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Dance as an Ethical Icon of Moral Action and Communal Responsibility

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Abstract



Inner motivations turn potential ethical action into kinetic reality. All shapes, sizes, ages, and colors of people live, move, have the starlight of bright being. In contact improvisation, norms of human kindness rule. Even swift, strong contact is gentle. We build on others' movements. Connections 'go someplace;' once done, they go peaceably to earth.

We will invent dances and learn dances from elsewhere. Letting others' dances be inscribed upon our bodies, taking their rhythms respectfully into our souls, helps us comprehend new ways of doing, via empathic absorption. After a brief warm-up using movement from two folk styles and one Western style, the class will construct three short phrases, then discuss leadership experiences in making and performing them. The first will be done as a group. The second will be done with partners, each triad seen by the rest. The last will be done in individual/coach pairs.

Physicalizing a leader's initiation, realization, and completion of a phrase or task aesthetically informs both the dancer and the observer, patterning for them 'how things get done' with others. Watching and describing movement teaches audience/participants through imagaic engagement. Positive, supportive feedback will continue throughout class; modeling initiative and courage while attending to group needs—learning the work of a leader—is the point of the workshop.

1. Summarized from teaching statements and conversations with J. Wolfe, O. Besançon, and others, 1970s-90s.

2. See Hodge, F., *Play Directing*, (Focal Press, orig. ed., 1971), pp. 9-13, for a diagram and further discussion of this concept. Blatner's work, *Acting-In*, on Moreno's creation of the field of psychodrama, is also significant here.

Précis: Or, There's a Reason They Call It a 'Movement'

Participants will engage in **group and individual movement** activities related to the physical aspects of “leading”: inhalation; deliberate action; inclusivity; and ongoing pastoral awareness of cohort abilities and limitations.



Warmups drawn from a range of movement options and a diverse folk/Western dance vocabulary will inform the activity's dimensionality and offer patterning options for cooperative interaction.



Analytical comments and experiential expressions will be elicited, with reinforcement for learning statements that encourage active, centered, focused leadership styles within the groups.

Transferring One Kind of Learning to Another

↳ “Knowing How To Lead” requires knowing how to do the thing you’re going to lead others to do, even if only in a simple or general way. It’s a doing thing, as much as a thinking thing.



↳ Instigating movement means **deciding and doing**. *Form a picture* in your mind: how do will things look when you’re done? *Look around*: where will this happen? *Take a breath* to prepare for the movement. *Look where you’re going*. Then *move forward*.



↳ **Bringing others along with you** is the final part—not the first! Others follow clear direction best: *codify within yourself* what they can do, so they can follow. Once you are sure, *look around*: be sure they are with you, *take a breath, look up*, and *move forward*.

Group & Individual Movement

Physical aspects of “leading”



Alvin Ailey Company, 'Honor,' from *Revelations*

Exhalation, Gathering, Inhalation

Deliberate action

Inclusivity

Ongoing pastoral awareness

of cohort abilities and limitations.



Gabrielle Romero, Studio 65,
Los Angeles, CA

Warm-ups

Preparatory exercises



Lavani: Indian dance once done by the Maratha Army

Drawn from

a range of movement options and

a diverse Eastern/Western dance vocabulary

Inform

the activity's dimensionality and

offer patterning options

for cooperative interaction.



Wedding Dance: The Punjabi Folk Dance Group



ABHIVYAKTI – Bangalore Dancer

Include: Gestural

Postural

Locomotor movement

Armature for the Work

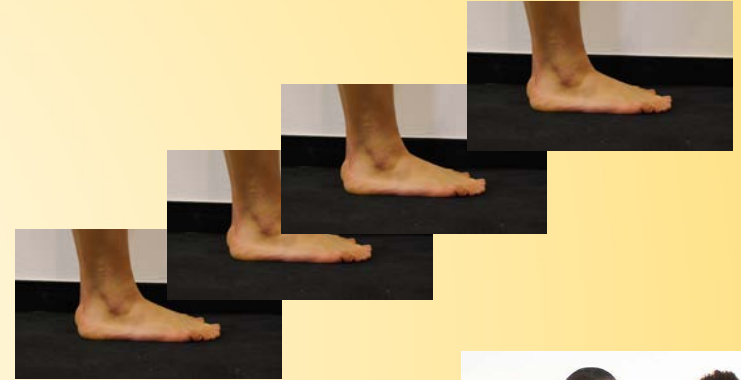


*Breathe in.
Center yourself.
Move one foot forward.
Take a step. Breathe.*

*Breathe in.
Take another step.
Go faster.*

Annnd....on your own time....Runnnn!

*Rest, breathe, begin again.
Now bring someone with you.
Keep moving, together or apart.*



Examples and Ideas about Leadership

Some Models for Drawing Others into the Work:

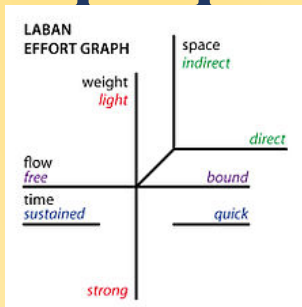
1. Enticing - When Liza Minelli was cast in “Cabaret,” she did her homework, watching films & speaking with cabaret performers.

One individual whose work she incorporated was Charles Aznavour’s gestural expressivity, especially his ‘come hither’ outreach, with arm and hand, pulling in auditors.

Erotic? Promising? See Lindholm’s book, *Charisma*, for more about charismatic, enticing leadership.



2. Following – Dance therapist B. Kalish (pp.38-40) ‘echoed’ Effort/Shape qualities to establish non-verbal communication in a child client.



Finally, Sarah moved from bound, self-hitting movements to more integrated gestures and postures, crawling into her therapist’s lap and imitating verbal sounds, a session goal.

Leadership involved empathic echoing and direction.

Examples and Ideas about Leadership

Some Models for Drawing Others into the Work:



Jubilee: Ghana Harvest Festival, J. Biggers, Houston MFA

1. Galvanizing - Strong, accented sounds & acrobatic movements draw onlookers in, at times transforming them into dancers.

In some circular African dance gatherings, individuals lead part of the event, or go

into the center of the circle to dance. Such dances in Ghana, notated by O. Blum and painted by American artist J. Biggers, foster a sense of communal belonging and resonant, centered action.

2. Performing – Hodges' *Play Direction* (p. 166) includes a diagram showing how a performed theater work influences the receptive audience such that they become *audience / participants*. Observers do not join in the action physically; their own empathically imagined responses are effective.



Analytical Comments, Experiential Expressions

Verbalizations of Individual and Group Experiences



To be elicited
with reinforcement for learning statements

that encourage
active
centered
focused



leadership styles within groups





Nancy Stark Smith Dance (see URL below)



Teen's March, 03.24.2018, protesting gun violence
(see URL below)

THE END (FOR NOW)



Selma, AL, 1965, at the P. Bridge: MLK, CSKing above, R



Thanks for your Attention!

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The 418 Project (see URL below)



Velocity Dance Center (see URL below)



Questions To Ask Yourself When Considering Diversity In Your Own Classroom and Teaching Style



(Read and think about these, first. Then answer them. Try to have examples in mind)

- 1) What have you changed about your classroom teaching, student mentoring, or interactions with colleagues in an effort to reach everyone for shared success?
- 2) How do you take a step back and think about audience when teaching or mentoring to ensure the message you need to send will be appropriately received and acted upon?
- 3) What have you learned as a result of teaching students who don't learn the way you did that makes you a more effective teacher?
- 4) As you moved out of your childhood comfort zone where everyone shared the same assumptions and expectations of behavior, what have you learned about how unspoken assumptions influence communities?
- 5) What things did you learn intellectually and then really grasp emotionally the significance after spending time with students and colleagues who don't share your background?
- 6) How do you demonstrate that you relate to students as people with their own dreams, goals, and desires?
- 7) How have you contributed to a positive work environment with colleagues by accepting 'Some People Are Different From You' (SPADFY) as a true statement?

Questions To Ask Yourself When Considering Diversity In Your Own Classroom and Teaching Style:

(Answer these after reading them and thinking about them for a while, first. Try to have examples in mind)

- 1) What have you changed about your classroom teaching, student mentoring, or interactions with colleagues in an effort to reach everyone for shared success?
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SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP POINTS AND PROCEDURES
For “Dance as an Ethical Icon of Moral Action
and Communal Responsibility” Workshop
Community of Scholars Day
March 28, 2018
by Donna La Rue

Intro: Names/Short intro, then begin moving.

Discuss the two small table sculptures

1. Three wooden figures, arms intertwined;
2. One metal figure *en attitude*

The combination of a strong, appealing performance (like no. 2) and the interactive strength of the group (no. 1) are both needed to make leadership work.

1. **Enable:** Movement warm-up: Center floor, circle: begin in parallel, arms relaxed, neck loose

- a) feet/knees (gestural)
- b) upper torso, waist (postural)
- c) integrated movement in space (locomotor)
 1. Following leader’s movements
 2. Free-form/Own movements
 3. Prepare for step 3 by imagining movements you might like to do if you could (if the leader weren’t telling you to do other things...)

2. **Discussion #1:** Visit resources table: Summary/workshop (Enable, Envision, Enact)

Look at Ppt info (see .pdf of Ppt also in this filing)

How to Draw Others In: (Enticing, Following, Gathering, Performing)

- a. Enticing: See Lindholm in bibliography,
See also these two videos:
 1. Liza Minelli/Cabaret
 2. Charles Aznavour
 3. Liza Minelli/interview
- b. Following: See Kalish article in bibliography
- c. Galvanizing: See *Danses Ethniques*, in bibliography)
- d. Performing: See Hodge (p. 113) in bibliography
 1. “Improvisations” of the playwright, director, actors, designers, and audience.
 2. “Kinesthetic Empathy” The audience, or “audience/participants,” pick up on these combined improvisations, interact imaginatively with them

3. **Envision:** Walk around again, envisioning the movements

you thought about doing before.

This time, do them: explore your movement until you have a version you’d like to share.

Share your movements (going around the circle)

4. **Discussion #2:** Choices in leadership:

Does the leader get their own way? Does each person contribute something?

Do you do different things at the same time, or sequentially?

Does the image of the leader as strong, independent performer work when you need to get many people involved in an activity?

5. **Enact:**

1. Working with a partner, combine your movements, or do one or the other person’s movement
Share those combined movements (going around the circle).
2. Combining the partners in groups, recombine your movements to make a movement sequence.
3. Discuss together how those combinations happened within each group
4. Discuss together any other observations about the process or anything else we’ve done in the class.