

REVIEW ARTICLE

CREATIVITY IN DANCE. Coralie Hinkley, Sydney, Australia: Alternative Publishing Co-operative, Ltd., 1980, pp. 1-158 (pp. 5-14: preface, 37 plates), \$16.95 (Australian).

The study of dance in education, like any evolving study, has its growing pains. Two important questions that need constantly to be asked are: (1) Where are we going, and (2) is this practice a contribution to the growth of the study or just another impediment? Hinkley suggests she has answered these two essential questions in Creativity in Dance (p. 13). She also suggests that her book represents a specialist view towards the study's growth (p. 8). She presents a series of creative dance experiments done in a classroom with students over an eleven-year period using concepts and theories of noted European and North American modern dance pioneers and dance enthusiasts on the questions of "the principles of natural movement" and principles and styles of dynamic dance techniques. Hinkley has provided her readers with a potpourri of concepts and theories which she believes to be important to the growth of dance in education. The stated major influences on her work were Margaret H'Doubler, Rudolph van Laban, Martha Graham, Louis Horst and Madame Bodenweiser of the Mary Wigman tradition -- to mention a few.

The problem in this writer's view is that the author has limited herself to the concepts of dance as an 'art form,' even though she suggests it is with dance in education that she is primarily concerned (p. 6). She tells us what her dance in education program embodies and the importance of such a program in an educational context.

... the growth of the needs and capacities of the individual are extended and enriched. The endowment is directed towards the physical mental, spiritual, emotional, aesthetic and social attributes of the human being. From movement we can learn about ourselves, our feelings and thoughts and actions. We are made more aware of others and the effects of our own actions on others. We can learn to relate and interrelate with our fellow man ... (p. 6).

The author believes that ultimately, all of this, "... arouses our emotional consciousness but improves the intellectual faculties as our mind learns, receives impressions, selects, manipulates and solves dance problems" (p. 6).

I ask in relation to these statements, what is it that "... arouses our emotional consciousness but improves the intellectual

faculties as our mind learns ...?", and how are these "needs" to enrich and extend the capacities of the individual's growth realized? What "endowments" is she referring to concerning our feelings and thoughts? Finally, what have any of these ideas to do with the dance in education?

Unfortunately, Ms. Hinkley does not provide the reader with any information about how she proposes to incorporate the two studies (i.e., dances and education) into a comprehensive formula that is presentable with a focus or direction towards the growth of dance education. If she believes that the problems facing a dance in education program of study can be solved by dance exercises and/or "creative situations" in the classroom, then I must say that Hinkley, like so many teachers of dancing in western societies is not contributing to the growth of the field of study but is unconsciously impeding future growth.

As a former dancer, I understand the shortcomings of emotionally laden, subjective thinking about dancing in particular and 'the dance' in general. While I was once a part of this, and believed some of the same things, I have now distanced myself from it. By 'this,' I mean that dance students are not usually encouraged to think for themselves, although they are constantly asked to 'think' (metaphorically used here for 'listen' and 'see'). In other words one was taught by a combination of explanation and observation what is required in the class as performance without being encouraged to question, or to think for oneself about what is being taught, why it is taught that way, etc. A robot-like discipline is practised where reliance on the body and how it looks is paramount. It is a focus so narrowly structured that 'the dance' becomes the only world, where one is left no time to think of anything but the movements of dancing. Ultimately, one becomes lost in the world of dancing and verbal articulation about that world becomes virtually impossible.

People say that they want one thing, but they do the opposite. I understand this, but feel that I can no longer passively accept these conditions. Through hindsight it becomes easy to see how such expressions as, "What do you know about dancing", "How can you talk about dancing?", and "Until you have danced you can't begin to talk about dancing", are so prevalent among dancers and teachers of the dance. Statements like these only reflect an inability to articulate what is meant on a rational and objective level of discussion.

In Hinkley's book the underlying viewpoint is the same: the viewpoint that the experience of moving is itself the ultimate exchange in understanding ourselves and others -- that the experience of dancing provides all of the knowledge that is necessary about any dance form, and about different kinds of

dances. It is suggested that we understand ourselves and others through aesthetic awareness of a danced experience and that this danced experience enables one to connect all other art forms together, freeing the individual's creative and spiritual powers. Hinkley says, "There must not be too much verbalizing about the content at the expense of dance action ..." (p. 145).

There is much to be learned from the experiences of dancing and of being a dancer, but there are other considerations that are required for educational purposes that stimulate the mind, without total physical participation, as well as the body. Hinkley has chosen to restrict these considerations and consequently, to restrict the student's development, to the body alone.

It is good to think, as we are led to believe, that modern dance or dancing in general has progressed since the turn of the century when the pioneers of a new dance form presented their ideas and concepts. But modern dance (or more precisely, dance in education) in Hinkley's book does not seem to advance our understanding very far. Once again the dance has been subjected to a dancer's artistic, subjective notions of aesthetics, which are preoccupied with assumptions that the dance is solely a 'felt' experience and therefore nothing can or should be said about it -- a point made by Best (1980:14), when he talks about alternative lines of study in dance education.

I do not suggest that there is no place for subjective or aesthetic considerations in the study of dancing because a dance is expressed through an idea about feelings and emotions which give rise to the growth of one's inner life in which subjective and aesthetic experiences play an important part. Langer's work, in this area of study, has revealed that "... subjective existence has a structure," and she says that it is the foundation on which creative processes rest (Langer, 1957:7). Brenda Farnell, whose work in dance education was concentrated mainly in England, reported that, "It is generally felt by dance educators in England today that dance, if it is to be justified in the school curriculum, must contribute to an aesthetic way of knowing" (1981:171). However, this should not cloud the issues of the values of philosophical reasoning or other intellectually comparative discourses within the study of the dance. Serious-minded dance educators must accept the fact that human ideas and feelings, in a broader context, can also be dealt with on rational and critical levels. Without these kinds of involvement of reason and intellect, there can be no justification for the study of the dance in the areas of academic scholarship and learning, nor will the study ever be considered worthy of inclusion in an academic curriculum.

Although Hinkley did not study in England, it appears that she

incorporated many of the ideas and directives from the English dance education programs whose foundations were mainly based on Laban's theories of movement (see Thornton, 1971, for further discussion). Laban used his principles of movement in conjunction with his system of writing not only to analyze the structures of human movements but to study the qualities of the moves as well, including weight, space, time and flow, in developing simultaneous and sequential combinations of movement. He said, "The writing and reading of notation necessitates an exact knowledge of the signs by which the details of the flow of movement in the body are indicated" (1971:62). Thornton, along with other scholars, believes these written signs can be seen to show the significance of written movements in relation to written language, i.e., "Just as language can be written down phonetically, so movement can be recorded graphically" (1971:62).

It seems inconceivable to me that the programs created by Hinkley for dance education did not include Laban's system of movement-writing. This system of notation is very important -- if not the most important technology for the analysis of dance and human movement systems because it has come to be the most important feature in establishing the literacy of the dance and human movement. Although Hinkley refers to "dance literate adults of the future" (p. 7), she seems to have chosen not to mention movement-writing, nor does she include it as an integral feature of dance education programs.

Hinkley speaks of the importance of trained teachers who will prepare the children of the future to become dance literate adults, but doesn't really explain how this will happen. With Laban's system of movement-writing, one is able to analyze and record dances. The value here lies in the fact that learning to do so might help "children of the future" really become "dance literate adults," and it would also help to establish a level of scholarly understanding in the teaching of dance-related subjects in schools and universities. If dance educators are truly interested in dance education, then written texts are required. Surely, music education has proven this.

It is unfortunate that Hinkley (while on a Fulbright scholarship in America) did not broaden her understanding by expanding and developing the concepts that she learned. As long as theories and concepts (useful though they may be or might have been) are simply accepted without question and left basically unexamined, then the process of development in the field of dance education will remain stagnant and narrow. Some reading of philosophy, especially that of Best (1978 and 1985) might have improved Hinkley's work immeasurably.

A lot of work has been done in the past two decades in the

areas of philosophy and dancing. There are the more empirically-based studies, such as those of Spencer and White (1972), and the studies of several anthropologists of the dance, all of whom were (and are) interested in the development of dance and human movement studies in different ways. Unfortunately, their efforts have been viewed with suspicion by many dance teachers and educators because they are not considered to be knowledgeable in the dance field simply because some of them are not -- nor have they ever been -- dancers.

Hinkley's book doesn't help: She unconsciously ascribes to a Cartesian 'mind/body split' in her thinking (see Williams, in press, and Johnson, 1989, for further discussion, which once again places the dance as a subject at a disadvantage in current academic educational circles. The author presents a narrow view of dancing based solely on a performing dancer's standpoint. She does not venture into broader viewpoints about dancing in relation to other established fields of enquiry such as therapy (psychology), cross-cultural or comparative studies (social or cultural anthropology) or philosophy. We are led to believe that the act of dancing alone encapsulates all the educational viewpoints and even the academic disciplines themselves.

This book travels along the path of so many before it which have dealt solely with the creative possibilities of the dance as an 'art form' and as a physical practise, possibly in lieu of sport or gymnastics. It leaves out consideration of other, and by now, established, educational approaches. We might well ask how the dance in an educational context is ever going to achieve the important recognition that I believe it should when performers and teachers of dancing never come to grips with some of the important issues involved? Until a more honest and critical dialogue is opened up and maintained among dance teachers, general dance enthusiasts, dance educators and scholars in other fields of study who are seriously interested in dancing, the bookshelves will continue to be filled with obviously sincere but intellectually somewhat impoverished contributions.

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