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THE PRODUCTION OF CHOREOGRAPHY INFLUENCED BY WORKS OF GEORGE BALANCHINE

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

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2012

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ABSTRACT

One of the most renowned Ballet Masters in the history of dance is George Balanchine. By studying his works and feedback from his dancers, my goal is to gain enough information to develop a two to three minute choreographed work of my own, incorporating the influence of Balanchine's style and design. In my research, I will be examining his history and the interviews of Balanchine-influenced dancers, reflecting on personal experiences, and dissecting his choreography and elements of my own work in creating my final choreography. Within my piece, I will be manipulating various uses of rhythms, implementing Balanchine-style movements, and revealing a specific intent to the audience through the incorporation of gestures and emotion. After completing my choreography, I will be discussing the challenges and successes that I come across along my research. By developing this project, I hope to educate others of Balanchine's style and impact on choreography. This research will enlighten me on his overall choreographic tools and methods.

Keywords: George Balanchine, dance, choreography, ballet, choreographic works, art

Dedicated to my family, friends, and dance professors.

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Finally, I am very grateful for the support of my family, both financially and in encouragement. They have always been actively involved in my successes throughout my educational career, and I appreciate that care. I thank my friends, as well, for always being supportive, and being active listeners in my discussions of my research process and findings.

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"'He had assured the future. We believe in the future because of his commitment to it. Modest as he was, and great as he was, he must have had that same wish which all humanity shares, that all things might die with him, but immeasurably greater than that was the wish that all would continue.'"

Peter Martins
(Ballet Master in Chief of New York City Ballet)

Portrait of Mr. B

PREFACE

Throughout my training in the study of dance, I have learned of many Ballet Masters and their teachings. One of the Masters who intrigues me the most is George Balanchine. His impeccable talent in the creation of renowned ballet works radiates his unique style and choreographic tools. In my Capstone research, I will be addressing Balanchine's history, dancers' interviews, selected Balanchine choreography, and personal experiences in order to create my own choreography influenced by my findings. I plan to use the methods behind his creative process in developing a two to three minute piece. For my choreography, my focus will be drawn to the design, musicality, and quality of the Balanchine style. Also, I will be addressing my trials and errors within my choreographic process.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

George Balanchine possessed an exorbitant amount of skill, passion, and dedication to the art of creating unique and respected Ballet works. To understand what established Balanchine as a distinguished Ballet Master, one must reference to the history of his dancing career. In reading *George Balanchine: The Ballet Maker,* by Robert Gottlieb, I found much information on George Balanchine's early history.

On January 22, 1904, George Balanchine was born in St. Petersburg, Russia (9). At the age of nine, he was evaluated and chosen out of fifty boys to be admitted into the Imperial School of Ballet and Theatre in Russia. Balanchine, however, did not embrace the art of dance until the age of eleven, when he performed as Cupid in Petipa's *Sleeping Beauty* (12, 15). Balanchine would go on to perform in numerous ballets, but it was not until he was sixteen that Balanchine began his career in choreography. He developed his first *pas de deux*[1], *La Nuit*, which was considered sensual and revolutionary in partnering with the "one-arm lift in arabesque[2]," meaning the woman was in arabesque in the air, with the man sustaining her in the air with one arm (18). As a teenager, Balanchine was known to study as a musician, learning how to put music and movement together to create unique choreography (17). The music and movements worked so well together, that the dancing provided visualization of the music. The book also delves into the influence of choreographers, Kasian Goleizovsky and Fedor Lopukhov, in Balanchine's young

[1] *Pas de Deux* is a French term meaning dance of two (American).
[2] *Arabesque* is a ballet term referencing a position of the body with a standing leg and the other moving at right angles (Grant).

choreographic experience. Both of these individuals were extremely gifted in bringing music and dance together to form a complete marriage of the two. They knew how to use images and motion in intricate fashions. They were known to take risks and try inventive ways of creating their artistic and technical pieces (22-23). Each of these tools that Goleizovsky and Lopukhov utilized would later be used by Balanchine in his own choreography.

As Balanchine grew into an upcoming choreographer, he developed the Young Ballet of the early 1920s, a company comprised of a group of his young dancer associates. He choreographed numerous works for the ballet (24). *Balanchine's Ballerinas*, by Robert Tracy, goes into some of the experiences of the Young Ballet. The group would go on to France, where they were all hired by Serge Diaghilev for his company Diaghilev's Ballet Russes. Within the company, Balanchine created his popular *Apollon Musagete* and *Prodigal Son* (15). Then in 1933, Balanchine was invited by Lincoln Kirstein to come to America and help start the School of American Ballet Theatre (17). By Balanchine defecting to America, he would bring with him the art of Ballet.

Robert Gottlieb addresses how Vladimir Dimitriev and George Balanchine opened the School of American Ballet on January 2, 1934. It was in this school that Balanchine began to mold his dancers the way he thought they should move and perform. His dancers were given the opportunity to learn his new ballet *Serenade*. In working with the dancers, Balanchine revealed his ability to work with progressive speed and intricacy, while still maintaining patience, agility, and passion (77-79).

In 1936, Balanchine decided to become more involved with Broadway. Choreographing for *Ziegfeld Follies of 1936*, Balanchine was given the opportunity to work with famous jazz and tap dancers, such as Josephine Baker, Harriet Hoctor, the Nicholas Brothers, and George Church. This was where he began to incorporate more jazz into his choreography, and create a ballet/jazz fusion (Hardy). Balanchine became responsible for the first Broadway show to incorporate dance into the story itself, which is called *On Your Toes*. He would go on to choreograph for *Babes in*

Arms and *The Goldwyn Follies* (89, 91). This is important, because it represents how Balanchine brought his ballet flavor to American Broadway, and in return, he gained the American influence in Jazz dance.

In the late 1940s, Balanchine created his Ballet Society and the famous New York City Ballet. With works such as *Firebird* and *Stars and Stripes*, New Yorkers began to embrace his companies. Balanchine also produced renowned Ballets including, *Jewels*, *Union Jack, Vienna Waltz*, and many more (150-151, 161). On April 30, 1983, Balanchine died in Roosevelt Hospital (181). Directly after his death, Balanchine's works were kept alive through his devout dancers and friends. In 1987, the George Balanchine Trust was established in order to protect/copyright his choreography. Now, new generations of performers have the privilege of learning his style and choreography through companies and colleges obtaining licenses of his ballets through the Trust ("The George Balanchine Trust").

CHAPTER 2

BALANCHINE'S INFLUENCE ON HIS DANCERS

When a dancer expresses the experience of working with George Balanchine, he or she always refers to the difficulty of the choreography, the physical demands on the body, and the commitment to Balanchine's choreography. Through the filmed interviews with Balanchine dancers, the documentary *Dancing for Mr. B*, the written opinions of his dancers, and the interviews of current New York Ballet dancers who have performed the Balanchine works, the uniqueness and difficulty of Balanchine's art is represented.

In 2006, Suzanne Farrell, one of Balanchine's principal dancers, gave her feedback of Balanchine in an interview conducted by Maura Keefe at Jacob's Pillow. She expressed that, as a dancer, you have to know how to conserve your body and be skilled in both technique and performance. She then responded with Balanchine's idea of imagining the body as two halves, instead of focusing on being separated into a top and bottom. By thinking this way, it allows the dancer to focus on perfecting the whole body, rather than fixing the lower half, and forgetting about the top half. Worrying about the legs has always been an issue for dancers, because it is the hardest half for most to perfect. Because of Balanchine's way of thinking of the body, he was able to focus on long lines of the legs and symmetries of the upper body (Jacob's Pillow).

The documentary, *Dancing for Mr. B,* reveals the quintessence of Balanchine's ballerinas. The content is so unique, in the sense that viewers are given a glimpse inside the experiences of dancing for such a renowned dance master. The film begins on a personal image of Balanchine. The dancers interviewed respond with quotes that include the following: "Any

other dancer in the company would do anything for him," "he was a master psychologist," and his ballets exude what is "true and real." According to his dancers, Balanchine possessed the mesmerizing ability to bring an individual into his world. He was a "psychologist" in the sense that he knew what to say and how to communicate with his dancers individually, bringing out all of their potentials in his choreography. Even in viewing his works, one can see his passion through the movements of his dancers.

The film introduces some of Balanchine's background in creating ballets in Russia and America, where he choreographed for Ballet de Monte Carlo and co-founded the School of American Ballet in New York City. In Balanchine's ballet, he changed the way ballerinas moved, bringing unity to his dancers. These dancers include Maria Tallchief, Mary Ellen Moylan, Melissa Hayden, Allegra Kent, Merrill Ashley, and Darci Kistler. The interviews of these dancers bring forth insight into Balanchine's world.

Maria Tallchief became acquainted with Balanchine when she danced at Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. She was one of the first dancers or "material" of Balanchine and held an incredible amount of responsibility. She first performed one of Balanchine's *pas de trois*[3]. In learning the Balanchine style and performing his works, there were numerous important aspects of the style that she had to learn to retain. In the interview, Tallchief referred to how Balanchine told her that she had to "treat this art like a religion." If she could execute a *battement tendu*[1] correctly, then that was all she needed to know. She also reflected on Balanchine's instruction of the use of the back, the elbows, and the hands. In viewing his works, one can see how even the hands are telling a story or emotion. Balanchine was considered "a poet." Balanchine's use of the American Jazz dance in his ballets revealed an aspect of his unique style and drive for the out-of-the-box works. Tallchief went on to perform pieces including *Scotch Symphony*. At twenty-years-of-age, she married forty-year-old Balanchine. Because

[3] *Pas de Trois* is a French term meaning dance of three (American).

[4] A *battement tendu* is a ballet term meaning a beating action that is stretched (Grant).

Balanchine became so intrigued and involved with his "material," he felt that marriage would bring him even closer to that muse.

They later divorced, and Tallchief discovered that her dancing for Balanchine improved drastically. She could now focus on herself and her personal responsibility to the choreography. Tallchief went on to perform Balanchine works, including *Firebird*, which Balanchine said was the "first great success of New York City Ballet."

Another young material Balanchine discovered was Allegra Kent. At fifteen, she was a New York City Ballet apprentice, and was later asked to join the company. She danced as a principal in Balanchine's ballets including, *Stars and Stripes*, *Agon*, *Las Enabula*, and *Seven Deadly Sins*. Kent expressed how Balanchine would create his works with exhilaration. With Allegra Kent's interview, an outside eye sees how Balanchine molded his dancers not only physically in the training, but also emotionally. In the film, she has difficulty revealing how she was once one of his favorites, until she started having a life outside of working in the NYCB. Balanchine wanted Kent to put all that she had into his work, and not participate in activities outside of the company. Each of Balanchine's dancers dedicated themselves to learn to pay attention to the physical and musical aspects of the choreography and technique. They did this through constant practice and concentration during rehearsals, classes, and performances.

Mary Ellen Moylan was one of Balanchine's first muse. At fourteen, she attended the School of American Ballet. Three years following, she joined Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. In 1946, she was asked to be a part of Balanchine's first independent ballet company, known as Ballet Society. Moylan described, along with Maria Tallchief, his work, *The Four Temperaments*, as incorporating lifts moving along the horizontal plane. The choreography emphasized the

quality of "running through space." She defined Balanchine as being a man of lines[5] and wanting to see the dancer; therefore, he had his dancers wear leotards and tights instead of elaborate costumes that hid the body. She described that Balanchine's focus was visualizing the music.

Melissa Hayden was another Balanchine dancer who referenced some of the similar points made by Moylan. She started her dancing career at the age of fifteen. In 1949, she joined the New York City Ballet. Hayden went more into detail of Balanchine's effect on the dancer's quality of movements and use of musicality. With Balanchine's choreography and teaching of Ballet technique, Hayden expressed how her muscles became elongated and gained the ability to perform extremely fast movement. Balanchine pushed for his dancers to "extend themselves" to their individual limits, which enabled him to create works that revealed how the "body could sing." Hayden referred to Balanchine's piece *Concerto Barocco*, where viewers could witness the manipulation of time and counter-time. Balanchine also manipulated the use of simplicity. In his ballets, such as *Stars and Stripes*, the movements were simplistic, yet technical and difficult. The effortlessness came in the control and precision of the dancers.

The two youngest women in the interviewed group are Merrill Ashley and Darci Kistler. Ashley, known for her lines, use of extreme tempos, and hops on pointe in the Balanchine ballet *Bella Della Regina*, joined NYCB at the age of sixteen. The Balanchine style and teachings of ballet technique were "not kind to the body particularly," according to Ashley. This was so because the technique caused muscles to change shape, along with increasing the ability for the muscles to move in extreme speeds. Kistler came to the company on scholarship at the age of fourteen. At fifteen, in 1980, she joined the company after being seen performing the Swan Queen in *Swan Lake*. Kistler described Balanchine's view of his dancer as the material being "like a color." Balanchine knew how to mold his dancers into the "colors" that he needed for his

[5] Lines is in reference to "outline presented by a dancer while executing steps and poses (American).

works (*Dancing for Mr. B*).

The interviews of the film *Dancing for Mr. B* show a personal look into what it was like to experience Mr. B's unique ability to consume his dancers, musicians, and audience with his passion, way of movement, vision, and musicality. I found it very interesting how each of the dancers interviewed are now teaching the Balanchine style. In video clips of their teachings, it is incredibly intriguing how Balanchine's passion comes back through his dancers. From the interviews, one may understand how Balanchine became such a renowned Ballet Master. Furthermore, these interviews also intrigued me to interview my ballet professor and advisor of Western Kentucky University Dance Department, Clifton K. Brown, about his experience with performing Balanchine choreography. Brown is a second generation Balanchine dancer, because he was taught by a woman who studied directly under Balanchine. Because of his training, Brown is able to instruct me in Balanchine technique during my Western Kentucky Ballet classes, providing me with more insight into how Balanchine taught his dancers.

My first question for Brown was what work he performed of Balanchine. He replied with the ballet *Serenade*. He revealed how the ballet was not intended to possess a certain meaning; however, the neo-classical ballet resembled meaning with certain gestures and the images created with the design and emotion of the piece. Brown also expressed how he "learned *Serenade* from a woman who danced for Balanchine," and that it was still as if he was receiving feedback from Balanchine. This comment holds much importance, because it shows how Balanchine's dancers pass on what they were given. Though it is not the same as if Balanchine himself was present working the piece, much of his methods were very prominent. I proceeded to inquire on the contents of the Balanchine style. Brown stressed that Balanchine's choreography was highly "influenced by the jazz of African Americans. When he came to the U.S., he worked on American dancer bodies." Brown also revealed how many dance companies have the rights to perform Balanchine repertoire, because the directors and dance masters of these companies come from personal Balanchine background. These companies include New York City Ballet, Dance

Theatre of Harlem, Miami City Ballet, Pacific Northwest, Atlanta Ballet, and Carolina Ballet, among others. The same can be said about many college programs. At the University of Iowa, in the 1980s, Brown referenced the performance of *Stars and Stripes*. He described how the learning process was very particular, because women were the dancers who mainly performed the work. "Balanchine's repertoire contains a precise, difficult quality for the dancers that seems incredibly easy to the audience" (Brown).

CHAPTER 3

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

In June and July of 2011, I attended the Atlanta Ballet Summer Intensive, where I was given the privilege to take classes from different dance masters. One of those instructors was Robert Barnett. Barnett danced for Balanchine in the New York City Ballet in 1949. Then in 1962, he became the Artistic Director of the Atlanta Ballet. As my class and I waited at the barre, Barnett walked in with his all black attire and gold chain necklace. He looked like he meant business; yet he exuded a very kind demeanor, one that was patient but to the point. In reading and watching interviews related to Balanchine, I have found that he reacted to his dancers such as Barnett reacted to us. In teaching the ballet and pointe class, Barnett stressed the lengthening action in the legs and the hips. He also talked about the carriage of the arms coming from the back, and the spot of the head always being forward, even in *chainés*[6] moving along the diagonal. A part of the class was focused on molding the body to create the body-line desired. Balanchine's style calls for long lines, and in order to do so, the dancer must change the muscles through technique. Though Barnett had a dancing career before dancing for Balanchine, his teachings and style are extremely influenced by Balanchine. This shows the influence that Balanchine spread to his dancers. I will always appreciate the classes Barnett provided.

On March 3, 2012, I had the privilege of attending Carolina Ballet's *Balanchine Rarities*. From the second row, balcony seat, I had a clear view of the performance of the ballet. In researching companies performing Balanchine works, the Carolina Ballet seemed to be a prospective option. The program began with three Balanchine works from the years 1948, 1951,

[6] A *chainé* is a ballet term that means a series of chains of linked rapid turns (Grant).

and 1955. The first performed was "Minkus *Pas de Trois*," which was described in the bill book as being a restaged work from Marius Petipa's *Paquita*. This piece possessed a classical/traditional ballet quality. Balanchine manipulated the movements to highlight his use of tempos and the abilities of the dancers, whether the specialties were petite jumps or strong balance.

The second work performed was *A La Francaix*, created in 1951. I found myself to be surprised by this work. This was the first work of Balanchine that I discovered to be comedic in nature. The story line is of a woman trying to get the attention of a man in a sailor-like outfit, when suddenly a sylph appears and takes the man from the woman. One can see how Balanchine had a strong background in character dance[7]. The movements created a visual for the music. The choreography and music enhanced one another. This kept with the Balanchine style, along with the fast movements, runs on pointe shoes, strong dancing, continuous flow in choreography, and the use of Jazz and Ballet infused movement. I actually did not expect there to be a comedic work; however, now I know that Balanchine expanded his choreography with all moods and genres. The work was quite delightful to watch, full of color, character, and intriguing movement.

The third work was "Glinka *Pas De Trois*," performed by two females and one male. Balanchine created this work in 1955. What I found fascinating about this work were the designs and contrast in solos, yet continuous flow from one to the other. One of the girls performed solos full of petite allegro/jumps, along with quick movement of the feet in pointe shoes, while the other showed off the balance and strength, with extensions incorporated. The man danced many *tours*[8], landing to the knee, and pirouette turns. Then as the work became a *pas de trois*, Balanchine used the method of filling negative space[9], which gave the image of continuous

[7] Character dance is a form of dance that represents a particular character (*Free*).
[8] A *tour* is a French term meaning turn (American).
[9] Negative space refers to the space around and between subjects (*Free*).

movement, with vivid shapes and lines. The music was absolutely beautiful, and matched the movements of the dancers. This work called for an extraordinary amount of control and precision from the dancers.

In watching Carolina Ballet perform the Balanchine works, I found they exuded high levels of performance, with pronounced quick steps, strong balances, and great expressions. One quality I do wish I could have seen more of from the performers was the constant growth in extensions that Balanchine always showed in his dancers. Though the dancers' extensions were clean and lengthened, they seemed to have a stopping point, instead of getting longer and longer through the use of energy. I discovered that they did not spot[10] their *chainé* turns to the front like Balanchine instructed, which many styles do not do. I enjoyed seeing how the dancers would end pirouette turns with a solid, big finish, which Balanchine's dancers always did in the videos that I have viewed. However, it was nice to see the company stay as close as possible to what Balanchine's works radiated.

This program was unique, because I got to view the work "Moving Life," created by the Carolina Ballet Artistic Director, Robert Weiss. At the age of seven, Weiss was chosen by Balanchine to dance in the New York City Ballet, where he performed as principal for seventeen years. By having this background with Balanchine, he was given the right, through the Trust, to set Balanchine works on his company dancers. In "Moving Life," one can see the Balanchine influence with the use of shapes, simple costume, music manipulation, and use of positive and negative space. The piece incorporated modern twists with slight changes in style; however, I found it refreshing to see the Balanchine style still strong in the dancers.

[10] Spot refers to the technique of the head used by dancers to maintain control while executing turns (*Free*).

CHAPTER 4

INTO THE WORKS

In order to incorporate Balanchine's style into my choreography, I decided to dissect some of his works. The pieces that I have chosen to examine are *Apollon Musagete*, *Tzigane*, and *Allegro Brillante*. Each piece is very unique from the other, and contains movements and design that I found exceedingly helpful in my research process.

Apollon Musagete possesses many elements that showcase Balanchine's style. The use of growing lines is an exceedingly prominent feature of this ballet. The video I am referencing consists of Suzanne Farrell and Peter Martins performing the duet. The piece is filled with *penchés*[11], splits that go into *arabesque*[12], and partnering where the arms and legs coordinate to create continuous lines. Every time Farrell *développés*[13], her upper body and the carriage of her arms would match the control and stretch of the leg. Balanchine also incorporates *bourrées*[14] on the heels, versus on pointe. One of my favorite moments, is where the dancers are kneeling, facing one another, and creating angular shapes with the elbows and wrists. Every movement creates an ongoing picture. Each lift develops into another, while still allowing the audience to

[11] A *penché* is a ballet term meaning leaning (Grant).
[12] An *arabesque* is a ballet term referencing a position of the body with a standing leg and the other moving at right angles (Grant).
[13] A *développé* is a ballet term meaning developed, where the leg draws up to the knee and then extends the lower leg (Grant).
[14] A *bourrée* is a ballet term referencing a French step (*Free*).

enjoy the images created by each lift. Because the dancers were in simple costumes, Farrell wearing pink tights and short leotard dress and Martins wearing black tights and white top, the

lines and shapes are easy to see. Aesthetically, the ending pose is absolutely perfect for the piece. Martins lunges and *cambrés*[15] back, while Farrell stretches her body forward along his back and *cambrés* with him, creating a unified design. What is so intriguing about this work is how the dancers moved together and combined precise ballet technique with out-of-the-box images and lines.

Tzigane, danced by Suzanne Farrell in a 1977 video clip, is a piece based on the strong character of a gypsy. The music, by Ravel, is extremely defined with the use of the viola, and coincides with equally precise and robust dancing. The speed and emotion of the movement matches that of the music. Balanchine uses parallel position in *plié*[16] and intricate use of ball and heel articulation of the feet. There are many *developés* that fall off pointe, where the dancer is standing on her toes and shifts her weight away from an upright position in order to come down, and slow *rond de jambe*[17] runs on pointe. It is also interesting to see the use of diagonals in space, which I believe shows off the angles and progression of movements. The interpretation of the main character is an enjoyable aspect of the piece. The movement and music work together, enhancing the story of each character. Elements as simple as the parallel *relevé*[18] can show character of the dancers. The angles of the legs and carriage of the arms reveal dialogue in the movement. To me, this piece shows off the character dancing background that Balanchine had been trained in years before.

Allegro Brillante, performed by Maria Tallchief and Nicholas Magallanes in 1956,

[15] A *cambré* is a ballet term meaning arched, where from the waist-up bends (Grant).
[16] A *plié* is a ballet term meaning to bend, where one bands form the knees, hips, and ankles of the legs (Grant).
[17] A *rond de jambe* is a ballet term meaning round of the leg, where the leg moves in a circle either clockwise or counterclockwise (Grant).
[18] A *relevé* is a ballet term meaning raised, where the body raises by the point or half-point of the feet (Grant).

showcases the use of music and movement. The music, by Tchaikovsky, whom Balanchine worked with quite often, uses strings, piano, and wind instruments, with changes in smooth

quality, or adagio, and then allegro and back. The music and dance work together to show shading and intensity of sound and dance. Balanchine implements the use of rounds in the timing of the movements of the *corps*[19] dancers, and incorporates layering to create the image of movement with the different instruments and sounds. There are many *arabesques*, *fouettés en tournant*[20], *piqués*[21], turns on pointe and in *plié*, and *sautés*[22] in this ballet. Balanchine used the diagonals and X design in space. This ballet also showcases some technique style, such as spotting the front in *chainé* turns. This piece is much more classical, visually.

On YouTube, there are two video clips of Balanchine works being taught by Balanchine dancers. The first clip is of Maria Tallchief instructing two dancers on Balanchine's *Scotch Symphony*, which she had initially performed in 1952. In the clip, Tallchief stresses to the female dancer the quality of the *developé* leg, the shape of the arm matching the attitude leg *devant* (in front), and even what the angle of the head is saying to the audience. In explaining the details of the choreography, viewers can see how passionate she is about the accuracy of the choreography, in matching Balanchine's original quality and design. The second clip is of Todd Bolender instructing *Four Temperaments*. What I discovered about this clip, is that Bolender gives more specific instruction in the intent of the movement and what the carriage of the arms and feet should be in order to portray what the movements are supposed to say.

In comparing the videos, I have found that Balanchine was consistent in using his movement to match the music, incorporating parallel positions and *developés*, articulating

[19] *Corps* is a French term meaning body (American).
[20] A *fouetté en tournant* is a ballet term meaning whipped turning movement (Grant).
[21] A *piqué* is a ballet term meaning pricked, where one steps directly onto the half-point or point of the supporting leg (Grant).
[22] A *sauté* is a ballet term meaning jumped (Grant).

intricate foot work, showing precise finishes in turns, lines (of the legs and arms) and design, and highlighting carriage of the arms. I plan to incorporate each of these elements into my piece. I want to make sure that I am aware of my body positions and use of space to reveal those elements to my viewers.

CHAPTER 5

MY CHOREOGRAPHY STUDY

The development of my personal work started with the idea of using classical music and incorporating the diagonals in space design. Then, I added on certain Balanchine style of movements along with rhythm and tempo. Finally, I contemplated on whether to portray a certain intent within my choreography, or if I should develop an abstract (non-concrete meaning) piece. Each of these aspects of the choreographic process has been extremely beneficial and challenging in producing a variation that symbolizes the style of Balanchine.

The selection of music was very important to me. I needed to find a composer who possibly worked with Balanchine, or possessed the ability to produce “color” with instruments, melody, and timing. In researching, I found that Igor Stravinsky would be the perfect match. Igor Stravinsky was Balanchine’s musical partner in producing works, in the sense that the music and dance worked together to create art. His music has pronounced top and under beats that provided room for more possibilities in choreography. The selection I chose is titled "Pastorale: Chant Sans Paroles.” The music exudes a very delicate quality all throughout the song, with pronounced wind instruments. I then had to decide if the choreography was going to be extremely fast or controlled and sustained. Because of the nature of the melody, I decided to go with controlled movements, and focus on the length of the movements. I really concentrated on matching the choreography with certain notes in the music, in order to incorporate the musicality relationship that Balanchine infused in his choreography.

Throughout the choreographic process, I found that the movements naturally moved along the diagonals. This caused me to wonder if it was the growing quality of his movements and use of lines that compelled Balanchine to often incorporate the diagonals, or if it was his

specific choice. I realized that the progressive nature of the diagonals highlight the lengthened quality of the body. I tried to place the articulated foot work sections closer to center stage to draw the eye to the feet and shapes created. The challenge with the spacing, consequently, was to not get stuck in the diagonals, and still experiment with the entire use of space.

The choice of which Balanchine style movements to combine with my own was enjoyable to manipulate, but also very difficult. The movements could not clash with the music, and transitions from one to the other needed to be smooth and connected. At this point, my piece did not have a specific intent, so the movements did not have to portray a certain meaning. I knew I was going to incorporate the *developés* falling off pointe, runs on pointe, parallel positions, and *plié* turns. Once I began to develop the choreography, I found the possibilities of growing lines and balances were endless. I wanted to bring focus to the carriage of the arms being initiated from the back. Once I established a rough draft of the movement sequence, I decided to go back and experiment with my rhythms and tempo.

Musicality is key, because timing is so important to movement. Deciding which melody and beat to focus on is crucial to the overall production of choreography. In working with the timing, I made many changes to my rough draft choreography. I found that I could incorporate more ball-heel articulations and sustain shapes that the movements created. In exploring articulations of the feet, I could understand why Balanchine loved to use the whole foot. There are so many options and discoveries that can be found using the articulations of the feet.

The most interesting discovery I made in developing my choreography was the growing intent of the piece. Though I began the choreographic process with no specific message to convey, the music and the movements gradually led to a flirtatious, teasing quality; therefore, I decided to go with that idea and develop the intent of the dancer teasing the audience. This discovery of intent also excited me, because Balanchine was known to create abstract works that produced emotions and open interpretations of the choreography. I feel that this research in creating my own Balanchine-inspired variation has been the most beneficial in growing as an

aspiring choreographer. Learning his style and choreographic methods have enhanced my knowledge in the creation of choreography.

CHAPTER 6

EMBRACED CHALLENGES AND SURPRISES

In studying the works of George Balanchine and creating my own choreography, I have come across a series of surprises and challenges; however, it is the unexpected that bring learning opportunities. In disciplines associated with the arts, researchers want to come across challenges and success, bringing discovery and development to the art.

One of the challenges that I have come across in my research is the difficulty in obtaining video resources. Each of Balanchine's works is very renowned, and therefore requires rights to be performed or shown to the public. In trying to find videos, most of Balanchine works were only accessible through online stores. However, I was able to come across some videos on YouTube. In order to view a live dance performance of Balanchine works, the closest company I could find was located in Raleigh, North Carolina.

I found difficulty in deciding which of Balanchine inspired movements of his choreography I wanted to incorporate, along with use of directions in space. Balanchine used numerous choreographic tools that I wanted to choose from. I wish I could have used two dancers to show the use of positive and negative space to create the look of constant motion and growth in movement.

The main challenges I found in creating my choreography include the inability to find dancers to perform the original duet I wanted to create, finding the right music that would properly represent a selection that Balanchine would have chosen, and whether or not to portray a clear intent within the choreography.

My original idea for my choreography involved two female dancers. However, there were not enough attainable dancers who could perform the technique in pointe shoes, or did not have

the time available to learn the choreography. This led me to perform my own choreography and develop my piece into a solo/variation. A positive aspect of this change was that I could perform my choreography how I originally set it on my body.

In looking for the right music, I knew I wanted to use an Igor Stravinsky selection because of his history with Balanchine. I did not want the selection to be one of the popular works that Balanchine used. I wanted to have more separation between my choreography and Balanchine's choreography; therefore, the challenge came in finding a Stravinsky piece that could match the prerequisite of not being a popular Balanchine work.

In choreographing, I started without a specific intent and decided to create an abstract work. I discovered that the more I worked with the choreography, the more I wanted to portray the idea of teasing the audience. It is very difficult to produce abstract choreography with movements that represent a certain meaning. Balanchine's ability to evoke intent through an abstract, such as in *Serenade*, is an ability that reveals his skills as a Ballet Master. Therefore, I decided to concentrate on the clear intent of flirtation and playfulness towards the audience, ending with the dancer being rejected by the audience.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

After the development of my Capstone research, I have learned an exorbitant amount of information about details of his works and the tools and methods he used in his choreographic process. I have high levels of respect for George Balanchine as an artist because of his talent and passion. His impeccable use of musicality and ballet-jazz fusion in his choreography reveal his skills of taking risks and opening doors for choreographic study. By looking into his history, listening to interviews, watching his works, and incorporating personal experiences, I was able to choreograph an interpretation of each of those findings. In getting involved in the study of a great Ballet Master, I was able to discover what it takes to stand out, and grow as an aspiring choreographer.

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