

Katie Yared

Virtual Intensive with slowdanger: Arts Award Project Outcome

Overview

After realizing my original plan of attending an in-person intensive in New York would not be feasible, fellow arts scholar Libbie Ryan and I were able to create a virtual intensive of our own. We reached out to slowdanger, a multi-disciplinary duo based out of Philadelphia, and collaborated to create a workshop series. During the last week of January, using zoom as our platform, we had the pleasure of working with slowdanger over the course of 5 days.

Throughout our time together, we had the opportunity to invest in embodied movement in a studio space (something we hadn't been able to do for quite some time). During our first session, we focused on building momentum through physical integration and guided imagery exercises. On day 2, we continued to discover authentic movement through a range of improvisational exercises, many of which involved sensing each other's movement while keeping timing and texture in mind. During day 3, we began to collaborate to work on building phrases around the ideas of reflection, stillness, and connection. Day 4 consisted of an in-depth conversation about slowdanger's use of sound as they showed us different programs and methods of building a soundtrack. On day 5, we continued to build on the piece and were able to dance as slowdanger simultaneously created a musical score in response to our movement.

In addition to the intensive with slowdanger, we had the opportunity to take class with Jasmine Hearn, with whom we continued our discovery of sensation and intentional movement. We also took a silks class at the Phoenix Dance Studio in Charlottesville, giving us a chance to try a new way of mobilization.

Process

Throughout the process of our intensive, I was motivated to take advantage of the opportunity to dance again. After dancing relatively little for nearly a year, I was excited to dive into movement exploration. Libbie and I have danced together quite often in our time at UVA, so being able to dance together again in an immersive setting was particularly beneficial to my progress. As we worked with slowdanger, we found ourselves exploring the idea of a "third thing" as something (a feeling, a connection, an unseen entity) that comes about as a result of two people forming connections through moving alongside one another in a space. This idea became thematic as we eventually worked towards creating a product of sorts.

Much of slowdanger's work involves the sonic environment, and they were beyond welcoming in allowing us to see into their process of building a score in relation to movement. We gained knowledge about various sound editing skills, as well as information regarding the different impacts of sound overlapping with movement or other art forms. Through witnessing their sound making process, I developed a newfound interest in the creation of sound as potentially integral to expanding my realm of artistry.

The intensive was originally loosely structured to allow for room to explore any ideas that came about, but we ended up creating a piece as a culmination of our time together. Throughout the piece, we play with themes of reflection, mirroring, and (spatial, interpersonal,

and bodily) awareness. As we began to form different phrases, I continued to consider ideas of imaginative exploration, relation to sound, what it means to experience embodied movement alongside another person.

Through partaking in this intensive, I was able to reenter my personal practice and find new ways of discovering movement and connection. Our time with slowdanger taught me about world-building, the importance of finding stillness, how to expand energy to new heights, and how to better relate my movement intentions to my surroundings and the world.

What's To Come

Libbie and I took several recordings throughout the intensive, but ultimately decided to create a dance film using the material we generated with slowdanger. We are filming along the Rivanna River in Charlottesville, and will complete the filming and editing process in time to present during the annual arts award outcome presentation. The film will also be shown during the UVA dance department's spring concert.

In choosing to translate the piece created during the intensive into a dance film, we will be able to portray the intentionality and energy that we experience when dancing. The sound will be created by slowdanger who have been gracious in helping us beyond the intensive into our filming process. Throughout the film, we will take advantage of the setting and costuming to convey a sense of otherworldliness. In using the dichotomy between water and land, we will play with the themes of reflection that run throughout our piece. I am excited to translate our work to the medium of film and look forward to sharing this project with the community.

Budget

The award was used to pay for the intensive with slowdanger, class with Jasmine Hearn, a silks class at Phoenix Dance Studio, and studio rental space. Funding was also used to pay for a speaker, costuming, and equipment for the dance film.

Mentorship & Thank-Yous

I had the privilege of having Katie Schetlick as my faculty mentor. She is a lecturer in the dance department, and has been incredible both as a professor and in offering guidance during my time at UVA. I have had the opportunity to take several of her classes, and have always appreciated her insights and perspectives. I was grateful to be mentored by Katie throughout my project process as her direction pushed me to explore the possibilities of movement and her support offered me reassurance.

Thank you to the Miller Arts Scholars Program for the generous grant and support; to Katie Schetlick for her guidance; to slowdanger and Jasmine Hearn for their willingness to offer us space to grow; and to Ella Cathey for filming our piece.

