

**Education Material Packet for
Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company's
Return Student Preview Spring 2018**



Return, part III of the “Together Alone” trilogy, is an evening-length science fiction inspired dance that imagines our future selves as a result of this current age of technological and global acceleration. Set in the future, onboard a spacecraft that is in the midst of a multigenerational journey, six galactic immigrants are isolated within the confines of an artificial ecosystem where the natural world no longer exists. Outcast and abandoned by their ancestors, these travelers seek to discover their humanity in the artificial world in which they now exist. They seek to find out who they are as they search for a new home. Conceived and choreographed by Artistic Director Daniel Charon and with an original score by the Salt Lake Electric Ensemble, this project considers how our current interactions with technology are affecting who we will become.

Return is being presented in the new Regent Street Black Box Theater, an intimate space that inspired an alternative set-up for this production. The performance will be arranged with the audience seated around the stage, isolating the performers and giving the viewers unique vantage points. The action will be in very close proximity to the audience offering a visceral immediacy to the experience.



One of the research images Mr.Charon used in his creative process.

Please find inside this information packet; artist biography, contextual information, and movement lesson ideas inspired by *RETURN*.

***RETURN* (World Premiere 2018)
by Daniel Charon**

Music: Salt Lake Electric Ensemble
Lighting Design: William Peterson
Costume Design: Laura Kiechle

“I’m interested in creating a series of dances that explore the multiplicity of our virtual selves and how its impact fundamentally changes our human psychology. The trilogy delves deeply into a continued conversation about our current evolutionary state as human beings. ‘Return’ emphasizes an escape to the future and considers our vulnerability, primal nature, and effort to re-learn what we are instinctually born with. I am thrilled to conclude this project with such an incredible team of dancers, artists, and musicians.”

- Daniel Charon, Artistic Director



Artistic Director of Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company since 2013, **Daniel Charon** has been active as a choreographer, teacher, and performer for over twenty-five years. While based in New York City, Daniel maintained a project-based company and primarily danced with Doug Varone and Dancers (1999-2010) and the Limón Dance Company (1997-1999). He is a BFA graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts and an MFA graduate of the California Institute of the Arts. He has presented multiple full evening concerts in New York City, has been produced by various theaters, and has been commissioned to choreograph new works for many companies, universities, and festivals around the country. Daniel choreographed The Pearl

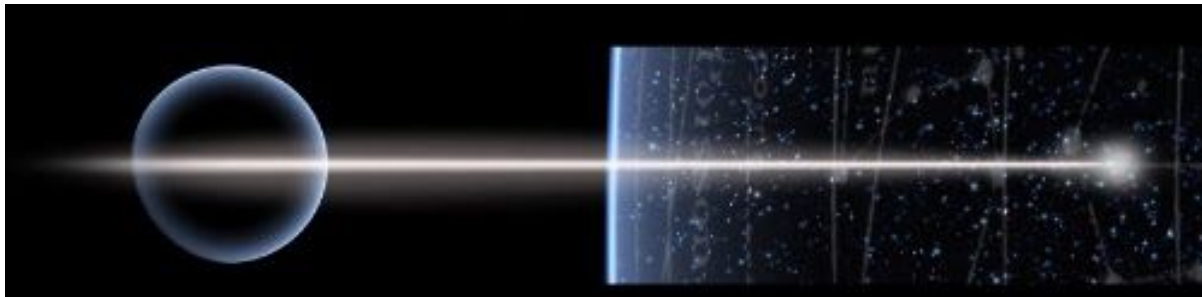
Fishers, Aida, and Moby-Dick at the Utah Opera. Daniel regularly teaches master classes and workshops nationally and internationally and been guest artist and adjunct professor at numerous universities Daniel has staged the works of José Limón, Jirí Kylián, and Doug Varone at schools and companies around the world.

Charon’s latest work, *Return* is the conclusion of the “Together Alone” trilogy, a grouping of work that considers how interaction with technology is fundamentally changing human evolution. Part I of the trilogy, *Shift* (2015), was an examination of existence in a digitally saturated world and how relentless connection can actually lead to new types of solitude. Part II of the trilogy,

Enter (2016), was inspired by imagining the premise of an abstracted existence within the vastness of a new, digitally generated ecosystem. Parts I and II of the trilogy received Salt Lake City Weekly's 2016 Best of Utah Arts award for best choreography.

Return will be accompanied by an original musical composition created by the Salt Lake Electric Ensemble (SLEE), the second collaboration between Charon and the group. The score is a suite of contrasting compositions ranging from aggressive, noisy electronics to gentle ambient drone and minimal textures. While the ensemble's sounds are mostly electronic in nature, SLEE also deploys additional acoustic instruments including brass, percussion, amplified guitars, and voice. The soundtrack functions like the underscoring of a film and highlights the relationship humanity has to electricity and how, in order to exist, it is becoming imperative to have access to this type of energy.

The Salt Lake Electric Ensemble (SLEE) formed in 2009 with a dual purpose: to perform and record Terry Riley's 1964 masterwork *In C*, and to explore chamber music using the computer as a musical instrument. SLEE's 2010 debut recording of *In C* was the first rendition to primarily deploy electronic instruments. SLEE often shifts personnel and instrumentation from project to project and has ranged from 6-10 members. The ensemble's body of work includes new recordings and performances of 20th century classics along with original compositions, improvisations, and multimedia creations. Most recently the ensemble issued a new recording of Philip Glass's monumental 1970 work *Music With Changing Parts* on Glass's own record label, Orange Mountain Music.



One of the research images Mr.Charon used in his creative process.

Lesson plans inspired by *Return*

Unconventional spatial arrangement - explore different spatial relationship between the performers and the audience

- 1) Have a group discussion. Have you performed where the audience is all around you? Or have you experienced any unconventional performance setup that is different from

proscenium theater, either as a dancer, or an audience member? What other spatial relationship do you think the performers and audience can have, and what might be the different effects?

- 2) Arrange the students in a group of 4 - 5
 - 3) Each group chooses a part of a dance they already know very well - 1 to 2 minutes in length. Take this dance outside of the dance studio - into your school building, or even out of doors. What kinds of audience perspective and performance experience can you create? Is there a place where audience can see from the above? Or below? Or all around, or among the dancers?
 - 4) Each group chooses a site and the instruction to the audience (optional).
 - 5) Have a tour of each group performing.
 - 6) Come back to the whole group to discuss what took place. What were the choices made about the site? What worked, and what didn't, and why? How were the performers affected? How did it feel, watching and/or performing? Was it exciting, frustrating, enjoyable, scary, or fun? Did the dancers make different choices in their performance, compared to when they perform on a regular stage? What was your favorite perspective/relationship, and why?
- Depending on the level of your students, you might do the same process (or repeat it), but change 3). Rather than a dance they already know, students choreograph new movement material just for this project. It could be created in the studio, or they can create it on site after it is chosen and then keep the audience perspective in mind when they create.



One of the research images Mr.Charon used in his creative process.

Ring-around-the-choreographer

Inspired by one of the choreographic tools Daniel used in the creative process of Return.

- 1) Divide your students into groups of 4-5.
- 2) Choose one student to be the “choreographer”
- 3) Choreographer stands in the middle of the creative space. Other dancers find ways to attach themselves to different parts of the “choreographer”s body, as if they are the extension of his/her body.

- 4) Slowly “choreographer” moves - and all the other dancers have to maintain the connection/attachment and move themselves in space as well. This has to be done very slowly so that all the dancers can learn and memorize the pathways of their movement.
 - 5) Repeat the pattern slowly several times, so that the dancers can practice.
 - 6) Keep creating until the whole movement phrase is about two sets of slow 8 counts (adjustable)
 - 7) The “choreographer” then removes him/herself from the middle. Dancers perform the pattern without the center figure. Can they make it work?
 - 8) Now the choreographer can take a look at it from the outside, and edit - keep what is interesting and effective, change the speed, adjust levels, etc.
 - 9) Have a showing to share what each group created.
 - 10) Discuss their perceptions -what they felt worked or was satisfactory, and why.
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- Depending on the level of your students, you might do the same process with fewer dancers around the “choreographer” (fewer bodies makes it a little bit easier/simpler).
 - After completing up to 7), can you put a few groups together in space and moving at the same time - what happens? Experiment with different proximities. Is there a possibility for an interaction between two groups? Who is the choreographer now - can two choreographers work together, or are the dancers able to determine the choreography as a group?

Have fun moving! And enjoy the performance of Return.

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One of the research images Mr.Charon used in his creative process.