Belle Femme: An Interpretation of a Play to Raise Awareness for Violence Against Women

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Belle Femme

An Interpretation of a Play to Raise Awareness for Violence Against Women

Kelsey Giustra

4/7/2014
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The following pages are the written aspect of my College Honors Thesis. This project was creative in nature. My thesis was to transform the French play, *Jaz* by Koffi Kwahulé, into a dance performance. Therefore, the project itself is the performance that I am holding on April 12th. Included here is the translation of the play from French to English as well as the creative process of producing a dance piece. This process is documented in a personal journal style of writing. The journal outlines the decisions I made concerning the performance piece, how I came to these decisions, and the obstacles that I had to overcome in order to reach them.

As stated in the title, part of this project was meant to raise awareness for violence against women. The play is violent and deals with abuse and how the character, Jaz, overcomes this abuse. This theme was the inspiration for my project. The need to bring awareness to this issue drove me to create a piece that would evoke emotions of abuse, a loss of a sense of self, and ultimately, the regaining of oneself and the defeat of the abuse. I state that the project is meant to raise awareness for violence against women in the title to clearly give the audience an idea of what the piece is about. However, after this, I let the choreography tell the story.
Jaz

“That one makes a lot or a few
Does not matter
It is simply necessary that each
Of these notes has a meaning”
Dizzy

A woman.
The head shaved maybe.
Naked maybe.
A gun.
Bullets.
A slate.
Jazz (a single instrument)
That, occasionally,
Pierces/is pierced
Embraces/is embraced
By the woman’s voice.

Jaz.
Yes Jaz.
They always called her Jaz.
Jaz.
She no longer knows.
Simply Jaz.

No.
No.
No.

Later.
This morning.
In a lavatory.
Place Bleu-de-Chine.

My girlfriend.
My friend.
I am not here to talk about me but of Jaz.

No.
It is Jaz who didn’t want.
But they see her often.
Rather at my place.
Not truly.
Some replacements.

It is never very easy to talk of this herself.
The shame the guilt I suppose.
In a lavatory place Bleu-de-Chine.

A maid’s room on the sixth floor.
Because there is a response to difficulties
To distribute the mail
In the building referenced
Because there are no toilets in the room.
Those on floor are out of order.
All is abandoned even them
In consequence it is suitable bring there
The following adjustments.

No janitor.
At the street corner of Jaune-d’oeuf.

The first time
Jaz unplugged them.
The second time also.
The third time she did nothing.
That someone else unplug them.

Since that morning Jaz also suspected it.
No one took on him to unplug the toilets.
No she left them as they were.

But they went there all the same.
Until the basin is full and overflows.
The neighbors always went there despite this.
Each one deposited their shit where he could.
This then overflowed the toilets
Carpeted the whole hallway of the floor
Tumbled down the steps of the stairs.
From the bottom up.
For more than two weeks.
From the first to sixth
No one complained.
Yet the street and
Even the surrounding buildings
The odor was unbearable.
Very special.
A sort of no man’s land in the middle of the City
Uniform and legible marking
Of all the names on the boxes
While using the characters the mayor and the police and
Those who hold the accounts of the book of deaths
Each one waits that
All rots and collapses on himself.

But they trick themselves.
While Jaz will live there
The building will stay standing.
I know it.

Foolish things.

A summer
Someone shot killed
A person of the opposite building.
The attack came from Jaz’s building.
No one ever knew who or why.

No.
She does not dream of moving.
I proposed it to her but she refused.

Her.
Very little things deep down.
Jaz practically never speaks of herself.
Very little.
I wonder even
If Jaz is her real name.

She is the owner of her room.
As all the world in this building.
A heritage.
An aunt.

The strict minimum.
One room almost bare.
Jaz possesses nothing
Holds nothing.
Nothing in all the cases that one
Can lock in a casket.
Herself.
Because of what happened.
To the death of the grandfather of Oridé.

Oridé.
A friend of Jaz.
The friend of Jaz.
Beautiful to wake the dead.
They lived together a moment.
At Jaz’s.
Jaz always lived on street Jaune-d’œuf.

The custom of the City.
That one buries the dead with one of his objects.

Doesn’t matter.
A lipstick
A nail file
A credit card.
There are some who are
Buried with their bank.

Their coffee pot
Their saucepan
Their vacuum cleaner.
Certain ones have reconstructed
Their kitchens in their graves.

Their pen
Their book
Their picture.
The worst they are
Those who have incinerated with
Master paintings.

Their car
Their helicopter
Their plane.
Hence the idea to construct
An airport in a cemetery.
For the dead.

Their house
Their particular hotel
Their building.
For some time
In the middle where
Somebody decides who will die
Somebody murmurs that
One of the bookkeepers of the
Book of deaths
Demands to be put on earth with the City.
And the cemetery with.

At the death of Oridé’s grandfather
We realize
That he possessed nothing.
Not a lighter
Not a cane
Not a monocle not even an ID.
Nothing.

It was the first time
And until that day the last
That such a scenario presented itself in the City.
All who had helped him in his life
From the button of his collared shirt
To the laces of his shoes
All had been rented borrowed.

Oridé had proposed that we bury
Her grandfather with her.
But the police and
The mayor and
All those holding
The book of deaths
Refuse.

The grandfather is thrown to the fish
Of the river that cinches the City.
As well as prescribed it the custom.

Jaz was impressed by these things
And began to make her life a challenge.
To live without a story without a destiny.

Maybe.
Yes.
But the Syndicate has an effective lock
For all the boxes so as to guarantee
The security of the long abdicated mail.

Worse than a dump.
The voted and realized workers were not paid.
Jaz showed me this one day while laughing.
The verbal trial of the assembly general of the Syndicate.
Here for example.

“The office ARBÉ GESTION SARL recalls the detail of expenses made for the Syndicate, arrested 31/12/199...were addressed to each one, and this, previously to the convening of the present assembly. It is noted that there are seven important outstanding debts. MR. KOABLÉ : (15 178,13 F), MR. BARLET : (19 735,51 F), MR. AND MRS. XINGJIAN : (15 117,90 F), MR. LÉKÉMA : (18 000,05 F), MRS DE KERMABON : (13 131,31 F), MISS ZAMBONI : (23 791,94 F), MR. AND MRS LANSMAN : (19 003 F), and several other superiors at 5 000,00 F : MR. WITTORSKI, MR. MEUNIER, MR. BENGUETTAF, MR. AND MRS COHEN, MRS CÉSAIRE, MR. ISHERWOOD, MRS BLHIN, MR. AND MRS MATSHUMOTO, THE Countess of ROUGEMONT, GURU MAHARAJI, MR. AND MRS DIABATÉ, MISS YLACHA. The assembly gives property management company all the powers to recover the sums due to the syndicate of the co-owners, including by way of justice.”

But justice never entered that building.

Jaz always paid her.
Until the Syndicate abandons the building.
Jaz is like so.

From now on Jaz descends in
The bathroom of the place Bleu-de-Chine.
Not necessarily.
She tidies herself and
Her body finished by understanding
That there are things
That it cannot ask itself.
In the paper.
She throws it in the trash in the morning.

Diarrhea after midnight.
Never.
No.
She only goes down there
When it is truly essential.

Except Sunday.
The morning.
Systematically yes.
Her body formed a habit that’s all.

Because after she goes for a walk.
Jaz likes to wander Sunday morning.
When the City makes morning grace
And the streets are empty and appeased again.

He had to notice that.
One week maybe.
Or a month.
Probable.
Maybe even since
The day where the toilets were clogged.
It is for this that he came to wait for her that morning.

One time.
In the stairs.
I go up to Jaz’s.
One cannot say this.
At first sight nothing about anything.
Rather common.
Thirty-three years old I would say.
Not more.
A little boy.
Six seven years old.
Jaz told me that he was married but I never saw her.

No.
No.
No.
No.
I am not here to talk about me but about Jaz.

In fact she should have.
Because of what happened in the stairway.
Of their building.

Jaz returned to the grocer’s.
He waited for her in the stairway.
Jaz believed that he waited for her.
Because of his eyes.
They implored her and resisted her at the same time.
Maybe.
Seen the circumstances she had the sensation
That he...
That such as he had done it.
Possible.
But it is certain that he waited for her
That he rushed there
After having seen her leave the grocery.

I know nothing of it.
Without doubt because of her beauty.
It is indecent how Jaz is beautiful.

A lotus.
Jaz is a lotus.
In this building an updating table
By classifying individual names
Of all the residents and outsiders housed
In the filthy alphabetical order where
One flounders in their own shit
Jaz emerges like a lotus.
It is this presence that illuminates it
And still maintains it in
A semblance of humanity.
Is it for this that she refuses to go away.
Rather it is for Oridé I believe.

Oridé.
The friend of Jaz.
Beautiful enough to wake the dead.
More now.
Oridé died from being so beautiful.

On the boulevard of Encens.
A hand extends
Open like a prayer
On the closed sky.

Oridé stops before the hand
That chants a piece.
Oridé watches the hand.
Attentively.

A regular hand to extend.
The filth lies dormant in the bed of the figures.
To be dirty the nails drop the eyes.
Leprosy devours the index finger.

Some passers-by stop
Dazzled by the image of
The girl beautiful enough to wake the dead
Fixed before the search of the leper hand.

Already the first drops of rain
Crash on the boulevard of Encens.

A piece chants the hand.
Oridé unbuttons her blouse.
Two buttons.
Oridé takes the hand kiss it
Then rolls it
Between the shirt and the dunes of her breasts.
From the right breast she caresses the hand
From the left breast she caresses the hand.
Oridé slides the hand
On her stomach
Around her navel
Down to the humidity of her offering
To this source
To which no hand of man
Has still ever drunk.

It has to do it.
To respect the pleasure of the other.
It has to do it.
The gift is before all dialogue.
It has to do it.

The crowd grew
Around what under the rain
The girl beautiful enough to wake the dead
Offers to the leper hand.

Oridé buttons herself up.
The expectation of the development extends before her.
But the hand no longer searches for
It demands.

Oridé separates herself.
The hand flags her down.
Oridé returns on her steps.
Now my piece says the hand.
But I already gave you everything responds Oridé.
My piece.

Oridé is knocked down.
She hurtes down the boulevard of Encens
The steamy spirit of shame
Lives through while running through
The City in the rain
To be in the arms of Jaz.

The piece.
It is this that killed her.
It is that piece that killed Oridé.

The following morning.
Oridé wore a mask.
As one takes the veil.
All that is more common.
A white mask bought in the shop.

At first to see her
Meander in the streets with this mask
The City smiled at this mention
Being vital for the presentation
At home of the objects recommended
Mandates and telegrams
After more.
Because Oridé did not wear it
One two or three days
She wore it until the end.

Each night
Oridé removed the mask
To offer her beauty to Jaz.
To only Jaz.

One night however
The mask resists.
Oridé haggles.
In vain.
Jaz hangs from the mask.
In vain.
Oridé and Jaz go round and round the mask.
In vain.

Oridé died at midnight on the spot
Asphyxiated by the white mask.

The following day Jaz shaved her head.  
A custom since a long time fallen in disuse.  
The loved shave their head for the dead of the loved one.

Each year  
The day of the death of Oridé  
Jaz shaves her head.

A lotus.  
Jaz is a lotus.  
Often in the street  
Of people we stop to  
Thank her for also being beautiful.  
One day  
In the valley of Josaphat  
A man threw himself to her feet  
Covered them with kisses and  
Told her while trembling  
Not to have fear.  
A little.  
Not to have fear.  
I want to thank you.  
You are the erotic evidence of God.  
Because a great beauty is only possible by Him.

I who had the privilege to see it often  
Naked  
I know amazement of  
The man of the valley of Josaphat.

This is my friend.  
That has no importance.  
This is not of importance.  
No interest.  
I am not here to talk about me but of Jaz.

Yes.  
His trousers were lowered.  
Around his ankles.

He caressed her.  
Probably.  
Jaz did not know to tell me.  
She told me in particular of
This thing at the time extended and relaxed
In the look of the man.
Like the face of Christ
On the stained glass of the churches.
These are the words of Jaz.

He said nothing.
He only looked at Jaz while
Between her legs
His fingers knead the desire.

Nothing
No big word.
Not even.
No insult.
Nothing that that vertical look
While his fingers went and came
Around his challenge.

His eye begged Jaz to look at him
In the act of doing this
That she embrace him in her wonder
Or even in her disgust.
Especially in her disgust.
In some sort.
The presence of Jaz approved his enjoyment.

But this is an attack.
This is always an attack.

I believe.
She mumbled something like
You have to have shame to do this.
I do not see Jaz in the act of telling him off.
Jaz is very calm.
Too.
I realize now that
I never saw her angry.
As if
Nothing deserves to be angry.

Distraught.
He suddenly seemed distraught to her.
To hear Jaz react like that without doubt.
He was afraid.
On the contrary.
He desired that urgency that cold panic.  
The fear had achieved to ripen his pleasure.

In these moments here  
People do not throw glances to their watch.  
Jaz does not wear a watch.  
No more than five seconds  
Even if speaking of it gives the impression  
That she was tranquilly sitting on the balcony  
To watch him do this.

Especially as the shopping  
Fell from his hands  
And as the starking apples  
Rolled to land on a collective safe  
Of large dimensions  
(Minimum 600 x 500 x 110)  
Closing key and destined to receive at the end of the stairs  
The starkings rolled until the end.  
Jaz is brought back down to gather them up.

He was no longer there.  
He had disappeared.

To the fourth floor.  
Jaz lives at the sixth floor.  
It is the last.  
Him as well.  
Not a single interest.  
Me I do not see any of it.  
I am not here to talk about me but of Jaz.

A flash.

One time.  
It has been six months.

Some days before  
What happened in the stairwell.  
He had offered to Jaz his toilet in case of.  
On the landing  
He is the only to possess a toilet...  
He must believe until he offered it to her.  
Jaz refused.  
Because she did not see herself  
Going to knock on the the door of the man and his family
Each time that.

Why would she have to talk about it to his wife.
Jaz refused to give
Any importance to that incident.
And then the man no longer bothered her.
He did not even tell her good day
If they thought of the adventure in the stairwell.
On her side
Jaz had cleaned from her memory
The man with the look of Christ
Waiting in the stairwell
The pants lowered to his ankles.

Until this morning.

Jaz descended
Like all the Sunday mornings.
He waited.
The man.
Jaz.
She thought that the lavatory was occupied.

She did not come up to it.
It was about the public toilets after all.
The lavatory indicated Free.
No longer him.
Since the incident of the stairs
They no longer said hello to each other.
Nor anything.
Why would she be wary of it.

She washed herself of it.
One or two days after.

Not a single look.
Jaz is so.
Because she neither expected
Nor saw it nor not saw it.
Faded.

She slid a piece
In the crack
The door is open
And she felt herself brutally pushed into the stall.
By the man.
He immediately reclosed the door after them.

No.
She no longer screamed.
Because she did not understand what was happening.
The mind slips in these moments here.

Undress he said to Jaz.
The voice is supposed to be soft and
The tone a mere obsequious nothing.
For a little he would add please.
Strangely.

A knife.
A kitchen knife.

At first yes.
Evidently.
To be formally addressed in a lavatory
A knife between the thighs
Can be reassuring to no one.

Jaz undressed.

Your underwear.

Because Jaz was afraid of the fear of the man.

Very.

He trembled like a leaf.
Not to be surprised.
As before a sooner blasphemy.
More he was feverish more
Jaz hunched herself in her panic.
She told herself that a man who was also afraid
Was capable of anything.
Of losing reason.

Of all the ways in the stairwell he had said nothing.

On his fingertips
He grazed Jaz’s breasts.
As if he was afraid to be struck down.
She did not have to have the choice or no.
In these moments here people hope that
Each concession will banish the worst.

Contrarily to the stairs.

While his fingers became sure
Caressing the nipples of her breasts
He whispered to Jaz how much
She was beautiful.

You are exactly like
God imagined
The woman
For the first time
Just before the tower of Babel.
Nude
You are still more beautiful.

Most of the people are awful one time nude.
It is on the beach that is spread
In the most barefaced manner
The disgrace of the flesh.

How the Eternal himself
I owe myself to inform you that
If these adjustments were not realized
In a period of how God
Himself was able to tolerate the intended messenger
To the the occupants of the building
Would be kept to the tendency
How God himself could tolerate
Such ugliness.

The clothes help to conceal
The vileness of their bodies.
More people dress themselves more it is ugly.
Physically.
No do not fold your hands on your breasts.
Jaz had understood that the Inquisitor
It was thus that Jaz the name
Did not tremble from fear but from madness.

Yes.
Leave my eyes stop them at the caresses
Of your breasts
Of your lips
Of your eyes.
Allow my eyes to subside in your eyes.  
What do they say?  
That she did not know.  
My eyes followed you until here  
For to see you refuse to have a shit  
From which they build their tower of Babel.

Flesh 
Flesh 
Flesh 
There’s all what he stays to share with them.

Flesh in the earth 
Flesh in the sky 
Flesh in the air 
Flesh 
Flesh 
Flesh.

Flesh in the good days 
Flesh in the good nights 
Flesh in the smiles 
Flesh 
Flesh 
Flesh.

Flesh in death 
Flesh in life 
Flesh in man.  
This century sweats defecation.

While man rots  
There 
From the soil  
To the middle of the bustling of the maggots  
And of the saraband of the vultures  
They build from Pharaonic sepulchers  
To throw their shit there  
While man rots 
There.

But you  
Oh look at me.  
Smile.  
Just a smile.  
I beseech it of you smile at me.
Sanctify me man of
Your smile of ripe sun.
What desert has to be the life
Of those that your eyes never touched.

Jaz no longer knows.
Maybe she smiled but she no longer knows.

If he had already come up to her to produce shame.
Jaz said yes.
He became angry.
Yelled.
The Inquisitor’s whole body trembled.

What is not true
Is that it is impossible that
Beauty produces ugliness
That Jaz has to stop to play with
His indulgence and his patience.

Otherwise he would slice her throat.

Simply those he wanted to convince himself.
To win some time.
In effect which time.

What of all her life
She had never fallen to have
This.
He rejoiced I know it I know it.
Illuminated. He was illuminated.

Jaz believed it.
Without hesitation.
He could have sliced her throat.

No.
I do not see the relation.
Me I see none of it.
I am not here to talk about me but of Jaz.

Incoherent things.
The same litany.
Marriage honeymoon honeymoon children.
Jaz had created for him him for Jaz.
She was his little delicate music
His archangel sent to wash his urine
The stigmatization of the earth.
Jaz was his redemption.

Even though Jaz pisses on the world.

She could not.
She was no longer in the placements.

He slapped her.
He had her sit down
By force
On the bowl
And berated her
Now piss
Piss or I dig in the knife there
To extract the purified lifeblood.

Yes he addressed her informally.
Terribly.
That he suddenly addressed her informally.

She is not always able to urinate.
He did not make her but he threw himself on her.

Yes.
On all fours.
You are good like all the others.
On all fours.
Don’t forget that from now on
You are my woman.
On all fours.

Finally.
But by force.

Insults.
You are good like all the others.
It is you who forces me here.
Just as there are heads to slap
There are women to rape.

For the first time
Since the man with the look of Christ
Had thrown her into the lavatory
Jaz feels guilty.
Because of what she had said to Oridé one day.

Oridé.
The one for whom Jaz shaves her head
One time each year.

Oridé was a stripper
In a cabaret of wandering hands
The Café of the Angel
On the side of the street Green-from-Grey
Formerly street Green-apple
In the quarter Hide-your-joy
People hope for death here.

It is even there that
Oridé
The girl who knew herself to be beautiful
Beautiful enough to wake the dead
Oridé that any
Bookkeeper of the book of deaths
Would ruin themselves to see her strip
It is here
At the Café of the Angel that
Oridé had decided to pop
All the nights
The grace of her beauty.

Because said Oridé
It is here
In this gutted gangrene on the sky
That the man needed it more from beauty.
By love but also by challenge.
Like all of what undertakes Oridé.

At first
Oridé arrived nude
To find herself dressed
At the end.

In this cabaret of the street Green-from-Grey
Cauldron of men
Only males with pricked up frustrations
Where hands do not hesitate
To grab at the legs of the dancers
Where the mouths jump
Out of the blue at the mouths of the strippers
Never a single nail had dared
To graze the smallest grain of skin of Oridé.
Never.

Only beauty
Can make an impression on such wild animals.
Not only my beauty but
That of the art that I accomplish.
People only touch the objects of art but not art.
In order to not be touched
There must not be
Distance between the object and the art.
There shouldn’t.

But above all
If they don’t touch me it is because
I do not desire it.
Especially because I do not desire it.
And they know it.
Without knowing that they know it.

That’s why
When the Inquisitor told her
That she was a woman to rape
Jaz felt guilty.

On behalf of any lost look
On behalf of any lost smile
On behalf of any mistake
The man with the look of Christ
Thought himself supported.

And you have rape stuck
On each pore of your muzzle
On the end of your fingers
On the tip of your breasts
On the crest of your sight.

I told you undress and you undressed yourself
I told you move your legs and you opened your thighs
I told you piss and you would have pissed if you could do it
I told you on all fours and you got down on all fours
Like a dog
And as soon as I pushed my flesh
Into the alarm of your flesh
You moved your bottom yourself.
You screamed.
You cried for help.
What kind of woman are you.
At heart you are only a harlot.
Like all the others.

The woman takes the slate
And puts it in front of herself like
Those about to go to prison.
On the slate is written
A character from an indecipherable alphabet.
Flash of a camera.
She turns to profile.
New flash.
She puts down the slate.
All while talking she inserts the bullets in
The barrel of the gun.
At the end a hole remains empty
That the bullet in the palm of her hand.

Perpetuity.
How long perpetuity lasts.
How long a life chasing a rainbow last.

Here.
Yes here.
This hole.
It is her grave.
It is here that he is buried
From here that the bullet roared later
To be mistaken in
The heart of the masculinity of the world.

That morning.
He waited for me before the lavatory.
The man with the look of Christ.
Like he needed it
Last Sunday.

His wife.
Why not.
What could I have hoped better for
Now that he froze my life in
The only color that does not exist
In the rainbow.

I am your woman.
Oh yes I am your little delicate music
I am your archangel.
I am your woman.

You are good the dagger
Whose tip is also violent
As the tail of a scorpion

Dressed like last time.
Exactly like the first time.
Me as well.
I know nothing of it.
I felt that I had to get dressed
Like last Sunday is all.

No.
No.
No.

The idea did not cross my mind.
He passed I passed.
Like people always did that’s all.
Neighbors.
No more with him.

It is by you
That I hoist myself to the mast of sensualities
By you
That I penetrate the delicious racket of
The abandon in itself
When the spur of your severity twists in me
By you
That to stuff in me all the enjoyed universe
Until exhaustion.

No one.
Sunday
At this hour
The place Bleu-de-Chine is always empty.

Yes.
Thursday I believe.
In the stairwell.
He came down I went up.

Out of habit.
He didn’t look at me I didn’t look at him.
Not bothered.
Tell us as if nothing was.
Because deep down there was nothing.
There had been nothing.

He pretended not to see me arrive.
I was not surprised.
I did not know him.
I put the piece in the crack
And the door opened.

Yes I knew that he would push me
And that people would meet both confined.

Evidently.
I took out the gun from my underwear
It was the only place where
I could hide it I fired.
I fired.
At the exact place where the heart
Of all the masculinity of the world
Is supposed to beat.

Completely stunned.
He collapsed
While looking at me with dazed eyes.
He died without understanding
The Inquisitor with the look of Christ.

Proud.
Proud of what.

While he pushed
The projection of his urge into Jaz’s loins.
Not a single woman
Can experience the pleasure in such
Circumstances.

I am not here to talk about me but of Jaz.

Neither pleasure nor pain.
Nothing.
Nothing that the scream of the man
Who yelled at her to repeat
That he is a dagger
Whose tip is as violent as
The tail of a scorpion.

Jaz repeated it.
You are a dagger
Whose tip is as violent as
The tail of a scorpion.
Jaz repeated it.

Multiple times.
Jaz repeated it.
As many times as he demanded it.
Jaz repeated it.
Until what
Under the bite of his pleasure
A throw
The epileptic scream
Avoids the glottis of
The man with the look of Christ.
Jaz repeated it.
Until the end.
Jaz repeated it.

Like this
It was the first time.
It was also the first time.
It was the first time for everything.
I know it.
Jaz is my friend.
People can say it.

When
The man with the look of Christ
Realized that he was
The first male desire
To jut out in Jaz’s waist
He burst into sobs.
Tears of joy.
A hallucinated joy.

He took Jaz in his arms
Covered her face in kisses while saying
It’s you it’s really you.
After each kiss.
Distant.

Neither disgust nor nothing.
Only distant.
Even his own fear.

The man put his clothes back on.
Ever more feverish however
The act had been delayed
Could only be temporary.
His eyes shone with insanity
The non compliance upgrade of the battery
From the boxes to the letters could bring us
The closing Flash closed on
His desire at his breathless present
Just like a plastic bag on a corpse.

Talkative.
Nothing that held up.
The same out of place words.
He had finally found in Jaz
The oblate promise.
Their encounter then their union.
There was not a single doubt.
Jaz was henceforth his.
Their sacrament collapsed
Shit by shit
The tower of Babel.

Next Sunday
They will meet anew in the lavatory.
And the next Sunday
And the next Sunday
And the next Sunday.
All the Sunday mornings
That their will grant the Eternal
They will come in the lavatory of
The place Bleu-de-Chine
So that he proves a point to her
He is all the masculinity of the world.

I am not here to talk about me but of Jaz.

The man placed his hand on the handle of the door.

I will go out first.
Count until one hundred before going out.

Count until one hundred.

Time moves on.
Count one two three until one hundred.
Slowly.
Otherwise.
Say that you will come.

Next Sunday
I will come join you before this lavatory.
Like this morning.

Good.

He kissed her on the forehead and disappeared.

They say that
In us music forms
That no one other than us can hear
That people cannot play for anyone else.
Music just for us.

They say that
After death
People continue to hear it.

They say that
Our bones in the grave
Continue to hear it.

They say that
Our ashes
Continue to hear it.

They say that
In us music forms
That people can never hear.
Unless to remain silent in oneself.

They say that
This music
Is our Name.

Jaz didn’t count.
Jaz didn’t count one two three until one hundred.
No.

Sit on the bowl
She blocked her nose
She closed her eyes
She shushed her ears.
Holding your breath.

First
a note
then another
note then again
another note
the same
like people bang at the door a myriad of notes
mixing with the ones against the others as to stay
hot a note of all the colors even of the one that
abolished from
the rainbow a
flood of notes the
same as all the
sounds impish notes
unruly the same
racing towards to
extract the secret of
the exploding silence
often scarcely
their hatching wing
to give birth to
other notes the
same still more
unpredictable
incandescent
volcanic and finally
to form the name whose
people will never know to name.

A note
Then another
Then still another
The same
Until what
Jaz opens her eyes and realizes that
The dress in her left hand
The knife in her right hand
She comes to cross
Naked feet
The place Bleu-de-Chine
To cross
The street Jaune-d’œuf
To cross
The look of the City that wakes up
Just now.

She inserts
The last bullet in
The last hole of the barrel.

Next Sunday
She will go to join him before
The lavatory of the place Bleu-de-Chine
More radiant than the winter sun.

Staying at your service
For all further information
I pray for you to agree
That she may hope better
Now that she was chased from the rainbow.

Neither disgust nor pleasure
Nor anything.
Jaz does not see this as a duty.
A thing to do that’s all.
Like so many others.

Next Sunday
Morning
At the same hour.
Go to the lavatory of the place Bleu-de-Chine.
Do not mind the presence of the man.
Put a piece in the crack.
Wait for the door to open.
That the man pushes her
And closes the door after them.
Do not raise your eyebrows
When he brandishes his kitchen knife.
And here
Take out the gun from your panties
It is only here
That she could hide it
And stick the bullet in his look of Christ.

Jaz it is no longer me.

Jaz.
Yes Jaz.
They always called me Jaz.
Jaz.
I no longer know.
Simply Jaz.
Journal

5/20/13

I began translating today. The idea of truly starting this project is exciting. The first step is to translate the play so that those who eventually see the piece are able to understand the story behind the movements. Although I realize it is going to be difficult to keep my movements figurative of the story and not try to literally translate the play into the movements. This is not my goal but I already catch myself wondering how to portray certain scenes in the play in a literal sense.

I also have begun to compile music ideas based on listening to Jazz music online. I have created a channel on pandora.com entitled “Cool Jazz”. I continue to listen to this channel in the hopes of finding music that will fit with the piece or will be similar to something I want to work with. Further research is of course needed, but for now I am creating a rough list of songs and artists that I feel can work.

6/30/13

Having finally gained internet connection I have been able to better verify my translations to date online. I went back through what I had translated and redid some of the lines that I was not able to properly translate with my knowledge or a dictionary alone. I continued to translate with more ease now that I had access to the internet. Though I do not rely on online translators, they are helpful for phrases that cannot be translated into English word for word. Jazz, I am finding, has many of these phrases, though many of the lines are short, single words. This leads to a choppy reading of the play but makes translation easier.

9/06/13

I am nearing the end of my translation of Jazz. The climax of the play is thus being translated where Jazz is raped. I find myself translating faster, not because I am more familiar with the vocabulary but because my emotional attachment to Jazz makes me want to end the horrific scene. I must stop upon one line however, as I am so overcome with emotion. “Just as there are heads to slap, there are women to rape” (Kwahulé 52). To think that there are still men in this world who believe this to be so and even worse to compare women to idiots always needing a good slap upside the head disturbs me. Translating this section only fuels my desire and determination to create choreography to bring awareness to the violence that women are forced to suffer from each day. More than ever I want my performance to potentially aid in bringing an end to violence against women.

9/08/13

Today I finished translating Jazz. As mentioned before, I feel more empowered than ever to begin choreographing. Ideas have already begun to run through my head for music ideas and movements. Taking the Choreography Workshop course is also lending itself to my ideas. The more I choreograph for the course the more prepared I am feeling to choreographing for my project.
Today I discussed my thesis project with my Dance professor. I have planned to have my work-in-progress showing as my final showcase for my Choreography Workshop class. Though it is earlier than planned, I feel it will be better to have the showing before the end of the semester so that I may take feedback into consideration as I work over the Winter Break.

I have been compiling a list of songs that may be acceptable as the music for the piece. I have also spoken with my younger brother, who is an aspiring jazz musician. I have asked him for advice in selecting songs and if it is possible for him to record him playing his saxophone for me to then use in my final performance. We are still discussing possibilities. As of now, I have more songs (excluding anything my brother may provide of his own music) than performance time. The project still stands as a twenty (20) minute piece.

10/23/13
I have outlined my dance into three sections, one for each of the characters of the play, Jaz, Oridé, and the woman on stage who delivers the play who I have named, La Femme (the Woman). Each section will ‘tell’ the story of each character though each story will be a figurative translation. I do not want to reenact the play but rather tell the common story of each character. Jaz is an abused woman who fights to reclaim her identity. When she does, she does not become the woman she once was. That woman is lost. In her place, she becomes someone new, La Femme. Oridé is yet another part of Jaz who is also lost before Jaz is raped. She represents the natural change that occurs in people as they grow. She is the Jaz that is viewed from the outside society. Though what they see and what she sees is not always the same.

Therefore I have divided the entire piece into three parts each with distinct movements for the individual characters. Oridé will be represented first with soft, beautiful, flowing movements. Jaz will be in the middle, a mixture of soft and hard movements, before she is ultimately beaten and
lost. La Femme is last, representing the strength of a woman who has survived abuse and is present in the world once more.

11/06/13

Again I spoke with my Dance professor about my thesis project. In doing so he propositioned an idea that I had been considering in my head for some time. The play involves three women who are all a part of one, hence my initial idea to conduct the performance as a one-woman solo. However, in speaking with my professor, he suggested that the piece be a trio. I had toyed with this idea but had always thought it would make the most sense and fit into the play’s translation if the choreography was made for one dancer. I thought the idea over, though, and came to the conclusion that a trio does make more sense. So now I have a new challenge. Instead of trying to represent three bodies in one, I must try to project the same person into three different characters and three bodies. For Jaz embodies three women and I now have three dancers, myself included. Instead of one single performance I have decided to divide the piece up into three solos and one section of unison work. Each solo will be roughly five (5) minutes long.

11/08/13

Both of my dancers have dance backgrounds of varying lengths with different styles of dance. One, Emma, was classically trained in ballet, modern, tap, and jazz. The other, Eleanor, had similar training with the addition of hip hop. I observed each of their personal style of movement in order to best assign them to a character. Today Eleanor was unable to attend rehearsal so I worked with Emma. She is very technical in her dancing and very strong physically and personally. I described each of the three characters I have taken from the play and the traits I have derived from them.

Oridé is the character described as Jaz’s friend. She is the most feminine of the three characters. She is also the most sensual. She works as a strip-tease and offers herself to a leper on the street. She is also described as the most beautiful woman and that her beauty is what kills her. She is beautiful enough to wake the dead. For these reasons, when she works as a strip-tease, no man will touch her. Oridé is puzzled by this. If she is as beautiful as they say, why will no man touch her? They act as if she is not beautiful. It is my opinion that this causes her to lose faith in her beauty which also acts as her identity. Therefore she loses her identity and dies because of it. Jaz is the main character who I found difficult to describe. Though she is the focus of the play as the story is about Jaz, she does not express herself much. Because of this aspect of her nature, I believe her to be an aloof individual, one who minds her own business and does not really see outside of her world. She is also an innocent as she does not quite comprehend what happens to her when she is raped and abused repeatedly. She loses her identity because of the abuse which leads to the development of one of the other characters. She has no name; she simply stands on stage in the play and recites the entirety of the monologue. I have called her “La Femme”. La Femme is the strongest of the three characters. She is the one who returns with a gun to kill her abuser (the one who raped Jaz). She is sent to prison because of her actions but she faces the consequences head on. She reclaims her identity as an individual, but more importantly, as a woman. After describing their personalities, I described a style of movement to associate with each woman. That is to say I wanted each character to be represented by movements that evoked a particular feeling. For Oridé the movements are mainly to be soft, ethereal, and beautiful. She is the most feminine of the three and therefore will have the most feminine of the movements. La
Femme is strong and will likewise have strong movements. She is a fighter. Jaz, again, proves to be the most difficult to figure out. She is abused repeatedly and does not fight back, yet I would not describe her as weak. For lack of a better description I have decided to make her movements aloof. I am not sure what those movements will look like, but I am anxious to find out. Emma said that she prefers not to dance as “flowy” characters whereas I do. We quickly came to the conclusion that I would play the role of Oridé and Emma would be La Femme, leaving Eleanor to dance as Jaz.

We began Emma’s solo that same day. I have nothing but praise for her and for Eleanor as dancers. They far exceeded my expectations. I instructed Emma to play with movements that she thought would evoke the strength of La Femme. From that playing I saw and picked out certain movements that I liked. We then collaborated in developing the choreography. Having not had the extensive dance background that she has, I let her create much of the movements and then I would string together what I liked and add specifics. When I became stumped on how to proceed, which tended to occur often, I would ask her what she felt like doing in order to get out of the position she was in. What felt the most natural to her? She would explain that due to the momentum from the previous movement she wanted to go right, or left, forward, or back and we would proceed. She asked a great many questions about the specifics of the movements. Should her foot be pointed or flexed? Should her fingers be splayed or close together? Slower or faster? I welcomed her questions as they made me truly look at what I was viewing. In the end we came up with about one minute’s worth of choreography. I am always amazed at how long it can take to develop such a short amount of movement. But I was ecstatic nonetheless.

11/15/13

Today both my dancers were at rehearsal. We are using the racquetball courts in the Patrick Gym. They are not the most ideal but they are spacious enough and have hardwood floors. I have found however, that due to their shape and size, much of my choreography moves laterally across the stage. I am hoping to designate time in Mann Gym on Trinity Campus in the spring semester in order to work in a larger, more open space in order to remedy this.
Eleanor accepted the role of Jaz. After finishing Emma’s solo I began to work on Eleanor’s. I had developed ideas for her movements throughout the week, and felt I had more of a sense of how I wanted the character of Jaz to move. It is difficult to explain with words, but Eleanor performed exactly what I was thinking. There was a slight stiffness to her movements as I showed them to her from her lack of dancing in previous years. There was also a slight awkwardness, no doubt from the same reason. I felt it fit Jaz’s character exactly as how I wanted. The movements, though sticky, will no doubt smooth out as she continues to rehearse, but I am hoping the awkwardness can remain somewhat. Eleanor asked questions too about the movements, but she did not add her own. I had choreographed the entirety of her solo.

I have learned that Emma likes to add input often where as Eleanor will simply do what I ask of her. I appreciate both personalities as they allow me to choreograph in different ways for the same project.

11/18/13

I have been debating with the idea of adding text to the performance. I have gone through parts of the play and selected a few phrases that touch me. They are as follows:

“Belle à réveiller un mort”
“Simplement Jaz”
“Un lotus. Jaz est un lotus . . . un semblant d’humanité”
“Oridé est morte de se savoir si belle”
“Mais c’est une agression. C’est toujours une agression.”

Whether I will use these phrases is still a question I am asking myself. Part of me wants to use verbal text but in keeping with the figurative interpretation of the play I am finding it difficult to find quotes that do not specify a character or action.

11/20/13

Today we had a showing of our final showcases (and therefore my thesis work) for class to gather input from my classmates and professor. So far, I had choreographed roughly one minute for each of my dancers and myself so we had approximately three (3) minutes worth of choreography to show. There was no unison work and no music, since I had yet to choose any. My professor asked us to run through it again but this time he had a classmate choose a random song on her laptop to play while we danced. It was a pop song with some bluesy undertones and vocals. It was definitely not something I would have ever chosen for the piece, but I realized, as did my class, that my piece was made to be put to music. The music completed the dancing in a way. My classmates really enjoyed the piece, telling me it was the best choreography they had seen me create yet. I did not give them any background information before the watched us perform. After explaining some of the project and where I wanted to go with my movement and how I wanted to further develop my choreography one of my classmates pointed out a vital piece. She simply saw three solos. She did not understand how the three characters on stage connected to one another. It was something I knew I would have to work on at our next practice.

11/27/13

Today we ran a dress rehearsal in the Recital Hall for our showcase performance. The stage was similar in size to the racquetball courts so my choreography needed little alteration in terms of spacing. I had found a way to address the connection between the characters that my classmate had been concerned about (as mentioned above). Jaz and Oridé interact in the play; therefore I had Eleanor interact with me as a transition between our solos. La Femme does not interact with Jaz or Oridé. In a way she is born from them once they have passed. So I had Emma acknowledge Eleanor and myself on stage simply by looking at us as she passes us by.

I also had created unison work. I already had a movement in mind and based the rest of the choreography off of that. In the unison work I wanted all of us dancers to be doing the same movement. We were no longer our own characters, but a representation of women in general. I wanted to keep some semblance of being different between us though, as no two women are alike. I decided to play with the tempo of the movements. We would all perform this particular phrase at the same time but at varying speeds. After this sequence, the three of us come together, grasp hands and stare out at the audience as an image of strong women.
I had also picked the music for the performance. I had found a jazz piece in my library that my brother had given me. He was unfortunately unable to record anything for me at the time due to his own busy college schedule. I had collected a few songs he had given me and played them for my dancers while at rehearsal. It was a unanimous decision once we heard the song. When we rehearsed to it for the first time, it was as if the song had been made for our movement. Everything fit where it was supposed to fit. I have never choreographed and then put music to movement. Rather I have always put movement to music. I chose to choreograph the other way because I did not have a particular piece of music in mind at the time we started rehearsing. Also, I knew that for my work-in-progress showing I was not going to have twenty minutes worth of choreography so I did not want to find a twenty minute song and then have to cut it. I would figure out how to elongate the piece into the full twenty minutes after the showing.

My classmates were very excited about my additions and my changes. Now seeing the unison work, they found that the connections between the three of us made even more sense. When we all moved in “unison”, some felt that one of the movements needed to be bigger; it needed to be a “pow” movement. Some of them liked the music whereas others thought it sounded like elevator music and didn’t add anything to the performance, though they all agreed that it did not detract from the choreography or overpower it. My professor said he appreciated the differentiation in the length of the solos – I now had approximately six and a half minutes worth of choreography. Eleanor’s solo was noticeably shorter than mine or Emma’s. He also noted the focus of the solos. Eleanor’s and Emma’s had a definite focus whereas mine did not. My solo was not set at the time hence why it might have seemed “out of focus”.

I have found it’s a very different process when trying to choreograph for you than for others. I cannot see my body and what I am doing, nor do I pick up on the small details that may not be consistent each time I run through the movement, such as a flexed foot as opposed to a pointed foot, or starting on the right foot for a movement as opposed to the left. My professor suggested that I teach my personal movement to another dancer in order to see it the way I see my other dancers. Unfortunately, I don’t think I’ll be able to do this due to the time crunch I’m on before the performance. Logistically, there is not enough time to find someone, teach them the choreography, and then perfect it for myself. I will look more into this after the semester break and once I have figured out how to elongate the piece into a full performance. It would make more sense to teach someone the whole of my part rather than in pieces. I fear I would focus too much on editing small sections rather than focus on completing the piece and editing it as a whole.

12/9/14

Yesterday was the showcase and I could not have been happier with the performance. Having performed it and the feedback that I received has reinforced my drive to see this project to the end. I feel more driven and enthusiastic than ever before to make this into a larger piece and perform it. I’m excited about this project and performing even just this small part of it makes it possible for me to envision it as a whole performance.

There were a few technical hiccups but nothing major. All in all, I felt the performance went smoothly, though I know there are changes I want to make for the final performance. The timing for the ending movements, for example, is something that I feel needs to be fine tuned. I also had an idea that I did not have enough time to bring to fruition for the work-in-progress showing. I
want to incorporate the character of Jaz’s abuser into the performance, whom I shall call
L’Homme. I would not choreograph any movement for him. Rather he would stand on the side
of stage and simply be a presence on stage just as he is a presence in Jaz’s life. She’s not quite
sure what he’s doing in her life. My hope is that the audience does not quite understand why he
is on stage and not moving. I know there might be a dark, sinister, and perhaps even creepy vibe
from his presence, but when reading the play that is what I felt from his character.

1/19/14

After my work in progress showing I focused on finding music. I enjoyed the jazz music choice
for the first showing. There were subtle cues and shifts in the music that fit the choreography
perfectly, at least in my opinion. The best part of the cues was that they were so subtle my
professor only noticed one at the beginning. I knew that I would need more music in order to
elongate the piece. I also wanted to keep the jazz style. I chose jazz for me style of music
because it is a direct translation from the play. “Un jazz (un seul instrument)” (Kwahulé 33). A
single jazz instrument. This is one of the few literal translations of the play that I have used since
I want my piece to be a figurative interpretation. I made this decision because I want to show that
the story being portrayed applies to women in general. I am retelling Jaz’s story in a way that
reaches and touches others with similar stories.

I feel that jazz music fits both the play and my choreography. Jazz music is improvisational – it
does not necessarily follow the rules of classical scores. Though I am setting all of my
choreography, I am finding that the timing is adjusting based on the music. There have been
some improvisational moments while creating the choreography as well, such as when I simply
play with movement until I find one I like and then I build my choreography from there.

Jaz herself, I feel is like improvisation. She does not quite fit the mold, does not always follow
all the rules, nor is she a conventional woman. I feel jazz music underlines and emphasizes these
qualities about her.

I decided I liked the music I used for my work-in-progress showing. I felt it fit the choreography
so well that I couldn’t bring myself to cut up what I had already created in order to make the
overall piece longer. I decided that in order to reach my goal of a twenty minute performance I
was going to make more of a production out of the piece. All three of us, Eleanor, Emma, and I,
will each have our own solo of approximately 5 minutes and then we will keep the final piece as
is, where we are all on stage together. There is obviously some reworking that needs to be done
with that section, but for the most part, it will remain the same. This will allow me to keep the
music and choreography together that I like and I now will not have to find a twenty minute long
jazz piece, which was proving to be quite difficult. Also, this way I can tailor the music to each
of my dancers'/characters’ personalities. This will involve thinking and working with lighting
and music and how that will happen during the performance. I have some ideas based off what
was done during the showcases from my choreography class in the fall semester.

2/10/14

I am back at UVM for my final semester. It is sure to be a whirlwind of a semester full of
challenges and triumphs and lots of work as I complete my thesis. Last semester, I auditioned to
be in a school performance and was offered a position. My rehearsals started as soon as I
returned to school and went until our performance dates this past weekend. I think it will be beneficial to me as a choreographer and as a dancer to be in the performance. I am also taking two movement based classes this semester, Contact Improvisation, and Dance Conditioning: Pilates, in order to strengthen my body as a dancer in preparation for the final performance.

Today however, I set up rehearsal schedules with Emma and Eleanor. Eleanor has a very busy schedule and can only meet once a week. Though this is not ideal to me, I know that they are both invested in the project. I have a much more open schedule so I plan on working on the choreography as much as possible in my free time and will teach it to them when we rehearse together as well as work with them to create more choreography during our rehearsals. Our rehearsals are scheduled from 1-3pm on Saturdays in the racquetball courts in the Patrick gym.

2/22/14

Today we had our first rehearsal since getting back from winter break. We talked for a lot of the rehearsal to catch up on what has been done, what needs to be done for the future and so on. We rehearsed what had already been choreographed and then developed new choreography. I already had some ideas in my head of what I wanted and they seemed to flow fairly easily into movement. We created about a minute each for Eleanor and Emma’s solos.

3/2/2014

Spring break takes away two rehearsals. I decided to give Emma and Eleanor assignments to work on during spring break in order not to fall behind in the choreography. Part of my role as a choreographer is to provide feedback and guidance as to what I want from each of my dancers. How do I want them to portray themselves and their movements? Who are the characters I want them to represent? My dancers are relying on my ideas and interpretations of the play. Therefore, I outlined these characters to Emma and Eleanor and asked them to create some movement based on my interpretations.

These are the assignments that I gave Emma and Eleanor for over spring break:

EMMA - La Femme is strong, and a bit cold, but she has to be because the light and life she had has been stolen from her. She gets a small part of it back after she kills her abuser but she is forever changed and she can never go back to who she was before. She is strong, cold, calculating, a fighter, who fights for what is right despite the consequences of her going to jail. She has avenged herself and gotten the justice she needs by killing the man who stole her identity away from her. She accepts her 'punishment' of going to jail for his murder because of this.

ELEANOR: Jaz is a complex character. She does her own thing and is somewhat aloof to what is going on around her. She does not understand exactly why or what her abuser is doing. She is a caretaker though - she takes care of Oridé and cleans up after others. She is a lotus - a beauty that emerges from the filth that surrounds her and she rises above it. That is until she is abused and loses herself. She falls into routines - cleaning the bathroom, shaving her head for Oridé, and being abused. She repeats all of it until she is lost and La Femme emerges. She is beautiful but unaware, aloof, caring, repetitive, a mixture of Oridé and La Femme. She becomes lost after the abuse continues.
I also gave them a list of songs that I have selected for them to listen to. I want them to send me their top three that they feel matches their character the best. We will compare their decisions to mine and then select the final pieces come next rehearsal.

3/16/14

Figure 3: Emma (left) and Eleanor (right) rehearsing

A two hour rehearsal became five hours on Saturday. I arrived early to work on the choreography solo for a while and then kept my dancers for a little while longer. Eleanor was late and I was not satisfied with the amount of work that I had made with my other dancer and on my own. They were both eager to stay longer. It makes me feel that they are as equally invested in this as I am. At the end of rehearsal I was two-thirds done with the choreography.

Emma had come up with more movement over spring break. The movements that I want for her character fit her natural style of movement far better than mine. She does big, excited, striking movements that are full of energy. I, on the other hand, prefer floating, light, ethereal movements. Emma did express concerns to me about creating movements. She was worried that it would become less of my project if I was not choreographing all the movement. I understood her concern. Even though I was not specifically coming up with the movements themselves, they were more the outer shell – I would pick movements I liked then rearrange the order of the phrase that she made and reshape them. I would change the speed and the specifics of a foot or hand placement. She created movement, but I developed it. I now anticipate her questions so I feel I am better able to develop and specify the movements.

During rehearsal we had an interesting development. Eleanor had some things that were bothering her and wanted to talk to us. Emma and I listened and then I found that we had joined in the venting. It was good to let off steam, so to speak, but also to take the frustrations we were feeling in our everyday lives and incorporate them into our dancing once we began moving again. I felt like a new element had been added to the dancing that had previously been missing.
It was also nice to talk to them as people and not instruct them as dancers. I could see how their own personalities fit those of their characters even better. Emma is strong, almost to the point of being stoic. Eleanor is hard to pin down sometimes and not always what you expect.

We discussed costumes during this rehearsal. Now that I have someone to pose as L’Homme I realized our costumes had to change from what they originally were in the work in progress. There is no doubt in my mind that L’Homme must be dressed in all black, like a dark shadow that looms off to the side, always present, always lurking.

I knew the base of what I wanted my dancers to wear. L’Homme will be in an all black suit, preferably with a long black jacket and a black fedora tipped over his face to obscure any specific features. As for my other dancers, I was unsure of colors. We thought about white to contrast L’Homme but to me the color white is a symbol of purity and none of the characters are pure enough to wear all white in my opinion. I want some uniformity but I’m not sure if I’m going to achieve it the way I want. Emma is in pants, no question. I would like to wear a dress or skirt and Eleanor might be in leggings and a tunic. Color would then have to the unifying factor. We eventually settled on the color scheme of purple, white, and black with each of us having varying degrees of the colors, i.e. I wear the least black and Emma wears the most, etc. We also played with the idea of varying shades of purple with me in the lightest, Emma in the darkest, and Eleanor in the middle. As I think back though, I wonder if I may have chose purple because somehow we all managed to be wearing purple at rehearsal. I suddenly want to incorporate red. I think I’ll have us all wear bright red lipstick as a symbol of our femininity. This idea just came to me as I thought about our costumes.

I will unfortunately not be here this weekend due to a previously scheduled event in Boston. I have resolved myself to finish the choreography this week before I leave. That gives me five days to complete roughly seven minutes of choreography. I believe it is a doable feat.

3/18/14

I have finished Emma and Eleanor’s solos! I spent two hours yesterday and produced only forty-five seconds worth of choreography. I was not satisfied at all with the progress of the day but my mind was blocked. The movement did not flow. I tried switching from solo to solo as I became stuck, but it was still difficult to produce anything that felt right. I watched music videos and movie clips of dancing to see if inspiration would hit. It did enough to create fifteen seconds of the forty-five. I left feeling discouraged and stressed, but knowing that no amount of forcing would make choreography develop. I took the rest of the day off to let my mind and body settle.

The next day I returned to the racquetball courts anxious that I would have a repeat of before. I ended up creating approximately three minutes of choreography in an hour and a half and finishing Emma and Eleanor’s solos, leaving only mine left to complete. Emma and I are meeting later this week for her to learn the rest and practice while I’m away.

This time I did not have my laptop with me to look up videos or listen to the music, which made figuring out the timing a little difficult. I had brought it the day before to see if the music would inspire me. However, I have been choreographing this piece without music for the first time. Normally, I am incredibly influenced by music and choreograph movement to music. This time around I am putting music to movement. I’m finding this way of choreographing works much
It’s much easier than trying to choreograph so that I make sure each hit in the music is hit with a corresponding movement. That nearly doubles the time it takes me to make movement and it is much more complex. I have found that the music I selected works because the feeling of the music fits the feeling of the choreography for each solo. Mine is slower and seductive. Emma’s is a bit louder and has bigger accents. Eleanor’s is a combination of the two, similar to how Jaz is a combination of La Femme and Oridé.

I sprained my ankle on Thursday. This puts a hindrance on my thesis as I can no longer teach Emma the rest of her solo. Though I am walking today with fairly little pain, I know I am not capable of dancing. I also do not want to aggravate the injury. The unfortunate thing to do is rest it in the hope that it heals quickly and I can get back to work soon. Emma has offered to meet this week once it’s feeling strong enough for me to show her the choreography.

Today we had another 5 hour long rehearsal. Emma and Eleanor learned the rest of their solos and I’m really happy with how they turned out. Dave, who plays the character of L’Homme, came today as well. His costume is perfect – sort of mob boss-esque. This does not necessarily fit the character in the play, but little is known about L’Homme other than that he has a family and lives in the same apartment complex as Jaz and he clearly has power over Jaz. Because of this, I took some artistic liberties with him. I wanted L’Homme to give off a dark, sinister vibe. L’Homme is powerful, not unlike how I picture a mob boss. This does not fit Dave’s personal character at all, but because he has done theatre he is able to act and portray those feelings, even though he’s mainly standing still.
Emma performed even better having Dave in place. She now had someone to direct her energy and movements toward. It emphasized the movement tenfold and made it that much more powerful.

We finalized costumes today as well. The process consisted of Emma, Eleanor, and me bringing every article of clothing we own that is red, black, and/or white, spread them across the racquetball court floor and tried on different combinations. I wanted Emma to be more masculine in appearance. Eleanor has an everyday look and I’m more feminine.

![Figure 5: Costume ideas](image)

After rehearsal I stayed to work on my solo choreography. I had recorded what I had so far and reviewed it to refresh my memory of the movements. While watching it back, I noticed some movements that I did not like at all. They did not fit the character, nor did they flow, nor did they look good. I immediately set to work changing the choreography I already had. After doing so the piece flowed better. I had not even realized that the flow was off until I changed the choreography. That flow also helped me to create new choreography. I ended up with just a minute and a half left to choreograph.

Next Saturday is the “dress rehearsal” but Eleanor and Dave will not be here as they have a previously planned engagement that they cannot get out of. Though I am nervous about this fact, Eleanor has already danced in the space so she knows it and Dave barely moves at all. I’m going
to focus mainly on the production aspects of the performance, such as lighting, music, and cues. I will be having a second dress rehearsal the day of the show to run things once or twice with the whole cast.

4/3/14

I am still debating about the use of text in the performance. Since I want a loose interpretation of the play I felt that direct quotes would be just that, too direct. I thought about what I really want each of us as dancers and as women to say. It dawned on me while working with M that I kept telling her to be present in her movements; that her movements should show that she is here, present in the world, and she knows who she is. It was a question about identity. I realize now that this project always has been about identity – the loss and the reclaiming and the proclamation of who you are. I got the idea then to have each of us before our solo simply say “Je suis” which is French for “I am”. At the end of the unison portion I thought we would each say a simple two word phrase. “Je suis”. “I am”. “Nous sommes”. And we would finish by all saying together “We are”. I have not had Emma or Eleanor practice with this yet as I’m still unsure whether or not to use it. I either want to use it to clearly get the point of identity across to the audience. But at the same time, as an audience member at dances, I have always enjoyed being able to take away my own opinions and perspectives from dance performances. Part of me wants to let the choreography speak for itself.

4/5/14

Today was the “dress rehearsal” in the Recital Hall. Paul Besaw, a member of my Thesis Committee came to observe and give feedback on the piece. Emma and I ran through our pieces with the lighting cues and music. I explained Eleanor’s movement style for her solo, Dave’s role as L’Homme, and the ending section of unison between Emma, Eleanor, and myself. Paul’s feedback was insightful and made me see the piece in a different way. His first comment was to perhaps change the order of the parts. As of now I had thought to have the three solos and then the unison work at the end. Paul suggested that I switch Emma’s solo to be at the end and have the unison work follow Eleanor’s solo. He found the order I had originally to be too predictable with the one, two, three of the solos and then the one, two, three in the unison work. That is to say, the order of the solos is me, Eleanor, then Emma. This order repeats in the unison work where we three have shorter mini solos. When Paul suggested the order switch there was something that clicked inside my head telling me it was the right decision.

I have always loved Emma’s solo and what she stands for with her character’s movements. She fights back. She knows who she is because she has reclaimed what has been lost – herself. She feels present whereas the other characters become and are lost. To me, Emma’s solo has the most power and strength behind it, which makes it the perfect way to end the performance.

Emma and I used the text I was considering in the beginning of our solos so I could decide whether to use it in the final performance. With this new change in order I am still unsure whether or not to use it. Paul, however, did have some good advice about using it. Each character has a specific personality and therefore, if they are each to speak, they must speak in a very specific way. That is, I must direct my cast to speak in a specific manner and also then move in a specific manner to their starting position. If I am to use the text, I would have each dancer begin
by standing center downstage, speak, and then move to their starting position which will not necessarily be where they speak.

Paul also helped in figuring out how to get Dave on stage. It seemed odd that he might enter on stage with me as the first solo. I wanted him to somehow be on the stage before me. Upon arriving at the Recital Hall, I noticed that part of downstage right is able to be lifted up to reveal steps leading onto it. Paul suggested that Dave sit in the audience by these steps and then after my welcome speech he would enter the stage from there where I would enter from offstage left. This would not draw too much attention to Dave until I wanted there to be attention on him.

Paul had a few performing notes for me. This was essential for me to hear since I tend to miss certain movements of aspects of my performing when simply re-watching video of myself and my cast members do not necessarily know what to look for. First, I have a tendency to do a “finger dance” when standing still. That is, I unconsciously move my fingers slightly when standing still, but I move them enough to draw attention to them. This is definitely a nervous habit of mine and also, as mentioned above, and unconscious one.

Most of my movements fit my character in an abstract way that Paul could understand. There was one movement, however, that was “too literal”. When practicing, the movement of which Paul spoke usually gave me pause. It did not seem to quite fit with everything else. When Paul confirmed this feeling I immediately decided to nix the movement. A final note Paul asked me to do was to sketch the pathways of my solo. In trying to avoid my earlier challenge of linear, lateral movements I pushed myself to have more random configurations and pathways for the dance to follow. In doing so, they are not always the clearest routes. I need to define them and really know them in my head so that I can own them come performance time. Except for the ending. At the end of my solo, I chose to no longer follow a path. The movements are sporadic and go literally all over the stage. To me, this represents the sporadic end of Oridé’s life. There is some order to it at first, but before she dies her world gets turned around. Paul’s comment was to make the ending messier, in other words, to have even less of a path than before.

Overall, the rehearsal was a huge success. I came to several conclusions on my own, such as costumes. Though we had settled on our costumes, I felt off in mine. It seemed too messy and overbearing for Oridé’s character. Eleanor’s seemed to clean and polished. So I decided to switch the two. I also came to the conclusion that a lot of work is yet to be done, with just one week left to go until the performance. Due to conflicting schedules, we are still only able to meet on Saturdays which means that we are able to have one final rehearsal on Saturday, April 12th, the day of the performance. My goal for the rehearsal is to first extend it from 11-3 and to drill the piece for the entire time, giving notes as needed.

4/8/14

And so this project has come to an end – almost. There are still some details to figure out the day of the show but in discussing when to submit this written aspect of my thesis, my advisor and I have decided it would be best to submit it to my Committee before the final performance.

It is a strange feeling to think that almost a year ago I started the process of my thesis. To say it has been a long process from start to finish is an understatement. When I started this project I had a very different idea of what the end project would look like compared to what it is now. I
had first envisioned this project as a very solo endeavor. I was going to be the sole performer. I alone would create all of the choreography. Now I have a cast of four, all with extremely different styles of moving. The process became collaborative with their participation. They added movements of their own. They combined their own interpretations of the characters with mine to truly develop who they were trying to portray.

My choreography and how I choreograph movement has changed drastically. I used to choreograph to music and now I put music to choreography. Music used to heavily influence my movement and how I dance; now I use it for timing cues rather than for emotional content. I have learned how to be more direct in explaining what I want to my dancers, whereas before I was a bit more indecisive.

I knew the process would not be smooth, for in dance it rarely is. There are always obstacles to overcome. These obstacles are part of the creative process though. Everything that happened has affected the performance in some way. And I have overcome every obstacle that I have encountered, such as spraining my ankle, getting over a fever, running a dress rehearsal with only half a cast, or working around my cast members’ schedules for rehearsals. I knew adding more people to my project would add obstacles, such as scheduling, but I knew the change from a solo to a trio would allow me to expand my knowledge as a choreographer. I would be able to add more to the project as a whole by dividing it with a larger cast.

The play begins with a quote by Dizzy Gillespie that was truly inspiring. In English, the quote translates to, “That one makes a lot or a few does not matter. It is simply necessary that each of these notes has a meaning” (Kwahulé 30). In other words, everything has significance. Nothing is done on a whim. I took this statement literally while working on this project. Every movement in the choreography is there for a reason. There is a meaning behind each hand position, and each foot placement. Everything I did with regard to this project was done with intention and had a purpose. The changes I made were necessary; the obstacles I overcame were necessary. A whole year of work has come down to a single, roughly twenty-two minute performance. I am proud of the piece I have created and I am excited to perform.