

Donlin Foreman
Associate Professor of Professional Practice
Dance Department
Barnard College

September 18, 2009

Service to the College

From the beginning of my teaching career at Barnard I spoke with folks about the overlap of my performing and my teaching, I feel that my service to Barnard comes from my association with the professional performing arena, bringing that point of view into the classroom/studio - that is the idea behind the Professor of Professional Practice. One informs the other. After fourteen years it is possible to look at the terrain that lies behind me while having a somewhat clearer idea of what lies ahead.

Most everything in these “statement” pages stem from service, and service to me has always had to do with stewardship; the idea of stewardship – that I have a responsibility to take care of something I don’t own. We as dancers must deal with the deepest feeling of ownership and yet not owning - our bodies, the steps, the meaning. We hold it all in our hands for a short time and then we must let it go piece by piece. The recognition that the Work – the dances - are not ours and never will be is a significant milestone for each dancer to come to grips with.

That I was a steward of every dance I ever danced even from the first character roles at Ballet West was a concept I always understood. I didn’t call it a word at that time or even when I wrapped myself around those roles at Graham, but... I knew I was the custodian of the role/dance – that someone had danced this before me and someone would dance it after me; At Graham this was quiet profound because we learned the dances from old films and there were several ‘versions’ for each role (not different choreography [though sometimes that too] but HOW the roles were danced). I became very aware of interpretation. By how I danced the role and understood its relationship to the technique, I was carrying this role into the future and I took onto my shoulders the responsibility to ‘take care of it’ to the best of my ability.

My first act of service to the field as a dancer was what I just described above. This took a long time to accomplish and is still at the top of my list of ‘Things I Should Be Doing’ when I work toward a performance. But, as I have embraced teaching as an expression of my stewardship, my responsibility is to challenge my students to recognize the profound nature of dancing in one’s life – even if one doesn’t dance professionally. This means burrowing into the movements and filling them from the inside out. This process is like paying for something with one’s time and concentration and imagination. And its not just that the student becomes the steward of the position or the movement or even the phrase but more importantly they become the stewards of the recognition of living – through dancing – executing a movement that may be very personal but may be done by another person anywhere in the world ---- that we own so little and that we are all so much alike. Within the liberal arts curriculum at Barnard I feel a particular responsibility to bring forward, through my teaching, this concept of stewardship for dancing, government, environment, and on and on, so other generations will be able to experience the Things we cherish and pay for, but do not own.

I am always happy to volunteer to bring my work and my point of view beyond the classroom at Barnard. Below are listed only a few ways I have done this in the Barnard community in the past several years. I know these involvements are important but truly I believe my greatest contribution in service to Barnard is in the area of stewardship to my profession, my art, my craft by teaching through example.

- I have sat on search committees and review committees.
- This summer I was asked to teach several classes:
- Summer Arts Institute of New York City where students from a NYC arts initiative program come to Barnard to see the facilities, talk about dance and dance related fields as professions and take a dance class. Also I was asked to teach two classes for the New Student Orientation Program
- I write four to eight letters of recommendation each year for students applying to everything from Graduate school to summer jobs and advise three to six 1st years and sophomores.
- I participate in the Departments annual Fall Family Weekend presentation by performing a solo or duet of my work when asked to do so.
- Presented 2004-2005 Professional Leave presentation entitled: Gravel Bed: A Discussion of Process with the Collaborators.
- Interviewed by a Barnard student for University radio station about my work as a Principal Dancer with Martha Graham in connection with the Graham Company's 80th Anniversary Celebration; discussion with the Company's current executive director Larue Allen, and veteran dancer and recent Graham School Director Stuart Hodes
- I participate in several not for profit youth organizations as advisor and teacher among these are Fairhope, AL Youth Leadership Conference, the Alabama School of Fine Arts where I sit as an active member of the advisory panel, and I am on the advisory board of the Trenton Educational Dance Institute. These associations in the area of service to the community are also indirectly a service to Barnard.
- Each semester I offer, to all my technique students, two Saturday two hour technique "workshops" for those who want more in-depth information and for those who were having a hard time understanding the material.
- On Feb 25 2007 I presented a lecture/demonstration for the John's Hopkins Outreach Program on campus: Dance ... On Common Ground: how a dance language can reveal our shared humanity. A lecture/demonstration illustrating, through the dance vocabulary of Martha Graham, how we can build an awareness of the human family. We discover through our dance movements – as in our movement through life – a universal language of physical images and emotional gestures common to all peoples of the world – our shared humanity.
- I gave a presentation at the National Dance Education Organization's (which I have been a member of for the past two years) convention at Towson University in MD. Putting this presentation together has helped me codify many of my beliefs about movement and step into the arena of writing up some courses that delve more deeply into the areas of performing, physical wisdom and personal recognition through the physical actions of dance.