

Foot Pressure. How and where does it come from?



So I have relocated to midtown Manhattan after hiding for twenty years uptown in the wilds of CentralPark West. Been gifted with a new apartment three blocks away from the new Alvin Ailey Center. Basically what this means is NO excuses about getting back to class for the first time in fifteen years as a "TOTAL" student. It has been at times painful, uncomfortable, and even a bit joyful. But the end result has been collecting and applying some new data, some old data all in a new unit of time with no pressure of making a final round.

After numerous classes over the last three months from incredible Ballet teachers, Tap teachers, Yoga and Pilates Instructors, I have heard a new definition for the word "technique" as well as what I now believe a fuller understanding of foot pressure how to create it and apply it. I would like to share this with you as as part of the new

Foot Pressure. How and where does it come from?

BALLROOMOLOGY tm system of teaching. Having started to experiment with coaching and teaching all levels of students. Once again I believe the successful results I have been experiencing are due to sharing a Kinetic viewpoint of how one consciously uses their bodies to create the desired movements and effects in their chosen style of dance.

The phrases "Use the floor" , "Your not using your feet" or "Everything starts with the floor" or the one that frustrated me the most for years "Keep the weight toward or use the inside edge of your foot" seemed to be very elusive to me as well as not offer a solution or an action to produce the correct usage of the floor when one chooses to use it. So after just pretending to understand and apply some kind of pressure with my foot or toe to the floor, bearing down and gritting my teeth with tremendous pressure on my Quads and knees with all my might resulting in two lovely torn cartilages by the way so at this point I think I would like to offer a different perspective.

I am only going to address the foot in this article. One must apply many principles while attempting to dance. But one must learn things one step at a time in order to create a coordinated muscular memory, body skill and then in an instant multitask to produce a product. So here we go....The Foot.

The foot contains twenty six bones which I will only acknowledge in the actions I present. I will mostly stay focused on the three arches of the foot which has numerous muscles as well. The three arches of the foot act to raise the center of the foot. They are: The Transverse(a horizontal line across the top of the foot), Medial Longitudinal(toward the inside edge from big toe toward the ankle), Lateral Longitudinal(outer edge from pinky toe toward the ankle). This vulnerable area called the arch was defined by Delsarte as "The Emotional Part of The Foot".

If you look down at the top of your foot try to picture a horizontal line starting from the bottom of your big toe joint traveling across to the bottom of your pinky toe joint. From each of those points the big toe and the pinky toe joint draw a line back toward your heel creating a triangle. This connects up with your Calcaneus or heel creating three points of contact. If your feet are parallel or in turned out position it matters not. The same result will be accomplished. Using all your toes grip, pull or claw your feet and toes up toward your core in a suction cup action. Practice this for a while until you are familiar with the sensation. When you are ready slowly lower or bend your knees toward the floor at the same time(the basic Plie). This automatically engages all the calf and leg muscles including the insides of the thighs as well as angles the shins slightly forward to keep weight off the knee. By using this technique you are automatically creating foot pressure by pulling the energy up from the floor when you lower as a counter balance or as we say working with equal and opposite energies. Not just pressing down in one direction. This takes wasteful and harmful pressure of the knees and helps to avoid injury to those areas. It is always best to work slowly and stay mindful and tuned in to the process. Please note this is used only in the lowering action as in Waltz or other dances. A helpful aide would be to place both hands in front of you

Foot Pressure. How and where does it come from?

on a flat surface and try the same actions. It will help you to visualize the look and feel of the foot. The palm of your hand is the arch of your foot. Your fingers are your toes.

Rising through the foot is a different action which I shall explain shortly. But I will say the more you suction or claw your toes in your shoes when walking down the street or even practice the whole dance rehearsal gripping your toes and lifting the arches you are reinforcing the action and making a quicker muscular memory for future use.

After you have reached the bottom of your lowering or Plie (parallel or turned out) as you come back up spread the toes on the floor flat and upon gradual rising crease all five toe joints to create a platform and push away from the floor. Still pushing down to rise but keeping the image of the three arches lifting will keep all the leg, foot and thigh muscles engaged to create an equal and opposite foot pressure. When in static position as you begin to rise gently shift your hips slightly forward and make sure you roll the knee and thigh forward as well so the weight of the legs feels lengthened down the front of your thighs. This also helps you to avoid popping or hyperextending your knees. When balancing in full foot rise it best to focus the point of balance on the big and middle toe of each foot instead of the outside edge of the foot. The results will be a very conscious creation of foot pressure upon will. This also increases stability and performance consistency.

It is an energy of the life force that we are utilizing. A focus of the mind a connection of the soul to partner or to ones self or music. To create an expression of dance. A visual art form. Other Spiritual and Yogic Practices teach about connection to below the Earths surface tapping in to her "Core" strength and energies. Drawing it up through your feet to your heart and other vital organs. Performing Arts Masters will talk about visualizing working from below the floor as a mental focus while creating the lifting of the arches to create foot pressure, resistance or a type of leverage. Whether you are standing on one foot or two the floor is the only connection one has when dancing. You can connect with a partner but they will not give you balance, stability or foot pressure. In the end whether experiencing life or death you are on your own.

It is my wish that these exercises and explanations will help you to lean toward a kinetic understanding of the human body and it's many wonderful usages in todays world. Ease your mind and your heart and encourage you to feel joy while you dance.

In closing let me share my new definition I heard from a wonderful Ballet teacher here in the city. I thought it was Brilliant, Simple and Profound. But then again most great things are. Technique: "HAVING CONTROL OF YOUR BODY NOT LETTING YOUR BODY HAVE CONTROL OVER YOU!"

Copyright ©Bonnie Diaz - All Rights Reserved