

# ALEXANDRA BUSH

## TEACHING STATEMENT

Artistic expression holds great value in its innate ability to erase divisions and remind all who experience it of the common ground that unites people everywhere. As a dancer, choreographer, and dance educator, I firmly believe in the potential for dance to function as a universally accessible form of communication that facilitates this exchange. Dance is built upon the most basic human instincts: rhythm and movement. It is through this communication and sharing of ideas that dance holds the capacity to erase social, cultural, and economic barriers by telling stories of the human experience, and allowing us to interpret them as a community. This makes dance a relevant and important art form, and the training of dance artists is crucial in keeping the art form sustainable.

At the center of my teaching ethos is a resounding “yes!” to the question, “is dance important?” Dance enables bodies to participate in the development of a cultural identity and to practice the art of exploring, understanding, and questioning it further. In teaching dance, I assist in this development through empowering dancers to articulate the collective spirit of the individual and the community. Dance provides a space for the individual to facilitate change- in one’s own body and in relationships (to space, time, other people, environment, communities). Having evolved from a discipline-based educational model, the art form as I teach it balances a structured approach that honors both the tradition and science of movement, as well as embodied choice-making. As an individual highly trained in classical ballet and contemporary dance, I consider it my responsibility to help sustain the art form through the training of dancers with respect to this balance. My approach to dance education is mindful of the art form’s traditions and also its potential to develop critical thinking and self-awareness in students.

My contemporary dance class is structured to enable students to fully engage in the practice of their technique. I use improvisation as an educational tool to guide students to deeper understanding of concepts that may be experienced through natural movement patterns. This often includes a series of “crossings” in which students investigate fundamental elements of technique such as weight or direction, and the ways these elements impact their conscious and subconscious movement choices. Other elements of a contemporary technique class include choreographed exercises and phrases that allow students to access new information about these fundamental components of their dancing. This includes floor work, standing combinations in the center, traveling combinations, and long phrases that also enable the student to consider how their personal choices and expression can give them ownership of material. The movement vocabulary and aesthetic I employ in my classes is derived, in part, from work with my teachers in the Florida State University School of Dance and the University of Iowa Department of Dance, as well as my experience working with the artists of Dance Exchange in Washington D.C.

My ballet class is developed with respect for the traditions of classical ballet as well as the innovation of contemporary choreographers. Ballet training prepares dancers to fully engage with the breadth of material being created in the field (both in ballet and in other dance aesthetics). The design of my classes, as well as my approach to giving feedback, are influenced by my experience as a student of the Alexander Technique. Awareness of the body and its systems, as well as efficiency in enacting those systems, are key components to my teaching. I also greatly value an environment of self-directed learning, in which the student, with the guidance and support of the teacher, can cultivate an understanding of their body and its potential to fully realize a variety of techniques and artistry within a structure.

In teaching other dance studies and practices, such as composition, theory, improvisation, technology, or music for dancers, my fundamental approach is in tandem with how I engage the teaching of technique. Teaching is an exchange facilitated through guided inquiry. As an educator, I ask the questions that send students on a path of discovery and deeper understanding of their moving bodies, and how those bodies relate to others and to their environment. By fostering the development of this awareness in the student, I am able to ensure that the art form will continue to prove its relevance to the individual and to society.

As a dance educator, my own awareness and knowledge of the dancing body and its mental and physical intelligence is essential. I believe all individuals carry with them the potential to grow through dance education, and that potential should be acknowledged and nurtured. This universal mode of communication, enacted through bodies that reflect the world in which they live, requires thoughtful education of new artists in order to sustain it. The implications for all individuals are limitless when we consider the power of this communicative, border-crossing art form.