

Title of Grant: Expanding Dance Opportunities with Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

S2008 – 169P –PF

Date of Funding: Summer 2008

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Abstract:

This project enabled me to attend the workshop “The New Art: Making, Being, Living Dances” with the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in Takoma Park, Md. Attendance at this intensive enabled me to bring new approaches to choreography and performance as well as advanced modern dance technique back to the PVCC classroom, enhancing and enlarging current curriculum content. This workshop culminated in performance in the Washington D.C.’s Fringe Festival and was an exceptional professional experience. Participation in this event provided increased visibility and knowledge of the PVCC dance program to the professional and academic dance communities of Washington DC and the surrounding area.

Actual Outcomes:

1. Use of new approaches for choreography and generating movement in the development of a site specific performance piece for the 10th Anniversary of the Dickinson Building. This piece was performed twice before the community on 9/13/08.
2. Incorporation of new modern dance and movement exercises into fall modern dance classes
3. Development of a close working and personal relationships with other workshop participants from all over the country. We have continued to stay in touch and exchange ideas and experiences. It has been interesting to hear about how each of us has applied the material in so many diverse ways.
4. One of the most difficult tasks in dance production and/or choreography classes is to give feedback in an instructive and gentle way. Liz Lerman's methodology of Critical Response has given me specific guidelines to teach my students to help them successfully express themselves in class.
5. In choreographing the Dickinson performance piece, I drew from experiences performing in the D.C. Fringe Festival with LLDE. Using the entire space, with the challenges of terrain, weather, and diverse abilities, was one of the prime elements that I had hoped to learn; the outcome was very successful.
6. As a dancer, and even more so, as a 60 year old dancer, the opportunity to study and perform with an internationally known company was uplifting. In the performing arts, the publicity generated not only reflects well on the participant, but on the institution and community as well.

Other Colleges:

N/A

Discussion and Critique:

1. One can always learn new techniques and methodology to support teaching.
2. Performance opportunities are available to diverse populations and can/should be taken advantage of.
3. Change and expansion of my movement vocabulary occurred through feedback, encouragement, and specific suggestions on what other avenues I should explore.
4. Incorporation occurred in my teaching of the company's methodology and exercises through the specific examples provided by the teachers.

I don't think that I have any gaps in my understanding of the work that I did, but there are a few changes I would make. It was very difficult to organize rehearsals during the summer months. Vacations, weather, work schedules, made it difficult for me to see the dance as a whole. Once I was able to make the decision that not all dancers would be dancing all the time, and that stillness could also be part of the choreography, the piece fell together. What had started as a difficulty, ended up being one of the best choreographic elements.

We did rehearse the piece once inside, on the main stage, just in case of rain. The piece looked extremely different, and I would like to explore how the choreography can be manipulated to be performed in a more traditional venue--perhaps in our upcoming annual May concert.

I would not change much about this experience. It was truly life-changing in many ways, both personally and professionally. The atmosphere in the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange is incredibly supportive and welcoming. I felt validated as a dancer, teacher and choreographer. What would I repeat? I would love to do another workshop with Liz Lerman in the near future!

Evaluation:

1. Successful development of a 15 minute site specific dance piece for the 10th anniversary of the Dickinson Building. Audience response, media coverage, and participant commentary of the performance all were positive and enthusiastic.
2. Successful enrollment in and completion of the 12 day Dance Immersion with the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange. My participation was evaluated by the audience and my colleagues at the performance at the National Building Museum, press reviews, specific comments on my performance and participation by Liz Lerman and other company members. ("Thank you for holding a place for us--and boy did you hold it! from L Lerman)

3. Acquisition of the book "Critical Response" by Liz Lerman, for the dance program book collection and its use in PVCC dance courses.

4. Use of new material in course content of Beg. Modern Dance and SDV Orientation class. The dance class members enjoyed the new material and I was also able to use it with non-dancers in an Orientation class as exercises to develop leadership and decision making experience. I intend to continue my assessment of the success of these new exercises at the end of the semester when my course evaluations are returned.

Dissemination:

I disseminated my findings and outcomes not only through the site specific dance piece, but also by describing to the audiences, my experience with Liz Lerman and how I used it in the creation of the piece. Many of the dancers that I worked with in the piece are also choreographers, and the process that I used will be added to their knowledge and choreographic process. In addition, I have talked at length with my colleagues in the Fine Arts about my experience and they were able to supplement those conversations by witnessing the ideas "in action" during the performances.

I also hope to submit an article to "Inquiry" discussing not only what I learned, but how it might be applied in other venues.