

Newsletter

Dancing in Flow

Contemporary Dance Classes by Anastasia Kostner

Dancing in Flow is a concept I have developed since 2010 for teaching contemporary dance. It is a philosophy about looking at the human development and therefore a pedagogical approach to teaching.



The terminology of *flow* comes from the psychological definition of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. My interest for the state of *flow* arose, when I was researching about the dynamics of learning. I wondered how an individual can perform his best and can develop himself in a non-violent and positive environment.

In the formation of many dancers I found mental barriers, which made them question their own abilities and therefore impair their full potential as movers and people. Trying to look at solutions around how teachers could cope with such difficulties, I found valuable insights in mental training, coaching and positive psychology. I observed, that especially the tool of improvisation helped to observe decision-making and therefore train self-reflected actions.

Sometimes, during improvising so-called 'magic moments' happen, where the dancer finds him-self in a state, where he can let go of a judgmental mind, as if he is melted with the surrounding and all of his actions are in harmony with his thoughts. The whole room around seems in synchronous harmony and if people observe someone dancing in this state, they describe the moment as breath taking. After researching further I found that such a state was scientifically and psychologically described as a so-called *flow*-state. I wanted to find out what happens in such a state and if I could teach people in such a state.

After having researched about the psychological insights of *flow* I finally applied tools, which would use the momentum of *flow* to contribute to the development of dancers. I realized that this is the state performers are looking for especially while performing. Not only it helps the performance of actions, it also enables to combine the already known skills with unknown abilities. Alertness and goal-oriented action connected with letting go of the self-control allow stepping out of the 'already known'. Learning in a state of flow enhances the ability of creativity and is fostering self-creation and self-action.

The methods and ways I have found could be transformed to my contemporary technique classes. It gave new ways of self-exploration for professional dancers and an easy entrance for dance students to face challenging materials. In Mousonturm in Frankfurt, but also at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt am Main and the Korean National University, students have expressed their gratitude for the teaching, showing that they could ease in themselves and open movement qualities and sides of themselves, which they have not experienced before.

At Tanzsprint Festival in Frankfurt and Teaching Weeks in Italy, also amateurs have benefitted from the *flow* approach, being able to encounter dance on their own level with excitement. A big part of the *flow*-experiment was held in first and secondary schools of Frankfurt am Main, where children could enter into contemporary dance with creative and physical actions, fostering social skills on the threshold beyond the state of boredom or stress.

*'In my teachings I use mainly improvisational structures to start an interactive experiment, which gives the participants the chance to engage with each other in an intuitive way.'*