Dance Theory and Composition
21M.675 Fall, 2008
F 2-5pm 50-201
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Description
This course will introduce students to the art and formal ideologies of contemporary dance. We will explore the aesthetic and technical underpinnings of contemporary dance composition. Basic compositional techniques will be discussed and practiced, to create an awareness of principles such as weight, space, time, effort, and shape. Principles of musicality and rhythmic presence will be considered and developed by each student. Working with each other as the raw material of the dance, students will develop short compositions that reveal their understanding of basic techniques. Hopefully, students will come to understand a range of compositional possibilities available to artists who work with the medium of the human body.

The class will be conducted as a workshop, with strength and coordination exercises leading to exploratory exercises in each class meeting. Selected viewing and reading exercises will form the basis for weekly composition exercises to be augment classroom work. In addition, the class will attend at least one professional dance event in the Boston area.

This course will be an introductory-level offering. Students with no dance background should take Introduction to Acting before enrolling. Students with dance background may petition the instructor to enroll.

Viewings will be made available on the class website. There is no required text for this class.

Requirements:

**Contribution to the Warmup**  At two or three intervals during the semester, each students will contribute movement to the warmup sequence of the class. The contribution could involve any of the following:

- **Focusing Sequence**
  Movements designed to aid in relaxation, breath control, and careful focus of energy into specific body parts

- **Stretching Sequence**
  Movements designed to stretch particular body parts such as spine, neck, and legs

- **Strengthening Sequence**
  Movements designed to strengthen particular muscle groups, such as those in the arms, abdomen, and legs

- **Balancing Sequence**
  Movements designed to challenge sustained mastery of balance

**Compositions**  Each student will present composition fragments over the course of the semester. The projects will be created in response to in-class discussions and viewings. Course musician Akili Jamal Haynes will be available to work with students. Each student will prepare a final composition excerpt based on principles from the entire semester.

**Written Response**  Each student will create a written analysis of their final project that offers an overview of their approach to the composition. The written paper should synthesize material from the entire semester, and offer evidence of choices made and discarded in the process of creating the final project.
Special Events

We will work with visiting guest artist Neta Pulvermacher in class on September 12, 19, and 26.

Neta Pulvermacher was born and raised in Kibbutz Lehavot Habashan, Israel. She graduated from Juilliard in 1985 and holds an MFA from the ADF/Hollins University. She founded The Neta Dance Company in 1987 and since then has choreographed over 65 works for her company and for numerous ballet and modern companies. Her company tours throughout the US as well as in Europe and Israel. Neta is an Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of Florida. She has choreographed for director, Mira Nair’s feature film, The Namesake, which was released in March of 2007. Most recently she was invited to the MANCC at FSU to work with the Limón Dance Company. She is the founder and producer of the A.W.A.R.D. Show! which now takes place in New York, Florida and Utah. Recent commissions include: Matte Asher Dance Company in Israel, Frank Sinatra High School for the Arts, Klor Music and Dance Center in Israel, Roger Williams University, and others. She is the proud mother of Alon.

Upcoming projects: Lady Justice Rides the Wagon (a site Specific Work with real NY women judges) at City Hall Park and a New York season which will include the premiere of the full length Air in fall 2008.

We will attend a performance by Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane at the ICA Friday October 24 at 8pm

Resources

project: create autobiographical sketch

“MC 14/22 (ceci est mon corps)” (2001) by Angelin Prejlocaj
project: arrange everyday gestures

“Silver” by Wim Vandekeybus (1997)
project: stage a fight

“Esplanade” by Paul Taylor (1975)
project: composition of walking and standing still

project: seated composition

“Accumulation with Talking” by Trisha Brown (1978)
project: accumulation with text

project: composition with deconstructed social dances

“Variations VII” by John Cage (1966)
project: composition with technology

Grading

Grading will be determined by an assessment of class participation, the extent to which exercises are fully explored, and the achievement of self-designed challenges set out for each student. There will be at least one performance event: an informal showing of material created with guest artist Neta Pulvermacher, Sunday September 28 at 2pm in Kresge Little Theater.