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I CAN

In this semi-improvised danced paper I share two core operational principles – what I think of as pragmatic and attitudinal ways of being – that are foundational to my studio work when leading drama students through an elective physical theatre production module. The first is the 'I can' - the philosophical and phenomenological concept of a pre-reflective kinetic spontaneity; each individual's embodied form of knowing, their particular manner of being, doing and interacting with the world through the capacities and possibilities of bodily agency. In my pedagogical paradigm, the 'I can' functions as a dynamic principle in which students' creative agency is facilitated and their felt sense of corporeal possibility when devising material cultivated. Some 'I cans' point to moments of physical accomplishment - such as when a student faces a particular fear (a handstand or giving weight to a partner) and after a period of training manages to ameliorate or totally eviscerate that fear. The felt experience of surpassing a previously-inhabited limitation opens portals to yet more physical and imaginative possibilities. 'I can' is thus both explicitly acquired skill and an awareness of, and openness to, further potentiality. Intertwined with the 'I can' is coenesthesia, described by dance scholar Maxine Sheets-Johnstone as 'a sense of full-bodied aliveness' and 'the feeling of creation' (Sheets-Johnstone, 2014: 110; 113). Animating this concept through a web of interconnected training exercises, creative scores and playful improvisational work encourages students towards a finely-tuned awareness of kinesthetically felt dynamics and a vital, potent language of the body.