

Exegesis on Done Not Finished

Allison Haussler

Loyola University Chicago

My research process started in the spring of 2019 as part of Loyola's dance composition course where we as students go through the entire dance-making process. As a class, we hold auditions, select dancers, find rehearsal times, choose lighting and costumes, and create a fully produced 5 -7 minute work that is performed as part of the Dance Composition Showcase. As a choreographer, I was first inspired by Drew Dudley's Ted Talk about "lollipop moments". Lollipop moments are defined as moments that make our lives fundamentally better. However, the catch is that we often have no idea when they are happening. From there, my piece evolved to explore the larger concept of time and the idea of time as cyclical versus linear.

Practice led research involves the nature of the practice itself and leads to operational significance and new knowledge for that practice. This type of research leads to improvement from the inside as it is distilled from the understanding of action in context (Haseman, 2006). Dance is a form of embodied learning and illustrates the importance of the mind-body connection. Dance as a way of knowing allows investigators to think through the act of movement and emphasizes somatic learning (Snowber, 2012). Dance-making can be thought of as performative research in the sense that it is expressed in non-numerical data. Instead it encompasses material forms of practice, music and sound, space and time, and takes into account both the perspectives of the researcher and collaborative inquiry (Haseman, 2006). My practice led research was extremely collaborative with my cast and we explored turning these concepts into movement. Circular movement, connection, symmetry, and retrograde were some of the concepts and choreographic techniques that became part of the process. Each

rehearsal and choreographic exploration led to new knowledge about movement, the choreographic process, and my idea of time.

In the fall of 2019, my piece was performed as part of a teaching event at Rolling Meadows High School that served to show high school students the nature of a college dance program. This spring, the work was supposed to be performed at the American College Dance Association regional conference at the University of Kentucky. Each time we got back in the studio to rehearse, there were different people in the cast and various stakeholders and expectations for each separate showing. The various people in the room and the nature of where it was to be performed altered the process each time. For example, my cast for the ACDA conference was made up entirely of upperclassmen. Their knowledge and our existing relationships allowed this process to be the smoothest of the three. Our mutual understanding of each other and the ways in which we work also allowed this process to be the most rewarding for myself as a choreographer. In addition, the setting and audience present at ACDA and the quick timeline influenced how rehearsals worked. Overall, while this last cast ultimately did not get the chance to perform, I still consider my research successful. In the dance program, our professors stress the concept of process over product. The circumstances that cut this process short have really put that statement into perspective. In times like these, that could not be more true.

## Works Cited

- Haseman, B. (2006). A Manifesto for Performative Research. *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy*, 118(1), 98–106. doi: 10.1177/1329878x0611800113
- Snowber, C. (2012). Dance as a way of knowing. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2012(134), 53–60. doi: 10.1002/ace.20017