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The Marauder's Son: An Exploration of the Classical Story Ballet and Children's Literature

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. ABSTRACT	2
II. BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTION	3
III. DEVELOPMENT	8
IV. PRODUCTION	
Fundraising and Budgeting	15
Advertising	16
Music	18
Costuming and Props	19
Lighting Design	21
V. CASTING	23
VI. REHEARSALS	26
VII. TECH REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE	29
VIII. REFERENCES AND INFLUENTIAL SOURCES	34
IX. APPENDICES	
Budget	35
Poster	36
Facebook event	37
Cast list	38
Rehearsal schedule	39
Slides	40
Program copy	42
Photographs	43

ABSTRACT

The *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling was, for many Millennials, a defining literary and media experience. The popularity of the series has spawned many fan-made parodies. Meanwhile, in recent years, the classical Petipa story ballet style has begun to give way to more modern structures of choreography. *The Marauder's Son*, the culmination of a yearlong choreographic endeavor, is a story ballet that strives to introduce new audiences to classical dance through the use of the first book in the *Harry Potter* series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. The full production is available for viewing in the Scripps College Dance Department and on YouTube.

BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTION

In 1998, my dad brought me a new book called *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. He had heard about it on a trip to England, and it had recently been published in the United States. I was seven at the time, and my family sat down to read it together. I was introduced to this magical new world, fascinated by the shenanigans of Harry and his friends and entranced by the possibility that something existed beyond the world that I knew. Through six more books and many, many years, I delved deeper into this world created by J.K. Rowling. When I reached college, I did not purposely seek out friends who were also fans of the *Harry Potter* series. Instead, we found each other, through similar personalities and a general feeling of attachment to like minds. Many of us shared other obsessions. Among those was, for some of us, a love of ballet.

I began ballet well before my dad brought me that first *Harry Potter* book. However, I did not experience the world of the story ballet until around a similar time in my life. Like many young ballet students, I was drawn in primarily through the love of the technique and beauty of the professional ballerinas, not necessarily for the stories presented. Like *Harry Potter*, though, I was fascinated with the possibility of an entirely different world, one where we danced in place of speech. However, it wasn't until college that I ever considered that those two worlds could combine.

The concept for this ballet began as a joke among friends. I had long thought of creating a story ballet, first as an independent project, and later as a senior thesis. One day, as a junior, I was discussing the idea of the senior thesis with several

friends, and one brought up the possibility of creating a story ballet based on *Harry Potter*. We laughed about the idea and talked about who among our friends might make a good Ron, a good Hermione. I found the idea absurd; certainly, such an undertaking wouldn't be taken seriously, particularly presented as a thesis. However, the idea stuck with me, and I began to ruminate on the idea that it wouldn't be taken seriously as a story ballet. Weren't most classic ballets created based on fairytales? And what was *Harry Potter*, if not a modern fairytale? It made sense, then, that a modern fairytale could be used to create a modern story ballet.

This undertaking did not come without its challenges. Perhaps the most obvious was the presence of magic. The entire book is focused on the concept of a society where magic not only exists, but is the focus of education and daily procedure. It is challenge enough to turn the daily events of a non-magical world into graceful choreography; true magic is something else entirely. I relied heavily on the blind spots of the audience. When I wished to make brooms appear out of thin air, I had dancers hide them behind their backs. Books flew off the shelf and papers exploded from offstage. However, it became clear at the culmination of the first semester that a modern audience is very aware of the non-existence of magic. For my ballet to work, I had to embrace the absurdity of my ballet and my low-budget magic tricks, and create something that took two genres I loved dearly to a level of parody and comedy. I began to think of pointing out flaws in both while treating them with the love and respect that I have carried throughout my life.

In order to create such a piece, I first had to allow myself to find flaws with the subject material. I re-read *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, with a critical

eye. It was at this time that I realized that my beloved book, something I had always held as a standard of literature, had virtually no plot. This concerned me at first, because to have a story ballet, you first must have a story. This meant that I had to find new ways to tell the story. Rather than give the audience a scene-by-scene blow of a book where much of the action happens in hushed conversations, I picked out many of the scenes that I determined would translate well to the dance medium, and instead allowed the events to unfold as if they themselves were a storybook that the audience was reading. To that end, I choreographed almost all scenes such that the action would take place in the same way a book would be read: from left to right in the audience's perspective.

In addition to reading the text, I began to research the history and creation of the story ballet. Ballet as we know it today has evolved through many structures, from the introduction in Catherine de Medici's Court Ballets, particularly 1581's *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, which included music, dance, and poetry and lasted several days, through the Romantic and Classical eras, to the more recent works, such as *Cinderella*, by Sir Frederick Ashton. The most recognized version of the story ballet originated with Marius Petipa, who saw the story as more of a skeleton on which the high technical standards of dancing were balanced. The Petipa ballet often followed a fairly typical structure, including a first act taking place in reality and introducing a storyline, a second act that brought one or more main characters to a "dream" world, and a final "celebratory" act, where the plot has largely ended and the characters instead honor the events of the ballet and show off their

dancing.¹ In my ballet, I strove to honor this formation of sequences to the extent that the plot allowed for it. Though not following the exact Act structure, this can be seen in Harry's transition from his previous everyday life to his "dream" sequence, the Wizarding World as a whole. The final act was honored in the celebration in the Great Hall, which will be discussed further later on.

In particular, I researched the creation and analysis of some famous story ballets, and aspects that are crucial to storytelling through dance with which I had less experience, such as pantomime. My research on the ballets themselves led me to a parallel between the classic story ballet as it is viewed by the typical audience and my own work. Though there are countless ballets that have been created over time, it seems often that only a small few, beginning in the era of Petipa, receive recognition beyond the crowd of frequent ballet patrons: *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *The Sleeping Beauty*.² Others, such as *Giselle*, certainly make appearances in company repertoire, but these three ballets, are held as the best known and most popular. In many ways, this has to do with the wide following of the subject material (it's no secret that even the best and most well-known companies only perform *The Nutcracker* annually to bring in funding and audiences that otherwise know little else about the artwork of the genre). Two out of the three

¹ Oleg Petrov, "Russian Ballet And Its Place In Russian Artistic Culture Of The Second Half Of The Nineteenth Century: The Age Of Petipa," *Dance Chronicle* 15, no. 1 (1992): 40-58

² Marion Robertson, *Swan Lake (le Lac Des Cygnes): The Story of the Ballet* (London: Newman Wolsey, 1947), 11-14.

ballets have had their stories converted to animated Disney movies, 1959's *Sleeping Beauty* and 1994's *The Swan Princess*, one of which has gained a following that perhaps even overshadows the much earlier ballet.

The study of pantomime was particularly useful in relation to the choreography. Because miming actions are the prominent method of conveying words to an audience in ballet, confusing or unclear actions can cause an audience to lose interest in a ballet. As previously discussed, much of the first *Harry Potter* book takes place in conversation and history, not in action. This meant that I had to find a way to translate these dialogues to the audience effectively. While there are many pantomiming actions that are frequently used in ballet (especially the use of the "Let's dance!" action, a continuous rolling of the hands and wrists above the head), I was particularly interested in using the overall body placement to convey messages. When Mr. Ollivander, the wandmaker, is intrigued by the wand that has "chosen" Harry, he leans forward in a lunge, a placement that is used to convey observation.³ The art of pantomime is extensive, and even the slightest change in head placement could convey a certain message or character quality. For example, the dancer portraying Professor Snape, a character who often appears disgusted or unimpressed, would be instructed to keep his head straight up and somewhat back, where a dancer playing a student from Hufflepuff house, characterized by friendliness and desire to please, might be told to keep her head leaned slightly towards her shoulder.

³ Charles Aubert, "General Ideas," in *The Art of Pantomime* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 18-55.

DEVELOPMENT

One of my first goals when I set out to create this ballet was to create a list of characters and scenes. I re-read the book, looking at scenes that would both translate well to the dance medium and would further the plotline of the ballet. Many important scenes in the book, such as the search for background information on the Sorcerer's Stone itself, were not included because they were heavily based in the characters reading and having complicated conversations. Others were excluded because, while pivotal to character development in the books, the scenes were simply not related to the final plot point, the encounter with Lord Voldemort. Finally, I decided to add one scene that is not explicitly present in the book, the murder of Harry's parents. This scene was inspired by the prologue of recent productions of *Swan Lake*, a scene that opens the ballet and introduces the villain while giving crucial background information about the main protagonist.

The Marauder's Son began on Halloween, as the evil wizard Lord Voldemort approaches the house of James and Lily Potter, intending to kill their infant son, Harry. After killing James and Lily, his attempt to murder Harry backfires and his body is destroyed.

In Act 1, Harry, now 11, is living with his Aunt and Uncle, Petunia and Vernon Dursley, who maltreat him. He is rescued by Rubeus Hagrid, who informs him of his magical background and takes him away from the Dursleys. In the Wizarding World, Harry visits Mr. Ollivander's wand shop, then is given Hedwig, an owl as a birthday present by Hagrid. Harry is then sent off to Platform 9 ¾ where he meets future

friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger among his many classmates, and catches the train to his first year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Upon arrival, Harry and his peers meet their professors and Headmaster Albus Dumbledore and are sorted in to one of four Hogwarts houses: Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Harry settles into his life at Hogwarts, and mysterious things begin to happen. Now a seeker on Gryffindor's Quidditch team, he plays his first Quidditch game against Slytherin house. Shortly into the game, Harry's broom seems to be cursed by Professor Snape. Ron and Hermione come to his rescue, and Harry is able to recover and catch the Golden Snitch, winning the game for Gryffindor! Later, while exploring the castle, Harry encounters the Mirror of Erised, a magical mirror that shows the deepest, most desperate desire of the viewer's heart. Through this, Harry is able to see his dead parents. Dumbledore finds him, and warns him not to go seeking the mirror again.

In Act 2, after noticing suspicious behavior by Professor Snape, Harry, Ron, and Hermione follow him through a mysterious trapdoor. There, they encounter a series of challenges to pass, including a room of enchanted keys designed to attack them as they search for the one that will allow them through the next door. Next, they find a life-sized game of Wizard Chess with major consequences for taken pieces. Finally, the remaining two find a series of potions with a riddle, leaving them to choose which potions will allow them to move on and which might kill them. In the final chamber, Harry is surprised to find not Professor Snape, but Professor Quirrell, who reveals that he has been sustaining Lord Voldemort's soul on the back

of his head. Voldemort attacks Harry, but is overcome by a mysterious kind of magic as Harry touches him.

In the final scene, with Voldemort gone once more, the students and professors celebrate in the Great Hall.

Main characters for this ballet included:

- Harry Potter**, a young wizard who is introduced to the Wizarding World and the fact that he is a celebrity for having defeated the evil wizard Lord Voldemort as a baby.
- Lord Voldemort**, who is set on creating a Wizarding World of “Purebloods,” free of those born to non-magic parents, and will murder anyone who dares cross him.
- Lily and James Potter**, Harry’s young and loving parents who are involved in the fight against Lord Voldemort.
- Petunia and Vernon Dursley**, Harry’s aunt and uncle who deny any existence of magic and dislike Harry.
- Rubeus Hagrid**, the helpful and friendly half-Giant who is sent to bring Harry to Hogwarts and teach him of his past.
- Mr. Ollivander**, an eccentric wandmaker whose allegiances are unclear.
- Hedwig**, an owl
- Ron Weasley**, Harry’s devoted and well-meaning best friend.
- Hermione Granger**, Harry’s brainy and bookish friend.
- Albus Dumbledore**, the wise and knowing Headmaster of Hogwarts.
- Minerva McGonagall**, the stern but kind Transfiguration professor.
- Quirinius Quirrell**, the meek professor of Defense against the Dark Arts.
- Severus Snape**, the cool and sinister Potions professor.
- The Golden Snitch**, a winged ball that must be caught to end a game of Quidditch.
- The Hogwarts students**
- Chess pieces**
- Winged keys**

After creating the scene and character lists, I began to look carefully at each scene to determine how I wanted the scene to play out in the context of the ballet. Some scenes, particularly the prologue, the Dursleys, and the initial Mirror of Erised scene were created based around the dancers’ abilities. Both these scenes had dancers who only had experience with ballroom dance, and I worked with the dancers to give choreography that would be familiar for them while still depicting the proper mood and course of events. Many other scenes were, out of necessity, a

strong mix of classical ballet, other dance styles, and miming. This was often the case where the Hogwarts students were involved. In Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, the dancers were given characters, ranging from excitedly meeting up with old friends to being lost and scared in a new place. These characters were briefly broken by a short dance interlude, but the characters were primarily supported through conversation and gesture in this scene. In the Sorting, dancers were given choreography to approach the stool, but were left to acting out their character's feelings about the house they were sorted into. Another example of the mix of classical ballet and acting is the Quidditch game. The scene is primarily based in ballet technique, and the two major exceptions happen when Harry's broom becomes cursed. In order to create a contrast in the typical dancing that took place in the game and the "uncontrolled" movements of the cursed broom, Harry's movement changes from being classical ballet to Irish dance. While I knew that I would need to change the movement quality vastly for these two parts, the idea to add Irish dance came later, when I cast a trained Irish dancer as Harry. The opportunity seemed too good to pass up; many of the movements from the Irish vocabulary are fast and include many sudden direction changes, high jumps, and beating of the legs, all of which add to the overall feeling to the audience that the dancer is perhaps not entirely in control of his actions. The Quidditch scene also included many miming actions, as Ron and Hermione attempt to distract Professor Snape, who they believe is cursing Harry's broom. In contrast, the Quidditch scene also contains a nod to the structure of the story ballet: the classical variation performed by the Golden Snitch. The variation is a short dance, often a solo, and is often performed by female dancers *en*

pointe. Many are repetitive in nature, with one sequence of steps being performed several times, followed by a short bridge of movement, and most contain some sort of technically impressive action (usually a series of fast turns or large leaps) at the end. Another nod to the classic story ballet was the *pas de trois* by Harry, Hagrid, and Hedwig. Most story ballets include a section with a *pas de deux*, followed by a solo variation for each dancer. The *pas de trois* inserted some humor in to this tradition by using traditional elements of partnering (promenades, pirouettes, and large lifts), but placing them in the absurd situation of a young boy and a half-Giant performing with a bird. The *pas de trois* was followed by a classical *pointe* variation for Hedwig, though I decided not to give solo variations to Hagrid or Harry due to time considerations.

Other scenes were entirely dance-based, particularly the challenges that Harry, Ron, and Hermione face on their way to the Sorcerer's Stone. I ultimately settled on making the dance of the enchanted keys not only classical ballet, but ballet done *en pointe*, because I wanted to use the light, lifted quality of the *pointe* work to add to the feeling of fluttering, winged keys flying throughout the room. This scene took inspiration from the required "women's corps" piece seen in traditional ballets, a section used for a group of women portraying ethereal or otherwise unworldly characters, frequently dancing in unison or mirrored movement. I also took inspiration from the Waltz of the Snowflakes in *The Nutcracker*, which often uses fast ballet movement such as *bourréeing* and small or large jumps to create a sense of chaos. In contrast, I knew that I wanted the chess scene to be less strict in the ballet vocabulary, instead taking some inspiration from

modern dance. The chess pieces, particularly when viewed next to the keys, are grounded and solid, and I wanted to show that difference through uses of different techniques. Ultimately, I ended up deciding that each chess piece would be characterized by a single movement, which they used throughout the game. The movement was still very much inspired by ballet, using steps such as the grand jeté and chaînés turns, but I stepped outside of the typical curved arm vocabulary. Instead, dancers left arms down, moved arms in angular ways, or had certain designated hand and arm placements (such as the mimicked rein-holding of the Knight, or the interlocked fingers of the Queen, inspired by the Queen pieces of the movie version of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*). One aspect of the chess scene that developed over the course of the semester was the use of white tap tiles to create a chessboard on the ground. The tap tiles were first used in rehearsal to allow the dancers to see how much ground to cover, but the look was so successful that I decided to continue using the tiles as an actual prop. However, the setup was extensive, leading to my decision to have to pieces set up the tiles while in character. One of the most challenging scenes was the confrontation between Harry and Professor Quirrell at the Mirror of Erised. Because Lord Voldemort's face is placed on the back of Professor Quirrell's head, the dancer had to be able to move both forward and backward in a menacing way. Ultimately, because the human body is limited in many of the ways it can move, the scene ended up relying heavily on the effectiveness of the Voldemort mask to create the feeling of a man with two faces.

The final scene, the celebration in the Great Hall, consisted entirely of dance and contained relatively little plot. This scene was inspired by the tendency of many

story ballets to have an entire act, often taking place at a wedding or celebration, where dancers simply perform, either for friends and townspeople or a specific focal couple or person. In this case, the students and professors are celebrating the end of the year and Harry's defeat of Lord Voldemort by dancing, each group of students with their own house.

PRODUCTION

Fundraising and Budgeting

In completing a project of such scale, I was aware from the beginning that the funding would be an issue. I was looking to obtain a performance space and technical crew members, costume 28 dancers (many of whom were in multiple roles and required two or more costumes), create or purchase several props, and print programs and flyers for advertising. I first looked into available resources on the colleges beyond the Scripps Dance Department funding, but those efforts proved mostly fruitless; because I was a Pitzer student completing a thesis on Scripps campus, I was ineligible for several funding options available through Scripps. For costumes and props at the In the Works concert, I applied to Without a Box Improvisational and Experimental Theatre for \$81.24 and was successful. When it came time to fund the entire project, I consulted with my costume designer and created a preliminary budget of \$1600. This early budget factored in theater rental and staff costs for Garrison Theater, though I was later informed that I would be unable to obtain Garrison due to commitments to the orchestra. After considering many fundraising outlets such as IndieGoGo and Kickstarter, I decided that my fundraising would be most successful if left in a personal realm. With the help of a family friend, I drafted a letter explaining my project and giving my goal of \$1600. Though I had decided not to go through third-party websites, I decided to follow a similar model, and offered donors prizes for certain amounts of donations, beginning with a credit in the program, and leading up to include reserved seats at the performance of their choice, a digital copy of the performance, an invitation to

watch a rehearsal, and, for the biggest donors, a home-cooked meal by me. I posted the letter, along with a PayPal “Donate!” button on my website and Facebook page, and the family friend e-mailed a list of friends and relatives who we thought might be interested in donating. Through these avenues, I received \$2118.70, plus an additional \$250 from the Dance Department, for a total of \$2368.70 to complete the remaining portions of the project. I also received several in-kind donations, such as the use of Pomona’s Pendleton dance studio for a venue (including it’s new lighting system), consultation and set-up work from Jim Taylor and the Seaver Theater, and use of a classical tutu from the Claremont Colleges Ballet Company. By the end of the project, I was still slightly under budget, and I decided to use the remaining money to buy a small gift for each of my dancers. For a full detailed budget, see appendix A.

Advertising

This show was primarily advertised through two methods: a flyer (see appendix B) and a Facebook Event (see appendix C). The creation of the flyer was perhaps most interesting, as it required more graphic design. Because of the copyrighted nature of the subject material, I had to be careful to send the potential audience a clear message about the content and purpose of the ballet without using any claimed images. I decided to use two images that are iconic to the character of Harry Potter, his lightning bolt scar and his round glasses, positioned as they would fall on the face of the character, but left off a full face. This was a decision made as much to avoid unusable material as to create a simply, minimalist look on the

poster. I thought the clean and simple look of the poster would be ultimately more aesthetically pleasing than including more text and images explaining why audiences should come to the ballet. Because many people are able to infer from the lightning bolt and glasses image what the ballet is about, and because I believed that the subject material would be popular enough on its own to entice audiences to come to the show, the poster did not need to do much more than speak for itself. To help with the suggestion of the subject material, I also used fonts similar to the iconic Harry Potter text used on the cover of the books. The final touch, the printing of the poster on parchment-like paper, was a decision made upon the prompting of the Scripps College Dance Production class, to add just one more hint about the ballet, and to give the poster a more immersive feel in the world of the ballet. Two hundred of these posters were printed and distributed by the dancers among the colleges and in store windows and bulletin boards in the Claremont Village. I made the decision to place flyers in the Village because I was hopeful that this would be a project I could share not just with the college community, but with the community at large, and this was certainly successful. Within days of placing posters, I received e-mails and messages from Claremont community members wondering about ticket availability, and upon the day of the show, several audience members appeared to be families unrelated to the Claremont Colleges.

Music

In the spring of 2013, when I first decided to pursue this project, I approached a friend of mine, Brett Berger (HMC '15), to ask if he would want to compose original music for this project. I had worked with Brett as a composer previously, and enjoyed the give-and-take process of working with original music. During the summer, I discussed two scenes with Brett to compose for the fall show, the Quidditch game with a variation for the Golden Snitch and Mr. Ollivander's shop, and instructed him to take inspiration from the soundtrack of the *Harry Potter* movies. He returned to me towards the beginning of the fall semester with drafts of music for the two pieces. I was delighted with the music for Mr. Ollivander's shop, but was concerned that the music for the Quidditch game was missing the Snitch variation and, more concerning, had taken musical progressions directly from the soundtrack. I discussed these issues with Brett, but his obligations as a student had overrun him and he was unable to complete the music. As it got closer to the fall show, I decided to keep the music and selected a chunk of music from "Hedwig's Theme" on the John Williams soundtrack for the first movie for the variation. I knew that this decision put me in more danger of copyright infringement, and that I would have to re-select my music for the next semester.

During January of 2014, I began my search for new music, as it became apparent that I would not be able to count on Brett to compose the entire ballet. I also knew that, because of the possible issues with copyright law, I needed to search for music in the public domain. On a trip to visit a family friend, he gave me several suggestions for music, many of which I ended up using. The remaining pieces of

music, with one exception, were gathered from internet searches with words describing the feeling or events of the scene. The exception, the music for the Sorting Ceremony, gave me the most trouble, because I was looking for something very specific. Choreographically, I was taking a lot of inspiration from the March in the Joffrey Ballet's version of *The Nutcracker*. Beyond this, I needed music with four distinct themes, one for each Hogwarts house. I approached a second composer friend, William Appleton (PO '14) who agreed to create a piece of music for me. Because I was using many different composers, I needed something to make sure the music all tied together. To achieve this, I looked specifically for music from the Late Romantic period and requested that William compose in a similar style. Finally, after selecting the music, I had to trim the selections to a more manageable scene length. This meant I had to listen to the music several times to find the spots that were musically appropriate for the scenes and locate the spots where the music could most easily be cut without jarring transitions. I primarily used Garageband software to cut music, and Audacity to slow down pieces where they felt too fast for dancers to complete the choreography cleanly and to extend notes where the music had been cut.

Costuming and Props

During the first semester, I designed all costumes for the "In the Works" performance. For the first scene, Mr. Ollivander's wand shop, I wanted Harry to have a simple, every day look. In the books, Harry is given hand-me-down clothing from his overweight cousin, Dudley. Because of this, I placed Harry in simple jeans

and a white t-shirt, but made each a few sizes too large. Mr. Ollivander was given a cloak, a clothing item that adults in the Wizarding World were often described to be wearing, and wore plain clothing underneath. For the Quidditch scene, the costuming was a little more challenging. Because the uniforms worn canonically by Quidditch teams are quite extensive and difficult to cheaply re-create, I took my inspiration from the fan-made parody musical, “A Very Potter Sequel.” Using Photoshop, I created two logos, one for the Gryffindor team and one for the Slytherin. I bought iron-on labels and plain t-shirts in the colors of the two houses, red and green. Dancers wore plain black bike shorts on bottom.

In the spring, I entrusted the majority of the costume design to Chelsea Thompson (SC '14), a fellow *Harry Potter* fan and experienced costume designer. I was left in charge of one costume, that of Hedwig the owl. Because Hedwig was one of two characters to perform a traditional ballet pointe variation, I wanted the costume to look as much like a costume from a classical ballet as possible. The dancer wore a white classical tutu with a white leotard adorned with white and brown feathers lining the straps and creating a “V” on the bodice. When it came to the costumes for the rest of the cast, I allowed Chelsea a large portion of the decision-making, stepping in only when I was concerned that the costume would affect the dancers’ ability to complete the choreography. Costume materials were accumulated from many sources, including pre-made sweaters and ties for the students, repurposed shirts and pants gathered from Goodwill, and raw fabric that Chelsea used to create cloaks and gowns for Voldemort and all four professors, skirts for the enchanted keys, and tunics for the chess pieces.

Out of necessity, this ballet also involved props in almost every scene. Many of these props were obtained at Goodwill stores and by asking friends and professors for household objects like glass bottles, a rocking chair, and old suitcases. The biggest and most challenging prop, the Mirror of Erised, was designed and created by the Seaver Theater prop department.

Lighting Design

Lighting design for this ballet was truly a collaborative effort between Jim Taylor, the head of the Seaver Theater, my light board operator and stage designer, and myself. I designed the basic ideas and many of the effects. I approached Jim Taylor with my preliminary designs and ideas, and he created a lighting plot that involved two rows of front lighting, one of top lighting, and one of back lighting with eight PARnel instruments each, four with warm-colored gels and four with cool gels, plus six booms with three Source Four instruments and the additional five Source Fours to create the aforementioned specials. My stage manager and light board operator, Brianne Imada (SC '14), created the exact cues during tech rehearsals, making calls on the intensity and direction of the light for all additional scenes that I had left unspecified. It was important to me to use lighting to help create some of the magic of the show. For example, in the Mirror of Erised scene, Harry's parents were unlit in the beginning and then lit up so as to appear only in the mirror. Specials were used in the Prologue scene to call attention to the baby Harry in his bassinet after Lord Voldemort's initial murder attempt, and during the Sorting to

announce each student's house with a burst of each house's color: red for Gryffindor, green for Slytherin, blue for Ravenclaw, and amber for Hufflepuff.

CASTING

The casting process began in the fall of 2013, with the auditions for *In the Works*. I began looking for seven dancers to be Quidditch players, one to play Mr. Ollivander, one to play the Golden Snitch, and, of course, a Harry Potter. For the Quidditch players, I was looking for dancers with strong technique. The choreography was planned out to be relatively intermediate to advanced ballet that incorporated the use of brooms as well as throwing and catching a ball. This meant that I needed dancers who were familiar with the technical movement so that they would have the least amount of trouble adding in the props. The Golden Snitch also had to be a strong technical dancer with a lot of ballet experience. I wanted the part to stay true in style to the classical variations of the story ballet, so the part was set *en pointe* and with very advanced ballet technique. Ollivander, on the other hand, did not need to have strong technical skills, but needed to have strong acting skills. The role is for an eccentric, elderly man who is described as being, “a bit creepy,”⁴ the kind of character who one is not sure whether he is good or evil. The choreography was more based in mime and gestural movements, in order to demonstrate his curiosity and fascination with the connection between Harry and dark magic. Oddly enough, it was casting Harry that surprised me the most. Going into auditions, I was sure that I wanted a strong technical dancer, one who could command a stage like Ali the Slave in *Le Corsaire*. However, when Byron Maltez (PO

⁴ J.K. Rowling, “Diagon Alley,” in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (New York,

NY: Scholastic Press, 1998), 82.

'16) showed up at the auditions, I knew I had found my Harry. He had no prior ballet training, only many years as a competitive Irish dancer, a year with the Claremont Colleges Ballroom Dance Company and some lower-level modern classes. Instead, it was first his look, the spitting image of a description of Harry Potter, and then the quality of his movement (a combination of genuine interest and insecurity), that drew me to him. That movement quality allowed me to see the role of Harry for what it ought to be: a slightly awkward, scared but good-natured and wondrous 11-year-old boy. I approached him immediately after the audition and offered the role to him.

The night after the auditions, I sent out e-mails to my top choices for cast members. Unfortunately, a large portion turned me down, including my preferred Ollivander and 5 out of 7 Quidditch players. I continued down my list of possible alternates, and began to reach out to friends and dancers who had been unable to attend the audition. Eventually, I was able to assemble a full cast of more than capable dancers (though one would go on to drop out of the piece, forcing me to take her place).

When it came time to cast for the spring, I had a large list of characters I needed to fill (see appendix D). For my corps de ballet, I was less concerned with technical skill and more concerned with having enough bodies to create the look of a full group of students. I also knew that the subject of this ballet is very dear to many people my age, and wanted everyone who was interested (and had some level of dancing experience) to be able to be involved in the process. I put out a call for dancers in January of 2014 over Dancer's Alert and received interest from about

seven dancers whom I had never met (though about five of them would end up dropping the project due to scheduling concerns). The rest of the corps de ballet was assembled from various friends and members of the Claremont Colleges Ballet Company. My corps de ballet all filled two roles; each danced as a student and as either an enchanted key or chess piece. These were split based on amount of classical ballet experience and pointe technique; those who were able and comfortable dancing *en pointe* were cast as keys, a section I wanted *en pointe* to appear more flighty. The rest became chess pieces, which I envisioned as a more modern-based section of the ballet. The Dursleys proved the most difficult part to cast. Like Ollivander, the Dursleys were a more acting-based part, so my difficulty casting came more from exhausting my resources than restrictions on the ability of the dancers. I enlisted several of my dancers to reach out to their friends, and ended up with two dancers from the Claremont Colleges Ballroom Dance Company, Vicky Bouche (SC '15) and Alexander Kwan. Though assembling the cast certainly presented challenges, I ended with a group of very capable dancers and actors, all of who stepped up to the challenge of this ballet with dedication.

REHEARSALS

The rehearsal process for the fall semester was quite simple. Because I was working on two different scenes with two sets of dancers, I initially scheduled two separate rehearsals. The choreography progressed faster than expected, and I quickly combined the two into one two-hour rehearsal per week. The one setback that inhibited the rehearsal process was my inability to secure a final Chaser for the Quidditch section. As mentioned previously, one dancer joined the cast several weeks into the semester, allowing me to finish the choreography, but shortly thereafter dropped out. Another setback in the process came when one dancer revealed weeks before the show that he was unable to make all but one show. I found a replacement dancer, and the previous dancer and I trained him together. Aside from these casting and commitment issues, I had a very smooth process.

The spring rehearsal process proved significantly more difficult. After polling all my dancers for availability, I created a rehearsal schedule (see appendix E) that attempted to accommodate all schedules. This culminated in approximately 13 total hours of rehearsals per weekend. I did my best throughout the semester to ensure that the schedule stayed constant, in hopes that this would mean fewer absences. However, this process failed me in two different ways. First, I found myself at the day of the dress rehearsal with still no rehearsals with a full cast. This was mainly due to frequent absences by a small number of dancers, primarily due to parallel commitments to the Ballroom team but also often due to social or familial commitments. In addition, I was perhaps more lenient (towards the beginning of the semester, especially) than I ought to have been with absences. I found myself

allowing dancers to miss rehearsals simply because I told them that, while I would rather they didn't miss rehearsals, I could not stop them. Had I been a bit clearer, asking them to re-frame their plans, or giving them a rehearsal schedule prior to asking for a commitment, I might have had a different outcome. The second failure in this process came towards the end of the semester, when I began to realize that I was not able to complete and clean the choreography to my satisfaction with the allotted weekly rehearsal time. In particular, I had created a short variation for each Hogwarts house, and these were feeling very rushed and messy. I asked each house (a group of 3-4 dancers per house) to find a time when all were free, and added two extra hour-long rehearsals for each. These extra rehearsals, coupled with the need to cancel rehearsals due to spring break and the Scripps Dances show, meant that I had to deviate from the weekly standard schedule, which proved to be confusing for many dancers. It also meant that I had to reschedule several rehearsals within one to three weeks of the rehearsals taking place. This led to more requests for absences due to social commitments, and more confusion about precisely when any given dancer was to be in the studio. I sent out weekly schedule reminders with the entire week laid out, but found quickly that many dancers simply did not read the e-mails thoroughly, which meant that, for the first few weeks of changed schedules, I was always missing at least one dancer who was unaware of a rehearsal. I emphasized the importance of reading the e-mails to the dancers, as well as the importance of being at a rehearsal. These reminders improved attendance to the point where I was able to successfully rehearse and clean sections that were of concern.

Overall, I believe that many of my issues with the rehearsal process stemmed from my initial desire to be viewed as “nice” before “professional,” a mistake on my part that led to dancers taking advantage of my perceived leniency and placing other commitments or activities of greater importance. Changing this attitude midway through the semester proved partially effective; while I did see an improvement in attendance rate, I was never able to fully achieve 100% attendance until the dress rehearsal. Were I to do this process again, I would set a clear rehearsal schedule and ask that dancers commit to all rehearsals prior to beginning the process, then enforce that policy with more weight. In addition, it must be recognized that many of my cast members had several other obligations, placing this production as a lower priority. This, coupled with a lack of available studio space, meant that I was simply not able to schedule as many rehearsal hours as I would have liked in order to ensure a clean final product. I dealt with this by providing videos of choreography for all dancers, and asking them to review and practice on their own time as much as possible. This solution was partially effective, though it left me with less control than I would have preferred.

TECH REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCES

Prior to the show itself, a small section of *The Marauder's Son*, including the Hedwig pas de trois and solo and Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, was performed at "Scripps Dances." In order to both deal with the fact that the choreography ended abruptly and to encourage the audience to attend the full show the following week, an introductory slide was added at the beginning of the choreography, and one containing information about the full show along with the words, "To be continued..." was added at the end (see appendix F)

For the full show, because of space restrictions, we were unable to enter Pendleton Dance Studio and convert it to the theater until the day before the performance. Even then, because lighting hang and focus took the majority of the day, dancers weren't able to even space their pieces until we began tech rehearsal the evening before the shows. While most productions would have separate rehearsals to space pieces, to record lighting and sound cues, and to run the show in full costume and makeup, all these things had to be condensed into one, six-hour rehearsal. Unfortunately, this meant that by the time we began to run the show in full costume, the entire cast (myself included) had become tired and somewhat restless. This led to several missed cues and other mistakes, both on the part of dancers and crew members. One particularly harmful mistake was the accidental speeding up of the music by 4.4%, which threw dancers off and meant that most people had to be called in prior to the show's call time the next morning to re-run several scenes and transitions. One dancer also fell during the dance of the enchanted keys dress run, injuring herself and rendering her unable to dance the

following day. This was dealt with by replacing her in Platform 9 ¾ and Sorting, re-spacing the dance of the enchanted keys to exclude her part, leaving an empty spot in the finale, and cutting her house variation, which already had one dancer replacing another injured dancer. This last decision was the most difficult to make, as I felt that it robbed the remaining original dancer of her hard work in that piece, but the variation was created for three dancers, and to replace the dancer during the day of the show would have resulted in sloppy-looking choreography at best.

Despite all the challenges presented the night before, the performances of *The Marauder's Son* were highly successful. Many of my concerns about the dancers' ability to perform the choreography were alleviated when the music was slowed back to the regular pace, and the dancers handled the problematic transition admirably. In particular, the presence of the audience seemed to ignite the dancers' acting abilities.

The audience reception was especially rewarding. The matinee performance had a nearly full house, but the true joy was the evening performance. When the doors were opened 30 minutes prior to the performance, a line had formed that extended far outside the Pendleton complex. By ten minutes to show, the theater had filled to capacity, including all available floor space and standing room, and more people were being turned away at the door. Those who were turned away were offered the opportunity to leave their e-mail address to receive a digital copy of the show. Those who were able to see the show were quite responsive, laughing at humorous sections and applauding loudly following each scene. Perhaps the greatest success for me has been the response from *Harry Potter* fans that have

approached me and thanked me for the way I handled the subject material (one particularly grateful audience member informed me that she had cried during the Mirror of Erised scene, when Harry was reunited with his parents through the mirror). One of my greatest fears in taking on this project was that I would be rejected by the true fans because of my extensive scene cuts and changes to the way that some events took place, a necessary evil in translating the book to movement. It was affirming that fans of the series stood by my artistic choices and were able to see the care and love with which this work was handled.

I was particularly happy with the performances. The dancers showed me that, not only were the long hours spent by all in rehearsal worth it, but that they, too, enjoyed participating in the final product. Were I able to re-work this production, I have many thoughts as to changes I would make. I would love the chance to extend some scenes and delve deeper into some characters. Headmaster Dumbledore, in particular, is a character that I feel has a lot of potential for some interesting movement, but was limited in this case by lack of ballet experience and a language barrier with the dancer that made choreographing complicated movements and actions difficult. Indeed, I would love to have the time to work individually with each dancer at length to fully develop each character. The dancers were admirably able to extrapolate from the brief discussions we had about the characters they were given, but there simply wasn't time in a single semester to work one-on-one with each person in a 28-person cast to go over in detail how each character would perform a single movement or react to an event. I also would love to extend the ballet to a true full-length show by adding more connecting scenes that

explain the plot and introduce the mystery around Professors Snape and Quirrell. There are also many small details that I might change, such as the entrance of the students to the Great Hall, where I inadvertently broke my rule of thumb in moving the action from left to right from the audience's perspective.

Something that was an unanticipated but worked well was the use of the gap between the back curtains for prop and scenery changes. While I was initially concerned that the parting of the curtains would ruin the immersive effect of the ballet, the opposite proved to be true. Instead, it seemed that, when the curtains parted, the audience was privy to another magic trick, a realm like the Room of Requirement mentioned in later *Harry Potter* books, where necessary scenery simply appeared. In another happy accident, this effect was aided by the “mysterious” blue glow from the work lights placed in the back for the crew. While I would not consider the set changes ideal (in a perfect production, scenery would change through pulleys and other non-human methods, appearing as though moving through magic themselves), this was truly an elegant solution to the available space.

I would love to keep *The Marauder's Son* in my repertoire, particularly if it was to be performed for communities with families and children, where the ballet could bring in a new generation of ballet lovers and *Harry Potter* lovers alike. I would be very interested to see this ballet performed by professional or semi-professional dancers, in which case I would be able to fully realize my vision. Because I was working with dancers from a diverse background (a decision which I do not regret), I did have to adjust my choreography and my expectations for the cleanliness of the choreography. I was happy with the effect it produced in some

scenes, but I think that using professional dancers would result in a very different feel of the ballet, and I'm curious to see how that could play out. Unfortunately, this ballet may be unique to a college setting, where it is possible to hold a free performance. In order to charge for any performance of this ballet, rights to use the *Harry Potter* subject material would need to be obtained (an expensive and likely impossible task for an emerging choreographer), and most companies or even studio productions are unwilling to produce shows without any expected revenue.

The undertaking of this project has been extremely taxing, with long hours of rehearsals and more creative and technical decisions than I've ever had to make. Ultimately, the final performances were more rewarding than I could have anticipated, and I am beyond proud of the accomplishments made both by my dancers and myself. While the choreography was the most time-consuming aspect of this show, the organizational and production-based tasks allowed me some of the most important, invaluable experiences of my dance and my college career, and I'm incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to produce this show.

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APPENDIX A: BUDGET

Prop Budget:	
Mirror of Erised Frame	\$600.00
Wands	\$52.95
Sorting Hat	\$24.95
Goodwill Suitcases	\$25.00
Costume Budget:	
Fabric for costumes	\$258.50
Goodwill	\$35.84
Forever 21/Sweaters	\$156.72
Bald Caps	\$19.96
Home Depot/Foam for Crowns	\$6.23
American Way/Shirts	\$46.62
SolidColorNeckties.com	\$114.30
Golden Sewing	\$30.20
Michaels	\$9.15
Misc:	
Music	\$2.97
Risers	\$750.00
Flyer printing	\$50.00
Total:	\$2,183.39
Raised:	\$2,368.70

APPENDIX C: FACEBOOK EVENT

Cover Photo

APR 19

The Marauder's Son: A New Ballet

Change Event Photo

Public · Hosted by Emily Kleeman Choreography

Going ▾

Invite

Edit

...

🕒

Saturday, April 19 at 2:00pm - 8:00pm
about 1 week ago

📍

Pendleton Dance Center
Claremont, California 91711

Show Map

The culmination of Emily Kleeman's senior thesis project, The Marauder's Son is a story ballet based on "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone."

There will be two performances, both on Saturday, April 19, at 2 PM and 7 PM. The shows will be performed at Pendleton Dance Studio at Pomona College and are free to the public. The running time of the show is approximately 1 hour.

POSTS



Joey, David and 77 other friends are going

GUESTS

216
going

49
maybe

979
invited

INVITE FRIENDS

+ Add friends to this event

37

APPENDIX D: CAST LIST

The Marauder's Son Cast List

Lord Voldemort	.....Lancelot Liu (PZ '17)
James Potter	.....Bryan Visser (HMC '13)
Lily Evans	.....Vivian Delchamps (SC '14)
Harry Potter	.....Byron Maltez (PO '16)
Vernon Dursley	.....Alejandro Kwan
Petunia Dursley	.....Vicky Bouche (SC '15)
Hagrid	.....Harrison Goodall (PO '16)
Mr. Ollivander	.....William Appleton (PO '14)
Hedwig	.....Sarah Barnes (SC '16)
Ron Weasley	.....Ilana Cohen (PO '16)
Hermione Granger	.....Nicole Wein (HMC '15)
Albus Dumbledore	.....Lancelot Liu
Minerva McGonagall	.....Debra Mashek (HMC Professor)
Severus Snape	.....William Appleton
Quirinius Quirrell/Voldemort head	.....Jacob Barrera (PO '14)
The Golden Snitch/The Silver Key	.....Vivian Zhang (SC '17)

Quidditch Players

Courtney Keeler (HMC '14), Molly Wilkerson (PO '15), Lizzy Ginelli (CMC '15),
Madeline McGaughey (PO '16), Allegra Barnes (SC '17), Maile Blume (SC '17), Cara
Shpizner (SC '14)

Hogwarts Students

Courtney Keeler, Lizzy Ginelli, Madeline McGaughey, Anna Blachman (PO '16), Emily
Morena (PZ '16), Cara Shpizner, Maile Blume, Allegra Barnes, Nava Dallal (HMC '17),
Megan Gianniny (SC '14)

Flying Keys

Courtney Keeler, Sarah Barnes, Grace Stewart (CMC '17), Emily Morena, Cara
Shpizner, Nava Dallal, Alejandra Baur (CMC '17), Mia Farago-Iwamasa (SC '17)

Chess Pieces

Lizzy Ginelli, Madeline McGaughey, Megan Gianinny, Anna Blachman, Molly
Wilkerson, Maile Blume, Allegra Barnes

APPENDIX E: REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

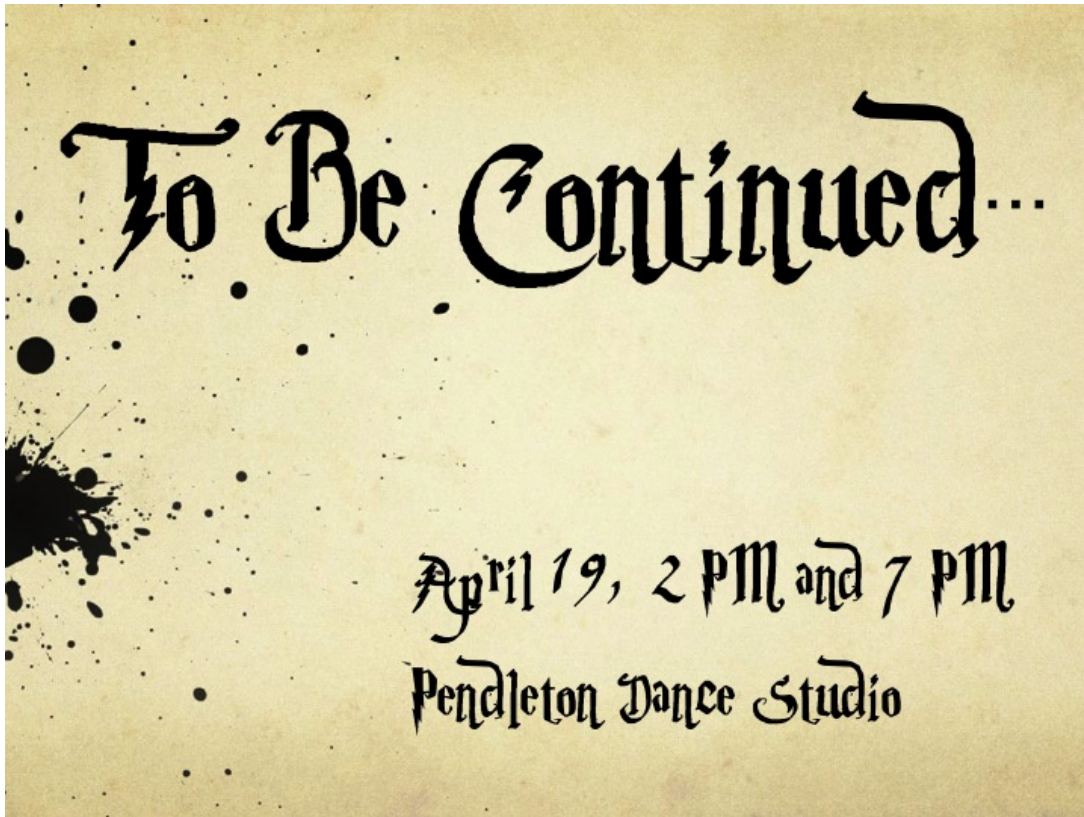
	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9:00 AM	Harry, Ron, Hermione, Quirrell (9:00-11:00)		
10:00 AM			
11:00 AM			
12:00 PM			
2:00 PM			
3:00 PM			Dursleys, Harry, Hagrid, Hedwig (4:00- 6:00)
4:00 PM		Keys, Harry, Ron, Hermione, The Silver Key (3:30-5:00)	
5:00 PM		Dinner	Voldemort, James, Lily, Harry (2:00-4:00)
6:00 PM		Students, Harry, Ron, Hermione, Dumbledore, McGonagall, Snape, Quirrell (5:30-7:30)	Harry, Quidditch Players** (6:00-7:00)
7:00 PM			
8:00 PM		Chess pieces, Harry, Ron, Hermione (7:30-9:00)	**Ron, Hermione, Snape, The Golden Snitch, and Quirrell may be called for this rehearsal

APPENDIX F: SLIDES

The
Marauder's
Son

Chapters 3-4

APPENDIX F: SLIDES, CONT.



APPENDIX G: PROGRAM COPY

APPENDIX H: PHOTOGRAPHS



Lily Potter protects her infant son from Lord Voldemort



Harry's bassinet, lit by a special after his initial defeat of Voldemort

APPENDIX H: PHOTOGRAPHS, CONT.



Mr. Ollivander contemplates Harry's wand



The Hedwig *pas de trois*

APPENDIX H: PHOTOGRAPHS, CONT.



Professor McGonagall calls students up to be Sorted



The Quidditch game

APPENDIX H: PHOTOGRAPHS, CONT.



The Golden Snitch



Professor Dumbledore pulls Harry away from the Mirror of Erised

APPENDIX H: PHOTOGRAPHS, CONT.



The game of Wizard's Chess



Quirrell lies dead on the ground, with Lord Voldemort's face showing

APPENDIX H: PHOTOGRAPHS, CONT.



Students and Professors celebrate in the Great Hall



The final pose of the ballet