Being Maxine: An Acknowledgement and Appreciation

A Personal and Choreographic Reflection for Independent Study in Dance

Maxine E. Tewsley

Department of Dance, Loyola University Chicago

DANC 395: Independent Study

Dr. Amy Wilkinson

April 6, 2022
Abstract

The 20th century in rural America left women stuck in the role of a farmer’s wife through an era of social and political change. History has written these women solely as vessels of cooking, cleaning, and caretaking when in reality, these women were doing so much more. By conducting research on the lives and legacies of three of my grandmothers as well as taking an academic look into the history of the period, I hope to uncover a layer of untold stories. In order to tell the stories, I wanted to tap into my dance knowledge. I understand dance as a method of storytelling and social justice and I wanted to translate my research to generate choreography. Over the semester, I documented my process through notes and video.
For my grandparents, Sally and Richard Johnson. Thank you for telling me stories and preserving our history.


Introduction

I’ve always loved hearing stories; particularly ones that really happened. I loved the story my Grandma Sally told me about her sister stepping on the radiator while they were playing a game. I also liked the one about my Uncle Marc packing a bag full of underwear and attempting to run away when he was five. I asked for these stories over and over again because I wanted to understand my family. I wanted to know them.

I became enthralled by the stories my parents and grandparents told me and I wanted to learn more. I loved dissecting stories about the people who changed the world. I read about MLK, Anne Frank, Rosa Parks, and Anastasia Romanov. My favorite, however, was our 16th president. By six, I had an impressive grip on the details of Lincoln’s life and legacy. I still know most of the words to The Gettysburg Address. I maintained a somewhat successful history blog from third to sixth grade where I shared book reports, travel stories, poems, biographies, and my opinions on the 2012 presidential election. I owe my passion for stories and history to my parents and grandparents. My dad is a history buff and has worked many years as a history book buyer for Borders Books and beyond. His grandpa was a reporter and editor in Grand Rapids and Niagara Falls. My mom is a vibrant communicator in her personal and professional life. Her parents are curators of family history. Storytelling and history are in my blood.

My ability to tell stories is present in my writing. I’ve always been a strong writer across many disciplines. It is also present in my friendship with a camera. I fell in love with photography after being gifted a camera my sophomore year of high school. In my senior year, I was able to expand my camera skills into videography through a program at my high school. The Milan Center for Innovative Studies allowed seniors to explore their interests through the application of 21st-century skills and cross-curricular disciplines. Through project-based
learning, students enhance their understanding of collaboration and technology. (“About the Program,” n.d.). For many years, MCIS students have worked together to create a documentary for the C-Span Student Cam Competition. Over five years, there have been 20 winning documentaries produced in the MCIS. My group’s project focused on the presence of hate in the United States. We researched the history of hate groups and how they are enabled today. This project deepened my passion for social justice while teaching me valuable skills in documentary filmmaking. Later in my senior year, I blended my dance training with my new skills in videography to create a dance film and accompanying documentary.

Formulating a Concept

When the opportunity to do an independent study in dance presented itself, I was immediately thrilled to jump into the project. I had countless ideas and big dreams for what I could fit into one semester. From the beginning, I wanted to tell a story about my family. My first thought was to compose a piece about the last few years of Borders Books and Music. My parents met and fell in love at the headquarters of the late bookstore chain in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I wanted to honor my parents’ love story as well as their love story with books. The book world began to shift in the late 2000s with the presence of online shopping and e-readers. Borders could not keep up. I wanted to explore the way my parents supported each other as the company they loved suffered. Logistically, however, I could not figure out a way to translate this story into movement. Choreographing a love story is easy, but presenting the downfall of a Fortune 500 company is not. I decided that concept was too large to portray in a student project.

After this realization, I had a long conversation with my mom about what dance looked like in my life. It led to a long talk about how the dance teachers in my life have been incredibly formative for me. Since I walked into my first dance class, I have looked up to the women who
helped me fall in love with the art. Influential and strong women have always been a driving force in my life. My mom is the strongest woman I know. How did she get so strong?

This question made me reflect on the women who my mom always told stories about. I decided I wanted to tell their stories. Once I determined the subject, my creativity flowed easily. I jotted my notes down with excitement. Music and motion quickly arrived in my mind.

**Rural Women: The Concept and Definition**

My research is about women in rural America throughout the 20th century. I began my understanding of what it meant to be a rural woman by looking at three of my great-grandmothers on my mother’s side. I read their journals, looked at their pictures, and asked my parents and grandparents about them. I then researched the history of rural women using journal articles and book chapters to solidify my definition. For purposes of this project, I define rural women as Euro-American women who lived in farming communities throughout the 20th century. My research occasionally overlapped with the history of Native women as they are considered rural as well. However, I chose not to include Indigenous women as their experiences vary from the ones Euro-American women face. While there are similar overlaps such as poverty, the systems that put these women in disadvantaged positions are oppressive for different reasons. Additionally, I did not want my research to be too broad, so I decided to focus on what I have access to through my family history.

I come from many rural women, however, I wanted to choose the ones who, while they embodied the role society laid out for them, also changed tradition. I also wanted to have an adequate understanding of these women, so I narrowed down my list by picking the ones who kept journals and the ones who I’ve heard the most stories about.
The first woman I selected is Edna Weitz Johnson. She is my great-great-grandmother on my grandfather’s side. She was born in 1880 and died in 1966, two days before my mom was born. I’ve loved getting to know Edna through stories. Edna was a wife, mother, and grandmother. She maintained the Johnson farm both inside the home and outside. In many ways, she served as the glue. She was a strong, fierce soul with a firm opinion.

The second woman is Rosie (Rosetta) Boughner Johnson. She was born in 1909 and died in 1993. My family does not know much about what Rosie did from 1944 to 1987. In 1944, she ran away from her husband and her two children, one of them being my grandpa. No one heard from her for those forty-plus years. In the last few years of her life, my grandpa saw her a few times. Her story is incredibly unconventional for the time. She moved across the country, abandoning her family for decades. I’ve always wondered why she did it. Through the stories, journals, and research I’ve come to the conclusion that Rosie felt trapped.

Lastly is my namesake, my great-grandma Maxine. Born in 1916, married in 1939, and a mother of four by 1945, my grandma Maxine was loved by all. Her husband Leo was one of twelve siblings. He grew up on a farm and eventually got a job with Lowell Light and Power in Lowell, Michigan. My grandma Sally, my great-grandma Maxine’s oldest daughter, was in eighth grade when her dad died on the job (figure 1). Grandma Maxine mourned the loss of her husband while continuing to raise her four girls. This tragedy changed her role.

The exploration of these stories set against the backdrop of academic research helped drive my choreographic process. I decided to create an individual story told through dance for each woman, as their stories were very different.

The Early Process
On one of my last nights home for winter break, I filled in for a teacher at the studio where I grew up. After I was done teaching, I had the studio space to myself for a while. I turned on a piece of music I had thought about in my initial brainstorming process. I came up with a few movement phrases, one of which I later incorporated into Rosie’s piece. This early exploration made me feel confident in my ability to choreograph for a project like this. I really enjoyed the early choreographic process as I was able to play around with movement that felt good in my body as well as with movement concepts I thought should be portrayed in the dance pieces.

**Music Choices**

My dad played me Melanie Safka’s version of *Look What They’ve Done To My Song, Ma* a few years ago. The song really resonated with me. Melanie displayed so much frustration and anger in her beautiful voice. She sings, “well, it's the only thing that I could do half right / And it's turning out all wrong, ma / Look what they've done to my song” (Safka, 2010). Rosie had the life she was supposed to have based on society’s standards. She was supposed to do it right, and she determined she could not. Rosie’s decision to leave was selfish in many ways. She blamed it on the people and the system, which was part of the issue. Nevertheless, she completely abandoned her children and family and never took responsibility for her actions. I felt that Melanie’s song was a good representation of Rosie as she places the blame elsewhere, saying “look what they’ve done to my song” (Safka, 2010). In this version, one of the last verses switches to French. The juxtaposition of the lyrics in English and French is beautiful, however, I didn’t feel it fit well with the concept. The French part, while beautiful, is not relevant to Rosie’s life in any way. I figured I could cut the song and remove that part, but then remembered a cover by Miley Cyrus. In 2012, Miley released a series of Backyard Sessions where she sang some of her own work and covers of other iconic songs such as *Jolene* and *Look What They’ve Done To*
My Song, Ma. 2012 was an era of transition for the singer. It was post-Hannah Montana but pre-VMA. I liked Miley’s version for many reasons. First, Miley has country roots. As my focus is on rural America, I thought a folksier version of the song would be better suited for this piece. Second, Miley is similar to Rosie in many ways. She was trapped by a system and needed a drastic change in order to escape. Third, Miley’s version does not include the French lyrics. Lastly, since I am telling my grandmothers’ stories through my eyes, I wanted to connect with the music I chose on a personal level. Miley Cyrus has been a constant icon throughout my life, so her rendition of the song means more to me than Melanie’s.

The next song I settled on is the piece I chose for Edna. Every summer, I attend a family camp in northern Michigan with a dear friend. It is a sacred place to all who attend. Although everyone is from different parts of the country, we pick back up right where we left off when we return to camp. On the final night, we gather around a fire to bid farewell as the sun sets against the lake. Each year we sing some of the same songs like Leaving on a Jet Plane and One Tin Soldier. This year, a woman got up to sing a new song. This woman has been coming to family camp since she was a little girl. Decades later, she still comes with her family, their spouses, and their offspring. She told us about how the pandemic kept her family apart. When they were finally able to unite again in the early summer of 2021, one song came to her mind. With her sister, they sang Crowded Table by The Highwomen. The song features women such as Brandie Carlile and Maren Morris who are trailblazers in folk and country music. At that moment, I was completely moved. The song so beautifully captured the essence of family and the importance of gathering. Her family was the most important thing in her life. The farm was a gathering place for immediate and extended family to come home to and share stories and meals. Edna’s journals entries often radiate joy and peace when she reflected on her family’s time together.
I was stuck on Grandma Maxine’s music for a while. I considered using an instrumental piece for her, but the other pieces of choreography utilize the lyrics to portray a story. I think that choice was a good one, as words were essential to my grandmothers' lives. After clicking aimlessly through Spotify, The Chicks’ cover of *Landslide* came on. *Landslide* is significant to Grandma Maxine for so many reasons. I’ve always thought of the song as a story of adapting and changing in a world that does not wait. After Grandma Maxine lost Leo, she had to adapt even though she built her life around her husband and her girls. Her life changed in an instant, like a landslide. I decided this cover was perfect for Grandma Maxine’s choreography.

**Into the Semester**

Entering the semester, classes began online. It was a major disappointment, although I was able to get some time in the dance room in Loyola’s rec center. I likely spent two hours total playing around with choreography in the first few weeks of school. I avoided choreographing to lyrics and music in the early process as I wanted to play with the concepts of movement first. I have some videos from this process, but most of the choreography from the video did not transmit into the final product. I found my best time for choreographing was on the shuttle back and forth from the Water Tower Campus. I was able to put my headphones in and feel it out in my head. When I took that choreography to a space where I could do it more full out, sometimes the choreography translated well and other times it did not. Oftentimes, the issue was in the timing. When you are choreographing on a bus, it is hard to estimate the exact time a phrase will take. Therefore, when I reworked it into my moving body I had to make some adjustments.

Finding studio space was frustrating. Despite being a great university for the arts, Loyola does not have many arts spaces. The Kathleen Mullady Memorial Theater on campus is barely usable, yet it is the only option for dance organizations. Not only is it dirty, poorly lit, and falling
apart, but it is consistently booked out in order to accommodate Loyola’s organizations and
events. The studio spaces in Halas Rec Center are often unavailable for individual use. The one
upstairs is a beautiful space, yet is often occupied by group workout classes. The studio
downstairs is consistently full of overflow from the weight room. Lastly, the studios in DFPA
spaces including Mundelein 409 and the Fine Arts Annex are always in use by DFPA students
and faculty. I was able to utilize the upstairs studio in Halas to work with a dancer for Rosie’s
piece a few times, but have had issues getting into the space multiple times. I was able to work
once with another dancer following her rehearsal in the Fine Arts Annex. However, it was 10
pm, and given the late hour, I did not want to keep her longer than thirty minutes. Space only
became available on a regular basis in mid-March. That left me with only three weeks to get my
choreography together, set it on dancers, and create a final product.

Challenges and Solutions

The space constraints were a major challenge throughout the semester. In order to combat
this, I kept detailed notes about my choreography. I realized that producing three complete
dances would not be realistic. Although I was not able to set all of my choreography on bodies, I
am grateful to have the notes I kept about each piece so I can return to them in the future

In early March I experienced a grand mal seizure. I was diagnosed with epilepsy in
March of 2019 two days before the most important dance competition of my senior year of high
school. Ever since that first seizure three years ago, I have felt like epilepsy constantly interrupts
my dancing. Seizures are immensely exhausting, both physically and mentally and the recovery
process takes days. In order to recover from this seizure, I chose to take a break from all school
work which set me back in my independent research process. Challenges are a part of life and
sometimes resources are not accessible. Like my grandmothers, I felt stuck at times. I felt
trapped and defeated due to space constraints and my seizure, yet I was able to recognize my strong support system in my professors, roommates, friends, and family.

The History of Rural Women

For too long, people have been written out of history. There are chunks missing from textbooks and eras left out of social studies classes. At school board meetings across the nation, people are having conversations about Critical Race Theory and the so-called threat it poses to our youth. People are afraid of CRT because “of its bold and unapologetic approach to disrupting power imbalances and systems of oppression” (Duhaney, 2021). CRT is crucial to creating a more inclusive, just education system. The words “bold” and “unapologetic” from this article resonate strongly with me. My grandmothers were bold and unapologetic in a world where they were supposed to be the opposite. The implications of being left out of history carry great weight. The trials and tribulations of the women before me were lessened as they were white, however, poverty and social norms were massively restrictive to these women. Before beginning my research, I considered a farmer’s wife to be a housewife. In reality, I found that “women’s roles on the farm often overlapped between the spheres of traditional women’s and men’s work” (Kleinschmidt, 112). Women were cooking and cleaning, but they were also managing money and doing physically challenging farm work. Moreover, the scope of farm life began to change in the 20th century. Farms grew larger and more political as events such as the Great Depression ensued. Edna’s journals detail her experience throughout the Depression and the 1936 presidential election. The day after FDR wins, she writes “O gee but I'm disappointed. Roosevelt won by a plurality of 7,000,000 votes over Landon” (figure 2). Edna was opinionated politically, even though history says these women were not. In the 1930s, the government’s understanding of what it meant to be a farmer caused concern for farming families. As FDR’s New Deal began to
come to fruition, “farm women actually had a stake in and were interested in the political decisions made during the New Deal” (Kleinschmidt, 113). Women wanted what was best for their families, and in order to achieve that they needed to be involved in the political processes that were occurring. Rural women’s second shift was hefty due to their copious number of responsibilities. John Mack Faragher is an American historian known for his studies of the United States frontier. In an article titled, *History from the Inside-Out: Writing the History of Women in Rural America*, Faragher argues that farmers were always freer than their wives. He writes that farmers were “granted the prerogative of social participation, participation that took place while their women were at home working with children, chickens, and cows” (Faragher, 550). Men on the farm were receiving all of the credit, yet doing less work. Faragher goes on to explain that these women were “powerfully aware of the inequities of their lot” (Faragher, 551). In private, these women could discuss their grievances with one another. Edna had a support system in her family and friends to share this with. Rosie’s lot, however, was smaller. Perhaps this is why she ran away. While she attended to her sons and family, her husband went to work. As he returned home to relax, she began her second shift as a mother. This easily could have led her to feel isolated, a common feeling among many rural women (Faragher, 553). While Rosie fled, most women did not. Despite these struggles, they remained consistent. They needed to do what was realistic and practical. Unlike Rosie, most rural women “approach solutions and take action with a driving practicality” (Fallows, 2019). In an article with *The Atlantic* about rural women, writer Deborah Fallows asks the question, “isn’t that how pioneer women and immigrant women and farming women survived?” (Fallows, 2019). It is a sad reality that women were forced to live their lives motivated solely by practicality. For some women, it was bearable and even enjoyable. For others, it was consuming and aggravating. A late 20th-century article by
The Washington Post tells the story of Marianne Brueshoff, a farmer’s wife from rural Minnesota. Brueshoff reflects on the historical factors that impact rural women including isolation. She says, “there is so little value placed on the woman's contribution” (MacPherson, 1978). 100-plus years after my great-great-grandma Edna was born, I wish she could see that her story is being told. I feel this way about my other grandmas, too.

Translated to Social Justice

The arts are tools for social justice. Literature dating back to Shakespeare has held social and political issues in the written word. Paintings, statues, fashion, and more have been representative of inequality and unfairness throughout the world.

Following the 2018 tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the dance world took initiative. Jaime Guttenberg was fourteen when she was shot and killed at her high school. She was a dedicated dancer and a kind soul. Following her death, her parents created an organization called Orange Ribbons for Jaime. In the following weeks and months, dance teams and companies around the country attached orange ribbons to their costumes and jackets to honor Jaime’s life and raise awareness about school shootings. It was remarkable to see the dance world come together. The dance world is a community of movers and shakers who have a unique set of skills that can be transmitted to social justice. Like orange ribbons appeared on costumes almost instantly, dancers are becoming fluent in how to integrate current events and social issues into their work. Shannon Mather’s contemporary piece Body Love went viral in 2016 for its artistic message about body positivity. Rena Butler’s 2020 work for Hubbard Street Chicago, A Tale of Two, is another example of social justice displayed through dance. The blurb for A Tale of Two says, “Created, filmed, and scored in Chicago during the summer of 2020, the work is filled with tension and tenderness, reflecting the vulnerability
of youth in a violent world. Dreams amidst despair. Hope amidst hatred. Joy amidst injustice. In a work that speaks powerfully to our present moment, the Hubbard Street Dancers capture both the intimate and the universal” (Butler, 2020). I admire these works as they tell stories through movement. The choreography, music, staging, and costuming are intentional in conveying their message. While the audience views the art, they are not only enjoying the technique, dedication, and skill that goes into creating a dance but also engaging in thought sparked by the story the dance is telling. Sandra Kauffman, Loyola University Chicago’s director of dance, founded the program on the basis of dance as social justice. Adam Doster conducted an interview with Kauffman about this crossroads. He writes, “dance at Loyola is understood as a form of rhetoric, a metaphorical voice for the voiceless” (Doster, n.d.). According to Kauffman, “students have to build the megaphone, manipulating their bones and muscles. Then they have to be the voice behind the megaphone” (Kauffman, n.d.). Loyola’s dance program is innovative and promising. Loyola is equipping dancers to be vessels of justice.

By researching the history of rural women and conveying my research through my grandmothers’ stories, I believe I created a work rooted in social justice.

**The Final Product**

After deciding that producing three full pieces was not going to be feasible, I had to narrow the scope of my final product. As I had already begun creating a video to accompany my work, I decided to continue with it. Instead of showing each completed piece in the video, I opted to only show excerpts from each. I am dancing Edna’s choreography as I was never able to work one on one with that dancer. I have snippets from Rosie’s and Maxine’s dances that were shot in the studio without costumes, lighting, or real camera work. I wanted to include information about my process for the pieces, so I decided to verbally tell their stories with
assistance from photos and videos. In addition to the documentary, I consolidated my choreographic notes into 1-2 page documents detailing information about the song, dancers, concept, and the choreography itself (see Appendices A-C for full choreography write-ups). Having these documents will assist me if I ever want to return to these works in the future.

**Conclusion**

My grandmothers helped make me who I am today. Being Maxine is an honor and a privilege; something that I could not have done without the strides they took. Throughout my independent study, I was able to blend my passion for dance with my heart for my family, history, storytelling, and social justice. I learned valuable skills about adapting, documentation, choreography, and conversations. By engaging in research, both primary and secondary, I gained a greater understanding of what it meant to be a rural woman in the 20th century. I will continue to carry my grandmothers’ stories with me through my voice, my strength, and my name and I hope this project inspired people to dive into the stories of their families.
References:


Figures

Figure 1

Newspaper Clipping about Leo Hoover’s Death

Note: Front page of the Lowell Ledger on March 19th, 1953 reads “Power Line Accident Tuesday, Fatal to Leo A. Hoover, Foreman As He Contacts 6,900-Volt Wire”

Figure 2

Edna’s Journal from November 4, 1936

Note: Edna discusses Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s win in the presidential race as well as the Michigan gubernatorial winner and other local elections
Appendix A

Edna’s Dance: Changing Tradition by Nature

Song: *Crowded Table*

**Edna’s Story:** Explore how she bore the weight of her family as well as the pressure of farm work and demonstrate how she was a unifier of her family

**Choreography Goals:**

- Play with weight-bearing and partnering
  - Represents her role as a mother, grandmother, and wife
  - Can be executed through group lifts where Edna is a base and being lifted
  - Partnering with each individual dancer meant to demonstrate her individual connection with every person who “sits at her table”

- Create a motif of a rectangle to represent a table/gathering space
  - Can take the form of a group formation or physical shapes with one body
  - Demonstrate gathering and conversation

- Concept of guiding
  - Mess with the concept of a follow-the-leader type movement
  - Edna was a leader, even though she had a husband… people looked to her for guidance
  - Can be done through group/unison choreography or “call and repeat” style movement
  - Integrate lines and movement in/down the lines

**Dancers:**
- Lead (Edna): Jeanette
- Other dancers (family): Olivia, Grace, Victoria, Harmony, Bri, Abigail

Other notes:

- Rosie’s dance is a solo for a reason, she chose not to carry that weight, it was too heavy for her. Edna’s dance is meant to have multiple people to represent the people in her life
- Music will be cut, roughly 2 minutes
  - 2 chorus + 2 verses

Final Choreography Structure:

Music starts: Edna starts stage right and enters with floor work
- Can be improvisational but remains low to the ground and heavy
- At the start of Edna’s day, feeling the weight but getting ready to begin
- As the music vamp ends, Edna rests center stage

First Verse: Edna sits in the middle, legs crossed, arms to each side of her body
- Right arm reaches over to palm and back arms come up to frame face drop
  - Preparing for the day
- Roll into a little kick cartwheel thing
- Ball change, ball change with arms pressed to the sky
  - Strength (inspired by Lusia’s song in Encanto)
- Edna pauses and watches as the rest of dancers enter the stage
- They each cross her and greet her in various ways (hug, brush, nod, she fixes their shirt/hair)
  - Showing genuine connection and trust
- Form a rectangular formation (3 in the front, four in the back)
Chorus 1: Group in formation on stage, unison choreography

- Little flick jump step head roll, balance x 2 ballet turn two chaines out legs arms out
- Pitch roll crawl together reach
  - Gathering closer to hear stories
- Edna rolls up rond de jambe lift with one or two dancers (will need to experiment with this)
- File out in a line to sit down around a figurative table

Second Verse: In rectangle formation, sitting toward one another

- Edna stands up, rock, rock out out attitude turn
  - Everyone else watches intently
- Edna step develop ball change high chaine low calypso
- Edna lifts up the dancer on the front right corner, turns around and grabs hands to swoop under one another
- Roll into center dancers form a clump
  - Repetition of the gathering idea
- Stand up turn out walk slow to new spots

Chorus 2: Dancers in a circle around Edna

- Hand out, out head roll ball change arm cuts through step back arms sweep backward
- Step out arms sweep across arms form flat (Edna sinks now)
- Pas de bourree in circle corner coupe turn stand reach reach reach
- Move together to form line connect together
- Edna moves down the line right to left and then left to right, interacting with each person again
Outro: Everyone walks away as Edna wraps up her day

- Improvisational, movement is high energy yet graceful
- Represents the end of her day
- At the last moment she stands still
Appendix B

Rosie’s Dance: Changing Tradition by Choice

**Song:** *Look What They’ve Done to My Song, Ma* (Miley Cyrus Version)

**Rosie’s Story:** contemplating leaving, frustration about the system, writing in her journal

**Choreography Goals:**

- Contemplation and anxiety
  - Rocking and looking
  - Touching apron
    - Apron represents how she is stuck
- Gesture Heavy
  - Eye hold: hyper fixation, focus on one role
  - Reading/writing in her journal: swipe right to left across the ground
- Contrast proper with anger and the need to escape
  - Integrate big movements with ballet aspects to demonstrate the restraints
- Apron
  - Use an apron as a prop to portray her wanting to leave

**Dancer:**

- Grace

**Other Notes:**

- Solo is intentional, Rosie felt alone and she was selfish
- She stays mainly in the center as she feels stuck, trapped in one place. She moves around the edge of her small circle, but does not break it until the end
- Apron as a prop/costume

**Final Choreography Structure:**

First verse: Grace stands in the middle of the stage, messes with her apron

- Sharp hand over eye gesture, melt with hand flicks,
- Repeat hand over eye, melt to ground one knee down flicking again
- Hand slide leg through arch back push upturn to face back and pout, move up and out
  - Relevance of the journal, frustration within herself
- Eye gesture again with a fan kick hand follows two little jumps and run run run run
  - Movement is becoming more outward rather than inward, her emotions are rising

Second Verse: Grace is in the middle, experiencing inner-turmoil

- Hands clasped proper walk
  - Trying to be polite and proper again, she “gets it together”
- Pique hands fold backward over shoulders x2
- Frantic walk move all over the stage pull at clothes then relax
- Flick dainty heal toe out to insane gesture grab hand in pull in
- Clasped hands walk freak out again legs and jump

Third Verse:

- Roll to ground hand slide again hands form book formation sink arms in front of the face
  - Finding solace in her writing
- Wrists around pull arm slice book gesture peek out from side head roll
- Little pull flick to stand up walk back, back book front
- Hip roll hip roll walk walk hands come down look eye gesture flick hand
- Improv with illusion move to the back of stage two strong strides with apron
Fourth Verse: Ballet section

- Grace starts with petite allegro, eventually expands to bigger, more messy movement
- Fifth position facing front right corner, hands to heart, frame face
- Rond de jambe, sweep back leg through
- Eye movement but more dramatic and aggressive, larger hand movement here

Fifth Verse:

- Criss cross in the front of the stage, hand slide gesture repetition flip up around
- Take apron off wrap around her shoulders
  - Deciding to leave, the apron remains significant
- Slide front back, fouette arms out in look down
  Backbend slide on hands pull apron and knees into chest
- Sit up eye gesture get up again roll around straight legs knees roll up

Sixth Verse: Juxtaposition of her kids/family versus the man she runs away with

- Look right and down slowly, soft smile, aggressive movement with ride side of the body
  - It’s like she is trying to be pulled that way but stays firm
- Look left and up slowly, slow dancing motion, waltz turns, shake out of it at the last second
- Wrists around slice through right hand sweeps, left hand sweeps, hands close together
  - She’s done writing in the journal
  - Let go moment
    - She feels free

Outro: Grace rocking back and forth center stage

- Leave the apron on the ground and walk off stage
Appendix C

Grandma Maxine’s Dance: Changing Tradition by Tragedy

**Song:** *Landslide* (The Chicks)

**Choreography Goals:**
- Weight sharing
  - Mourning yet supporting
  - Partnering and group movement
- Persistence
  Use repetitive movement that resembles her strength and consistency
- Gestures
  - Grave hand placement

**Dancers:**
- Lead (Maxine): Caitlin
- Other dancers (the sisters): Olivia, Harmony, Bri, Victoria

**Other Notes:**
- Maxine’s dance will be mostly focused on her with the other dances coming in and out occasionally
- The dance will move through time… It begins with Maxine visiting her husband’s grave alone, and ends with her daughters visiting the grave after she is gone
- Fragility

**Final Choreography Structure:**

Music Starts: Maxine enters stage right
- Walks across the floor, transitions into floor work to move to knees in the front left corner on the diag
  - Movement is slow and solemn, she is by herself, reckoning with this sudden change

First Verse: Knees bent facing front corner of stage left
- Hand hand heart hand hand out again (grave gesture) down collapse into self
- Perk up roll out of it to stand up pull attitude turn
  - Quickly moves on after a quick visit
- Sway with hands reach out and around on snow extend to backbend
  - Grasping for something that isn’t there
- Rond de jambe with following arms, battement, chaise step pas de cheval

Second Verse:
- Rond de jambe phrase
- Lower one knee to the ground, rise up and fall
  - Represents the backs and forths, highs and lows of loss and grief
- Moving in large circle, chug sequence x 4, waltz turns x 4 back to middle
- Each daughter appears in one corner of the stage to dance with Maxine

Chorus: Unison choreography with Maxine in the center
- Low chaise to the side step through to point, brush back, turn behind self arms out
  - Showing support for one another
- Arm arm head falls reach out pas de bourree coupe turn, foot drags
- Left leg slides forward right arm reaches up
- Hit arms together in a ripple
- Turn close together, rond de jambe heads rest on shoulders
- Maxine steps out for slow large movement

Third Verse: Maxine dances in the front left corner while the sisters dance in the back left
- Hand and head drop to the right side of the body, slowly come to standing
- Rond de jambe phrase

Outro: Maxine leaving through her daughters
- Improv movement through the sisters
  - Explore partnering and lifts here to get Maxine off the stage
- Ending with sisters repeating the beginning phrase at the grave