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Fly High Fall Silently

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

DANCE

December 2003

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Cast description.....	3
The Concert.....	5
The Big Cheese.....	5
Cone Interludes.....	8
In the Zone.....	9
Glow Worms.....	15
Mere Mortals.....	18
Just A Girl.....	22
The Question of Water.....	25
Video Projection application.....	44
Production Elements.....	47
Technical Rehearsal.....	51
Conclusion.....	54
Appendix A: Thesis Proposal for Fly High Fall Silently.....	55
Appendix B: Footholds 3: Fly High Fall Silently 2003 concert program.	
Cover Page.....	71
Inside Left-Hand Page.....	72
Inside Right-Hand Page.....	73
Back Page.....	74
Appendix C: Fly High Fall Silently 2003 concert flyer.....	75
(Reduced from 8 1/2 x 13)	

Fly High Fall Silently

Fly High Fall Silently was a modern dance concert choreographed and directed by MFA Candidate, Jennifer Butler. The concert was presented May 7-11th as the Footholds III Concert of the 2002/2003 season in the Ernest Lab Theater at the University of Hawai`i at Manoa. The concert consisted of five original pieces of choreography, four interludes and a video performed by University of Hawai`i students and alumni. With the concert now over, it is time to reflect upon and evaluate the choreography, production and performance process.

In my original proposal I stated specific goals for *Fly High Fall Silently*. Among these goals was the desire to challenge myself as a choreographer and director. Throughout the creation of the concert I was challenged on levels I could not have possibly imagined. In the end, I feel that I accomplished almost all of the goals I put forth in my proposal, as there was very little deviation from my original plans. I incorporated all of the proposed choreography into the concert. The choreography for the concert included both reconstructed pieces and new choreography. All of the dances evolved in some way during the creative process.

For the purpose of these reflections, I will follow the format of my thesis proposal. My proposal acted as my guide throughout the many months of preparing the ninety-minute (with intermission) concert. In my proposal I stated that, "The MFA Concert can and will help me further hone my talent and the skills I have learned in my training." This has proven to be profoundly true. *Fly High Fall Silently* helped me grow as a choreographer, dancer, teacher, director and producer. I developed and refined skills I already had, and learned new skills that I

believe are essential for a dance choreographer to possess. This paper will present description of casting, concert concept and content, each of the dance pieces, use of video production, and the other production components of the concert. The focus for each area will be on the process and what I learned through the experience.

The title, *Fly High Fall Silently*, poetically describes my personal three passions in dance: dancing, creating dances and teaching dance. As a dancer, I love how it feels to be in the air, to move freely, and to interact with the environment. I love to move wildly and softly, high and silently. I love to become one with the movement and let the dance move through me. As a choreographer, I love the idea of creating without boundaries, letting the inspiration guide me to find new movement in unexpected places. Creating dances for me is both an invigorating high and a humbling low in that I love it and feel powerless next to it. Choreographing fills me with energy and then takes all of my energy and leaves me silent and exhausted. As a teacher, *Fly High Fall Silently* reflects my belief that dance can take each person to a new place and that the journey changes us in the process. Through dance we can become stronger, wiser.

Fly High Fall Silently, the concert, was a culminating experience of many years of dancing. It will not be the last concert I ever choreograph and produce nor was it a stellar work of art. In reflection I can see it was a good concert, aesthetically and intellectually stimulating. This paper will reflect on this amazing and difficult journey to see what was done well and what could be improved.

Cast

I had an amazing cast for *Fly High Fall Silently*. In my proposal one of the things I expressed was my excitement about working with a large cast that included well-trained dancers. Working with the large cast proved to be fun, exciting and demanding. Working with the large cast proved to be one of the hardest jobs of preparing the concert. In my proposal, I initially wanted the same cast for every dance because I wanted to create a dance company-like atmosphere. I did work with the initial proposed ten dancers for all of the pieces except for one, *Mere Mortals*. The ten dancers I worked with for the majority of the concert were diverse in personalities, body types and abilities. The diversity in cast created a variety of benefits and challenges. The criteria I used to cast the concert included: technique level, performance quality, personality, and work ethic. I had worked with almost all the dancers as a choreographer or dancer in the past. The two exceptions; Jessica Womack and Wayles Haynes were new to the dance program at UHM. I liked how they moved and their obvious enthusiasm for dance. As I was casting the show I approached each dancer with an outline of my project and tried to be very clear about the commitment I was expecting from each of them. The process was beginning in October and the performance was not until May. I knew I was going to be expecting a lot of time and work from each dancer and wanted each dancer to understand the size of project they would be undertaking. I think this approach served me well over the course of the rehearsal process. While there were many challenges within the cast, I did not have a dancer drop out or have to ask any cast member to leave. I feel very fortunate.

The core group of dancers (the ten) and I were involved in many performances throughout the semester. We worked together intimately not just on *Fly High Fall silently* but on many other dance projects. These projects included U. H. Dance Ensemble, *Introspect* (Malia Yamamoto's BFA concert), *Dance Korea*, *Footholds II* and *WAR*. These multiple obligations brought the cast together and pushed us all to a higher level of performance. But the other performance commitments limited rehearsal time and even caused major breaks between meetings. During this dance frenzy it was not uncommon for the majority of the cast to be in rehearsal for six hours after a long day of school and/or work. The long rehearsals usually were not dedicated to only pieces in *Fly High Fall Silently* but often included work on many projects. This ultimately took a toll on energy and moods. Amazingly enough no one got severely injured in this stressful and sometimes chaotic process. However, there were many times that tempers and egos flared, and I, as choreographer and director, had to step in and become peacemaker. I found this particularly stressful because everyone involved were (are) friends. Toward the end of rehearsals I began having trouble with a few dancers not showing up on time to important rehearsals or not showing up at all. For the performance everyone pulled together for the final show of the year (my concert) and performed like professionals in every sense of the word.

Another challenging aspect of the large cast was scheduling. With the limited space and the multiple performances preparing at the same time, we found it extremely difficult to schedule rehearsal space and find time when everyone could come at a time when there was space available. I spent an astonishing amount of

effort working out schedules by looking at calendars and keeping everyone updated to changes. Organizing who, what, where and when was a constantly changing and evolving process that I had to deal with on a daily basis. I believe that I handled it well, and that most rehearsals were organized and efficient. I tried very hard not to waste people's time. I think the length and depth of the show tells a lot about the rehearsals; we worked and we worked hard! Because of the difficulty with schedules and limited space I had to work very efficiently. I tried to be prepared for each rehearsal with a specific goal in mind. In most rehearsals I had a game plan with a time outline that I would write on the chalkboard or verbally inform the dancers so that we would all be clear on the agenda. This is a skill I have developed over the years working as a dance teacher. Students often can focus more and get more work done when they know the day's goals. This was particularly important in *The Question of Water* because it has five sections two of which include all ten dancers.

The Program

The program for *Fly High Fall Silently* began with a video titled "*The Big Cheese*" which included the entire cast of *Fly High Fall Silently*. In my proposal I planned on creating a "bloopers video" to play during intermission. Early into the rehearsal process I decided to create an introduction video instead. My intent behind the video was to introduce each dancer with their name on screen. I felt that each dancer was so vital to the creation of the concert that I thought it was important to give each of them more recognition than just their names in the program. The video is short and silly. I wanted to poke a little fun at the sometimes over-seriousness with which we approach our art form (dance.) I was also responding to the "cheesy" but

very popular TV shows such as “Star Search” and “American Idol.” The dance for the video was choreographed in two rehearsals. I wanted to have an 1980’s feeling to the video so I chose ‘80’s music and costumes. For choreography I created the outline of the entire dance and had the dancers fill in with their own movement. They were all assigned to bring into the rehearsal 8 counts of very “cheesy” movement that represented one of their favorite “moves” they had learned or seen somewhere. This was a very fun and funny exercise. Several dancers had lots of fun competing to see who could do the weirdest, wildest or raunchiest movement. We videotaped on the second rehearsal. The dance for the video wasn’t meant to look polished but each dancer had to stay in “character.” On the second rehearsal Wayles Haynes (costume designer) and I brought in a large assortment of bright and out of date costumes. Once costumes and make-up were applied we began recording the dance. I had three video cameras rolling from three different angles. The dance is comprised of lots of stylized jazz walks and body isolations in the shoulders, hips and head. We taped the dance four times from different angles. The choreography and taping totaled at most two hours. The editing of the video took between 15 and 20 hours. The video editing was done in iMovie. I did the first editing of the video by picking which angles worked best and splicing different angles together. I applied a few transitions between the clips and added text into dance. Toward the end of the dance each dancer comes forward doing an individual “show off” move. I freeze framed each dancer and put their name under them. The effect reminded me of an early ‘80’s TV show format. I found it quite humorous. After the initial editing I handed the video project over to Colleen Murphy who finished and polished the

video. She imported the music we used and finished the transitions, she did a wonderful job. The video flows smoothly from one transition to another and feels like a complete piece.

I think the video was a success for three different reasons. I think that it was a good way to start the concert. The video helped to lighten the mood and prepare people to see dance. *The Big Cheese* was well received by the audiences at each performance. The audience responded to the video with laughter and applause. A second reason I feel the video was a success was because the dancers themselves enjoyed it so much. They loved watching themselves be silly and outrageous. It brought the whole cast together in a positive way helping to relieve stress over a long semester and hard technical rehearsals. Every time the video played during the technical and dress rehearsals the dancers would rush out to watch, and laugh and cheer each other on. The video project gave me the opportunity to apply practical skills in an enjoyable and creative project. I had never attempted to create a video for a performance. As part of the concert project I wanted to pursue multi-media skills I had been introduced to in the Digital Media class taught by Kirsten Pauka. When planning the dance structure I purposely set the structure around movement and floor plans I thought would work well on video. Throughout the process I had to not only look at the video like a choreographer but as a videographer as well. The editing in iMovie, which is a very consumer friendly software application, was taxing but educational. There are few editing choices included in iMovie but they are simple and relatively fast to use. We were able to edit and add as many transitions and effects as

we wanted. I was happy with the final project and learned a lot about shooting video, editing and projection.

Cone Interludes

The cone interludes were short performance pieces in between some of the dances. There were four cone interludes throughout the first half of the show. The purpose of the cone interludes was both practical and artistic. On the practical side, the interludes were planned when dancers needed extra time to change costumes or when the production crew needed to change gels. As an artistic social statement, the cone interludes were a light poke at the ridiculous parking bureaucracy here at the University of Hawai`i and in Honolulu in general. The interludes were performed by three to four dancers and were structured improvisation pieces that involved fifteen orange street cones. Each group of dancers came up with their own idea and structure. To prepare the dancers to organize their cone interludes I would often use breaks in rehearsal for *The Question of Water* to brainstorm about the multiple purposes of cones, both literal and symbolic. I enjoyed watching all of the cone interludes. I felt they were appropriately funny and meaningful and fit well into the overall structure of the concert.

In the Zone

In the Zone was originally choreographed in 2002 for the advanced choreography class taught by Betsy Fisher and performed in the Spring Footholds at the Ernest Lab Theater of that same year. The dance is performed to music by Critters Buggin. The same cast was used for both performances of *In the Zone*. The cast included Kathy Arakaki, Ben Arcangel, Christopher Quioco, and Malia Misa Yamamoto.

In the Zone is a non-literal dance created using basic lesson plans found in many creative dance classes. As a teacher of creative dance I have often been amazed at how simple ideas transmitted through lesson plans can bring about interesting and unique movement. Creative dance lesson plans are a teaching tool to structure creativity in such a way that new material is conceived and the concepts behind the material understood. Although the dancers were trained in different ways and at different levels I approached them all at the same level through the structure of the lesson plans as teacher and choreographer. I tried to keep the choreographer out of the picture when leading the students/dancers through the initial stages of the creative process. As the teacher I gave the dancers structure and tools to complete the assignment while trying to not bring in the manipulative element of the choreographer as crafter. The four lesson plans used to create *In the Zone* are rooted in these basic concepts; include studies in: levels and facings, locomotor vs. non-locomotor, group improvisation, and Rudolph Laban's eight effort drive concept words. These could be argued to be the basis of all movement. When movement is organized to create dances these basic concepts take on great

importance. For the purpose of the paper I will give a very brief explanation of each lesson plan.

We began the rehearsal process with the Laban effort drive lesson plan. I have used this lesson plan with various age groups and levels. It involves exploring the eight concept words that deal with weight/space/time. The concept words combine three of the elements Laban recognized in movement as dealing specifically with weight (strong or light), space (direct or indirect), time (quick or sustained). For the rehearsal process I approached the dancers as if they were all new to these concepts. For the lesson plan I handed out a chart of the effort/drive concepts. I discussed and then demonstrated movements that went along with the concepts. I then gave exploration time for each word by playing a movement game based on only moving in the quality that I called out. As they became familiar with the different movement qualities I gave feedback to the level of correctness they demonstrated for each concept word. At the end of the rehearsal I assigned each dancer to bring back a movement phrase based on the eight words. Each word had to be presented at least one time in any order and in any way they wanted. During the second rehearsal I watched each movement phrase and made corrections only in terms of quality not in terms of movement choice.

The second lesson plan involved the use of levels and facings. I gave a brief explanation of the use of low/middle/high and the need and importance of clarity in facings and directions. I found I did not need to go into much detail as the dancers were all very familiar with the concepts. We spent a short time exploring the concepts through improvisation and then moved on to applying the concepts to the

movement phrase they had created and two phrases I had choreographed and taught to them. I gave instructions to change the level and facing somewhere in each of the phrases. For exploring both levels and facings collectively we played a sculpture game where each individual made a movement choice that affected the entire group. The sculpture ultimately ended up in the final choreography. I found that while reviewing these basic concepts with the dancers, we all thought very specifically throughout the process of where a movement was facing and if it was at the best possible level.

The third lesson plan involved locomotor vs. non-locomotor movement (shaping). The group began by exploring basic locomotor skills such as skipping, running, turning, and jumping. We then moved to exploring pathways (curvy, straight, zig zag) with sudden stops and starts. The second aspect of the lesson plan involved shaping the body without moving thru space. I led them through various exploration words by calling out a word such as twist or spread and gave them time to explore the idea. I then asked each dancer to improvise locomotion utilizing the concepts they had just explored in addition to any concepts we had used during the entire rehearsal process up to that time. I did not set the locomotor choreography for many rehearsals. I took the time to watch and let each dancer develop their own style and pattern.

As the dance gained structure I began to set movement and floor patterns. I structured who did what, when, and how. I altered timing or changed facings. I coupled or grouped movement that had been conceived as solos. In short, I began crafting. The last lesson plan involved a group improvisation known as the flocking

exercise. I set the dancers into a flock formation that has a point, two middles and a back. In the improvisation the dancers followed the leader's pattern; as soon as the leader changed facings whoever is then at the point is the new leader. Throughout this lesson we talked a lot about where and how to focus, types of movement that worked with this improvisation and what it was like to be follower then suddenly leader. This exercise demands the performers to be absolutely present and aware of themselves and fellow "flockers." I set the floor pattern but during each performance this section remained improvisational within a set structure.

As a completed piece the dance is slightly over eight minutes. It is fast paced dancing interwoven with many different movement qualities, dynamics, vocabulary, and floor patterns. The dancers relate to each other throughout the piece in a casual and matter of fact way. The relationships are real and were built during the creative process through both the movement structure and the process of creating the structure. The rock-and-roll prerecorded music, performed and composed by the rock band Critters Buggin', framed the piece without dictating the movement. The lesson plans acted as a guide to the structure. The entire piece was created by the team while I, as choreographer, facilitated the process through a highly structured creative process. At no time during the piece did I ask the dancers to simply make up movement. I gave specific instructions to aid both the dancers' choices in movement and to complement the overall choreographic statement that was being built. In this way the piece allowed each dancer to present his/her

individuality while at the same time the movement unified all of them into a community.

I believe the piece *In the Zone* is a success because it reflects many of my personal values as a choreographer. These values include but are not limited to: creative movement vocabulary, community amongst dancers on and off stage, investment of dancers during all performances, and dancers' growth as performers and technicians during the creative process.

Restaging

The restaging of *In the Zone* for *Fly High Fall Silently* for my thesis concert was relatively easy because I was able to use the original cast. I had to ask permission through my proposal to use Kathy Arakaki and Malia Misa Yamamoto, as they had recently graduated from the dance department. The dancers had performed the piece only four months before we began restaging it for *Fly High Fall Silently*. We began rehearsals in late September 2002. The dancers retained a lot of the material over the four-month break. We reviewed the dance on video and put the piece back together in one rehearsal. While the dancers remembered the structure and vocabulary they had lost some of the qualities and dynamics in the movement. To correct this problem we spent several rehearsals going back to the original lesson plans. This helped the dancers reconnect with the qualities of their movement. This also brought back a sense of play and spontaneity that had been

lost in the restaging process. Another challenge for the dancers was rebuilding their stamina to perform the dance optimally. To perform correctly they had to be able to run the piece with sustained high energy. Running the dance two times in a row during each rehearsal for the last three weeks of rehearsal solved the stamina problem. By the time the show opened they were in “tiptop” shape and performed with enthusiasm.

I did not make any major changes during the restaging of *In the Zone*. I was happy with the original product and tried to keep as true to the original as possible. I did make a costume change. For the first performance of the dance the dancers wore different colored baggy workout pants with stripes down the side and white fitted tank tops. For the *Fly High* performance I changed the costumes to seventies-styled clothing that included bell-bottoms and polyester butterfly collar shirts. The costumes added a cartoon like quality to the dance; it made the movement seem more exaggerated and wild looking. The dancers loved the change in costumes and this added new flavor to their dancing. In a way, the dance got “funkier” and more playful. I liked the change in costume for these reasons. However, as the choreographer, I liked the dance in the plainer costumes just as much. Both costume styles fit the dance but in different ways.

I am glad that *In the Zone* was included in the *Fly High* concert. It is a well-structured piece and represents a pivotal point in my choreographic process.

GlowWorms

GlowWorms is a duet choreographed in collaboration with the dancers Wayles Haynes and Kelly Del Rosario. The dance is performed to music composed by The Chemical Brothers. The dance grew out of my desire to explore partnering. I have always liked to watch and perform dancing where there is a lot of exchange of weight and lifting between performers. I also like to teach counter-balance and sharing of weight to my beginning modern classes and my older creative dance students (third grade to adult). As a choreographer I have utilized partnering within the structure of the majority of my dances. For *GlowWorms* I wanted to approach the entire dance through different partnering skills to develop the movement. This was as much of a desire to create a new dance as to teach myself new ways of partnering through the exploration process. As a dancer I felt that I had not been involved with many classes or dances that utilized lots of lifts and sharing of weight since coming to the University of Hawai`i. This is an area of modern dance I particularly enjoy as audience member, dancer and choreographer. I wanted to increase my own vocabulary as a dancer and choreographer.

The dancers, Kelly Del Rosario and Wayles Haynes are very well suited to partnering together. They are both strong individuals and happen to be about the same size. Wayles has a background in contact improvisation and Kelly studies and teaches Capoeira.

Their two backgrounds combined with my own background in contact improvisation, partnering and tumbling proved to be a powerful and exciting creative force.

The duet developed in two stages. The first stage was choreographed as part of the U.H. Dance Ensemble repertory for 2002-2003 season. The dance developed from a combination of choreography I created and set, guided exploration, and vocabulary the dancers brought in from their own previous experience. It was common for me to approach the dancers with an idea and then ask them to figure out how to make it work. Because we were often creating or rehearsing the piece in Dance Ensemble rehearsals, I would be busy rehearsing another dance. Therefore I would give them a specific movement assignment to develop on their own. They would later show me what they had worked on and together we would decide what fit into the overall structure. Once we got started creating it the dance found its own natural energy and seemed to just grow and develop naturally. Because the dance was part of the Ensemble, Peggy Gaither-Adams asked me if Kelly could do a Capoeira demonstration at the beginning of the piece. Kelly and I agreed and I added the Capoeira demonstration as the beginning of the duet. From a performance standpoint, combining the Capoeira and partnering duet was challenging for Kelly. He had to make a fast transition in intention and quality between the two forms. We had to work to take his focus from a very internal place to an outward focus so he could connect with Wayles and the audience. *GlowWorms* was performed more than any other dance in *Fly High Fall Silently*. Because *GlowWorms* was part of the Ensemble repertory, Kelly and Wayles had the opportunity to perform it on many occasions in lots of different venues. Every time they performed the piece they were able to develop the dance further and improvise their use of weight, contact and timing.

The second stage of *GlowWorms* involved setting new choreography.

The first version of the piece ran about 4 minuets. The completed version is around six minuets. I added more choreography because I felt that the piece, as performed for the ensemble, had not quite resolved itself. It needed more development and a clearer ending. The new section is comprised mostly of variations of phrases from the original portion. I decided to keep Kelly's Capoeira demonstration as the beginning of the duet and work in a short improvisation section for Wayles. I structured her improvisation to juxtapose Kelly's flowing and introverted Capoeira demonstration by giving Wayles instruction to be very outward with her energy and focus. I also asked her to be direct in her spatial awareness as well as find moments with percussiveness and lots of air maneuvers and turns. This tends to be Wayles' natural movement style and it was easy for her to explore these ideas during her improvisation. After adding the new ending onto *GlowWorms* it felt like the dance was finally finished. I was very satisfied with the final product and enjoyed watching it develop over the run of the show. After seeing *GlowWorms* so many times and for so long, I now miss getting to see Wayles and Kelly work together. They did a fabulous job being active in the creative process and performing the dance.

Mere Mortals

Mere Mortals was a reconstruction of a dance I choreographed for my senior BFA project at Cornish College of the Arts in 1998. The piece is comprised of four main sections and is performed to music by Tom Waits. The piece has a moody, surreal atmosphere. The dancers' costumes include jean overalls, white face paint and fake clown eye lashes in a variety of colors. Four of the dancers wear clunky shoes during the first two sections and later change into slippers and no shoes for the final section. The abstract theme for the dance involves the notion that everyone displays a protective persona for the world at large so they are socially accepted. That persona is driven by insecurity about being "othered" and left out or left behind. The dance is not literal and the non-literal concept behind it inspired my choice of movement, music and costume without expecting the audience to understand the same exact message. *Mere Mortals* was an important part of my development as choreographer and teacher. The original cast members were all strong technical dancers who were used to being told what to do. They had little or no experience being active participants in a creative process. I was attempting for the first time to mix setting my own movement on dancers along with some guided exploration to develop movement. As a choreographer I had to rely on my experience as a teacher to facilitate the dancers to be creative with their movement exploration. We were successful and the piece developed into a well-built piece of choreography that was performed with clarity and commitment. I had always wanted to revisit the dance and work through some of the problem areas. Deciding to include it in my MFA concert was difficult. I knew that restaging it from video

would be challenging. I didn't have any notes or video from early rehearsals and knew I was going to be working with very different dancers. I decided to accept the challenge and see how the piece would change.

Restaging

In my original concert proposal, I wanted to use the same cast throughout the whole evening with the biggest piece including everyone. I had specific dancers in mind for *Mere Mortals*. As the cast became overwhelmed with multiple rehearsals and performances I decided that I needed to find five dancers not already involved in the concert. This worked well. It was refreshing to work with new dancers after many months of working with the same people. It didn't work well in other ways because I wasn't able to cast the piece with the same dancers I had intended and really thought the piece needed. In the end, the five dancers did a great job and brought their own strengths and personalities to the choreography.

The cast for *Mere Mortals* included: Malia Bowlby, Larisa Eastman, Colleen Elizabeth Murphy and Kiplinn Sagmiller. They learned the piece quickly and approached it with a positive attitude and lots of hard work. The dance was the last piece to be set for the concert. We began rehearsals in March and finished in mid-April. I was so busy with other projects for the concert that I had little time and/or energy to spend on rehearsals for *Mere Mortals*. In the beginning of the process I gave each dancer a videotape of the dance and asked them to watch and learn small segments. The dancers helped by studying the video on their own and being prepared to work on it in rehearsal. This allowed us to reconstruct the nearly 12-minute piece in a relatively short time with relatively few rehearsals. For the

reconstruction process I used the original dance as a guide but allowed the dance to grow and change with the new dancers. The most difficult section to recreate was the solo/duet that Larisa Eastman and Malia Bowlby performed. It was difficult for two reasons: 1) I created and performed the solo originally, and it is fast, spastic and extremely stylized to my own movement style. This proved challenging for Larisa to learn and for me to teach exactly what it was I was doing because it felt so natural on my body. The solo was set choreography with moments of improvisation interwoven into the structure. It was difficult to clarify for Larisa without the movement losing the wildness of the original. 2) This section includes partnering between Larisa and Malia, who is on the ground most of the time. Learning partnering choreography from video proved to be very difficult. It was hard to see and to figure out what was actually going on. We also ran into problems because of the different body sizes (Malia is bigger than Larisa whereas I was bigger than the other dancer). At the time, Larisa and Malia had limited partnering experience so I was teaching them about weight sharing as we were learning the choreography. In the end, we were able to recreate most of the partnering section and change areas that were problematic. I tried to videotape the dancers throughout the process but ran into a great deal of resistance from one dancer who felt very uncomfortable watching herself. I wanted to use video because as a learning tool it helps us to see the difference between what we think we are doing and what we are actually doing. I like to videotape rehearsals so I can review the tape and make notes about things I need to change or work on as a choreographer. The video provides distance from the piece and allows me to think objectively. I was able to

record a few of the later *Mere Mortals* rehearsals and show it to the dancers.

Each time they watched themselves on video the piece improved noticeably.

I enjoyed getting to revisit *Mere Mortals*. It is a weird and creepy dance that is very different from all of the other dances in the *Fly High Fall Silently* concert. By resetting a piece I had choreographed so long ago, I was able to see how my aesthetic as a choreographer has developed and changed. It was also nice to revisit work that was inspired by another place and another group of people. The only thing I would change about the process is that I would have started setting the piece first so that I could have spent more time refining the choreography and performance.

Just a Girl

Just a Girl is a solo I choreographed for myself to music by Meredith Monk. The solo is the only piece in the entire concert that was choreographed specifically with the music. As a matter of fact it is the only dance (other than choreography for my students) that I have choreographed using the music as both the inspiration and the structure for the choreography. Betsy Fisher introduced me to the music in her advanced choreography class. I fell in love with the playful, imaginative music and attempted to choreograph movement that captured the same feeling.

The short piece of music is just over two minutes. I found the process of setting a solo on myself both difficult and rewarding. It was challenging in the sense that because I was setting movement on myself I couldn't see it from the outside with an objective eye. During the first stages of creating the choreography I found that I was creating movement that was repetitive or predictable. Another challenge I faced was keeping myself engaged in the movement. I realized after working on the solo for a while that I get bored with my own movement. I like when I can mix my movement up with other dancers and watch the movement develop as each dancer applies their own personality. I decided to create clear movement goals to explore with the music. As soon as I approached *Just a Girl* with specific goals the choreographic process began to flow.

The first assignment I gave myself was to identify exactly how I wanted to use the music. I began listening to the music repeatedly and exploring how many different ways I could hear it. The music is very fast with a minimalist type of

rhythm driving the whole song. Laughter with different notes, tempos and rhythms comes in and out throughout the piece. It gives the whole composition a giddy, manic feeling. It reminds me of when I was a kid and would eat too much sugar and be on the verge of losing control. The vocals that are woven into the composition are more like spoken text than singing. I decided to deal with the lyrics on both literal and abstract levels. The lyrics are spoken clearly and are easy to understand. Typically, I steer away from using music with lyrics. If I do use music with lyrics I try not to dance the lyrics but focus on the mood created by the music and lyrics together. I did this in *Mere Mortals* with the Tom Waits music. For *Just a Girl* I felt I couldn't ignore the lyrics. I decided to deal with them as they are: deceptively straightforward. I mixed literal gestures that went with the lyrics with the quality in the music. I am going to describe it as the "color" of the music. I attempted to apply the color into the movement that went with the lyrics and approached the entire score in this manner. I wanted to hit particular accents and follow certain cycles in the music with my movement. I was trying to understand it through my own experiences and senses. Because of the music's complexity and speed it was easy for me to feel overwhelmed by it. To overcome this problem I did two things: I recorded the music at slower speeds to practice with and I decided to shake things up by focusing on areas of movement I wanted to explore. For example, there is a line in the song that says "I still have my hands" and I perform a gesture with both hands. I continued focusing (in the choreography) on my hands paying particular attention to how they were moving in space. This tuned me into

the fact that I was applying effort/ shape qualities to the movement as I was interpreting the effort/shape qualities I was hearing in the music.

The music's underlining beat that drives the whole song creates the urgency I feel when I hear the music. On top of that driving beat there is laughter that weaves in and out and is sometimes high and light and others times deep and strong. Often the laughter travels from high to low creating a flowing feeling then will abruptly change into short, percussive types of laughter. A voice humming creates another pattern in the music. The humming is light, airy and circular. It reminds me of a boat rocking back and fourth on the water. I realized that every time the humming came back into the dance I had created movement that was also circular, flowing and light. I applied this insight to all of the movement. Following the qualities I heard in the music I became attentive to what shapes, what force and space I was creating through the movement.

The choreographic process for *Just a Girl* ended up being an amazing experience in applying Laban's effort/drive to how I hear music and from there creating movement. I found this helped me create interesting movement and allowed me to perform it with the same energy and variation I hear in the music. I titled the piece *Just a Girl* because dancing the solo makes me feel young and free.

The Question of Water

The Question of Water is a dance in five sections involving ten dancers. The piece was inspired by my personal interest in our most important resource: water. I wanted to create an abstract dance that celebrates the importance of and threat to this natural resource. In my proposal I assert, “The need for water is everywhere. The problem of water is everywhere.” This idea drove my need to create a dance about water. My objective in creating such a dance was not to “preach” or make a narrative play about the good of water and the evils of mankind. Rather I strove to create an abstract dance dealing with various issues through movement studies of water. This was an ambitious plan but in many ways I feel *The Question of Water* fulfilled my expectations. I did not stray far from the outline of the dance in my proposal. The main area that changed involved the application of video projection during the dance.

The beginning stages of creating “*The Question of Water*” began outside the studio in my personal study of water and water related issues. For inspiration I began observing water in many different contexts and paid close attention to how water moves. I spent time at the beach watching the ocean; I traveled on the mainland and watched snow, rivers and lakes. I sat and watched rainfall, drip from tree leaves, and ripple in puddles. I began focusing on water throughout my day as I showered, washed dishes, and swallowed long cool drinks. I didn’t just look at water. I tried to experience it through all my senses: how it felt, sounded, and tasted.

I began researching water and found many alarming discussions on the impact that the loss of clean water is having worldwide on people and the environment. I was astonished at how many different organizations are concerned about the issue of water. I knew that environmentalists are alarmed, but I was a surprised to hear doctors, politicians, farmers, scientists, lawyers, and average citizens all discussing the endangerment of our most precious resource. I found a plethora of sources that in some way focused on the issue of water. Three of the most informative books are: *Water Wars* by Diane Raines Ward, *Tapped Out* by Dr. Paul Simon and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

All I learned and experienced about water formed my approach to movement in *The Question of Water*. Water is necessary for life. We are running out of water by over use. Much of the water we do have is being polluted by big industry and human ignorance. The air we breathe, the food we eat and the quality of life we live are all delicately balanced with water. I approached movement in *The Question of Water* with a reinforced sense of respect and love for water. As rehearsals began for *The Question of Water* I shared with my dancers small portions of what I was learning. In the initial stages of rehearsal we talked a lot about water; what it means to us as individuals, what it means for Hawai`i, and what it means for all people everywhere. As we began choreographing each new section I brought in new information about water in the form of quotes, statistics, and real news events. The dancers would improvise as I read a particularly moving selection about polluted water or the effects of draught. Other times they would

free write about the importance of water in their own lives, or they would bring in something that reminded them of water in some way. I think approaching the movement this way gave the movement itself a feeling of importance, and reverence.

The Question of Water runs about eighteen minutes. Each of the five sections is performed to different styles of music and is choreographically distinct. Each section is a complete dance in that each has its own movement vocabulary, style and resolution. Throughout the rehearsal process I gave each section working names. For this paper I will refer to each section by the section number and/or the working name.

The sound of a softly trickling rain echo in the dark space and as the lights slowly fade in we see many figures in white slowly rising from the ground, arms outstretched to the side. One by one they begin to tilt their entire bodies until they gently fall into a spiral turn before settling into a new shape. The journey has begun. The clouds form, spill over into rushing, twisted rivers and elegantly rise back into the heavens again

The first section of the dance, "The Water Cycle," included all ten dancers and is performed to music by Mickey Hart and Midival Punditz. To create the sound score I edited the two pieces of music together. The dancers wore white, flowing straight-legged pants and fitted white tank tops. The lighting for the dance utilized dark blues and purples with projected images of water reflecting off the dancers white costumes.

To create “The Water Cycle” I began the choreographic process through readings and movement exploration. I then taught the dancers a creative dance lesson plan based on the water cycle. Just as in a classroom exercise, we explored the cycle in terms of non-locomotor and locomotor movement with an emphasis on possible movement qualities that can be found within the cycle. During this process, I discussed the science behind the water cycle: how it happens, why it happens, and what impact a “broken down” water cycle will have on the earth. Surprisingly, although adult, many of the dancers didn’t know or remember much about the water cycle. We focused on the different qualities of movement for the three parts of the water cycle: evaporation (light, free, indirect, and sustained), precipitation (rhythmic even and uneven, light or strong, direct or indirect), and condensation (gathering, shaping, bound and light, explosive and subtle). After exploring the different parts of the water cycle we put together the whole “dance” just as I would when working with a creative dance class. I wanted the dancers to feel the water cycle through their dancing. I was concerned that they would focus more on how rain and clouds look than how it would feel to be these particles of water fulfilling their life cycle. After running through the dance several times with different music the dancers began to lose the look of pretending and instead committed to the movement experience itself. At this point I began crafting the dance that would grow into “The Water Cycle.” I began by setting movement that I had created from my own movement exploration based on the water cycle. Variations based on these phrases would reappear throughout: water cycle, storm and cycle returns.

“The Water Cycle,” the dance, does not follow the exact order of the lesson plan. That would be too simplistic. The image I wanted to create was of water moving, growing, changing, appearing and disappearing through overlapping ideas of evaporation, precipitation and condensation. There are many different movements and shapes going on during this dance. With a cast of ten dancers I was able to paint several different “pictures” at the same time. I find this section mysterious and captivating. There are always multiple images being formed on stage. Rather than looking chaotic it seems to flow together as the dancing images continuously evolve and change.

I would not change much about the structure of “The Water Cycle.” If I could go back I would not change anything choreographically but I would try to clean up a rough transition between the large unison “waterfalls” in low level to the two large “cloud” group lifts. This area always stands out like it doesn’t quite fit the overall picture. I would also clean up the “wave” section where lines of dancers are running into each other and around to create a new “giant wave.” This section was performed slightly different every time the dancers did it. Sometimes the lines were clean and straight with the timing just right, other times the lines were straight but there was no force behind their running, other times the lines were not straight completely negating the effect of the wave. We spent a lot of time cleaning this section throughout the rehearsal process. In reflection, I would do two new things to clean it up. 1) I would try to move dancers into different lines to see if the difficulty of keeping straight lines stemmed from different leg

lengths. 2) I would set the whole phrase to specific counts. The music during this section varies in tempo and rhythm and often begins at different times in the music depending on how fast or slow the previous group lifts were executed. I think we could impose counts on a tempo set by the first line that would clarify the timing.

In the event that I restage *The Question of Water*, I would change the lighting for this section. Due to many problems during the technical rehearsals I was never able to find the right color and transitions of lighting in this piece. I would fade the lights in slower so we could see the projection of water on the dancers before we saw the dancers. We tried to do this but the dancers complained that they could not see. I think with practice and glow tape these concerns could be overcome. I would also saturate the cyclorama with more color and explore taking the light intensity up and down to work with the choreography and projection.

The mass of swirling dancers spin and rush off both sides of the stage. In their wake remain four figures, shirts removed, sweat glistening as they slowly revolve around themselves until they become absolutely still. Their faces are turned skyward and their eyes are closed. The sound of wind creeps into the silence before a dancer from the wings suddenly rushes onto the stage swirling past the four figures changing the landscape. A dancer falls forward like a rock that has been waiting for such an event to bring it tumbling down. The light on stage turns from a predawn gray to a rich and saturated red-orange. A picture of a full sun fades onto the background. The four figures begin to slowly carve shapes into the space creating a feeling of suspended time.

“Desert” was inspired by the effects on land of lack of water in the form of draught, fire, and desert landscapes. The movement throughout this section is slow and deliberate with attention to vertical and horizontal lines. The music by Pat Metheny resonates the deep, deliberate and timelessness of the movement. In creating the choreography I focused on making shapes that reminded me of rock sculptures slowly being carved and redefined by sun and wind over time. In the first rehearsal we spent time looking at pictures of places that do not have a lot of water due to draught, fires or climate. We talked about the heat, dryness and hardness of life in these places. Together we brainstormed a list of words that describe these areas. The first thing I notice when I am in an area lacking an abundance of water is that it appears to be suspended in time. Change is always happening but it is subtle and slow. The striking features of an area like this are open space and endless horizons. To create this atmosphere in “Desert” I chose dancers for their ability to display strength and control. The dancers included: Ben Archangel, Christopher Quioco, Christine Berwin and Kelly Del Rosario.

In approaching “Desert” I had a few specific images and feelings I wanted to create. I wanted the dancers to create a feeling of space through horizontal and vertical lines that seemed to grow from the environment. I knew the entire piece needed to be slow, continuous, clear and with little dynamic change. To help create movement that would develop this landscape on stage, I led the dancers through several improvisations that involved detailed descriptions of desert. The improvisations were about developing an understanding of the space I was asking

them to create, not just a visual representation of the landscape. I wanted them to become the open, endless, harsh landscape.

We worked on four main improvisations. The first involved the dancers sensing the space with their eyes closed as I verbally described the landscape of a desert with the intense heat and the relentless sun beating on their unprotected bodies. I gave them instructions to let their bodies respond to the ideas as naturally as possible. This was an exercise in feeling, not in creating movement. The second imagery-based improvisation involved imagining the extreme thirst of the desert and how that would feel and how it would affect their movement. The third exercise was to explore through movement some element of water deprived landscape, i.e., wind, fire or sun, and how this element would affect the landscape. For example, I gave them an image such as wind slowly carving rock. The fourth improvisation was based on pictures from the southwest desert: Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona. The images were all pictures that I had taken myself and are particularly fond of, images that remind me of home. I asked each dancer to write a few words describing each picture. We talked about each dancer's first impression of the visual image. First they described what stood out to them in the picture. Then we talked about how they could translate the description into dance "talk" i.e. space, time, weight or shape. After the discussion the dancers got up and moved according to the description words they had presented for each picture. After the movement exploration for each picture we returned to the pictures. I described the surrounding scene, the smell of clean air and dry dirt, and the

quietness that makes the wind seem to echo. I explained the different colors of brown, which seem to grow more vibrant and varying the longer you look; how for all of the desert's apparent stillness there is always something moving, shifting, swaying and changing. The purpose of my own verbal description was to add variety to the movement quality. From this point each dancer picked one picture and created a short movement phrase based on their chosen image. I worked with each dancer to refine their phrases in terms of shapes, transitions and qualities. I then began building the structure of the piece.

The most challenging aspect of creating this section was keeping the movement bound, slow, and strong throughout the transitions between the various "landscape sculptures." This proved to be difficult to maintain through the full six minutes of the dance. The movement, while based on different shapes, is not easy to execute. There are several partnering sections where one dancer is being lifted or is balancing on another dancer. Usually the movement would be done with the use of momentum and flow as the dancer's exchange and/or share weight. However, for this piece I wanted to minimize the appearance of momentum and flow by making all of the movement bound, strong and slow. The dancers had to rely on muscle control to execute many of the sculptures. Another challenging aspect of the choreography was to create the sense of space on a small stage with little locomotion to move the dancers around the space. I wanted to keep the movement specific, clear and uncluttered but at the same time keep the movement changing and engaging to the viewer. I attempted to achieve this by having the

dancers feel a constant vertical and horizontal pull as they changed levels and facing. I think that this was successful. The music is slow and the dancers are so present and dedicated to each movement that although the movement happens slowly it is engaging to watch and beautiful in its apparent simplicity.

Three figures begin building a large structure by one of the figures slowly and methodically climbing up onto the shoulders of two of the figures. Her body slowly curves up and over creating an arch, her feet on the shoulders of one dancer and her hands on the other. Her back curves up toward the ceiling. A fourth figure continues to slowly carve around the standing sculpture as it slowly rotates. The sun behind them fades out and the bright orange light turns dark gray as lightning suddenly streaks across the background a rush of bodies suddenly swarm under the arch destroying the calm and stark landscape. "Storm" has arrived. A new, faster force takes over as the deep quiet feeling of "desert" is suddenly replaced with high, fast and explosive music. The rushing dancers throw themselves into a clump momentarily gathering force before exploding into a frenzy of swirling, whipping, running and leaping.

Storms represent the potential overwhelming power of water. Storms can bring life or destroy life. Some storms are blessings because they end brutal heat waves or draught by bringing much needed rain or snow. Other storms maim and destroy during their feverish and dramatic life.

Storms can destroy buildings, bridges, bring down power lines, snap trees and destroy entire towns and cities by the force of wind and rain. Storms are never the same and are stunning in their power.

“Storm” is performed by five dancers: Traci Chun, Wayles E.S. Haynes, Jacqueline Nii, Malia Misa Yamamoto and Jessica Womack (Eun-Kyung Kim) to music by Dmitri Shostakovich. The dancers are costumed in short dark purple tunic dresses with different style sleeves and mottled gray tights. The music drives the movement with a powerful and urgent energy. The dancers appear to be on the verge of spinning out of control as they violently turn and leap around the stage. “Storm” was the first section I began choreographing in *The Question of Water*. I picked the cast for their technique; those who could move quickly, powerfully and wildly. We began the choreographic process by talking about various types of storms. In the first few rehearsals I brought in videos about storms. I showed clips of hurricanes, tornados, and floods. The image of a major storm non-selectively destroying everything in its path is frightening and amazing to watch. The purpose of watching the videos was to understand the awesome power of storms and apply it to the movement of “Storm,” the dance.

To set the choreography I taught the dancers three phrases I had created from watching and reading about storms. From these three phrases I created the majority of movement for the entire piece. The movement ideas behind these phrases included turns at different levels, circular pathways created with the arms, legs and center of weight, explosive leaps, jumps and hops, a sense of gathering

and releasing. I wanted the dance to have a chaotic forceful look and feeling but with a sense of form created by relationships between the dancers and specific spots on the stage (center, stage left and right upstage corners) that the dancers return to throughout the piece.

I enjoyed watching “Storm” being performed. The dancing was done with the quality and energy we focused on during rehearsals. The dancers executed the movement clearly and with passion. If I were to change anything about this piece it would be to add specific counts to areas in the dance that need to be in unison.

The dancers create a spiral of energy that seems barely in control as they turn madly and forcefully making their way across the stage before disappearing as suddenly as they appeared. An eerie silence fills the empty space. A dancer enters from stage right as a deep-throated voice begins to echo in the room. Her steps are slow and deliberate, her eyes cast down, her hand trembling slightly as she travels toward the center of the stage. From the opposite side a dancer drags a limp body by the arm. The two dancers meet and collapse into each other. A procession of figures in white has subtly started filing onto the stage. They are solemn as their eyes and arms reach upward to carry a faceless form across the stage.

“Pollution” was the last section I choreographed for *The Question of Water*. I was tempted to not even start choreographing “Pollution” because it was becoming nearly impossible to find time and space to rehearse. I decided that to take out “Pollution” would not be true to my vision for the entire piece. In many

ways, pollution inspired the entire piece because it is due to human waste and abuse of this sacred resource that we are facing such severe water problems.

To re-inspire myself I returned to my research and focused on issues of pollution. I was most moved by the diseases unclean water causes in populations without access to clean water or who do not know how to prevent water borne illness. Every day, throughout the world, thousands of people die from diseases caused by unsafe water: cholera, typhoid, bacillary dysentery, polio, meningitis, hepatitis A and E, among others. To create the movement for “Pollution” I focused on these diseases. I brought in statistics for the dancers. I asked them to listen and then respond through movement to the disturbing information I was sharing with them. We focused on how having these diseases would make you feel - cramps, fevers, bone and joint pain, dysentery, extreme nausea, etc. I chose to have the dancing occur mostly in the middle of the stage in a small clump or circle. The three women dancers represent mothers who lose their children from these diseases. The trio’s movement is almost all initiated from the gut. It is in the gut that these deadly diseases fester; therefore the movements are heavy, sharp, twisted, awkward and uncomfortable to watch. The focus is blank and often downward. I wanted the dancers to feel uncomfortable through their movement quality but I did not want them to “act” sad or show pain on their faces. I wanted the audience to feel uncomfortable by watching the dancers move.

The procession in upstage carries the single body above their heads as they make their way across the stage is a profoundly moving image to me. It is a simple idea yet powerful and complicated in image and concept.

The three dancers for “Pollution,” Kathy Arakaki, Wayles Haynes, Jessica Womack, wore dark colored pants and loosely fitting tunics. The music by Mickie Hart and is a piece that I have wanted to choreograph a dance to for years. When I began thinking about pollution, I knew that the Mickie Hart piece was perfect. The music has a sad and haunting sound that is beautiful in its strangeness. If I had to pick a favorite section of *The Question of Water*, I would have to pick this section. The movement is strong, twisted, revolting as the dancers in the center evolve uncomfortable shapings, as the relentless procession in white carries the body across the stage in the background. The piece has a grotesque, beautiful and tragic feeling developed through the movement and the music. I think all the elements came together to create a compelling dance. The music, costumes, cast and choreography fulfilled all of my expectations.

The voice in the music howls mournfully as the three dancers slowly separate from their entangled embrace and turn to leave the circle, each walking heavily, hand trembling, eyes down as they disappear. An image of a waterfall appears on the screen as a lone figure reaches up toward the sky as if the water is falling upon her face. Others join her, reaching up in their own turn waiting to feel the cool clean water on their faces. A soft drumming begins; there is a sense that the troublesome journey is near an end; the water cycle has returned.

The full cast returns for the last section of *The Question of Water* in their white flowing pants and white shirts. The music, by Ruben Blades, has an uplifting and rejoicing quality. The movement resonates in the music. It is light, expansive and calming. For inspiration for choreography I returned to movement motifs from all of the sections, particularly the first section, "The Water Cycle." Each movement idea and/or phrase was presented with variation in sequence, level, floor pattern or timing. In this section I wanted to create more of a feeling of community rather than warmth. Upon first listening to the piece of music by Ruben Blades, I fell in love with it and could visualize a dance about water being performed to it. I chose the music before I began the choreography for *The Question of Water*. My first instinct was to use it for the opening section, but it did not fit the mysterious movement I was creating in that section. It seemed too forward and exaggerated for the movement. I put the music aside, planning to use it for the last section in the dance. When we finally began constructing the final section I returned to the music. It felt like it fit the atmosphere I was creating for the final section.

However, as the piece developed, I grew very tired of the music. It seemed to load the choreography with too much of a happy "fairy tale" ending. I began searching for replacement music but could not find anything suitable. I was also faced with the dancers' opposition to the possibility of a change in music. They almost unanimously did not want the music changed. They liked it, liked dancing to it, and felt the music fit the overall dance. Because I did not find a replacement

for the music selection, and out of respect for my cast's wishes, I decided to continue using the Blades music. In an effort to resolve the problem, I edited the music by fading the Rubin Blades song slightly and bringing in the rhythmic rain section from the Mickey Hart piece from section one, the opening of "Water Cycle." This gave the music a little depth by toning down the hyper-happy feeling of the vocals in the Rubin Blades song. I was satisfied enough with these results and decided to further edit the music by slowly cross fading the Rubin Blades piece out while bringing in the Midival Punditz section, also from section one. This fit the movement well because the end of the piece has the dancers returning to their original places and poses from the very first of the dance - thus the water cycle continues.

Creating and rehearsing this last section presented a few challenges. As a cast, we were nearing the final stages of preparation for the performance. I was finished setting the structure for the choreography by early April but I continued to clean the dance until the week before the performance. The cast, as mentioned before, included dancers with different body types and abilities. These differences were magnified during this last section because there is more unison and more complicated choreography. Some of the cast were not getting the quality and dynamic changes in the movement that I could feel in my own body and could see in a few of the dancers. The men in particular struggled to find the balance of flow and strength that I felt the dancing needed. We spent a lot of time reviewing two phrases in the middle of the piece. The first section is a leaping phrase that occurs

in a cannon. We had trouble organizing the space - too many dancers and not enough room to fulfill the movement and place the dancers where they needed to be for the next section of movement. A second problem occurred after the cannon leap phrase. Immediately following the leap phrase, the dancers begin a complicated phrase involving lots of arm circles, changes of weight and direction. I wanted the movement to have a released feeling, performed with momentum and flow, but performed in unison. I was not concerned so much with the shape as the flow of the phrase. However, it proved to be extremely challenging to unify all the dancers so the phrase didn't look sloppy or 'off'. I was frustrated with the lack of success we were having in solving the problem and asked Gregg Lizenbery to come in and see the phrase. He was able to help clarify certain spatial and shaping questions for the dancers that I was not able to clearly articulate. The third problem area involved a three-part cannon lift that evolves into small moving group sculptures. The dancers were not finding a flow to the timing. I wanted the sculptures to move quickly from shape to shape seamlessly. We spent a great deal of time playing around with different tempos to perform the moving sculptures. I think there were two main reasons for these trouble areas. This is where the music obviously departs from the feeling of the dance. The tempo slows down and becomes almost operatic. I coached the dancers not to depend on the music but to find their flow and tempo in the dancing. Because I particularly had grown to dislike this part of the music, I was having trouble liking anything I saw performed to it. Once the dancers found the group's internal flow I began to enjoy the choreography. I think the second reason for the difficulties in this section arose

from the weariness of the cast. It was at the end of a long semester. People were tired and allowed their dancing to become sloppy. The same corrections had to be made repeatedly and the overall energy was at an all time low. In addition, *The Question of Water* is a long and physically demanding dance. While there are opportunities throughout the dance to catch one's breath while another section is on stage, all of the sections are physically challenging. I think part of the trouble that we encountered in cleaning the last section was due to physical exhaustion. The dancers were simply worn out by the time it came to perform the last section.

Once the dance was performed in front of an audience many of the problems in this last section were worked out. The choreography and the performance were engaging to watch and I believe "The Cycle Returns" is a solid ending to the overall dance.

Upon reflection and review of the dance, I would approach this section differently in two main ways. First, I would change the music. While I think the music worked (and was told by many audience members it was their favorite section), I believe it took away from the dancing and the overall feeling of the entire dance. I would find music with an organic and earthy sound (acoustic drums, guitar, flute etc.) without getting the same "everything is wonderful now" feeling that the Rubin Blades piece inflicted on the choreography. The second change would involve timing. I would set the entire section to counts with the new music to help clean the movement. Thirdly, I would teach it first so that the dancers could develop it over a longer period of time. This would only work with

a subsequent production. I could not do this when first creating the piece because the very structure of the dance grew from all of the sections before it. However, I do think it is the hardest section of choreography to perform with clarity and think that it needs to develop over many rehearsals.

An unseen force gathers the dancers into the center where they grab hands and delicately extend out and back into a circle that opens into a large arch. In unison they rise out of the back arch before releasing into two long waves that circulate around each other before exploding into individual raindrops and returning to their small closed positions to begin the cycle anew. Ten figures slowly rise up off the ground in the shadowy ripples of the projected light before darkness falls.

I am proud of *The Question of Water*. As a whole it is a well-structured piece that displays a wide range of dynamics, style, quality and content. Each section of the piece represents a different concept and choreographic approach. The dances are complete in and of themselves but work beautifully together to create the whole. It was an amazing journey to begin from only a seed of an idea and develop that seed into a dance with five distinct sections. As a young choreographer, *The Question of Water* is my greatest accomplishment to date.

Video

I used video projection for two pieces in *Fly High Fall Silently*. The first was for the video *The Big Cheese*. The second application of video projection was for *The Question of Water*. In my proposal I mentioned that I wanted to use multi-media in the form of video projection because I had had little experience with it and felt it was an important tool to know how to work with. I originally wanted to use images of water projected onto the dancers throughout *The Question of Water*, with the majority of the video projection being utilized during the last section. Before I started to choreograph I thought that the last section would be more about the video images than the dancing. As the piece developed I found it important to keep the focus on the choreography. I anticipated the projection to be used as a lighting tool to create the illusion of water on the dancers.

In the beginning of the rehearsal process I intended to work on the video projection with the dancers in the theater space. I found this nearly impossible. First, it proved difficult to reserve time in the lab theater at times that worked with the cast's schedules. Second, it was extremely difficult to obtain the use of the theaters' projector. It was often checked out and/or being used for other projects. The dance program was not able to get their new projector until days before we went into technical rehearsals. In addition, I had limited understanding of how best to use the projectors in the way I envisioned for the dance piece. I explored using a projector on the dancers in the dance building. In that space, the projector created the illusion of water on the dancers' bodies by creating subtle ripples and swirls of light reflecting off their clothing.

Over the rehearsal period I had collected many video and still clips of water. I began editing these clips into one long sequence so that I could see which images worked on the white costumes. I found that images that had lots of horizontal or vertical movement with contrasting colors worked best. But it became painfully apparent that placing the projectors in the space was going to cause problems. I wanted the images to be on the dancers and not on the cyclorama behind them. During this entire process I was in contact with my lighting designer, Daniel Sakimura. We discussed potential images and potential placement for the projectors. Daniel and I both felt that we could find a place that covered the dancers and with some use of theater lighting wash out the extra projector light that was spilling on the background. However, we had limited opportunities to explore potential solutions because there was a main stage show in progress that used both projectors. To further complicate the situation Daniel was the stage manager for that main stage show and was unable to spend much time on *Fly High Fall Silently*.

Colleen Murphy and I decided to keep working on the video idea and try to find a solution to the placement issue. During this exploration period I began to like the idea of projected images on the cyclorama that supported my concept of water as transitions or background to the dancing. I began re-editing the many video clips into two tapes. The first tape was of images that would project onto the cyclorama. It contained images of waterfalls, rivers, waves, sun, pollution and storms. Editing the video images together to go with the music and fade in and out at appropriate times was extremely challenging and time consuming. When we were finally in the theater for technical rehearsals, with the lighting designer and all three projectors,

other problems developed. Daniel thought that we could set up the projector on a pipe and have it project down on the dancers. It did project onto the dancers but it also projected onto the large frame above the stage. We explored many possible solutions many of which created as many problems as they solved. We finally decided to place the center projector in the last row of the audience, tilted to miss as many heads in the audience as possible. We placed the two projectors that were meant to project only onto the dancers from the upstage corners of both stage right and left.

Once the projectors were finally set up, I realized that the light from the projectors, even when the video screen was black, could still be seen on the dancers. Finally, I had to have each projector manually covered and uncovered during “non-video” times. It was a remarkably stressful and frustrating process, but I believed that if we could work it out correctly the video projection would enhance the piece. We had worked out many of the kinks when the idea was presented to me to drop all of the video. This was during the second to last dress rehearsal, which totally disrupted my entire concept.

While the video caused many problems, we worked most of them out by this rehearsal and I had faith that the rest of the kinks would work out before opening night. As the choreographer, I did not see the video as a distraction from the overall dance and instead believed it supported my artistic concept for the piece. I knew that the dance was not dependent on the video projection but that the images supported the concepts in my choreography. Upon returning for the last dress rehearsal I had decided to compromise some of the video images but not all of

them. I cut out the beginning images of water and the images of pollution. I left the side projectors alone- I liked the look of the water/light on the costumes. I also left in the image of the sun during “Desert” and the waterfall during the last section, “Cycle Returns.” After taking the images out and watching the piece several times, I missed the images that I had taken out. If I were to recreate the piece I would reinsert the video images but in a more holistic way. Rather than layering the video images on top of the choreography I would integrate the images and choreography together.

I learned a lot about video technology, light and costuming through this video projection project. If I were to do another piece with video projection, I would find a visual artist or lighting designer who had experience working with video projection. I would work with them to help me design clips that work best for the choreography.

Production Elements

Fly High Fall Silently is the first major concert production I have created. In the process I learned as much about production as I did about choreography and performance. I had some prior production experience from classes, jobs and my own involvement in choreography and performance, but in many ways, the production and technical aspect of preparing *Fly High Fall Silently* was far more challenging than preparing the actual choreography. I found it extremely difficult to organize all of the many different projects that fall under the production heading. I found the process of preparing the production side of the concert fraught with red tape and problems. Preparing an MFA concert in a university setting is a mixed

blessing. I was thrilled and honored to have access to a theater where I did not have to pay for space, crew or advertising and where I had a \$1000 budget. But on the other hand, as an MFA student I was responsible for everything as the director of the concert, but I also had to get permission from many different people for nearly every choice I made. During the production I received gracious support and encouragement from the Dance faculty and costume shop but ran into problems with the publicity office.

Costuming

As a choreographer, I am embarrassed to admit that while I have created many dances I have never really designed any costumes. In my undergraduate studies I had to take a costume class where we designed and sewed our own costumes. I vaguely remember learning about different textures and how certain fabrics move and reflect light. *Mere Mortals* is the only dance where I thought about the costumes while I was choreographing the dance. For previous pieces I've waited until the last minute to find either what color scheme and style all the dancers own or find what is least offensive in the costume shop. Preparing *Fly High Fall Silently* changed all that. As I considered each piece for the concert I had fun thinking about what costumes would work best for each dance. I was very fortunate to have a dancer in the cast who was also interested in costumes and worked in the costume shop. Wayles Haynes approached me early in the rehearsal process about helping with anything relating to costumes. Having a dancer who was involved in the piece, and therefore knew the style, feeling and structural needs of the dance, as the costume designer, ended up being a very important factor in

preparing appropriate costumes. For *Question of Water* I had vague ideas of what designs and colors I thought might work but needed someone who knew more about costumes to design them. To design the costumes for *Question of Water* we discussed each section and what colors would or would not work, what style and what practicalities the choreography demanded including turning up side down, turns and time variations. We looked at fabric and patterns with Bertha Fernandez (a second designer) to find material and patterns that would work best for the piece. I found this particular production element interesting, fun and relatively non-stressful. I give all the credit to Wayles Haynes who took on an enormous, time-consuming project and pulled it off with a smile. Spending time talking about fabric, color and design in relationship to the choreography and lighting was extremely beneficial and educational. I will never again approach dance costuming with a “whatever” attitude. I look forward to applying what I have learned about costume design in future dance pieces.

Programs/Posters

As part of the MFA requirements I was responsible for supplying the publicity director with all information regarding programs and posters. Because I was approaching the entire concert as a learning experience to prepare me to present my own concerts, I decided I needed to design my own programs and posters. In addition, I did not feel that anyone else would bother to spend extra time preparing a quality product that was designed with my show in mind. Unfortunately, I ran into many problems and red tape in all things publicity related.

To create both the poster and program I worked in Photoshop 6.5. I spent hours designing and formatting the projects. I was very happy with the end results. I was able to make the mediocre photos from the photo shoot attractive and eye catching. I know for a fact that because it was my concert I spent a lot more time and energy creating images that fit the concert. I prepared several versions and had both students and faculty review them. I turned in both projects well in advance of the deadlines set by the publicity office. I later found out that neither the publicity director nor the graphic designer worked on the project until two and a half weeks before the show opened. Traditionally the posters should be out at least two weeks prior to a performance. This disorganization and total disregard for this concert was frustrating. My frustration increased tenfold when the publicity office disagreed over the style of font I had chosen, cone graphics, and that I was not allowed to the use of two different images on the poster and program.

While staying friendly and professional, I did my best to supply the publicity office with any and all additional requests. My biggest concern was to get the posters out for the public to see. The publicity director handled everything concerning my concert with carelessness. I believe that I would have been better off if I had been allowed to oversee all aspects of the publicity myself without having to wait on and haggle over details with employees of the publicity office. The posters were late! The publicity release was late! And when it was released it was different from the one I had seen. The show was advertised with wrong information as late as opening night. Kalaeo, the University of Hawai'i school newspaper and the KTUH school radio both announced *Catwalk*, the MFA concert

that *Fly High Fall Silently* was replacing. I do not comprehend how our own school paper and radio did not get the correct information. In any other situation I would of either replaced the incompetent staff or demanded better service. Or I could have done it myself. As a MFA student I did not have these options.

In reflection, I am still glad I was involved with the design of both the poster and program for *Fly High Fall Silently*. The experience with the publicity staff was unpleasant but certainly helped to make me a little tougher for future concerts.

Technical Rehearsals

The technical rehearsals, May 4th –6th were full of expected and unexpected challenges. Previous to the technical rehearsals I had been in contact with both the lighting designer and stage manager, Nicole Shorn. They had both been present at many rehearsals and we collectively discussed issues concerning lighting, program order and costume changes. I had arranged for my production crew early in January. I asked dancers who I knew would be responsible and intelligent. A week before we went into technical rehearsals, one of the crew dropped out to prepare for finals that were during the week of show. It was also during this week that the lighting designer informed me we would need an extra crewmember in the lighting booth. The concert was during finals week and nobody wanted to take on an extra time-consuming project. Thankfully, Daniel was able to find with two (inexperienced) students from the Theater program. When I scheduled the technical weekend, I anticipated some difficulties with the projectors and planned on meeting in the lab with the lighting designer, stage manager and crew a full six

hours before any dancers arrived. Unfortunately, when I arrived on the morning of the first technical rehearsal, Daniel was still hanging and focusing the lights. He had been busy with the main stage show and had not come in advance to prepare the lights for the technical rehearsal. The extra time I had allotted for the projectors was used up setting up the lights and preparing the lighting board and circuits. Because of the missing lights that were being used for the main stage production, Daniel was forced to compensate with what was available with promises to “fix” the problem the next day. When we arrived the next day we had to delay setting light cues in order to hang and refocus the new lights. As we began to set light cues, Daniel realized that because of all the new lights he had to repatch the light board and none of the cues set the previous day worked anymore. We had to start all over.

The technical for *Fly High Fall Silently* ran into many problems that caused severe delays. Once we finally set the light cues there were problems changing the gels between pieces so we had to take out cues Daniel had set. The next three days continued with many problems involving light cues, gel changes and projection problems. The cast pitched in and helped try to get the show up and running as much as they were able. It really took a massive team effort to make up for the lack of experienced crewmembers. For the most part, the dancers were patient throughout the prolonged hours in the theater, and danced strongly in each run-through. By the time we opened on Wednesday, the show ran fairly smoothly and we were able to put the long and taxing technical experience behind us.

In reflecting on the entire technical experience for the concert I still get an anxious feeling in my stomach. Thinking back, I cannot positively say what I could have changed before going into the theater for that long technical rehearsal. In advance, I had arranged for crew, met with both my lighting designer and stage manager and planned the schedule of events to allow for short delays. I made sure that I had all the video, music and costumes ready. Everything seemed on target until I realized that Daniel did not design the light plot as effectively as he should have nor was he prepared to begin the technical rehearsal when he had promised. Because I was “collaborating” with the lighting designer and the crew was all just volunteering their time, it was difficult for me to find a balance between being bossy and controlling and just letting everything fall apart. I decided that I had to remain calm and focused to pull it all together.

I did learn many valuable lessons from the experience for other projects I will work on. Next time, I am going to ask the lighting designer to explain the light plot ahead of time and how he imagines it working for each piece. I would make sure that the stage manager was aware of certain responsibilities particular to stage-managing a dance performance. Third, if at all possible, I would have an outline of responsibilities for the show that include everyone’s job (changing gels, helping other dancers, etc.) for each dancer before going into technical rehearsal. These ideas may help to run a smooth technical rehearsal and show so that when the unanticipated problems arise it is easier to deal with them.

Conclusion

As a culminating experience, *Fly High Fall Silently* was an exemplary representation of my combined skills developed throughout my dance training and highlighting in my graduate studies at the University of Hawai'i. Choreographing and directing my own concert was the most challenging and rewarding experience of all my dance studies. The risk of choreographing an evening concert was frightening, and at times overwhelming. I not only had to produce my own work, but also had to coordinate a cast of fourteen, a production crew of six, and my thesis committee. The concert challenged my skills as a choreographer, dancer, and teacher in such a way that I was able to mature in each area. The fusion of these three passions drove the creative force for the entire concert. In reflecting on each dance in the concert in terms of content, process and performance I became aware of the similarities and differences in my personal work style. *Fly High Fall Silently* was one of the most profound learning experiences I have had to date.

Jennifer Butler
MFA Thesis proposal
Submitted September 2002

Fly High Fall Silently (working title)

For my MFA thesis concert, I am proposing an evening-length performance featuring my choreography, past and present. The performance will be held in the Ernest Lab Theater May 7-11th, 2003.

I am excited to have the opportunity to work at such depth and with such a variety of choreography. I want to do my own show because I feel that the challenge will take me to a new level, giving me the necessary skills required in the “real world” for a dance educator, choreographer, and dancer.

I want to do a show by myself for a variety of reasons. First, I strongly believe that as an MFA graduate I should have developed the skills and have the experience of running my own show. As a student at the University of Hawai`i in the dance program, I have consistently choreographed and performed. The MFA concert can and will help me further hone my talent and the skills I have learned in my training. The experience of producing enough work, planning and running my own show, and pulling it all together for a major evening-length performance will be extremely invaluable in my future.

While I am sure I cannot truly anticipate the stress of putting on a show of this size, I feel confident that I am capable. As a teacher and a choreographer, I have had experience working small and large groups into dances and full-length

performances. The most exciting part of this anticipated concert for me is that this will be the first time I will have had the opportunity to work at such a high artistic level with well-trained dancers while having three sets of professional eyes critiquing and helping me grow, hence improving the process and the product of my choreography.

An additional skill I wish to develop during this concert is the use of multimedia in the form of video projection during the performance. The majority of the multimedia will be during the final piece, *The Question of Water*.

As a dancer, I see my roles as choreographer, teacher and performer as all equally inspiring and important to my dance studies. I believe they are inter-twined and should be respected as such. Therefore, I approach creating dances through the lens of choreographer, dancer, and teacher.

My approach to choreography is not as a dictator choreographer with the attitude that I know more than my dancers. My best work as a choreographer is achieved when I am the facilitator of creative problem solving. I ask for my dancers' advice and input as both performers and choreographers. I respect their opinions and cherish the additional creativity. I view dance making as teamwork. Dancing actually is about teamwork: working together to make something new and exciting.

As a teacher, I view learning/making dances as the real way we learn to dance. In building the dances for the final performance, we (the cast) will be working on perfecting technique and improving the quality of our dance through paying close attention to how we approach the

movement. Thus, I view this concert as an opportunity for me to grow as a choreographer as well as an educator and performer. I also believe that this concert will be beneficial for the cast members for the same reasons.

The performance: *Flying High Falling Silently*

My proposed show will include five different dances and an additional four or five short “interludes”. I anticipate the show running at least 1 1/2 hours including the intermission. Two of the dances are reconstructions of past choreography and the rest are new dances I will be creating over the next six months. I will be working with a total cast of ten dancers including myself. Due to the length and involvement of this project, I have been careful to approach each dancer with as much information as I can about the project. All dancers who have agreed to work on this project are aware of the time and commitment involved with this particular project. I am well aware of conflicting rehearsals and projects and will adjust rehearsals accordingly to fit the ever-changing schedule of the dance department and lives of the dancers. I discuss cast and rehearsal goals later in this proposal under “who, what and when.”

Brief overview: Fly High Fall Silently

I have chosen the five dances for this show to represent my personal style as a choreographer. Presently there is not a thematic choice for why each piece is in the show. They are not connected through theme or even style but as a display of the variety of possible styles I can work in as a choreographer. The pieces chosen are examples of working strategies that I try to employ and improve on as an artist.

As previously stated, I approach choreography equally as dancer and teacher. While the pieces themselves are not tied together through theme, they are tied together via my choreographic process. One of the reasons I chose the 1998 piece *Mere Mortals* for reconstruction is that it was in that dance I first began trying to specifically work as the creative facilitator with dancers as individuals. I have continued this approach in a variety of ways throughout a variety of dances (and in my classrooms). I do not go into each dance with the same “formula”. Rather I enter each new dance with the same evolving philosophy. This philosophy is rooted in the idea that dancers are individuals with amazing creative abilities and I, as choreographer, to facilitate their various creative energies into a cohesive and hopefully engaging product. In the selected pieces, each dance was choreographed beginning with a different idea or topic in mind and is therefore different although coming from the same approach. Program Order

The following is (obviously) a first draft program order of Fly High Fall Silently. Within the program order is a short description of each piece. Following the program order is a more detailed description of the intention of choreographer for the two new dances, which are to be submitted for partial fulfillment of my MFA degree (*the 15 minute choreography and personal performance portions of the concert*).

FLY HIGH FALL SILENTLY PROGRAM

GlowWorms (approximately 5 min)

Duet. An exciting movement study of the many possible ways two people can lift, share weight, roll, and fly together without worrying about gravity!

Cones 1 (1-2 min)

Cone Interludes –short “skits” in-between many of the pieces. These will involve “cones and trolls.” Each skit will be different and use improv and props. A poke at the ridiculous parking bureaucracy here at UH. 1-3 dancers at a time. These will be (hopefully) funny and cute. These will also act as a breather and costume change for dancers.

In the Zone: (approximately 7 min)

Original cast? 4 dancers. Movement study based on creative dance lesson plans. Fast and high energy.

Cones 2 (1-2min)**Mere Mortals: (approximately 15 min)**

5 dancers. Reconstruction from video. Dance in four parts. Music by Tom Wait (a little dark and weird) Quirky movement with abstract theme of being “othered” as part of being human. Get to wear big boots, overalls, slippers, painted face and fake eyelashes!

Intermission: Bloopers on video: 15min

Cones 3 (1-2)

Just a Girl (working title) approximately 5 min.
Solo. Performed and choreographed by me.

Cones 4 (2-3 min)

The Question of Water (working title) 20 min.

Whole cast

Multimedia (using projections of water on screen and dancers)

Format:

Water cycle
Water poem
Storm/flood
Drought
Water Cycle..... Returns

Total approximate time: 65 min of performing time + 15 intermission and extra time for changes of gels etc. = 1 1/2 hour show?

Intention of Choreography

Just a Girl (*working title*)

I will choreograph and perform a solo to music by Meredith Monk. This dance began as an assignment on a phrase built directly off a musical phrase in Betsy Fisher's advanced choreography class. However, the dance has never been performed (as it is still being choreographed) and has and will continue to grow far beyond the original assignment. I am inspired by the music's quirky and changing vocal patterns of laughter overlaid with text that is used as part of the instrumental score (as Meredith Monk is known for) The movement I am working on involves playing with the music with different rhythmic patterns in various body parts. I am playing with using the musical timing as I hear it, not necessarily "proper" musical theory timing.

Question of Water (*working title*)

Question of Water is a dance that will deal with the concept of water as a source of movement vocabulary, quality and theme. I grew up in the desert where water is scarce. An environment without water is harsh, brown, and tough. Anything that survives, survives because of the ability to do without much water or to manipulate water resources. I grew up thinking

and dreaming about water probably because I had little around me. I understood early how sacred water is to all life.

Upon leaving the desert and moving to the northwest coast of the United States, I encountered water on a very different level and gained another perspective. Water is everywhere in the Northwest in the form of lakes, ocean, rivers and rain. Lots and lots of rain. Whereas in the desert we would run out and turn our faces to the little rain we received, in Seattle we would turn our heads down and try to ignore the ever-present rain. The abundance of water turned the world green, lush and healthy. I fell in love with water even as I cursed the constant rain and clouds. I loved watching the water spin and curl in the lakes and the waves of the ocean rippling in and out. When I moved to Hawai'i, I was and am still in awe of the ocean that surrounds us. I am fascinated by the fact we are surrounded by all this water, none of which we can drink, but which feeds us in so many ways. It takes care of us, can hurt us, and even destroy us through storms and tidal waves. Yet even here where it rains everyday in the mountains and we are surrounded by water, we can see the impact of the changing climate and our abuse of this sacred resource.

This brings me to the question of water. Water is necessary for survival for all life forms. Every organism needs water, in different ways and amounts. We need water to keep our body systems functioning properly. We need water to feed the food we eat. We need water to feed the plants that give us oxygen to breathe. We need water for industrial production.

Although water is so important, we in the United States treat water like a never-ending resource we are entitled to use and abuse as we see fit.

This past summer I encountered the problem in all of its ugly reality. I went home to New Mexico knowing that there had been draught and fires. One expects drought in a dessert climate. However, this was extreme. It was not just the dessert that was suffering. The worst effects of the drought were in the mountains. I grew up with the Rockies in my backyard. Colorado has always been a haven from the harsh, dry, hot land of New Mexico. However, this summer Colorado was dry, brown and, in many places, on fire. Rivers were drying up. Creeks were gone. Forests and homes were burning. These fires were polluting water sources. All across the Southwest were fires. One fire would finally be brought under control, and another would start. Farmers who depend on irrigation water were in trouble. Crops were dying in the fields. I understood for the first time my grandmother's description of growing up in Oklahoma during the dust bowl.

New Mexico, indeed the entire Southwest, has had a serious water shortage for years. The causes are many and complicated. The huge sunbelt population explosion, uncaring developers, individual and collective abuse of resources, and governments unable or unwilling to acknowledge or deal with the problem are the primary culprits responsible for the impending state of emergency this part of the country is facing.

The facts are: we *will* run out of water. Soon.

As I left the Southwest to return to Seattle and Hawai`i, I was eager to feel fresh water on my skin. However, in Seattle, I found myself reading an article about the Northwest's polluted water caused by excessive timber cutting, and the unchecked nuclear power plants and other industries polluting the rivers, lakes and streams. Back in Honolulu, I started looking into the water issues here. Hawai`i itself is in danger of running out of water much sooner than people are willing to recognize. The population explosion and abuse of resources in this fragile ecosystem cannot ultimately support the demands and abuse we inflict.

The need for water is everywhere. The problem of water is everywhere. The water issue hardly ever makes front-page news and is seldom talked about. I would dare to assume that most people never give a thought to the importance of water in their lives or of the danger of polluting and running out of this sacred resource. This leads me to the *Question of Water*.

While the above is a personal manifesto about water, I do not intend to make a narrative play through dance about the good of water and the evils of mankind. Rather I would like to make an abstract dance that deals with these various issues through movement studies of water. I want to introduce the idea of water without preaching. I want to introduce the idea and maybe someone will leave the theater thinking about water and the next time they see an advertisement to conserve or protect water they will pay more attention.

Choreographic process for *The Question of Water*

Presently I have divided the dance into five sections. These sections include: water cycle, water poem, drought, storm/flood, and the water cycle...returns. These are starting points to break the dance into parts. I anticipate that through the creative process these sections will develop, change and maybe replaced as the piece develops. The entire piece will act as a culmination of choreographic tools and exercises I have developed during my training as a choreographer. In addition, I will be using video projection on screens and on the dancers. For the movement vocabulary, I will be utilizing tools I used to choreograph the other four dances. Some of these tools include: creative dance lesson plans, text as inspiration of movement (poetry), personal writings, writings from dancers, improvisation, pictures, video, and movement games.

Section 1: Water Cycle. 9 dancers.

The dance will open with me (as Just a Girl) or a crewmember leading the audience through a participatory rainstorm. This includes breaking the audience into groups and leading them through snapping, stomping, and hands rubbing to create a cannon that creates the auditory effect of a rainstorm. As the storm dies down a video projection comes on that shows

various clips of various types of water (rain, rivers, ocean waves etc.) As the video fades out the dancers are moving.

I envision this section developing around the actual water cycle (precipitation, evaporation and condensation) I will begin the movement exploration based on a lesson plan I use in creative dance to explore the water cycle. The movement will be a mixture of phrases I choreograph and movement created by the dancers through the lesson plan. I intend to use all nine dancers in the section.

Section 2: Water Poem 3-5 dancers

As section, one fades out and off stage, there are three or four dancers left on stage. The video projection projects scenes of water over the dancers as they dance on the stage.

The movement from this section will grow from exploration of text based on the idea of water to create movement. The text will come from three different forms: poetry (published), my own personal writing, and the dancers writing. I will guide the dancers through various writing activities and then pull movement ideas from the entire or partial text. The dancers may also be asked to create short movement phrases based on their own or writing or that of others. I am not yet sure if this piece will be all group dancing or solos mixed with group dancing. I don't think I'll use the text during the performance as I see it more as inspiration for the movement. However, I want to be able to leave this option open if it seems appropriate.

Section 3: *Drought* 3-5 dancers

Section 2 closes with a black out and a slide type show displaying various pictures of drought that we used to create the material for the piece, pictures like burned trees, dried up rivers, stark landscapes, etc...

The source for movement material for the choreography for this section will be inspired by pictures, videos and ideas generated in discussion. We will explore the movement qualities and shapes of drought. Things that drought bring to mind such as dying, fire, thirst, bent and haggard trees, lizards, dryness, hunger...etc. The possibilities are endless. I imagine that this section will be heavier in emotional content and more dramatic/heavy in movement while perhaps limited in movement through space. I picture movement being more about shape than locomotor. Quiet and slow movement versus loud and fast. I will use the material generated from improvisation facilitated by the pictures/videos to create movement phrases.

Section 4: *Storm/Flood*

In the background the drought dancers freeze in shapes while in the background the sound of a major storm thunder in the lights go black and then on very darkly. The video projections and other non theater lighting lights the stage (with minimal lights for practicality from theater) lights and video are used on the dancers who are running around the stage with big movement- some carrying fabric and/or frames of scrim to create an airy but frantic effect.

Source from movement will come from some external sources such as writings and pictures, sound and video, but will focus most specifically on

the movement qualities while thinking of water in these natural disasters type of scenarios. I am not sure if we will focus specifically on one type of water catastrophe or focus on the general power water can have. I envision the movement in this section to be big, fast, wild, strong, with lots of locomotion and changes of levels. I can see using many floor patterns and waves of dancers through space.

Section 5: The Water Cycle... Returns

The calm returns after the storm. The dancers make their way back onto the stage as the projector projects on them various scenes that have to do with falling of water off plants, flowers, and puddles, etc.

This final section will be some sort of culmination of the four previous sections. I envision the majority of this section will rely on the use of the video with the dancers on stage but not necessarily the focus.

Production Elements

Video

The use of video during this performance is meant to enhance the choreography and not replace the live performers. I plan to use at least one video projector and maybe up to three if I can secure that many and they work in the lab theater. I have very little experience working with this type of media but feel that it is a very important skill to be familiar with to be employable in today's market. Therefore, I am proposing that I incorporate it into the concert. I am presently taking the multimedia class that will teach

me the basics of video editing. I will also be spending quite a bit of time in ITS learning how to use their facilities. Colleen Murphy, a fellow graduate student in the department who is familiar with video and dance, has agreed to work on this part of the project with me.

I will have to play in the Lab Theater early in the rehearsal process to really understand what the possibilities and limitations of using the video projection during the performance are. I anticipate projection on a screen as well as bodies, fabric and anything else on which the image will read on!

Costumes

I will be working with simple costume ideas for each of the pieces. I anticipate using some of the MFA fund to buy or have built some of the costumes.

Possible costumes:

Glow Worms- red pants, black top, and black pants and red top.

Cones: Whatever. Street clothes.

In The Zone: silver jump suits (!??)

Mere Mortals: blue jean overalls, boots, slippers, white face paint, fake clown eyelashes

Just a girl: Neutral dress. Red/purple wig.

Question of Water: I am not sure yet. Sequoia has agreed to design costumes that match the piece. I will either have them built or try to buy appropriate items.

Rehearsals

I will be working throughout the next 8 months on the concert. I have started rehearsals for the three of the dances (*GlowWorms*, *Just A Girl* and *In The Zone*) and during the next two months will begin all of the dances. I will be rehearsing each piece at different times due to cast and performance needs.

Time frame goals for each piece:

GlowWorms: Completed by Oct. 15

Just a Girl: November 20

Mere Mortals

Sections

- A October/November
- B January, March
- C December
- D October/November

The Question of Water

Sections:

- A October/November
- B November
- C December
- D January, March
- E March-April

Finished by April 15! Take month of February off for Korean workshop except for reviews.

Who, What, Where, When

Who:

Choreographer: Jennifer Butler

Dancers:

Ben Arcangel

Kathy Arakaki

Jessica Womack

Wayles Haynes

Kelly Del Rosario

Christopher Quiocho

Malia Yamamoto
 Coleen Murphey
 Christine Berwin

What: A full evening length performance of my choreography that involves a variety of styles and themes. In particular, the pieces *Just a Girl* and *Question of Water*, in conjunction with a written document, will satisfy the choreography and performance requirements for the MFA degree in dance.

Where:

Kennedy Theatre's Earle Ernst Lab Theatre
 University of Hawai'i

When: May 7,8,9, 2003 at 8:00
 May 11, 2003 2pm

Time Table as of September 20, 2002

- Projected date for the thesis committee formation based on acceptance of proposal: October 5, 2002
- Showing date for 1/3 of choreography: Monday, December 1, 2002
- Showing date for 2/3 of choreography: Monday, March 17th, 2003
- Showing date for complete choreography: Monday, April 14th, 2003
- Concert Dates: May 7,8,9, 2003 at 8:00
- May 11, 2002 2pm

Scheduling of production and publicity elements:

- Photo shoot
- First week of April. Unless arranged to do photo shoot with the April Footholds concert.
- Poster info turn in by April 18, 2003
- Press Release Info to publicity office no later than March 8th, 2003
- Program: April 18th, 2003
- Lighting and tech run-through: Saturday, May 3, 2002.
- Deadline for submission of first draft of written work August 29, 2003
- Deadline for submission of video and written document to the graduate division: October 1, 2003



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA
Kennedy Theatre

Primetime Theatre
2002-2003 SEASON



FOOTHOLDS III:
*Fly High
Fall Silently*



SHOWCASING CHOREOGRAPHY BY MFA DANCE CANDIDATE JENNIFER BUTLER
MAY 7 - 10 AT 8PM & MAY 11 AT 2PM
(REPLACING A NIGHT AT THE CATWALK CLUB)

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

THE BIG CHEESE: VIDEO

CAST

▲ (INTERLUDE)

IN THE ZONE (2002)

CHOREOGRAPHER Jennifer Butler

MUSIC Critters Buggin

COSTUME DESIGNERS Jennifer Butler, Wayles E.S. Haynes

DANCERS Kathy Arakaki, Ben Arcangel, Christopher Quicho,
Malia Misa Yamamoto*GLOW WORMS (2002)*

CHOREOGRAPHERS Jennifer Butler in collaboration with

Kelly Del Rosario and Wayles E.S. Haynes

MUSIC Chemical Brothers

DANCERS Kelly Del Rosario and Wayles E.S. Haynes

▲ ▲

MERE MORTALS (1998)

CHOREOGRAPHER Jennifer Butler

MUSIC Tom Waits

COSTUME DESIGNER Jennifer Butler

DANCERS Malia Bowiby, Larisa Eastman,
Colleen Elizabeth Murphy, Kiplinn Sagmillér

▲ ▲ ▲

INTERMISSION

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

JUST A GIRL (Premiere)

CHOREOGRAPHER & DANCER Jennifer Butler*

MUSIC Meredith Monk

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts Degree requirements in dance.

FRONT OF HOUSE INFORMATION

There will be an informal question and answer session after Friday's show.

In consideration of the performers and your fellow audience members, please turn off or silence all pagers, cellular telephones and digital watches. Also, eating, drinking, smoking, photography and/or video recording are not permitted in auditorium.

For large print programs or any other accessibility needs, please contact the House Manager, or call the Kennedy Theatre Box Office at 956-7655 (v/t).

Due to new University of Hawai'i policy, smoking is not permitted within 20 feet of any campus building. Your assistance in helping us adhere to this policy is greatly appreciated.

THE QUESTION OF WATER (Premiere)*(There is no significant break between sections.)*

CHOREOGRAPHER: Jennifer Butler*

COSTUME DESIGNERS: Wayles E.S. Haynes, Jennifer Butler,
Bertha Fernandez

PROJECTION DESIGNERS: Jennifer Butler, Colleen Elizabeth Murphy

DANCERS: Ben Arcangel, Kathy Arakaki, Christine Berwin,

Traci Chun, Kelly Del Rosario, Wayles E.S. Haynes,

Jacqueline Nii, Christopher Quicho, Eun-Kyung Kim,

Malia Misa Yamamoto

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts Degree requirements in dance.



Music: Midival Punditz and Mickey Hart

*Water flows from high in the mountains.**Water runs deep in the Earth.**Miraculously, water comes to us, and sustains all life*

— THICH NHAT HANHN



Music: Pat Metheny

*Imagine the ocean dry as lavender.**Imagine branches ceasing to be perches for the birds.**And then on the horizon**imagine death in its pallor of pallors**letting the dead live again.*

— ANDRÉE CHEDID



Music: Dmitri Shostakovich

*The great sea has set me in motion.**Set me adrift,**The arch of sky**And mightiness of storms**Encompasses me,**And I am left**Trembling with joy.*

— ESKIMO SONG



Music: Mickey Hart

*You'll never miss the water**until the well runs dry.*

— TRADITIONAL BLUES



Music: Ruben Blades

*May the earth continue to live**May the heavens above continue to live**May the rains continue to dampen the land**May the wet forests continue to grow**Then the flowers shall bloom**And we people shall live again.*

— HAWAIIAN PRAYER

PRODUCTION STAFF

CONCERT COORDINATOR Jennifer Butler
FACULTY ADVISORS Betsy Fisher, Peggy Gaither Adams,
 Gregg Lizenbery
LIGHTING DESIGN Daniel Sakimura
STAGE MANAGER Nicole Schorn
LIGHT BOARD OPERATORS Larissa Marceau, Rosie Summers
SOUND BOARD OPERATOR Velma Buchanan
PROJECTOR OPERATOR Colleen Elizabeth Murphy
BACKSTAGE CREW David Bruhn
VIDEO EDITOR Colleen Elizabeth Murphy
SOUND EDITOR Ben Arcangel
LAB THEATRE COSTUME SUPERVISOR Megan Patton
WARDROBE SUPERVISOR Tracyn Hagos
DRESSER Arturo Mariano
COSTUME CONSTRUCTION Bertha Fernandez, Wayles E.S. Haynes,
 Christine Hauptman, Angela Mangano, Mariko Neubauer,
 Megan Patton, THEA 221 Students
BOX OFFICE SUPERVISORS Michael S. Lee, Tim Gonzalez-Wiler
BOX OFFICE STAFF Carolyn Covalt, Allie Fishburn,
 Tanisha Franquez, Jennifer Norton, Lei Sadakali,
 Danielle Williams
LAB THEATRE TECHNICAL COORDINATOR Cristian E. Ellauri
PUBLICITY DIRECTOR Kristy DeAnn Miller
PUBLICITY ASSISTANT Chris Doi
PHOTOGRAPHER Andrew Shimabuku
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Lauren Forsythe
GRAPHICS Jennifer Butler
PROGRAM EDITOR Allyson Paris
HOUSE MANAGER Carolyn Covalt
ASSISTANT HOUSE MANAGERS Helen Lee, Allie Fishburn,
 Jennie S. Frazer
WEBSITE ASSISTANT Kenneth Yeung
KENNEDY THEATRE RESIDENT STAFF Gerald Kawaoka, Marty Myers,
 Hannah Schauer Galli
DEPARTMENTAL OFFICE STAFF Tana Marin
DEPARTMENTAL CHAIR W. Dennis Carroll
DIRECTOR OF DANCE Gregg Lizenbery

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Peggy Gaither Adams, Betsy Fisher,
 Gregg Lizenbery for your wisdom and inspiration.
 To all my dancers for their many months of hard work,
 creativity and love of dance. To my family for their support
 in all of my academic pursuits. Thank You Eamon Shannon
 for all your extra support, time, energy and work with photos,
 programs and so much more!

— JENNIFER BUTLER

*We wish to acknowledge with gratitude the generosity of the
 Women's Campus Club of the University for a \$5,000 grant to provide
 the Ernst Lab Theatre with a new light board and console system.*

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 2002-2003 SEASON



FOOTHOLDS III

DIRECTED AND CHOREOGRAPHED BY MEA DANCE CANDIDATE JENNIFER BUTLER

Fly High Fall Silently



FEATURING *THE QUESTION OF WATER*

A Multi-Media Dance Celebrating Our Most Precious Resource Through Movement

MAY 7 - 10 AT 8PM & MAY 11 AT 2PM

(REPLACING *A NIGHT AT THE CATWALK CLUB*)

POST SHOW RAP FOLLOWING THE MAY 9 PERFORMANCE

Tickets on sale May 5

\$9 Regular \$7 Non-UHM Students, Seniors, Military, UH Faculty & Staff \$3 UHM students w/valid Spring '03 ID
 All seating in the Earle Ernst Lab Theatre is general admission. Latecomers will be seated only during the breaks in the program.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CHARGE-BY-PHONE, OR DISABILITY ACCESS,
 CALL THE KENNEDY THEATRE BOX OFFICE 956-7655 (V/T)
www.hawaii.edu/kennedy**