

Feldenkrais Method in Performer Training

Encouraging Curiosity and Experimentation



Kene Igweonu



SWANSEA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL FETROPOLITAN ABERTAWE



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All the images in this report are taken from video recording of the 'demonstration workshop' on 24 March 2010. Photos captured by Mark Tranter

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Centre for Innovative Performance Practice and Research (CiPPR)

Centre for Innovative Performance Practice and Research (CiPPR) is a new international research centre based at the School of Performance and Literature, Swansea Metropolitan University. The CiPPR is vital to the University's research strategy which works to encourage research outputs that are of an applied nature and/or comprising professional practice.

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- Publish and distribute performance journals, books and related materials
- Work to bring new and innovative performance practices and practitioners to the attention of Welsh, UK and international audiences.
- Facilitate links and exchange of practice and research with international research and practitioner communities and their Wales/UK equivalents.

1 Introduction

Feldenkrais studied the body in movement with a precision that I have found nowhere else.

(Peter Brook)

The use of the Feldenkrais Method® in performance training dates back to the work of Moshe Feldenkrais in the 1970s when he first taught actors and dancers in the United States and Israel. It was also during this period that the renowned theatre director Peter Brook invited him to teach the Method to actors at *théâtre des Bouffes du Nord* in Paris. Following Feldenkrais' work in Paris, Monika Pagneux who, at that time, was Movement Director for Peter Brook's company went on to propagate the Feldenkrais Method through her own work. Even though Pagneux is not a practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method, her approach to movement training draws extensively on the Feldenkrais Method. As one of the foremost teachers of movement in Europe, Pagneux' influence in performance training is quite profound and far reaching. Through her former students, Pagneux continue to play a key role in the recognition and acceptance of the Feldenkrais Method as a somatic discipline and practice that is suitable for training in performing arts.

Within the past two decades in the United Kingdom Feldenkrais Method has continued to gain significance within the performing arts community through events like the International Workshop Festival. The International Workshop Festival started in 1988 as an annual festival of workshops and demonstrations by established practitioners from a variety of performing arts disciplines and backgrounds. Focusing on themes such as 'the performers energy' in 1995 '...and movement' in 1996, the International Workshop Festival provided a platform for Garet Newell, Educational Director of the first UK Feldenkrais training programme to teach the Feldenkrais Method to professional performers

in the UK. However, the inclusion of the Feldenkrais Method in UK higher education curriculum is traceable to the pioneering work of Richard Cave, now Emeritus Professor of Drama and Theatre Arts at Royal Holloway, University of London. On qualifying as practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method in 1998, Cave went on to design and institute what is arguably the first UK higher education course in physical theatre that embeds the Feldenkrais Method as a distinct part of the curriculum at Royal Holloway's Department of Drama and Theatre. Following Cave's retirement in 2009, Libby Worth has continued to teach the Feldenkrais Method provision within the physical theatre course at Royal Holloway.

A number of other universities have also gone ahead to integrate the Feldenkrais Method into their performing arts programmes to different extents. However, like the drama and theatre department at Royal Holloway, London Metropolitan University's 'BA Performing Arts' course as well as the 'BA Contemporary Performance Practice'



programme at the University Centre Doncaster have the benefit of academic staff - qualified practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method - who have also been successful at embedding the Feldenkrais Method in their respective programmes. To this extent the work of Thomas Kampe, Senior Lecturer and Coordinator for Dance and Movement at London Metropolitan University, and Dianne Hancock, Course leader for the BA Contemporary Performance Practice at the University Centre Doncaster,

has sustained and helped to facilitate a greater recognition and acceptance of the Feldenkrais Method as a practice that is suitable for training in performing arts within the UK higher education.

This research project sets out to explore and document this growing practice within the UK higher education, and to look specifically at some of the approaches adopted by various Feldenkrais Practitioners in their work with actors, dancers and performers in general. Key to the adoption of the Feldenkrais Method in Higher Education is its perceived usefulness for developing pedagogical ideas - as a pedagogical tool - and offering dynamic approaches to learning that complements and often challenge established modes of teaching and learning that are body-centred and somatic. The research project had the following aims:

- i. To investigate and document the use of Feldenkrais Method as a performer training methodology within UK higher education
- ii. To generate and disseminate resources that could be useful in performer training
- iii. To generate interest in Feldenkrais Method as a useful performer training methodology
- iv. To consider how performer training pedagogies could be expanded to include training in the Feldenkrais Method

The project employed qualitative research methodology in the form of interviews with the growing list of Feldenkrais Practitioners teaching in various UK higher education institutions, and who are involved in performer training. The interviews were semi-structured and were carried out between January and March 2010. Equally, the methodology adopted was such that it enabled me to - based on pre-negotiated arrangement - undertake workshop observation with some of the practitioners to witness first hand aspects of the work my chosen practitioners are doing with their students. Care was taken to ensure that the composition of the sample (practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method) was fairly evenly distributed among the subject discipline areas and professional grade as is reflected on the list published by the Feldenkrais Guild UK. This list of practitioners in different parts of the UK is freely available to members of the public through the Feldenkrais Guild UK and can be accessed via the Guild website.¹

In addition to the interviews, the project also featured a demonstration workshop supported by the School of Performance and Literature at Swansea Metropolitan University. The workshop provided an opportunity for colleagues from other UK higher education institutions to explore the Feldenkrais Method in its application to performance training under the guidance of two respected practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method. A DVD of that workshop is included in this pack. The research also formed the basis of a presentation I made on the 9th of June 2010 at a research seminar organised by the Centre for Innovative Performance Practice and Research (CiPPR). The seminar presentation made it possible for me to make results of the project available to other members of the performing arts community and get useful feedback which has been helpful in compiling this report.



1.1 About this resource

This document and accompanying DVD work as a resource to be dipped in and out of for information on how the Feldenkrais Method is being used in performance training contexts within UK higher education. Throughout the resource you will find useful views and reflections on some of the approaches and issues involved in using Feldenkrais Method in performance training. However, it is important to note that the resource is meant primarily to generate an awareness of the use of the Feldenkrais Method within the context of performance and performance training in UK higher education, and by so doing to provoke discussion and reflection. It is not meant to serve as a manual for the Feldenkrais Method, or as a resource for Feldenkrais lessons. Feldenkrais Method lessons, including guidance on practicing them can be found in *Awareness Through Movement* by Moshe Feldenkrais, as well as in other books and materials which are available through the California-based Feldenkrais Resources website.²

1.2 What is Feldenkrais Method?

Feldenkrais Method was developed by Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984) as a method of somatic education which draws on his vast knowledge and expertise in physics, engineering and judo to help the individual discover new possibilities and choices in movement. The Feldenkrais Method is a somatic discipline that is based on sound mechanical and neurological principles which are easily accessible



through unforced physical movement based on simple re/organization and re/alignment of the body in time and space. In essence, the Feldenkrais Method is a pedagogical method which emphasizes experiential learning by helping the individual to gain a heightened psycho-physical awareness, providing more options and enabling the individual to make intelligent choices about everyday movement and action. This idea is equally identified by Alan S. Queste as being central to the practice of Feldenkrais Method.

One of the basic tenets of the Feldenkrais Method is to increase our options and create more choices about how we do things. Rather than teaching the right way of doing something we evoke more possibilities.³

The Feldenkrais Method employs Awareness through Movement™ (ATM) and Functional Integration™ (FI) as means of enabling the individual to experience the transformative miracle of efficient, integrated and aesthetically pleasing movement. This is because the Feldenkrais Method lessons are structured in such a way that enables individuals to develop in their self-awareness, and consequently discover and choose new patterns of movement which enables them to let go of old habits and patterns of movement for more efficient ones. Functional Integration is a hands-on approach that enables the practitioner to use his physical organisation and experience to guide the student to discoveries. In Functional Integration,

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lessons are bespoke and are selected by the practitioner to address the individual's movement habits and physical organisation.

Awareness through Movement, on the other hand, is usually experienced through group lessons that involve verbal instructions in that exploratory journey to a more efficient and functional use of the whole self in movement. In Awareness through Movement the practitioner uses verbal prompts and instructions to lead a group of students through a sequence of movements which are explored using gentle movement and repetition. At the heart of the teaching and practice of the Feldenkrais Method is the concept of 'awareness' which it addresses using movement as a vehicle. Simply put, 'Movement is the basis of awareness'.⁴ Awareness, according to Moshe Feldenkrais, is 'consciousness together with a realization of what is happening within it or of what is going on within ourselves while we are conscious'.⁵ This awareness using the art of 'questioning' is central to the teaching and practice of the Feldenkrais Method - as an inquiry based system of learning and unlearning movement habits.


Awareness through Movement is usually experienced through group lessons that involve verbal instructions in that exploratory journey to a more efficient and functional use of the whole self in movement.



Feldenkrais Method is quite useful to the performer in that it not only provides the vehicle of enquiry but, more importantly, it presents the performer with the clear indications as to 'what to question' and 'how to question'. Feldenkrais Method offers the performer a space in which to listen to himself and to enquire about his physical organisation and relationship to the world around him. This space equally provides the performer with the unique opportunity to notice, to be uncertain and to possibly change long held habits that will in turn lead to greater ease, sophistication and creativity in movement, play and action. Writing on this Moshe Feldenkrais notes that:



The lessons are designed to improve ability, that is, to expand the boundaries of the possible, to turn the impossible into the possible, the difficult into the easy, and the easy into the pleasant.⁶



For some however, uncertainty and puzzlement can often manifest at the early stages of a Feldenkrais Method lesson. However, as the enquiry deepens and they begin to attain a greater sense of awareness, they will start to gain much better clarity about their subject of enquiry – their physical organisation and relationship to the world around them. In turn, they will achieve greater efficiency and fluency in movement, as well as the confidence that comes with the possibilities that this growing awareness presents. For the performer this will most often lead to their being able to make better judgements about how they apply themselves in training and performance situations. In this system of enquiry, the answers are often not as important as the process of arriving at them. This is because, by emphasizing 'awareness' of the process instead of finding the 'right' answers, the Feldenkrais Method places the performer in the strong position to be an efficient and creative mover.

What practitioners say about the Feldenkrais Method

The Feldenkrais Method offers a methodology for personal enquiry into movement of any sort. It is especially useful in dealing with situations outside of the norm - different physiques and body types, different physical and mental abilities. It is dangerous to some disciplines in that it questions received wisdom regarding posture, exercise and coordination. Also, because it is sincere in its use of scientific methodology, it takes time and attention; that somewhat restricts its use.

(Scott Clark)

The Feldenkrais Method is an investigative practice focusing on self awareness, reflective practice and analysis through modes of embodiment, self and peer observation. As a non-corrective, and thus inclusive open ended system focusing the facilitation of learning through experience, questioning, and problem solving it has had a tremendously empowering impact on my students in all areas of practical study - movement for actors, dance education and training, choreographic and performance making syllabi.

(Thomas Kampe)



Since it is highly adaptable for a wide range of students, this makes it useful for working with the variety of participants that undertake UG and PG courses at Royal Holloway. The gentle and gradual progression of the movement sequences allow for safe, challenging yet manageable experiential learning. The basis in learning through experience provides each student with their own way into becoming more aware of their specific habits and preferences. They remain in control of allowing these to change (or not) and therefore the method is respectful of individual learning speeds and processes. As a holistic approach to movement the lessons address a range of challenges encountered by performers and offer means of overcoming them. The amazing range in lesson format and number, with unusual approaches to familiar movements, are inspiring and invigorating as starting points for creative development. The non-judgemental approach that the method supports encourages creative response and personal exploration/discovery.

(Libby Worth)



ATM offers dancers in training a unique opportunity to sense themselves and their individual habits and patterns in a subtle and powerful way. Small changes achieved through ATM can then have a big impact on technique with regards to aspects such as balance, stability, range of movement, comfort and ease. I believe these aspects can contribute significantly to technical training, injury prevention, rehabilitation, and to the general well being of the dancer. ATM offers dancers the opportunity to be their own teacher rather than constantly relying on outside feedback to know whether they are doing ok or not. Using their own sensory feedback as a guide to their own comfort and ease in dancing can be very empowering in a world in which dancers are often dictated to and told what is right and wrong for them.

(Caroline Scott)



2 The interviews

A key aim of the project was to investigate and document the use of the Feldenkrais Method within performer training programmes in UK higher education. Over a period of three months, beginning January 2010, I interviewed fifteen Feldenkrais Practitioners I had identified through the Feldenkrais Guild UK as being involved in performance training at higher education level. In addition to the interviews, I was invited to a workshop session at Royal Holloway, University of London where I was able to witness, first hand, aspects of the work being done with students on the MA in Theatre (Physical Theatre and Performance) programme. Unfortunately, a second workshop observation at another university could not take place as the class had to be cancelled as a result of the disruptions in January due to heavy snowfall.

When examined in relation to the other areas of the performing arts, dance practitioners have, perhaps, the longest tradition of using Feldenkrais Method in their training programmes. Consequently, the composition of the interview sample of practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method was fairly evenly distributed among the subject discipline areas even though, as I anticipated from the start, dance and physical theatre practitioners using Feldenkrais Method are better represented than those involved in drama and acting programmes. At conception, one issue that arose from this was the possibility of contextualising the project at some level within the broader area of the application of somatic practices to performance training. While I recognise the merit of this sort of contextualisation, and focus for instance on dance or actor training, I deliberately chose to make the project inclusive rather than exclusive. This is primarily because I wanted to capture what seems to be an increasing focus on training the total/physical performer who employs physical theatre as a means of communicating through the body.

For each interview, after arranging a mutually convenient time, I travelled to the interviewees' institutions or practice locations to

conduct a face-to-face interview with them. The focus of each interview was on their processes and experiences of working with, and/or training, performers using the Feldenkrais Method. Interviews were semi-structured, and after going over the aim of the project with them, all interviewees signed a consent form (see appendix) as audio recordings of the interviews were made. Each interview lasted an average of one hour. The interviews began with a general request asking the interviewees to give me a brief background to their Feldenkrais practise, and their thoughts on using the Feldenkrais Method in performer training. The interviews focused specifically on the tutor led approach of 'Awareness Through Movement' as opposed to the hands on, one-to-one approach of 'Functional Integration'. The rest of the interview was structured around the following questions however, practitioners were always encouraged to, where necessary, digress and talk about other aspects not addressed by the questions.

1. How did your interest in using Feldenkrais Method within performer training develop and for how long have you been using it?
2. Did you receive any institutional support for your work with performers?
 - a. If yes, was it adequate to your expectation?
 - b. If no, why do you think this support was not given?
3. What is your favourite lesson to use and how do you think students receive this?
4. What student numbers do you prefer to work with and at what level?
5. In what position do you normally start your acting and/or dance students at the beginning of a lesson?
6. Generally, how would you describe your lessons with acting and/or dance students, with particular reference to the environment/ atmosphere you set out to create?
7. Do you make up your own lessons or draw directly from the cannon of lessons that already exist?
8. What positive or negative experiences have you had with using Feldenkrais Method with performers?
9. Do you assess students on the Feldenkrais Method?
 - a. If yes, what and how do you assess?

- b. If no, why not?
10. Are there other aspects of your work with performers that you would like to tell me about?

2.1 Encouraging curiosity and experimentation

The following points are, I think, key: 1) The Method helps create a more neutral state from which, for example, physical characterisation can develop more clearly and imaginatively. Students can begin to distinguish what is their movement pattern and what might be that of a character as well as what movement can express. 2) The Method develops more inner stability, including emotional, which is helpful in the performing arts. 3) Students develop self-awareness, self-management tools and more ability to care for their bodies in demanding situations. 4) The Method also creates a state of ease, confidence and presence - all necessary for performance.

(Caroline Hasler)

Movement is an integral part to the actor's ability to *tell the story*. This is true not only in terms of what is to be expressed and communicated, but also in terms of tuning, refining, and developing *the instrument*. The Feldenkrais Method presents a unique opportunity for the actor to create a role, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the creative process.⁷

When used effectively, the Feldenkrais Method encourages student and performers to develop a heightened awareness of themselves in stillness and in action. Creating a supportive environment is essential for learning in general, and this is also true for teaching an Awareness

Through Movement lesson. The support structure can take different forms including small group work in pairs or threes, with students



observing and offering feedback to each other after each lesson. This helps to create a community of enquiry as a supportive framework in which learning can take place. It creates ‘scaffolding’ around the learners by providing individual, tailor-made support, utilizing small group work and feedback as a mechanism to support and encourage enquiry and focus the performer on the process instead of the result.

...not everybody is capable of identifying himself easily,
and one may be greatly helped by the experience of
others.⁸

Such collaborative or ‘assisted’ enquiry encourages curiosity and experimentation within a framework that is both supportive and mutual. It encourages the students to build on peer feedback (this feedback can be both physical – during the lesson - and verbal – after the lesson) to ask further questions about their physical organisation and relationship to the world around them. In this way, students working in small groups, act as co-enquirers by asking similar questions about their own physical organisation and relationship to the world around them as they work with the lead enquirer. This relationship as

co-enquirer also operates when a student is working directly with a practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method. Both of them function as 'learners' in the sense that the practitioner can gain new and useful insight from the enquiry process of the student. However, in this relationship, the practitioner retains his primary role as a guide, helping the student to make sense of his experience of the enquiry.

A key issue that emerged from my discussion with the practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method I interviewed is that the Feldenkrais Method must not be construed as a technique that students have to learn and adopt to be good performers. Instead, it must be seen as helping to put up a viable foundation of awareness on which different techniques can then be built. There are several strategies that are useful when working with the Feldenkrais Method which operates to encourage curiosity and experimentation. In choosing which Awareness Through Movement lesson to teach students of the performing arts, the practitioner must take the learning outcomes for the module (if a modular programme) and the theme under exploration into account. For example, the practitioner may choose to introduce a creative task as a starting point for the Awareness Through Movement enquiry. This can take the form of improvisation or characterisation task. A good example of this approach can be found in research projects such as 'Weave' by Thomas Kampe which brought together a team of international contemporary dance makers and experienced somatic practitioners to investigate the use of the Feldenkrais Method as a resource within choreographic practices. In this practice-based research project, Kampe explores what he terms 'the possible applications and resonances of the Feldenkrais Method within the context of performance making rather than performer training'⁹.

ATM is most useful for underpinning the teaching and learning of technique primarily because it does not function as a technique in itself.

Awareness Through Movement lessons take an average of 45 minutes to complete however spending an average of 15-20 minutes on

each lesson when working with students at undergraduate level is recommended in order to retain their attention. The time spent on lessons can then be extended as the students develop in their training. Other strategies identified as being useful have to do with the following:

- Introduce relevant Awareness Through Movement lesson using appropriate ‘scaffolding’ technique such as peer observation and feedback.
- Give enough time for discussion and peer feedback after each lesson. This includes encouraging students to use this time to record their experiences in their journals and logbooks. This is important as it encourages self reflection and evaluation – skills which are extremely useful for students and performers in general.
- Explore how lessons can lead to characterisation or improvisation either as a direct creative stimulus or as a basis for exploring a given stimulus. It is important that lessons are made relevant to students in this way, particularly in the first year. However, it is equally important to teach and practice Awareness Through Movement as a vehicle for facilitating awareness, in which case it does not have to lead into improvisation or characterisation but becomes a foundation on which other performance techniques can be built once awareness has been awakened and developed in the students.





It useful to remind students from time to time to observe the following:

- i. Do each movement slowly and deliberately
- ii. Keep within the range of movement that allows you to carry out the instruction without straining
- iii. Observe a short pause between each movement
- iv. Repeat each instruction a couple of times to give your nervous system enough time to register the paths of movement.
- v. As you repeat each movement also reduce the effort involved to enable you have a clearer awareness of your organisation.

...in order to recognize small changes in effort, the effort itself must first be reduced. More delicate and improved control of movement is possible only through the increase of sensitivity, through a greater ability to sense differences.¹⁰

- vi. Importantly, take care of yourself and stop if you feel pain or discomfort - in which case you should contact a qualified practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method for guidance.
- vii. It is of utmost importance to remind students that the process of enquiry as used in the Feldenkrais Method is entirely non-judgemental and must remain so for the process to be productive.

2.2 The issue of assessment


I have often found myself teaching students in a format that is not overseen by other members of the teaching community and not assessed as part of the students' qualification. I always approach these situations as an opportunity to stimulate the curiosity of the student and encourage their confidence in their capacity for self-development. I feel with more acceptance and support the benefits would be very significant indeed.

(Maggy Burrowes)




This research project surveys the use of the Feldenkrais Method in performance training contexts within UK higher education. Given that assessments are vital in appraising students learning and achievement of set module/programme learning outcomes, practitioners who took part in the project were invited to share their views on how best to measure and assess the impact of Feldenkrais lessons on students.

On this subject of assessment, some of the practitioners who teach in higher education work as guest lecturers at institutions where they are often called upon to teach students on courses with predetermined/ set assessments addressing specific outcomes. Consequently they are not required to assess any aspect of the Feldenkrais Method work undertaken with the students. On the other hand there are other practitioners who were interviewed as part of this project who teach modules that have the Feldenkrais Method written into it in ways that mean they have to be assessed. These latter group hold the view that 'reflective journals' by students have proven an effective means of assessing Feldenkrais Method within a performance training context as individual students learn and experience the lessons differently. This is primarily because a key benefit of the Feldenkrais Method lies in its ability to transform the way students' approach training and performing as they develop a heightened awareness of their physicality.



The quality of the environment created by the Feldenkrais practitioner is one of safety, where people are free to make mistakes and to explore without having to succeed.¹¹



There appears to be a general consensus among the practitioners that the assessment framework for articulating benefit to students should not be performance based but must take into account the students' developing awareness of habitual patterns of stress

associated with particular movements and actions. Students are then able to build on the awareness of these habitual patterns to move in ways that are most useful for the creative tasks they want to achieve. This is equally observed by Queste who notes that 'to be able to fulfil one's intention in action is essential to the ability to create a role and to tell a story'.¹¹ To achieve this, students undertaking Feldenkrais lessons are constantly reminded and encouraged to let go of goal orientation and judgementalism for their enquiry to be. In other words, it is useful to explore potential benefits in how the individual student can take advantage of their increased somatic awareness in ways that enables them to sense how they are organised, moment by moment, in performance and everyday life and eliminate 'parasitic efforts' that are not necessary for the specific action they are trying to accomplish. Taken from this perspective, assessment should address whether Feldenkrais Method has in any way contributed to reflective practice and in what ways.

3 The demonstration workshop

The project also featured a demonstration workshop funded by the School of Performance and Literature at Swansea Metropolitan University which took place on Wednesday 24 March 2010. This workshop which aimed to provide an opportunity for the exploration of Feldenkrais Method and its application to performer training was attended by colleagues from several UK higher education institutions. The event drew together teachers and practitioners of the dance and drama performance disciplines to experience the Feldenkrais Method in its application to performer training under the guidance of two respected practitioners of the Method.

The first session explored reverse breathing and was led by Richard Cave who is Emeritus Professor of Drama and Theatre Arts at Royal Holloway University of London. The second lesson was led by Gareth Newell, Educational Director of the Feldenkrais International Training Centre. The demonstration workshop was recorded on DVD and explored specific approaches adopted by these two distinguished Feldenkrais Practitioners in their work with actors, dancers and performers in general. As well as taking part in the lessons, the event served as a forum for delegates to discuss a range of pedagogical issues and other concerns inherent in the use of the Method in HE performer training.



Sample of feedback by workshop participant

Practical work and discussion/feedback were both useful. An efficiently run afternoon. Would have been nice to have a full day, thus more time for in-depth discussion. (The workshop) served as a nice refresher to the Feldenkrais work I incorporate into my teaching. This method supports many other training approaches by teaching efficient use and awareness of body which can be applied to all other physical activities required by the actor

(Danielle Meunier)



I see this practice as a valuable tool in the field of performance. Not only for its obvious health benefits but also as a way of developing character and physicality. I found it very interesting and would certainly attend more. I think it would benefit any and everyone.

(Conor Donelan)

Most useful and resourceful was the reverse breathing.

(Lucinda Stone)

Good to meet some others interested in this work. A lovely reminder of working with people new to Feldenkrais Method after having done the training. Would like to meet with lecturers in HE who already use Feldenkrais Method.

(Libby Worth)



Workshop was very enjoyable and informative. I think that continuing with this work would be very beneficial. The most useful part was the actual practice of the work. The instructors were very clear about what we should be doing. It will benefit my physical awareness and my physical and mental work as an actor. I thought the workshop was excellent and very educational, interesting and worthwhile.

(Marian Carroll)

The most useful part of the workshop was getting practical experience in the Method. When reading about it, it can be difficult to understand what it is about, but practical workshops like this make it clearer. It has helped my general awareness of my personal movements and how I can look at them in performance in more detail. I think this (Feldenkrais Method) is essential as a base/foundation in physical

training and all performers should avail of it. The facilitation and instructions were very clear, I can't think of any other improvement other than maybe a brief history/ discussion about Feldenkrais. It was enjoyable, relaxing, interesting and very well organized. All students should get a go at this training during their time at SMU.

(Roisin Clarke)



4 Conclusion

Evidently, there is a growing amount of work being done, particularly within dance, performance and actor training programmes in UK higher education, which recognises the immense benefit of Feldenkrais Method to students. This project has shown that there is considerable enthusiasm among the practitioner community to share their experience of teaching the Feldenkrais Method to performing arts students in higher education. Even though many of the practitioners that took part in this study contribute to courses that do not have the Feldenkrais Method fully embedded in them, they all expressed enthusiasm about some changes that are beginning to take place. Consequently, there is evidence to suggest that it would be timely to support a much clearer embedding of the Feldenkrais Method in performance training programmes in UK higher education to build on the progress identified in this report.

At the heart of the Feldenkrais Method is the development of a heightened awareness of the self in stillness and in action. This need to awaken and develop awareness in students is key to the adoption of the Feldenkrais Method in performance training. The Feldenkrais Method has much to offer performing arts students as a heightened psycho-physical awareness and the ability to make intelligent movement choices can contribute immensely to their potential to succeed as creative practitioners and performers. Consequently the Feldenkrais Method could and should be at the forefront of performance training. Caroline Hasler, one of the practitioners that participated in this study, considers that the following points are fundamental to why the Feldenkrais Method can be most useful for training in performing arts:

- The Method helps create a more neutral state from which, for example, physical characterisation can develop more clearly and imaginatively. Students can begin to distinguish what is their movement pattern and what might be that of a character as well as what movement can express.
- The Method develops more inner stability, including emotional, which is helpful in the performing arts.

- Students develop self-awareness, self-management tools and more ability to care for their bodies in demanding situations.
- The Method also creates a state of ease, confidence and presence - all necessary for performance.

Some key issues that emerged from this study are:

- Feldenkrais lessons are designed to enable students to develop a heightened awareness of themselves in stillness and in action.
- The Feldenkrais Method must not be construed as a technique but as a foundation of awareness on which different techniques can be built.
- The assessment framework for articulating the benefits of the Feldenkrais Method to students should not be performance based.
- Reflective accounts are effective means of evaluating students learning in relation to the Feldenkrais Method.
- Creating a supportive environment is essential for teaching the Feldenkrais Method.

Going forward, there is much work to be done in exploring the application of the Feldenkrais Method to performance training and performance making processes. While it is hoped that this report will provoke discussion on the issues raised in it, it is also hoped that it will inspire further research particularly in the following areas - some of which emerged from discussions and feedback:

- How the Feldenkrais Method might support specific techniques in a performance training context
- How the Feldenkrais Method might stimulate and support creativity
- How the Feldenkrais Method might be used in the performance making process
- The Feldenkrais Method and reflective practice
- Usefulness of the Feldenkrais Method to the performer in relation to voice and breath support
- How to integrate the Feldenkrais Method into sustained delivery for students.

- Usefulness of the Feldenkrais Method in controlling stage fright and anxiety
- Feldenkrais Method in relation to improvisation and characterisation
- Possibility of using Feldenkrais lessons as a starting point for movement in dance and physical theatre

5 Notes

1. <http://www.feldenkrais.co.uk>
2. <http://www.feldenkraisresources.com>
3. Alan S. Queste, 'The Feldenkrais Method: Application for the Actor', *Feldenkrais Journal*, 14 (2002), p. 14.
4. Moshe Feldenkrais, *Awareness Through Movement* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), p. 36.
5. Moshe Feldenkrais, p. 50
6. Moshe Feldenkrais, p. 57.
7. Alan S. Queste, p. 11.
8. Moshe Feldenkrais, p. 23.
9. Thomas Kampe, "'Weave": The Feldenkrais Method as Choreographic Process', *Perfformio*, 1:2 (2010), p. 38.
10. Moshe Feldenkrais, p. 59.
11. Alan S. Queste, p. 13.

6 References and further reading

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6. Appendices

- 6.1. Appendix A: Consent form
- 6.2. Appendix B: Workshop programme
- 6.3. Appendix C: Contact details of Feldenkrais Guild UK and training programmes

6.1 Appendix A: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

I hereby consent to the video recording/ audio recording of my participation in the research study entitled: 'Feldenkrais Method in Performer Training' conducted by Kene Igweonu and funded by PALATINE.

- I understand that all material obtained will be used for educational and related purposes, including distribution as a learning and teaching resource.
- I understand that I will receive no compensation for my consent to participate in this project but that my participation will be acknowledged.
- I understand that the recordings will become the property of the investigator and Swansea Metropolitan University.

I confirm that I have read this form and been given the opportunity to ask further questions about the project.

Name:

.....

Signature:

.....

Date:

.....

All questions regarding this project can be directed to
Kene Igweonu (kene.igweonu@smu.ac.uk / 01792 402090)

6.3 Appendix C: Workshop programme

WORKSHOP: Feldenkrais Method in Performer Training

Wednesday 24 March 2010

**Swansea Metropolitan University, Room TK 220, Townhill Road
Campus, Swansea**

This event is organised by the School of Performance and Literature at Swansea Metropolitan University as part of the PALATINE-funded project of the same title. This workshop aims to provide an opportunity for the exploration of Feldenkrais Method and its application to performer training. It seeks to draw together HE practitioners and teachers of the dance and drama performance disciplines to observe the Feldenkrais Method in practice or experience it for themselves under the guidance of respected practitioners of the Method. It is equally hoped that the event will serve as a forum for delegates to discuss a range of pedagogical issues and other concerns inherent in the use of the Method in HE performer training.

Programme

- 14:00-14:30 Registration and refreshment
- 14:30-14:45 Welcome and Introductions
- 14:45-15:30 Feldenkrais lesson led by Richard Cave (Emeritus Professor, Royal Holloway University of London)
- 15:30-15:45 Discussion
- 15:45-16:00 Tea/Coffee Break
- 16:00-16:45 Feldenkrais lesson led by Gareth Newell (Educational Director, Feldenkrais International Training Centre)
- 16:45-17:00 Discussion
- 17:00-17:15 Feedback and closing
- 17:15-18:00 Dinner

Please aim to arrive at 2pm for a 2.30pm start on Wednesday 24 March 2010. This will allow enough time to register and refresh before the first workshop session.

The workshop will take place in a warm studio which has had a new dance floor installed (mats will also be provided). However, you may want to bring along a blanket for extra warmth. Also do wear warm clothing, which is comfortable and does not restrict movement. Tea, coffee and water will be provided during the workshop, and there will also be complimentary hot dinner at the end of the workshop.

6.4 Appendix D: Contact details of Feldenkrais Guild UK and UK training programmes

For a comprehensive and up-to-date listing of practitioners of the Feldenkrais Method in your area, visit the website of The Feldenkrais Guild UK.

The Feldenkrais Guild UK


 07000 785 506

 <http://www.feldenkrais.co.uk>


 enq@feldenkrais.co.uk

Feldenkrais International Training Centre

PO Box 36, Hassocks
West Sussex BN6 8WZ


 01273 844 140

 <http://www.feldenkrais-itc.com>

 garetnewell@compuserve.com

London Feldenkrais Professional Training Programme

13 Camellia House, Idonia Street
LONDON SE8 4LZ

 020 8469 0245

 <http://www.feldenkraislondon.com>

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NOTES



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