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## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My aim as a teacher is to help students become agents of their own self-discovery and change. Learning happens best, and has the most staying power, when students come to know, trust and depend on themselves, and I believe that helping students develop a thoughtful, skillful movement practice is an effective and powerful means to that end. My teaching brings together form, especially contemporary ballet and modern technique, with somatic and creative practices. I bring my own unabashed love of dancing into the classroom and begin from the conviction that learning and dancing should be fun.

### **Form is fundamental but never fixed.**

Technique is deeper than any one style or modality; it is a set of fundamental skills that underlie many movement practices. In my classes, I teach tools for tackling *any* movement task, and approach these "building blocks" from multiple angles and contexts. For instance, the principle of yielding to gravity might be explored by rolling on the floor, weight-sharing with a partner, discussing the weight of our bones, executing a phrase that moves through all different levels of space while maintaining a primary relationship to the ground, or doing a jumping combination that demonstrates the buoyancy of the "up" that arises from a clear sense of "down." By considering gravity as a function of relationship, and by *embodying* that relationship, we learn about ourselves in all kinds of relationship: with ourselves, others, our work, with the world. I believe that what is fundamental to movement, is fundamental to life, and that the dance studio is a great place to start.

Technique is also dynamic. When we make comments like: "She has excellent technique," we imply that technique is fixed – something to be had, owned, mastered, complete. Technique, however, is an invitation to engage in process. It holds a space for asking questions about what it means to engage, respond, adapt, intend and choose; it asks us to set goals and examine our relationship to them.

### **We are humans first, dancers second**

I relate to students as individual, complex, capable, whole human beings, not silent vessels making shapes and patterns in space. I believe that a dancer's best technical "trick" is to embody her full humanness: body, mind and feeling; to that end, my teaching is practically and philosophically inspired by somatic practices.

As an example, two ideas from Body-Mind Centering: 1) there are many routes to the same goal, and 2) optimal learning is driven by curiosity. In my classes, I aim to

create a space where students feel safe to be curious, and successful no matter what route they take towards our common goal. I offer suggestions, not corrections, and orient our work in the studio towards inquiry rather than perfection: “I wonder what would happen if...” “How does it feel when you try...”? I find that this approach gives students agency in the progress they make, even as it accelerates their technical skill acquisition.

### **Dancing is fun!**

Above all else, I aim to lead by example – hoping that my enthusiasm and ongoing curiosity about my work will inspire students to follow their own passions and guts. Out of my own challenges as a performer and teacher have come great empathy, respect and a sense of humor for the incredible journey of becoming a dancer. I bring these qualities into the studio with me and create a fun, positive atmosphere.

I remember that my own teaching practice is just that – a practice – and that it is flexible and dynamic and never fixed. And I trust that the education of my students begins with my own commitment to self-discovery and change.