

Rebecca Galt  
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Outcome Report

With many thanks to the Miller Arts Scholars Program, this grant helped me to further discover and expand upon my movement vocabulary and challenged me as a choreographer to create a longer, cohesive dance work. The grant enabled me to attend the American Dance Festival's Winter Intensive in New York, where I was exposed to many different professional choreographers and provided the opportunity to generate new movement. I was also able to purchase a camera (Canon EOS 70D), which aided in the archiving of the creative process and final product. The remaining funds were used to purchase props and to publicize the concert, which was entitled *Compositions: Dance Concert featuring original choreography by Erika Choe and Rebecca Galt*. My final work, *Self-Assembly*, was over 20 minutes in length and was performed as a part of the Virginia Player's Lab Series in April in the Ruth Caplin Theatre. An excerpt from this piece was also performed in the Spring Dance Concert. My advisor through this process was Kim Brooks Mata, the head and artistic director of the dance program at the University of Virginia. She mentored me through the choreographic process and provided me with the resources that aided me in my exploration and the final production of my piece.

The image that initially stirred a choreographic impulse in me was that of wooden building blocks. The concept of what a structure is and how the individual components come together to create a functioning arrangement was one that I thought would be enjoyable to explore and could potentially be expanded upon to create a full piece. The themes of creation versus destruction and parts versus the whole are a few examples of what I was exploring conceptually when I began to choreograph in the fall for the Fall Experimental Dance Concert. My cast consisted of four dancers, Erika Choe, Elena Dimitri, Alex D'Elia, and Gabrielle Struckell, and the dance was titled *Assembling*. In this piece I took a very literal approach to the block image. I tried to create movement that made my dancers appear as if they were the wooden blocks. The piece began with the dancers at the far corners of the stage as they made angular, simple shapes. As the piece progressed, they increasingly began to interact, influence, and support each other. In the end, the movement was less contained and angular as they developed into a working structure. This piece was approximately 8 minutes in length and was an inspiring way to test my concept and flesh out my ideas before beginning the creation of the longer piece in the spring.

After the fall concert, I took a break from thinking about my piece and choreographing new movement. I attended the American Dance Festival in New York City from December 28<sup>th</sup> to January 5<sup>th</sup>. During this time, I had the opportunity to take technique, improvisation, and composition classes from an array of renowned choreographers. The information I absorbed from these artists was very influential on the evolution of my piece. The composition classes especially reminded me of the importance of looking at the choreographic process as a dynamic process. I also had the time to generate new movement unconnected to the

movement I was working on in my previous work. I returned in the spring with new inspiration and was determined to start on a new piece rather than just extend upon the piece I had just presented in the fall.

Even though I was starting a new piece with a shifted concept, I wasn't starting from scratch. I was still interested in playing with wooden blocks and the image of a structure. However, I decided that I wanted to step away from the literal interpretation of the dancers as the blocks and instead incorporate the blocks as props on the stage. With the integration of the blocks, I was able to expand my movement vocabulary. I was no longer constrained to generating movement that emulated blocks and was able to create parallels between what was happening with the blocks and what was happening with the dancers. This decision opened up many more choreographic opportunities for me to explore. I had never before choreographed with a prop, which infused the work with a sense of improvisation and unpredictability. The title of the piece was *Self-Assembly* and consisted of the same four dancers as the previous semester. Self-Assembly is a term used to describe the occurrence where the components of a system spontaneously assemble themselves through interactions to form a larger functional unit. A link to the first 9 minutes of this 22-minute piece is attached at the end of this report.

In addition to the creative, choreographic process that was happening in rehearsals, this experience gave me a taste for what it is like to produce my own dance concert. Along with my peer, Erika Choe, who was also producing a longer dance work as part of her senior thesis, I applied for the Spring 2015 Lab Series, which is sponsored by the U.Va. Department of Drama and the Virginia Players. Thankfully, we were one of the selected projects, and as a result we were provided the Ruth Caplin Theatre as our venue along with some additional funds and support. Our performance date was set for Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, which was 4 days after the closing of the Spring Dance Concert. In preparation for the performance, I had three hours and thirty minutes of rehearsal a week for 10 weeks. I had to design my own costumes and lighting for my piece. Erika and I also had to find people who were willing to work the sound and music boards and manage the house. Fortunately, we had a great deal of support from the Drama Department, the Virginia Players, and fellow dance minors who volunteered their assistance. Kim Brooks Mata also helped me schedule rehearsal times and space, and she was there during tech to assist us in the lighting design. Erika and I publicized our event primarily through social media and adding a leaflet in the Spring Dance Concert playbill advertising our show. We had approximately 75 people attend our event, which ran for about an hour and 15 minutes total. Overall, it was a very rewarding experience, and it was captivating to watch the artistic choices my dancers made on stage.

The most challenging part of creating this dance piece was the length. The difficulty wasn't that I didn't have enough ideas or movement to form a full-length piece, but rather that it was difficult to sufficiently rehearse the piece in the allotted rehearsal time. The piece was almost always rehearsed in parts, which made it tough to be able to appreciate and evaluate the piece as a whole. There were many sections that needed more clarification in terms of intention and more practice to smooth out transitions (particularly in the second half of the piece) that I just didn't have time to work on. My dancers did an outstanding job internalizing all the

instructions I gave them and committing fully to every movement, which helped mitigate some of the rougher, less rehearsed sections of the piece.

I followed my initial timeline very closely and my final product was very similar to what was proposed. The biggest divergence was that I did not include a video component to my concert piece. In the creation of my piece, I quickly realized that integrating a video component would interrupt the environment I wanted to create on stage. I was already taking on a sizeable challenge of developing a work more extensively and trying to find a way to incorporate a film component would have changed the direction of this piece significantly. Instead, I incorporated blocks into my final Dance for Camera project. The title of my film is *Creative, Destruction*, and it explores the tension between creation and destruction. The manipulation of the blocks depicts how we sometimes need to deconstruct in order to continue creating. Creation and destruction go hand in hand and there cannot be one without the other. It also looks at how we have the innate resources to create our environment. A link to this film is also attached at the end of this report. I hope to one day challenge myself by incorporating film and live movement into one cohesive concert piece.

This grant was extremely rewarding and challenged me to grow both personally and artistically. This work still feels like a work in progress and I can see myself returning to it in the future. I am very grateful for the Miller Arts Scholars program and the donors for making this possible.

*Self-Assembly* (excerpt)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvQ8PuaKpqY>

*Creative, Destruction*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGf6I0i4znc>

