

UNCG SCHOOL OF DANCE

MFA THESIS CONCERT

of liminal space
by: Caitlyn Schrader

...(con)fabulate
by: Allison Beaty

March 25th & 26th, 2022



Photo by: Snovian Image

A black and white photograph of a woman in profile, looking upwards towards the sky. The background is a cloudy sky. The image is partially obscured by the abstract geometric graphic on the left side.

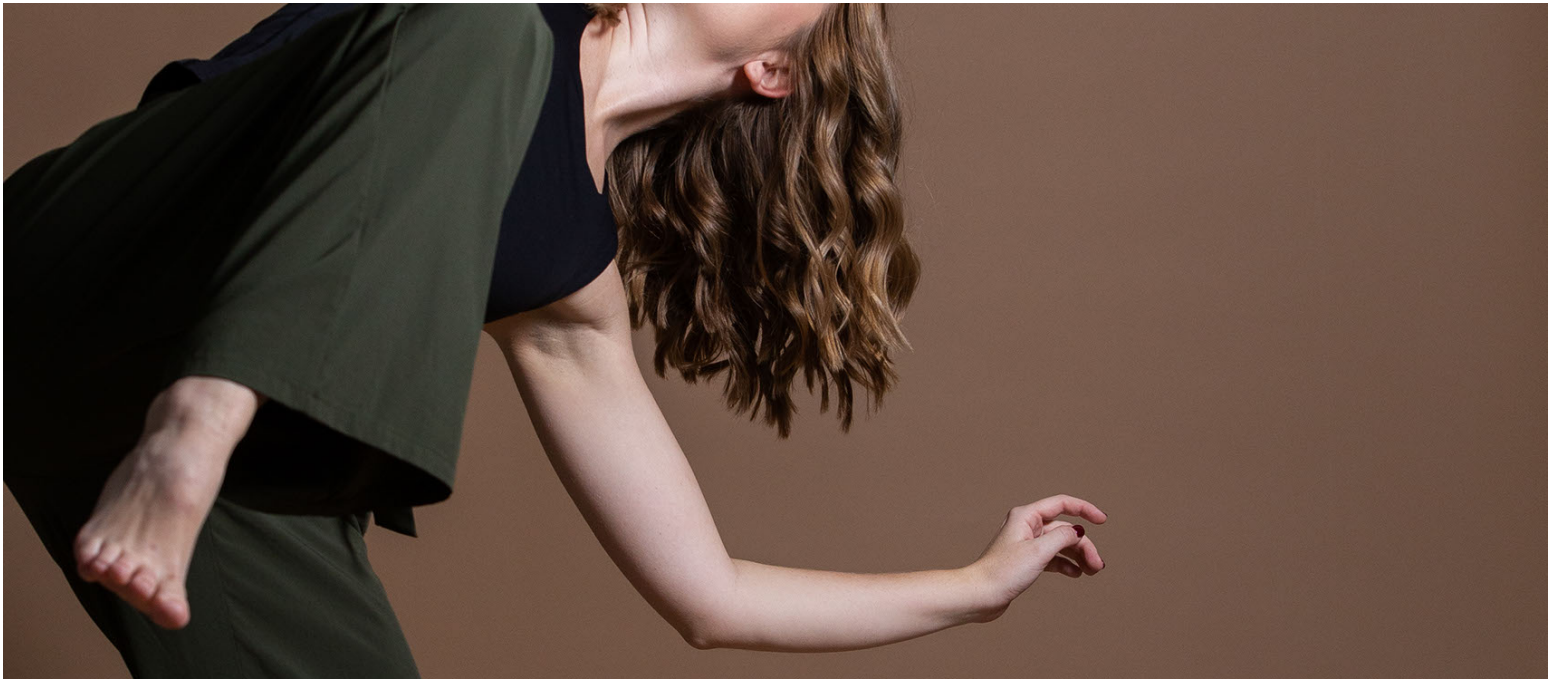


ALLISON BEATY

"I am immersed in research at the intersection of artmaking and scientific inquiry, aiming to bridge historical gaps between these disciplinary perspectives through an embodied practice of experimentation, abstraction, and collaboration."

I situate my choreographic work in the postmodern/contemporary genre with a focus on process, experimentation and chance, abstraction, and improvisation. In addition, I position my work alongside a community of interdisciplinary, collaborative artists— particularly those working with cognitive neuroscience, psychology, and technology. My overarching choreographic research explores using multimedia dance performance as a means of investigating interdisciplinary collaboration in the representation of scientific and psychological phenomena through an artistic, embodied lens.

PC: Hannah Long



More About Allison...

Since I can remember, I have always been interested in both art and science. Throughout my life I have often felt either pulled towards art and away from science, or vice versa. Typically when I mention that I love both dance and science, it is assumed that I mean “dance science.” However, while it is true that I have a passion for both dance and science, I am first and foremost an artist. My work in graduate school, particularly throughout the MFA Thesis process, has illuminated this truth.

My current creative research centers around embodying scientific phenomena in the development of movement material, choreographic devices, and improvisational structures. More specifically, my MFA Thesis work, ... *(con)fabulate*, reflects on memory processes, errors, and failures through abstraction of neurological principles and personal reflections on remembering and forgetting. Taking theoretical concepts from cognitive neuroscience and psychology into the dance studio, I investigate the artistic possibilities for deepened understanding of the human experience through embodiment of brain mechanisms in collaboration with a composer and multimedia artist. This work, alongside continued explorations of memory in other choreographic processes, explores how we store and recall memories, what we remember and forget, and how our present experiences are changed by the different ways we conceptualize our memories through recollection, embodiment, sharing, and sensory stimulation that engages reflection on/of the past. In addition, this work considers how interdisciplinary collaboration with other art mediums— specifically through layering of movement with sound design and projection design— heightens possibilities for abstraction of scientific phenomena in live mixed media dance performance.

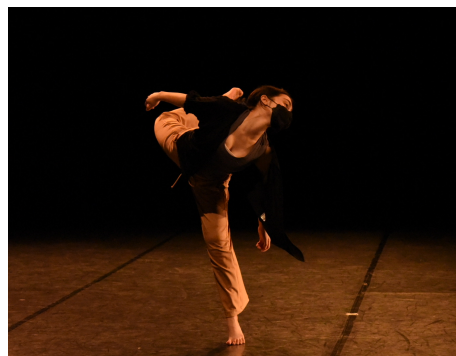
[Link to Allison's Website](#)

PC: Hannah Long



Developed out of a deep exploration in collaborative, interdisciplinary creative practice, ...*(con)fabulate* investigates the powerful, yet fragile nature of human memory. Through examination of neurological memory mechanisms and psychological principles of remembering and forgetting, this work explores how our present experiences are changed by the different ways we conceptualize our individual and shared memories through recollection and embodiment that engages reflection on/of the past.

PC: Yilin Wang





PC: Yilin Wang

**A BEHIND THE SCENES LOOK AT THE
CREATIVE PROCESS OF ...(CON)FABULATE**





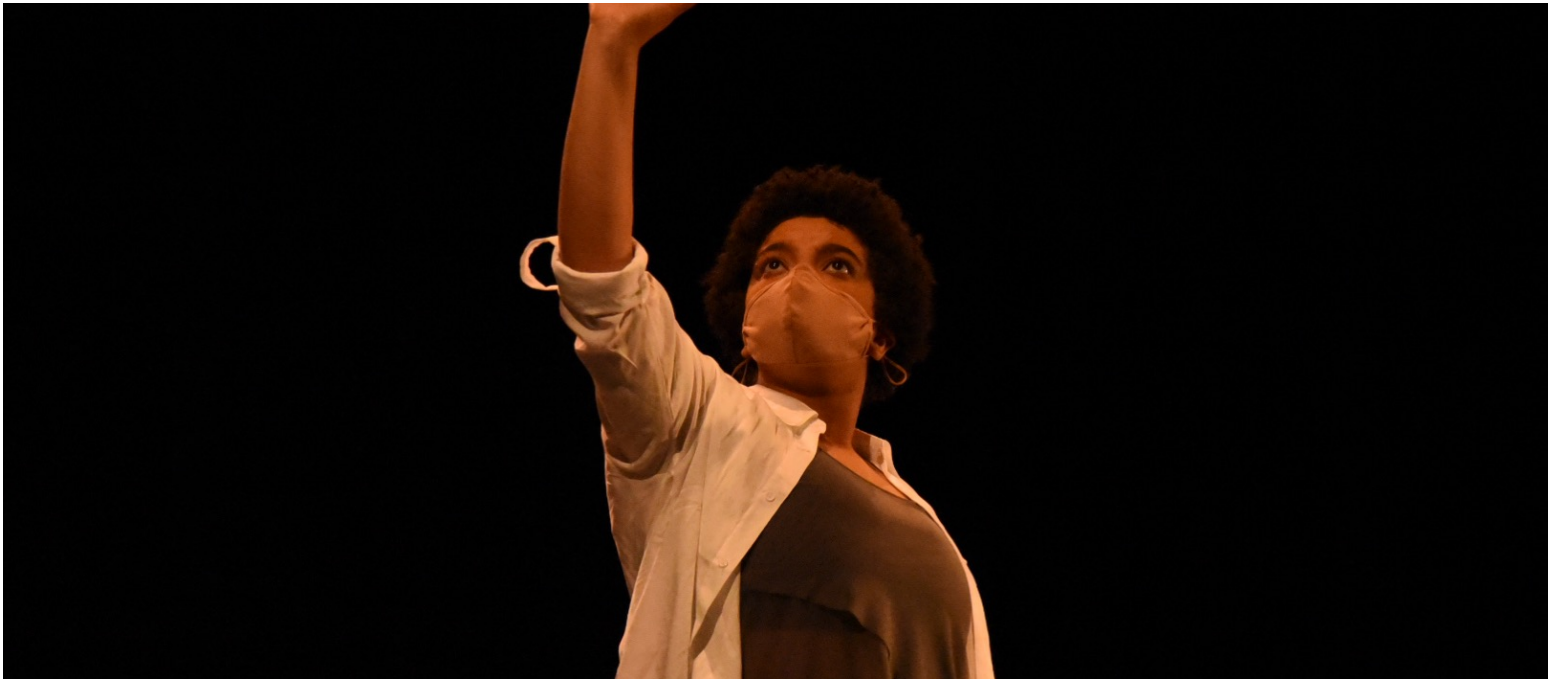
Conceptual Development

When I began the graduate program at UNCG, I knew my creative work for my thesis would somehow intertwine scientific principles with choreographic design. During my first year, I became interested more specifically with investigating the brain, as I've always been fascinated by this incredibly important and intricate part of the body.

This led me to enroll in Dr. Robert Wiley's course, Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychology at UNCG. While taking this course, I began exploring translation of the different neurological processes and concepts we were learning in class into movement and choreographic design in the dance studio. Through this movement lab of sorts, I found myself continuing to revisit principles of memory over and over again.

PC: Yilin Wang

Remembering & Forgetting



Diving more deeply into memory mechanisms, I became captivated by the two seemingly opposed ideas of "remembering" and "forgetting." I say "seemingly opposed" because as I reflect on this end of my thesis work, I now see the two processes as interdependent, symbiotic, and harmonious.

I used to think more negatively about the concept of "forgetting." Forgetting where you put your keys. Forgetting the name of a person you have met too many times to ask their name again. Forgetting the exact feelings, sights, sounds, and smells of one of your favorite days. Watching someone else slowly forget details of their life over time. These, among many others, are frustrating, stressful, and even devastating examples of forgetting. The inability to remember. A failure of our brain's memory system.

PC: Yilin Wang

FORGETTING
true forgetting = disease of synapses
ability of forgetting = adaptive
to forget FUNCTION of
memory not
failure

Choreographer Journal 01.08.2022 (reflection from journal entry on 06.09.2021)

However, there is also another side to forgetting. The *ability* to forget. Forgetting allows us to dispose of information that is not useful to us anymore and make space for things that matter for our ever-changing lives. Forgetting frees us to let

go of unnecessary details and focus on things of great importance to us. Forgetting empowers us to move on from heartbreak and love deeply and vulnerably again. Forgetting allows us to experience and build new memories to treasure. Forgetting enables us to grow. Forgetting is a *function* of memory, not just a failure.



PC: Yilin Wang



Movement Development

I employed many different choreographic methods in the creation of my thesis work. Collaborating with natural and genuine consequences of fallible memory, I experimented with various ways of "teaching" movement material to the dancers. Some of the movement sequences seen in the first half of the work were intentionally taught in a way that made it impossible for the dancers to be *able* to remember the entire sequence perfectly. This method of communicating phrase work to the dancers proved to be a fascinating investigation of human memory while also providing subtle, yet intriguing movement motifs and variations—something that would have taken *hours* to create had I not utilized the power of forgetting to our advantage in the creative process.

PC: Yilin Wang

In the development of movement material for this work, I also began playing around with translating neurological and psychological principles of memory into choreographic devices. One example can be seen in the image below. The dancers were given a movement sequence and then asked to manipulate the phrase based on the translation of a specific type of memory error.

- memory errors:
- 3 • transience (detailed → "essence"/generalizations)
 - 4 • false memory (adding add. details)
 - 5 * • misinformation effect (~~patterns/groups~~ ^{patterns/groups})
 - 6 • source confusion (diff. body parts)
 - 7 * • intrusion errors (diff. phrase brought in)
 - 8 • absent mindedness (stillness/pauses)
 - 9 • time-slice errors (diff. order)
 - 10 • problem of bias (any other manipulations like levels, facings, etc.)

Choreographer Journal 08.24.2021

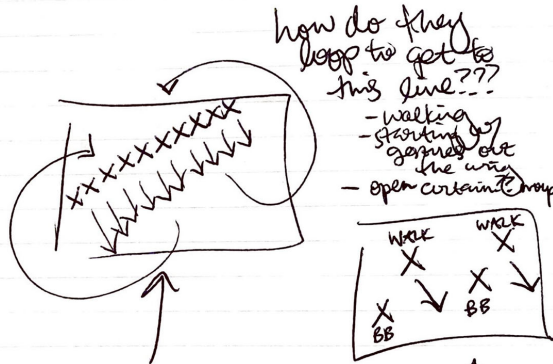
For example, "transience" refers to a weakening or loss of memory detail or accessibility over time; therefore, dancers were asked to create a manipulated phrase that was only the essence of the original sequence. To do so, the dancers wrote down verbs that could be used to describe each major movement concept in the original sequence and then created a new phrase with only the list of verbs as their reference point. These kinds of manipulation processes were uniquely developed for each memory error in the above image to create the majority of the movement material seen in the first half of the work.

I then organized these manipulated phrases in a list from least to most different in comparison to the original phrase. Utilizing this list, I began to craft the structural development of the movement sequences and spatial design to represent memory changing and becoming further abstracted over time from the original experience/moment of memory encoding.

phrase manipulations - how diff they are from original 08/31/21

- LESS**
- NEW UPPER BODY (Arlinn & Arjuna)
 - INTRUSION (Arlinn, Arjuna, Kat, Gemma)
 - FALSE MEMORY (KT & Kyah)
- MIDDLE**
- SOURCE CONFUSION (+ they both together + Kat & Arjuna and Gemma & Arlinn)
 - MISINTD PARTNERING (Gemma & Kat)
- A LOT**
- TRANSCIENCE (Marissa & Christina)

- BIG TIME SLICE BOI (Leandra & Aidan)
- BIAS (KT & Marissa & Aidan)
- Absent mindedness (Christina, Leandra, Kyah)



→ start w/ walking phrase loop
 → have a pair go into big box after last walking loop??
 (→ start making a structure for manipulations)





PC: Yilin Wang

Structural Development & Spatial Design



Throughout this process, I explored the overarching theme of the ever-changing nature and fallibility of human memory due to the brain's neuroplasticity and the abstraction processes that occur neurologically in interpretation of external stimuli. I investigated this theme through three interconnected ideas: 1. Abstraction in brain processing of past experiences during memory recall, 2. Memory interruptions and failures, and 3. Memory fragments and shared memory. As I worked on translating principles relating to these themes, I began to see them not as completely separate, but rather as different windows through which to view the mysterious, fickle, and sometimes even deceptive nature of our own memory.

PC: Yilin Wang

In the image below, you will see a journal entry from the beginning of this process in which I was figuring out how my different conceptual interests about memory might sort themselves out choreographically.

⇒ SECTION 1 MEMORY PROCESSES/CHANGES/EVOLUTIONS

- walking phrase
- manipulations → building in repetitions
- groups/sections/ins & outs/
partners/soles -

⇓
distortion
manipulation
abstraction

SECTION 2 ⇒ TRAIN
OF THOUGHT??

⇒ SECTION 3 FRAGMENTS/PIECES/SPECIFIC STORIES

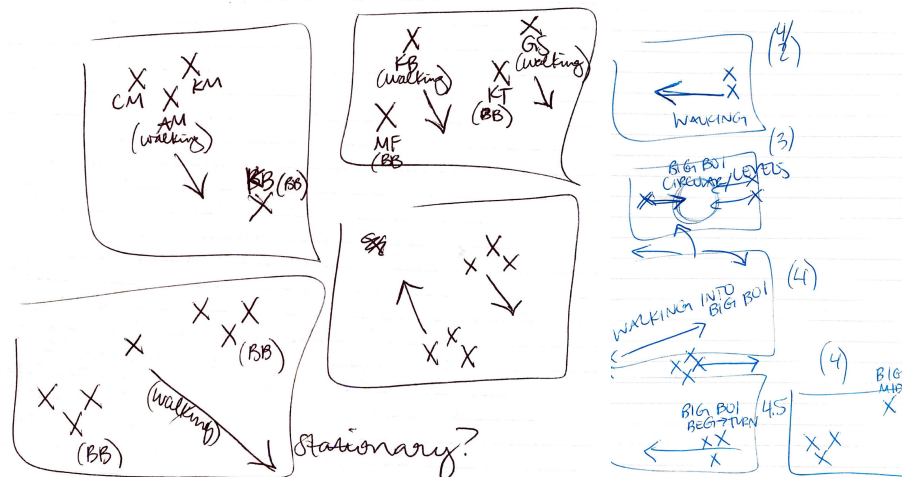
- photographs
- dream-like / foxy / foggy
- bits & pieces → moments of stories
- build material from stuff pulled from photos

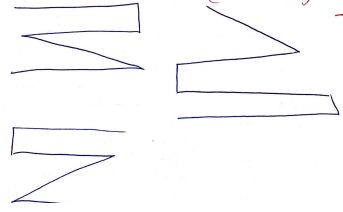
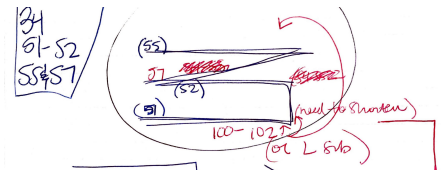


Spatial Design

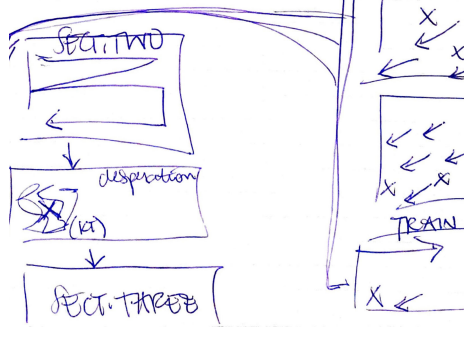
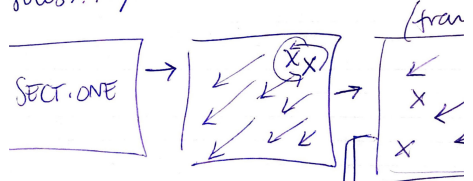
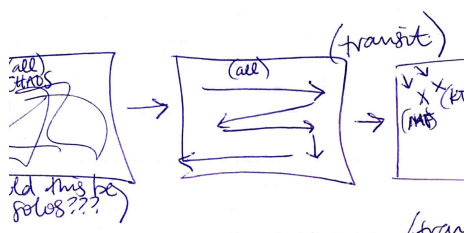
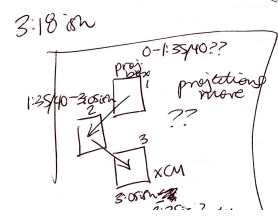
Spatial design always plays a large role in my choreographic work, and the creation of my thesis work was no different. Guided by the neurological and psychological principles I was studying in addition to my own artistic/aesthetic preferences for visual design in dance, I would often zoom out from the specific section I was crafting to re-examine the overall spatial development of the work as a whole. You will see a glimpse at some of those moments in the following images below.

PC: Yilin Wang





SECT.





PC: Yilin Wang

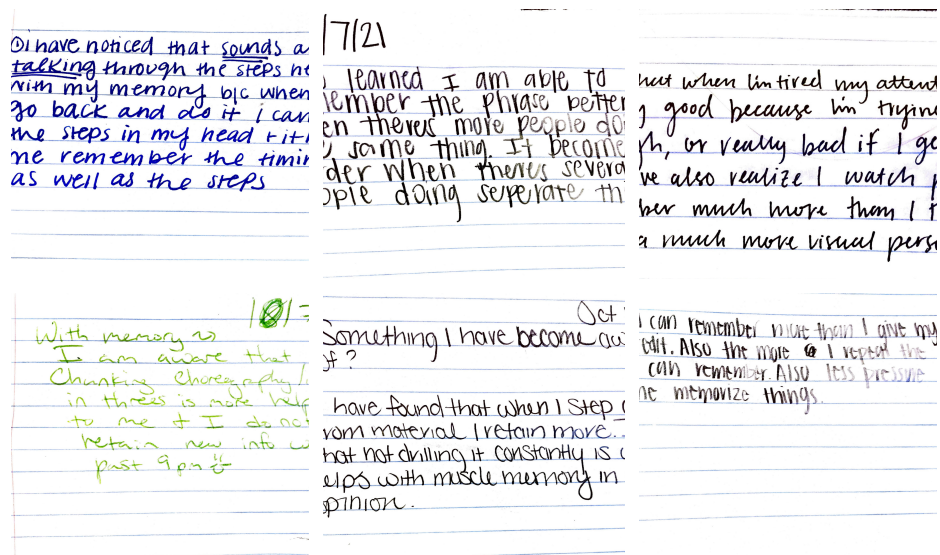
"In a good collaboration, differences between partners mean that one plus one will always equal more than two." –Twyla Tharp



Collaboration

My choreographic methods are highly collaborative, both with other disciplines, but also with the dancers in the space. I view my creative process as a series of shared exchanges between the dancers and I that ultimately results in shared ownership of the work. Throughout this process, we reflected on our own experiences of memory through movement, auditory, and visual explorations that allowed us to remember and consider our past experiences, as well as deepen our understanding of and relationship to our own memory capabilities.

PC: Yilin Wang



we became aware of my
Attention/focus during those
when I really tried, I've been
now aware of when I
of absorbing/memorizing the
situation, like I'm conscious
aware of this happening, I
don't think I've realized

What stood out tonight in
the act of talking about my
memory... the more I talk
the more I remembered.

I forgot a lot of what we
did that week but for some reason
I do remember a phrase
made from weeks ago

Dancer Reflections

2) I struggled to remember
when facing different directions
in space & with different people.

Dancer Reflection

Toward the end of rehearsal I couldn't
remember instructions even right after
you said them.

Dancer Reflection

In addition to collaborating with the dancers, I also invited two other artists into the creative process. Collaborating with a composer and visual artist expanded the possibilities for manipulation and distortion of visual and auditory information through layering of sound design and projection design on top of the movement design the dancers and I were crafting. However, this collaboration became so much more than just a layering of sensory information. The conversations that the collaborators and I shared together in our monthly meetings inspired my creative direction and resulted in many of the conceptual, visual, aural, and kinesthetic elements that are present in the final work.

COLLABORATOR MTNG. → OCT.

10 18 21

- taking a whole/photo/memory & breaking it up in diff. ways / never complete memories
- mismatching parts together aesthetically / lines/shapes, but we know they don't go together / they don't make sense

Choreographer Journal 10.18.21 (notes from October collaborator Zoom meeting)



As you continue to scroll you will have a chance to learn more about the collaborators I had the pleasure of working with on this project. I am deeply grateful for their creative insights and thought-provoking questions that challenged and inspired me as an artist throughout this process. This work would not be what it is today without the generosity of the dancers and collaborators to offer so much of their own voices and perspectives with me.

One plus one really does equal more than two in a good collaboration.

PC: Yilin Wang

COLLABORATORS FOR ... (CON)FABULATE



PROJECTION DESIGN

Jacqueline Hinkson is a freelance artist, dancer, and filmmaker currently residing in Atlanta, GA. She is passionate about the healing capacity of artistic and movement practices. Her personal practice centers on mindfulness, improvisation, a growing relationship with trust, and an avenue for self-analysis in relation to her environment. Jacqueline explores these concepts through various mediums, often overlapping them, to create works that reflect the complexity of the human experience. Jacqueline is currently developing films, choreographic pieces that merge mediums, projection work for stage, and a painting series. These works in progress encompass concepts of awakening, our relationship to others as a reflection of self, the fragile nature of memory, and the evolution of ideas when we lead with self-trust.

A note from Jacqui on the collaborative process:

“The element of dialogue shared between Sean, Allison, and I informed and enriched my process infinitely. We often reflected on the concept itself when we convened— memory: its distorted and often fleeting nature, the ways in which we process and hold onto, the element of playback, the influence of our memories on those of others, and various points of dialogue connected to the human psyche. While in conversation, these ideas would begin to take form in my medium. I would see ways to arrange elements within the video content, patterns to play around with, and motions/movement that would reflect these aspects of memory. I believe collaboration has the potential to open so many more doors than may have been possible on one’s own. Engaging in this conversational and

reflective process with Sean and Allison has proven to inspire dynamic, obscure, and expansive qualities within my contribution to this work.”—Jacqui Hinkson



COMPOSITION

Sean Mulcahy is a multi-instrumentalist and composer from Charlotte, NC currently based in Greensboro, NC. He has collaboratively composed and performed live scores for the Nouveau Sud Circus Project since 2015 and worked with various Charlotte-based arts organizations including Children’s Theatre, CPCC, and UNCC. His compositional output ranges from film, dance, and videogame scores to sound installations for art galleries. He also plays accordion in the progressive-folk band, Winterbirds. He attended UNCG where he received a bachelor’s degree in Music Composition and studied ethnomusicology.

A note from Sean on the collaborative process:

“I was very excited by this project when Allison first approached me about it. I’ve had an abiding interest in neuroscience and aspects of memory for many years and have previously sought to express these subjects sonically. Working with Allison, Jacqui, and all of the dancers has been a very enriching experience. I feel that drawing movements, images, and sounds from the recollections of each of the dancers led to a compelling cohesion between the layers of our contributions. The continual, mutual feedback throughout the creative process has yielded work that feels legitimately interdisciplinary rather than just collaborative.” –Sean Mulcahy



LIGHTING DESIGN

Savannah Jenkins (Winston-Salem, NC), has trained in various genres of dance and is currently in the process of earning her Bachelor of Fine Arts with a concentration in performance and choreography while also obtaining minors in both arts administration and anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro anticipated May 2022. She was selected to participate in American Dance Festival in NYC under many artists. These artists include Urban Bush Women, Kyle Marshall, Christian Von Howard, Nia Love, Leah Cox, and more. She has also learned works from B.J Sullivan, Clarice Young, Juel D. Lane, Maurice Watson and many more. Her interest include, interdisciplinary art and culture as well as choreographic processes. She hopes to perform in a professional company and collaborate with more artist in the future. For serious inquiries please contact Savannah Jenkins at smjenki3@uncg.edu.

Chris Fleming has served in the capacity of studio assistant for a number of visual artists and blacksmiths; and as a Stage Hand, Stage Manager, Technical Director, and Production Manager for many Dance, Theater, Opera, and live music artists and venues. In 2001, Chris began to explore working in higher education, first as a guest artist and speaker at Naropa University (Boulder, Colorado), followed by St.Olaf College (Northfield, Minnesota) and the University of Georgia (Athens, Georgia). He is currently the Dance Technical Director at UNC Greensboro.