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DANC 191.09: Special Topics - Dance Technique

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DANC 191 09: Dance Technique (2 credits)
M/W 10:40-12PM PARTV 005
University of Montana School of Theatre & Dance Spring 2014

Instructor: Professor Nicole Bradley Browning
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Email: nicole.bradleybrowning@umontana.edu
Hours: T: 9-10:30, F: 10:30-12

Course Description

A contemporary dance class designed to lead intermediate movers through improvisation, authentic movement, technical exercises, anatomical exploration and movement combinations that are technically (strength, balance, agility, line), kinesthetically (tuning into sensation, initiation, efficiency) and intellectually challenging. This course further proposes to unite one's body, intellect, personality and creative energy through movement thereby challenging the dancer to contemplate and act upon what it is that inspires and compels the human being to dance.

Objectives

1. To continue the practice of contemporary dance technique philosophies, somatic approaches, partner techniques, improvisation and performance disciplines in a safe yet challenging environment.
2. To encourage dancers to advance and further develop their technical, kinesthetic, intellectual and creative capacities in movement, and deepen their mind/body connectivity.
3. To challenge students to understand movement and dance in new, fresh, integrated and thoughtful ways.
4. To challenge students to remain present and connected to the class offerings.
5. To develop individual and group performance and improvisational skills relative to advanced technical levels.
6. To promote an appreciation, if not love, for dance as an art form and educational tool.

Course Content

I. Introduction

- A. Description of course
- B. Structure of course
- C. Expectations (Attendance and Grading Policy)
- D. Writing Assignments
- E. UM High School Dane Day (Friday February 7th: 10-11: Ballet, 11:10-12: 10 African, 1:15-2:30 Modern (please attend if you can). 4-4:30 Roundtable with current dance students (YOU!). Please make arrangements to be here for this important component of HSDD before ACDFA Benefit Concert Riser Set Up.

II. Description of the Course: The Technical Aspects (*Italicized items indicate the skill to be acquired in Level III technique, non-italicized items reflect skills that have been acquired in Levels I-II*)

- A. Demonstration of Line and Form
 - a. Students are proficient in ability to move upper body without displacing the pelvis
 - b. Students excel in their understanding of rotated and parallel positions
 - c. Students are strongly integrated in their bodies
 - d. Students have a strong sense of line and shape
 - e. *Students are able to manipulate line and form with ease*
- B. Dynamic Alignment
 - a. Students excel in their understanding of alignment
 - b. Students excel in their ability to execute plie (demi and grand) in parallel, first, second, third positions and *demi plie in fourth position*
 - c. Students excel in their ability to land from jumps
 - d. *Students excel in their understanding of alignment in vertical and non-vertical positions*
 - e. *Students understand pelvic alignment and the neutral pelvis*
 - f. *Students have clear head-tail coordination in all body patterns (core-distal, body-half, upper-lower, cross-lateral, spiral)*

- g. *Students are able to achieve freedom from excess joint tension*
- C. Effective Body Patterning
 - a. Students excel in their ability to coordinate breath with movement
 - b. Students understand all concepts of Body Patterning:
 - i. Breath
 - ii. Core/Distal
 - iii. Head/Tail
 - iv. Body Half
 - v. Upper/Lower
 - vi. Cross lateral
 - vii. Contra lateral
 - viii. Spiral
 - c. Students excel in their ability to fall and recover the center of the body
 - d. Students excel in their ability to execute turns, both stationary and locomotor
 - e. *Students are proficient at isolating thigh joint in retire, extensions and battement*
 - f. *Students excel in their ability to turn off their vertical axis*
- D. Spatial Awareness
 - a. Students excel in their understanding of kinesphere, personal space and shared space
 - b. Students excel in their understanding of basic partnering skills
 - c. Students excel in their ability to move within space while maintaining relationship to others
 - d. Students excel in their ability to dance according to varied facings
 - e. Students excel in their spatial awareness and spatial intent
 - f. *Students develop ability to interact with other dancers*
 - g. *Students develop ability to make dance a shared experience*
 - h. *Students develop ability to represent clear directional and spatial intent*
- E. Rhythmic Accuracy
 - a. Students excel in their understanding of time
 - b. Students excel in their ability to dance with an awareness of the beginnings and endings of phrases
 - c. Students excel in their ability to accent movement
 - d. Students excel in their ability to distinguish the center of the beat
 - e. Students excel in their ability to dance within complex rhythmic structures, counting patterns and unconventional time signatures
 - f. *Students demonstrate skill in dancing to traditional rhythms (3s, 4s, 6s, 8s) and unconventional collections of counts with overall musicality*
- F. Initiation and Follow-Through
 - a. Students excel in their awareness of body part initiation
 - b. Students excel in their ability to use weight and momentum in body part initiation
 - c. Students excel in their ability to distinguish successive or sequential vs. simultaneous movement
 - d. Students move with both internal and external focus
 - e. *Students demonstrate understanding of point of initiation and follow through*
 - f. *Students demonstrate strong body/eye focus*
- G. Strength, Flexibility and Endurance
 - a. Students have strong torso, feet, arms and overall alignment
 - b. Students descend to and ascend from the floor safely
 - c. Students have familiarity with proper stretching techniques for major muscle groups
 - d. Students easily complete long and complex movement sequences
 - e. Students excel in their ability to do floor work and take weight into the upper body
 - f. Students have clear articulation in feet
 - g. *Students demonstrate ability to easily complete a two-hour technique class: demonstrating the endurance to complete a two hour class without strain*
 - h. *Students understand developing "stability through mobility"*
 - i. *Students have the capacity to move through sequences with appropriately applied energy*
- H. Professionalism, Etiquette and Performance Ability
 - a. Students excel in their understanding of movement quality
 - b. Students excel in their concentration efforts
 - c. Students excel in their demonstration of personal investment

- d. Students demonstrate classroom etiquette
- e. Students demonstrate willingness to experiment
- f. Students have an awareness of performance aesthetics
- g. Students learn material at a quicker pace
- h. Students have an appreciation for different movement approaches
- i. Students move through the space with confidence
- j. Students have peer assessment skills
- k. *Students demonstrate ability to grasp complex phrases and easily reverse phrases*
- l. *Students demonstrate performance presence*
- m. *Students develop dynamics within movement and the ability to shift predictability in a movement phrase*
- n. *Students develop personal ownership of movement and develop own voice*

III. Structure of Course

Class begins promptly at 10:40 a.m Students are expected to be enrolled in Contact Improvisation as a lead in course to technique (please speak with the instructor immediately if you have a conflict). Students arriving late to either course will not be permitted to take class (for safety purposes). Class will end at noon. Students are required to remain in class until it finishes with the closing circle. Consistent departure from class before its end will result in lowering of one's grade.

Injury

Please notify the instructor of any injury (current or past) that may affect your full performance in class. See attached injury policy for specific considerations.

Attire

Street shoes are not permitted in the dance studios. Movement will be experienced with bare feet. Students should plan to wear clothing suitable for movement and should take into account keeping the body warm for the beginning and end of class, bring extra clothing. It is also recommended that dancers own and bring kneepads to class. These can be ordered on line at: www.contactquarterly.com . Please do not bring shoes, bags, cell phones into the studio. Leave all valuables in your locker. To rent a locker: See School of Theatre & Dance Administrative Associate Teresa, PARTV 199).

III. Expectations: Attendance and Grading Policy

Attendance: 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. **STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE IN EVERY CLASS.** However, knowing that unpredictable circumstances can arise, students are granted one permissible absence. Students may also make up two absences by watching, and writing a one-page observation of another dance class that is approximately the approximate level and style of class that one is taking. **AFTER A STUDENT HAS USED HER/HIS ONE ABSENCE AND TWO MAKEUPS, THE STUDENT WILL BE DOCKED ONE-THIRD OF A GRADE FOR EVERY ABSENCE FOLLOWING. IF A STUDENT MISSES AN ENTIRE WEEK OF CLASS (3 CLASSES), AN ENTIRE LETTER GRADE IS DOCKED FROM THE STUDENT'S GRADE. IF THE STUDENT MISSES 6 CLASSES (IN ADDITION TO TWO PERMISSIBLE ABSENCES), THE STUDENT WILL EARN AN "F" FOR THE SEMESTER. SHOULD A STUDENT MISS 4 CLASSES OR MORE WITHIN THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF THE SEMESTER, S/HE WILL BE ASKED TO DROP THE COURSE.**

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 grading is not assigned a point breakdown. To earn an "A" a student must be proficient in all areas listed in the technical aspects of the syllabus. The student must achieve each area at least 85% of the time in class. Additionally, the student must fulfill all attendance, critique and self-assessment requirements. Students may receive an "incomplete" (I) only if there are exceptional circumstances that have been discussed with the instructor.

IV. Writing Assignments

Performance Attendance & Written Critique: Students are required to see three dance concerts. The following concerts are required:

- A. **ACDFA Benefit Concert** February 7-8 (Fri-Sat) 7:30pm, Open Space, \$5.
Tickets at the door

- B. **Dance in Concert**, March 19-22 (Wed-Sat) 7:30pm, Montana Theatre; general admission \$20, \$16 senior/student, \$7 required students
- C. **Dance New Works**, May 6-10 (Tues-Sat) 7:30pm, and May 10 (Sat) at 2:00pm, Open Space; \$9 general admission, \$6 required students

Optional Performances are also available for student attendance. You are encouraged to attend the following concerts for additional credit:

- a) **Springboard 2014**; January 24, 25, 31, and February 1 at 7:00pm; 2:00pm on Feb 1
The Elk's Stage 112 (112 N. Pattee St, Missoula, MT). Tickets \$13 in advance and \$15 day of show, available at the Downtown Dance Collective, at www.ddcmontana.com, or 406.214.0097. For more information about the show: www.barebaitdance.org
- b) **The Legend of Orpheus**; February 14, 7:30pm; February 15 at 2:00pm & 7:30pm; February 16 at 2:00pm.
Missoula Children's Theatre, Tickets available at MCT box office: 728-7529 (PLAY).
- c) **Wall City News**; April 18, 19, 25, 26 at 7:00pm, and 2:00pm on April 26
The Elk's Stage 112 (Elk's Lodge: 112 N. Pattee St, Missoula, MT); Tickets: \$13 in advance and \$15 day of show, available at the Downtown Dance Collective, at www.ddcmontana.com, or by calling 406.214.0097. For more information about this show: www.barebaitdance.org

The instructor will require a written critique for which the guidelines will be distributed prior to the concert. The student's grade will be lowered by one full letter grade for a critique that is not submitted.

Self-Assessment Writings

Throughout the course of the semester, you will be asked to reflect upon and assess your growth in this class. You may also be asked to write about specific ideas and movement explorations experienced in class. PLEASE NOTE: At any point you feel further discussion would aid your development, please schedule a meeting with the instructor. Further assignments may be scheduled throughout the semester at the discretion of the instructor.

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/theatredance/about/handbook>.

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.

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/>.

University of Montana Dance Program

Injury Protocol for all Dance Practicum Courses

(Dance Technique, Contact Improvisation, Improvisation, Composition, Pedagogy courses)

In effort to avoid injury, the Dance Faculty encourage all dance students to take responsibility for their bodies prior to the beginning of dance class. It is critical that the dancer be nourished and hydrated, rested and dressed appropriately for class (i.e. layers and kneepads for modern, ballet slippers and tights for ballet class). Additionally, dancers must arrive to class and begin to warm up their bodies to effectively prepare for class. Each dancer has unique needs, the time before class begins is there for each dancer to begin preparation of the mind and body for dance.

Chronic Injury (Tendonitis, Bursitis, Fasciitis)

If a dancer experiences a chronic, ongoing injury requiring that s/he take relative rest sit out of class then it is assumed that the dancer cannot fulfill the requirements of the class. This dancer will not be able to earn an "A" in this class.

If the dancer needs to practice relative rest, it is expected that s/he do everything as normal in class. If the injury hurts, it's important to not quit class but instead learn to modify to complete the class.

Once the dancer sits out of class, s/he cannot reenter. The dancer is done for the day.

If the dancer must sit out of class, it is critical that s/he communicate with the instructor, ask permission to sit out of class. At this time it is expected that the dancer explain what is the injury is that requires observation of class.

Once a dancer experiences injury, s/he must see a doctor and receive a prognosis that explains what the injury is, what the dancer can do, what the dancer should specifically avoid and a timeline that indicates when it is safe to return to full physical activity.

The dancer must also see a physical therapist and begin a rehabilitation program. When seeing a physical therapist, it is critical for the dancer to tell the therapist exactly what her/his dancing entails, how the body is used, what parts of the body are used and taxed in dance classes. The dancer needs to ask what part of class s/he should be doing and what part of class should be avoided. The dancer needs to ask when you can return to more complete physical activity, discuss the timeline. Then, the dancer must create for her/himself a checklist of what can be done and what needs to be modified or omitted. This plan must be shared with the instructor.

When the dancer must sit out of class, it is expected that the dancer complete her/his physical therapy exercises while observing class. If the dancer is unable to complete such exercises, then s/he must discuss with the instructor.

Observation Policy:

Should an injury or illness require that the dancer sit out and observe, her/his grade will reflect lack of participation in class.

Traumatic/Acute Injury:

If the dancer experiences a traumatic injury that requires s/he be absent and observing class, the dancer has the following choices:

1. Medically withdraw from the course
2. Drop the course and add a 1 credit Independent Study
 - This option would enable the dancer to come back to full participation in the class over a longer course of time. It would be expected that the dancer observe class, complete her/his physical therapy exercises during class and communicate a plan of reentry into the class with direct doctor supervision over a specific period of time. The instructor of the class must approve this plan of action.
 - The 1 credit Independent Study would not count towards the dancer's required technique credits should s/he be pursuing a dance major or minor. If it becomes necessary for timely graduation, the student has the right to petition the course to be considered towards her/his major/minor. The faculty will then review and approve (or not) the request.

Illness (this doesn't include hangovers):

If you are sick, please stay home.