

23 AND COUNTING: A CHOREOGRAPHIC INQUIRY INTO TRANSMEDIA
STORYTELLING

A Thesis Reflection Paper

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by

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Introduction

Growing up experimenting with video cameras, audio recording gear, and theatrical lighting always left me fascinated with technology's potential as a mode for expression. Many of my experiments aimed at finding intersections between different modes of theatrical and media technology—intersections that could tell a story. Finding educational lines of inquiry that explored these ideas was difficult, as much of the research I was following and getting excited about during my secondary and undergraduate education was only just developing among academic and professional circles. It wasn't until I began my graduate research that I was able to identify and narrow my interests as aligning with the term transmedia storytelling. Since then, my research has become focused on theory surrounding transmedia storytelling and how its implementation from theory into practice drives my creative process.

23 and Counting: The Creative Product

The culmination of this thesis research resulted in the creation of *23 and counting*, a 35-minute narrative dance film. *23 and counting* was presented October 11 and 13 2018 in the Dance Theatre within the James and Nancy Gaertner Performing Arts Center at Sam Houston State University. The film is broken down into eight sections that follow the told and embodied stories of five dancers. The eight sections consist of the Exposition, 18 – The Party, 19 – Ben's Story, 20 – Sarah's Story, 21 – Morgan's Story, 22 – Dustin's Story, 23 – Lori's Story, and Counting. In total, seven dancers were cast and involved in the creative process that culminated in the creation of the film.

The creative process did not follow traditional filmmaking or concert-dance processes consisting of pre-production, rehearsals, production, and post-production

phases. Instead, traditional filmmaking and concert-dance phases were shuffled, blended, and re-introduced frequently throughout the creative process to allow for an evolving homogenous mixture of documentary filmmaking and choreographic techniques. This process of sourcing and developing content orally and physically allowed me to explore the identity of each dancer through a transmedial lens, which led to my final narrativization and depiction of their stories in the dance film. The two processes used to generate content in the film were verbal interviews and choreographic problem-solving. Whether inspired from the choreographic problem-solving or verbal interview, each section of the film was crafted uniquely based on my own interpretation of the personality and story behind each dancer.

Thus, *23 and counting* tells the complex story of this generation through each voice's dimensions of identity, value, and discovery. Utilizing transmedia storytelling, the dance film intimately expresses stories from five young adults that unfold at the intersection of their dialectical perspective and embodied inner thoughts. Together, their voices construct a time-capsule capturing what it means to be young in 2018.

A Synthesis of Research and the Creative Process

When I began graduate school, I began to question what makes art successful, and can I make money making this successful art? After taking Theory of Dance and Research Methods, I came to understand that the importance of dance and art in society is its ability to embody and express ideas, stories, and values that contribute to our societies' discourse and cultural tapestry. I wondered, surely there's a way to capitalize on what I create without sacrificing its ability to artistically express values and ideas? This question drove my inquiry and inspired my quest to develop and execute a creative

process that is grounded in both culturally conservative and profitable theory, as to produce a creative product that holds relevant cultural ideology and has profitable potential.

Crafting a bridge between Dance and Transmedia Storytelling. This research journey began with synthesizing text for my review of literature. *Critical Approaches to Media*, a course taken within the Department of Mass Communication, exposed me to a spectrum of historical and sociological perspectives on media's influence upon our capitalistic society. Readings from authors commonly associated with the Frankfurt School of thought such as Adorno, Benjamin, and Habermas provided me with a Neo-Marxist foundation from which to critique the socio-economic effects of mass media's influence on society. This foundation became useful while reading into transmedia theory.

Several pieces of literature called upon critical theory as a means to critique and explain the effects of transmedia in today's contemporary capitalist society, and thus helped me value transmedia storytelling's successes by identifying profit and retainment of cultural ideology through examples such as the *Star Wars*, *Marvel*, and *Matrix* franchises. This research into Transmedia's growing effect on societies both ideologically and economically validated pursuing research into developing a transmedia storytelling based creative process to elevate choreography as a competitive ideological vessel. Seeking an answer to my initial research question led me to my prospectus's research statement: "This investigation will explore transmedia world-building through a capitalistic lens in order to inform the creative process and design a transmedia

experience that aims to expand and elevate choreography as a competitive ideological vessel.” (Kinsey)

Beyond validation in the early stages of the research process, the critical approaches to media course complimented my literature review and aided in the expansion of my creative toolbox by introducing me to Stewart Hall and his ideas in *encoding/decoding*. His theory was developed at a time when broadcast television was transforming mass communication. He focused on understanding both how media professionals create media, or “encode,” and how we interpret, or “decode,” media being presented to us through television programming (Hall 128-130). His ideas paired well with my literature review’s focus on transmedia and other articles that I found about transmedial narratology.

Similar in nature to Hall’s ideas, narratology focuses on explaining how we understand and interpret narratives. I felt that understanding how narrative structures work within a transmedia context was a step towards understanding how to adapt the choreographic process into a transmedia story. The frame theory, prototype semantics, and intermediality aspects of Werner Wolf’s narratological research surrounded my transmedia research and synthesized well with Hall’s *encoding/decoding*. This served as a basis from which to engineer a bridge from transmedia theory to artistic practice.

When the concepts associated with Wolf’s transmedial narratology are compounded with Hall’s *encoding/decoding* and transmedia, choreography and oral storytelling come together to strengthen each other. When I read deeper into how these concepts work together across other forms of media, such as music and painting, I began

to see the three concepts as a pliable framework that I could explore in the studio and with a camera.

The *frame theory* discussed in my review of narratology is one of cognitive psychology rooting from Erving Goffman. Here, “narrative can be considered a cognitive frame (or schema), that is, a conceptual complex which allows us to decode certain individual phenomena as pertaining to this frame and to integrate them into a meaningful whole” (Wolf 258).

Our ability to understand a variety of narratives comes from *prototype semantics*, developed by Rosch and Mervis among others. “Prototype theory is based on the observation that, on many occasions, we categorize by means of flexible concepts acquired from prototypical examples which are then mentally stored” (Wolf 258). Together the first two elements of transmedial narratology work hand in hand to help us identify narrative elements, understand their place, and what that means to us as a whole.

The transmedial dimension of this theory comes from the third concept. *Intermediality theory* covers, “those parts [...] that deal with the description of phenomena that transgress medial boundaries and comprises a typological form of transmediality” (Wolf 263). Important to this facet of narratology is identifying that media are not expressively neutral. Any given medium shapes material that is transmitted through it, and some mediums are often stronger at evoking certain types of content than others (Wolf 264). *Intermediality theory* thus illustrates the idea that different mediums can have complimentary and contrasting ways to express perspectives when paired together to tell a story. Wrapping my creative process around the analysis of encoding/decoding material, conceptual prototyping, the effects of intermediality, and

narrative framing was quite a task that evolved over time, but ultimately led me to an interesting transmedial narrative of oral storytelling and dance.

Arriving at the correct presentational form. The aforementioned research played an important part in two aspects of the final product. In a micro sense, the theory and literature helped me methodologically work directly with the dancers in creating the oral and choreographic content from which to build the story world. And in a macro sense, the research helped me methodologically organize and structure the content into a final presentational form that was to be presented to the audience. Aspects of the research applied to the micro will be addressed later in the 23 and Counting: Structure and Composition section. First, we will address the macro. My literature review put forth two transmedia concepts for me to explore as methods to establish the product's final presentational forms, East-Coast and West-Coast.

An East-Coast attempt. Early in my creative process, concepts found in Transmedial Narratology and Hall's *Encoding/Decoding* began to help me make decisions about which dancers should work together and how their stories should overlap. Leading into the first showing of my work to my committee, I had the idea of working towards creating a narrative that took form through east-coast transmedia modes and methodologies. Henry Jenkins, Brian Clark, and Marie-Laure Ryan see this mode as a means of distributing story elements across multiple channels of media (Ryan 39). Examples of projects talked about by them in my research like, "installation art, alternate reality games, and interactive TV," led me to pursue distributing the narrative elements across filmed speaking, filmed dance, live dance, and interactive text-messaging with characters on-stage (Ryan 39-40). However, the feedback I received from my committee

was: that major narrative elements such as characters and their relationships dissipated when the presentational form transitioned from filmic elements on-screen to concert dance elements on-stage because of vast spatial differences. This kind of effect has also been noted in criticisms of Dance and Technology works, where a true marriage of Dance and Technology is difficult to achieve because of the amount of interactivity involved. Johannes Birringer, Dance and Technology scholar, noted that the advent of transmediality within performance, “points away from the individual body to techniques of the machine and complex human-technical involvement, to a communication loop that involves technology” (Birringer 390). This is important to note, because much of what was not working in my first showing had to do with the fact that the content was spread too thin across channels of media and not focused enough on just the dancer’s embodied movement and their oral story.

A West-Coast attempt. After reflecting on my attempt at constructing a transmedia story with an east-coast methodology, I realized that I needed to align my methodology and product with a West-Coast style of transmedia storytelling. I dug a bit further into my research and referred back to Jenkins, Clark, and Ryan and their idea of west-coast or Hollywood transmedia. “West Coast transmedia includes novels generating films, films inspiring novels, TV series linked with ARGs, comics turned into TV series, computer games becoming films, and vice versa” (Ryan 40). West-coast transmedia still distributes a story-world across various media, however, instead of distributing only part of the story or narrative elements across different media channels, west-coast distributes standalone stories and new contributions to a larger narrative across multiple media. A good example of the West-Coast form would be the Marvel franchise, where each movie

made by Marvel tells another character's perspective and story into the overall story-world. Each movie has some crossover into neighboring character's stories, which ultimately develops a cohesive web of interconnected narratives.

My idea after facing some failure with the East-Coast transmedia storytelling method was to sort through the interview and movement content to create standalone stories for each character/dancer through several presentational forms of media channels that would contain character/dancer crossover. This would have utilized presentational forms of media channels consisting of dance film, Instagram posts, Facebook events and posts, printed advertisements, and a live choreographic installation. However, after consulting my committee and revisiting my research into the criticism of dance and technology, I was convinced that by simplifying the quantity of my creative product's presentational forms, I would effectively hone the quality of my creative product, creating much stronger art.

This simplified approach folded an entire story-world into one presentational form. As seen in other large transmedia franchises:

Each medium does what it does best-so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained enough to enable autonomous consumption. That is, you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice-versa. (Jenkins)

Transmedia stories are then constructed from individual presentational forms that stand alone. This thesis research focused on re-creating the idea of transmedia storytelling on a manageably small scale. I had to find a way to structure and compose a story-world that

mimics larger transmedia franchises through only two perspectives into each character's story, while housed within one presentational form. The compression involved in this task resulted in a highly structured film that is different from what most would expect at the box office. Thus, the final presentational form became a West-Coast transmedia style film that utilized documentary filmmaking and choreographic techniques to convey five individuals through the transmedia blending of two medial perspectives, their spoken dialogue and their embodied movement.

23 and Counting: Structure and Composition

The process of narrowing down a final presentational format resulted in many structural and compositional choices that were important in establishing the transmedia story. These choices had to create a support system for each dancer/character's voice and story. Individually, for each dancer/character's section, it was important to provide the audience with both medial insights into their identity on screen, through movement and oral text. In order for each section to work cohesively together in a larger narrative, it was equally important to find moments of crossover or through-thread elements that provided the audience with ways to construct an overall picture and keep them invested in the film. So, when establishing the narrative structure during editing, it felt like the right choice to sequence events and sections in accordance with two levels of context.

Establishing structure through editing. First, I choose to pair up each character's oral interview with their corresponding embodied story. Ordering them text section first, followed by the embodied dance section second aligned with transmedial narratological concepts. This editing method allowed the audience to create narrative frames from the oral story to prototypically compare and contrast embodied movement,

establishing meaning through the intermedial connection to the dance that followed. In other words, the oral story setup the dance so the audience could make stronger connections to the embodied story.

And Second, I choose to establish common elements and through-threads, so that collectively the story made sense to the audience and kept their interest. Most notably, I established that these stories all took place in and around one setting to help tie things together. Other elements that came into play when making decisions in editing were thematic. For example, a cell phone was used to tie Ben's stories together with other sections. Or another example, solo cups and alcohol were used in several sections to tie them together and create a social commentary on drinking habits of young adults and the decisions that surround them.

Together these two ways of determining context helped me arrange the content in the editing process and shaped the core structure of the narrative. After this rough core structure was established on my editing timeline, I decided to fold in an additional element into the film, established narrative time. Using age as a way to distinguish sections provided a rhythm and loose structure, for me, from which to reify a sense of loss of innocence, gaining of experience, and progression of narrative time.

Compositional techniques in content creation. In returning to the literature review's influence upon my creative process, the micro level methodological integration of my research bridged theory with artistic practice when creating oral and movement content with the dancers. Early in the creative process, there were several rounds of interviews and choreographic problem-solving rehearsal sessions that resulted in the content that was used within the editing phase. Each dancer/character was different and

required unique approaches to capturing their content. The following subsections explore how content was created for each section, and how the research influenced its composition.

Exposition. Projecting a collage of childhood snapshots and images of the dancers as an opening sequence framed the film's first moments in a nostalgic sense of who each dancer was. All seven dancers then articulated the backyard with a sense of themselves, moving within their signature movement vocabulary. Rounding the tree with a caress, Ben gesturally punctuated the exposition leading us into a unison play phrase before the group runs off into the distance.

From the beginning the narrative goal, for me, was to explore each dancer's identity, so I spent time in the studio exploring their movement vocabulary. The technique that yielded the strongest movement generation and sense of self came from the following: I gave each dancer a descriptive sentence from a variety of sources of fictional literature that provided depth into the character that it was written about and asked them to develop a series of gestures from it. From there, I gave them a movement score that laid out a temporal road map of the effort qualities and spatial levels in which they should generate a movement phrase.

What I did not tell them was that my decision making behind the sentences and movement score was based on my own Stewart Hall-esque "decoded" insights of who they are. This generative process aided the dancers in unknowingly "encoding" their own unique signature into a movement vocabulary from which to access for other assignments in each section moving forward. Accessing this generative process while working with

the dancers to create content provided me with another practical layer into utilizing Hall's *encoding/decoding* theory.

18 – *The Party*. Enjoying food, drink, and good company, the dancers lounged on a patio. Drink after drink, and laugh after laugh, collectively the party became circular in behavior. One by one party guests filtered in and out of the house. Over time they did not return as the sun set, until finally, Ben was alone on the patio with his phone.

This section was developed around the same time as the exposition, towards the middle of the thesis process. At this stage in the overall process I was focused on finding connections and creating transitions, and the setting became of interest to me. Since all of the other sections used the same residential setting, it made sense to explore its other narrative potential. In making this decision, I found that it strengthened the narrative and opened the possibilities for thematic elements and ties. Creating a party scene worked well in reference to Sarah's and Ben's stories and eventually provided a full-circle ending as well.

The party on the patio provided a transitional section from the expository introduction of the dancer's movement signature to the more intimate nature of each dancer's story. In blending pedestrian aspects of a party with intentional movement, I gave the dancer's a movement score that consisted of a simple repeatable gesture phrase and cues on when to enter and exit the house. The gesture phrase was inspired by movement each dancer had previously seen and or experienced in a "party" setting. Similar to the two medial modes explored by each dancer's story, the exposition and party scenes explore two movement styles through a transmedial lens as a way to introduce the characters as both dancers and as people.

19 – Ben’s Story. In this section, Ben discusses living alone and his values when it comes to relationships. Followed by his oral interview, Ben enters the house and dances with a gentleman that was at the party earlier in the evening. The tension between them develops into grappling with what was seemingly discussed earlier in Ben’s oral interview, Ben’s relational values. The dance adds onto the oral discourse by revealing Ben’s relational values in practice, cutting relational ties and leaving the gentlemen alone on the floor.

The techniques used in developing the duet centered around word associative improvisation and expressing my own personal experience with relationship tension. Two words that helped to inspire movement in this section were tension and grappling. After developing a few gestures, an improvisational score, and a couple of movement phrases, I captured the movement of the dancers at various close angles to retain a sense of intimacy, and to prevent the audience from gathering the whole picture all at once.

After creating content for several other sections and capturing Ben’s oral story, I revisited the movement I had captured earlier, then created the opening and closing to this section. Borrowing from Hall’s and Wolf’s theory, I attempted to place myself in the audience’s position by reverse engineering the “decoding” process to narrow down what narrative element would help the audience connect the duet with Ben’s oral story. The transition into and opening of the dance stemmed from Ben’s attention to his cell phone which was a common element in the interview and party scene. For me, this element abstractly “encoded” a narrative frame—of secretive dating app messaging—for the prototypical semantics of the movement to follow. This encoded element created the

intermedial bridge, for me, between the oral story and the choreographic story while leaving his interaction via phone abstract.

20 – Sarah’s Story. Sarah talks about what happened at the party earlier, and then carries on discussing how she feels about parties. She shares with us that its really how boys make her feel uncomfortable that makes her feel unsafe in her own home when her roommates have parties. Following her oral story, Sarah and three others find themselves dancing in the kitchen. Through dance, they establish support for each other and a sense of community before tensions begin to rise with the introduction of alcohol. Ultimately, the dance pushes the narrative forward by showing the external conflict between roommates at odds over alcohol and the assumed idea of partying.

This section was also developed early in the process and involved the creation of dance before the oral interview with Sarah. The movement generation occurred on-location through several iterative rehearsals where the camera captured the movement and then was reviewed prior to the next rehearsal. The dancers were motivated by music and instructions to explore the space. However, it should be noted that the final music used in the film was not used to inspire the movement. After introducing the idea of the moving camera to the dancers, we collaboratively refined their content by assembling the movement phrases together into a series of moments, that a moving camera could capture in a one take pass through the room.

For this section, I reflected on the content and looked for narrative frames that could be layered on top of the prototypical semantics provided by the movement and found answers in two ways: by sprinkling pedestrian movement into the dance and using story driven music choice. Taking a few ideas from her interview I had the dancers help

craft pedestrian movement that mimicked the idea of “discomfort at a party within her own home,” such as tension surrounding a wine bottle and sweeping away her friend’s mess. The music choice echoed her oral story in contrast through a male’s voice that sang about his perspective of a break up story. These two elements created contrasting narrative frames that bridged the intermedial gap between her interview and the dance.

21 – Morgan’s Story. Morgan addresses her feelings about living as a minority woman in society today. In her opinion, the impacts of technology and social media drive everything and often reify social and racial inequality. She admits to struggling with her own vanity and sense of entrapment in this technological world of social and racial inequalities. After her oral story, Morgan is pulled into a dance by two other dancers. At first, the two white dancers control her movement in a dominant power struggle, but following one turn the power dynamic shifts and Morgan becomes in control of the couple. Throughout the entire dance Morgan keeps her eyes locked with the audience as to draw attention to herself, but also her control or lack thereof. Progressing the oral narrative forward, the dance in this section provided a physical interpretation of the power dynamics she was referring to orally in her statements on social and racial inequalities.

Working from her thoughts, the inspiration and motivation for the dancers developed from the idea of inequality. Utilizing movement from the identity exercise earlier in the rehearsal process, Morgan was tasked with positioning the other two dancers in dominance over her. After experimenting with different spatial arrangements and bodily shapes, we generated an extended phrase. To modify and extend the phrase

further, I had them shift the power dynamic in Morgan's favor, and asked that she keep her eyes locked with the camera wherever it traveled.

After having learned from creating Ben and Sarah's sections, it made sense to simplify the creative process by working in the opposite direction when creating content with Morgan, Dustin, and Lori. So, in contrast to Ben's and Sarah's sections, the movement generation techniques deployed with Morgan became more intentional and less generic, because they were focused on expressing her dialectical perspective. "Encoding" movement to create the dance used the prototypical semantics of inequality in power dynamics to create and strengthen connections between Morgan's oral story and the trio.

22 – *Dustin's Story*. Frustrated and troubled, Dustin addressed his concerns with unbalanced fairness that arises in client work and in society at large. Then Dustin discovers that a tire on his car needs repair due to uneven wear and a nail wedged in the tread. Frustrated with this discovery, he takes a moment to cool off before he checks over the rest of his car, replaces the tire, and enters the house.

This section felt the most unclear to me and proved to be the biggest challenge. The oral interview in this section, while portrayed in the film as about a car mechanic's struggles, in actuality centered around Dustin's struggle as a working artist. In efforts to keep the overall subject of the film from becoming about the stories of struggling artists, I made the decision to cut together the interview in a way that took the narrative elsewhere. Unfortunately, my decision dampened Dustin's ability to create movement when we arrived in the choreographic process. Working from the car mechanic narrative point-of-

view, I had Dustin take apart his car, look for issues, and consider finding intentional movements throughout that process.

The choreographic construction of this section in the editing process heavily weighed on my interpretation and internalized use of the research to find narrative connections without the same degree of involvement from the dancer/character as in other sections. The main narrative frame that I worked from to motivate semantical prototypes from the dancer was his experience working on cars. Because I was not able to motivate a stronger, genuine story and response from Dustin, it ultimately proved difficult to encode a fabricated narrative around the content that I captured.

23 – *Lori's Story.* Afraid of other's perception of her religious beliefs, Lori discusses judgement. She slowly recognizes that people are going to do what they want to do regardless of what she thinks or says to them. She expresses her misunderstood care for her friends and hopes that one day things will change. Lori then finds herself helping Ben get out of a bout of depression over his lost relationship from earlier in the film.

Different from the other character's stories, the movement generation for this section was created and fleshed out in a studio setting before adapting it on-location. Late in the thesis process, the two dancers had recently taken a partnering and improvisational course and felt confident exploring and developing a partnering phrase initiated by Lori's movement vocabulary and her own knowledge of her interview. This phrase was brought on-location and adapted with a few other improvisational and motivational cues. Adapting, and blending this content with thematic elements and a featured character crossover into Ben's story pushed the narrative forward by creating macro level narrative connections with Ben's story.

The concept of character crossover from researcher Guerrero-Pico found during my review of literature was utilized in this section. He defines crossover as, “specifically involv[ing] a transformation of diegesis to facilitate a dialogue between characters who do not share the same narrative world” (Guerrero-Pico 187). Since the majority of content developed surrounding each character’s story was created without regards to the other characters, my approach to shaping and constructing the movement in this near closing section required a crossover approach to begin tying the macro narrative together. Working this way with Lori’s oral story and movement content allowed for consideration of the macro narrative, and created connections to other characters, themes, and established a sense of narrative cohesiveness throughout the film.

And Counting. Finally, at the end of Lori’s story the five characters are reunited on the patio. Revisiting the exposition, isolated vignettes feature each of the five dancers’ whose stories appeared in the film. Arriving full-circle, we then see the full cast run off into the distance.

Choices surrounding the closing evolved in the editing phase of this thesis and relied on assessing each character’s story through Wolf’s narratological lens to pinpoint elements that could be used in reference to earlier sections, tying things together. This section was the last to be assembled. Transitioning out of Lori’s section, movement became pedestrian on the patio before returning to moments akin to the exposition. The isolated character vignettes were shot and generated as part of the movement content for the exposition but were set aside because they did not fit well in the beginning at the time they were created.

Encoding this content in the closing allowed the audience to revisit moments of each dancers' identity embodied in their movement. It brought the narrative to a close, echoing the childhood images from the exposition in a new embodied form. Finishing the film with this sequence utilized the film in its entirety as a narrative frame from which the now informed audience could then decode each dancer's identity.

Conclusions

The narratological method combined with a transmedia approach developed from my research, guided me in editing and constructing the final narrative structure from the oral and choreographic content developed previously in the creative process. Each narrative element, whether visual or auditory, is a piece that is a part of a whole. Context at every moment is key. The transmedial narratology theory built on the *encoding/decoding* and transmedia framework, lead me to organize my final creative product in a logical pattern and rhythm. Each dancer's personal perspective constructed a narrative frame that prepared the audience to prototypically assess meaning of the movement that followed.

By abandoning my usual creative habits, I feel as though I was able to work through constructing a creative process that wove transmedia, narratological, and *encoding/decoding* theories together to create a transmedia story told through oral and embodied content. By keeping narrative concepts agile, medium-neutral, and adaptive, I was able to find new pathways for motivation at every level throughout the creative process. Additionally, keeping concepts generalized not only helps the audience make sense of what they are experiencing in reference of the context, it also proved helpful in

motivating the dancers to build connections between their oral stories and embodied movement.

Ultimately, my experiences into reviewing literature collectively shifted my creative process over time. I arrived at seeing the act of combining choreography and oral interviews as having transmedial qualities that provide a richer story in two dimensions from which the audience can explore characters. Thus, integrating choreography with media through transmedia storytelling is a step towards elevating the field of dance as a competitive mode of storytelling within the entertainment industry by increasing its accessibility to an audience that is developing a craving for stories told across media channels.

The current face of dance across YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and television is spectacle competition dance set to the latest pop hit, occasionally with a dash of flashy lighting or projection design. Dance film as a sub-genre within the film community is not large, especially within the film festival circuit. Netflix and Amazon see dance as edgy teen cheerleading competition movies. While that's all culturally valid by today's market, the rich culture of embodied storytelling through dance has been increasingly exploited across media over the last decade for quick profit.

The work many choreographers have made towards expressing embodied stories through choreography has not been as appreciated in mass media as much as other forms of entertainment have. Critical media theory suggests there's not much that's going to change the way media works in a capitalist society; however, if choreographers are able to create work that capitalizes on the same theory that's changed the face of the Hollywood box office over the last 15 years then there's hope for growth.

Concert style dance is fervently being fought for by choreographers within range of their media influence as a valid standalone means of embodied storytelling, beyond the exhausted musical form of spectacle cutaway found in many films. By making documented efforts to explore how embodied stories can be told across medial channels, this research aims to expand choreography into a rapidly developing world of mass media that's changing the social and economic landscape. My creative research into choreography and transmedia is important to the field of dance at a time when concert-dance practitioners' medial influence, dance companies, and government funding sources for dance are struggling to support dance artists that want their art to thrive not just survive. Continuously exploring how to economically elevate choreography in the entertainment market, while maintaining its ideological integrity and expressive value, will progress the field of dance in keeping it relevant, sustainable, and a rich expressive medium to embody stories. And, as an artist, by creating work that mimics this generation's consumption, adaption, and creation of culture in society, I'm attempting to do my part to use transmedia practices to elevate the field of choreography and dance, reflecting both a financially and culturally profitable model.

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