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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The best teacher I ever had was the one that cared enough to let me experience failure. He allowed me to fail in small, meaningful ways so that I could learn how to deal with it, and rise again stronger than before. He inspired me to consciously choose the path I wanted to take in life, instead of simply following in the footsteps of those who had come before. He challenged me to take nothing for granted. He encouraged me to be thoughtfully critical and to take an active role in my education. I seek what he sought, to inspire students to take responsibility for the exploration and development of their bodies and minds as tools for creative investigation and expression. In the studio and classroom I clearly articulate my expectation that students boldly tread the lines between what they already know and what is yet to be known, and to build bridges between the two.

Every person in the classroom is a storehouse of prior knowledge and kinesthetic intelligence. Each person has experienced and trained their bodies and minds to perform specific movement skills and conceptualize the role of movement in certain ways according to the unique circumstances of their lives. For me, some of these experiences that have left a definite mark on my choreography and movement patterning include dancing Hip Hop for 20 years, playing sports (particularly pole vaulting and football), watching Gene Kelly dancing in the rain, and nine months spent in Israel studying the imagery-rich, improvisationally-based practice known as Gaga. As an educator, it is my goal to provide the security, tools, and motivation to access the intellectual and embodied knowledge of my students. I use that knowledge as a springboard into fresh and stimulating subjects of academic and physical inquiry. Education is a continual process where practices are regularly assessed, re-strategized, and applied. It requires curiosity, input, and regular refinements to one's paradigm.

Two priorities for every technique class I teach are 1) the utilization of imagery and visualization in combination with physical action, and 2) teaching kinesiology sound technique rooted in the principles of somatic practices. The combination of these two beliefs has led me into the study and implementation of ideas that have contemporary underpinnings in the Israeli-based Gaga movement vocabulary. In response to the nine months of research I conducted in Israel, and in collaboration with Gina Bolles Sorensen, I have developed, and continue to explore a model of teaching that renegotiates traditional dance training through the use of verbal cues that invite the dancer's associations, imagination, and intellect to play an equal part to their physical training. The class intentionally mixes both guided improvisations and set material in order to utilize the strengths of both approaches as part of an integrated whole. The first part of class utilizes improvisational scores in addition to traditional exercises that are guided by a continually evolving flow of imagery cues and visualizations that shift the priorities of the performers towards a balanced relationship between internal sensation and external form. After we explore anatomical principles and the kinesthetic sequencing of the body, and begin tuning into the proprioceptive system, the last half of the class seamlessly connects these bodily investigations into set choreography. This class model enables students to build solid technical skills, while simultaneously questioning, and often renegotiating, habitual patterns of movement and performance.

Emilé Chartier said, "Nothing is more dangerous than an idea when it is the only one we have." By encouraging students to participate in a variety of dance classes and consider multiple perspectives, I prepare them to be adaptable in the face of changing circumstances and increase their ability to understand other points of view.

My classes incorporate exercises that require collaboration among members of the class in order to create opportunities for diverse populations to share their experiences and build trust amongst their classmates. This stimulates more open dialogues amongst the members of the class and a sense of identity both within a local and a global dance context.

Building a community of artists, scholars, and dance enthusiasts who demonstrate respect, support, and accountability at every stage of the learning process is imperative. In this type of community, the group gains from each individual's creative risk, and celebrates each individual's artistic progress. For those students who are taking dance classes recreationally, it is my pleasure to create inviting classes for them to come experience the fun and values that dance classes foster like dedication and a healthy appreciation for the human body's capacities. For those students who wish to dig in deeper and pursue a career in dance, it is my pleasure to additionally begin connecting them to the larger dance community by inviting them to work and collaborate with *somebodies dance theater*, the professional dance company that I co-direct with my partner, Gina Bolles Sorensen. In addition to working with students directly, I also aim to make all of my resources and networks freely available for them. At the end of my time with students, I want them to not only have the tools and wisdom to succeed, but also to already have a foot in the door as they begin the journey of their professional careers.

In conclusion, my teaching strategies are dedicated to fostering versatile movers and thinkers who show innovation and drive in the pursuit of their physical, intellectual, and professional goals, both now and far into the future.