

## **Variant Dance Troupe Showcases Growth in an Eclectic Spring Showcase**

**By Oscar Kim Bauman, Scarlet Staff**

On the evenings of April 5th and April 6th, Clark's own Variant Dance Troupe took to the stage of Atwood Hall for their Spring Showcase. According to the show's programs, as well as a pre-show announcement by the co-directors, the theme of the show was the idea of growth and being grown.

The concept of being grown, defined in the programs as "a stage of young adulthood in which we are in college, and we are considered adults, but are not done growing yet" was center stage during Variant's performances, as dancers presented 17 largely original, self-choreographed pieces, set to music from EDM to downtempo balladry.

While other dance groups may focus on one particular style of dance, Variant purposefully includes a variety of genres. According to their own Facebook event page for the showcase, the dances presented included "hip-hop, jazz, contemporary, tap, and jive."

The show opened with a bang as 27 dancers assembled on the stage to deliver a powerful performance choreographed by sophomore Bailey Ross and set to a thumping remix of Travis Scott's hip hop hit "Sicko Mode." From there, the pieces were largely more intimate, featuring fewer dancers, before ending on a trio of larger numbers, and coming to a close with the entire Variant ensemble taking to the stage.

First year student Hannah Ballou found herself drawn to Variant's eclectic, inclusive atmosphere. "I knew that I wanted to join a dance group on campus. I talked to this year's co-directors at the club fair, then went to their general interest meeting, and I was hooked."

Ballou performed in three dances as a part of the Variant show, and choreographed an original piece set to the song "Sober" by Pink, an emotional pop-rock power ballad. According to Ballou "choreographing a dance is like writing; you have a general idea and tone you're going for, but when you start, you don't know exactly where you'll end."

"There was a lot of listening to the song and trying to find emotions that felt natural with the story I was trying to tell. The process of choreographing has been very cathartic for me. It's been my number one stress reliever this semester."

Ballou found the experience of joining Variant to be so positive, she even decided to get involved with the club's leadership, taking part in E-Board elections for next semester. "I ran for co-director. We have one that's graduating this year, so there was an open slot."

Ultimately, this year's Variant elections ended with a tie between Ballou and Ross, bumping up the number of co-directors to four. This level of collaboration in the leadership and membership of Variant may be seen reflected in the variety seen onstage.

"I love Variant," said Ballou. "I think that it's an extremely inclusive group, and I think that has to do with the fact that we're not audition based. We're extremely supportive, we build each other up. We're all there to have fun and learn from each other, and it's a beautiful thing to be a part of."

This sense of community and support that Ballou describes the members of Variant having could be seen on stage during the many performances. Throughout the diverse performances, the camaraderie of the dancers was evident.