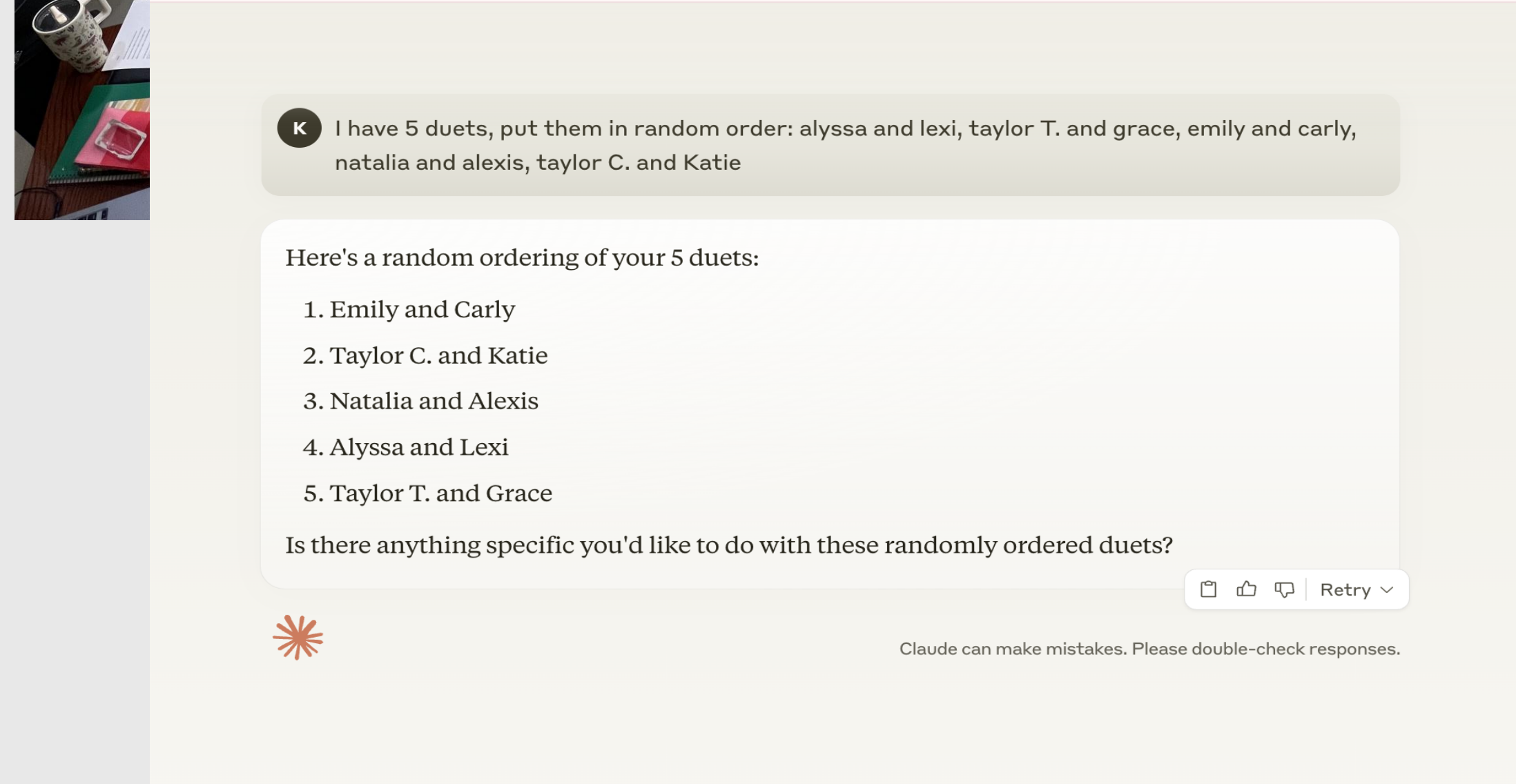
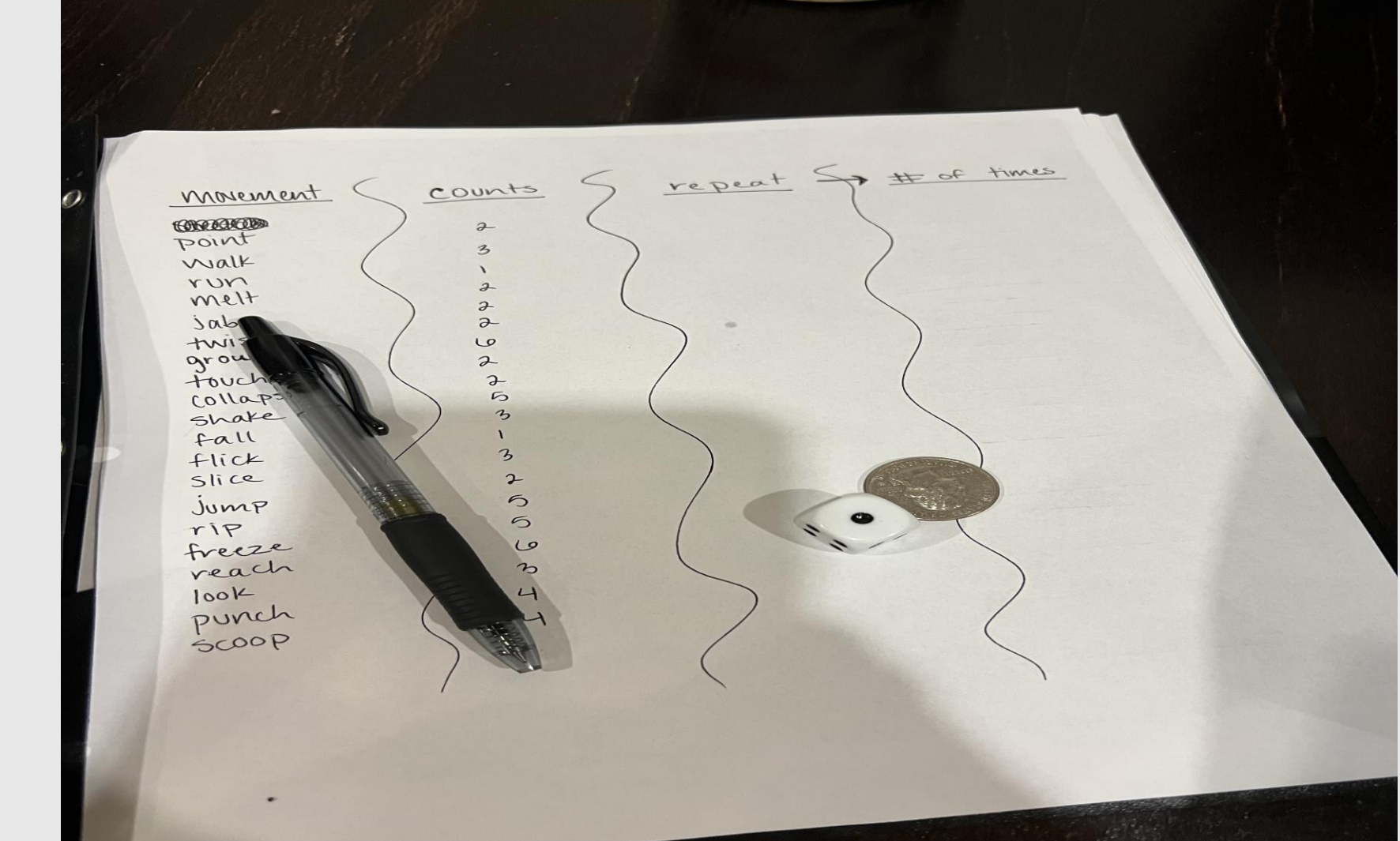




"What are the Chances?" Choreographic Process

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INTRODUCTION

According to dance scholar Sally Banes, chance procedures in choreography represent "a way of working that allows the artist to discover that which could not have been imagined." My senior capstone project explores the delicate balance between randomness and planned structure in dance creation. Inspired by Merce Cunningham, who pioneered using chance methods like flipping coins or rolling dice to determine aspects of choreography, this approach challenges traditional linear choreographic methods by generating movement combinations that might otherwise remain undiscovered. "What are the Chances?" emerges from narrative-driven work and through an experimental process where some elements are deliberately chosen while others arise through chance operations.

METHODS

At the beginning of this project, I conducted research on Cunningham's methodologies and explored chance-based techniques that others have implemented. My interest in this choreographic process was initially sparked during my freshman year Modern and Contemporary class with Professor Tricia Zweier.

After careful consideration, I selected several chance methods involving dice rolls. Following a comprehensive audition process, I assembled a cast of eight dancers and two understudies I was confident would excel with this challenging approach.

Each performer was assigned two different chance-based exercises: one to create a solo phrase and another to develop a duet phrase for collaboration with another dancer.

I developed a chance system that incorporated a number generator to select movements, dice rolls to determine the duration of each movement in counts, and coin flips to decide whether movements would be repeated. Additionally, AI generators were utilized to determine duet partnerships and establish the sequence in which performers would enter the stage. During rehearsals, when faced with creative decisions, we also regularly employed coin flips to allow chance to guide our process.

Get with a partner and develop your movement by adding a variety of choreographic devices/ relationships.

- 1= UNISON (performing the same movement at the same time)
- 2= CANON (performing movement one after another)
- 3= QUESTION AND ANSWER (movement complement/contrasted by others in the group)
- 4= COUNTERPOINT (performing individual movement sequences at the same time)
- 5= CONTACT (adding a touch, support, lean or lift)
- 6= REPETITION (repeating all or part of one or more motifs)

RESULTS

As a result, a nine-minute piece titled "What are the Chances?" was choreographed. The dance features group performance with transitional movement vocabulary distinctly different from my typical choreographic tendencies. The solo and duet arrangements create unexpected encounters that challenge traditional composition while maintaining cohesion through consistent movement qualities.

This choreographic structure revealed fascinating correlations between increased randomization and heightened creative problem-solving as the process evolved. When faced with unusual movement combinations determined by chance, I discovered innovative transitions and relationships that expanded my artistic range. So much so that I was inspired to create two different ending phrases and the dice will decide which phrase will be performed each night.

CONCLUSION

Working with chance operations was both challenging and liberating for me. Through making this work, I was able to break free from habitual movement patterns and discover new creative territory. The process taught me that structure and spontaneity can productively coexist, challenging the perception that artistic creation must be either entirely planned or completely improvised.

These chance methods have transformed my approach to choreography by revealing how embracing unpredictability can lead to authentic discovery. After two months of weekly rehearsals, this piece was ready for the 2025 Spring Dance Concert, representing both an artistic expression and a physical demonstration of my research findings. The project honors Cunningham's innovative legacy while establishing my own voice as a choreographer, providing a sustainable methodology that I can continue to explore throughout my artistic career.

Roll the dice three more times and write down the numbers you roll, in order. Now look at the following slide and write down the corresponding instruction next to the number.....

- 1= DIRECTION (Forward, backwards, sideways, up and down)
- 2= PATHWAYS – floor or air (Straight, curved, angular or circular)
- 3= LEVELS (Low, medium or high)
- 4= SIZE (Small or large)
- 5= PERSONAL SPACE
- 6= GENERAL SPACE (Centre stage, down stage or upstage)

Add these characteristics to your choreography, and make adjustments according to the numbers you roll. 1st action roll is paired up with your 1st characteristic, etc...

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