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Professional Practice for Performance
Reflective Essay
Elinor Morgan (2304199)

Introduction

This essay reflects and evaluates my involvement during the Professional Practice and Performance module, which focuses on the creation of the brand advertisement for Urban Outfitters (2026). At the beginning of this project, it presented new challenges and more areas to gain knowledge as I had little prior to beginning this process, specifically within advertising and dance for film. However, as I feel quite connected to the brand particularly with their values of self expression, community and individuality it helped me to be engaged during this process creatively and personally.

The project required a lot of communication and collaboration within all departments involved, including choreography, fundraising and costume, as this helped to produce a cohesive final product. I was assigned to the prop and set department, where I took on the responsibility for designing the Vinyl room set. This role allowed me to explore different lighting, textures and how I could use the space to provide a definitive change within the narrative as well as communicating the brand's overall values.

In addition to my role, I was also required to develop my performance and dance skills, specifically when retaining complex choreography within limited time and adapting to changes being made either on the shoot day or prior. This essay evaluates my experience of the process, within the planning, rehearsal, filming and editing stages, analysing my accomplishments as well as the challenges which I faced and how the process has contributed to my personal development as a performer.

Main Body

The Process

I was intrigued at the beginning of this project since I have not had any experience with creating a brand advertisement, as well as having little experience with dancing for the camera.

When I found out that the brand we would be creating for was Urban Outfitters (2026), I was excited since I have always felt majorly connected to the brand and connected as a young adult and have continuously been influenced by what their values are.

We researched highly into what we would like our advert and concept to be, as Urban Outfitters sole values are about individuality and community as well as self expression. We watched various other advertisements, such as Gap (2025) Better in Denim advert which featured Katseye as well as their 2024 advert which featured Jungle, named Get Loose. These advertisements had a large influence on our product as well as our Behind the Scenes Video.

At the beginning of the process, we were assigned roles within 4 departments such as the choreographers, costume department, prop and set department and the fundraising team. I was assigned a role within the prop and set department. I knew that this role was going to be a lot of responsibility from the information that was given within the creative brief.

We decided within the prop and set department to separate the responsibilities of each room, meaning that each member had a room each to design and collect items for, this worked well due to their only being one responsibility for each room, meaning that there was a larger focus for that individual to allow time to plan and design efficiently.

I was given the main responsibility for the Vinyl room which is the last room which will be seen within the advertisement, this room allowed me to really explore what Urban Outfitters (2026) stands for within their lifestyle which they promote, through lighting, mixed match patterns and items. The space needed to have a welcoming and unique environment, for the individuals that have changed from being mundane to showing their personality, to have a safe space to express themselves which correlates with them.

There were many discussions surrounding potentially having external cast members to play students within this project, these individuals would be external from the university as well as other students from within the university. This idea was proposed due to only having a limited number of individuals already connected to this project that it may be beneficial for the project to include others.

We also discussed that we may need fundraising events to allow for a larger budget to achieve a higher quality result for this product, this includes a professional videographer and editor, more of a budget for the prop and set department to allow for further purchases of props and any extra costs which the production may need.

As the rehearsal process began, I knew that I needed to be able to pick up choreography a lot faster as well as making sure that I apply details and corrections as soon as they are given, due to the choreography which will be included within this project being highly detailed and specific as well as not having a large amount of time to learn and clean each section.

The first section of choreography which was learnt was the 3rd dance break as that was originally the first dance break which was not danced by the extra dancers, this choreography was very detailed and specific but that is when we learnt that angles and arm shapes are the choreographical motive for this piece, all choreography will have similar stylistic choices throughout but with a different presentation.

After a large discussion, as a cohort we decided to not include any external dancers for this project, due to lack of time and unavailability to rehearse the routines with the extras, therefore as a cohort we learnt all the choreography, which is included, this meant that the remainder of choreography was taught in a shorter timeframe.

However, this change did benefit the project a lot more since it meant that we could spend more time spacing, cleaning within more than one rehearsal.

As this discussion happened quite far into the process, it meant that there wasn't a lot of time to learn the choreography, this meant that we had to make sure that we were applying all corrections, details very quickly, which was difficult for me personally, as when I am under pressure I struggle to concentrate as well as I can,

therefore to overcome this I was constantly going over the choreography if there was a gap between being taught it, either in my head or physically, this technique helped me a lot since I wasn't allowing myself to shut my brain off and it was constantly thinking about each movement, each change and every detail.

Alongside choreographical rehearsals, the prop team were continuously looking for props that were at a cheap price and connected each set to the theme. We kept a list of items which we already had in our possession as well as what extra items we will need to purchase or borrow. However, we were quite lucky that a lot of items we needed we had within our personal possession limiting the need to take from the budget.

We did face many challenges throughout the process collecting each prop, however we overcame this by messaging multiple individuals, whether that was on Facebook Marketplace for a cheaper price, or individuals that we personally know to ask to borrow items, this way of collecting the props benefitted this department a lot due to it meaning that we were not spending a lot of money from the budget and could provide the same quality of set.

Throughout the rehearsal process we held fundraising events this was to ensure all prop and costume expenses were covered alongside an external videographer which will film the project. Many of the fundraising events were quite difficult to organise to ensure enough time to collect the money before the final shoot day. The main expense which we had to raise money for was the external videographer, as we wanted to make sure that the quality and edit of the product was high, however due to the cost of the videographer, which was wanted, this meant that a lot of time was spent doing these fundraising events rather than doing extra work towards the project.

Towards the end of the process I felt like I had achieved and gained a lot of knowledge and skills, my pick up of choreography and attention to detail highly improved from the beginning of the process as well as more knowledge surrounding dance for film, and has also made me come to the conclusion that creative director might be a career path for myself as I really enjoyed the process.

When the shoot began, I felt little to no stress before beginning the filming due to how we planned and organised this day. For the props department, we planned that all sets and props would be set up the day prior to the shoot day, meaning that this gave those apart of the prop department more time to focus on the actual filming rather than the set up, this worked really well for us since we all felt a lot calmer and focused as there was less things which we needed to focus on for the day.

Throughout the day there were multiple quick changes being made within choreography, and direction as different choices worked better on the day, for example we originally planned within the beginning of the story bored, was a shot of all students walking up the foyer steps with the last shot showing the 3 heroes' shoes, this shot changed on the day, this was due to new inspiration for this scene from the dance video, "Angel Vector" choreographed by Ztato (Ztato,2026) as this looked like a better visual for camera than the stairs.

I gained a lot of knowledge within how dance for film works throughout this day, especially with changes being made to the original storyboard, this helped me to

know that when on a shoot that there will be changes happening and you just have to instantly make those changes there and then, this has prepared me for potential future work after graduation within this area.

At the very end of this process, we began to edit the 20 minutes Behind The Scenes video. This editing process had various amounts of challenges and limitations which occurred, including the file sizes and the amount of footage which had been taken over the course of the process, it meant that when receiving footage to begin the editing process was a lot slower and limited the amount of time in which the editors could get all edits done to send over to the final editor. This caused a lot of pressure and stress on each editor to make sure that each section was completed but was high quality.

During the editing process, I learnt that when editing a large amount of footage, I had to be very particular to make sure that all relevant footage was included as well as still keeping the unserious parts so therefore there is still some fun within the final edit.

What I Would Have Done Differently

Even though the process was very organised, and the outcome of the product was very close to how we wanted it to look as a cohort, there are a few changes which I would have made throughout this process for various reasons.

The fundraising would have been something which I would have done differently, we needed to create a larger budget for this project due to the type of project it is as there was a small budget attached to it, but the fundraising portion of this process meant that it took time away from doing work which was in relation to the project. As a commercial dance student, I do believe that when it comes to the budget we should have fought for more as if we had the budget, we required from the beginning we would not have had to take time away from our module or other modules to host fundraising events.

To extend this, all fundraising events were not attended by all members of the cohort, which I believe is quite unfair when we were all trying to contribute as a cohort for our group project, therefore I would have made all fundraising events mandatory.

Another change which I would have made, would've been cutting people from sections of choreography if they have missed more than two rehearsals for the dance element, as this caused a large amount of limitations throughout the creative process, especially when choreographers miss their own rehearsals, which meant that either the entire rehearsal process had to stop or changes were made meaning that the choreographers did not know their own choreography.

This also affected all sections within this project as it meant that we spent more time teaching the choreography when time could have been spent more productively with the progress of the project.

When it came to the editing process for the Behind the Scenes, I would have made sure that all footage would have been sent to the editors as soon as it was filmed to allow for the editing process to begin sooner, as well as more conversations

surrounding the editing element as this lacked a lot throughout the process and not much communication happened until the week before the submission.

The lack of communication meant that the editors were unsure about how the layout of the video should be, this caused a lot of problems for all individuals within the cohort due to needing the video for a submission.

If all editors received the footage and had a conversation surrounding the layout, then the video would have been a lot more organised towards the end instead of having many limitations to how much editing we could have achieved in a shorter amount of time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this process significantly helped my development as a performer within a professional production environment. Throughout the process I was able to strengthen my ability to retain and execute complex choreography within a limited time frame, as well as developing my awareness of the stylistic differences between dancing for film and dancing for a performance. This process has allowed me to gain knowledge and confidence surrounding dance for film as well as enhancing my performance skills and learning to adapt quickly for changes and corrections within the rehearsal and filming process.

My role within the props department allowed for further development skills within my organisation and creativity, as I was responsible for designing a set which reflected Urban Outfitters (2026) core values, whilst working with a limited budget. This reinforced how important the set is when conveying a storyline and narrative.

The challenges which I encountered throughout this process, particularly within fundraising, time management and the communication within the editing process, allowed me to highlight areas for improvement. By identifying these challenges, it has now allowed me to develop strategies for potential future projects.

Overall, this process and project has allowed me to gain knowledge and understanding within dance for film and has given me skills which I can transfer to a professional environment after graduation. It has also influenced a potential career interest within creative directing as I found the entire process of creating and shaping both performance and visual elements interesting and engaging.

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