

For the past few years, I have been working as an associate lecturer for the Dance degree at Bath Spa University, UK; and for the last academic year, I worked as a full-time Movement lecturer for their Acting degree. With it being my first time lecturing in Higher Education, I turned to the mentoring of senior lecturers who guided me through their curriculum, allowing me to also facilitate from my own practice. I started to question my interdisciplinary approach when facilitating both courses, reflecting upon the differences, strengths and challenges in my pedagogy practice as a dance-trained artist, now facilitating not only for dance but also for acting, which makes this matter the primary focus of this research. My work prepares actors to be better movers, and dancers to have a wider acting vocabulary, establishing a universal lexicon, by incorporating training methods from these inherently intertwined disciplines, supporting the idea that ‘dances that play with theatre, and theatre that plays with dance, [enable] each to do their own thing better’ (Elswit, 2018, p. 4).

Somatic practices of consciousness and awareness are essential for the authentic portrayal of truth on stage and the attainment of choice and freedom (McCaw, 2018, p. 37), and by using Alexander Technique, for both actors and dancers, I aim to enrich their kinaesthetic experience. I have noticed, however, that institutions can often heavily focus actor movement training to somatic practices. I believe that somatic work should not be seen as the primary tool for improving physical technique, as actor movement training goes beyond the ‘matter of finding physical neutrality’ (Burgess 2012, cited in Savrami, 2016, p. 204).

Actors when faced with choreography, may find themselves tempted to say that they lack coordination, and dancers, when informed of the emotional depth or text, may react with apprehension. It proves immensely advantageous for a performer to address any training deficiencies in both disciplines, recognising and embracing the inherent interconnectedness (Harker, 2022, p. 2). I support the idea, therefore, that actor training should also include dance techniques. For actors, ballet ‘develops the correct alignment [...] quality of movement, time and phrasing and flow [and] requires core and muscular control [...] which could interfere with the softness of the actor’s diaphragm’ (Savrami, 2016, p. 208). Contemporary techniques such as Cunningham and Graham offer ‘movement principles to set vocabularies and exercises’ (Savrami, 2016, p. 209); and contact improvisation improves ‘the physical relationship between two [or more] characters’ (Loui 2012, cited in Savrami, 2016, p. 210). When then adjusting specific fundamental principles of these dance techniques and refocusing them for actors, I found that, for example, in a contemporary swing exercise, the release of excess tension in the body supports the actor to ‘achieve a balance between control and freedom, or limitation and

liberation in motion' (Savrami, 2016, p. 212). After a few weeks of applying similar methods in sessions and testing them through a formal assessment, progress in their physical technicality and movement confidence was achieved, as well as the reassurance that '[such] fear can be overcome in part by learning more about the moving body through dance' (Harker, 2022, p. 4).

In contrast, with dancers, it is important to not only 'focus on developing technique [which] can obscure the importance of storytelling, leaving the young dancer ill equipped when attempting character work' (Harker, 2022, p. 3). Through my work, I support dancers beyond their technical and movement qualities, through confidence development using acting elements such as props, storytelling, text and voice. The focus is on the 'ability to analyze, develop, and portray [theatre vocabulary] in order to achieve an authentic performance' (Harker, 2022, p. 3) through experimentation and investigation outside their discipline training, in order to enrich their interdisciplinary devising processes.

There is an element in my facilitating that ties together the application in both disciplines however - an interdisciplinary improvisation which 'allow[s] the [students] to be imaginative and responsive in expressing thoughts and emotions through shape and form' (Savrami, 2016, p. 212). When set and planned with creative care, an experimental safe space is enabled that 'support[s] the "now" nature of performance and its unpredictable conditions' (Savrami, 2016, p. 211), with its major focus on the testing of the material explored previously in the session, this time in a performative context and free from the pressure of quality from the students. Such creative improvisational tasks contrast with 'the theatrical tradition of making an entrance, where all eyes are upon the drama of the individual [performer] who in entering takes over the action' (Tufnell; Crickmay, 1993, p. 87). This notion challenges the students to 'enter not as [themselves] but as a fresh ingredient called into being by the state of affairs in the space at that moment finding a gap that calls out to be filled' (Tufnell; Crickmay, 1993, p. 87). In essence, it allows the students to apply their learning in relation to opportunity, space and other bodies, deepening their consciousness and awareness to the live creation of material being made.

In the twenty-first century, there are still very traditional technical and structural assumptions regarding the nature of actor and dancer training, but 'how does the actor's physical task correspond to and differ from that of the dancer, the gymnast, or the circus performer?' (Ann Dennis cited in McCaw, 2018, p. 35). This is a question that I keep very present in my interdisciplinary practice, which centres around the idea of the body as an instrument, regardless of the discipline in question; but very often, the single discipline-trained

instrument is left with gaps of knowledge unexplored. While reflecting upon my first year of facilitating in higher education, I noticed my need for further research, adoption and even re-training, in order to re-balance my specifically-focused dance knowledge. My non-interdisciplinary dance training, however, did not equip me with the experience within theatrical elements that I now lack when facilitating for dancers. My limited knowledge has only been acquired through self-exploration and interdisciplinary collaborations in my professional practice, leading me to the realisation for deeper learning. This matter was the principal reason for my interest in this Master's programme with Middlesex University, which I believe to already be supporting and enriching my practice. My aim through my practice, but ultimately through my teaching, is to balance out this deficiency of interdisciplinary training in performance courses, in order to prevent future generations of performers from reaching the same realisation as myself; that having a lack of interdisciplinary training will contradict the idea that 'an actor must dance, and a dancer must act' (Harker, 2022, p. 2).

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