

Teaching Philosophy – Dance Performance/Education  
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My teaching philosophy centers around creating a positive and inclusive learning environment that fosters creativity, skills development, self-expression, and confidence in one's capabilities. As an instructor that prepares students for an industry that requires grit, self-discipline, and professionalism, I am responsible for nurturing employable humans and artists who believe in their abilities to create and maintain a professional performance career. Years beyond their time with me in the classroom, students will constantly be putting themselves on the line at auditions looking for work, facing subjective judgment from potential employers. I seek to empower my students with the belief that they can handle any audition they attend because they believe in their skillset and understand that whenever one door closes, there are several others open just waiting for them.

A combination of experiences contributes to my teaching practices: my university dance training, my university faculty positions, my choreographic collaborations with other OCU departments, and my performance career, where I have worked internationally on cruise ships and locally with a professional dance company. I also draw from my professional career as the Executive Director of RACE Dance Collective, a nonprofit dance organization whose mission is to ignite social awareness and change. I have worked with various artists and organizations to bring accessible art to the OKC community. Through these shared experiences, I've learned the value behind collaboration, the impact of serving others with intention, and how dance is an accessible language between all communities. As I help curate the next generation of professional artists in an academic setting, I aim to cultivate a room of individuals inspired by their potential success as artists and the kinds of contributions they can give to the world.

As a dance educator, I approach my classes as a communal space where the dancers in the room are free to increase their knowledge of specific techniques, and creative output by exploring movement prompts using the space as a canvas to create. Through trial and error and repetition, students become better equipped to handle a performance career's mental and physical demands by learning how to learn. They seek answers through questions, problem-solve at their own pace, observe their peers, make mistakes, and learn from them. I prioritize creating a safe and supportive space where students learn to become vulnerable in an environment where they feel comfortable taking risks. I remind them that I don't seek perfection, but I seek progress. The only way to progress is to be willing to experiment with the exercises given, embody new ways of thinking, and test the limits of what they think they can do. Creative discovery has no boundaries, and each student's journey is not like another's; I constantly remind my students that their journey is unique to them alone, and with the learning tools I provide for them, they have the power to develop more personal kinesthetic awareness and take ownership of their movement expression and abilities. This ownership builds confidence and empowerment to embrace an industry that constantly requires vulnerability in a room with strangers. Winston Churchill said best: "Success is not final; failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." My goal is that the experiences and skills learned in my classes promote confidence in what they can offer the professional working industry because they have been motivated in my classes to push themselves through challenging material and achieve their goals.

Before presenting any material in my courses, I always clarify the movement's intention and goals. I design each element with a specific purpose to help students be sustainable and malleable in an industry that demands high-quality execution with tenacity and some vulnerability. Regardless of the technique I am teaching, I pull from my background of technical styles and teaching perspectives I have gained from my own experiences as a teacher and student so that students learn how to integrate my approach to movement into their bodies. I also take time to lean into historical insights, which develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of dance techniques and its culture. Much of my content aims to physically push my students to build correct execution of technical fundamentals, strengthen and condition for injury prevention, and build mental stamina to increase retention and attention to detail. With an emphasis on body alignment, core strength, shifting through space, musicality, and dynamics, students explore these ideas within the exercises given and gain an understanding of the relationship between the movement and their artistic expressions (performance quality). As their instructor, I provide other investigative tools such as physical demonstrations, verbal counts and sounds, imagery, and time for personal assessment. By critically thinking about dance, students develop skills in observing and evaluating dance, whether on their bodies or others, learning how to learn in any competitive environment. They also gain understanding that dance is more than just mastering steps and technique; it's about using movement to communicate ideas, emotions, and stories.

As an active choreographer, performer, and artistic leader in my community, many projects I engage with influence my work. Artists are life-long students through self-discovery, and I am deeply committed to continual learning. I find ways to take classes, attend auditions, and collaborate with other artists in the field so I have relevant information to carry into my courses. Hence, my students are well-informed and equipped for professional demands. I consistently learn from my students, peers, and other artists and teachers who have come before me. I continually observe, train, research, and collaborate to create meaningful experiences and tangible tools for my students.

Lastly, my teaching philosophy is a living document. As I continue to grow and learn from the world around me, I reconsider my teaching practices to align with where I am as an artist and how I fit within the industry and educational standards. I draw from current and past experiences to ensure I meet students where they are and find new ways for them to navigate through the physical and mental demands artists face. More than anything, I hope that my classes provide a positive learning experience that empowers students to navigate through any professional setting because they have learned to believe that they are capable of great things, regardless of the challenges presented to them.