

ABSTRACT

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Apple Falling is a 55-minute dance theatre performance work in which the lives of seven individuals intersect as they interact with their familial histories, musing over the stories and characters that have, over generations, shaped who they are and who they will become. This artifact details the process of creating the work, from inception to performance, with reflections on its successes and failures. It outlines my foray into the philosophies and methodologies of Theatre and my integration of this new knowledge into my creative process.

APPLE FALLING

By

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Chapter 1: Introduction

2001-Present

My Family started young and fast. I met my wife Lehua in the fall of 2001. I was a 21-year-old freshman in the Department of Modern Dance at the University of Utah. She was a 23-year-old transfer sophomore. We were cast together in a restaging of Alwin Nikolais' *Mechanical Organ*. A year later we were married and had a baby. I was now a sophomore, she a junior. I was 22, she was 24.

Perhaps it goes without saying that things were difficult. Suddenly my whole world was upside down. My dress, grooming, eating, organization, sleeping, opinions, basically all life habits were in question. It was as if the universe as I knew it had been a sham and I was left to assimilate to this new reality. Perhaps this isn't a new tale. I resisted. She needs to accept me for who I am. If you really love someone, you don't ask them to change. But I eventually came to realize that my long straight bangs parted in the middle of my head actually did look slimy. That in fact if you place a heavy laundry basket on top of (her) car and slide it off, it will scratch the exterior. I suddenly felt like I had been raised under a rock. I transitioned from denial to blaming my paternal example.

There was much in my father to resent. My childhood was full of yelling fits, irresponsible poverty, driving lost, missed rides and broken down cars. It was a childhood full of unpredictability. I was as likely to be awoken without warning at 5:30am on a Saturday to do menial housework as I was to be, again without notice, escorted to an extra-curricular science class at the Navel Academy that was far beyond my competency or interest level. This was not a home of drug addiction or crime. It was one of good

intentions, but dysfunction nonetheless. Our butter was stored in the pantry uncovered. It sat there, soft and oily as bugs collected and died around it. In the morning we would brush them off and spread the butter onto our toast. Perhaps my worst memory, or at least most revealing, was when, as a teenager, my father asked me, in front of my mother and my entire family (five younger siblings at the time): “When you go to a church dance, you don’t go up and ask the fattest girl to dance with you, right?” He asked me this as a logical argument as to why he didn’t love my mother.

After I married, my identity completely shifted to Lehua and my daughter Isobella. I no longer identified as an individual and was in a certain state of denial of my paternal family. My father, yes, but he lived across the country. By now my parents had finally divorced and my mother and siblings lived locally in Utah. I found that my mother and particularly my youngest siblings reminded me of that life that I was working so hard to expunge myself from. I grew embarrassed of them. I was confused and being around them confused me further. I experienced a simultaneous drawing in to and spiraling away from my family. Again, perhaps this is not an uncommon tale. I was compelled to reflection upon what made me who I am, and what I am sending out into the world, the core theme of my thesis performance work *Apple Falling*.

Project Statement

Apple Falling is a 55-minute dance theatre performance work in which the lives of seven individuals intersect as they interact with their familial histories, musing over the stories and characters that have, over generations, shaped who they are and who they will become. Graham, the main character, struggles to understand his role as husband and father in relation to his imbalanced paternal example. His struggle is contrasted and challenged by his friend Ava's reflective gratitude and appreciation for the positive example set by her late father who made a choice to change the troubled legacy handed him by his father.

Chapter 2: Research/Investigations

2007-2010

The novel *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer was my first conscious point of inspiration for *Apple Falling*. This work of fiction-inspired-from-fact follows Foer's real-life journey to the Ukraine to seek artifacts from his ancestors who lived in a small village called Trachimbrod for many generations until they were obliterated in World War II. He traces back several generations, dramatically heightening the stories of his ancestors' beautifully gritty intertwining lives. He outlines with ingenious creativity, the ways in which a person's circumstances or choices can reciprocally influence generations. This reflection of family influencing itself over generations of time gave place for my reflections on the same matter in my own family. I became interested in investigating this theme within my own creative work.

Another theme that inspired me in *Everything is Illuminated* was the character's frequent references to and relationship to god. As an active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have been eager to integrate my spiritual life into my creative work in a manner that is relatable, not alienating or preachy, and of artistic merit. Literature has an easier time of this, I think. Other books that have inspired me in this way include *Davita's Harp* by Chaim Potok and *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel.

2009-2003-1010

DV8 Physical Theatre provided the second great point of inspiration. In the fall of 2009 I saw their work *To Be Straight With You* at Royce Hall, University of California, Los Angeles. I had been a fan of DV8's film work, but seeing *To Be Straight With You* live blew me away in terms of the razor sharp and super human capacity for very idiosyncratic and ground breaking choreography, coupled with impeccably performed text, with sets, projections, and lights that were as technical and seamlessly integrated with the work as the dancing. And all of these elements pointed succinctly to a specific narrative intent that was clear, bold, and unparalleled. In short this work changed my perception of what is possible in live theatre.

From 2003 until that point I had been working almost exclusively in improvisation performance. During this time I began to grow tired of dance as it so often existed: emotionally ambiguous and disconnected, of little to no substance beyond the dance movement, which itself often existed within a relatively gray landscape. I observed audiences walking away alienated, confused, and disinterested. I yearned to find a capacity to make work that moved people in a manner as I had been by Foer's novel, to really sink into content with depth, substance, and meaning. Upon seeing DV8 I was charged with a living example of just that, and became eager to delve in.

Chapter 3: The Process

2007-2013

I began experimenting with the ideas of family and legacy (though not so clearly identified at the time) through various choreographic commissions from area High Schools and Colleges. I began generating text from the cast, for use as recorded audio as well as inspiration for movement vocabulary. I also found myself inclined toward props of a domestic nature such as silverware, appliances, and furniture. In terms of movement I felt two distinct pulls. One: toward movement of a task-based nature that was generated either within use of the props or inspired from the text; and two: movement vocabulary inspired from my days of dancing at nightclubs in the late '90s-early 2000s. Movement that had a very specific rhythmic identity with more of a “boogeying” or pop-cultural folk sensibility, integrated with contemporary dance movement vocabulary.

My most successful work along these lines, pre-graduate school, was a duet called *A Twinkle In The All Seeing Eye* presented at a curated evening at the Sugar Space in Salt Lake City. Labeled as a one-act play by one of the adjudicators, the work consisted of a live script, modest scenic design, and a storyline that could be tracked by an audience, regarding a couple struggling to understand each other. The work received rave reviews from the audience but was considered more critically by the adjudicators. The primary critique of the work was the imbalanced acting in relation to the superb dancing. The work's strongest aspect was its unique partnering and movement vocabulary, intermingling contemporary dance with flavors of b-boying and the pop-culture folk vocabulary mentioned above. Some referenced it as African or Hip-Hop movement, but I

would reject these labels, not having enough experience in either to lay claim on the genres. These coupled strengths and weaknesses may well remain true to *Apple Falling*, four years later.

2010-present

My creative interest upon entering graduate school was to make work with a linear narrative that engages the voice and other theatrical devices in conveying its message. To this end I have choreographed three major works in addition to my final thesis concert. *As far as I know* is a 20-minute solo/monologue performed by myself; *The Better Half*, a 20-minute trio with Joel Brown, Stephanie Miracle, and myself; and *You*, a 60-minute ensemble work performed by TDPS Undergraduate and Graduate students as well as two independent local dance artists. All three of these works informed *Apple Falling*; both directly in terms of choreography and script, and indirectly in terms of creative processes.

In the way of training- in addition to the required MFA Dance courses, I took several independent study courses with faculty in Theatre including Voice with Leigh Wilson Smiley and Anupama Singh Yadav, Alexander Technique with Leslie Felbain, Playwriting with Walter Dallas, Advanced Media Design with Jared Mezzocchi, and Acting with Ashley Smith. Each provided invaluable information for me both as a performer and a creator. For the purposes of this artifact I will discuss two that have been most influential: Voice and Playwriting. In order to track my process linearly I will

toggle chronologically between discussing choreographic works and these independent studies.

2010-2011

As far as I know began my process of questioning paternal inheritance, and this work began with a simple assignment in Sara Pearson's Choreography class: "Write five lines about your father." This was all I needed to get started; the writing came pouring in from there. The original five lines I wrote were:

They said my great-grandfather had a condition. He could never sit still

Somehow this skipped over my grandfather, but took vengeance on my father.

They call it ADHD; but this is extreme ADHD

They told me I have ADHD, but a more manageable, run of the mill type

My son is yet unscathed

He's 5

While the writing poured out, the choreography did not. I found myself profoundly blocked creatively and overwhelmed personally as I navigated graduate school and family. I muscled through the process and in the end had a work that I was quite happy with, that achieved my goal of addressing familial legacy, both physically and vocally.

Staging the work the first time in the Shared Graduate Concert was perhaps the biggest learning experience of the process. My lighting and projections ideas that I thought were straightforward enough, proved a very arduous and time-consuming challenge. I had created a simple projection design of a crossword puzzle made of Bananagrams pieces, spelling the names of my family members as I discussed them:



This was an effective device in that it provided a reference point to the audience, a way to keep track of all of the different people I talked about, and it provided a visual

metaphor of how intertwined we are in each other's lives. The work begins with only the blank wood projected and as it progresses, names appear in coordination with my spoken text. This seemingly simple device proved incredibly difficult to achieve technically. There was a question of what program to build the projections in and whether to use images or video. The stage manager was overwhelmed in calling all of the sound, light, and projection cues. In the end I used far more tech time than I had been allotted, more than all of the other pieces combined. I discovered the margin between conception and execution in stage design.

In the end, after many unsuccessful methods of execution of the projections, I created it in power point and simply had a separate operator move through the projections on my vocal cues. This proved a very simple and smooth solution. In hindsight the stage manager was not involved in the work at all until tech. Not having ever worked with one I didn't know what to do with him, and the idea of having another person in the studio as I rehearsed this very personal solo felt intrusive. Over the course of my graduate work, I have come to embrace the stage manager as a crucial component to the creation and execution of successful stage work.

Another learning experience that staging this work provided was to place the very emotionally delicate and vulnerable into a working context of stage execution. When I say "my grandfather didn't know god" light cue 137 should go. When I say "my mother cried herself to sleep" sound cue 203 go, but not until after I pause reflectively, looking stage right. It is not a process about artistic affirmation; it is about accurate execution. The process of working with a team of people in realizing my work, wading through an

uncomfortable place performatively, knowing that I was working on something important, was startling, but in the end exhilarating.

2011-2012

The Better Half was created a few months after the premier of *as far as I know* through a commission from the Dance Exchange. I decided to further my work on a duet I had been performing with my brother, Joel Brown, called *I've Had It Up To Here*. Joel is paralyzed from the chest down. The duet consisted of two sections: one with both of us sitting downstage next to one another in hard back chairs, and the other with both of us in and out of separate wheelchairs, moving throughout the stage. The work questions perceptions of disability through brotherly banter and love. From its original creation in 2004, I had intended to make a third section to exist between the other two that would consist of both of us on the ground moving as he does, crawling and rolling in a very unique utilitarian vernacular that he had developed. I imagined this to be a section that employed contact improvisation style partnering, and either spoken or recorded text regarding individual inefficiencies. This commission provided that chance.

I decided however, to make this a trio with Stephanie Miracle, Joel and myself, in which two able-bodied dancers would assimilate Joel's movement vocabulary in this new section. In regard to spoken text I chose to delve further into the content of the following lines from *as far as I know*:

My grandfather blamed his alcoholism on his fathers' condition

My father told me he never liked the taste of beer, or the memory of it

I've never been interested,

but my brother with one kidney can't get away from it.

I felt like there was something more there. The issue of filling the void felt important. In working through these ideas the theme of “the better half” came up, as a metaphor for Joel’s condition, as well as a reference to a spouse, a person with whom we feel whole, complete, without void. I also wrote text regarding the particulars of the accident that caused Joel’s paralysis. There were essentially three groups of text that resulted: a poem, if you will, on the theme of “the better half,” a monologue about how the men in my family have filled the void in their lives, and another monologue about my involvement in the accident that left Joel paralyzed.

I chose to use all three of these threads of text, as well as live music by Joel, with lyrics that related. The result was a carefully woven tapestry of language: Stephanie performing the “better half” text, me interfacing these two monologues, and Joel’s vocal and guitar melodies. All of this was framed physically by a duet between Stephanie and me, engaging a very unique movement vocabulary inspired by Joel’s abilities. By prioritizing the disabled body as the ideal to emulate, this movement frame furthered the work’s message of challenging perceptions of disability, while providing rich metaphor, deepening the content of the script.

2012, Spring

My independent study in Voice included participating in Leigh Wilson Smiley's undergraduate Theatre major Voice I class, weekly individual sessions with Anupama Singh Yadav, and four individual sessions with Smiley. After having made two new works with significant amounts of spoken text, this was my first experience with any vocal or theatrical training. I found, first of all, that I harbored a great deal of fear of my voice. I found myself becoming very anxious upon being asked to make any noises, albeit small sounds at first. As a slight tangent, this work also served a pedagogical purpose for me, as I was engaged in an experience much like that of my non-major students. Releasing fear of my voice helped me empathize with my students as I helped them conquer their fears of their body.

Physical awareness is the first step to this work, and I found that, despite my career, I had much to learn regarding the emotional housing of my body, and of the acute awareness of breath, vocal chords, tongue, jaw, face, even the muscles and bones throughout my body. This is a different awareness. It is an awareness of vibrations and of emotions. The first step within physical awareness is breath awareness. I discovered that I had been holding an immense amount of tension in my body that was stopping my breath's natural flow. Learning how to breathe into my belly, using my diaphragm, was the first of a series of landmark discoveries that not only helped me in performance, but raised larger questions about dance training, and how I wanted to fashion my voice as a teacher of movement. In dance we are so often concerned with placing our bodies into a correct position and in supporting that position from the core, that we (or at least I) build a navel-to-spine girdle around our core. Over the weeks of training I learned to relax

years of tension and unnecessary holding patterns. This re-patterning and releasing of tensions was further sustained in my Alexander training with Leslie Felbain the following two semesters.

The second major breakthrough was emotional. In an individual session with Smiley, she did an exercise called “dropping in” in which I say lines of text (from *as far as I know*), she asks questions and I respond by repeating that line of text back to her. The intent is to connect your words with emotional meaning. I say “...but took vengeance on my father,” she asks, “How do you feel about your father?” and other such questions, to which I repeat that line. Within a minute I felt an outpouring of emotion the likes of which I don’t think I’ve ever felt before. I never cry. I was beside myself in tears, sloppy, sobbing, and embarrassed. Smiley was unphased. She did not offer me a Kleenex or to excuse myself, rather she repeated: breathe into your belly, relax your jaw, say the line again. We were at work, but not any type of work I had ever done before. This continued for 15 or 20 minutes, the emotions, memories, and tears pouring relentlessly. This single experience opened me up to a level of emotional sensitivity and awareness that continues to serve me as a person and as a performer. Leigh taught me how to cry.

I performed both *as far as I know*, and *The Better Half* after having worked with Smiley and I felt a difference, and experienced a difference in comparing the videos. I was louder, clearer, and more emotionally connected.

2011, Fall-2012, Spring

You was my next big choreographic venture. After having made these two very personal and content heavy works, I wanted to give myself a chance to focus on generating and crafting movement. I was interested in pushing myself choreographically to generate and set movement on others rather than working collaboratively with the cast in generating the material. I was also interested in challenging the UMD students, specifically in riskier, momentum heavy movement, as well as in complex partnering work. Finally I thought it a wise methodology to allow this work to become a physical prototype for my thesis. This way I would already have the material created going into the process, and would be able to focus on the narrative and craft of the work.

My inspirational entry point was my own visceral reactions to the music of Thom Yorke and MF Doom. I was interested in making a statement about dancing, as it exists in “real life” rather than as is made for the stage. Not in dancing as a metaphor for other meanings, but the act of dancing, as reactive to beats and music in private and public spaces. I was also interested in testing out some of the scenic ideas I had been conceptualizing, that of representations of private spaces within a home, and having these representations exist in a capacity available for shifting throughout the stage. As a portion of the work was to be performed in the Maryland Dance Ensemble fall concert, I had access to an MFA scenic and costume designer to collaborate with in realizing these ideas.

The rehearsal process for this work was incredibly fruitful. We began with a two-week intensive during summer break. We worked three hours a day, during which I spent

the first portion training students in contact improvisation and teaching them phrase material. The conceptual sections of the work formulated quickly in my mind and were clearly too much for a 15-20 minute work.

The following is an outline of the sections sketched out by the end of the two-week intensive, prefaced with parenthetical, italicized titles for future reference:

- *(Partnering Quartet)* A quartet focusing on complex partnering material, moving from upstage right to downstage left.
- *(Danger)* A group section focusing on highly physical and risky off-centered choreography, moving rapidly in and out of the ground.
- *(Group Section)* A group section focusing on the act of dancing together, seeing one another, experiencing something together as a group.
- *(Faust Arp)* A “pretty dance” in which only the bottoms of the feet could be in contact with the floor, and moves from stage right to left.
- *(Columns)* A group section focusing on very rhythmically specific movement within a relatively small-space periphery.
- *(Changing Duet)* A male-female duet in which they change into and out of several outfits, as facilitated by the rest of the cast bringing in and carrying off clothing as needed.
- *(Four Windows)* We see four different activities at once: upstage left- a projected film of a person dancing to music in their bedroom; upstage right, on a table- a

woman dancing in private to music, in unison with, but independent of the film; downstage left- two people moving slowly together in a contact heavy duet; and downstage right- a person sitting in an armchair reading a book.

- *(Doom Solo)* A highly demanding solo, both physically and rhythmically, during which set pieces change around the performer throughout, placing her into different rooms of a house. This section was only conceived of at this point. It was created during the following semester.

The following are further sections created for the full evening-length work:

- *(Evolving Song)* A series of evolving images of a woman singing; first in the shower, then to herself wearing headphones, then in the mirror in her bedroom, then joining a group of friends (including me) singing in a karaoke bar. These images are made visually apparent through cast members moving props on and off the stage throughout. The section ends with the rest of the group exiting stage R while I walk over to an armchair that had been placed onstage, facing backward, during the singing in the bedroom. I reach down into the chair and pull my 7-year-old son out of the chair, asleep, and sing to him as I hold him, walking off stage.
- *(Uncle Lou)* A reimagined use of a section from *as far as I know* in which a mug is broken onstage, freezing the remaining four performers on stage in a sitting position, with arms lifted as if on arm rests. As the broken mug is being swept up, they are frozen still until two cast members assist them off stage.

- (*Table Trio*) a fast-moving trio with glass bottles, a table, and a refrigerator.
- (*Cartoon Duet*) A love-hate parody fight/duet.
- (*Dance Party*) A depiction of the entire cast dancing at a club. This section is enhanced by a projected video of club lights that span from the middle of the stage, up to the top of the cyc.
- (*Hug*) After a very high velocity section (*Danger*), all performers collapse to the ground except for one who is caught by another performer who has run from offstage to catch her in a hug shape. Slowly the rest of the cast couples off into similar embraces. This simple image is sustained for about three minutes.

As rapidly as these sketches were generated in this concentrated time, once the next semester began, rehearsals came to a comparative stalemate. Between everyone's schedules, there were constantly people missing or dropping out of the piece. Most of the remaining rehearsal time was spent in resetting roles. Of course I didn't make it easy either. Being that there was too much material, and so much enthusiasm for the work, I received permission to present an informal concert of my own in the Dance Theatre the following semester. While rehearsing the MDE piece I was also continuing to rehearse the other sections for use in my choreography class, with the intention to put them together the following semester.

As rehearsals progressed another layer of the work became more apparent, that of presenting simple performative images that evoke in an audience more personal emotive

associations regarding relationships with the self and others. The Changing Duet and Hug are two examples.

The collaborative experience with JD Madsen, scenic designer, and Kelsey Hunt, costume designer, proved important in helping me find clarity in my artistic voice. Not having worked with designers before, I was unaccustomed to having to explain myself artistically in this way. As so much of dance exists within the unknown, I was at a loss as to what to tell them I wanted the audience to experience or what type of a house this is in the world of the piece. At first I was put off and found myself telling them that I didn't want to answer this or that question, that it was beside the point of the work. What I came to realize over time, was that finding the answers to their questions was actually valuable two-fold: One it helped me to realize what my intent really was (for surely all works of art exist within an intent, otherwise we wouldn't be inspired to make them. This intent, however, often exists within a subconscious place that we may not be in the habit of accessing beyond an intuitive level), and two: it empowered the designers to come on board with me in realizing the work.

The final scenic design consisted of four pieces representing four spaces within a home: an armchair, a nightstand, a counter with a microwave on it and a shelf underneath with pots and pans, and a shower curtain. For the full show I also added a refrigerator and a kitchen table. The four created for the MDE version were all designed to be mobile. A construct of the work was that rather than people moving around the house, the house moved around them.

The other major component to the scenic design, which I did not use for the full version of the show, was a 4-foot high platform on wheels that stretched about half the width of the stage, with stairs on each end. This was created as a compromise for an image that I presented Madsen with, that of a full-sized two-story dollhouse on the stage. This compromise, albeit well constructed, was in the end a distraction from the piece. It was visually intrusive and my use of it did not justify its existence. Nonetheless I am glad for the experience as it informed the scenic design for *Apple Falling*.

Collaborating with Hunt on the costumes was largely successful, especially in conceptualizing and realizing the Changing Duet. Perhaps this is true because of the level of clarity I had as an artist going into the process. She was able to offer great ideas for both characters' outfits, particularly for the woman's that grounded them and gave them a life greater than the sum of the many moving parts.

Perhaps the most eye-opening collaboration was with Will Voorhies, the stage manager for MDE. With so many set pieces and with the complicated movement of costumes in the changing duet, he became a vital force in the work. He was right there, eager to gather props, clean up after rehearsal, track movement of costumes, etc. The contrast between this process versus the execution of the full show in which I had no stage manager was stark. I found myself staying up until endless hours of the night making charts to try to keep track of all of the complicated movement of the set pieces and costumes, not to mention juggling everyone's complicated schedules.

The full show was quite successful, based on audience response. The process of making it offered me many lessons in organization of a group, of collaborations with

designers and stage management, and generation of new and high quality performance work.

2012, Spring-Summer

Initial research for *Apple Falling* began soon after *You* was finished (and after my wife gave birth to our third baby). My intent for the work was to essentially take the cast through a process similar to my process in *as far as I know*, and then to weave our stories together creatively fictionalizing it into a coherent whole. This was a relatively clear methodology, albeit naively ambitious. I began first by collecting the cast.

I will spare the reader the arduous and tragic details as one cast member after another became unavailable, how though I began my search for this cast in my first semester of graduate school, I found myself searching for a replacement only two months before opening night, how because the right people saw him performing in *The Better Half*, my brother was swept away by Axis Dance Company in Oakland, CA and was no longer available to be in my work, and how not until half way through the process did we realize that it was clearly too difficult to have two kids and a baby in rehearsal with us in order for my wife to be cast in the show. In the end, after much sweat and tears, I ended up, by some act of god, with an ideal cast that complemented one another perfectly and formed a coherent unit, both on stage and in the creative process.

I began my research by interviewing the cast individually about their families. I interviewed six people total for one to two hours each, including:

- Candace Scarborough, a senior Dance major at UMD and original cast member in *You*.
- My wife Erin Lehua Brown, former member of Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company.
- Stephanie Miracle, fellow Dance MFA student and cast member of *The Better Half* and the full version of *You*.
- Brad T. Garner, former collaborator and faculty member in the Department of Dance at the University of Oregon.
- Raja Feather Kelly, current New York dancer.
- Hank Sichley, former classmate at the University of Utah, currently living in New York.

Two of those interviewed ended up performing in the work, four of them inspired characters in the show. Each interview was recorded and began with me asking them to go back as far as they were aware of and to tell me as much as they know about their family, working historically to the present from there. These interviews were recorded and used heavily in the writing of the script.

My intent, again naively ambitious, was to spend the summer scouring the interviews and to have a first draft of the script written by our first rehearsal in August. This did not happen. I did listen to all of the interviews and take notes on them, transcribing certain parts that seemed of particular interest, but was at a loss as to how to

organize the stories I had collected. Or perhaps more accurately, would have needed a good deal more time to do so.

Developing the content, though a slower process than expected, did bear some fruits. I found myself gravitating to the following stories and themes, gleaned from the interviews with the cast:

Candace had a beautiful relationship with her father. He was quite a famous songwriter, for such artists as Bill Withers; Earth, Wind, and Fire; and others. He died of cancer when Candace was only 12. She spoke of him so highly, calling him the perfect dad. He came from a very difficult upbringing, a home full of anger. “But he made it a point to not be like his father.” He protected her from the legacy he was born into, and filled her life with positivity. I was drawn to this story, as a diametric opposite to my experience with my father, for the tragedy of losing her father so young, and, though I didn’t realize it at the time, for the fact that her father had done exactly what my character wanted to do; he changed his family legacy.

Lehua had a similar experience in terms of having such a great father who changed the legacy that had been handed to him. Unfortunately, between juggling our lives together, our interviews were shorter and more disjointed than the others. Furthermore, my own sensitivity to the fact that the struggles in our relationship, which were in no way fully resolved, was in many ways the impetus for the work, made it difficult for me to look objectively at her stories for use, creatively.

Stephanie’s father is a fascinating character. I was drawn to his intensity and eccentricity. There were two stories that I was particularly drawn to. The first, that he

would go on impulsive “faith walks” where he would feel that God was telling him to walk, so he walked as far as from Oklahoma to Canada, without telling his wife (Stephanie’s mom)! Another was that as a very young child, Stephanie observed several things in her father that led her to believe that he might actually be Jesus: He had long hair and a beard; he was always helping people out, including offering to let strangers sleep in their house; he was a carpenter; and he played Jesus in all of their church plays. Then there was the story of how, over time, she saw him doing things that Jesus wouldn’t do, realizing that he was just an imperfect man just like everyone else, not Jesus. As we spoke of some of these experiences of disappointment with her father throughout her childhood, she began speaking very passionately about her own relationship with her husband; how “it seems like there’s just more willingness to be broken and compromised from the woman’s side, and it just takes longer for the man to take a wider perspective.” These stories bring up important issues of spirituality and gendered experiences in relationships, and of two iconic ideas: that of “marrying your father,” and of finding out as you grow up, that your father is not perfect; all very salient and relevant issues to the subject matter.

Brad is a husband and father of two, and had much to say about marriage and parenthood, but what I found most compelling was his deep and intense relationship with karaoke. First let me say that Brad is a mild mannered, muscly, tattooed, no nonsense kind of guy. He is nothing like what one may imagine of a person with such a close relationship to karaoke. He speaks of it as a spiritual experience, a channel in his life where his performance is not pressured, where it is not about greatness, where you have to conquer your ego and give in to looking ridiculous in front of other people. He

compares it to church: there's a community of regulars who go and care about each other, "it's like a confession situation the way you choose a song," it's a practice of compassion, "You're totally supporting people who hurt your ears sometimes!" Brad used to be strongly Christian, but over time lost interest. His spiritual practice is now in karaoke.

I did not spend much time analyzing Raja and Hank's interviews because from the beginning I was skeptical that they would be able to be in the show, which in the end proved correct. As for myself, I planned on mining the wealth of personal material generated in *as far as I know* and *The Better Half* for use in this work.

Summer Rehearsal Intensive

In August we had a two-week intensive in which we worked Monday through Friday, 9-5. The cast at that time consisted of Erin Lehua Brown, Stephanie Miracle, Candace Scarborough, Brad T. Garner, and, reluctantly, myself. I wanted very much to be able to maintain an outside eye in the work, but there was such a shortage of men available, I was left with no other choice. I was also interested in casting a group of 5-10 extras who would perform in different large group sections, as well as move set pieces and costumes throughout the show.

I had procured funding to bring Brad out from Oregon; it was go time. The rehearsals ended up consisting of probably 60% talking: brainstorming, collecting and honing family stories, storyboarding ideas, and generating writing. I felt pressure to be moving while the group was together, yet without knowing the story it felt like shooting

in the dark. We formed a pattern of talking one day, trying out the ideas generated the next. In the end we generated a lot of snippets of ideas, both choreographic and written, but certainly no connective tissue toward a whole. It is interesting to compare processes. For *You*, I had only 3 hours a day, and was working with undergraduate students in a manner that included training. For *Apple Falling* I had six hours a day with professionals, yet the output was far less. Clearly this would prove to be a much harder work to realize.

Sections created during the summer intensive included:

- A group section in which the cast keeps interrupting Lehua's quiet time to ask various questions and favors of her. Eventually Lehua exits from the scene leaving the remaining four in an exciting partnering heavy section that travels the group offstage right.
- A solo/monologue for Candace talking about the torture of constantly perming her hair growing up, and questioning this as a cultural practice in female African American culture.
- A duet between Brad and Stephanie in which they are sitting at a table and move through different phases in their life together as a couple, while audio is playing of Stephanie talking about how her father would go on long "faith walks" before she was born.
- A phone confrontation with Brad and his father who calls him on his birthday. We were working on several stagings of this scene.

- A monologue from *as far as I know*, about an adolescent bonding experience with my father over my involvement in the high school gymnastics team, during which I am performing a simple gymnastics floor routine. For *Apple Falling*, I inserted Brad, both of us doing intersecting routines as I perform the monologue.
- Preliminary work on an abstract task-based section around a dining room table (we actually created it in my house), clearing and setting the table.

2012, Fall

Playwriting with Walter Dallas the following semester provided both the training and accountability needed to begin putting together a script. There is nothing, first of all, like being in a room full of people who can on command, write a one-page dialogue that has a conflict and a resolution, to force you to step up, ready or not. For the first few classes Dallas would lecture and guide us through exercises and discussions, but the bulk of the semester consisted of the students taking turns reading their plays and discussing them as a class. I learned the elements of Gustav Freytag's pyramid of dramatic structure in a play. Put simply: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. I learned about the crucial nature of conflict, that without conflict there is no drama. I learned about the importance of raising the stakes so that the audience connects with the characters and stays checked in to their journey. I learned about the value of doing rather than showing. In other words placing the characters into situations in which we would see their conflicts in action, rather than telling a story of something that happened.

In a preliminary in-class discussion about the major themes and characters in the script I planned to write, the first question Dallas had for me was, “what makes you think this is drama?” Another student asked, “If that’s what you want to do, why are you taking this class?” I found out quickly that my perception of what would constitute as drama or theatre didn’t measure up to the expectations of a traditional playwriting paradigm. I would have to do more than string several interesting stories together, centered on the idea of family and inheritance. I would have to actually identify what the characters wanted, what their conflicts were, and what was at stake for them if they failed.

I began working on descriptions for my five characters, named (at that time) Graham, Lehua, Brad, Stephanie, and Candace; identifying their relationship to one another, their conflict, and their trajectory over the course of the work. Independent of the playwriting course, I recruited Jeff Kaplan, 1st year Performance Studies PhD student whose research involves theatre and dance, to be a dramaturge for *Apple Falling*. This proved to be a crucial alliance. Jeff and I would meet weekly and with my orientation to the basics of playwriting, we were able to hash out the beginnings of character descriptions. In brief, the early versions went as follows:

- Graham: scattered husband and father, struggling to reconcile his rocky childhood. His struggle is given urgency when his wife gives him an ultimatum to figure things out or he’ll have to move out.
- Lehua: wife of Graham, incites his action toward change.
- Candace: Woman on the brink of adulthood. In a time of questioning, she stops conditioning her hair, and draws away from her Christian practices. Eventually

her friends Lehua and Stephanie help her to find a deeper sense of herself, including returning to her spirituality.

- Brad: A man who has left the church and taken to karaoke as a spiritual practice (This character was still in flux for me).
- Stephanie: Brad's partner (She was also very much in flux for me at the time).

The course required there be no more than four characters and mine had five. Since I felt I had the best handle on Candace's character, I decided to remove her from this version, in order to focus on the two couples. By the end of the semester, I had written a 24-page one-act play (The full version including Candace was 28 pages). I felt quite happy with this script, and eager to press forward with the show. Its primary weakness was Brad and Sam's characters. I hadn't clearly figured out what they wanted; what was moving them forward in the show. They kind of got lost toward the end. What did develop strongly was my character's struggle, conflict, and resolution, with both his father and his wife.

As I was writing, I found a useful scene from *as far as I know* in which Graham is venting to the audience about his father's inadequacies, and tries to display how he is different (excerpt):

My father eats sunflower seeds, and just spits the shells out all over the car!

I eat sunflower seeds, but I spit them into a cup

He's always lost!

I'm always asking for directions

His eyes flare when he's angry!

So do mine, but...there's a dif...

This monologue was helpful as it shows his disdain for his father's legacy, his attempt to distinguish himself, and the complexity of understanding whether he actually has. I'd like to think that it offers the chance for audience members to form their own opinions as to whether he's making valid points, or just whining. When I performed *as far as I know*, I didn't tell my father about the show (he lives about 20 miles away). The information was too close to me; I wasn't emotionally ready to display myself to him in this way. In creating *Apple Falling*, I felt a healthy level of disconnect from that emotion and treated it more as a motivation for a character; and I felt ready to invite my father.

In imagining my father in the audience while I go on and on venting about him (the scene was originally longer than in the final work), I imagined him getting so angry that he can no longer remain in his seat, storms onto the stage, and confronts me right there. That thought birthed the climax of the show (again, paraphrasing):

(Graham's father storms onto the stage, interrupting him)

Who are you talking to?! Talk to me, I'm right here! Why can't you say these things to me?! How do you think it feels hearing you say all of this, nonsense to all of these people!

Other significant scenes that were developed in the scriptwriting class include:

- A heated argument between Graham and Lehua; the inciting action for the main conflict.
- An abstract scene of parallel intersecting monologues from the cast, confessing their struggles and fears; offering rising action to the work.
- The adaptation of several dialogues from my interviews with the cast into scripted dialogues between the cast, within the action of the story.
- A humorous monologue for Graham in which he outlines both his deep love for his child, while revealing some of his social inadequacies and intolerances for others.

2012, Fall

Apple Falling Continued Rehearsals, similarly to my initial work with *as far as I know*, were not going nearly as well as the writing. Creatively I felt unmotivated to work in the studio until I had figured out the script. I did not want to fall into familiar

habits of dance making. I wanted to make this work differently, motivated from an acutely pinpointed dramatic narrative. Logistically I was also facing huge challenges. Rehearsals, as they involved my wife Lehua, also involved my three children: 10-year old Isobella, 8-year old Oliver, and nursing baby Elliette. Between taking breaks to nurse baby and keeping the other two kids contained, the rehearsal process was nearly as dysfunctional as the childhood I was trying to reconcile.

Two major recasting developments that at first seemed tragic, ended up launching the work forward. Lehua and I mutually agreed that it was just too impossible to have her cast in the work. This was a painful decision for many reasons, but both us felt that it was unmistakably right. I recast her with Erin Crawley-Woods, a 2nd year Dance MFA student who was a cast member in *You*. Erin was an obvious choice because in addition to being a strong and mature performer, she had performed the Changing Duet with me in *You* and I planned on using it in *Apple Falling*.

The second recasting issue came as a more devastating shock. I built the show around Brad Garner, for whom I had procured travel funding. He encountered an issue of priorities with the University of Oregon, and was unable to be a part of the show. I mentioned earlier that finding men was a difficult challenge. I had been in conversation with four other men along the way, three of whom were at one point or another planning on being in the work, and two of whom I had interviewed extensively. All of them eventually had to back out for one reason or another. My initial casting interest was for four men and two women. Now only a few months before the show, I was down to only myself, the last person I had wanted to be in the piece in the first place.

After searching in many directions I found the perfect replacement for Brad in Nick Horan, a 3rd year Performance MFA student. I had worked with Nick the previous year in *Sandwalk*, a devised play directed by Leigh Smiley for which I was the choreographer, and had been impressed with him as a mover and performer. I was leery of casting an untrained dancer, as much of the choreography was very advanced, but at the same time was excited to have a theatrical performer in the show; a dancing actor to complement the other four acting dancers. Both of these re-castings ended up being exactly what the piece needed to move forward.

2012, end of Fall Semester

First Draft, In Detail

In lieu of submitting the entire script I will now outline the full show, as it had been scripted/conceived at this point. I will do so in two ways: first by character and second by scene. The reader is encouraged to reference back to these detailed outlines throughout the remainder of this document, as beyond this point, explanations of the characters and scenes, their evolution and realization, will be written assuming that this information is understood.

Each character's name changed from that of the performer, as a way to make room for the characters that were being developed. I was the one exception. I wanted to maintain my own name, not so much because I wanted to maintain a purely autobiographical truth, but more as a heightened level of vulnerability to my character, or perhaps more so to myself as a performer and creator:

Character Descriptions/Outline

Graham: A scattered but well meaning husband and father of two who is unable to maintain a functional relationship with his wife. She gives him an ultimatum that he has to figure this out or she'll have to leave him. This incites reflection on Graham's part as to what has brought him to this point. He reflects on his childhood and upbringing and places much blame on his father for the lack of life skills learned from him and undesirable behavioral patterns modeled by him. While venting about his father, his father unexpectedly appears and confronts him. After a heated argument, they find a level of awkward resolution. After having come to some level of peace with his father, he moves forward in his relationship to his wife and family.

Charlotte: (formerly Lehua) Graham's wife and mother of their three children. A woman who concerns herself more with helping others than herself, she is an agent for change in the lives of many. After so many years of trying to make her dysfunctional relationship work with Graham, she is near giving up and, in a heated argument with him, tells Graham that she can't take it any more and that he needs to figure out how to be a supportive husband and father or she'll have to leave him. She has a close friendship with Sam and Ava and helps both of them with struggles they are having in their lives. She helps Ava recognize the love she does have for God and her Christian beliefs. She helps Sam recognize that she needs to stand up for herself in her relationship with her husband. In doing so, she recognizes the value of the struggle of the every day in any relationship and is resolved to continue to work through the difficulties in her relationship with Graham.

Pascal: Graham & Charlotte's 10-year-old daughter

Theodore: Graham & Charlotte's 8-year-old son

Brad: A man in his late 20's, married with no children. He and his wife love going to karaoke; they appear to be a perfect match. He has lost his faith in god, however, and without discussing this with Sam, has found karaoke to be a new spiritual outlet for him. His "changing of religions" feels to him like his own business, and he doesn't feel the need to consult his wife about this change. (Brad's story had not been fully realized yet at this point)

Sam: (Formerly Stephanie) A woman in her late 20's, married with no children. She appears to have a great relationship with her husband; she sees a lot of her father in him, which she admires. She tries not to be worried about how her husband will be out all night doing karaoke without telling her. She compares it to how her father used to go on long "faith walks" where god would tell him to walk, sometimes hundreds of miles, without communicating with his wife until he got there, weeks later. Over time she becomes concerned as she recognizes his disinterest in church, and is angered that he doesn't even feel the need to talk to her about it. (Sam's story had not been fully realized yet at this point either)

Ava: (Formerly Candace) An African-American woman in her very early 20's on the brink of adulthood. She is in a time of discovering her independence, and in doing so finds two major questions with her upbringing. 1-the expensive, time consuming, and painful process of having her hair permed straight on a regular basis, and 2- her belief in god and the Christianity she was brought up with. Both of these she sites as things she's

done with her parents since she was very young, and is now questioning whether they are really “true.” In different conversations with her friends, she comes to realize that she really does believe, but has been afraid to go back, for the accountability she will have for some of her poor choices. Specifically she is afraid to go up to the “altar call” at her church, which is a public acknowledgement for a need to change. She finally overcomes her fears and goes up to the altar call; symbolically represented by her finally agreeing to go up to sing karaoke with her friends.

First Draft Outline, Scene by Scene with *(parenthetical italicized)* titles of sections for future reference:

Scene I An evolving series of dialogues in which, mid conversation, a person is replaced with another, picking up the conversation where it was left off:

- Pascal asking Ava questions about her father, who had died of cancer when Ava was young.
- Pascal is replaced by Charlotte.
- *(Graham Interrupting)* Graham interrupts this conversation, telling Charlotte about several unrelated things without listening for her responses.
- Brad sitting at a table at a restaurant explaining to Graham why he likes karaoke so much and how it is a spiritual experience for him.

- Ava replaces Graham mid-conversation, and compares going up to karaoke with going up to the altar call at church.
- (*Time Duet*) Sam replaces Ava at the table and tells him he reminds her of her dad, who was also eccentric with his spirituality. She continues to tell him how her dad would go on these long walks for God, as far as from Oklahoma to Canada, without telling her mom. During this dialogue we see them moving through time in their relationship as represented by the choreography, and a changing of the table setting; from a first date at a coffee shop, to a more sustained relationship at a nice restaurant with a wine bottle and glasses, to a simple quiet table with only a salt and pepper shaker. They take turns shifting the salt and pepper on the table, a quiet game after a lifetime together.

Scene II

- (*Evolving Song*) The scene follows Brad & Sam singing together: first in the shower, then in their bedroom getting dressed, then walking down the street sharing a pair of ear buds, eventually in a club singing karaoke together on a stage. After they sing, they return to their table with Graham, Charlotte, and Ava. Sam & Brad try to get the others to go up to sing.
- (*Baby Monologue*) Graham goes up to the microphone, but instead of singing goes into a comedic monologue about his baby, and how intolerant he is of certain types of people. During this monologue, the scene changes back to his living room. He is sitting at a desk with a pitcher of dyed blue liquid and a stack of

diapers. Systematically, he opens a diaper, pours some of the liquid, wraps the diaper up, and throws it in a nearby garbage can, often missing.

- *(Graham & Charlotte Argument)* Amid his monologue, Charlotte appears, trying to get his attention. After he ignores her several times, she finally gets him to come and help her. They start preparing a dish together while talking, first about how Charlotte is concerned about Sam, having heard that Brad has been disappearing to go to karaoke at night. They begin to quarrel as Graham is unresponsive. A heated argument ensues while they are at the table preparing dinner, but is interrupted by the doorbell.
- *(Dinner Party)* Graham & Charlotte put on their happy faces for a dinner party with the full cast. This is entirely choreographic, no dialogue.
- After everyone leaves, Charlotte gives Graham an ultimatum: she can't take this anymore and something has to change or he's going to lose his family.

Scene III *(The Apples Falling)* An abstract series of intersecting monologues and dialogues from the cast, focusing mainly on Graham and Ava, reflecting on family heritage and personal struggles. This is outlined with each character's lines grouped together, not in the intersecting order as it appears in the script:

Ava:

- *(Hair Solo)* Begins talking about her family lineage, starting with her third great grandfather who was a white slave owner, and got to know one of his slaves in the

biblical sense. She continues through the generations, focusing on the type of hair they had: smooth, kinky, curly, thick, etc.

- She then addresses and questions the great lengths African-American women go to to assimilate their hair to that of other races.
- She declares that she no longer needs the “creamy crack.” That her hair is natural, thick and curly, not styled into someone else’s ideal.
- She addresses the fact that her mother has been taking her to get her hair permed since she was a young girl and makes the connection that her mother has also been taking her to church her whole life. If one is not true, maybe the other is not either.
- She goes on to question the existence of god, asking how can you ever really know what’s true.
- Brad hears her and is quick to adamantly agree with her, which startles Sam to hear her husband talking this way.
- In hearing Sam and Brad going back and forth, she realizes quietly to herself that she really does believe in God.
- Her final statement is a monologue admitting that she’s afraid to go to the altar call and make a change, but that she no longer wants to hide.

Graham:

- Begins talking about how he found out his grandmother was crazy, that his father has extreme ADHD, and that emotional and mental instability runs in his family.
- He questions whether any of this is his fault since it runs in his DNA, comparing it to someone blaming his paralyzed brother for not walking down the stairs to do laundry.
- Sam challenges this, pointing out that his brother is plenty capable of doing laundry and asks Graham what he's doing about the problem he has, to which Graham has no answer.
- He then goes into a few different monologues:
 - How his family has filled the void over the generations,
 - The passing down of a belief in God from his father, through to his children,
 - His father crying himself to sleep every night as a child when his mother disappeared suddenly,
 - His mother finally leaving his father after 20 years of marriage, and
 - His declaration of his fear of repeating the past.

Sam:

- She first speaks in reaction to Graham trying to compare his situation to his brothers as mentioned above.

- She says a few short lines regarding Brad as her better half; adapted from *The Better Half*.
- She then speaks in reaction to Brad's agreeing with Ava in questioning God. She is at first confused and hurt, then challenges him. When he defends himself and challenges her back, she is shocked and unable to find her words to respond.

Brad:

- He agrees with Ava in questioning God, then challenges Sam, as outlined above.
- He tells a short story of his mother dying when he was a child, and his failed attempt to make a bargain with God to bring her back.

Charlotte (She has only two lines that are very short, so I'll quote them directly):

- "Can you be with people every minute of the day, and still feel lonely?"
- "Pascal asked me the other night if we were going to be the break-up family. I didn't know what to tell her."

Scene IV

- (*Cartoon Trio*) Charlotte is at home struggling to get the kids to bed. This evolves into a standoff between mom and daughter, erupting into a laughter-filled cartoon-like fight/dance scene with the two kids. Eventually she gets them to bed and greets Sam who has been waiting in the living room.

- (*Women Dialogue*) Charlotte and Sam have a dialogue in which Sam expresses her frustration with her husband's sudden change from God to karaoke, and how inconsiderate he has been in not even talking to her about it. Charlotte is encouraging her to stand up for herself when Ava knocks on the door.
- (*Spirituality Trio*) This scene was never written, but the gist is that Ava had volunteered to watch the kids to avoid going to karaoke. Before they go, Ava brings up her struggles with her spirituality. She asks them how they came to believe and they express their personal stories of conversion to her.

Scene V

- (*Gymnastics Monologue*) Back at the karaoke bar, Graham & Brad go up to the mic together. This time, rather than singing, they do separate intersecting gymnastic routines as Graham tells a monologue of his childhood bonding experience with his dad over gymnastics.
- (*Graham Vent*) They go to a different room in the club with many people on the dance floor. As he is dancing, he starts yelling over the crowd, venting about the differences between him and his father.
- (*Father Confrontation*) Suddenly his father storms on from the audience and confronts him. After a heated argument, they proceed to move together in an awkward, minimal movement duet during which a series of their unsaid thoughts are projected on the cyc behind them. Honest statements that if they were uttered

out loud, may offer a level of resolution between them. His father eventually leaves him alone on the stage.

- (*Changing Duet*) Graham proceeds to take off his shoes and places them in the air as if in his closet. Just as he does so, someone walks on to take them from him. Charlotte appears and begins to do the same. A laundry hamper is placed just in time for their socks to land in them. Clothing and props are continually placed and removed as they dress and undress into different outfits, cycling through different moments in their life together.

Scene VI

- Back in the Karaoke bar, Ava is at the microphone; Brad, Sam, Graham, and Charlotte are at their table watching. She tentatively begins singing, but struggles with embarrassment. Her friends eventually run up to the stage to sing along with her.
- As the song concludes, they disperse and the space changes back into Graham's living room, including an armchair turned backwards. The other four exit stage R, Graham reaches into the chair, scoops up Theodore who is asleep and softly rocks and sings to him as he exits the stage.

Scenes cut from the summer intensive

- Brad's phone confrontation with his father on his birthday.
- The group section with the cast constantly interrupting Lehua (Charlotte) evolved to only me interrupting her. This focused attention on exposing the dynamics of their relationship.

I was, and still am quite happy with at least the potential of this script. Some of its problems that needed to be ironed out at that point included the fact that the major conflict doesn't happen until half way through the second scene; in the Apples Falling section, there was no reason why Ava would start talking about her family tree of hair; the Apples Falling section generally was packed with way too much important information, in a manner that didn't follow a clear logic for an audience to hang on to; the dialogue between Sam and Charlotte in scene IV wasn't very strong; the Spirituality Trio dialogue still needed to be written; and as mentioned earlier, Brad and Sam's characters and relationship weren't making sense just yet. Their story just stopped in the middle of the show without any falling action, let alone resolution. Furthermore it was clear that this was far too big a project for a 45-minute work to be performed in three months. Finally, I hadn't considered it seriously enough at the time, but the other major flaw was that this was a full-on play that I had developed and neither I as a director, nor my cast of dancers (and one actor) were in a position to be able to pull this off in a professional manner in such a short amount of time.

2012, end of Fall Semester

The Choreography thus far had progressed as follows:

Repurposed Sections From *You*:

Danger As a solo for me during Graham Interrupting. I was told from the start that that material should be solo material for myself. It is of a very high velocity and risk level, a palette of movement that I excel at. This vocabulary also perfectly matched the frantic nature of the speaking during this section.

Evolving Song - This section was to be performed by Brad and Sam together as an exposition of their relationship, finishing in a real karaoke scene.

Doom Solo - This was performed by Candace in *You*, and was now coupled with her Hair Solo.

Columns and Group Section - I intended to use this material as a frame for all of the intersecting monologues and dialogues in the Apples Falling section. The more confined movements of Columns would offer an interesting physical frame for the speaking.

Cartoon Duet - now a trio between mom and kids. This section was originally conceived of and the first part created by my kids and me one evening in the living room. I had always intended to bring it back to the kids and me in *Apple Falling*. Over time it struck me as a stronger idea to set this section on the kids and their mother, to show her as the primary one attending to them.

Faust Arp – I used this material for the spirituality trio. As the movement has a more lush and lyrical tone, it felt a fitting palette to be coupled with the women speaking of their spiritual conversions. Each had written monologues, spoken in turn, coupled with the movement. The concern from the beginning was that this section would come across as cheesy or preachy, like a Christian sit-com. I recognized the danger, but was determined to find a way to speak positively of spirituality, Christianity specifically, in an unapologetic yet relatable way with honesty and artistic merit.

The Changing Duet – I knew from the start that I was going to use this as the dénouement of Graham and Charlotte’s relationship.

New Sections Developing:

Dollhouse Duet – a duet between Sam and Charlotte that was performed during Ava and Pascal’s dialogue about Ava’s father (at the very beginning of the show). Their movements were choreographed to the rhythm of their speech and subtly matched the childishness and playfulness of the dolls that Ava and Pascal were playing with.

Baby Monologue – This section is well described above. It was developed as an exposition of Graham’s character. The writing and imagery (that of the constant action of opening the diapers, pouring the liquid, wrapping, and tossing) were strong.

Graham & Charlotte argument – The physicality of this section was inspired by observing a couple of friends at their apartment as they prepared a finger-food dish together. Without a break in conversation, and without any communication between the

two of them, they washed, chopped, mixed, and passed ingredients to each other in a highly choreographed, sub-conscious way that was intricately coordinated between the two. This was clearly a dish they had made together many times and knew exactly what to do. It struck me as an interesting contrast to give this task to Graham and Charlotte, as they are in a heated argument. A living paradox: completely in sync physically, while being so out of sync emotionally. I obtained the recipe from my friend and Erin Crawley Woods and I choreographed the preparing of the dish together.

Dinner Party – This was the first section worked on after Erin and Nick replaced Lehua and Brad, and made it clear that I had finally found a coherent cast. This section was an abstract depiction of the friends coming over to Graham & Charlotte’s house for dinner. We choreographed a very fun entry from the front door to the kitchen table that involved a lot of partnering work and character performance; friends greeting each other, getting into conversations, helping set the table and sitting down, establishing to the audience their close friendship. Brad, Sam, and Ava then go into a rhythmically specific plates-and-silverware-game, passing utensils to each other, around their backs, and in the air. The creation of this game was a good example of the value of playing in the studio to find what the work is about. I entered the rehearsal with a vague idea of an abstract playful passing of the silverware and plates. As we worked, it became clear that I was taking a subconscious cue from a childhood game I used to play with friends involving cups: clapping, flipping and passing the cups around in a circle. After identifying this, I was able to move forward with constructing this game with plates and silverware.

Gymnastics Monologue – This was largely a matter of resetting it onto Nick. In a few rehearsals, he was pretty comfortable with the material.

The Creative Team: Designers, Dramaturge, Stage Manager, Composer, Acting Coach, Movement Coach, Cast

Scenic, Projections, and Lighting Design

Drew Kauffman, 3rd year Design MFA student, was assigned as my lighting, projections, and scenic designer. Our primary preliminary conversations were focused on scenic. I told him of my interest in continuing the ideas started with JD Madsen for *You*, that of furniture pieces that were mobile and representative of different rooms in a house. I was interested in representing public spaces versus private spaces, and for the set pieces to be able to represent different spaces at different times. I also wanted to have the ability to create very distinct spaces on the stage at the same time. My idea in realizing this was to construct four moving walls that can shift throughout the stage in various ways, creating these distinctions. Drew's response to the latter was that it sounded like a bad version of a good idea and that he'd work on it. I could tell I was going to like this collaboration. The final idea I presented, albeit in a surrendered manner, was the initial idea of creating a two-story "dollhouse" environment on the stage. I suggested it with the understanding that it was probably impossible and that I was ready to let go of the idea, but that I'd bring it up just in case it inspired any ideas.

We eventually conceived of a simpler design than I had intended, and feared that it wasn't enough. In regard to the moving furniture pieces we ended with basically several different tables and chairs: a living room set with an area rug, an armchair, and a coffee table; a dining room table with four chairs and a bench; two restaurant tables with

four chairs (the same chairs used in the dining room), a nightstand representing a bedroom; and a shower curtain to represent a bathroom. There were many other smaller props used for the various table scenes, things like plates, silverware, cutting boards, knives, mixing bowls, salt & pepper shakers, a wine bottle and wine glasses, etc. The small props list evolved greatly throughout the process, bringing things in, taking them out, bringing them back again. In the end most things were taken out, for the sake of simplicity.

The most ambitious scenic design was Drew's response to my dollhouse idea. He designed a six-foot-high wall with a five-foot deep platform, spanning across most of the upstage space. On the stage L end of it there are stairs from the ground leading onto the platform with a 4' X 4' landing half way up the stairs. As the creative process moved forward we eventually dropped the moving walls idea entirely, but did extend the platform on the stage right end, to accommodate for a door. I had simply imagined the wall to be flat but Drew had a further idea in mind for that as well. He designed textures onto the wall to look like a topographical map of a neighborhood or "google earth" look, offering the narrative idea of the motion of the show between different spaces. He planned to design projections for this wall to amplify this concept. Generally I took the attitude with this collaboration that he was the expert in design and that I would give his ideas the benefit of the doubt. I worked at being as clear as possible with my aesthetic and narrative intent, maintained a very open dialogue with him as things progressed, and trusted his artistry.

We also spoke extensively about projections designs as being a strong component of the work. I was interested in very specifically lit spaces and was curious about

projections as a means to more effectively do this. Drew was interested in using projections as wallpaper throughout, adding details like picture frames on the walls of the house, etc. I also needed to replicate my club scene from *You*, where club lights are projected throughout the floor and cyc.

We spoke the least about lighting, other than the general interest of mine in, again, very specifically lit spaces, and that of natural looking light. I wanted to transform the space as much as possible into something that looked like the spaces the work lived in and as little like a theatre as possible.

Costume Design

I was largely happy with the costume design from *You* and had held onto those costumes to keep as a resource moving into *Apple Falling*. Rebecca DeLapp, 3rd year Design MFA student was assigned as my costume designer. I was excited to be working with her, but startlingly was greeted largely with apathy and felt a little shrugged off in trying to set up meetings with her. I found out later that she was terribly overwhelmed with other projects that she was doing. When we were eventually able to meet, things went relatively well, she was receptive to my ideas and the fact that I wanted to hang on to some of the costume pieces and outfits designed by Kelsey Hunt for *You*. She was also eager to offer some further ideas that she felt would improve upon that design. We determined that the look was of contemporary street clothing within a more classic style. In other words the costumes should not harken too closely to any specific time, but would be fashionable now as well as 15 years ago, while heightening the individual personality of the character. I wanted there to be many changes of clothing throughout the show. As

the different scenes represented different moments in time, I wanted to come as close to reality as possible in this way.

The changing duet was another big endeavor that I was eager to take on together with Rebecca. We decided to postpone designing this section until January when more of the work was fleshed out. I wanted the changing duet to be rich with meaning in reference to the work, rather than as separate unrelated images as it was in *You*.

Finally we discussed the costuming of the extras and of Graham's father. They would be costuming themselves with Rebecca's guiding eye. I expressed that I wanted them to look in the same palette as the main cast, in terms of looking like regular people in real life. Rebecca suggested limiting them to more muted tones in order to remain in the background of the main cast. For Graham's father, we just wanted to make sure he looked like a regular guy sitting in the audience, but that he did look late middle aged.

Dramaturge

As I mentioned earlier, I recruited Jeff Kaplan, 1st year Performance Studies PhD student as a dramaturge for the show. This was perhaps the single most impacting move I made in the realization of this work. It was invaluable to have a person to bounce ideas off of, to receive a very intellectually informed perspective from, to keep me on track artistically and offer an advocacy for the audience. He would read my scripts, offer suggestions, help me brainstorm, help me to write scenes, research information for me, basically anything I needed from him, he was eager to help. One of the biggest things I wanted from him was to keep me accountable to the narrative and the stakes. To always be asking me "who cares" as the piece moves along. I felt strongly about this because I

knew that this would be a difficult piece to realize and that it would be very easy to fall into defaults of abstraction; to present a series of interesting ideas or composition, but without any narrative accountability from one moment to the next. One great question he asked me toward the beginning of the process was “what would be so bad about Graham and Charlotte splitting up? Couples get divorced all the time and sometimes they’re better for it.” That’s what I’m talking about. These are the tough questions I knew I needed from him in order to realize my vision for the work.

Stage Manager

Of all of the crucial contributors to the work, only narrowly less crucial than the cast itself, was Tarythe Albrecht, the stage manager. She joined the process in the beginning of December and immediately jumped in with organizing props lists, figuring out rehearsal times, reserving spaces, setting up meetings with designers, and finding answers to questions I had been asking for months. In our first meeting she made it very clear to me that she was there to take on anything organizational or logistical so that I could focus solely on art making. Please read that last sentence again, and let it sink in before reading on. Perhaps the single most valuable lesson I learned in my efforts to implement theatrical methodologies into my work is the absolutely crucial role of the stage manager.

Composer

I took the task of seeking out a composer quite seriously. I met with Ethan Watermeier, Vocal Performance DMA student who I had met in working on *Sandwalk*, to gather suggestions of names for composers as well as gather some tips on communicating

with musicians. His strongest suggestion was for Jazz composer, Nguyen Nguyen. I emailed Nguyen and he was interested. To help him get a sense of the aesthetic I was interested in, I made an online playlist of a range of styles of music. We had a meeting and he attended a couple of rehearsals. By the end of the fall semester, I didn't hear much from him and, being rather overwhelmed with all of the other elements of the show, didn't follow up myself. I was somewhat worried, but was hopeful that we were on the same page and that he was working on compositions.

Acting Coach

In an effort to train the cast in performing text and generally finding a sense of honesty in emotionally driven performance, I recruited Caroline Clay, 3rd year Performance MFA student, to work with the cast as an acting coach. While I was in the midst of writing and choreographing the work, she was not involved. She entered the process in February.

Movement Coach

I asked faculty member Adriane Fang to be a movement coach for the show, both for the fact that I was working with a non-dancer, and that I was in the show and not able to have an outside eye. As with Clay, she did not become heavily involved until February.

Cast

In referencing creative collaborators it would be a great injustice to omit the cast. Their creative relationship with the work will be outlined further as I continue to discuss

the creative process, but suffice it to say that nearly every aspect of the show was created in close collaboration with them. They were very committed to the work and even when I didn't want their opinion, when I thought something was working just fine, they often spoke up to express a suggestion for improvement, and more often than not were right and their suggestions did improve the overall work.

2012, December

Three Months Until Opening Night

Starting December 17th I went into overdrive, rehearsing nearly every day. Now that Tarythe was on board, Erin and I were able to efficiently work out the argument scene while preparing food. This was the first scene to feel like it really crystalized. Erin and I also worked on the Graham Interrupting section. The combination of such highly physical movement with the script proved to be a much trickier task than I expected, but with Tarythe there to feed me lines, record what movements were happening with what lines, and film it, I was able to work more efficiently.

Erin, Stephanie and I put some significant work into the Women's Dialogue, both the script, and movement. To find the right movement to go with the script, I recorded them saying their lines, then had them improvise with the sound score of the recorded dialogue. We quickly found that larger dancing movement didn't fit the mood. After trying several task-based options it was suggested that they simply repeatedly take their hair up and put it back down. This was a start. It offered a sense of abstraction within an everyday task that can convey several different meanings. The final version we ended

with was to have them also be changing seats repeatedly between the chair and the coffee table (and the ground). We initially kept this improvised. Erin and Stephanie were left with the task of juggling their lines with putting up and taking down their hair, while continually switching seats. It was a great start. The hair task is a good example of something that worked really well that I would have never thought of on my own.

2013, January

Two Months Until Opening Night

The problem still remained that the show was way too long, and I was at a loss as to how to remedy this. I finally put a pause on rehearsals and instead had two intense all day writing sessions, primarily with Jeff, Nick, and myself, but also with contributions from Candace and Stephanie who had less availability (Erin was out of town). Upon Jeff's recommendation I wrote down every section onto separate 3X5 cards. As an exercise I grouped these cards together based on Freytag's triangle, putting all of the exposition together, the rising action, climax, etc. into their own categories. In doing this I realized that nearly half of the show was exposition; interesting stories that didn't do anything for moving the story forward. I had almost no falling action or conclusion.

We met in a big conference room, spread out the cards and got to work. Nick proved a vital force in this process. He had an informed bluntness that was very efficient in helping me see where I could trim. We ruthlessly cut entire sections, sections that I was in love with, but in the end realized that they either weren't necessary, or just didn't

fit. Such sections included: my Baby Monologue, my Gymnastics Monologue, the Spirituality Trio, the final karaoke scene, and, most painfully for me, Ava's Hair Solo.

Both Jeff and Nick had advocated removing the Hair solo, but I resisted, feeling that it was a strong section that provided an unexpected inlet to the concept of familial heritage. What finally moved me to remove it was when Candace clarified how it came to be. What I remembered was that it was something she had written over the previous summer, that it was something she felt strongly about. In fact, she reminded me that in her writing she had one simple line referring to herself as natural. I had inquired of her what she meant by that and was then fascinated when she explained the cultural phenomenon of African-American women's hair. We then did an exercise where we traded our writing and another person continued where we left off. Brad got hers and channeled his inner black woman, writing a bold, powerful monologue, including the exclamation "natural is Africa!" We were all so blown away at this writing (in retrospect it wasn't that it was such great writing, just from such an unexpected source), I was sure we had hit something important and continued developing it with Candace. She was a good sport all along, but was never happy with this solo. To her it felt like it simplified her family into one trait. It was the two white men in the room who had really formed that solo, not her! Once I realized this I immediately, without regret (and with a little embarrassment) removed the monologue.

This omission now left Ava pretty flat. The hair solo had led her to questioning of god, which led her through the rest of the show. Without this, what was her struggle? It finally occurred to me to focus on her father. Instead of talking about his hair she would talk about how he changed his family's legacy, from "violence, and abuse" to "love and

music and God and family.” Rather than questioning God’s existence, she went through a sort of grief process: First she was reflective on all the great things he did, then on what it was like after he was gone, then confused and angry, first at him for not trying hard enough to get better, then at God, “and why would God have taken him when I was so young?” “Why would I want to have anything to do with him?!” This train of emotion was also more true to the experience Candace had in losing her father.

The next big narrative hurdle was figuring out Brad and Sam’s story. We knew they had the struggle of Brad not being interested in religion any more, but why wasn’t he? I had always wanted this couple to be a contrast to Graham and Charlotte in that they seemed like the perfect couple, and then over time we see more of their struggles. So what were their struggles? After much brainstorming, Jeff, Nick and I stumbled across the idea of their not being able to have a baby. This seemed particularly relevant considering the subject matter of family and legacy. As we continued along this trajectory, it occurred to me to change Graham and Charlotte’s story slightly so that they only have two kids, and that they find out she’s pregnant within the timeline of the show. This would heighten the stakes for both couples as Graham and Charlotte have what Brad and Sam want, but Charlotte is not sure she will stay with Graham much longer so this baby complicates things for her, and offers a source of tension. This fueled the Women Dialogue with a lot of emotional motivation.

The final piece to Brad and Sam’s relationship was the dynamic that they do not ever speak to each other in private, that their lives together exist only as a farce in public. They have lost their ability to communicate. Their relationship is not hostile, just empty. Their falling action and resolution would be a final confrontation in which they finally do

talk, fight, and voice their emotions and opinions. They don't come to a clean "happily ever after," but we see that they do love each other and there is a glimmer of hope for them.

The women, including Tarythe were absent for this brainstorming and decision-making process. When they arrived and we presented the idea to them, Stephanie said, "You know my parents took eight years to have me, right?" I didn't know that, somehow I had missed that in all of our interviewing. Tarythe then spoke up that she and her husband actually tried for four years before she got pregnant with her son. As opposed to the Hair Solo, we had stumbled across something deep and relatable within the cast. We added in the detail that Sam & Brad had been trying for four years to have a baby, and that it had taken Sam's parents eight years to conceive her. Brad was angry with God for ignoring them for so long. Sam didn't understand why Brad was so impatient, knowing that it took as long as it did for her to be conceived. Why couldn't he have faith? Tarythe resonated with the concept of losing communication with each other over this. She told us what it was like for her, how both people blame themselves, and/or wonder what's wrong with the two of them.

Of course the next big hurdle is to go from nice idea into believable dialogue. We had already spent so much time writing, once again I felt compelled to move into the studio. We dove into the Apples Falling scene, having rewritten Ava's monologues within. As with everything else, this was difficult because I knew that the scene was not exactly right yet. Nonetheless, we started building. There was the task of teaching Nick the Columns material, which is rather challenging in that it is so physically and rhythmically specific. He was a great sport about it, but clearly was going to need a lot of

practice before being able to confidently perform it. We started choreographing new material to our monologues. My instruction was to consider the rhythm more than the content of the words in creating the movement. It shouldn't be anything too large or swooping, and should mainly face front to be able to be heard. It shouldn't distract from the content of the speaking. We built the choreographic pieces relatively easily; the problem remained that the script was in such a flux. We would quickly go back to trying to make sense of it, rather than establishing the nuance of the movement material and the timing.

2013, End of January

Second Draft Outline

Following is an abbreviated outline of the show, as it existed at this point. New scenes are in parentheses and italics.

Scene I

- Ava telling Charlotte about her father, who had died of cancer when Ava was young.
- Graham Interrupting.
- Brad & Sam Time Duet (without the Faith Walks dialogue) beginning with Sam saying to Brad that he reminds her of her dad; Brad responds that Sam reminds him nothing of his mother.

- Graham & Charlotte Argument.

- Dinner Party.

Scene II

- Evolving Song.
- A “split screen” scene – Brad, Sam, Ava, Graham at karaoke; Charlotte at home trying to get kids to bed.
- Cartoon Trio.
- “Split screen” Brad and friends dancing at the club; Charlotte and kids boogying at home.
- Eventually the scenes combine into a big (*Living Room Dance Party*).

Scene III

- Graham & Brad (*Karaoke Dialogue*) at a restaurant.
- Charlotte & Sam (*Faith Walks Dialogue*) at a different restaurant (we see the two at the same time).
- (*Ava & Kids Dialogue*) Pascal asks Ava about her dad, while they’re talking Theo interrupts asking Ava, “Why is your hair so spongey?” She is startled at first by the question, but it causes her to reflect on her father, whom she got those tight little curls from. “A little piece of him I can hang on to.”

Scene IV The Apples Falling. I will only list changes from the previous outline:

- It begins with Charlotte saying to Graham “You can’t just pretend everything’s ok!” and slamming the door on him.
- Graham goes into more detail about ADHD as a trait he and his father share, of his experience in a car accident that paralyzed his brother, he has a new line expressing fear that one day his son will blame him for the void he feels in his life. He tells the audience that they just found out Charlotte is pregnant.
- Ava tells the story of how her father changed his father’s legacy, how life was without him after he died, her anger at her father for not trying hard enough to live, and ultimately at God for taking him when she was so young. “So then why would I want to follow this god who takes my dad away from me. Why would I want anything to do with him?”
- All dialogues are cut.
- Sam speaks of her grandfather filling the void with alcohol and her father filling it with God, how she thought her dad might be Jesus when she way young, how she doesn’t know Brad anymore, and how she wants to have a baby.
- He says how Sam prays every night for a baby but has been ignored for four years and that he started going to karaoke more than a year ago.

Scene V

- Women Dialogue.
- Brad & Sam Argument.

- Graham Vent.
- Father Confrontation.

Scene VI

- Changing Duet.

After a showing of the work for the designers and thesis committee, it was clear that the project was still too ambitious, both dramatically for the cast of primarily dancers, and within the given time frame. I was very resistant to making any changes, for fear of the piece reverting to an abstract dance piece, ambiguous with meaning. I received the feedback that the Apples Falling section was the strongest, where we were speaking directly to the audience, but that none of the dialogues were working. This was very hard to hear because the Apples Falling section was the one I was least happy with, as it most resembled a modern dance text-and-movement piece, and that the dialogues were what I was most interested in. Upon further reflection, I realized that it was really the stakes that I was most interested in maintaining, that the audience is involved in the story and interested in what happens next to the characters. In response to this, Professor Leigh Smiley assured me that the writing does have those stakes, but without the performers ability to execute these lines on full voice and genuine emotion, all of the stakes disappear, and that it takes years of training to be able to find the level of performance required for this script. This helped me to realize that in order to maintain the stakes I would need to find a different way to tell the story than purely through the script.

After much pouring over the material, brainstorming with my dramaturge, and working with the cast in rehearsal, I cut and reduced much of the script, finding the essence of the message and focused on putting the complex emotions and story lines into the choreography. I also returned to the original recordings of the interviews and identified a few of the recorded dialogues to use as audio in performance in lieu of live speaking. Specifically this included: two stories of Candace's about her dad, Brad talking about karaoke as a spiritual experience, and Stephanie telling the story of her dad going on his faith walks.

I recognized that some of the specifics of the stories may be lost, but hoped that if we maintain these stories as performers, that it will convey meaning to audiences. This process of cutting and simplifying and cutting and simplifying continued through to the very end of tech, and into the show.

2013, February-Opening Night

Finding the Final Product

Performance Work

I will now reference the development of specific sections, from this first big cut at the end of January through to their final manifestations in performance. I will refer to these sections in the order in which they were developed, rather than in show order.

Father Confrontation was created quite smoothly. Kevin Brown, a local actor whose wife is a Dance MFA student, played Graham's father. This was one of the only

dialogues that remained in the show, though upon rehearsing it with Kevin, I shortened it quite a bit. The duet portion was also choreographed quite quickly. We improvised a couple of times and found a clear movement palette of stillness, tentative walks toward and away from each other, pushing against each other with anger, and finally, slowly and awkwardly, arriving into a long sustained hug. During this hug, the rest of the cast appeared in the background, hugging or holding each other in different ways. After 30 seconds to a minute into the hug, Graham's father returns back to the audience. Graham maintains this sustained hug shape after his father has left. This empty hug idea came as a result of almost never having Kevin in the runs of the show. Without him there, I would perform it solo, ending in this empty hug. This solution to a problem proved to be a strong image. In the end, having Graham hugging his father, then hugging the absence, carried metaphors of the fantasy of the scene versus the reality in life and of the concept of the perfect father not existing.

From the beginning I had the idea that during the duet there would be words projected onto the wall behind them. First I thought it would be their projected thoughts, but eventually settled on a poem that Jeff found by Sukasah Syahdan called *The Perfect Father*. A very simple poem, it simply states a list of several traits that the perfect father doesn't have: "doesn't punish" "doesn't neglect" and finishes with "doesn't exist." This seemed to put to words the summation of Graham's resolution to change and move forward.

Women Dialogue, renamed The Hair Duet was a real success in creating dance as theatre, in other words, a scene with dance as its base language that exists within a clear emotional space that conveys narrative meaning. This was the first scene in which

we decided not to say a single word of the script. We used the script as a guide, and discussed the emotional impact of the scene, what were these two women going through in this moment, what did they mean to each other. There was much to mine, emotionally: Sam and Brad have revealed to the audience their struggles in trying to have a baby, Graham has revealed that they just found out that Charlotte is pregnant with their third child. Sam wants to be happy for Charlotte, but can't help but be jealous and sort of angry with her, and then feels angry with herself for feeling angry. Tarythe was the source of this psychological train of thought, having experienced it herself many times. Charlotte is aware of the sensitivity of the subject and wants to tread lightly. At the same time her joy for her pregnancy is laced with fear and anxiety, as she doesn't know what will be happening with her relationship. And this only what is unsaid. On the surface, Sam is seeking consolation from Charlotte regarding her frustrations and fears about Brad's choice to leave the church without so much as communicating with Sam about it. Charlotte is as much reflecting on her own relationship as she is giving Sam advice when she tells her she needs to put up the fight, that that's what a relationship is, the every day struggle of figuring out how to join two people's lives together.

Choreographically, we stayed with the tasks as the creative entry point: putting hair up and down and switching seated positions in the living room. They improvised several times within this parameter. Tarythe filmed these improvisations. It was simple, beautiful, and meaningful. The final step in realizing this duet came with Caroline Clay's acting coaching. She found it to be too polite, and helped Erin especially to find her rage. Through coaching and exercises such as barking out loud every time Sam pushed too

hard, the two of them found a succinct and deep relational duet that ended up being one of the stronger sections in the show.

Brad & Sam Argument followed the Hair duet in the show and followed a similar evolution. This was a newer scene that Nick and I had written. I was and am very pleased with this dialogue, but in the end, as with the hair duet, Stephanie and Nick were able to connect more strongly with the content by leaving the spoken dialogue out. I gave them the task of going upstairs (the platform) to get ready for bed. We choreographed this section following the script quite closely, each movement motivated by what would have been said. Narratively, this section represents Sam taking Charlotte's advice and finally stepping up to Brad. He resists, but she insists that they need to talk. They finally get it all out, Sam's concerns about Brad's sudden change, and lack of consideration for her, Brad's frustration with God, and their difficulty in having a baby and differing perspectives on the matter. The act of arguing is a sort of resolution for the two of them for the fact that they are talking to each other at all. In the final image Sam gets into bed (represented vertically in a bent, hunched shape), and soon Brad does the same. They lay in stillness for a moment, either closer to or further from one another than they have ever been. Slowly Sam reaches her hand onto his thigh, connecting the space between the two.

Time Duet served as the exposition to Brad and Sam's characters and their relationship. They each open with one line regarding the other in relation to their parents, and the rest is performed without words. Aided by the motion of the table setting we see them move together through their relationship, but rather than ending, content and together, (as it had been previously choreographed), Brad leaves when Sam is not looking. The audience wouldn't get this detail, but internally, it's getting at the idea that

Brad starts disappearing (to go to karaoke) when things get difficult. What I did want the audience to see was a relationship that gets colder and more disconnected over time.

Graham and Charlotte Scenes

For me as a choreographer, the Hair Duet, Brad & Sam Argument, and Time Duet were the most fulfilling to realize. In part because of the depth and specificity of the context, in part because of the incredible artists I was working with, and in no small part because I was not in these sections and could have an outside eye. While these sections were thriving, the sections between Erin and me: Graham Interrupting, Graham & Charlotte Argument, and a couple of other brief but important interactions, were not working. The outside eyes of the other cast members were the key to realizing these sections. In an atmosphere not unlike mutiny, the cast spoke up unsolicited that these sections were not working, Erin included. The general complaint was that Charlotte was a shallow character, little more than an angry wife who was being done wrong. After getting over my directorial ego, I allowed for their coaching.

We created a new set-up for **Graham Interrupting**, raising the stakes for Charlotte. Whereas she had been quietly reading the whole time, we changed it so that she was folding laundry through the whole first scene as the audience meets the other characters. She finally finishes the laundry and sits down to have a moment to herself. She takes out a book to start reading just as Graham bounds in. We empowered her to actually retort back to Graham, whereas before she kind of pantomimed trying to get a

word in. Caroline coached her to project her voice as loud as I was. This gave a much stronger dynamic to the scene, and an unexpectedly comedic element.

We rearranged the first scene so that it would go straight into **Graham & Charlotte Argument**, adding a crucial transition. After entering and exiting several times, and one brilliant pass across the stage by Theodore, offstage I exclaim: “oh, and by the way- I invited Brad, Sam and Ava over for dinner tonight. They’ll be here in like ten minutes.” Charlotte was annoyed before, but now she’s enraged. She calls out to Graham who sheepishly re-enters the stage. After a brief standoff they go to the kitchen to make the food for dinner. As with the changes made in *Graham Interrupting*, this transition increased the stakes and added context to the scene.

In the end the food and the dialogue were cut from *The Argument*. This was another very difficult pill to swallow. The idea of the scene still strikes me as a strong one, but the reality as it manifested itself within the time frame was that it wasn’t acted well enough, and that it went on too long in the same tone. We settled on a very short percussive rhythmic duet of knives chopping rapidly on cutting boards, spoons clanking in mixing bowls, and stolen angry glances. The script was projected on the wall behind us, sometimes a barrage of illegible words battling with each other, other times bold, clear, and cutting statements.

After the dinner party, we changed it so that Graham decides to leave with their friends, rather than having another moment together where she exclaims to him “I can’t take it anymore.” This was a small transition, but one that the cast would not let me get away with until it was right. After trying several options, we settled on me shutting the

door behind them, pausing to make the decision, then approaching Charlotte to give her a kiss and running back out the door, leaving her alone.

Another brief but crucial interaction of this nature comes just before the Apples Falling section. My plan had been that she storms upstairs and slams the door on me as the inciting action for the monologues. The cast felt that we had already seen this side of her, and proposed that this be a moment of recognition, acceptance, and forgiveness from Charlotte, that this be the inciting action for Graham's reflections, rather than that of anger. This moment always felt awkward for me. All they had me do was to stand and see Charlotte. Don't fidget or try to do anything, just yield the moment to her.

The final moment between Graham and Charlotte that needed work was the transition between the Father Confrontation and the Changing Duet. Lehua actually created this at home with me one night after a dress rehearsal. She asked me to stand there in the empty hug shape; she walked over to me, ducked under and into my arms and replaced the empty space. It was very emotional, and a perfect lead into the Changing Duet.

The Changing Duet's greatest challenge has always been the logistics of simply getting all of the people and clothing into the room together at the same time long enough to practice. Tarythe made this possible, coordinating with the costume shop and the extras. She also was key in tracking the motion of all involved. Erin, Rebecca DeLapp and I designed the outfits/images we would arrive into which included: gardening; going out with friends; a potentially romantic moment at home in bed, interrupted by the kids barging in for a pillow fight; a funeral; and finally a quiet moment at home rocking baby

to sleep. For this go around, I wanted to add even more realistic detail, in terms of mood within each moment. We are angry at each other for one, somber another, excited, erotic, etc. What we found however, was that a realistic portrayal of two people in moments in life wasn't where the magic lay in the section. Rather it existed in the even paced ritual of the changing in and out of moments in time, two people connected as the world swirls around them. Upon realizing this, we removed all of the extra layers and let it exist in its simplicity.

The Cartoon Trio remained a gem through all of the messy edits of every other section. Isobella and Oliver retained the choreography impeccably, despite relatively few rehearsals. The section was moved to happen immediately after Graham leaves unexpectedly after the Dinner Party. Charlotte being left alone is amplified by the fact that the audience now sees her picking up the pieces for the family, cleaning up, getting the kids ready for bed, but we also see the deep love and sense of fun and enjoyment she gets from her children.

The Living Room/Dance Party evolved into two separate and very brief images. The Cartoon Trio ends with mom and kids boogying to music just as we see the rest of the cast and extras entering stage R in a nightclub atmosphere created by club lighting and small tables that are brought on. This image was less than a minute long, reduced from being much longer, and I nearly cut it entirely for fear that it was just extra unnecessary fluff. I received feedback to the contrary however, that it was a short but

strong and very fun moment of contrast. An interesting parallel representation of people grooving to music in different contexts.

Karaoke, one of my favorite themes within the work, one that in the first full draft of the script was an anchor to the entire show, in the end, was cut entirely. This was done within a third and final sweeping cut of scenes two weeks before the show. It was a drastic move, but it was necessary. This meant that the Evolving Song and Graham & Brad's Karaoke Dialogue were gone, and that Brad was now more of a supporting character. We determined to keep this as back-story for the performers, but as far as the audience was concerned, Brad and Sam's inability to have a baby was the only manifestation of their conflict.

The Double Duet combined the movement from Brad and Graham's Karaoke Dialogue with Sam and Charlotte's Faith Walks Dialogue. These were created at the two tables to the rhythm of the speaking in the recordings of these two conversations. Graham and Brad were seated at one table, Charlotte and Sam at the other. The Karaoke audio was cut, but I kept the Faith walks audio. It begins with just Graham and Brad in a short duet switching seats, climbing over one another and the table before settling in stillness as the women enter. The audio comes on of Stephanie's voice and the two couples move in unison doing simple gestures with the settings on the table: stirring the contents of their coffee cup, salting food, etc. Then Graham and Brad exit and Charlotte and Sam continue a duet only to the ambient sounds of the restaurant, doing the choreography that was originally built to the rhythm of the karaoke audio.

The Dinner Party was, from the beginning, one of the most narratively and choreographically clear and uncomplicated sections. The friends come over, interrupting the fight; they all have a nice evening together, eventually exiting out the door. The choreography was a combination of new material made with the cast, the Partnering Quartet from *You*, and the original Lehua Interrupted section made in the first summer intensive with Brad and Lehua. It was very upbeat and fun, with a lot of complicated partnering material, and many opportunities for exposition of each of the characters. The Silverware Game section was removed from it, only because of the lack of time to rehearse it.

Ava's Scenes

From the beginning Candace's character Ava was a difficult one to place. She is significantly younger than the others, the only one who's single, and the only one of a minority background. In reference to the latter, I tried very hard to have a multi-racial/ethnic cast, having invited many people of different races and backgrounds to be in the show, however no others panned out. Furthermore, as a performer, Candace is the least experienced or inclined toward theatricality. A great argument could have been made for cutting the character, but given that Candace had committed to the show, that didn't seem like a fair option. The only way I could figure out how to keep her was to make her a central character. Her character was the most changing through the process. First a woman at the brink of adulthood asking questions about the things she had been raised with (permed hair, and God), Then a woman who was proud of her father and

confused and angry at God for taking him from her. Ultimately, I settled on hers as a character not driven by conflict but rather a diametric opposite to Graham's character. A woman proud of the legacy her father carved out for her, and ultimately an agent of change for Graham who is torn over his own weaknesses and inability to change. Ava's is the voice of naïve simple wisdom, unfettered by life's complications. Her message is idealistic and clear: my father made a choice to change what his father had given him; you can do the same.

This message is conveyed in the following ways:

Opening Solo- We meet Ava dancing to the recorded audio of Candace telling two stories of things she did with her father before he died. In these stories it is clear that she holds him in high regard and cherishes those memories with him. We learn that he died, but the story is not about his death, but his life. The movement is a repurposed segment of Faust Arp from *You*. This is very lush and full movement.

Women Faust Arp- This was a trio for the three women, again performing the Faust Arp material from *You*. The section begins at the end of the Double Duet. Ava enters and has a short trio with Charlotte and Sam at the table. She then begins the Faust Arp material as the audio recording plays from her interview, talking about losing her father and how he was the best dad. Again we see her in a reflective place, sharing positive experiences and memories about her father. She is speaking of the difficulty of losing her father, but focusing on the positive of his life.

The Apples Falling- She has two lines in this section that she speaks live. She opens the scene with the lines about how her father changed his legacy from "violence

and disorder” to “love and God and Family.” Later, After Graham has complained about his undesirable family legacy and makes excuses, questioning whether any of it is his fault, Ava confronts him, pointing out that “Everything was working against my father, but he made a choice to change!”

Ava Solo- This solo is adapted from Candace’s Doom solo from *You*. It comes toward the end of the show and is her falling action/conclusion. Her final celebration of everything she gained from her father. She is newly aware and appreciative of this after her confrontation with Graham. It’s like a private thank you letter to him for everything he did for her.

Graham Vent: Ava’s solo ushers Graham into the space. What was a private moment in her room is now a dance club. She and Graham move briefly in unison together before she exits. This section remained largely unchanged from how it was *in as far as I know*. The movement was still improvised as if at a club. The text was shorter, and I’d like to think performed from a place of more genuine emotion.

More on the Apples Falling Scene- As one of the final acts of cutting, nearly all of the lines in this scene were cut. Ava opens as mentioned above, Graham talks about how crazy runs in his family, toward the middle he asks whether it’s even his fault if it’s “just written in his DNA” to which Ava challenges him. Then at the very end of the section, setting up for the Hair duet, Graham says, “We just found out Charlotte is pregnant with our third. My parents divorced after 8.” Then Brad says, “Sam and I have been praying for a child for four years now. That’s a long time to be ignored.”

Outside of these lines, it's about six minutes of dancing consisting of Columns from *You*, new material built by the cast and myself, part of the floor work from *The Better Half*, and ends with a portion of the Group Section from *You*. With the exception of *The Better Half* material, all of the movement is very rhythmically specific and grounded in a pop-cultural folk sensibility.

From the beginning, I had wanted a group of five or so advanced dancers to perform this section with us. This type of choreography looks better performed by more people, and I liked the idea of the cast existing within a crowd. I was able to get a commitment from dancers from UMD based Phunktions Hip-Hop crew, but in the end only had three people follow through. This did not look like a crowd, just three extra people who randomly joined the group for one section. It was confusing and didn't work. I had to make a very tough decision to cut these three dancers from the piece, even though they had committed their time and were dedicated to the show.

Finally, I will speak of **a few subtle symbolic moments**. The opening image, after we see Charlotte begin folding laundry, is Theodore on the landing facing the audience, singing a lullaby. Oliver did a great job and was very brave to sing a solo. His singing was accompanied by recorded audio of a deep man's voice singing harmony to his melody. In a way this is the whole show wrapped into a moment: the father and son, together in a way, separate in another way: the innocence, vulnerability, and availability of a child with the complexity and guarded state of the aged.

As he is singing, lights come up on Ava and Pascal on the platform playing at a dollhouse. When Theo finishes singing he walks down the stairs, gets a pile of laundry

from mom, and walks off stage. Ava gets up and walks down the stairs. As soon as she leaves Pascal, Pascal puts down her doll and starts reading, as if opening the story of the show. Ava begins her solo with the recorded audio of her memories with her father. One of these memories is that she and her father made a dollhouse together. The whole experience of reflection and appreciation that Ava goes through in the show is catalyzed by this opening moment spent with a child, triggering her memories. After Ava's solo, she goes into her room, staged by lighting and a nightstand, and starts writing. We see Ava writing and Pascal reading diagonal to one another for a moment before the lights go out on Ava and up on the Time Duet, after which Pascal puts down her book, walks down the stairs, takes the laundry basket from mom, and exits. I intentionally drew a connection between Ava and Pascal, as demonstrated above. This carried over to two other small but important moments. In the funeral moment in the Changing Duet we see Pascal near her mother, but hugging Ava. Also in the final hug image, Ava is writing alone, and Pascal enters through the door next to her and snuggles up to her, watching her as she writes. These are all small images that are rich with symbolic meaning for the work.

2013, February–Opening Night

Designers and Creative Team

Composer/Sound Designer

By February Nguyen had offered a few sound samples, none of which were remotely usable. I was growing very weary and wondering if I had made a poor choice in

hiring him. In the mean time it occurred to me that my brother, Joel Brown, was a great musician and that the content of much of his music closely parallels that of my work: reflections on childhood, fatherhood, family, etc. It had naturally occurred to me before then to work with him on this project, but for one reason or another, it never happened. At the prospect of my current composer not being able to deliver, it occurred to me to ask Joel to adapt some of his already existing songs for this work. He was enthusiastic and eager to get started. In contrast to the sluggish collaboration with Nguyen, Joel was communicating with me almost daily, sending music files, asking questions, brainstorming possibilities. I would pinpoint certain songs that I was interested in using, cite the lyrics I wanted to retain, explain the scene they were accompanying and he would start writing. I gave him a copy of the script before all of the cuts were made and encouraged him to use it for inspiration for lyrics. His music was of an aesthetic that I was drawn to so I didn't need to probe him to go in certain directions. Rather he would surprise me with music that was better than I would have asked for. In fact it was uncanny how well his pre-existing music, especially the lyrics, fit the show; as if they were written specifically for *Apple Falling*. One extreme example: he sent me a song called *Apples and Apples*: "Apples and Apples...falling from an apple tree, they won't go too far." It was a dream collaboration.

I emailed Nguyen asking him to only focus on two sections in the hopes that by reducing his load he would be able to produce music that would work. He sent me some more music samples about three weeks before the show that were a bit better than the last but still not usable. At that point I had to make the tough call of citing creative

differences and letting him know that, as we are so close to the show and haven't been able to find anything that works, I wouldn't be able to work with him any further.

In the end about half of the show was composed by Joel and the other half music I selected. The opening lullaby that Theodore sings is adapted from a lullaby that my mother would sing to us when we were young; the deep male voice is Joel's. The Time Duet is a song of Joel's that I had never heard before. The theme of the section is of a couple moving through time together. The song is called *Time*, and includes the lyric: "It's like a lost dove, and I can't go back in time" repeating the phrase "in time." After I say my first lines at the beginning of the Apples Falling section I jump off the platform, roll on the ground and start dancing. Joel's song *Falling*, has a very catchy and edgy rhythm that gives a perfect drive to the section, repeating the lyric "falling on the floor."

The first song I thought of for this collaboration was a song called *Baby Hungry* because it perfectly matches the theme of the Hair duet. This song was rewritten, incorporating the script from the original Women's Dialogue. It took an already highly emotionally loaded section to an even higher level. Perhaps the most personally meaningful song for me was the one he re-wrote for the Father Confrontation. It is a song he wrote when he was only about 15 and consisted of a strange mix of the deepest most profound gut-wrenching emotional content, mixed with the awkward perspective, and amateur songwriting of a teenager. I asked him to simply pare the song down to the former, including the lyrics: "I just want you to know, you are my hero" "Are you watching me?" "I don't want you to see all the bad in me" "Please turn your head."

The song *Apples to Apples* just fit too perfectly to use during the show, so I had it play after the curtain closed.

The other major contributor to the sound score was Jeff Dorfman, the sound designer. He was hired for the show about three weeks before opening and was majorly helpful, especially in cleaning up the audio files of the recorded interviews that I had edited sloppily in garageband, and for generally having a person to take care of little sound issues as they came up. Again, the more hands you have working toward your goal, the higher the quality, and for me as director and performer, the more headspace for the important stuff.

Scenic, Lighting, Projections

I think that in the end it was a little too ambitious for Drew to have designed all three elements. When we got into tech he was in majorly high stress mode and things were not looking good. There was a lot of work done on all three elements between tech and opening night. The colors of the furniture were determined to be too distracting so everything was painted in different tones of grey. At first this idea made me very worried that it would sterilize the set, but in the end it matched the space in a way that gave it coherence. It personalized it rather than depersonalized it. The lighting was the most frustrating aspect of the work, or perhaps the very little tech time we had was the most frustrating, which manifested in the lights. The projections were of a similar nature. Drew was constantly working on new ideas within the tech process, that being the only time he ever had to try out his ideas in the space. There seem to have also been some ideas that in the end there just was not time for and had to be let go of. All of that said I found the

collaboration with Drew to be very rewarding. I felt he brought his own creative ideas to the work that amplified the artistic direction I had set for the piece.

Costumes

Surprisingly I did not find the same level of satisfaction with the collaboration with Rebecca. She did not bring the cast in to try things on until very late in the process, and when she did the costumes did not match the research she had offered in our meetings. The clothing was oversized and generally plain and frumpy. As we worked on honing in more closely to the research we eventually did find nice costumes for almost the entire cast. I was never happy with Ava's costume. One thing that was pointed out was that the research drawings were of a different body type than Candace's so we were shooting in the wrong direction. It was acceptable in the end, but not what I would have hoped. Another major cut in the work happened in the area of costuming. As planned we came on stage in a different outfit after each time we exited. I got the feedback that this was too messy, and most importantly to me, lessened the impact of the changing duet. With that we cut all of the extra outfits for everyone. The entire cast stayed in the same outfit for the whole show with the exception of the changing duet.

One lesson I learned through this process is of the difference between staged theatre versus film. My idea in the conceiving of the changing of outfits throughout was that in a film you wouldn't see the characters in the same outfit the whole time. I wanted this to be like real life, different day, different outfit. It occurred to me however that in a film the camera focuses in on the face, the clothing is peripheral. On a stage you see the full body the full time. Audience members get to know the characters by their costumes

as much as their faces. If costumes are changing throughout, that gives the audience another thing to have to keep track of, and I want them to be focusing on the story and the choreography.

Movement and Acting Coaching

Unfortunately I was not organized or perhaps productive enough in the creative process to have employed their help as fully as I could have. Nonetheless, Caroline and Adriane were very helpful in the final week of rehearsals and moving into tech. They would coach the performers on the side as I worked on certain sections, they would offer notes after runs, which was so helpful since I was in the show. Adriane focused a lot of attention on Nick, and the improvement was marked. Caroline was particularly able to help Erin to find her voice and emotions in performance and saw a great improvement from her coaching. I worked individually with both Caroline and Adriane, focusing on myself as a performer, outside of director mode.

Dramaturge

Jeff was more hands-off as we grew closer to the show, but remained an ever-vital outside eye. His dramaturgical note in the program was very impressive and I hope was able to prime the audience for a more informed viewing of the work.

Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, and Run Crew

I have made clear the vital role that Tarythe played in the entire process. This remained true to the very end. Additionally the Assistant Stage Manager, Marshalle Grody, and the run crew became vital to the work. The run crew was a group of about six

undergraduate students who I used for the changing duet, running clothing and costumes throughout the section. This is a very difficult task. It is one of a performer, and with a little coaching they arrived in a very solid performative state. Erin and I were never waiting for them on stage, we were able to stay focused on our characters and our tasks at hand, without worrying whether the next item would be in the right place or not.

Chapter 4: Results

2013

In many ways the show was a profound success. Following are some of the responses I received in writing from audience members:

Came to your show last night. I don't even know what to write – it was so beautiful, that I cannot express my reaction. It was brilliant. Your theme, your choreography, your performers, your dialogues, your story, touched me in a way that rarely happens to me. I absolutely loved what you did, loved it!

-Stephanie Bergwall

I saw your show last night and wanted you to know I thought it was the one of the most impressive pieces I have seen here at Maryland. It was brilliant. I thought your entire choreography was innovative, intellectual and very moving. I followed the story line all the way throughout so clearly. It was personal yet something for every man. My husband cried watching your piece. Thank you for such a memorable event. All the dances were amazing.

-Camilla Schlegel

I saw "Apple Falling" on Friday and just wanted to tell you that I was truly inspired by how vulnerably and beautifully you expressed the questions and challenges of your journey through the piece. I was often moved to tears...thank you for sharing this with others.

-Jan Beardsley

...You did a wonderful job in taking on a work of meaningfulness, emotional depth and complexity of all elements! I applaud you for revealing a very personal experience and message... You brought a great sense of respect and honor to the material and integrated your performers of varying ages and abilities in seamless ways.

-Deborah Riley

The following is a sampling of anonymous quotes offered to me from Stephanie Miracle, written by students in the Dance History class for which she is the Teacher's Assistant:

Graham's story was beautifully created and presented.

Apple Falling was so raw, stripped, honest, theatrical, and heartfelt. Graham Brown could not have done a better job.

Graham's work was so authentic, heart-wrenching, and expressive, that it seems

that the impetus behind his choreography involves raw experience and truth.

Overall, I found Graham's work to be an unbelievably compelling work of art.

I am honored and grateful for this flattering feedback. I also think it prudent to remember that those who dislike or feel lackluster about the work are not likely to express this to me, especially in writing. Many of my dancer friends were more critical, finding certain holes in the work. Some of the critical feedback included a lack of understanding of aspects of the storyline, that Candace's character was particularly vague, that some of the movement that was transplanted from *You* had lost some of its life in the restaging and reorganizing.

As for my own evaluation of the work I simultaneously feel it to be a triumph and a failure. As Brian MacDevitt put it, "There's a masterpiece in there." In other words it's not there yet, but it's in there somewhere. There was much in the work that I am very pleased with. To name a few of these aspects: I find the overall flow of the show to be relatively coherent, I like the pacing from section to section, I feel like it largely follows a logic from one scene to the next. I find many of the scenes to be very successful including the Time Duet, Graham Interrupting, Dinner Party, Cartoon Trio, Hair Duet, Brad & Sam Argument, Father Confrontation, and Changing Duet. I am very pleased with the emotional ride that the work takes the audience on. Moving an audience to both laughter and tears is truly a significant accomplishment.

When I refer to the work as a failure, I say it in the sense that it is not fully realized, that not all of the rich meaning and storyline was conveyed fully. One

“compliment” I received from a few dance savvy audience members was that watching me dance was the highlight of the show, or that the unique movement vocabulary was the works strongest aspect. The first is almost the deepest cut because, though it is always nice to hear a compliment about my dancing, that was surely the single least worked on part of the show. Indeed had I had it my way I would not have performed in the show at all. The latter, again though it is nice to be told that I am an inventive creator of movement or of composition, this compliment to me says that the movement invention for its own sake upstaged the theatrical or narrative content of the work rather than fueling it.

I feel that in the rush to find the completed work, much of the symbolism either disappeared or was too faint to have been significantly impacting. Furthermore with so much cutting of the script, I fear that some important lines were deleted that would have been more successful had they remained.

Specifically I do not think that much of the intricate symbolism within the opening scene (as outlined above) translated to the audience. I think that the transition into the Graham & Charlotte Argument and the Argument itself lost the stakes that it should have had. I do not know that I would do something different were I to go back into the exact same time crunch, but as it was originally written the Argument was filled with very high stakes and intricate, vulnerable, and relatable details into the couples’ lives. As it happened, Graham Interrupting ended up being so humorous, and the Argument so short, that I’m afraid it just felt like a slapstick continuance of the comedic scene, rather than an emotional inciting action to a conflict that will be wrestled through for the remainder of the show.

The Double Duet lost all of its stakes and became at best a nice piece of choreography that offers further exposition into the friendship of the characters. The recorded audio is a nice interesting story about Stephanie's father, but has no connective tissue to the rest of the story. I question much of the movement I transposed from *You*. I'm not sure about the Faust Arp movement in the women's trio. I fear that the large sweeping choreography swallowed the content of Candace's audio about her father, and of the relationship between the women, making it confusing and becoming another nice dance piece. Overall I wonder about the Apples Falling section. Here more than anywhere I feel that the story is put on hold for some cool dancing. Were I to go back I think I would have kept more of my monologues, if not others. I think telling the audience more about the particulars of my family: my brother who was paralyzed in an accident that may have been my fault, my sister and best friend who suddenly snapped, my father who cried himself to sleep as a boy waiting unrequitedly for his mother to come home, my mother who was married to a man that didn't love her for 20 years before finally leaving him, would have raised the stakes and given Graham more of a reason to go into the Graham Vent.

Overall I was very dissatisfied with Ava's character. I think the detailed and rich description of the character that I offered above was not translated at all in her performance. Partially this is a performative lack in Candace as a performer, but as a director, I did not give her the rehearsal time that she would have needed to realize this character. As a director I do not feel I highlighted her strengths enough, or perhaps did not hide her weaknesses enough. As with the Graham & Charlotte Argument, I do not

know what I would have done differently given the circumstances, but in the end, Ava did not work as a character in the performance.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Next Steps

2013-

Never have I poured so much work, so much heart, soul, and guts into a work of art before. I feel as if my soul has been through a shredder over the past year plus in conceptualizing, creating, writing, severing, editing, re-editing, re-creating, re-imagining, until finally staging and performing *Apple Falling*. I have never been brought to tears so many times in the middle of the night as I write or edit music, or in rehearsal as I experience the unearthing of pure heart-felt emotion. I have never felt more worthless, incompetent, uncreative, frustrated or overwhelmed as I did in this process. The irony is that the rewards are not nearly as sweet as the sacrifice is bitter, for the work will always fall short of the ideal that exists in my head. I have never learned more, gained more skills and a more focused set of personal aesthetics and goals than I have from this process. I feel as though the creating of this work has laid the gauntlet for the rest of my career. I am as equally excited and eager to start tomorrow, as I am terrified to ever attempt it again.

On a more practical level, I'm not sure what is next. I feel as if I have crossed into a new terrain that I do not think I can return from. I can not imagine going back to making work of a purely abstract nature and without a creative team, especially without a stage manager. A big part of me is not finished with this work. Whereas I am often bubbling with new ideas, my creative consciousness remains with this work. I think any new creative endeavors I take on will be as a choreographer and/or movement coach for theatre. More than anything I would like to find a play that I feel strongly about, with a

director and cast who is willing and interested to go along with me, and to comb through, intricately choreographing the entire play. Finding the places where we can physicalize the story and lose the dialogue, and where we layer movement and words together. Neither theatre nor dance feel like enough for me. My real artistic passion lies within merging the two.

Beyond that of a creator, I am interested in continuing to be a student. There is so much I have to learn about performance. I would love to find outlets for continued learning in theatre, be it classes, or involvement in performance work.

I am also very interested in repositioning myself as an active member of my family and community. I want to find a balance in my time so that I may have a more three dimensional existence, and may be a good parent for my children and husband for my wife, which, in the end is what it is all really about.