

Carolyn Diamond

Miller Arts Scholars

Dance Training and Movement Research

Thanks to the Miller Arts Scholars Program and the rising fourth-year grant, last summer I had the opportunity to take a variety of dance classes and attend dance performances in New York City. These experiences allowed me to expand my dance training in new ways and build upon the practices I have cultivated at UVa within the Dance Program. With my proposal I set out to attend weekly dance classes, performances, and an intensive program the summer between my third and fourth-years at UVa. I also planned to use funds to cover the purchase of a new pair of tap shoes, as I have had my previous pair for over seven years. The funds from this grant were also essential in covering class costs, transportation into and out of the city, and performance costs and I would not have been able to dedicate as much time to dancing as I did without the help from the Miller Arts Scholars program.

Prior to leaving Charlottesville for the summer, I worked with my faculty sponsor, Kathryn Schetlick, to find a variety of available classes over the summer as well as performance opportunities to attend. Katie's help was essential to the development of my tentative class schedule over the summer, as she was able to provide me with a variety of movement groups and organizations that I would not have been able to find on my own. From previous experience taking classes in the city at Broadway Dance Center, I was familiar with their class offerings which are very commercial dance focused and I was incredibly pleased to find classes with other focuses and styles as well. One of the most rewarding classes I took was at the Gibney Dance Center with Jessie Young. Her class focused on building strength and endurance and working

with your body when you're in a state of exhaustion and fatigue, and I found it very freeing to push my body to its limits and then figure out how to keep going.

Something that I found incredibly valuable this summer was being able to reconnect with tap, as it is a style of dance that I worked with a lot in high school and have not had as many opportunities to engage with at UVa. I find that tap dancing challenges my body and my mind in a different way than other dance styles and the tap classes that I was able to take this summer reminded me of that exhilaration. Each class I took was with a different instructor and they each had their own style of tapping and they each challenged me in different ways. I was also excited to get a new pair of tap shoes for the second time in my life. I spent a lot of time researching which type of shoes I wanted to get and ultimately decided to design my own custom pair to then pick up in the city.

I did not expect attending performances would be the biggest obstacle in my project, as I was surprised to find that there were not as many dance performances occurring over the summer because that is when most dance companies take a break or go on tour. Luckily, I was able to find performances to attend while I was home for thanksgiving and winter break and was even able to go see the Radio City Rockettes. Additionally, my project did not end with the classes and performances I attended in the past year as I am constantly investing more time into my dance practices and I look forward to continuing to do that in the future.

The work I did over the past year thanks to the fourth-year grant heavily influenced the work I produced in the 2019 Fall Dance Concert as well as the work I was building for the 2020 Spring Dance Concert that was disrupted due to the current circumstances in regards to COVID-19. Even beyond the influence that this project had in the dance studio, the experiences

that I gained from my training and research last summer gave me new insights into myself, what I value in my own life and work and what I appreciate in the works of others. These insights expand beyond my artistic practices and influence all of my other engagements in my life. This was an invaluable experience for me, and once again I would like to thank J. Sanford Miller, the Miller Arts Scholars Program and director Michael Rasbury, and my faculty sponsor, Kathryn Schetlick, for all of their support with this project over the past year.