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Teaching of Dance

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The Teaching of the Bartenieff Movement Analysis: How Bartenieff Fundamentals teaches dancers internal body awareness leading to overall improvement of their dance understanding, integrating, and performing.

Somatic practices have been used in multiple areas of study ranging from dance, music, sport, therapy, and medicine. Somatics is a movement studies field that encourages awareness of the internal perception of the body. The internal sensation is achieved through what is called bodywork (Hanna 198). Other concepts weave their way into somatics, such as spiritual practices and psychotherapy, to help achieve awareness of the inner physical body. Bartenieff Fundamentals (BF) is considered a somatics practice that has been used, most times together with Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), to assist dancers in their alignment and overall connection to their body. The history of Bartenieff Fundamentals, its founder, its main concepts/ideologies, and certification paths are important to understand as a dance instructor as well as a rising dance student. Bartenieff Fundamentals should be incorporated in studio dance curriculum to educate developing students on internal body sensations which promotes accurate and beneficial alignment, enhances performance quality in studio dancers, and engages students in the warm-up period of their classes.

What are Bartenieff Fundamentals? Bartenieff Fundamentals are a series of "... movement sequences which simultaneously stabilize and mobilizes our bodies toward a more

lively movement dialogue with the surrounding environment” (Andrews and Scott, 14). It is also a somatics practice of “corrective body movement” (Andrews and Scott, 14) that centers on “movement integration and harmony” (“Bartenieff FundamentalsSM”). The practice is named after its founder, Irmgard Bartenieff, who studied alongside Rudolf Laban when he was developing his original movement approaches, universally known as Laban Movement Analysis (Andrews and Scott, 14). Bartenieff was a dancer, physical therapist, and early pioneer in dance/movement therapy (“Irmgard Bartenieff”). She enjoyed fusing together disciplines (“Irmgard Bartenieff”), which is seen in her creating of Bartenieff Fundamentals. Inspired by her teachings with Laban, Bartenieff translated her knowledge into rehabilitation of polio patients, using Laban principles to create a series of movement “correctives” that encouraged locomotion through space to strengthen muscle groups (Andrews and Scott 14). Additionally, Bartenieff experimented her movement series on a group of dancers and observed how they also benefitted from her movement series. She concluded that anyone concerned in expanding their movement potential could benefit from these movement ideologies which she eventually named Bartenieff Fundamentals (Andrews and Scott 14). She was most focused on “...support of the body to facilitate functional, expressive and efficient movement experiences” (“Bartenieff FundamentalsSM”), which logically applies to what dancers do in their everyday dancing practice. To teach Bartenieff Fundamentals in studios, it is important to expand knowledge and training through a reputable certification program such as the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies (LIMS) (“Certification Programs”). The program involves studies of Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff Fundamentals through curriculum of embodiment practices, observation periods, and seminars. Upon completion, the recipient gains the recognized title of a Certified Movement Analyst (CMA) (“Certification Programs”).

Bartenieff Fundamentals has numerous concepts, ideologies, and exercises that define the practice. Since it developed from Laban Movement Analysis, Bartenieff Fundamentals parallels LMA in some of its concepts. In Bartenieff Fundamentals, there are three main concepts derived from LMA, apart from the overarching concepts of Body, Space, and Effort (Andrews and Scott, 17). They are focusing on whole body mobility rather than strengthening specific groups of muscle, emphasizing that every movement requires the whole body to work in response, and the importance of preparing the body for movement (Andrew and Scott, 17). Other important ideas are knowing the initiation points of movement in the body and focusing on spatial intent (Andrews and Scott, 17). Because initiation points and the whole body are important, Bartenieff Fundamentals has connectivity concepts to better understand the connection of the whole body. The connectivity concepts are Core-distal, Head-Tail, Upper-Lower, Body-Half, and Cross-Lateral (Hackney 45). Core-distal is the relationship between your core, or center of the body, to your distal points such as the fingers and toes (Hackney 72). Head-tail is the relationship between the head and the tail, the two are moving in a relationship to each other, usually in towards the center or to the sides (Hackney 91-92). Upper-Lower is the connection between the upper part of the body, above the hips, and the lower part of the body, below the hips. The main key for Upper-Lower is that it involves the limbs. Typically, the upper is focusing on articulation and moving, while the lower is stabilizing and locomoting through space (Hackney 121-123). Body-Half is the connection between the sides of the body, specifically differentiating the left and right sides of the body (Hackney 182-183). Cross-Lateral is the connection between the upper limb to the opposite lower limb, example: left hand to right foot (Hackney 194). Overall, Bartenieff Fundamentals require "... the use of deep muscles, close to the core of the body, and the use of breath support to increase the power and flow of movement" ("Bartenieff

FundamentalsSM). Professor Ursula Payne, a CMA through LIMS, states that the most important concepts of Bartenieff Fundamentals to her are, "...groundedness, articulation of the spine and the relationship to the pelvis and base of support, and connection of limbs to the core" (Payne). When it comes to specific movements unique to Bartenieff Fundamentals, Bartenieff Fundamentals has preparation practices and exercises known as "The Big Six" (Longstaff 1). The preparation techniques are called breath preparation and rocking preparation (Longstaff 1). "The Basic Six" exercises are the thigh lift, the pelvic forward shift, the pelvic lateral shift, the body half, the diagonal knee reach, and the arms circles with or without diagonal sit-up (Longstaff 1). These Bartenieff Fundamentals' concepts, ideologies, and exercises are valuable for developing dancers in studio dance.

One of the most important practices to teach young dancers is proper alignment. Proper alignment aids dancers in accessing their greatest mobility potential and decreases the risk of injury. Bartenieff Fundamentals has helped athletes improve their athletic performance and has reduced injury in participants ("Bartenieff FundamentalsSM"), two essential points in a dancer's practice. By implementing Bartenieff Fundamentals in dance studio curriculum, dancers receive greater clarity ("Bartenieff FundamentalsSM") and strengthen their alignment, reducing their risk of injury. With the nature of Bartenieff Fundamentals being a somatics practice, when dancers engage in Bartenieff Fundamentals, they are strengthening their internal body awareness. Internal body awareness allows for dancers to sense what is happening in the body and notice when their body is out of alignment. From there, students can adjust their alignment on their own due to the taught internal body awareness. Practices of Bartenieff Fundamentals help to establish the relationship of body parts to one another, an example being rocking preparation outlining the relationship between the feet, pelvis, spine, and head (Peterson 166). Bartenieff Fundamentals

have even been used in children with autism spectrum disorder to identify strengths and deficiencies in body stability, movement coordination, gestures, and joint attention (Martin 549). This information pertains to the dance studio setting by showing how dance teachers can use Bartenieff Fundamentals to identify deficiencies and strengths in their students such as alignment imbalances, and therefore can cater their lesson plans while also preventing injuries. Teachers can also continually assess their dancers through Bartenieff Fundamentals to learn how their students' bodies are changing as they grow and develop. Proper alignment is stressed in dance studio curriculum, but another concept that must be trained as well is performance quality.

Bartenieff Fundamentals strengthens young dancers' performance quality. Because Bartenieff Fundamentals stems alongside LMA, the concept of Effort plays a role in teaching performance in students and provides deeper specificity in their performance ("Bartenieff FundamentalsSM"). The effort qualities, "Floating, Dabbing, Wringing, Thrusting, Pressing, Flicking, Slashing, and Gliding" ("About Laban's Efforts"), can be used by dance instructors to describe to their students how they should perform a certain movement. The effort qualities teach young dancers about specificity and dynamic quality of movement. Focusing on initiation points and spatial intent, points of Bartenieff Fundamentals, also allows for dancers to learn specificity and dynamic quality of their movement. Bartenieff Fundamentals not only enhances general performance quality when focusing on the Bartenieff Fundamental concepts, it also helps in the teaching and understanding of the qualities that define specific dance techniques and genres. An example is the teaching of jazz dance qualities, such as the ephebistic spine (Peterson 166). Ephebism in jazz dance symbolizes a youthful quality. Jeffery Peterson, a certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst, claims that the rocking preparation, both lying down and standing, "...is a derivative of a groove and therefore is a pre-cursor to manifesting an Ephebistic

spine” (Peterson 166). He also states that when rocking preparation is done to music, it enhances, “...students’ ability to manifest the groove within choreography with set timings” (Peterson 168). Students are encouraged to rock in time with the provided music, emphasizing upward and downward accents, synching up with grooves, and engage in complex, polyrhythmic patterns (Peterson 168), another key element of jazz dance technique. Another dance instructor that uses Bartenieff Fundamentals in her classes, Ursula Payne, admires the groundedness concept of Bartenieff Fundamentals and uses this idea to approach performance training in her students (Payne). She claims that “...groundedness brings excitement and aliveness in the body” (Payne), which translates to how a student performs movement. Tapping into groundedness is a key characteristic of some dance styles such as jazz, tap, and modern technique. Connection of limbs to the core also provides performance qualities and design elements such as speed variation in movement (Payne). Lastly, teaching students about the flow of breath and how that connects to their movement creates fluidity in sequencing and therefore heightens their overall performance quality.

When is the best time to incorporate Bartenieff Fundamentals into a dance class? The warm-up is the best time to incorporate Bartenieff Fundamentals to introduce concepts early on. The warm-up period “...prepares the body to dance and focuses on technical elements and alignment issues that all students must learn” (Ambrosio 17), therefore it is vital for students to be engaged mentally and physically during the warm-up. By using Bartenieff Fundamentals in the warm-up, students are taught about alignment, reducing injury risk, but are also exposed to concepts that can surface later in the class. For example, using the body connectivity pattern Body-Half during a rolling exercise on the floor at the beginning of class to warm the body up can later translate to an across the floor combination or center floor combination. Bartenieff

Fundamentals is a great tool for teachers as it allows for teaching in a progression and many opportunities for critical thinking with the students, stimulating their minds with thinking.

Bartenieff Fundamentals is engaging because students are learning about their body kinesthetically (Payne) through internal body awareness. The warm-up portion, especially when influenced by Bartenieff Fundamentals, allows for students to “reclaim what makes them themselves” (Payne). It is an opportunity to meet people where they are in that moment and work somatically together to create a community in the space all while experiencing a deeper connection to the body. It is a time to honor and support those who are sharing a space while experiencing and learning something new (Payne). Bartenieff Fundamentals allows for critical learning while also meeting emotional needs of students through body work and community bonding making the warm-up period engaging.

Bartenieff Fundamentals, when used in a studio setting, can be beneficial to young, learning dancers. The core concepts and beliefs of the somatic practice allows for students to learn and develop internal body sensations and awareness. Throughout their training, dance students can incorporate this knowledge to improve their dancing. Bartenieff Fundamentals emphasizes proper alignment and therefore, assists dance students in improving their alignment. Improved alignment translates to the rest of their dancing by enhancing overall range of motion and reducing risk of injury. Bartenieff Fundamentals also improves performance quality in dance students by focusing on effort qualities, initiation points, spatial intent, groundedness, along with much more. Specific elements in dance techniques, such as ephebism in jazz dance, can also be instilled using Bartenieff Fundamentals. Finally, Bartenieff Fundamentals helps dance students be engaged in the warm-up, the most important part of a dance class, by encouraging thoughtful learning, critical thinking, and stimulation of mind and body as well as creating community.

Bartenieff Fundamentals is beneficial to include in a studio dance curriculum for young dancers learning about their self and dance through movement.

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