

#InsideTheStudio with Brennen Renteria

Several years ago, as part of our collaboration with the Morrison-Shearer Foundation, we remounted several Sybil Shearer works for a fall show at the Auditorium. I was involved with a work titled *Salute to Old Friends: For Agnus*, which was originally a solo danced by Sybil herself. We studied the video and were tasked with expanding the work into a full company piece with twelve dancers while still maintaining the integrity of the movement. Her distinct movement style made recreating the choreography particularly difficult, especially given its speed and subtlety.



I remember all of us bringing our computers so that we could all watch independently to all try to dissect the video. Then we would reconvene to try and assemble what we had found off the video. Some of us even downloaded slow-motion video players, and I remember going frame by frame and then suddenly pausing to see a specific arm shape or head position before Sybil rocketed into her next move. To me, this process felt like we were all detectives trying to solve a case in X-files as her dancing is just not what we were used to.

When we finally had the entire piece mounted, we then faced the daunting task of cleaning a dance with twelve dancers while still finding the intricacies of the movement for ourselves. I would go to sleep with counts floating through my head very often.

Once it came time for tech, we discovered that we would be dancing with projections of Sybil behind us as well. Of course technology isn't always perfect. During our performance, Sybil was late for her cue at the very



end of the piece. We all reached back at what was supposed to be her giant image upstage of us with big ol' smiles and she was nowhere to be found (I think she got a note for that)! In the end though, I feel like the final product was a fun work to perform and watch with authentic intent. This piece found its way into our repertoire for the remainder of that season where other audiences could also experience a little bit of Sybil's quirkiness.

**Salute to Old Friends, For Agnes* was mounted as part of TDC's American Dance Legacy - Learn more [here](#).