



The Excellent Instructor and the Teaching of Dance Technique, 3rd Edition

Nora Ambrosio. Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2018. 170 pages; \$63.99 (paper).

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The Excellent Instructor and the Teaching of Dance Technique, 3rd Edition

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In *The Excellent Instructor and the Teaching of Dance Technique, 3rd Edition*, author Nora Ambrosio provides a comprehensive resource for novice dance teachers as well as skilled educators wishing to refresh their teaching practice. This book covers pedagogical methods that are applicable for teaching all levels of students and appropriate for a variety of dance education settings (private studios, K-12 education, academe, and community centers).

Readers are provided with tools to immediately apply the content. In part, this is accomplished through eight chapters that offer numerous examples, charts with key information, detailed pictures, and ideas for discussion questions and creative projects. A section titled *Instructor Resources* includes hundreds of suggested readings; they are broken down into various dance-related topics and categories, print materials, and digital resources. A DVD provides further support material.

Ambrosio recognizes that improvisation, somatic studies, and an amalgamation of training and physical practices constitute dance knowledge. Moreover, a central tenet is the emphasis on the instructor's responsibility to teach safe movement practices in the dance classroom. Whether working with beginners or professional dancers, "One of the most important concepts that dance instructors must teach to dance students is correct alignment. It is imperative that instructors have a strong understanding of the body and how it functions, to be able to see where and how students are making mistakes, and to help each student correct those mistakes" (42). Accordingly, the author, a professor and accomplished dance educator, details components of technique class and ideas for sound and safe lesson plan development. Ambrosio reinforces imagery as a powerful tool and explores how teachers can meaningfully connect sensation/bodily awareness to advance student learning.

Critical thinking is an essential skill in dance and Ambrosio gives it special attention. Engaging the body and mind to investigate technique requires that teachers also understand how to provide corrections on both an intellectual and physical level. The author questions: What methods can be employed in the dance technique class to introduce and encourage students to use critical thinking? How can questions be posed to students and feedback provided to more deeply and actively engage students? What are the skills that a critical thinker demonstrates? Inherent

in this line of questioning is the author's acknowledgement that everyone has distinct life (and dance) experiences. As part of developing critical thinking skills, an excellent instructor provides opportunities for students to consider others' views and examine their own preconceived ideas and biases. In this way, the book astutely recognizes the daily challenges of both engaging students physically and developing their own sense of personal artistry and ownership of the learning process.

Two noteworthy chapters in the book are *Assessment and Establishing Policies for Effective Teaching*. These chapters could be especially beneficial for private studios and K-12 settings where a singular dance teacher might be tasked with creating assessment tools and policies for their classes. "Assessment, like critical thinking, is not something to be added on, but should be so ingrained in the teaching process that it becomes second nature to instructors, and utilized to improve all levels of teaching and learning" (107). The author discusses the articulation of learning goals and outcomes, the educational environment, and how this information guides what is being assessed and why it is important for students.

Specific ideas for assessment and sample rubrics are included. The chapter on policy deliberates class participation, student behavior, appropriate dress, parental involvement, tuition, class placement, and registration. "What if ... ?" questions are posed to contemplate scenarios for policy development that best address the (a) situation, (b) learning environment, and (c) dance community that the policies intend to serve.

Ambrosio's book is a thorough, useful resource for dance teachers. "For some, learning how to be an excellent instructor will be easier than for others. However, all people who desire to teach can learn, with education and training, to be outstanding educators. All people in the business of teaching dance should strive to be the best educators they can be" (110). The book achieves this aim by providing applicable information and clear strategies for the disciplined, sometimes arduous, journey of becoming (or remaining) an excellent instructor.

Christi Camper Moore, PhD



Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies: Contemporary Applications

Colleen Wahl. Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL, 2019. 241 pages; \$49 (paperback).

In *Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies: Contemporary Applications*, Colleen Wahl offers readers a text that is richly