

Reflective Essay

Last spring (2020), I wrote my final paper for History of Dance Theatre about UK choreographer Antony Tudor and the concept of the psychological ballet; this intrigued me as a psychology major. My initial idea early in the semester was to explain why dance history asserts Tudor's ballets were psychological. However, my professor, Dr. Jill Nunes Jensen, encouraged me to actually question whether or not Tudor's ballets were psychological using another lens. Delving deeper into my research through Hannon Library's online databases, I found that some of Tudor's ballets don't actually have psychological themes so I decided to argue that "psychological" may be a misnomer for Tudor's ballets in my paper. This was an eight-to-ten-page paper, which gave me space to develop and explore this line of reasoning.

The best way to understand what it is like to be in a theatre watching dancers is often to read reviews others at live performances have wrote or to watch recordings. I wanted to watch these ballets myself to evaluate as primary sources before reading about others' opinions, but recordings of full ballet performances are rare and not readily available on research databases. I first used Tudor's official website to figure out when and by whom his ballets had been performed. Then, I used that information to do a YouTube search and managed to find clips and even full performances of Tudor's ballets with decent quality, considering when those performances happened. Keeping in mind that dance is very subjective, I explored multiple viewpoints by using Hannon's online research databases to find archived newspaper articles published after opening night of Tudor's ballets. Having access to old newspaper articles really helped me understand why Tudor's ballets were so revered. However, I also needed credible sources so I turned to JSTOR and EBSCOhost, which are the standard research databases for research within the humanities. I found scholarly, peer reviewed articles and books that provided

more in-depth analyses of Tudor's ballets. I was fortunate enough that the sources I was interested in were available to download, including full length books. For the psychological aspect of my analysis of Tudor's ballets, I turned to the American Psychological Association (APA), the largest organization of psychologists in the US, which has an online dictionary database with clear definitions of terms used in the field of psychology. I relied exclusively on online resources due to the restrictions of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Reading about how others interpreted Tudor's ballets actually led to my discovery that dance history deemed Tudor's ballets psychological because the ballets urged people to reflect on themselves, not necessarily because the dancing was implicitly psychological in nature according to the tenets of the discipline. While it seemed like these sources argued against my point, I realized that the authors simply had a different mindset. They interpreted Tudor's ballets as dancers, dance scholars, or casual ballet watchers who expect ballet to entertain, not to make them think. As a result, I welcomed and was able to reconcile different viewpoints in my paper. I emphasized that my argument came from a psychological point of view and was simply different from, not necessarily opposing, the views presented in my sources. One of the challenges I faced in conducting interdisciplinary research was for me to take a scientific approach and not evaluate sources based on how much I agreed with their opinion of Tudor's ballets. I had to constantly refer back to the APA database to remind myself of what I was looking for in terms of psychology. One source that helped me remain objective and not think like a dancer was *The Choreography of Antony Tudor: Focus on Four Ballets* in which the author, Rachel S. Chamberlain Duerden, evaluated each ballet in a very clear fashion. This inspired me to create various criterion for each ballet to meet to be deemed "psychological" in my analysis of several Tudor ballets. Having a source that analyzed Tudor's ballets systematically was invaluable in

helping me structure my paper and research. Overall, conducting interdisciplinary research and writing this paper was a very interesting and unique experience for me. It combined two of my interests and challenged me to think and analyze information in different way.