

Movement Fundamentals™

Experience a radical shift in ways of perceiving and training the dance artist in technique, choreography, and performance

Challenging Scholarship

Traditionally, undergraduate dance programs and dance studios train dancers in the styles of ballet and modern dance through instructor demonstration of steps and student imitation. The dancer then learns to dance by continued repetition of these steps within the form and style, until coordination and proper line associated with the form is attained.

Today, most undergraduate dance programs and dance studios are supplementing traditional training with courses and/or instructors in somatic practices (movement practices emphasizing body awareness and movement rehabilitation and integration) and dance improvisation (dance forms built upon the bodily exploration of concepts and images).

The dance program of the Visual & Performing Arts department at Luther College has been challenging both the traditional training of dancers and the trend of supplementing with somatics and dance improvisation. This research is based in the Movement Fundamentals (MF) curriculum, coupled with the dance form of contact improvisation. The MF curriculum emphasizes training the dancer through sensory awareness, proprioception (the body's neurological knowledge of itself in space) and imagery.

This experimental curriculum takes a step further outside of the traditional dance-training box of imitation, repetition, and supplementation. Instead of continued training in codified dance styles, the MF curriculum proposes to develop dance artists who understand *how* to move while cultivating movement vocabulary and intention. This curriculum proposes agency for the dancer, challenging the evolution and expansion of ideals and ideologies held in traditional dance forms.

MF Proposals for Change

- Traditionally, the dancer's body is an object for display, or a machine for codified or stylized movements. MF proposes advocating the body as intelligent source and tool for expression and design, developing the dancer's abilities of awareness, responsiveness and expressiveness.
- Traditionally, dance training uses ballet barres and mirrors. MF proposes education of the skeletal structure and the interdependence of bodily systems as the tools for balance and form.
- Traditionally, dance training uses 14th century French terminology of ballet steps. MF proposes vocabulary based on anatomy, imagery, visual art elements, and spatial design concepts.

- Traditionally, the instructor demonstrates. MF proposes facilitation of guided movement explorations, charging the student with research and discovery.
- Traditionally, dance training is prescriptive, developing stylized technicians. MF proposes descriptive training using methods applicable within daily life, which develop instinctive, analytical and transdisciplinary artists.

Underpinning these proposals for change are the MF's tenets as standards for agency, artistic refinement and inclusion. The curriculum promotes diversity in body shapes, range in ages and abilities, self-reliance, and economic access to dance practice and performance.

MF Facilitation

The MF curriculum has been in practice since 2001, and presented at national and International conferences because of its radical proposals for change in dance training.

The Movement Fundamentals curriculum engenders theory and practice to be in deep relationship with one another. This, along with MF's standards for agency, artistic refinement, and inclusion, forms a new paradigm, which implements radically different ways of perceiving and training the dance artist in technique, choreography, and performance.