

THE WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF BALLET

Kee Juan Han, *School Director*

Co-founded in 1944 by the late Mary Day and Lisa Gardiner, The Washington School of Ballet (TWSB) is recognized nationally and internationally for its classical training and dedication to excellence in dance and dance education.

The Washington School of Ballet curriculum includes pre-ballet, boys' classes, and a graded program for children through young adulthood, many of whom wish to pursue dance as a career. Students catch glimpses of The Washington Ballet rehearsals and can earn the opportunity to perform in company productions. The school offers a **Professional Training Program** that brings together especially talented students from around the world for intensive training. The school also offers a **Trainee Program** that provides beneficial training upon entering the professional field and many performing opportunities with the Company.

For more information about school auditions or summer intensive programs, please visit: www.washingtonballet.org

VANCOUVER BALLET SOCIETY

Operating out of Scotiabank Dance Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Society, which turned 70 in 2016, offers an annual Spring Seminar Week Intensive, taught by internationally known dance artists/teachers, to students aged 11-18, selected by audition. Scholarships are awarded at the end of the seminar.

The not-for-profit Society, also offers 3-6 Master Classes annually with dance artists from visiting companies and maintains an archives and library open to the public.

vbs@telus.net | www.vancouverballetsociety.ca | 604.681.1525

VICTORIA ACADEMY OF BALLET

Bleiddyn Bellis FCSC-CICB, Enrico Cecc Final Diploma

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM

An intensive dance training program committed to helping students reach their fullest personal potential.

- Students are nurtured in an encouraging atmosphere with a dedication to excellence.
- Ballet, Pointe, Repertoire, Pas de Deux, Contemporary, Jazz
- Summer Intensive
- Personal attention and guidance

BRIDGE PROGRAM (post secondary)

A 2 year, PCTIA registered, post-graduate Diploma program preparing dancers to pursue a career in professional dance. Students are encouraged to explore different aspects of professional dance life through the extensive program curriculum in a professional atmosphere.

- Ballet, Pointe, Repertoire, Pas de Deux, Contemporary, Jazz
 - Guest Teachers, Choreographers
 - Anatomy, Ballet History, Choreography, Career Exploration, Nutrition
- Individual advising, career preparation and assistance from experienced Academy faculty connect students to avenues in the professional field.

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INSIDE ED

Continuum's Fluid Strength

by Amber Elizabeth Gray

Solid as we may seem, a mostly fluid constitution is our inheritance: much of our body is made up of water, just like a jellyfish. Free-floating in the ocean, the strength of a jellyfish's liquid pulsations creates form, image, movement and beauty. The practice of Continuum, which derives from the earthy undulation of Haitian dance, recognizes our fluid origins and composition. Continuum suggests that movement is more than mechanical, functional or expressive; it is also sacred. It is not what we do, but who we are.

We are not a final product; we are a species travelling an evolutionary pathway with unknown possibilities to innovate, adapt, complexify and change. Research suggests that movement is a potent way to grow the brain, which may be the pathway to a more evolved body with as of yet unimagined creative potential. This is where dance and Continuum meet.

When dance is based on repetitive movements by overly exerted muscles shaped in defined patterns, there is less opportunity for diversity and complexity. When we introduce the idea of fluidity, we amplify the "sound" of movement and create many more ways for a movement to express itself. Dancers shape and define movements with emotion, precision, artistry and other attributes that connect the dancer to the dance and to the audience through form. Our ability to draw up movement from internal reservoirs of dynamic fluidity, versus static repetition, offers dancers a way to increase the potency of their art.

Think of the use of ultrasound in physical therapy; the introduction of sound waves or frequencies to tissue changes the density of the tissue. Just as ultrasound can dissolve scar tissue, when we use breath-made-audible, or sound, inside our bodies, we can change the density of our tissue by

promoting fluidity. When tissue softens and becomes suppler, we are stronger. We are supported by water's strength and capacity to shape our muscles, and therefore our body and its movement. We literally enhance the capacity of the body to shape, move and express by breathing sound streams that promote fluid undulations and micro-movements, creating new and innovative textures, nuances and affects below the larger movements that create dance.

To try this practice, make an O sound. O is one of Continuum's classic sounds; it's a tubular sound that can create pathways and help tissue to organize, gather, tonify and cohere. It's also universally accessible and familiar; almost everyone has a reference point for the O. Sometimes it's simply alphabetical, sometimes sacred and ancient.

A simple way to teach an O sound is to describe it as an OM without the MMM. Without tensing or straining the mouth, inhale and on the exhale make an O sound, sort of like a foghorn. A powerful way to experience the tissue-shifting quality of the O is to plié simultaneously. When you begin the downward movement of the plié, exhale and send the O through your spine, bottom to top, and imagine it lengthening your spine while you plié. As you rise up, sound an O through your spine, top to bottom. Rest. Repeat this several times, noting the influence of the O on your spine as you plié.

Sending the O into the muscles of the buttocks and thighs can increase muscular coherence, strengthening and grounding the quality and action of a plié. Sending it into the spine can support and enhance the lengthening elegance of a plié. Our body's response to the sound is the echo of fluid in our tissue.

After practising this several times, rest a moment, and allow whatever micro-movements, pulsations or waves arise to move through you, and *move you*. Notice what's new and novel, and what creative possibilities arise. This being moved is the essence of Continuum Movement. ^{Dr}

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www.danceinternational.org
604.681.1525**

Above right: Todd Stone (foreground) in Continuum class led by Linda Rabin in Montreal
Photo: Tony Chong

Amber Elizabeth Gray is a dancer, an authorized Continuum Movement teacher and a dance movement therapist.