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Ballroom Dance Choreography
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I started ballroom and Latin dancing when I came to URI. I had been a fan of ABC's Dancing With the Stars and it looked like it would be fun to learn. I don't think I had anticipated how much I would love it! After two years of social and competition dancing, I wanted the challenge of choreographing dances to be performed, instead of the lead-and-follow that we had been doing. So, that's how I got the idea for my project. The final products were a choreographed Viennese Waltz for one couple and a Cha-Cha for two.

The process of getting the performances ready was pretty exhausting. It was mostly done in the fall of 2009, and the steps will be broken down below.

The first steps were to find other dancers and pick out music. The dancers were Lauren Poston dancing with Alexander Lee, who did both songs, and Richard Wadland dancing with myself for just the Cha-Cha. I went through many, many songs trying to pick ones that really stuck out to me, and after changing my mind many times selected the Theme from Harry Potter, by John Williams, and Let It Rock by Kevin Rudolph.

Next I came up with ideas for choreography. I decided to combine traditional ballroom figures with some that were more made-up, to fit the style and the music. I had to look at figures that I already knew, and came up with more ideas by watching professional dancers on YouTube.

Early in the fall I had chunks of both songs finished and taught to everyone. We took a break in October to work on our competition dancing, but when we were ready to restart rehearsing, my dance partner became sick with mononucleosis. That threw off our practices quite a bit, and we had to cram a lot into the last three weeks of November to be ready for the December performances. We finished with a simplified, but probably better, version of my original ideas for the dances. The only true rough spot was in the middle of the cha-cha, when Rich and I were doing a solo segment with some lifts and tricks. That part was hastily done and not polished at all, and it showed in the performances.

Also going on simultaneously was other behind-the-scenes preparations for the shows. I ordered costumes for the Cha-Cha, and decided that Lauren should wear her pink competition dress for the V Waltz. Before Rich was sick the Viennese Waltz was going to be both couples, but he wasn't healthy enough for two dances, so I had to choose one. Originally we had black and silver tops and long black skirts for the show. Another element of behind-the-scenes work was having the music edited. The Cha-Cha had to be cut, and I thank Tim Coffey for seamlessly altering the song, and to Dan Byer for finding the right software to slow down the Viennese Waltz just a little bit so that Lauren and Alex's feet could keep up. They were integral for making the shows a success.

In December we performed for the URI Dance Company's Winter Recital in Edwards Auditorium. It was quite nerve racking because the audience was huge. I had choreographed with a stage in mind, but had practiced on this stage only once and didn't like it much. The floor was

too uneven and sandy. Maybe the nerves paid off, because we actually did quite well. Less than a week later we performed it again, but in the Memorial Union Ballroom, and just in front of our dancing friends at a party. My coach filmed it and that is the one that you will see if you watch the enclosed video!

It is hard for me to acknowledge the aftermath, because it wasn't pretty. I had a lot of negative feeling towards dance for a while, because there was a lot of stress leading up to the performances. About a month after the shows Rich ended our partnership, which left me bummed for a while. But, they say everything happens for a reason- the experience led me to being part of South County's Dancing With the Stars, and I was a "pro" in the show, which raised money for a local domestic violence shelter.

I learned a lot from this project. Number one is to be flexible, and not get too attached to your original ideas, because these things tend to take on a life of their own. Number two is to plan ahead. With experience choreographing will get easier and I may be able to translate my ideas into true movements easier, but I found it to be much harder than I anticipated. Number three is to always be thankful to those around you, and I am very grateful to everyone who helped this show go on.