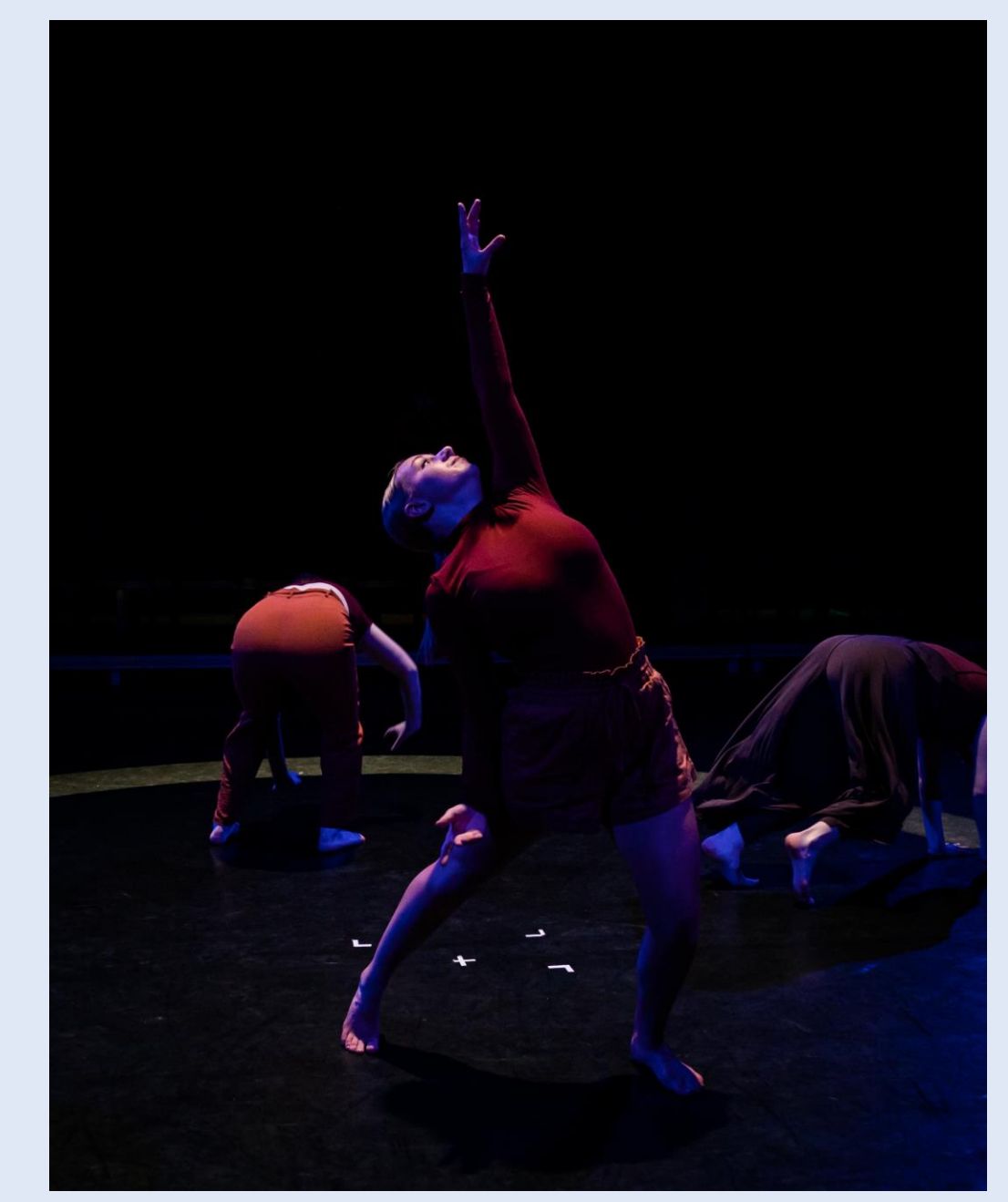




Personifying Inanimate Objects: A Study Through Movement

Delainey Bailey, Amy Gammon, Tricia Zweier
Lindenwood University Dance Program
Saint Charles, Missouri



Introduction

According to Oxford Languages, the definition of personification is “the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something nonhuman, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form.” Through artistic movement, the challenge for this creative project is to take characteristics and qualities of an inanimate object and translate that into choreography. This can also be called abstract or non-literal movement.

In a kaleidoscope, visual qualities such as the patterns, colors, shapes, and speeds influenced the movement, costuming, and lighting for the piece. For emotive qualities, a kaleidoscope is joyful, calm, whimsical, and magical. These are all expressions and feelings I gave to the performers. When watching my piece, “Kaleidoscope,” the viewer should feel these qualities.



Methods

At the beginning of this process, the dancers were asked to provide one word that was meaningful to them. Some of the words included: art, rocks, passion, love, music, stories, and drive. I created a unique individual phrase for each of the dancers based on their provided word. That may have been spelling the word with my body and through movement, or the movement that came out of me from thinking about how that word made me feel. Other times, like for the word “rocks,” I thought about the qualities of a rock and personified it. It is small, condensed, neutral, hard, and heavy. These qualities inspired more movement. I spent the first few rehearsals teaching these individual phrases and setting them in a sequential order that made sense musically.

Next, I worked on the opening scene: the dancers linked in a circle forming the kaleidoscope image. This scene introduced the idea of the dancers becoming the kaleidoscope and their bodies forming the patterns and shifting in pathways.

Results

As a result, a five-minute piece titled “Kaleidoscope” was composed. The dancers wore a variety of outfits, all in the same color palette of a deep orange and maroon. Both of these colors paired well with the rainbow of lights cast on the stage during the performance.

This piece was performed in an arena style stage, meaning there were four sides of audience surrounding the dancers. Every angle was “the front.” This added to the effect of the kaleidoscope image because the audience could see the complete circle.

Additional collaborators for this work include lighting design by David LaRose and photos by Katie Strzelec Photography.



Conclusions



Playing with the idea of abstraction and personifying an inanimate object was a new challenge for me. Through making this work, I was able to pull out the qualities of a kaleidoscope and turn that into movement for my cast of dancers. It was an inspiring process that I am able to carry over into my other creative projects.

After three months of weekly rehearsals, this piece was ready for the 2022 Winter Dance Concert.

