Reviving Fantasia's Toccata and Fugue: An Imaginative Journey Through Music, Multimedia and Concert Dance

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REVIVING FANTASIA’S TOCCATA AND FUGUE:
AN IMAGINATIVE JOURNEY THROUGH MUSIC,
MULTIMEDIA & CONCERT DANCE

By

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The members of the Defense Committee approve the thesis of Emma Lalor defended on April 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2015.

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Firstly, I’ve greatly appreciated the opportunity to deeply investigate the questions and ideas of my Honors in the Major thesis, Reviving Fantasia, during my final two semesters in the School of Dance at Florida State University. Although I did not fully realize the initial plans laid out in my prospectus, I am proud of my research into the elements and creation of Fantasia, specifically the Toccata and Fugue. I am particularly enthusiastic about my employment of artistic responses and videoed improvisation sessions in developing the choreography, and willingness to find alternative ways to explore my multimedia performance ideas through collaboration. It would be wonderful to have more time and resources to work on this thesis in order to learn how to develop my own projections and/or stage lighting, tweak my choreography to present the full seven minutes, and continue exploring how to reinterpret and modernize the goals of Fantasia’s creators. I would have liked to include sections of improvisation, stillness and avant-garde happenings developed in late February, and had more time to test how the Fantasia’s animator’s creation visually stimulated imaginative thinking and implement their techniques through my own art form. By welcoming changes and obstacles this spring semester, the final product is not exactly what I envisioned in my prospectus, but it is a wonderful resemblance of the strong ideas, questions, and investigation I endeavored on about cross-disciplinary collaboration, imagination, reinvention, and dance with multimedia.
My love of the *Fantasia’s* encouragement of imaginative thinking, creative use of Baroque music, and merging of pure entertainment and high art led me to study the separate elements and combined effect of the *Toccata and Fugue* section before moving into the studio. In the beginning, I was more focused upon the scholarly writings about Johann Sebastian Bach, Leopold Stokowski, Walt Disney and *Fantasia* (as a whole) than my own questions, but the preliminary research provided beneficial information about the musical structure of BWV 565 and debate about its authorship, Stokowski’s creative liberties in transcribing Bach’s original organ work, the process of cross-disciplinary collaboration between Disney and Stokowski, and how their integration of ideas came together in the process of creating *Fantasia*.

The Allen Music Library resources provided a reference point in music history and scholarly opinions about both Bach and Stokowski’s imaginative and spontaneous invention habits. Rhythmic analysis of the score brought clarity to ways in which the musical structure informed the aesthetic of the abstract animation onscreen, such as how terminology (translated into English) mirrored qualities or dynamic shifts both heard and seen while watching *Toccata and Fugue*. With gained understanding of the complexity of Bach’s asymmetrical tonal architecture, and Stokowski’s rich use of the full spectrum of symphonic instruments, I was able to explore more inventive musicality with my danced improvisations and more clearly identify the musical structure and layers within.

Microfilm examined at the Robert Manning Strozier Library provided glimpses of how the Disney team of non-musician animators discussed how to best illustrate mental images whilst listening to music after working with abstract animator and painter Oskar Fischinger and musicologist Deems Taylor. Collected interviews and artifacts of *Fantasia* illustrated challenges and triumphs of the animation team, particularly the many alterations to the *Toccata and Fugue* due to Fischinger and Disney’s disagreements about
the balance between abstraction and representation in the animations. Overall, the collected materials on *Fantasia* emphasized the unique goals and ideas of the *Toccata and Fugue* and the film as a whole. In particular, the importance placed upon “seeing the music and hearing the picture,” imagination and accessibility, invention and artistic collaboration, were influential themes that carried into the next stage of my thesis process.

Over winter break, I successfully received permission from Concord Music Groups to use a Cincinnati Pops Orchestra recording of the Stokowski *Toccata and Fugue* for educational purposes for two full years. This kick-started the creative development process of spring semester, and I began listening and creatively responding to the music with improvised movement, captured on video, and basic art supplies. My decision to dive into free creative responses was inspired by the inventiveness and use of improvisation by Bach in his compositions, and corresponded (with the update of my own art form) to the process Disney and his team of animators used when brainstorming what to animate with Stokowski’s version.

Before recording my improvisations, I researched the work of choreographers known for using improvisation for invention and/or dance alongside technology, including but not limited to Merce Cunningham, William Forsythe and Bill T. Jones, to provide perspective to my own invention process within the accomplishments of recent concert dance history. Although the visually stimulating products of these innovators initially inspired me, I never strived to mimic them but to simply acknowledge that my research was building upon an already developed utilization of improvisation and technology in the field. During the improvised responses, I felt deeply connected to the sense of mysticism and brooding romanticism conjured by the inventive musical score, and responded with often large, space-covering, dramatic, bound and sharp movements or
gestures. However, the fine balance between drama and playfulness in Stokowski’s translation, which allowed the universal spirit and freedom of the music itself to bring life to the changing colors and dancing forms onscreen, also inspired improvisations of soft fluidity, freeing off-balance phrases, releasing and falling into space. The sense of dualism, strong and soft, light and dark, tradition and modernity, present in the music itself is mirrored in my own blend of dance, a mixture of classical, modern, and post-modern vocabulary that shapes and flows the volume of space in my body and the room.

My decision to record these sessions, then splice and synthesize them in FinalCut Pro and iMovie, was an excellent way to cultivate phrase-work that possessed the most dynamic or inventive moments of invented movement, but admittedly challenging due to my own critical nature when viewing video of myself. Not all choreography was put together from video translation, and the overall framework of the solo was tested and tweaked usually without visual feedback from a recording. The visual creative responses were used to develop a gestural phrase, wherein a number of descriptive qualities written about the music or how it made me feel, such as silly, wild, evil, magnificent, corresponded to a particular bit of movement. This phrase was then stretched into separate gigantic and little versions, and parts were worked into the final version of the solo. Ultimately, the freedom of improvisation was applied to the full process of invention and refinement of the solo, and utilizing a philosophy of openness allowed me to welcome changes and test innovative ideas in the present moment.

In the interest of replicating the effortlessness of the animated sequences of *Fantasia: Toccata and Fugue*, which hid the painstaking work of Disney’s animation team just as dance performances conceal devoted time, sweat and effort, I reserved studio space twice a week. This time was used to create and refine the solo, and focus upon
keeping my endurance up by running the work three times a session. I feel that this sense of structure and regularity helped me quickly develop the solo material by late February.

The music has a definite qualitative split, from dark and commanding to light and free, between sections at about four minutes, and I had invented material past this point when I approached MFA second-year candidate Megan Carvajal with my initial multimedia ideas. Her graduate level Video Applications course provided a chance for collaboration on a four-minute dance that used dual front projections in the Montgomery Hall Tech Studio. I was thankful for this serendipitous opportunity, especially considering undergraduate limitations on learning about projections, creating stage lighting, and working with multimedia equipment. After discussing my original imaginings of the projections, we worked together in the computer lab on their development. Although the initial idea of scanning and animating my colorful drawings was struck from the table, because it took too much time and was a poor replication of the original *Fantasia* animations, Carvajal suggested we peruse copyright-free projection sites, and we quickly found clips that had great potential for not only working well projected in the space and on my body, but also connected to some of my original ideas for multimedia. I am grateful to have worked with such a supportive and open-minded artist, and I could not have explored my prospectus ideas to the extent I desired without Carvajal’s guidance, positive support, technical skill, and willingness to collaborate.

The most challenging part about this final step of my project was editing choreography, to meet the four minute limit of Carvajal’s assignment, and reducing its size to effectively be performed in the smaller Tech Studio space. All but one of my improvisation sessions and choreographic rehearsals were videotaped in and influenced by the incredible size and architecture of Montgomery Hall’s studios, allowing for athletic movement that traveled throughout the generous volume of space using flying
jumps and traveling floor-work. My gratefulness for the FSU School of Dance resources is unbound, I was very fortunate to have so much space in which to improvise and create, and shrinking the choreographed solo for a new environment was a great challenge.

The final product explores the impact of light and dark upon my moving body, mirroring the drama and playfulness of the magnificent score, within the condensed malleable space. The dual projections allow for the imaginative exploration of space and light working with my choreography and moving body, and some of my original stage lighting and projection ideas were tested in a preliminary form. These ideas included beginning the solo in darkness, playing with shadows of myself, use of a strongly lit diagonal to splice the space, and the transformation into cloudscapes at around four minutes to highlight the dynamic musical arrival into an impression of beautiful naturalism.

Overall, I am thrilled that I had the opportunity to play with the unique characteristics of dance performance alongside multimedia, and use my final product to begin to unpack how the modern possibilities of art-making could reinterpret Fantasia’s illustration of imaginative thinking, support of classical music and abstract art, and appreciation of cross-collaborative efforts in the field for the purpose of pure entertainment. My presented product is inspired by the naturally expressive and theatrical sensibility of the music itself, exploring sound as volume within the body, movement and space, and takes steps towards exploring the potential of dance with multimedia to modernize the imaginative ideas and goals of Fantasia and the Toccata and Fugue.
Reviving *Fantasia’s Toccata and Fugue*: An Imaginative Journey through Music, Multimedia & Concert Dance

In 1940, Walt Disney and his associates presented their imaginative creation *Fantasia*, a masterpiece union of symphonic music and animation that employed “a new type of entertainment” -- a hybrid multisensory experience for Americans. Over 60 years later, I fondly remember how this captivating spectacle willed me into movement as a young child, the VHS tape battered and worn from multiple daily viewings, and cultivated in me an appreciation for classical music, moving pictures, and my imagination.

As *Fantasia* begins, the narrator explains that this film is intended to illustrate what you might imagine if you were sitting in a concert hall listening to the music, encouraging viewers to let their imaginations run freely as the film suggests how to “see the music and hear the pictures.” Then Leopold Stokowski shakes Mickey Mouse’s hand before conducting his famous 1927 orchestral arrangement of Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor BWV 565*.

This opening section of the film, entitled the *Toccata and Fugue*, captured my attention with beautifully moving vivid colors, dramatically lit musicians, and the painterly abstraction of instruments dancing through clouds. While listening the power and drama of the robust music erupts, the swirling colors and darting shapes move through space, illustrating how we might “see the music” in our own imaginations. With great similarity, dancers can draw attention to musical accents or qualities with controlled use of their bodies in space in order to dance with or mirror a musical score.
As more connections were made between the images onscreen and my own study of art, I began to question what *Fantasia* would look like with the addition of my own imaginative, expressive, often abstracted, artistic discipline. How could the addition of dance to the *Toccata and Fugue* revive *Fantasia*?

After a number of rereleases over the century, *Fantasia*’s newfound success with contemporary audiences provided revolutionary access to classical music whilst encouraging imaginative thinking about art through the accessibility of popular entertainment. What could the field of dance learn from *Fantasia*? By considering the past, could we develop strategies to support an artistic conduit between high art and popular culture, and present audiences with accessible contemporary strategies for approaching and appreciating the abstract and transcendental nature of dance?

The remarkable connection between Walt Disney and Leopold Stokowski, the dynamic duo behind *Fantasia*, was centralized around their belief in the everyday person’s ability to appreciate the good, true, and beautiful in the world. Their faith in the average man allowed them to work towards entertaining the masses by appealing to the popular tastes of the era, the result being an abstract, expressive work of art that was easy to connect to and appreciate by children and adults alike. By playing into the power of imagination, a universal ability never hindered by discrimination or lack of education, *Fantasia*’s creative team provided a window of opportunity wherein entertainment and high art were innovatively and appropriately intertwined. The *Toccata and Fugue* section in particular was intended to bring life to what they called “abstract music” – music for its own sake, with no plot - using expressive colors and transforming shapes to illustrate the “brooding romanticism and mystical overtones” of Stokowski’s transcription.

How could modernized forms of artistic expression, such as concert dance and multimedia, come together into an abstract, yet accessible union? By studying the
elements of the opening segment, both separately and together, I set out to translate my conclusions into an all-inclusive multimedia reinterpretation that infused live dance performance with the musical structure and artistic intentions of this segment of the film.

I vowed to investigate, as an intelligent thinker and mover, how dance could enter into the current stream as an equal part in the work, making the attempt to fully realize, modernize, and improve upon the fundamental goals of Fantasia’s creators without sacrificing the unique characteristics of dance performance; ultimately adding to and reviving Fantasia for modern audiences with the addition of my own artistic expression.

I believe that the type of cross-disciplinary investigation in Fantasia, which encourages collaboration and creativity within imaginative projects, is essential to the continuing development of the concert dance art form. More than ever before, choreographers are collaborating with sound designers, scriptwriters, projection gurus, & performers in order to enhance and ground the performance experience in the contemporary reality of hyper-sensory engagement, it is important to me to explore and support cross-over between the fine arts within the university setting and the larger arts community. By continuing to ask how dance can reinterpret and shape what came before it, we as artists take on the responsibility of respecting, learning from, and utilizing the vast history of art that provides a foundation for our own artistic endeavors and investigations.

By welcoming changes and obstacles this spring semester, the development of my thesis product became a wonderful resemblance of the strong ideas I set out to investigate: including collaboration, provocation of imagination, reinvention of historical artifact, and the integration of dance with multimedia. My love of the Toccata and Fugue’s creatively unified animations and symphonic music, and interest in how the merging of pure entertainment and high art was accomplished, led me to study the
separate elements and their combined effect before moving into the studio for creative development. Preliminary research in the Allen Music Library and Microfilm Archive of Robert Manning Strozier Library provided beneficial information about the musical structure of BWV 565, the scholarly debate about its authorship, Stokowski’s creative liberties in transcribing a Baroque organ work, the process of cross-disciplinary discussion and collaboration between Disney and Stokowski, and the integration of their progressive ideas via the efforts of the animation team within Fantasia. With gained understanding of the complexity of Bach’s asymmetrical tonal architecture, and Stokowski’s rich use of symphonic instruments, the correlation between music and the visually animated movement became more evident. Overall, the collected materials on Fantasia emphasized the unique goals and ideas of the Toccata and Fugue and the film as a whole, notably providing access to the arts for the masses, encouraging the use of imaginative thinking when faced with art of an abstract or non-narrative manner, and the importance and benefits of artistic collaboration.

During January, I received permission from Concord Music Groups to use a Cincinnati Pops Orchestra recording for educational purposes for two full years. I then began listening and creatively responding to the music with improvised movement, captured on video, and basic art supplies. My decision to include creative responses, using visual arts and dance, was inspired by the musical inventiveness of Bach and Stokowski, and corresponded to the process Disney and his team of animators used when brainstorming what to animate with Stokowski’s version. Before recording my improvised movement, I researched the work of artists known for using improvisation for invention and/or incorporating dance with technology - including but not limited to Merce Cunningham, William Forsythe, Bill T. Jones - to provide perspective to my own creative process within concert dance history. Many choreographers have experimented
with these types of methods to create otherworldly atmospheres onstage, as well as document and better understand the contemporary choreographic process. The work of these innovators’ visually stimulating products initially inspired me, particularly their faith in spontaneous creation as a key to composition, and ghostly trails of movement in captured footage. I never strived to mimic them but to simply acknowledge that my research was building upon an already developed investigation within in the field, one that (1) welcomed the opportunity for chance and impulse in the choreographic process, (2) considered the greater design by tracing the shapes created by the body, (3) and use video as a tool to support memory and provide immediate feedback about the overall visual impact of phrase work.

After analyzing an arrangement of the Bach work by Busoni, which included noting rhythmic changes, the toccata and fugue structure, use of repeated themes and translating dynamic markings from Italian, I felt deeply connected to the sense of mysticism and brooding romanticism conjured by the inventive musical score. During the improvised responses I used large, space-covering, dramatic, bound and sharp movements or gestures. However, the fine balance between drama and playfulness in Stokowski’s translation, which allowed the universal spirit and freedom of the music itself to bring life to the changing colors and dancing forms onscreen, also inspired moments of soft fluidity, freeing off-balance phrases, releasing and falling into space. The sense of dualism – strong and soft, light and dark, tradition and innovation – present in the music and film itself is mirrored in my own blend of dance, a mixture of classical, modern, and post-modern vocabulary that flows and shapes the space in my body and the room.

My decision to record these sessions, then splice and synthesize them in FinalCut Pro and iMovie, was an excellent way to cultivate phrase-work that possessed the most
dynamic or inventive moments of spontaneous movement - but was admittedly challenging due to my own critical nature when viewing video of myself. Not all choreography was put together from video translation, and the overall framework of the solo was tested and tweaked usually without visual feedback from a recording. The visual art creative responses were used to develop a gestural phrase, wherein a number of descriptive qualities written about the music or how it made me feel – including silly, wild, evil, magnificent - corresponded to a particular bit of movement. This phrase was then stretched into separate gigantic and little versions, and parts were worked into the final version of the solo. In the interest of replicating the effortlessness of the animated sequences of Fantasia: Toccata and Fugue – which hid the painstaking work of Disney’s animation team, just as dance performances conceal devoted time, sweat, and effort - I reserved studio space twice a week for time to create and refine the solo, and focus upon keeping my endurance up by running the work three times a session.

In the music, there is a definite qualitative split between the toccata and fugue - from dark and commanding to light and free – and I had developed material past this point when I approached MFA second-year candidate Megan Carvajal with my initial multimedia ideas. Her graduate level Video Applications course provided a chance for collaboration on a four-minute dance that used two rear projections in the tech studio. After discussing my original imaginings of the projections, we worked together in the computer lab on their development. Although the initial idea of scanning and animating my colorful drawings was struck from the table – took too much time and was a poor replication of the original Fantasia animations – Carvajal suggested we peruse copyright free projection sites, and we quickly found clips that had great potential for working well in the space, as projections onto my body, and connected to some of my original ideas for a complimentary multimedia component. I am grateful to have worked with such a
supportive and open-minded artist, and I could not have explored my prospectus ideas to the extent I desired without Carvajal’s guidance, positive support, technical skill, and willingness to collaborate. The most challenging part about this final step of my project was editing choreography, to meet the four minute limit of Carvajal’s assignment, and reducing its size to effectively be performed in the smaller tech studio space.

The final product, the first time working with projections for both Carvajal and I, explores the impact of light and dark upon my moving body, mirroring the drama and playfulness of the magnificent score, within the condensed malleable space. The dual projections allow for the imaginative exploration of space and light working with my choreography and moving body, and for the testing of some of my original stage lighting and projection ideas – including a beginning in darkness, playing with shadows of myself, use of a strong lit diagonal to splice the space, and the transformation into cloudscapes to highlight the dynamic musical arrival into a new impression of beautiful naturalism.

I am proud of my research into the elements and creation of Fantasia, specifically the Toccata and Fugue, my employment of artistic responses and videoed improvisation sessions in developing the choreography, and willingness to find alternative ways to explore my multimedia performance ideas through collaboration.

It would be wonderful to have more time and resources to continue working on this thesis in order to learn how to develop my own projections and/or stage lighting, tweak my choreography to present the full seven minutes, and play around with how to reinterpret and modernize the goals of Fantasia’s creators. In retrospect, I wish there had been more time to discuss the animation process with Jason. It was clear that there were flaws to the Fantasia cross-disciplinary collaboration, most obviously noted by the departure of Oskar Fischinger – the notable German-American abstract musical animator
who assisted in the development of sections of the *Toccata and Fugue*. Stubborn headedness, a behavior of Walt Disney’s noted by many interviews with his team of animators, made it less about working together and more about meeting his demands. At any rate, collaboration requires a willingness to understand the other art form – to some degree – and make compromises in order to work together.

Overall, I am thrilled that I had the opportunity to play with the unique characteristics of dance performance alongside multimedia, and use my thesis to begin to unpack how the modern possibilities of art-making could reinterpret *Fantasia’s* illustration of imaginative thinking, support of classical music and abstract art, and cross-collaborative efforts in the field for the purpose of pure entertainment. My presented product is inspired by the naturally expressive and theatrical sensibility of the music and animation, shown within the volumes of the body, movement and space - and takes steps towards exploring the potential of dance and multimedia to modernize the imaginative ideas and goals of *Fantasia’s Toccata and Fugue*. 
ABSTRACT

In 1940, Walt Disney and his associates presented their imaginative creation *Fantasia*, a masterpiece union of symphonic music and animation that employed “a new type of entertainment” -- a hybrid multisensory experience culminating in an abstract, animation motion picture. Although initially a flop, the film’s subsequent altered re-releases led to its triumphant declaration American Film Institute in 1998: *Fantasia* was now considered one of the greatest American animated films. Most significantly, *Fantasia*’s newfound success with contemporary audiences provided revolutionary access to classical music whilst encouraging imaginative thinking through purely fantastic entertainment.

In the opening scene, Leopold Stokowski shakes Mickey Mouse’s hand before conducting his famous 1927 orchestral arrangement of Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor BWV 565*. This opening section of *Fantasia* captured my attention with beautifully moving vivid colors, dramatically lit musicians, and the painterly abstraction of instruments dancing through clouds. I fondly remember how this captivating spectacle inspired me to move as a young child, and my love for the delightful music and visuals of *Fantasia* guided my passions towards movement and improvisation, as well as my decision to seek a University degree in dance. Contemplating the shimmering abstract watercolors of the opening section, *Toccata and Fugue*, has led me to question what *Fantasia* would look like with the addition of my own imaginative discipline: dance.

By studying Stokowski’s arrangement of Bach’s most recognizable organ piece and performing an “action analysis” of both the physical score and the animation itself, I hope to translate my conclusions into an all-inclusive multimedia reinterpretation that
layers live dance performance and stage lighting techniques with the preexisting structure and patterns of the film.

I will investigate, as an intelligent thinker and mover, how dance can enter the current stream as an equal part in the artistic work, ultimately adding to and reviving Fantasia for contemporary audiences with use of video projection and concert dance.

**CONTEXT**

*Fantasia* is a 1940 American animated film produced and released by Walt Disney Productions, and is part of the legacy of the original innovative films of Walt Disney Animation Studios. The film consists of eight animated segments set to pieces of classical music, most performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra and conducted by Leopold Stokowski, broken up by live action transitory scenes narrated by the film's Master of Ceremonies Deems Taylor (Thomas, 1991). Due to the United States’ entry into World War II in 1942, the initial release of the film received mixed reviews and was unable to make a profit due to the high costs of creation, installation of “Fantasound” speaker equipment into theaters, and lack of nuclear family ticket sales (Peri, Humer 2008). *Fantasia* has gained the love of several generations of Americans through re-releases over the past 60 years, and the 1956 rerelease in particular successfully drew the appreciation of millions for whom it was made (Culhane, 1983). Over the next sixty years, the promotion of *Fantasia* as the “art of the future” (using different advertising campaigns such as a 1970s psychedelic-influenced poster, and the wedding of cartoon art to classical music) allowed the movie to be regarded as an accessible “high art” masterpiece (Culhane, 1983). Today *Fantasia* is seen as a landmark in American film history, an inventive blend of symphonic music with fantastical animation. Despite the film’s initial problematic reception, the various adaptations and re-releases over time have allowed for its
preservation and celebration as one of America’s classic twentieth century animated features.¹

The first section of the movie uses Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565*. Despite contemporary questions about the true author of this infamous piece, for the purposes of my project I look towards the vast majority of Bach scholarship about his *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* as the foundation for my contextual analysis of the structure and inventiveness of the music itself.² BWV 565 is Bach’s most recognized organ piece due to its highly theatrical and distinctive opening, wherein the diminished-seventh chord is “exploited for its harmonic expressiveness” for the first time in history (Keller, 1967). The piece’s irresistible melodic opening theme is commonly associated with Halloween due to the organ’s spooky and dramatic overtones. Leopold Stokowski transcribed this particular Bach piece for the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1927 (Loebel, 1994) and his fame for reinterpretations of Bach and other composers developed long before working with Disney. Stokowski’s inventiveness, playful attitude, mastery of transcribing classical composers’ work, and imaginative flair allowed for “brooding romanticism and mystical overtones [to summon] up primal emotions heretofore untapped in Bach’s music” and excite audiences who lacked access to organ concerts or even

¹ Walt Disney and his *Fantasia* were awarded two Academy Honorary Awards for their “unique achievement in the creative of a new form of visualized music…thereby widening the scope of the motion picture as entertainment and as an art form” (Oscar Ceremonies, 1942). The film is preserved by the United States National Film Registry of the Library of Congress (LOC, 1990), and is currently ranked fifty-eighth on the American Film Institute’s 100 Greatest American Movies of All Time (AFI, 1998).

² Notable arguments have been made by music historians, beginning in the 1970s, that refute Bach’s authorship of the piece due to its clearly unusual, un-Bach-like composition “of many unison parts, excessive use of harmony, and paucity of contrapuntal effects,”(Claus, 1995), and the number of inconsistent features in the “showy piece,” (Geck, 56). Herman Keller describes the piece as “probably the best-known organ work of Bach” that unfortunately has won for itself an exceptional position in the canon to which it has no right (Keller, 1967). Despite doubts, other scholars have chosen to look past this argument to properly study and comment upon the composition’s structure. Klaus Eidam concludes that Bach’s “Arnstadt period pieces, inclusive of the D Minor Toccat, have unprecedented complex and inventive musical architecture” that lacks any correlation to what is generally understood as Baroque music (Eidam, 2001). Martin Geck comments upon Bach’s “combination of order and expressivity, structure and singability, structural autonomy and theological meaning, compositional rigor and social openness”(Geck, 648), and ultimately reveals how the piece is anchored in tradition, modernity and experimentation. Geck’s perspective adds to Robert Lewis Marshall’s challenge to the conventional view of Bach, wherein he praises the classical genius as a progressive composer rather than traditionalist (Marshall, 1989).
symphonies (Cosentino, 2001). Stokowski himself remarked on the Toccata and Fugue’s freeing rhythm, plastic melody, bold harmonies, irregular, asymmetrical tonal architecture and universal spirit, equating Bach’s composition’s naturally expressive and theatrical beauty to feats of nature (Robinson, 1977).

The musical section of the Toccata and Fugue begins with live-action shots of the orchestra illuminated in blue and gold, backed by superimposed shadows, which fade into painterly pastel shades as the music progresses. Animated lines, shapes and formations reflect the sound and rhythms of the music as the musicians and their instruments are abstracted and begin blending into the hazy dreamlike cloudscape. The overall color scheme, which makes use of both bold and faint shades of the full spectrum, was designed to mimic the dynamism of the music. Walt Disney, Cy Young, Robert Cormack and Samuel Armstrong were among the many artists responsible for the difficult drawing of the visual segment (Peri, 2008). The effortlessness of the animated sequence effectively hides the painstaking work that went into its development. The combination of rhythmic order and colorful expression within Bach’s composition, as revealed by Stokowski’s celebrated transcription, is beautifully reflected in the animators’ depiction of dancing forms and spectacular colors on-screen.

The remarkable connection between Disney and Stokowski centralized around their shared belief in the everyday person’s ability to appreciate the good, true, and beautiful in the world. Their “faith in the discrimination of the average person” allowed for the two artists to work towards entertaining the masses by appealing to the popular tastes of the era (Culhane, 1983). The accessibility of the visuals – which elevated cartoon drawing to an art – and the fame of Stokowski’s Bach transcription – partly due to his famously theatrical and bizarre persona (Smith, 1990 and Opperby, 1982) — provided a
window of opportunity wherein entertainment in a popular format innovatively combined high art mediums.

The relationship between dance and technology has exponentially grown over the past fifty years through the work of concert dance choreographers, who have made use of visual projections to provide scenic display or an otherworldly atmosphere to the concert hall stage. Merce Cunningham and Bill T. Jones have experimented with using technology to track and/or recreate dancer’s movements, as well as assist in documenting choreographic or improvisational processes (Creative Elements, 1997 and Ghostcatching, 1999). It is necessary to recognize that choreographers have previously attempted cross-disciplinary work to reveal unique interactions between physical and digitalized/animated movement. The correlation between danced and visually animated movement will be illuminated in my final product, and my investigations into this undeniable relationship will be supported by the fundamental research of these monumental dancers/choreographers.

Walt Disney was preoccupied with whether the viewer would “see the music and hear the picture” whilst making Fantasia (Culhane, 1983). This concept is often applied to dance, because as artists we are often asked to use movement to illuminate the musical components, such as melody or rhythm, or to emulate the texture or atmosphere of a particular environment or object. The section of the film, Toccata and Fugue, follows a loose narrative structure through abstract expressionistic ideas, and the addition of dancing colors, shapes or forms within the animation is highly reminiscent of nature. Fantasia’s

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3 The use of keying in Ohad Naharin’s Gaga movement ideology revolves around challenging dancers to embody descriptive phrases about objects, textures, temperatures, and environments. For example, an instructor will say “Take a cold shower” “Allow the bones in your forearms to shatter into many pieces” “Feel the bottoms of your feet squishing into thick wet red mud.” These types of directives are essential to Naharin’s conceptual ideas about expanding the body’s movement capabilities through exploration of new pathways of information and a heightened understanding of total sensation. This is only one example amidst infinite ways in which choreographers integrate textural and sensory information into their choreographic or improvisational process in order to bring out unique movement in themselves or their performers.
foremost collaborators, Disney and Stokowski, strived towards illustrating pure abstract movement, and their aspirations are undoubtedly reminiscent of modern dance at its core (Culhane, 1983).

RATIONALE

Despite their innate differences, animation and music were synthesized in *Toccata and Fugue* in such a way that each art form amplified unusual or unique aspects of the other whilst working in tandem. This led me to question what my own art form (dance) might add to the collaborative conversation and innovation of *Fantasia*. How can cross-disciplinary work illuminate new facets or possibilities? Furthermore, I am curious how dance can to tap into the fundamental precedents of accessibility and imagination already inherent in *Fantasia*, without sacrificing the unique characteristics of a live dance performance. Because of these questions, I am drawn to creating a dance work to complement the *Toccata and Fugue* in order to facilitate the unpacking of how a dance artist might enter into and best engage in collective projects with musicians and visual artists as an informed and innovative participant. This section of *Fantasia* is a monumentally appropriate outlet to integrate dance into due to the masterful projection of a unique blend of abstract expressionistic art through an accessible yet theatrical outlet, ultimately a goal shared with artists of modern concert dance.

The influence of technology upon contemporary society is not easily ignored. Technological advancements must be recognized and utilized by the dance world in order reflect and comment upon present-day society. Many choreographers incorporate aspects of present day life into their work to continue the process of asking the questions about the human experience and, ultimately, about our place and purpose on this planet. Reassessment through dance by each generation is necessary in order to continually adapt
the art with regard to current historical, social, political, and aesthetic constraints. How can dance use technology to express the modernity of our world? How can various forms of art come together into an abstract, yet accessible format? How can dance use the past to discuss present ways of approaching abstract art or using multimedia? These questions will propel my investigations of how to best integrate dance with the segment of the film in order to facilitate cross-disciplinary interaction and utilize multimedia within a live dance performance.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

My passion for improvised and creative movement stems from my own physical responses to the vision of unified music and animation in *Fantasia* as a young child. Because of my experience, I hope to explore how the film itself facilitates or inspires the desire to move in all of us, and in doing so look at how the creation supports an artistic conduit (between the seemingly inaccessible classical symphonic music and abstract visual art and the accessibility of popular cartoon art and imagination). My firm belief in the power of imaginative thinking whilst moving is fueled by this type of cognitive and sensory engagement; it also motivates both my choreographic and improvisational work for this project. I believe that this type of cross-disciplinary investigation, which encourages imagination and creativity within collaborative projects, is essential to the continuing development of the concert dance art form. More than ever before, choreographers are collaborating with sound designers, scriptwriters and projection gurus in addition to performers in order to enhance and ground the performance experience to the contemporary reality of hyper-sensory engagement. It is crucial to generate more dancers that are not only comfortable with cross-disciplinary collaboration but also
inspired by this type of artistic layering so as to build upon the current developments of
the field at large.

DESCRIPTION OF PRODUCT

METHODOLOGY

The research for this project will be primarily utilizing an interpretive
postpositivist mode of inquiry, including historiography and movement analysis
methodological practices.

Interpretive, postpositivist inquiry extends research to qualitative subjects, requires
a self-reflexive component, and supports an ethnographic approach of observation,
participation, and documentation. This methodology’s fundamental ideas directly correlate
with my intentions of approaching my research process, and will specifically allow me a
freer approach to the investigation of aesthetic, qualitative, multifaceted visual and
musical material. Fantasia cultivated an appreciation of classical music, visual art, and
imagination within me at a young age, and the autobiographical undertones of my project
will not be discounted within this type of inquiry, which relies on ontology (the belief and
study of how we construct reality based on our perspective, ultimately focusing upon
determining significance and coherence of investigated phenomena). This open-ended
study will provide me the opportunity for perspective amidst seeking coherence and
validation of my subjective investigation of artistic material.

Historiography research will provide order and clarity to my investigation of the
vast amount of scholarship about Bach, Stokowski, and Disney. This mode of inquiry will
inform me of the stylistic influences, concepts, and events associated with the creation of
this enterprise and reveal direct connections between the history of the work of art and the
work itself. The importance of contextual evidence in this field is essential to interpreting not only the aesthetics of the musical and visual elements but also the collaborative creation process of the film; therefore it is crucial to engage in questions of historical nature, especially with regard to the prominent authorship debate about BWV 565. Importantly, this type of methodology will assist me because it recognizes the transcendental nature of performance, the complex issues of identity and perspective involved in studying autobiographical influences, and supports the reinvestigation and reinterpretation of past cultural artifacts. It asks how dance can reinterpret and shape what came before it, both physically and historically. I believe that Fantasia helped shape my appreciation of dance, and would like to better understand this development so as to recreate and share my findings with other imaginative thinkers within the arts community. Additionally, historiographical questioning emphasizes the importance of viewing the research with multiple perspectives, and informs my decision to include writings as well as visual responses, drawing and movement, to the research and choreographic process.

Movement analysis entails the description, interpretation, evaluation, and synthesis of judgments about the motions themselves. My knowledge of Nikolais and Laban complex analytical systems suggests that the use of flow, weight, time, space, shape, and other descriptive terminology pertaining to the senses be examined. This methodology pertains directly to my artistic discipline, and my intention is to apply similar techniques of studying movement to my “action analysis” of both the music and visual aspects of the film. Observations on movement will additionally be noted in my visual responses, dictated through drawing and extensive improvisation, and extensively documented using video technology. With better understanding of the action or movement of the film and score and my own findings, I will then create dance phrase-work that synthesizes my
discovery of direct patterns within the film and my own conclusions and emergent responses.

**PROCEDURES**

This project will be completed in two phases: the preliminary phase, completed in autumn of 2014, will be dominated by research involving the development of a prospectus, and the secondary phase of my project will culminate in a final multimedia dance performance in spring of 2015.

I will begin with an “intelligent listening” to the music and discussion the score and structure of the piece with my mentor, Douglas Corbin. Then I intend to conduct an “intelligent viewing” of the segment of the film with Jason Maurer from the School of Film and discussion of the difficulty of the animation process and historical significance of the film within the canon. This interactions and conversations will be recorded through note-taking and video documentation.

The next stage will rely predominantly on improvisation to the music, documented using a camcorder and edited on Final Cut Pro X. I intend to improvise or participate in imaginative thinking in two ways: with visual responses with a variety of art supplies such as pastels and crayons, and movement responses that call upon my training in a variety of modern dance and classical techniques. These creative responses will give me tangible visual feedback about what I am seeing and hearing, and will be used to develop spatial patterns of movement as well as to shape the numerous qualitative or dynamic shifts of movement within the piece. Improvised dance sessions will be filmed -- due to the ephemeral nature of the art form, and my desire to capture and reuse pure imaginative movement -- and each time the music will run to the end of nine minutes and twenty-five
seconds. Each of the recordings will be watched, analyzed, and selections from the improvised phrase-work will be pieced together and solidified.

My ultimate goal is to simulate the immersion of dance within the other two mediums, therefore I am pursuing permission from the Disney corporation to screen the film for educational purposes. The Nancy Smith Fichter Dance Theatre within Montgomery Hall has a proscenium stage with the ability for various projection possibilities. Therefore, I would like to experiment with using front projections of the film during my final performance, specifically under the guidance of Tim Glenn, a member of the School of Dance faculty with in-depth knowledge about video documentation and editing, logistics of projections during the performances, and ultimately the synthesis of dance and technology onstage. This would require assistance from at least three persons to work backstage and up in the booth to coordinate stage lighting, projection, and music. I intend to allow the film to play on the back screen for the entire performance so as to create a specific type of charged, dramatic atmosphere for audience. When the segment reaches the second section, wherein the animation becomes painterly and abstract, stage lights will illuminate the dancer, myself, as they begin to engage with the space (this occurs three minutes and twenty to twenty-five seconds from the start). The simultaneous dance and multimedia will occur until seven minutes and thirty-five seconds into the piece, where the piece crescendos to a halt. At the suggestion of my mentors, I will only tackle a segment of the full piece to choreograph to so as not to be overambitious. Movement will be alternating through sections of legato, allegro, stillness, traveling and stationary phrases corresponding to the dynamic shifts and structure of the music and visuals.

Lighting design would ideally involve low-level side lighting, with white or yellow tones, so as to create a dramatic shadowing of the body and heighten the drama of the
performance space. Costume potentials at this time include a dark blue dress with quarter length sleeves, boat neck, and dance-able skirt. Hair up and slicked back, intentionally sophisticated so as to appropriately work with the “high art” aesthetic of the *Toccata and Fugue*. Overall, my intention is to sophisticatedly layer choreography and stage lighting techniques on top of this section of *Fantasia*.

**MATERIALS**

The film itself will be analyzed throughout my research process, as well as incorporated into my final multimedia production. I also intend to study the creative process behind the film, including the synthesis of animation and music (impressively documented by John Culhane, Bob Thomas, and Deen Thomas). I will examine each element of the *Toccata and Fugue* section separately with specific regard to its unique historical and contextual development; looking at Walt Disney’s influence and leadership, the debate about the authorship of Bach’s BWV 565, and the critical reception of Stokowski’s reinterpretation for orchestra. Other materials include my notes and observations of the intelligent listening and viewing exercises that will occur with my mentors.

I have a camcorder and tablet with which to record my improvisation sessions, and access to video editing software such as my personal iMovie and the School of Dance lab FinalCut Pro X (both of which I am trained to use). The Nancy Smith Fichter Dance Theatre will provide me with a performance space that has lighting, sound, and projection capabilities, and with the help of Tim Glenn I will plan the logistics of using projections and stage lighting for my final product. I am feverishly attempting to acquire the rights to screen this particular section of the film and use a recording of the music. My own personal copy of the DVD film will be used for action analysis, and the additional
interviews and commentary will be viewed for padding to my understanding of the film’s creation. I will provide my own costume for the final performances of my multi-layered artistic revival of *Fantasia*.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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