The Center for Dance, Movement and Somatic Learning

Strategic Plan 2011

Amy Yopp Sullivan/May 20, 2011

ABOUT THE CENTER

Developed out of the goals of Dance and Movement Studies since 1986, The Center for Dance, Movement and Somatic Learning has emerged as an exciting incubator and hub for creativity, research, education, performance and community discoveries. The mission of the Center is built from a strong history of interdisciplinary collaborations, artistic and creative performances, and innovative techniques for education and learning. The award-winning faculty of professional dancers, choreographers, body workers, educators, scholars and somatic therapists represent diverse approaches to thinking and action through their training in classical, contemporary, cultural, educational, theatrical and somatic traditions. The purpose of the Center is to offer expansive training and vision for the fields of dance, movement and somatics.

The work at the Center examines how the knowledge and principles represented through dance and movement arts are poised to meet the needs of the future. In addition to art making we seek to uncover how the body's interconnectivity will lead us to new discussions and collaborations with health science, technology, leadership, business, engineering, industry, community relations, cultural studies, and design. We are confident that the examination and dynamic interplay of heightened body/mind connections through intention, thought and action can lead us to more productive, inventive, interconnected and purposeful lives.

Since 1986, dance and the movement arts have collaborated with such diverse on-campus areas as The College of Leadership and Service; Philosophy; Marine Science; Brookhaven National Laboratory; The Staller Center for the Arts; The Wang Center; Physical Education and Athletics, The College of Arts, Humanities and Culture; The Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action; Africana Studies; Medical Students from Pediatrics Oncology and Hematology; The Honors College; Undergraduate Research, Education and Creative Activities; the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences as well as colleagues in the areas of Music, Theatre Arts, and Art.

Throughout the past years faculty and students have collaborated, presented, performed and participated in events at The United Nations; The International Dance Festival for the Americas in Mexico City; The T. Schreiber Studio in NYC; Regional American College Dance Festival Galas; Amnesty International Human Rights Art Festival; Dance Theatre Workshop in NYC; White Wave's DUMBO Festival; Boogie Down Dance Festival @ BAAD!; The International Dance Festival and Conference in Almada, Portugal; Movement Research: Open Performance; The Global Holistic Body in Seoul, Korea; Maritime Festivals throughout Long Island; The John Drew Theatre in East Hampton; International New Music Plus Festivals; Regional and National Arts Councils; The Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; The Kennedy Center for the Arts; The Arts in Education National Conference at NYU; the National Lilly Teaching Fellowship; The Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the US Festivals; Bald Hill Cultural Center; and numerous events at public schools and communities throughout Long Island.

We have initiated and developed such events as Spare Change Dance Theatre, which began the VITA awards on campus by inviting dance artists Bill T. Jones, Sara Pearson and

Patrick Widrig as the first honorees of this campus wide celebration of artists. Winning the First Prize in the College of Arts and Science for Performing Arts at the Celebration of Undergraduate Achievements was a significant honor for undergraduate dance performers. We have had a history of artistic collaborations weaving the professional world of art makers into the educational and learning environment for our undergraduates. Guest artists have included such luminaries as Maguette Camara, Sabrina Castillo, Kei Takei, Creach and Koester, Sara Pearson and Patrick Widrig, Lacina Coulibaly, Tanya Calamonari, Tetsuro Fukuhara and Camille A. Brown.

The Center seeks to enhance the learning process by bringing an active, engaged and interdependent experience back into education, art making, research and health. It is our goal to offer new, fresh and inviting ways to explore ideas. We offer experiences that intersect learning with creativity and imagination. Such experiences build tools to help increase the amount of play, risk, observation, reflection, interpretation, analysis, curiosity and creativity necessary to break through and discover new directions of learning, thinking and inventing in all disciplines. Because we teach students across the disciplines, the impact of our work moves beyond one discipline and into many. By creating interdependent learning relationships, the Center seeks to find new, unoccupied territories to test, examine and demonstrate the importance of the movement arts, whole action and whole body learning. It is our mission to contribute to the developing formula for a new global, interactive and educational climate.

THE FUTURE

Collaborations in Performance and Media:

The Center's faculty, students, collaborators, performers and research investigators examine how we build and manifest knowledge through the body and how such knowledge may serve our communities and us. We examine how information is housed, read, spoken and performed in the body. We investigate action as an experience of self, in relationship to others and in relationship to the environment (Laban). We examine knowledge as both a physical and experiential learning process through the body. We test our whole bodies in their cellular, 3-dimensional, artistic, intellectual, creative, collaborative and interactive potential. Performance, educational and research experiences are developed to discover how the thinking body (Mabel Todd) enhances contributions to the world and collaborations across the globe.

Based on these goals and the exciting visual and physical culture of today, we are developing specific directions in Media and Dance Performance. Such goals emerge from years of past collaborations. We first engaged with interactive media through the innovative work, *Variations on Godot* as part of *Beckett Space* (1996) at Staller Center. This was followed by the site-specific work, *Our Mothers* (2000), which was a collaboration with interactive new media, music, design, art installation and dance built around the themes of bread-making, flight, and mothering. *Giants in Small, Shallow Pools* (2003), was developed through an interdisciplinary course with the Honors College, performed as a live dance/media work involving students from a host of disciplines at an international festival in Portugal, and presented at the National conference of the Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance in Chicago. The work examined the costs and sustenance of courage and intersected with numerous viewpoints for dialogue, discussion and art making. *Sea Bourne*, a full-length film in process, was first shown at Avram Theatre in Southampton in 2009 and investigated our relationships to the sea. During the process baymen, ecologists, scientists, boat builders and other members of the Long Island community were interviewed about their experiences and stories of the sea. The film received funds from the New York State Council for the Arts' Decentralization Grant

through the Huntington Arts Council.

Our plan is to continue to examine film making and media collaboration as part of the focus at the Center with the goal of establishing a Media and Dance Major within the next three to five years. But in order to develop in this direction, with the kind of vigor and excellence it deserves, we need to transform our spaces, create an environment that supports the innovations of media and the body, and hire personnel. We are in discussions with the Consortium for Digital Arts and Culture and the Music Department as we begin these plans. In addition, we plan to develop close contacts with organizations focused on Screen Dance, Dance on Camera, and Dance Films.

We plan to renovate our larger studio space (Nassau 114) into a State of the Art Experimental Loft Performance Space, which will continue to operate as a Creative Learning Space for our university classes, but will also have a dual purpose for experimental media and performance of all kinds, based first and foremost in the body. In addition, we plan to renovate the smaller studio space (Nassau Hall 104) into a State of the Art Media Laboratory for the Body, also while maintaining the Creative Learning Space for our classes. We hold the viewpoint that the body is the connection from our inner life to our experiences in the world; and we plan to build an environment where innovative art can be intelligently excavated and authentically embodied.

Film and media will allow us to bring our work to others throughout the world and to create an experimental laboratory and performance arena where discussion about the body can reach global populations.

The newly renovated spaces will be home to the professional performance/media company, Ironworks on the Edge, as well as to the undergraduate Performance Dance Ensemble. The Performance Space at the Center will be dedicated to exploring movement and physical performance in collaboration with film, media, technology, music, theatre and visual art. Our work will spill out of interdisciplinary questions, inquiry and content from all domains of learning. It will be a laboratory to bring ideas to life through innovation and creativity in order to test how the idea, movement, gesture, thought, action and journey collaborate as parts of whole learning and creating. We will merge the knowledge we hold with acts of generative, authentic performance based on our goals of somatic learning.

WHAT IS "SOMATIC LEARNING"

"The purpose of somatic movement education and therapy is to enhance human processes of psychophysical awareness and functioning through movement learning.

Practices provide the learning condition to:

• Focus on the body both as an objective physical process and as a subjective process of lived consciousness;

• Refine perceptual, kinesthetic, proprioceptive, interoceptive sensitivity that supports homeostasis and self-regulation;

• Recognize habitual patterns of perceptual, postural, movement interaction with one's environment;

• Improve movement coordination that supports structural, functional and expressive integration;

• Experience an embodied sense of vitality and extended capacities for living."(International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association, 2003)

Our second major goal is to develop graduate and undergraduate certification programs in Somatics built from an intersection of health, performance, creativity and imagination. There is much current research in health care examining the effects of physical, creative work on recovery and healing. We are already members of the Society for Arts in Health Care and we plan to become more involved in understanding how we can contribute to the dialogue of this important interdisciplinary conversation. However, not only will our focus on Somatics influence health care; but it will also influence how all populations take care of themselves in demanding careers, jobs, and professions. In this way, we salute the challenge to embrace the discipline, creativity and health needs of performance of all kinds and plan to create a Somatic Certification program that may be relevant to all undergraduate and graduate student needs.

In addition, we will continue to offer the Performance Dance Minor and university classes in dance and movement studies to all interested students.

Performance at the Center invites the novice and the seasoned professional from all disciplines to engage in the body's authentic performance and action with intelligence, awareness and understanding. It is about growth and learning, collaborating and considering, process and product, risk and discovery, expression and form. Sometimes it spills into the world of produced performance; but often it engages us in a world of performing our lives and how we remain connected in order to fulfill our contributions to this world. Both of these areas of performance involve similar principles and actions.

The Performance Space at the Center will invite artists, scholars and professionals in numerous disciplines to present their work and allow others to engage and respond to their work. Our goal in this dialogue is to demystify, examine and celebrate what is known and unknown; what is visible and invisible, all in order to uncover the dynamic interplay of thought and action. Guest artists from NYC and beyond will find the Performance Space a generative and welcoming place to bring informal showings and works-in-progress in order to receive feedback and input, all the while benefiting the university and professional community through performance, dialogue and discussions. Students, faculty and the university community will have the unique opportunity to interface with innovative, contemporary professionals as they build, create and investigate new, collaborative thinking with a listening, speaking body.

We will use our spaces to gather leaders in the fields of education, performance, technology, filmmaking, movement, health science, psychology and the arts in order to find unoccupied territories for interdisciplinary thinking that inspire people to action. By building partnerships that offer an expansive view of creativity and collaboration, we plan to uncover and develop new dynamic approaches for productivity built from creativity and collaboration. The goal is educational reform and industry enhancement.

We will need resources to offer this innovative and exciting work to our community. And we see the First Stage, as described below, as most important for this Strategic Plan:

- Set up The Performance Space and the Body/Media Laboratory with lap top computers, high definition projectors, large, full-wall projection screens and state of the art sound design and equipment.
- Purchase state of the art digital media and editing equipment for filming and provide funds for on-going media work.

- Hire a Media Specialist/Technical Director who will oversee the space and equipment, co-teach media and dance classes and serve as a collaborator for new work.
- Gut the existing sound and lighting booth in Nassau 114; and transform the equipment into state of the art, digital sound and lighting booth, working with portable equipment that can follow us to various venues throughout the world.
- Purchase new lighting instruments and cable for the spaces.
- Have university help to target and develop major grant support of Innovation in Performance/Learning/Teaching/Creating.
- Hire two full-time, tenure-track dance and media faculty who are also trained in somatics.

The Center for Dance, Movement and Somatic Learning is dedicated to explorations of body/mind performance, physical intelligence, movement systems, dance theatre, and body awareness. The space is already home to numerous interdisciplinary efforts and plans to continue this innovative trajectory through the new focus of a Media and Dance Major and Graduate and Undergraduate Certificate Programs in Somatics.

Research and creative projects at the Center will continue to include examination of the systems, interconnectivity and interactive potential of the human body. Research methods will range from scientific to historical and include exploratory, constructive and empirical methods. Techniques of creative thinking, improvisation, problem solving and therapeutic applications will serve the goals as we develop new unoccupied territories for teaching, learning, creating and producing new ideas and new forms.

It is our goal to build collaborative partners who can match a strong, confident internal space of Self with changing World Spaces, Global Needs, and Cultural, Creative Challenges. The overarching goal of The Center for Dance, Movement and Somatic Learning is to enhance human performance and productivity, while offering techniques and therapies in support of the needs of humanity. We want to offer whole action education to our students and represent this philosophy through the practice and engagement of professionals of all disciplines. We are convinced that our world needs to recover these aspects for enhanced learning and productivity.