Dance Teacher 2025: An Invitation to Dialogue on Art, Potential, and Power

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Imagine for a moment that I don't want to sell you anything. Imagine that I have no interest in persuading you that what I think and do is what you should think and do, or that my perspective on the future of dance and dance teaching is something you should accept based on how well I prove my case. Imagine that all the questions I ask really are questions and that I ask them of myself even as I pose them to you.

I am asking you to imagine this because I think we are all caught, particularly in our culture and in our time, in a context of insistent persuasion and it takes imagination to think otherwise. The context of persuasion is heightened in situations like this, in which someone (I) addresses a topic ("the dance teacher of 2025") in a way that suggests I have figured something out and want to bring you to where I am. It is almost impossible to unhook from the power of that idea. So I'm calling on the power of the imagination to release you from the pressure of being convinced, or of needing to buy anything, or of having to change yourself to see the way I see. What if this were just an opportunity to pause and to ponder some questions together and to see where they lead?

David Bohm, a physicist who was committed to meaningful human connection through dialogue, described creative dialogue as a way to shape understandings together. "The thing that mostly gets in the way of dialogue," he said, "is holding to assumptions and opinions, and defending them."[i] Bohm talked about using words to edge as close as we can to what we think we mean while remaining aware that the speaker's and the listener's meanings can be both similar to and different from one another's. We need also to realize that our words reveal intentions and actions that contradict each other. If we remain curious, rather than defensive, about our contradictory natures and what we uncover by recognizing the contradictions, we stand a chance of making something new, delightful, and surprising together—something neither of us would have cooked up on our own.

Years ago, I heard Rudolph Arnheim, a renowned professor and author on psychology and art, present his new theory about visual artists and what happened as they grew old. I remember Monet being one of his examples. As he studied different artists' work, he wondered if they approached color and light differently over time and whether their aging eyesight had led to the changes he was perceiving in their work. A slide show illuminated his ideas. Suddenly, mid-lecture, Arnheim paused, gazed at his audience and said, "I don't *know* if this is what was happening for them. It's just an idea." He chuckled along with the crowd, and then continued down his path of not certainty, but possibility. I think now about David Bohm's conception of dialogue, in which people remain curious about what they are saying and hearing, rather than trying to prove or defend their ideas or intentions. This was the kind of dialogue Rudolph Arnheim, then in his 80s, seemed engaged in—a dialogue within himself now opening up to our own ideas as we listened. Not surprisingly, when my partner Barry and I asked him afterward if he'd thought about aging dancer/choreographers and how physical changes might alter their artistic process and product, he beamed excitedly. "Oh! I hadn't thought of that," he said. "How wonderful; what will you do with that?" Suddenly, our own newly-hatched idea seemed newer still and filled with promise.

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In that spirit, I offer some thoughts on teaching and the preparation of teachers for the future. I notice that whenever I reflect on teaching, three overlapping themes emerge: *art*, *potential*, and *power*. Those themes percolate through a seemingly endless parade of questions and stories from my more than 35 years of teaching—most of it in dance.

I imagine you will find a similar parade, based on your own experiences, while hearing of mine. This brings me back to David Bohm who wrote extensively about the questions and stories, ideas and opinions and assumptions that humans carry within them. Bohm noted that "whenever certain questions arise, there are fleeting sensations of fear, which push [one] away from consideration of these questions, and of pleasure, which attract [one's] thoughts and cause [one] to be occupied with other questions." He asks, "When we come together to talk, or otherwise to act in common, can each one of us be aware of the subtle fear and pleasure sensations that 'block' his ability to listen freely?"[ii] Bohm further wonders if we can *suspend*, rather than *suppress*, action (or reaction) in those moments. He speaks of a physical, proprioceptive state of suspension while listening. Every once in a while I may ask you to pause and consider what fleeting or lingering sensations have occurred for you—be they fear or pleasure or something else. It will happen to me as well. Remaining aware of these sensations *and* to the content of our conversations—the different and similar meanings of our words and the contradictions they contain—can help us talk about new ideas and understandings, the ones we create together, as we step into the next part of our unknown adventure into the future. One of my stories involves my own sensations of fear while teaching.

Learning from Fernando

A tall, extremely thin, stooped man with a long grey braid walked into the studio where I prepared for the first day of an undergraduate college course called Fundamentals of Contemporary Dance. Already in the studio were about fifteen young college students. Some were first-year students with lots of dance experience, required to take the Fundamentals course at the beginning of their dance major. Some were fourth-year students who wanted to finally take a dance class before graduating as nursing or political science or math majors. Fernando was different. I admit I approached him that day with a small prayer in my heart: that he had entered the wrong studio and meant to be in the yoga class.

He did not. A former college professor auditing the class, Fernando was 70 years old, had overcome cancer of the kidneys (and now had just one), suffered neuropathy in his feet from the cancer treatment, had a few other health issues and—oh—was also the recipient of a heart transplant. I did my best "Welcome—all are welcome here" greeting and said, "Let's see how it goes and talk after class about whether it's a good fit. If not, there are some other classes—yoga, folk dance—that might work." Of course I also urged him to take care of himself during class and to sit out whenever necessary. My secret prayer intensified.

At the end of class—after watching Fernando struggle to get up from and return to the floor; experiencing my own anxiety that he was about to keel over with a heart attack; and agonizing over whether I should drop the "walk-to-the-beat across the floor" plan in favor of a long relaxation and cool-down—I smiled at Fernando and asked as neutrally as I could, "What do you think?" While asking that question (David Bohm would say my opinions were in full flower) I was forming another thought—a kind affirmation with which I planned to soften Fernando's feelings of frustration and demoralization. "Yes," I imagined myself saying, "I understand it *is* quite challenging. I'm sure you would get a lot out of the yoga class."

But Fernando didn't give me that opening. He was smiling too. He'd had fun. He thought he would stay. The faces of the students nearby looked annoyed. "Really? *This* guy?" they seemed to imply.

I could—but won't—take you, class-by-class, through that semester. It was a progression: what changed in Fernando, but more important, I think, what changed in me and in his classmates, day by day. We faced potentials that he unleashed in all of us because of who he was, what he could and could not do, and what we assumed about him and ourselves going in, assumptions of which we gradually became aware and from which we steadily unhooked. It was slow and not miraculous, but something did change.

I'll jump to the first day the across-the-floor involved a real, all-out run. Every across-the-floor had Fernando at the tail end—whether walks, triplets, slides, or turns—persisting in a slow, not especially rhythmic attempt to stay with his partners, but consistently arriving on the other side a soloist. On the day of the first run, he got to the other side—alone as always—and said, "I haven't run in fifteen years!" The entire class burst into applause. Maybe a little switch flipped that day. Students began to ask after him when he was absent. When he returned to class, letting us know he'd been back in the hospital and would be taking it easy, my fear was still there. I admit I thought selfish thoughts like, "Please don't let him die in *my* class." The students always welcomed him as one of their own. Not as caretakers, but as caring colleagues. No one resisted being partnered with Fernando, despite my ongoing fear that they would.

I could tell you much more about Fernando's subtle artistry, revealed in simple explorations; about his perspective in class discussions on the art of dance and the nature of physical challenge; about the way students began to listen not only to Fernando but to each other, and to enjoy similarities and differences; and so much more. But I'll skip to an occasion two years after Fernando was in my class, when the head of a dance conservatory program visited a faculty meeting at my college, heard my story about Fernando and my belief that he embodied what was beautiful and unique about our non-audition-based dance major and the potential of such unexpected encounters to shift people's understandings of themselves and of others. The conservatory director—urging more "rigor" in the program and advising a new administration to separate the dance majors from the casual, extra-curricular dancer—asked to chat with me after the meeting. "Lovely story," he said. "But what about the talented students in your class? Do you not worry about how they are held back by people like Fernando?"

This is a moment for a Bohmian pause. Take a minute here and be alert to your own sensations. Fear or anger? Confusion? Pleasure? Old opinion, new idea or new question? Multiple points of view jockeying for position in your heart-mind? Maybe, if you have time, ask what these words mean to you: Potential? Talent? Rigor? Ability? Can you notice questions without demanding an answer of yourself? And if you see contradictions within yourself can you hold those contradictions with a curious and open eye? Is it possible?

Back to Michael, the man from the conservatory. In that moment, with his question, I had to attend to the sensations inside me and to the contradictions, trying to hear and not defend. "I'm going to put aside the word 'talented' for the moment," I said. "I think I know what you mean by it: that there are people in that class who aspire to be professional dancers, looking to be pushed and to grow beyond a beginner-level dance class filled with those called 'non-dancers.'" He nodded. "Yes, I did worry about whether I was serving their needs," I said. We had common ground here; Michael and I both wanted people with professional aspirations to be able to succeed, to not be held back. Here was an interesting contradiction.

"What I learned, though," I said to Michael, "is that they *will* go on, those 'talented' ones. They have the drive, the skills, the curiosity and resilience that keeps them pushing. And several of them did join dance companies after graduating. But do you know who they ask after when I run into them at dance concerts? Fernando. And that makes me think about them and what they experienced. Because once they've stepped fully on that track to achieve their professional goals, I think they know they are not likely to be in class again with Fernando. Or anyone like Fernando. And they learned something from him that I cannot teach—and neither can you. They were changed in their understanding of dance, of bodies, of art, of desire, of human connection. And I think the ways they were changed will serve their professional lives as artists in ways we cannot know."

He listened very politely as I shifted from Fernando to the dance program's policy that any student could be a dance major without having to audition. To Michael this seemed absurd. Like him, I'd never considered that possibility in a "serious" dance program until I'd gotten to this one. "But think," I told my new acquaintance, "what happens through such a policy. Can you imagine it? If a dance program says to interested students, 'Welcome into this world of dance. Help us find out who dancers are and can be, unrestricted by age, weight, body type or skin color, previous dance experience or long-term aspirations in dance—anything. You have to do the work, pass the courses, but we won't define your potential for you in advance.' Can you imagine that?"

He couldn’t. I wasn’t selling him anything and he wasn’t buying; Michael was interested in something entirely different. And yet I believe we had a dialogue, each of us asking hard questions and paying attention to our assumptions without having to persuade the other that there is one best way to do this.

My experience with Fernando helps me focus on potential, but it is not as simple as opening my eyes to *his* potential alone. An idea I hope dance teachers in 2025 might include in an ongoing dialogue is that all of us can be changed—transformed—through intersecting and shared potentials, teachers and students alike. Art can help us see the potentials, but it takes conscious effort, especially from teachers, who hold a certain power, to get out of the way and share in the transformation. Three ideas guide me here and help me check my assumptions:

1. Everyone arrives with something.
2. I am trying to make space for those “somethings” to meet.
3. I must be willing to be changed by experience and to recognize the changes that others go through.

I see these ideas also at the heart of the challenge ArtEZ has presented: in asking us to contemplate the dance teacher of 2025, my ArtEZ colleagues essentially ask, “What do we—students and teachers—see as our potential? What do we hope for, and how do we take responsibility for the change that will help us realize those hopes together?” In a session with a group of ArtEZ dance faculty last fall, preparing to watch the students present a first full run of their concert, each faculty member spoke about what he or she wondered, hoped, and feared before we were to enter the theater. Reflecting on and sharing these ideas, individuals recognized similarities and differences and also found new potentials, even within what they identified as fears or concerns. Naming the unknowns—the wonders that had no firm answers—alongside the hopes and fears, also shifted the way we saw the students’ work. One member of the group, speaking after the performance, said she thought it was the first time she went to a student performance wondering, “What would you like to show me?” rather than “Let me see if you do what I expect.” By not solely focusing on whether the students “measured up” to her expectations, she realized, she saw things she might not otherwise have seen. She was also interrupting the traditional power role of a teacher: to judge or evaluate according to pre-determined criteria. It’s scary to let go in that way.

This is not about a quick fix. Even while exploring the hopeful possibilities in teaching and learning, we can't avoid the problems that exist. The problems will *continue* to exist because of the simple (and complicated) fact that we are humans, blessed and bedeviled by human nature. There is no "quick fix" and no *one* or *best* answer. For artists, that's a good thing; problems bring us into the work. We study them and try different approaches. Taking a long view is difficult: we observe what we can while knowing we cannot see the whole picture; prepare for change while remaining aware of the natural human impulse to resist change; and leave space for dialogue and self-scrutiny while recognizing how hard it is for multiple points of view to dance together conversationally. This takes time. And it takes presence. This is how my students and I were able to learn from Fernando and to discover what was under the surface not only for him but for all of us in that dance studio.

Being Present in Art and in Teaching

Dance is an art of presence. To avoid that is to avoid its essence. Through dance we commit to the tuning (and continual re-tuning) of perception. It's an enormous challenge: finding and trusting one's own shifting sensations and perceptions while encountering those of others. You see that fragile and vital phenomenon in a dance studio or in any space where dance is found. Dance is many other things as well. But these aspects—the beauties and struggles in being physically present and responsive, connecting not only with one's own perceptual awareness but to the varied and sometimes conflicting perceptions of others—strike me especially now, in 2018, when both consciousness of physical, perceptual phenomena and the capacity to make space for others' perceptions seem to be waning. In our heavily dis-embodied world—relying on clicks and clouds and concepts of connectedness involving little face-to-face (much less body-to-body) contact—our "encounters" with others seem almost designed to avoid bodily and motional essence and to steer us away from the sometimes messy, interpersonal challenges of collaboration. It is so much easier to be an island—or to communicate only with fellow, same-thinking "islanders."

Dance is not the only art I'm concerned with; teaching is also an art—a performing art—and so it, too, is about presence. That notion may seem old fashioned or even backward-looking for those focused on the "science" of teaching and in a time of online courses and other technology-based educational products and processes. (A friend recently described a degree program offering a certificate in early childhood education that was conducted entirely through online course work. Clearly live experiences with young children were deemed unnecessary for that certification.) A simplistic and polarizing debate pitting “pro-technologists” against “anti-technologists” does not address the complexities of the issues and does not foster what David Bohm saw as true dialogue. By considering together the relationship between current (and likely future) technological developments and the opportunities for physical/bodily learning within a changing society we might find new ways of thinking and working and being. So, too, if we can explore the live, performing artistry of teaching.

This idea makes some people nervous. We’re probably all familiar with the teacher who takes center stage in a self-glorifying role, sometimes charming his delighted students even as they know they are not learning what they need to learn. For some, the performing arts represent a surface celebrity that elevates charismatic performers with little substance—an image that can drive away any thought that performing artistry would be good for teaching. Perhaps this is another opportunity for a Bohmian pause. Does the idea of teaching as a performing art set off sensations of fear or pleasure? Does it make you uncomfortable that I describe it as such? If you are a performing artist, how do you use what you know as a performing artist in your teaching role?

Seymour Sarason’s book Teaching as a Performing Art stimulated my thinking around this idea. The book grew out of his study of schools of education and the roles they played in the preparation of teachers. Though Sarason acknowledged exceptions, he perceived that schools of education all too often failed their students. Wanting to know what might improve the process, he reflected on the masterful teachers he had known and recalled his own failings as a young, poorly trained teacher. He concluded that the ways performing artists were trained and the goals behind their training were directly relevant to the artistry involved in teaching. That conclusion does not seem at the center of most programs in schools of education.

Think of what performing artists study and why. They are trained not merely to transmit information but to engage audiences, to *move* them and to stimulate change and growth for audiences as well as for themselves as live performers. Successful performing artists bridge gaps between performers and audience. They spend long periods of time preparing, rehearsing their material physically, not to become mechanical but to uncover essentials and to develop their ability to respond in the moment as they read the needs and energies of various audiences. Through live performance, they aim to discover more effective ways to communicate in specific contexts, reflecting on their performances and trying to learn what works or needs improvement. Are any of these goals *not* what we would want teachers to strive toward in their teaching?

Imagine how schools could benefit as well. In the performing arts, we accept that not every applicant is right for every job—that there must be a "rightness of fit"—and to find a good fit, those hiring conduct not only interviews, but live auditions. An audition can help an artistic team understand how individuals might take on a role; how adaptable and curious they are; how responsive to direction and how willing to collaborate with others. (You may note a contradiction with my earlier questions about auditions and dance. Is the context the same or different? Are auditions useful or not in different situations?)

One thing artists of all kinds are encouraged to do, which teachers sometimes are not, is to be original and exploratory in their work. Even with identical materials, artists do not create the same way as each other, following a formula that will provide a pre-determined "best" outcome, nor do we expect or desire that they should. An actor with a script would disappoint audiences if he studied "best practices" for delivering lines and served them to a passive audience in precisely the same manner as a thousand other actors. The artistry would be missing.

The director of an undergraduate dance program in which I taught for almost eight years had an artistry as a teacher that was both startlingly clear and almost indescribable. I saw it whenever she spoke with students, whether in informal conversations, during rehearsal processes, or when teaching a pedagogy, technique, or composition class. She and I taught the same courses and we did so in very different ways. At the same time, we respected each other. We had many long conversations, and sometimes disagreements, about the choices we made with the material and our students. Sometimes both of us tried to persuade the other that our own methods really were the best. In the end, though, we were in dialogue: listening, noticing the fears and feeling the urge to defend, then suspending the fears and discovering new possibilities that neither of us had conceived on our own in all our years of teaching.

The last time I saw my colleague lead a group of students was also the first time I witnessed something I'd heard about often: Jana's pre-concert circle. Over the years, both as a leader and as a member of an ensemble, I had participated in many pre-performance rituals in which a company of dancers and choreographers gathers before the curtain rises to focus and prepare for being on stage. I'd heard so much about Jana's circle that I thought it might be cultish and I remained somewhat skeptical. One of my colleagues once said, "I've only heard about it, but it seems a little airy fairy." Knowing it was the last opportunity for me to see Jana's pre-concert ritual, I asked to participate.

I wish I could bring you there with me now. Her calm, sturdy presence seemed tangible. There was no ego in it; she did not draw focus to herself, but instead seemed to channel focus toward each member of the circle one at a time and all at once. Close to fifty dancers and choreographers held hands and breathed together, listening with rapt attention as Jana spoke to them about what had brought them to this moment and what was ahead. She led a group of performance-jitter-filled young artists through an event that had an arc like any transformative art experience. They moved, as one, from a state of jangled nerves, to easeful breath, to intense purposefulness and selfless pride in what they were about to offer the world. I stood beside a student from my Fundamentals class, participating in her first concert at the college and having just met Jana for the first time on this circle. When the ritual concluded, Tracy turned to me and said, "Who is that woman? I understand for the first time why I'm going on stage and why it is so important. I am inspired." When I watched Tracy perform that night, I saw the meaning behind her words. She gave nothing extra and everything that was already within her. Her performance seemed drawn into that space in a new way. She'd been touched by an inspired artist teacher whose power of presence served a greater purpose than herself alone.

When I asked Jana later how she planned for these events and whether she knew beforehand what she would say, she said, "I have no idea. I don't know that I have anything special or different to offer. I just really believe in what the students are doing and why it matters." I believe it was her artistry that allowed Jana, over the course of decades, to renew herself and her students, to tap into the moment and to the particular people sharing the space with her, and to help everyone move as a group toward a meaningful and even transformative experience.

What dance teacher would *not* want to guide young dancers with Jana's commitment and ability to connect? And yet no one would succeed by trying to imitate what she had created out of her own unique self. The American psychologist and educator John Dewey warned that if schools of education focus teachers-in-training too soon on replicating model lessons rather than attending to the psychology of learning, "the principle of imitation is almost sure to play an exaggerated part in the observer's future teaching, and hence at the expense of personal insight and initiative."[iii] Personal insight and initiative grows from observing and wondering; reflecting on, adapting, and experimenting with our own processes and asking for response from colleagues and students; developing new skills that we may have witnessed in others, but made our own. Dewey wrote that a student teacher ought not observe "to find out how the good teacher does it, in order to accumulate a store of methods by which he also may teach successfully. He should rather observe with reference to seeing the interaction of mind, to see how teacher and pupils react upon each other—how mind answers to mind."[iv]

Taking the time to see how mind answers to mind—or how body answers to body—is essential to teaching artistry. It is no small part of our task to help teachers remain curious and interested in order to serve their students as well as themselves. I hope, as Seymour Sarason did, that we can help teachers find "the sources, internal and external, to give them the sense of growth, to cause them willingly to enlarge or alter their role and repertoire, to prevent the feeling that they have settled into a safe, comfortable routine."[v]

How Power Shapes Learning

Power is built into the teacher's role. Having authority helps a teacher guide productive learning without chaos; insures that individuals feel safe during disagreements or in conflict; and focuses groups on finding and working toward common goals. At the same time, we know from human nature that anyone with power runs the risk of abusing it, often through habit or inattention. Our overlooked biases contribute to the habits of and inattention to subtle abuses of power. Long ago a colleague gave me an article describing research that showed the greater frequency with which boys, rather than girls, were called on in classrooms. That article shook me and made me re-examine my practice. I reasoned that since I was human, I undoubtedly committed similar sins of omission of which I was mostly unconscious. I needed specific tools—note-taking being the most effective for me—to keep track of who I called on, how much time people got, and whether opportunities for action were fairly distributed. Identifying every bias I had, and banishing them, was not possible, so I decided to work harder to minimize their effect especially because I was in such a powerful position as a teacher. Perfection wasn't the goal; consciousness was. By self-scrutinizing I learned some things about myself. For example, that I had a soft spot for children wearing glasses. Who knew? Well—maybe the children *not* wearing glasses knew.

It is also human nature that our actions, as David Bohm notes, frequently contradict our intentions. On too many occasions I have participated in well-meaning, carefully designed classes, seminars, and workshops that subtly and steadily made me feel manipulated and controlled, even as the leaders expressed the intention to offer an open, participatory, and student-centered experience. I've stumbled, myself, in the role of leader.

About ten years ago I led a professional development workshop for dance teachers that I called "Get Out of the Way." By asking, "What's the least I can do?" I hoped to encourage teachers to create clear, minimalist structures that would allow students to direct much, if not most, of the action and, therefore, to find and develop their own creative voices. A group of twenty-four dance teachers joined me for five two-hour sessions over the course of a week. Throughout the workshops I intended to step back: setting up or inviting new structures and then getting out of the way so participants could create, lead, and collaboratively shape the direction of the work we did together. In one session, I asked everyone to join a circle and unthinkingly said, "When I give a sound signal, I'd like you to respond with a movement that…"

That was as far as I got. "Wait a minute," I said. The circle of teachers looked at me expectantly. "Isn't this workshop about 'stepping back' as a teacher? Getting out of the way? Did I say that?" I asked. The participants nodded, but looked a little perplexed. "What am I doing?" I asked. "Something's going to happen with sound and motion, but do *I* need to give the sound or define the motion? Is this a place in which I could get out of your way?"

We stood silently for a moment before I said, "Any ideas?" One member of our circle posed a tentative question, "Do you think a sound could come from anywhere around the circle?" Before we knew it, a new improvisational structure was taking shape. It required everyone to listen and respond with heightened attention. As I remember the "rules" that evolved, anyone could make a sound of whatever duration; all others would embody the sound in their own way for as long as the sound lasted; new sounds could arise from new locations, with sounders being sensitive to the overall density and volume of sounds; the new sounds could overlap the old or could follow a period of silence; traveling was permitted, though not required; stillness was to match the silences. It wasn't the score I'd constructed in my mind—it was one the group found together. Anticipated problems or confusions came up and were addressed easily; agreement around the circle was swift. My role—and my use of power—in that workshop shifted: still the leader, I unhooked from being responsible for presenting pre-determined prompts. This dropped me out of a position of dominance and into a more facilitative role, collecting ideas and asking questions to clarify how the dance would proceed and cohere enough to have perceivable shape.

Though my workshop was all about that sort of facilitation, in the midst of it I found I still had further to go.

Here is another pause in which to note the subtle sensations you may have in response to these ideas. Some questions have helped me look at risks and develop strategies for overcoming unintentional power-grabs and may be useful here: (a) Where are my biases (e.g., cultural, aesthetic, personal) and how can I study them, rather than inadvertently control *through* them? (b) What is my relationship to control and what do I fear will happen if I give it up? (c) What do I want and do I know what my students want? How will I find out? (d) When have I gone too far—either in trying to control or in giving up control?

My own meditations on those questions show up consistently in one place: my notebooks, which are always next to me when I teach. When I look back at what I've written, my biases stare me in face, both in what I've written and in what is lacking in my notes. Whom do I keep noticing and who has not made an appearance? That calls for a redirection of my attention. I also see my relationship to control: notes about how long I meant to spend on something and how long I really spent; scribbles of anxiety in which, asking myself if it's time to step in and fix something or better to let it play out, I see the physical "pause" the writing offered; and instructions to myself—"Don't do this one again. Give Lisa a chance to lead next time." The most important and frequent notes, though, are my notes of what students say. First-day introductions, questions raised in group discussions, excited brainstorms about what might be a good improvisation, descriptions of their struggles when we speak in private conferences—pretty much anything and everything they say. I learn how they are thinking and communicating, what is shifting in their perspectives, what is confusing and frustrating, and what I had not imagined. Spoken language is not the only way I learn these things, but it is one way and the notebooks help to capture that important information.

One often overlooked aspect of power relationships in teaching that could be part of the dialogue for the dance teacher of 2025 is governance. I am interested in a "self-governing" class and here is why: in my experience, a self-governing group is a livelier, more committed, self-motivated community. Through self-governance, they collaborate and take on responsibility, both individually and collectively, for their own learning. Self-governance begins when my students enter the studio. Instead of taking roll at the beginning of class, I ask students to tell me who is missing. This began when I noticed students not seeming aware of each other—their presence or absence as well as that they *had* names—at the start of class; the roll-call formula seemed to induce a passive state. Asking them to pay attention to their classmates and whether they were present told them that they, too, would be missed and mentioned on days they were absent; their presence mattered. Noticing their classmates was only the first step. Next, I asked volunteers to bring the missing students up to speed when they returned to class. Similarly, when students returned to class after an absence, I would ask if someone had filled them in. If not, I turned responsibility for review of material over to the group. Soon classes seemed to automatically begin with informal whole group reviews, led not by me but by my students. This is one small example of self-governing behavior.

Dance teachers of 2025 (and all of us) will continue to face difficult questions about power for as long as we teach. A few interrelated concepts that are worth considering:

1. The authority of a teacher is a form of power.
2. Power can be abused through the unconscious effects of bias, whether cultural, personal, or aesthetic. Bias is a natural human condition.
3. Inviting others to share the power, to participate fully and to question the work, also invites resistance, which carries its own risks for teachers as well as for students.

Concluding Thoughts: Concerns for the Future

Many of my concerns for the dance teachers of 2025 have to do with time and consciousness and whether beginning teachers are invited into dialogue around issues of productive learning. That dialogue would require that we trust and make space for what student teachers bring to the table, including their expertise as learners, and give sufficient time for them to explore and test their ideas. Doing so ties together, for me, all three of the areas I've been meditating over—art, potential, and power.

More than a hundred years ago, John Dewey wrote about the tendency of schools of education to overlook the practical experience students bring with them from their lives as learners. He saw that student teachers were often taught that the ideal methods and materials of learning were found only in school and that until they learned those methods they had no means by which to understand theoretical principles or big ideas. He warned against isolating the learning of the classroom (or studio, in our case) from the learning that happens outside of school. "This isolation is both unnecessary and harmful," Dewey wrote. "…it throws away or makes light of the greatest asset in the student's possession—the greatest, moreover, that ever will be in his possession—his own direct and personal experience… that he has been learning all the days of his life, and that he is still learning from day to day."[vi]

In dance, learning—in studios and in the larger world—happens in a holistic way. Dance artists trained not only as performers but also as choreographers and teachers learn to see and direct live human beings in space, using shape, time, and energy. It makes me think the dance teacher of 2025 could, and should, be a leader in some new thinking in our world. Imagine what might be if preparatory programs in general education hired dance teachers to help them observe what students communicate through their bodies; how breath and motion can integrate learning; how conscious use of physical space could shape transitions in the classroom and make room for different learning styles; what physical space and bodies reveal about social interaction and how teachers can share in the dynamics of art and potential and power.

Certainly dance teachers of the future will face challenges that none of us can foresee. Dewey spoke also to this point as he noted how much change was happening in the world around him in 1897. His words are worth contemplating in 2018. It was a mistake, he said, to try to fit a student for a future we could not know. Instead, it was the ethical responsibility of schools to train a student in ways that "will give him such possession of himself that he may take charge of himself; may not only adapt himself to the changes which are going on, but have power to shape and direct those changes."[vii]

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[i] Bohm, D. (1996). On Dialogue, page ix.

[ii] Bohm, D. (1996). On Dialogue, page 5.

[iii] Dewey, J. (1904). *The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education*, originally in National Society for the Scientific Study of Education, *Third Yearbook*, Part I, 1904. Pages 324-325 of John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings edited by Reginald D. Archambault (1964).

[iv] Dewey, J. (1904). *The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education*, originally in National Society for the Scientific Study of Education, *Third Yearbook*, Part I, 1904. Page 324 of John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings edited by Reginald D. Archambault (1964).

[v] Sarason, S.B. (1999). Teaching as a Performing Art, page 64

[vi] Dewey, J. (1904). *The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education*, originally in National Society for the Scientific Study of Education, *Third Yearbook*, Part I, 1904. Pages 322-323 of John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings edited by Reginald D. Archambault (1964).

[vii] Dewey, J. (1897). *Ethical Principles Underlying Education*, originally in National Herbart Society, *Third Yearbook*, 1897. Page 114 of John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings edited by Reginald D. Archambault (1964).