

# Nourishing Connections

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## Integrating Somatic Approaches to Contemporary Dance Technique



This December we, Anastasia Kostner and Jungyeon Kim, led an intensive workshop for dance students at the Korea National University of Arts (KNUA) in Seoul. The aim of the workshop was to convey principles for efficiency of movement, which would support the students to enhance their skills for a broad range of styles in the contemporary dance field. Informed by various somatic techniques, yet particularly Bartenieff Fundamentals and Rolwing, each day of the workshop dealt with a specific aspect of the body, facilitated through topic-oriented bodyworks, use of imagery, movement explorations, practice of dance sequences and discussions.

Following topics formed the foundation for the sessions in KNUA, which are key elements of our on-going research and interest:

### **Eight Heels – Awakening the Body Connectivity through Whole Body Awareness**

Moving a single body part has an influence on the whole body. An active relationship between body parts is needed to ground and stabilize the moving body. *Eight Heels*, as a teaching concept to generate various exercises, helps students to utilize connectivity within the body by perceiving and moving body parts in relation to each other. Engaging different parts of the body simultaneously into multiple directions, one can initiate a movement that is stabilized through active connections between the limbs through the core.

### **Falling – Freeing the Hip Joints and Riding through Momentum**

Many dance students have a tendency to lock their hip joints, instead of releasing them and gaining more freedom to move. The willfulness of dancers' legs often leads the dancer to tighten the buttocks, overwork the quadriceps and restrict the mobility of the hip joints. *Falling*, as a concept to depict a specific state of the body and mind, helps the students to release excessive tension, deepen and soften the folding actions of joints, increase the sense of weight, and distribute the body weight to multiple directions in dynamic motion. By mostly using partnering exercises to invite immediate changes, this work helps students to find optimal alignment of the body through its skeletal structure.

### **Spirals – Activating Tensile Support through Fascia Work**

In dance practice the body is often perceived as an arrangement of muscles and bones, and the vital function of the connective tissue is easily neglected. Improving the quality of the connective tissue is in fact the key to dance with appropriate consistency and elasticity and to support movement re-patterning. Through hands-on work in pairs and through guided stretching exercises, this dance technique lesson can help students to dissolve chronic tension in various areas of the body and to improve the quality of tissue tone. For instance, students can enhance their skills of using the arms in floor work by dealing with fascia, which fosters a flexible, tensile and spiral connection of the arms. Working with the connective tissue gives essential support to the integrity of the whole body in movement.

“I didn’t waste a single minute during my 5 days’ participation.”

“It was really pleasurable to perceive my body in such details. I was reminded again that it is a clear physical logic that helps me to find eased and efficient motions.”

“The workshop was very helpful for me to avoid injury in the future.”

“The workshop helped me to awake my body in a natural and understandable manner. I wish all dance class works like this.”

“It was a great experience! I am happy to have deepened my understanding in dance and to have gotten more familiar with my body. Please come again.”

- responses from the participating students

Guiding the students of Choreography Department in KNUA over a week, we confirmed our belief that it is important, as well as highly effective, to approach dance technique education through understanding the underlying nature of movement and through a holistic approach to the human body. The aim of our research and guidance is to increase dancer’s mobility, stability, clarity, better alignment and ease of motion. It surprises us many times to see how deeply the somatic practice can alter the state of body and mind.



### ***Our collaboration continues; upcoming projects in 2012***

Dance Workshop for Teenagers with different abilities || February, Frankfurt am Main  
Into Dance – Dance Pedagogy Intensive Workshop for Music Teachers || May, Frankfurt  
University of Music and Performing Arts  
A dance film project in collaboration with choreographer Martina Marini || June, Merano, Italy  
TanzSprint12: a series of contemporary dance workshops, organized by MAztp || July, Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts

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