

Rising Third Year Art Award – Outcome Report
Zohar “Zoe” Ziff – Miller Arts Scholar in Dance
Spring 2021

I used the funds from the Miller Arts Scholar Program’s Rising Third-Year Arts Award to commission an original duet (alongside Kiana Pilson, another Miller Arts Scholar in Dance and recipient of an Arts Award) from acclaimed choreographer Helen Simoneau to be performed at the UVa Dance Program’s Virtual Spring Dance Concert. This piece will manifest as a dance film that will be screened at the end of April. With the funds from this award, Kiana and I also commissioned a musician to create an original composition for the piece, plan to hire local videographers and film editors to produce the work, and procure costumes. Funds not allocated to this piece are going towards extracurricular dance classes and photos and web assistance to develop my artistic portfolio.

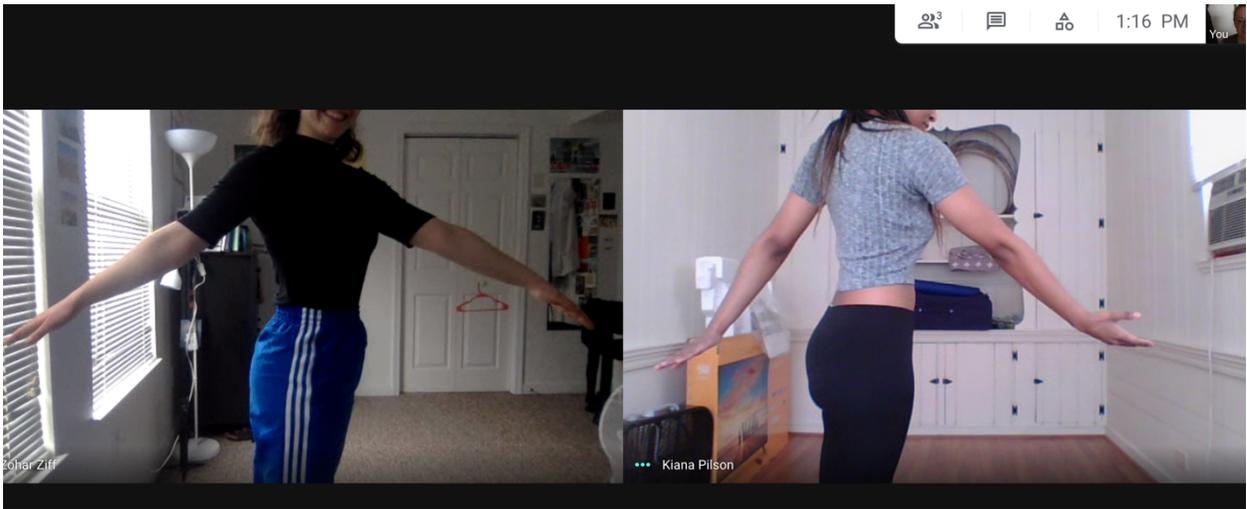
Originally, I had planned to use the award to attend the American Dance Festival (ADF) Intensive in New York City during the winter of 2020/2021. Kiana had also planned to attend. However, as it was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our proposals shifted to accommodate a possibly entirely virtual and distanced project. We decided to jointly commission a duet from Helen Simoneau, artistic director of [Helen Simoneau Danse](#). Kiana and I first learned material asynchronously from videos that Simoneau sent in January 2021 and then attended virtual rehearsals over video-chat to structure the choreography. We rehearsed occasionally in the Caplin Theatre under appropriate COVID-19 protocol and individually in our own homes. Simoneau tuned in virtually from her home for these rehearsals.

Although I experienced frustration in having to rehearse in a space that is not conducive to expansive movement and dance – my bedroom – I felt that Simoneau easily adapted the rehearsal and movement material to interact with our spaces, making the dance site-specific. Rather than feel like a limitation, my room was able to be incorporated in the dance, and Kiana and I found ways to “interact” with each other and partner across the digital space.

In addition to virtual rehearsal, Kiana and I scouted the locations where the film will take place and discussed how the movement would interact with the space and how costuming will affect the meaning of the space and piece. This is great practice for me as a student who has a few dance films under my belt but is still relatively new to the screendance world. Working with Kiana and Simoneau to curate movement, film, and other visual elements is a great exercise in working with interdisciplinary media to create an artistic work. It will be screened at the end of April in the UVa Dance Program’s Virtual Dance Concert, and I am excited to share this piece with the community!

Thank you so much to the Miller Arts Scholars Program and to the Miller Arts Faculty Advisory Committee for making this project a reality and continuing to allow students to pursue their art during the challenge that is the pandemic. A special acknowledgement to my faculty advisor, Kim Brooks Mata, the Head and Artistic Director of UVa’s Dance Program, for mentoring me through this often-shifting process. Thank you for guiding me throughout this piece and helping me stay hopeful during these tumultuous times.

Below are photos taken during the virtual rehearsal process, both in the theater and at home, and during site-scouting.



Below are photos from site-scouting for the film.

