BALLET'S PEDAGOGICAL LEGACY:
THE WORK OF MAGGIE BLACK THROUGH HER STUDENTS

by

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Introduction

The pedagogical legacy of ballet teachers resides within the minds and bodies of their students. For dance artists who transition into their own teaching careers, they must negotiate the theories and methodologies of mentors that echo in their ears and reverberate through their limbs. One enduring legacy that continues to resonate in contemporary ballet training is that of renowned ballet teacher Maggie Black. Her anatomically based approach to ballet instruction supported the careers of many dance professionals, including internationally acclaimed artists, in New York during the second half of the twentieth century, by offering classical ballet training that honored the unique bodies of individual dancers.

In classical ballet, the master-apprentice model is recognized as the traditional mode of training, and while many universities and national ballet institutions throughout the world now offer systematic teacher training programs, many ballet pedagogues still rely on autonomous deconstruction and analysis of the pedagogical knowledge embedded in their training to begin their own teaching practices. Such is the case for pedagogical heirs of Black’s work, as she passed away in May of 2015 without codifying her methodology or training a successor.

This research proceeds from the premise established by dance historian Jessica Zeller that pedagogical lineage in dance develops as students “use their bodies, intellects, and imaginations to accept, reject, and make changes to the philosophies and methods of
their own teachers,” thus subverting any assumption that pedagogies and methodologies are passed down “wholesale.” Similarly, dance scholar Carrie Gaiser Casey theorizes that the shaping of dance lineage is not simply a copying of the ideals presented by one’s mentor but is a negotiation of one’s own corporeality in response to those ideals. This research explores this process of negotiation in the work of two pedagogues who trained with Black and publicly claim her as a major influence on their work. It seeks to understand how they interpreted Black’s teaching for themselves as students, and how that understanding subsequently informed their own pedagogies. In doing so, it presents the enduring legacy of Black as an illustration of how pedagogical legacies within ballet’s oral and embodied tradition transition from one generation to the next.

**My phenomenological approach to this research**

One underlying assumption of this research is that an embodied knowledge of the subject matter enables richer data collection and analysis. My own embodied knowledge of Black’s pedagogical legacy directly links to the teaching of Kim Abel, one of the two pedagogues whose work I explore. I have trained on and off with Abel for twelve years. My work with Abel has allowed me to develop an understanding of Black’s pedagogy in my own body, and this unique depth of knowledge enables me to engage in substantive interviews with research participants who also share an embodied comprehension of this lineage. This understanding allows me to analyze the material and present findings

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through embodied scholarship, a valued approach to analysis in dance scholarship.³

I offer here a brief description of my early work with Abel to disclose my connection to Black’s legacy, and to illuminate how her pedagogy and that of her students has contributed to my own dance practice. In 2005, while on hiatus from a professional ballet company in North Texas, a friend introduced me to Kim Abel who maintained a small, private professional ballet class in the area. During my first class, Abel gave me only one or two minor corrections, explaining that she wanted to analyze my movement habits before offering feedback that was more comprehensive. Afterwards, she shared the observation that I was constantly “moving in and out of the strength of my rotation,” and guided me through a series of battements tendu devant and à la seconde while explaining how to find and maintain equal rotation in the hip of my working leg and the hip of my supporting leg. In my next class, with an initial area of focus established, Abel began offering me feedback as she did with other participants. I learned later that she had worked similarly with each student previously, and, therefore, focused on each of us as individuals with our own needs and goals. Her corrections came as a constant stream of clear, actionable directives throughout the class, and her uncanny ability to offer a corrective cue that alleviated my own feeling of being “off” in my body just as I started to experience it, followed by a positive affirmation (“Good, Rubén, Good”), kept me returning to her classes whenever I had the chance. Even if I had been away for months, we would start again where we had left off. I did not know this at the time, but the pedagogical approach that Abel utilized with me paralleled the experience

that she had had with Black. Within a few months of working with Abel, I felt significant changes in my technique. Her emphasis on proper pelvic support and alignment of the torso allowed me to release tension in my neck, shoulders, and arms. I was soon able to straighten my legs without sitting into the hyperextension in my knee joints, and I could stretch the arches of my feet as I never had before. Abel also coached me through reshaping the musculature around the bow of my leg bones, making the appearance of the bow less pronounced. I also discovered an efficiency of movement that I had never experienced before. I felt prepared for a long day of rehearsals; warm, but, more importantly, clear in how to move in my body. “Get your torso in one piece and move it through space,” she would say, and that is how it felt; I moved from my whole torso from step to step with a proprioceptive understanding of how to articulate my legs and feet, and used the newfound strength I carried across my back to support and coordinate my arms. My stamina increased, not because the classes pushed my muscular or respiratory endurance, but because the consistent support I felt in my body by establishing and moving with a clear alignment meant that long dance sequences took less effort. My dancing was efficient—I could dance longer using less energy.

The dramatic changes in my own dancing encouraged me to ask Abel how she had developed her teaching approach, and it was at this point that I first heard the name Maggie Black. Abel had worked with Black for over twenty years and based her own pedagogy on her study with Black. I scoured the internet for more information on Black, but, in 2007 and 2008, I found little in the way of scholarly research or personal recollection about Black, only brief mentions of her name in the biographies of teachers across the country who had trained with her at one time. I did discover two names that
continued to surface over the years in connection to Black: Christina Bernal and Zvi Gotheiner. They had trained extensively with Black and claimed Black publicly as inspiration for their own pedagogies. I found, however, through discussion with fellow professionals who had taken the classes of Bernal, Gotheiner, and Abel, that, despite some similarities in the classes, they found the three to teach quite differently. This caused me to consider that pedagogies may change from one generation to the next.

The development of unique pedagogies from a singular source and my own interest in Black’s pedagogy were the impetus for this research. Sadly, Bernal passed away while I was conducting my research, and while I was able to speak with her, it was a brief introductory discussion, and I did not have the chance to conduct a follow-up interview nor did I have the opportunity to observe her teaching. I, therefore, include a number of memories that Bernal shared of Black in the first chapter, but focus my research and analysis of Black’s pedagogical legacy on the work of Kim Abel and Zvi Gotheiner.

**Methodology**

To understand how Abel and Gotheiner developed their individual pedagogies, I present their perspectives as two case studies.  
4 My investigation of the development of each teacher’s pedagogy is an individual case and they are “bounded,”—or related by area of focus—by the professional influence that Black’s pedagogy had on their own

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5 John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2013), 97.
teaching. Scholar Robert Yin relates case study research to historical research, but notes that case studies examine contemporary phenomena and add two sources of evidence often unavailable to historians: “direct observation of events being studied and interviews with people involved in the event.”\textsuperscript{6} I have included both sources of evidence in this research.

Along with the reflections from those who trained with Black, I use archival material provided by two sources that offer examples of Black’s barre work in the later years of her teaching. Rebecca Herrin, Instructor at the University of Oklahoma School of Dance, provided me with two written accounts of Black’s barre from August 7 and 9 of 1996. Herrin was a student in those classes and recorded the barre combinations in her notebook. American Ballet Theatre dancer Daniel Mantei uploaded two audio recordings of Black’s barre work to Vimeo.com on May 24, 2015. The recordings come from two classes Black gave in Stony Brook on Long Island. Mantei did not include dates for these recordings, however, Black taught at Stony Brook in the early 2000s so the recording of these classes can be narrowed to the first few years of the twenty-first century.

To research the pedagogies of Abel and Gotheiner, I traveled to New York in July of 2016 to observe their respective classes.\textsuperscript{7} I then interviewed both pedagogues separately about their own teaching and their work with Black. Finally, I engaged in the role of participant-observer by joining each pedagogue’s class as a student. Ethnographic

\textsuperscript{6} Robert Yin, \textit{Case Study Research: Design and Methods}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Press, 2009), 11.

\textsuperscript{7} Abel moved back to New York from Dallas to teach for two years, beginning in January of 2015.
research traditionally utilizes participant-observation to deepen an outsider’s understanding of a culture that is not one’s own. As a classical dancer myself, I was not researching a culture outside of my own, however, this role allowed me to physically engage with each pedagogue’s material to discover embodied data that I may have missed from observation alone.

In the first chapter of this research, I look at the existing literature on Black from both scholarly and popular sources. I briefly discuss her training and career to offer context for the development of her pedagogy. I then describe the theories and methodologies of her teaching practice, including her class design, and present aspects of her pedagogy with which Abel and Gotheiner have engaged in their own pedagogies. Along with the recollections of Abel and Gotheiner, I offer those of other students of Black’s, including Bernal, in order to paint a more comprehensive picture of Black’s teaching practice.

Chapter 2 addresses Abel’s pedagogy and Chapter 3 addresses Gotheiner’s pedagogy. In both chapters, I first present observations documented during my research on both teachers in July of 2016. I include a brief record of their basic class designs, and compare both to Black’s. I present information from my interviews about each pedagogue’s training with Black and bring forward elements of this training that the data indicates is relevant to the development of their own pedagogies. I then address the development of each teacher’s work. I rely on the words of the pedagogues themselves to guide me, offering the information they shared through public press interviews or my

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personal interviews with each. I reserve the bulk of these chapters for an examination of Abel and Gotheiner’s pedagogies in relationship to Black’s. I propose that their pedagogies are distinctly their own while underscoring the ways they continue to carry Black’s pedagogy forward.

**Limitations and Positionality**

It is not my intention with this research to declare one pedagogue rightful heir over another to Black’s legacy. Both pedagogies illuminate a teaching legacy as it moves from one generation to the next. These case studies serve as exemplars for broader theorizing on the progression of ballet lineage, not as evaluative research of the merits of one methodology over another.

I note here as above, that my research of Abel draws from twelve years of training and mentorship, while my research of Gotheiner consists of one week of interviews and observation. The material for analysis between Abel and Gotheiner is, therefore, not equally comprehensive. However, I have asked the participants to review the portions of material that relate to them, to insure that, while the amount of data on Abel and Gotheiner may not be commensurate, the perspectives of both are accurately represented.
Chapter 1

The Pedagogy of Maggie Black

Maggie Black (1930-2015) was a significant twentieth century ballet pedagogue whose almost forty-year career from the 1960s to early 2000s supported the work of notable artists in both classical and contemporary dance. She offered training based on “[h]er development of anatomically sound principles of alignment”\(^9\) that honored the unique facilities of individual bodies within the confines of classical ballet. Eschewing the particularities of any one school or style of training, she composed a simplified methodology that offered accessibility to dancers from an array of classical and contemporary backgrounds. Ballet historian Jessica Zeller makes the case that Black’s pedagogy “perhaps inadvertently” supported the choreographic work of twentieth-century luminaries such as Merce Cunningham, George Balanchine, and Antony Tudor by “respond[ing] to and help[ing] to define the burgeoning aesthetic that stripped away perceived excesses”\(^10\) in concert dance of the time. Born in Rhode Island, Black moved to New York at sixteen to study with Edward Caton, who worked with numerous performing groups including Ballet Theatre (now American Ballet Theatre).\(^11\)

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\(^11\) Ibid., 58.
performed in New York’s Roxy Theatre, with the Cleveland Civic Ballet, London Theatre Ballet, Ballet Rambert, American Ballet Theatre, Ballets Alicia Alonso,\(^{12}\) and the Metropolitan Opera Ballet. During her time in London, she trained with Audrey de Vos whose own theories on class design and anatomical placement challenged the orthodoxy of Royal Ballet School training and encouraged Black’s own investigation in these areas. At the Metropolitan Opera Ballet, Black worked closely with Antony Tudor and followed him to The Juilliard School for a seven-year teaching apprenticeship. While I do not address it extensively in this research, much of her expressive approach to ballet coaching derives from her association with Tudor.\(^{13}\)

**Black’s Theories**

After her time at Juilliard, Black returned to Europe where she solidified her foundational ideas on anatomical placement and efficiency of movement through a three year “period of rigorous and introspective personal study,”\(^{14}\) spending hours a day alone in a studio deconstructing and re-working her technique on herself in front of a mirror.\(^{15}\) In two of the few existing articles about Black's work, Zeller and Valerie Gladstone describe Black's theory that emerged from her embodied investigation. Black prioritized

\(^{12}\) A precursor to the National Ballet of Cuba.

\(^{13}\) An in-depth analysis of the seminal influences of de Vos and Tudor on Black’s pedagogy can be found in Zeller’s “Teaching through Time: Tracing Ballet’s Pedagogical Lineage in the Work of Maggie Black.”


\(^{15}\) According to Valerie Brooks, Black continued the practice of creating classes on herself before giving them to her students into the early 1980s; Valerie Brooks. “That Black Magic: The Legendary Maggie Black is Shaping the History of Dance in her New York Studio,” *Connoissuer*, August 1983.
the centered placement of the torso in order to organize movement throughout the rest of the body. She developed a methodology that first addressed the pelvis, making sure it was neither in a posterior nor anterior tilt but, instead, vertically aligned, or, to use her abbreviated phrasing, “up” on top of the legs. The vertical alignment of the pelvis allowed access to optimal rotation of the leg at the hip joint. Black insisted this rotation be consistent through the whole leg and foot and that both legs maintain an equal and independent rotation from one another. Essential to this was the need to maintain the frontal orientation, or “squareness,” of the pelvis no matter the position of the working leg. With the pelvis established, she focused on how the trunk was placed on top of it, ensuring that the shoulders were directly atop—not pitched forward nor behind—the hips, while maintaining the natural curve of the spine. Once the torso was established, the arms could be supported from the strength of the back.16

The centered alignment that Black established relieved unnecessary strain in the joints, and allowed students to become aware of and release extraneous tension in the body. It also permitted access to a balanced use of interior and exterior muscles of the legs on which to stand and to present clear, classical lines. The lack of strain established while standing was maintained in movement by coordinating the whole torso to move “in one piece.”17 In Black’s view, coordinating the movement of the torso as a unit offered a sense of ease and freedom that allowed artists uninhibited access to their own unique

16 Gladstone’s article refers to the upper torso as “the back,” which is the term that Black commonly uses to refer to the upper torso; Valerie Gladstone, “Maggie Black: Grande Dame of Dance,” Dance Ink, (July/August 1991): 14.; Zeller, “Teaching Through Time,” 61.

Because her alignment ideas respected the natural facility of each dancer’s body, Black did not require that students force themselves into idealized positions that many traditional syllabi demand. For instance, she guided students to the maximum degree of turn-out, or rotation from the hips, that they could maintain as long as it was equal in both hips and did not disrupt the centered alignment of the body. Gotheiner recalls, “Because I had tremendous turn-out she was always on me to turn out; but if you did not have that, she would not force you to do something you could not do.” Indeed, this became the orthodoxy of her training, work toward the ideals of classical technique to the degree that could be achieved without distorting the alignment of the body.

Black’s anatomically based pedagogy allowed ballet dancers whose bodies did not conform to the ideals of classical ballet to train successfully. It also attracted dancers from other disciplines who often were turned off by more traditional ballet classes that asked them to strain their bodies to fit a classical aesthetic. What emerged was unusual for the time: a “common ballet workspace” for ballet, modern, and musical theatre dancers of different shapes and sizes to train together.

**Black’s Class**

Black’s classes were straightforward, designed to support her concepts of alignment and movement efficiency. She narrowed the variety of vocabulary choices that

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18 Gladstone, “Maggie Black,” 16.

19 Zvi Gotheiner, interview with the author, July 2016.

she employed; this made her classes accessible to dancers with limited classical training and shifted the focus for all students, classical and contemporary, toward the quality of execution rather than the quantity of steps packed into each exercise. Bernal referred to her classes as “minimalist,” streamlined but sophisticated in their design.\(^{21}\) Black abandoned lengthy combinations or those performed on a sustained relevé that teachers often employed to build strength in traditional ballet classes. Instead, Black designed class so that students developed strength through maintaining and moving from a clearly aligned body. “She made the exercises so that you could exercise in them,” Gotheiner recalled fondly, “[Black’s] exercises were realistic.”\(^ {22}\) Abel also noted the accessibility of Black’s exercises which she felt were designed to develop strength through consistency and not complication: “[M]y take away…was that you are training to be successful every time you do a combination.”\(^ {23}\)

Black maintained a consistent order of exercises over the years in her barre work. She began barre with battements en cloche in attitude devant and derrière combined with a series of shoulder rolls.\(^ {24}\) She continued with pliés in second position, first position, and fifth position, foregoing any plié in fourth.\(^ {25}\) She then proceeded to battements tendus

\(^{21}\) Christina Bernal, interview with the author, August 2016.

\(^{22}\) Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

\(^{23}\) Kim Abel interview with the author, July 2016.

\(^{24}\) I utilize classical ballet terminology to describe this exercise, however, Black allowed dancers to perform this warm-up combination with legs parallel and with relaxed feet. According to Abel, Black gave this exercise to “get the blood flowing” not to refine the shape of a classical attitude devant or derrière.

\(^{25}\) Abel recalled Black giving grand pliés in fourth position rarely, estimating that she gave them ten times in Abel’s twenty years of training with her.
from first position and from fifth position, and battements dégagés, again, from both first position and from fifth position. She continued to rond de jambe à terre with cambré, rond de jambe en l’air, a repeat of battements en cloche in attitude, grand battements, battements frappés, and, finally, grand pliés in second position facing the barre. All exercises but plié were conducted on the right and left with a quick soutenu connecting the two sides, then repeated a second time after Black offered feedback to the dancers. Each exercise was rarely longer than thirty-two measures on each side and barre usually lasted a little under an hour. Black rarely gave a separate adagio exercise but incorporated adagio movements such as battements fondus and développés into the exercises that comprised the second half of the barre.26

Black rarely gave battements tendus that closed in on the downbeat, instead preferring to give a count to tendu out and a count to close in. Other times, she asked students to sustain the full stretch of the tendu position for up to four counts.27 At the barre, she preferred that dancers press to three-quarter pointe from a straight leg rather than to spring from a plié so as to build strength, and to reinforce the central alignment of the leg through the foot with the weight between the first and second toe. She did not have students spring to relevé until the center work.28 Zeller writes that Black never explained the unconventional placement of the frappé exercise after the grands battements but proposed that, as the use of the leg and foot in frappé is a preparation for

26 Kim Abel in conversation with the author, April 2017.


28 Zeller, “Teaching through Time,” 64.
allegro work, “she likely placed battements frappés at the end of barre, just as allegro combinations are done at the end of center work.”

The pedagogues I spoke with offered examples of shifts in Black’s barre work over the years. Abel remarked on a general trend from slower, longer combinations to simpler but speedier combinations by her last years of training with Black, and Bernal agreed that Black’s tempos increased over the years. Abel recalled that early in her training with Black, the pedagogue asked students to move directly into grand plié in second, first, and fifth positions, foregoing the two demi-plié that she later placed before the grand plié in first and fifth. Abel also recounted Black giving eight grand battements devant, à la seconde and derrière, on the right and left separately, a practice she scaled back significantly in later years, rarely giving even four grand battements en croix in an exercise. Abel also remembers in her early years with Black, students did not go immediately to the left during combinations but finished on each side in a sustained demi-plié. She believed that the quick soutenu between sides became commonplace as Black’s popularity grew and class sizes surged above fifty. Bernal remembered that Black sometimes gave a number of exercises from first position before moving to fifth position. While neither Abel nor Gotheiner share this recollection, former American Ballet Theater dancer Deborah Weaver recalled that she employed this approach at


30 Abel, interview, 2016.; Bernal, interview, 2016.

31 Abel, interview, 2016.

32 Bernal, interview, 2016.
various times,\textsuperscript{33} demonstrating an occasional deviation from her standard design.

Black began center work with an adagio, then continued with a terre à terre that could include battements tendus, battements dégagés, grand battements, linking steps, and a simple pirouette. Black then gave a waltz across the floor, sixteen to thirty-two changements, a petit allegro, a grand allegro, and a final grand plié in second position.\textsuperscript{34} Each combination was performed at least twice, with the waltz and allegro often repeated three or four times. While Black’s combinations at the barre were relatively short, her center exercises were longer—up to sixty-four measures on one side then immediately repeated on the second side—and Abel recalled that, while not being choreographically elaborate, they were quite “dancey.”\textsuperscript{35} As Black rented her own studio, she was not inhibited by time constraints and, while class usually lasted two hours, she would extend beyond that time if she felt it necessary.\textsuperscript{36}

Black’s use of épaulement varied throughout her teaching career. Zeller, who as a teenager worked with Black when the pedagogue retired to Long Island, recalled that “Black was opposed to the use of épaulement during barre work; she always insisted that her students looked straight ahead.”\textsuperscript{37} According to Gotheiner, Black was less emphatic about this when he trained with her: “It’s not that you could not [use épaulement], but she

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{33}] Deborah Weaver, Facebook instant message with the author, January 2017.
  \item[\textsuperscript{34}] Zeller, “Teaching through Time,” 66-67.
  \item[\textsuperscript{35}] Abel, interview, 2016.
  \item[\textsuperscript{36}] Zeller, “Teaching through Time,” 71.
  \item[\textsuperscript{37}] Ibid., 64.
\end{itemize}
would encourage you to look forward so you [could] get a sense of yourself and get present in your body.”  

Abel, however, recalled Black using the head and arm at the barre right away, but she agrees that Black discouraged épaulement if it was inhibiting a dancer from finding his or her alignment. It is reasonable that Black was more prescriptive about the use of épaulement when working with pre-professional students than with professional dancers, and even among professional dancers of different disciplines with different goals. All three remembered that Black did not discourage dancers from using épaulement in the center, and Abel recalled specific exercises that Black created in the center to help dancers discover the épaulement in the croisé and effacé lines that moved from the waist without losing the movement of the torso “in one piece.”

Black’s musicality was a source of some controversy. Former New York City Ballet dancer Stephanie Saland called her musicality “dubious,” and Bernal and Gotheiner remarked that her exercises did not always fit squarely with the music. Abel, on the other hand, felt that Black “was very musical,” and did not remember encountering “a combination or exercise that seemed awkward musically.” Despite different views on

38 Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

39 Abel, interview, 2016.

40 Ibid.


43 Abel, interview, 2016.
Black’s musicality, each pedagogue agreed that Black’s tempi were generally moderate and that she did not incorporate complex, syncopated rhythms into her exercises.

Black often stated, “Dance is physical first,” and her feedback in class reflected this idea. She spoke in general anatomical terms rather than using imagery and metaphor. “She had a way of giving you notes that was very specific on a physical level,” Gotheiner recalled, “The narrative changed to an attainable task where you could feel the difference between an aligned torso and an unaligned torso... [Her] remedies were physical, it was not like we [we]re deep, embodied spirits.”

The majority of Black’s feedback was to individuals with less focus on group corrections, and she maintained this practice, offering at least some level of consistent feedback to all participants in every class, even when class sizes sometimes topped eighty students. Zeller described her class as “a nonstop stream of corrections directed by name, toward specific dancers” and related that “the combination of [Black’s] eagle eye with her clear, concise language made every correction valuable.” To facilitate this individual specificity, Black often observed new dancers for a class or two before


45 Black did not have any formal anatomical training and spoke to general bodily landmarks such as “hips” or “shoulders” when giving feedback.

46 As a coach for specific roles, Black expanded her advice to address character and emotion. However, class corrections rarely strayed from a clear physical application.

47 Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

48 Abel, interview, 2016.

offering feedback in order to assess how best to begin their training.\textsuperscript{50} Black was encouraging but persistent, and would eventually reach a point where she demanded that students take ownership of their technique by incorporating a correction into their work, in order to move forward with their training. Abel recalled the phrase that she often used when she had reached the point of frustration with a student: “I’m not going to give you another correction until you…”\textsuperscript{51} and then stated the feedback that the dancer needed to apply.

If a dancer continually disregarded Black’s corrections, she did not hesitate to dismiss the student from class,\textsuperscript{52} and she was equally severe if a student was caught taking classes with other teachers.\textsuperscript{53} She disapproved of what she called “a little bit of this, and a little bit of that”\textsuperscript{54} in one’s training, feeling she could not be effective in cultivating change if she had to contend with a multitude of approaches. She spoke once of her frustration to Gotheiner about having “to start all over again”\textsuperscript{55} with dancers that had returned to her after what she considered to be ineffective training with another teacher. While Black’s pedagogy was progressive in that it honored the plurality of bodies and backgrounds of those in her classes, Black was, nonetheless, authoritarian in

\begin{enumerate}
\item Gotheiner, interview, 2016.
\item Abel, interview, 2016.
\item Carman, “Maggie Black (1930-2015),” 76.
\item Gotheiner, interview, 2016.
\item Gelsey Kirkland, “Remember Maggie Letter” (presentation at memorial event for Maggie Black, New York City, NY, February 28, 2016).
\item Gotheiner, interview, 2016.
\end{enumerate}
her demand for a total commitment to her work. It is important to note that Black’s class was a private professional class; she did not employ dancers, and, therefore did not wield economic power over those who trained with her. Participation in her class, therefore, was voluntary but conditional; for Black to devote herself to an artist’s training, that artist had to abide by her instruction.

Within that framework, Black’s students considered her class to be a safe and supportive environment where the focus was on the “simple, earnest, brass-tacks” work of ballet training itself and not on Black’s ego or that of any student. Regarding the relationship between participants, Abel found Black’s class to be “unique” in the dance world: “It was not competitive; people were very supportive of each other.” It is likely that Black’s focus on dancers as individuals reinforced this non-competitive atmosphere; she did not compare dancers and each artist’s growth had its own trajectory.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, dancers spoke of the ways that Black’s class prepared them for physically demanding workdays and allowed them to continue to grow technically and artistically as professional artists. Bernal shared her reason for devoting herself to Black’s training for eighteen years: “Because I was a better dancer at twelve than I was at ten that morning,” referencing her assessment of her technical ability at the end of Black’s class compared to the beginning. This embodied satisfaction with Black’s training offers a compelling reason that her students would seek to develop their own teaching based on her work. They felt the validity of her pedagogy in their own


57 Abel, interview, 2016.

58 Bernal, interview, 2016.
bodies and, therefore, sought to share those insights with their students.
Kim Abel is an example of a student whose pedagogy closely relates to that of her teacher, Maggie Black. Abel maintains what she understands of Black’s pedagogy with little attempt to change or embellish it because of her embodied understanding of its possibilities, and the capacity of the training to support the work of so many different, individual dancers. While the pedagogy she employs stems from her work with Black, Abel’s embodied investigation has shaped her interpretation of the work. Abel’s pedagogy, therefore, offers fertile territory to explore how even observant stewards of a lineage inflect the work with their own interpretations.

Abel’s Current Class

During my visit in July of 2016, Abel taught both intermediate and advanced levels of ballet at Steps on Broadway. Before each class, she moved around the room asking the names of new participants and confirming the names of returning students. Once she secured everyone’s name for herself, she settled the low noise of conversation in the room by exclaiming, “Okay, let’s swing out!” and directing dancers through Black’s battements en cloche in attitude exercise. Abel maintained Black’s order of barre exercises, beginning with the battements en cloche in attitude and finishing with four grand pliés in second position facing the barre. She started class on time and did not allow students to join the class after the battements tendus from first position. During barre, she weaved in and out of the portable barres placed about the studio. She spoke
throughout every combination, giving individual corrections, by name, to students, cueing the sequence of each exercise, and guiding dancers to focus on different placement and movement ideas. She spoke briefly after the first pass of the exercise, giving general notes on what she wanted to see improved during the repeat and relayed a handful of individual corrections to dancers around the room. Occasionally, she would take a moment in between combinations to work individually with a student. She would ask the student to repeat a portion of the combination and then stop at specific points so she could offer feedback. For example, during the battements dégagés from first position, she had one student perform the first half of the exercise. She had him pause in plié in second position, then instructed him to “Get [his] back on top of [his] hips,” to center his weight between both legs, and release the tension in his ankles. Then she asked him to relevé and directed him to, “Lengthen [his] muscles and rotate up.” When he did this, she exclaimed, “Right!” and continued, “That’s what I want you to feel! Go up and don’t tighten in that muscle. Good.” This was not a private conversation, everyone in the room could see and hear the exchange, allowing all to learn from feedback given to another student. Some other phrases she uttered include: “Feel your alignment, get your torso on top of your legs and feel the shape of it,” “Keep the strength of that standing side,” “Get on the center of both legs,” “Feel the arch, get to the full shape of that foot,” “Square it up,” “Don’t get bunchy, get to the full length of the muscle,” and “Find your turn-out from your hip joints.”

Abel continued Black’s sequence of exercises in center work, beginning with a

59 Abel, like Black, uses the term “back” to refer to the upper torso.
thirty-two bar adagio that finished and reset between sides. With the intermediate class in a smaller studio, she demonstrated the exercises facing the mirror but had dancers turn to face the windows at the back of the studio to perform them, making it a little easier to maneuver around the two support beams that were in the downstage portions of the classroom. In the advanced class in the larger studio, however, she did not have the students face away from the mirrors. She was more adamant that the intermediate students use the port de bras that she demonstrated than in the advanced class, and stopped the exercise to ask students to “do the arms that [she] showed.” During center work, she traveled around the periphery of the room, watching and correcting from different angles. She focused on clarity of transitions between steps and encouraged students to move from the whole torso without leading from the head or chest. She asked students to put their heels down in the landings from every jump and directed the pianist to play at a moderate tempo for the allegro to facilitate this directive. She had dancers repeat every combination twice and, if time permitted, she repeated the waltz, pirouette, petit allegro, and grand allegro a number of times.

The population of dancers in the room consisted of classical and contemporary dancers. While the intermediate class was comprised of mostly pre-professionals, professional dancers took the class as well. Some women put on pointe shoes in the center in the professional class, and, while Abel did not ask them do this, she did give

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60 The primary reason she gave to me for turning to the back of the intermediate studio was the placement of the pillars, but she recognized that the facing offered the pedagogical advantage of compelling dancers to feel rather than look at the movement. In my classes with Abel, she often had us turn away from the mirrors for just such a purpose.
variations for certain steps in the center exercises for these individuals. She also gave variations within the grand allegro to accommodate the gender specific vocabulary of classical ballet for men and women, and asked the pianist to change to a slower tempo when the men performed the exercise.

Abel’s demeanor was positive throughout the class and, while being clear about her expectations, she never belittled a student. I observed students chat with her for a moment before class or come up after to speak with her, and Abel either answered their queries or promised to find ways to address their concerns in the next class.

Abel’s Training with Black

Abel began her training with Black in 1974. She started her ballet training in her hometown of Gainesville, Florida, and describes it as “not terrible, but not good,” and recreational; she did not take class more than twice a week until she went to Atlanta Ballet School’s summer program at age fifteen. At age seventeen, Abel moved to New York, where she studied for a year and a half at the Joffrey Ballet School before joining the “Disney on Parade” tour. After her brief foray into musical theatre, Abel returned to New York to again pursue ballet. She briefly performed as a back-up dancer with Radio City Music Hall’s corps de ballet and a colleague there invited her to Black’s class.

Having had her fill of unsatisfying professional classes, a skeptical Abel actually watched Black’s class before participating. Abel was a quick convert, however, appreciating the straightforward, logical progression of Black’s exercises that prioritized the mechanics of dance over complex choreography or tricky musicality: “I never had trouble getting

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61 Kim Abel, email message to author, February 27, 2017.
combinations,” she explained, “so to do brain teaser combinations that didn’t address how to approach it physically was boring to me. I had trouble doing it physically.”

Abel took Black’s class for the first time the day after she observed and remembers the initial feedback she received from Black: “She kept saying to me, ‘You're fine, you're fine, you're just too tense.’” Abel appreciated Black’s encouraging demeanor and attentiveness, which she said continued even as class sizes grew upwards of eighty people: “We would be so packed into those barres that everyone had to face inward yet you still felt like you were getting individual attention.”

In her initial observation and, later, in her own practice with Black, Abel appreciated the repetition of exercises at the barre. “[T]o be able to do something, stop and reset; do it again and address things [I] knew [I] wanted to improve made sense.” The repetition of the exercises, with a chance to apply Black’s corrective feedback, offered her the opportunity to take ownership of her progress; she could reinforce new movement and placement patterns in her body during the refrain of the combination.

Through her training with Black, Abel came to understand that the difficulty she had with dancing “physically” was her inability to keep her pelvis vertically aligned. Perhaps due to weak lower abdominals or tight hip flexors or a combination of the two, she found this to be a consistent struggle. She persevered because she could feel the

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62 Abel, interview, 2016.

63 Ibid.


65 Abel, interview, 2016.

66 Ibid.
progress she was making through Black’s watchful eye and clear, consistent feedback. She described the feeling when she was finally able to establish vertical alignment in her pelvis along with a consistent placement of her shoulders over her hips as being akin to a deep exhalation of breath, she was finally able to release the tension she had been holding in her body to support herself.\(^\text{67}\)

Abel also observed the progress of other dancers. She recalls noticing a fellow dancer “getting up really high”\(^\text{68}\) in her pelvis, and seeing the stretch of the dancer’s arch increase. Consequently, Abel perceived an interconnectivity in Black’s methodology: the alignment of the torso did not just allow her weight to be centered as she stood, but it also allowed for greater awareness and control of her extremities to create clean, classical lines.\(^\text{69}\)

Abel recalls that in her early years with Black, the pedagogue did not articulate her methodology in full to her students: “It was much more of a process for us,” Abel explained.\(^\text{70}\) Abel pieced together her understanding of Black’s theories from Black’s pithy corrections, her observation of Black with others dancers, and her internal, physical feeling of the work. Abel was then able to discern an “order to how you worked on things so that it was most efficient”\(^\text{71}\) which she described to me as: “First, you get your pelvis

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\(^{67}\) Abel, interview, 2016.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.

\(^{70}\) Ibid.

\(^{71}\) Carman, “Maggie Black (1930-2015),” 80.
up on your legs, you get your back on your pelvis, your pelvis and your back work together…in one piece, and your turnout comes off that evenly. Your head, your arms come off your torso.”  

Abel understood Black’s systematic approach to placement and understood that prioritizing alignment was necessary for students to move freely and efficiently: “The whole point of alignment,” Abel explained, “was to create greater movement quality.”

Abel considered Black’s training to be comprehensive, believing that Black had given her the tools to approach the range of classical vocabulary that she encountered. “From a rational or mental point of view...she ha[d] given me the tools of how to approach and do anything.” Abel understood through Black’s training that each separate step did not require its own idiosyncratic means of execution, but could be analyzed and executed by adhering to Black’s concepts of alignment and efficiency of movement.

Abel credits her training with Black for the successful classical career she had with Eglevsky Ballet and with New York City Ballet principal dancer Edward Villella’s touring company, Edward Villella and Friends. In 1983, Villella asked Abel to join him as ballet mistress for the newly formed Ballet Oklahoma, which he had been hired to direct. She retired from dancing and accepted the position. Although she had been teaching throughout her years of training with Black, and incorporating Black’s ideas into her teaching, she began a consistent, focused study of Black’s pedagogy in Oklahoma.

72 Abel, interview, 2016.


74 Ibid.
The Development of Abel’s Pedagogy

Abel began the process of developing her own pedagogy from an embodied analysis of Black’s theories and methodologies. As Black had done for three years in Europe, fine-tuning her own pedagogical approach, Abel studied alone in the studio in front of the mirror. Every day, before teaching company class, she worked privately to reaffirm Black’s theories on placement and ease of movement, to develop her eye for assessing and offering feedback to others, and to deconstruct Black’s class design.

“I started working really basically and really slowly,” Abel recounted, “[T]endu out and stay, tendu in and stay…and I wouldn’t look [in the mirror] until I finished.” Abel checked her physical feeling for movement and alignment against what she saw in the mirror. If it felt “off” she would look to ascertain why. Had she dropped her pelvis behind her mid-line, was she carrying too much tension in her hips? She observed what her placement looked like in the mirror when she felt correctly aligned and what it looked like when she did not. Through a daily comparison of her internal feeling and its outward manifestation, she developed an eye for alignment imbalances and movement inefficiency. In this way, she reaffirmed Black’s theories as mediated through her own body and trained her own eye to analyze and offer feedback to dancers in her subsequent classes.

To better understand the efficiency of Black’s class design, Abel analyzed her


76 Abel, interview, 2016.

77 Ibid.
streamlined use of ballet vocabulary. For example, Abel reviewed the elements that Black included in her barre exercises and found that, instead of traversing the range of classical vocabulary, Black tended to limit herself to certain positions and coordinations. Abel characterized this as valuing “types of movement” over “steps,” and came to believe that as long she included these “types of movement” in her barre work, then she had designed a barre that allowed students to build strength, warm their muscles, and “get on their legs.” These movements included battements tendus and battements dégagés from first and fifth positions at a variety of tempi, to facilitate a deep warming of the muscles through different rhythms. She also included a transfer of weight, whether chassé or temps lié, a sustained press to three-quarter pointe, a movement from three-quarter pointe to plié, a sustained retiré and a sustained attitude devant and derrière. Finally, she felt it necessary to give extensions from a fondu, extensions through développé, and extensions brushing from 5th position with some of these extensions performed with a straight supporting leg and some with the supporting leg in plié.

Another avenue for investigation that helped Abel crystallize her ideas on the logic of class structure was the contrast between Black’s classes and those of other teachers — again, mediated through her own bodily investigation. Recalling the exercise patterns given by other teachers, Abel would consider why she found them less valuable to her than Black’s. “I would ask myself, ‘Why does this [movement pattern] not feel good to me? Why did this never feel good to me because this is a totally valid movement.’” She spoke specifically of her dislike for closing directly to demi-plié from

78 Abel, interview, 2016.

79 Ibid.
a battement tendu early in the barre. She surmised that her dislike stemmed from her inability to maintain the clear placement of her pelvis and, therefore, unwittingly “move off [her] weight” when attempting it. She concluded that the simplicity of Black’s arrangement of vocabulary allowed students space to feel what they were doing so that they could reinforce clear placement and movement habits.

In addition to deconstructing Black’s design, Abel used her embodied perspective to create her own classes. This, too, was a pedagogical tool of Black’s who, at least for the first half of her teaching career, famously gave herself the daily class that she would give to her students. Abel’s reasoning mirrored Black’s—she wanted to know how it felt for herself. As she planned the class, Abel thought about the needs of certain dancers and the company’s current repertoire, using both as springboards for developing exercises. She also assessed if combinations felt coordinated and “organic.” She found that, as a teacher, “you can make really interesting combinations in your head but when you try them they feel like crap.” She, therefore, used her own physical feeling to gauge if a combination felt coordinated, focused, and accessible enough for the dancers she was teaching. If not, she would simplify to allow for the clarity of design that she remembered from Black’s classes. While being straightforward, she was, nonetheless,

80 Abel, interview, 2016.
82 Abel, interview, 2016.
83 Ibid.
keen to maintain the “dancey”\(^{84}\) quality that she had experienced in Black’s classes, both because she had enjoyed this aspect as a dancer, and because, pedagogically, it reinforced the idea that the ultimate goal of prioritizing alignment was for the sake of freedom of movement.\(^{85}\)

**Abel’s Current Teaching as it Relates to Black**

An examination of Abel's current teaching practices provides detailed support for her teaching as part of Black's legacy. Her twenty years of training with Black combined with her private investigation of Black’s ideas in preparation for her own teaching have created the framework for Abel’s pedagogy. It is the lens through which she views and approaches classical ballet training.

Abel maintains the basic design of Black’s classes. The only element of Black’s barre work that Abel omitted for a time is the initial battements en cloche in attitude and its refrain after the first performance of the rond de jambe en l’air exercise. When I began training with Abel, she did not include this exercise, proceeding instead to the grand plié. Abel had included the exercise previously when teaching in New York, however, one of the dancers that was instrumental in arranging the private class that Abel taught in North Texas was not particularly fond of the exercise so Abel removed it. As Abel conceived of this exercise as a “dynamic stretching”\(^{86}\) pre-barre exercise to raise body temperature and lubricate the joints, she did not consider it essential to class if students felt warm enough from their own pre-class regimen to proceed without it. She reinstated the battements en

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84 Abel, interview, 2016.

85 Ibid.

86 Kim Abel, email to the author, April 2, 2017.
cloche after I inquired about them following my reading of Zeller’s article “Teaching through Time: Tracing Ballet’s Pedagogical Lineage in the Work of Maggie Black” published by Dance Chronicle in 2009; in which Zeller mentioned them as part of Black’s barre work. My sense was that Abel felt reconnected to her lineage after reading the article herself and wanted to reintroduce this element of Black’s methodology into her own work. The initial battements en cloche have remained a consistent part of her class ever since, however, she only includes them before the repeat of the rond de jambe en l’air exercise if the exercise was particularly challenging that day or if she perceived students to be gripping in their muscles to accomplish it. Abel preserves Black’s placement of the frappé exercise after grand battements, yet when asked, she did not have a clear pedagogical reason for this, thus revealing an unconscious patterning after one’s mentor that can occur as a pedagogy moves from one generation to the next.87

As she found it useful to her own development in Black’s classes, Abel continues to repeat the exercises at the barre. I have participated in Abel’s class on a few occasions where she had only an hour to teach a full class, and while she simplified and combined combinations to accomplish this, she repeated every barre combination except grand pliés. That she would persist in this repetition, despite a restricted time frame, illustrates the extent to which she values this pedagogical tool from Black’s methodology.

Abel continues to value the simplicity of Black’s exercises and designs her barre work to include the “types of movement” she determined to be consistent in Black’s barre exercises. Like Black, she rarely gives quick battements tendus that close in on the

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87 Abel agreed that Zeller’s proposal relating the placement of the frappé exercise at the barre to the placement of allegro work in the center seemed plausible, however, Abel did not find it objectionable if a teacher placed it elsewhere in the barre.
downbeat, but usually allows one count to extend the leg and one count to close. She also carries forward Black’s partiality to pressing to relevé rather than springing to relevé at the barre.

Certain preferential patterns have emerged from Abel’s own private analysis of Black’s pedagogy. Abel frequently creates space between movements, or sustains movements for a number of counts as she did when she worked alone to incorporate Black’s ideas into her own teaching. During her grand plié exercise, she often gives four counts to stand on both feet, whether in first, second, or fifth position, with the port de bras moving from fifth en bas to fifth en haut, not primarily as an arm exercise, but as a chance to feel the alignment of the torso. She frequently gives her “favorite grand battement exercise;”\textsuperscript{88} grand battement on count one, close to fifth position on count 2, and stand in fifth position for two counts, twice en croix, to allow students the opportunity to feel their placement in the recovery to fifth position from grand battements devant, à la seconde, and derrière. While Black also gave sustained movements, the frequency of their use in Abel’s work comes as much from her own investigation as from her training with Black.

As was her experience with Black, Abel assigns clear head and arm movements at the barre when demonstrating combinations. She is fairly insistent that students use the port de bras that she demonstrates,\textsuperscript{89} but is more permissive in allowing variation in the

\textsuperscript{88} Abel, interview, 2016.

\textsuperscript{89} Abel is often more lenient with professionals than pre-professional students regarding épaulement.
degree to which each dancer turns his or her head in order to foster an “organic”\(^\text{90}\) sense of head movement. Also like Black, Abel continues to design specific center exercises to facilitate a clear understanding of the upper body facing in croisé and effacé lines.

Abel carries forward the sense of musicality that she felt inherent in Black’s work: “The music [in Black’s class] was used to support the physicality of the movement,” Abel explained, “for the purpose of learning and advancing specific ideas.”\(^\text{91}\) Like Black, Abel’s use of music is straightforward; she does not use complex, syncopated rhythms. She encourages students to find individual phrasing that works for their own sense of movement. She occasionally encourages dancers to ignore the music for a time if it is too fast or slow for them to maintain a coordinated movement of the whole torso or to establish classical lines; thus prioritizing proper execution of the step over the timing of the step. While Black’s musicality is a source of disagreement among her students, Abel’s exercises are musically clear and her combinations fit squarely with the music.

Abel had the most autonomy as a teacher in the professional class in which I met her, and, in that environment, she maintained many of the defining characteristics of Black’s teaching style. She observed new students for a class without offering feedback in order to familiarize herself with their movement patterns and to ascertain how best to assist them. She honored Black’s focus on the individual, giving attention to every student by relaying specific feedback to each participant, no matter their ability or rank. Having trained her eye through her own embodied investigation, Abel, like Black before her, was able to assess small alignment and movement issues and, thus, gave precise,

\(^{90}\) Abel, interview, 2016.

\(^{91}\) Carman, “Maggie Black (1930-2015),” 81.
actionable feedback to dancers often just as they were starting to move inefficiently. She retained much of Black’s verbiage to communicate with dancers, referring to a vertically-aligned pelvis as being “up” and advising dancers to move “in one piece.” She also used little imagery or metaphor in her corrections. Unlike Black, she never refused to work with a student or asked someone not to return to class, but she did occasionally warn students that such a measure was not off the table by stating, “I’m not going to continue to take your money, if you’re not going to listen to what I’m saying.” Abel’s preservation of defining elements of Black’s pedagogy in a teaching environment where she had the most control demonstrates her affinity for Black’s work and that, if given the chance, she would teach as much like Black as she could.

As ballet mistress for professional companies, adjunct instructor for magnet high school and college programs, and ballet teacher for a professional class at Steps in New York, Abel has spent much of her career teaching in environments where she has limited autonomy, and she has adapted her teaching to accommodate the distinct parameters of each environment. The classes I observed specifically for this research, offer an example of such an environment. In these classes, Abel was limited to an hour and twenty-five minutes for the class, in contrast to Black who could stretch class beyond two hours in her own studio. To stay within this timeframe, Abel gave most of her feedback during the exercises, and offered only a few general ideas for the class and a handful of individualized corrections between combinations. These classes were open, as opposed to private, professional classes, and, therefore, Abel engaged with a population of students

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92 Black famously cued dancers with the phrase “Get your butt up.” Abel tends to say “Get your pelvis up,” but occasionally uses Black’s endearingly crass phrase.
that Black refused to deal with—those not fully devoted to her methodology. To relate to this population, Abel supported her individual feedback with more general group corrections and explained the theoretical basis for her work with an acknowledgement of other approaches. For those unable to assimilate her straightforward, anatomical feedback she occasionally resorted to imagery and metaphor. She also gave feedback to students right away without waiting to observe them first, holding true to her desire to offer individual feedback to all participants, but recognizing that she may not get the chance to develop a long term working relationship with dancers cycling in and out of open classes. For students who attended her classes consistently, however, she was able to develop a teacher-student relationship that afforded deeper study into the concepts of anatomical placement and freedom of movement that Abel has carried from Black’s pedagogy into her own.

Conclusion

For the most part, Abel affirms through her own pedagogy a fidelity to Black’s work. Abel continues Black’s theories of placement and ease of movement, she maintains a similarity in class design and content, and she maintains many of the defining characteristics of Black’s teaching style. Abel’s pedagogy can colloquially be described as demonstrating an “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” relationship to its forebear.

Abel’s training with Black introduced her to what she considers to be a comprehensive framework for high-level classical ballet training that honors the unique bodies of individual dancers. Consequently, she undertook a rigorous, embodied investigation of the work. She reaffirmed Black’s theories in her own body, deconstructed Black’s streamlined use of vocabulary, developed her classes to be
accessible and supportive of Black’s placement and movement ideas, and trained her own eye to offer precise, practical feedback to her own students. In essence, she sought to meet Black’s pedagogy as she had experienced it in her own training.

In practice, Abel has had to adjust her teaching to the distinct realities of environments quite different from Black’s private class. She maintains Black’s theoretical framework and similar class structure suggesting that, for her, the integrity of Black’s pedagogy lies within these non-negotiable elements. She is, however, responsive and flexible in her teaching style to each unique situation, honoring certain aspects of Black’s teaching practice while foregoing others in order to train the dancers in front of her as best she can.

Abel’s nimbleness with elements of Black’s teaching suggests Abel’s pedagogy is not merely an imitation of Black’s. Supporting this idea is Abel’s preference for certain patterns in her class design that come from her personal investigation and not from her memories of Black’s classes. While such variations are minor, they suggest that Abel is not simply a passive conduit for Black’s pedagogy, but is an active agent working with a pedagogy that is uniquely her own. Her embodied investigation of Black’s pedagogy reconstituted the work into a new pedagogy supported by Abel’s insight and intellect. She has, thus, created a living pedagogy that she continues to adjust and reframe whenever and wherever she teaches.
Chapter 3

The Pedagogy of Zvi Gotheiner

Zvi Gotheiner is an example of a student who draws significantly from his teacher, Maggie Black, but who also rejects or reframes aspects of her work in response to his own reflective study. Gotheiner trained with Black for over eleven years and, like Abel, had few other influences in his training. However, where Abel has maintained much of Black’s pedagogy in her own work, Gotheiner has experimented with other theoretical ideas and modes of transmission in his teaching. His embodied understanding of Black’s pedagogy, however, provides the framework for his inquiry and many aspects of her methodology continue to manifest in his teaching practice.

Gotheiner’s Current Class

Gotheiner currently teaches a regular class at City Center in New York. The class is scheduled to begin at 10am, but when I arrived to observe and participate in 2016, students told me that it usually did not start until around 10:15. Gotheiner entered class unassumingly nodding to the pianist and a couple of dancers but offering no general greeting before giving the first exercise. Gotheiner allowed latecomers to wander into class well after barre had begun, in contrast to most teachers, Abel included, who rarely allow students into class after the first or second combination. Gotheiner never raised his deep baritone voice throughout class and it often became inaudible when the pianist was playing. Despite this, he continually spoke throughout, mostly narrating the exercises as they happened. He gave few general corrections except for constantly reminding
participants to breathe. He gave individual corrections privately to dancers as he walked around the room, and did not reiterate them for the rest of the class to consider. Occasionally, Gotheiner walked over to a dancer and put his hands gently onto the student’s shoulders or waist, often for several measures of an exercise. In my observation, he spoke little, if at all during this exchange, and the student continued to perform the exercise without stopping. During the barre, he constantly moved around the room; in center, he shifted from a chair at the front stage left corner of the room to the front stage right corner of the room on the repeat of the exercise. During a chassé en avant in the center terre à terre exercise, he instructed one dancer to move his pelvis and shoulders at the same time, which brought to my mind Black’s concept of moving the torso “in one piece.”

Gotheiner structured his class similarly to Black’s with only a few deviations. He did not begin with battements en cloche in attitude devant and derrière but he did incorporate the shoulder rolls from Black’s initial exercise into a simple tendu from first position facing the barre. After grand plié he gave battements tendus from first and fifth, as Black had done; however, he did not return to first position for a battement dégagé exercise, but instead presented two separate battements dégagés exercises from fifth position. He continued to rond de jambe à terre and rond de jambe en l’air and did incorporate Black’s use of the battements en cloche in attitude after these exercises. He concluded, as Black had, with grand battements, the unconventionally placed frappés, and grand pliés in second position facing the barre. Similarly to Black, he did not include a separate adagio at the barre but incorporated fondu, développé and other en l’air movements into the rond de jambe and grand battement exercises. Like Black’s class, all
exercises but plié were performed on the right and left and then repeated a second time, sometimes, at a quicker tempo, other times at the same moderate pace. The length of Gotheiner’s combinations were often as much as sixty-four measures, many times with an A and B section, where Black’s exercises were usually no more than thirty-two measures.

In the center, Gotheiner followed Black’s general progression of exercises. He began with an adagio, proceeded to a terre à terre exercise, a waltz from the corner, sixteen changements, or a similar sauté exercise on two feet that remained in place, and a petit allegro. He did not give a grand allegro exercise when I took class but I was told that he has a few standard ones that he gives from time to time. Gotheiner gave extended waltz and allegro exercises, expanding from sixteen bar exercises that Black and Abel gave, to thirty-two bars. However, Black and Abel gave sixteen bar exercises that went immediately from the right to left side while Gotheiner’s exercises continued on one side until dancers had moved from the upstage corner on one side to the downstage corner on the other. From my perspective, Gotheiner’s waltz and allegro exercises took the “danciness” that Abel remembered and maintained from Black’s class to a choreographic level by incorporating numerous directional changes, steps that reversed direction, and vocabulary that was not strictly classical such as step drags with the working leg in à la seconde. The day that I participated in the class, I found some of the transitional steps awkward at first, but once I clarified them for myself, I enjoyed these long sequences. The other participants seemed to appreciate them as well, attempting them from each

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93 Domingo Estrada, Jr. (professional dance artist), in conversation with the author, November 2016.
corner at least five or six times.

The population of dancers in the room was a mix of classical and contemporary dancers, both amateurs and professionals. I did not witness any preferential treatment toward any dancers in his classes; I could perceive no hierarchy among dancers. It was an inviting space and noticeably quiet. The pianist’s music echoed through the room but conversations were minimal. I perceived it to be a calm environment where dancers focused on their own training for the day.

I observed that Gotheiner made himself available to students before and after class. I watched him work for several minutes with a dancer who was having persistent ankle discomfort. Gotheiner guided him through a series of demi pliés and relevés with his feet parallel and hip distance apart, bringing the dancer’s awareness to the subtle instability in his ankle as he moved up and down.

**Gotheiner’s Training with Black**

Gotheiner began his study with Black in 1978. A native of Israel, Gotheiner was studying classical violin when he saw a performance of the Batsheva Dance Company, which inspired him to begin dance training at the late age of 17. In 1978, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation awarded him a scholarship to study in New York.94 The now famous choreographer, Ohad Naharin, a close friend of Gotheiner’s, invited him to Black’s class the day after he arrived in America. Gotheiner immediately embraced her teaching: “The whole idea that you can create a narrative in the body from a placement point of view was very attractive right away,” he recalls. He related it to his musical

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training: “My last [violin] teacher was working in similar terms, in that the sound you produce is different when you are centered. It’s a different relationship of weight of the arms…and with music, you hear it. The sound you create when you are centered is far superior.”

Gotheiner understood and embraced Black’s emphasis on centered placement, yet, in the time that he trained with her, he did not recall her fully articulating her methodology: “[I] knew that [Black] was talking about placement, and movement efficiency, clarity of line but she did not have a formula that she declared about class.”

Instead, Gotheiner characterized Black’s teaching in instructional, not theoretical, terms: “You do as she tells you to do and you get better,” he said simply. He felt the improvement is his own body and he witnessed it in other dancers.

Gotheiner appreciated Black’s design of combinations: “The structure of the exercise was to allow you to learn something.” He contrasted this with his work with previous teachers in Israel: “I felt that most of the exercises that I got from other teachers were [given] with the intention that I would fail.” Black’s straightforward combinations showed him that success in his dancing could be achieved by simplifying and focusing on how he was moving, not by merely persevering through difficult combinations.

Gotheiner also valued the chance to repeat the barre combinations, remarking that

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95 Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.
the first time allowed him to become familiar with the exercise and the second time to move clearly in it. He also felt that this approach warmed up his body better than others he had experienced: “It was not just getting artificially warm, it was deep into the connective tissue.”

Gotheiner appreciated Black’s use of moderate tempi, and still recognizes an embodied preference for a slower pace: “I need the time, I need the slow tempo. Some people they are so used to doing things so fast, I can do it, but I feel superficial in some way, [like] I’m not fully fulfilling it.” Black’s use of sustained steps in her combinations also allowed him the space to fulfill each step to his liking.

Gotheiner regarded Black’s manner in class fondly. It was not just that her demeanor was positive, he found her generally more personable than teachers with whom he had trained. “She was goofy and funny,” he recalled, and contrasted her with the “melancholic and overly dramatic” stereotypical ballet teacher interested less in teaching than on a bygone performing career. He recognized a pedagogical element to Black’s accessibility: “You didn’t feel like you had to put on an act for her.” He believed that Black’s demeanor took focus off her and allowed dancers to focus on their own technical growth.

Gotheiner, however, recognized a negative aspect to Black’s character. He said

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100 Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.
that she could be “militant”\textsuperscript{104} about her approach to ballet training. Upon reflection, Gotheiner recognizes that Black may have been emphatic about her point of view to not be dismissed due to the sexism of the day.\textsuperscript{105} Despite this legitimate rationale, he expressed uneasiness with the loyalty that she demanded of her students.\textsuperscript{106} For his own training, though, he felt no desire to stray: “I got addicted to her teaching…[N]o class would prepare me for the day of being a professional dancer like her class.”\textsuperscript{107} Gotheiner felt nurtured by Black, and the improvement of his ballet technique and his self-confidence allowed him to pursue a fruitful career with Joyce Trisler Dance Company and Feld Ballets/NY in the US, and later The Batsheva Dance Company in Israel. In 1989, he formed ZviDance, a company build around his own choreographic works.

**The Development of Gotheiner’s Pedagogy**

Gotheiner’s teaching career began in 1980, when his own performing career was put on hold after he had sustained an injury dancing with Feld Ballets/NY. While recuperating, he began giving private classes to a fellow dancer in her kitchen. Through these informal classes, he discovered an interest in teaching and soon took on a full class schedule.\textsuperscript{108}

Initially, Gotheiner sought advice from Black about teaching; but he found her to

\textsuperscript{104} Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
be surprisingly reticent. Gotheiner got the impression that Black felt he was too inexperienced to teach, and perhaps feared teaching may distract him from a substantial performing career. Whatever the reason, she did not offer to assist him, and he, therefore, was left to develop his teaching on his own.

Although Black declined to assist him, Gotheiner modeled his teaching after Black’s practice. As she had given consistent verbal feedback to her students, he followed suit, describing himself as “much more talkative” than he is in his current teaching. He also adopted some of Black’s adamancy: “[Black] was militant...I learned from her to be militant, too.” Gotheiner came to question this approach following a fateful confrontation with a fellow pedagogue at a faculty workshop in Frankfurt, Germany. What began as a difference of opinion about the proper execution of relevé turned into a shouting match. Unsettled by the exchange, Gotheiner reevaluated his approach: “I don’t like to be in conflict...I don't want to live my life like that. Ultimately, I recognized that I could go much further [in my teaching] when I was not in a power struggle.” Gotheiner altered the trajectory of his teaching, turning away from the “militancy” he had learned from Black toward teaching from a more inclusive point of view. “I am not truth,” he told me, “Just one element of thinking a certain way.”

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110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.
While Gotheiner told me he had spent some time working privately on his own in front of the mirror to investigate Black’s pedagogical ideas, he had not done so in a prolonged, systematic way. Instead, he focused much of his personal investigation on developing ways to describe his embodied feeling: “When I started teaching and I had to communicate with dancers...All of a sudden images became important to me.”\textsuperscript{114} On this point, he could not rely on Black’s teaching, as he noted: “[Black] used very little imagery.”\textsuperscript{115} Thus, he began his own journey to find words to share his embodied understanding of ballet with his students so that they could understand it as well.

While Gotheiner searched for imagery to express his embodied perspective, he continued to repeat phrases that Black often used. However, as he began to move away from Black’s unyielding approach, he also began to question the efficacy of some of her directives. Particularly, Gotheiner was concerned with Black’s oft-used phrase “Get up on your legs.” He acknowledged and agreed with Black’s intention behind it: “I think for her, it was, maybe, a way to zero in on how [a dancer’s pelvis] is behind them or tucked under.”\textsuperscript{116} He had also witnessed how using the phrase had been effective in her classes. He discovered, however, it was not recreating the same positive results in his classes. He noticed that when he used the phrase dancers would become more tense and constricted in their movement, not less so. His reflection on this point led him to other sources of reference for his teaching.

\textsuperscript{114} Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
Gotheiner began to research what he termed “body-mind connection,” which opened up another area of pedagogical exploration for him beyond his training with Black: “[Black] would say, ‘Now, dancing is first physical.’...I felt that there was another realm [that] you need to come to consciousness about.” Gotheiner began to explore the effect that words can have on the body. “The words that you use are tremendously important. They connect into the mind and they create a system in the body that is reflective of it.” He used his newfound language sensitivity to analyze Black’s cue to dancers to vertically align their pelvises: “[T]he language ‘Get up on your legs’ creates an image. The background of it is negative, it is that your body is collapsed. When you dance with that perception, no matter how much you fix it, it's always collapsed, because your mind produces that image.” He continued, “I realized for myself again that dancers are not collapsed. I mean, they stand up. But that extra power to stand up is creating tension and, for me, unnecessary power that can block [them] and contort [them].” This led Gotheiner to reject Black’s phrasing and the image he felt it conveyed.

Currently, Gotheiner says very little, but facilitates his students’ own somatic investigations of placement to discover centered alignment: “I think center is the least effortful place and the most simple one,” he explained, “[W]hen you strip away all the complications, it’s there—it’s evident. It’s a natural thing for your body to do if you

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117 Gotheiner did not offer details about the specific body-mind literature or techniques that he used to reshape his pedagogy.

118 Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.
allow it...When I teach master classes, I actually work with people changing their alignment, which is not easy to do. But for a few minutes they can...they go straight up and down in their plié. Most people do not realize they have that option,” he laments, concluding, “Most of us are unconscious of the body.”

The exchange I witnessed in his open classes when he placed his hands on the torso of a dancer for an extended period during a combination was also an attempt to facilitate a dancer’s consciousness of the body. This tactile feedback was his reminder for the student to feel the “extraneous tension” in the body. It was this tension and a lack of awareness of this tension that Gotheiner believed prevented a dancer from maintaining centered alignment.

Gotheiner spoke of an emotional component to carrying tension in the body: “[T]ension is parallel to negativity,” he explained, “… the mind that is upset, unsatisfied, overly ambitious will produce tension in the body, it will contort you, you will not be able to come to center in your body.”

To reinforce a dancer’s positive self-image, Gotheiner avoids giving negative feedback. He tries not to say a dancer is doing something incorrectly. He also relaxes traditional etiquette of ballet classes in order to foster an environment of self-care, allowing dancers to alter his combinations or to stop to stretch in the middle of an exercise. Gotheiner is philosophical about the dancers I observed entering his class late, preferring to take a sympathetic view of the practice, “They could have stayed in bed, but they came to class,” he said.

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121 Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.
sense of self-acceptance that enables dancers to have a self-affirming view of their bodies: “I want to facilitate the conversation with dancers that, actually, the body is fantastic: that it’s great, that it’s naturally good…[Y]ou don’t come to class to break yourself down into pieces and build it up again.”\(^{125}\)

Gotheiner believes that being present in the body and having a positive self-image not only helps dancers discover their alignment, but also leads to authentic performance onstage. “The whole idea that [you] need to do something to get attention…onstage as a performer, that you need to come to life so that people notice you…I invert it actually.”\(^{126}\) By inverting it, he means performers should initially focus inward, in order become conscious of the movement within themselves, otherwise, they will be “artificial about the way they express the movement.”\(^{127}\) This is the ultimate goal of his pedagogy—authenticity through conscious movement.

**Gotheiner’s Current Teaching as It Relates to Black**

While Gotheiner’s pedagogical journey has moved away from a strict reproduction of Black’s theories and methodologies, her work still undergirds his own teaching practice. Elements of her methodology remain in his work, although they are often invested with a slightly different emphasis.

Like Abel, Gotheiner maintains the basic design of Black’s class with only minor

\(^{125}\) Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

\(^{126}\) Ibid.

\(^{127}\) Ibid.
variations. As the straightforward nature of Black’s exercises was important to his development, he strives to uphold such simplicity in his own work: “I still try and make the exercise for exercise sake,” he declares. “I also realize that if the exercise is too complicated then I'm failing [as a teacher], I'm not successful.” Gotheiner maintains Black’s moderate tempi and, like Abel, he incorporates Black’s practice of sustaining a step such as battement tendu for a number of counts. Gotheiner continues to repeat the exercises at the barre as Black did. However, where Black used the repetition to allow dancers an opportunity to incorporate her feedback into their bodies, Gotheiner utilizes the repetition of the exercise to foster self-analysis, so dancers can discover for themselves alternative ways of moving by “being present” in their bodies. His desire to promote contemplation may also explain his shift from Black’s thirty-two phrase exercises to sixty-four phrase exercises, as it gives students more time to reflect on their practice in each combination.

Like Black, Gotheiner avoids tricky musical phrasings and syncopations in his classes, in spite of being a musician himself and a choreographer who values musicality: “[My exercises] are not for the musicality of it. If you want to learn musicality go to music class...I understand there is a value to it, having fun integrating music in[to class], but [I] made a decision to not make it the main focus.” From my personal observation, he does allow the pianist to indulge in lush music that echoes through the studio, but Gotheiner’s exercises are straightforward and do not mirror the intricacies of the music. I

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128 Gotheiner, interview, 2016.

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid.
did find, however, that, due to studio acoustics, the echo of the music made conversation difficult, and, perhaps inadvertently, facilitated the quiet, introspective study that I witnessed from the dancers.

While Gotheiner shows clear head and arm positions during barre work, he does not comment if dancers choose a different arm coordination or focus straight ahead with the hand on the hip or the arm in second position. He is similarly relaxed about adherence to the épaulement demonstrated in center work. While he does indicate specific positioning in the upper body in his demonstrations, he allows dancers to use the head and arms of their choice.

The persona that Gotheiner cultivates for himself as a teacher, while quite different from Black’s, comes from his analysis of her demeanor in class. Upon reflection, he came to believe that Black was not “arbitrary or unconscious”131 about her persona, that she intentionally cultivated a way of being in class that shifted focus off herself and onto her students. With this insight in mind, Gotheiner carefully regards his own presence in class, and its effect on students. As his teaching has shifted toward fostering somatic reflection in his dancers, he is conscious of how he walks around the room, and how he reacts when dancers attempt exercises.132 His use of a low, calm voice, his even temperament, and his soft reminder to students to breathe are conscious choices cultivated to offer space for dancers to focus inward, to become aware of their placement, and to release tension in their bodies. While his persona is a clear departure from Black’s, it still reflects her intention to direct dancers’ focus toward their own technical growth.

131 Gotheiner, interview, 2016.
132 Ibid.
Conclusion

At first glance, Gotheiner’s pedagogy seems quite different from Black’s. Where Black filled her class with a constant stream of corrections, Gotheiner is noticeably silent. Where Black decided the plan of action for each student, Gotheiner allows each dancer to plot his or her own course. What emerges is a decidedly hands-off pedagogy derived from one that was fundamentally hands-on.

Initially, Gotheiner did as pedagogues often do as they transition from student to teacher: he modeled himself after Black. Over time, though, he became dissatisfied with the results he observed in his own students. He noticed that when he adopted Black’s language, it manifested as tension in his students’ bodies, and when he replicated her unyielding approach, it created tension between himself and others. Consequently, he sought other avenues of support for his teaching practice, specifically the emerging theories in body-mind science.

His investigation, however, did not alter Gotheiner’s fidelity to his embodied understanding of classical ballet established through Black. While he searches for new ways to discover centered alignment, his point of comparison is the effortless feeling of center that he achieved under Black’s tutelage. In addition, the authenticity of performance that Gotheiner seeks to foster with dancers directly links to Black’s goal of providing artists with uninhibited access to their own unique movement qualities.

Gotheiner’s pedagogy proposes that Black’s theories of placement and ease of movement can be transmitted by facilitating self-analysis and self-discovery. It is Black’s pedagogy re-framed as gently guided somatic practice. Gotheiner maintains the elements of Black’s methodology that support self-reflection—the repetition of exercises, the
moderate tempi, the streamlined use of classical vocabulary—while rejecting the arbiter of truth role that Black assumed in her own teaching. In this sense, Goheiner carries forward his embodied understanding of Black’s pedagogy through self-directed inquiry.
Conclusion

The teaching of Kim Abel and Zvi Gotheiner illustrate the enduring pedagogical legacy of teachers through their students. In examining two pedagogues who each trained almost exclusively with one teacher, especially a renowned teacher with a distinct pedagogy like Maggie Black, this research starkly reveals the extent to which students engage with the work of their teachers when developing their own pedagogies. It is reasonable to assume that even in the works of pedagogues whose influences are more diffuse, some measure of similar negotiation with the ideas of one’s mentors takes place.

Abel’s work refutes the idea that a pedagogy that closely adheres to the theories and praxis of one’s teacher can be dismissed as mere imitation of its predecessor. While Abel does preserve much of Black’s work in her own teaching, her meticulous investigation of Black’s teaching produced a pedagogy uniquely imbued with her own intellect and experience, enabling Abel to adapt and change her approach as needed.

Gotheiner’s work exemplifies a pedagogy that moves away from significant elements of the theories and praxis of one’s teacher, while paradoxically reflecting the embodied knowledge acquired through that teacher. Gotheiner reframes Black’s pedagogy by designing his role as facilitator of self-analysis.

One reason for the distinct pedagogical approaches of Abel and Gotheiner is the subjective nature of dance pedagogy as embodied. This research indicates that as pedagogies move through the subjective frames of students’ bodies they are uniquely understood and the resulting differences between two embodied perspectives can propel
heirs of the same pedagogical lineage down different paths. For example, Abel describes her difficulty with finding and maintaining a vertically aligned pelvis, and that, through years of effort, she was able to finally get “up” on her legs, find a centered alignment in her torso, and release excess tension in her body. Gotheiner does not describe a similar struggle or embodied perspective related to finding centered alignment. He speaks of center as being “the least effortful place” and that tension itself inhibits one from finding center. Their subjective experiences with finding centered alignment have informed their approaches to Black’s anatomical concept. Generally speaking, Abel encourages students to find the strength to support centered alignment and Gotheiner encourages students to release tension in order to find centered alignment. Both approaches may be equally helpful and, it should be noted, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but the distinction between them illustrates how a pedagogue’s subjective embodied experience can influence his or her pedagogy.

The findings presented in this research suggest that not only do pedagogies change as they move through different bodies from one generation to the next; they also change over time as pedagogues continually reassess their methods. Abel altered her practice to address shorter class times and a constantly changing student population by offering more general corrections, incorporating more imagery into her feedback, and giving rationale and context for her teaching. Gotheiner made a more pronounced shift in his pedagogy. While he initially modeled himself after Black, he eventually rejected her

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133 Abel, interview, 2016.

134 Gotheiner, interview, 2016.
“militancy”\textsuperscript{135} and reframed his understanding of her pedagogy through his research into body-mind science. Black herself may provide the most compelling example of a pedagogue continuously reassessing one’s pedagogy to address the needs of students. While her theories of placement and efficiency of movement remained intact, those who trained with her for extended periods of time noticed her continuous reevaluation of her methods. Abel recalled a gradual progression from slow, repetitious exercises to speedier, streamlined exercises during her two decades under Black’s tutelage. Black also varied her use of épaulement during barre work, incorporating more upper body movement when working with professional dancers, but minimizing it when working with pre-professional students. This information calls into question the view of pedagogy as fixed. While there may be some philosophical consistency in a teacher’s pedagogy, the work of Black and her students illustrates how a pedagogue’s theories and practices adapt and change over time and in different contexts.

While this research demonstrates that the pedagogies of students are uniquely their own, it also highlights the ways in which the legacies of teachers live on in the work of their students. One example is the persistence of idiosyncratic patterns from one generation to the next. For example, both Abel and Gotheiner reflexively preserve Black’s placement of battements frappés after grand battements instead of a more traditional placement earlier in the barre work. Along with unconscious modeling, students deeply scrutinize their teachers’ patterns and processes to glean embodied and pedagogical value as they develop their own pedagogies. In the case of Black’s students, both Abel and Gotheiner retain the repetition of barre combinations, the use of accessible

\textsuperscript{135} Gotheiner, interview, 2016.
and straightforward exercises, and the moderate tempi that allowed them to progress as professionals when working with Black.

Teachers’ pedagogies also endure through the embodied memories and sensory experiences that students contend with as they process new information. Abel compared her feeling when performing Black’s exercises to her feeling when performing exercises given by other teachers, valuing how she felt during Black’s combinations as the standard. She continued to validate the combinations she designed by comparing them to the coordinated and “organic”\(^\text{136}\) exercises that she encountered in Black’s classes. Despite shedding elements of Black’s work and embracing new insights, Gotheiner’s memory of centered alignment and ease of movement as he experienced it through Black remained a clear touchstone for the new information he assimilated.

The cases of Abel and Gotheiner suggest that students carry forward the values that their teachers espouse in their work. These can be aesthetic values; both Abel and Gotheiner champion simplicity, clarity, and ease in the dancing they facilitate through their teaching as Black did before them. They can also be humanistic values embedded in a teacher’s pedagogy. Black’s pedagogy honored the plurality of bodies and backgrounds of dancers, and I observed in Abel and Gotheiner’s classes a similar range of artists from different disciplines with many different body types. Black also valued the individual dancer, offering individual feedback to every dancer who took her class. Abel maintained this individual attention in her teaching; Gotheiner continued to value the individual by fostering self-discovery and self-acceptance. Black’s creation of a “common ballet

\(^{136}\) Abel, interview, 2016.
workspace\text"\textsuperscript{137} opened Abel and Gotheiner to the possibilities of training individuals from the full spectrum of the dance community together in one studio.

More broadly, this research demonstrates the depth of investigation and analysis that teachers undergo when developing their pedagogies. For ballet teachers working outside of a national system, such examination may be particularly complex as they lack an institutional framework to support their embodied analyses. Yet these students-turned-teachers continue classical ballet’s master-apprentice tradition as they make manifest the pedagogical knowledge embedded in their training. It is through this process that the legacies of ballet teachers move from one generation to the next.

Dance scholars also have a role in preserving the legacies of influential ballet pedagogues. It became apparent to me through the passing of both Black and Bernal during my research that, if not added to the literature in some way, the legacies of numerous significant teachers will be lost to time, along with the historical and pedagogical insights they might offer the field. The dearth of literature on pedagogical lineages in ballet demonstrates that more research needs to be done in this area. This research is an attempt to fill this content void and to provide a possible investigative framework for other scholars to utilize when documenting the pedagogical legacies of other notable pedagogues in classical ballet’s rich history.

\textsuperscript{137} Carman, “Maggie Black (1930-2015),” 75.
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VITA

Rubén Gerding was born November 11, 1977, Louisville, Kentucky. He is the son of Samuel and Madeline Gerding. A 1996 graduate of DuPont Manual High School, Louisville, he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in ballet performance from the University of Oklahoma, Norman in 2000.

Upon graduation, Gerding danced with Eugene Ballet under the direction of Toni Pimble. In 2004, he moved to North Texas to join Texas Ballet Theater under the direction of Ben Stevenson. Gerding has also danced locally with the Bruce Wood Dance Project, Avant Chamber Ballet, Ballet Concerto, among others. In 2009, he taught at the Fall Seminar for the Southwest Committee of the Cecchetti Council of America. He was adjunct faculty for Booker T Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts from 2010 to 2014.

Gerding has choreographed for universities in North Texas and regional ballet schools associated with Regional Dance America: Southwest. His work Crossed, Shaded, and Thrown Wide Apart was presented as an adjudicated work at the South Central Conference of the American College Dance Association in March of 2017 and at the annual Chi Tau Epsilon Honor Society AIDS Outreach Benefit Concert in Fort Worth.

In September, 2014, he enrolled for graduate study at Texas Christian University’s School for Classical & Contemporary Dance.
Abstract

Maggie Black was an internationally renowned ballet teacher during the second half of the twentieth century whose anatomically based approach to ballet training supported the careers of many dance professionals in both ballet and modern dance. This research explores her enduring legacy through a case study of the pedagogies of her students, Kim Abel and Zvi Gotheiner. By analyzing the development of their respective pedagogies in relationship to Black’s work, this research examines the transition of ballet’s pedagogical lineage from one generation to the next.