

15 October 2009

Dear Dr Lewis, Dr Chapman, Anna Carlisle and LUTSF committee

I felt delighted and pleasantly surprised to receive the scholarship from Lisa Ullman trust. For many years I had been aware of the various exciting projects that movement practitioners had been able to undertake through your support. Finally applied for it this year. So thank you.

I appreciate your confidence in me and willingness to contribute to my future development as a choreographer, performer, and teacher.

On my return from the US, I applied the knowledge gained immediately, in my role as a teacher and artistic programmer for the Milapfest Summer School in Manchester and the CAT program in Birmingham.

This (SME) training continues to inform and influence my work and me. I plan to write some articles/blog based on this experience. Will certainly keep you posted on anything I do.

I have included some of the participant's comments of their experience of my teaching after the August'09 Summer dance course.

I am very happy to be contacted by any one requiring information, suggestion or a conversation regarding my experience.

Photographs and contact details are given below. Again, thank you for investing in my future.

Warm Regards

Anusha Subramanyam

Introduction

As a dancer, choreographer and teacher of bharatanatyam. I have been developing a teaching methodology for teachers and dancers of the form. Living in the west and therefore the need to articulate one self, necessitate re thinking and articulating what I do. I think this is true of most artists, this dislocation or relocation of the form in another context thrusts change. I believe that bharatanatyam teaching and its practice is evolving and needs to continuously evolve. It is therefore vital that bharatanatyam, now very much a dance form of "Britain" also create an appropriate teaching methodology suitable to the trans- national student and practitioners.

I felt this study would give me a valuable scientific knowledge of anatomy in relation to movement principles. My plan is to use this information, i.e. the western medical model of anatomy and physiology to further develop an informed analytical movement training methodology for bharatanatyam.

Forming a construct of teaching and learning dance that encourages being rather than doing, which to me is central to South Asian Art practices.

The Project

I travelled to the Centre of Body Mind Movement in Pittsburgh, USA for an advanced training programme in Somatic Movement Educator. This program is devised and organised by Mark Taylor. Mark had also invited various guest tutors to teach the course with him.

I studied three fundamentals body systems – endocrine system, connective & ligament system and the nervous systems.

For each system I learnt and experienced

- Anatomy and physiology and aspects of motor development theory
- Muscular attachments and key actions of the primary muscles
- Hands on practice and movement exercises
- Indications and contra-indications for working within each of these systems

Connective and Ligament

The functions of connective tissues are varied. They are hugely responsible for creating unity and togetherness of the body as an organism. They bond and tie the body as one, giving us form and shape, through the tissues as structural system and the organs as functioning units. Connective tissues are essential for the protection of the body in its elaborate defense mechanisms against infection and in repair from chemical or physical injuries.

This course gave a clear understanding of muscular and bony landmarks and its interconnections. The hands on work gave me basic understanding and simple tools to help ways of supporting good dance practice and help in preventing injuries.

Endocrine System

Glands of the endocrine system and the hormones they release influence almost every cell, organ, and function of our bodies. The endocrine system is instrumental in regulating mood. I studied the hypothalamus, pituitary, thyroid, pancreas, adrenal, pineal gland and gonads.

Nervous System

The nervous system is a network of specialized cells that communicate information about our surroundings and us, for ourselves. It takes information and processes this to create reactions/responses in other parts of the body. The nervous system is divided broadly into two categories: the peripheral nervous system and the central nervous system.

Out Come

The SME course at Body mind movement was truly transformative for me.

After the course I went straight into teaching and program directing an International Indian dance summer program.

It was almost witnessing a third person, like an outer inner body experience. I felt my speech was clear and to the point,

As I stayed within my own experience and felt the experience, I was responding to people, this changed how people responded to me.

I taught a warm-up-body mind preparation class to start the day. I was able to share what I was witnessing in my own self with the whole group.

Which I know from many people's responses everyone was deeply moved. And felt they were in a life program rather than only a dance training camp.

The SME course was very well structured, in its teaching, content and the teachers who were invited to teach with Mark. All the participants I met on the course were extraordinary people, who supported my learning and experiencing the work.

Connective tissues and ligaments course was taught by Plouman; it was direct, clear and like the ligamentous touch slowly crept into your being.

It was an important start for me as it provided the basis for direct and clear touch, understanding of bony landmarks and connections to ligaments.

Enabled a direct knowing of the body. Endocrine course taught by Diane, had the element of flying particularly Diane's singing voice and her

presence gave me the permission to sing. The course content as such also used lot of sounding and vibrotorial awaking of various glands. As a rabbi she also brought with a particularly all-encompassing Judaic tradition which was specific and all embracing. In the Nervous system course Mark was joined by Marie Lou, her teachings were fine, clear. Her teaching of a yoga class, I had never experienced such freedom and ease of movement as I did through her teaching. Marks teaching, creating this course, with teacher's who are on a spiritual path and having mediation every week was very special. The work to me became way of living rather than a course one does and applies outside of who you are. To me the course teaches integration in its deepest sense, within yourself and ways to respond and see the world that is not reactive. Importantly finding appreciation of who you are and others.

Conclusion

The somatic approach has been around in the West since the 1970s. Choreographers Trisha Brown, Jennifer Monson, Daniel Burkholder and many others have been influenced in working through a felt, sensory based approach.

Equally now there is a growing number of movement practitioners writers, artists who are exploring somatic practice, which seems to encourage working from within, in order to cultivate a deep inner connection. I believe a first- hand personal, experiential approach is transformative and allows individuals to experience themselves therefore any work that emerges from a process such as this will be authentic.

This approach appeals to me as it uses sensory feedback, one has to pay attention and learn from ones own experience. As a performer, teacher this allows empowering the leaner and teaching is lot more exciting. Dancing becomes a felt experienced for the performer and the onlooker. This to me is core of learning and understanding South Asian forms.

The emphasis is on being mindful and knowing ones own body, would also prevent injuries, making the learn as responsible for their learning and developing their potential.

Some Feedback

My experience of the warm-up sessions was very positive over-all. I found the stillness to start, with visualisation of the body using various images and concentration on the breath was an invigorating way to become more mentally and 'present' in ones own body. It helped me feel a sense of 'wholeness', which was great to feel more focused and empowered for the day ahead. It also made me more aware of the sensory information I was picking up from my environment (the room temperature, the feel of the floor, the proximity of other people and the small sounds they were making) and the information I was picking up from within (small adjustments in weight to maintain balance, any stiffness or aching muscles and the feeling as they relaxed or released slightly). This state of calm awareness is a great way to start a day of dance!

Katie Ryan

I loved the session Anusha Subramanyam gave during the extremely intense week "Dance India 2009".

I felt deeply touched by the connective tissues "image" she made us explore through the sessions as a possibility we have to connect different parts of our body and ourselves and also to connect ourselves to other people in a peaceful, loving and respectful way.

In a society where we feel so often lonely as individuals, separated from each other and very often from our own soul, our true self I think it's crucial to make this kind of experiences for our personal development. And as a dancer I feel it's even more important to experience my body from inside and amazing to discover that deep there my body, my emotions and my soul are interlaced in such a wonderful way that you can't make any distinction! Anusha worked (as always) with her heart, with her whole being, creating in her sessions a place for peace, meditation and sharing the excitement of body in movement. Arianna Balabio

Warm-up session during Dance-India 2009, Manchester.

I feel that the session was very well planned, and I enjoyed the fact that it started with complete stillness (lying on the floor, rather than standing), increasing the pace of movement and finishing with an energetic dance sequence. It worked really well considering that the whole week was physically intense, so we started with relaxation, when we could take time to listen to our bodies, concentrating on our breath, while being guided through the process by Anusha. We then continued with a variety of stretches and strengthening exercises. I enjoyed the elements of touch introduced to the session.

Elena Jecinta

I would like to say that I found the morning classes very rewarding and prepared me mentally and physically for my daily classes. The yoga combined with the subject of the human body (connective tissue in this case) was as much educational as it was allowing us to become aware of how our bodies work with every movement. You did and am sure will carry on doing an amazing job and I would be amazed if you were to be faulted on any of your practice and I am sure anyone would agree with me in saying to be able to encourage and inspire students, to bring out their creativity with such sensitive approach is a gift that of which you have. Thank you so much.

king regards sarriea din (kathak beginners)

Images

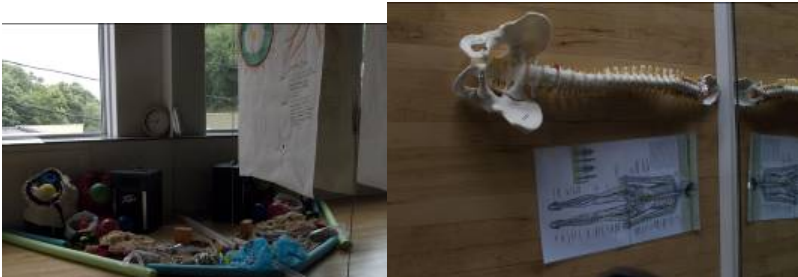
Connective-Ligaments



Endocrine



Nervous



Contacts

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