

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The joy of movement is at first curious self-exploration. The child moves from desire, impulse, interest, and with the honest engagement of the whole being. I find that for many students, the joy of creative play and self-expression is stamped out early on with rigid training inside a production oriented society. Authenticity, physical alignment and creativity are compromised while students become disconnected from their own nature. Whether working with children, college students or mature adults, my primary aim as a teacher is to engage the student in a process of self-development and in alignment with their true nature.

Focusing on the breath and stillness, I teach individuals to develop an internal awareness in order to establish a rooted base or *neutral* that the body can move from and return to. Somatic exercises hone the individual's physical awareness and mental focus while establishing an ensemble sensibility amongst a company of performers. I use developmental movement patterns to return to early movement building blocks. Accessing the floor, rolling, crawling and finding comfort on all levels builds awareness and strength as well as confidence to engage with others. Early partnering practices such as rooting develop comfort and spatial awareness as the class recognizes each other through touch. Students learn to support and be supported by continually exchanging partners and roles, avoiding cliques and isolation inside the class, while identifying personal strengths and weaknesses. Meeting in a circle and eliciting feedback from each other promotes an egalitarian atmosphere while giving a space to intellectually process movement material, as well as voice concerns and realizations.

I believe the two greatest challenges of our time are the degraded relationship with the natural world and the severe historical and present inequities along race, gender, class and cultural lines. As students in my class become in tune with their personal potential and comfortable with each other, they develop the strength to address these challenges. I believe a valuable education awakens the consciousness of the student and plants the seeds to address these imminent threats to our collective existence.

I encourage students to distinguish between and value both subjective feelings and objective and critical thought. Students are encouraged to think independently while finding their own voice within a community of peers. Performance response papers are assigned to engage with contemporary performance of various forms, and students must express their personal feelings and develop a critical perspective, often in relationship to the aesthetics of the form being studied.

Capoeira, Contact Improvisation and Devising processes are methods to employ contemporary multicultural theory and inclusivity. In my teaching I focus on form while encouraging adaptability, creative responsiveness, and the students' unique ability to express themselves amongst and with their peers. The primary forms I teach with college students utilize improvisation, require engagement with others, and allow each voice to be expressed while refining a communal experience.

I have developed a keen awareness of the benefits and challenges of collaboration, both for performance and participation in community and society. My role is to develop a stronger individual with awareness of themselves and the space around them; one who knows how to effectively move on their own, is responsive and capable of a physical conversation with a partner,

and can be an adaptable, creative and contributing member of a larger group. An effective collaborator is one who knows when to claim the lead, yet is also able to yield and follow with equal enthusiasm, invested while maintaining a healthy critical perspective. In addition, I encourage my students to embody a technique that has personal meaning to their own lives, and one that is useful both on and off the stage, both in and out of the studio. Out of class self-study and practice with the material is essential for success, and students can realize themselves as the center of their education.

I believe the process of growing and learning is a constant conversation between the refined and the raw, the established and the revolutionary. It requires a commitment on the part of the student to find themselves between these poles, of knowing and not-knowing. Joseph Chaikin, in *The Presence of The Actor*, calls this “a dialectic between restraint and abandon; between the impulse and the form which expresses it.” I am constantly exploring this relationship in order to establish meaningful expression, and I present exercises that incorporate technical form balanced by improvisational responsiveness, and concrete approaches while nurturing intuition.

My work as a movement artist and teacher is rooted in a somatic approach that recognizes there is an intimate relationship between the mind, body and spirit. I place a high value on improvisation as a creative tool of adaptability and individual expression, and co-creation (collaboration) as the shared space of enlightened communal experience. I desire to nurture a conscious, aware and responsive student, one who has the tools to develop a greater understanding of themselves and in relationship to others and their environment.