

Miller Arts Scholar Arts Award Proposal: Rising Fourth Year

Project Title: Catalyzing Policy Change through Movement

Project Overview:

As a student studying both Public Policy and Dance at the University of Virginia, I am interested in exploring how the two disciplines can inform and develop one another. For my third year Arts Award, I attended the Now Next Dance workshop to learn methods of developing leadership skills in young students through dance. I then applied this research to the creation of a piece, *Diffident Direction*, for the dance program's fall concert. The piece explored leadership concepts through movement and the role of women as leaders in society and was my first choreographic endeavor at UVa.

Having researched the connections between leadership and dance, I would now like to shift my focus to exploring the role of movement in the policy process. Dance can contribute to both issue advocacy and policy implementation by directly involving community members in the process of bringing about social change. For this grant project, I would like to explore a trajectory that has already been set forward by several dance makers, community leaders, and social activists dating back to the 1930's and 40's in the US. I plan to conduct in-depth research on dance artists and companies who are using movement to advocate for social change. Specifically, I am interested in the work of Anna Halprin, Liz Lerman, Dance Exchange, Axis Dance, Paloma McGregor, and Jennifer Monson. With funding from a Miller Arts Scholar Award, I will develop an advocacy campaign for a social policy issue specific to the Charlottesville and UVa community. The year-long advocacy campaign will include two movement workshops with members of the community that will serve as fodder for the creation of a choreographic work as part of the dance program's spring concert.

To inform my research for this project, I will attend two different dance intensive programs. The purpose of the first intensive is to focus on methods of community engagement and workshop development. The second intensive will enable me to transform this content into a piece of choreography. I plan to attend Dance Exchange's 2016 Summer Institute from July 8-17. Dance Exchange is a Takoma Park, MD-based non-profit arts organization committed to "unearthing and exploring the questions at the center of our lives, using dancemaking and creative practices that engage individuals and communities of all ages". The institute will be co-lead by Dance Exchange founder and creator of the Critical Response Process, Liz Lerman, and current Dance Exchange Artistic Director Cassie Meador. As an institute participant, I will experience daily movement classes, sessions in core practices including Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process, and meaningful dance-making beyond the studio with partners in forestry, health care, human rights, and science education. Attending this institute will be a valuable opportunity for me to explore the creative process and gain insight into dancemaking with a social change focus. I will also learn how to construct a workshop to explore social issues with certain members of a community. Through this intensive, I will meet fellow dancers that share an interest in issue based dance-making. It is important that I enter into this community to learn about models of community engagement used across the country. I plan to journal during the week of the institute so that I can use my experience as a tool throughout the completion of my project.

Throughout the summer and into the fall, I will invest time in researching Charlottesville and the issues it faces. I will then choose a specific social issue to be the focus of my research and advocacy exploration. I also plan to research organizations in Charlottesville to identify a

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specific partner organization to collaborate with. It is important that I develop a strong, working relationship with the identified organization before collaborating to create an issue-based workshop.

During the fall semester, I will begin to conduct more extensive research on dance artists and organizations that are actively advocating for social change through dance. Using this research, and with the help of my mentor, Katie Schetlick, I will construct a workshop to engage community members with a specific social issue of importance. I plan to partner with a Charlottesville organization that is involved with issue advocacy to attract a wider audience. The workshop will be held in a space within the Charlottesville community. It will occur in the late fall to allow time for research and understanding the needs of the partner organization. The information gathered from the workshop will allow me to start exploring choreography in preparation for the Spring semester.

Over winter break, I would like to attend the American Dance Festival Winter Intensive from December 28 – January 5 in New York City. This intensive will enable me to transform content gained from research and the fall workshop into a piece of choreography for the dance program's Spring Dance Concert. Through creative process and technique classes with experienced professionals, I will build improvisational skills and scores that could be useful in a workshop. Part of my reasoning for attending this intensive is the location. Much of the advocacy work I am interested in researching is occurring in New York City. Attending this intensive will provide me with an opportunity to converse with some of the dance artists and organizations who are active in the field of dance and social change. One such artist is Paloma McGregor, co-founder of Angela's Pulse, which creates and produces collaborative performance work dedicated to building community and developing timely performance works that provoke, inform and inspire. I am also interested in learning more about Gibney Dance, a NYC organization with a mission to "bring the possibility of movement where it otherwise would not exist". One component of the organization I find fascinating is Gibney Dance Community Action. This program uses dance to help heal and empower survivors of interpersonal violence through multiple platforms, including movement workshops for domestic violence survivors. While in NYC, I hope to communicate with the artists involved in these community-oriented organizations, among others, to inform my research.

After my time in New York gathering research from dance artists and organizations active in the field of advocacy, I will return to UVa to complete my project. In the spring semester, I will create and facilitate one more workshop, making necessary adjustments based on what I will have learned from the fall workshop and from interactions with New York artists. Information from this workshop will directly inform the choreographic work that I will begin to create for the dance program's Spring Dance Concert. Simultaneously, I will be researching performance work that has followed a similar workshop-piece model like Bill T. Jones' *Still/Here* or Joe Goode's *Resilience Project*. This piece will be a culmination of the research I will obtain over the year. It will also allow me to utilize the choreographic processes I will have learned from both the Dance Exchange and American Dance Festival intensives. Ultimately, the piece will be an exploration of movement as an advocacy tool and catalyst for social change.

This Arts Award will enable me to combine my two academic areas of study into a comprehensive and meaningful exploration. I am excited for the challenge presented by this project to grow as a mover, choreographer, leader, and social innovator.

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Project Timeline:

Summer 2016:

- July 8 – 17: Attend the Dance Exchange Summer Institute in Takoma Maryland to explore issue based dance-making and learn methods of community engagement and workshop development.
- Research social issues specific to Charlottesville and identify potential partner organizations
- Choose an issue on which to focus.

Fall 2016:

- Continue to research chosen issue and begin to develop working relationship with partner organization in early fall.
- Construct and facilitate an issue-based movement workshop within the Charlottesville community in late fall.
- Begin to explore choreography for Spring semester piece.

Winter 2016-2017:

- December 28 – January 5: Attend the American Dance Festival Winter Intensive in New York City to explore the creative process and learn methods of constructing choreographic content.
- Communicate with community focused dance artists and organizations in New York City to inform research.

Spring 2017:

- Research performance work with a workshop-choreographic piece model.
- Construct and facilitate another workshop in the Charlottesville community with partner organization.
- Use information gathered from workshops and research to create a piece of choreography to be shared in the Dance Program's Spring Dance Concert.
- Present project outcome in late April.

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Budget:

Dance Exchange Summer Institute (July 8-17)	
Tuition Cost	\$850
Housing (Air BnB)	\$1000
Gas to DC	\$50
American Dance Festival Winter Intensive (Dec. 28-Jan. 5)	
Tuition Cost	\$785
7-Day Metro Pass	\$30
Train from Charlottesville to NYC (Round-trip)	\$170
Workshop Expenses	
Space Rental	\$400
Publicity	\$100
Total	\$3385

I will use my own funds for food while attending both dance intensives. I also plan to stay with friends and family while in New York City, so there will be no cost associated with housing for the week.