

DONLIN FOREMAN

Teaching Statement 04

I believe that movement is a basic element of human expression - that joy and inspiration flow from its wellspring. Using myth, the archetype, and a consuming physicality, my teaching, dancing, and choreographing combines full-bodied dancing, subtle gesture, and theatrical staging to render classes and dances that explore and reveal the bold visceral strengths and exquisite vulnerabilities of the individual. In developing my craft and broadening my abilities to communicate through dance flights of fantasy or 'deep matters of the heart', passion and the use of imagery have become benchmarks of my work.

I believe in and practice dance as – utility, identity, craft, and art.

For me there are three primary aspects of dance: utility (movements derived from daily labor), identity (movements inspired by the archetype, Jung's concept of the collective unconscious), and craft (dancing that identifies movements as tools of expression). All of these are actually fundamental to the basics of the Graham technique that I teach. The fourth, "art" of dance, is more illusive.

Most of the students I teach at Barnard will not be dancers. This was difficult for me to adjust to, but I began to recognize within them and myself a common bond in that all movement I work with them on involves these three primary elements. I actually discovered that the "art" of dance created some burdensome obstacles to overcome with most of the students, mainly because everyone's idea of "art" and the art of dance is different. However, everyone's experience of holding and letting go or pushing and pulling is very similar. Dance, as a utilitarian thing, dance as defining identity (cultural or individual), and dance as craft are radical ideas for most of my students, but much more vital and immediate to work with than dance as art. So in the past seven years or so I have worked, in my teaching, to communicate the necessity and craft of dancing as a physical language and in doing so, my students have arrived at a disarming fundamental beauty in their dancing.

I strive to be a source of discovery, affirmation, and education. By embracing these goals I contribute to the future and necessity of dance at Barnard, in American society, and the global community.

- Discovery: We discover through our dance movements - as in our movement through life – images common to all peoples of the world – our shared humanity. We build an awareness of the family of man, and through this recognition, a greater understanding of universal human themes.
- Affirmation: My dancing, (expressed through movement as a language), affirms the overwhelming beauty of men and women - their intense passions, glorious strengths and shattering vulnerabilities. This physical voice speaks of human greatness through a timeless and "shared" language of imagery and possesses the potential to bring all cultures closer together.
- Education: I believe that teaching young dancers and including them in my choreographic, performing, and teaching projects with my Company and through

Barnard's broad offerings is essential to the future of dance as a vital interactive art form. Through this commitment to ignite the imaginations of future generations of dancers and dance enthusiasts and expose them to the fire of dramatic theatrical dance I will build the legacy of American culture and nurture within the community a commitment to dance as a lifelong process of discovery.

Having performed over a thirty-year period as a principal dancer with many diverse dance companies including the Martha Graham Dance Company, Eliot Feld, the La Scala Ballet, Jacque d'Amboise's National Dance Institute, and Buglisi/Foreman Dance I trace my legacy as a dancer to earlier societies when dancers and their dances were vital to the culture of a community — when myths and archetypes inspired and informed the lives of those who watched the dancers dancing. Dancing was necessary; it had an essential quality. There was nothing called Art, there was only being. Where to craft a bowl, an arrowhead, a mask, or a dance furthered the needs of the community. Now, through teaching, dancing, choreographing, and directing I contribute to this great legacy, to illuminating this indomitable life affirming art that speaks directly to the heart of man. I believe that by training our bodies to move voice-like through the passions of men and women, our movements become to the eyes what words are to the ears.

Associate Professor of Professional Practice

As a dancer, choreographer, teacher, and director of a dance company I do not practice my art in the abstract. Continuing the process of discovery, being active in the performance of my art furthers my evolution as a teacher of that art, and broadens the scope and depth of my understanding of it. If, as an educator, I become isolated from its practice I would be discarding a potential wealth of scholarship.

Teaching the Graham technique - or any technique in dance - is not merely passing on a repetition of learned movements and styles in the abstract. A technique draws its strength from the tangible application to choreography, both past and present. The true basis for teaching Graham technique in the 21st century is in finding its relevance and application to contemporary dance choreography and performance, and in continuing the legacy of dance as a necessary, enlightening, and inspiring part of our lives.