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The Artist in Education: Integrating the Many Roles of the Future Dance Educator

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Abstract: It is vital that future dance educators have experiences in the many areas that they will be required to fulfill as they enter the K12 dance arena. Their skill sets must range from the knowledge of classroom management, pedagogical principles, community building through dance, to understanding and application of artistic and aesthetic values and a deep embodiment and application of the creative process. However, there are many logistical obstacles to the successful achievement of these many and varied goals. This paper details a project that attempts to simultaneously and fluidly develop several of the necessary skills needed for the dance educator, to be implemented in a dance program at the college or university level. The project, entitled PACES (Performing Artists Creating, Experiencing and Servicing) involves a combination of community service, teaching, and performance training in a student-driven program, culminating in a community performance. The major components to this project that will be detailed include the following: • A service learning project that actively engages pre-service teaching with K12 students • Performance training for PACES students (pre-service teachers) that centers around master works • Lessons that are created by the pre-service teachers and are derived from the content and choreographic structures of the master works • A culminating performance in which all are participants

Keywords: Dance Education, Service Learning, Dance Training

PREPARING DANCE EDUCATORS holds immense challenges. It is vital that, during their pre-service studies, candidates have experiences in the many areas that they will be required to teach as they enter the K12 dance arena. This skill set must range from expertise in classroom management, pedagogical principles, content knowledge, community building through dance, to an understanding and application of artistic and aesthetic values and skills and a deep embodiment of the creative process. However, there are many logistical obstacles to the successful achievement of these many and varied goals. How can students gain practical experience as teachers while digesting the theoretical content in the short time in which they are preparing? How can they develop as artists while at the same time gain the pedagogical skills and teaching experience they need to succeed without sufficient synthesis of these various roles? After ruminating over these and similar issues and observing students' journeys from pre-service to induction and beyond, I have created a project that integrates the various skills and conceptual knowledge with an applied and student-centered approach. The project, Performing Artists Creating, Educating and Servicing (PACES), described here, involves a unique combination of performance training and dance-making; planning and teaching dance lessons; and engaging in community service, which coincide with the three general thematic goals that this alternative method employs: that of honing skills as a (1) performing and creative artist, (2) teacher/facilitator, and (3)

artistic director/community builder, respectively. This paper will detail this pilot project for the purpose of creating a template that others might utilize as well as personalize to fit the scopes and needs of their students, institutions and communities.

The Performing/Creative Artist Role

The first of the various sets of skills needed for future dance teachers within a university dance program are those of the performing and creative artist. When educational dance was first conceived by Margaret H'Doubler in the early part of the 20th century, the realms of professionally oriented dance and dance in education were quite separate. Dance in education was born from physical educators, with an emphasis on a newly found holistic approach to health and well-being. However, as practices both in professional modern dance and modern educational dance were refined and deepened, there evolved a more appropriate reformulation of these divergent pasts.

Today, dance rightfully sits within the context of the other arts and should be taught as such. It is optimal and desirable that model dance teachers have, in addition to content areas and pedagogical knowledge, a rich knowledge and embodiment of the performance and choreographic aspects of dance. Yet, although a crucial component, this role is not intended to be an overarching focus of the varied skill set of the future teacher. In an informed discussion on dance teaching and preparation, As Sylvie Fortin (1993) states in her discussion of dance



teacher preparation: “The present view of dance teaching competency as currently reflected in teacher education programs tends to favor a high level of technical content knowledge and only a basic level of pedagogical knowledge” (p. 35). Furthermore, Fortin comments that, historically, dance teachers have been chosen for their professional level of dancing and/or association with a major company (p. 38). And that, “The assumption is that experience in the practice of the discipline in addition to the acquisition of a smattering of teaching strategies is sufficient preparation for teaching” (p. 38). To be sure, this is not the intention of this project or this very role within it. To the contrary, what makes PACES unique is the opportunity for the students to be guided in the interweaving of the various roles. Several factors are key in this design, including student-centered approach, faculty-driven objectives that involve a melding of content and pedagogy, and reflective practice in every aspect of the project. In many dance education settings, dance teachers will spend a large part of their time creating and rehearsing dances for their students. Yet, how do programs prepare future teachers to be successful at such a nuanced skill set that requires an integration of both the pedagogical and creative aspects of the dance teacher? How do educators hone what Fortin borrows from Shulman (1987, as cited in Fortin) as “pedagogical content knowledge” (Fortin 1993, p.35), where a deeper integration of pedagogy and content is manifested through a variety of dynamic teaching contexts?

The PACES project addresses this issue in several ways. For example, the scope of the project includes performance and choreographic training in both new works and classic master works (or the equivalent). The PACES repertory varies each year, but the constant is that the participants have a significant experience with a master work (usually in the modern idiom). Yet, this is only one dimension to their multi-leveled engagement with these works (as subsequent sections discuss). One drawback to providing consistent exposure to master works is that it can be costly and often relies on the availability of additional financial support. Through the *American Dance Legacy Institute*, etudes, or studies fashioned after several classic modern dance works are available at a minimal cost (made possible through grants from the *National Endowment for the Arts* and other agencies) and provide several options for gaining closer experience with master works.

In furthering their training, each year, the students also take part in the creation and performance of a new work. In the first year of the project, per-

former/choreographer/teacher Celeste Miller, who works with movement and text, set a piece on the dancers, with generous contributions from the dancers themselves. This collaborative process was extremely suitable for the students and this project in that they were deeply involved in creating the work and therefore had increased investment in both the work and their performance of it. Secondly, when developing lesson ideas for the K12 students (based on this and the other works), the PACES group had a richer foundation from which to draw than had they not been involved in the creative process. Additionally, I devised time within Miller’s residency schedule to specifically discuss her methodology for generating material from dancers and to share some of her residency experiences with students of differing dance abilities, which added to the richness of their overall experience in this process. This reflective, pedagogical discussion is a dimension that does not commonly occur in traditional guest artist residencies.

In the current year, as a facilitator, co-choreographer and guide for the current new work that PACES will create, I help them to define the parameters of the work (narrow in on ideas), and guide them into making a cascading sequence of decisions (both of content and of structure) that result in a road map for their choreographic journey. Another important component to this project is reflection. It is essential that we document and reflect upon this creative process through note-taking, journals and both formal and informal discussion. In alignment with a secondary objective, all of these dances are from the modern idiom and are centered on one of five defining concepts (Enghauser, in press) developed in order to help to deepen one’s understanding of modern dance.¹ Tethering the works to these defining concepts is another way to insert a pedagogical lens into their experience with a master work. These works are then performed in the spring in a formal concert as well as other venues in the community and region

The Teacher/Facilitator Role

The next layer of this design is the service learning component. One of the main purposes of this layer, in addition to serving the needs of a selected community through dance-based experiences, is to provide the pre-service teachers hands-on experiences in planning and teaching lessons geared for K12 students. It is vital that the students see (and help to create) the connection between the dance works and entry points that illuminate these works in an instructional setting.

¹ The five defining concepts are: (1) Personal/cultural inquiry; (2) Process and Experimentation; (3) Invention; (4) Individuality; (5) Community and Collaboration. Building modern dance awareness is a secondary objective within the PACES project; thus, the use of virtually all modern dance repertory. Other such programs may wish to explore works of various genres.

We begin by sifting out some essential concepts from one or both of the current PACES dance works. Service learning, quickly becoming a highly utilized and powerful learning tool in all levels of education, goes beyond a general outreach program in that its purpose is to seek to instruct while serving some larger need in a community. Locally, public school dance programs are sparse, yet a few new programs are cropping up that need support in order to gain momentum. We became involved at the request of one of the local teachers and proposed several different options from a one-time workshop for several different classes (to strengthen dance awareness and appreciation throughout the whole school) to a more in-depth, sequential set of workshops with one group of students (targeting the teacher's dance students) in an after school setting. I believe both models can be a successful service learning project if they support the desired goals of the recipients.

In the coming year, I plan to devise a service learning project that centers on issues that have a regional concern, such as select environmental issues and/or stories from this region's environmental history. The new work will be derived from this general theme; therefore, the service learning project will be derived from these concepts as well as those that arise from the current master work. We will work with non-dance populations and, in working with the sponsoring K12 teacher, introduce the art form through a focus on regional issues of interest to the participants. Devising clear lessons in one short semester for a population usually new to process based dance learning and making provides many challenging but vital opportunities for growth on the part of the PACES students. In our pilot year, we devised a six-lesson curriculum based upon themes of isolation, fears, and personal stories/histories (see Table 1). In generating movement material, we also relied upon structures that Celeste Miller used in her dance making, such as a studies consisting of both gesture and spatial pathways based on questions about everyday life. Similarly, in the creation of her piece, Celeste Miller led the students on a creative journey that explored and developed material from the various media that provided their daily news, and detailed memories of the moment when they heard about a tragic world event.

In the very first meeting, the high schoolers came over to the university where the PACES students performed their works for them in an informal showing. A discussion followed. Subsequently, we met at the high school for a two hour block once per week for six sessions (not always consecutive weeks, due to scheduling conflicts). A pair of PACES students took turns teaching each workshop that they had planned together. Each lesson included (1) an ice-breaker: some activity, such as a name game,

that helped everyone to get to know each other and feel comfortable in this context; (2) a warm-up, emphasizing basic movement fundamentals and developmental movement patterns, and featuring a dance element, such as weight or force or balance; and (3) a main activity centered on a larger theme (related to one of the PACES works) where movement material is generated by the students. Attendance to these after school sessions (called the "Community Movement Group" by the high school dance teacher) was expected, but not always consistent. It was obvious that although these students had had some exposure to various forms of dance, none of them had been led through movement activities in this way. Their responses, in general, were very tentative and they were hesitant to fully explore or invest in their own personal gestures or other movements when asked. The apprehensive disposition of these students was an incredible learning experience for the PACES students. They were incredulous as to why high school students could be so timid and so unresponsive when they themselves were so enthused in presenting their lessons. They found that they had to regroup and spontaneously reconsider their content to try to engage the high schoolers. On another day each week, we rehearsed the repertory and also set aside an hour to discuss the coming workshop and to digest what had occurred the prior week. The PACES students' investment in this project was notable and evidenced by long, impassioned discussions. They worked diligently to devise adjustments to their overall plan based on the ideas and lessons they observed and spent valuable time problem solving and refining. This process provides evidence of their development of pedagogical content knowledge in dance.

The Artistic Director/Community Builder Role

The final role in this tapestry is that of artistic director and community builder. This role is the least exploited through traditional classroom based preparation. For, even standard field teaching (such as student teaching) do not necessarily provide the pre-service teacher with the informed experience of serving as a producer of semi-annual performances (the artistic director), or reflecting and deeply analyzing how particular populations can be properly engaged in or turned on to dance through a dance learning experience (the community builder). The following narrates the culmination aspects of the PACES project, which narrows in on how students gain experience in this role.

In the pilot year, the six-session service learning unit culminated in several "clumps" of movement material that had accumulated and were rehearsed

on each new visit. In two concluding workshops scheduled as “rehearsal” sessions, the PACES students were able to successfully organize that material into a performance study, in which they were co-participants. In a special lecture demonstration at the high school, the PACES students performed the original work, the master work, plus the collaborative study. The following week, the PACES project presented its own informal performance at the university, which included the dance study.

By the end of the year, the PACES students communicated a sense of accomplishment and pride in the totality of what they achieved. Such a comprehensive program as PACES allows students to learn about dance works and their creation from a kind of 360 degree vantage point. Their training goes far beyond that of performing or choreographing. They are also asked to analyze both the concepts behind the works as well as the compositional structures that inform them and convert this information into accessible, level and age appropriate lessons. Lastly, they must work within a fluid context where they must interface the works with real students whom they must engage, motivate and try to understand.

Each one of the roles that the PACES students fulfilled- that of teacher or performer or choreographer, is a comprehensive undertaking in traditional terms. For, the traditional components to a teacher preparation program consist of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and teaching experiences, usually learned through separate course work and field experiences. However, students benefited most from the multi-dimensional nature of this experience which provided a uniquely deep insight for the participants that went beyond artificial boundaries. The intertwined and overlapping roles provided a full spectrum learning experience that compounds the effect of any one role in isolation. Since this project has a significant teaching component in addition to performance opportunities, it attracted students who were both casually interested in teaching (and primarily interested in performing) as well as the teacher certification candidates.

Finally, the model presented in this discussion is not without its challenges. Some of the challenges had to do with finding enough time to properly attend to all of the sub-areas that are entailed. Another challenge has been developing and maintaining relationships with schools and collaborative K12 teachers each year. In our pilot year, the cooperating school’s dance teacher provided immense support to the project and maintained a cooperative spirit throughout. However, one’s contacts and schools may change from year to year and sometimes convincing schools or teachers not familiar with dance the worthiness of the project can be a challenge. There are also many logistical details to address in the service learning

component that require time and a knack for administrative details. Managerial support in this area would be helpful if possible.

Summary

In summary, the PACES project included the following components:

Performance/Repertory

- Dance master works(s) (1-2).
- One new, original composition, in which student have a hand in the creative process
- A year long commitment from students: one semester to rehearse, reconstruct and plan lessons, and a second semester for service learning (and additional rehearsals)
- A minimum of 4-6 contact hours per week for rehearsals and planning. (The students receive performance credits for this project; however, it may be credited as part performance and part field experience, or even community service).

Service Learning

- Clearly defined/devised objectives and plans for each lesson. Lesson content is related to the above works but also entails responding to the needs of the recipients
- An embedded reflection component: both for the PACES students and within the service learning students
- For an in-depth program, a minimum of 16 contact hours with one group of students, with a regular weekly meeting time

Intensive training in performance and choreography as part of pre-service teachers’ overall college dance training and preparation is vital. The student should achieve a proficiency in these areas that, at a minimum, equals the non-certification track students. This standard is supported by National Association of Schools of Dance, the national accrediting body for dance programs and schools (NASD, 2007). In addition, these future educators need application based experiences, not only in teaching their content in the classroom, but in the context of a *mélange* of dynamic roles. In the preparation of future K12 dance educators, the National Dance Education Organization enumerates eight Professional Teaching Standards for Dance in Arts Education (2007), several of which are addressed within the auspices of the PACES project. The eight standards, including understanding students and how they learn, and valuing active learning and “transformational thinking” (2007, 4) as well as practicing resourcefulness and skill in producing proficient dancers all help provide a useful

reference of essential teacher skills, accomplishments and dispositions when creating a project such as PACES.

To create accomplished teachers, a successful student would require, beyond the attainment of proficiency in both content and pedagogical knowledge, significant experience-based opportunities to practice and reflect upon these skills. Students' exposure to the K12 classroom is usually reserved for field hours where they observe experienced teachers and take part in a relatively modest amount of teaching (apart from student teaching). Yet, this does not provide training in the multi-faceted role that they will be asked to play the minute they enter the classroom as a full-fledged teacher. Projects like PACES are an ideal avenue to begin to provide such needed experiences.

If we are to continue to propel growth in dance education, we must continue to uncover ways to better prepare future dance educators so that they become the successful models upon which future generations of dance programs are built. Many existing teacher preparation programs provide solid traditional models. However, the dialogue regarding alternative, practice-based structures that take students away from their desks and studios and into the K12 classroom in a collaborative, pro-active way need to be highlighted, discussed and developed. PACES and other such models could be a useful launching point for the re-invigorated examination and improvement of pre-service dance programs in higher education.



Figure 1: PACES Students Performing "Just In!" by Celeste Miller

Table 1: Sample List of P.A.C.E.S. Repertory with Corresponding Instructional Components

name of dance	choreographer	'defining concept'	lesson themes
"Bushasche Etude"*	Pearl Primus	Personal/Cultural Inquiry	Acknowledging cultural values, exploring ritual, war
"Rooms Etude"	Anna Sokolow And Lorry May After Anna Sokolow's <i>Rooms</i> (1955)	Personal/Cultural Inquiry	Isolation, Fear
"Rainbow Etude"	Donald McKayle (after Donald McKayle's <i>Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder</i> ; (1952)	Personal/Cultural Inquiry	Justice, Equality, Identity
"Just In!"	Celeste Miller	Process and Experimentation	Creating personal narratives through dance
NOTE: *Etudes are made possible by the Repertory Etudes™ Dance Instructional Collection, directed and curated by Caroline Adams and Julie Adams Strindberg			

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Rebecca Gose Enghauser performed with Garth Fagan Dance from 1988-1993, touring the US and abroad, including many colleges and universities, the Spoleto Festival, Carlton Dance Festival (Brazil), and New Zealand Festival of the Arts, and the world premiere of Griot New York, with collaborators Wynton Marsalis and Martin Puryear at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. She subsequently worked in arts education as a teaching artist and artistic design consultant for the Leonard Bernstein Center for Learning through the Arts in Nashville, TN, while also performing and producing her own choreography. Rebecca holds an M.F.A. in Dance from the University of Washington. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of Georgia, where she primarily teaches modern technique and directs the teacher certification program. Currently, she continues to perform, both regionally and nationally, as well as write for scholarly publication in dance education, primarily in the areas of motor learning and somatics.

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