

Caroline Game

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DN 310

Stacy Alley

### Self-Assessment

I am often told that it is difficult to place me in musical theatre because I don't exactly stand out in one particular area. I believe that I am well-rounded, but I definitely wouldn't call myself a triple threat, and out of the three disciplines, dance is my weakest. While I love it and believe I have a strong foundation, I have always been hesitant to call myself a dancer. I went into the semester telling myself that I would likely never be cast in *A Chorus Line* or in the ensemble of *An American in Paris*, and I was okay with that. I got to a place, however, where I decided I wanted to change the narrative in my mind and fight the voices telling me I wasn't good enough. I decided that I wanted to use my critiques as fuel for improvement, rather than validation that I wasn't what I know I can be.

"Stay in the floor" is one specific critique that I have been given a thousand times over, and it is something I have always struggled with. I often feel that I need to overcompensate for my shortness by staying lifted even in moments when I should be more connected to the floor. In tap, it is especially important. That is one of many reasons why "I Got Rhythm" was a challenge for me. The show-stopping number from *Crazy for You* was by far the most difficult combination for me. The movement was incredibly intricate, and my mind oftentimes didn't move as quickly as my feet were supposed to. I had a hard time getting this number into my muscle memory and even said during my assessment that it felt uncomfortable in my body. The growth that I had from this combination to our other tap

number, “Turn it Off”, was nothing short of incredible. I stayed grounded and my performance aspect was much stronger. Though I still have room for improvement in my tap abilities, I am proud of the work I did in these two combinations.

I performed in the ensemble of Pippin in high school and found that “With You” was one of the most difficult numbers for me mentally. I was one of six girls chosen and was then told by my choreographer, and even some of my fellow castmates, that I was too cute. While I loved performing in it, I always felt inadequate. This is one of my main weaknesses in musical theatre dance. I made it my mission to simply enjoy this combination this semester and forget about the voices in my head telling me I wasn’t sexy enough. I will continue to work on this aspect simply by finding my own confidence and using the movement to influence my demeanor. One specific way that I have already implemented this practice into my daily life is by putting words of affirmation on my bathroom mirror. The post-it notes say “you are beautiful”, “you are worthy”, and so on. The biggest one says “you are in control.” It is my reminder that I am in control of my own destiny both in life and in dance, and that no one can tell me what I am or am not capable of.

One thing I know I can do well is pick up and retain choreography quickly. This skill of mine proved useful on the mock audition day, as well as for each of the Andy Blankenbuehler combinations. One of the main reasons Andy’s choreography was easy to retain was because each movement was incredibly motivated. The transitions all had a purpose and every moment imitated the emotion and action of the character. I learned an immense amount about character motivation in dance from his workshops and want to continue exploring how to transfer main objectives into my dancing, even if it is not noticeably present in the choreography.

The combination that felt the best in my body was “Jesus Christ Superstar.” The steps weren’t as technical as other combinations which allowed me to bring more of my own personality into it. I often have less fun when I have more freedom, but this number was an exception. On the flip side, the combination that I had the hardest time getting in my body was A Chorus Line. It is an incredibly difficult number that requires a strong technical foundation that I am still working on. The feeling that the number evokes, however, is one of true longing and that is something that any musical theatre hopeful can relate to. For that reason, this number had to be one of my favorites.

I found that the warm-up was a challenge for me in the same way A Chorus Line was. Both required a level of technical proficiency that is difficult to obtain. I want to continue using this warm-up to find the floor and to work on my core strength and stability. I frequently forget to use my abdominal muscles and this can be a weakness of mine. The warm-up requires that one obtains a level of strength that I don’t quite have yet, and I will continue to workout daily to improve this aspect of dance. This warm-up will be my guide to finding the floor and my core.

If I were to take this class again I would really want to explore how I can motivate each movement the way Andy motivates his choreography. I want to use the main objective of a character to influence each moment with specificity and purpose. I frequently find myself going through the motions and aimlessly doing a combination, not really thinking about who I am in the context of the show. I know that I can take it to another level in my next dance class. I would also like to explore how I can use whatever I am going through to help influence my dancing rather than trying to suppress. This semester proved to be a

challenge for me mentally, and in the future I want to use my personal life as fuel for my dancing rather than baggage that I have to try desperately to leave at the door.

In regards to my research process, I tried to really dive deep into what the choreographer's style was and how I could implement their personal technique into my movements. One example of this was with the combinations, "Beat Me Daddy" and "With You." After researching Fosse and his technique, I learned a great deal about how he used his own insecurities to influence movement. The research that I did for his dances helped me to better understand how to translate the intention of each movement into my body.

As I mentioned on the last day of in-person class, my main goal really was just to show up. There was a very strong possibility that I wouldn't even be in school this semester. However, if there was one thing that I needed to heal from my episode, it was human interaction. While my newfound performance and social anxiety made everything a challenge for a while, I soon learned that my support system at this University would be my saving grace. I am beyond grateful for a class that pushed me past what I thought I was capable of, and for even offering me momentary relief twice a week. I am immensely proud of myself not only for showing up physically, but eventually getting to a place where I was able to show up mentally as well. My energy level increased as the semester went on and I was able to get out of my rumination long enough to truly perform in class. I know that I still have a very long way to go before I am back to one-hundred percent, but for now I am taking pride in the baby steps my mind is taking in its fight to full recovery.

While I am very sad that next semester will be my last, I know that this class and this program has prepared me for a career in musical theatre. From knowing the proper way to research a show, to how to pick up choreography quickly and more, I am now confident in

calling myself a dancer and believe that the skills I have acquired here will take me far. I will miss this place and these people, but I am looking forward to applying what I have learned in the “real world.” I can’t wait to see what life has in store for me beyond college, and I know that no matter where I am, I will always be able to call this Department a home of mine.