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DANC 205.01: Improvisation

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Improvisation

University of Montana, School of Theatre & Dance
DANC205-01 75068 Fall 2014 2 Credits Mondays/Wednesdays 9:10-10:00am, PAR-TV 035
Instructor: Joy French, joy.french@umontana.edu
Office hours: Wednesdays 10-11am & Fridays 10-11am

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Improvisation, deciding what to do or not do in the moment, is an integral part of a dancer's education. The study of dance's basic elements, through improvisational techniques, facilitates students' ability to demonstrate fundamental movement vocabulary and skills as well as **generate unique movement material**. Improvisation is often used as a tool to create material for choreographed dance pieces, however improvisation is a powerful art and mode of performance in itself. The revolutionary work of the Judson Church Members and other experimental theater initiatives whose art was based on improvisation in the 1960s, reintroduced this form in such a powerful way that it is now common for dance students worldwide to participate in improvised dance structures and performance events throughout their contemporary dance training. **It is not predetermined, it is unpredictable and being made spontaneously in the moment.**

Improvisation relies upon scores that outline what is to transpire throughout the event. In this class, **students will explore movement elements such as space, shape, time, energy, quality, relationships and etc. through structured improvisations. Simultaneously, they will experiment with the following: movement through solos, duets and group structures; their ability to react kinesthetically, intellectually, creatively and emotionally to the score; and the effort to maintain a clear relationship with the score and movement material that relates directly to the evolution of the improvisational structure.** Through these explorations the dancers will find and invent material unique to themselves and their immediate group. This experimentation should yield a **broader range of movement vocabulary and possibilities** through which dance can take form.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

- Participation and Attendance: Improvisational structures will be presented and/or collaboratively designed during each session of the course. Students are expected to participate in movement sequences to the best of their ability. Class discussions are a vital part of the learning process. It is expected that students voice their thoughts and opinions regarding both their dancing and viewing experiences. Your presence in class is vital to maintain and enhance creative working relationships with your peers. The material taught and explored throughout the semester will be delivered as building blocks and therefore, only two absences are permitted. (50%)
- Outside work: From time to time, you will be asked to engage with class material between classes. This includes journaling, watching videos, watching live concerts, etc. (25%)
- Participation in two improvised "happenings" or performance events throughout the semester including: events designed and determined by the body of the class. (25%)

Attire:

Please wear comfortable clothes that allow for freedom of movement. (No jeans or tight pants, please. If you have a question about movement-appropriate clothing, please ask Joy.) You may need CLEAN shoes that allow turning. Jazz/ballet shoes/boots can be purchased on-line or at local dance studios.) You may also opt to dance with bare feet if it is comfortable for you.

Important Details to note:

- **We WILL be meeting during FINALS week.** Our Improv final will be held on Wednesday, December 10th, at 10:10am - noon in 035
- If at any point you feel further discussion would aid your development, please schedule a meeting with Joy.
- If you are sick or injured please talk to the instructor as soon possible before class. This includes any pre-existing conditions/injuries that should be shared.
- If you get injured during class get the instructor's attention immediately
- Restrooms / locker rooms are located across the hall.

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

*All Theatre & Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance Student Handbook. The Handbook is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/umarts/theatredance/About/handbook.php>. **There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they are very physical in nature.** Please proceed through class, shop time, or rehearsal with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others. Students participating in class/shop/rehearsal/performance do so at their own risk.*

*Due to safety considerations, **at no point during a student's time spent in class or serving on a production (in any capacity) should non-enrolled persons be guests of that student without my consent.** Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.*

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

DANCE TECHNIQUE CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Fall Semester 2014

- I. NO STREET SHOES, FOOD, OR DRINK ALLOWED IN THE DANCE STUDIOS.
- II. All students enrolled in classes who are not Theatre/Dance majors are highly encouraged to sign up as C/NC. PLEASE NOTE, HOWEVER, in order to receive Expressive Arts credit, a student must enroll for a traditional grade and the grade received must be a C or higher. December 5 is the last day to change to C/NC, *and may be done after October 27 by petition only.* [ImportantDatesFall2014.pdf](#)
- III. ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED AT THE FOLLOWING:
 - A. **Dancers on Location (Site Specific):**
October 4-5 (Sat-Sun) noon; Mansfield Library Mall; free
 - B. **Dance Up Close:**
November 4-8 (Tues-Sat) 7:30pm, Masquer Theatre;
\$9 General Admission, \$6 required students. Tickets at Box Office in PARTV lobby
 - C. **Dance Studio Works:**
November 21-22 (Fri-Sat) 6:30 and 8:30 each night, Open Space;
General Admission \$5/ one show, or \$8/both shows. Tickets at the door

AND choose one of the following (required):

Settle, Aug. 29-30 and Sept 5-6 (Fri-Sat) at 7:30 pm and 2:00 on 9/6, Open Space;
Tickets at barebaitdance.org or \$12 at door day of show

Fingertips Toward Floor, Head Follows or The Lazy Sexy Peepshow
Oct 17-19 (Fri-Sun) at 7:30pm. Stage 112 at Elk's Lodge, 112 N Pattee;
Tickets \$10 in advance \$12 day of show at barebaitdance.org

Headwaters Gala Concert, November 21-23 (Fri-Sun) at 7:30pm and Sun matinee.
MCT, Center for the Performing Arts, 200 N Adams St;
Tickets \$15 General and \$10 students at headwatersdance.org

Your instructor MAY choose to offer students a chance to use attendance at additional performances as make ups for absences at the instructor's discretion

Your instructor will require a written critique, quiz, or something else of his or her own choosing. You will need to give specific examples, so take notes either during or after the concerts. As you watch, it will be helpful to think about the following:

1. Which pieces you felt strongly about (i.e., either really liked, disliked, were puzzled by, etc.)
2. On the choreography of each piece;
 - a. What is the theme or movement idea?
 - b. What is the style of dance and how does it work with the theme?
 - c. What is it about the movement or the way the piece progressed that made you react as you did?
3. Your reaction to the performances of the dancers: expression and technique.
4. Your opinion on the theatrical elements: costumes, lighting, sets and sound score. Did they work with the choreography?
Provide specific examples to back up your opinions!

ATTENDANCE AND GRADE POLICY–DANCE TECHNIQUE

Attendance is important in any field, but vital in the field of dance. Learning to dance requires that your body do it. You won't gain in flexibility, and strength, or in your ability to pick up movement or generate your own movement by hearing about what happened from a classmate, or reading a book. In other words, there is no way to make up the material you miss.

So, WE EXPECT YOU TO BE IN EVERY CLASS. However, knowing that unpredictable circumstances can arise, we are giving you two absences. You may also make up two classes. You can do this by watching, and writing a one-page observation of another dance class that is either a more advanced level of the style you're studying or a different style, or by participating in another section of the same level and style of class that you're taking.

AFTER YOU HAVE USED YOUR TWO ABSENCES AND TWO MAKEUPS, YOU WILL BE DOCKED ONE-THIRD OF A GRADE FOR EVERY ABSENCE FOLLOWING.

GRADING: Dance is different from many other fields in that a student's work is not as quantifiable as it is in some other subjects, such as history or math. For this reason we do not have a point breakdown, but rather general guidelines.

To receive an "A" you must:

- show signs of aptitude for dance technique, and musicality
- have an energetic, attentive attitude
- progress over the semester
- be at the top level of the class
- and, of course, fulfill the attendance, critique, and exam requirements

You will receive an "F" if your absences and lack of critiques add up (or subtract) to an "F."

Your grade will be lowered by one-third of a point for each critique you do not hand in (e.g., if you start with a B, your grade will drop to a B-, then C+ and you will receive a "C+").

You may receive an "incomplete" (I) only if you have exceptional circumstances, *which you have discussed with the instructor*.

NOTE: **LOCKER RENTALS** ARE AVAILABLE FOR ALL STUDENTS IN THE DANCE CLASSES. WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU DO NOT LEAVE PERSONAL BELONGINGS UNATTENDED IN THE DRESSING ROOMS, HALLWAYS, OR DANCE STUDIOS, AS **THEFTS FREQUENTLY OCCUR**. LOCKERS MAY BE RENTED FOR \$7.00/SEMESTER, OR \$13/TWO SEMESTERS. (see Dance Program administrative assistant—door across from women's dressing room and then up the stairs.)