

Penny Campbell

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Dance Program
Middlebury College
Middlebury, VT 05753
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Current positions:

- 1985 – present, Senior Lecturer in Dance, Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT 05753. Teaching all levels of technique (until 2008), composition, improvisation, and performance; plus, dance history, creative process, and cultural studies.
- Director of Dance, Fall 2008-
- Artistic Director, The Dance Company of Middlebury, in rotation with other dance faculty; most recently, 2010.

Other Professional Positions:

- Co-founder and core faculty, *Work in the Performance of Improvisation*, a summer intensive for professional dancers at Bennington College, Bennington, VT, 1995-2005



Education:

M.A.L.S. in Dance/Movement Studies, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, May, 2000.
B.A. in Dance, Bennington College, Bennington, VT, May 1970.

Professional training:

In New York: Valerie Bettis, Merce Cunningham and company, Viola Farber, Matt Mattox

In Chicago: Bill Evans

In Tokyo: Akiko Kanda

At Bennington: Bill Bales, Jack Moore, Judith Dunn, Bill Dixon, Jane Dudley, Martha Wittman

At Wesleyan (postmodern forms, anthropology and dance therapy): Richard Bull, Cynthia Novack, Jane Wilson Downes

At Stephens/Perry-Mansfield (CO): Harriette Ann Gray, Kaye Harrington (Afro-Haitian)

At the School for Body-Mind Centering (Amherst, MA): Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen

On-going classes in swing, waltz, Argentine tango, Dominican bachata and merengue with various teachers in Vermont and the DR.

Professional Companies:

- The Giants of Sciants/Midgets of Metaphysics/Two P's in a Pod – related improvisational performing groups of musicians and dancers. Personnel: Arthur Brooks Ensemble, Terry Creach, Michael Chorney, Susan Sgorbati, Peter Schmitz. Sculptor Sue Rees was also involved. 1983 to 2005.
- Penny Campbell and Friends/The Improvisation Ensemble. 1983-85
- Ketch Dance Company. 1980-85
- The Dance Company with Judith Dunn. 1973-76
- Judith Dunn/Bill Dixon Collaborative Works Ensemble. 1972-73
- Akiko Kanda's Dance Pantheon (Tokyo, Japan). 1971-72

Recent Performance:

- *Memories, Dreams, Refractions* at Middlebury College, 2006
- *Arthur Brooks, Penny Campbell/Penny Campbell Arthur Brooks* at BRIC Improvised and Otherwise Festival, Brookly, NY, 2006
- *The Birdhouse Project*, Stuyvesant Cove Park, New York and Nicolas R. Clifford Symposium, Middlebury, 2005
- *Don't Say No* at Western Massachusetts Moving Arts Festival (Earthdance), 2005;

Recent choreography or directed works:

- “Cheap Shots,” the Newcomers’ Piece, for performance in the Fall concert, November 2010.
- “Kidz/Niños,” Suite with Chorus,” and “Improvisation: Music, Dance, Light, Time, Space” for The Dance Company of Middlebury performances at Middlebury and on tour in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, January 2010. 8 dancers, original music by Kareem Khalifa, guest choreography by Christal Brown.
- “Performance Improvisation: Music, Dance, Light,” an evening-length performance, 2011.
- The Middlebury Improvisation Ensemble, four dancers and two musicians, in Draftwork: Academy Dances at Danspace Project in NYC, curated by Ishmael Houston-Jones, and at Middlebury, 2007.
- “Memories, Dreams, Refractions,” (9:00) a duet with music by George Todd and Bill Dixon, 2006
- “InterVaDos” (17:00) for The Dance Company of Middlebury: The Cuba Project, 8 dancers. Music by Raúl Guará. Performances in NYC and at Middlebury College, 2005

Guest Teaching:

- Classes in contemporary movement techniques and improvisation for Bálamo, a theatre company in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, 2008-
- Teaching residencies at Franklin & Marshall College and the University of Michigan/Ann Arbor. Improvisation, composition, and performance.
- Movement classes in public schools through the Vermont Institute on the Caribbean, 2008 on
- Bennington/Sarah Lawrence Mini-Fest, 2005-2007
- Western Massachusetts Moving Arts Festival at Earthdance, featured teacher, 2005, 2006
- Sarah Lawrence/Bennington/Middlebury College Mini-Fest at Bennington College, 2005
- Académia de la Danza Narciso Medina, Cuba; contemporary dance technique, 2003; improvisation, 2004

Other Significant Professional Activities:

- Reader for Wesleyan University Press, *Method to the Madness: Movement Improvisation in the Words of its Practitioners* by Kent De Spain. 2009
- On-going research into Taimáscaro, the contemporary carnival tradition unique to Puerto Plata, DR. 2008-
- Chair of the external review committee for the Dance Department at Denison University in Ohio, 2008.
- Member of the Organizing Committee for the Puerto Plata (DR) Provincial Carnival celebrations, member of the Arts Education sub-committee, Winter 2008
- Curator, teaching, performing, and cultural exchange residency for choreographers Lisa Gonzales ’94, Jennifer Kayle ’91, and Pamela Vail ’90 in Puerto Plata, DR. January 2008.
- Member of the Steering Committee and then the Board of Directors of the Vermont Institute on the Caribbean, 2006-2010.
- Panelist, Grants Committee, Vermont Council on the Arts, 2006
- Interview appearance with Andrea Olsen on *Profiles*, a half-hour program hosted by Fran Stoddard, Vermont Public Television, first aired January 2004

Print Publication:

“Riding the Wild Ephemerid: Glimpses into a Preparation for Dance Performance Improvisation” in Contact Quarterly, Winter/Spring 2004

Interviewed for and included in:

I Want To Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom by Danielle Goldman (University of Michigan Press, 2009)

Composing While Dancing: An Improviser’s Companion by Melinda Buckwalter (University of Wisconsin Press, 2010)

“Teaching Improvisation” published in the August 2008 *Dance Magazine*.

I am interviewed on a regular basis by graduate students writing theses about teaching or performing improvisation and by professional writers working on texts about dance, dance history, and improvisation.

Courses Taught at Middlebury College:

- *Introduction to Dance*, a survey course that includes units on dance history, movement techniques, improvisation, choreography/performance, anatomy and kinesiology, writing about dance;
- *Advanced Beginning Dance 1 and 2*, first two semesters of composition and performance in our core curriculum that includes theory and criticism, writing about dance;
- *Dance History*, offered as a writing intensive course in alternate years;
- *Intermediate/Advanced Dance IV: Performance Improvisation*, a studio course culminating in performance that also includes theory, criticism and writing;
- *Performing Culture: America's Dancing Bodies*, a cultural studies course from a sociological perspective that integrates embodied research (participant/observer) with traditional scholarship. I develop this course with a colleague in sociology and with whom I taught it for the first time in 2005. Revised as a First-Year Seminar, a writing intensive course, subtitled *Bodies Moving and Meaning* for Fall 2008.
- *The Dance Company of Middlebury*, in rotation with other faculty, emphasizing a professional experience in creating and touring original concerts of dance in the US and abroad, audition required;
- *The Creative Process*, an entry-level course, highly experiential, that includes a strong element of reading/writing and project completion. I have collaborated with colleagues in theatre, dance, music, visual art, and film/video to develop this course.
- *Collaboration in the Arts: The Creative Process Continues*, a course conceived as a next step for students for whom continued investigation of the theory and practice of creativity and collaboration across the arts is appealing.
- *Creativity in the Arts*, an adaptation of *The Creative Process* as a First Year Seminar, a writing intensive for entering students who are also my advisees. I introduced a web log component in 2002.
- *Thinking Body/Moving Mind*, a one-month intensive course (January term) that combines introductory improvisation study with investigation into mind/body issues.
- *Special Topics in Dance: Independent Study in Dance History*, my dance history course adapted as a tutorial and independent study.

Administrative Responsibilities at Middlebury College:

- Director of Dance: 1986-87, 1988-91, 1995-96, 1998-2001, 2002-05, 2008-
- Artistic Director, The Dance Company of Middlebury: 1986-87, 1995-96, 2000-01, 2004-05, 2009-10
- Member, Faculty Advisory Committee for Middlebury Schools in Latin America, 2008-
- Curriculum Committee, 2004-2007
- Liaison to Admissions for Dance, 1993-2007
- Dance Delegate to Committee on the Arts, since 1991
- EAC Sub-committee on the shape of the curriculum, 2007
- Member, Faculty Working Group on Diversity, 2007
- Advising dance majors and first year students
- Thesis advising in Dance, for joint majors with other disciplines, independent scholars, and for Teacher Education students seeking the Dance endorsement for their Vermont teaching certificates.
- Panelist, moderator, member of ad hoc committees, symposia, and panels as they arise.

Recent Honors:

- Promotion to Senior Lecturer in Dance in recognition of many years of service to Middlebury College
- Finalist for the Engaged Scholar Award 2010, Vermont Campus Compact.

Photograph: Erik Borg

Penny Campbell Biographical Sketch



Penny Campbell, Director of the Dance Program, has been on the faculty of the Department of Theatre and Dance at Middlebury College since 1985. She is best known for her work in improvisation as a performing art. A performer, choreographer, and teacher with interests in contemporary approaches to composition, movement invention, creative process across the arts, and Pan-American dance history, Penny has made improvisational performance her professional specialty. Over the years she has developed and articulated training practices that have contributed to raising the level of dance improvisation on stage and in the classroom. In 1995, she co-founded *Work in the Performance of Improvisation (WIPI)*, a week-long intensive for professional and pre-professional dancers at Bennington College with colleagues Peter Schmitz, Susan Sgorbati, Terry Creach, musician Michael Chorney, and sculptor Sue Rees. She taught and performed in Germany under the auspices of *Deutsches Institut für Tanzpädagogik* from 1992 until 2002. In December 2003, she began a series of classes for pre-professional students at Academia de la Danza Narciso Medina in Havana, Cuba. In April 2005, the Dance Company

of Middlebury, under Penny's artistic direction, premiered *InterVaDos*, a suite of five dances created in collaboration with Cuban composer, Raúl Guará. Latin American and cultural studies through the lens of dance are her most recent research interests. Since 2007, she has developed ties to Puerto Plata, the northern coast city in the Dominican Republic and organized a tour for the Dance Company of Middlebury to the city in 2010. Students performed, offered workshops for dancers of all ages in many settings, and collaborated with a local theatre group, Bálsamo, in one of their own concerts aimed at preserving Dominican children's songs with movement. She also continues to pursue her interest in the unique carnival tradition of Puerto Plata, Taimáscaro.

Performance Improvisation, the improvisational style which Penny named and practices, springs from the music/dance collaborations of Judith Dunn and Bill Dixon during the late 1960's to early 1970's in NYC and at Bennington College, where both taught. Dunn was a member of Merce Cunningham's company and a prime mover in the break-through Judson Dance Theatre phenomenon in 1962-65. At Dixon's urging, she began applying improvisational techniques used in avant-garde Black music to her choreographic process. Eventually, Dixon and Dunn initiated a course in improvisation at Bennington that led to performances and creation of a professional ensemble of musicians and dancers working exclusively in improvisation. Penny was a member of that ensemble. Many years later, Performance Improvisation blends a variety of training techniques with aesthetic and human values: individuality and personal artistry, technical and compositional proficiency, commitment to innovation and exploration, and willingness to initiate and collaborate boldly and sensitively.

Excerpts from *Riding the Wild Ephemeral: Glimpses into a Preparation for Dance Performance Improvisation* -- a semi-fictional account of a college-level course in Performance Improvisation as seen through Campbell's eyes—is published in the Winter/Spring 2004 edition of *Contact Quarterly*. In it she shares some of her training techniques and perspectives on improvisational performing. She is also interviewed or profiled in *I Want To Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom* by Danielle Goldman (University of Michigan Press, 2009) and *Composing While Dancing: An Improviser's Companion* by Melinda Buckwalter (University of Wisconsin Press, 2010)

Penny lives in Shoreham, Vermont, a small, rural community near Lake Champlain where she maintains a lawn, a garden, perennial flower beds, and a collection of animals. She is also a textile craftsperson, a sailor, and a student of Spanish.

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