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CAN A METHODOLOGY BE DEVELOPED FOR MUSICAL THEATRE
CHOREOGRAPHY?

by

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B.M.E. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1999

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
in the Department of Theatre
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
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2007

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ABSTRACT

Limited training exists for young, aspiring choreographers who wish to work in the realm of musical theatre. University programs turn you away if your focus is not on concert dance and few good books can be found on library shelves to gain knowledge. Most books that do exist are very outdated and lack the practical knowledge and information necessary to become a successful musical theatre choreographer today. This research will help to determine whether a methodology can be developed for training musical theatre choreographers.

The research data collected stems from the creative minds of choreographers and performers. A select group of professional musical theatre choreographers completed surveys in regards to the craft. Three of the participants were observed using their creative teaching strategies in rehearsals. Furthermore, selected performers responded to a set of questions in regards to the selected participants' strategies.

All of the collected data was analyzed to determine which choreographic methods and strategies result in the most successful rehearsal periods and products. The favored methods and strategies, as well as other information, assisted with recognizing the necessary knowledge that an excellent musical theatre choreographer must possess. That knowledge was divided into elements that will make up the courses within the desired methodology.

The conclusion finds that a methodology for training musical theatre choreographers is obtainable, consisting of the study of the determined elements. With the development of a text and a university to pioneer the program, aspiring choreographers will have a way to gain beneficial knowledge and experience in the craft of musical theatre choreography.

This thesis document is dedicated to every individual who ever dreamed of being an incredible musical theatre choreographer, but was not sure how to develop their skills to become one. For every individual who would like to be the future Bob Fosse, Susan Stroman, Jerome Robbins, Michael Kidd, Gower Champion, or Onna White, the words on these pages will hopefully provide you with some insight as to how to get yourself there. Finally, for every individual who, like myself, searched for a university program that would help you to develop your skills as a musical theatre choreographer and could not find one, or got turned away from a concert dance program because of your desire to choreograph for the theatre, this research and document is for you. Here is some of the information that will assist you with becoming a great choreographer of the theatre. My hope is that the rest of the information will soon be published in a book that you can buy or check out of your local library. For as a result of this thesis research, a methodology for training future musical theatre choreographers will be born. It is my hope that my created methodology will be available to all individuals with the desire to study it and better their choreographic skills and knowledge. It is my hope that my created methodology will help you to be the next outstanding musical theatre choreographer. Best wishes and good luck with your future endeavors!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Without the help, faith, and support of numerous family, friends, and colleagues, this project would never have fulfilled its development. It is therefore with a grateful and humble heart that I thank the following individuals. First, I would like to thank Earl Weaver, Gary Flannery, and Chris Niess for believing in my ideas and serving on my thesis committee. Much thanks to the three directors who allowed me to sit in on their rehearsals. Thank you for trusting me with the confidentiality of your material. To my good friends, Kathleen Hurley and Stephanie Plahitko, who gave me a free shelter in which to stay while traveling around the country to complete my observations; considering that I funded this research project out of my own poor pockets, your friendship and charity served better than a five star hotel! I owe my gratitude to the interviewed performers for trusting me with their opinions and knowledge; your feedback on the choreographers' teaching methods and personalities have already increased my knowledge and will hopefully benefit numerous other choreographers in the future. Thank you to my mom, dad, and family for influencing the person I am today and supporting this crazy passion I have for the performing arts. Finally, my most sincere thanks go to all of the professional musical theatre choreographers who volunteered their time and thoughts to this endeavor. Without you, there would be no research, no answers, no knowledge, and no future for a methodology for our craft. I cannot thank you enough for your willingness to share your creative ideas and vast knowledge. This project lives so that great ones such as you will live on in the future!

The following choreographers participated in this research project:

Tim Bair

Kathleen Marshall

John C. Bell

Carlton F. Meier

MaryAnn Black

Cheryl L. Obal

Andy Blankenbuehler

David Ollington

Karyn Bracilano

Ruthe Ponturo

Donald Brenner

Myles Thoroughgood

Francis (Gary) Flannery

Eric van Baars

Mike Lopez

Earl D. Weaver

Robert Mackey

Mike Weaver

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Four and a half years ago, I decided to apply to master's degree programs for two reasons. First, I knew I needed more training in voice, dance, and acting if I wanted to compete with my fellow Actors' Equity performers. Secondly, I wanted to strengthen my choreography skills, hoping that a good staging position would help to stabilize my life.

I applied and auditioned for three programs in dance composition, thinking this was the training I needed to assist me with my career in staging/choreography. However, I hit a major roadblock when I got the same response from all three program leaders: "This program will not train you for the type of choreography you want to do (theatre, theme parks, and cruise ships). It will only train you for composing in the realm of concert dance. You need a musical theatre program." So, I went back to the drawing board. I applied and got accepted into the MFA program for musical theatre at the University of Central Florida. The program has succeeded in further developing my skills in voice, dance, and acting; it has not offered me courses in composition to develop my choreography skills. I have come to the conclusion this is because no course work exists for training aspiring *musical theatre* choreographers. Furthermore, my preliminary research proves that few, if any, beneficial books are published to give aspiring choreographers the skills necessary to become great teachers and innovators.

Thus, the question remains, "Where can aspiring musical theatre choreographers go to develop the skills that will lead them to successful careers?" Many professional choreographers today began their careers as Broadway dancers and worked their way up to choreographic positions. However, for those dancers who are not able to travel the "Broadway" route, the only

opportunity available is to work in educational and community theatres with little pay. They lack the experience and knowledge necessary to obtain the advanced level positions. Therefore, my thesis research has focused on answering this question: “Can a methodology be developed for creating choreography in the musical theatre?”

A training program, in the form of either a university program or a well-written text book, could greatly enhance the skills and knowledge of aspiring choreographers. Though “on the job” training through internships, assistantships, or shadowing a mentor often serves as the best predecessor to a successful choreography career, many individuals do not have access to these opportunities without the help of some initial experience and credentials, such as a degree. The desired methodology would give these individuals the tools necessary to open some of those doors toward success. I hope to create this methodology by tapping into the minds of successful musical theatre choreographers around the country and combining their ideas and knowledge into one, solid format. Combining the best knowledge from the various choreographers should help to produce some of the best musical theatre choreographers of the future!

The research data was collected through surveys submitted by professional choreographers, interviews completed with professional performers, and personal notes recorded from observations in the field. In the following paragraphs, you will learn of the elements involved with creating excellent choreography for the theatre and the processes that working choreographers are using in the field today, manifested through their responses from the surveys and the notes recorded through the observations. Analysis of the collected data follows, discussing which of the stated processes and strategies seem to work best in terms of creating innovative choreography. There is also discussion of which teaching strategies and processes

culminate in a productive rehearsal period, leading to a successful product manifested in a well-received and entertaining theatre show.

The conclusion section presents all of the elements proved to be necessary in the proper training of a musical theatre choreographer. It briefly discusses how each element will enhance an aspiring choreographer's knowledge and career prospects. The conclusion also presents the necessary steps that must occur in order to make this methodology a reality. The data collected supports the notion that a methodology for training musical theatre choreographers would be beneficial for those wanting to succeed in the professional entertainment business. We just need to lay the groundwork and find a willing university to pioneer the program.

CHAPTER TWO: MATERIALS AND METHODS

All research data was compiled from the thoughts and teaching methods of eighteen human participants. The primary investigator recruited the participants through networking with former instructors, colleagues, and arts organizations, such as the Society for Stage Directors and Choreographers (SSDC).

The first phase of data collection involved the participants completing a survey of questions created for the study. The survey can be viewed as appendix “F” on page 62 of this document. Each participant received a packet in the mail which contained a cover letter detailing the survey instructions, a survey, two copies of a consent form, and two postage paid envelopes. The consent form can be viewed as appendix “C” on page 54 of this document. The participants completed the survey and returned it to the primary investigator in one of the envelopes. They also signed the consent form and returned that to the primary investigator in the other envelope, keeping the second copy of the consent form for their personal records.

Once the primary investigator received the consent forms and surveys, she reviewed the survey responses. Three participants, who had varying responses on their surveys, were chosen to be contacted for the second phase of the study. In the second phase of the study, the primary investigator traveled to observe each of the three participants working with performers in a rehearsal. A few of the performers were also asked to volunteer to do a short interview with the primary investigator.

The three chosen participants were contacted via electronic mail and asked to participate in the observation phase. All three participants accepted the offer, and plans were made for travel

and observation dates. At each rehearsal observation, the primary investigator recorded written notes on a legal pad of paper. Volunteer performers did verbal interviews with the primary investigator at the end of each rehearsal day. Each volunteer performer signed a consent form, which can be viewed as appendix “E” on page 60 of this document. The primary investigator verbally asked them six questions in regards to the participants’ teaching methods and character. The list of interview questions can be viewed as appendix “G” on page 68 of this document. Their responses were recorded on an audio tape using a small tape recorder.

The primary investigator transferred all of the participants’ survey responses onto a spreadsheet, presented as appendix “H” on page 70 of this document, for easier comparison processes and further evaluation. All observation notes were inputted into computer files, as well as the audio responses from the performer interviews. All data collected from the surveys, observations, and verbal interviews was used to create a result for the thesis question at hand.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

Preliminary Research

If one thing is unanimous amongst the volunteer choreographers (here after referred to as participants), it is that excellent musical theatre choreography stems from a lot of pre-production research. Some of them learned this lesson the hard way, not doing any research and ending up with a bumpy rehearsal period and unfulfilling product. Others learned this lesson when they were performers, by working with choreographers who did not research the show. As a result, they experienced unproductive rehearsals and unchallenging material to work with as a performer. However, 28% of the participants claim they learned this valuable lesson from previous teachers they had in high school or college. They would become a force to be reckoned with in the world of musical theatre choreography if they spent time gaining knowledge about numerous aspects of the shows on which they would work.

The participants gave the following responses when asked about the significance of researching a show before the creative process. Researching the show and its characters often helps to spark the creative process for 17% of them. It also provides choreographers with “a touchstone to return to” when they hit a road block. The background knowledge allows 39% of the participants to create movements that uphold the time period and history of the show, as well as develop the characters’ personalities. Seventeen percent of the participants also stress that the more research one does prior to rehearsal, the smoother the rehearsal process will be. An excellent choreographer knows how to run an efficient rehearsal so as to not waste valuable time.

Furthermore, several of the interviewed performers commented on the frustration of wasted rehearsal time. Though they understand that a choreographer has numerous things to accomplish, they feel that, at times, things could be better prepared ahead of rehearsal. The performers specifically suggest that the directors not call them in until they will be used in rehearsal. They also suggest that any rehearsal assistants be trained on the proper movements prior to rehearsal so the performers do not get confused from learning two different sequences of steps. All of these things play an important role as to why a musical theatre choreographer should complete pre-production research.

Every choreographer chooses various things to research when gathering information to develop their creative springboard. Though not everyone focuses on the same things, 100% of the participants in this study agree that they research the dance styles of the time period in which the show takes place. One-hundred percent of the participants also claim that the size of the stage or performance space is of utmost importance. The background of the show concerns 89% of the study participants, as well. What is the storyline of the show and who are the characters? Where does the show take place? Related to the background of the show is the history of the time period. Was a world war occurring at the time when the story takes place? Were women allowed to work outside of the home in the century that the story occurs? Finally, 89% of the participants find out the ability levels of the performers with which they will be working.

Sixty-seven percent of the participants also research other various things before beginning the creative process. They look into where the show takes place, what the costume and set designs will look like, what props will be available, and what kind of a budget they have to work with. They also take into account the amount of rehearsal time they will have to teach the

performers the movements. Lastly, one participant who reads music studies the musical score to see what musical nuances appear within it.

The participants use various sources to gather all of this information, but 100% of them use videos and DVD recordings. Books and magazines received a strong second place vote from 83% of the participants, followed by the use of audio recordings, such as tapes and compact discs. Fifty-six percent of the participants use them to gather research. It never fails to network with your colleagues either, especially when it comes to more abstract shows that are not performed often. They will sometimes know of information or resources that cannot be found at a library. Seventeen percent of the participants attend live theatre performances to assist them with their research and one participant takes dance classes in various styles with which he is unfamiliar. Finally, the participants today access the internet to gain information on many of the research topics. The internet serves as a very convenient and cheap way to access a plethora of information considering that it is commonplace in most modern households.

The Creation Process

The first thing that needs to be done once the pre-production research is complete is to decide where and when to incorporate dance numbers into a show. Seventy-eight percent of the participants state they base this decision upon the director's instructions. Wherever the director feels dance should help carry the storyline, the choreographers focus their attention on those places. Sixty-one percent of the participants claim they decide where to insert choreography based upon aesthetical motivation. They either sense where movement needs to occur and will assist the storyline, or they feel a song or monologue would have heightened meaning

accompanied by some movement. There could be many other reasons for adding movement in certain places based upon aesthetics, as well. The choreographers just get an internal feeling that movement needs to occur. The scripts often tell choreographers and directors where movement should occur, and 56% of the participants say they use this guideline for determining where to place their choreography.

Though these three things prove to strongly influence where choreography should take place in a show, one participant makes an equally strong statement when he claims that “The movement must be motivated by some internal state of character, some “social scene” that requires a period style, or a device to move the story forward.” This thoughtful response makes much sense when relating it to meaningful choreography within musical theatre and deserves some consideration among professionals as well.

Once choreographers know where to insert the movements, they must then decide which numbers they will create first. Fifty percent of the participants claim they often begin with the most difficult number in the show. Some feel the difficulty of the piece will be a good learning process for the performers. Others claim the most difficult numbers tend to be the large ensemble numbers, and creating them first can have several advantages. First, they will have more time for development and needed changes considering their earlier origination. Second, the earlier they are created, the sooner the choreographers can begin teaching them. If the ensemble numbers are taught first, it gives those performers something to work on while the choreographer works with the principal performers on their solo numbers. This makes for efficient use of everyone’s rehearsal time.

Twenty-two percent of the participants state that the order in which they create the numbers depends specifically on the show and its nature. How many ensemble numbers exist in

comparison to solo numbers? Is it a “dancer” show or a “mover” show? Choreographers must also take the show director into account when figuring out what to choreograph first. The director creates the schedule and, as a member of the production team, the choreographer must follow it. So, what gets created first often depends on what and who is scheduled to rehearse on which days. This means the numbers may get created in the chronological order of the show, or the ensemble numbers first, or the solo numbers first. Should choreographers have the lucky opportunity to decide what they will teach first, they may create whichever number they feel most passionate about first and let aesthetical motivation drive their creational process.

The next step in a musical theatre choreographer’s creational process becomes creating the actual movements. Two options exist for creating movements when it all is said and done: pre-planning them or improvisation. Seventy-eight percent of the participants claim they pre-plan their choreography in some way, shape, or form, while only 17% choose to improvise, or create the movements “on the spot.” Those who plan ahead of the rehearsal do so in various ways. Some choreograph movements down to the last count, while 39% of them develop a framework that can be filled in during the rehearsal process. In the end, 22% of the participants say that despite their planning and documenting of the movements beforehand, things inevitably change once in rehearsal with the performers. Either the movements do not look right on the performers or the performers sometimes come up with fresh ideas on their own. So, the participants agree that a good choreographer needs to leave room for flexibility and be open to multiple ideas. The participants who choose to create movements through improvisation in the rehearsal room find value in using the dancers’ bodies to create the steps. This way, they know right away what works and what does not work. However, they claim this process usually works best when given a large amount of rehearsal time.

Physicality and visualization play equal roles in the creation game for 72% of the participants in this study. They claim they visualize the blocking patterns in their minds first, but they physically get up and do the movements they place within those patterns. One participant claims that when working with large ensembles, he tends to visualize movements in his mind before working them out physically to make sure they flow well. Seventeen percent of the participants also state that when creating the movements, they listen to the music and allow it to tell them which movements should live within the piece. They get up and simply begin moving to the music and the steps form naturally. In the end, the mind and the body work together to create what will appear on the stage; but the participants take many other elements into consideration when creating their movements as well.

The music, visual effects, flow and difficulty of the movements, as well as use of the stage space, all affect the way 72% of the participants string movements together. One of the participants says he figures out what steps to incorporate next by doing what feels right in his body. The music will also help to produce the sequence of the movements; for example, if the musical rhythms go slow, fast, fast, the steps will tend to flow from the body in that rhythm as well. If there is a sudden pause of sound in the musical arrangement, the body will tend to pause. So, the body feels the musical nuances and naturally moves where it should go next. Seventeen percent of the participants also place a high importance on maintaining the “storyline” through the movements they create. They ask questions such as, “Why are the performers moving?” and “What must happen here to move the story forward?” If the movements do not tell the story, they will simply live as a bunch of steps hooked together for no reason.

Now the choreography is created, whether it is a day before the rehearsal or a month before the rehearsal. Either way, the next concern becomes remembering the movements that one

created so the choreography can be taught in rehearsal. Hence, most choreographers have some form of documentation that will assist them with remembering “what comes next” in the case that their memory fails them in rehearsal! Eighty-three percent of the participants claim to use some sort of system that involves writing out the movements and relating them to specific counts. Many choreographers do this on scratch paper; twenty-two percent of the participants state they write the counts and movement names into the musical score. Thirty-nine percent of the participants often incorporate some sort of drawing or stick figure into their documentation. Seventeen percent of the participants rely on video taping the movements for future viewing. This becomes an efficient tool in modern times as laptop computers can be hooked up in the rehearsal room and downloaded videos can be viewed at the necessary times. Seventeen percent of the participants claim they rely on their memory alone to produce the previously created movements in rehearsal, and none of the participants in this study use Labanotation to document their choreography.

These various forms of documentation have their benefits and set-backs. The most beneficial form of documentation seems to be the video recording. According to one participant, if one records the movements from behind, or upstage, with a mirror in the front of the room, one can view the recording in the future and it appears that there is a teacher demonstrating the movements in front of you. However, you can also view the front of the movements in the mirror, so it gives you both perspectives. The other benefit of video documentation is that it withstands the test of time. If one looks at written notes a year after they created them, one may not remember the movement that corresponds with a term or “name.” Also, the words on the paper may not make sense if the body does not remember physically how the movements felt. However, one can view a video tape and see exactly what the movements are supposed to look

like. So, it seems the only possible set-back of video documentation would be if the video tape broke or the computer file accidentally got deleted from the laptop!

In regards to the documentation method of writing out the movements in relation to counts, it does offer a quick reference guide to look at if one forgets one or two movements within a combination in rehearsal. This will save a choreographer time, which is a benefit when one is under a theatre's strict rehearsal schedule and budget. However, the major problem with this method is that other people usually cannot decipher the written notes and terms when the choreographer is not present. If the choreographer has to leave rehearsal for one reason or another, the assistant may not know how to move forward, and the performers may not be able to practice on their own if they do not understand the written documentation. The other set-back of this method is that it requires a lot of time to write everything down in a thorough manner so that it might be deciphered weeks later. This also applies to the participants who claim to record their movements and counts within a musical score. The one benefit to that method is that it allows the choreographers to better communicate with the musical conductor in rehearsal. As for relying on one's memory for documentation, if the memory holds true, it saves time not having to refer to written documentation in rehearsal. However, if the memory fails, choreographers get stuck with nothing but frustration as they try to remember the connecting steps. This wastes time as they then must try to improvise a movement which proves to be a longer process.

The Teaching Process

A choreographer must decide which number to teach first before arriving at rehearsal the first day. Fifty-six percent of the participants state they usually start with the most difficult

number in the show. They have several reasons behind this teaching strategy. First, some say it gives less experienced dancers more time to work on the movements and learn to sequence them together. Second, the most difficult numbers tend to be the large ensemble numbers, as stated previously during the creation portion of this chapter. Teaching the ensemble numbers early in the rehearsal process gives those performers material to practice while the choreographer works with the principal performers on their solo numbers. This method prevents many performers from sitting around with nothing to do during rehearsal time. Furthermore, teaching the ensemble numbers first gives them a longer development period in which to grow and more time to clean the movements with the performers.

Seventeen percent of the participants also say their teaching schedule relies heavily on the director's rehearsal schedule. If the director wants to rehearse the show in chronological order, then the choreographer must teach the numbers in chronological order; twenty-eight percent of the participants claim to use this teaching method. The choreographer also must work with the other members of the production team. If the vocal director needs the gentlemen to sing on a certain day, the choreographer will have to rehearse numbers consisting only of the ladies. These scheduling concerns play a big role in determining which numbers to teach first in the rehearsal process. Hence, it is always best to meet with the production team ahead of time to map out a plan before mapping out your personal teaching plan.

When it comes to teaching the actual movements to the performers, the participants have various strategies for working with them. Fifty-six percent of the participants claim they start teaching the numbers from the beginning and work them through to the end. However, 22% of the participants also say that how they teach the numbers depends upon the nature of the numbers themselves. If they are working with large ensembles, some of them teach the unison

choreography first so that when they teach sections of complimentary movements, the other performers have something else to work on. One participant states that teaching the most difficult section of the number first may prove beneficial in that it can help one to determine the ability levels of the performers. In general, the participants hint at the fact that one should be flexible and adapt to the needs of each particular number. Various teaching strategies may prove most beneficial in various situations.

What happens when a choreographer teaches a piece of pre-planned choreography in rehearsal and it does not work with the performers? There are generally two options for fixing this situation. Seventy-two percent of the participants do not mind improvising a new movement sequence in the current rehearsal. They often times will use the bodies and minds of their dancers to help them come up with a workable sequence, accepting the dancers' ideas for possible steps or blocking placements. The other option for replacing the failed choreography is to move on to a different section of movement within the number, re-create the choreography outside of rehearsal, and insert the new sequence of movements at a later time. Fifty percent of the participants use this strategy. One participant claims that the strategy used often depends upon why the planned choreography did not work in the first place. There may be a simple solution that can be worked out in the rehearsal room at that moment; but sometimes a successful fix requires more time and is best taken care of when not on the time clock.

When it comes to perfecting the movements, 67% of the participants say they prefer to teach the entire number and then go back to the beginning and clean each movement. Some say this proves to save time when under stressful time restraints. Others feel that if the entire number is learned, it allows the performers to run it more often and repetition will help to perfect the movements itself. Thirty-nine percent of the participants perfect the movements as they teach

them, saying this works especially well for large ensemble numbers. Twenty-eight percent of the participants teach the number and perfect the trouble spots at the end. Some say it depends on who is being taught. Two participants use all of these methods, depending upon the situation. They claim that perfecting the choreography is an on-going process and requires different methods at different times.

Concert Dance Training: The Benefits and Mishaps

The participants have various responses in regards to how concert dance programs prepared them to become musical theatre choreographers. Two of them comment that their background in concert dance gave them an unlimited vocabulary in the field of dance. Two participants say concert dance taught them about using the stage space and the different powers that each part of the stage possesses. One participant states her modern background taught her how to run rehearsals and manage the rehearsal process. Most of all, the participants who did come from a concert dance background say the programs gave them a background in various styles of dance, including ballet, tap, jazz, modern, and folk dancing. The programs developed their technique, and the consensus is that good technique is required to create good musical theatre choreography. Concert dance training definitely has its benefits in relation to becoming a musical theatre choreographer. However, it fails to touch on certain necessary aspects of theatre choreography as well.

Seventeen percent of the participants with concert dance training state their concert dance programs did not prepare them for creating dance movements for singing performers. When choreographing movements for singers, one must remember that the performer cannot face

upstage when singing or the vocal sound will be lost. Also, performers cannot do such aerobic movements while they are singing or they will run out of breath. These elements greatly affect the movements a choreographer can create at certain times in a number. Another 17% of the participants claim their concert dance programs did not teach them how to tell a story through movement. They figured out how to incorporate subtexts and dramatic images into movements on their own. Eleven percent of the participants also say their concert dance programs failed to teach them certain styles of dance that are prominent in the musical theatre world, such as ballroom and tap dance. Though concert dance programs have many benefits when it comes to musical theatre choreography, they also stop short of fully preparing someone to successfully work in this creative craft.

It seems there is a hole somewhere in between the two worlds of concert dance choreography and musical theatre choreography. The hole represents the lack of formal training that exists for individuals who want to pursue this craft of choreography specifically for the theatre. Sixty-seven percent of the participants in this study agree that the art form of musical theatre choreography would benefit from educational training. They suggest that such a program include dance classes in various styles, with a strong focus on technique. It should also incorporate dance composition courses and performance experience in live theatre shows on campus. Seventeen percent of the participants mention the importance of having skills in dramaturgy and music theory as helpful to the successful theatre choreographer. One participant stresses the importance of learning how to collaborate on a production team.

Above all of these elements, though, the participants stress the importance of on-the-job training in becoming a successful musical theatre choreographer. Hence, such a program should incorporate a professional internship where a young choreographer can shadow a working

professional and learn valuable tricks of the trade, as well as assist them in rehearsals. All of these elements would benefit an individual wanting to become a professional musical theatre choreographer, elements that the participants wish they would have encountered earlier in their professional journeys.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Research: An Educational Tool

The study participants claim that completing pre-production research is necessary to successfully choreograph a theatre show. Several say they learned the importance of research from working with poor choreographers who had done none. That statement represents one of the reasons for completing this thesis study. We have all worked with bad choreographers at some point in our lives, and the goal here is to figure out what qualities are possessed by good choreographers. The participants also say they learned the importance of research from teachers they had in school, or they figured it out on their own. It is interesting to note that out of the participants who claim they learned to research from previous teachers, none of them learned the skill from dance teachers. They all learned it from acting or directing teachers. This may prove one of the benefits of having an educational training with more of a theatre background versus one in concert dance. When you choreograph a theatre show, a storyline already exists that must be researched. On the other hand, concert dance pieces are often more abstract, allowing the choreographer to create their own storyline. Research may not be necessary in these cases. So, theatre courses may provide more opportunities for research practice.

When it comes to learning how to research a topic, an educational course will probably give individuals more knowledge than what most people figure out on their own. A good research methods course will teach someone how to use a lot more than books. My research methods course in my MFA program introduced me to the worlds of microfiche, professional

journals, and various online resources that I would have struggled to find on my own. Since pre-production research plays an important role in the success of musical theatre choreographers' work, good choreographers need to have knowledge of the resources available to them. So, a good training program would definitely teach aspiring choreographers how to become excellent researchers.

The biggest difference between musical theatre dance and other types of dance is the movement must advance the storyline forward from where the script left off, and it must revolve around the given characters. This provides the main reason for researching a show prior to creating its choreography. Without studying the characters, storyline, and all of their elements, the movements will not succeed in this mission of advancing the story. So, preliminary research allows choreographers to create more meaningful choreography so the audience members will better connect with the show's storyline.

Good musical theatre choreographers research various things to ensure their movements blend with the storyline. The results state that 100% of the participants research the dance styles of the time period. I feel this is necessary if the choreography is to relate properly to the storyline. For example, the dancers should not perform the Charleston if the story takes place in the 1800's, as it was not created until the 1920's. Rather, the waltz or the gavotte would serve as more appropriate dances for the 1800's. The size of the stage, or performance space, directly affects how much the choreography can travel, whether lifts or acrobatics can be performed, how many dancers can comfortably move in the area, and the difficulty of the movements. These are clearly two things to take into account before beginning the creative process.

Researching the background of the show concerns 89% of the participants, and this helps to relate the choreography to the storyline as well. A good choreographer must discover who the

characters are, as their personalities will affect the way they move. If the show takes place in Kenya, the choreography should look much different than if the show takes place in Omaha, Nebraska. So, discovering the who, where, what, why, and when of the show will assist a choreographer with creating movements that advance the storyline. The same theory applies to researching the history of the time period. Such information would affect the emotional state of the characters and how they move. Historical events may also affect the gender of the performers available to do the movements in a certain scene.

Costume design was not one of the options listed for the survey question about what to research, but a few of the participants wrote it in as something they researched, and it makes a lot of sense. The dancers' costumes greatly affect their ability to move and their range of motion. For example, ladies wearing long dresses with crinolines would have great difficulty performing various leaps, and men wearing blue jeans may have more limits to their flexibility. It seems that costume design may not be at the top of the list for items to research, but it definitely should be included in there somewhere.

In regards to the set design, only two of the study participants say they research this before creating their movements. Again, set design was not one of the optional answers to the question on the survey, but it has a major effect on the choreography, especially the entrances and exits onto and off stage. It also affects where you place the dancers at various points in the numbers. For example, an extension may be added to the front of the stage for extra room or one of the set pieces may have a porch or balcony that a couple dancers may move on. There also may be a structure center stage during a number that will prevent the performers from moving there. Researching the set design prior to the creative process will save time later in the game, as one will know where they can block their movements. This will prevent unnecessary surprises

from occurring once in rehearsals with the performers. Researching the various elements above will clearly assist a musical theatre choreographer with using movement to advance the storyline of a show, as well as running a smooth rehearsal. Just as good musical theatre choreographers research various elements, they use various resources from which to draw the information as well.

When it comes to the types of sources the participants use to research the storyline, the most used sources consist of things or activities that one can do on their own, in their own time frame. Such activities include watching videos, reading books, and listening to audio soundtracks. It is a known fact among industry professionals that musical theatre choreographers have very busy schedules. As stated above, many of them work more than one job at a time to make their living. Thus, it is no surprise that many of them choose research sources that are easily accessible to them at any time of the day. This allows them to squeeze their research time into their busy schedules without having to worry about meeting with someone else.

This sort of independent study works well for researching things such as the background of the show or the dance styles of the period. However, there are times when needed information cannot be found in books, videos, or compact discs. Sometimes the best information can be obtained from speaking with other professionals in the field or colleagues. These resources most often involve making an appointment to meet with them, but they can share boundless information they gained from experience. They may have directed or performed the show in the past, or they may have researched it at one point in time. Because colleagues can be such important sources of information, it is always smart to keep contact information for everyone you have worked with or learned from in the past. E-mail addresses prove especially useful in

these modern times, as they provide an informal way to get in touch with professionals you know are busy or have not spoken with in some time.

Two of the elements the participants listed as the most important to research were the size of the performance space and the abilities of the dancers; these are elements that must be researched through the help of others as well. Another big difference between a concert dance choreographer and a musical theatre choreographer is the presence of a production team, and members of the production team would serve especially useful for gaining this information. While most concert dance choreographers work solo on their projects, a musical theatre choreographer must serve as a member of a team that involves a director, producer, music director, costume designer, set designer, lighting designer, and sound designer. In terms of assisting with pre-production research, a choreographer often must contact the director to receive information about the performance space and the performers. In an optimal situation, the choreographer would be included on the audition panel where she/he could view the space and see the performers' abilities before creating the movements. However, when that does not happen, communication with the director of the show is key to gaining this valuable information.

A good example of the need for this communication stems from one of my observations. It seemed that the choreographer had not communicated thoroughly enough with the director. Some of his movements appeared too difficult for the performers' abilities; he must not have checked with the director on their talent levels. The other concern, though, was the performers were learning the movements on risers which did not have enough room to accommodate all of them. As a result, some performers were trying to do movements too difficult for them in too small of a space, and some of them ended up falling down. Had the choreographer spoken with the director ahead of time, he could have compared the size of the performance space and the

performers' abilities with his choreography. He could have then suggested they rehearse the movements on a flat surface, such as a gym floor. So, though an excellent choreographer can do most research on their own time, they need to be flexible and willing to communicate with others to get the job done well.

As stated above, two other members of the production team are usually the costume designer and the set designer. The set designer often times will help to make any necessary props. So, one would want to ask them about the size and make of any props that may be included in a choreographed number. These concerns should be researched with the set designer prior to creating the choreography so that one does not have to backtrack later in the process or waste precious rehearsal time. In the same manner, one should consult with the costume designer to find out exactly what the characters will be wearing in various scenes before creating the movements. As you see, a good musical theatre choreographer serves as an active member of a production team, not only contributing knowledge to the overall product, but gaining knowledge from the other team members as well.

In summary, pre-production research is necessary for good musical theatre choreographers as it will allow them to create movements that will advance a given storyline. Musical theatre choreographers research various show elements from various resources to make this happen. Though some individuals can learn to become excellent researchers on their own, most people would benefit from learning research skills in an educational course. Hence, a training program would include such a course, providing aspiring choreographers with the necessary researching skills to become excellent musical theatre choreographers.

The Creation Process: Concepts More Thoroughly Learned in an Educational Setting

Once choreographers research the various aspects of the show, they must decide where to put movement within the show. The production team will come in handy here, as 78% of the participants state they decide where and when to place choreography based upon the director's instructions. The director is the mind of the show, and the rest of the production team must work to create his or her vision. So, a choreographer must place choreography where the director wishes to have it; at times, if the director does not like a piece of choreography or thinks it is unnecessary, a choreographer may have to take out a piece of movement as well. This relates back to the fact that a good choreographer must be flexible and willing to change things, especially when the director wants something changed.

"If there's music, dance" was another option listed in regards to where to put choreography within a show. Only one participant chose this as a possible option. (The participants could choose more than one option for this response.) It makes me wonder why it was not a popular choice. The logical response is that music alone does not serve as a reason to dance when speaking of musical theatre. Again, the primary purpose of the movement should be to forward or enhance the storyline. There may be music between scenes or even entire songs that do not require movement, as the text alone is strong enough to maintain the story. Choreographing movements to every measure of music in the score could lead to meaningless sequences of dance steps. Such sequences often offer less of a challenge to the performers and cause them to lose their motivation for the scene. Hence, some performers do not enjoy working with these types of choreographers as much. This is not to say that those who choose this

motivation for movement are not good choreographers. However, when thinking about the qualities of an “outstanding” choreographer, this probably would not be one of them.

Fifty-six percent of the study participants say they rely on the script’s instructions to decide where to put movement into a show. The script provides an easy source for assisting with this decision, as it has already been decided by the librettist. However, a possible downfall of this creative decision is that the product may not turn out to be as creative! If every choreographer based their decision to insert choreography on the script’s instructions, then many productions of one show could turn out looking quite similar. This is probably for the best when speaking of a classic show, such as “West Side Story,” because audiences expect and want to see certain things they have seen before, be it in the movie or a prior production. However, with most musical theatre shows, a little variety and creativity can go a long way! Choreographic variations could make a production of one show better than a previous version. It could contribute to a revival winning theatre awards that eluded the original Broadway production. So, there will be times when the script’s instructions will make sense from a creative standpoint, but excellent musical theatre choreographers should not feel the need to rely on the script’s instructions alone. They should follow their own senses and feelings and add movement where they feel it will enhance the storyline.

As stated in the results section of this paper, after choreographers figure out where to place choreography, they must then create it; they can create movements through a pre-planning process or improvisation. Another reason for my choosing this research topic stemmed from my experiences working with choreographers who wasted valuable rehearsal time trying to create their movements on the spot. We, the performers, felt great frustration as the choreographers sequenced movements together that meant nothing and did not challenge us. Furthermore, they

would decide that things did not work well and continually change things on us. One of the interviewed performers also claimed her choreographer was making a lot of changes, as he did not have everything set before arriving to rehearsal; she did not like working with that many changes. As performers, these are the type of choreographers we sometimes label as poor. The choreographers who pre-plan their work always seem more credible to me.

Interesting enough, 78% of the participants claim to pre-plan their choreography prior to rehearsal. Some of them go into rehearsal with only a framework that can be completed through use of the dancers' talents. As stated in the results section of this paper, this process seems to work best when given a large amount of rehearsal time. Most theatres today unfortunately work on a tight budget, which results in tighter rehearsal periods. Therefore, planning only a framework may not be the best creational method when it comes to working in the modern day theatre network. Most of the participants pre-plan their movements down to the last count and detail, but they say they always leave room for flexibility as well. That way if some of their pre-planned choreography does not work out, they can change it on the spot. Pre-planning choreography seems to work best for most choreographers as it gives them a solid game plan with which to use their rehearsal time, and outstanding choreographers use their rehearsal time productively.

I would like to comment on the one participant who claims to visualize things in his mind when choreographing movements for groups/ensembles. This method makes much sense as the mind can imagine the look of various movements on multiple performers much more efficiently than a single body can perform them. The imagination can create choreographic pictures that one body cannot. When creating ensemble movements, it helps then to have a few assistants or performers to test run what the imagination envisioned. Again, this creational method would

most likely waste a lot of rehearsal time. So, it works best when implemented as a pre-planning strategy.

Only 39% of the participants commented on their motivation for sequencing together the steps they pre-plan. In regards to the participant who claims to sequence steps together based upon what feels right in his body, I feel this has a lot to do with the flow of the movements and weight changes. Your body will naturally want to move in a certain direction depending on where your weight is; going with that feeling will help the movements to flow well together. Furthermore, two of the interviewed performers commented that they like it when the movements flow easily together. They said it is nice when there is a degree of predictability to the choreography because it helps them to know what is coming next. It helps their learning process, but they hope the audience does not see it as predictable as well!

Of the others who did comment, the feel of the music and storytelling are the dominant influences of which steps get connected together. They then incorporate the stage space, flow and difficulty of the movements, and the visual effect into those elements. Considering that stories encourage people to feel various emotions, it makes sense that storytelling and the feel of the movements produced by the music have a great effect on the way the participants sequence their movements together. The positive thing about this is that everyone feels music and interprets stories differently. Hence, though choreography between two different productions will have its similarities, it will always hold its uniqueness as well. Though two choreographers may have the same idea about an element of the story, there are hundreds of dance steps for them to choose to interpret that element or musical nuance. This provides the degree of uniqueness between the two products. In the end, both variations will carry the audience members through the story, and that is the product of an outstanding choreographer.

When it comes to deciding which number in the show to create first, most of the participants state they begin with the most difficult number. This makes a lot of sense because beginning the tough numbers first provides them more development time. Many of the participants say the most difficult numbers tend to be the ensemble numbers, as they consist of the most people to engage in movement at one time. Considering the movements should not only relate to the storyline but to the individual characters as well, time can definitely help in terms of developing the characters, matching movements and styles with those characters, and then figuring out how to blend those styles and movements into one, big ensemble number. The sooner you begin the number, the longer you will have to generate ideas and change them, if necessary. Furthermore, if you get the tough numbers done first, it will hopefully relieve some stress and allow you to enjoy creating the easier numbers more!

One of the participants says he likes to choreograph the solo numbers in rehearsal with the performers. This allows him to cater to the individual performers' abilities, making sure the performers can execute the movements before putting them into the numbers. This would work wonderfully with trained dancers, as they would have the knowledge to contribute ideas and steps to the routine. You could toss out the name of a movement and they could tell you whether they know it or not. If they don't, you could most likely demonstrate the movement, and they could pick it up. However, when working with untrained dancers or movers, it seems that going into the rehearsal with at least a framework of ideas would prove more beneficial. A list of basic movements within the style could serve as a springboard from which the performer and choreographer could choose which ones fit the performer best. Since the performer will have little knowledge of dance steps, he/she will want more guidance and instruction. The list will

assist with tossing various movements onto the table, hopefully speeding along the process and keeping the rehearsal productive.

Once a choreographer creates the movements, they should get documented for future reference. We, as choreographers, tend to remember many of the movements we create, but not all of them! It especially becomes difficult to remember sequences when one is working on more than one project at a time. Most of the study participants claim to use a documentation system involving writing down the names of the steps and coinciding them with their relative counts. This sort of system works well for most choreographers provided that only they have to decipher the notes later on. However, the most commonly stated set backs for this style of documentation were that no one else could translate the notes and it is very laborious to get them written down. This becomes a concern if an assistant has to teach a routine for you and they cannot figure out one of the movements. The long process of writing down the movements becomes a concern when one has multiple projects to complete and little time. Though most choreographers use this style of documentation, the set backs make you wonder if a better system could exist.

Most of the university dance programs in the country must believe that Labanotation serves as a beneficial system, as this is what they teach their students in the programs. Interesting enough, none of the study participants claim to use Labanotation as their documentation choice. This causes me to wonder what value this system currently holds in the field of dance choreography. Concert dance choreographers possibly use it for their creations, but it clearly has not crossed over the lines into musical theatre choreography. It seems that a different form of documentation needs to be taught in our university programs, especially one that would yield choreographers for the theatre. The question becomes what system of documentation will work best. What will take little time to record and be decipherable to anyone who peruses it?

The answer to this question could be a system used by a couple of the participants. They video tape the choreography from behind while having the camera filming towards a mirror. This way, as one views the tape, they have a teacher right in front of them from which they can learn the movements. Since they are standing in front of a mirror, one can also see their front side for any necessary details. It takes little time to record the sequences if they are known well and anyone with a VCR, DVD player, or laptop computer can view it. This documentation strategy can serve as a good learning tool for the performers, too. During one of my observations, the choreographer brought his laptop out in the middle of the rehearsal floor and had the cast gather around it. He needed the performers to learn how to do a baseball slide type movement across the floor. Rather than try to show the move himself, he had the performers view the video documentation he had from his pre-production rehearsals. The performers saw the movement on the video, studied it, and then practiced it on their own.

This process makes much sense and seems to be what most of the top professionals in the industry use today. For anyone at the top of the salary range, this system would work well as the money is there to afford the camera, rehearsal studio, and assistant to record the video. However, for the average choreographer working in the regional theatres or at the educational level, this system could get expensive. One needs to purchase a good video camera to get the job done, as well as a laptop computer that can be used to view the video while in the rehearsal room. Having a paid assistant helping you may not be necessary, but from what the participants say, it seems to help a lot.

So, could this documentation system serve as a universal one that could be taught in a university program and to professionals at conventions throughout the world? Most definitely, but more affordable variations of it would definitely help those choreographers at the bottom of

the food chain. Those who work and choreograph in an educational setting most likely will have access to the necessary tools (video camera, rehearsal studio, and laptop) on their campuses. This will assist with alleviating the expenses for them. However, for the many freelance choreographers working their way up the ladder, it may take them longer to afford these materials, and they may have to resort to the laborious written documentation until they can. Furthermore, completing a written version of the video documentation would still be beneficial over the long term. It is never a bad idea to have a back-up plan in case the videotape breaks, the DVD gets scratched, or the electricity goes out! Hence, establishing a universal written documentation system would still benefit the field in the future.

The concepts discussed in this creational section could be learned while on the job. One could learn how to communicate with directors through years of experience. One could learn the value of pre-planning choreography through trial and error. One could learn how to efficiently document choreography if given the golden opportunity to shadow a professional choreographer during his/her creative process. However, would it not be more beneficial to have some of these trial and error experiences in an educational classroom? Young musical theatre choreographers could learn these concepts without the pressures of a stringent rehearsal schedule and a cast of forty performers looming over them. They could learn how to work creatively alongside a director through a hands-on style course. They could have opportunities to learn how to improvise sequences through a workshop style course and critique sessions. Aspiring choreographers could also learn the most efficient forms of documentation through a course, incorporating practice time and time spent learning how to use the necessary media devices. Hence, it seems a training program would offer today's theatre producers with better prepared choreographers. With more trial and error experiences occurring in the classroom, less will occur

while on the job. The knowledge will help young musical theatre choreographers to create appropriate movements and lead productive rehearsals, which should lead to happy directors and successful products.

The Teaching Process: Successful Strategies to Lead Successful Rehearsals

Let's now discuss the process of teaching the created movements to the performers, the next step to successful musical theatre choreography. The solo numbers tend to be the easiest numbers in the show, and none of the participants claim to teach them first in their rehearsal process. Since they only have to work with one performer, they can easily tackle these numbers later in the rehearsal process when they are running short on time. Some easier numbers do involve multiple performers as well, and they can also be taught quickly toward the end of rehearsals. This works because they usually involve little movement and the necessary movements are simple in terms of execution.

Just as 56% of the study participants say they choreograph the most difficult numbers first, they also like to teach the most difficult numbers first when it comes to the rehearsal process. It is true the most difficult numbers tend to be the ensemble numbers. They tend to involve more challenging dance steps and blocking patterns, so teaching them early in the process does give them more development time. This is especially beneficial when partnering or lifts are involved with the choreography. The more time a couple has to get used to working together, the cleaner their performances will likely be come show time. Furthermore, teaching

the most difficult numbers first does give everyone in the cast something to work on during slower rehearsal sessions when they are not needed.

This teaching strategy seems quite sensible considering the benefits listed above. It is interesting to note that only 22% of the participants say they teach the numbers in the chronological order of the show. Those who choose this method claim to do so for purposes of storyline comprehension, especially for the performers. Though this teaching method may not always serve as most beneficial in terms of the final product, the participants' reasoning behind it is of great importance. One of the interviewed performers was working with a choreographer who gave them all a layout of the scene before teaching any of the movements. The choreographer made sure they knew who they were, what was going on, and why they were going to do the given movements. The performer said it gave him a place from which to move forward, which made it easier for him to learn the movements.

Hence, even when choreographers do choose to teach the most difficult numbers in the show first, they should definitely talk with the performers about where the numbers fall in the storyline. They should discuss what just happened prior to the number beginning, how the number carries the intent of that scene, and where the story goes after the number is finished. If the choreographer discusses these elements while teaching the number, the performers will still have knowledge of how that number will fit into the overall picture of the show when it comes time to run the entire act.

When it comes to teaching a specific number, 56% of the participants like to start teaching it at the beginning of the number and work it through to the end. This allows for smooth sequencing of steps and running of the number, as you begin rehearsing it at the beginning each time and run it up to the point of completion. It also allows for continuity in regards to telling the

story. However, the participants stress the importance of flexibility once again. The teaching strategy used depends highly upon the nature of the number itself. There might be a section of choreography that repeats several times, and they teach that first so everyone has something to come back to in unison. A number might go from being a duet to an ensemble piece, and so they teach the ensemble section first for reasons stated above. So, it is always good to analyze each number and decide which teaching strategy will work best.

The flexibility factor also comes into play when a piece of pre-planned choreography does not work in the rehearsal. Seventy-two percent of the participants state they drop their rehearsal plans and improvise a new sequence right away when this happens. Many of them claim they use the dancers' knowledge and abilities to assist them with creating something that works better. This strategy would probably work very well when working with a cast of experienced, professional dancers. They have a working knowledge of movement and know how to make steps flow within their bodies. Also, they know how to respect the ideas of their fellow dancers and offer their own ideas at an appropriate time.

On the other hand, this strategy would probably not be the best option when working with high school performers or performers with little background in dance. Depending on the level of maturity within the performers, opening up the floor for their ideas could create an atmosphere of fooling around and wasted rehearsal time, not to mention creative individuals getting laughed at or teased for their ideas that may not be so grand. This can create a scenario of having too many leaders and not enough listeners, as well as a rehearsal room of chaos. In this case, it would work better to skip the section of unworkable choreography, think up a new sequence outside of rehearsal, and then re-teach it at a later time. This allows one to move on with the rehearsal, maintain control of the atmosphere, and get something productive accomplished.

The final step of the teaching process is always perfecting, or cleaning, the choreography. The process of making sure that each arm placement and foot position appears similar to the audience can be tedious, but the reward of an exceptional product outweighs any frustration over the amount of time spent making everything appear perfect. Sixty-seven percent of the study participants claim to teach the entire number and then go back and clean each movement from beginning to end. The benefit to this strategy, as stated by some participants, is it gets the movements into the dancers' bodies so they can run the number. Running the number over and over can sometimes be one of the best cleaning tools. The participants make it clear that every movement needs to be perfected and placed; there are few times when perfecting only the trouble spots will produce an outstanding product. For example, if the performers have advanced dance abilities, they often nail the steps from the moment they are taught. Perfecting only the trouble spots makes sense in this scenario. Targeting the trouble spots may also have to do in situations when one has run out of rehearsal time and the show must go on. However, cleaning every single movement seems to be the way to go when time permits.

One study participant suggests an interesting strategy for not only creating the choreography, but cleaning it as well. He stresses the importance of marrying the movements he creates with the lyrics and musical nuances of the number. For example, if there is a big crescendo in the vocals of the score, he chooses to put a movement there that begins small and gradually opens up to a larger step or picture. He creates sharp, short movements to go with more staccato musical nuances in the score. In addition, he tends to use vocal sounds such as "pow" when teaching the movements to his performers. Two of the interviewed performers commented they liked this teaching strategy; it helped them to know how to execute the movements, as well as remember them. In regards to lining up movements with lyrics, two performers from another

interview said it helps them learn choreography better as the music often does not have a steady beat. This makes learning via counts difficult for them, especially considering they have little dance training. It is easier for them to learn steps that go with the lyrics. Furthermore, it helps them to memorize their lyrics!

When you think about it, choreographers naturally create movements and sequences in this fashion a lot. This relates back to the notion of naturally feeling the music to decide which movements to sequence together next in the creational process. It makes sense, too, that choreographing movements in this fashion would assist with cleaning them. Just as the music helps us to feel the movements as choreographers, it will do the same for the dancers, which will assist them with sequencing the steps and knowing which ones come next. Lining up the movements with their vocal cut-offs will help them know when to stop a movement or change it. So, it seems this creational strategy has merit and value. It should not be used as a guideline at all times, but it can definitely serve as a beneficial tool when it comes to cleaning up the choreography.

If a choreographer chooses to clean the choreography as he goes along, an assistant can serve as a very useful tool. One study participant says his assistant is able to clean the movements even as he teaches them. The assistant can quietly assist those struggling with a step as the choreographer advances the combination. Assistants can benefit the rehearsal process in many other ways. They can be an extra body to demonstrate movements which is especially beneficial when teaching a large ensemble number. An interviewed performer even stated having more than one person to watch makes it easier for her to learn movements. They also are incredibly helpful when teaching partnering choreography, as you will have a partner to help demonstrate who already knows the movements. If you have a section of choreography

consisting of multiple groups or parts, your assistant can teach one group their part while you teach the other group. This strategy worked quite well for one of the choreographers I observed in rehearsal, and it can save a lot of time when it comes to a tight rehearsal schedule.

So, an assistant can serve as a very beneficial tool in the choreography field. The only downfall is that assistants must be paid for their time and will cost part of your salary! In the upper ranks of the theatre world, such as Broadway, perhaps a producer may cover an assistant's salary. However, in most cases, the money will come from your personal pocket. An advanced level student could be used for an assistant at the high school or collegiate levels in exchange for an elective credit. Regional theatre choreographers could use the appointed dance captain if the theatre is providing them with an incentive pay. However, if the theatre will not pay them for pre-production rehearsal time, the choreographer will have to foot the bill. Hence, it seems that only the choreographers at the top of the food chain have this tool in their toolbox. It will definitely assist you with creating an exceptional product if you can afford the bill.

It is a general consensus among the participants that cleaning choreography is always an ongoing process. Various movements will get clarification from the moment they are taught all the way through the final performance of the show. One will need more time to perfect movements with less experienced dancers as well, whereas the movements will come together easier working with professional level dancers. In the end, every number needs a good cleaning in order to produce an exceptional product.

It seems that an exceptional product results from the work of a flexible choreographer as well. The participants mentioned the need for flexibility several times while describing their creative and teaching strategies. It seems to be a necessary quality of an outstanding musical theatre choreographer; yet, in my opinion, it is one of the most difficult qualities to develop in

one's personality. As creative artists, we take pride in our work and want to believe it is the best creation. It becomes challenging, at times, when a director or performer offers a better suggestion. Hence, the path to flexibility must involve working with humility. As stated earlier in this chapter, musical theatre choreographers also work busy schedules with stressful deadlines. If one does not relieve the stress, it gets brought in to the rehearsal room; oftentimes, stress and flexibility do not work together hand in hand! So, choreographers must also work with a more laid back, relaxed attitude to allow an open door for flexibility.

The performers interviewed during my observations seem to like working with laid back, relaxed choreographers, too. They comment that as a performer, you can still have fun when learning from choreographers who incorporate jokes into their teaching styles. They say it is easier to freely learn the movements with a laid back choreographer as they do not have to worry about making a mistake. Furthermore, if they make a mistake or modify a movement and the choreographer likes it better, they trust and respect their work much more. However, the performers stress they respect choreographers who expect them to know their stuff, too. It seems they enjoy working in a relaxed, but on task atmosphere the most. A choreographer with humility and a laid back attitude will have the flexibility necessary to create that atmosphere and an exceptional product.

As with the creative concepts, most of these teaching strategies could be learned while on the job, especially through shadowing an experienced musical theatre choreographer. However, not everyone has the inert ability to manage a group of performers well or create that relaxed, but on task, atmosphere. A course in classroom management would help an aspiring choreographer develop those abilities. Also, if one wants to try lining up the movements with musical nuances in the score, one will need the ability to read music. A basic music theory course would develop

that skill. A training program would offer both types of courses, as well as providing knowledge on the various teaching strategies discussed above. So, a training program would simply send aspiring musical theatre choreographers onto the job with the necessary tools already in their toolboxes, rather than having them pick up the tools over a number of years.

Educational Training vs. On-the-Job Training

The survey results listed in chapter three seem to support the idea of a training program for musical theatre choreography, and most of the study participants agree that such a program would benefit tomorrow's choreographers. Only 33% of them state they think a training program would not help to produce excellent choreographers. Those participants say the craft must be learned from working one's way up the ladder of dancer, dance captain, assistant, and choreographer. They say the craft must be learned through "on the job" training. What is interesting about this statistic is that most of those participants learned to be choreographers on the job. They may have had some post-secondary education, but they got their training from working in the professional industry, whether that be on Broadway or in the regional theatres. On the other hand, most of the participants who support the idea of an educational training program come from more of an academic background. Eighty-three percent of them have college degrees in the arts and 50% of them have taught at the high school or collegiate level. Many of them work as choreographers in academic settings as well. So, those who work in the professional theatre industry support on-the-job training and internships. Those who come from an academic background support the idea of educational training. People seem to side with what is familiar to them!

Things have changed and developed over the years in the performing arts industry, though. For example, thirty or forty years ago, a college degree was not necessary to become a principal performer on Broadway, and most young performers went straight to New York without ever seeking a college education. Today, if you peruse your Playbill at a Broadway show, the performer profiles indicate that more and more performers are earning college degrees in the arts before pounding the pavement. No, a college degree is still not necessary to succeed in the performing industry, but those degrees and the training behind them are proving beneficial to all the performers succeeding on Broadway and in the regional theatres. Who's to say that educational training will not produce better, more productive choreographers as well?

Indeed, an internship needs to be the culmination of such an education. As many of the participants state, nothing proves more beneficial than shadowing and assisting a working choreographer. However, many of the elements the participants claim should be included in a training program cannot be learned while "on the job." Choreographers race against time constraints just to get their creations taught and rehearsed with their casts. There is no time to learn things such as music theory and technique while on the job. One needs to come to the job with those skills in tact, especially considering that most theatres operate on a tight budget and time schedule. A prepared choreographer is necessary to get the job done well; if you, as the choreographer, get the job done well, it may mean more work for you in the future. Hence, a training program should exist to teach aspiring musical theatre choreographers all those skills before they approach their on-the-job training.

A college education does cost a pretty penny these days and when paying so much for tuition, you want to make sure your program is training you exceptionally well for your field of study. When it comes to the craft of choreography, most universities today offer programs in

concert dance to train promising candidates. In fact, when completing preliminary research for this study, not a single program in musical theatre choreography was found in the United States of America. The concert dance programs out there provide many benefits to aspiring dancers and choreographers, teaching them various styles of dance, proper dance vocabulary, excellent technique, how to use the stage space well, and how to run a rehearsal.

However, in regards to choreographing shows for the theatre, there are many things these concert dance programs do not teach their students. Three of the study participants say their concert dance training did not teach them how to tell a story through movement. The training was more abstract and focused more on stringing movements together. Seventeen percent of the participants claim they never learned how to choreograph movements for singers who move, rather than dancers. Hence, the art of creating movements around difficult vocals came as a tough lesson to them. They also had to learn to simplify the dance steps for the singers who were not trained dancers and had no technique or advanced dancing abilities. The concert dance programs also did not teach the participants several of the necessary dance styles used so frequently in the theatre, such as tap, ballroom, and folk dance. Finally, several of the study participants say they wished they had learned to read music in college, claiming it would assist them greatly with choreographing to various musical scores and around the vocals. Not to mention, it would give them more credibility when working with the musical directors of the shows during rehearsals.

Thirty-three percent of the study participants state they do not think a training program would help to improve individuals' choreography skills. I agree that some material could get learned while shadowing or assisting a choreographer during pre-production rehearsals, but think of how much more knowledge could be gained through participation in a training program.

Aspiring musical theatre choreographers could get ample time to better their technique, learn various dance styles, take some music theory classes, as well as complete an internship where they can shadow or assist a working choreographer to get on-the-job training.

As proven in the results of the survey, 72% of the participants do not work full time, twelve months out of the year, as a choreographer. They seem to teach or hold other jobs as well. This presents another reason why an educational training program would benefit future musical theatre choreographers, as it would help to provide them with other skills to utilize when they do not have choreographic work. Most of the participants began their careers as performers or teachers. An educational training program would provide the classes necessary to assist individuals at becoming successful in both positions.

A university training program would better prepare young choreographers for the field so they do not have to figure out as much through chance while completing their first few gigs. Not only would this benefit the aspiring choreographers, giving them more knowledge and experience, but it would benefit the theatre business as well. For they would know they were getting a well trained choreographer with the knowledge to get the job done well.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Can a methodology be developed for musical theatre choreography? After much research collected through surveys, observations, and interviews, the answer is yes. Sixty-seven percent of the participants agree that a training program would benefit aspiring choreographers in many ways. However, the research collected hints that this methodology would be quite complex in order to accommodate every aspect of training required by this craft. The challenge will be to figure out how to fit everything into a four or five year bachelor's degree program, one that will not only prepare the students to be outstanding musical theatre choreographers, but will give them the general tools necessary to get a good job in today's world. The methodology will need to consist of the following courses, in no particular order of importance:

Dance classes in various styles will be of utmost importance in this program, as many of the study participants stated in their survey responses. Furthermore, two of the interviewed performers commented that the only thing their choreographer could improve on is being more versed in the various styles of dance. Good technique is necessary to be a good choreographer, and technique will come from practice. The various styles taught should include ballet, tap, jazz, modern, hip-hop, ballroom, and folk dance with more of an emphasis on ballet, tap, and jazz. Students should take at least four semesters of ballet, as it serves as the foundation for dance technique. Furthermore, a minimum of two semesters of tap and jazz should be studied, as those styles are prominent in the world of musical theatre. Students should take one to two semesters of the other styles to give them at least a basic knowledge of the style. They can then further their study in the future, if desired.

Since this is a methodology for “musical theatre” dance, the students should take one or two acting classes as well. These classes should focus on teaching them how to tell a story through movement. Learning the concepts of action and reaction, as well as how to place themselves “in the moment” of a scene, should assist with learning how to feel emotion. The students can then learn how to transfer that emotion into appropriate and effective movements.

The methodology must include a couple of theatre history courses. A general theatre history course is necessary to teach aspiring choreographers how the theatre began and what transformations it went through over the centuries to get where it is today. Furthermore, a course on dance in theatre history needs to be taken to learn how the role of dance has evolved in the theatre over the years. When did it first appear and in what form? Who were the first choreographers for the theatre? Who were the big stars and what dance steps did they make famous? An excellent theatre choreographer should have a working knowledge of this information.

The methodology must include some dance composition courses. Again, these courses should focus on telling a story through movement, giving the students opportunities to experiment with creating sequences to a specific storyline. They should also help to teach the dynamics of the various parts of the stage, such as which side tends to pull more focus and how to make use of each section of the stage. Other topics to include would be which numbers to teach or create first, how to go about stringing movements together, and other strategic choreographic methods. Finally, the composition courses should involve some aspect of a workshop, where students can showcase their own compositions and receive constructive criticism on their creations.

Students must also take a basic music theory course. They will learn things such as note values, dynamic markings, how to figure out key signatures and time signatures, the various scales, chord structures, and more. A basic aural theory class will help students to hear the differences between major and minor keys. Considering that movements must blend with the music to advance the storyline, this becomes an important tool for an excellent choreographer. For example, most music written in major keys will accompany movements with a positive theme, whereas most music in minor keys will accompany movements for a dark or melancholy theme. Knowledge of music theory will also help to solve the problem of choreographers not having the ability to read musical scores and communicate properly with the musical directors.

All outstanding musical theatre choreographers should know what it feels like to perform in shows as well. Hence, a program should require each student to perform in at least two shows. Not only will this help them to begin or further a performance resume, but it will help them to better communicate with their performers when they are the choreographer someday. They will know what it feels like to be in their shoes! Performing in shows will also give them opportunities to work with other choreographers and observe their teaching methods and styles. This will give them knowledge of things that work well and those that do not.

Excellent choreographers also should know the basic fundamentals of teaching. As stated by one of the interviewed performers, “A lot of people want to be choreographers that don’t necessarily know how to teach.” Knowledge of classroom management skills, as well as proper skills for lesson planning, can assist a less-experienced choreographer with running a smooth, successful rehearsal. Learning how to make modifications or accommodations for performers with special needs can prove beneficial, too. This skill may come in handy if working for a community theatre or public school; one may be more inclined to work with special needs

individuals in those settings. Also, knowledge of linguistic phrasing, forming your questions and sentences to promote growth and development in your students or performers, can be a useful tool in the rehearsal room. An aspiring musical theatre choreographer could learn all of these things in a teaching methods course, which would be required as part of this training program.

Considering that all of the participants agree on the importance of doing pre-production research, aspiring choreographers should learn various research methods. Information in regards to the various resources, web sites, performing arts libraries, and computer programs available will greatly help them in becoming excellent choreographers with extensive knowledge of the show material. They also need to know what aspects of the show to research and the importance of the information. Knowing how to extensively research a show will lead newcomers down the path toward successful choreography careers.

Documentation must be part of the methodology, as all effective and productive choreographers document their creations. Students should learn effective ways to video record their movements, as well as record them in a written form. Both video and written documentation will benefit them in rehearsals, as well as for long term archiving of work that can be stored in a library for future use.

Aspiring choreographers need to have knowledge of the reality of the entertainment business. They should learn the roles of the producer, composer, librettist, director, music director, and all others involved on a production team. This could be learned in a forum style course where the students could participate in round table discussions with professionals in the field. The professionals could speak about their roles on the production team and the students could ask them questions about their working relationship with choreographers. This will give

aspiring choreographers knowledge on the communication lines necessary in the field. It will also help them to see how their work fits as a puzzle piece into a show as a whole.

Finally, every young choreographer should have the opportunity to shadow or assist a working musical theatre choreographer in the field. Though much of choreographic knowledge can be learned through studying the craft ahead of time, that knowledge will be enhanced through hands-on learning with someone who has already succeeded in the business. The best way to experience real situations is to be part of them, not to mention that on-the-job training is the best way to learn how to communicate with the dancers, as well as the production team. So, every student in a university program for musical theatre choreography should complete an internship requirement. Furthermore, an aspiring choreographer not in a program should network their way into some sort of an assistantship, be it through the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers or a regional theatre near their town. Learning the tricks of the trade alongside of a working professional will serve as one of the best tools to assist individuals with becoming successful choreographers.

There are plenty of necessary elements available to make up a methodology for training future musical theatre choreographers. Numerous study participants from around the country agree that training in these elements will benefit individuals who would like to succeed at a career in this craft. The plans just need to be finalized as to the organization of the training and a text needs to be developed from which students can learn the fundamentals of the choreography trade. Furthermore, a willing and established university needs to assist with launching a program and heading a front for this mission. A lot of work needs to get accomplished, but with time, faith, and passion for the cause, a methodology for training musical theatre choreographers will develop. Aspiring, young choreographers will have opportunities and training that until now

were unavailable to the creative minds of the past. This training will hopefully open more doors for them to achieve their goals and dreams of becoming a successful choreographer for the theatre.

APPENDIX A: PRELIMINARY RESEARCH: THE BOOKS AND THE FINDINGS

Preliminary Research Bibliographical Information

Berkson, Robert. Musical Theatre Choreography: A Practical Method for Preparing and Staging Dance in a Musical Show. London: A&C Black Publishers, 1990.

Synopsis: This book discusses the role of the choreographer as part of a production team. It talks about understanding and using the libretto and score of a show, researching the musical, knowing how much dance to put in a show and when to put it in, dealing with the costumes and props in relation to dance, and how to operate and run the rehearsals.

Cass, Joan. A Handbook for the Appreciation of the Choreographic Experience, 4th Edition. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 1999.

Synopsis: This book focuses on concert dance choreography. It discusses the styles and forms within the choreography. It also talks about the structure of composition based on the lights, music, narrative, and visual design. Finally, the book discusses the choreographer's role as being an artist of lights, costumes, and props.

Hayes, Elizabeth R. Dance Composition and Production, 2nd Edition. Pennington, NJ: Princeton Book Company, 1993.

Synopsis: This book focuses on dance composition from a concert dance perspective. It explains how to audition dancers and produce a concert.

Smith-Autard, Jaqueline M. Dance Composition, 4th Edition. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Synopsis: This book focuses on construction of a dance through style, motifs, form, improvisation, etc. It is written from a concert dancer's perspective, though much of the information could apply to theatre staging/choreography.

Sunderland, Margot and Ken Pickering. Choreographing the Stage Musical. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Synopsis: This book mostly gives examples of actual steps and combinations to use when choreographing a musical. It also talks a lot about various formations and ways of grouping dancers. It briefly discusses the importance of costumes and props in relation to choreography and dance.

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Research & Commercialization

March 2, 2006

Katie Marie Kelly
6205 Westgate Dr. #1205
Orlando, FL 32835

Dear Ms. Kelly:

With reference to your protocol #06-3286 entitled, "**Can a Methodology be Developed for Musical Theatre Choreography?**" I am enclosing for your records the approved, expedited document of the UCFIRB Form you had submitted to our office. **This study was approved on 2/27/06. The expiration date will be 2/26/07.** Should there be a need to extend this study, a Continuing Review form must be submitted to the IRB Office for review by the Chairman or full IRB at least one month prior to the expiration date. This is the responsibility of the investigator. **Please notify the IRB office when you have completed this research study.**

Please be advised that this approval is given for one year. Should there be any addendums or administrative changes to the already approved protocol, they must also be submitted to the Board through use of the Addendum/Modification Request form. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 407-823-2901.

Please accept our best wishes for the success of your endeavors.

Cordially,

Barbara Ward

Barbara Ward, CIM
UCF IRB Coordinator
(FWA00000351 Exp. 5/13/07, IRB00001138)

Copies: IRB File
Earl D. Weaver, MFA

BW:jm

12443 Research Parkway • Suite 302 • Orlando, FL 32826-3252 • 407-823-3778 • Fax 407-823-3299

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APPENDIX C: SURVEY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research Study Participant Consent Form

Note to all participants: Please read this document carefully before you participate in this research study. Upon finishing your review of this consent form, please sign your name at the bottom of this form and return it in one of the postage-paid envelopes. Please note that you must be 18 years of age or older to participate in the study.

Project Title: Can a methodology be developed for musical theatre choreography?

Purpose of the research study: There is little or no training available for young dancers who wish to choreograph for the theatre, cruise ships, or theme parks. Most choreographers just fall into the craft and take educational guesses at how to do the job, never knowing whether they are good at the craft, or not. The purpose of this research study is to try and develop a methodology for training musical theatre choreographers based upon the various methods that everyone out there has created today. If a beneficial method can be developed, it will hopefully be published into a book that can be used to pilot some university programs for musical theatre choreography around the country.

What you will be asked to do in the study: There are two phases to this study. In the first phase, you will be asked to complete a survey and return it to the investigator (Katie Marie Kelly) in the provided, postage-paid envelope. You do not have to answer any question on the survey with which you do not feel comfortable. In the second phase of the study, the investigator will choose three or four participants who gave varying answers on their surveys to observe in rehearsal with their performers. If you are chosen for the second phase of the study, the investigator will contact you via e-mail and request permission to sit in on one of your rehearsals.

Time required: The survey will take you 10-30 minutes, depending on how detailed you would like to be with your answers.

Risks: Though all information will be kept confidential and in the possession of the investigator, you may experience some minor psychological effects in recognizing some of your methods in the final draft of the study. Psychological effects may include embarrassment, disappointment, frustration, jealousy, or feelings of self-doubt.

Benefits/Compensation: There are no direct benefits or compensation for your participation in this study. However, you may request a final hard copy of the thesis paper for your records and personal education. If you would like a copy of the thesis paper, please mark the appropriate box at the bottom of this form.

Confidentiality: Your name may be listed as a participant in the final draft of the thesis paper as recognition for your time and efforts. However, all of your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be linked to any of the final reports. The surveys, consent forms, interviews, and master participant list will be stored in separate, locked file cabinets in the UCF theatre department under the supervision of Professor Earl Weaver. The collected data will only

be accessible to the investigator and Professor Weaver. Upon completion of the research study, any personal information collected such as addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses will be destroyed unless the investigator requests permission to save it for her files. The results of this research study will be shared with the investigator's supervising faculty at the University of Central Florida. After review of the final results by the faculty, final copies of the thesis paper will be made available to the participants and public.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating. As stated above, you do not have to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study: Katie Marie Kelly, UCF Graduate Student and Investigator, (651) 261-1106 or kellykm76@hotmail.com , or Earl D. Weaver, Assistant Professor of Theatre, (407) 823-3638 or eweaver@mail.ucf.edu.

Whom to contact about your rights in the study: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF). For information about participants' rights please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 302, Orlando, FL 32826-3252 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

Please place a checkmark in front of all applicable statements below.

- I have read the study described above.**
- I voluntarily agree to participate in the study.**
- I give my permission to be contacted for the second phase of the study.**
- I am at least 18 years of age or older.**
- I would like my name to be listed in the final thesis paper as a study participant.**
- I would like to receive a copy of the final thesis paper for my records.**

Participant Signature

Date

Principle Investigator Signature

Date

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM-PHASE TWO

Research Study Participant Consent Form-Phase Two

Note to all participants: Please read this document carefully before you participate in this research study. Upon finishing your review of this consent form, please sign your name at the bottom of this form and return it in the postage-paid envelope. Please note that you must be 18 years of age or older to participate in the study.

Project Title: Can a methodology be developed for musical theatre choreography?

Purpose of the research study: There is little or no training available for young dancers who wish to choreograph for the theatre, cruise ships, or theme parks. Most choreographers just fall into the craft and take educational guesses at how to do the job, never knowing whether they are good at the craft, or not. The purpose of this research study is to try and develop a methodology for training musical theatre choreographers based upon the various methods that everyone out there has created today. If a beneficial method can be developed, it will hopefully be published into a book that can be used to pilot some university programs for musical theatre choreography around the country.

What you will be asked to do in the study: There are two phases to this study. In the first phase, you were asked to complete a survey and return it to the investigator. In this second phase of research, the investigator will contact you via e-mail and request permission to sit in on one of your rehearsals. The investigator will observe your teaching strategies and interactions with the performers and all observations will be recorded via handwritten documentation. Following the observed rehearsal, the investigator will ask permission to interview a few of the performers. They will be asked a set of questions relating to your choreographic skills and their answers will be recorded on audio tapes for accurate documentation. The observation data and the tapes will only be accessible to the investigator and her professor, Earl Weaver. They will be destroyed upon completion of the research study.

Time required: The amount of time needed for this phase of research will be negotiated between you and the investigator.

Risks: Though all information will be kept confidential and in the possession of the investigator, you may experience some minor psychological effects in recognizing some of your methods in the final draft of the study. Psychological effects may include embarrassment, disappointment, frustration, jealousy, or feelings of self-doubt.

Benefits/Compensation: There are no direct benefits or compensation for your participation in this study. However, you may request a final hard copy of the thesis paper for your records and personal education. If you would like a copy of the thesis paper, please mark the appropriate box at the bottom of this form.

Confidentiality: Your name may be listed as a participant in the final draft of the thesis paper as recognition for your time and efforts. However, all of your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be linked to any of the final reports. The surveys, consent forms,

interviews, and master participant list will be stored in separate, locked file cabinets in the UCF theatre department under the supervision of Professor Earl Weaver. The collected data will only be accessible to the investigator and Professor Weaver. Upon completion of the research study, any personal information collected such as addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses will be destroyed unless the investigator requests permission to save it for her files. The results of this research study will be shared with the investigator's supervising faculty at the University of Central Florida. After review of the final results by the faculty, final copies of the thesis paper will be made available to the participants and public.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating. You do not have to permit any actions with which you are not comfortable. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study: Katie Marie Kelly, UCF Graduate Student and Investigator, (651) 261-1106 or kellykm76@hotmail.com , or Earl D. Weaver, Assistant Professor of Theatre, (407) 823-3638 or eweaver@mail.ucf.edu.

Whom to contact about your rights in the study: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF). For information about participants' rights please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 302, Orlando, FL 32826-3252 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

Please place a checkmark in front of all applicable statements below.

- I have read the study described above.**
- I voluntarily agree to participate in the study.**
- I give permission for the investigator to interview my performers.**

Participant Signature	Date
Principle Investigator Signature	Date

APPENDIX E: PERFORMER INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Research Study Participant Consent Form: Performer Interviewee

Note to all participants: Please read this document carefully before you participate in this research study. Upon finishing your review of this consent form, please sign your name at the bottom of this form. Please note that you must be 18 years of age or older to participate in the study.

Project Title: Can a methodology be developed for musical theatre choreography?

Purpose of the research study: There is little or no training available for young dancers who wish to choreograph for the theatre, cruise ships, or theme parks. Most choreographers just fall into the craft and take educational guesses at how to do the job, never knowing whether they are good at the craft, or not. The purpose of this research study is to try and develop a methodology for training musical theatre choreographers based upon the various methods that everyone out there has created today. If a beneficial method can be developed, it will hopefully be published into a book that can be used to pilot some university programs for musical theatre choreography around the country.

What you will be asked to do in the study: You will be asked to provide answers to several questions that relate to the methods and teaching styles used by the choreographer. Your answers will be audio taped for accurate documentation by the investigator.

Time required: 5-15 minutes, depending upon how detailed your answers are.

Risks: There are no risks associated with your participation in this study.

Benefits/Compensation: None. Participation is voluntary and appreciated.

Confidentiality: All of your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be linked to any final reports. The audio tapes will be stored in locked file cabinets in the UCF theatre department under the supervision of Professor Earl Weaver. The collected data will only be accessible to the investigator and Professor Weaver. Upon completion of the research study, the audio tapes and records of your name will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is not penalty for not participating. You do not have to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Please place a checkmark in front of all applicable statements below.

- I have read the study described above.**
- I voluntarily agree to participate in the study.**
- I am at least 18 years of age or older.**

Participant Signature

Date

Principle Investigator Signature

Date

APPENDIX F: RESEARCH SURVEY FORM

Thesis Survey Form: Can a methodology be developed for musical theatre choreography?

The following survey of questions has been developed for the purpose of gathering data for a research thesis. Your information and honesty is appreciated. Please circle the letter of the answer that best describes your choreographic method. If more than one answer applies for you, circle as many answers as you see fit. Feel free to elaborate on any of the topics; space is available after each question for your comments. When you have finished the survey, please promptly return it in the provided postage-paid envelope. Thank you for your time and efforts.

Section One: Background Information

1. How many years have you been a choreographer?
 - A. 1-10 Years
 - B. 11-20 Years
 - C. More than 20 Years

2. In an average year, how many months are you actively employed as a choreographer?
 - A. 1-4 Months
 - B. 5-9 Months
 - C. 10-12 Months

3. How did you get your training to become a musical theatre choreographer?
 - A. Dance training at a studio
 - B. University Program Type of Program _____
 - C. Performing in Shows
 - D. Other Please List _____

Section Two: Process Information

4. What kinds of sources do you use during the research period of your choreographic process?
 - A. Books/Magazines
 - B. Videos/DVD's
 - C. Networking with colleagues
 - D. Audio Recordings
 - E. Other _____

5. What kinds of things do you research before creating your movements?

- A. Background of Show
- B. History of Time Period
- C. Dance Styles of the Time Period
- D. Location of the Show
- E. Abilities of the Performers
- F. Size of the Stage/Performance Space
- G. Costume Designs
- H. Other _____

6. What do you feel is the significance of researching the show before the creative process?
Who taught you the importance of preliminary research?

7. How do you decide where/when to put choreography into a show?

- A. Script Instructions
- B. Aesthetical Motivation
- C. Director's Instructions
- D. "If there's music, dance."
- E. Other _____

8. What is your process for creating choreography?

- A. Create movements "on the spot"/Improvisation
- B. Pre-plan the Movements
- C. Other _____

9. When creating movements, do you:
- A. Physically do the movements
 - B. Visualize the movements in your mind, then get up and do them
 - C. Other _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

10. How do you choose which number in the show to choreograph first?
- A. Choreograph the numbers in chronological order of the show
 - B. Aesthetic Motivation
 - C. Choreograph the ensemble numbers first, then the solo numbers
 - D. Choreograph the solo numbers first, then the ensemble numbers
 - E. Choreograph what you perceive to be the most difficult piece first
 - F. Choreograph what you perceive to be the easiest piece first
 - G. Other _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

11. When creating your movements, what do you take into account when sequencing steps together? How do you decide what type of step to incorporate next?
- A. Use of stage space
 - B. Visual Effect
 - C. Flow of the movements (e.g. which leg is free)
 - D. Music
 - E. Level of difficulty
 - F. All of the above
 - G. Other _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

12. How do you record your movements?
- A. I don't record them; I rely on my memory
 - B. Labanotation
 - C. Stick figures and drawings
 - D. Write out the names of the movements
 - E. Write out the movements, relating them to the relevant counts
 - F. Other _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What are the benefits/set-backs of this recording method?

Section Three: Teaching Information

13. When multiple numbers need to be taught, how do you decide which one to tackle first? Why?

- A. Teach them in chronological order of the show
- B. Teach the most difficult number first
- C. Teach the easiest number first
- D. Teach the ensemble numbers first
- E. Teach the solo numbers first
- F. Other

14. What strategies do you use when teaching a number?

- A. Start teaching at the beginning of the number and go through to the end
- B. If there are repeated sections of movements i.e. during the refrain of the song, teach those sections first
- C. Teach the most difficult section of the number first
- D. Other _____

15. If a section of your pre-planned choreography does not work in the rehearsal, do you:

- A. Improvise a new sequence
- B. Skip that section and re-work it for the next rehearsal
- C. Other _____

16. What strategies do you use to perfect/clean the choreography?
- A. Perfect the movements as you teach them
 - B. Teach the number and perfect the trouble spots at the end
 - C. Once the entire number is learned, go back and perfect each movement from the beginning of the number
 - D. Other _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Section Four: If you got your training in a concert dance program, please answer the following questions.

17. How did concert dance training prepare you for becoming a musical theatre choreographer?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

18. What aspects of musical theatre choreography were you unprepared for having come from a concert dance program?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Section Five:

19. Do you believe that the art form of musical theatre choreography would benefit from educational training? In what ways?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

APPENDIX G: PERFORMER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Performer Interview Questions

1. Was it easy to learn the movements from this choreographer? Why or why not?
2. Does the choreography flow well? Do the steps connect easily for you?
3. Do you like the choreographer's teaching style or strategies? Why or why not? (I.e. using counts versus words when teaching the movements, etc.)
4. Do you like the choreographer's attitude and personality? Does it affect your ability to learn the movements?
5. Do you feel that the choreographer used your time well?
6. In what areas do you think this choreographer needs improvement?

APPENDIX H: SURVEY DATA COMPILED SPREADSHEET

Survey Data Compiled Spreadsheet

Section One: Background Information

1. How many years have you been a choreographer?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
1-10 Years	2	11%
11-20 Years	9	50%
More than 20 years	7	39%

2. In an average year, how many months are you actively employed as a choreographer?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
1-4 Months	7	39%
5-9 Months	6	33%
10-12 Months	5	28%

3. How did you get your training to become a musical theatre choreographer?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Dance training at a studio	14	78%
University Program*	13	72%
Performing in Shows	17	94%
Other**	9	50%

*Type of Program

BFA Musical Theatre	Dance
BFA Theatre Dance	MFA Dance
Ballet/Musical Theatre/Acting	BA Dance x2
MFA Musical Theatre	MA Theatre
BA Theatre x2	BFA Acting
MFA Film Directing	Modern/Jazz
BM Commercial Music	
Dance Minor x2	

**Other

- Working as a teacher of musical theatre jazz
 - Assisting choreographers
 - Being a dance captain
- Protégé to a repertory jazz dance company's director and choreographer
 - Personal study, trial and error
 - Workshops
 - Getting critiqued in choreographic classes
 - On the job training
- Progression from performer-dance captain-assistant director-choreographer

Section Two: Process Information

4. What kinds of sources do you use during the research period of your choreographic process?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Books/Magazines	15	83%
Videos/DVD's	18	100%
Networking w/ Colleagues	8	44%
Audio Recordings	10	56%
Other*	7	39%

***Other Types of Sources**

Live theatre performances x3
 Taking dance classes (specific styles)
 Art history/Cultural history
 Broadway directors and dancers
 Internet

5. What kinds of things do you research before creating your movements?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Background of Show	16	89%
History of Time Period	16	89%
Dance Styles of the Time Period	18	100%
Location of the Show	14	78%
Abilities of the Performers	16	89%
Size of the Stage/Performance Space	18	100%
Costume Designs	14	78%
Other*	8	44%

***Other Things to Research**

Set Design x2
 Character Motivation
 Plot
 Special Props
 Director's Vision
 Amount of Rehearsal Time
 Musical Arrangements/Score Analysis
 Style of the Director
 Original Director/Choreographer Notes
 Director-Choreographer Collaboration
 Budget

6. What do you feel is the significance of researching the show before the creative process?

- To remain true to the history of the era if a period piece- and it is often insightful information for moving into and through the creative process.
- When I was "performing" it was very evident with some of the choreographers that I worked with that they had no idea what the dance or even the show was about- that made for a laborious rehearsal period- the numbers weren't usually fun to rehearse or dance.
- As a performer, I quickly learned the difference between choreographers and directors who did a lot of preproduction and those who didn't. Those who did (and I am now one of them) came into rehearsals well prepared. Thus the rehearsal process was more productive and efficient- and their work was better (deeper and more layered). Research helps me create movement that is more specific to the show=period, characters....It's like a writer who uses beautiful and rich words. Those words have more impact. And simply put, material in a show must be stylistically correct to period, character, and the demands of the script.
- The research gives you a place to start an outline or springboard from which the creativity can start and also a touchstone to return to if you are stumbling.
- I think a choreographer should be totally prepared so as not to waste precious rehearsal time. I think if you do a lot of preliminary work, you are actually more free in the rehearsal room to try something else if what you planned doesn't work.
- So that the choreography is appropriate for the considered elements.
- Preparation is everything.
- If I have an idea of how the show is structured, conversations and compromises with the director have a better chance to run smoothly. Forming my own creative vision and having an opinion tends to benefit the process in the end.
- It is important to research the time period, mood, characters, plot, etc. about any show before creating movement, in order to create appropriate choreography. If the show has dark themes, you don't want to create movement that looks happy or inspires happiness.
- Preliminary research is extremely important. One needs to read reviews of previous productions to avoid pitfalls, learn what you can about the style and period of the dancing, and learn what you can about the creators and composers.
- I like to get the feel of the time period- how did people walk, sit, etc. Plus if it is set in a specific period I want the postures to be correct too. What people wore is important to how they moved so that's important.
- Prior productions can give me information helpful as a skeleton, or map to center my ideas around. I feel research can spark the creative process.
- Research affords a background of "steps" applicable to era/nationality/culture of production, as well as style of original choreography.
- Musical theatre choreography and staging all comes from character (should!).
- You have to be true to the script. If you have done your research of time and place, your movements for the dancers will have a specific feel and style. It will also give you a base for creating movements that were significant of that time or place.
- Knowing the historical era and styles of popular dance are important.
- Director and choreographer should both have awareness of the "period." Research is key to develop characters and relationships, as well as style and costuming.

Who taught you the importance of preliminary research?

- My high school acting teacher taught the importance of researching a show before you begin.
- I learned the importance of preliminary work from working with bad choreographers who did none!
- Several teachers and colleagues along the way.
- This was not a skill I was taught, so much as one observed by being a dancer in musicals.
- No one taught me the importance of preliminary research, I think it was something I figured out on my own.
- I learned to do this more from acting and directing teachers than from choreography teachers.
- My six years as a theatre student helped me know importance of research.
- I learn about asking "what's the story" from Maurice Hines and Joe Layton.
- I was very influenced by the work of Jack Cole, dance as a cultural movement for the musical.
- I learned this through my experiences with film directing. Also, interviews with many MT directors all say the same thing- "Research the details and the movement will clarify itself."
- I learned this from directors I've worked with.
- Hard-luck lessons born of the traps and travails of having NOT done research.
- Watching Graciella Danielle in NYC library, researching a project.

7. How do you decide where/when to put choreography into a show?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Script Instructions	10	56%
Aesthetical Motivation	11	61%
Director's Instructions	14	78%
"If there's music, dance."	1	6%
Other*	6	33%

Other/Comments

- If there is dance-how much and where it's needed to develop artistic and dramatic styles-or dance for beauty sake.
- 90% of the time it is dictated by the script. But there is that other 10% where I add movement where it might enhance the storyline.
- The movement must be motivated by 1) some internal state of character 2) some "social scene" that requires a period style 3) a device to move the story forward.
- Ability of performers
- Sometimes less is more-just because a script calls for a number doesn't mean you have to follow.

Sometimes you add movement to an otherwise "acted scene" because you need to convey preshadowing or foreshadowing.

- This is a negotiation with the director. I usually let him/her decide where the dancing goes. I occasionally request a number-or ask to not stage it. On occasion, a director changed his mind at the last minute and I have had to come up with choreography on the spot!
- Usually when there is a piece of music within a show where there is no singing or dialogue, it is a good opportunity to insert choreography, usually at the director's discretion as a result of his/her vision for the show.
- Based on story, character, and music.
- If the character's motivation/monologue requires expressing more emotion. To cover a scene shift or costume change.
- When working on a piece, I just have an instinct as to whether or not a moment should develop physically. Sometimes this has to do with the music-sometimes it has to do with how successful or unsuccessful the scenes and songs are around it. Often times I realize I don't need to restate something in dance that has been well put in words. But sometimes I believe the moment wants a physical lift.

8. What is your process for creating choreography?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Create movements "on the spot"/Improvisation	3	17%
Pre-plan the Movements	14	78%
Other*	7	39%

*Other/Comments

- Sometimes I choreograph sequences down to the last count and finger movement-usually I choreograph a very detailed framework that can be filled in as we rehearse. I only make it up on the spot when we (the team) are finding the moment in the room.
- I pre-plan everything but am not afraid to improv on the spot if I get a new idea or if what I had planned isn't working!
- I tend to listen to the music on my walkman over and over while taking walks. I keep a small pad of paper and pen with me to jot down staging ideas.

- Prepare and then be prepared to adapt.
- I definitely pre-plan, but once I see how the movement works/looks on the dancers, things inevitably change. It is difficult to plan exactly how things are going to be and it is good to be flexible in order to see what comes out of the spontaneity and talents of the individual performers.
- Combination of the two. In professional situations, I've found it best to be ready and prepared, but often the work comes out looking too mechanical. I like to at least have a good idea of what I want to do.
- If for a big group number I plan group patterns and sections of steps. But there is always something I change when I see it onstage. For a solo or duet I like to throw stuff out and see what happens-that is if you have the luxury of a little more rehearsal time.
- I like to have an outline of beginning, middle, and end. But only two of them so one will be discovered in rehearsal.
- Develop an arsenal of signature steps for the production or character-when my pre-planning does not pan out, I fall back on rhythms.
- Pre-plan the blocking (where the dance happens within the playing area). "Dance breaks" must be thought out beforehand.
- I use a combination of pre-planning and improvisation. I will map out some steps and patterns-but may wait to work with cast to develop more details.

9. When creating movements, do you:

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Physically do the movements	13	72%
Visualize the movements in your mind, then get up and do them	13	72%
Other*	3	17%

***Other/Comments**

- Lots of improv with a video camera running; rely on planning patterns on paper.
- Both. Sometimes I get a picture or a specific movement in my head or sometimes it comes out of a previous move.
- Work out blocking; THEN decide what movement is required. Does it travel or stay put? Partners, counterpoint, or unison?
- I visualize patterns/stage areas used, but always physicalize the movements.

- Like a script speaks to actors, I use the music to tell me what to say physically.
- I usually have to dance myself to the music til it feels right. For a group I'll "see" things in my mind then try to create it.
- When working with less experienced dancers, I tend to physically do the movements more when choreographing. When working with higher level dancers, I tend to "mark" them more when choreographing.
- First I spend a lot of time with the music and text. I find where I think it wants to live physically. (I find its groove and its energy.) Then I get on my feet and begin to find the vocabulary. Sometimes vocabulary comes first-sometimes staging ideas come first.

10. How do you choose which number in the show to choreograph first?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Choreograph the numbers in chronological order of the show	4	22%
Aesthetic Motivation	3	17%
Choreograph the ensemble numbers first, then the solo numbers	4	22%
Choreograph the solo numbers first, then the ensemble numbers	0	0%
Choreograph what you perceive to be the most difficult piece first	9	50%
Choreograph what you perceive to be the easiest piece first	2	11%
Other*	5	28%

***Other/Comments**

- Often, I start with the most difficult first. I find it is a good learning process for the dancers.
- I tend to start with what seems easiest, but I don't let myself stay there too long. I know it would be easy for me to make the good number great (and sacrifice other parts of the show). So I get my confidence up by diving into what I know-then I try to work through the order of the show-but I always red flag what I know will be difficult and give it extra attention.
- The order I choose depends specifically on the type of show and its requirements.
- Depends on the show-no set formula.
- Sometimes due to the director's wishes, you don't

have a choice!

- I choreograph whatever is scheduled first. Some directors do the whole show chronologically. Others prefer to break it up. This can be dependent on the show itself, its nature, who's available when.
- I usually start (in a high school musical) with a number that most of the cast is in. This gives more time to clean it.
- I choreograph what inspires me first. I generally am inspired by ensemble numbers over solos in the beginning. A solo dance is created with the dancer more often than not.
- Stage the largest numbers first because it makes more efficient use of everyone's time and occupies the ensemble's time while you work on the solo numbers.
- The larger ensemble numbers tend to be the most difficult.
- Always tackle the "monsters" first so they'll have maximum gestation/development time.
- Whatever the rehearsal schedule will allow.

11. When creating your movements, what do you take into account when sequencing steps together? How do you decide what type of step to incorporate next?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Use of stage space	1	5%
Visual Effect	3	17%
Flow of the movements (e.g. which leg is free)	4	22%
Music	3	17%
Level of difficulty	0	0%
All of the above	13	72%
Other*	4	22%

***Other/Comments**

- First, why are they moving? Second, what must happen? Third, is this a production number or a special with only a couple of people?
- For me, the music-how does it sound and feel-is probably the most important factor in the movements I choose.
- Sometimes dramatic action will dictate a transition.
- All are important, but visual effect is usually the primary concern.
- Sometimes I come up with a vocabulary of steps for a particular number and put them on post-it notes and move them around a chart for the number.
- What feels right and what looks good on the

dancers.

- #1 Storytelling—the steps must continue to tell a story. If the music is good, it is easier to create a blueprint of storytelling. I really try to not think of movements as dance steps...or the tendency is to hook together steps that don't mean anything.

12. How do you record your movements?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
I don't record them; I rely on my memory	3	17%
Labanotation	0	0%
Stick figures and drawings	7	39%
Write out the names of the movements	10	56%
Write out the movements, relating them to the relevant counts	15	83%
Other*	3	17%

***Other/Comments**

- I generally make notes on the score and write out longer sequences on other papers.
- I chart positions using a numbering system-same that I learned while working on 2000 Special Olympics.
- Diagram patterns; write out counts and write out steps underneath counts; I name steps-specialties-with personal names.
- I occasionally use video to help the dancers clean.
- I write the steps into a copy of the piano score.
- Videotape from behind looking towards the mirror.
- I "score" out the music taking a blank piece of paper and in the left hand column writing down sets of eight. Then I write steps corresponding to the counts and adding diagrams as necessary.
- I video tape almost everything I do in the studio. I have a full time assistant. (But I memorize almost everything as well. It just gets harder when it's an intricate group number.)

What are the benefits/set-backs of this recording method?

- I find it very easy-mostly it's my own shorthand or description. (D)
- Benefits: I can decipher my recordings; I know my method. Set-backs: No one else can decipher my recordings, i.e. if I got sick or if I needed to be somewhere else during rehearsal. I often direct and choreograph at the same time. (C,D,E)
- Benefits: It's a system I've refined over the years and works well for me. Set-backs:

Reading my own handwriting! (C,E)

- It takes a lot of time to write it out clearly in such a way that you will understand what you meant later. (D,E)
- Not a lot of detail. (A, E)
- No set-backs. The benefit of recording from behind is that when you play back, it's like having a teacher in front of you but you can also see it from the front 'due to the mirror.' (F)
- Benefit: If I like the steps I've worked on and want to teach they usually stay with me, or it allows me to fill in the missing pieces with something that may work better. Set-back: Frustration of remembering connecting steps, that usually hangs me up, especially if it worked well during my prep-time. (A,E)
- The only way this works is if the movement and everything is fresh in your mind and body. Even if I notate very well, I find that if I pick up the same notes a year later, the notes won't make sense if I watch a video of the choreography. (E)
- Benefits: Using the score, I'm better able to communicate with the conductor/accompanist. Set-backs: Sometimes I don't remember what my notes mean or I cannot think of a "name" for the move I want. (E)
- The benefit is that otherwise I would forget things as I'm usually choreographing so many songs at once. (D,E)
- The benefits are instant images and names for working in rehearsal. A set back is my notes are temporary and the names change for different shows. (C,D)
- Slow process of recording them. (C,D,E)
- The benefits: weeks later you can decipher the sequences, the positions, and what is supposed to happen. Without some sort of system, you are relying on memory which (when you are working on a lot on different projects) can leave you grasping for "Now what was that?" Not good if you are under the clock/\$\$. (C,D,E,F)
- I record my choreography directly into the score, that way I can be specific with counts and measures with the conductor or music director. Sometimes I can't read my own writing due to limited space. (C,D,E)
- Benefits are: makes teaching clearer/more exact; helps expedite the rehearsal process. (E)
- None; it's organic and works well for me. (C,D,E)
- Benefits: I can look back and review; can be used immediately with no other media needed. Set-backs:Cumbersome (A,E)

Section Three: Teaching Information

13. When multiple numbers need to be taught, how do you decide which one to tackle first? Why?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Teach them in chronological order of the show	4	22%
Teach the most difficult number first	10	56%
Teach the easiest number first	0	0%
Teach the ensemble numbers first	5	28%
Teach the solo numbers first	0	0%
Other*	5	28%

***Other/Comments**

- Pretty much rely on all of these influences. I don't have to have order, but generally would want to tackle harder numbers first with less experienced dancers.
- Teaching the ensemble numbers first gives the rest of the cast something to rehearse while you work on the smaller/solo numbers.
- Teaching difficult ensemble numbers first allows them time to drill and polish.
- This helps to enroll everyone into your vision and style. (D)
- I negotiate with the director on what's to be done first. I choreograph and teach numbers in the same order.
- It usually depends on what performers are available, and when. For example, if there are singers and dancers in a show, usually the vocal director works with the singers first, and so they are not available. So I would start with the dance numbers first.
- The cast, and myself, can get a sense of show flow and sometimes the movements need to show a progression as the story progresses. (A)
- Depends on the show.(x2)
- After considerations, if a number requires use of a specific prop or set piece you may have to wait until that is acquired first.
- I try to knock out the most difficult stuff first and then go in order. But in rehearsals for a big show, scheduling is a give and take between departments- sometimes you have to rehearse the boys because the girls are in a vocal rehearsal.
- It usually takes the most time. It also allows the performers in the number a longer absorption time. They start that number at the beginning of the rehearsals and are able to work on it everyday after.
- Brains fill fast-I find it's best to fill it with the most difficult first.

14. What strategies do you use when teaching a number?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Start teaching at the beginning of the number and go through to the end	10	56%
If there are repeated sections of movements i.e. during the refrain of the song, teach those sections first	2	11%
Teach the most difficult section of the number first	3	17%
Other*	6	33%

***Other/Comments**

- Often I start where the musical number builds from song to dance. I don't like to start with sections that require experimentation. I like to build a rhythm first and then work through rougher spots.
- All of the above depending on the number.
- No set formula-varies from song to song.
- If I've done a number before I would start at the beginning, but if I'm creating a new dance I teach repeated stuff, then the beginning, then through to the end.
- When teaching large ensembles I teach the big unison stuff first. Very often groups are learning complimentary choreography. I like to have everyone on the same page at the top and refer back to this section when they are tired.
- "C" is useful because you are able to quickly determine the technical abilities of the dancers.
- All of the above may apply depending upon the pieces.
- Depending on rehearsal schedule, I may adapt.

15. If a section of your pre-planned choreography does not work in the rehearsal, do you:

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Improvise a new sequence	13	72%
Skip that section and re-work it for the next rehearsal	9	50%
Other*	1	5%

***Other/Comments**

- Most usually if I do my work correctly, it usually works out the first time.
- Depends on the professional level of the performers and my brain being able to improvise or not on any

given day.

- If my gut says I can fix it immediately, I try...but I often give them a quick fix and move on. Then on my own time (without so much pressure) I'll fix it on my own, and at a later rehearsal, re-teach it. Sometimes when something doesn't work, it's because the original thought was not good-and a better way just develops in the room.
- Sometimes I need to go away and solve the problem and re-teach it at the next rehearsal.
- Depends on why it doesn't work.
- I am very comfortable tossing whole sections out and I change things until they are right.
- Use the minds and bodies of the talent you are working with.
- Always have a plan B!
- Ask for help from the dancers.
- I believe work should be completed and not changed as quickly as possible. If something doesn't work, will provide new choreography immediately to allow performers continuity.

16. What strategies do you use to perfect/clean the choreography?

	Number of Participants	Percentage
Perfect the movements as you teach them	7	39%
Teach the number and perfect the trouble spots at the end	5	28%
Once the entire number is learned, go back and perfect each movement from the beginning of the number	12	67%
Other*	1	5%

***Other/Comments**

- Most usually a combination of all.
- I also feel that a lot of good cleaning is done by simply running the number. So it's good to get the number up and not spend all of the time teaching. Repetition is very important. Also, a good strategy is hiring a great assistant. She (my assistant) cleans and clarifies even as I am teaching the movement.
- Choices based mostly on who is being taught.
- A: Better for chorus numbers; C: A choice if I am up against time constraints.
- Perfecting and cleaning is an ongoing process.

- I'm always making adjustments. ©
- With high school kids and limited time, I try to get them to do it right at first; but invariably we have to clean the whole thing. However that way the really quick dancers can help the rest.
- If there are vocals involved, lock the movement combinations with the lyrics, including attacks, cut-offs, sforzandos. Lyrics should fit naturally with movements. They should marry. Dance sequences (with counts) must be taught clearly.
- It's a mistake sometimes, but I generally like to complete choreography and then perfect.

Section Four: If you got your training in a concert dance program, please answer the following questions.

17. How did concert dance training prepare you for becoming a musical theatre choreographer?

- I started school as a concert dance major and quickly found that I needed/wanted a dance career that was more accessible-more literal and less abstract. So it prepared me by pushing me into a new path! But I will say that good technique is VITAL to creating good musical theatre dance. (ballet, jazz, even modern)
- Learned how to deal with extended dance sequences. Learned certain vocabularies.
- It allowed me to work with multiple choreographers, styles, and techniques of dance, as well as staging.
- The choreographer had come from a musical theatre background.
- It didn't really prepare me-I choreographed a lot of modern dance during my university training, but it is quite different from musical theatre choreography. The way it did prepare me was that it taught me how to work with people and how to run rehearsals and how to manage the entire process.
- Good choreography is good choreography regardless of form. I learned in concert dance the power of different parts of the stage space, the importance of contrast, and the ability to infuse excitement.
- Choreography is choreography. A well constructed dance in ballet is the same as a well constructed musical theatre number. You want a good beginning, interesting middle, and great ending.
- Learning use of space and emotion in music. Telling a story through dance.
- I had a choreography principles class in my dance training program. I utilize a lot of concepts I learned in that class when I do musical theatre choreography. Having had training in ballet, jazz, modern, tap, kabuki, and folklorico have also helped me.
- Taught me about texture, weave, polyphony of movement. Moved me away from "presentational unison" in my stage show choreography.
- My concert dance background, incorporating ballet and modern dance, has given me unlimited vocabulary to draw from. It has also given me first-hand knowledge of what steps and "tricks" will be possible for that dancer.

18. What aspects of musical theatre choreography were you unprepared for having come from a concert dance program?

- Incorporating dramatic images and subtexts for dance movements. I have had to learn the importance of telling and forwarding the story in movement, rather than just brilliant dance.
- None.
- The connection of the dance movement to the demands of the script.
- The wide range and level of dance training. Having to work with dancers who are primarily singers or actors with little dance training. Learning to read music.
- I always did both.
- Tap vocabulary, ballroom vocabulary, and understanding the restrictions imposed when a performer has to sing at the same time as dance.
- I wish my university had educated us more about the different styles of dance that come from different periods of time. I had to do a lot of this research on my own.
- Large spectacle opening numbers.
- Developing someone's character through movement.
- Singing while dancing; Staging-as opposed to dancing.
- I've worked with a few concert choreographers who were totally unprepared. More often than not, concert choreographers don't "get" this art form. (Just like most musical theatre choreographers don't have the tools to do a concert piece-two sets of tools.)

Section Five:

19. Do you believe that the art form of musical theatre choreography would benefit from educational training? In what ways?

- I think that there should be more musical theatre dance courses; teach lots of different numbers utilizing the choreography of past historic choreographers-through historical re-visits there are great vast collections of techniques and art that can be passed along to future generations of directors and choreographers. I think that observations as interns of established choreographers/assistants can be of great benefit to aspiring directors and choreographers.
- Yes. There are certain "vernacular" steps that aren't taught in choreography classes that would be very beneficial to the musical theatre choreographer.
- I'm open to anything, but my gut says no. I believe that there are rare talents that shine at a young age. These people have an instinct for physical storytelling. For everyone else, years of experience is necessary. For myself, I know that fifteen years ago, I did not possess the tools to be really good as a musical theatre choreographer. And it wasn't something I could have learned at the time. In theatre, dance makes up only about half of what I do as a choreographer. It has taken me years to learn: how to talk to a composer, a dance arranger, a casting director, an actor, a lighting designer. All of these connections/collaborations make up the other fifty percent of what I do. Don't get me wrong. I am all for formal training. I would have profited from it, but I know that I had to learn by jumping into the fire. If there were such a program, I think it should encompass a wide range of studies: 1. Ballet, jazz, and tap technique 2. Social dance styles 3. Music theory 4. Dramaturgical study 5. Study of the business (the role of producers, arrangers, networking...) and lots of on the job practice. The best education (or at least a vital part) is trial and error.

- No I do not. I believe a good musical theatre choreographer benefits from a well-rounded education in dance and theatre. Their success relies on how well they combine and utilize the knowledge.
- Yes. I think it would be beneficial in terms of teaching young choreographers various styles. Also, how to stage a number (not just steps) and how to deal with singers (everyone sings now-there are no dancing choruses now).
- Yes. It would better prepare choreographers in anticipation of varied situations.
- I think musical theatre choreography is an apprentice art and is best learned by dancing in shows, working with choreographers, and then assisting choreographers.
- Nothing beats practical experience. Observing, working and learning from an active choreographer or director is a wonderful education. Trial and error, at times, is the best teacher.
- Education on what styles come from what periods, and the corresponding styles of dress. Education on what areas of the world different types of dance come from e.g. Samba comes from Brazil, etc. Education about notating your movement and videotaping things, keeping organized records. How to run a rehearsal and how to deal with the extreme personalities of performers.
- Some kind of training is essential, even if it's on the job. I think regular practice and critique would facilitate growth for aspiring choreographers. I think experienced choreographers could successfully share pitfalls and triumphs to students.
- Yes. In college I had improv (dance) and choreography class. The more you experiment with movement and sounds (music) the more comfortable you will be. Also, it is so helpful to create short studies over and over and be critiqued. Like anything else, you do get better with practice.
- Yes, I do. Learn how to read music, physically tell a story in character, perfecting the balance of song and dance, and text. With training these abilities will enhance a choreographer's creations and the theatre at large.
- Unlike concert dance, the movements in musical theatre are character driven or lyrical (narrative). The voice must be free for vocals as well as dance. I think most musical theatre choreographers become so because they worked with good musical theatre choreographers (or bad!). Mentorship programs through organizations such as SSDC, on the job training, assisting choreographers-these are the classrooms for tomorrow's choreographers in musical theatre.
- Yes. Today's pro musical theatre industry constantly needs trained dancers-time and budgets require it. Musical theatre choreographers are plentiful- good ones, less. Unfortunately there are also plenty of trained (excellent) dancers with no staging skills. Training choreographers in the basic technique of storytelling, character development, period styles, and visual aesthetics should be basic.
- In training in every form of dance, ballet, tap, jazz, folk, ethnic, a big aspect for me was learning to read music, which I learned after I left school.
- Absolutely. I have worked with many dancers who were not brilliant technicians but had a talent for choreography. If they had had an opportunity to have more classes focused on musical theatre staging/choreography, it would have helped them immensely.
- Probably couldn't hurt, but degree to which it would prove beneficial is hard to project.
- As most of our top choreographers-especially in music theatre-are not strongly trained in educational schools, I tend to believe while developing a more well-rounded individual, schooling will not compete against professional experience.