



Harnessing the Wind: the Art of Teaching Modern Dance

Jan Erkert

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Harnessing the Wind: The Art of Teaching Modern Dance gives you the theoretical knowledge, the practical tips, and the inspiration to prepare the next generation of dancers to meet the demands of contemporary dance.

This book combines information about constructing and presenting a dance class with personal reflections about the art of teaching modern dance and integrating somatic theories, scientific research, and contemporary aesthetic practices. It provides new teachers with a solid theoretical base and incites experienced teachers to reexamine and revitalize their teaching.

The book asks dance instructors to make conscious choices about what, why, and how they teach. Advocating an individualistic approach, it helps teachers understand how their personal dance interests and interpretations influence their teaching styles. Part I, “The Vision,” provides a philosophical perspective. It defines the role of technique and explores the delicate job of nurturing the artist during the quest for technical control. Part II, “Class Preparation,” is where the planning process takes shape. This section shows how to

- set strategies and realistic goals to lay the groundwork for a carefully built progression of movement skills;
- use rituals to facilitate centering;
- safely incorporate conditioning principles into dance training, thus encouraging the development of powerful and resilient dancers;
- understand the interplay between gravity and rhythm, space and energy to shape phrasing; and
- sequence exercises effectively using helpful graphs and planning guides.

Part III, “Class Presentation,” covers essential issues such as pacing, making good corrections, building images to enhance movement learning, and collaborating successfully with musicians. Finally, part IV, “Professional Concerns,” embraces important issues that touch the teaching professional, such as how to objectively analyze and critique a very subjective subject—the body—and how to maintain a healthy body, mind, and spirit.

Learning Aids: Investigations and Reflections

Each chapter is followed by a series of investigations and a reflection designed to challenge and inspire students and teachers. The investigations are concise exercises that explore theories both in and out of the classroom. They cover a range of activities including writing, drawing, chart making, observing, and experiential processing. The reflections provide insight to a dancer's world. Told through the eyes of a dance teacher, these narratives unveil the intangibles that are taught in dance, such as breathing, centering, playfulness, presence, and discipline.

Teacher Resources

The appendixes are full of practical tools, including a sample syllabus, sample grading policies, placement goals for four levels of technique, and assessment and evaluation forms.

Throughout the book, abstract and highly imagistic photographs by dance photographers Erika Dufour and William Frederking provide a powerful visual stimulus that captures mood, motion, and emotion.

This book provides dance students the information and theory necessary to begin the task of teaching. For seasoned teachers, it will inspire new questions and introduce new possibilities. Either way, readers will unleash a world of potential with *Harnessing the Wind*.

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