

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My performance experiences, paired with training ranging from classical modern to contemporary, lead me to embody a personal sense of dance history along with an optimism about how those lineages can feed contemporary dance, and young dancers in our world today. The following quote by Alan Moore is the underpinning of my career and encapsulates my love and approach to teaching.

“The birth of an artist is in the harnessing of discipline to imagination.”

On a practical level, dancers must train rigorously, but they must also remember who they are, to play, to feel free to follow their imagination. In the rigors of training and the meticulous demands of the art form, it is easy for young dancers to forget who they are, what they are training for, and who the technique is supposed to serve. Dancers must realize that they are not simply tools for the choreographer, but rather, full realized contributors and collaborators in the creative process. To this end, each class is designed as a process of cultivating human wholeness, of creating a space where students realize that their whole person must participate - mind, body, and spirit.

I center my classes on specific movement principles, but the real focus is on the visceral experience of movement. As I stated earlier, movement principles are an application of kinesiology and physics, and each of my class combinations is centered around one or several principles broken down into component parts. The movements within each combination are designed to facilitate a physical experience, leading students from intellectual process to embodied practice. Throughout class, as new material is presented, I give dancers time to experiment, to choose what aspect they wish to explore, before engaging with the full given task. The constancy of choice leads dancers to eventually interpret movement principles in a personal manner, moving through space with strength and clarity while reveling in the virtuosic capacity of their own physicality. This is when the rigor of training becomes a road to transformation.

I feel a deep responsibility to teach tools and craft, but especially when working with young dancers, the true focus is in facilitating an experience that allows them to discover and develop their own genuine impulses to move. To this end, I utilize repetition. Combinations are repeated and built upon over several weeks, allowing students to stop thinking about what is next and instead, delve deeper, cultivating muscular awareness and establishing the optimal movement patterns that underpin each principle. Familiarity allows dancers to develop a deeper understanding of their needs, strengths, and instabilities within the given technique, again allowing them to make choices and push themselves past, and transcend, personal habits and default movement settings.

It is vital to learning that information is understood in a manner that allows for experiential success, and for an educator to effect positive change, they must create those conditions for success. Here, progression is key. Dance is radically complex, requiring the use of multiple body parts functioning in different directions and at varying speeds, simultaneously, all while hurtling through space, rolling on the floor, and leaping into the air. Much like a pianist uses both hands to create different musical textures, the dancer does this with the whole body. It is preferable for movements of the head, torso, legs, and arms to be systematically introduced and integrated into increasingly complex patterns. Principles are introduced on a global scale and gradually drawn to what I refer to as their inevitable center, with individual landmarks explored and dissected. The process tends to take on its own momentum as understanding of how a movement principle applies to one aspect of the body then creates an intuitive leap to the next.

The role of a dance educator is far bigger than teaching technique. Ultimately it is the application of technique as a metaphor in the broader aspects of our lives. My goal is to aid in the evolution of the individual - the artist. We just happen to be dancing. This understanding is accomplished through a

constant reinforcing of purpose and choice. Each class begins with a self-guided exploration of previously introduced materials. In this way students are able to take responsibility for their own learning by following their own inquiries. Throughout the class, students are then asked to examine what is happening physically and correlate it to an emotional response or observation of human behavior, transforming the given task into a meaningful action. In this way dancers become aware of themselves as creative interpreters of the human condition, and technique class becomes a clear road to performance.

I strive to be constantly present. Deep learning happens in the daily, consistent interactions, in the availability and accessibility of the teacher. I've always had the feeling that when a lesson is fully learned it seems like it was always known, and it is wonderful watching young dancers make the transition from being students, to realized artists cultivating choices on their own terms. I hope to instill in dancers a sense of self-purpose - that the choices they make must come from the dream of who they wish to be.