I remember my first week of graduate school so clearly. I was feeling overwhelmed at the thought of another three years of school. I was the youngest one in the program and I felt as if I had something to prove coming in with only a dance minor from Georgia College. I pursued a Masters in Dance because I wanted a full, diverse dance education. I wanted to be in an environment where I could grow as a performer, instructor and choreographer. This program has allowed me the space to do that I am leaving feeling full.

Within my first few weeks of school, I quickly discovered that there is a lot I don’t know. Thankfully, I realized that was the best position I could be in as a student. My dad always told me not go to school to get a job, but to go to school to get an education. If I could pass on any advice to my students, it would be just that. As a student, your job is to learn. I wonder how different the world would be if we treated life a little more like an education, and allowed ourselves to be more willing to listen and to learn. I have learned that when you are constantly curious and keep an open mind, you allow yourself the most room for growth. I believe growth is not always something to be measured and your financial status does not reflect your success.

In a commencement speech at University of the Arts, Neil Gaiman said that we have the ability to make great art, and that no matter what happens in life, make great art. If you have nothing else, you have your art. I am leaving this program feeling confident in my abilities and knowing that I am enough. I know that I am unique. I know that I can take risks because I have been taught that your failures do not define you. I know that I can make great art.

This Dance department is lucky to have such a unique, diverse group of faculty and staff members that instill these ideas into their teaching. Each of them have contributed positively to my experience here and I am so grateful to know them and to have learned from them. Faculty – I want to extend my sincere thanks to each of you for your guidance and support. You have challenged me in the best ways. I know I am taking skills and ideas learned from each of you as I embark on my next journey. I’m extremely thankful for the opportunities I’ve been given in this program. Some of you know that my thesis concert was a reflection of my research in place and how we are connected to places we live in and occupy. I can honestly say this place has changed me for the better. It’s been my home. I will forever feel connected this place and I am forever grateful for the people I connected to through it.

To my fellow graduates, I can’t wait to see you soar. I hope you always know your worth and continue to use your platform to make the world a better place. I’m lucky to have been in this program alongside you and to have learned from you. I wish you all the best and peace in your future. Don’t forget about me when you’re famous!

Thank you