

# PROJECT JOURNEY

by

Tristan Griffin

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Sponsor: David Bassuk

Second Reader: Jimmy Mehiel

Tristan Griffin

Senior Project

David Bassuk

Artistic Aims Paper

### Artistic Aims of Project Journey

**PROJECT JOURNEY** is a multimedia, multi-act performance experience showcasing a variety of pieces loosely based on personal memories and lifelong influences. It's a journey of self discovery, maturity, and reflection; rooted in childlike wonder, nostalgia, and the romanticization of youth. With this show, I hope to offer audiences an abstract glimpse into stories and passions that have defined me, told through a group of diverse performers and artistic mediums.

I've spent a long time considering what is the best artistic representation of myself, as I've spent my life trying to be as multifaceted as possible by dabbling in various performance and art forms. When I was initially the director of Frame(D), it was a chance for me to showcase my skills as a multi-platform director, by incorporating multimedia elements, specifically film, into a theater show. While it's unfortunate I lost the opportunity to direct that piece, it was a blessing in disguise that allowed me to dig deeper into my personal forms of self-expression, and how I best want that to be displayed on a stage.

With **PROJECT JOURNEY**, I'm finally able to be honest with myself as an artist, and direct across various mediums that have influenced me over the course of my life: piano, theater, film, dance, music and immersive art. I want this piece to be focused and unified, of course, yet

also all over the place (deliberately); the only words to describe where I am as a creator. Now, I have the flexibility to write, shoot, and edit a short film that can be shown alongside a piece of staged work, bolstered by additional acts of choreographed dance and live music. I've always yearned to collaborate with other artists in their respective fields, and a stage at Purchase of all places represents a perfect opportunity for that goal.

Even more so than *Frame(D)*, this feels not only like a culmination of my college experiences and studies, but a representation of my life's repertoire. A strong piece of advice I received from my advisor is to remain reflective as a director, almost anthropologic, separating myself enough from the work to direct and critique without bias. With *PROJECT JOURNEY*, I'm attempting to strike a balance between the inherently personal and the unbiased mindset required of me to properly direct this piece. These stories will be about childhood, growing up, and the constant fantasizing or romanticization of life, opportunity, and the future; but, they will also be about my childhood and my fantasies, albeit indirectly. The show is a 'memory palace' in a sense, even a time capsule. While these acts are the memories of an original character, the set is decorated in a plethora of toys and decorations from my home bedroom. While Richard, the original protagonist in Act 2 experiences vivid dreams of future careers as he's faced with a difficult life choice, the careers shown are passions and hobbies I've incurred over my years. While the fictional boy of Act 4 dances in three duets, each duet reflects a relationship I've personally experienced. This is the dual nature of the show- on one hand a group of new stories, on the other a nostalgia-driven look into my life.

**With each act, I have unique artistic aims.**

Act 1: Compose a mixture of influential musical themes and match it to a precisely edited montage in a live performance.

Act 2: Create a meta, comedic stage performance utilizing previous theater directing experience, under a very short and rushed timeframe.

Act 3: Shoot a mockumentary short film in the style of my favorite sitcoms, while paying homage to my personal experience attempting the YouTube lifestyle.

Act 4: Play piano live to dance and have directorial input on choreography while telling a deeply personal story.

Prologue/Epilogue: Introduce and wrap up the story in abstract ways that grabs the attention of the audience and then leaves them with a sense of finality but some ambiguity.

I recently watched *Tick, Tick... BOOM!* starring Andrew Garfield, a film about Jonathan Larson's early creative process and lifestyle in 90s New York City. While I'm by no means a musical theater writer nor the genius that Larson was, the film was incredibly motivational and hit surprisingly close to home. His ability and determination to have every possible portion of his show perfect is inspiring to me, and pushes me to find the cracks and holes in my stories and see what I can do to polish it, and display my very best possible work come the 26th. It's also finally an opportunity for me to create something wholly original, by pulling entirely from my personal library and vault of memories. In the past, I've directed works written by others; I'm admittedly not the strongest creative writer, but I believe I've written strong stories that are representative of myself and my passions, for a show I can hopefully look back on, reflect, and learn from many years into the future, in addition to using it as a central showcase of my artistic portfolio.

Tristan Griffin

Senior Project

David Bassuk

Research Paper

### An Analysis of Nostalgia, in Pop Culture and Beyond!

*A sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations*, Oxford Dictionary defines the word ‘nostalgia’. From an industry standpoint, nostalgia is not thought of nearly as emotionally, but rather an increasingly used tool to better sell products; films, television shows, albums, all of the above. From an audience standpoint, however, which is just as important, that definition perfectly encapsulates what a viewer might feel internally when seeing their favorite movie hero return to the big screen after a three-long decade absence. While these neurological feelings are often unrealized, it’s not remotely surprising how creators and studios have utilized nostalgia in recent years to strike all the right underlying chords with their audience base. In the last decade, nostalgia has dominated pop culture in spades, influencing major cultural shifts in various mediums and has become the single most successful and reliable business and creative trend in entertainment.

It’s likely true that a majority of people don’t realize the impact nostalgic feelings have on their everyday lives, and how consistently present it is in our homes, habits, and possessions. An unexpectedly obvious version of nostalgia that exists in several households is food- more specifically, the scent of certain foods, and the taste of others. Growing up, my mother would treat my father and I to a weekly Saturday morning breakfast consisting of corn beef hash and

eggs, the former of which has an incredibly distinct smell whilst being prepared. Nowadays, in my few visits to home, the scent of my mom making corn beef hash in the morning instantly evokes the following: a spontaneous craving of the dish, an excitement to run downstairs, and an inadvertent throwback to my childhood. In another vein, when my mom prepares a traditional Korean dish, it's often a throwback to meals she grew up with in a Korean household. This creates a dual layer of nostalgia from something so commonplace as food and heritage. These are unfiltered experiences of nostalgia in my own home, without much preparation- now, imagine a carefully curated Hollywood marketing campaign designed to cater to a very particular audience group, specifically hoping to trigger a memory related reaction. In this paper, I'll analyze recent pop-culture phenomenons that have intelligently and successfully utilized nostalgia for their products, while also considering nostalgia's place in other portions of daily life, including being a primary inspiration for my senior project, *Project Journey*.

Pop culture, especially the entertainment industry, has been a conduit through which nostalgia has operated in the last decade. In 2014, massive cinematic franchise giant Marvel Studios took a gamble by releasing *Guardians of the Galaxy*, an adventure/space opera/team-up story about characters that very few audience members were familiar with- in other words, obscurity wasn't something that Marvel typically toyed with, and the franchise was more accustomed to releasing films of their known players such as Iron Man and Captain America. With *Guardians*, however, Marvel was the first to utilize what was then a brand new marketing scheme for film trailers... old music. Featuring Blue Swede's hit 'Hooked on a Feeling', the song became instantly iconic, or re-iconic, with younger generations listening to chart music that likely would've never been made aware to them. Following this initial trailer, Marvel Studios would proceed to use 70s music heavily in the promotion for the film, with a highly anticipated

soundtrack accompanying the film featuring old classics such as ‘I Want You Back’, ‘Cherry Bomb’, and ‘Come And Get Your Love’. And even within the story of the film, old music is used as a framework for how the protagonist, Star-Lord, reconnects with his long lost childhood and his deceased mother via listening to a mixtape on his personal cassette. Thus, partially because of this film, and due to its extremely successful usage of old music, a new wave of 70s/80s nostalgia was ushered into popular culture.

The trend of vintage/classic music wouldn’t just continue through more Marvel projects, but through franchises across the film and television world, increasingly becoming a common token of marketing campaigns rather than a distinguished trait. Popular and known examples include the usage of ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ in 2016 *Suicide Squad’s* trailer, or ‘I Got 5 On It’ in Jordan Peele’s *Us*. This trend of using re-tuned popular music even dates back to pre-Guardians with 2010’s *The Social Network’s* first trailer featuring Radiohead’s ‘Creep’, although the synth-wave/disco feel of Guardian’s and other similar styles have reigned supreme still. These songs that once dominated airwaves or perhaps rarely saw the charts, were suddenly transformed into cult classics that were immediately associated with popular characters or worlds. Pop and disco hits from the late 70s and 80s were also likely as successful due to their approachability and innate similarities with some styles of pop music today. They’re fun, with good lyrics and typically party-centric, which accomplish one of two things: they appeal to the young audience hearing them for the first time, establishing a narrative where Gen-Z and young millennials now are “fans of old music”; or, they remind older generations of their childhood hits, making them more likely to go see a new Marvel film with the promise of ‘Immigrant Song’ blasting through the speakers at some point; these two sides of the coin are both reactions towards nostalgia. The young audiences don’t have the memories of listening to the old music like their parents do, but

they can fall into a nostalgic, retro-esque aesthetic. Meanwhile, baby boomers can generally associate memories to popular songs from their past and thus discovering new outlets to enjoy them. Both are business oriented, and credit is due to studios such as Marvel that know exactly how to craft nostalgia-fueled marketing that caters to a much larger audience base.

Possibly due to some market influence from *Guardians of the Galaxy*, 2014 was the beginning of an aesthetic trend in pop culture that would borrow heavily from 70s and 80s colors, sounds, and styles. This would appear nowhere more obviously or prominently than Netflix's massive 2016 television sensation, *Stranger Things*. While the show featured an interesting story and cast of characters, it captured the hearts of audiences due to the old school, retro-80s vibe and the vintage-oriented design and soundtrack. Besides just the aesthetic, it's the callbacks to the style and formula of famous 80s films that cements *Stranger Things* as the definitive 80s throwback project of the last decade. Plenty of films have been inspired by 80s culture, but "Stranger Things, rather than being hamstrung by its 80s templates, realized that what people love about 80s movies is not the plots but the feelings they provoke. The show's makers, the Duffer Brothers, took the camaraderie of *Stand By Me*, the soulfulness of *ET*, the sci-fi of *Firestarter*, and the teen angst of John Hughes's movies and spun them into an original story, putting in an occasional specific reference but jettisoning any comparison-provoking plot parallels." (The Guardian, 2017) Following this passage in the article, the writer discusses how *Stranger Things* has a pan-generational appeal that allows all age groups to experience some form of nostalgia. Halloween weekends following *Stranger Things* season 1 premiere only solidified that everyone's favorite decade was back in full swing, with kids who hadn't even experienced the early 2000s dressing in denim jackets with multicolored tops and a boombox on their shoulder- perhaps unaware why they were nostalgic, as they hadn't ever experienced the



80s, but nostalgic nonetheless due to an inescapable vibe from a present-day television show. Other shows would follow suit in the same year and beyond, with Netflix's *Black Mirror* releasing an 80s themed episode and AMC's *Halt and Catch Fire* firmly existing in that decade. Blockbuster films now don't even bother hiding the fact that they want to milk the love for the 80s as much as possible, such as DC's recent bomb creatively titled *Wonder Woman 1984*.

As stated earlier, music has arguably the biggest influence on this era comeback- but not just with the reinvigoration of old chart toppers. Rather, pop and R&B artists now will entirely base production styles around 80s sound, crafting disco and electronica hits ripped straight out of a Michael Jackson or Madonna album. The most well known artists releasing Synthwave (a term for the style of music) in today's industry are Dua Lipa and The Weeknd, both of whose recent albums are clearly inspired by the era and have continued the 80s-nostalgia obsession in a fury. Dua Lipa's release, *Future Nostalgia*, contained a variety of songs in the style, one of her music videos even paying homage to the camp and colorful TV exercise classes of the 80s. Meanwhile, The Weeknd's record-setting anthem "Blinding Lights" from his funk-infused album *After Hours* proved to be the epitome of 80s nostalgia, the song recapturing the very best of the electronica era and subsequently crossing over into a variety of films and television shows about, of course, the 80s. Both projects dropping in the midst of COVID-19 perhaps helped their growth, as the pandemic proved to be a perfect time for most to find nostalgia in their lives during quarantine. And despite both artists being professionally marketed and curated as mega-pop stars, they're likely fans of the 80s era just as much as listeners, making their album-creation process a nostalgic trip into the sounds that influenced their artistic upbringing. Even other, more niche artists such as bonafide experimenter Charli XCX just released her new album *Crash*, which she's publicly stated is directly influenced from 80s pop and even borrows samples from the

time. As electronica continues its dramatic comeback into modern music, it'll be interesting to see how long the nostalgia lasts before it's integrated enough to become the sound of today.

Nostalgia, of course, isn't exclusively adjacent with the 1980s and their neon lights. A recent resurgence in sequels, prequels, spin-offs, and tie-ins have plagued Hollywood for the last decade, with nearly every recognizable franchise guilty for some kind of money sucking nostalgia scheme. While it's argued this is bad for filmmaking as a whole (which it likely is, as it takes significant attention away from original independent films and directors and turns cinemas into blockbuster churners), it's no doubt great for the fans, which is the target market. In the last few years alone, dozens upon dozens of sequels and remakes have been released, often of classic films from the pre-2000s that others would argue don't need reinvention. However, studios love utilizing previous success (after all, if it worked once, why *wouldn't* it work again), and much of this trend's takeover of the movie industry can be attributed back to the initial promotion of Lucasfilm's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* in the winter of 2015. The first official trailer concluded with Harrison Ford's famous Han Solo character, accompanied by trusty partner Chewbacca, appearing in the frame, signaling the first return of the character since 1983. The comeback of the infamous Han Solo essentially took over the internet, fans clamoring and salivating at the idea of seeing Ford reprise the character in addition to other past Star Wars actors. For older audiences especially, it was an emotional and nostalgic throwback to one of the most important and beloved cinematic franchises of their generation. And it was only fitting that the film largely lived up to expectations, which acted as a green light for other studios that would initiate a phase of bringing back old characters to bolster the new and increase excitement for subsequent releases. Looking at a small list, some films released in the last 7 years since *The Force Awakens* that rely on nostalgia either for marketing purposes or as a storytelling device

include: *Spiderman: No Way Home*, *The Matrix: Resurrections*, *Creed*, *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, *Blade Runner 2049*, *The Incredibles 2*, *Mary Poppins Returns*, *Terminator: Dark Fate*, *Halloween*, *Bill & Ted Face the Music*, and the upcoming *Jurassic World: Dominion*. All these films are similar in the sense that they contain characters from old films in the same franchise, or act as direct sequels decades later to celebrated storylines. In *Spiderman: No Way Home*, while never marketed to audiences (although the internet was well aware), three different actors who had played the character of Spider Man were put onto one screen, a seemingly impossible multi-studio crossover that's been made possible due to Hollywood's newfound infatuation with multiverse films- essentially a plot excuse that springs from the capitalistic desire to preserve all versions of characters that the fans adore. But even without parallel realities, franchises are still finding ways to bring back old favorites. In *Blade Runner 2049*, Harrison Ford's (yet again the catalyst behind a nostalgia-driven film) character continues the Blade Runner story through a new story featuring new characters. And in this summer's final Jurassic Park sequel, the original cast from the 1993 film will unite with the newer cast established in the 2014 remake- and while there may be a reasonable story to convey the purpose of the team up, it's clearly for nostalgic purposes. It seems as though Hollywood has become more and more addicted to the past; while critics rain down on the film industry complaining of the lack of originality, studios continue to pump out remix after reboot, keenly aware of their audiences's insatiable desire for consuming an easily digestible form of content. And despite these criticisms, there are still projects that deftly utilize nostalgia as both promotional and plot devices, with Marvel Studios in particular continuing to be a pioneer. Their 2021 Disney+ release, *WandaVision*, centers on a super-powered woman fueled by trauma and anguish who creates a fake reality directly inspired by old-fashioned TV shows. By setting the series in the visual styles of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*,

*I Love Lucy*, *Bewitched*, and others, Marvel created an experience that both paid tribute to historic comedic television while justly serving the character. Nostalgia has transformed into such a malleable and successful tool that's now begun to blend its creative and emotional appeals with the marketing and business angles designed to retain audiences time and time again.

While nostalgia has left an enormous impact on pop culture, specifically in the cinematic and musical veins, it's important to recognize where it exists heavily in physical products that permeate in various capacities in our daily lives. Perhaps contradictory to earlier statements, music has remained a consistent and capable outlet for nostalgia throughout the last multiple decades regardless of any impact *Guardians of the Galaxy* and other films might've had. In particular, vinyl and physical records have both risen and fallen in popularity throughout different generations but always remained a staple of the music collection space. The usage of traditional record players was minimal for many years into the 2000s, until a sudden resurgence in the last decade where Generation Z suddenly took an interest in collecting old music and spinning them on a vintage player. Record stores have managed to remain alive thanks to a niche audience that's passionate about preserving LPs that are significantly older than the listeners. And for the folks in their 40s and above, purchasing a vinyl of their favorite childhood album is the perfect encapsulation of personal nostalgia- no business or marketing schemes involved whatsoever. The artists on these old records aren't even promoting the vinyls; they're simply being bought off of affectionate memories.

From another perspective, personal photos and videos are the most commonplace form of nostalgia that's used almost universally by every person with a phone, or even those that cherish physical photographs. Technology has become the primary method of memory preservation since the rise of handheld devices and cloud services in the 21st century, with most people nowadays

having access to some form of image gallery filled with their pictures of childhood, a month ago, and yesterday. It's now become so easy to look back and find a photo from any given time, and, depending on the context of the photo, can offer the user varying levels of nostalgia. There's nostalgia both in watching a video of your group of friends laughing in the high school cafeteria, to looking at the last picture you may have taken with a deceased loved one. It's instantly accessible and the most personal (but also shareable) of any form of nostalgia. But of course, there's always ways to exploit human emotions for business, such as what Snapchat has accomplished in the last decade- specializing not only as an app to send photos back and forth to friends, but also an app that reminds users exactly one year later after having taken a photo or video, appropriately called 'memories'. Other apps such as Instagram and TikTok have created similar features of preserving or revisiting older posts, so there's clearly a market for nostalgia-oriented products and development within the technology scene just as much as the capitalism-fueled entertainment world.

With all of this said, I think when creating *Project Journey*, I engaged in a mega-franchise-producer mindset more so to bolster my obviously emotional and personal perspectives rather than viewing my show as just a capitalist opportunity. After all, it's a senior project without ticket sales, so all of my concerns were creative and logistical. However, I think my acute awareness of pop culture trends and consumer behaviors in conjunction with some of my studies has instilled in me a very particular sense of business that bleeds into all of my work. I put that mindset into effect with *Project Journey*, as I attempted to craft a performance that both spoke to my personal needs and would also broadly appeal to an audience and hopefully hit key emotional notes, even if they're watching a show about somebody else's memories. Throughout the developmental phase of the production, it became apparent that the best way to describe the

show was as a time capsule. Time capsules, originating in the 18th century, are typically defined as a preservation method/cache of information and goods to communicate with future people. They also double as memory palaces that can be used to store precious items for personal or familial rediscovery. My show features the latter, and in *Project Journey*, each act represents a different memory of mine that's theoretically been placed in a time capsule. In the theater, a box placed on stage surrounded by some of my childhood toys and memorabilia act as a physical representation. While each act serves emotional purposes for me (which is just as important) I tried designing elements in each act to be 'crowd-pleasing' and nostalgic, in a sense. For example, in Act 1, a montage of well known pop culture fandoms appear on screen accompanied by a live piano score. While editing the montage, I was well-aware that many of my lifelong media influences were generally popular and came with their own passionate fanbases, so I purposefully edited moments that would be recognized by fans of any given franchise- epic shots from Game of Thrones, a charge forward of the Avengers, or a funny scene from the Office were all met with various audible reactions from the audience during the live show. I hoped that these clips would evoke feelings of nostalgia similar to mine when editing the piece. And later on in the show, Act 3, *Viral Heart*, was directed and written in a way that I knew would appeal to a mass audience with approachable humor and a tried and true style of mockumentary comedy. On the creative side of things, the process was deeply nostalgic for me- not just revisiting entertainment from my childhood, but having the opportunity to reflect on relationships and my own growth- a different, more intimate and intangible form of nostalgia, but nostalgia nonetheless. This was achieved via various physical methods, but more often than not, through deep thought- perhaps an entirely different paper could be written on how emotions of nostalgia can be evoked from a concept so rudimentary and accessible such as thought.

An article by Mental Floss states that “dwelling on the past may help us contextualize the present and prepare for the future”. Yet, this infatuation with the past is paradoxical, since we are an incredibly ‘forward-thinking and future driven culture’. Most likely, the continued rise of technology and sheer amount of entertainment outlets has overexposed us to media that’s lulled us into turning around versus looking straight ahead. Historically, waves of cultural phenomenons tend to come and go, but nostalgia is so inherently unique and personal to each audience member that may watch a film or listen to an album. It’s not preposterous to imagine that this idea of revisiting and rehashing will continue to remain prominent in the media industry. Via a theoretical lens, it’s arguable that nostalgia will always stay relevant, as new generations will experience and discover what’s popular in our present day at some point in their future- the cycle will just repeat. On the other hand, it’s just as arguable that sequels, remixes, and cameo appearances will grow stale within the next decade, since we consumers have the most unwieldy loyalty and limited patience. One thing that’s not arguable, though, is the power of nostalgia, and how accessible it is by both parties of the artistic world. There’s perhaps nothing more comforting than the safety of the past, since nostalgia highlights your best memories. And the fact that a specific sound or obscure reference can cause a tidal wave of memories and feelings is testament to how fragile and frankly exploitable the human emotional spectrum is. And exploited it has been, both by the most gargantuan media franchises on the planet and the smallest, most irrelevant college content creators. The truth is, at least at the moment, is that nobody really seems to mind.

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...plus my personal knowledge of current pop culture events & trends!



Tristan Griffin

Senior Project

David Bassuk

Technical Paper

### A Reflection on Project Journey

Before I reflect on Project Journey, I must reflect on what came before, and that includes my directing experience at the tail-end of high school, through courses at Purchase, my initial senior project, and my loss of said project. My directing career had largely existed in my imagination through childhood, and while there were projects I took on throughout my education there was none more grand than *Necessary Evil*- an original play I co-wrote and directed with a classmate for my high school's Winter Production program in early 2018. That play felt like an ode to parts of my childhood in a way, as the plot gathered famous fictional villains into one room for a group therapy session. It was a tremendous first directing experience, but my goal approaching college was to learn more and shoot higher. After a series of theater and film directing classes with David Bassuk, Lenora Champagne, Rachel Dickstein, Sean Weiner, and Brian Paccione, I felt prepared to tackle a multimedia project that would highlight my multifaceted directorial abilities. After partnering with a student playwright and stage manager, this all led to Frame(D), an idea I created once again from a childhood memory- my favorite board game, Clue. This show would allow me to direct on a stage with live actors while incorporating filmmaking, a hybrid I've been fond of but haven't seen done to good or proper effect yet at my time at Purchase, or even at professional venues such as Guild Hall or The

Public. However, after an unfortunate series of events (more on that later), my trajectory on the Frame(D) team led to my departure from the project. While it was disappointing to lose the opportunity to direct the show I'd been passionate about for so long, it was also a personal reset and a chance for me to channel my anxieties and emotions into a new show. It was only a few days after I left Frame(D) when the concept of Project Journey popped into my mind.

I initially developed Project Journey as an excuse to showcase myself in various mediums- theater and film would flow over from the previous attempt, but I wanted to add in elements of live music and dance, two other artistic forms that have been present throughout my life in different capacities. Through conversations with my advisor, David, these multimedia/multi-performance type concepts alluded to the idea of utilizing personal memories to bring them to life, or a memory palace... what I quickly realized to be in simplest terms, a time capsule. In addition, we utilized an analogy of a necklace, with multiple beads, as a way for me to process this concept creatively- each bead representing something different about myself, but the two threads tying everything together into a necklace. After the time capsule idea materialized, I began a different recruitment process to fill my team than I did with Frame(D). Given recent events in my life, I found the best decision was to reach out to artists and collaborators on campus personally, entrusting mostly close friends to help me on this journey. However, while much of the process was incredibly team-oriented, I remained entrenched in the idea that this show was a full, truthful representation of myself, even if that representation was oftentimes through other human beings/performers. For a while, I struggled with this concept, as I found a senior project about myself to be selfish and conceited. As I continued writing and searching for ways to approach the show more anthropologically and move away from using myself, it felt dishonest. Even in my Artistic Aims, which I wrote months ago, I express how the

show ‘revisits my childhood memories, albeit indirectly’. This remained partly true, especially in the play- but anyone who remotely knows or understands me quickly realized while watching the show how *direct* everything was about a memory of mine. Nobody else in the rehearsal process seemed to have an issue with that, and so once I sold myself on that notion, it made bringing Project Journey to life so much easier. I realized that reflecting on my past, and various memories, events, interests, and people, was a necessary moment for me that would mark the end of a personal era before a major transition phase.

Despite a lot of behind the scenes work accomplished by myself for this show, it wouldn’t have been remotely possible behind the various people that helped me achieve my goals. My first and most important collaborator, fellow senior Norah O’Brien, was indescribably helpful during the entire creative, rehearsal, and performance process. Norah excitedly took on a role of producer for the show, acting as both a stage manager and a liaison for the entire cast, in addition to being a trustworthy moral and emotional support when my anxieties would rise. As someone who was accustomed to completing most tasks on my own, having Norah as a coworker taught me the importance of teamwork and collaborative trust. Besides working with Norah, which was a partnership from a managerial standpoint, being able to work with a variety of artists on campus was a tremendous learning experience and true pleasure. Accompanying singer Emily Koziarz on piano allowed me to view my playing from a second musical output; filming *Viral Heart* with notorious campus cinematographer Gray Scott led to a professional and breezy shooting weekend; while working with actress Kendra Canavan in a variety of platforms taught me a lot about myself as a director and how I interact with performers across different mediums. Perhaps the most ‘high-profile’ collaboration of this effort, however, was my multishow team up with dance conservatory senior, and good friend, Naoki Yogi. We agreed

early in December that I'd play live piano for her senior project, and she'd choreograph the dance element of mine, and our work together was nothing but fruitful and rewarding.

Accompanying dancers was an early concept of Project Journey, and when choreographed to memories of my past relationships, it was an often emotional and honest process. This honesty, I believe, permeates throughout the show, which is where the idea of filming a behind the scenes 'documentary' (although more akin to a vlog) came from. Post-show, I wanted audiences to be able to view both the creative and production process that went into Project Journey, and most if not all of the incredible footage I have is courtesy of Kailey Ossorio, an unabashedly caring and hard-working individual who's also made everything possible. Kailey, besides creating the gorgeous makeup looks on the dancers for the live performance, attended a multitude of rehearsals, brainstorming sessions, and tech days to document with a video camera. Her chaotic and no-boundaries vlogging style may seem unprofessional at a quick glance, but I believe it was exactly the type of energy my show means to exude, both through the hard-work moments and the shenanigans. Finally, a compassionate group of friends and collaborators rounded out the process- Taylor, Shonnon, Danny, Maggie, Thomas, Nahiem, Angelina, Emily, Shota, Jack, Ben, Mike, Isaiah, Adrienne, and Hope- each played pivotal roles that imbued Project Journey with relentless optimism and support.

Away from the group, Project Journey required more vigorous solo work than I initially expected. Dozens of hours were spent at practice pianos in the music building, honing the Act 1 montage piece and the Act 4 duet pieces. Editing the montage perfectly to coincide with my composition was difficult, as was finding the right comedic timing in the scenes of Viral Heart. I wanted to go the extra mile before show night, as well, so I spent additional time designing the poster, playbill, projected backdrop, and opening playlist so the whole experience could feel both

curated and cozy. As much as this was a team project, it was just as much a solo journey of self-discovery for me, and how I could put forth the most honest version of myself. And so, of course, all these shooting days, editing sessions, rehearsals, vlogs, anxiety attacks and moments of confidence had to lead somewhere...

Show night was a culmination of everyone's hard work and emotions, and while the cast and crew seemed ready and excited for the big moment, I was having some internal difficulties getting into the proper performance mindset. The thoughts plaguing me stemmed from the same issues that ended my tenure on Frame(D) and generally made the semester very difficult for me, which was the existence of false rumors that damaged my reputation, especially in the theater community on campus. While my confidence in the illegitimacy of the rumors was unfazed, I had a fear that certain folks on campus would attempt to harm my production, as they did with Frame(D). I knew that the plausibility of this scenario was extremely unlikely, but it didn't stop my anxieties from overcoming my judgment. Thankfully, my fears were quelled as soon as familiar faces started to gather into the theater, with folks I trusted managing the front of house. I quickly eased into a confident mindset, and before I knew it, with 120 people in the audience eagerly awaiting, we went into blackout and began the show.

I thought Project Journey ran incredibly well, even with minor kinks throughout. The prologue and Act 1 were perfectly smooth, paced correctly, and the audience seemed to enjoy the montage especially. Act 2, the play, as expected was the messiest, but still gave off an innate charm courtesy of the performances and technical elements. Act 3, the film, was easily the most 'successful' of the night, with the comedy receiving plenty of laugh out loud moments and a thunderous applause at the end. I think everyone could agree Act 4, the dance, was the most unique portion of the show that showcased a variety of talent- everyone performed brilliantly.

Finally, the epilogue- the decision for me to read the letter was actually a last minute change suggested by an actor, who thought that due to the show being inherently derivative of my memories, I should read the monologue I wrote about memories. I definitely came off as nervous at the onset of reading, but by the tail end picked up a good pace and closed the show on an empathetic note that I believe resonated with the audience. It felt authentic. The ensuing curtain call and the heartwarming standing ovation we received was the cherry on top.

It definitely took me a couple days to internalize everything and understand how valuable this entire experience was, and how important and memorable that performance night truly was. I remain unbelievably grateful for all the selfless hard work that everyone involved put into this show- I think everyone began to realize more and more during tech week how much Project Journey meant to me, and them giving it their all truly blew me away. Also, for the first time in a while, I was really proud of myself, for seeing my vision through and presenting an unfiltered version of myself to the audience. I think after all that's happened these last two semesters with my projects and my reputation, I needed to reestablish confidence into myself, and that's exactly what I did. Now, I can journey out into the professional world, knowing that I achieved a remarkable feat of directing and also created an everlasting memory. After all, building memories and putting it into a time capsule is what Project Journey was all about.

### **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS/NOTES FROM PRODUCTION PROCESS**

**Behind the Scenes Images/Playbill/Poster:**

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SgRPB7kaVpPu\\_OnKGi5bndZbYLW5muxh?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SgRPB7kaVpPu_OnKGi5bndZbYLW5muxh?usp=sharing)

**Dreamwheel/Act 2 Script:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1grZkT8VmDbrCOK1rCgXfdpdxsWQN6MvsKjKKqGt30PE/edit?usp=sharing>

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**Viral Heart/Act 3 Script:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NmOY7jswievkiyLRN8UXSy-YfmfaQnjEoHHv0eN-p9U/edit?usp=sharing>

**Viral Heart Shot List:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FwTvOX8cRTpgp7scj3I4\\_joYb-8Z\\_Qc-PwWELjUEtIk/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FwTvOX8cRTpgp7scj3I4_joYb-8Z_Qc-PwWELjUEtIk/edit?usp=sharing)

**Action Figures/Act 1 Notes:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CcyYHrZmN6z3UnOI0cb5B-vOwR7Rvs2aJgiejNVvvqo/edit?usp=sharing>

**Sound Master List:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rADgmVzIZneELRjPzAhOvvXYVtAHIMvLfnZCwUXmVOI/edit?usp=sharing>

ng

**Lighting Master List:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Vr2v1JvwI3kVbU2KoBrOv9DIwF6G1JdE5npD7g1BfWw/edit?usp=sharing>

**Photos/Scans of various written notes:**

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mK0DW\\_aNGyFXvWWOmuOUqKnKHLVWkuII?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mK0DW_aNGyFXvWWOmuOUqKnKHLVWkuII?usp=sharing)