

TITLE: "Elemental Beginnings: Water Dances and Chopin's Preludes: A Children's Curriculum"

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BIO:

Dicki Johnson Macy, BC-DMT, M.Ed., L.M.H.C., third generation lineage holder in the Art/Technique of Isadora Duncan (having studied first as a child with Anita Zahn) and director of the "Boston Children's Foundation" is the creator and founder of Rainbowdance . A tireless and dedicated pioneer in the field of trauma focused stabilization and resiliency programs for young children and their communities, she is also the co-founder of the acute trauma response and intervention, CBI. For the past 25 years, in her career as a dance therapist, she has created international healing rituals for children isolated by developmental and neurological disorders and exposure to conflict and natural disaster. She continues to guide children, caregivers, and dancers of all ages with her Isadora inspired workshops and trainings.

Abstract:

The workshop presenter engages participants in a sequence of dance motifs from her children's curriculum. She weaves a tapestry of music, story and movement encouraging the experience of the many manifestations of water in their varied elemental states, ranging from "mist" to "thundercloud". Chopin's Opus 28 Preludes are coupled musically with each danced manifestation. Water and emotion are both , in their varied forms, shaped by their vessels, social and physical. The workshop , primarily experiential, is laced with slide, film and discussion, which provide theory and a pictorial pedagogy.

key words:

Wave- children's curriculum-Chopin-elemental- harmony-Nature-transformation

Date: Saturday, June 13, 2015 9-10:30 AM

Workshop with slides, film, experiential lecture

- 1) Finding the wave that flows within us, and discovering the waves that are around us, bring us to a sense of the oneness that we are component to. Contemporary education mandates that children learn to separate and to compete, to move away from what is their birthright: to be in relationship with other humans and to the creatures and forces of nature. Children

intuitively dance the elements: the wind, the waves, the fire, the earth. Children, before reason has set in, (says Plato), are naturally empathic, having that sense of oneness that assures understanding of the other. Isadora Duncan, harbinger of an educational aesthetic that assured the child continue to live in this oneness, was of the Dionysian perspective: The dancer lived the story, immersing oneself in the elements rather than telling about it.

- 2) The workshop presenter grew up by the sea, danced with the waves, never forsaking their lessons. Anita Zahn was her teacher and Duncan dance was the vehicle through which nature continued to flow for thirty years to her many students. Here she presents one of her many curricula for young children; She has woven a movement tapestry which focuses upon the many manifestations of water: Rain, Mountain stream, Waterfall, Lake, River, Sea, Mist, Clouds, Storm Front, Thunderhead, Storm, and Rainbow, coupling each with one of Chopin's Opus 28 Prelude. Each dance song engages children to explore, not only the elemental but Chopin's music, which lends itself so beautifully to the experience of "the wave". Various Duncan motifs and etudes are component to each of the dance songs.

3) Isadora's foundation for her dances and for the lessons significant for children were based upon the experience of this surrender to the elemental: "All the movements of the earth follow the lines of wave motion. Both sound and light travel in waves. The motion of water, winds, trees and plants progresses in waves. The flight of a bird and the movement of all animals follow lines like undulating waves. If then one seeks a point of physical beginning for the movement of the human body, there is a clue in the undulating motion of the wave. It is one of the elemental facts of nature, and out of such elemental the child, the dancer, absorbs something basic to dancing". Isadora Duncan: (1909). I have learned, anecdotally, from my teacher, Duncan lineage holder Jeanne Bresciani, and her from Mary Theresa Duncan, that the Preludes and Isadora's embodiment of this powerful emotional compilation of twenty four preludes, can be experienced progressively, as follows:

1-6	Elemental, archetypal, pre human
7-11	Human (easiest for young)
12-17	Passionate, Enrapt, Explosive
18-24	Transformed, Transfigured Realm

- 4) Isadora extrapolates upon the crescendo of emotion which follows the natural movement of all life forms:

“Emotion works like a motor. It must be warmed up to run well, and the heat does not develop immediately; it is progressive.

The true dancer, stands before Beauty in a state of complete suspense; He opens the way to his soul and his “genius” and he lets himself be swayed by them as trees abandon themselves to the winds. He starts w/ one slow movement and mounts from there gradually, following the rising curve of his inspiration, up to those gestures that exteriorize his fullness of feeling, spreading even wider the impulse that has swayed him, fixing it in another expression. The movements should follow the rhythm of waves: the rhythm that rises, penetrates, holding in itself the impulse and the after-movement; call and response, bound endlessly in one cadence”.

5) In my work, I begin each session with the children, orienting them to the center of the room, which I call, “The heart of the room”. It is always visually beautiful, silk enrapt, with nature’s gifts (pine cones, shells ,feathers, twigs). This symbology orients them to the vessel of the room with its own visual “heart”; The children experience the relationship between their own physical and emotional bodies and the great mother earth vessel whose children they all are. From this simple beginning children move with honor, dignity, and respect for themselves and for all the diverse and wondrous creatures of nature; All become brothers and sisters when we begin with this elemental orientation. The space is honored as symbolic of the earth that holds and feeds them.

6) Once oriented to their center, their heart , their axis mundi, their safe place, we will move through varied motifs which warm the children’s physical and emotional bodies to the theme of the session. Here, in this sequence of eleven classes, we dance the ‘moving barre’ of water to Chopin’s Barcorolle in F:

rain (Light vertical float runs)

Rivers: (spiral /swim arms in serpentine pattern –rocks
jump over)

Lake: gestural circling wide with body following

Sea : Over and under curves

Clouds: float runs spinning

Storm front: Run diagonally across room with Solar Plexus and gaze
downward

Thunderhead: spinning on vertical plane :one begins all
joining

Storm: wind runs w/ victory leaps

7) In my session with the adult participants, we explore the concept of the wave embodied within, via the breath path, and without as we move through space. To Chopin's Spinato, we begin with the solar plexus, hands placed upon the emotional, breath and physical orientation. The horizon of the body is embodied as the arms extend outward, above being the sky and all that is light, below being the earth and all that has weight . Shifting the physical body from left to right ,we experience the path of the horizontal figure eight; Moving forward and backward, we rise and fall, crest and recede the over and undercurve of the wave path. We visualize then move the breath body in three directional paths: **vertical**(aspire and descend), **horizontal** (widen, open close), **sagittal** (advance retreat/ebb/flow: reach return to back space).

8) My slide and film presentation draw the parallels between the manifestations of water: rain-mountain stream-waterfall-lake-river-sea-mist-clouds-stormfront-storm-rainbow. The text for this study comes from a book entitled , "Waterdance" by Thomas Locker. I begin this presentation with a lovely slide clip of my little niece Ella, dancing by the seashore:

"Seated on the beach, I look on while my little niece dances here before the waves. I gaze across the vast expanse of surging water-wave after wave streaming endlessly past, throwing up white foam. And in front of it all the dainty little figure in her white fluttering dress, dancing before the monstrous sea! And I feel as though the heart beat of her little life were sounding in unison with the mighty life of the water, as though it possessed something of the same rhythm, something of the same life. Her dance by the sea seems to reflect the naturally beautiful motions of the human body, in the dance. She dances because she is full of the joy of life. She dances because the waves are dancing before her eyes, because the winds are dancing, because she can feel the rhythm of the dance throughout the whole of nature". (Isadora Duncan, Art of the Dance).

9) The actual curriculum follows; The dancers are read the description of each manifestation of the water element to be danced, then encouraged to embody in an improvisational manner.

MANIFESTATION	DANCE	MUSIC
<p><u>Rain</u> Some people say that I am one thing. Others say that I am many. Ever since the world began I have been moving in an endless circle. Sometimes I fall from the sky. I AM THE RAIN</p>	<p>Read description ; show images;Encourage children to become the water manifested in the described manner, and from their own experience of each. Light, quick, floating ,vertically. Groups of 4 or 5. Three manifestations in each of four consecutive classes.</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude #23 \ </p>
<p><u>Mountain stream</u> Sometimes I cascade. I tumble down, down, down, over moss covered rocks, through the forest shadows. I AM THE MT STREAM</p>	<p>Spirals, tumbling, turning ,weaving</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude# 3</p>
<p><u>Waterfall</u> At the foot of the mts, I leap from a stone cliff. Spiraling, plunging. I AM THE WATERFALL</p>	<p>light, quick spiraling, plunging</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude # 5</p>
<p><u>Lake</u> In the shadow of the mt, I am still and deep. I fill and overflow. I AM THE LAKE</p>	<p>Slow, horizontal, lower body focused..overcurve</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude #6</p>
<p><u>River</u> I wind through broad, golden valleys joined by streams, joined by creeks. I grow ever wider, broader and deeper. I AM THE RIVER</p>	<p>Weaving, float runs in serpentine path-slowing down to grow wider, perhaps at elbow of curves...picking up others to grow</p>	<p>CHOPIN PRELUDE # 13</p>
<p><u>Sea</u> I pass thru a gateway of high stone palisades, leaving the land behind. Cool silver moonlight sparkles and dances on my waves. I AM THE SEA.</p>	<p>Very slow, contemplative, covering ground space,gazing upward, growing with music to stand and move over and under curves</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude # 4</p>

<p><u>Mist</u> Drawn upward by warm sunlight, in white silver veils I rise into the air. I disappear . I AM THE MIST</p>	<p>Light, quick, like bubbles, hide when music slows down</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude #11 or #9</p>
<p><u>Clouds</u> In thousands of shapes I reappear high above the earth in the blue sky. I float. I drift. I AM THE CLOUDS.</p>	<p>Float-shift shapes-imagining differ cloud images</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude # 21</p>
<p><u>Storm front</u> Carried by the winds from distant seas I move, grow heavier, growing darker, returning. I AM THE STORM FRONT.</p>	<p>Running across floor-with solar plexus gazing downward creating heaviness-moving backward</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude # 14</p>
<p><u>Thunderhead</u> At the wall of the mts, I rise up as gleaming power-filled towers in the darkened sky. I AM THE THUNDERHEAD</p>	<p>Spinning on verticle plane-one at a time until all 4 or 5 children are spinning together</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude #12</p>
<p><u>Storm</u> I blind the sky with lightning. The earth trembles w/ my thunder. I rage. I drench the mountainside. I AM THE STORM.</p>	<p>Spinning, leaping-sways on low horizontal plane-spin to fall</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude #22, 16</p>
<p><u>Rainbow</u> Storms come. Storms pass. I am countless droplets of rain left floating in the silent air. I reflect all the colors of sunlight. I AM THE RAINBOW</p>	<p>Dance from ground to move to create huge arch, either solo or group; Dance the reflected light, growing fuller and brighter.</p>	<p>Chopin Prelude #17</p>

end

Emilie Conrad Da'Oud (1990's)

" I asked myself if movement is what we are, can this ever be stopped? I began to wonder about people who are paralyzed. Perhaps paralysis is not what we think it is; perhaps it is a cultural trance.

Exploring movement w/ various degrees of paralysis, function appears to be suspended although movement is still continuing at many other levels. I wondered if these other levels of movement were invigorated, would they provide a basis for new function? My questioning led me to consider wave movement. If we take into account that a human is at least 80% water , and has emerged from the undulating watery environment of the embryo, would it be reasonable to explore internal wave motion as a primary movement? I explored movements that were much like the ripples created when we throw a pebble into a lake. I found that undulations were stimulated by breath and sound, seeming to arise from an internal reservoir of primary organismic responses. I came to believe that wave motions are an essential biological link for all organisms. They represent the watery substance of our origin. Life began as aquatic and later became terrestrial..life processes flourish in fluid states."

The A^b-major Étude, op. 25, no. 1, depends on the repetition of one musical figure. In this it is typical of the tradition of study, or prelude, a genre that tends to use a single characteristic motive to saturate the musical texture, as Robert Wason has pointed out (Wason 2002). The repetition of this motive is a central goal of the piece, and the gesture of playing the motive therefore becomes a primary physical way in which a performer relates to the music.

Chopin Preludes/ Isadora Dances:

**ELEMENTAL BEGINNINGS: WATERDANCES, CHOPIN PRELUDES-
A CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM**

Saturday 9-10:30

Studio 2

PROPS: BLUE SILKS ,SHELL/MIRROR, RAINBOW AND WATER SCAPES, HANDOUTS, ELECTRONICS, CARDS WHITE PARACHUTE

9- 9:15

OPENING EXPERIENTIAL/Intro:

wave orientation and 3 D breath:

over and undercurve, horizontal figure 8

Chopin Spinato

breath:**vertical**(aspire and descend), **horizontal** (widen, open close:

first Tanagra motif :identity), **sagittal** (advance retreat/ebb/flow:

reach return to back space)

9:15- 9: 40 ORIENTATION SLIDES (1-11)

elemental, visual install, beauty, nature container, Ella dance:
heart of room set up with water images to pass around

9:45-10:30 EXPERIENTIAL:

Moving Barre: Motifs for each manifestation Chopin
Barcarolle (cut after storm part 5:00)

Sequence: **rain** (Light vertical float)

Rivers: spiral /swim arms in serpentine pattern –rocks
jump over

Lake: gestural circling wide with body following

Sea : Over and under curves

Clouds: float runs spinning

Storm front: Run across rm with SP and gaze
downward

Thunderhead: spinning on vertical plane :1 begins all
join

Storm: wind runs w/ victory leaps

ALL Manifestations of water:

rain-(1:07) light moving finger tips from sky

MT stream- (.59) tumble roll on floor

waterfall-(.35) start in one place (mt) all leap from spiral, plunge

lake-(2:02) ready for turn taking /witness :start still-circle walks-
horizontal hugging space gesture

river(3:02 cut to 2:00) all in different corners:serpentine to pick up-
circle in and out or large group serpentine as flock not line

-sea- (2:01)small group in varied places start and join low circling w/
gesture-splash-splash crash pull back on dramatic music

mist-(.41)light side flicks w/ attitude side to spinning

clouds(1:46) from different places all start float runs to circle-drift off

stormfront- (.39) wind runs to victory leaps

storm- (.49) teach motifs of tempest dance :striking lightning

rainbow: (3:03)each solo as raindrop-under arch of rainbow silk-
(held by 2 adults) to join hands holding scarf hands -swish in and
back (like scarf dance)-then scarf held up in arch as children swish
under and back, ending in circle-
here I can thank all for participating as music finished

Chopin Preludes

Show slide of each manifestation as rest between dances

Music : approximately 5 minutes for Moving barre 35 minutes for
manifestations and explanations