PROPOSAL: CHOREOGRAPHY
Courtney Darlington
Number of Dancers: 5-7
Semester of Presentation: Fall
Title Ideas: (pur)chasing power

I. The Seed: Project Inspiration/ Intention

I am looking to explore the cyclic relationship between wealth and power. Wealth is a resource used to access more power. The elite in our society have an abundance of this resource that is often exploited in order for personal gain and amplified influence. Once this influence is bought, wealth becomes easier to obtain, feeding the cycle, making it stronger.
II. The Roots: Research Process


- This article introduces the Class-Domination theory. Those in the social upper class are currently benefiting most from our economic system. Comprising 0.5% to 1% of the population, they own 35-40% of all privately held wealth in the United States. The upper class is also very prevalent in the corporate community though their collective stock ownership. Members of the upper class have power based on their wealth, and corporate executives have organizational power based on their influence. The upper class’ power does not stop here. Many large non-profit organizations share the same members as those of the corporate community. These organizations serve a huge role in framing debates over public policy and shaping public opinion. I want to really explore these issues and to represent them through dance, providing my audience with an informative and insightful experience.


- I worked with Doug last summer while I attended his workshop and participated in his Choreographic Devices class. I want to use a lot of the games that he came up with in order to create movement and spatial intentions.


- This article talks about the mechanisms that the wealthy use in order to exercise their power. These include political campaign funding and thereby buying access and influence into the government, ideology and propaganda especially through the school system, and by capital. Our society functions on the well being of capitalists in order to provide economic growth and job security to many Americans. “Trickle down economics” is a huge ideal that is running our society. When firms ask for tax incentives and looser regulations they argue that increased profits will generate more investment and more jobs and that a failure to grant their requests will do the opposite. This way of thinking is toxic, because it is validating the influence of wealth on power.


- This was a memoir written by Wednesday Martin, an anthropologist who moved to the upper-east side with her family. She studied the behaviors of those living in the Upper East Side discussing the hierarchies and the stress to maintain “the perfect life.” She discusses how important materialism is to upper-east side wives. Those who had Birken bags, big apartments, and children in the best private
schools were the only ones who were significant. Wednesday Martin even started to adapt the traits of these women in order to fit in. I want to use her story in my dance because I believe that it is a good representation of how wealth and power affect people.

- Nathalie Pubellier is a French Choreographer who I had the experience to work with in Paris. She developed a choreographic method called “the Imprint,” where she has her dancers associate each movement to a verb having them speak that verb while executing the movement so that it is “imprinted” into the body. Doing this makes the dancer hyperaware of what they are doing and completely changes how to the movement is portrayed. I intend to use a lot of Nathalie’s teachings in my own choreographic method.

- This piece entitled, “The Statement”, was choreographed by Crystal Pite and performed by NDT. I saw this piece in the Netherlands this past March and was instantly inspired by the lighting as well as the movement quality. They use a lot of full body gestures in order to communicate with each other. It is very narrative and the lighting was very complimentary of the piece. The cues were very abrupt and kept the audience completely enthralled throughout the work.

- This was another piece that I saw, performed by NDT and choreographed by Sol Leon and Paul Lightfoot, a duo that I have done a lot of research on. I really want to use a lot of partner work in my piece and I intend on using “Shoot the Moon” for inspiration. The choreography created a magical relationship between the dancers; the partner work was intricate and fluid.

- This is a book written by neuroscientist, Ian Robertson. It discusses the mental and physical changes that take place in the brain when someone obtains power and is continuously successful. He compares winning to a drug. The more a person wins, the more they will continue to win. I want to use this book for movement generation. How does power physically affect the dancer? What do they do in order to obtain more of it?

- Over the winter, I read Trumps’ “The Art of the Deal” because I was intrigued about the background of Trump due to his continued momentum in this Presidential campaign. Donald Trump is who I am basing the “character” I am
trying to display after. He started off working in his father's modest real
estate business. He then went to business school and created his own
business. He continued to win big real estate deals, gaining money, and thus
gaining power. He then was never really satisfied with what he had, even
though he owned more than almost every American. He is always searching
for more power in the real estate and business world, and now he is running
for president. If he becomes president, I do not believe that his needs will
ever be met. He will continue to search for power even if it leads to
corruption.

1. The aesthetic that I want to work with will incorporate some
contemporary ballet technique while also mixing in a strong gestural
language. I am interested in how the limbs can be used in both typical
and atypical manners and the role they play in character
development.

2. I have been deeply influenced by Nathalie Pubellier, a choreographer
based in France. She has developed a choreographic technique that
she calls, “The Imprint” where the dancer becomes extremely hyper
aware of the sensation that their body is feeling while dancing. I hope
to introduce some of her ideas to my cast. Doug Varone’s
choreographic method of using games and chance with his dancers
has also inspired me; I have also noticed that it is a good way to coach
the dancers to move through space in an interesting fashion.

3. No visual, musical, or theatrical artists come to mind when I envision
my piece. However, I imagine lighting that incorporates a lot of dark
colors with juxtaposing bright head and floor lights. I envision some
silhouette work as well to magnify the gestural work as well. I am
also considering using costumes that reference the style present in the
French courts during the Renaissance. At this time people began to
dress for power. It would be interesting to incorporate some hints of
Renaissance dress as a metaphor for exercising control.
III. The Flowering
https://fr.pinterest.com/darlingtonce/senior-project/

i. As far as sound, I am interested in using music created by Pan Sonic, a Finnish electronic music group. Their music creates an auditory tension that evokes an almost unsettling, visceral reaction. I am also drawn to a German artist named, Senking. His pieces maintain a steady pulse that is very grounding as well as stimulating. I am looking for music that provides momentum but is also somewhat distorted in a way to fuel the seed of my piece.

ii. I want this piece to not only be a physical experience, but an intellectual one as well. I intend on using my first rehearsals to explain my concept completely so that my dancers understand the emotion of the piece. I also want my dancers’ experiences to influence my own choreographic learning, so I want to create an atmosphere that encourages collaboration. I intend on using a lot of characterization and gestures, while also creating full-bodied phrase work.
IV. **Reflection**

a. Did I convey the message that I originally intended to?
b. Was I successful in using influence from the choreographers that I have worked with? Did I apply their principles usefully?
c. Did I direct my dancers clearly? Did their performance capture what I was trying to portray?

Works that I am performing in this semester: Callie Moore, Aaron Salas
Seniors in my work: Brittany Powers, Aaron Salas