Alia Montijo

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Teaching Philosophy:

As an advocate of community building beyond the dance studio, my teaching approach is centered on human connectivity in the classroom to bridge compassion, empathy and relationships outside of the classroom. My career focus on equity and inclusion through the arts and specifically through dance underpins all of my classes from early childhood creative movement to college-level technique classes. I accomplish this goal through the active development of an inclusive learning environment that encourages question, collaboration and support among the students by creating class time devoted to student voice, student creativity and reflection. I’ve merged my dedication to a community-centric approach with my ability to effectively teach codified technique, and over the past 15 years of my teaching career I have crafted curriculum that balances technical learning with creative manifestation (or the development of choreography) in order to demonstrate the applicability of codified language within creative development.

To achieve community within the classroom I begin with the recognition of each individual student by learning their names, a demonstration of my investment for the experience all participating students. I take this approach in all classes whether it is a semester-long commitment or a singular workshop, my student-centric approach of teaching helps to create an environment of respect and validation. Additionally, all of my high-school, college and professional level classes outside of ballet begin with walking around the dance space with the direction to see and greet one another. The small exercise in moving and seeing reaffirms the shared likeness between individuals. Similarly, all of the above classes end in a circle of reflection, a non-hierarchal formation that affirms the time shared together and carves space for individualized reflection of the learned knowledge. In my experience, I have found that starting and ending my classes in this way results in the thoughtful participation of students and creates a springboard for movement exercises and dialogue in subsequent classes.

Simultaneous to my efforts outlined above, my classes follow self-crafted curriculum based on my knowledge of codified techniques and my experiences with the subject material. I fuse my knowledge with descriptions and imagery that can help students grasp concepts about alignment, intention, movement and technical execution. My layered approach of demonstration, description, contextualization and metaphorical or image-based prompts that I have labeled the “accessible-teaching model” is built to ensure an inclusive teaching approach that accounts for the varied learning styles of my students. I hold myself accountable to provide a class in which every students’ learning curve is met through my complex approach to teaching. I set high expectations for all of my students, however I know that with the devised community environment combined with my accessible-teaching model and my voiced confidence in their ability, they have the ability to exceed beyond the expectations set.

I teach dance because of my love for sharing the creative expression with others as well as reigniting my excitement and passion for the art form through the observation of my students. I feel privileged to be a part of the dance education system and I hold myself accountable to a standard of continuous growth and development seen through continued learning like higher education degrees, certifications and supplemental learning all for the benefit of providing substantiated and ever-evolving dance education for my students.