

SABBATICAL PAPER
THE IMPULSE AND PHYSICS OF MOVEMENT

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Of all the arts, Aristotle thought drama as the most direct response to humanity’s deep need to imitate experience.” (1a)

In my teaching: Movement for the actor; choreography; four dance techniques – ballet, Graham, Humphrey-Limon and jazz – and in composing and directing choreography for the theater and concert productions for over thirty years, twenty-three of which were spent at Drake, I hope that I’ve been able to communicate to the students the concept behind Aristotle’s words. Inherent in Aristotle’s observation are life’s evocative moments that spiritually, emotionally and psychologically affect us, and that are transcendent in their universal significance.

Aristotle is not speaking of drama as pure entertainment, although entertainment must be part of the equation if drama and dance are to appeal to an audience. He is referring to the writing and performance of drama/dance that travel into the realm of evocative meaning for performer and audience alike, if it is to be worthy of his observation: “... humanity’s deep need to imitate experience.”

While witnessing drama/dance, the conflict or situation presented must have evocative qualities: having the capacity to awaken, to stir within us on a visceral, an emotional and a psychological level, some understanding; an awareness that allows us, the audience to relate to an experience from our own lives, or to relate empathetically to experiences from the lives of those around us. Without empathetic identification, we, as an audience, simply don’t care what happens to the characters, or to the conflict’s outcome. Theater/dance can act as a great civilizer, expanding us as human beings, “breaking down barriers that bedim and obstruct our own humanity.” (1b)

This experience can occur as easily with some musical theater and comedy as it can with tragic catharsis as found in, e.g.: “King Lear,” “Othello,” “Romeo and Juliet,” “Oedipus the King.” There are many moving plays that have a cathartic effect, i.e. “Our Town.” Although this play would not fall into the category of tragedy as defined by the scholars.

(1a) Milly S. Barranger, “Understanding Plays,” page 56.

(1b) Professor James J. Federlick, founder of Drake University Theater.

One could argue that through comedy, musical or non-musical, laughter is as good a way to know the soul as through tragedy. However, much of comedy tends to be secular and topical in nature. The greatest difference between comedy and tragedy is that conflict in comedy is usually peopled with characters that bend society's rules; who make fun of and ridicule institutions, but who have no desire to destroy them; and, ultimately, end up embracing society's institutions and rules.

As intriguing a subject as I find this to be, it is a small digression and not the focus of this paper.

So, how does the foregoing apply to movement? Much of my task as a teacher is to give the students the technical background while at the same time keeping alive within their consciousness that movement is not divorced from the evocative moments of life. But rather it is a reflection – heightened and distilled – yet, nevertheless, a reflection of life. And in pursuit of this goal, if the teacher does not urge honest exploration, then the aspiring actor/dancer is shortchanged, accepting and practicing sloppy, mediocre craftsmanship; and, therein, ultimately depriving the audience of the evocative experience.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of theater/dance is its ephemeral quality. Because of its fleeting nature, once it is performed, it is gone. The only way that an audience can recapture the performance is through memory.

The other arts: poetry, painting, sculpture, the novel and film are recorded for posterity. One can return to them time and time again and the artist's efforts and result remains unchanged. "The only thing that changes is your and my growing perceptions and insights, and as such, the understanding of a work of art." (1c) Having said that, it is true that drama, traditionally speaking, starts with a scripted play. One starts with the words, and when all is said and done, the words of the script is all that is left for posterity.

At this point, I offer a definition of theater: There must be a live performance before an audience. Theater does not exist on the printed page or in the rehearsal process, as exciting as that process is. Rather, there must be a live performance before an audience for theater to occur.

(1c) Professor James J. Fiderlick, Drake Theater.

One of the things that makes theater unique among the arts is its dynamic variables. Not only is it the ephemeral art. But one can see the same production with the same performers many times, but never see two performances that are alike because of drama/dance's dynamic variables in performance: the live flesh and blood performers before an audience. As it is impossible for a live performance to be identically repeated, so it is with audience response. Audiences change from night to night, responding, perhaps, quite differently than the audience from the night before, which has a bearing on the performers.

An audience that gathers to see a play or dance concert is composed of individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds. But when the house lights go down and the stage lights come up on the action, the individuals in the audience become a collective social unit, responding collectively. This electric, communal ensemble exchange between performers and audience constitutes the true power of theater.

So, how to guide the student actor/dancer to those moving, evocative moments? The task for the teacher, from my perspective, is not only to teach technique, but it is to prick the students' consciousness; arouse their imagination, as they continue to evolve in achieving the highest they can in this exciting craft that challenges them by its evocative and its ephemeral nature. I'm exhilarated to have been a force in their training and awed by their achievements of those wonderful moments.

My approach to teaching movement for the actor or dancer is based on ideokinesis. It is a tool for achieving neuromuscular recoordination in the establishment of better mechanical balance of the skeletal structure. To achieve clarity and fluency of movement in the ever-growing physical demands placed upon the body in choreography, the body undergoes a strenuous regimen of exercise. Ideokinesis does by no means relieve the person of that necessary exertion, but produces the desired result absent tenseness.

“Ideokinesis, as attained through imagined movement, relies on the principle that movement patterns are formed and stored in the central nervous system. Experimental evidence shows that concentration on visualizing a movement without trying to perform it voluntarily results in statistically significant changes in body

relationships...Acceptance of the principle stated by Gray and Quain as a philosophy of teaching movement would shift the emphasis from indiscriminate and persistent admonitions about muscle tightening toward a more meaningful attempt to achieve a concept of the desired skeletal movement pattern. In the dance, emphasis is all too often placed on tightening specific muscles, and some dance teachers and dancers consider it a weakness if there is not continuous effort to hold muscles...As Hellebrandt noted, 'Every volitional movement is composed of two parts, that which is willed or cortically controlled, and that which is evoked spontaneously in association with the purposive act and cannot be introspected.'

“This statement of principle implies that a desired movement is initiated in the thinking center of the brain and that its successful performance is a function of activity in the nervous system below the thinking level. The coordination of muscle action to produce a desired movement and to stabilize the skeletal structure during the process is patterned in the central nervous system in response to ideation and a continuous stream of impulses from the various sense organs of the body. The desirable result of using this method is more effective and efficient movement patterns.” (2)

In the theory part of my paper, I draw heavily upon the work of Lulu E. Sweigard, Ph.D. She was a pioneer in the field of anatomy/physiology and study of motion especially as it applied to sports and dance. I had the good fortune of studying with two of her disciples: Betty Jones and Libby Nye of the Jose Limon Dance Company. Over the years of my teaching, I have expanded upon the images presented in Dr. Sweigard's many suggestions that make ideokinesis a viable and effective method in teaching movement for the actor and dancer.

II. THE CLASSROOM

It is the first day of fall classes at Drake University. In the Harmon Fine Arts Center, at 8:30 a.m., Room BO44 is filled to capacity with students. Striding into the

(2) Lulu E. Sweigard, “Human Movement Potential/Its Ideokinetic Facilitation,” p. 146.

center of the room, I ask, “Is this Movement I?” The students nod yes. “Good,” I say, “I’ve come to the right place. Take me to your leader.” This statement is met with a mixture of blank stares and some chuckling. “Ladies and gentlemen,” I say, breaking into a smile, “you’re looking at her. Welcome. My name is Sally Garfield; I am your teacher. This is going to be an exciting semester, and you have the opportunity to soar to the moon and back, moving with ease and growing skill in the command of your body in motion that you’ve never imagined in you wildest dreams. How? By giving yourself to the process, trusting in it, and me.”

I introduce my student demonstrator and begin articulating concepts. “Before we actually start moving, I want you to just listen. What I’m about to tell you, you will hear reiterated in many different ways throughout the semester. As you master your body posture and language via these concepts, you will become acquainted with and enhance you appreciation for your body, a physiological marvel of design.”

SPINE AS LIFELINE

“I want you to think of the SPINE as a lifeline. Aided by muscles and ligaments, it resists gravity and keeps us upright.” I ask the demonstrator to turn profile to the class, and I run my finger lightly down her cervical vertebrae and the thoracic vertebrae, through the lumbar vertebrae, releasing my touch to just above her sacral table that leads to the coccyx; then reconnect, passing along her sciatic nerve that runs down the center of the gluteus, down the back of the thigh and the back of the knee and end my path’s tracing at the back of her heel and around to her toes.

“Think of energy running down the line I’ve traced, and when we are optimally aligned, the energy will pass out between the second and third toes into infinity.”

I point out that the spine is composed of a series of curves: the first at the back of the neck (cervical vertebrae); the second and greatest at the waist (lumbar area); the third, at the back of the knee. I ask the demonstrator to tilt her pelvis to the back, which causes a “shortening” in the lumbar area.

“When one is aligned in this manner, a disruption occurs in optimal alignment and energy flow, causing muscles to compensate, overextending themselves to support the spine. The good news is that this condition is not terminal. There are exercises to correct

this, exercises to strengthen the abdominals, and ones to lengthen the spine, allowing the muscles to work in the most efficient manner. Why is this important? First, because, among other things, we do not want to court injury to the body as it is called upon to do complex maneuvering. Second, optimal alignment is essential, so that when you DEVIATE from it, you do so out of CHOICE. In aligning the lumbar area, while standing and still, or when doing plies or jumps, think of your pelvis as a bowl filled almost to the top with water. But if you arch the spine or tighten the gluteus maximus, the pelvis tips and the precious water spills. So let the pelvis and gluteus hang rather than tightening it. Think of the bottom of the bowl pointing to the South Pole; obviously you'll have to adjust the tilt of the earth's axis as we know it."

EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL STIMULI

"The spine responds to all sorts of physical and emotional stimuli. Examples: When we are sad, depressed, grief-stricken, blue—the spine succumbs to gravity. On the other hand, when we experience joy or laughter, like a belly laugh, the spine arches and lifts the sternum, or the spine rounds as we double over. Regarding the last example, as contradictory as it may seem, the spine LENGTHENS in its curved position, rather than collapses.

"When we are threatened, ready to protect ourselves, or our children the spine goes into a different mode. Depending upon the circumstances, it can act like a TAUT COIL, or it LEANS, TILTING FORWARD. OUR WEIGHT SHIFTS TO THE BALLS OF THE FEET. As prey or predator, our body through neuromuscular preparation readies for attack, flight, or retreat."

BREATH

I then ask the class to point to their lungs. Invariably, all point to the front of the chest. "Let me help you with another liberating thought that will empower you. Your lungs are at your upper back. And from now on, I want you to hone in on the lungs' placement in the body, and breathe from your back. It is amazing how that will free you, opening up the chest and upper back area. And the next time you have a physical exam, you can be proud, knowing why the doctor listens to your chest when checking your

heart, and why he listens to your back when checking your lungs.”

The class is attentive, like children who are delighted by a newfound discovery. Now, I'd have to be a liar, liar with my pants on fire if I represented that all the students are engaged. There are always a few who through their body language of fidgeting or rolling of eyes appear bored or disinterested, as if there's nothing new to be experienced under the sun.

(After a few class meetings, I ask the students to pair up and trace the spine energy on each other as I did with the demonstrator at our first class meeting. I believe the laying-on-hands experience, right at the start, has a salutary effect that puts the students in the center of the learning process.)

“Now, speaking of breath, I want you to think of another way of viewing breath, especially when in a sitting position,” All sit in a cross-legged fashion on the floor, backs slumped, as instructed, imitating the class demonstrator. “I want you to rock back and forth on your ischials.”

They look at me in a nonplused manner. “Ladies and gentlemen, translated into the native vernacular, that's your butt bones, but as of today, you'll also know them by their anatomical name – ischial tuberosities.”

The class, laughing, rocks from side to side. “Now, as you straighten the spine from its base rather than from the upper back, I want you to think of inhaling and exhaling from the base of the spine. Our tailbone, between the ischials, in a very real sense, connects us to the earth. And from now on, think of this dance floor not as battleship linoleum, but as the earth.”

After experimenting, struggling to bring their spines to a barely upright, erect position, I tell them that by mid-semester, they will have mastered that skill. Then I ask the students to stand, and to close their eyes. “Now, feel your feet next to the earth. In a standing position, think of your feet as the physically-felt connectors to the earth. And it is good to recognize that the earth is a compatible and supportive base in our energy exchange with it, and that each one of you always carries that exchange in your consciousness. And now, I want you to think about and feel your inhalation and

exhalation of breath centered in the lower back.

“Breath is the first thing we do upon entering the physical reality, energizing the spine. The last thing we do, when leaving this physical reality, is to release our final breath. Our breath and our exchange of energy from the earth and to the earth, physically felt through the feet, strengthen and ground us.” After about twenty seconds, I say, “Now, open your eyes.”

There is a hushed stillness and a centeredness felt throughout the class. All agitation and nervous energy is absent, accomplished by such a simple action that was initiated by suggestion, awakening the imagination, letting the impulses flow, unimpeded by tense muscles, as the neuro-musculo-skeletal structure does its work. I could have instructed, for example, “Stand quietly.” I assure you this is never as effective; nothing of value is learned that the student can call upon time and again, once he/she has experienced those moment of fruition made possible by suggestion.

INFINITY LINES

“There are two other concepts that I want to leave with you today and with which you will be familiar long before the end of the semester. They will aid you in daily living, as well as in your study to be an actor or dancer.

“The first is INFINITY LINES.” I tell them to go to the barre and face it, resting their hands lightly on the barre and to assume a releve position (the heels released and raised from the earth, with their weight centered over the balls of the feet.) “I want you to imagine two lines: one runs across your shoulders; the other runs from the base of the spine to the top of the head. Now, imagine and feel these lines ending where your body mass ends. Now, imagine, feeling these lines extend beyond the shoulder area out into infinity. Do the same with the line running vertically from the base of the spine and out the top of the crown of the head into infinity.”

As they respond to the suggestion, I can see their necks lengthen and their shoulders relax and broaden. “By just imagining this happening, you are teaching your body to respond on a vaster and more alive scale with the result that the space does not swallow you. As we continue our work this semester, keep this idea in your consciousness. By doing so, you release the tenseness of holding your muscles, and your

movement will be freer and more fluid.”

As they experience this idea of “infinity” in posture, I throw out another idea. “How are the stars out there?”

“The stars?” a student asks.

“Yeah, the stars. I was raised on a farm and at night when we’d look skyward, the stars dazzled us by their brilliance without the interference of city lights to dilute the view. And correct me, if I’m wrong, I’m a little rusty on the history of science, but I believe it was in the 1940’s, perhaps earlier, when astronomers and physicists discovered that the stars and human beings have much in common. That the compositional elements of the stars and humans are the same: carbon, nitrogen, oxygen as well as other elements. Wow! How about that?”

“If you’re at all like me, hundreds of thoughts race hither and yon in the brain. But when that scientific discovery crosses my mind—that stars and humans are related—it always pauses me, and my fragmented, spinning thoughts disappear as I let myself be carried into infinity. And who said, for crying out loud, there’s nothing new under the sun? So, as you keep in your consciousness the infinity lines and bring it to your work, think of the stars and direct your energy into infinity. Don’t worry! There’ll be plenty of times when we get downright finite.”

Throughout the semester, I divide the class into sections of doers and observers, then change off, so that all may see and experience this manifestation that liberates the body from a tenseness and holding that stifles and impedes the flow of movement. They are amazed in feeling a difference while “doing” it, that control and command of body balance is gained, and, that as observers, they can see a perceptible difference when their fellow-colleagues work from the finite to the infinity lines. For a few, in the beginning, the “doing” soon becomes second nature.

Throughout the semester the students hear from me: “Whoops! You’ve cut off your energy where the top of your head ends. I know you’re alive because you’re vertical, but otherwise you could have fooled me. THINK INFINITY LINES. LET THEM RUN OUT ACROSS AND BEYOND THE ENDS OF YOUR SHOULDERS, UP AND OUT BEYOND THE TOP OF THE HEAD, AND WITH YOUR HANDS REACH FOR

SOMETHING THAT IS OUT OF REACH.” Reminding them of this power energizes their vitality.

“Thinking in these terms prevents you from being swallowed up by the space and allows you to be a carver of space.”

OPPOSITION

“The last concept I’ll introduce you to, for today, regards OPPOSITION. In all our physical efforts, the energy driving the spine and bones are our muscles which operate or work in opposition. As you feel your energy through the feet connected to the earth, at the same time, feel the energy running up the spine and out the top of the head, stretching us up, rising against gravity. Here, there are two forces working in opposition that stabilize us.

“Energy in motion always works in opposition. If it weren’t for this opposition, we would be ungrounded. One can think of opposition on many levels and dimensions. I think of human beings in terms of energy forces. I remind myself that energy within my own body reaches beyond the crown of my head and across my shoulders that awakens me to an infinity energy on all imaginable levels, and, yet, I feel and am confident in my grounding to the earth. Further, as my imagination soars, I carry that idea into another realm: That energy, always working in opposition, symbolizes the polarity of our existence wherein lies a marvelous, wonderful, miraculous paradox.

“Doris Humphrey, who is the originator of one of the great American dance techniques, built her technique on opposing forces: the body rising against gravity; suspended through breath, and precariously off-balance, returns to the earth by the force of gravity before rebounding to the next movement. Simply put it’s based on a pattern of falls, recovery, suspension; all guided by breath and a rhythm that has the inherent sense of a rising and falling swing. Technically and choreographically she thought of these opposing energies metaphorically as a manifestation of man’s struggle between life’s Dionysian and Apollonian forces. At the intermediate-advanced level, you will study her technique that is now known as Limon technique.”

A student asks what I mean by the Dionysian and Apollonian forces. I’m happy for the student’s curiosity and her feeling comfortable enough to ask the question.

“Well, Dionysus and Apollo were gods from Greek mythology. And though gods, they had this habit of being anthropomorphic. Actually, they couldn’t help it. It was their nature, which meant they exhibited human-like qualities: the negative as well as the positive. Dionysus, the god of wine, symbolizes fertility, spontaneity, and cruelty. He also, in my mind, represents the sensual, passionate, and the chaotic dynamics that run in the subterranean of human existence. And this applies not just to the ancient Greeks but to contemporary times.

“I believe Freud was on to something in his understanding that the struggle of Oedipus, written 2,500 years ago, still holds dread and fascination for us today.” (3) I ask, “Are you all familiar with that story or play?” Only one raises his hand.

“Well, what Oedipus, the great king of Thebes, unwittingly did was to commit two heinous crimes: patricide and incest. He unwittingly killed his father and married his own mother. From the womb which he had emerged, he sired four children. During the play, he unravels his true identity. And even though the gods had pre-determined his fate as generational punishment for a sin committed by his father that offended the gods, nevertheless, Oedipus takes responsibility for his own deeds. His shame is so profound that he demands self-retribution, rendering himself blind, stabbing out his eyes. And he transcends this unthinkable suffering with great dignity.

“I suppose on a subliminal level, the audience witnessing these horrible events, may feel, ‘There but for the grace of gods, go I.’ As you read the great dramatic literature, you’ll find that fear, dread and trembling extend to modern plays. If you haven’t already, read Peter Shaffer’s “Equus.” The situation in that play is different from Oedipus’, but there are parallels. The protagonist, Allan, is plagued by fears and shame. In his disturbed state; feelings of unworthiness and fear, he doesn’t, like Oedipus, pluck out his own eyes. Instead, he stabs the eyes of his beloved horses, blinding them.

“Back to Dionysus and Apollo. For the theater majors in the class, you’ll learn in theater history that theater is celebrated in honor Dionysus. I think we can easily see why, since central to drama is conflict.

“At the other end of the spectrum is Apollo, the god of the arts, reason, balance, and harmony, and from Doris Humphrey’s viewpoint, balance and harmony are virtues that the human spirit seeks. I think that what she was saying is that given the human condition, we are in a constant psychological and emotional struggle between the gravity forces of Dionysus and those of Apollo, as revealed by her technique and choreography. And judging by dramatic literature, there’s a long history of that struggle. Well, in her technique and choreography, this struggle is poignantly evident. Aren’t you glad she was born? Aren’t you glad Sophocles and Peter Shaffer were born? And Bach and Peter Gabriel?” A light comes into their eyes at the mention of Peter Gabriel.

“Now, you’ve heard a lot today about releasing tenseness, but I don’t want you to confuse tenseness with tension. There is a vast difference between tenseness – a no-no – and tension in varying degrees. Tension is necessary and desirable in the sense of oppositional forces; it is a necessary ingredient in drama. As you gain command of technique you will discern the difference.

I say a few words about the body joints, which I refer to as hinges because it is something concrete to which all can relate. We identify certain hinges: wrist, elbow, neck and waist (vertebrae), shoulder, hip, ankle. Each hinge has a range of movement, from large to small, depending on where it is in the body. I talk about the joint of the hip as a hinge connected to the “scissor” concept that is necessary to grasp as it relates to tendus and degages.

“When we cut cloth with scissors, we don’t chew at the cloth. Rather, we cut with a quick, sharp action in guiding the scissors. Now, think of your hip hinge as if it were the hinge on a pair of scissors that holds the blades in place. Think of the open blade as your leg in motion, extending to an open position away from the support leg, which is the stabilizing blade. As you bring the extended leg back to the support, think of it as the scissor blade that quickly and sharply cuts down on the cloth.”

I ask my assistant to demonstrate followed by the class imitating her action. Again, because the imagery is concrete, it is far more effective in teaching this aspect of technique. Far better than instructing the students to extend the leg and bring the leg back home.

A word about the students' background: about 97% enrolled in the movement/dance part of their theater curriculum have never had a movement class in their lives. Therefore, I think that concrete imagery facilitates their learning of body placement and moving with clarity.

I point out that all movement technique, no matter what technique we're talking about, emanates from exactly three things: 1) the demi-plie, which is a half-bend of the knees, the heels still in contact with the earth; 2) a tendu, which is a stretched leg away from the support leg to either the front, side or back of the spine; and finally 3) a releve, which was described earlier.

After demonstrating a port de bras, which is the carriage of the arm forward, down, recovering vertically to continue to reach behind the spine, coming to a resolve where the movement originated, and all done with maximum range, the class imitates this action at the barre.

Although imitating the movement, their arms wander in space, undirected.

"Before we repeat this action, I want you to think that movement has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It must start from somewhere and go to somewhere, even if, let's say, the artist's intent is to go nowhere, as exemplified in Samuel Becket's classic play "Waiting for Godot" that reveals the poignant, existential absurdity of the characters' condition and dilemma.

"Now, even though the characters' struggle goes nowhere, the actors must still carve out within the space the act of going nowhere. With a port de bras, we are carving out the space in a definite, purposeful way. I want you to look closely again at the demonstrator's port de bras, and look how the arm leads the torso out and down, then sweeps forward, bringing the spine to a vertical position, with the arm above the head. We're going to do only that part of the port de bras.

"But before we do, I want you to imagine that you are holding a flower in the port de bras hand. Keep your eyes on the flower as the arm carries your torso and head down to the earth. Let's humanize this port de bras through your focus to this lovely flower." They repeat the action, and I assure them that by semester's end they will execute a port de bras as if they owned it.

I check my watch. There are ten minutes remaining of the class period. (Class period: 1'20")

“Ladies and gentlemen, I want to leave you with yet another thought. If, before you stepped into this class, you had the inclination to think of movement as “routines”, I hope you’ll start to think of movement as occupying a different dimension, one that reveals the human spirit. Certainly, movement as routines has a valid place in our lives. It is fun to watch the skilled execution of cheerleaders’ routines, some of which are breathtaking. But as you assimilate this class material, we will explore more and more what propels us to move in theater and dance that goes beyond “routines” to the evocative.

“Paraphrasing a theater historian, Milly Barranger, who makes the writing of history like a wonderful story, “This business of theater and drama started a long, long time ago, traced back to ritual dance performed by masked dancers during fertility rites and ceremonies calling to the gods for success in war, hunting and farming. Early societies acted out patterns of life, death and rebirth associated with the welfare of the village.’ And we’re still doing it today, if not for the welfare of the village as in ancient times. Yet, ‘theater to this day imitates these enactments because plays and film are largely imitations of living, dying, and surviving. They enact situations of joy and sorrow, struggle and conquest; they mirror our questions and tentative answers about life.’ (4)

“And so the beat goes on. Pretty exciting stuff to be joined in such an endeavor.” I turn and thank the demonstrator, and then the class. “Now, stay cool; see you next time.”

(4) Milly S. Barranger, “Understanding Plays,” p. 56

IMPROVISTATION

Jumping over the twice a week classes in technique, that as they continue place rigorous and increasing demands on the body. I come to improvisations that I usually start midway in the semester. I wait that long for one reason: trust. My classes consist of theater majors as well as a cross-section of students majoring in other fields of endeavor. Especially at the beginning level, I welcome that healthy mix. By mid-semester the students have become familiar with my modus operandi and most have gotten to know one another. The discoveries made in some improvisational material are by their nature self-revelatory and a certain amount of exposure goes with the territory. The teacher must be sensitive to the student's vulnerability and never cross boundaries that would transgress the emotional or psychological welfare of the student.

In improvisations there must be an objective in mind. Without an objective, we have a free-for-all, and since I don't believe in, nor recommend, free-for-alls, having observed them, and having participated in them at workshops, I'll list the improvisational objectives I've used, and why. That will be followed by description, in detail, of two exercises; student response and my commentary.

The asterisk indicates that a person other than myself constructed the improv. Where I can, I will give that person's name.

IMPROV

PURPOSE

1. creative rest:
 - a) skeletal alignment correctives through physical placement and imagery.* (Lulu Sweigard; illustration contained in Bibliography.)
 - b) visualization to evoke imagery, sensory and sound via creative rest techniques.
2. mass movement: to develop sensitivity to ensemble energy
3. rhythm ring: to develop ensemble rhythm.* Alan Langdon, Actors Space, NYC
4. animal impersonations: to hone observation skills.
5. random pairing of blindfolded students, seated in the dark; facing one another; one examining the other's face: to heighten tactile sensitivity and cognition.

6. mirroring: to sensitize person working in a duo situation & to develop concentration.*
7. energy ring: sensitizing one's own energy and building commitment to the group energy focus.
8. natural gesture: group composed; involves functional, social as well as gesture and stance emanating from the emotional/psychological state.
9. stylized, abstract gesture: starting with the "natural" human gesture; transforming it to the abstract, stylized gesture.
10. body language reflecting age and socio-economic class: to explore the "honesty" of body language according to a given situation; avoiding stereotypes.
11. runs/contact/falls/lifts with sound: to explore dramatic shifts of weight in constant motion, without pre-planning by the students. Done in groups of two to five students. Requires an intermediate technical skill.
12. singing ring: to explore the strengths of vulnerability.* Alan Langdon, Actors Space, NYC
13. group conversation without words: to explore succinct, effective body language in communicating, without falling into parody or "cute".
14. solo and group dynamic study: to explore the three dynamics of movement in time & space: percussive, swing, sustained.
15. Red Rover, Red Rover: one opposed to the group in a "win" situation; designed from the children's game.* Alan Langdon, Actors Space, NYC
16. Back to back, spine and shoulder; arm communication: done in pairs, seated back to back, spines touching; to develop body communication as to mood, conflict, etc. without words or advantage of eye and facial contact.

It's a little before mid-semester in Room BO44.

"Before beginning with exercises and improvisation," I say to the students who sit on the floor, "let's think for a few minutes about our physical reality. See if you can help me out. First, let me ask why you or I move, and what might be the situation?"

RESPONSES: “to go to the refrigerator.”

Sally: “Good, I can certainly relate.”

Stud: “to run to class or to work where I’m consistently late.”

Sally: “That bad, huh?”

Stud: “to go to the bar when I can’t stand to write another paper or take another test.”

Stud: “to go to bed.”

Stud: “to pet my dog.”

Stud: “to get in my car and set out for home.”

Stud: “to phone my family.”

Stud: “to visit my friends down the hall.”

“Okay. I need some more help. I’m trying to figure out the sequence of the neuro-muscular path that initiates movement.” Everyone is silent. “Well, that’s a little obtuse. Check this out: in all of your examples, which came first—the action or the impulse?” The students say “impulse.”

“That’s great. You’re right, and it does make sense, doesn’t it? Doesn’t it usually occur this way: first is the impulse, followed by action, followed by speech? Or have I got it wrong?”

Jim responds: “I’ll go along with the impulse first, but not necessarily action followed by speech.”

“Okay, let’s test that out. I’m going to walk with my back to you over to the corner of the room. Let’s say I’m walking down a busy street. When I’m about half or three-quarters to the corner of the room, Jim, holler my name. But before you do, everybody stand, and, Jim, you mix in the crowd.” When I’m halfway, he shouts my name. I turn and say, “Jim, great to see you. Haven’t seen you in years,” and at the same time I start for him, and all the class laughs, including Jim.

“Why did you laugh?” I ask.

“Because you spoke his name, but you didn’t pause to see where he was in the crowd before plowing ahead.”

“Oh,” I say, “I get it: the action of the body pause. First, the impulse to turn, the action of the pause, followed by speech. I’ll bet that if you do what I just did, and do it consistently in rehearsal, you’ll hear the director say: ‘Look first, identify where he is, before you “plow” into the dialogue.’ Is this a thing the director subjectively imposes

upon the scene? No. He recognizes the natural process has been screwified.

“Okay, fair enough. What do comedians who’ve made fun of President Nixon center on?” Silence. “Don’t we laugh, because the former president appears to be disconnected from the normal neuro-muscular process when he speaks without a scripted speech? The comedians portrayed him as disconnected; that his speech and gestures appear to have preceded the “impulse,” and he’s not in synch. Even his expression of emotions seems to be bassackwards, that is, his verbalization, followed by his gestures appear to have preceded the emotional impulse, making him appear uncomfortable and unspontaneous. The next time you see a documentary of him, or a newsreel, observe this phenomenon.

(1a*) “Now, I’m going to take you to a creative rest position. The purpose is to let the neuro-musculature do its work without effort, lengthening the spine, widening and dropping the shoulders, and widening the pelvic region.” I instruct the students to separate and stretch out on their backs on the floor. I explain to them what we are going to do before the actual exercise takes place. They are asked to close their eyes, breathe deeply and hold the breath, then slowly exhale, hissing out the air. The hissing out is an effective way of releasing all the breath. After a three to four second pause, they are instructed to breath in again, hold the breath, then release. I then slowly count backwards from ten to one, suggesting that with each count their bodies will relax, but that their minds will remain alert, but undisturbed by external distractions. Any unexpected sounds will serve to deepen their state of relaxation. As they exhale, they will visualize and feel the rib cage soften, the shoulders open wide and drop. To help them visualize AND feel the spine lengthen, I tell them little men, with lead boots, are slowly walking down the inside of their spines, starting at the cervical vertebrae, down to the coccyx. I accompany their visualization with making sounds as the little men step from vertebra to vertebra.

This process usually takes ten minutes. At other class periods, I work on their necks, shoulders, and pelvis via imagery, letting the imagery, rather than tense exertion, do the work. If done on a regular basis, within four weeks I can see and the students can feel a difference in their alignment. This exercise can be practiced at home, outside the movement studio, and repeated on a daily basis.

The following exercise/improvs, as constructed, are done only once in exploring their purpose

(2) Mass movement: to develop sensitivity to ensemble energy and the power of focus. I divide the class into two groups. I announce the objective: packed closely together, shoulders touching, group formed into a wedge with a “leader” at the front. The leader is to guide the entire ensemble, traveling from upstage right to downstage left. They will travel slowly as the path is a dangerous one, and the leader must get all to their destination. (No instructions are given as to focus.) The leader may not start them on their path UNTIL he/she feels all of the participants’ energy is focused. No words may be exchanged.

While one group “does”, the other sits and observes.

I give to each one in the first group a small piece of paper on which instructions are written that do not differ from what I announced. But to two persons, on the outside of the wedge and next to the leader, I write: throughout the entire exercise keep your focus close in on the leader’s neck.

The leader quickly starts the group on their path. Within less than two minutes the first group has completed the exercise. (An important note: I selected the leaders for the two groups, based on each one’s strong commitment and determination in their class work from the start of the semester, as well as their maturity.)

The next group gathers at upstage right. To each participant, I hand a piece of paper, stating what I’ve previously announced. But to three individuals, two of which are on either side of the leader, AND to a person in the middle of the wedge-pack, their pieces of paper read: When you are a third of the way, offer resistance by closing down your energy; refuse to move. It is up to the leader and the rest of the group through their energy to bring you back into the group. If you feel that happening, then proceed. If you don’t feel it occur, then remain obstinate. None of the participants is aware of what has been given to the others in way of instruction. ONE OTHER THING: all are instructed, in writing, to direct their focus into the distance.

Dave, the leader and an older student, doesn’t start for about 30 seconds, seemingly garnering his energy as well as waiting for the group to “settle in.” As the

exercise gets underway, the leader of the group has trouble about halfway in his path of moving the ensemble. He and the ensemble come to a halt. I can see him concentrating, determined and patient, as he tries to galvanize the ensemble's energy. He and the others keep their focus into the distance, as instructed. It takes him ten minutes to successfully guide his group to their destination.

I then ask this group to repeat the exercise. All are told, in private, to keep their focus more finite, like within a few inches in front of them. The former stipulations apply to the three instructed to obstruct the energy flow.

Whichever group is observing, they are spellbound as they witness what occurs. At the completion of the second round for group two, we all then sit down. "I have to say that I have nothing other than respect for both groups' commitment to the exercise. Now, we're going to talk about what you learned or discovered in doing this exercise. We'll start with the first group participants."

Shelly: (leader of the group) I discovered I'm not a leader.

Sally: Why do you say that and how do you know?

Shelly: Because I felt very uncomfortable being responsible for leading the group.

Sally: That's interesting. So, leaders do not experience discomfort?

Shelly: I hope not like I was experiencing.

Sally: Is it fair to say that your discovery was simply one about discomfort rather than a definitive statement about your leadership?

Shelly: Possibly, but I'd rather not be the leader.

Sally: If you're comfortable not being the leader, I'd say that's a valuable discovery.

Observer's comments:

#1: I noticed that Shelly's focus seemed scattered. Now, hearing about her feelings probably explains the fragmented focus.

#2: What really got me was the focus of the two next to her and slightly upstage of her.

#3: Yeah, that was distracting to me. I wondered if there was something crawling on Shelly's neck that she wasn't aware of.

#4: I found myself drawn to their focus rather than to the group as a whole.

#5: It created a tension that I wasn't quite sure was meant to be there. I wanted to ask Shelly if she was aware that the two were looking at her neck, almost like examining her neck?

Shelly: Actually, I wasn't aware of it. I just wanted to get the group across the floor as quickly as possible.

Brett: (one of the participants in Shelly's group). I was very aware of the two's focus. They were right in front of me and I thought why in the hell are they so fixated on her neck?

Sally: I am the culprit. They were given instruction to do so.

Marlene: (one of those focused on Shelly's neck) My experience was, like where my focus was, took me away from the ensemble effort. At first I found it funny, then kind of frustrating.

Karen: (the other one instructed to focus on Shelly's neck) Actually, I kind of got into it. It gave me a surreal feeling, you know, moving ahead, but focused on her neck.

Sally: So, are most of you saying focus is important in this particular exercise?

Tom: Very much so, especially when you compare the focus of the second group. When you asked them to repeat the exercise, their focus changed.

Sally: Good observation. What did that do for you?

Tom: Changing the group focus, totally changed the mood and purpose of their moving. I much preferred the first focus.

Sally: Let's see what the 2nd group's experience was and if the different focus changes affected them as it did Tom and others. I turn to Dave and his group.

Dave: It took me a little while to feel the energy of the group. I began by generating in a conscious way my own energy. When I felt my own energy on all eight cylinders, I started moving. Then about halfway, I felt a resistance. Not just like the energy dropped out by the two people slightly in back of me, but that it was an active resistance. I didn't know whether it was the two just in back of me or the whole group. It threw me at first; then I remembered what the objective was and that the path you said was dangerous, and I felt a tremendous burden to see that we all reached our destination. So I started really concentrating and visualizing us again in motion.

Finally we got going. And I felt great relief and really happy that we'd made it to the end.

Then when you asked us to repeat the pattern but with a close-in focus, the exercise was much harder to do for me. I felt less inner strength to continue, and found myself distracted from the goal. It was not as rewarding an experience. I don't know how the others felt, but that was my experience.

Jessica: (one of the resisters) I felt the same way as Dave about the focus change. When the focus was out into the distance, I felt that we were on a stellar journey. As to my being one of the resistant energies, I didn't know who, if anyone else, was a part of this resistance, so I was totally in the dark. But Angela, next to me, shut down her energy too, I think shortly after I had. And I didn't know whether she was picking that up from me or what. The tension and suspense of the exercise was really cool.

Because this was such an intense, powerful experience, plus knowing that I had affected Dave's energy, I did, though, want Dave to convince me with his energy determination, so we could continue the journey.

Observers:

Tom: I have to agree that just watching it grabbed me. My attention didn't waver during their first trip down the path. By comparison, the second trip with the focus change to closer in almost made it mundane.

Shelly: It didn't make it mundane for me, just different. Were there only two assigned resisters?

Brett: No, I was assigned to resist, and it was really easy to do with Jessica and Angela. Those are two strong chicks, and I could feel their energy change, although I didn't know they were instructed to do it, but they were very effective.

Describing in detail the above two examples gives the flavor and the idea of the process. The improvs and exercises that were most effective, having a profound affect on most, not all, of the students were the ones that evoked an emotional/psychological response:

1b. Creative rest: visualization to evoke imagery, sensory heightening, and sounds.

This exercise was popular and often requested.

2. Mass Movement

4. Animal Impersonations with sound.

Anyone passing by BO44 on the day this improv took place might have thought they were in the midst of an animal shelter or a zoo, hearing dogs howl, roosters crow, cats hiss as their energy boiled over into a vicious cat fight; monkey talk; and flicking-tongued snakes slithering across the earth.

(I will never forget Marlene who had, hands down, the movement of a snake. She was remarkable in her observation powers that extended to all of the semester's improvs and that she beautifully translated into movement. She was one of the more imaginative students in the two sections of Movement I. Where she was scared of the actual technique part of the class, she shined in the improv. She is or was a Theater major.)

And in that menagerie of movement and sound, another image stands strong in memory: the dogs (Jim, Jessica and Mark) treeing the squirrel, Stephen.

5. Random pairings of blindfolded students; one examining the other's face, heightening tactile and cognitive abilities.

7. Energy ring

8. Natural gesture

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10. *Singing ring (scary but emotionally revealing for the students, evoking tears.)

The study of technique needs to go hand-in-hand with improv exploration for the more knowledge and command the actor/dancer has over the human anatomy, the more precise and specific he/she can be in nuance in carving out the space, that one will have the power to execute, making CHOICES rather than falling victim to habitual habits of posture, or the amorphous, willy-nilly ungrounded image.

THEORY

Much of what follows are direct quotes from Lulu E. Sweigard, Ph.D. Since I have based my teaching on the scientific ideas of this pioneer in the field of movement, and since she can articulate the theory far better than I, her words will speak. It seems to me that directors, most of whom are woefully ignorant of the anatomy of the human body, would do well to read Sweigard's "Human Movement Potential." It is a must for those teaching movement for the actor and dance techniques.

Inspired by her work in ideokinesis has given birth to my suggestions to the students regarding: 1) infinity lines; 2) breath; 3) oppositional forces; 4) hinges (joints); 5) specificity in where movement emanates, both physiological and emotional; 6) dynamics and their subtleties in movement. The last two relate in particular to some of my designed improvisations for class work.

LULU SWEIGARD: Movement is a neuro-musculo-skeletal phenomenon. The method stressed is its neural aspects that secure and maintain neuromuscular efficiency. This differs significantly from the procedures generally employed in the private studio and in college in the teaching of posture, fitness and dance technique. Although the standard methods often produce the outward effects desired, they frequently build strain which can, in turn, lead to premature debilitation and actual loss of efficiency in movement.”(5)

Kinesis is motion, here defined as physical movement induced by stimulation of

(5) Lulu E. Sweigard, "Human Movement Potential," Preface

muscles and characterized by qualitative and quantitative positional changes of the skeletal parts.

Ideo, the idea, the sole stimulator in the process, is defined as a concept developed through empirical mental processes. The idea, the concept of movement, is the voluntary act and the sole voluntary component of all movement. Any further voluntary control only interferes with the process of movement and inhibits rather than promotes efficient performance. *Imagined movement* is best defined as an ideokinetic facilitator. (6)

The utility of ideokinesis as a teaching philosophy for the neuro-musculo-skeletal phenomenon of movement depends upon a knowledge of the universal laws of mechanics, the skeletal structure, and the principles of muscular and neurological function. (7)

The concept's premise rests on "concentration upon a picture involving movement results in responses in the neuromusculature as necessary to carry out specific movements with the least effort." Three factors are essential for eliciting the proper response from an image to create the conditions for appropriate movement response: 1) exact location of the movement, 2) the direction of the movement, and 3) the desire to move. This process is identified as the psychophysical or psychophysiological principle. Furthermore, at a creative rest position, the use of the *imagined movement*, the idea of movement occurring within one's body in a specific place and direction, but not being voluntarily performed has a positive effect on the learning process of new motor skills. (8)

We must therefore begin with the physical laws and principles of Mechanics. Mechanically, the human body is a living machine. It operates under the same physical laws and principles as inanimate structures. (9)

A machine is a device that converts energy into work to accomplish some purpose. To perform, the machine must receive energy from some outside source. It cannot create energy, nor can the amount of work it performs exceed the amount of

(6) Ibid., p.7

(7) Ibid., p.6

(8) Ibid., p.16

(9) Ibid., p.16

energy it receives. However instead of being 100 percent efficient, it is, however, not so, since all machines must overcome friction.

There are two simple machines: lever, the machine for movement of the human body, is one.

Pulley, wheel and axle, inclined plane, wedge, and screw. The pulley, wheel and axle are only modified levers, while the screw and wedge are modified inclined planes.

Energy is the capacity to do work. Energy stemming from the position of a body is called stored or *potential energy*; that resulting from motion is *kinetic energy*.

Force is the cause (a push or pull) which produces or changes acceleration of a body. The effects of force can be seen, felt, and measured; but force itself cannot be seen. Man's awareness of force within his body is derived, perhaps unconsciously, from the sensory impulses within muscles as they occur with movement. (Muscle is a "pull" engine; most manmade machines are "push" engines.)

Work is the product of a force acting through a given distance, always in the direction of the force. The agent that exerts the force which does the work in man is muscle.

Power is the rate at which a body or agent works.

Gravitation is the force of attraction that every particle of matter in the universe has for every other particle. Gravitation is a function solely of mass; it bears no relation to other qualities of a body such as temperature or molecular condition.

Gravity is the force of attraction between the earth and all bodies on or above its surface. Gravity's effect is strongest at the earth's surface. The force of gravity is capable of giving an object acceleration equal to 32.2 feet per second. ALL bodies fall with the same acceleration when the only force acting on them is gravity. On the other hand, when a man jumps or throws an object or when a spacecraft rises from its launch pad, gravity has to be overcome. Thus, that rate of acceleration needed by an object to cause it to rise must be greater than gravity's pull. Gravity holds man to earth. IT IS THE PRIMARY force to be considered in the study of alignment of the skeleton of the body in the upright position.

Weight It is gravitational attraction that gives us weight and a sense of which

way is down. (10)

HOW WEIGHT IS SUPPORTED

Whether the human body or in mechanical structures, weight is supported or held in place in one or a combination of three different ways:

1. by sitting or resting on something
2. by hanging from something
3. by being braced in place. (in the upright position vertebral bodies sit, ribs hang, the shoulder girdle both sits and hangs, and the sacrum is braced in place in the pelvis. (11)

A word about *tension*. It is often applied to a person or to a particular portion of his body, such as tense shoulders, tense neck. This means that many of his muscles are engaging in nonpurposive, incessant contraction. They are experiencing unnecessary strain, and the suffering person seldom knows how to reduce or eliminate that strain except by changing his body position and/or activity. This muscular tension may result from emotional strain, pressure of work, drive for accomplishment, anxiety, worry, or finally, false ideas about posture and movement, such as the “high chest” as a mark of “good posture.” (12)

We now come to a necessary inclusion as far as movement of the human body is concerned.

NEWTON’S THREE LAWS OF MOTION

These laws function in all terrestrial mechanics. They are the key to all motion, establishing the conditions for motion and equilibrium in man, machinery, and mechanical structures. (13)

NEWTON’S FIRST LAW

Every body persists in a state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line, unless it is compelled by some force to change that state. This is often called the law of inertia.

When man and his space ship are far enough from earth, inertia and gravity keep the space ship in orbit, but when the ship is propelled by rocket in a definite direction

(10) Ibid., p. 17

(11) Ibid., p. 20

(12) Ibid., p. 20

(13) Ibid. p, 20

toward the moon, etc. beyond the pull of gravity, it is inertia that enables the ship to travel in a straight line toward the moon.

NEWTON'S SECOND LAW

The rate of change of the momentum of a body is proportional to the force acting on it and is in the direction of the force. Here, momentum is defined as the product of mass and velocity.

The Third law can be seen in both the starting and stopping of running, where the force acting on the body is muscle contraction.

Before we get to Newton's Third law, a few words about muscles and their function.

The nervous system initiates movement and controls its patterning. It stimulates the muscle, the workhorse, into action to move the skeleton, the machine for movement. There can be no efficiency in movement, nor can there be realization of the full potential for movement unless all three components—nerves, muscles, and bones—perform with optimal facility. (14)

Muscle contraction applies the force to produce, retard, or prevent movement of the bony levers. In any movement, muscles work—some more, some less, some sooner, some later—each in the degree necessary to attain the particular goal. Thus, muscles cooperate not only to produce movement, but also to allow it, control its speed and force, guide its direction, stabilize the more central structures against outward-pulling (centrifugal) force, and even maintain equilibrium of the body as a whole as movement continually changes the distribution of weight. (15)

(Sally: Often, students do not feel the body's interconnectedness. For example, when moving the arm in a wide range of motion, with whatever force of dynamics intended by the choreographer, the student tends to work and think only from the shoulder joint, as if there were no muscles attached to that joint, thus diluting the evocative power of the movement. And, perhaps, leaving the audience feeling that they've witnessed amateur night. Especially, if this way of moving is consistent

(14) Ibid., p.1

(15) Ibid., p. 14

throughout the piece. The joint allows a range of motion, but the performer must feel and operate from the interconnectedness of that joint to its attached musculature.)

NEWTON'S THIRD LAW

Action (thrust) and reaction (counterthrust) are equal and opposite.

This law calls to minds the firing of rockets to life a space ship from its launch pad. Likewise when one turns on a garden hose suddenly the reaction of water shooting outward makes the hose try to move backward in one's hand. The recoil of a gun into one's shoulder when it's fired is another example of reaction or counterthrust.

Action and reaction are ever-present in man's activities. For example: In diving from a springboard; in jumping, running, or walking; and in all sports and dance. The downward thrust of the body weight in any position the body may assume is always met by counterthrust from the earth. In the standing position, at the level of any weight-supporting joint in the body, the thrust of weight above is met by counterthrust from below. The ability to keep the axis of thrust and counterthrust centered in weight-supporting joints is the secret of efficient posture and movement, attained only through efficient habits of neuromuscular coordination. (16)

FACTORS INTERFERING WITH FUNCTIONS OF THE SPINAL COLUMN

There are three factors, evident in varying degree in the movement of practically all individuals, which interfere with the primary function of the spinal column, weight support, and with its secondary function, movement. These are:

- 1) movement in the spine which should be accomplished logically by movement in other joints, especially the femoral (hip);
- 2) reduction in flexibility of the ribs by repeatedly and forcibly lifting and holding them high, usually in response to a number of false ideas about "good" posture;
- 3) lack of free movement of the shoulder girdle, usually resulting from tense muscles in this area and in the neck. (SALLY: for these reasons, I use the INFINITY LINES concept.)

(16) Ibid., p. 21

These three factors interfere with the spine's

- 1) efficient alignment
- 2) flexibility
- 3) efficient reaction to the centrifugal force of any large movement of the upper and lower extremities
- 4) ability to tie together patterns of movement of the arms and legs
- 5) ability to focus reaction to all bodily movement in the bodies of the vertebrae and their intervertebral discs without undue muscular and ligamentous strain.

All movements of the various parts of the body are interdependent and interrelated and the degree of efficiency with which each movement is performed is in direct relation to the efficiency with which the spinal column performs its PRIMARY function, that of weight support. WHEN the spinal column contributes to range of movement, for example, in lateral bending of the trunk, concentration on lateral bending of the central axis of the trunk (rather than on movement at the surface of the body) invariably results in a greater range and a more efficient distribution of the movement of the spinal column. (17)

Here, I stop in the THEORY section of the project. For those interested in learning more about the neuromusculature of the human body, I refer you to Sweigard's book. It holds information, stated clearly and precisely, that can enlighten and instruct teachers and students.

**APPROACHES TO THE PHYSICS OF MOVEMENT & THE SPINE BY TWO
WORLD RENOWNED CHOREOGRAPHERS**

Martha Graham and Jose Limon

I had the good fortune to study under these two great choreographers, and throughout the years with their company members: (Graham): Bessie Schoenberg, Ross Parks; (Limon): Pauline Koner, Betty Jones, Sally Stackhouse, Eduardo DeSoto. I'll draw contrasts between the technique and choreography of Martha Graham and Jose Limon.

(17) Ibid., p. 57

A bit of biographical information on the two I believe will shed light on their different approaches and philosophy of movement.

Graham, born in 1894, died 1991, was raised in a strict Irish-Scotch home where a puritanical discipline reigned and strong moral values were taught. Her relationship with her mother was formal and not particularly spontaneous. She had a much more open rapport with her father. Her father, who was a psychiatrist, would talk to Martha about body language being a truer indicator of what one actually feels than words. One could not hide the true nature of one's feelings under the subtext of words. Body language did not lie. He studied Darwin's observations of animal and human body language in its emotional similarities as expressed in the face, hands and feet.

Although it was considered scandalous for a respectable female in the 1920s or 30s; culturally, still, under the domination of male-driven beliefs of the Victorian era, to even think of having a career in theater or dancing, Martha was determined to become a dancer. She studied with Ruth St. Denis and her husband, Ted Shawn, at the Denishawn Studio in California. Both Ruth and Ted, seeing her promising talent, took her under their wings. After several years with the company, an artistic disagreement precipitated a fallout between Martha and Ted, and she left the company, to dance elsewhere. But Ted, artistically threatened and petty-spirited, forbade her to dance or to teach the Denishawn method. Out of desperation and her burning desire to dance, she was forced to create her own method. And that is exactly what she did, revolutionizing dance technique. She based her fundamental idea of contraction and release of energy on the basic breathing rhythm of the body and the effect of inhaling and exhaling breath from the base of the spine. (18)

I believe her technique reflects her austere upbringing; her discipline. And her choreography, at times, reveals an outraged woman.

Jose Limon, born in 1908 in Sinoloa, Mexico, died in December 1972, at his New Jersey farm. He is remembered as one of modern dance's greatest male dancers and choreographers. Limon was the oldest of 11 children born to Florencio Limon, a

(18) Richard Kraus, Sarah Chapman Hisendager, Brenda Dixon; "History of the Dance in Art and Education," p. 113

musician of French and Spanish descent. His mother, Francisca, was of Mexican lineage with a trace of Yaqui Indian blood in her ancestry. In 1915, Limon's family immigrated to the U.S., but his memories of his early childhood in Mexico—the vibrancy of Spanish and Mexican dancing and music, the ritual of the bullfight, the violence of the Mexican Revolution—provided artistic inspiration and choreographic material throughout his life.

He had aspirations of becoming a painter and studied at the University of California, Los Angeles, but in 1928 left school to pursue his career in New York City. After seeing a dance concert, he put his brushes aside and enrolled in modern dance classes at the Humphrey-Weidman Studio, studying under both Charles Weidman and Doris Humphrey. Limon's large, powerful build (he was over six feet tall) required him to find a way to control his limbs and his weight within a technique that was designed for smaller, more supple bodies. He devised a series of exercises that isolated the different body parts and developed control of the weight within each. In his doing so this more complex distribution of weight added another technical dimension to the Humphrey method, resulting in its incorporation into the technique.

What he did was to create incredible counterpoint of the arms to the rhythm of the feet carrying a particular movement pattern. Some of the major components of the Limon technique—the isolation of weight in different body parts; successional lifts in the spine and limbs; and fall, rebound and suspension—were identified as his signature. He was known for the natural, animal-like grace of his dancing and for the dignity and elegance of his bearing, and for the virility of his dancing. (19)

Of all the techniques that I teach (ballet, jazz, Limon and Graham), Martha Graham's is the hardest for the student to grasp, even for the few who with a solid technical background enroll in my classes. I think it's fair to say that a student that studies this technique needs prior training in ballet before attempting the daunting challenges of: contraction/release; spirals and falls, even though the technique is based on simple principles. It's finding, viscerally, from where the initial action begins in the body that travels an organic path in its power and release.

A great deal of Graham's study of technique is floor-oriented. Where classical ballet starts in a vertical position at the barre, Graham starts you seated on the floor (19) "International Encyclopedia of Dance," p. 197

before moving to a standing position. The reason, I believe, is that while sitting on the floor, rather than a standing position, it is easier to identify and execute a contraction in the lower abdominals, that then releases to a lengthened spine, with the torso and arms spiraling around the spine and working in opposition to the legs, before the torso and spine assume the vertical. Of course, one must master the contraction/release action in a standing position as well. But seated, grounded by the butt to the floor, one isn't concerned with balance and can better concentrate on the action of a contraction deep within the abdominal area where the neuro-sense feedback is not as easily felt as it is in the extremities: the hands, feet and limbs.

In studying and teaching her technique, many of the floor positions remind me of Yoga positions, and I swear she was influenced by this ancient art of training the body, although none of the scholars/critics mention this.

Plies: contrasting the two techniques.

Her grand plies (full bend of both knees; heels released from the earth, except in 2nd position) are very exciting in that in 3rd, 4th, and 5th positions, just before the recovery from the plie, the torso and shoulders spiral around the spine, creating a tremendous sense of physical power and a three-dimensional movement as the dancer's arms reach at diagonals, carving out the space, and in a releve one feels the balls of the feet pushed against the earth. Her choreography incorporates this principle as well.

In all her arm gestures that accompany plies, arabesques, attitudes, jumps, etc., there is not one shred of superfluous motion. There is no flowery design. Rather, there is a stark beauty to her technique and choreography, almost an austerity. She cuts to the core. And the feeling for me while dancing her choreography is one of great, but contained, power. There is not the sense of energy release into infinity, as there is in Limon's technique and choreography, in dancing it as well as viewing it.

One of the reasons is that rarely, if at all, does one find successional movement in her technique that leads constantly to a state of suspension of body and breath and precarious balance before the force of gravity takes over, as you find in Limon's work. It's as if Graham is totally in charge of the principles of gravity, manipulating them to her desires.

Limon's plies are, also, of a totally different nature from Graham's. Students often comment that it's like dancing a piece of choreography, leaving them emotionally and spiritually touched. The arms gently press the energy away from the center of the body, as the knees soften and bend, arms moving to the maximum range, creating a V shape design, then the arms rotate in the shoulder joints and the arms slowly bring the energy in, returning the arms to their initial position. In the grand plie, the head and eye focus go to the ground. And with head still lowered as one recovers to the vertical and continues to the movement's resolution in a releve, it's as if the body is helium rising; the chest, sternum and face lifted skyward, arms expansively opened. This position makes one completely open, receptive and vulnerable, and I say to the students as they sustain that action: "In your vulnerability therein lies the strength in you own humanity."

Opposition

How the two use opposition in its simplest terms can be illustrated by the *walk* and *fall*.

Walk As we walk, our arms and legs move in opposition to one another while the torso, in essence, spirals around the spine. In other words, when optimally aligned, we operate from the hip and shoulder joints which are squared to one another with the pelvis in line with the shoulder girdle.

Graham takes this natural spirally and heightens it; the dancer initiating the movement deep within the abdominals and lower back. The pelvis stays aligned, flush, to the shoulder girdle as the legs move in a parallel or turned-out position. And the spiral initiates turns that have a sculpted, clean-lined look

When Limon deviates from the walk, he takes the basic alignment of pelvis to shoulders and instead of spiraling, he makes use of body displacement through pelvic thrusts forward, back and side-to-side, disturbing the basic alignment of the spine. In doing so, the pelvis pushes the body design through a series of off-balance positionings where Newton's 3rd law will surely take over, and the body will literally fall to the earth if it were not for traveling steps to aid in its recovery to a stable, vertically aligned position before the pattern is repeated or further disturbed as the body rhythmically moves to a different place in space and time.

Intrinsic to this action is successional driven body designs that move to suspension before rebounding to the next movement. This is accomplished by arcs and swings. What is occurring can best be illustrated by the following and what I use to instruct students, going beyond demonstration:

When one sits in a swing, gathering momentum, swinging higher and higher, at the height of each arc of that swing, one suspends in the air. It's as if at the top of the arc, the swing takes a breath at its highest point, rising against gravity, before the weight falls, sweeping down and forward into the next rising arc.

Pelvis Also there are great differences in the treatment of the pelvis between the two techniques. Where the principles of contraction and release guide its movement with Graham, Limon pushes and thrusts the pelvis forward; side to side, and to the back. As the pelvis thrusts forward, the sternum and chest open and lift upward in a hyper extension, and the body suspends in motion by the inhalation of breath. As the pelvis thrusts to the back while exhaling, the torso tilts with straight, lengthened spine. As it thrusts from side to side, the torso successional bends or arches, and the body starts to fall as the pelvic thrust pushes it to an off-balance before rebounding. These are crucial differences in their respective techniques and treatment of choreographic material that have a direct bearing on the emotional/psychological revelation, its shading and coloring of the human condition.

Falls In Limon's actual falls to the earth, the use of swing and suspension is crucial. Unlike the precise markings of a metronome, the swing suspends the body weight by breath momentarily before the pull of gravity takes over. The arms of legs swing and arc in space, and at the final swing, the limbs travel a complete circle while the pelvis simultaneously thrusts in the opposite direction of the swing, taking the body to the earth in the direction of the pelvic thrust. The momentum of movement takes one over to the back, body stretched; then through hyper-extending the upper chest, sternum leading, with the added weight of the head hanging to the back, the body rises against gravity to a balanced, harmonized position of recovery before starting again in its Dionysian plunge until the pattern of movement resolves itself. It is a breathtaking experience for dancer and audience alike.

With Graham Falls Nothing prepares the audience for her startling and famous falls, from either a still, standing position or while moving with great speed across the floor. They are simply incredible to watch and scary to do. If you don't know what you are about, technically, you could end up injured with torn muscles, or sprained ankles and twisted knees. In my classes, teaching her technique begins when the student has had two semesters of prior training: ballet and jazz.

The great choreographer Agnes De Mille wrote after seeing Martha Graham's famous spiral fall, as was used in *Heretic*: "One began a spiral fall by pivoting on both feet while leaning back and contracting on bent knees, descending and turning simultaneously until the shoulders grazed the floor and one came to rest on one's back. The element of excitement was supplied by the fraction of a second during which the body was totally off balance and falling. One recovered by reversing the process, jackknifing, circling forward, and rising to stand erect." (20)

Martha had discovered the knee, or the leg hinge. Not the bent knee used in crouching and squatting, but the bent knee as support, which had been outlawed by ballet and is absolutely abhorrent to all ballet dancers. Graham was the first to use the supporting knee as a hinge, with the body straight, straight spine lowered, balanced and thrust backwards, a position of danger because the body cannot save itself from falling except by the unflinching support from the iron thighs. It's this very sense of peril that gives the excitement. There is danger. The strong, straight back, lifted pelvis and strong thighs provide the only safety. The whole tilted structure rests on the foot. This was absolutely new. She revolutionized dance technique.

For the audience the Graham fall, like out of the blue, happens without any seeming preparation, disturbing rhythm and dynamics with its explosive force in recovery. In contrast, with ballet, the audience's excitement is heightened seeing the dancer prepare to execute an expected move in all its technical virtuosity, especially as the dancer becomes airborne, defying gravity and landing perfectly balanced with line intact. It is this virtuosity, per se, and for their purposes, gravity was not a thing to be defied for virtuosity's sake.

(20) Agnes DeMille, "Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham," p.89

“Martha Graham has given us a body of dance technique as complex and formal as that of ballet, yet ballet has been forming for over 400 years, while Graham produced her dance technique in the space of one lifetime. It’s reasonable to believe that henceforth every theater dancer who is exposed to this style will move differently because of it.” (21)

These dramatic differences alluded to are not in a constant, unabated use in their respective works, but are brought to bear as the conflict presented in their drama-dance increases, resulting in an explosion or point of no return for the characters as it does in a scripted play.

My experience in dancing Graham technique and in viewing it as an audience member is as follows: The path and energy release in Graham is a powerful but contained energy due to the contraction/release concept and to the angular lines of the body designs, be they oppositional symmetrical or asymmetrical lines.

In contrast, dancing or viewing Limon’s technique, his use of successional design; pelvic thrusts, connected to suspension and swings guide the energy beyond the confines of the body mass out into space, leaving one with the sense of the energy continuing into infinity.

On a personal note. In the 1980s, Ballet Iowa hired one of the Graham Company dancers to give a week long workshop in Graham technique and choreography. Ballet Iowa graciously opened the classes to students in college dance programs.

That year, for two semesters, I’d concentrated on teaching Graham to the Intermediate-Advanced classes. Seven of my students: five males and two females, along with myself, showed up at Ballet Iowa. In the first session, the ballet director gave a classical ballet class, which my students gamely joined. They, of course, could not hold a candle to the company dancers, but when it came to Graham, they SHINED. The classically trained ballet members were having a helluva, frustrating time with Graham technique. The guest artist turned his attention to the Drake Theater students because they could cut it, having grasped the concepts, able to execute them, moving confidently and joyfully. That was quite an experience for the students and me. For the two previous years I had five strong males studying with me. They were rambunctious in their youthful

(21) Ibid., preface

virility and sensitive and committed to the poetry of the choreographic visions.

In the 1980s, with those same five males and three females, we won honors twice in the regional American College Dance Festival. The first time was at the University of Wisconsin at Madison; the following year at University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Those were the days when students, in the movement program were hungry to learn; walked tall; proud to be taking movement/dance classes; open to the process; unafraid of doing what they had previously thought was impossible. If you're hearing what sounds like a cheer, it's me doing a bit of crowing, proud of those students and my work with them.

These days, choreography is eclectic, drawing upon techniques from ballet, jazz, Limon and Graham. A student who is serious about the craft, wanting to dance professionally, will find it a must to have a working knowledge of more than one technique.

THEMATIC MATERIAL

The content of a great deal of Graham's choreography reflects her passion for metaphysical themes and themes found in Greek mythology. As I alluded to earlier, she was raised in a strict Irish-Scotch home where a puritanical discipline reigned and strong moral values were taught. This certainly influenced her choreography and her approach to teaching. She was one of the first choreographers to use blacks and Orientals in her company.

"I am a dancer. My experience has been with dance as an art. Each art has an instrument and a medium. The instrument of dance is the human body; the medium is movement...It has not been my aim to evolve or discover a new method of dance training, but rather to dance significantly. To dance significantly means 'through the medium of discipline and by means of a sensitive, strong instrument, to bring into focus unhackneyed movement, a human being...'" (22)

For Graham there were only two kinds of dancing—good and bad. Anything fake, any pretty nonsense incurred her bitter scorn. She looked at dancing as an exploration—a celebration of life.

(22) Kraus, Hilsendager, Dixon, "History of the Dance in Art and Education," p. 16

“In one of her works, “Lamentation,” which consisted of a remarkable series of grief stricken postures, partly Greek, partly Hebraic, basic and searing, the figure remained seated throughout. Her feet were planted on the ground and the body rotated and writhed, a figure of unbending, burning woe and anguish. The year was 1930. After seeing this dance, a woman came to Martha backstage, weeping bitterly. Some months before, the woman had witnessed her child being struck by a car and killed. She had been unable to shed a tear. “Lamentation” released the terrible restraints. ‘I realized,’ she told Martha, ‘that grief was a dignified and valid emotion and that I could yield to it without shame.’ And she mourned in Martha’s arms.” (23)

Martha was drawn to props and set pieces for her choreography that dealt with ancient Greek myths. She also used props in some of her other works. One of her well known pieces is “Appalachian Spring,” music by Aaron Copeland. There were scenery and set pieces for that masterpiece. All her props and set pieces are an extension of her choreography, unfrivolous, pared down to the core. Photos are attached; found in the bibliography.

In all of Limon’s work, I recall only one prop, used in “The Moor’s Pavanne;” Desdemona’s handkerchief, which of course is integral to Iago’s villainy as proof to Othello of Desdemona’s unfaithfulness.

Limon’s company was the first to travel abroad, under the auspices of the State Department, as goodwill ambassadors, spreading American modern dance all across the world. Graham’s company also did their share of performing in other countries for our government. Limon’s choreography has transcended his death; his company lives on and continues to perform; his works are in the repertory of renowned ballet companies throughout the world. Both he and Martha Graham have made a tremendous artistic impact on the world of dance and art.

In concluding my discussion of these two towering artists, Graham is without doubt a genius in revolutionizing dance technique. Choreographically, she strikes me as the master sculptor, riveting our attention to the abstracted design of the dancers’ bodies in time and space, as she carries us forward from moment to moment, scene to scene, in movement that is honed down to its stark, bare essentials in communicating, and which was, at times, esoteric.

Limon grappled with grand themes. Is it possible to top the written words of the Bible, as found in Ecclesiastes? Yes, Limon did, in one of his moving masterpieces: “There Is A Time.” Is it possible to top the written words of Shakespeare as found in “Othello?” Yes, Limon did, taking the dance world by storm with “The Moor’s Pavanne.” Is it possible to top the written words of Eugene O’Neill’s “Emperor Jones?” Yes, Limon did. Or to be so moved while he and his company were touring for the State Department in 1957 when he saw the results of the Third Reich’s World War II devastation of a town in Poland, inspiring him to choreograph a massive work, “Missa Brevis,” in honor of the spirit of these brave, fierce people who fought, refusing to give in to tyranny.

If Graham is the master sculptor, then Limon is the master architect, architecturally moving his visions with a company of dancers that ranged from 13 to 28 in number. His body designs emanate from the natural gesture and in his choreographic hands become sanctified. As his visions architecturally swept upward, creating a sacred edifice to the human spirit, it swept us, dancer and audience, along with him in his understanding of human character and his compassion for humanity as he revealed its hubris, its fallibility, and its suffering with great dignity. Jose Limon captured the essence of what it is to be human.

In his own words, Jose Limon tried to

“compose works that are involved with man’s basic tragedy and the grandeur of his spirit...to dig beneath empty formalisms, displays of technical virtuosity, and the slick surface; to probe the human entity for the powerful, often crude, beauty of the gesture that speaks of man’s humanity.” (24)

Observations of Teaching Methods in the Des Moines Area

In the Des Moines area there are a number of capable and gifted teachers who have either graduated from a university dance program or have danced in professional companies, such as the following for whom I have great respect:

(24) Jose Limon, “International Encyclopedia of Dance,” p. 200.

- Hank Adams & Elizabeth Harano, *Central Iowa Dance*
- Gigi, *Betty Hill Dance Studios*, Debbie Westphal, Director
- Kathleen Hurley
- Mary Joyce Lind, *Iowa Dance Theatre*
- Tanya Ogden
- Jan Stewart, *Tanglefoot Cottage*, Lois Penn, Director

Through their instruction, they have given their students a solid, strong technical foundation, mainly in classical ballet, although at some of the studios tap, jazz and hip-hop are also taught. And Kathleen Hurley is an outstanding teacher of modern technique as well as ballet. Some of their students have in the past enrolled in my dance classes or choreography course while attending Drake or while still in high school.

Several studios graciously opened their doors for me to observe class work. Of significant note is that most of these students have been studying since small youngsters. The students I observed ranged in age from 8-17 years old. Very little demonstration was offered by the teacher at the start of an exercise or a combination across the floor because the students are familiar with dance vocabulary. That is in direct contrast to my classes in which a majority of the students have never had a movement class, let alone any knowledge of movement vocabulary, necessitating demonstration by me or my demonstrator.

All the ballet classes followed pretty much the same and accepted ballet format. Starting at the barre with plies, tendu, degage, rond de jamb, port de bras, grand battment, arabesque, attitude, penche, soutenoos, etc. This preparation was followed by jumps, then petite allegro, grand allegro, and if time allowed, an adage. The respect and discipline in the class room was a given. All were joined together, committed to the serious purpose in studying to be an accomplished dancer. I was impressed. When I mentioned the class conduct to one teacher, she said, “It took work to get that discipline established. High expectations must be communicated to the students. Those expectations cannot be met without discipline, and they see that discipline obviously pays off; reflected in their growth and command of the technique. There’s no other way. Commitment, high expectations and good instruction.”

From every teacher, I saw this at work, even though only one teacher spoke to me about it.

I have to say at this point that in my 23 years at Drake as a lecturer, director of choreography and dance teacher, by far the most mentally and physically exhausting is, without doubt, teaching dance. And when I visited the private studios, these teachers' dedication was notable as they taught class after class without break and taught each class with the same pains-taking care. I know how wiped they are at the end of the day.

For the most part what I heard the teachers say in way of instruction to their students is the same thing my students hear from me. The notable difference between their methods and mine concerned: musicality, breath and suggested imagery, of which more later.

The following are things that I found impressive in the methods of the different teachers:

-1) the use of the foot in a tendu (stretching the leg away from 1st and 5th positions). "Press the heel into the floor as long as possible before bringing the foot to its pointed extension."

Bringing this into the students' consciousness made an obvious difference in carving out the space and a grounding that gives intentional direction to the leg in motion. It is an instruction that bears much repetition through months of class work until it is kinetically imbedded and becomes second nature.

-2) "You must lengthen the space between the rib cage and the pelvis, and don't sit into or settle into your thigh bone. Stay up on top of the leg. If you sink, you're lost. Think lengthening of the waist so that your legs can move more freely."

-3) "Quit playing cautious. You know the combination. Now, please give yourself permission to do it. Just do it! Quit worrying about mistakes; the studio is the place to make them."

-4) "Are you really doing a frappe? Why do we practice frappes?" (Silence) "Does Sally have to tell you why? For goodness sake, you've heard this hundreds of times from me, and if you can't answer my question then I'm a pretty lousy teacher." (The teacher reminds them that a frappe is to build strength and clarity for jumps. It was nice to know that I'm not alone in reminding the student why they do a certain exercise.)

-5) After completing an exercise at the barre where the teacher saw the student make a needed correction, the teacher stops the class and asks if the student consciously made the correction and what that correction consisted of. A very helpful technique in aiding the student's growth. It moves one from a mechanical dancer to a thinking, feeling dancer.

Methods of awakening musicality and breath through imagery

Most choreography (not all) requires that the dancer have a keen sense of musicality: the composition's phrasing, its rhythms, its tempo. To be ahead of or behind in any of these elements spells disaster to either solo or ensemble work.

I'd compare that deficiency to a singer who consistently sings off-key, which would, normally, send an audience scurrying for the exit doors before the intermission, if it were not for the constraints dictated by a cultural politeness.

For a teacher/choreographer, the unmusical dancer can drive one to distraction. At one of the classes that I observed, an excellent teacher at wit's end stopped the class and addressed the hapless student, "You have no sense of musicality and because of this I can't use you in ensemble work as a dancer or student choreographer. You must listen to the music. I'm not angry at you. I say this, so you will pay more attention to the music."

Over the years in my classes, there have been a few who have initially exhibited this affliction. This is the way I addressed the problem in my classes. I'd interrupt the class work and have ALL sit down to listen to the music that they'd already heard umpteen times. Then I'd ask for all to clap on the downbeat of each measure.

THEN, I'd turn off the music and we'd stand. Then I'd clap out the accents to the 9-count, 12-count, or whatever the phrase count was and then everyone joined in clapping the phrase with the strongest clap on the accents in the phrase. I'd have the class repeat this six or seven times. With that completed, I'd turn the music back on and the students then moved the combination across the floor without a hitch. THIS METHOD NEVER FAILED except in one case. Curiously enough, the student was a music major, but because of this lack of musicality that reflected in poor grades, she switched to theater upon the counseling of her advisor.

Breath What I heard repeatedly from the teachers is: "Relax, you're too tense." Well, no dancer purposely holds his/her breath. It is an occurrence that in the beginning happens to everyone studying movement. If one is still doing it after several years of study, then the trouble must be addressed. In holding the breath, one tenses, gripping the muscles. Equally bad, at the other end of the spectrum, is passivity, where the student

lacks tension (not the same thing as “tenseness”). Breath and tension are essential to

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clean attack and carry-through of a phrase of movement.

What I’ve found helpful in dealing with the “tenseness” problem is to remind my students from where a particular movement begins in the body, and that it cannot begin without the initial breath from the lungs, which in essence lifts and lengthens the spine and waist, but not the shoulders. I tell them to feel the hanging weight of the shoulders, to let them simply hang. I ask them to focus on the part of the body that is in motion, and, using imagery, to see the muscles softening, as if the muscle is exhaling.

If the point needs to be further stressed, I require them to move, or try to move, a whole phrase holding their breath. I require them to do “conscious” normal breathing, and remind them that normal breathing always has a slight suspension or pause at the peak of inhalation as it does at the bottom of the exhalation. And if it were not for this suspension, I tell them, we’d hyperventilate ourselves out of this world.

In the beginning, I insist that I be able to hear their breathing, especially the exhalation at they hiss, forcing out the air. At the end of that exercise, they are required to sing la, la or ohh,ooohs as they move a combination across the floor or while in releve at the barre. It’s impossible to sing without breathing.

One of the beautiful things about the students in my classes is the quality of their phrasing guided by breath. It is that breath that makes possible a clean attack. Breath literally breathes life into the movement, removing that awful tenseness and gripping of the muscles which makes the dancer appear to be a moving stiff. And because an audience experiences a performance not only visually and aurally, but kinetically, without the breath in phrasing, the evocative experiences are diminished. The audience feels worn out, knotted up, finding relief by taking a breath, as if breathing for the performers on stage.

Conclusion

Theater movement and dance is a noble craft, and I’m blessed to have studied with the visionary James J. Fiderlick, founder of the Drake Theater Department, and many greats in the field, and to have studied with two of its masters, Jose Limon and Martha Graham. I have spent many creative years as a choreographer and teacher

working with Drake students, and I like to think that together we made a difference to the

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quality of a performance and to the enrichment of our lives. My professional life has been immeasurably enriched by the positive experiences as that ensemble process plays out between teacher and students, both working together and learning from one another.

In closing, however, I have some concerns that I believe can be addressed to enhance the educational experience for Drake Theater students. For example, the background of most of the students who enroll in the department reveals a limited exposure to theater and to concert dance where one finds an abundance of dramatic conflict on which theater is based. Regarding dance, their exposure has largely been one of attending local spring dance recitals and “The Nutcracker.” After four years at Drake, some students are still stuck with the beliefs/perceptions with which they arrived – that movement and dance are “routines.” This can be alleviated, in large part, by exposure to the work of other theater movement/dance programs in the area, such as Grinnell College, University of Iowa, Iowa State, Luther College and University of Northern Iowa.

Far too many lack any familiarity with the grand themes of dramatic literature (which Play Reading and Theater History courses can help correct). Few have experienced performances beyond those of their local community theater. Many have no clue as to world or American history, or a grasp of geography outside the confines of where they grew up. Certainly, the educational system from kindergarten through high school needs to be held accountable. But my concerns extend to what can be done at the four-year college level.

In conjunction with widening the students’ horizons intellectually and culturally, it is incumbent upon the faculty to expect, nay, to require that the students have exposure to artistic events, and to artistic work besides the departments. I know this is difficult given the department’s heavy production schedule. But the aspiring actor/dancer needs additional exposure to expand them as artists. It’s like a fiction or poetry writing teacher pounding home to the aspiring writer: “Read, read, read. Get a wide exposure to good writing, starting with the masters up to and including the contemporary artists’ writing.” The theater student can learn so much about western forms by attending classical music concerts as well as rock; and to see musical theater productions at the Civic Center; more

exposure to concert theater dance (University of Iowa brings in wonderful artists to Hancher Auditorium); they need to go to art galleries, starting with Drake's Anderson Art Gallery. From my view, this exposure needs to be planned into the curriculum.

For 23 years, in all of my classes, I have urged the students to go to the Drake Art Gallery and experience the sculpture, the drawings, and the paintings. When theater students told me they just didn't have any time to do so, I found that outrageous, especially when the gallery is housed in the same building with the theater classes. Also, what has disturbed me is the apathy and lack of curiosity on the part of a lot of the students as to what faculty and students are artistically producing in other departments. By making this exposure mandatory for the theater student, I think there's a better chance that apathy will fade, as their imagination is stimulated, sparking them to new heights in their own work.

So, for the last three years, at least once a semester, I set class time aside in every class I taught (movement/dance, choreography, Intro to Theater) and took my students to the Anderson Art Galley. The Art Department graciously opened the gallery to us even when the gallery's hours didn't coincide with my class times. I also required that the students write their perceptions and feelings about the work they viewed in the artists' guest book. Most were glad that they were required to have this experience.

My point is that a substantial part of the ongoing preparation for any artist must include exposure to other artists' work and to the larger world.

The length of my sabbatical paper has expanded beyond my initial anticipation, but it has been a labor of love. Before closing, two notes: the first addendum comes about due to my teaching "infinity lines" in which I allude to the stars, instructing the students to release their energy into infinity. I was curious about the scientific discovery in which it was determined that stars and humans share the same compositional elements. Thus, the addendum.

The second note concerns the picture index. You will find a much larger number of photos of my work as compared to Limon and Graham for the simple reason of accessibility.

I respectfully submit my Sabbatical Paper.

Sally Garfield
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Theatre Arts