OLLI Week 8

I am sorry we were not able to meet for our last class. It has been a delight to dance with all of you and I hope you will continue to dance blues! Please stay tuned for additional OLLI blues dance classes in the future.

If you did visit the Spurlock Museum Blues Exhibit last week or do so in the near future, I would enjoy getting your feedback and happy to answer any questions you might have. My email address is [jenwhite@illinois.edu](mailto:jenwhite@illinois.edu).

Here are three activities that you could do on your own in place of meeting this last week.

1. Explore using contrast in your dance. Varying your dance to fit the music can help you interpret the music by adding texture to your dance. This gives you more options in how to move using the steps and moves you already know. And it makes it more visually interesting as well as more fun. For example, you can use contrasting level changes by standing tall and doing the side-step with a pulse when the music is loud and then bending more at the waist, knees and/or hips to lower yourself while doing the side step with a pulse when the music is quieter.

**Contrast Activity:**

* 1. Pick a song and listen to it and identify one contrasting characteristic in the music that you would like to dance to, such as:
     1. Volume changes
     2. Intensity changes
     3. Speed changes
     4. Soft flowy sounds versus sharp, rhythmic or syncopated sounds
     5. Coarse vocal texture versus polished smooth sounds
     6. Other contrasting characteristics
  2. Pick how you will express that contrast in your dance, such as:
     1. Level changes (high versus low)
     2. Size of your moves (small versus large)
     3. Making round flowy shapes versus sharp angular shapes
     4. Speed of your moves (such as slow shake or shimmy versus a fast one)
  3. Play the song and dance to the entire song just focusing on applying one of the contrasting elements.
  4. Try again using a different way of contrasting. This can be a fun challenge and a way to enrich your dance!

1. Explore using Polycentric Movement in your dance. This is an important characteristic in blues dance that has its origins in African dance. An example would be someone stepping with their feet while shaking their shoulders.

**Polycentric Movement Activity**

1. Watch for the polyrhythmic movement in the following videos. See how many parts of the body are used to express different rhythms simultaneously.
   * + - * Congolese group

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mMsXM-4USM>

* + - * + Adowa Dance, Akan people of Ghana, the clearest view is from the side at time stamp 1:30 on the video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBPomwXuK7c>

* + 1964 video, Double O Soul with Billy Preston singing and dancing and Ray Charles, the best examples are at time staps 0:37 and 1:11

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBF0SN88WIo>

* + Contemporary Blues Dance example with Grace Taylor Jones Solo Blues

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDWHZKrjxPk>

1. Try using polyrhythm in your own dance. The key is to start simple with things you already know and work up gradually.
   * 1. First choose two moves that you are very comfortable with. These should be ones that don’t require you to spend a lot of brain power to do the move. Choose one that can be done by the lower part of your body such as a single side-step, a side-step with a pulse, tic tocs, James Brown or any other step or move you like. Second choose a movement that can be done with your upper body such as a shimmy with your hands or shoulders, or shoulder roles.
     2. Practice the two moves you chose by themselves with your choice of music until you are very comfortable with each of them and can do them without thinking too much about them.
     3. Next start off with the move in your lower body and when it feels comfortable try adding the upper body movement. If it doesn’t work, re-set and do each separately again before adding the upper body to the lower body move again. Don’t worry if you don’t get it right away, this will take lots of practice! But if you are successful, you can always add a third or try combining other steps and moves. Have fun with it!

1. If you are interested in learning other moves, check out the website <http://www.bluesmoves.com/the-moves.html> and hover over ‘The Moves’ to see the menu listing video examples of each of the moves being done by Nicole Trissell. Each video shows in regular time and in slow motion. This can be a great way to review moves we have already done or learn new ones on your own.

Thank you! Enjoy! And Dance on!