Dance Debut’s Adventures in Week 4

Dance this week began with an intensive on **how to point through the ankle** and not just with the toes. These ideas were explored in all of our classes at their various levels. As well, we continued to explore **eye tracking and spotting the head**. There was some noticeable changes for some dancers with their abilities, and some new noticings happened for other dancers. The level of confidence did rise as the dancers realized they could perform the task and succeed at single turns, maybe doubles and triples.

In the **preschool classes, Music in Motion** **and Starmakers** we explored the Nursery Rhyme “Humpty Dumpty” with a longer story line. We introduced jumping like a frog with turnout and bent and straight knees on the **trampoline**. There was a change of movement for many dancers as they began to use more of their foot to push off the floor, as well as their knees to reach new heights**. “Listen to the Water”** advanced the dancers to clearer singing (some singing this week when they only watched last week), a full point to second position with the foot turned out (heel under) and a complete change of weight and then to a close in first position. Ballet runs were explored on a higher demi point with pausing with the phrases of the music. We also learned about our place in space in relation to others as we tried to maintain a large circle for the group, and also about taking turns and lining up. Spotting the head for this group was also about spinning and finding the natural ability to spot the head while turning. This helped with turns later on in the class.

**Music in Motion 4 and Starmakers** worked very hard this week to lengthen and stretch the leg, point through the ankle and count the movements of a walk. We focused on transferring weight from 4th rear to first and out to 4th. This took a lot of skill and concentration from everyone, but we were all counting and moving as one unit at the end. This advanced our jazz to move with a full stretch for jazz runs and jetes. In the tap portion we focused on changing the sounds from regular hard individual parts into a musical melody. There was a complete tonal switch for the dancers. On a brush forward or back we focused on making a sharp sound rather than a slide through the position. This also changed how the foot contacted the floor and how the ankle was involved.

**Starmaker 3** explored **walking like a Princess**. We worked on quick pointed walks that would allow our dresses to look like they were gliding across the floor. This took a bit of work in completely using the whole foot and quickly. We also rehearsed walking to sit upon the royal throne. This utilized imagination for swishing the dress aside and then sitting with an open back, knees over toes and shoulders open. This was not an easy task, but we did manage to shift bodies.

**Stretching with Biokinetic Information from Wayne Topping’s book**. We explored at the older jazz level as well as the Audition class, how to stretch with a purpose. Instead of just choosing the usual hamstring, adductor, quad, calf ideas, w e focused on three adductor muscles, then we determined through muscle testing if the muscles needed to realign themselves using stretching for surface muscle, deep muscle, tendon, ligament or fascia. If it is the muscle that needs alignment, the stretch is held for 30 seconds. If the ligament is needing alignment the stretch is held for 60 seconds. If the tendon or fascia is in need, then the stretch is held for 5 minutes. Several dancers were able to feel when the body made a shift in alignment, so they could determine on their own when the stretch was no longer needed. We will be furthering our development of a stretching regime to help dancers know what they need and for how long.

**Tap** this week saw a huge learning curve for dancers as they were challenged to count their steps and then perform in a cannon. This meant everyone had a different count to perform a task on. We had some great challenges and some wonderful revelations as everyone was counting out loud to their taps. We will now be able to explore rhythm patterns in groups and create counter rhythms with each other.

Several of our **ballet dancers** were assessed for point this week. They discovered through Dr. Eureka Nakai that they have great abilities, but they are not working to their true potential. With some incredible insights from Dr. Nakai these dancers will be able to really focus with their bodies to reach for the highest point of their foot for a demi point. They also will be able to push their turnout abilities both at the hip and the lower leg. They discovered that our words about opening the back and expanding the shoulders for centering were true, and how this affects the way you stand on your foot. As well, she indicated there were two types of walkers that created difficulties for their feet: the floaters who raise their toes off the ground and forget to use them for balance and power; and the crunchers who attempt to curl up their toes to create a point rather than stretching fully through the ankle. **I hope that everyone will take the time to ensure that when they place their feet on the floor for any dance step that they will reflect on how their whole foot comes in contact with the floor and how they use the toes to support the foot and create power for movement.** Dr. Nakai is in the Market Mall professional building for anyone who has foot, ankle or leg difficulties and would like an expert opinion. She specializes in working with dancers and understands the demands they will place on their bodies.

Further notes from subsequent weeks:

Timing with music – hum the tune on own, with music and while dancing, rub ears for better clarity for hearing

Dr. Nakai – Pointe – Straighten rolling ankles

21 days to change a habit

Bunion – place whole toe on the ground

Lift the arch when the foot is flat on the floor

Leg cross stretch for big toe and over toes

Reciprocals – wrists and ankles – loose, shoulders and hips – tight and loose, open back and loosen arms, sounds can change hard to soft.