

Release Dance Curriculum written for ARTEZ, Arnhem, the Netherlands

Prepared by M.O'Donnell, 2005-6

Definition of Release

Release is a body/mind integrative technique through which engagement with imagery enhances and inspires imaginative responses and bodily movement. Images for consideration in Release are initially anatomical, and /or created from physics principles applied to dance, and later may arise from any sources, including personal history, human emotions, dreams, wishes, memories, future projections, social protests, and strong reactions. Any source that inspires the individual to a coherent and identifiable response, and that may be presented as metaphor for consideration may be useful as inspiration within a Release class. Release may be used as a source for correction of alignment in movement. The Release Process inspires movement vocabulary, and indicates constructs of thought that may be used in movement creation and compositional decision making.

Dimensions of Release Practice:

--At the primary level, Release is a technique that allows for the bringing up of inspirational material, and through the use of stillness and concentration, focuses body/mind in constructs that are physically compelling, constructive and imaginative. These constructs of body/mind supplant banal thoughts and distractions, and replace the individual in a perspective of higher consciousness where the individual is able to make concrete, simple, and focussed thoughts into direct and essential actions and interactions.

--At a more advanced level, Release imagery creates imaginative bridges, linking thoughtful movement into flowing activity and vocabulary. Study becomes a practice that richly provides psychological, physical and emotional development. Awareness is increased. At this level, the dancer experiences a compilation of different images in a coalescence of mindfulness. This results in clarity of dance movement, along with imaginative decision making.

--At the next level, *paradox* becomes of interest through readiness in mind/body development that arrives at a point where understanding encompasses the possibility for opposites to create a richness of experience. The student experiences a reconciliation of opposites, and the ability to use imagery in order to construct paradigms that refer to dance performance, dance creation, and life itself.

--At an advanced level:

Release provides for the enhancement of performance experience and perceived results, (in life as well as dance), through the integration of imagery, immediate physical response, and evaluative thought processes.

The Release Process may be used to discover new movement vocabulary, and to increase individual understanding of the act of performance, through the activation of imaginative resources and physical awareness.

Release links to choreography, when choreography is seen as the active formulation of paradigms that increase awareness in both performers and audience.

Through Release, the dancer may become aware of herself/himself as a flexible construct of thought and action, and, through this awareness, is better able to direct, guide and abandon control according to the dictates of different choreographic works.

--Eventually, through Release, an individual may become fundamentally more integrated as a person, as well as an artist. The practice of dance performance and creation becomes a stage for the unveiling of a total human being with results that embrace an encompassing view of psycho/physical development, and the reflection of this in life and work.

The Release experience of Body/Mind is situated somewhere between meditation, physics, and metaphysics, referring to all three at once, through the use of imagery that creates an immediate construct of essential alertness within a vocabulary of movement and stillness.

Overview of Release Study, a summary of work of years 1-4 with specific years in more detail to follow

Release is to be seen as part of the technical practice within a Dancer's Curriculum inclusive of traditional and contemporary dance techniques.

Release is a body/mind integrative technique through which engagement with imagery enhances and inspires imaginative responses and bodily movement. Images for consideration in Release are initially anatomical, and/or created from physics principles applied to dance, and later may arise from any sources, including personal history, human emotions, dreams, wishes, memories, future projections, social protests, strong reactions,--any source that inspires the individual to a coherent and identifiable response. Release can be used as a source for correction of alignment in movement. The Release process inspires movement vocabulary and indicates constructs of thought that may be used in movement creation and compositional decision making.

--At the primary level, Release is a technique that allows for an escape in consciousness from mundane distractions, through focus on inspirational material. At this level, movement occurs with simplicity, concentration, and clarity.

--At the intermediate level, Release imagery creates imaginative bridges, linking movements into flowing activity that is permeated with mind/body awareness. At this level, the dancer

experiences a reconciliation of different images in a coalescence that provides continually re-generative physical imagery, and continually re-generative movement processes.

--At the advanced level, Release provides for the enhancement of movement experience to a performance level, with perceivable results of daring, freedom, anatomical complexity, safety, and exploration of each movement as it occurs, seeking exactitude with spontaneity as when a movement occurs complete for the first time. At this level, the integration of imagery and immediate physical response includes contrast, development, and lightly held focus that may change instantly. This experience is situated somewhere between meditation and metaphysics, including both at once, through an immediate construct of essential alertness.

Competence, DT1 Release

At this primary level, Release is a technique that allows for an escape in consciousness from mundane distractions, to alert focus on inspirational material. At this level, movement occurs with simplicity, concentration, and clarity.

1. General—an introduction to Release occurs: physical concentration, movement imagination, exercises and exploration of images leading to greater expressive and physical abilities.
2. View—carry out research into enhanced sensory experience within movement, through the application of inspirational images to movement contexts. Movement exploration occurs initially based on bodily alignment and physics principles, in stillness, and this mental imagery is later applied to the body and explored through movement.
3. Ability to cooperate—the student becomes aware of her/his own potential as dancer and performer, and consequently learns to respect other's abilities and potentials.
4. Analytical Capacity—the student takes responsibility for analysis of bodily potentials, both artistic and physical.
5. Craftsmanship—Release is a holistic study with body-mindfulness as the result. This contributes directly to creative awareness and artistry within performance.
6. Societal Orientation, and entrepreneurial ability—Release is a developmental study, involving the whole person as a dance artist, with the result of capable reflection of societal images and concerns within the production of dance imagery.
7. Learning Capacity—The study of Release begins as an introductory course, slowly developing to become eventually a mind/body integrative technique with broad application to dance and choreography with the potential to enhance life experience.
8. Capacity for Reflection—The combination of active and receptive thought processes leads to analytical as well as intuitive experience within dance. Reflection within Release is seen to include inner, un-named developments and conscious, decisive steps.
9. Capacity for Innovation—The exploration of body/mind states within the Release process yields continual, mental re-freshening, physical renewal, and psycho-physical invention.

Competence DT2,

DT2--At this intermediate level, Release imagery creates imaginative bridges, linking movements and thought into flowing activity that is permeated with mind/body awareness. At this level, the dancer experiences a reconciliation of different images in a coalescence that

provides continually re-generative physical imagery, and continually re-generative movement processes.

1. General: This level follows first year Release and its introductory exploration of the subject. The course strengthens the processes begun in Year One, and particularly focuses on the development of personal identity and the creation of individual vocabulary in movement.
2. View: the practice of Release is supported through the full range of energy, with the continuum from stillness to highest energy as a focus. This results in integrative technical experience of the body, and active fulfilment of imagery.
3. Ability to cooperate: the sharing of space in constructs of imagery that allow for duets and trios to emerge, asks each student to “give and take.”
4. Analytical Ability: Students develop the strength to analyse their own abilities and potentials. Also to know when they are progressing and when not.
5. Craftsmanship: The enhancement of body/mind integration, develops to produce corrections in body alignment, extensions of individual movement vocabulary, greater variation in forms of energy available for improvisations and for use in set forms, along with greater subtlety of means.
6. Societal Orientation and Entrepreneurial Ability: psycho-physical research brings up knowledge of individual human vulnerability, power and resources. This provides orientation within communication, respect for humanity, and enhanced potential for societal and entrepreneurial work within the professional world of performance and choreography.
7. Learning Capacity: Students apply resources from their physical trainings of the first year to reach greater possibilities in the areas of complexity of movement and perception. Learning capacity occurs through the assimilation of already learned resources, advancing creativity and expertise.
8. Capacity for Reflection: Discovery of greater subtleties of discourse and enormities of range depends on the student’s ability to reflect, analyse and develop within his/her own ability. Competition occurs with oneself, to discover the best within, to reveal and to use this “individual best.”
9. Capacity for Innovation: Release demands adaptation, as the students enter continually new relationships with dance imagery and movement. Consequently, the capacity for innovative thought and work grows continually.

Competence, DM3—Continuing at the late-intermediate level, Release imagery creates greater understanding of imaginative bridges, linking specific movement phrases with improvised movements into flowing activity. Knowledge of processes that are permeated with mind/body awareness and that may coalesce into set materials is enhanced. The reconciliation of paradox within the body regarding its abilities, images, potentials—both imaginative and physical, becomes an issue. The study of differing forms of energy pervades lessons. Continually re-generative physical imagery, and continually re-generative movement processes are explored in some detail.

View—to explore in depth the student’s authentic vision of the art of dance as constituted by exploration of the student’s own movement vocabulary integrated with the vocabularies of others. Also, to extend and enhance the individual’s choice making abilities within this context of learning and studying the abilities and developments of others.

Creative Capacity—to combine inner resources with empirical observations, further developing original points of view, and psycho-physical concentration.

Ability to Cooperate—leadership qualities of the choreographer combine with the ability to create cooperation between dancers. Dancers become co-workers within an inspirational framework of creativity.

Communication Ability—Communication with colleagues about one’s own work, becomes a critical issue, along with the reception of critical feedback.

Analytical Capacity—The application of the concept of Economy of Motion to mind/body functioning for both choreographer and dancers becomes a focus.

Craftsmanship, Entrepreneurial Ability and Societal Orientation—Resources gained in this area integrate inner logic with outer demand for “entertainment” and lead directly to societal positioning and survival as a choreographer. The meaningfulness of movement is discussed.

Learning Capacity—The student becomes entirely self-motivated, independent, while still accepting and being interested in dialog with the teacher and other students.

Capacity for Reflection—The student develops the ability to reflect on, evaluate, discuss, defend, criticise and investigate the creation of imagery from a position of stillness. The student learns to use Release for his/her choreography works. Also, the student is capable of analysis and evaluation regarding physical and imaginary resources.

Capacity for Innovation—innovative participation in release leads to increased perceptual capacity. Increased capability of imagination leads directly to increased capability within creative processes.

Competence, DM4

DM4--At this advanced level, Release provides for the enhancement of movement experience to a performance level, with perceivable results of daring, freedom, anatomical complexity, safety, and exploration of each movement as it occurs, seeking exactitude with spontaneity as when a movement occurs “complete” for the first time. At this level, the integration of imagery and immediate physical response includes contrast, development, and lightly held focus that may change instantly. This experience is situated somewhere between meditation and metaphysics, including both at once, through an immediate construct of essential alertness.

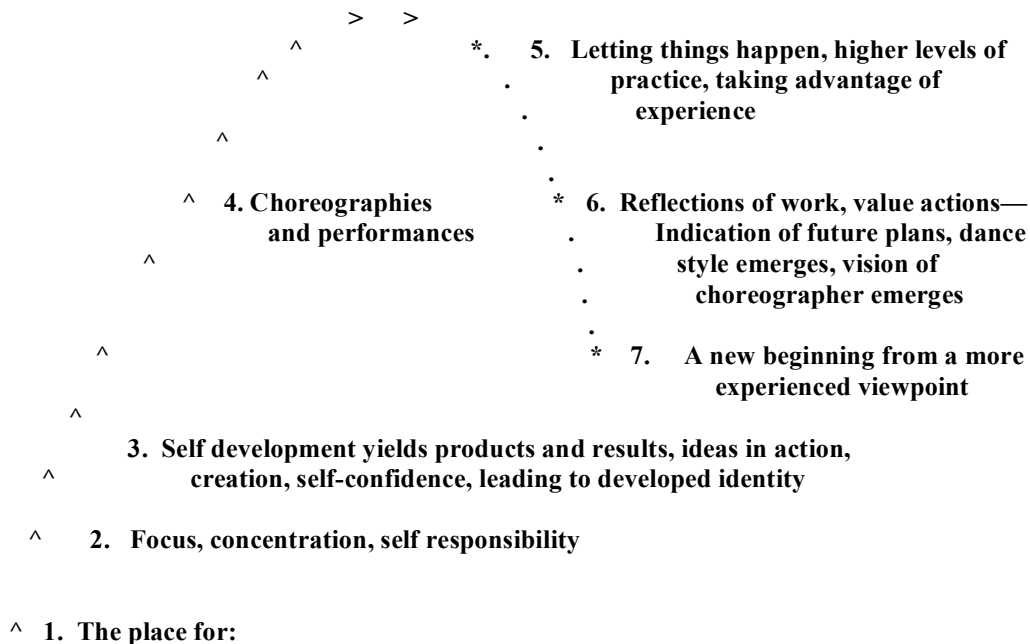
This course goes into areas of movement research devolved from an inquiry into creativity that includes attention to the individual’s perceptions, inter-personal positioning, theoretical formation of thought, and psycho-physical understandings at a highly evolved level.

The DM4 student derives the possibility to discover a deep and rich research into self-created experience and shared experience. Participation within imaginative states, and physical expression into movement and form are enhanced. Depth of practice produces an advanced knowledge of primary matter of dance building including:

- movement creation,
- implications of movements (subtext),
- social and political implications of movements (context)
- and higher dimensional awareness through movement study (intertext-to-metatext).

Refer at this point to the following page for a pictorial representation

The Schemata for the Development of Artistic identity:



^ 1. The place for:
--motivations,
--energy build-up,
--experiencing, play, tryouts,
--yes/no "value actions,
--creating options for understanding
--creating options for presentation of body/mind, ideas, and resources,
and all abilities regarding awareness of inner/outer orientation.
Work and personal development begin formation here.

The above schematic outline for the development of Artistic identity—as dancer or choreographer is adapted with reference to the writing of Bertram Mueller, THNRW Dusseldorf) Proviso: Begin with the individual as she/he "is" and envision development in arcs of creative endeavour with points of arrival at higher levels than the beginning of the former arc.

View—to achieve an advanced knowledge of the student's own personal and authentic vision of movement creation. This involves support for the student's individual, creative vision and the habituation of thought processes that will allow for continuing desire for growth possibilities within imaginative exploration.

Creative Capacity—to experience advanced levels of imaginative research, to create process and specific movement vocabulary, and to be able to extend this knowledge through psycho-physical analysis.

Ability to cooperate—to continue the development of leadership skills, listening abilities and constructive patterns of interaction that are necessary within the choreographic role.

Communication ability—Further development of communication and feedback processes.

Craftsmanship—full and aware interrogation of imagery to become essential communication, a vigorous process.

Entrepreneurial Ability and Societal Orientation—this course strengthens the individual identity of an artist who is relevant, capable and eager to take a place in society as a creative maker of dance.

Learning capacity—With encouragement and feedback, the student learns to develop deepening knowledge of the various stages that occur within the creative process, including initial perceptual stages, value actions, research, and social interactions. Reflection—Further analysis of process and research occurs constantly within this study.

Capacity for innovation—development of perceptual capacity in relation with analysis in several spheres, personal, creative, social, and political—forming the relationship between inner and outer experience and following this to conclusion in communicative forms and essences. At the highest level of Release study, attention is given to areas of imagery beyond the anatomical. The following sorts of images pertain:

- ... Images having a source in Memory—personal research
- ... Images based in Future projections—anticipated developments—(also personal research)
- ... Psychological states—frames of being and what they enhance and detract from ones fullest communicative possibilities (interpersonal research)
- ... Physiological systems—the body as united through the senses, fluid systems, bony systems taken as a whole (anatomical research on an advanced level)
- ... Advanced study of social positioning and identity—(research into the individual's position in society)
- ... Historical content, including aesthetic positions of the current time,
- ... and Images having Metaphysical concerns.

The student here derives the possibility to discover a deep and rich research into self-created experience and shared experience. Participation within imaginative states, and physical expression into movement and form are enhanced. Depth of practice produces an advanced knowledge of primary matter of dance building including:

- movement creation,
- implications of movements (subtext),
- social and political implications of movements (context)
- and higher dimensional awareness through movement study (intertext-to-metatext).

Role of Student:

Beginning level, DT1/DM1

- practice and analyse codified movement
- practice movement invention,
- practice alignment,
- practice kinetic flow within movement
- investigate and constructively develop resources for movement performance and creation
- study alignment through imagery derived from anatomical information
- learn how to use conventional anatomy as resource
- find, investigate and constructively develop expressive resources for movement performance and creation.

Intermediate level, DT2

- build on all movement sources and resources discovered in the first year,
- initiate and follow another's process and progress,
- to notice, describe and discuss one's own process.

Advanced level, DM3, DM

- establish a self directed practice of release as it would apply to choreographic works
- investigate leadership qualities through self direction
- investigate application of imagery and image based constructs within the choreographer-dancer relationship

Role of Course Leader/Coach, DT1, DT2,DM3,DM4 :

- coach,
- leadership of practice
- continual feedback to group and individuals
- leadership of discussion
- continual feedback to group and individuals
- direct formation of experience with imagery

Work Forms:

- experiential teaching of alignment through individual, investigative work with anatomical images, and compositional concerns, directed by coach
- group investigations of movement focussed on kinetic processes and principles—these usually begin travelling
- corrective work in pairs with one student guiding another
- verbal feedback from coach and students based on observation of a student's work
- student generated written reports of their own experiences
- staff generated written reports of students' own experiences

Purpose of the teaching:

Beginning level, DT1/DM1:

To provide a practice that may be used for:

- personal development, as dancer or choreographer,
- source for creativity and creative responses,
- training for concentration and movement analysis,
- basis for kinetic experience needed to transition between movements,
- accentuation of flow through complex structures,
- movement discovery,
- movement invention,

Intermediate level, DT2, DM3

To provide a practice that may be used for:

- development of dancer's and choreographer's identity, skill level, and awareness while in movement
- development of skills using process leading to artistic product
- concentrate on skills of personal criticism, and the giving of advice to support dancers into productions, creating performance of high quality movement and concentration
- practice appropriate mind set for different movement tasks

Advanced level, DM4

- create a vocabulary of movements or locus of interest appropriate to the future work of the individual choreographer
- establish a self-directed practice of release as it may apply to the individual artist's choreographic works
- investigate leadership qualities
- investigate application of different forms of imagery and image-based constructs within the choreographer-dancer relationship

Application to other parts of the course

As it is based on the principles of body/mind integration, Release touches many other parts of the course:

For Dance Techniques taught on the course, Release supports *alignment principles*, allowing time to explore the body in *holistic movement constructs*, where the dancer is able to *integrate sensation, emotion, and form*. In this way, Release builds physical awareness that leads to *movement clarity*.

Release creates *ease in dealing with movement complexity*, as the student gains *access to precise understandings* that emerge from the anatomical and kinetic aspects of Release. This is achieved through *in-depth working with complex paradigms of thought*.

Economical production of movement is enhanced through precise understanding that emerges from the *anatomical and kinetic aspects* of the released body.

For Choreographic Work, Release provides in-depth movement exploration that results in a wealth of dance possibilities that may be accessed by the choreographer for the making of works. In this way, Release allows for the *invention of movement vocabulary* and the *re-focussing of dancers intentions to include a body-mind approach*.

The Release process provides many examples of *interactive movement creation* –interactive between a leader(teacher or choreographer) and persons involving themselves in *exploration of movement based concerns*. (students or dancers.) This creates potential for *choreographic exploration through process, leading to forms in choreography that contain either real time choice making, or set material*.

For personality development, contributing to the formation of a dance artist,

Release supports:

- Exactitude in the execution of movement combined with ease
- Independence of thought
- Power to take decisions
- Access to emotions, and sensations
- And Flexibility of mind.

All of these enhance performance as either dancer or choreographer, and apply to life situations as well.

Refer to the next page for the specific components of syllabus, for years 1-4

Release Syllabus, Year One

General—This class is an introduction to the subject of Release, including such subject areas as concentration, imagination applied to the body in movement, and the extension of bodily potential and identity through participation in exercises and explorations of images.

View—Release is a form of research into the relationship between thought and activity. It involves primary exploration regarding the body and images. Thoughtful concentration leads to enhanced sensory experience within movement, and to movement exploration based on the principles of physics. Anatomical problems are addressed through alignment principles. Additionally, there are many choreographers today who rely on input from dancers when making choreography. They believe that the individual resources of dancers are an important factor in their choreographic work and wish for a partial sharing of the responsibility for movement creation. They may set up improvisations, give verbal instructions or imagery or set up game structures to arrive at movement content. This course brings the student dancer to a level where he/she is able to respond fully within such structures. Interesting movement vocabulary will arise from sources within the students themselves, and they may find a taste for a compositional world of movement that is especially their own. For the first and second year students who may be interested to become dance makers, this course forms a beginning for the creation of one's own vocabulary. This is an introductory course, with emphasis on creative movement invention, and alignment principles.

Ability to cooperate—To become aware of one's own movement potential, and then to respect oneself and one's similarities and differences from others on physical as well as and intellectual/imaginative levels brings about greater confidence and respect for others. Implicit in this course is a fundamental aspect of cooperation between persons, mutual respect.

Analytical Capacity—The primary concern in the beginning of release is to take responsibility for one's body, including artistic potential, and physical means. This involves on-going analysis of alignment, selective application of principles and continual adjustment through analytical as well as creative thinking.

Craftsmanship—the craft of Release involves imaginative integration of body/mind resources. This is different from craftsmanship in the ordinary sense of the work, as Release occurs within a holistic framework, within which there is no difference between the craftsman and the craft. Body-mindfulness is the result.

Societal Orientation—Many human experiences may be seen as evidenced within any one person's body. In order to dance, one develops beyond the limitations of societal experience into an instrument that is not only evidence of societal concerns but is also capable of transcending these concerns. Limitations are extended and body/mind develops as a reflection of physical possibility.

Learning Capacity—The course is introductory and begins slowly. Groundwork is laid for further courses in this subject area. Continual assessment is made regarding the students' abilities to adventure, grow and develop. Progress is individual, but also supported within a group context. Discussion will occur over how each student is progressing, often at the conclusion of a class, and here students will be able to share their experiences honestly and fully.

Capacity for Reflection—The students will be led through active and receptive thought processes, with the active processes being based in conscious decision making and receptive thought processes being based in physical forces, such as gravity or kinetic possibilities, reflexive movement, and physical intuition. Receptive work will occur through a process

influenced by a period of stillness before thought and action. The stillness will create a thoughtful change in body and mind that results in a receptive mode of functioning. This receptivity, as practiced, leads to enhanced capacity for reflection within both stillness and movement, and provides resources for reflective moving and thinking.

Capacity for Innovation—As stillness permeates thinking, there is a continual de-stabilization of “absolutes” within one’s thought processes and an emergence of perspectives, this occasioning relative choices, rather than absolute choices--a key factor in the student’s ability to make innovative decisions.

Content: Introduction to Release

Several experiential means are used in teaching the course.

1. Primary experiences of imagination and physical participation within imagery of the body occur on a continual basis. Anatomical imagery (imagery that is based on anatomical, structural research which is then drawn into conceptual frameworks that encourage productive alignment principles) is mentally and visually constructed, first with the body in stillness and then with the body moving. Concentration is focussed on movements possible within the environment of the images.
2. Kinetic experiences of the body in movement, with attention to physics principles and forces are invented, explored and constructed into forms.
3. Experiences where movements are arrived at within research and exploration are brought into strings, and chains of experiential knowing and memory.

These three together form the heart of the course. Each student is encouraged to explore, to find and follow imaginative potentials, to stop, to reflect, to analyse, and to dream.

Work consists of intuitive discovery, analytical decision making and cataloguing of personal realizations.

In order to find work as a dancer and/or choreographer, the student will eventually be required to access the body intelligently, as a receptacle for experience, and to evaluate and use the tensions and psycho-physical states present within the body. From these will eventually come full bodied, expressive, improvised dance, as well as images and inspirations for the choreographer. Release lessons build body intelligence from exploration of ideo-kinetic imagery. Through this exploration students discover fundamental aspects of personal identity. The relocation of selfhood, that is supported through the full commitment to an image which encourages the dancer/choreographer into movement, requires constantly changing answers to the questions “Who am I as a Dancer and/or Choreographer?” And “What is dance for me?” With this knowledge, a student is able to begin to understand more exactly how she/he is positioned within the activity of dance. Through exploration of personal identity, the student is supported to have the courage to risk fully but safely within the development of dance process and the fulfilment of dance product.

Within the Release class the student becomes aware of possibilities that contribute directly to the personality building that makes up a professional who will find herself/himself within society, knowing her/his personal, social and entrepreneurial possibilities.

Form

- experiential teaching, groups of 6-25 students
 - individual creative work
 - reports of individual experiences
 - occasional participation in group processes
 - coaching based on observation of students’ work
- Role of the teacher:
- continual feedback within work process

--discussion leadership

Role of the student:

--to find and investigate one's own resources for movement creation

--to constructively apply anatomical imagery to movement alignment and movement creation

Assessment and Grading

--Attendance is mandatory for assessment, for 80% of the total number of classes taught.

--Continual verbal assessment from the teacher is on-going throughout the lessons.

--Final assessment consists of written feedback in two reports, one from the student and one from the teacher, and a grade is assigned based on the teacher's assessment, taking into account the student's writing.

--Criteria for assessment:

In order to pass the course the student will:

- a. Show knowledge of release processes, as in evidence in class work,
- b. Have the ability to concentrate and focus on anatomical information and develop this into movement forms across differing energy levels,
- c. Be able to discuss and describe the body in terms of anatomical information,
- d. Demonstrate economical patterning in the body while moving. (This refers to the use of primary, oppositional and homo-lateral patterning, and combinations of these).
- e. There will be a number of short writings during the course that will contribute to the final assessment.

Resources

Language of the Axis, Mary O'Donnell, Theatre Papers, Peter Hulton, Exeter University, Exeter, England

Works of Barbara Clark, available Theatre papers, Peter Hulton, Exeter University

Release Syllabus, Year Two

General—This course follows on the first year's Release Course where students have begun to explore the positive effects of alignment imagery on the body in movement, and have had some experience of free movement exploration coming from anatomical imagery. Each of them will have by this time developed some knowledge of their own imaginative pathways that leads to constructive, physically satisfying invention. The purpose of the course is to strengthen these processes, and to begin to recognize personal identity within movement exploration. This identity is notably not a search, but a process of observation of oneself and others, supported by discussion and analysis.

View—The relationship between thought and activity as arising from stillness and reflection begins very slowly. It takes time to encompass the receptive consciousness. In the second year of study the students have already experienced this somewhat, and also have arrived at quite energetic and complex movement possibilities within their practice. This is welcome, but as the whole range is fruitful, from reflection to high levels of activity, it is necessary to support practice in the second year along the full range for both, mentation and energetic physicality. This short course enhances what is already known regarding movement creation, allows for further developments in the student's own vocabulary and supports the student in her/his exploration of anatomical imagery within movement.

Ability to Cooperate—The sharing of spaces, and the coming together and apart within a space where everyone is involved in exploration of movement, asks each student to give and take. Some exercises require specific dependency between two or more persons, and resulting works enhance tolerance, the ability to predict what another person will do in improvisation, and the ability to assist another person along their pathway. These and other skills contribute directly to the development of shared human resources, basic to both cooperation and communication.

Analytical Capacity—A constant curiosity about one's own abilities and potentials, coupled with intellectual strength to recognize and analyse when one is progressing and when one is not, are fundamental to this study.

This work evolves to provide a supportive feedback system organized through discussion within pairs and within the group.

Craftsmanship—Body-mindfulness continues to be the main subject and craftsmanship exists within a growing field of experiences, extension of vocabulary, variation of energies, and subtlety of means.

Societal Orientation—Much can be said about societal orientation in Release. The form allows for inner experiencing and very occasionally reveals one's deepest, most profound, and essential levels of psycho-physical research. Such research brings up human vulnerability, and ecstatic moments of fully conscious realization. The willingness to support one another through these occasional extremes, creates a societal effect, something like a climate that takes on a second, more tangible form through discussion. The students are not required to judge each other in this state, but to observe. As one person tracks into new ground, others find and follow. Information is traded freely and shared fully in the real time of dance invention. Alertness is essential in this process.

Learning Capacity—Initial steps are already made, students add new anatomical knowledge to their image books, and with a full year of physical training behind them are expected to go much farther in their movement inventions and energetic contrasts. They are expected to be able to rise to the challenge of much more complex imagery and to apply it readily and easily.

Capacity for Reflection—By now activity and receptivity are comfortable, accessible and in balance. So the interest is in the discovery of subtleties of discourse and enormities of range. The student is asked to reflect regularly on both active and receptive modes of thought.

Capacity for Innovation—The practice of body/mind centred works is constantly innovative, as the organism presents continually new experiences. Release is a continual study in adaptation of the body as mind and the mind as body.

Content

By the second year the student is working responsibly and has quite a lot of information regarding her/his artistic potential, physical means, and alignment strengths and weaknesses. There is, throughout all the courses of the second year, a natural development in the areas of artistic and imaginative potential, physical means, and alignment strengths. Beyond this, in the Release class, the students will become concerned with a self developmental program that can accompany them into the life of a dancer or choreographer.

The supplementary aspect of Release for this year group will take two directions. For dancers, this course will strengthen the appetite for new movement experiences, and for dance makers, this will extend into an appetite for movement creation. Additionally, proper alignment principles will show the dancer how to get through the sometimes difficult situations of pressured rehearsals and performances, using alignment imagery that reminds the tired body of safe ways to move. Dance makers will be made aware of the need for alignment principles within the creation of movement, and will develop extended and exciting movement vocabulary for future works. Analysis and feedback are constant and continuous, along lines of aesthetic choice making, and the demands of safety.

Work will be directed along three areas, anatomical information, kinetic information, and compositional information. Areas of awareness and concentration are implicit within all three.

Form

- experiential teaching, groups of 6-25 students
 - individual and group works
 - reports and discussion of experiences
 - coaching regarding process
- Role of the teacher: director, coach, and discussion leader
- Role of the student:
- to find movement sources
 - to initiate and follow another's process
 - to note, describe and discuss one's own process

Assessment and Grading

The student must attend 80% of the classes to be eligible for assessment.

Continual verbal assessment from both classmates and teacher is available for the student's consideration through discussion and question-and-answer sessions.

Final assessment consists of written feedback in two reports, one from the teacher and one from the student.

The students will show competence along the following lines:

- a. Physical development will be in evidence in their movement exploration, appetite for new and different movement experiences, and in their movement transitions. This will be seen in class work and evaluated by the course leader.
- b. The students will gain the ability to discern, comment on, and evaluate their own movement processes, and this will be judged through discussion and short writings which will contribute to assessment.
- c. Students will practice across a broad physical range from stillness and mentation to highly physical activity, and this will be in evidence in their class work.
- d. Dance maker students will develop their own vocabulary of movement, preferences and energies.
- e. Research outside classes will be reported as notes about individual progress.
- f. A self development program will emerge for each student, based on their own awareness of strengths and desired areas of growth. This will be assessed through discussion and notes.

Course Evaluation

This will occur in discussion with teacher and year group leader, and be recorded by the year group leader.

Resources

Issues of Contact Quarterly

The Thinking Body, Mabel Ellsworth Todd

Excerpts from "**Release, Seven Zones of Comprehension Coming from the Practice of Dance**," cd-rom by Mary O'Donnell (430pages) www.releasedance.com

Barbara Clark, **Body Proportion Needs Depth**

Syllabus Continued years 3 and 4...

Release Syllabus, Year 3

View--to explore for the first time in depth the student's own personal and authentic vision of the art of dance as constituted by exploration of the student's own movement vocabulary integrated with compositional abilities.

Creative Capacity—continue to experience individual movement research, based on individual movement vocabulary; --to deepen research possibilities that combine inner resources with empirical observations of the world at large, in order to enliven work with an original point of view; --also to develop psycho-physical concentration.

Ability to Cooperate--to take on leadership qualities necessary for a choreographer and also to study qualities

necessary to enhance cooperation between dancers as they work in another persons' works.

Communication Ability—to communicate with colleagues about one's own work and receive critical feedback.

Analytical Capacity—Analysis is required in order to apply processes of Release to choreography. Knowledgeable abilities occur within the following areas: the "becoming of images," the formation of movement vocabulary, the exploration of weight shifts, the creation of body/space connections and energy changes as Release is applied to choreography. Through analysis, the concept of economy of motion may be applied to all dancing situations and to mind functioning for both choreographer and dancers.

Craftsmanship--the full and aware inhabitation of imagery that becomes essential communication.

Entrepreneurial Ability and Societal Orientation—this course provides basic resources for choreographic developments that will eventually lead to a societal positioning and survival as a choreographer.

Learning Capacity—each student develops to the greatest capacity of her/his conception, being encouraged and supported through the teaching and dialog with other students; this takes the form of open-ended enquiry that arrives continually at formed and substantial products (specifically, taking the forms of: movement vocabulary, energy flows of improvised and repeatable action, and image resources) along an endless journey.

Capacity for Reflection—each student develops primary skills of reflection, especially coming from the process of Release floor work which involves a period in stillness wherein a greater perspective can be created for physical exploration. Reflection is also involved in the analysis of physical and imaginary resources.

Capacity for Innovation—the growth curve of a Release class is dependent upon each student's own ability to conceive of, and be encouraged into, developmental change. This is achieved through the innovative participation of each student and staff member involved. Probably the greatest achievements occur in the area of perceptual capacity. What they are capable of imagining leads directly to what they are capable of creating. This is measured through the students' own discussion and written reports.

Content

The course begins with the choreographer as she/he is, strengthening self identity and experiences as sources for creative practice. Individuals are encouraged to explore sources for imagery coming from their immediate surround as well as earlier experiences. The practice takes the form of exercises in concentration and awareness, based in imagery that may be derived from

any subject area--literature, the other arts, philosophy, psychology, social sciences, science, politics--any source may become a starting point for the student's work.

Options for body/mind research are presented for the student's exploration, as they actively explore and lead their own discovery process. They are expected to find within themselves primary motivations, to take value-action decisions, to contact and use primary resources of imagination, and to give and take artistic criticism. The students work in co-dependent and individual environments, always with a sense of self responsibility. Studies emerge, these being the results of ideas generated initially by the teacher, and then explored by students. Later on, students may generate their own ideas as starting points. Both teacher and students reflect on the students' own works, and evaluate results.

Advances are made in the student's self confidence, and creative abilities, as they work in an atmosphere that is often personally gratifying and supportive but occasionally extremely demanding. There are few performances and products in this class. Instead, there are exercises created, witnessed and considered. Mainly the class focuses on the creation of individual process, and sourcing for later application to choreographic works. The students allow themselves to experience new movements and enlarge their vision of movement vocabulary. This consists of energy based or visually formed research. Students continually gain new and greater visions for their movement potential and actual possibilities based on their physical and imaginative resources. Support, for individuation of a person moving from her/his own motivations, develops awareness of movement forms and begins to coalesce into a choreographic movement vocabulary for use in creation of movement studies. The student is continually arriving at a more informed place regarding her/his vocabulary of movement, energy resources, and emotional/psychological positioning as a dance maker. From here, he/she begins again, in an upward spiral of investigative practice.

Year Three Subject Matter:

In this year of study, the student takes self-responsibility for Release, directing herself/himself in the Release Process.

The Release Process:

1. The student will learn to self-direct the receptive thought process that allows for the uniting of the self with imagery in a full, individual, and receptive manner. This will create in the student practical, imaginative and creative resources. . The student will integrate consciousness with movement at a deep level, without distraction or fixation, will develop movement intelligence, and extend physical possibilities.
2. The student will learn to remember and apply anatomically based images easily, through a variety of movements, well placed and well connected, well articulated in space and presented through a range of dynamic changes.
3. The student will show evidence of the ability to differentiate between images and construct connections between differences—to be seen in a variety of energy states and possibilities, also differentiation of limbs travelling and harmonious patterning, both cross patterning and homo-lateral patterning.
4. A dancer's bodily knowledge and a choreographer's movement invention become apparent in the articulation of different body parts, dynamic variation, invention of movement, and easy conversion of energy from one level to another.

Here the student is expected to perform tasks having a united physical/ mental focus, with grace and clarity. This will be evaluated according to principles of economy within movement structures in action and enhanced capacity for inclusion, and multiple referencing.

A third-year example of anatomical imagery: Completing the length of the breath cycle—visualise the breath as happening from the whole length of the central spine of the body, with the crura (legs) of the diaphragm being connected to the pelvis, descending along the line of both psoas muscles, and with the tops of the lungs being just behind the clavicles. In functioning, the diaphragm descends close to the spine, causing pressure to develop within the lung space, pulling down on the lungs. This pull creates a vacuum inside the lungs and air rushes in to fill the vacuum.

The work with this image is, first, to visualise it, imagining it within the body, then to ease action of the body through supplementing breathing with a visual picture of how that action works constructively, then participating within the image—what is known as “becoming the image.” Exploration of images may develop into highly kinetic movement, or compositional ordering. This is usual among more experienced and advanced students.

Kinetic Journeys through Space (examples)

Beginning with rolling and balancing

Journeys that expose body parts to enquiry

Journeys of circular rotation

Journeys of extension into space,

Long lines in the body,

Withdrawal from extension to quietude (adagio)

Journeys with contrasting physical states

Journeys that build cardio-vascular strength

Shared improvisations, dealing with all the above areas but in duet forms, trio forms, small and large groups.

The student will be able to develop improvisational skills, travelling through space, define new movement patterns, explore full physical ability and imaginative capacity. The student will engage as a performer in deep interior work and fully outward communication. Movement intelligence and musicality, as well as the appreciation and love of dance are emphasized. The student will show technical certainty, decision making and application of fullest potential.

Associated works carried out within release classes in relation to the subject of release:

--The Heavy Exercise Routine encourages clarity of whole body action and surfacing of intelligence within large systems of the body in movement. This is comprised of aerobic exercises: running, back curves, toe touches, sit-ups, back arches, foot articulations, shoulder and hip articulations, and may be chosen specifically by any teacher to create a high energy workout that covers the whole of the body.

--Set material may be derived from each student's anatomical research. This may be learned by others.

--Individual Corrective anatomy lessons may increase anatomical possibilities, physical intelligence, and diversity of physical invention.

Form:

--experiential classroom teaching, groups of 8 – 25 students

--individual explorations sometimes leading to finished examples

--group research, led by individual students

--continual coaching from teacher yields feedback on performance material generated in classes

--students teach each other

--students offer each other feedback both verbally and in the nature of the works they create for each other's explorations

--role of teacher: guide for individual and group research
--role of student: to establish their own beginning practice, to inhabit their own creative imagery, and to develop leadership qualities and participative roles within the choreographer-dancer relationship

Assessment and Grading

--Attendance is mandatory for assessment, 80 per cent of the total number of classes taught.
--Continual verbal feedback from the teacher is on-going throughout the lessons.
--In-depth research on vision of dance, through development of one's own movement vocabulary, will be evaluated continually by the course leader, and communication of this will be verbal. Students will submit their notes for final assessment.
--The ability to receive critical feedback will be assessed throughout the course by the course leader.
--The student's ability to bring open-ended enquiry to open form composition and to substantial product will be assessed by both, individual students and the course leader through discussion.
--The student's ability to analyse imagery and physical resources of him/herself and others will be continually assessed by both, course leader and students, and will be communicated through discussion.
--In the final class, material will be summarized, and individual students will be encouraged to ask any remaining questions covering the whole of their experience within the course.
--Final assessment will consist of a written evaluation giving indications of developmental progress within specified areas of work as listed above in Competencies and Content. In addition, a test lesson may occur in which other members of staff will contribute to a written evaluation for each student.

--The course is completed through:

- a. submission of research notes
- b. creation of short studies based in release processes
- c. submission of student's own evaluation

and when the course leader has written an individual assessment of each student's work. The course leader will assign a mark indicating achievement of the student on a scale of 1-10.

Resources

Excerpts from **Release, Seven Zones of Awareness, Coming from the Practice of Dance**, available www.releasedance.com, CD-rom, 430 pages

Anatomical drawings and photographs

Irene Dowd, **Taking Wing to Fly**

Release Syllabus, Year Four

This course continues from Release, "Year Three," and extends subject matter.

General To achieve an advanced level of competencies following on the initial level of research and understanding in Level One. This goes into areas of movement research devolved from an inquiry into creativity that includes attention to the individual's perceptions, inter-personal positioning, theoretical formation of thought, and psycho-physical understandings.

View—to achieve an advanced knowledge of the student’s own personal and authentic vision of movement creation. This involves support for the student’s individual, creative vision and the habituation of thought processes that will allow for continuing desire for growth possibilities within imaginative exploration.

Creative Capacity—to experience advanced levels of imaginative research, to create process and specific movement vocabulary, and to be able to extend this knowledge through psycho-physical analysis.

Ability to cooperate—to continue the development of leadership skills, listening abilities and constructive patterns of interaction that are necessary within the choreographic role.

Communication ability—Further development of communication and feedback processes.

Craftsmanship—full and aware interrogation of imagery to become essential communication, a vigorous process.

Entrepreneurial Ability and Societal Orientation—this course strengthens the individual identity of an artist who is relevant, capable and eager to take a place in society as a creative maker of dance.

Learning capacity—With encouragement and feedback, the student learns to develop deepening knowledge of the various stages that occur within the creative process, including initial perceptual stages, value actions, research, and social interactions.

Reflection—Further analysis of process and research occurs constantly within this study.

Capacity for innovation—development of perceptual capacity in relation with analysis in several spheres, personal, creative, social, and political—forming the relationship between inner and outer experience and following this to conclusion in communicative forms and essences.

Content: Year Four, Level Two Subject Matter

In Level Two attention is given to areas of imagery beyond the anatomical. The following sorts of images pertain:

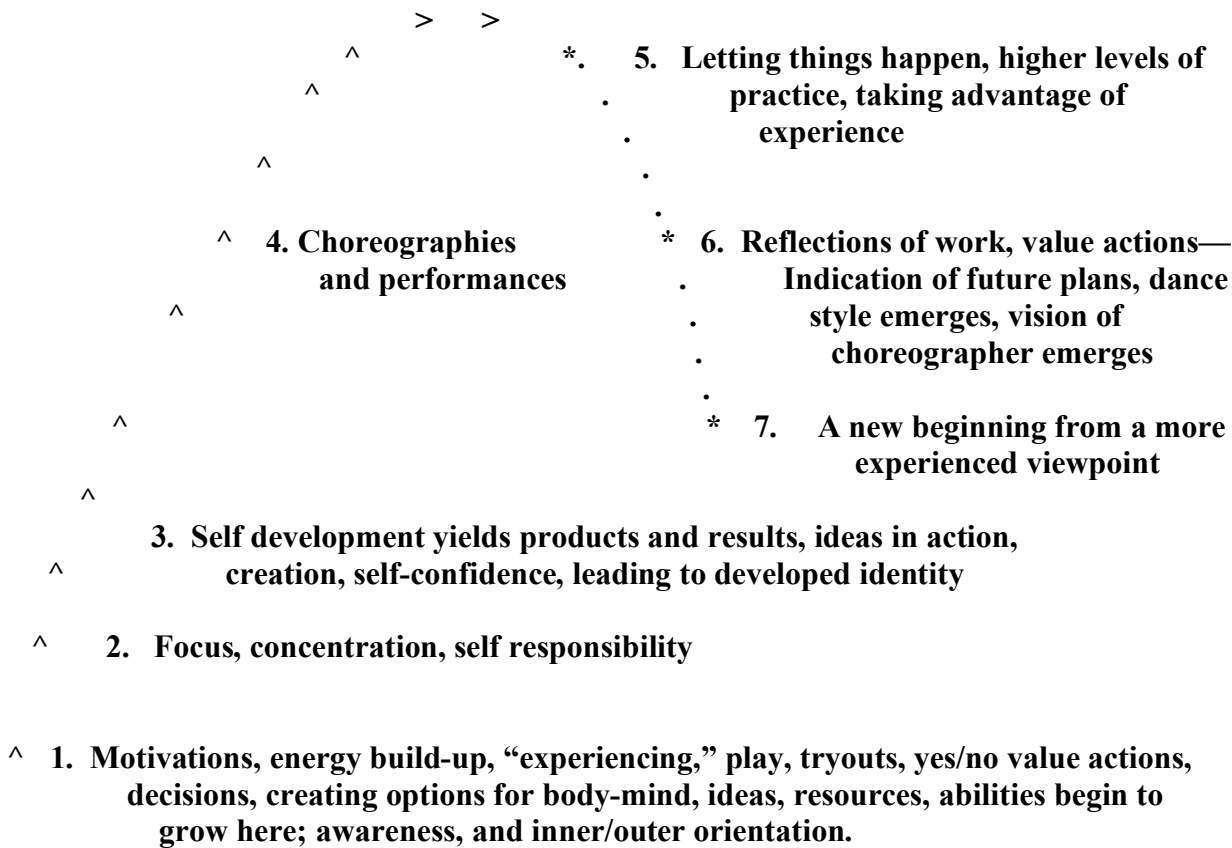
- ...Images having a source in Memory—personal research
- ...Images based in Future projections—anticipated developments—(also personal research)
- ...Psychological states—frames of being and what they enhance and detract from ones fullest communicative possibilities (interpersonal research)
- ...Physiological systems—the body as united through the senses, fluid systems, bony systems taken as a whole (anatomical research on an advanced level)
- ... Advanced study of social positioning and identity—(research into the individual’s position in society)
- ...Historical content
- ...and Images having Metaphysical concerns.

The DM4 student derives the possibility to discover a deep and rich research into self-created experience and shared experience. Participation within imaginative states, and physical expression into movement and form are enhanced. Depth of practice produces an advanced knowledge of primary matter of dance building including:

- movement creation,
- implications of movements (subtext),
- social and political implications of movements (context)
- and higher dimensional awareness through movement study (intertext-to-metatext).

continued....

The Schemata for the Development of Artistic identity:



The above schematic outline for the development of Artistic identity—as dancer or choreographer is adapted with reference to the writing of Bertram Mueller, THNRW Dusseldorf) Proviso: Begin with the individual as she/he “is” and...

Envision development in arcs of creative endeavour with points of arrival at higher levels than the beginning of the former arc.

Assessment

This will be continual, discursive, with the student providing self assessment and other students contributing their own thoughts as well. Eventually the teacher will sum up these evaluations and create a critical description covering areas of growth that she has observed.

The student will submit a short writing regarding his/her ability to describe:

- a. his/her own individual perceptions, and values,
- b. vision of movement creation and construction of set material and processes for open form composition,
- c. imaginative research and exploration,
- d. communication and feedback possibilities,
- e. and learning capacity within the creative process.

The student will suggest a grade for his/her work. This will be considered seriously by the course leader and in most cases will stand as the final evaluation.

Resources

Anatomy books and pictures beginning from

- a. the systems approach to anatomy, and
- b. the body parts approach to anatomy

...systems meaning, the “whole of circulation” or the “whole of the skeleton” and “body parts” approach, meaning all of the torso considered in all its functions as integrated, all of the limbs, or all of the head studied as an integral whole.

Body-mind integrative literature—usually at this time the students are active in finding very interesting suggestions of possible sources that they bring to lessons if they feel it would be interesting for others to share.

Mind-body integrative literature, with each student making her/his own list of sources.