THERE IS NO ROSE: CONTEMPORARY CHOREOGRAPHY MEETS THE ANGLICAN CHORAL TRADITION

HANNAH BARNARD
Faculty Advisor: Gerri Houlihan
The School of Dance

Hannah Barnard is a Senior BFA student in the FSU School of Dance whose choreography has been showcased in FSU productions. She has a strong musical background in piano and choral singing. Upon receiving her undergraduate degree, she will pursue a professional dance career as a performer, choreographer, and teacher.

My choreographic research project contains three phases. In phase one, I choreographed a solo work of contemporary dance for the choral piece "There Is No Rose," arranged by Randall Stroope. My primary objective in this phase was to design a new approach to the movement development process by exploring academic sources and translating them into choreography. In phase two, I performed my work with live accompaniment by the Oakland Girls Choir of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in multiple Anglican churches in the U.S. and in England. I adapted the work I'd developed in a large space with recorded music to small spaces with live music. In phase three, I obtained feedback from twelve audience members through personal interviews. This phase contains two main objectives: to examine the audience's perceptions of my choreography, and to analyze the relationship between dance and the Anglican Church. My main research findings occurred during phase three. The interviews revealed ways in which individuals see the same movement differently, identified qualities that distinguish sacred dance from concert dance, and led to a set of guidelines that may facilitate contemporary dance into the tradition of Anglican worship.

Anglican worship is a beautifully complex phenomenon. It embodies many of the liberating ideas of Protestantism while retaining the rich historical traditions of Catholicism. It maintains a balance between

high-minded intellectualism and flourishing artistic creativity. It remains deeply rooted in practices that have spanned across centuries while simultaneously embracing contemporary concepts. Indeed, Anglicanism provides the perfect breeding ground for art that aims to unite the old with the new, to transport tradition to uncharted territory, and to pay homage to one's history while challenging established boundaries.

This project attempts to accomplish each of these goals through the medium of movement. Contemporary dance, classical choral music, and medieval text come together as a unified work of art under the roof of the Anglican Church. At last, the church that excels in producing the highest quality music, paintings, tapestries, architecture, and stained-glass windows can add dance to its artistic repertoire. At last, liturgical dance, a form that has thus far existed primarily within the realm of contemporary worship music, can experience the age-old influence of Anglicanism.

"There Is No Rose," a poem by an anonymous medieval writer that has inspired a plethora of composers, has come to represent a long, life-changing artistic journey for me. It commenced with the investigation of a strange and unfamiliar creative process. It then progressed to a series of performances in extraordinary and unusual places. Finally, it opened up a treasure trove of individual insights and exciting possibilities for the future of Anglican liturgical dance.

The Process

The choreographic process represents the first stage of my research. My primary objective during the course of this process was to draw

from several different sources of inspiration to create a series of movement phrases rich with symbolic meaning, and then to combine these movement phrases into a cohesive, musically sensitive work that would clearly express each source. My main sources of inspiration included an in-depth study of the Bel Canto musical style in which the piece is written, an investigation of the text of the fifteenth-century anonymous poem "There Is No Rose," observations of the shapes and movements associated with blooming roses, and an examination of medieval icons depicting the Virgin Mary.

I began by researching the Bel Canto music style, which is an "Italian vocal technique of the 18th century with its emphasis on beauty of sound and brilliance of performance, rather than dramatic expression or Romantic emotion."[1] The secret to expressing emotion through a vocal technique that places its value on full control of the entire body lay in the composer's intimate awareness of the voice's capacity to express various human moods.[2] Early Bel Canto composers acutely observed how changes in one's vocal register correlated to changes in emotional intensity, and incorporated this knowledge into their musical works. Primeval vowel sounds were found to universally express specific emotions; For example, "ah" was used to communicate feelings of pleasure, as in the "ah" of a contented sigh. The "ie" sound, as in the word "fierce", expressed hatred, and the "oo" sound, as in the word "doom", expressed horror and fear.[3] This information directed the majority of my process; I would find ways to express the emotion I could hear in the music and text through the beauty of technique and form.

My choreographic interpretation of the word Transeamus in the poem serves as one example of this method. Transeamus translates to "Let us cross over" or "Let us journey." There are various interpretations of the word transeamus as it is used in this text. The shepherds' response in Luke 2:15 to the angels who appear to them in the fields and inform them of the infant Christ's whereabouts is one interpretation. A more metaphorical interpretation is "Let us cross over into Christ's world," referring to the sinner's conversion from living solely for himself and his own "worldly mirth" to becoming a devoted follower of Jesus Christ.[4] In each of these instances, I explored the emotions that might accompany the decision to "cross over." I imagined that fear, hesitation, apprehension, excitement, uncertainty and joy would all be present. I represented feelings of ambivalence in the body as a kind of tug-of -war, with various body parts reaching right, grasping left, tensing in rebellion, releasing in acceptance. Uncertainty was communicated through a series of unfinished movements. Abstract references to the shrug, a universal human gesture, influenced the "uncertain" movement I composed. Joy was communicated through harmonious shapes inserted between moments of complex internal struggle. Once I had completed each set of individual shapes and movements, I wove them together into a fluid choreographic phrase.

My investigation of roses informed the next stage of my process. Rose imagery is commonly used in medieval art and poetry to represent the Virgin Mary. Since one such poem directly inspired my own artistic representation of the Virgin, I

desired to leave a visual imprint of the image of the rose upon my choreography. I watched several time-lapse videos of blooming roses, and noted the petals' changing movement qualities over a period of time. Each petal in a bud hooks the next petal tightly, forming a clump of linked petals spiraling around the center of the rose. I detected a sense of tension, energy, and anticipation in this stage of the rose's life. The bud then bursts open with an abrupt release of energy. The petals settle open with a slow, suspended quality. To translate these observations into movement, I found several ways to link body parts together around a center point, and then burst the shape open, abruptly separating each body part and gracefully settling into an open position.

In addition to my exploration of the physical aspects of the rose, I investigated the flower's symbolism in medieval art. "During the Middle Ages, the rose was seen as the queen of flowers, symbol of the Virgin Mary, representing romance, religion, and healing."[5] Many of the famous medieval unicorn tapestries on display at the Cloisters Museum of Art weave together the images of the rose and the Virgin. I found myself especially drawn to a tapestry depicting Mary taming a unicorn in a field of roses. "The unicorn symbolizes the bridegroom...(T)amed by a virgin, (he) is no longer fierce. So too, God became gentle through the Virgin Mary."[6] Inspired by this symbolism, I created a gestural movement phrase that represented God's powerful, majestic being passing through the "rose" of Mary's body to emerge as a soft, vulnerable infant.

In the next stage of my process, I continued to study medieval

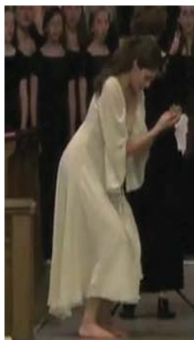
depictions of the Virgin Mary by examining a series of painted icons. Because the textual content of the piece is derived from medieval origins, I decided to incorporate a taste of the medieval aesthetic into my contemporary choreography. I selected eleven paintings of the Virgin Mary, ranging from ~1280 AD to ~1530 AD. Each painting shows Mary in a different light: In Fra Filippo Lippi's "The Annunciation" (~1450), she humbly and graciously accepts the news that she is to bear a son; In Leonardo da Vinci's "The Virgin of the Rocks" (~1495), she kneels to worship her newborn; In Cimabue's "The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Two Angels" (~1280), she holds the infant Christ in a stately and dignified manner; In Raphael's "Madonna of the Pinks" (~1506) she gazes fondly at her child with a hint of laughter on her lips.[7] I studied each painting carefully, examining the details of Mary's posture and expression: the curve of her spine, the direction of her focus, the tilt of her head, and the intricate positions of her hands and fingers. I then sought to emulate each of these positions, embodying the painted figures and stringing them together into a flowing choreographic phrase.

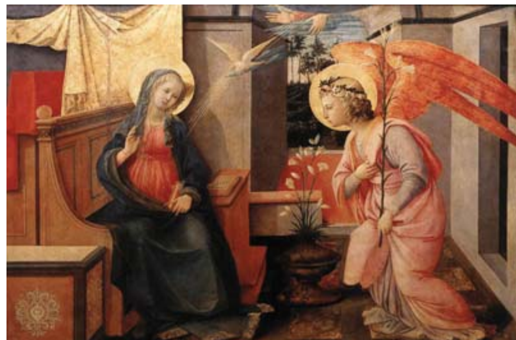
Although many additional sources served to inspire the choreographic creation of "There Is No Rose," the majority of the movement arose from a thorough investigation of the Bel Canto music style, multiple interpretations of the text of the poem, biological observations of the rose, and an examination of depictions of the Virgin Mary in medieval art. Throughout the choreographic process, I strove to be attentive to the musical structure of the piece by closely tailoring each movement

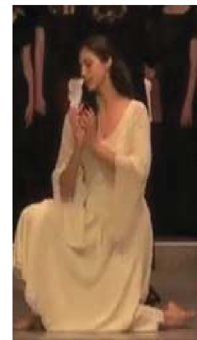
phrase I generated to the rhythm, dynamics, volume, and tone of the musical phrase with which it was united.

The Performances

I performed "There Is No Rose" with the Oakland Girls Choir of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at seven different locations. In the U.S., we performed at The Anglican Church of the Ascension and at a synagogue called Rodef Shalom that hosts an annual summer concert series. In England, we performed at four Anglican churches (St. Nicholas' in Cuddington, St. Phillip's in Dorridge, St. Laurence's in Church Stretton, and St. Laurence's in Hartley Wintney) and one non-denominational Christian retreat center called Lee Abbey. Adapting the choreography to different spaces proved to be a significant challenge; the spaces varied greatly in size, and many contained immovable structures that needed to be maneuvered around. In addition to the spatial challenges, I discovered the need to develop a keen sensitivity to the musicians. I had an excellent sense of the choir's







Video stills of Barnard's performance of "There Is No Rose" alongside Fra Filippo Lippi's "The Annunciation 3"

breath and tempo by the end of the tour, but I still had to pay close attention to the small fluctuations that are inevitable in live performance. This was especially true when we were fortunate enough to find an instrumentalist to play the oboe or flute accompaniment.

Although each concert presented its own set of challenges, each one also offered a new piece of inspiration. From beautiful marble statues and stained-glass windows to an intimate closeness with the audience, the individual features of each performance space provided a unique experience that fueled the dance. Consequently, the choreography grew fuller and richer with every performance.

Audience Feedback

In the final stage of my research, I obtained feedback by interviewing audience members about the performance. After each performance, I asked one to three audience members a series of open-ended questions. Some questions were specific to the choreography; others explored the general topic of dance presented in Anglican worship settings. I interviewed a total of six U.S. citizens and six English citizens. Many subjects were Anglican, but some came from other denominational backgrounds, including Mennonite, Catholic, Lutheran, and Baptist. These factors allowed me to obtain a well-balanced variety of responses.

The first set of questions I asked was designed to delve into the audience members' imaginations and discover what images, stories, emotions, and interpretations the dance had evoked. Multiple subjects described a section of the choreography in which I manipulated the fabric

of the costume, a long, translucent, white silk gown, using the material to wrap myself in different shapes and configurations. Many audience members detected themes of spiritual entrapment in the way I twisted and intertwined myself in the fabric. "You became entangled, enmeshed, convoluted," remarked Arielle Gordon. "There was a sense of struggle, but with moments of freedom, of reaching out to what lies beyond. This is what the Christian life is about for me. There are times when we feel enmeshed, but there are also moments of clarity, when the heavens open and we catch a glimpse of God's glory," Ms. Gordon explained. Sasha Levin also saw this part of the dance as a metaphor for the Christian experience; she described a woman finding herself trapped in a net of sin and struggling to free herself, only becoming more entangled with each effort to break free. At last, she is freed from her trap by Jesus' victory over sin and death.

Multiple subjects observed images of pregnancy and birth within the choreography. Emily Bradshaw was one such individual. "The ripping and tearing of the birth-giving process was clearly represented in what you did with the fabric of the dress," she commented. Veronica Streiss seemed to agree with this perspective: "Some of your movements came across as contortionist-like," she explained. "For me, this signified Mary surrendering her entire life over to God, including her physical body. She allowed her body to be contorted through pregnancy, and she allowed her life to be contorted by the apparent scandal her obedience had caused. I appreciated how the dance showed that her experience wasn't all pleasant and lovely. There were thorns in that rose!"

Rose-like movement was another feature of the dance that stood out prominently for many of the subjects. Aiden Llewelyn explained, "the complex shapes (I formed with my body) could be reminiscent of the tangled branches of a rosebush." When I wrapped myself in the fabric of the skirt, he was reminded of "a rose enfolded in its petals." Clarissa Bedford even picked up on the exact source I had used to develop rose movement: "There was one movement that particularly stood out to me," she said. "When you pulled the two layers of the skirt apart, it looked like fast-motion photography of a blooming rose."

Certain parts of the dance simultaneously evoked images of pregnancy, spiritual entanglement, and blooming roses. One example is a moment in which my hands clasp together in front of my abdomen, wrapped in the fabric of the dress. They slowly expand, causing the illusion of something growing within the membrane-like fabric. Mr. Llewelyn identified this motion as a representation of an expanding womb. Ms. Levin saw my trapped hands as an image of a soul trapped in sin. Ms. Clark saw a rose blossoming within the fabric. "It was cool to see the rose opening beneath the gauze," she commented, "because it was less overt and more mysterious." I enjoyed the fact that each of the themes I had intended to communicate was clear, but there was much room for creative interpretation within those themes.

I received another pleasant surprise when subjects detected meaningful images in the choreography that I had not intended to portray at all. Julia Clark commented on the position I assume at the beginning

and the end of the dance, in which I recline on my left side and reach my right arm upward toward Heaven with a slight extension of the index finger. This particular pose reminded her of the painted position of Adam on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. (The painting, by Michelangelo, is called "The Creation of Adam." It depicts God and Adam reaching toward each other, grazing the tips of each other's index fingers.) "It's interesting," she remarked, "because the painting depicts a birth moment between God and Adam, while the choreography depicts a birth moment between God and Mary." This comment not only fascinated me, it infused the choreography with a rich new layer of symbolic imagery that affected my experience of performing the dance thereafter.

Another noteworthy perspective on the dance came from Veronica Streiss, an artist who had studied the practice of icon painting under a professional painter with a PhD in iconography. Naturally, she expressed an interest in my use of icons throughout the choreographic process. "The piece contained very specific shapes, which created the feel of looking at an icon," she remarked. "There was a unique mixture of flow and austerity. Even though you flowed through the positions, each body shape was so stark, it left a still impression in my mind's eye."

Veronica then went on to describe the process of icon painting, which I found to be particularly relevant to my own choreographic process in the creation of this work "The process is more important than the product," she explained. "First of all, the act of icon-painting itself symbolizes the reincarnation. Jesus came to us through matter, through

flesh and blood. Painting an icon is symbolically reliving the incarnation by depicting Jesus through matter." I found this idea personally relatable, as my choreographic process had, in a way, enabled me to bring the Virgin Mary to life.

Veronica proceeded to further explain the importance of the icon-painting process: "Icon painters are not so concerned with making mistakes in their work," she explained. "If an artist makes a mistake while painting, he sees this as an opportunity to recognize his imperfect human nature and constant need for God's grace. There is even a suggested prayer mantra that some painters repeat while working on their icon: 'Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner.'" This enlightening explanation allowed me to feel a strong connection with the medieval artists whose work I had represented through the dance. I, too, had been confronted by my own shortcomings many times throughout the creative process, and had discovered the constant need to rely on God's strength and grace.

My second interview objective was to examine my choreography within the larger context of the liturgical dance genre. I desired to gain insight into pre-existing liturgical dance forms, and to determine whether or not I had succeeded in stretching the boundaries of the genre. I asked subjects to share their previous experiences with liturgical dance, and to compare and contrast these experiences with my choreography.

Collectively, the subjects had experienced a variety of liturgical dance forms. Some described a charismatic style that is popular in the Pentecostal tradition. This highly emotional dance form focuses on

the power of the Holy Spirit, and commonly incorporates scarves and tambourines. Others described a narrative liturgical dance style that uses simple movements and pantomime to express the lyrics of worship songs. Clarissa Bedford described yet another style of liturgical dance that arose from the African Catholic tradition, which uses African drums and group dances to portray themes that are central to Catholicism.

In contrast to some of the aforementioned liturgical dance styles, subjects described "There Is No Rose" as quiet and soulful, elaborate, specific, spatially constrained, and technically demanding. They detected an effort on the part of the choreographer to listen very carefully to complexities in the text and musical structure. These responses assisted me in determining which aspects of the choreography made it a unique contribution to the liturgical dance genre. I intend to continue exploring these features in future choreographic projects I design for religious settings in order to continue broadening the spectrum of liturgical dance.

My third objective, to identify key differences between sacred dance and concert dance, was inspired by a quote from Robert Bridges, a British poet who contributed to the publication of several hymns. Bridges describes the ideal sacred music composition as "a music whose peace should still passion, whose dignity should strengthen our faith, whose unquestioned beauty should find a home in our hearts...a music worthy of the fair temples in which we meet and of the holy words of our liturgy... whose expression of the mystery of things unseen never allowed any trifling motive to ruffle the sanctity

of its reserve."[8] In response to this quotation, I decided to investigate whether or not "sacred dance" would also be held up to a different set of standards.

The majority of subjects agreed that dance presented in a sacred space should answer to a different set of standards than dance presented in a concert space. Overall, they felt that sacred dance "should be attentive to the intentions of that space" by communicating a redemptive message, empowering people to love God more, and displaying an inclusive, inter-generational attitude. Rather than showcasing the talent of the performers, it should enable the performers to take part in something greater than themselves. These responses affirmed my instinct to approach the creation of sacred dance differently than I would normally approach the choreographic process. Many subjects mentioned elements of my own choreography as examples of features that distinguished sacred dance from secular dance; I saw this as a confirmation that my attempt to design a dance specifically for a sacred space had been effective.

My fourth objective was to determine the main reasons behind the general exclusion of dance from the rich artistic tradition of the Anglican worship service. Subjects offered logical, enlightening explanations that helped me to identify what measures needed to be taken in order to overcome the obstacles lying between dance and Anglican worship.

Many subjects, as I expected, attributed the lack of dance in Anglican worship to the historical tension between the Church and the human body. "Many people think dance can be a distraction from worship,"

explained Ms. Levin. "They are afraid that people will think only about the dancer's body, rather than God." Indeed, the Catholic Church from which Anglicanism is derived banned or strictly limited the use of dance in medieval times, believing it to be an indulgence of "the pleasures of the flesh" that certain Biblical passages warn so strongly against. Dance therefore constituted a distraction from the "contemplation (of) holy thoughts such as the martyrdom of Christ and the mysteries of the Christian doctrine."[9] Since the Anglican tradition retains a close connection to its Catholic predecessor, it is no surprise that remnants of this mindset are still present.

Some subjects speculated that Anglican avoidance of liturgical dance was due to the fact that the denomination is rooted in the Church of England, "a more physically repressed society" than, for example, the African-American Baptist Church. As Ms. Streiss pointed out, it can be scary for a culture accustomed to physically restrained interactions to connect with each other through physical means, especially in church, where the soul is so open and vulnerable.

Different subjects offered various other insightful explanations. Ms. Gordon conjectured that because dance is often considered a "girl thing" in Western culture, it is not used much in worship, which is supposed to be all-inclusive. Mr. Llewellyn suggested that the difficulty of finding space in a church that is visible to the entire audience and provides enough room to move around in probably contributes to the absence of Anglican liturgical dance. (His point about visibility applied directly to a problem I

had encountered while performing "There Is No Rose" - Many audience members had difficulty seeing me when I performed movements that were low to the ground, since church pews are not placed on a slanted floor, like seats in a theater.) Ms. Thornton also offered her opinion on the absence of Anglican liturgical dance: "People feel that dance is difficult to interpret, so it is avoided in worship contexts, which are meant to open your heart," she remarked. In addition, a lot of churches are on a schedule, which makes it difficult to add a dance portion to the service."

Each of these responses assisted me in finding ways to overcome obstacles that prevent dance from becoming a regular part of Anglican worship. I used the information provided by the interviews to identify six possible ways to facilitate dance into a structured Anglican worship service:

1. *Be sure that the dancers are modestly covered, and that none of the choreography draws too much attention to the dancer's figure.*
2. *Create choreography that both men and women in the congregation can relate to.*
3. *Create choreography that is expressive, but physically controlled.*
4. *Consider horizontal spatial constraints that could affect the dancers' range of motion and vertical spatial constraints that could affect the visibility of the dance.*
5. *Provide just enough background explanation on the choreography in the service bulletin so people don't feel pressured to "get it" all on their own, while leaving room for creative interpretation.*
6. *Coordinate the presentation of choreographic material with the person in charge of organizing the service. Set an allotted amount of time to present the material and work out transitions beforehand.*

Hopefully, these guidelines will assist me and others in future attempts to include dance in Anglican worship services.

My final objective was to determine how well-received liturgical dance might be within the context of an Anglican worship service. Performing my choreography as part of a concert that took place in a space used for Anglican worship provided the perfect opportunity to help subjects imagine the benefits and/or drawbacks of presenting dance as part of a worship service. Subjects provided enthusiastic responses, and some even offered further suggestions for creative ways to incorporate dance into an Anglican worship service.

The prospect of inserting dance into a weekly worship service excited many of the subjects I interviewed. "Dance is a wonderful way to invite people in who would normally be disinterested in a worship service," observed Angela Perlman. "You've got to throw your doors open and make people feel welcome in any way you can." Mr. Llewellyn also saw the potential value of dance in Anglican worship: "Including dance in a worship service would underlie the incarnation of the Gospel," he began. "Jesus had a body, and our bodies are not separate from our sanctification. It matters how we use the body." Ms. Thornton added, "Beautiful things, such as music and stained-glass windows, are present in Anglican churches to help open your heart for worship. Dance could also serve that purpose." Ms. Bedford echoed this response: "Creating beautiful music and dance in an age-old space filled with history, art, and architecture can provide such a positive spiritual experience for people."

A young German woman named Lina Berger even suggested dancing to a contemporary worship song in addition to a more traditional piece within the same service. This approach would support what Irena Thornton described as "the marriage the Anglican Church has created between traditional music and the new 'praise and worship' style." Each of these responses encouraged me to continue pursuing ways to bring dance into Anglican worship services and gave me hope that contemporary dance could eventually find its niche within the tradition of Anglicanism.

Conclusion

Reflecting upon the entire experience, I find myself in awe of the impact the creation of a brief, six-minute dance has had on my life. Through the creative process, I grew significantly as an artist by learning how to navigate the waters of academic, research-based choreography; Through the rehearsal and performance process, I developed the ability to listen carefully to musical collaborators while dancing, to adjust set choreography to difficult spaces, and to interact with the unique features of each space by allowing them to inspire the way I present my work; Through the interview process, I made close connections with a variety of wonderful, fascinating people from all over the world and found an incredible depth of meaning within my own work that I never would have discovered without their input.

This project has also defined a new artistic direction for me. I would love to continue creating work in collaboration with live musicians and presenting it in sacred spaces within the contexts of musical concerts and Anglican worship services.

It is my hope that this project will spark a new artistic movement within the Anglican Church that will inspire many Christian dance artists to express their creativity within the worship setting. Ultimately, this may lead to a magnificent blossoming of the growing genre of liturgical dance.

To see a video of Hannah Barnard's performance of "There Is No Rose," please visit:

http://our.fsu.edu/FSURJ/video.html

[1]E.J. Dobson and F. Ll. Harrison, Medieval English Songs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 73.

[2]Lucie Manen, Bel Canto; The Teaching of the Classical Italian Song-Schools, Its Decline and Restoration (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 25.

[3]Manen 19-20.

[4]Don. R. Campbell, et al., "There Is No Rose," American Choral Directors Association, 2012, 5 Feb. 2012 <http://www.choralnet.org/view/222011>.

[5]Robyn Greenstone, "The Image of the Rose," The Augustine Club at Columbia University, Cloisters Museum Gallery Talk, 9 Dec. 1997, 5 Feb. 2012 <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/augustine/arch/frear/rose_img.htm>.

[6]Greenstone.

[7]Louise Govier, One Hundred Great Paintings (London: The National Gallery Co. Distr. by Yale University Press, 2010).

[8]Paul Chappell, Music and Worship in the Anglican Church (London: The Faith Press, 1968) 15.

[9]Carol Lee, Ballet in Western Culture: A History of its Origins and Evolution (New York: Routledge, 2002) 5-6.