



# Moving Despite a Disembodied Culture: Movement Fundamentals with Anna Stenerson

Chloe Rozga, Social Media Manager

Inside the Barefoot Studio in the Center for the Arts (CFA), a serene ambiance is curated by the soft glow of yellow and blue light bulbs on the wooden floor. The air is filled with the sounds of instrumental music, creating an atmosphere that welcomes beginning and seasoned movers alike.

Smiling just inside the studio is class facilitator Anna Stenerson ('25), excitedly greeting each person who enters the space. The class about to begin is based on Professor of Dance Jane Hawley's ('87) curriculum: Movement Fundamentals Four Phase Practice. The four phases include: prepare, move, dance and witness. Stenerson offers movers time to reflect between each phase.

The only time the movers are given exact directions is to warm up before the phases of the practice begin. The phases involve different levels of movement. In phase one: prepare, movers listen to their bodies, which Stenerson describes as “an emptiness in which something can happen.” After phase one, movers are told to “find their ending,” reflect, and enter phase two: move. The move phase is when Stenerson encourages movers to trust where they are in this specific moment and to force nothing. Phase two, according to Stenerson “alerts [movers] to what it is that they are doing or like to do, and notice habitual patterns.” She focuses on “embodied self-awareness” for movers to pay attention to themselves.

Tension is released from the bodies of the movers as each person in the room lets go of the stress of the day through gently stretching, turning, flowing and improvising. The reflections follow when movers find their personal endings of each phase. This aspect of the practice is guided by worksheets created and used by Hawley for her semester-long version of the course. The reflection process using the worksheets allows for fluid movements to turn into concrete thoughts of feeling, both physically and emotionally.

The final phases, dance and witness, are the most vulnerable according to facilitators. During these phases, Stenerson quotes Albert Pessó, “Our body is a source of truth,” as well as Stanley Keleman, “If you’re an alive body, no one can tell you how to experience the world. And no one can tell you what the truth is, because you experience it for yourself.” Stenerson uses the quotes as narration to guide the movers through the phases, giving them important reminders about their bodies as they flow.

Movement during the latter part of the class gets larger and increasingly expressive. Many of the movers take up more space and travel across the studio. Some spell their names with their bodies, embodying what they love or are proud of.



Jermaine Dizon

Stenerson flows through the four phases of the practice along with the movers.



Movers shift through the phases in the Barefoot Studio. (Jermaine Dizon)

Stenerson quotes Hawley during the final phase, “A tenet of phase four is the relationship between the moving self and the witnessing self. The heart of the practice is about the longing, as well as the fear, to see ourselves clearly.”

Despite never taking the Movement Fundamentals Curriculum with Hawley herself, Stenerson found herself connected to the practice and decided to facilitate the class this January Term to

encourage more Luther students to get involved.

“I have never seen [Hawley] formally do this, and I think it helps me to have my own style,” Stenerson said. “I try to remember when I took this class over a year ago [with another professor] and tried to go about it as a facilitator [informed by] my social work background and counseling, going about it with a trauma-informed approach.”

A mover who attended the class on January 10, Ashlyn Meyer (‘27), expressed how she felt a sense of community during Movement Fundamentals.

“It’s accepting of everyone, and I felt a sense of community even though I don’t know these people well,” Meyer said. “I feel like I was able to be myself and do things I normally wouldn’t do, and still feel loved and connected with everyone else. It’s a great way to relieve tension or stress.”

Following the class, dance minor Lily Chen (‘24) reflected on the importance of Movement Fundamentals and her belief that it is an experience everyone should have.

“I think this should be a [general education] requirement that everyone needs to take,” Chen said. “We can all get deeper into ourselves and learn about our bodies and care about our bodies more. People are apprehensive about [dance classes] and think that they aren’t dancers, but it is not about that.”

Paired with her social work background, encouraging people to learn and care about their bodies is at the heart of Stenerson’s passion for dance and movement and why she wanted to facilitate the practice.

“It’s made me more confident in every aspect of my life to know that I’m helping people release tension and be less lonely because that’s something that I struggle with,” Stenerson said. “We live in such a disembodied culture and world, and art is one of the things that gives the most space for people to understand and think.”

The importance of movement is personal for Stenerson, especially as a tool to cope with the transition to college. Reconnecting with dance at Luther helped her find her place and move through her various identities.

“I danced for a long time competitively, and it gave me the technique and training that I have today, but it was also hard to grow up, especially as a teenager, staring at myself in a mirror after school for hours and being told to look exactly a certain way,” Stenerson said. “When I got to Luther, I was the most lost I had ever been, and I didn’t feel like I had an identity because I so deeply identify as a dancer.”

Those interested in moving through the Movement Fundamentals phases can join Stenerson on January 17 and 24 from 8:15 to 9:15 p.m. in the Barefoot Studio of the CFA. No prior experience with dance or Movement Fundamentals is required. Everyone is welcome to join, even if they missed the first two practices with Stenerson.

“Let’s move together and feel less lonely in a mindful and safe setting,” Stenerson said. “You can do whatever you want here. You can lay down the entire time, so long as it is not disruptive to anyone else. You have the freedom to do whatever you want, it’s not difficult to show up.”