

**UVM DANCE
2026 SENIOR DANCE CAPSTONE CHOREOGRAPHERS**

LEXIE DIVERS



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:

Lexie Divers (she/her) is a dancer and choreographer from outside Charlottesville, Virginia. She began dancing at Wilson School of Dance, where she trained in ballet, pointe, contemporary, lyrical, jazz, and tap. As a Dance Instructor there she created her first short choreographic works for young children, and then self-choreographed a lyrical solo titled *As a Child* (2022). Lexie continued her education at the University of

Vermont where she received her bachelor's degree in Dance and Psychological Science. There she developed a love of improvisation and the possibilities for exploration and play in contemporary movement. While at UVM, Lexie created a solo and two group works. She has also performed in numerous faculty, guest artist, and student pieces featured in *Dancing Uphill*, the Senior Capstone performances, the Dance Composition showcases, and ACDA informal and adjudicated concerts. In the future Lexie plans to continue dancing as she pursues a research career in developmental psychopathology.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

I create dances to capture aspects of human experience. Informed by my studies in Psychological Science, I am fascinated by human behavior and resilience. Using contemporary movement, I seek to represent a range of themes in choreographic works that reflect what I observe in society. Some of the questions that have guided my work include: How do people reckon with societal norms? How are we burdened or uplifted by our environments? How can we harness movement to foster connection? I am also interested in the role of authenticity in performance and consider the physical experience of movement a valuable tool that influences storytelling through dance. For example, I am curious about how an audience responds to a dancer's true exhaustion or ease. Through curating movement or altering how the human form is embodied, I aim to convey various states of being that can connect with the audience and invite reflection about the themes they perceive.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: *Invitation to Linger*

The research that guided this piece investigated behaviors that strengthen social connections and structures that support developing friendships. Through touch, gaze, and weight sharing, the piece explores how we reconcile individuality with who we become when embraced by community. If we slow down and savor beautiful, mundane moments in life, what might we notice?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I'd like to express my deepest appreciation for the support and guidance of my cherished UVM Dance family. This wouldn't have been possible without my stellar cast who breathed life into this piece. Further, I must thank my parents and sister for giving me the priceless gift of dance.

SADIE MARTIN



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:

Sadie Martin (she/her) is a dancer and choreographer from Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. She began her dance training at Institute of Dance Artistry in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania. She has a background in Jazz, Modern, Tap, Ballet, Contemporary, Lyrical, and Musical Theater Dance. As a double major in Studio Art and Dance and University of Vermont, she has continued her movement training. Her love of visual art and dance work together in her artistry. She has developed a love for improvisation and utilizes it throughout her practice. She is a co-captain of UVM's co-ed student-run hip hop team, Catamount Dance Crew. She has performed in many of UVM's annual shows, including *Dancing Uphill* and the Senior Dance Capstone performances.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

I create dances based on natural movement, producing an authenticity that is tangible both to the dancers and audience. I dance because it is something I need to do, not just want to do. Dance is my way of staying in

tune with how I feel and expressing it. It is a natural necessity for me. I aim to express this feeling through my work, a catharsis that is felt and seen. A theme: this is just what I do.

My approach to dance comes from letting my body tell me what it needs. The movement comes from within, then I take it where it needs to go. Improvisation has grown into one of my most precious tools. I can endlessly build upon it, repeating, altering, and reordering movements to create sequences that flow. I create movement that works its way easily through the body, and therefore is digestible to those who view it.

I am drawn to investigate how to create a collective feeling through dance. Not only one feeling, but an overall quality that can be felt by those who are moving and those who are viewing. This collective feeling is achieved when my inspirations, goals, movements, or ideas come from an authentic place.

What makes dance so special to me is its fleetingness. That ephemerality has inspired me to investigate the melding of concrete art forms, like photography or painting, with dance. Exploring this overlap whilst engaging in dance's transient moments are important, to discover how these forms can affect you, question you, and ultimately, make you feel.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: *Because I Found a Feather*

This work explores and celebrates the phenomenon that we are all a combination of everything and everyone around us, yet still unique and irreplaceable. It is ultimately a practice in gratitude for ourselves, those around us, and the elements that shape us and our individual mosaics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thank you to the beautiful people in my life who've contributed to my mosaic. Much gratitude to my cousins Maggie and Tommy for creating magical songs for me to dance to. To my mom, thank you for being my artistic ally and unwavering supporter. My love to you all, always!

MADELINE SHERWOOD-McGRATH



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:

Madeline Sherwood-McGrath (she/her) is a dancer, choreographer, and performer. She grew up in northern New Hampshire and trained at a small studio in Maine, performing at Tina Titzer's School of Dance on the Act One Dance Company competitive team. She danced there for 16 years, training in styles of ballet, tap, jazz, contemporary, and acro. Madeline also perfected her acro skills by competing on a competitive gymnastics team known as Saco Valley Gymnastics Training Center. Madeline trained many hours a week at both sports, which complemented each other by combining the world of dance and gymnastics for both avenues. These sports both focus on the balance as well as the strength of the person. Madeline is currently earning a B.A. in Dance and a B.S. in Public Health Science at the University of Vermont. Both degrees have shown ways in which the arts can be used in the real world after education, including nonprofit work involving the arts. As a performer, Madeline places value on movement quality and the connection between the body and

environment. Focusing on balance and how the body can use these skills to show new ways of moving. She likes to challenge and break the traditional limits and see what new ways her body can move. Some of Madeline's recent performances include *Dancing Uphill* (2023-2026), UVM Dance Composition Showcase (2023-2025), ACDA (2024), UVM Senior Capstone (2025), and the UVM Basketball Games on the Dance Team (2024-2026). As a choreographer, she draws her inspiration from contemporary styles, musical based connections, and collaboration. Madeline's work is a strong example of her life goals, the joys of movement, and her willingness to challenge herself in new ways. After graduation, Madeline plans to continue her work in movement by continuing her education towards a Doctor of Physical Therapy.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

I make dance with exploration of the body and soul. How can I try new things and develop ideas I've never explored before? Are there new ways for me to challenge myself through movement? I like to look at movement styles as a stepping stone for creativity. The building blocks to the start of any artwork. This, alongside music choices as well, is the best building block for the creative process. The use of sound vs. music: what is music and what is not. I like to look at this in a different light as I grow. Is music just sound and all sound noise? I am interested in how concepts like movement, choreography, music, and other factors influence styles and work both with and against each other. I am drawn to the way music also helps create a story. Music can range from sounds to more musical style sounds we are used to. I like to focus on movement that both complements and breaks the classical sounds we are dancing and moving to. I enjoy changing the meaning of songs as well. This is a fun process that requires me to listen to lyrics and understand their true meaning. Most of my styles consist of contemporary with influences in jazz, acro, and lyrical techniques. Storytelling has been the main focus of my work and has created new inspiration in my creative process. What story can be told through movement and music to inspire an audience? This has led me to new ideas, which have helped me develop and embody new characters and concepts of narratives I want to create. My creative journey is created by my joy in dancing; it is driven by these emotions and is shown in my movement. Dance is an important outlet for me in the physical aspect. I love getting to push myself in new ways that allow for a new approach. In the future, my goals are to grow my work and continue to study, create, and perform in the dance world. I would also like to explore the movement of the body through a career in physical therapy.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: *No time like the past*

This piece explores the world as we know it, now coming to an end. The ideas behind it came from similar topics in the popular show *The Twilight Zone* and themes common in the 60s. When there is only one person left, are they there or are they not? It explores the realities of being the last people alive in a world that may be different in what we come to know. Are they someone that can be trusted, or is it your other half? Creating this piece brought me back to my childhood about fears I used to think of, and I wanted to express them through this work. I hope this piece makes you reflect on the fears of being alone and being the last one out there.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I would like to personally thank my dancer, Mel, for trusting my creative process and helping me bring this idea to life. A huge thank you to Paul, the dance professors, and the other capstone seniors for making every bit of my UVM dance experience so special. Thank you for all the support and care. Finally, a huge thank you to all of my friends and family who have come to support me in all of my UVM dance shows; it means the world to me!

AMANDA SMITH



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:

Amanda Smith (she/her) is a third-year student at the University of Vermont, double-majoring in Political Science and Dance. Originally from Arlington, MA, Amanda began dancing at age 3 and has trained in styles such as ballet, tap, contemporary, jazz, and hip-hop at both recreational and competitive levels. She debuted her first choreographic work her senior year of high school with a competition contemporary piece for younger highschoolers and has since choreographed in college in contemporary and hip-hop styles. Shortly after arriving at UVM, she began exploring their dance program and discovered that dance could be something so much more liberating and creative than she had thought. She is graduating in May 2026 and hopes to continue creating explorative works wherever the future takes her.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

I make dance in order to explore the emotions I have buried.

When investigating the medium of dance, I find that I am the most interested in exploring feelings within myself that I may have repressed or failed to allow myself to explore deeply in my daily life. I first heard “the dance will not be denied” from a professor of mine, Julian Barnett. This statement motivates me to continue moving even when I do not wish to. It’s an internal motivation to dance despite if oppressive powers may wish I would not. Dance has always been a way to tell myself the things I cannot quite verbalize. This is true of dancing just by myself as well as for an audience. I do not make my work for the audience explicitly, but I do have a desire for audiences to connect with my work. I seek for my works to bring out the emotions others may have repressed and to allow them to begin to realize them.

I am especially interested in movement in a political context and how just by moving, I am making a statement. To move is to be liberated. As a choreographer, I question the way identities inform how people dance and how people view dance. My movement style is informed by contemporary and hip-hop styles, often blending the two. Musicality is a large part of how I create. The intricacies and layers in sound inspire my movement.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: *You can’t take it with you*

You can’t take it with you centers around the idea of change. Change is relentless, inevitable, and cyclical. Despite knowing it’s coming, we still resist it. Does this dread hold us back? I reflect on my time coming to college in this piece, and it gives me comfort to know that I once felt this dread and then found something so incredibly meaningful. Nothing will ever be the same again but just maybe, we can carry pieces of it with us.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thank you to the UVM Dance Department for allowing me to have this opportunity to create, especially Paul Besaw and Maddy Grant for their guidance. I want to thank my family and friends for their support and my incredible cast for their dedication and commitment!

NOVEMBER STAPLES



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:

November Staples (he/him) was raised in Mill Valley, California, and grew up training in classical ballet at a small local school. He came to UVM for his undergraduate degree in Psychological Science and soon declared a Dance major as well, in addition to a Writing minor. Although his dance background was mostly in ballet, he also received four years of contemporary classes and occasional summer workshops and festival classes in other styles. His school also offered opportunities to perform frequently, including several Balanchine pieces (working with Sandra Jennings from the Balanchine Trust), classical variations, new choreography created for the dancers of the school, and both corps and solo work. At UVM, he has mostly taken classes in contemporary, with a wide variety of other styles thrown in, in addition to being in many pieces choreographed by faculty, other students, and guest artists. He has started to make his own work as well, branching out from his ballet training to create something stranger.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

A dance performance creates a dichotomy: the bodies of the dancers set apart from the bodies of the audience. You are the audience. Do you have the power in that relationship? Are the dancers vulnerable? Are they inviting? Or are they confronting you? Do you feel empathy, do you feel fear? Do you feel guilt, relief? A dance communicates in emotion. But it also communicates within our social structures, our subconscious minds that see another person and think, immediately, of affiliation. Of potential: companionship or danger. Us or them. You are sitting and on stage there are bodies moving, trying to say something to you. Are they calling you the enemy? Are they calling you a friend?

I won't answer these questions for you, but watching my work, you will think about them. Like any other art, dance has the power to let you in, to show you something about yourself. But it is not a painting or a book. It is a person in front of you, speaking with their body directly. You see them, and you think about the dance, but you also think about the dancer, and who you are in relation. Why pretend that isn't happening? My work leverages it, instead of blinding itself.

Don't blind yourself, either. You aren't what defines a dance. Even without the watcher, there is still the dancer and their body. What is their relationship to themselves? When the performance ends you will go home, you will think what you think about it, then your life will go on. The dancer remains in their body. They cannot leave. There is nothing you or I can do to change this. Sometimes, the body is not a safe home. We have to find a way to live anyway, or we will not survive. So, above all else, my work explores and fosters an empathy within the dancer's self, and between the dancers, acknowledging the shortcomings of our bodies but striving to move past them, and to move past you and your eyes, and to move past our separation from each other, to ultimately accept the parts of the self that are destructive, dysfunctional, maladaptive, painful, inhospitable, and to keep dancing anyway.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: *The transsexual¹ said, "I'm bored."*

The person who wrote the words you are reading is not going to live to see things get better. And you won't, either. Well, there's music playing on the other side of the wall. The lights are dim. That person, who you won't ever meet, maybe they are dancing right now. Maybe the night is good to them. Might as well have one good night, yourself.

¹Who, thirty-six seconds ago, while standing by the public bathroom sink, had been shot twice in the chest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I would like to give an extra special thank you to my amazing dancers. This piece would be nothing without their spectacular individuality and all the attention and care they brought to the work. Sorry we didn't do tear-away pants. I wish you all the very best in your futures.