

Student Work: Reflective Writing in Blackboard Blogs

Prompt 2

Detail what we have been doing in class. Ruminates on your experiences...Have they changed your thinking about performing and/or your own performing practice? What significance does the Natalie Goldberg reading have? Is there anything else that you want to share?

Novice

I think the Natalie Goldman article is very relevant to movement because the principle of not getting stuck in your head and being able to let go and momentarily push aside the little voices telling you that what you are doing is dumb carries over so well. So many times in movement you have to do what Natalie talks about and open your mind to whatever your impulses are telling you. In both movement and free hand writing, it is vital to not over think and over analyze things. The similarities between what she writes about and what we have been doing in class are overwhelming if you ask me. The dance of surrendering exercise we did this week really left an impression on me. I was partnered with another student and I felt that it was very liberating and exciting to do this with him. I cannot wait to be partnered with him in our movement scene because I felt an energy between us that seemed to just flow. It was hard at first to surrender completely to him because my body was apprehensive as a reflex. I realized that it takes a lot of trust to completely give yourself to someone like we had to do especially when you have your eyes closed. Once I let go though, it was completely freeing and I lost all sense of my whereabouts and surroundings as my partner galavanted me through the space. It was a completely surreal experience. It really was beautiful.

Developing

Natalie Goldberg's reading connected so well with me as a person and as an actress. When she was talking about letting go with your writing and not thinking about it, it kind of struck home just to let go and pour out myself into all that I do. When I act I think too much, I need to learn myself before I can pour myself into that character. Still keeping that person separate from myself. Complicated. The six rules were very important because I think that you can keep these rules for acting as well. Keep your hand moving- Keep my body/mind going, if I mess up just keep going. Learn from it. Grow. Don't cross out- remember what I did and why. Lose control- Let myself do it. Don't think about it. Etc. I wish I could have made time to do this exercise. I have done this before while I was journaling. When I had really strong emotions it would just come to me and I would write and write and write. When I would re-read what I had written, usually, these were the best pieces because they were me. Beauty is truth, truth beauty. This class so deals with this. I want to let go in my acting. A controlled letting go. An awareness of letting go.

Thursday's class was just beautiful. We began dancing together as a class. And an ensemble, as one. One would follow, one would lead. Many would follow, many would lead. My body is my own and I am taking that ownership of it. And because I am learning to do that I feel ready and okay with adding more people around me. We did partner work, only touching at the wrists and fingertips. We became one person and I felt as though if I broke apart from this person it would be incomplete. We were aware of every movement and moved with each other.

"Partner work was great, it's not working with someone else, its just adding more to the shape that is me. There is a wall if its not mutual then its not a growing thing"

I'm excited to add to my person, add my person to an ensemble. As an actress this class has been helping me to understand ensemble work and awareness of the group and myself in the group. This class is letting me let go in a controlled way.

I wish I could find all the right words.

Advancing

Wow! I LOVED this reading. Some articles I find my brain spacing and having to force myself to re-read sentences, paragraphs, even whole pages. But this article kept my attention from the first sentence. I realized that I used to do 'writing practice' all the time when I was younger! I always had a journal, a notebook, or a secret diary that I was scribbling in! I followed most of the rules she gave too! Usually when I was writing in one of these books I was expressing a certain strong emotion...anger at my parents, excited for something coming up, or infatuation with a new boy! So I would just go crazy and write. I used to re read these journals when I cleaned or moved and quite honestly would find myself, 18 years old, sitting in my room and crying again over that boy in the junior high who broke my heart or that huge fight I had with my parents in high school. Many of my entries would turn into huge scribbles the more excited or angry I became After reading this piece now I realize I was simply intently involved in my writing. I believe my point here is, I am going to take a huge tip from a younger me and begin keeping a notebook again!

Now, as for how this reading relates to movement/acting. This is EXACTLY what we've been doing in class...but with our bodies instead of a pencil and paper! Just looking at her rules, I can relate each one of them with our exercises in class:

1. Keep your hand moving. = Keep your body moving! Don't pause to think about what you are going to do next, just let go and MOVE!
2. Don't cross out. = We never stop and feel stupid about any movement we've done or rewind ourselves and re-do it the 'right' way, there is no right way!
3. Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar. = Again, there is no 'right' way to move our bodies, and we typically don't move with a structure or rules.
4. Lose control. = Completely self explanatory.
5. Don't think. Don't get logical. = Again, self explanatory. I've found myself in this class not even realizing I'm doing certain things until after I've done it! And those are my most creative and free movements!
6. Go for the jugular. = I love this statement. For the first week or so in class, I know I 'played it safe' during some of our exercises. I wasn't completely comfortable. Now that I am getting to know everyone better and feel more comfortable in class, I personally have felt myself 'going for the jugular' in some moments. Especially during our exercises with music, I feel a more emotional pull and find myself doing things that I never thought I would find myself doing in front of 20 somewhat strangers!

I'm finding myself beginning to progress slightly in class, but I can tell I'm still really looking for that emotional connection with my body. I'm still trying to really find that 'moment' where I can completely let go of everything. Some days when I'm not feeling 100% or I'm just tired I can definitely feel the effects. However, I have noticed on days that I come into class exhausted or stressed out, I find myself leaving class slightly refreshed, or with a more positive outlook on the rest of my day, week, or life! I believe this is a indication that I am at least beginning to let go during class! (Or the yoga stretches are just fantastic!) At first, I was a little wary about our work in class. After the first week, I realized how important this work was and I am so excited about continuing. I love what we are doing! I can't wait to have an opportunity to apply this work on stage!

Advanced

I thoroughly enjoyed "Writing Down the Bones" by Natalie Goldberg. These exercises traditionally used for writing are so applicable to theater, puppetry, and especially improv. After reading it I became very conscious of my internal editing, "we live in the realm of second and third thoughts". I feel like this could inspire a theater piece, 3 acts, one act for each layer of processing the brain has done. During the "Tree of Life" we focused on these tools, silencing our inner monologue to just let "self 1" loose and able to explore and play freely. This comes from self confidence, as well as confidence in those around you. Something that Goldberg touched on that I think is important for young actors to consider is that these are all exercises and techniques used to open up the thought process, while still remaining sane. There are so many stories of method actors going off the deep end, I think this article is very fair with how far these tricks and tips can and should be pushed. Also, I think every actor should have to read the "trouble with the editor" segment of the article. This is something we have to deal with everyday, and the sooner we can get a handle on pressure within our selves, the easier it will be to deal with critique and pressure from the outside world.

Today in class we warmed up and then moved on to the trifacta. Along with the music, we were allowed to incorporate both copying and flocking exercises that we had practiced previously. I seem to get a lot more out of the experience when working with the others in our class. It becomes a performance instead of just an individual stretch. This trifacta in particular was special. I had special and moving moments several times. At one point I was in a line with three other students and we were performing some tai-chi-esque slow moves. I was the 3rd to join the group, but after a while I honestly could not tell who was leading. We are all just doing the exact same move in time with each other. The karate kid would have been proud.

Also during this trifacta, another student walked in and began to watch. Some of us saw him and others sensed him but we all seemed to jump at the chance to show off our performance skills. Everyone in the class ended up together in a living, breathing mass. We were swirling and dipping in and around each other. That alone was cool, but somehow we seemed to end perfectly timed with the music and we found a final pose that gave me chills.

Next we did the finger tip exercise. It's amazing how you can connect with a partner while only making a tiny amount of contact. We challenged each other and sometimes even broke contact, which was ok with us, we were discovering what we could and couldn't accomplish. A good opportunity for a dosage of failure. This led into the "surrender" game. Instantly I thought of

puppetry, and transferring all of my energy, ideas, and movements into another object. I found that when she was controlling me I struggled to give her total control. I would turn her manipulation into a graceful move instead of just letting her move me. I eventually relaxed and it was the first time all year that I became totally dis-oriented in the room. Before I opened my eyes I had no idea which direction I was facing, or where I was in the room. While it is always important to know where you are on stage, I thought this chance to get lost in a room I have spent so many hours in was exhilarating.

We ended the period with weight sharing. This was a fascinating experience. My partner and I had very different centers of gravity, however we were able to successfully sit down and stand back up, all the while supporting each other. This kind of work reminds me of Pilobolus, or other acrobatic dance shows where the performers rely on each other mentally and physically.

Advanced

Writing excersizes are like movement class for your mind. You just put the pen on the paper and don't stop writing no matter what kind of crazy thoughts cross your mind. In movement, the music begins and we don't stop until we're told. The only limitation is our mind and so we must tune it out. Much like Natalie says in her writing, we have to ignore the little voice that says things like "that's a dumb idea" or "this probably looks really stupid". Natalie says that "writing practice embraces your whole life and doesn't demnad any logical form". Again, this is exactly like some of our movement warm ups. At first there is no logical reason for how we move our bodies, but then when we go back and reflect, we discover the feelings that drove us to that particular shape or form. Likewise, in acting, you have to take risks and make bold choices. This is not always easy because we edit ourselves, but if we tune out the editor and the imediate logic, sometimes we come up with beauty. This is where the cool part of acting and movement comes in. When we are the creator and not the editor we do what is natural and follow our impluses without that little voice telling us something is weird or might look dumb. I think this reading made a whole lot of sense. Also, I plan to use it for KU Confidential, because we are going to be doing a lot of writing excersis like the ones she talks about. Just writing and filling up the space and not worrying about what it is exactly that we are writing.

I think this will be a good way for me to approach my movement scene coming up. We just need to start moving and then go from there. I am very much enjoying class. I really liked the work that Garrett and I did the other day with the elements in our bodies. We were totally feeding off each other's energy and ended up creating an extremely engaging scene without even having talked about what we were going to do. It was cool to switch which element I was based off of what Garrett was doing. It awoke alot of emotions within my body as well. For a while I was a teasing breeze, but then things turned sour and I had to switch to a whirlpool to get away from him. Our suspenstion was my favorite part though because I didn't know he was about to grab me from behind. I was stretching toward the ceiling and read to swoop away, but he caught me. I felt surprise, fear, beauty, excitment, and so many more things in that one moment. To be honest, I forgot we even had an audience for a minute there!

The copying we are doing in our warmups becomes more and more interesting with every class. There were two minutes in particular from the last class. We suddenly were all jumping and clapping with our knees up high around the room in a line. What I noticed was that everyone had

a huge grin on their faces and everyone had an upward motion with their life bodies. It our energy had real form I have no doubts that we would have lifted the room right off the building!