

DANC 167

Dance Improvisation

Model contributed by Lisa Gonzales

This course introduces students to dance performance, composition, and movement research through improvisation. Coursework balances in-depth individual exploration with rigorous practice in spontaneous duet, small group, and ensemble dance making. Throughout the course students will investigate concepts of dance composition while developing skills to work spontaneously, collaboratively, and independently. Direct physical work will prioritize the development of the student's unique movement voice, and will be supplemented by readings, writing, and discussion.

Class schedule and format

In this course students will be split into 2 working groups (to comply with social distancing) and will meet 2 x week every other week for 70-75 minutes. On alternate weeks students will work independently on assignments that will be thoughtfully woven into the face to face experience when they are back in the classroom. Content/Practice modules will be designed so that in the event that our work is interrupted (and we must all go remote) assignments will have multiple paths toward completion, and creative practice will continue remotely.

Course-specific organization, examples and ideas

Weeks 1 and 2: Movement as Research

Group A will work in person, Group B will work remotely. The remote group will be encouraged to work synchronously, but there will be an asynchronous option to account for difficulties with synchronous learning. The groups will switch during week 2. Class time is spent in guided movement research sessions.

Sample Assignment (beginnings of an idea) given to both groups to be complete outside of class time. Inspired by an assignment developed by Paige Cunningham for her ballet class)

Improvisation as “Freedom”

In order to help us contextualize our work in Dance Improvisation this semester within the hybrid format, please review the following assignment and submit your response by the end of week.

Using Canvas Studio, or a two-minute voice recording, or a two-page (750-1000 words) written paper, answer the following three questions:

1. What does the term “freedom” mean to you? When do you feel “free?” Does the notion of freedom impact the way you live your life from day to day? How or How not?
2. What limitations do you experience in your life on a regular basis? Some of these may seem internal and others external. Please give some thought to both. Which come from inside and which from outside?

To prepare for a discussion concerning the idea of “freedom” in improvisational practice—who gets to feel “free”, how one sees themselves in relationship to “freedom” may impact one’s perceptions about choice, and how working within limitations may allow/train for

balancing individual needs and desires with tracking the needs of the whole--**Choose 1 of the following modalities to aid you in your answers to the three questions:**

A. Read the following four articles:

B. Listen to the following two podcasts:

C. Watch the four videos below:

Other possible modules:

2. Building Bridges Module (2-4 weeks)

a. Group A will meet in the space while Group B meets remotely synchronously through zoom. The groups will switch the next week. Both groups will experience a warmup guided by instructor (either in the studio or in their own spaces)

i. In class group performs a series of exercises and scores aimed at composing a bridge between two independent movement voices (forming a duet out of two simultaneous solos.)

ii. Zoom group will do the same using break out rooms.

iii. During weeks 3 and 4 students will transition into setting the exploration into a short repeatable duet and recording it to post to canvas.

iv. Discussion forums will provide a place for students to share and respond to each other's work and what they are noticing about compositional choices.

v. All students will complete readings and view video examples of performance that support their research for this module.

b. In person experiences will prioritize the benefits of being guided in improvisational research by the instructor. Remote experiences will allow for more independent working and will provide time for students to incorporate additional compositional elements such as music, costume considerations, etc., as well as provide the invaluable experience of practicing distance collaboration.

3. Site Specific: Improvisation as research Module (2 weeks)

a. In studio experience introduces students to tuned listening and nuanced movement exploration. The student also practices setting movement discovered through improvisation. The student sets 10-20 counts of repeatable movement.

b. In the subsequent remote experience, the student will apply tuned listening in a location of their choosing. The student will play with framing their set movement sequence within the space. The student will develop the work and create a short site-specific piece with a beginning, middle and end. They will video their work and share with the class.

c. Discussion forums will provide a place for students to share and respond to each other's work.

d. All students will complete readings and view video examples of performance that support their research for this module.

e. For students who begin this module remotely, the research conducted in their location will be brought back into the studio to inform the making of a short "place" infused study.

f. In person experiences will prioritize the benefits of being guided in improvisational research by the instructor. Remote experiences will prioritize working independently to apply skills practiced in the studio to specific challenges created specific to remote learning.