



## **Breaking Free: score for exploration**

### **The Aesthetic Body**

The workshop I will lead, when we are with participants, comes from a passionate belief that everyone is a dancer. I love my art form but also hate the stereotypes that historically and permanently live with dance - the expectations that only people of a certain size, age and physicality can be seen in this form. How this dominance colours all participation and inhabits deeply the question of who can dance and how and where. It also inhabits both consciously and unconsciously the viewer whether this is the teacher or the audience member and of course the reviewer.

#### **Context**

I was told by my first employer (male) when I ended my contract after my first year working as a dancer and teacher with Scottish Theatre Ballet, Moveable Workshop 'that I must acknowledge my limitations'.

I have never forgotten this 'advice' and have celebrated and used my limitations ever since!

This comment was made, in the early seventies when contemporary and post modern dance were only just emerging. Difference was only tolerated in male dancers. I can remember the embarrassment and shock of the classical dancers in the company when I asked them to sit on the floor for floor work and open their legs apart for a stretch, also revealing bare feet was quite a difficulty. Later, when working with young dancers in Russia, the staff thought I shouldn't sit on the floor as it was dirty! All my career I have had an inclusive practice, aiming for no need to prepare a 'special' class for someone who might be a wheelchair user, the class and making was always possible to translate. This word is fundamental to my practice; the dance isn't adapted for difference but translated by the participant who knows their language best. Over 50 years of work as a dance artist, strangely I have become more confident to call myself a dancer, more confident than I was in my thirties for example when being pregnant meant stopping your career and having children wasn't something you mentioned as a reason for not being able to take a new job. I delight as I get older in what I can do, not what I can't do and my practice is firmly embedded in the celebration of difference, creative expression and passion for the form.

I believe dance is the original art form, we were doing it before we were born, and that my last dance on this planet will be my last blink. My whole career is one of celebration, celebrating what people can do if they allow themselves 'out' to celebrate their unique limitless body and mind and the particular aesthetics that make them who they are. This is the point when dance gets interesting.

The aim of my workshop would be to empower each person to find the dancer in them through a series of simple adventures that celebrate difference.

Here is my 'Covid' score for you:

### **Celebrating your uniqueness**

Warm up, arriving, focussing

1. Sit or lie in neutral, a very dancerly place to begin, how we wait in the wings before performing, aiming for the body to say nothing, to be as empty as possible, an imagined line run down the centre of the body would show symmetry on either side, with the weight resting into the ground evenly. Allow time to arrive, to breathe there and to feel yourself deeply in this moment.
2. Go as simply as you can from your starting place to a higher level to sitting or to standing in neutral and again allow time to arrive, to breathe there and to feel yourself deeply in this moment.
3. As simply as possible go back to your start position and repeat this task but this time on arrival at the higher position, call out "I am here".
4. Repeat 3 but on arrival, call out "I am " and say your name, loud and clear but also break out of neutral and find a position that you and your name find and hold this, observing where your name has taken you to.
5. You can of course repeat this as many times as you want and of course it will change and if we were meeting others it would change more.

### **Awareness of audience, the outside eye**

Two memories are triggered here for me; perhaps you can share any of yours?

- Auditions as a student for various musicals etc the first thing we were often asked to do on arrival was to line up on the edge of the stage and stand looking out at the empty auditorium. One by one we were told to stay or leave, we were being assessed only on how we looked, there was no singing or dancing yet.
  - In one of Pina Bausch's pieces the dancers come forward to the edge of the stage, standing side by side and reveal different parts of their bodies that they particularly want to show the audience, it is a variation of a chorus line. It is a very beautiful and powerful presentation of the human body.
1. Can you choose which part of your body you'd like to feature to your camera and repeat this with two more parts, linking them into a short routine for your audience even setting this to music perhaps?
  2. You could then add your words "I am here" or "I am, your name" or new words too.

## Object Replacement

1. Find one object that represents something you related to in the past and another that relates more strongly to you now.
2. Place each object one by one with you, where does it fit with you body and take a photo of this moment.
3. Then taking each object in turn develop a movement phrase that echoes how this makes you feel. You could film this too?

## Ending

Confirming you right now, take time to return to neutral and emerge again with your voice and movement “1 am here” Observe how this may have changed.

*Don't mince your steps, take a giant step!*

*One should believe in the energy born in oneself out of suffering.*

*One shouldn't become a bonsai (miniature tree).*

*Believe in your own energy and don't let yourself be affected by others.*

Tatsumi Hijikata

MAN, ONCE DEAD, CRAWL BACK!

20th Century Performance Reader

Cecilia Macfarlane 11/07/20