

Book Notes

Dance Kinesiology, second edition

by Sally Sevey Fitt (New York, Schirmer Books, 1996), hardback, 485 pp, \$40)

In teaching anatomy/kinesiology for college dance students in a liberal arts setting, I am faced with inevitable questions about what to include and what to leave out, given, among other variables, the limited or nonexistent foundation in this subject area which the students bring to the course, the time constraints of the quarter system, and the limitations in number of credits allowed by the university in the dance major curriculum. Seeking to integrate information gleaned from my own background in university dance courses in anatomy, kinesiology, Pilates, and Ideokinesis, from post-graduate workshops and readings in these subjects (plus Laban Movement Analysis), and from my years as a dancer/teacher/choreographer, I have structured an integrated course that aims to connect the science of dance both with mental imagery to promote correct muscle patterning and with physical conditioning exercises which, as a supplement to dance training, identify particular muscle groups for strengthening and/or stretching. Ideally, in this course, when a student studies, for example, the lower extremities, he or she would process and integrate information about the bones and muscles, movement potential of the joints, application to specific dance movements, imagery for proper alignment, functional and efficient use, and release of tension in these limbs, and individualized conditioning exercises for his or her particular body. With this approach, the student is asked to connect with the material intellectually, creatively, and physically.

The search for one text to meet the needs of this holistic approach to learning has not been fulfilled, but in Sally Sevey Fitt's newly revised version of her 1988 book *Dance Kinesiology*, she is moving closer to providing the kind of text I have imagined. Fitt's book has always been impressive for its methodical analysis of actions and limitations of the joints, its attention to the issue of muscular imbalance in individual bodies, its explanations of dance injuries and diet, its extensive visual aids, and its compassionate tone in reminding dancers to be both realistic and optimistic about their bodies' capacities for change. Now, in the second edition, Fitt builds on the foundation she laid in related areas of dance science by expanding the material which focuses on somatic learning and adding a chapter which introduces the subject of performance psychology.

Recognizing new developments in the field of somatic learning, Fitt retitles Chapter 17 as "Somatics, Relaxation, and Efficiency" and provides background in the evolution of terms and definitions in this domain. For this second edition, she commissioned eight articles from practitioners in the fields of Pilates, Rolfing, Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, Ideokinesis, Body-Mind Centering, Bartenieff Fundamentals, and Laban Movement Analysis. Each article, except the one on Body-Mind Centering, offers background material about the founders of these methods. Susan McLain's writing, addressed to the dance student who has not experienced the Pilates Method, relates how some of the mat and Reformer work translates into correct muscle patterning for dance technique. The wonderful piece by Mary Bond on Rolfing does a fine job of providing the scientific rationale, desired outcomes, and application to dancers of this form of body therapy. Carol Lessinger's writing about the Feldenkrais Method provides more of a philosophical and poetic basis for this process than scientific support, perhaps in keeping with Moshe Feldenkrais' statement, "I have deliberately avoided answering the *whys*."¹ The writing by Jacque Lynn Bell about the Alexander Technique, while laying the

basis for psychophysical education, misses an opportunity to get at what I have always wondered—what does Alexander Technique offer to the dancer that Ideokinesis, based on the same concepts, has not already incorporated and greatly expanded for the specific needs of dancers? Based on several workshops and more readings about the Alexander work, Ideokinesis strikes me as a highly evolved version of Alexander Technique because it offers extensive imaginative prompts for directing more of the joints of the body to attain a state of alignment and reach their full range of motion and suggests efficient pathways, based on precise location and direction, for muscular initiation in motion and balance. Pamela Matt's writing on Ideokinesis, grounded in numerous examples of its active visualizations, fluidly weaves together historical background on Mabel Todd, Lulu Swiegard, and Barbara Clark, points to factors which "dull kinesthetic sensitivity," and presents concepts of neuromuscular habituation and repatterning. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's work with Body-Mind Centering is based on knowledge gleaned through experimental anatomy and the observation of developmental patterns of movement in humans and animals. Her approach trusts the body (through its movement, touch, sensation, and emotion) to teach us much about a subject whose very topic is the body. For the purposes of this text, instead of only reprinting material from her book, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action*,² some background about Cohen's journey from dance into this work and her viewpoint on technical dance training would also be of interest to dance students. Peggy Hackney clearly has a long-standing and strongly developed sense of the application and benefits of Bartenieff Fundamentals to dance training. While expressing respect for other somatic forms, she articulates what she perceives as the unique contribution of Bartenieff work for dancers—its ability to "provide a bridge in the actual training process for the student to grow to full potential in usage of three-dimensional space and make phrased movement statements that express a broad range of dynamic qualities and personal feelings." Madeleine Scott expands on Hackney's explanations of how Laban Movement Analysis conceives of effort, shape, and space. Her perceptions of the limitations of dance technique classes which focus only on conditioning "an assemblage of parts," as opposed to total body connectedness, are right on target.

An additional new article in this chapter by Fitt herself eloquently calls for the inclusion in dance department curricula of somatics-based courses. While a subject area within a field of study earns attention and respect via being given its own course(s) within an academic department, and is certainly a goal to achieve, along with curricular change should come new integrated learning models in which areas within a field of study are woven into the fabric of each course. The goal is to reduce fragmentation of learning for the student and to give regard to the varied modes of intelligence that students bring to their coursework. This approach may require support through faculty development funds to provide instructors with opportunities to stay current in their field, to delve into related areas that have a bearing on their field, and to create new syllabi which reflect an integration of subjects and approaches. Models for this kind of decompartmentalization in dance education are coming forward and that is why it is surprising that Fitt does not discuss or cite books and articles which tie together two or more of the approaches to the body which she delves into in *Dance Kinesiology*. For example, *Introduction to Anatomy* by Sherry Ogg³ weaves Ideokinesis and Feldenkrais exercises and dance technique applications into its anatomy text. *Inside Ballet Technique* by Valerie Grieg⁴ illustrates and discusses specific dance movements, the alignment necessary to execute them, and imagery for proper

execution within the same chapter in which the anatomy of the relevant body part(s) is presented. In Judy Gantz's article "Evaluation of Faulty Dance Technique Patterns: A Working Model,"⁵ joint relationships during specific stability and mobility coordinations utilized in dance training are analyzed. Sylvie Fortin's article "When Dance Science and Somatics Enter the Dance Technique Class"⁶ offers an exciting case study of a dance teacher actively incorporating her knowledge in the areas of technique training, somatic learning, and guided imagery. Other models for integrated learning appear in several issues of the journal *Impulse*^{7,8} and in the books *Science of Dance Training*,⁹ *Dynamic Alignment through Imagery*,¹⁰ and *Dance Imagery for Technique and Performance*.¹¹ These and other published pieces make the case for integrated teaching approaches which enrich course content by drawing connections between related subject areas within the field of dance.

Fitt's new chapter ("Enhancing Performance," Chapter 21) focuses on performance preparation and is a welcome introduction to the topic within this text because it adds another dimension for the student to consider. Fitt couches her material with the disclaimer that she is not an expert in the field and yet, other than the 1986 book *Performing Your Best*,¹² does not cite the wealth of new studies published since that time (many appearing in this journal) which could provide further insight and scientific data to bolster her views on the subject.

Indeed, it is odd, given the volume of published articles and books in the field of dance science since Fitt's book first appeared in 1988, that her reference section includes only three citations post 1986 (one of which she co-authored). Recent research that might support or debate Fitt's ideas from the original edition is not woven into the book or cited. The index to this new edition, however, is expanded and much better organized.

Several new conditioning exercises are included in Chapter 19 which enhance the very effective material previously published. Based on exploring a circular range of motion through the planes of the body, these exercises, called "the clocks," involve stabilization of much of the body in order to allow a fluid, circular spatial exploration of the part under consideration (pelvis, shoulder, thoracic vertebrae). The exercises (modified from Feldenkrais work) allow for self-teaching as the student is asked to note and process which directions in the circular pathway cause "snags" (areas of tension or lack of clear articulation). Fitt does a good job of describing and coaching, always advising a return to neutral at the end of an exercise in order to process the new kinesthetic information that was gleaned from the experience.

The text of Chapter 13 shows the results of a better thought-out structure as well as expansion. Fitt reverses the order of much of her original material in order to begin by laying a conceptual foundation for assessment of alignment, testing for muscular imbalance, and understanding of chain reactions in the body before she plunges into specific application of these concepts. She also takes the time to define and expand on material that was well presented in graphs, charts, or pictures in the first edition, but which needed more text to really flesh out the ideas. For example, additional definitions and discussion of structural misalignments of the skeleton and expanded writing about assessment and improvement of total body alignment (from front and side views) are now included. A welcome new section addresses head-on the initial resistance dance students may exhibit when first faced with the process of realistic body assessment and provides words of encouragement for them.

Chapter 18 ("Prevention of Dance Injuries") contains a new table which Fitt designed for her students to aid in their ability to self-diagnose everyday aches and pains of a muscular nature. Used with her caveat that familiarity with the preceding chapters of her book be a prerequisite, Fitt constructs a questionnaire to analyze the source of an individual's problem and asks the student to design procedures for correction based on the theory that muscular overuse, misuse, or stress is involved. With her warnings as to what constitutes a situation in which to see a physician, Fitt's approach has the potential to allow dancers to feel more attuned to the messages of pain and relief they get from their bodies, more in control of their rehabilitation, and better able to self-correct poor muscle patterning.

Dance Kinesiology, second edition, lays important groundwork and whets the appetite for more. Perhaps there is a way to even further organize an integrated, companion text in which, through layout or cross-referencing, a structure arises which enhances the flow and exchange of ideas between the domains of dance science, somatics, and technique. In such a text, specific anatomic information would be tied to: (1) applicable principles of kinesiology, (2) examples for usage in dance technique, (3) potential for injury or imbalance of the body part(s) under consideration, (4) somatic promptings, and (5) conditioning work relevant to the part being studied. Such a text could both show regard for the various modes of intelligence our students bring to their studies and aid young dancers in making vitally needed connections.

ROBIN LAKES, M.F.A.

*Dance Faculty, Northwestern University Dance Program
Evanston, Illinois*

REFERENCES

1. Johnson DH: Bone, Breath, and Gesture. Berkeley, CA, North Atlantic Books, 1995.
2. Cohen BB: Sensing, Feeling, and Action. Northampton, MA, Contact Editions, 1993.
3. Ogg S: Introduction to Anatomy. Alberta, Canada, Grant MacEwan Community College, 1993.
4. Grieg V: Inside Ballet Technique. Pennington, NJ, Princeton Book Company, 1994.
5. Gantz J: Evaluation of faculty dance technique patterns: A working model. *Kinesiol Med Dance* 12(1):1-11, 1989-90.
6. Fortin S: When dance science and somatics enter the dance technique class. *Kinesiol Med Dance* 15(2):88-107, 1993.
7. Richmond PG: the Alexander technique and dance training. *Impulse*. 2(1):24-38, 1994.
8. Batson G: Stretching technique: A somatic learning model, part 2: Training purposivity through Sweigard idiokinesis. *Impulse* 2(1): 39-58, 1994.
9. Clarkson PM, Skrinar M: Science of Dance Training. Champaign, IL, Human Kinetics Books, 1988.
10. Franklin E: Dynamic Alignment through Imagery. Champaign, IL, Human Kinetics Books, 1996.
11. Franklin E: Dance Imagery for Technique and Performance. Champaign, IL, Human Kinetics Books, 1996.
12. Kubistant T: *Performing Your Best*. Champaign, IL, Life Enhancement Publications, 1986.