

Description:

Using different methods of tracing, dancers will develop a new and unique movement vocabulary that will be used to create duets and trios.

Objective:

To increase our ability to generate unique movement and explore how it can be developed into choreography.

To explore ideas spontaneously, through improvisation without planning or thinking ahead.

Exercise 1: What is unique movement?

Ask the dancers to think back over the past year or so, calling to mind all the different dance they have seen. It could be at a professional dance concert, at high school, football game, on TV, or in a movie. What are the dance moves that they have seen so many times, they're sick of them? A fan kick? A battement? Have them think of all the different moves that have been used so many times, no one cares anymore. On paper, in front of the class, brainstorm a list of these moves.

There's nothing wrong with these movements, we are just going to try and challenge ourselves to do something different, something new, something we've never seen before. We are going to take these moves out of our tool box, so to speak, and leave them on the side for another day.

Exercise 2: Object Tracing

Ask the dancers to look around the room. What do they see? A clock, a door, a window... What are the lines they see around them? What are the objects in the room? Ask the dancers to trace as many objects as they can using only their arms in 16 counts. Count out loud so they know how long that is going to be. They should improvise and don't have to remember what they do.

Try it a second time. Ask them to be as clear as they can with the tracing. They don't have to worry about making it a 'dance' – adding turns, leaps, skips, etc. There is enough dancing happening by just following the tracing instruction.

Try it a third time – this time tracing with a different body part. Ask the students for suggestions... head, feet, torso, elbow, etc. Do it several more times, each time exploring tracing the objects in the room with a different body part.

After ample improvisation and exploration, ask the dancers to set/choreograph a short phrase of material 8-12 counts long based on their object tracing experience. It doesn't have to be a long phrase but it has to be memorized and done the same every time. Give them 5 or so minutes to work. Again, there is no need to make it a 'dance.' Simply trace what they want in the room and remember the movements.

When they have finished have them do it one more time all together for memory. This is phrase A.

Exercise 3: Figurative Tracing

Rather than tracing what is in the room, what if we trace what we wanted to be there. A doorway? A line running from high to low? A doorknob? A wavy line about two feet off the floor? In figurative tracing, dancers are going to establish figures in space using their arms, head, torso, feet and then interact with what they have 'drawn.'

Ask the dancers to draw something with their arms. Then have them swipe it away – to clean the slate, so to speak. Have them explore this idea of tracing something new and swiping it away for 16 counts. Like exercise two, count out loud so they know how much time that is going to take. The goal here is to move, not memorize shapes.

Ask the dancers how else they might be able to interact with the figures they tracing in front of them? Lower, lift, carry, hug, punch... all are possible ways to interact with what they have in front of them.

This exercise is taken from William Forsythe's 'Dance Technologies.' He calls this Room Writing and in his version, the dancer must swipe the figure they create with such force that they fall off balance and travel somewhere new in space. Have the dancers explore this idea.

For more information about Forsythe's 'Dance Technologies' take a look at YouTube:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLO96ZPJY80>

After exploring the options with the dancers, ask them to create a new phrase of material based on figurative tracing. This phrase can be 12-16 counts long – longer than phrase A, but still rather short in the whole scheme of things. Ask them to use any method of interaction they like, even switching from one to another if they choose. Give them 10 minutes to work and show all at once when everyone is done.

Review phrase A again to make sure it's not forgotten. The new tracing phrase will be phrase B.

Exercise 4: Palm/Thumb Print Tracing

Ask the students to look at their palm. What lines do they see? What angles, shapes, swoops, etc. are present? Holding their palm in front of their face so they can see, ask them to trace the lines on their palm in the space in front of their body using their free hand. No need to add dance-like steps to this exercise... the movement options should be interesting enough.

Ask them to trace the same lines with their free elbow, their torso, hips, foot, etc. Can they change the plane of action: rather than tracing right in front of them, could they lie on the floor and use the ceiling as the plane of action? What about a diagonal plane parallel to a corner of the room?

Explore the same tracing ideas with a thumbprint. What are the movement possibilities?

Ask the dancers to set/choreograph a third movement phrase 8-12 counts long based on the lines in either their palm or thumb. Remind them that their choreographed steps DO NOT have

to include their palm or thumb print up in the air while they look at it! They should memorize the lines and actions like any other choreography.

Once everyone has finished, review phrases A, B, and this final phrase, which is C.

Exercise 5: Phrase A, B, and C together

Ask the dancers to put phrase A, B, and C together in some fashion.

The simplest way to do this would be to keep each phrase intact and do them in some order, maybe B, A, C. This is, however, not the most interesting way to solve this instruction. Could they cut and paste, throw away things they don't like, repeat things they do like, and fuse A, B, and C together in some new way? Encourage this kind of process. Give the dancers 15 minutes to do this. Check in on their progress.

Show each solo in small groups once everyone is done.

Exercise 6: Duets/Trios: Over, Under, Through, and Around

Once the phrases have been blended together, put the dancers into duets or trios.

Using only their own solo movement that they created, they have to create a duet that goes OVER, UNDER, THROUGH, and AROUND each other.

They may teach each other parts of their solos and may do each other's movement; they may repeat or throw out movement that they like or don't want to use. They may make up simple transitions that are not a part of their solo material to make smooth transitions but they may NOT add new steps, choreography, etc.

Moving over, under, through, and around gets to be difficult if the duet or trio gets too spread out. Suggest to the dancers that they stay in close proximity of each other.

Encourage them to move spontaneously rather than standing around and planning. If a group gets stuck, suggest that they all do the first four moves of their solos very close together and see what the possibilities are. Did someone's arm almost hit someone else? That could be manipulated to fit the 'over' element. Did someone slide along the floor? Could they slide through someone's legs? Doing over planning should be stressed!

Duets and Trios may not have any moment in unison. This means doing the same thing as other dancers. Challenge them to all do something different and try to satisfy the over, under, through, and around elements as many times as they can.

Give 15 minutes – AT LEAST – to work.

Show at the end of the time and discuss what the process was like, the results, and how they think these methods could help them in their own choreography.