

This summer, I embarked on a journey that changed the way I would think about choreography, dance, and film forever. Thanks in part to funding provided by Rackham Graduate Student Research and the Department of Dance, I traveled to both Salt Lake City Utah, and Chicago in search of answers to my many questions regarding the journey and progress of dance on film and it's relationship to an audience. Though many people need answers delivered in black or white, I expected a greyscale of sorts. Through that greyscale, however, I left my two weeks feeling more inspired than ever, receiving what I believe to be positive information for the path and future of Screendance.

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My first stop was the International Screendance Festival, held at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Led by Simon Fildes and facilitated by Ellen Bromberg, the festival was a six day intensive filled with important conversations, screenings, and hands on experience learning the craft of Simon's editing techniques. Throughout the festival, we touched base on Simon's "Twenty uncomfortable questions for comfortable video dance-makers." Among them were the questions: How can we make people care about video dance? How can we justify having our own genre - is video dance any different from short-film making? How is it that there rarely seems to be any dance in video dance? How can video dance makers recognize the web as a future distribution channel? How can we avoid a lack of awareness of what has gone before or is happening in other art forms? I began to realize that many of my personal questions, are in fact being discussed by many in our field.

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What I was able to take away most from the week of discussions was a thought that has now changed how I create dance films. Simon posed the very big question: Why are we making films? Is it for television, or cinema? Is it for continuity sake, to please the masses, or match the techniques used in television and movies? Are we staying true to the dance? As I reflected through the week, I realized going forward I need to create work with these questions in mind, to maintain clear intent behind my work.

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Our afternoons at the festival were spent in an editing lab learning Simon's editing process. Specifically, we learned and practiced "trimming the fat" on sequences, ridding of "junk" immediately. We also learned how to set up a rhythm through clip arrangements. His aesthetic is to cut on action, and practice repetition throughout the edit as an additional means to the choreography. He and his partner, Katrina McPherson published a paper entitled "Repetition, revelation and transformation, the loop in video dance structure," where they discuss three approaches to their work: repetition as musical structural device; repetition as constructed narrative device; repetition as transformative structural montage. They compare how editing dance film through repetition can mirror contemporary approaches to choreographic composition and structure. As I left Salt Lake City to embark on part two of my research, I decided to try to stay as true to Simon's editing style as possible while creating my film in Chicago, to see what the outcome might bring.

Ultimately, the festival taught me that I am not searching for the answer of live performance VERSUS film, in our dance genre, but live performance AND film as a valid means in our art. This thought became a turning point for my research.

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I arrived in Chicago and began working immediately on the film, 'What is Taken.' I had seven days to film, edit, and present the film, so there was a lot of pre-planning and organization involved leading up to my arrival. I used a dancer I had known and worked with prior, Jamie Salas, and was granted permission from the band T0W3RS, to use an exclusive track, with the agreement to cross promote each other's art.

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I taught Jamie the phrases and gestures on day two and filmed the interior shots. Day three and four were spent filming on location in the mornings and editing in the evenings. Day five I completed the film and day six I presented the film along side a live performance of the choreography to a panel of twenty people. I will now play the Screendance version of "What is Taken."

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The panel was an even mix of dancers and non dancers, both male and female. I also was able to live stream the event on the internet and had written feedback from those who tuned in online. The panel filled out a written response, answering questions about the most and least effective qualities of both the live performance and the Screendance. They also surveyed their use on the internet and the amount of time they spend watching videos on YouTube and Vimeo, specifically dance related. What was remarkable about this experience was the amount of verbal response all twenty of the panelists gave voluntarily. The dancers on the panel preferred the live

physicality in front of them, following the arch of the narrative, whereas the non-dancers on the panel jumped in to argue that perspective through the eyes of the lens was much more engaging to them, allowing them to focus clearly on the story line. The conversations continued on to where the audiences focus was for each performance, how non-traditional spaces and multiple locations can help or hurt the transformation of the performance, and how using social media to promote dance, by putting it on film, is effective in marketing the art and to expand audience reach.

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After returning home, I put the film on Vimeo and received over 200 views in just 24 hours. I also submitted the film to a couple festivals and am pleased to announce that it is also part of the current “Test Kitchen” exhibit at Work Gallery, here in Ann Arbor. The opening reception is this evening and the exhibit runs through September 20th.

As I transition back into the school year and dive into my thesis, I am still processing all of the information and conversations had this summer throughout my journey. I am inspired to use this past summer as a foundation for my thesis and am excited to use the information received and the information I will continue to receive, in the upcoming year. Thank you.