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Reflective Practice in the Ballet Class

Bringing Progressive Pedagogy to the Classical Tradition

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ABSTRACT This research seeks to broaden the dialogue on progressive ballet pedagogy through an examination of reflective practices in the ballet class. Ballet's traditional model of instruction has long required students to quietly comply with the pedagogue's directives, and it has thus become notorious for promoting student passivity. Despite strong recent efforts, particularly in academe, to advance student agency in ballet, the field struggles to transcend its authoritarian pedagogic history. I propose here that open-ended reflective practices can allow ballet pedagogues to bring a progressive approach to preprofessional training paradigms—to empower students as they prepare to enter the ballet profession. To reconcile ballet's formal traditions with reflective practice's progressive underpinnings, I draw from literature in ballet and educational philosophy. Using Max Van Manen's (1991) and Donald Schön's (1983, 1987) frameworks for reflection, I describe elements of my reflective approach to teaching university ballet majors with professional potential and aspirations.

Ballet has an acknowledged pedagogy problem. Despite the progressive, feminist, critical, and democratic pedagogical philosophies that have been developing over the last century, ballet is still notorious for its reliance on traditional authoritarian teaching. The damaging effects of ballet's outmoded approaches have been widely documented: in (a) dancers' firsthand accounts, (b) Education and Dance Studies research, and (c) the embodied experiences of dancers at every level who fear their ballet teachers or associate ballet training with a sense of shame or disempowerment (Karsavina 1950; Kirkland 1986; Ellsworth 1992; Vilella and Kaplan 1992; Tallchief and Kaplan 1997; Smith 1998; Green 1999; Lakes 2005; Johnston 2006; Clement 2007; Risner 2009; Burnidge 2012; Zeller 2016; Casey 2017). Ballet's institutional resistance to pedagogic change is not surprising; teaching practices that subordinate the student have long been considered not just inextricable from, but necessary for professional quality ballet training. Its authoritarian methods originate in the historical perspective that the teacher creates the dancer according to ballet's ideals—that students must submit themselves to achieving textbook standards (Jackson 2005; Casey 2017). Ballet pedagogues who consider themselves progressive, however, maintain the opposite perspective: They champion each student's holistic development, consider their goals and aptitudes, and fit ballet's ideals to each student's reality. In seeking to perpetuate ballet's traditions without subjugating the dancer, these teachers navigate the tension between traditional ballet pedagogy and progressive educational philosophies.

With this research, I propose that reflective practices in the ballet class offer possibilities for merging progressive pedagogy's humanistic philosophy with professional quality ballet training. I assert that progressive ballet pedagogy via reflective practice can preserve—rather than distort or dilute¹—the classical tradition's emphasis

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on form and style. Fundamentally, this research demonstrates that reflective methods can enable ballet pedagogues to serve as active stewards of the classical tradition, while supporting the development of empowered ballet dancers who are prepared for the challenges of the profession.

AUTHORITARIAN PEDAGOGY IN BALLET'S LITERATURE

In the ballet studio, authoritarian approaches take various shapes, from the siphoning away of students' voices or expressions of knowledge, to hurtful or chiding remarks, to outright physical abuse (Smith 1998). While some pedagogues are working to change this dark spot in ballet's legacy, these methods continue to self-perpetuate, with the support of more than 200 years of literature. Most ballet technique and training manuals roundly emphasize the technical elements over the teaching and learning process: The correct and incorrect execution of steps and positions occupy the majority of their pages. Manuals offer (a) ample theoretical grounds for the material of the ballet class, (b) stylistic information from various schools of thought, and (c) details of how the body is expected to look and function in ballet technique and performance (Zeller 2016, 4). These technical elements are foundational to ballet pedagogy and of great import, yet the fact that most ballet pedagogy publications give little attention to how students learn—instead focusing almost solely on what teachers teach—is itself indicative of ballet's regressive tendencies.

Ballet's "ideal body" takes precedence in these manuals as well; photos and sketches value certain physical attributes: long limbs in relation to the torso; flexible ankles, hips, and backs; reduced weight; and pale skin tone. This body and its capacity to accommodate the technique according to period aesthetics has changed over time as ballet's positions have become amplified, and as ballet's aesthetics have, conversely, responded to changing bodies. Ballet's pedagogic literature lacks strategies for helping students work with their unique bodies when the ideal is not the reality, and it prioritizes the shaping of the body rather than the embodiment of ballet as a moving, dancing art form. The existence of these gaps insinuates the exclusive perspective that only those students whose bodies easily accommodate the ideal are worth ballet instruction.²

Although inclusivity is not the focus of this research, it is important to acknowledge that what the literature refers to as "ideal bodies" affects not only ballet's pedagogic practices, but its capacity for inclusion (Risner 2009). The upholding of the ideal as central to the ballet aesthetic has allowed what Brenda Dixon Gottschild (2003) calls "the visual tyranny of ballet" (139), which refers to its historic emphasis on whiteness. It pushes dancers of color to the margins of the profession; it makes the dancing secondary to the body. Notably, images across ballet's pedagogic literature reveal a striking absence of dancers of color. For ballet to confront this situation in earnest, practitioners and participants must not become complacent with the publicized promotion of individual dancers. Rather, ballet practitioners at all levels must reconsider the

authoritarian ideal. This reconsideration requires the dismantling of authoritarian structures, including pedagogies.

The literature describes ballet's emphasis on authoritarianism, noting the relationship established between teachers and students. In his 2010 book, *Ballet Pedagogy: The Art of Teaching*, Rory Foster describes clear roles: "[T]he teacher is the source of artistic and technical knowledge," and the student is "the recipient and beneficiary of this knowledge" (92). The relationship Foster describes is aligned with critical pedagogue Paulo Freire's (1970) "banking" model of education, "in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (72), a well-known model to which ballet has historically adhered and to which Freire is opposed. It assumes that all knowledge comes from the teacher—the ultimate authority who owns the material (Villegna and Kaplan 1992). Because this perspective views the teacher as beyond reproach, students' knowledge and experience are overlooked as essential elements in their learning.

Foster (2010) also describes his expectation for students to "accept the teacher and what is taught unhesitatingly," saying, "When a student begins to argue, misbehave, and resist corrections, it is time for him/her to seek out another teacher, because without complete trust and respect, the training development is breached" (92). Foster expects students to trust and respect the teacher, yet he does not mention a need for reciprocity. Instead, he endows teachers with power and expects obedience inside the established power structure. It might not be easy, however, for students to trust that a teacher in a traditionally autocratic position will prioritize their well-being and individual interests. Particularly in ballet, where dress codes are prescriptively sparse and methodologies involve touch, students might feel vulnerable and trusting a new teacher might not be automatic. This expectation of belief in authority does not value the students' experience, perception, or internal response to their surroundings; it demands total compliance and, effectively, silences the student's inner voice (Johnston 2006). From a Freirian perspective, this is a hallmark of an oppressive environment. Freire (1970) cautions, "[e]ducation must begin with the solution of the teacher–student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (72). The development of mutual esteem and a balanced, open approach to communication is key; as the individual in power, the teacher must work to earn the student's trust and respect, rather than to expect it outright.

In his *Advanced Principles in Teaching Classical Ballet*, John White (2009) notes that it is appropriate, on occasion, for the teacher to express dissatisfaction in the ballet class to reach a desired end, using what he called "premeditated pedagogic outbursts" (14). He offers the following example of one of these "teaching tool[s]":

If students are bobbling a balance on demi-pointe after a pirouette while holding the barre, ask them why they are hopping or why they are lowering their supporting heel or their

working foot to the floor. Then wait for an answer. Of course, there will be none. Then tell them emphatically, “Do not hop!” And have the students try it again. When they hop again (as they more than likely will), ask once again, even more emphatically, “Did you understand what I said before? (pause) Do not hop!” When the movement is at last done correctly, remind everyone that overcoming such difficulties often is just a matter of deciding not to commit the error. They have to learn to be tough-minded. (14–15)

Freire’s (1970) democratic approach to learning sits in stark contrast to this passage, which makes assumptions about students’ intentions that are demeaning and regressive in nature. White encourages the disparagement of students en masse, and uses layers of artificial theatricality to emphasize the teacher’s superiority. More extreme still is this subsequent excerpt, in which White (2009) cautions teachers about getting too “cozy” with their classes:

Students must always be kept guessing. They must wonder if the teacher is serious about what he is saying or if he is just kidding. This keeps them on the edge. There is an element of fear, but it is a special kind of fear that is rather benign. It has more to do with uncertainty. If students can figure out what makes the teacher tick, then they are more likely to try to take advantage of perceived weaknesses. (15–16)

Student learning, here, is superseded by the teacher’s fear of losing power. Despite some pedagogues’ efforts starting in the mid-twentieth century to develop more individualized approaches to ballet training through anatomical means,³ these recent texts indicate that ballet in the twenty-first century continues to promote regressive methods as essential to its pedagogy.

Robin Lakes (2005), in her compelling analysis of authoritarian dance pedagogy, offers the following censure:

It is indefensible morally and ethically. It fosters emotionally (and sometimes physically) abusive atmospheres. Its politics uphold a template for regressive, antidemocratic relationships. It is insupportable when analyzed through the lens of reform and constructivist pedagogical thought since it does not foster deep, higher order thinking. Moreover, it flies in the face of what is now known in the sciences since it ignores the way that the human mind constructs knowledge. (16)

It is insufficient to suggest that because teachers endured these approaches in their own training, students should continue to be subjected to them. This common notion is rife with bitterness about teachers’ own experiences, or perhaps with uncertainty about changing an entrenched methodology, but mostly with fear of (a) being perceived as less knowledgeable if teachers are not dictatorial in their methods or (b) losing the kind of adulation that has historically been associated with “master” ballet teachers (Lakes 2005, 15). Perhaps teachers fear that without authoritarian practices, they would no longer be teaching ballet in a rigorous

enough manner for students to reach a professional level—that students must learn to capitulate and fear authority to attain the degree of artistic and technical prowess necessary for a professional career. I seek to counter this all-too-prevalent thinking in ballet through an examination of reflective practice, which can foster a progressive educational environment that values student agency, mutual respect and trust, and professionally viable training.

REFLECTION, PROGRESSIVISM, AND BALLET

Reflection is central to progressive pedagogy. Philosopher Max Van Manen (1991) describes reflection as “a fundamental concept in educational theory”; “in some sense ... just another word for ‘thinking.’ To reflect is to think. But reflection in the field of education carries the connotation of deliberation, of making choices, of coming to decisions about alternative courses of action” (98). This definition of reflection as an intentional act entrusts pedagogues with the responsibility of determining what is valuable in an educational setting. Progressive icon John Dewey (1910) similarly defines “reflective thought” as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (6). He endows reflection with a certain ongoingness—“active, persistent”—that requires a deep understanding of a phenomenon’s context and a willingness to follow its tendencies without prescribing an external end or goal. Likewise, Doug Risner (2002) notes that reflective practice’s “aim is not absolute certainty, statistical predictability, or law-like, fixed solutions (21). This living practice of reflection challenges pedagogues to continuously consider prior knowledge, current contexts, and future implications, without expectations for specific results.

The open-ended nature of reflection for the pedagogue is philosophically aligned with progressive education’s attention to open-ended learning, in which students’ individual tendencies and experiences are vital (Dewey 1938). The academy’s current emphasis on outcome-based instruction hampers such open-ended efforts, as it purports to know the outcomes of the learning process before it can begin in earnest. In this restrictive environment, spontaneous associative ideas that emerge from students’ independent critical thinking are often deemphasized, as they are peripheral to the intended outcomes and therefore considered less important. Measurable outcomes, too, are more highly valued in these environments than those that might be more difficult to quantify at the outset; the possibilities for unforced, unplanned, ruminative learning, and opportunities for students to exercise spur-of-the-moment curiosity are thus diminished. As these measurable learning outcomes are often included in syllabi or program documents before the teacher meets the students, it is feasible to suggest that they do not take the proclivities or challenges of each individual student into account, nor do they implicitly value the pedagogue’s process of open-ended reflection.

Ballet presents a challenge to the progressive concept of open-endedness in that it is traditionally outcome-oriented. Ballet's established vocabulary and theories of the body are documented as outcomes in national or program syllabi, which instructors use to prescribe daily class content. Unlike many other areas in education, however, to eliminate ballet's outcomes would be to push against its very identity as ballet, as the objectives constitute the form. Ballet's content simply cannot be open-ended or spontaneous without becoming potentially unsafe; the body most efficiently assimilates the details of the form through the structured development of syllabus material in the ballet class. Dewey (1938), given this context, would have surely rejected the possibility that ballet could ever be wholly progressive, yet I propose that there is ample room for progressivism in ballet pedagogy. Open-ended reflective practices in ballet classes can allow pedagogues to facilitate individual students' embodiment and learning while preserving ballet's traditional elements. Reflection allows pedagogues to balance ballet's traditional aesthetic and technical demands with individual students' embodied knowledge, tendencies as learners, and career aspirations; it offers a means for advancing a progressive pedagogical philosophy inside professional quality ballet training.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AS PROGRESSIVE BALLET PEDAGOGY

As a student, I was fortunate to study ballet with teachers whose approaches to preprofessional training enabled me to develop confidence and autonomy; they were insistent about the details and rigorous, yet encouraging.⁴ Although I did, along the way, encounter some authoritarian teaching both personally and in the horror stories that abound among friends and colleagues, I did not fully grasp its effects until I began teaching at the university level, when the first day of each new term revealed the trauma caused by these approaches. It was evident in the air, thick with apprehension as I entered the studio; in students' tense facial expressions, held breath, and shifting eyes as I walked past them at the barre; and in their overt self-flagellation when they did not complete a step to their satisfaction, no matter how I commended their efforts. It continues today, as I encounter students whose confidence seems predicated on outside approval, whose perfectionism borders on brutality, or whose approaches to movement and musicality are dangerously militant. These students, whose bodies and beings reveal the damage caused by authoritarian pedagogies, have shown me the urgency with which ballet needs to find progressive pedagogic solutions.

My current efforts to bring progressive approaches into the ballet class are bolstered by Van Manen's (1991) description of pedagogy as "a fascination with the growth of the other" (13). As he suggests, I am captivated and inspired by those students with whom I have the opportunity to work. From a similarly humanistic vantage point,

feminist pedagogue, theorist, and activist bell hooks (1994) asserts, "[t]o teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin" (13). With these understandings of pedagogy as catalysts for my teaching, I work to demonstrate care for and fascination with students, and to make my commitment to their empowered professional preparation visible through my pedagogy. At the same time, I approach the ballet vocabulary—the *danse d'école*—with an almost sacred reverence; its artistic, historical, and theoretical perspectives are at the core of my embodied practice, teaching, and research. Reflective practices underpin my daily efforts to balance ballet's traditions with my progressive philosophy—to honor both the art form and the students who dedicate themselves to it.

The following discussion of my current reflective practices is theoretically aligned most closely with Van Manen's (1991) four forms of reflection, which take place in the intervals before, during, and after an educational experience (101–18). Van Manen references Donald Schön's (1983, 1987) theories of "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action," which establish the temporal relationship between an activity and the consideration of that activity.⁵ Risner (2002), as well, articulates the fundamental questions reflective practitioners ask themselves in both present and past tense: "What do/did I do? Why do/did I do that?" (23). These time-based frameworks for reflection serve to ground this discussion of my teaching of university ballet majors with professional potential and aspirations. Although I do not offer a comprehensive instructional approach, the discrete strategies I discuss are part of how I reconcile the tensions between progressive pedagogy and ballet's traditions.

Before Class

Van Manen (1991) calls his first form of reflection "anticipatory reflection," or the pedagogue's preparation for an educational experience (101–05). In ballet, this preclass reflection can be considered in part from a material perspective, in that ballet comes equipped with level-appropriate vocabulary or program syllabi that establish benchmarks for progress. Reflection on ballet's material is not a new phenomenon, in this light, nor is it unique to my work. Even authoritarian pedagogues reflect as they choose the material content of their classes. The progressive pedagogue, though, understands that students will advance through syllabus elements in individual ways. In my material preparation for ballet classes, then, I construct a logical progression of steps and concepts that balance my program's standards for each level with the current abilities of the specific group of students with whom I am working.

Anticipating the students' need for flexibility with material is critical: Van Manen (1991) notes the importance of trying to imagine how students will engage with and respond to material. I prepare a thorough plan and prepare to

abandon that plan at any moment. To enable fluidity with class content, I might construct a few possibilities for an exercise, or I might draw from ballet's built-in degrees of difficulty: building from *à terre* to *en relevé*, *en pointe*, or *en l'air*, for example. I do not adjust the content for each student, but I prepare to facilitate individual students' progress by considering which exercises might be more challenging for some than others, and by recalling what they have shared with me of their professional goals. My class, then, supports and challenges these particular students in accordance with their objectives and ballet's traditional progressions; I endeavor to meet students where they are in their training, while considering where they want to be.

In anticipation of teaching, I also prepare a behavioral approach as I work to be a source of inspiration and encouragement for the students. In the moments—however few—before each class, I reaffirm my high expectations and my confidence in the students' abilities: I remind myself that the students are motivated, want to enjoy their work, and want to do their best. My intention is for optimism, enthusiasm, and good humor to shape my presence in the studio and manifest in my physical body, tone of voice, and personal energy. When students begin to trust the consistency of my temperament and intentions, they become freer to focus on themselves and their dancing without concern about my thoughts or pending actions.

Anticipating, as well, that students are sometimes challenged by the contexts of their own lives outside the studio, I prompt myself to engage them with compassion and avoid making assumptions. As dance artists, difficult life experiences can benefit, rather than hinder, their work. Asking them to dissociate entirely from their world outside the studio—the traditional “leave it at the door” approach—expresses an uncomfortable degree of indifference. I question, frankly, whether such dissociation is possible. Rather, I endeavor to find balance between acknowledging the fullness of students' life experiences and encouraging them to continue their work in times of adversity. These anticipatory reflective methods typically allow me to bring open, thoughtful, and generous energy into the studio—to offer students the space to approach their work with authority.

During Class

Van Manen's (1991) second form, “Active or interactive reflection,” (101) is related to Schön's reflection-in-action. Van Manen describes it as a “stop-and-think type of reflection” that enables on-the-spot decision-making and illuminates the “interactive reality of the pedagogical moment or situation” (101, 107). Such active reflection during a ballet class can be challenging from a material perspective. Despite my efforts to respond to student needs within ballet's systematic design and program standards, I occasionally observe that I over- or underanticipated what they needed on a particular day. I reflect in the moment to determine whether it is both safe and worthwhile for the class to work through the material as I configured it. If not, I respond: I

change a step, a transition, or an element of timing. Sometimes, after they dance the exercise, I turn the reflective process over to the students and inquire about their experience with it. If it felt simple to them, I might press them to be more specific or more artistically present; or I might ask them to repeat the exercise with an added challenge: a faster tempo, an extra pirouette, or with *battu*, for example. Whichever direction I choose to go with the material, my progressive philosophy demands that I am supportive of all student attempts, particularly the less successful ones. This support, notably, is not the same as telling students their work is accurate if it is not, but it acknowledges the fact that they did not select the content and were required to engage with material of my choosing. Humility and flexibility on my part, then, are central to active reflection, which asks me to make continuous decisions for the benefit of student learning and development in the form.

Dewey (1910) considers “a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt” (9) to be part of the reflective process. This state of uncertainty is part of Van Manen's (1991) “stop-and-think” (101) moment. Authoritarian pedagogues who wish to appear infallible might deny having this experience during class; they often express to students that theirs is the only correct way despite the likely inaccuracy of such a hard line. In my experience, students are quick to learn that a teacher who freely questions or exhibits doubt is both knowledgeable and curious: I might see that students are tipping sideways toward their standing leg in first *arabesque*, for example, and consider changing it to second *arabesque* to introduce oppositional support. When I encounter such hesitation or doubt during a class, I explain my thought process and, sometimes, ask students to weigh in and discuss. Perhaps they express readiness, instead, to try first *arabesque* again, making a concerted effort to support the standing side; I applaud their motivation and we continue with that specific challenge. My willingness to allow students to see my consideration of what is best for them at that moment demonstrates my trust in them, and helps me earn their trust in return. Reflection-in-action becomes visible in ballet when teachers are transparent about the pedagogic choices they make based on philosophical, aesthetic, and anatomical perspectives, and on their knowledge of a specific group of students. Particularly for dancers in the United States, whose training might not be consistent in theory or approach, clarity about a teacher's decisions can validate and extend students' range of experiences and enable them to make informed technical and stylistic choices.

In almost every class I teach, I spend concentrated time on a few areas of the technique. These miniworkshops ask students to tackle a step or sequence that requires complexity in coordination or alignment, while giving me space outside of a full phrase of movement to actively reflect on that element in their dancing. We workshop pirouettes often, because they require time and a truly individualized understanding of coordination. The students spread out to “play,” as I suggest, with their turns, while I work with as many students as possible. If a student succeeds but cannot

identify why, I might ask that student to reflect and verbally articulate what the attempt felt like physically so he or she can identify it from the inside (Jackson 2005). Other students then benefit from their colleagues' embodied research and reflection, and I learn just as much: Hearing the students describe their physical approaches and sensations provides me with language to use as I cue them in subsequent attempts. The workshop process promotes curiosity and problem solving in ballet, and allows students to engage in their own analytical and reflective study. It empowers students to handle complex movement independently and gives us both space to identify how ballet's ideals can be adapted to their individual bodies and movement inclinations (Casey 2017).

"[T]he interactive pedagogical moment" is Van Manen's third form of reflection, and another interpretation of Schön's reflection-in-action that involves "a certain mindfulness" (Van Manen 1991, 101). Van Manen (1991) states, "Living the pedagogical moment is a total personal response or thoughtful action in a particular situation. Thoughtful action differs from reflective action in that it is thoughtfully attentive to what it does without reflectively distancing itself from the situation by considering or experimenting with possible alternatives and consequences of action" (109). This metacognitive process of listening, then choosing and hearing my words as I speak allows me to be deliberate and thoughtful in my communication with students. Although this might not by definition be a reflective process because it lacks the distance across which to reflect, the immediacy of these moments—how I listen and speak to students, and how I provide cues and feedback, for example—is part of a larger reflective context for teaching. These moments are central to progressive pedagogy in that they establish the core of teachers' relationships with students; they are the moments that inspire my deepest reflection after class.

The interactive pedagogical moment asks pedagogues to listen to the sounds of their own voices, to attend to their use of language, and to see their own postures and facial expressions. Despite my before-class anticipatory reflection, I sometimes notice my tone slip or my choice of words become vague. I adjust accordingly when I see a change in students' postures or the energy with which they respond to my feedback. I am alert to individual students who seem to be favoring a body part or are withdrawing, and I might check in with them quietly on the side of the room. If students are focused and specific about their work I commend them in earnest, and amplify my voice and physical energy to encourage them further. My eye must go beyond identifying technical details: It must be attuned to the students' energies and the back corners of the studio, where so much goes on beneath the surface of the class. I spot when a student repeatedly leaves the room or when students seem to have trouble focusing, and I carefully consider the language I use as I approach them about it. My care for students as developing dance artists prompts my thoughtful engagement with them in the moment. Our relationships and their dancing develop through mutual respect and honesty.

After Class

Van Manen's (1991) "recollective reflection," (101) like Schön's reflection-on-action, enables teachers to derive meaning from their experiences because of temporal distance, and to shape their future actions in response. In the few minutes that follow any class, ideally, I reflect on the event as Dewey (1910) describes reflection: "turning a topic over in various aspects and in various lights so that nothing significant about it shall be overlooked—almost as one might turn a stone over to see what its hidden side is like or what is covered by it" (57). My unidealized reflection, in this light, is critical; I must be able to look honestly at my work and the students' work. Perhaps I question my choice of material, or recall an individual student's learning: Did someone make a discovery that I could reemphasize in tomorrow's class, or did someone struggle with a concept or step that I could revisit? Perhaps an injury affected someone's work, or maybe a student seemed unusually distressed or resigned. I might have made a language choice that I would like to reconsider, I might have offered a sparkling analogy that I would like to remember, or I might have unintentionally overlooked a student who was trying to disappear by dancing in the back corner. Perhaps I was too tough on a student who was having a difficult time, or maybe I could be more insistent about a certain detail. The replaying of such moments is necessary, but not for their own sake: Reflection-on-action is only useful if it elicits change—what Van Manen (1991) refers to as using "the thoughtfulness that I have been able to acquire in recollective reflection" to determine "possible actions" (116). I must ask why and seek a remedy when I see in hindsight that I made a poor choice; I am not above apologizing to students when I make a mistake. I might have said just the right thing at the right time, and I must analyze that moment to glean insight. I use these reflections to keep myself open and listening to the students—to maximize their opportunities for development in our next class.

CONCLUSION

Progressive ballet pedagogues will always experience the tension between ballet's form and progressive pedagogy: If students cannot determine or change class content directly, and if authority over the content of one's learning is a defining characteristic of progressive pedagogy in the Deweyan (1938) sense, then ballet might never achieve true progressivism. Reflective methods, however, allow pedagogues to further ballet's traditions while fitting the material elements of the ballet class to individual students—their proclivities and goals. Ballet thus moves away from its oppressive ideal and closer to a progressive philosophy, while maintaining its traditional forms and structures that are critical in preprofessional training.

It is perhaps in the relational elements of pedagogy, though, where ballet has the most room to embrace progressivism through reflective teaching. Treating students with respect and

validating their individuality and experiences are foremost in this endeavor, as we seek to support their development of curiosity, agency, and physical prowess in preparation for careers in ballet. Our willingness to abandon the authoritarian model and allow those perhaps younger and less experienced to help educate us in our efforts to educate them, and our interest in reconceiving the ideal, go against much of what ballet has traditionally espoused. In adopting a reflective approach that seeks to empower individual students and acknowledge their humanity as developing professionals in an artistic field, ballet pedagogues can continue to emphasize career preparation while countering the authoritarian tactics that have, historically, silenced ballet's students and diminished its educative potential.

NOTES

1. See White's (2009, 135) chapter titled, "Which Is More Important, Learning or Self-Esteem?"
2. There are some exceptions, notably the publications of Anna Paskevka, whose books address student well-being, growth, and development through a systematic approach to classical ballet training (Paskevka 1981, 2002, 2005); also see Jennifer Jackson's (2005) article, "My Dance and the Ideal Body: Looking at Ballet Practice from the Inside Out." Historically, the textbooks of Louis H. Chalif endeavor to fuse early twentieth-century educational philosophy with ballet instruction.
3. Maggie Black, David Howard, and Robert Joffrey were three such pedagogues.
4. I wish to acknowledge Jan Hanniford Goetz, Maggie Black, and Rochelle Zide-Booth.
5. Van Manen (1991) refers to Schön's work as a "dominant model" of reflection, which he finds "suspiciously similar to the process of scientific inquiry itself" (225).

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