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Tomorrow's Song

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Tomorrow's Song: Context and Choreographic Intent

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In Dr. Berg's class on performative behavior, an underlying theme was present that focused on personal identity. By becoming ethnographers and cultural anthropologists, we observed how performance is woven into all aspects of life. This form of performance I am referring to is defined by everyday actions and behaviors, not the typically understood form of public display on a stage. Whether we were attending dance performances by Akram Khan, sampling food at outdoor markets, or watching street performers, it was evident how a person is unconsciously performing at all times. It is through these performative behaviors that one's identity is defined. Our personal background along with our cultural and social surroundings are all factors that influence our own concept of self, and in turn how we perform or behave in front of others.

As a dance major, I have been immersed in the realm of performance for years. Rehearsing long hours for a show is a regular part of my life. However, Dr. Berg's class challenged me to think of how everyday actions, dialogues, and gestures are also examples of performances. In fact, these improvisational, unplanned occurrences are even more indicative of who we are than the pre-planned or choreographed concepts we present. This shift in thinking led me to create a piece that explored human responses—both emotional and physical—more than technical feats within dance in order deliver a message that was meaningful and relatable. I wanted to strip away the beauty of the art in order to expose the kernel of movement: the heart and soul of humanity.

Through my senior choreographic work *Tomorrow's Song*, I wanted to explore my own concept of self. As I learned from Akram Khan's dance performance *DESH*, one's quest for identity requires you to delve into your past to further understand your future. As I thoroughly and carefully reflected upon my life—my relationships, my fears, my dreams, my heartaches—a

recurring image came to me in the form of a wall. This wall symbolizes my inherent nature to build a protective layer around myself—to enclose myself in order to shield my emotions. The wall also acts as an obstacle, both literally and symbolically. It is an immovable structure but it is also a representation of unexpected hardships that test our character and try to hold us back. However, as the piece progresses, the wall slowly starts to open up and create passageways. The dancers interact with the wall in complex ways. They lean on it for support; they push against it to flee from its relentless and imposing manner; they fly over it to show that with the help of others, one does not have to resign defeated but can instead rise victoriously. As the dancers make journeys through, around, and over these different passageways, we see their acceptance of their past, their awareness of their present, and their hope for their future. And it is at the intersection of these three things—past, present, and future—that we see their most authentic portrayal of self.

This concept also relates to the anthropological walks we took in London on Brick Lane and through Highgate cemetery. There was stillness in the history of these places, but it would suddenly be interrupted by an outside force. This shows that identity is constantly transforming; it is made up of multiple layers of history that must be built upon in order to stay relevant. Therefore, this piece can be seen as a visual autobiography, a personification of who I am through movement. It deals with my response to difficult times, my search for courage and strength, and my determination to cling to hope despite everything.

Youtube Public Link of Performance:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AiiGIYza20>