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DANC 220A.01: Creative Practice I - Dance Generation

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Creative Practice I: Dance Generation
University of Montana Tuesday/Thursday 9am-10:50am PARTV 005

Autumn 2017
University of Montana
School of Theatre & Dance

10:30am

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“When I first began choreographing, I never thought of it as choreography but as expressing feelings. Though every piece is different, they are all trying to get at certain things that are difficult to put into words. In the work, everything belongs to everything else - the music, the set, the movement and whatever is said.” [Pina Bausch](#)

“Creativity for me is something that is absolutely critical. I think it’s something you can teach. And, I think you find out things about your own personal physical signature, your own cognitive habits and you can use that as a point of departure to misbehave beautifully.” [Wayne McGregor](#)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Through the practice of improvisation, movement generation, choreographic design, reflection and evaluation – students will learn methods to compose dance and develop individual creative processes.

Required Materials

- Your imagination
- Required Text: [The Intimate Act of Choreography](#) by Blom and Chaplin
- Recommended Text for all dance makers: [The Art of Making Dances](#) by the great Doris Humphrey
- Schedule of readings, improvisations, studies, films will be arranged as the course progresses and according to the student’s development and needs
- Journal
- Digital video camera to record all studies completed throughout the semester

Objectives

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Explore various improvisation structures and compositional principles to invent new and personal movement vocabulary.
2. Demonstrate command of traditional choreographic tools such as: phrasing, space, time, quality, form, content development, sound implementation, production, design, performance and evaluation.
3. Discover a personal method and creative process to shape material derived from improvisational work into structured and choreographic studies.
4. Develop an understanding of the vital importance of intent within one’s creative work, and to employ thematic material to support one’s intent.
5. Develop a constructive method to deliver and receive feedback.

Methods

A dance practicum course grounded in play, structured improvisations, lecture, discussion, reflection, text and film resources to serve as a point of inspiration from which one’s creative practice can emerge. The following criteria will enable objectives to be met: completion of assigned readings, viewing of assigned films, participation in discussion, improvisation and choreographic studies, self – peer evaluation, and archiving creative process and product in both journal and film format throughout the semester.

Course Content (may include but is not limited to...)

I. Essentials

- a. Isolating intention or stimulus
- b. Implementing content to support intent: composition provides the artist a chance to express an idea
- c. Simplifying: every movement should tell
- d. Invention

II. Phrase

- a. Methods of creation of a dance phrase or structure
- b. High point

III. Space

- a. Level
- b. Direction, dimension, plane
- c. Pathway, floor patterns
- d. Line (curved, straight, angular, symmetrical, asymmetrical)
- e. Positive and Negative space
- f. Stage Space
- g. Environment (Dynamic space, Symbolic space, Site-Specific)

IV. Time

- a. Phrasing
- b. Breath
- c. Momentum (acceleration/deceleration)
- d. Accent
- e. Stillness

V. Energy

- a. Tension: Loose/Taught
- b. Force: Strong/Gentle
- c. Movement Qualities

VI. Sound

- a. Music
- b. Words
- c. Environmental

VII. Production Elements

- a. Costume
- b. Props
- c. Film
- d. Set design
- e. Collaboration

VIII. Form

- a. The container for the work
- b. Transition
- c. Sequence
- d. Compositional Structures and Devices

IX. Creative Intention

- a. How do Body, Space, Time, Movement Quality, Production Elements, and Form support your intention?

X. Performance

Course Requirements:

1. Studio Work: Improvisation, Play, Studies: (45%) Each student will participate in improvisational structures and present new creative work as assigned. Creative work will range in terms of intention, use of accompaniment and performance site. **Each work must be individually titled and regarded as a complete entity in and of itself.** There is a fundamental expectation in this course that students will approach each of the assignments as an inventor- an explorer who is generating her or his own approach to creativity. Both group and solo studies are required throughout the semester. Students will be graded according to:

1. Effort to fulfill the requirements of each study;
2. Effort to communicate through complete thoughts. Just as sentences have a beginning – middle – end, so does creative work;
3. Effort to rise to the challenge of the studies. As they sequentially grow in their complexity – so should the approach;
4. Ability to thoughtfully articulate intent;
5. Inventiveness. Change it. Make it one's own. Completely trash it. Start anew. Students have total license to create in this class.
6. Development of one's own creative process. Students will be exposed to multiple ways by which artists approach the generation of new work. The ultimate goal of this class is for the student to begin to recognize how she or he is inspired to research and create dance.

NOTE: STUDENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO "MAKE UP" STUDIES THEY MISS DUE TO ABSENCE. PLEASE DON'T ASK!

2. Research, Discussion, Critique: (20%) Directed improvisations and creative works will be discussed, reflected upon and evaluated during weekly classes. To develop a discriminating eye, students will deliver and receive feedback in a constructive manner that goes beyond subjective responses such as, "I liked it." Students must thoughtfully construct their feedback and be able to justify their critique both in class and in on-line forums.

3. Journal: (5%) As students begin the creative process, they must maintain a journal. In this journal, students are expected to record research for dance making, ideas relative to creative process, important notes about the tools, exercises, skills, concepts used to create choreography, the structure of choreographic studies (the notation used to record the form), feedback, criticism, notes for improvement, questions as well as topics that arise through discussion and assigned readings. Students are expected to **bring the journal to each class session**. It is likely that students will receive feedback and engage in on-line dialogue through Moodle. These on-line materials may culminate in a document that students include in the required journal, or as an online link that is also available for review at the culmination of the semester. The physical journal will be submitted for grade during the last class session. Be consistent on a class-by-class basis.

4. Digital Filming (5%) Students are required to have a digital camera available for class throughout the semester. The video log, as a tool, enables students to archive their work and reflect upon and learn from past exercises. Students are expected to bring the personal camera to each class session, **with the battery charged and an appropriate amount of memory available, otherwise**, work will not be recorded. At the conclusion of the semester, students are required to submit a finalized video log/reel of **all work completed throughout the term**. Be consistent: upload, edit, label your projects throughout the semester.

5. Showings: (20%) Students are required to show and comment on work throughout the semester. Students are expected to acquire and apply creative approaches, improvisational skills and compositional skills throughout the semester. Therefore, work should become more sophisticated as the semester progresses. The goal of the final project is to provide an opportunity for the dance artist to exhibit the tools s/he has learned throughout the semester. Secondly, this project provides the chance for the artist to decide what her or his intention and approach for the final work will be.

Final showing will be during our last regular class meeting: Tuesday, Dec. 12

Post process/performance wrap up: Thursday, Dec. 14. 10:10am – 12noon

NOTE: STUDENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO "MAKE UP" SHOWINGS THEY MISS DUE TO ABSENCE. PLEASE DON'T ASK!

6. Concert Attendance (5%): As a burgeoning creative artist, it is your responsibility to attend as many artistic events as possible to further develop your aesthetic preferences. Therefore, you are required to

provide proof of attendance to three dance concerts throughout the term as well as attendance to one other artistic event (music events, art openings, theatre productions, film showings, etc.).

Required Concerts include:

- ❖ **Dancers on Location: A Site Specific Dance Concert:**
 - Friday September 15th @ 5 PM, Sunday September 17th @ 12 Noon. Meet at the UM Mansfield Mall, Free!
- ❖ **Dance Up Close:**
 - November 10 @ 7:30PM, November 11th @ 2PM and 7:30 PM, Masquer Theatre
Tickets available at the UM Arts Box Office in the PARTV
- ❖ **A Celebration Service choreographed by Meredith Monk and performed by the School of Theatre & Dance and School of Music:**
 - November 3-4 @ 7:30 and 9:30 PM, UCC Missoula, 405 University Avenue.
Ticket Prices \$12 Student, \$15 General Admission

*Include the programs from each event (with notes documenting your response) in your journal. Students are required to write one critical response to a required concert during the semester. More details and guidelines will be forthcoming.

Attendance Policy* One absence is permitted for the term. After one absence, student's grade will drop one-third letter grade (B -> B-, B- -> C+).

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://www.umt.edu/vpesa/Dean%20of%20Students/default.php>.

All syllabi for Theatre & Dance courses imply the understanding:

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 our consent**. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

NO street shoes are allowed in the dance studio at any time, even carried in-hand. Anyone entering the studio must remove their street shoes **BEFORE** entering and leave them outside the studio. The only shoes permitted in studios are those that have been purchased for the exclusive use of dance in dance studios (with the exclusion of tap shoes, hard-shoe clogs, and flamenco shoes. These should never be worn on Marley floors).

Individuals concerned about theft should rent a locker for their shoes and other belongings.

NO food or drinks (except water in closed bottles) are permitted in the dance studios or theatres.

NOTE: **Locker rentals** are available for any student. The School of Theatre & Dance recommends that students do not leave personal belongings unattended in the dressing rooms, hallways, dance studios, or

theatres as **thefts frequently occur**. Lockers may be rented for \$10/one semester or \$15/two semesters through Administrative Associate IV Sharon Collins (sharon1.collins@umontana.edu; PARTV 194).

From the EO/AA Office:

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <http://life.umt.edu/dss/>.

I _____ have read the syllabus on _____ and understood the information presented about this course. My signature documents an agreement to adhere to these policies.