any of her cues pre-set, so the process of lighting my solo took longer than it should have. She attempted to be creative by trying to add specials to the beginning of the piece, but did not have anything to match that for the rest of the solo. In the end Ms. Endo and myself decided on a more simple design. The piece started with a stark white light which eventually warmed to a golden amber color and changed during specific instances in the solo when my pathway through space changed. By opening night I was very pleased with the warm colors and cue changes Ms. Endo designed.
CHAPTER III. PERFORMANCE AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

All performances of *Prism* went very smoothly. I was fortunate to have a very talented and experienced cast. The success of this piece is a direct result of their input, creativity and enthusiasm. More than any other element, it was the dancers that made *Prism* a success.

I received positive responses not only from the faculty but also those who came to see the concert. Many members of the audience noticed that each section of *Prism* had memorable moments that were echoed in the other sections. They commented that this caused the piece to have a sense of progression within each individual section and the entire piece as a whole. Furthermore, this sense of progress made the piece feel like it was going somewhere important. Most people who came to see the performance acknowledged the conceptual elements that were represented in the choreography. Others placed their own narrative on top of the work, stating that they felt *Prism* represented a kind of journey from a negative place to a more positive, hopeful place. I am pleased that the piece represented different things to different people. As a choreographer I always want my audience to develop their own connection to the choreography. Part of what makes choreographing so exciting for me is the ability to listen to others interpretations of my work.

As for my personal performance in this concert, I feel that I have grown a lot during the last three years, but I still have a lot to learn. Solos are a challenge for me because I tend to become extremely nervous dancing on stage by myself. During this particular concert's run I came up with several techniques for relieving my performance nerves and allowing myself to enjoy the moment. By the final two performances I felt confident in my abilities and was finally enjoying being on stage alone. I also performed in Becky Helfert Wedll's thesis work and enjoyed every minute I spent onstage. By the
time we closed our last show I was not ready for the experience to end. I wished that we could have gone on to perform the following weekend.

Throughout the process of creating both *Prism* and *Awaiting Change* I was continually surprised by several situations where a negative circumstance could be turned into a positive outcome. For example, the communication issues I experienced while working with the lighting designer resulted in two very simple lighting designs that complemented both *Awaiting Change* and *Prism*. The simplicity of the designs for both pieces allowed the dances to speak for themselves. In other circumstances, what could have been a setback caused me to create structure and movement that I never would have constructed had certain events not occurred. As previously addressed, when one of my dancers could not perform the required movement for the ‘amoeba’ section of *Prism*, her physical limitation inspired a creative way to incorporate her into the choreography. I often found that my best work fell into place naturally; because of a reaction I had to an event or because I went with my instincts while experimenting in rehearsals.

In conclusion, I know that what I learned while working on my thesis will influence my future choreographic endeavors. One of the most important things I learned while working on this thesis is that I really enjoy the choreographic process. In the near future I will continue to choreograph regularly. Working on *Prism* has motivated me to create more dance pieces inspired by science and nature. The next few pieces I want to work on will revolve around the solar system, galaxies and the expansion of the universe.

I have learned many lessons during this process that will inform my future endeavors and have taught me a little more about myself as a choreographer. One of the most important lessons that I learned during this process is how to communicate effectively, not only with my dancers, but also with the other important people who make
a complete performance possible: lighting designers, publicity staff, stage managers, costume designers, etc. This process has made me a better communicator. I am proud of the work that I have accomplished and will continue to learn from this experience for years to come.
FIGURE 1: LAW OF REFLECTION
Source: Laser Physics. *What is Light?*

FIGURE 2: LIGHT REFRACTION
APPENDIX A. *ECHOES* CONCERT POSTER

**PRIME TIME**
**EARLE ERNST LAB THEATRE**
**2007-2008 SEASON**

*Spring Footholds - ECHOES*

*A Dance Concert!*

April 30 at 8pm
May 1, 2*, 3 at 8pm
May 4 at 2pm
*post-show rep*

Featuring: MFA Thesis work by Becky Helfert Well and Amy Redmond
BFA Culminating projects by Mikaela Brady & Mayuko Ayabe

$4 UHM STUDENTS WITH VALIDATED SPRING OR ID

$12 REGULAR, $10 SENIORS, MILITARY, UH FACULTY/STAFF, STUDENTS
FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 956-7655
**Tickets On Sale April 28**
at Kennedy Theatre Box Office, Campus Center
and www.etickethawaii.com

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**PRODUCTION STAFF**

Stage Manager: Michelle M. Painter  
Associate Lighting Designer: Espen Velasquez  
Light Board Operator: Jackie Okimoto  
Sound Board Operator: Carolyn Will, Shelly Johnson  
Patch Panel Operator: Jamie Gallo  
Floor Crew: Jenise Nicole Castillejos, Becky McGuire, Lauren Santor, Sara Satellite, Megan Southard  
Faculty Production Manager/Lighting Design Consultant: David A. Griffin  
Staff Costume Shop Manager: Hannah Schauer-Gall  
Earle Ernst Lab Theatre Costume Coordinator: Katherine Greenway  
Costume Construction Crew: Johanna Batiste, Marie Charlson, Katie Plevnik, Priscilla Stafford, Students from HFEA 240 and 221  
Wardrobe Supervisor: Alexis Leon  
Concert Advisor: Peggy Gaffney Adams  
All costumes were coordinated by the individual choreographer.

**FRONT OF HOUSE STAFF**

Staff Theatre Manager: Marty Myers  
Box Office Staff: Sarah Jane Cantrell, Kristen Kellar, Ellen Sanders, Stephanie Slaughter  
Publicity Director: Brett T. Bohlby  
Publicity Assistant: Jeremy J. Dowd, Alan Shepard  
Web Assistant: Erin Sim  
Graphic Designers: Brett T. Bohlby, Karline, Iris Wasan  
Photographer: Beth McKee Elliott  
Kennedy Theatre House Manager: Kyle Klupatosky  
Lab Theatre House Managers: Jeremy J. Dowd, Sara Skinner  
Department Office Staff: Liana Marin, Lori Ann Chun  
Department Chair and Director of Dance: Gregg Lienenberg

**FRONT OF HOUSE INFORMATION**

For large print programs, Assistive Listening Devices, or any other accessibility requests, please contact the House Manager or call the Kennedy Theatre Box Office at 964-4655.  
To arrange a Campus Security Escort from any two points on campus, please see the House Manager.  
Please silence all pagers, phones and digital watches. Photography, texting or video recording is not permitted.  
Please refrain from eating, drinking or smoking in the theatre.  
Visit us on the web at http://www.hawaii.edu/kennedy

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Special thanks to Peggy Gaffney Adams, Becky Fisher, Gregg Lienenberg, Paul T. Mili, Amy Lynn Schiffer, Judy Yen Zie, and Marija Sakamoto Wong for their guidance and support.  
Congratulations to Sarah Ann Barber on the completion of her BFA senior project performed at the Ten Days On the Island Festival in Tasmania.

**SPCIAL THANKS**

The UH M/C ticket program is supported in part by a grant from the Associated Students of the University of Hawaii and the Student Activities and Program Fee Board.
Choreography: Mikaela Brady  
Music: The Grateful Dead  
Lighting Design: Daphne Velasquez  
Dancers: Mayuko Ayabe, Sarah Ann Hartley, Travers F. King, Jennifer L. McGowan, Jacqueline Nii

Awaiting Change
Choreography: Amy Redmond  
Music: Don Ross  
Lighting Design: Asuko Endo  
Dancer: Amy Redmond

Remember to Breathe
Choreography: Malia Bowlby  
Music: Scanner  
Lighting Design: Kazumi Hatsumura  
Dancers: Michael Caputo, Neryssa Nicole Castilleja, Sarah C.M. Cottis, Shealin Johnson, Ashley S. Matsuura, Lyndsey Matsuura, Becky Mcgarvey, Betsy Saccenti, Daniel Sakimul, Maki Tokami

Please visit http://www.freewebs.com/mbdancintthome/ for a "backstage" look at the creative process of this dance.

In the Realm
Choreography: Jennifer L. McGowan  
Music: Edgar Meyer  
Lighting Design: Tino Cares, Nathan Garrett  
Dancer: Jennifer L. McGowan

Prism
Choreography: Amy Redmond  
Lighting Design: Asuko Endo  
Music: Tool  
Dancers: Malia Bowlby, Isabelle Brosnahan, Stephanie Gumpel, Sarah Ann Hartley, Tiana Krohn-Ching, Nicole Lam, Jennifer L. McGowan

"Reflection"
Music: Tool  
Dancers: Malia Bowlby, Isabelle Brosnahan, Stephanie Gumpel, Sarah Ann Hartley, Tiana Krohn-Ching, Nicole Lam, Jennifer L. McGowan

"Reflection"
Music: Tool, performed and arranged by The Section Quartet  
Dancer: Becky Helfert Wedell

"Reflection"
Music: Tool, performed and arranged by The Section Quartet  
Dancers: Malia Bowlby, Isabelle Brosnahan, Stephanie Gumpel, Sarah Ann Hartley, Tiana Krohn-Ching, Nicole Lam, Jennifer L. McGowan

Intermediate

Choreography: Mayuko Ayabe  
Music: Scanner  
Lighting Design: Justin DeLand  
Dancers: Mikaela Brady, Sarah Ann Hartley, Lindsey Jarvis, Jacqueline Nii

Pat de Moi
Choreography: Carolyn Wilt  
Music: Tchaikovsky  
Lighting Design: Marie Kuroda  
Dancers: Carolyn Wilt

Variations from the Big Sky
Choreography: Becky Helfert Wedell  
Lighting Design: David A. Griffith

"Field Ready"
Music: Kimmie Rhodes and Willie Nelson  
Soloist: Becky Helfert Wedell  
Dancers: Sarah Ann Hartley, Tiana Krohn-Ching, Amy Redmond, Lauren Santos, Megan Southcott

"Bright Eyes And"
Music: Roy Rogers  
Dancers: Megan Southcott with Travers F. King

"At I Lay"
Music: Johnny Cash  
Dancers: Gwen Arbaugh, Mikaela Brady, Sarah Ann Hartley, Amy Redmond, Megan Southcott

"Angel on My Shoulder"
Music: Willie Nelson  
Dancers: Sarah Ann Hartley, Lauren Santos

"Happily Ever"
Music: Kourtney Heying  
Dancers: Gwen Arbaugh, Mikaela Brady, Sarah Ann Hartley, Travers F. King, Tiana Krohn-Ching, Amy Redmond, Megan Southcott

The work of Amy Redmond and Becky Helfert Wedell is in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Master of Fine Arts degree in Dance.

The work of Mayuko Ayabe and Mikaela Brady is in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance.

We invite you to participate in a post-show discussion with choreographers and dancers following the Friday, May 2nd performance.
APPENDIX C. ECHOES CONCERT REVIEW

HonoluluAdvertiser.com

May 3, 2008

Wacky start works in modern dance showcase 'Footholds'

By Carol Egan
Special to The Advertiser

This spring's "Footholds" program at University of Hawai'i-Manoa offers predominantly modern dance works, with one notable exception: Carolyn Wilt's wonderfully wacky ballet solo. She begins by nobly striking a series of classical poses. But soon things begin to fall apart. At first the hands start flapping wildly, soon followed by wobbling elbows and limp arms. Things progress from bad to worse, letting up just long enough for her to strike a semi-poised position before tripping off into the wings.

Comedy is rare in dance concerts, particularly in the world of ballet. Kudos to Wilt, who recently received an undergraduate research award; she's the first dancer to be so honored.

The remaining seven pieces, though all in modern dance style, are nevertheless very distinct. Starting off the program on a light note is Mikaela Brady's "On the Road." Reminiscent of the '60s, the loose-limbed, playful dancing is well served by casual, colorful costumes, music by the Grateful Dead, and psychedelic lighting effects.

Amy Redmond's solo, "Awaiting Change," by contrast is intense and deliberate, depicting a woman searching the horizon, first directing her gaze and energy to the four corners, then taking in a full 360-degree circle. Perhaps threatened, she prowls the stage with high intensity.

Malia Bowlby challenged herself by choreographing a large group work for 10 less-advanced dancers. She managed to give the dancers movements which, while not exceedingly difficult, are well executed and give the work a dramatic touch.

Jennifer L. McGowan's solo proves how far this young dancer has come in the past few years. Her strength and flexibility is apparent as she collapses prone on the floor then slowly raises one leg in an arc across her body, toes reaching for the ground. Rising, she alternately extends her limbs into space, only to fold in on herself.

The three-part dance "Prism," choreographed by Redmond, expresses the various ways light works. In "Absorption," seven dancers in black begin by extending outwardly then closing in upon themselves. In a white dress, Becky Helfert Wedll, soloing in "Reflection," slowly crosses the stage as the lights gradually rise and the black upstage curtain parts, replaced by a white one. In "Refraction," the seven dancers return, this time costumed in solid bright colors.

Another dancer who has shown consistent growth since entering UH is Mayuko Ayabe, whose affinity for modern dance has developed to the point where she can execute many different styles. Judging from her quartet, "Nemesis," she may be equally talented as a choreographer.
The concert ends with Helfert Wedll's five-part work to assorted country-western songs. Each section differs in mood, from the wistful to the lyrical, from the depressed and deprived to the playful and joyful. Particularly fine are Megan Southcott and Travers F. King, exuding freedom and carefree youth, and Lauren Santos and Sarah Ann Hartley in a gentle tug-of-war relationship.

Carol Egan, a former professional dancer, choreographer and teacher, began writing about dance in 1975.