

Calypso May Haddad - Teaching Philosophy

I break norms and find immense joy in doing so. I have never been one to follow the crowd and this individuality is reflected in the innovation of my teaching practices and the unique creativity I bring to every project I direct and choreograph. My dancing life began outside and barefoot, guided by the drum circles of my family elders. Studio training found me living the pointed foot-steps of a classical ballet company, where I explored the narrative power of ballet pantomime. I soon evolved into an eclectic jazz, tap, modern and funk dancer, eventually finding a home in musical theatre dance where all these styles converge. Through all this, I was rooted in a strong sense of self, community, and collaboration that would become essential in my professional life as a teacher and choreographer.

My teaching philosophy evolved from these experiences and cemented my desire to recognize and enhance the strengths of each person I lead. As an educator, I encourage my students to be virtuosic and intelligent performers. Every person in my classes is urged to excel in their craft through technical growth, a deep understanding of their body, and a cultural understanding that grounds the dance in its contextual place in history. There is great importance in not only the physical training of dance but also acknowledging the authentic background that is key to capturing nuances within different styles. During my time as a graduate student, my research focused on the decolonization of musical theatre dance through recognition of minority creatives and their contributions to this performing art. My work as a dance scholar and active teacher commits me to the responsibility of inclusion and diversity awareness, progressive material selection, and dismantling any of my own biases that may appear. A fundamental aspect of my teaching philosophy is to inspire students to reach excellence through individualized instruction and creating a safe environment for the development of any experience level. My background as a K-12 and post-secondary instructor has shown me how to build professional relationships with students by establishing a shared set of goals, offering constructive feedback and guiding each person toward an enlightened understanding of their own artistic visions and abilities. Utilizing accessible course structure, gradual release, a variety of modeling techniques, and repetition until mastery, my time as a public school teacher informs my cognitive and spatial attentiveness in the classroom. Focusing mind-body awareness and the right to establish boundaries allows me to center my teaching in a place of wellness and improve longevity in the performing arts. Providing room for risk and failure, my students learn how to evaluate and think for themselves as they become responsible professionals in the field. My approach is simply that every student is already enough, has something valuable to offer, and is capable of growth.

When working on a show or piece, I model creative leadership and encourage the cast to own the power of their own influence. My passion is constructing dances that highlight the unique strengths of each performer while also forming a cohesive relationship between the story and music. I see every task as a creative project and a chance to use my courageous originality and instinctually collaborative nature. This embedded curiosity to learn from others is at the center of my teaching and directing. As I share my knowledge and experience, I open myself to understanding and growth.