



**We learn most easily when relatively relaxed and comfortable and able to express curiosity freely.**

(Shafarman, 1997, p192)

## **A Pedagogical Approach**

Detta Howe

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**...practice of movement, in and of itself, without awareness, does not make perfect: practice only makes automatic.**

(Goldfarb, 1990, p140)

## **Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to share a pedagogical research pathway that offers a progression of taught movement sessions with the intention of enabling students to establish a sense of how to learn from their body. To actively take part in being their own teacher; informing, directing and making choices to allow new learning to take place. This new approach to my teaching has evolved both during and as a result of an exploration of my current dance practice. Here my intention has been to re-establish my interest and curiosity in the human form. Through intense physical practice, working closely with ideas of noticing and listening to the body, my knowledge and understanding of the potential to learn from the body has grown in depth and as a consequence the possibilities now seem endless.

As a result of this research I would like to encourage students to explore, listen to and learn from their own bodies; in short, to become aware. In doing so I believe that not only their technique training will become more fruitful but the transfer of this knowledge into the realm of performance will transform the experience of the moment of movement and will enhance the quality of the material performed.

## **Reasons**

The main reason for applying a new approach to my pedagogical practice evolved through my increased attention to noticing. Through my practice led research I became aware of how much of my movement went by unnoticed, absent from my awareness. I realised through repetition, habits of doing had formed a barrier around my body and that my learning had almost come to a standstill. I had fallen into a pattern of automatic responding and largely unconscious movement rather than searching for something new. I began to realise that my training and consequent career had layered my body with shape, sequence, qualities and movement patterns which were now smothering my ability to see, listen, respond and be within the moment of moving. I recognised the need to start with a blank canvas and allow myself to relearn and appreciate movement at its root, applying the colour of new knowledge, awareness and sensation. To enable this new picture to take shape I needed to remove the layers of history, habit and pattern to find something new, to re-discover what it is to be present and alive, negating moments of absence and nourishing the experience of dancing for the dancer.

## **Influences**

This work has been practically influenced by the work of Deborah Hay, Matthias Sperling, Malcolm Manning and latterly Moshe Feldenkrais and theoretically by the writing of Drew Leder and Lorna Marshall, among others.

The following maps a brief chronological explanation to explain the history of my current thinking, highlighting how, where and when the formation of these ideas came into being.

The story of my re-learning began during a period of Research and Development with Matthias Sperling in the summer of 2010. At that time his work was heavily influenced by the work of Deborah Hay and so, I was introduced to her philosophy of movement. The importance of noticing was paramount and here I realised for the first time how much I had been missing. Hay's working method is to offer questions, suggestions and proposition to challenge the dancer, to stay away from what they know and to explore another world without restriction, in an attempt to expose something new. Hay explains

I was inspired to construct a verbal dance vocabulary that merged personal and universal images. I wanted to include the sensual experiences of perception. With the help of language, I wanted to simplify access to dancing while expanding the territory from which a dancer could draw immediate kinaesthetic experience. (Hay, 2000, pxxiii)

In her book, *'my body, the buddhist'*, Hay refers to her work in contrast to more conventional dance teaching where the dancer '...works to master...shapings and timings and, through the process learns, what the body can and cannot do.' Hay's approach

...constructs body as a site of exploration to which the dancer must remain vigilantly attentive....teaching themselves by attending rigorously to the body's impulses. (Ibid, pxiv)

For this to happen it is necessary to '...acknowledge the constant changing of body in consciousness.'(Ibid, pxiii)

Hay's work didn't necessarily highlight an awareness of the structure and make-up of the body but through participating in practice with Sperling, I became intrigued by these aspects through the process of listening and noticing and then responding to what was heard, felt or sensed.

My contemporary dance teaching up until this point has focussed on musicality, rhythm, shape, design, working with the unexpected and creating often quirky, sometimes inorganic movement sequences. Attention would focus on quality, content and the transitional flow of the material, highlighting weight, dynamics and use of space, focus and the presence of the performer in the material.

The experience of working with Hay's principles however, led me to think more about where the movement came from and 'how' the material was formed rather than 'what' was happening. With attention to the 'how,' the 'what' felt so different and informed the movement in a way that took it from being something on the surface to something more within. The depth of my learning and understanding altered dramatically and as a result changed my thinking about movement in both the rehearsal studio, the technique class and as a consequence, in performance.

I believe that we actually limit ourselves by an undue and erroneous emphasis on *what* is important...at the neglect of *how*.

(Feldenkrais, 1981, p99)

So, my practical exploration continued, expanding my attention to noticing and my awareness of the body in motion.

Alongside this journey I became familiar with the work of Drew Leder and his writing about *The Absent Body*. Leder writes

While in one sense the body is the most abiding and inescapable presence in our lives, it is also essentially characterised by absence....When reading a book or lost in thought, my own bodily state may be the farthest thing from my awareness. I experientially dwell in a world of ideas, paying little heed to my physical sensations or posture.

(Leder cited in Zarrilli, 1995, p49)

It was not until I began to take the time to listen to my body that I became aware of how much of it went by unnoticed both in life in general and in the dance studio. I would rarely think about the movement of my spine in space or the back of my body, the spaces around my body or how it actually felt to walk. So intent on the needs of the day ahead or making sequences of material for a technique class or movement for a piece of choreography, my attention tended to be outside, on the shape, design and piecing together of the material and the fulfilment of the day's needs. Leder continues

When we fix our visual focus upon that which lies spatially and temporally ahead, the back of the body is comparatively forgotten. It is absorbed into background disappearance. (Ibid, p50)

Leder's work introduced the idea of 4 layers of the body; the 'ecstatic' surface body, the 'recessive' visceral body, the 'aesthetic' 'inner' body mind and the aesthetic 'outer' body, (Ibid, p 50-54) each taking a step further into the body, opening up the possibility of new sensations and discoveries within our often neglected form. Leder details the complexity of each of the layers, but for the purposes of this paper I will provide a simple outline which highlights the reason for my illustration of his work. The surface body, which Leder also refers to as the 'flesh,' contains the senses that connect us with the outside world. The recessive body refers to '...the deep, inner, visceral body of corporeal depths...' (Ibid, p53) including the workings of the internal organs and '...other processes enveloped by the body surface'. (Ibid, p54) The 'aesthetic' inner body mind brings into play the notion of awareness and experiencing, the layer of importance in relation to this research. Phillip Zarrilli explains that a heightened awareness comes from an embodied practice that engages '... the physical body and attention (mind) in cultivating and attuning both to subtle levels of experience and awareness. (Ibid, p55) For the majority, this is a layer of experiencing that will never be explored and will remain 'unknown' (Zarrilli, 1995, p55) but for those working with the body, with an interest in self-discovery and attuning the mind and body to work as one then this layer

can be revealed through practice.

The aesthetic outer body refers to a '...set of actions/tasks ....offered for the abstractive gaze of the spectator...' (Ibid, p57) for example a character played by an actor or dancer experiencing both the inner self as well as that of another. Leder explains that this experience '...knits together all the 'bodies' as a gestalt within which there is a constant dialectic movement between ecstatic and recessive states with respect to each of the bodies.' (Leder 1990, cited in Zarrilli, p58)

My reading and understanding of Leder exposed my practice to the potential depth of learning that could be acquired from both listening and responding to the body, experiencing a visceral connection with my bones, muscles and nervous system that I hadn't been exposed to before. Zarrilli refers to the '...depth....associated with our deep visceral experience....where the boundaries between inner and outer....become more porous.' (Zarrilli, 1995, p59)

Working in this way allows the participant to '...discover an alternative relationship to time through the body' in which they are encouraged to stay here, present in the body, rather than always trying to get somewhere else, as Zarrilli suggests, offering the possibility of '...re-cognize-ing oneself through exercise'. (Ibid, p190)

In *The Body Speaks*, teacher, director and performance consultant, Lorna Marshall provides more support for my developing thinking, suggesting that

...most of the time we are totally unaware of what our body is doing. Patterning takes us out of contact, and we have no sense of what is physically happening, moment by moment. (Marshall, 2001, p11)

Her writing explores '...the process of becoming connected,'

To extend our range beyond that which we already know. To develop alternative areas of freedom and control; new techniques, new styles, new physical possibilities. (Ibid, 2001, pxiii)

Marshall's writing highlights all of which I hope to explore within this research and provides a useful reference to return to as a continuous source of fuel for my developing awareness.

## **Practice**

As part of my research I have participated in many classes with practitioners whose work had a similar underlying principle to enhance my learning and general knowledge of other current practices, including Soto Hoffman, Nicole Piesl and Andrea Buckley. It was Malcolm Manning however, who was highly influential in my understanding and perception of the body in motion. His work encouraged awareness of movement by working with very simple ideas and injecting a variety of ways of thinking about the movement to expand the dancer's awareness and perception, offering opportunities to experience the movement in another way. A simple example to illustrate this is an idea

he sometimes works with when walking. He would offer the suggestion to imagine the foot having only one bone to experience how that might feel to walk, then to imagine 26 bones and then 2000, to notice a difference of attention to the foot, to how it is used and how things can possibly change with attention drawn to thoughts not considered before. Manning trained as a Feldenkrais practitioner and generally tends to end his classes with an ATM (Awareness through Movement), one of many movement exercises developed by Moshe Feldenkrais. The result of my experiences with Manning intrigued and inspired my learning about the effect of the mind on the body and as a consequence I continued to pursue the Feldenkrais practice further.

Moshe Feldenkrais developed his practice, Awareness through Movement, as a result of a knee injury he acquired through his judo practice and was told that he would always suffer with this problem even with an operation. So, with a heavily scientific background he applied his understanding of physics to the skeleton and began a lifetime's work of learning how to feed the body via the nervous system with very simple movement instructions. All with the aim of releasing tension, finding a freedom and ease of motion through an efficient use of the body and relieving both physical and emotional pain. Most importantly, he was interested in helping people learn how to learn, to self-correct, enhancing the term 'organic learning' as a way to inform, enrich and nourish our too often neglected bodies.

To my mind, learning that allows further growth of the structures and their functioning is the one that leads to new and different ways of doing things I already know how to do. This kind of learning increases my ability to choose more freely. Having only a single mode of action means my choice is limited to simply acting or not acting. (Feldenkrais, 1981, p35)

Feldenkrais describes his movement lessons '...where the accent is put not on which movement you deal with but on how you direct yourself doing it.' (Ibid, p36)

This philosophy relates to the ideas presented in the following sequence of lessons, offering tasks with accompanying thoughts to allow the dancer to self-direct and consequently self-learn, through listening to their bodies.

Feldenkrais explains that Awareness through Movement '... leads to knowledge of oneself and to previous undiscovered resources in oneself.' (Ibid, p94)

But what does Feldenkrais mean by awareness?

Awareness as Moshe understood it, involves consciousness plus knowledge. To know what we are doing and learn, we need to be aware. Awareness links self and environment, inner experience with outer world, enabling us to be here, now, whole. (Zarrilli, 1995, p196)

'With awareness, comes the experience of difference and the possibility of choice.'  
(Goldfarb, 1990, p139)

This is the main intention underlying my work. I will attempt to offer a variety of choices

within the dance studio to support a dancer in their technique classes and within the realm of performance. Encouraging the student to enable, enrich and engage in ways that may otherwise be ignored, undiscovered and preventing possibilities of new learning from taking place. Highlighting the importance of becoming one's own teacher in preparation for leaving the learning institution and working as an independent artist in the field, instilling the strength and will power to continue the learning pathway with an interest that has developed through this experience of learning.

With these classes the aim is not essentially to make the dancers look good or become more technically accomplished although there may be neurological change and new physical understanding that does have an effect. The idea is to allow the dancers the freedom to explore new or retreat back to those first moments of movement that intrigued them as a child. Dancing and exploration before technique took over and moving became about trying to be like another, to achieve and emulate that of their teacher. Not that I am negating the importance of this aspect within a dancers learning but the intention of these classes is to offer a moment of freedom and release to explore the self within a programme of conventional technique classes which strengthen and explore a variety of movement styles.

## Teaching

**The way I teach my students to work is to bring them into conditions where they can learn to think.  
(Feldenkrais, 1981, Lecture at San Diego, Mandala Conference, p88)**

In his preliminary notes to a theory for Feldenkrais, Lawrence Goldfarb explains that the '...teachers role is to somehow assist the student in kinaesthetically informing herself or himself.' Guiding the student

...in the process of making new distinctions...to feel different and therefore, to be able to move in new ways. (Goldfarb, 1990, p134)

The Feldenkrais method allows

...the student to have a new experience of moving, of being embodied, which breaks cycles of habituation and leads to awareness from which learning can proceed. (Ibid, p139)

A movement lesson is a conversation in which the student learns to articulate movement and to move more articulately. (Ibid, p138)

The Feldenkrais method offers a change to the way we think and by adapting the thinking process within the studio, I am attempting to offer the dancers an opportunity to

re-engage with who they are and how they move without always needing the safety blanket of steps to rely on. These can often prevent thinking from occurring, resorting to a comfortable place where learning stops, as copying is something that the body knows. Much time is taken with learning the movement of others throughout dance training and often we don't listen to or acknowledge how we move ourselves in order that we can use that information in a technique class. This knowledge could enable more clarity and efficiency of one's own body movements, having time to notice habits, allowing them to potentially dissolve or at least with awareness having the choice to notice and work with them or against them.

The intention behind the sequence of teaching sessions within this paper will allow the student to explore a different element each week to gradually shift layers of patterning and open up pathways that may not have been explored before. It will expose sight, sound and sensation that may have been hidden by unconscious patterning and past learning, experiencing moving again, as if for the first time.

Some students may accept and understand this way of working more than others, but whether a beginner or with experience, the learning is limitless.

Each segment within the teaching could be explored for two or three weeks to really get to the bones of the idea. Or another approach could be to introduce a few of the ideas and then return to them, allowing the processing over time to have an effect on the dancers understanding. These thoughts need to be explored in the studio to see which method would be the most effective.

My teaching approach will aim to be less physically active, therefore not giving the dancers something to copy or 'try to be like'. The emphasis for me and the skill that I am currently trying to develop is how to give enough verbal stimuli to allow this new learning to take place.

**Aim** (Awareness in Motion)

**Only with constant surveillance and reassessment can one progress to new actions, orientations and adjustments.**

**(Feldenkrais, 2010, p102)**

The aim of these sessions is to provide students with the skills to learn how to learn from their own bodies, moving away from habit and lack of awareness to being conscious of what is happening in the body as a way to find ease of motion. The students will not be given steps and sequences to follow but will be given the opportunity to discover through the experience of awareness and being awake to their learning as it is happening. Each session will involve improvisation alone or in small groups and time permitting, a known sequence will be shared to experience that material with new thoughts in mind. This may then allow a renewed relationship with a previously experienced movement sequence, transferring the new knowledge of motion



to their more structured technique material, providing them with other areas to direct their focus which may enrich the doing and being within a dance class.

The use of improvisation in this context is to allow for personal time and exploration rather than to develop material for a piece of choreography.

I recognise that some ideas may take longer than others dependent on the student group in terms of level and ability and will respond to the needs of the group and also to the feedback attained through discussion alongside the material experienced.

The intention is that the student will carry the material learnt from week to week, absorbing more information through awareness and attention and apply the freedom of motion, the new learning, into more abstract situations which challenge both mind and body. Offering more tools to play with when choreographing, in technique classes and importantly to transfer and apply in performance.

The intended result of this work is to encourage and develop a thinking, intelligent body that can learn from listening. A dancer interested in more than just the steps, one who might learn to question, what if I move more, what if I move less, will there be a difference, will I move with more ease and efficiency? Importantly noticing what moving with awareness can do to the dancing/performing body?

The progression of these sessions is aimed to work from the outside in, in the first four/five week block and then again from the outside in, in the second four/five week block before taking the inside knowledge learnt to the outside, connecting the two worlds together and allowing the internal learning to be shared within performance. This work has the potential to transform the potential repetitive nature of classes and tour dates from a re-enactment of the material to a constantly evolving, live process of awareness and re-invention or new experience of the material.

A skeleton will be used at times to access the inner structure of the body, connecting with the inside, seeing it and then sensing it in movement. Other images and visual aid via computer will be used when appropriate.

Partner work will be incorporated when required to enhance sensation, an outside touch to enhance awareness in specific areas.

### **Who are these classes for?**

I would suggest that this work would be more suitable for those with at least 2 to 3 years of dance training. These students should have an understanding and good knowledge of movement so they can be challenged on another level and discover a new layer to the moving body. However, there is also the thought that those students with less technical training may be more open to the ideas and discover a way of working and

thinking that will then inform and influence the way that they pursue their continued technique training.

So far I have worked with 4<sup>th</sup> year students who have acknowledged benefits to their technique classes and dancing in general but I would be interested to explore the work with younger dancers as well as those in the profession to gather more information as to the positives and negatives and as a way of developing the ideas for different levels of ability.

I would also suggest that this work would be beneficial for actors or any field which requires movement and performance as a premise, for example gymnasts, athletes, swimmers. Even those that are office bound would benefit from an awareness of the body to recognise and respect the body and allow for rest and change, to encourage working with efficiency, comfort and ease.

## **Summary**

The following teaching ideas attempts to bring together the philosophies of Deborah Hay and Moshe Feldenkrais, playing with a variety of thoughts and suggestions and blending these ideas with my own developing understanding of what it is to be aware of movement whilst moving and how much can be learnt from the process of awareness, attention and the ability to listen.

Enhancing the art of noticing - To notice what is seen, felt and sensed, as well as seeing, feeling and sensing that which is noticed, encouraging a new engagement with the body.

I have included student feedback and self-evaluations on some of the teaching sessions offered in practice so far.

## **AIM – Awareness in Motion**

**All performance work begins and ends in the body...The body is an organism of endless adaptability. A knee can think, a finger can laugh, a belly can cry, a brain can walk and a buttock listen.**

**(Schechner 1973, p132, cited in Zarrilli, 1995, p14)**

**12 classes designed to allow the dancer to explore new possibilities of motion through awareness and new ways of thinking.**

### **1. Four introductions and Seeing**

The idea of the first session is to introduce a very simple idea and for new students to get to know each other.

A 'getting to know you improvisation.'

This would include four meetings with someone new each time and introducing yourself with movement that you think best describes you. With each meeting the material needs to be different.

What do you notice? What happens to the material? Can you make it different each time? How did you do that and which time do you think best described you?

This will be different for each student. Some might find this very difficult. The idea being to introduce the potential that there is more to us than we first might think. Our movement history will all be very different but there will be a depth to it that may have been forgotten. Although it may not all be retrieved in this task, it is hoped that by the end of this module of sessions that layers of movement potential will be unlocked and made more accessible, so that if this same task were to be repeated at the end of the course the four moments offered would be different and more easily accessible.

It would be interesting to video this at the beginning and then at the end of the course to see if the dancer can see a development in their thinking and moving as well as the audience.

- The second part of the session would then take the dancers on a journey looking at how we develop and evolve as humans, beginning with spending the early stages of our lives lying down either on our back or front, before learning to roll, crawl, sit and eventually developing the strength and co-ordination to stand.

This idea began from a moment of noticing and thinking about the development of a baby to an infant to an adult and then to a senior citizen, towards the end of their lives resorting back to more sitting and eventually lying down.

## Draw

I realised the curve of our eye line and how the horizon changes within that evolution and wanted to explore and notice that change of seeing within the studio as a simple exploration to introduce the students to seeing.

- Begin lying on the floor, noticing the weight of the body giving in to the floor. Notice the difference between lying on the front and back, the difference in weight distribution, what becomes the foreground in each position.
- Initially try this with the eyes shut and then try both with the eyes open and notice what you see. When lying on the front begin to lift the head to allow the focus to explore the front and the sides, whilst on the back, exploring the above, the sides and behind. Very much moving in a way of a baby, developing the strength needed to hold the head to explore the world around him/her.
- By way of increasing the mobility of the body, begin to allow the eyes to lead the movement and extend the floor exploration with curving, extending, folding and unfolding, as you begin to increase the motion and exploration towards the sitting position. Noticing how the horizon changes, the freedom and expansion of movement. Continue to improvise with the sitting to the lying position and back to sitting, exploring different pathways and notice what you see each time.
- The sitting position can begin to make its way to a standing position, moving in a variety of ways to get there and very much paying attention to the expanse of the horizon that becomes available with the ability to stand, twist and turn. Again, reversing the pathway back to sitting and lying, importantly pausing at any point along the way to rest, notice and see.
- In threes, explore the same ideas but this time with freedom of movement from standing to lying to standing to sit, rather than having to go through each in turn. Responding also the people you are dancing with so that there is not more than one in each position initially. Here having the opportunity to notice your own seeing and the seeing of others, experiencing orientation; your own, others and your orientation in the space with others.
- This improvisation can develop without the restraint of always having one in each position, allowing more freedom of play. Noticing what happens if all three sit, stand or lie down. How does the orientation alter, what else do you notice as dancers and importantly what is noticed by the rest of the class watching.

Questioning, are you now more aware of seeing than you were and has this affected how you are moving. Can you explain why?

## 2. **Front of body, back of body** - in vision and awareness (possibly two sessions).

- Pilates exercises to engage with the core and introduce ideas of noticing the front of the body and the less noticed back of the body.
- Up to standing and walking continuing engagement with ideas that have been introduced, encouraging the noticing of the feet, ankles, knees, hips, spine, ribs, neck and head whilst walking.
- Back to stillness and standing. Notice whole vision in front, 180% of peripheral vision – take in the whole picture, with a sense of what is behind. Then turn to face the other direction and take in the new picture keeping a sense of behind and notice how that changes the body. Repeat the walk and notice if there is a difference, keeping attention to the front and back of the body.
- Back to stillness and allow the weight of the body to shift on the feet, initiating with the head leading the direction of motion and then the pelvis, as a way of massaging the feet and also continuing the theme of shifting the weight forward and back, noticing the sides.
- With these thoughts in mind, add the idea of allowing the air to move you. Ask to student to lift their arms to the side. Then suggest that they try again but this time it is the air that allows the movement to happen. Notice the change.
- Explore this idea with the whole body, letting the air move you and also maintaining engagement with the front and back space and body.
- Try the same idea but this time travelling across the space.

Opening thoughts and questions whilst dancing – what do you see, what do you notice, are you aware of absence, where do you feel most present. Try not to think about what you're doing...let the space move you.

### **Students Feedback–**

Became so much easier to move  
Less decision making  
More freedom  
Noticed the whole of me – 360%

### 3. Moving towards and away

- Begin with Pilates strengthening to introduce the ideas of moving towards or away from either the ground underneath you or the different parts of the body. (sit ups and long legged bridge) again working way up to standing.
- In walking, this time notice an object or space in the room and walk towards it, then turn your back on it and notice what happens when you keep your attention on it but walk away. Try this a few times.
- Notice walking with the eyes leading the motion and then notice the difference if you move in the opposite direction to the eyes.
- Back to standing and notice how the body feels. Allow the head to move to the left and right to highlight the central axis of the spine, imagining a nose at the back of the head to re-enforce the idea of having a back of the body. What happens, how does this feel?
- In a circle, walk towards each other, then turn and walk away but with attention to where you are leaving.
- Walk to shake someone's hand thinking about the front of the body and then repeat with attention to the back of the body – what do you notice.
- Then across the floor, travelling, allowing the space to move you and noticing choices of either paying attention to the front space, the back space or both. What does this do to your movement?
- Finally in two's and three's, explore the same ideas. Can you engage within a duet or trio and still play with the ideas of towards and away. Not necessarily moving towards and away from the others but having the internal sense of noticing what is behind when attention is forward and vice versa. Also, changing within the improvisation, to see if the audience can notice a difference and to see how that might change the dynamic of the duet. How does this feel from the point of view of the dancer.
- With a known phrase of movement from a technique class, explore these ideas whilst moving through the sequence and see whether it changes.
- If time, this could be used with the idea of form and formlessness, one doing a known phrase and the other improvising around the phrase, both with the same intention – again, what do you notice, how does this feel?

#### Student Feedback –

I felt bigger

At times felt confused

Noticed a change but can't describe it

Noticed the back of my body

It is the neurological change that happens in the brain as we challenge and introduce new ideas to our thinking. This is often the feeling that we get inside that we can't quite describe. Helping to break down the known and comfortable and introducing thoughts to engage with that will stimulate and shake up stale, patterned movement and potentially,

open up more possibilities for change or at least for noticing how you are moving.

**The structure and function of the nervous system provide the principles and the means to guide us to efficient use of ourselves...Harmonious efficient movement prevents wear and tear.**

(Feldenkrais, 1981, p44)

#### 4. Exploring the bones highlighting the Spine - Use of visual images and a skeleton.

Begin with looking at the spine, mentioning the axial and peripheral skeleton and the structure of the spine. Also with visual hand-outs to highlight the different areas of the skeleton with a brief overview of how we will be exploring the bones through movement and to encourage the students to touch and get to know the skeleton, in the room, in their bodies, as well as at home, looking out for images that will be a useful reference.

Start with reference to a known sequence which can be repeated at the end.

- Begin lying on the floor with arms and legs straight, relaxed and heavy. Notice the heaviest parts of the body and what is in the foreground and background of your awareness.
- Then try to imagine and experience no bones, using images of water, waves washing, with breath to enhance softening and losing a sense of structure.
- Take time to allow this idea to settle before waking up the bones, beginning with the fingers and toes, head and pelvis, spine and legs, slowing rolling to one side and then the other. Gradually rolling to sit each side and then slowly getting higher each time until standing, noticing the use of the bones throughout the transition from lying to standing. Once up, take the bones for a walk, highlighting the joints as the students move around the room and coming to stillness again to notice the central axis as the head moves from side to side.
- With a partner, one places a hand on the pelvis and back of the neck of the other. The 'touched' moves and the 'toucher' tells the mover when to stop. The mover then pauses mid motion and moves away from the hands to see in space the length and shape of their own spine. The mover then becomes the toucher and the dancers take turns to explore moving with attention on the spine and then seeing a moment in time of the motion and shape of their spine.
- Continuing on this theme, in twos the mover waits to feel the touch of their partner, who this time will touch any part of the spine which then initiates a movement. This will act as the instigation of a short phrase of movement that begins from a specific point on the spine, with the attention staying with the spine and its pathway through space that arises from the initiation. The 'toucher,' follows the mover until they pause and then offers another point of initiation. The dancers take a turn in each role.
- This can develop with the 'toucher' imagining how they would move if given the same initiation, whilst still watching and moving towards their partner. Again taking turns at this before actually moving with their partner. One touched, one imagined touch, both make a short phrase of movement and then the initiation happens again. Taking turns at each role and noticing areas of the spine that maybe more difficult to locate, strategies taken and any discoveries made.
- This can develop into a travel improvisation across the floor with an imaginary touch to initiate the motion from the spine with attention on how the spine is shifting in the space.
- Finishing with the sequence used at the beginning of the session to notice whether it now feels different and to discuss how. Is there now more awareness of moving with attention to the bones?



## 5. **Skin, Muscles, Bones** Use skeleton (may need two sessions).

Recap on knowledge of the skeleton

- Begin with walking and noticing how the body is walking, the feet, ankles, knees, hips, pelvis, pubic bone, ribs, spine, neck and head.
- Come to standing and allow the head to move from side to side noticing the skin, the muscles and the bones that allow this motion to happen. Include the shoulders and ribs and again notice the participation of the areas mentioned. Then add the hips and a softening in the knees as you move from side to side. Noticing the motion from the outside in, the skin, then the muscles and then the bones. Can you differentiate, do you notice a difference, how does it feel?
- Begin a slow motion softening into the floor to roll and stand up the other side, repeating from side to side, again incorporating the notion of the skin moving, then the muscles and then the bones. Gradually begin to speed the motion up. Again, pause for a moment to discuss what you notice, what you feel, do you have a preference in terms of whether it works for you to move with attention to the skin, muscles or bones.
- Recap on a known sequence from a technique class or teach a very simple phrase that can be referred to later.
- Travelling across the space allow the dancers the chance to improvise, allowing the space to move them, firstly thinking about the skin, then the muscles and then the bones. Noticing how each journey feels, whether there is a freedom of movement or a restriction. Does it open up more potential for quality of motion, how does it change? Should it change?

For example, just because we are thinking about the bones doesn't mean we have to move like a robot, the movement quality may not change but the attention within the movement is about the bones which gives the dancer a task to engage with, as with the skin and the muscles. Should there be a noticeable change? The bones, muscles and skin all work together but it maybe that attention to one or other may alter how we consider and think about moving. It may not make an enormous difference to the movement on the outside but may have a dramatic effect on the nervous system and feeling, highlighting how just a thought can encourage change, difference or enhanced attention. Offering food to the body to keep movement alive and engaging, feeding the nervous system to inform and stimulate the body into new ways of action.

This may take a while to find and feel comfortable with, but if found and content to move on then -

- the students can try to mix the ideas within the same journey to see what this does to their dancing and to their thinking.
- A further development could be to work in twos or threes, choosing two elements out of the three. With an audience explore one idea together, then another, not the same necessarily but they may be. It is for the audience to notice if we can see a change and if we can see which aspect is the focus. After each group,

allow time to discuss what was seen and for the dancers to explain how it felt, what they noticed and which they felt allowed them to find a sense of freedom and breadth of motion and exploration.

- A final idea would then be to refer to the exercise introduced earlier, to explore the phrase with attention to each area to see how it affected, changed, improved or hindered the material. So the dancers would perform the sequence with attention to the skin, then the muscles and then the bones.

### **Student Feedback –**

Skin felt light, external, a continuous sensation, really noticing a difference from the inside to the outside.

Muscles felt bound and shortened and I noticed I held my breath

Bones tended to emphasise the arms and legs and found it hard to avoid muscle.

Although internal, can become external.

The crucial work consists in leading to awareness in action or the ability to make contact with one's own skeleton and muscles and with the environment nearly simultaneously....The aim is healthy, powerful, easy and pleasurable exertion.

The reduction of tension is necessary because efficient movement is effortless.

Inefficiency is sensed as effort and prevents one from doing more and better.

(Feldenkrais, 1965, Interview with Richard and Helen Schechner, p101)

(Reading week!)

## 6. Feet, Hands and Head

Working from the outside in again beginning with an exploration of the extremities. The intention here is to highlight or enhance the need for the power and initiation to come from the centre.

Pilates exercises to start –

- Lying on the back with arms and legs long, notice foreground and background, right side and left side and roll the head gently from side to side, noticing the weight of the head, hands and feet.
- Bring feet to standing and again notice whether the foreground and background changes, notice the shift in the pelvis to bring the legs to standing and notice how the spaces around the body have altered.
- Peel feet off the floor, notice pelvic change. Lift each knee twice and then tilt the pelvis and continue to roll the spine up to the bridge position and down, placing the hands behind the head to do eight easy sit ups – notice pressure into the feet and head and take your attention to your hands. Again, noticing how the spaces alter under and around the body.
- Then roll onto the tummy. Here, notice the length of the body and the difference in weight distribution. Begin with lifting the centre and lengthening the head away from the feet. It will slightly lift from the floor but keep the neck in line with the spine and relax. Try this a few times to engage with the centre and to notice the distance between the head and the feet.
- Then with the arms above the head, begin in the same way but this time adding the lengthening and lifting of the right arm and left leg and then the opposite, again to become aware of the distance between hand, foot and head.
- On all fours repeat the same movement. In this position requiring more core strength as in a less stable position but still able to experience the distance between the extremities.
- As a stretch, push the pelvis up to the downward dog position and notice the weight and pressure into the hands and feet and the head released between the arms.
- Slowly making way up to standing and begin to walk with attention on the feet, parallel, turned in, turned out, as well as the hands and head and back to stand.
- Repeat the massage exercise where the head and then the hips move off centre to allow the weight to move around and massage the feet.
- Whilst standing, explore the idea of letting the space move you and initiating the movement with attention to the skin, the muscles and the bones as a recap from previous lesson, to loosen the body, to re-explore possibilities adding the additional connection of the noticing the journey, pathway or relationship of the head, hands and feet.
- Then explore the same information as you travel through the space with the main emphasis being with the head, hands and feet...what do you notice? Are you aware of texture, distance, space, shape, support, again, emphasising that it is not a dance about the feet, hands and head but just to notice them whilst dancing to see what happens to the movement as a result.

On the first experience of this task, it became clear that it was difficult for the students to move without exaggerating the hands and feet rather than just noticing them. All of the movements tended to look very similar.

So, in response to this I decided to ask the students to exaggerate the extremities with the addition of giving them particular qualities to work with. The first was to move emphasising heavy and fast and then to explore light and fast.

After experimenting with these ideas we discussed what needed to happen to make these qualities apparent and also questioned whether it is possible to think about the hands, feet and head separately from the legs, arms and body? Hopefully highlighting to the student the importance of the connection and support of the centre, to guide, strengthen, soften and allow the limbs to explore the ability to be free and released as well as controlled and shaped.

Those watching noticed that the light and fast looked more interesting than the heavy, although this seemed a more comfortable place for the students. The light and fast was more challenging but definitely added texture and interest to their movement.

- After this exploration re-visit the idea of allowing the space move you and see what had changed and whether there were now more possibilities than before.
- In twos, or threes working together, noticing the same things and also noticing each other. What happens, what changes for you?

Take these thoughts into run of piece of repertory or a technique sequence and notice whether this attention might be useful within the performance process.

**(Another idea – Fingers, toes and nose – short session)**

## Images to highlight the notion of foreground and background

**...in learning, attention must be directed alternately to the background and the figure...you have to know the trees and then the forest where they belong.**

(Feldenkrais, 1981, p94)

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## **Pedagogical Assessment – Awareness in Motion (AIM)**

### **Session 7 of a 12 week sequence of classes**

#### **Arms and Legs/ Appendicular skeleton**

The aim of this class is to provide a space for dancers to experience and explore movement ideas that they may not offer themselves or find within their contemporary dance technique training. To encourage an awareness of the body in motion and to open up new possibilities of motion with the intention of being able to transfer this knowledge to other movement situations; class, rep or improvisation.

Introduction to the students –

- Development of my current thinking
- Self learning and awareness of the body as a result of my own studio practice.
- Also influenced by the Feldenkrais philosophy of organic learning.
- Explain that this is one of a progression of exercises to encourage awareness in motion, efficiency and opening up new possibilities of movement potential.

Discuss the appendicular skeleton, with images and the use of a skeleton to explain the particular focus of the class.

The appendicular skeleton includes the upper limbs, the hands, the lower limbs and feet and the pectoral and pelvic girdles.

Warm up beginning on the floor to stretch and build strength and to introduce the ideas within the session. Keep warm clothes and socks on.

- Pilates based exercises focussing on the legs and arms- including pelvic tilts continuing up to the bridge and lengthening each leg. Beginning with noticing foreground and background and giving attention to each limb. Small sit ups to support the lower spine before reaching arms and legs to the ceiling, lifting and dropping each leg and arm encouraging weight and awareness. Wide star shape to notice width and breadth of limbs to curl and open encouraging folding and shortening and opening and lengthening. Then on all fours to round, lengthen and rotate the spine to increase mobility and prevent injury but also to notice the strength in the arms and stability from the legs. Working way up to standing by stretching the legs in 'A' frame position to notice the weight through the limbs hanging from the pelvis to slowly uncurl.
- Walking with focus on the legs, arms, pelvis and shoulders.
- Noticing from the foot to the hips and pelvis and back to the foot.
- With the arms noticing from the hand to the shoulder and then from the shoulder back to the hand.
- Noticing both at the same time, connecting hands to feet, elbows to knees and hips and pelvis to shoulders, whilst walking and running, forwards, backwards and sideways.

- In a circle play with folding and unfolding, softening and lengthening the legs, emphasising the breath whilst reaching up to the sky and curving over with wide arms as well as direct and heavy.
- Improvisation based on qualitative exploration and connection of the legs and arms, again joining the hips and shoulders, elbows and knees, hands and feet. What do you notice in terms of quality, shape and dynamics how does this feel?
- Then travelling across the floor, allowing the space to move you and working with those same connections initially before mixing up the thinking. For example working with the pelvis and elbows, shoulders and feet, hands and knees, to see if you find anything new.
- Discuss how it feels to work with intention purely on the peripheral skeleton. Does this feel normal? Have you noticed or acknowledged any movement in the spine?
- Repeat the exercise with attention on speed and quality, heavy and slow, light and fast, also trying light and slow, heavy and fast, noticing what this does to the rest of the body. (Time dependent)
- In small groups improvise with each of these ideas and see what happens with the group dynamic, shape and design. Working in threes, each exploring one of the movement ideas to allow the rest of the group to see them in motion. Does seeing effect what you then do? In doing can you notice own intentions at the same time as another, what happens to your movement or thinking then? Encouraging both seeing and experiencing, feeling the movement. How does the material look? Can we see the peripheral skeleton working? Is it hard to avoid movement in the torso? (Time dependent)
- Back together as a group, back to hands and knees to repeat the movement of the spine, enhancing the idea of the 'fish body' and 'reversibility'. (These terms are explained in the next section).
- Try this standing also, bringing our awareness back to the spine to glue us back together.
- Finish with teaching a sequence which highlights peripheral and axial skeleton, alone and together to capitalise on the students thinking and noticing of those different areas in action.
- Time at the end to discuss how the students felt during the exercise. Did they find more from the movement as a result of the previous work? Would this make them think about their technique class material in a different way? Is it helpful, insightful or a hindrance

Stretch to finish – reaching and dropping with the arms as at the beginning and diving with the body to ease through the spine and breathe at the end of the class.



## **Teaching Notes –**

1. Notice how working with attention to the bones can potentially release muscle tension, encouraging freedom, and ease of motion by accessing the weight of the limbs.
2. Working with these ideas can help to eradicate habit formation and introduce new possibilities into your movement vocabulary.
3. Feeding and informing the nervous system, offering connections that may not have been considered before that may offer a sense of unexplored freedom in motion.
4. What do you notice? – Enhance this point to encourage self-learning and understanding of the movement potential of the body. Waking up our minds within the process of moving to notice what is happening in the moment of motion. Noticing change and allowing that physical change to inform the mind.
5. Did the students notice a difference in each other's dancing?

## **Student Feedback –**

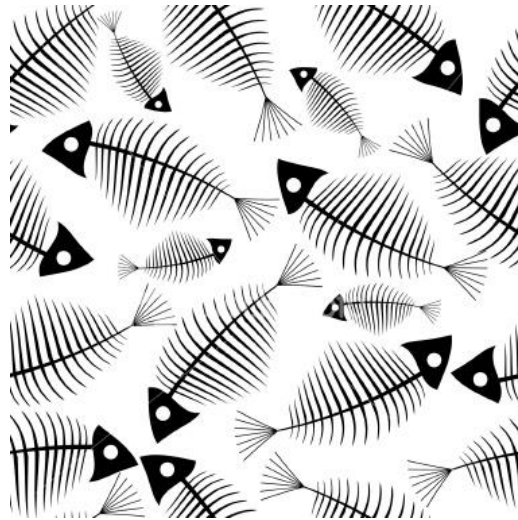
- For the first time I became aware of layers to the body in terms of structure rather than depth.

-Working with the idea of horizontal planes of motion, knees, hips which I hadn't thought of before.

## **Self-Evaluation –**

More time required to teach the set material and to notice where the movement comes from. In the rush towards the end, I tended to blanket the movement as either from the arms or legs when actually could have been more specific, highlighting the hand, elbow and knee connection, as well as spending time with the movement initiating from the hips. Importance at the end of reconnecting with the axial skeleton to reduce the notion of the separation...although in hindsight I wonder whether it would have been better to leave the students with the sense of the limbs and the external structure, in line with Feldenkrais often just working with one side of the body, to see if the nervous system makes its own sense of change of attention and to allow the students the opportunity to sense their own re-finding or reconnecting with the central axis.

## 8. Fish Body (Images as well as skeleton).



I came across this term as a result of working with Malcolm Manning. He refers to this term within his teaching to highlight the torso or the axial skeleton, referring to the part of our bodies that has evolved from the fish.

The images on the next pages may help to enhance this idea and understanding.

After the last 2 weeks of exploring the peripheral skeleton, the intention is to now highlight the axial skeleton, which glues together the peripheral, changing the awareness from external motion to internal to highlight the change of initiation and to be aware of difference –

- Begin on the floor, lying on back and notice the connection between the head and the pelvis. Also, become aware of the sternum through touch, attempting to soften through the breath.
- With legs in standing come up to the bridge and lower into small sit ups, to further connect with the motion of the pelvis, head and sternum.
- Star shape to curling from one side to another with the same awareness.
- On all fours introduce the wiggle and ripple to begin the idea of the motion of the fish, connecting the pelvis, sternum and ribs as if gills breathing, noticing the opening and closing of the bones. First leading with the head and then with the pelvis to experience reversibility of motion
- Stretch to stand and walk staying with the same information in mind and body.
- Come to standing introducing the fish tail, side to side and forward and back.
- Back to walking exaggerating fish motion, the pelvis and ribs and the domino effect up the spine.
- Back to standing highlighting the central axis, turning the head on top of the spine, length of the fish body
- Rolling down through the spine with the weight falling from different parts of the axial skeleton. For example, the skull, the sternum, the ribs and the tail bone.
- Rolling into and out of the floor, initiating with the pelvis and the sternum

- Improvise alone, continuing with this idea but taking the exploration further.
- In two large groups, play with the same idea, allowing half the group to watch and notice and then to do. Firstly playing with just the axial skeleton and then alternating with the appendicular skeleton.
- Travelling across the floor, with axial, then appendicular and finishing with combining the two.
- Time permitting, learn a sequence with all of those features in mind

The following could take place in the next session, beginning with a warm up

- Improvisation, in twos, one dancer working with the axial skeleton, the other with the peripheral.
- Discussion – what do you see? Which do you prefer watching? Which do you prefer doing? Is it possible to notice whether one style is more suited to a person?
- Final group improvisation where the dancers can explore working with both the peripheral and axial skeleton, one then the other and then mixing them both together.
- Discussion – discoveries, changes, what have you noticed. Are you now more aware of another way of moving that you weren't so aware of before?
- With these ideas adding the notion of seeing to encourage taking the movement out of the body but trying to maintain the connections internally.

### **Student Feedback –**

- Thinking of the sternum as vertebrae gave me a freedom in my chest and throat which released my jaw.
- although the movement was small I felt really big.
- Noticed my heart and blood and this awareness changed the way I moved.
- My bones felt 'squidgy,' softer than usual which changed my movement quality.
- Became aware of layers, noticing where fluidity of motion stopped...at the sternum and the head. I had to work hard to find the connection.
- I felt I had too many bones and found it hard to stop moving.
- Felt a sense of freedom with both skeletons working together.

### **Self-Evaluation –**

I noticed how different the students looked at the end of the session, moving with much more freedom and curiosity. They opened up to the exploration and found new options and possibilities, new information became available which really altered their approach to moving.

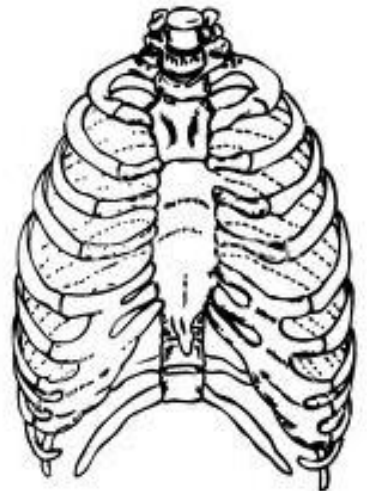
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## Seeing 2 – What lights up?



**...one's ability to engage and encounter the world is heightened and attuned to the point where 'the body becomes all eyes' with an ability to respond immediately through the body-mind to the sensory surround.**  
(Zarrilli, 1995, p59)

This session is the first which allows all experienced so far to be explored again but this time with an external reference as well as an internal awareness and initiation, both working simultaneously.

Seeing what lights up here refers to that in body and that in the environment.

Images will be used to highlight how focus can be near or far and how the picture changes as a result, discussing foreground and background. (see next 2 pages)

- Beginning on the floor with eyes shut to focus on the internal, noticing where the body is and how it is lying on the floor. Noticing what is in the foreground initially and then highlighting the background. Having an awareness of the front of the body and the back of the body, whilst lying on the back and then lying on the front. Also noticing differences of pressure into the floor, whether symmetrical throughout the body or whether more to the left or right and also the difference or not of lying on the front or back of the body.
- Gentle stretches and strengthening exercises with reference to those used before whilst maintaining the internal connection with the eyes shut.

- Gradually working way up to standing and again noticing the foreground and background, length and experiencing the vertical before taking all of this info into a walk. Pausing and noticing which foot is natural to lead the walk each time you start again and making sure that you lead with the opposite. Also working with seeing 180% of peripheral vision whilst walking and with each pause. Moving in and out of each other's view, changing the sense of foreground and background. Then walk, leading with the eyes and then moving away from the eyes and finally back to stillness.
- Then with eyes closed, imagine eyes in other parts of the body. For example, keeping the eyes shut but imaging that you can see through the fingertips, elbows, hips, knees, arch of foot etc, allowing that part of the body to explore the space as if truly seeing. Notice what happens as a result in terms of internal awareness and quality of movement.
- This needs to take time to really experience each body part with this new role, so allow time for exploration.
- Then, with eyes open working with the idea of what lights up, using different parts of the body to express the seeing but with the added layer of having the eyes to also see at the same time. Either seeing something new or could notice the same area, doubling the stimulus, initiation and sensation.
- Reintroducing the idea of pausing, noticing the peripheral whether lying on the floor or upside down and beginning to give the students the opportunity to choose their own eyes as well as the freedom to listen to the feedback from the body and just respond, waiting until something is felt, sensed, noticed, highlighted.

(This introduces ideas from Deborah Hay's philosophy of movement which will be looked at in more detail later).

Discuss with the group how that felt.

- One idea would be to try in two groups to give time to rest and also to see the exploration from the outside.
- Another would be to finish with the same ideas but working in a duet or trio, adding an extra layer of seeing other dancers as part of the exploration as well as seeing the space and allowing the body to see partner and space – for example, the back of body can be seeing your partner as long as your awareness is with the connection of the back of the body and your dancing partner.
- On this occasion, I chose to try a short Feldenkrais exercise to allow the dancers to feel the weight of their arms before trying some of their technique exercises to

employ all of the ideas explored within.

(Feldenkrais exercise – Placing both hands under the arm pit of a partner and allow the shoulder, chest and weight of the arm to relax and soften. After a few minutes slowly release the hands from the arm pit area, there should be a noticeable difference for the dancer in terms of space and difference between one side of the body compared to the other. Try on the other side).

#### Discussion

- Time permitting, finish lying back on the floor and notice the foreground and background again. Has it changed, what do you notice this time?
- On this occasion we did this in pairs, one massaging the lower half of the body whilst experiencing the above whilst I gave some attention to the shoulders.

#### Homework –

Notice what you see, see what you notice. Keep awareness in the areas of the body that are generally in the background of our consciousness.

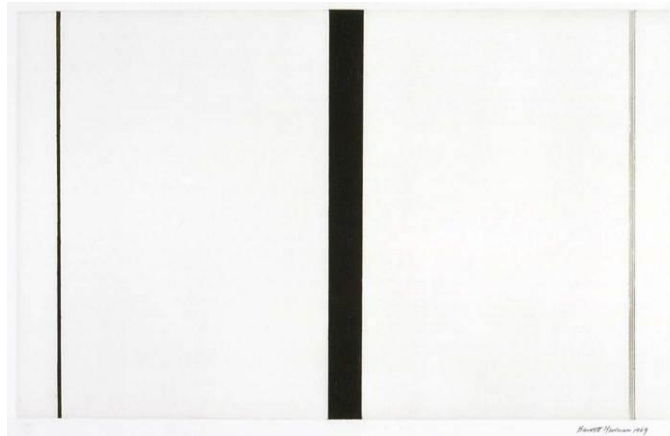
#### **Student feedback –**

- I enjoyed being given eyes in different places as this made me free up my movement.
- I really enjoyed listening to the feedback from the body, I felt so free and everything felt so easy.
- I realised how I was working too hard with unnecessary muscular effort, this new attention made the movement feel so much bigger and better.
- I became aware of space under my arms and an openness in my chest and shoulders.

#### **Self-Evaluation –**

I was really impressed with how the students engaged with this information. I believe all of the previous weeks work has begun to sink in and they now understand the benefit of this kind of work. I noticed a change in their approach and their attention and as a consequence a development in their ability to explore and learn from the body. As a result of this session, the technique sequences looked utterly different. There was a real sense of depth, clarity and engagement in their movement.

## 6. Space



**...a story is told as much by silence as by speech. Like the white spaces in an etching, such silences render form.**

(Susan Griffin, *A Chorus of Stones*, 1992, cited in Zarrilli, 1995)

Here the idea is to take the student out of the body for a moment and to think about the shape they are creating in the space rather than the shapes they are making with the body. Focussing on the spaces in between, the stillness's between the movements. The space becomes important rather than the movement which will potentially remove the ego from the dancer and give attention to the movement of the space. As a result of this kind of work something may become apparent in the body or at least a dancer may become aware of the outside of the body and its important role within the space.

Class content -

- A short sequence will be taught as part of the general warm up which will be returned to at the end of the session.
- Improvisation set in threes, one still, one moving and one watching to see the spaces created, all taking a turn in each role. The static dancer then begins to respond to the mover and to the poetry of the space created and shaped together, discussing with the outside eye on each change of role.
- The idea of shaping the space can then be informed through an exercise with chairs. Five chairs are placed anywhere in the space one at a time by five dancers and then removed from the space in reverse order, or altered, again in the same number order as before to see how the placing affects the space.
- This can then be performed by the dancers, moving one at a time and then randomly in the space, just walking and standing initially and then with more



movement as a development of the same idea. This is an expansion of the initial play with space between two dancers.

- With each performance the dancers will be encouraged to engage with elements experienced from previous sessions, for example, seeing and the idea of what lights up, thinking in terms of the bones, skin and muscles moving through the space, the space moving them and having an awareness of foreground and background, presence and absence.

After each performance, there will be a discussion of what was seen, felt and sensed both from the dancers and the audience perspective.

- To develop this idea the dancers can then travel in 3's across the studio noticing the air and space as they move through it, exploring motion that is big, small, open and closed before returning to the original sequence offered at the beginning of the class, to notice spaces in the body and in the room made by the body as well as the space around you.

After the improvisations experienced I would expect that the re capturing of a moment of known material would feel very different, more open and full of air and would hope that the dancers had a real sense of spaciousness as they moved.

**Images to highlight different ideas relating to space -**

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6.



7.



## 11. Deborah Hay based exploration

This session intends to expose the dancers to a Deborah Hay practice experienced during a process of research and development with Matthias Sperling in 2010.

After offering a brief explanation of Deborah Hay's background and philosophy I would then propose similar questions or suggestions to the students that Matthias offered to me as part of one of our daily practices.

With the information already offered to the students within the last 10 weeks, they will have more to draw upon to enhance their play and experience of this work. The practices are difficult and are meant to provide questions for the dancer and it is for the dancer to find the answer to the puzzles offered, hopefully learning something new along the way.

The initial suggestions offered will be –

- What if my 100 trillion cells have the potential to get what they need!
- What if, what lights up can lead me from A to B!
- What if my 100 trillion cells at once could just get moving and call it, what if!

After this exploration I will then propose the thought of what it would be like to be in between dancing and not dancing!

What is dancing, what is not dancing...how do you show the in-between?

- What if, what lights up can lead me from A to B, while all of my cells at once are either dancing or not dancing

The suggestion is that you are never dancing and never not dancing, what happens? This should be tried alone initially and then with a partner.

With each practice, I will also add notions of awareness to feed in material from past weeks for the dancers to respond to and use or not.

Again, after each exploration it will be interesting for the dancers to share their experiences of this kind of work. Some may find it frustrating, some may find it liberating, and some may go between the two.

### **Student Feedback –**

- Overwhelming
- Could only cope with the initial stimulus. After that I had to shut everything else out.
- Freedom and ease of exploration
- Never worked in that way before.
- Had one experience working in this way before and having another try made more sense and I got more from it this time.

**Self-Evaluation –**

- I realised at the end that I had possibly given too much information, although some needed more than others. At the beginning I need to make clear that as with the moving, the important thing is to listen to the body and to get what you need. Also, to listen to the instructions and take what you need.

- I need more confidence in the amount that is possible to find within very simple instructions at this level. Possibly with younger students or those with less experience, it may be necessary to offer more ideas and options to explore.

## 12. Recap 4 introductions

The opportunity here is to revisit the initial idea of four introductions from week 1, each time showing a different element of movement knowledge. After the 10 to 12 week experience of playing with the ideas within this paper the hope is that the dancers would have more information to draw upon and may notice a difference in themselves from beginning to end. To enhance this it would be ideal if the dancers introduced themselves to the same people as before and in retrospect it would have been interesting to have videoed the initial introductions to record what had happened in the first week.

(This maybe a better way of approaching this task...At the beginning each dancer could introduce themselves to the group which is recorded and referred to in week 12, for both the dancer and the audience to reflect and respond to what they see on screen and what they now see in the studio).

Student feedback on themselves dancing and what they've learnt as well as audience feedback on what they now see...have they noticed change, can this be put into words?

## 13/14. Assessment

This could work with the idea of a 100% process mark as this is the fundamental reason for the practice, to open up the body to possibilities and encourage the student to learn how to learn, to become their own teacher which they will need when leaving the teaching environment. It could have a final assessed improvisation incorporating some of the ideas explored either as solos or duets and trios to explore any of the information experienced over the 12 weeks. The grade for which would be considered with a reflective journal which the students would have from week 1 to record the individual sessions, their thoughts and developing understanding of the ideas introduced and explored as well as research into the practitioners referred to throughout to familiarise and enhance their learning.

## **Other ideas to explore**

### **Place**

Responding to the poetry in the room – say what you see, then respond to that poetry in motion

With a partner – respond to their poetry, one moves, other responds half way through, a little like a Question and Answer but doesn't have to be an answer, but an honest response to what is happening.

### **Diagonals**

X shape on the floor and pressing from foot to opposite hand all the way up through the body...leading into rolling leading with hand or foot into a sequence highlighting diagonals throughout the body and in pathways, shapes etc. Developing this into movement patterns in space and across the floor. Finishing with a sequence based on diagonals.

### **Eyes (Nick Rodine)**

Leading a sequence of movements with the eyes initiating direction.

## **Reflections - Future Practice.**

As I draw this paper to a close I am already aware of how much my thinking has developed and how I would no doubt teach everything within this document slightly differently as a result of my learning.

I am continuously looking for ways in which I can incorporate the teaching from the Feldenkrais method and the philosophy of Deborah Hay, without losing what it is that I already bring to the studio. It is through my contact with these methods of thinking, teaching, listening and learning that I have discovered a new dancer in me and also a new teacher. My thinking has changed and I am passionate to share this with others in a way that makes sense to me. As yet I have still to find a way of expanding upon my new learning and mixing that with the flavours I already offer. Technique and steps will always be important to me but the journey and exploration within and around those steps will be different. I will challenge myself and the student to experience movement sequences with a variety of thoughts and notions which will continuously challenge, direct, redirect and stimulate the dancing body in the hope that an organic learning might take place from which the student dancer can learn about themselves, their bodies and the way that they think about both of these.

As I embark on further research with the Feldenkrais method and a period of research and development with Deborah Hay I hope to broaden my knowledge and practical experience to enable a deeper physical understanding with which I can then discover, play and share.

I am still at the beginning of a whole new journey within my dance practice, both as a dancer and a teacher but also importantly as a human being, recognising and respecting that this is often something that can get forgotten along the way.

**Improvement in talented people comes through their awareness of themselves in action. Their talent arises from their freedom to choose their modes of action. New modes of action are available to those who have discovered themselves, or who have had the good luck to meet a teacher who helped them to learn to learn.**

(Feldenkrais, 1981, p96)



### **Lying down** – Things to notice

When first lying on the floor, try not to adjust, just lie down as if 'splat' and notice how you lie. Drawing attention to how the weight is shared throughout the body, is there more weight on the left side of the pelvis compared to the right, or the shoulders, is the head centre or is it favouring one side more than the other. Noticing that which contacts the floor as well as the spaces underneath and around the body. This is useful to do both lying on the back and the front. When on the front draw attention to the same areas of the body and also notice whether you feel heavier and more released lying on the front or back. Carry this thinking through the given stretches and strengthening exercises as a preparation for the class.

### **Walking** - Things to notice

Feet – spreading width and length, bones, 10, 26, 126.

Ankles – smooth transition through foot and connection of foot to the leg

Knees – ease of motion, hinge

Hips – where are they, deep ease, flow of walk

Pelvis – width, depth

Spine – length, internal, external, ease, flow, each vertebrae walking, lights.

Ribs – breathing, opening and closing, gills

Sternum - small spine at the front.

Neck – length, carrying the head

Head – Floating, release jaw, nose front and back

Eyes – peripheral, open, receiving and pulsating, giving.

### **Standing** – Things to notice

Weight - feet

Difference between two sides

Central axis – twist head, torso, hips, mixture

Pelvis – fish tail, small, big

Doing habitual movement the wrong way round – interlacing fingers, crossing arms, stepping forward, kicking a ball

Notice what attention to one of these areas does to the walk.

Pilates material to be used to notice change – Pelvic tilts up to full bridge.

Core work, holding the leg long in the bridge, abductor exercises, mermaid, rib articulation, 'A' frame stretch

Massage and hands on – Noticing in own body the information you are giving to another. Relaxed and at ease as this will feed to your partner. Using own body weight to massage.

### **Challenging habits** – ideas to disrupt our habitual way of moving

Fingers interlacing

Leading with the opposite leg

Folding arms the other way

Moving from lying to sitting to standing, leading with a different side of the body.

Eyes lead a movement and then try moving away from the direction of the eyes.

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## **Images –**

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## **Space**

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## **Practical classes experienced -**

Soto Hoffman - Ideokinesis

Malcolm Manning - Awareness, Performance, Presence

Scott Clark – Feldenkrais

Elizabeth Beringer - Feldenkrais

Nicole Piesl

Matthias Sperling

Andrea Buckley



## Notes not used –

This is one of the main principles to use in the class room, to explore, self-learning more powerful and present, from the inside and therefore has more meaning.

Refining, learning, efficiency. This can only come from listening to the body and awareness of how it works. Physics of the skeleton, knowledge of the structure can open up potential.

How does it feel – this is important to notice too.

This philosophy supports the basis of my research as I began to form the following dance as I can see – at the end!

Moshe Feldenkrais – organic learning. Philosophy of the method – to learn how to learn, learning how to self correct – Really important for dancers to understand. Not about what we do but about how we do it.

‘The structure and function of the nervous system provide the principles and the means to guide us to efficient use of ourselves...Harmonious efficient movement prevents wear and tear. (1981, p44)

‘Free choice means having at least another way...free choice means having an alternative mode of action available, so you can then choose the way you want the most. (1981, p150)

Different to academic and social learning – refe to babies ‘...playfully exploring and imitating, motivated mostly by innate curiosity and guided always by exquisite awareness of comfort.’ (Shafarman, p189)

‘ We learn most easily when relatively relaxed and comfortable and able to express curiosity freely.’ (Ibid, p192)

Feldenkrais ‘..understood that every act involves moving, sensing, feeling and thinking.’ (Ibid, p197)

(p198) Shafarman discusses that ideas and insights into awareness can be compared and examined alongside spiritual and psychological approaches, eg hypnosis and meditation. Also mindfulness which also links with ideas about Buddhism – Deb Hay

Ellen J Langer – book called Mindfulness (1989) makes ref to Mindlessness...I like these thoughts in relation to dancing- noticing the difference between dancing with a fully consciously aware mind compared to one which is mindless and empty.

As well as the writing of Drew Leder and Lorna Marshal, this work will mainly focus on

the philosophy of the Feldenkrais method of teaching, which I have re-introduced to my practise by way of recognising its relevance, power and proximity to the working practice of dancers.

To begin however, I would like to highlight the work of Drew Leder and 'The Absent Body' as an introduction to my developing thinking and practice and which has led to the formation of this work.

As if trying to hear in a sound proof room –) once learnt something, learning stops. Preventing sensation and truly feeling where a movement is initiated and what it feels like.

'Improvement in talented people comes through their awareness of themselves in action. Their talent arises from their freedom to choose their modes of action. New modes of action are available to those who have discovered themselves, or who have had the good luck to meet a teacher who helped them to learn to learn. (1981, p96).