EXPERIMENTAL CHOREOGRAPHY; USING ELEMENTS OF CHANCE

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Merce Cunningham, a famous choreographer whose innovative choreographic methods emerged in the 1950s, found a solution to personal movement habits inhibiting choreography. He developed a method known as chance composition which uses arbitrary mechanisms to structure a dance. These mechanisms determine fundamental elements such as movement phrases, the order, the spacing, and the timing. I discovered chance composition in my high school choreography class. As a ballet major with a modern background, studying Cunningham’s experimental choreography was appealing because I wanted to explore a new way to choreograph. For my experiment with chance composition, I conceived, structured, and choreographed a dance titled ‘Yahzee’. For my experiment I selected written movement phrases at random on paper out of a bowl to determine the order of the dance. I used dice to determine the number of dancers and spacing on the stage. Using choreographic devices to manipulate each phrase, I changed the timing, spacing, and levels of the movement. For the musical accompaniment I created a composition on a computer program called Garage Band. I discovered that chance composition avoids personal movement preferences and allows one to see possibilities of movement that would have been impossible to otherwise conceive.