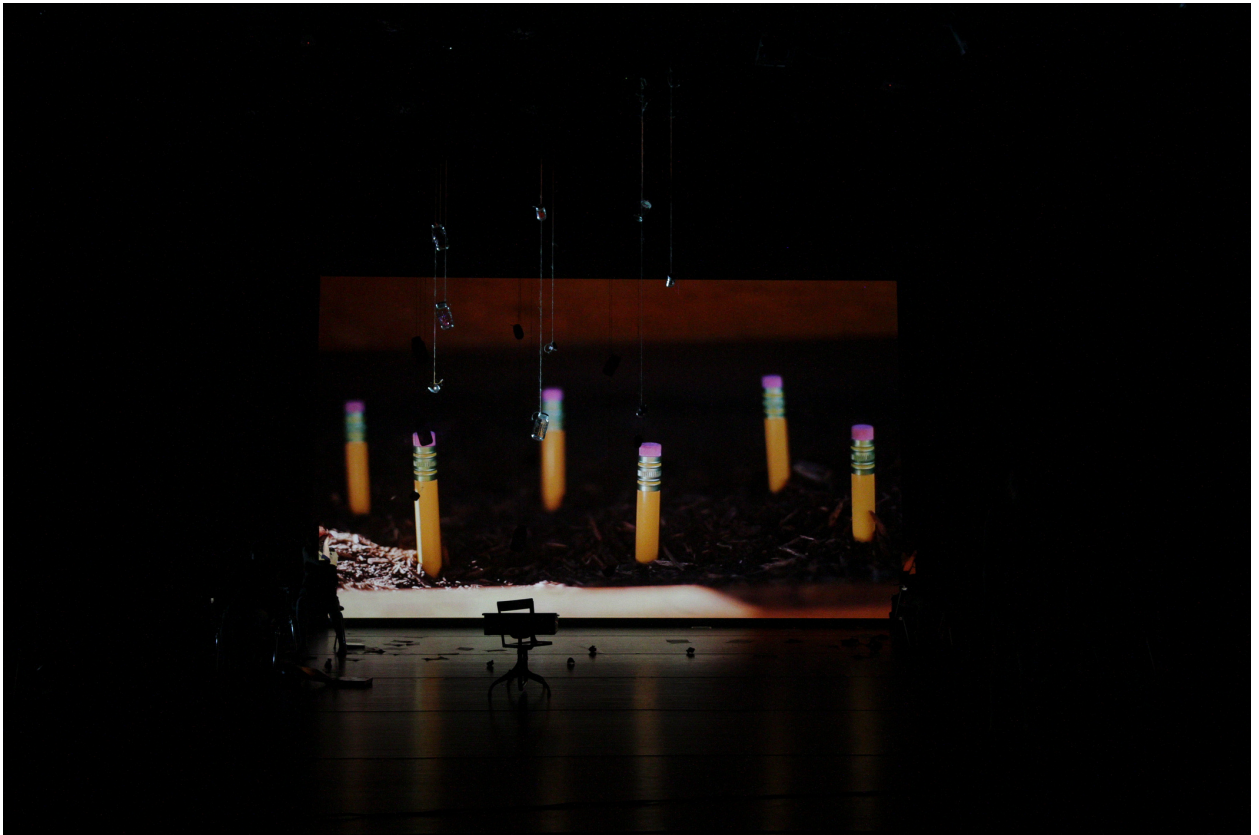


**Not Waving**  
**A Collaborative Dance/ Theater Experience**



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**Abstract:**

*Not Waving* is a 20-minute, collaborative dance work that compares the intelligence and physicality innate to the human body with the postural conformities that construct a society. Through dance, theater, music and film, BFA candidate, Amy Millennor will showcase her BFA thesis project in the 2014 *Catapult*. *Catapult* is an evening length performance that will be presented by the department of Theater & Dance at CU Boulder and take place in the Irey Theater. This collaborative performance will seek to explore sexism and institutionalized oppression by exposing the unseen suffering of women in the school classroom. *Not Waving* Is inspired by the work of Paulo Friere (Philosopher of radical education), the writing and life of female poet Stevie Smith, and her own experience in the public school system.

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### *Everything that Matters*

Imagine that one by one, all of the molecules of your skin began to separate, to float away from your body and become the same matter as the air that once surrounded it. Imagine now, that instead of your raw flesh being assaulted by the confrontation of external elements, it, too, was evaporating into the molecular atmosphere now made of unidentifiable matter. As you look around, you notice that all surroundings, which have been so familiar to you, are disintegrating, losing their physical form. The trees, the ground, the buildings, all melting into what you once knew as skin and air. As you notice your ligaments and bones are beginning their departure, your consciousness, once concerned by the events, begins to understand and accept that what's happening is alright. It is a process of returning all the matter from where it once came. Matter is now being liberated from its confines. But then there is a snag, a jam in the process of completely surrendering yourself to this inevitable happening. There is something that you left unresolved in your physical existence, something that won't let you be at peace. What is it? And in what's left of your body, what part is resisting, not giving in to natural forces because you are so desperate to have conquered this one thing?

The above notion of unresolved issues connected to physical form served as a movement score and as the beginning of the physical exploration that became *Not Waving*. *Not Waving* is a 23-minute long dance piece that explores the critique of western pedagogy, particularly that of Paulo Freire, whose writing served to deconstruct institutions within a colonized world. At first I did not perceive a direct link between my physical exploration and my literary one. It wasn't until much later in my process that I became aware of the direct connection between the two. I began working with five women and myself. We sifted through this idea of the body becoming unidentifiable matter both theoretically and practically. By dancing as though there was no defining or confining limitations to the body, I was trying to create a specific aesthetic vocabulary, which my dancers and I could all draw upon. I wanted to create a shared kinesthetic experience of being undefined by the physical body. By having myself and my dancers notice what felt unresolved in the physical world, I was trying to access a physical expression of constraint, moments of rigidity to juxtapose the experience of limitlessness and expansion.

Upon discussing the “unresolved” with my cast, I discovered an array of personal and philosophical interpretations of the physical world that pointed directly to the humanity in each individual dancer. My response to my own exercise was a fear of leaving this body before I got the chance to thoroughly and accurately articulate a complete thought. As I explained before, this exercise was a tactic for generating specific movement, I had no idea how much this response had to do with Paulo Freire, my other literary research, and the essential content of my finished product.

### ***The Institutionalized Oppression within the Public School System***

A long-standing relationship with my own struggle in the public school system and a fascination with liberation led me to Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this book Freire exposes the inherent empirical values infused in, and upheld by, the education system. There is a particular point he makes about the disempowerment of students via their inherited position within the system. The student/ teacher relationship negates the subjectivity of the students by taking away any creative participation in the development of their knowledge, rendering them powerless objects to be molded into whatever form the teacher and, thus, the system sees fit (Freire 71). I used elements of Freire’s critique to both confine and liberate many aspects of my artistic process.

In order to combat notions of the “one person in charge” model of patriarchal westernized institutions, collaboration with musical composer, Nathan Wheeler, and video artist, Julie Rooney, became vital to the creation of *Not Waving*. Their roles were not only to *create for* the work, but also to help create the work. Our roles as choreographer, musician and videographer were free-floating, with each of us permeating each other’s work as much as our own. Both Wheeler and Rooney performed in the piece as characters in the world that we had created together. I was with each of them during most steps of their creation processes, brainstorming and experimenting with different ideas. Nathan and I spent many hours co-creating a sound score with textbooks, through trial and error we wove it into the choreographic context of the piece. The creation of the textbook score was the eventual solution to the incorporation of some of my key research. With Julie’s extensive knowledge of film making, she was able to assist me in decisions about camera

angles, setting, and timing that would lead to the actualization of the filmic world I sought to create. Both Wheeler and Rooney went beyond their designated roles in order to serve the piece dramaturgically, which means they helped in making big decisions about the final product including editing, trajectory, timing, and order of events.

Collaboration also served as the primary drive when working with my dancers. I employed tactics of researching and crafting choreography that would enlist the creativity of my dancers. This happened in several different formats. Sometimes the assignments I gave during rehearsals were individual tasks, but most notably were the movement scores that required us to work together. For one rehearsal, I brought in a copy of the nines times tables. As a group we came up with movements for each number (0-9) and then we learned the nines times tables by dancing them through each rehearsal. This created a movement score that I never would have been able to come up with by myself. The use of timing and counts became important to various sections of the piece, neither of which I have much skill in utilizing. Therefore it became the responsibility of my dancers to track and sometimes create the timing of pieces of choreography. This level of cooperation was not easy and often proved to be a point of tension. We were all used to the leader-follower roles being cut and dry. However, because of its necessity to the process, we got better and better at collaboration as the piece progressed.

I could not capture the full feeling of imprisonment without alluding to the possibility of escape, thus the occurrence of the bathroom duet. This was a duet that took place in a men's bathroom. Jessica and Megan were two of The Students whose relationship served as a twisted love story inside the piece. For this duet, the two left the stage and the audience was able to witness this duet via video projection. Through this window, more of the individuality of these characters can be seen. This duet reveals what happens when the authoritarian presence is escaped. The relationship of these two dancers becomes one of experimentation, sexuality, violence, and rebellion. It also directly challenges hetero-normative expectations of the patriarchal school system. The women are manipulating each other's bodies in a men's bathroom. The way in which they relate to one another and their surroundings addresses basic human issues not being addressed institutionally or, in some senses, societally. Once again, there is a particular emphasis on the internalized female issues, in particular: competition; sexuality; and powerlessness.

### ***The Intersection of Different Theoretical Lenses***

Often when analyzing dances from a scholarly perspective, applying a theoretical lens helps to contextualize the dance within a certain framework of thought. Laura Mulvey deconstructs the patriarchal ideology perpetuated in film.

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness* (Mulvey,2088).

By analyzing and integrating Mulvey's theoretical perspective, one can cultivate a critical feminist vantage point from which to view any kind of artwork. This critical vantage point can be used to understand how the portrayal of women in a given arena can intentionally or unintentionally uphold the gender hierarchies.

Lens application is used in the critique of art. Similarly it can also be used in its creation. By over-laying multiple theoretical lenses, I was able to merge several ideas together in order to create structural devices for the work. Through my varied theoretical dissection, I found that it was the questions and "untruths" that served my overarching process. In an effort to have the structure of my work echo its content, I wanted to have these inquiries be revealed. The piece demanded an exposed yet conceptual approach to dance-making, one referenced, in the works of Jerome Bell, with his use of meta-theater.

"Meta-theater" refers to the deconstruction and exposure of the function of theater or performance. Jerome Bell provides a good example of how meta-theater can be applied to dance. Jerome Bell is a contemporary French choreographer. He works in the genre of conceptual dance. His pieces are minimalist and tend to question the very idea of performance, challenging the performer/audience relationship. In his piece *Veronique Doisneau*. Doisneau, a woman who once danced in the choral section of the corps de ballet at the Paris opera house, walks out on stage and tells her story of never becoming a star. She also talks about the tyranny and boredom that came with being in the choral.

*Veronique Doisneau* not only gives the spotlight to someone who was in the background but begins to expose the hierarchies within a ballet company. I incorporated the idea of meta-theater into my exploration of Freireian thought as it applies to the relationship between performer and audience.

I applied Freire's description of the subjectivity and objectivity at play within the student/teacher dichotomy to examine how this hierarchy is perpetuated in the structure of performance. It is taken for granted that the performer has something to say and that the audience is there as merely a passive spectator, thus negating any power or responsibility of the audience for their experience. We dissected this assumption in rehearsal by sitting and simply watching one another. In this exercise there was a clearly defined watcher and a person being watched. The person being watched was not allowed to perform, nothing to distract either party from simply noticing the inherent power structure between the watcher and the watched. This exercise pushed my dancers and myself out of our comfort zones more than any other of our practiced rituals. It also allowed us to become painfully aware of our emotional, personal, and cultural associations with observing and being observed. As this meta-theatrical process revealed the power of the watched over the watcher as it relates to the student/ teacher dichotomy, it also revealed the power of the watcher over the watched from a feminist lens. What started as an attempt to level the playing field between performer and audience, served instead to create a paradoxical world in which subjectivity and objectivity were always in question.

At first the incorporation of my literary research into the rehearsal process was merely a way to translate what I was reading into movement. By doing so, I surpassed an important facet of the practical research, my dancers and their personal connection to my research material. In her book, *Legacy of Conquest*, Patricia Limerick discusses the participation of women during westward expansion in the United States. Limerick analyzes the roles of the wives of male pioneers as well as the prostitutes whose services to the male pioneers allow the wives to "hold onto the role of pure creatures set above human biological compulsions" (Limerick, 51). While reading about these early western women, whom Limerick refers to as fallen and respectable, I became aware of a link between past and present. This blatant dichotomy reveals a mechanism in which women were systematically set up against one another.

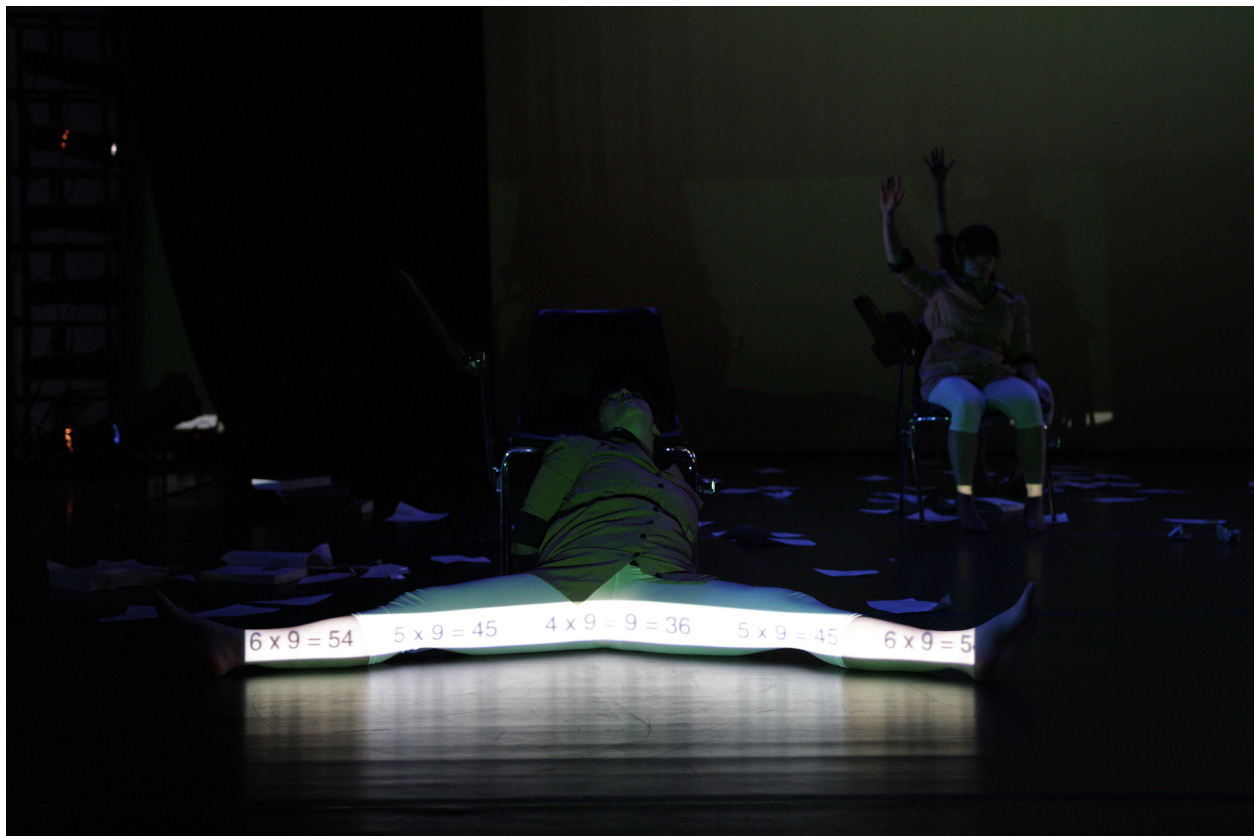


Though Limerick is referring to a historical struggle between women, this mechanism is currently functioning under today's patriarchal value system and thus is a dynamic to deconstruct.

When I brought this concept of the systemized female binaries into rehearsal, my dancers and I brainstormed synonyms for "fallen" and then used those words to create movements that were strung together into dances. Though the dances revealed every dancer's individual relationship to the concept of being "fallen", they were one-dimensional and aesthetically upheld what they were seeking to deconstruct. I had unwittingly taken away the subjectivity of my dancers and dismissed the complexity of female sexuality and identity. It wasn't until later, as the piece and process unfolded, that we discovered our relationship to the fallen/respectable dichotomy. We discovered that the physical expression of one or the other wasn't actually providing any new information. The practical research was about all of the complications *in-between* the fallen and respectable spectrum. It was the internalized experience of sexism marked by competition with one another, impossible standards, violence to our own bodies, and the silence that accompanied suffering that became the most relevant point of research. This practical research also included the discussion of how skin color played a role in who fell first, and the privilege it created even amongst the fallen, both past and present. The way in which the literary was manifested into performance was a lesson that continued to unfold throughout the process. Unlike its initial appearance, "the fallen and the respectable women" was not just a section of my dance, but present throughout. This dichotomy existed in the development of the relationships between performers on and off stage and the way all other concepts in the piece were approached. This material gave us a feminist perspective into our own potential collusion and gave us an angle from which to approach all of the other parts of conceptual framework in the piece.

The marriage of philosophies of Mulvey, Friere, and Limerick is best demonstrated halfway through the work. What starts with a strongly raised hand slowing disintegrates as a Student, performed by Kate, slides out of her desk and onto the floor with legs splayed. At this time The Teacher (Julie) enters and places a projector on the floor in front of Kate. Projections of the nine times table equations are cast onto Kate's inner thighs. The equations move from the ends of her legs up toward her vagina and then disappear inside

of her (Figure 1). This is a literal interpretation of the “banking model of education”. This is a term that Friere uses to describe the western model of education where “the students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor”(Freire, 72). The dancer has “fallen” and now, instead of “displayed” and “coded for erotic impact,” she is splayed and erotic implications can be decoded as the issue of objectification and rape is now at the forefront of the image



**Figure 1**

### ***Collaboration that Transcends Time Boundaries***

Collaboration, which was an intended element, showed up in the work on more levels than I could have foreseen. By directly referencing the works of other artists in my work I can collaborate across generations and lifetimes, so-to-speak. The works of contemporary artists which have been my biggest inspiration ended up in direct conversation with my piece. The choreography of both Belgian choreographer Anna-Teresa De Keersmaeker and German Tanz theater trailblazer Pina Bausch were key to my research, philosophically and aesthetically. It was suggested to me, by one of my readers (yet another point of collaboration) to directly reference these women in my work rather than have their presence unnamed. In the same way that a painting can look differently each time you view it, a dance, even one you've seen a hundred times, can say something more when you're ready to hear it. As it turns out, Pina Bausch's *Café Muller* and Anna Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Rosas Danst Rosas* had a lot to say to me on the matter of the complex humanity trapped within systematic rigidity, so I decided to use elements in each of these pieces in my dance. Interestingly, it was those points of contact during which my musical composer and video artist had the most influence.

*Rosas Danst Rosas*, choreographed in the early 80's, is a piece about women in mental institutions. The piece[which was performed live, as well as being created as a dance for camera, uses an all-female cast]. In the section I referenced, the women are all in chairs facing forward in a bleak, empty room. Their repertoire consists of only a few short repeated movement phrases using an accumulative choreographic method. Accumulation occurs when one movement is performed, then that movement is repeated, with another added to it and so on, (example: A, AB, ABC.....) The phrases in *Rosas Danst Rosas* are made up of gestures that slice across their torsos, gasps that draw them up and then out of their chairs momentarily only to collapse back into the tyranny of the chair. Fingers pull hair back to reveal the faces then hands swiftly grazes breasts, pulling torsos toward the ground. Through repetition of these movements, exhaustion is revealed, the fatigue of the mindset on loop, with only itself to reference for reality. The desperation of the struggle to get out from under one's own mental confines while simultaneously being trapped in one chair, within one room, isolated from the world which too contains the complexity of desire

and suffering, is revealed over time. Though I could not articulate it in the beginning of my rehearsal process, I knew that this dance spoke to my own experience of being in the classroom.



**Figure 2**

My cast and I learned this section of *Rosas Danst Rosas* and Julie Rooney filmed us doing it in a wide, open meadow with the Flatirons as our backdrop. My dancers and I kept the choreography exactly as it was in *Rosas Danst Rosas*. We stayed confined to chairs just as it had been executed in the video but did it in a location that was the opposite of sterile room. Because the final performance would take place on a stage set up to resemble a classroom, I wanted this video to reflect the desire for escape, which I imagined the women contained in institutions possessed. I conceived that, though the women were out in wide-open world, they still never left their chairs or veered off the movement sequence of confinement because the outside world only existed in their imaginations. Beginning with hands raised high, the live dancers sunk unperceivably slowly to the floor as their hands melted from the gesture of a schoolchild to that of someone drowning. Simultaneously, the

video of the dancers in the field, performing De Keersmaeker's choreography, played on the backdrop behind the live dancers (Figure 2). The juxtaposition between the stillness of the live dancers and the quick movements of their filmic counterparts was also expressed in the vastness of the outdoor world within the video and the confinement of the live stage setting. Once again, *meta-theater* was used to examine the layered experience of the Students. Although the women in the video reflected the desires of the women on stage, they still remained primarily in their chairs even amidst the infinite landscape, revealing the physical and psychological dimensionality of being trapped within an institution.

The *Rosas Danst Rosas* choreography was recapitulated for another section of my dance. I did this in order to juxtapose De Keersmaeker's initial concept with new facets of freedom and confinement in order to reveal new dimensions that then related to my dance. Using clothing and other objects in the room, I had my dancers section off a small plot of individual space which they would each physically explore. I had them define the imagined limitations of the space above and around them as well, using their bodies to demonstrate the dimensionality of their confinement. Then I instructed them to use the movements from *Rosas Danst Rosas* to continue to define their space. This resulted in a remixing of the phrases that stretched the movements to their size potential. Now, without the limitations of the chairs, the movements exploded into the space, energetically reaching into the ethers with their cries of desperation. Using the same choreography was another way that the concept of confinement could be expressed.

Nathan and I collaborated to create a live musical score performed by the dancers that would help weave De Keersmaeker's world and my world together. Nathan designed a score that mimicked the structure of the syncopated rhythm used by De Keersmaeker and the two of us experimented with different sounds that could be made with classroom objects. The dancers then used that recorded rhythm as a baseline in which they improvisationally riffed off of, using textbooks to make sound. Using pages flipping, tearing, books thudding against desks, dancers sighing, we created a soundtrack. This soundtrack, once widely associated with women in mental institutions, now emulated women in classrooms.

*Café Muller's* (Pina Bausch) presence within *Not Waving* was functionally different from the presence of *Rosas Danst Rosas*. Instead of directly using any of her exact

choreography, I invoked and inverted her choreographic concepts. In *Cafe Muller* Bausch uses repetition to demonstrate elements of violence inlayed in the romance of male/female relationships. A woman is repeatedly put in the arms of a man, and repeatedly dropped to the ground. This sequence goes on for an unbearable amount of time while getting more and more aggressive as it speeds up. I imitated this scene in *Not Waving*, however I utilized the two aforementioned women who were in some sort of romance. In this moment the women compete with each other, leaving the loser to throw themselves to the floor over and over again. This exposes a layer of internalized sexism by having the one perpetuating violence and the one receiving violence be the same person. This particular instance speaks to the violence encoded within female competition. Often female competition is marked by the fight for male affection, but the fact that they are competing with each other for each other's affection reveals the insidious and destructive nature of this particular internalization.



**Figure 3**

Another point in which *Cafe Muller* enters my piece reveals a play between my work and Bausch's that mimics Limerick's fallen/respectable dichotomy. There are several moments in which some of the dancers find themselves on the floor with arms to their sides, unsuccessfully trying to locomote (Figure 3). This was a choreographic moment that I literally inverted from its original form. In *Café Muller* a woman hurls herself through space with eyes closed and arms to her side, pulling downward. This leaves her vulnerable to collision with the objects (tables and chairs) that surround her. Her safety is then reliant upon the man urgently pulling the objects out of her pathway in the nick of time. This could be perceived as a metaphor for the preservation of the woman. The man is frantically trying to keep her from falling, to keep her respectable. By inverting this movement on the floor, there is no use in trying to preserve my dancers, for they have already fallen.

There is a notable character that seems to serve almost as a narrator in *Café Muller*. She is the only woman fully clothed and wearing shoes. The clicking sound of her high heels characterizes her amongst the silence of the rest of the dancers on stage. Julie Rooney became an iteration of this character in the realm of my piece. She, too, wore high heels amongst a stage of barefoot dancers. She was The Teacher character, which not only served as a marker of institutionalization but also worked functionally as it allowed her to control and interact with the projectors on stage. Her role as a videographer transcended its traditional placement, behind the scenes, allowing the video to be highly interactive with the live performance. Though Rooney's character emulated a very specific character in *Café Muller*, her movement riffed off that of a second character in Bausch's work who, with eyes closed, hurls herself through space. The Teacher character that Julie Rooney portrays consistently has her arms out in front of her mimicking the blind vulnerability of the dancer (Figure 4). Rooney's entrances and exits often coincide with the destruction or re-configuration of the desk-chairs in which The Students inhabit. This is also a reference to the way the table and chairs are interacted with in *Café Muller*. The involvement of my collaborators allowed me to uniquely integrate the works of great contemporary choreographers, adding another layer and deepening my definition of collaboration.



**Figure 4**

***Not Raising but Already Under***

Dance artists weren't the only artists referenced in my piece. The writing and life history of English poet Stevie Smith became a through-line for the entire performance. In fact the name of the piece *Not Waving*, came from her poem entitled *Not Waving but Drowning*. The poem talks about a man in the ocean. Onlookers on the shore believe that the man is waving when in fact he is drowning. The last line of the poem changes to first person, "I was much too far out all my life, and not waving but drowning," revealing that the poem is not about a man waving or drowning, but a woman (Smith, herself) caught inside a lifetime of unseen suffering. Upon my further research into Stevie Smith's life, I learned that she faced much silent suffering, which she only expressed through characters in her writing. "Stevie" was also not her birth name. It was given to her by a friend because of her sometimes, masculine appearance (Bryan). It seemed to me that it was very



probable that the poem was actually about her, adding yet another dimension of misconception to the meaning of the poem.

The gesture of the schoolchild's raised hand related to the idea of not waving, but drowning, both physically and metaphorically. The text of Smith's *Not Waving but Drowning* was woven throughout my piece to convey the unseen suffering of the students within an oppressive system and the misconception of the intent behind a raised hand. This connection is revealed in the piece in many ways. Most notably was the way in which I used the raised hand gesture to convey its limitations regarding communication. While angst, suffering, chaos, and rebellion were being fully expressed by The Students around me, I remained in the center of the stage, unable to do anything but attempt to raise my hand (Figure 7). While the chairs were getting hurled across the space, while books were being shredded, while relationships were unfolding, I remained in the center of the stage, unable to do anything but attempt to raise my hand. This gesture also symbolized the imprisonment of the other dancers on stage. Often a militaristic unison hand-raise would interrupt bursts of individual expression and freedom, stopping themselves in their tracks, The Students would return to their prison desks. The raised hand represented a silencing of suffering, a lack of agency by those who used it.

Toward the end of my creative process I brought in a male dancer, Adam. Throughout most of the piece I remained stagnant in the space, while Adam had the freedom to roam around the space and dance the experience of the words I was speaking (the poem). He was meant to represent a piece of my imagination that only had agency of movement because of his manifestation as a male. Though Adam's choreography and agency to move felt significant to me, feedback revealed it was not an element that held significance to the audience. The piece begins with Adam at the far downstage left corner. He is standing at a podium. As a spotlight comes up on him it becomes obvious that his mouth is moving as if he were speaking to the audience (Figure 5). He is mouthing the words of the poem but there is no sound coming from his mouth. The words of the poem are coming from me. I am not illuminated by the stage lights yet, so my physical presence is not noticed, only my voice. This too demonstrates the concept of the poem that is being spoken: 'what you see is not what is taking place.' At the very end of the piece, I stand and take his place. That figment of my imagination dissolves as I gain the ability to move.

Though perhaps not obvious to the audience, this part is significant to me because it pays homage to the actual existence of Stevie Smith and my perception of her lived experience. This is another moment that contains a feminist lens that utilizes Mulvey's Gaze Theory. By having the text from the poem be spoken by a female (me) voice, I am not only trying to retroactively give female voice to Stevie's poem but working to give voice and agency at a potentially phallogocentric moment of the piece.

The Macro structure of my piece existed within the structure of the Smith's poem *Not Waving but Drowning*. The discovery of my relationship with my work was revealed in the last stanza of the process. "Nobody heard *HIM*, the dead man but still he lay moaning, I was much further out than you thought, and not waving but drowning." In this first stanza it is clear that what is perceived is not what is actually happening. After researching her life, I discovered that this poem was about Stevie Smith herself. She was living a life of unseen suffering. The poem was not really about a man but about *HER*. She was the character: "Poor chap, he always loved larking; and now he is dead. It must have been too cold for him. His heart gave way they said." My attempts to apply this poem to the suffering that occurs within institutions, particularly the school system revealed a very personal subtext within framework of my piece. It wasn't until merely days before the show went up that I discovered that all of my dancers, though distinct in their individual performances, were all representations of me! I had articulated a multiplicity of responses to a personal experience of school that left me silently suffering although a raised hand was all that was perceived. The "I" in the poem was for me. This desire to articulate something before my physical form dissolved was the same as the drowning man waving for help and Stevie Smith writing a poem about unseen suffering. The poem's three stanzas held dimensionality that linked the fictional character to Stevie and Stevie to me. "Oh no, no, no, it was too cold always (and still the dead one lay moaning) *I* was much too far out all my life and not waving but drowning".



**Figure 5**

*The Discovery of Time***Figure 6**

At some point along the way I realized that time had become an important element to the piece. It revealed itself to me in many ways. What at first seemed like a piece about having to sit still in a classroom, turned out to be a piece about the eternalness of the passage of time while sitting still in a classroom. The entire piece existed between the passage of time and timelessness. Time, then, became the tool used in order to develop the choreography we had generated for the times tables. Each dancer was assigned two of the nines times tables, for which we had already developed the movements as a group as, I mentioned previously. Then I asked each of them to use the elements of timing and duration in order to manipulate the perceived passage of time via their bodies. We defined duration as the amount of time each movement took, and timing to mean the time between the movements. They were also allowed to use repetition and retrograde. After they each had about one minutes worth of material they broke into groups and learned each other's

movements. I had Megan (one of the dancers) teach her score to the whole group so we had a main phrase that the dancers could pop in and out of. For several rehearsals, the dancers would start off on the group score together and then I would call out their names and one, two, or three at a time they would diverge from the group score to their individual scores and then went back to where they left off on the group score. This not only made for interesting choreographic moments, but it was hard and frustrating for the dancers and created a real time experience of the exhaustion of memorization and regurgitation. Time was also referenced in the duet that occurs between Megan and Jessica. When they leave the classroom and a video projection allows us to witness a duet between them in the bathroom, a clock is passed between them, fought over, hidden and used as a pillow (Figure 6). Here time is used as an emblem for power and control.

### ***The First Part of a Complete Thought***

As I began to show my work to my readers, it became clear that the piece that existed in my head was not actually being manifested. During the last work-in-progress showing, my readers informed me that there was clearly a world that existed inside my head that wasn't being seen on the outside. As one stated, "I can see all of your (literary) research, but I can't feel the physical investigation." I could feel my chest caving in. I was brought back to that initial exploration that occurred in the beginning of my rehearsal process. It felt as though my body was dissolving, layer by layer. That skin, muscles, organs, and bones, were no longer mine. My physical definition was dissolving, my matter becoming indistinguishable from all other matter.... My worst fear was going to come true, I was going to be extrapolated from the physical world without having had the chance to fully articulate something real. For the first time in the process I felt the full weight of the content I had been trying to explore. I felt the multi-dimensionality of my brain with infinite ideas that bounced around excitedly birthing new ideas and images. I felt the harsh, sobering, reality as those images tried to make themselves known outside of my head but died upon exiting due to the limitations of my physical language. I could imagine my body expanding, reaching beyond its kinesphere to free me from the rigidity of fear, articulating

thought where words had failed. But all I could do was to metaphorically raise my hand and sit very still hoping that someone would call on me before the last of cells had disappeared.

It was the experience of failing to communicate that I needed to bring forward into my rehearsal process. Somehow, amongst all of the collaboration, I had left myself out of my art in a particular way that caused it to live only in the land of theory. My rehearsals became less about the scores and the structure and more about how my dancers and myself, connected to the world, what it felt like to be trapped in our desks, and what was our true desire for escape. I enlisted the minds of my dancers and collaborators to take over some of the responsibilities of directing so that I too could be on the inside of the world we were creating. We implemented real time challenges that would expose the suffering, humiliation, and struggle of drowning inside a system that mistook our raised hands for waving. Up until this point I thought I was trying to create something that expressed the multiple experiences of my dancers and collaborators. However, as I mentioned before, I realized that all of the characters in the piece were manifestations of me, much like the man at sea was a manifestation of Stevie Smith. It was through collaboration that I was able to express an individual experience - my own. And although I had to face that my desire to tackle expressing something was beyond the scope of a 23 minute dance piece, the attempts hold moments of tangibility that are unexpected and, wrought with possibility.

Each generation of artists and dance makers define their rules based on the ever-changing social, political, and personal context which they inhabit. Often these definitions are born out of a rejection of the previous generation's ideology. The need to restructure and invent new rules is inherent to the relevance of art in all forms. In *Not Waving I* implored the influence of two seemingly contrary ideologies within contemporary dance. Tanz theater, which Bausch is the poster child for, is born out of German expressionism. This form uses the combination of dance-theater and other performative elements. Metaphor, emotionality, spectacle, and montage are key characteristics used to create an almost otherworldly perspective to issues that are very much of this world. Props, costumes, and performance tend to display a co-existence of fantasy and reality. Jerome Bell's practice of "meta" rejects all of these notions. Using minimalism he strips down, exposes, and questions the very function of performance, dance, and even the human body.

This leaves us with only reality to face. No fantasy to distract, nor metaphor to uncover. The beauty lies within the raw honesty of the occurrences on stage.

I attended a workshop with dance artist Trajel Harrell in which he explained the importance of this. He said that in order to create something relevant to the audience, “the thingness of what you present must be the primary objective of the performance and everything that you do must be in service of that thing.” He went on to explain that metaphor was no longer relevant because it held no impact or significance for the audience, only the performer.

In *Not Waving* I incorporated these three philosophies and, whether successful or not, I incorporated them whole-heartedly. Perhaps right now my identity as an artist is not being formed by the rejection of any ideologies but by the rejection of the assumption that these distinct ideologies are mutually exclusive. So the question then becomes did the elements of “Tanz” and “Meta” coexist in *Not Waving*? Or does one negate the other? For the majority of the show I remain in the center of the stage, squeezed into a child sized desk slowly raising my hand. It takes me almost the entire 20 minutes to get my arm fully raised, a task that was every bit as difficult and painful as the suffering that it stood for. Is that meta still in conversation with the leaves in the jars hanging from the ceiling metaphorically representing resistance? One of The Students, played by Sara, has a solo containing movements that theatrically and metaphorically display outrage against containment. Later Sara and another Student, Millie, attempt to stand on releve atop textbooks placed on desk chairs. My desire was to use both theater and truly difficult tasks to reveal different aspect of the same experience. I am still unsure of whether the attempted marriage of these ideas ineffectively references them or if referencing them has the potential to create a new forms in which artistic identity could be discovered.

*Not Waving* was one of many infinite possible configurations of the content I waded through. These theoretical elements and personal insights will be manifested again in future endeavors, for I have only begun my journey into the deep end. I will continue to explore the intersections of my own lived experience with the theoretical and artistic opinions of others. I will seek out collaborators both living and not living. Through this collaboration, exposed theoretical metaphor, and specific gesture I will aim to continue to create worlds where institutionalization can be examined and ideally undone within my

work. The ideas in my head can become so vast that that they feel like an infinite ocean's worth of thoughts. Although the desperation to articulate these thoughts may feel like drowning, through my art I will create a lifeline long enough to reach far beyond the shore. I will continue to raise my hand, no matter how long it takes, and speak up against the systematic injustices that contaminate our schools and uphold oppressive ideologies within our patriarchal society.



**Figure 7**



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