Syllabus

The Art of Choreography (ARTS-UG1209)

Professor Kathryn Posin Pozndance@aol.com, kop2001@nyu.edu
www.kathrynposin.org
Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Thurs 3:30-6:10
Rm 430, One Washington Place
Fall 2016 Office Hours by Appointment

It was the great modern dance choreographer Martha Graham who said, “We are all born with genius. It’s just that most people just lose it in the first five minutes.” This class attempts to help the student get back his or her original choreographic ability.

We will study the basic elements of dance —time, space and energy—and, each week explore a different aspect of the choreographic process. The students, through improvisations, problem solving and short movement studies, will discover their movement vocabulary. Each dancemaker will find their own philosophy of dance and their own individual choreographic voice while being introduced to some of the major twentieth century choreographers and their work. By nature we are all dancers, with or without years of training. Choreographic process, whether one wishes to be a choreographer or not, is a superb model for thinking, assembling and creating. These skills are transferable to other modes of artistic creation and other fields.

Class will begin with a short discussion of selected readings and viewing of video of some of the masters: from Martha Graham’s heroines, to the blazing use of the kinesphere by William Forsythe, to Gospel songs by Alvin Ailey, Twyla Tharp’s complex aerobics, or the gay-oriented Swan Lake of Matthew Bourne. Every class will include a short warm up based on the theme for the day, using Pilates, modern dance or a ballet barre. Dancers will work in class on solo assignments, then in duets and small groups. Work is shown, and teacher and class respond in a useful and reinforcing way. A space will be made available for choreographer/students to work on their assignments. Mid-term and final showings will complete the process.


Wear clothes you can dance in to class


Read: from What is Dance, Copeland and Cohen, eds., John Martin from The Dance, and The Modern Dance, Susanne K. Langer from Feeling and Form, Paul Valery, Philosophy of the Dance (Since students haven’t gotten book yet, this reading postponed)
View: The Kirov Ballet’s Swan Lake, Matthew Bourne’s Swan Lake

Week Two: Sept 15, Intention and Theme p.31

Read: Approach and Essentials from The Intimate Act of Choreography, Blom and Chaplin, chapters 1-4 from The Art of Making Dances by Doris Humphrey
View: Doris Humphrey’s *Passacaglia and Fugue*

**Week Three: Sept 22, Building a Phrase p.71**

Read: The Phrase from *The Art of making Dances* by Doris Humphrey, Phrase from *The Intimate Act of Choreography*, Blom and Chaplin.

View: Anthony Tudor, *Dark Elegies*

**Week Four: Sept 29, Theme and Variations, Motif and Development p.85**

Read: First Rules of Composition from *Modern Dance Forms* by Louis Horst, Theme and Variation vs. Motif and Development from the *Intimate Act of Choreography* by Blom and Chaplin.

View: George Balanchine *Theme and Variations*

**Week Five: Oct 6, Finding Structure: Sameness and Change Rainer's Trio A.**

Guest Teacher Pat Catterson

**Week Six: Oct 13, Philosophy and Strategies of Yvonne Rainer's Trio A.**

Guest Teacher Pat Catterson

Oct 20, Teacher away, no class, make up session to be announced

**Week Seven: Oct 27, Energy and The Basic Efforts p.139**

Read: Dynamics through the Basic Effort Actions from *Modern Educational Dance*, Valerie Preston Dunlop, Inner Impulses to Move from *Body Movement – Coping with the Environment* by Irmgard Bartenieff with Dori Lewis

View: Twyla Tharp *Push Comes to Shove*

**Week Eight No 3, Space and the Kinesphere p.151**

Read; *Space Harmony* by Cecily Dell, Carving Shapes in Space from *Body Movement – Coping with the Environment* by Irmgard Bartenieff with Dori Lewis

View: William Forsythe and Deconstruction in Architecture and Dance

**Week Nine: Nov 10, Story and Character p.159**

Read: Martha Graham’s Journey by Eric Bentley from *What is Dance?* Copeland and Cohen, eds., The Heroines Within from *Time and the Dancing Image* by Deborah Jowitt

View: Martha Graham, *Night Journey*

**Week Ten Friday, Nov 11 3:30-6:10 Rm 430 (make up for Oct 20) Rhythm, Time, Tempo and Meter p.99**

Read Rhythm from Doris Humphrey, and Duration or Timing in Music from the *Intimate Act of Choreography*

**Week Eleven: Nov 17, Genre and Style p. 201**

Read: Problems of Definitions from *Next Week, Swan Lake* by Selma Jeanne Cohen from *What is Dance?* Three Sides of Agon by Edwin Denby from *What is Dance?, Cerebralism, Jazz and Americana from Modern Dance Form*, Louis Horst

View: George Balanchine, *Agon*

Nov 24, THANKSGIVING, no class
Week Twelve, Dec 1 Finding Roots p. 227

Read: Alvin Ailey from *Black Dance* by Lynne Fauley Emery, from *Alvin Ailey, A Life in Dance* by Jennifer Dunning
View: Alvin Ailey, *Revelations*

Week Thirteen: Dec 8, Musical Form p.239

View: George Balanchine, *Serenade*

Week Fourteen: Dec 15, Final showing of choreographic works

The Grade: Work and showing of work in class and on the final performance are 60%, class discussion is 20%, written assignments are 20%. More than two absences will lower the grade. The most important determinant of grade is the quality of the choreography and progress of the student in this area. The goal of the class is for the student to learn the craft of choreography and gain experience and confidence in assembling and performing a work of art, in this case the specifics of dance.

Academic and artistic integrity is expected of all students. No plagiarized work is acceptable.

Course pack can be purchased at Advanced Copy Shop, 552 La Guardia Place between 3rd and Bleeker.