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DN 310
December 5, 2019

The dreamy musical theatre part of me was doing cartwheels and trenches across the stage on our first day of class when going over the syllabus. Each piece of rep we were scheduled to learn this semester were from a handful of my favorite shows and emphasized styles I felt were in my pocket of perfection. But by no means did this make learning and performing these styles easy. Something key I've learned about my process of interpreting choreography and picking up details is that I want to mend any gap I have between the style I picture in my head and how it is executed during performing. I noticed this most when reflecting on my natural balletic qualities that seep into other styles. While I'm grateful to have the soft-natured elegance that my years of ballet and contemporary have given me, it's more of a process than I expected to find a balance of releasing them to allow for attack and sharpness while not losing poise or presence.

Beginning our class by learning "Dancing in the Streets" was a blast to learn and dance. This show is a great example of being able to blend the uplifted elegance while also being okay with sitting into the musical beats and rhythm the show requires. I felt confident starting the semester with this and could tell from this beginning that I was going to have a blast learning. Picking up this choreography quickly, I felt I was able to add my personal style to it while still keeping in the theme of the show's timeliness and character qualities. In a show like "Motown", I begin to question at what point am I able to put my own additions on the style if it's a show where I would not be considered for a cast? On the opposing side to that question, as a dancer who isn't right for the characters or ensemble in the show, how do I still learn and pick up the choreography with the same qualities and stylization I would have if I was in it? This very thing is something I tried to continue navigating throughout each piece we were worked on and some proved to be harder than others.

“Anything Goes” was a number I was jumping out of my seat to begin working on. I had previously learned this from a former dancer in the show who performed with Sutton Foster in the Tony awards. Not to mention, I’ve watched this on Youtube so many times I can practically picture it in my sleep. When having learned choreography previously, I’ve found it’s important to keep that knowledge in the back of my mind, but don’t let my previous notions take away from the experience and details being taught in the present. If I don’t do this, I will be off regardless from what I was taught the first time.

Another balance to find here was taking what I’d already learned and channeling that energy toward the style, then focusing picking up on the specific sounds and steps we learned in class with everyone. There were some technical differences or gaps in my muscle memory and I’m glad this happened. While this is my preferred style of tap, I noticed myself cheating some steps without consciously realizing I was doing it, until listening to other dancers tap the rhythm or listening to the tap sounds in the track and realizing I was missing a count or two. Syncopation is key in this piece and something I love about tap; especially when it’s mixed with Broadway tap. I’m thankful that every time we tapped in this class, we spent time breaking down the sounds, working on them in small groups or individually and really sending time understanding the details and making sure we mastered those. There is a time and place to “fake it till we make it”, but in a number like this, I recognized how essential it is to pick up on the details of the rhythmic choreography and steps. Once these are understood and become natural, the character and stylization on top of the tap will happen naturally. With tap, it’s sometimes easy to add character and confidence on top in the upper body and let the feet pretend they’re doing what everyone else is doing or miss some sounds. Though it was harder to work through the technical work, the challenge made the overall understanding of Kathleen Marshall’s choreography more wonderful. To see that many dancers tapping this challenging work so perfectly in unison- for 8 minutes- and performing with their 1930’s characters, gave the piece of rep a new thrill to it than I had experienced previously.

I'm glad our next tap routine was similar to these concepts. *42nd Street* is a show I grew up watching with music my family played in the background of family dinners since I was younger. I remember seeing this show for the first time and in awe at the opening scene when the curtain rises to reveal the sparkling tap shoes of the Broadway hopeful tap dancers. There's a special place in the hearts of performers for this show because of its relatability to us as auditionees. Like *Anything Goes*, its stylization and character are similar in the upper body and poise, but has a little bit more of a young feel to it as the dancers are trying out to be cast in a show rather than living as performers on a cruise ship. This is seen in the first steps as the classic time step section begins. The hunch over on the accent as the knee picks up the shoulders go over in the time step reveal this character from the beginning. I think this helped get into character easily at that start and what made this piece so fun to learn and dance. I picked up the details quicker on this than I did on *Anything Goes* surprisingly, but caught myself rushing the timing. Even as I listen to the score with just the tap sounds as I did for *Anything Goes*, performing almost gets me excited and so into hitting the accents that I end up rushing the sounds. I believe the best way to work on this is slowing down the tempo like we did in class and focusing on the sounds at each pace, then once I've accomplished hitting each sound exactly, I can move back up to the regular speed since I feel more comfortable going fast.

An example of a show where I had to learn to keep the poise while letting go in my shoulders and upper body was "Too Darn Hot". I was lucky to have Austin as my partner, but both of us knew we had to work on the same things technically speaking. I loved the choreography, but wanted to find a way to make it feel natural. My inspiration was the beautiful tall redhead from the Tony performance. I loved her mix of ease and sensuality while also being so fierce, bold, and sharp with her energy. Her ability to move these energy and attack levels up and down like a dimmer switch was amazing and one I'd like to continue exploring in my own adaptability to characterized choreography. I understood the hits and counts in this piece really well and felt most confident that I'd picked this up. With understanding this, I

want to keep working on controlling the release of my head. This is the blend I want to keep finding of where to stay poised and lifted in my shoulders while still being able to release my head and neck without looking stiff. Specifically, in the arm and head throws before the infamous twelve jumps. I liked being able to speak in this piece as it gave it more of a realistic and lively quality. Almost like getting to yell "Man, it's hot!" invited us into the choreography as performers and character in the show rather than just learning the rep for fun.

On a completely different end of the spectrum, I had possibly the most fun performing "Rich Man's Frug." Growing up learning Fosse choreography, I was ecstatic to get to work on it more in class. I had also just finished watching the Fosse Verdon series and felt I had a new understanding of Fosse dancers opened up to me that I hadn't understood before. While numbers like Hot Honey Rag, Sing Sing Sing, Blackbird and Damn Yankees are on my list of favorite Fosse choreography, Rich Man's Frug was one I felt almost unprepared to learn. The stylistic elements are so precise and exact in that kind of funky Fosse way, that it honestly felt awkward and uncomfortable to learn. Thank goodness! We need to feel uncomfortable more as dancers. Picking up the choreography was relatively simple, but the style of the heads, wrists, and posture one that took some outside work to even come close to novicly mastering. However, once we split into our smaller groups and began working on the performance quality, I was genuinely surprised to see this become one of my favorite pieces. It was cool to work on a new side of one of my favorite choreographers and be challenged in this style I had originally felt so confident in. It became a fun process to develop the style and then develop a character to go with it. This is a piece where I felt myself "sit into the pocket" and hope to keep working on stuff that's challenging to the brain and the body.

Confidence speaking as far as character and style go, the day when Scarlett Walker taught us the opening from *Carousel* was an absolute dream. Since my middle school production of this show I'd known I liked it and seeing Justin Peck's revival choreography of it in 2018 had me weeping in my seat as

I saw the dreamiest blend of ballet and Broadway come to life before me. I'm a Balanchine and Jerome Robbins girl to a T and this rep was so fun to work with and learn. It's details were challenging, but in the best way. It was difficult to hit each of them but felt like the patterns I'm used to in Balanchine ballets and Peck made it so fun to add the elegant and playful character on top of it.

Completely opposite of my balletic upbringing, but surprisingly equal in fun of adding character, was learning "It's Time to Dance" from *The Prom*. I wasn't super familiar with this show before seeing it performed at Macy's and the Tony's, but had seen Casey Nicholaw's work in some New York master classes. Believe it or not, I was on dance team in high school and I felt more confident performing this style today in *The Prom* than I did in my pom days. The key I found was having fun, something we hear a lot about performing and I really feel I activated when doing this. Naturally, I still need to work on being grounded. It's easy to be bouncy when I have a natural lift and I'd like to continue centralizing this bounciness while being grounded.

Looking back through this semester, the most valuable lesson I want to keep on taking with me is how to find that balance between my personal style and the style of a character a show calls for. I feel more prepared about auditioning and adapting to alternative styles and shows because of this class and love that I had the opportunity to work with Musical Theatre majors who inspire me to dance in a way traditional dance majors haven't challenged me. It's so wonderful to get to work with other areas of the department and I hope to continue this growth over my last semester in UA Theatre & Dance.