

Teaching Philosophy: “Get You Out into that Dark Sea” (Solnit 5)

I sit on a tufted cushion with my head lowered and swimming in words. I smell the well-aged parchment and run my fingertips along the moisture resting in the text’s pages. Dwelling in knowledge, I am unwilling to be bound by ignorance. A repetitive tap, tap, tap begins in my big toe and makes its way up my body to the crown of the head. I reminisce about favorite movements accompanied by the energy of the musician's instruments—the drumbeats in Pat Thomas’s Graham class, the jazz trio’s musical masterpieces in Ruth Andrien’s Taylor class, and the piano classics in Andrew Pap’s Vaganova class. These masters of their chosen techniques challenged me, guided me, and perhaps most importantly, asked me the difficult questions, propelling my hands to reach out for more knowledge—more words, more movement.

The tap, tap, tapping grows louder and beats in rhythm to my heart. Can you hear it?

The words on the page begin to blur. I feel the floor beneath me open up and recall the feel of the barre in my hand and the way in which my arm leads the stretch forward. As sweat runs like teardrops down my back, Ruthie’s voice is more than a whisper—ra-ta, tee-ta, ta-ta-ta. I clutch my book tighter and allow the path to the unknown, that locus where the next beyond rests. It is this “blue of distance” (27), a term coined by Rebecca Solnit, where I exist. This is the place where I wish to take my students—a region of longing where we play, enact together, but never quite possess, a place to which we must return again and again in order to come alive. After all, when “the far becomes the near, [it is] not the same place” (Solnit 33).

The voice repeats—ra-ta, tee-ta, ta-ta-ta. I drop to the floor and hit the percussive demands of Graham floorwork. But wait, it is my mouth that forms the sounds, ra-ta, tee-ta, ta-ta-ta. Vibrations originate at the base of my students’ feet, crawling up and tickling the back of

their knees, continuing with a massage up both sides of the spine, and finally creeping up the cervical vertebrae. They have come alive.

My eyes spring open, clear this time as I recite my mantra: *You still dwell in the difference you can make. You must stay curious and give others time to adapt, to find their own way via problem solving and discovery. Their voices, their art, matter. You will hear them, share with them what they fail to see, what they doubt. You will combine creativity and intuition with logic and language. After all, this duality resides in the same body.*

Via educational praxis supported by a heavily heuristic approach and centered upon lived experience, my goal is to address the fears associated with being vulnerable—the fear to “never go beyond what [we] know” (Solnit 7). Through the encouragement of embodied being, a body-mind connection, we embed ourselves in the surrounding environment and enact within the possibilities of that space. Choreographed movement phrases interact with our tacit knowledge and authentic movement. Improvisation organically fuses with the muscle memory of the known and “the faraway blue realm that is neither” known or unknown (Solnit 30); it is the place of coming alive.

As such, we recall daydreams of our youth, embedding ourselves in the dark—where the light is found, where knowledge lives. Through the implementation of play, adaptation commences and practical benefits, such as an individual’s revitalization, contribute to the holistic wellness of the community. The mantra: *Let go, get uncomfortable, and test the limits.* After all, “never to get lost is not to live” (Solnit 14).

Work Cited

Solnit, Rebecca. *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. Penguin Random House, 2005.