

Movement Matters:

A Journey into the World of Physically Integrated Dance

The truest expression of the human spirit in dance is a language of movement spoken by every kind of body. Physically integrated dance is not about overcoming physical limitations, but about redefining the very nature of movement itself. By challenging traditional dance aesthetics, we can expand movement translation and vocabulary to incorporate the unique movement abilities of each dancer. Physically integrated dance celebrates the human body in all its forms and expressions emphasizing the strengths of all dancers. It is an invitation to experience movement differences as an advantageous influence in performance and choreography. Embracing this ideology of dance not only redefines and raises questions about traditional notions of beauty and skill in dance, but it also broadens our understanding of what dance CAN be.

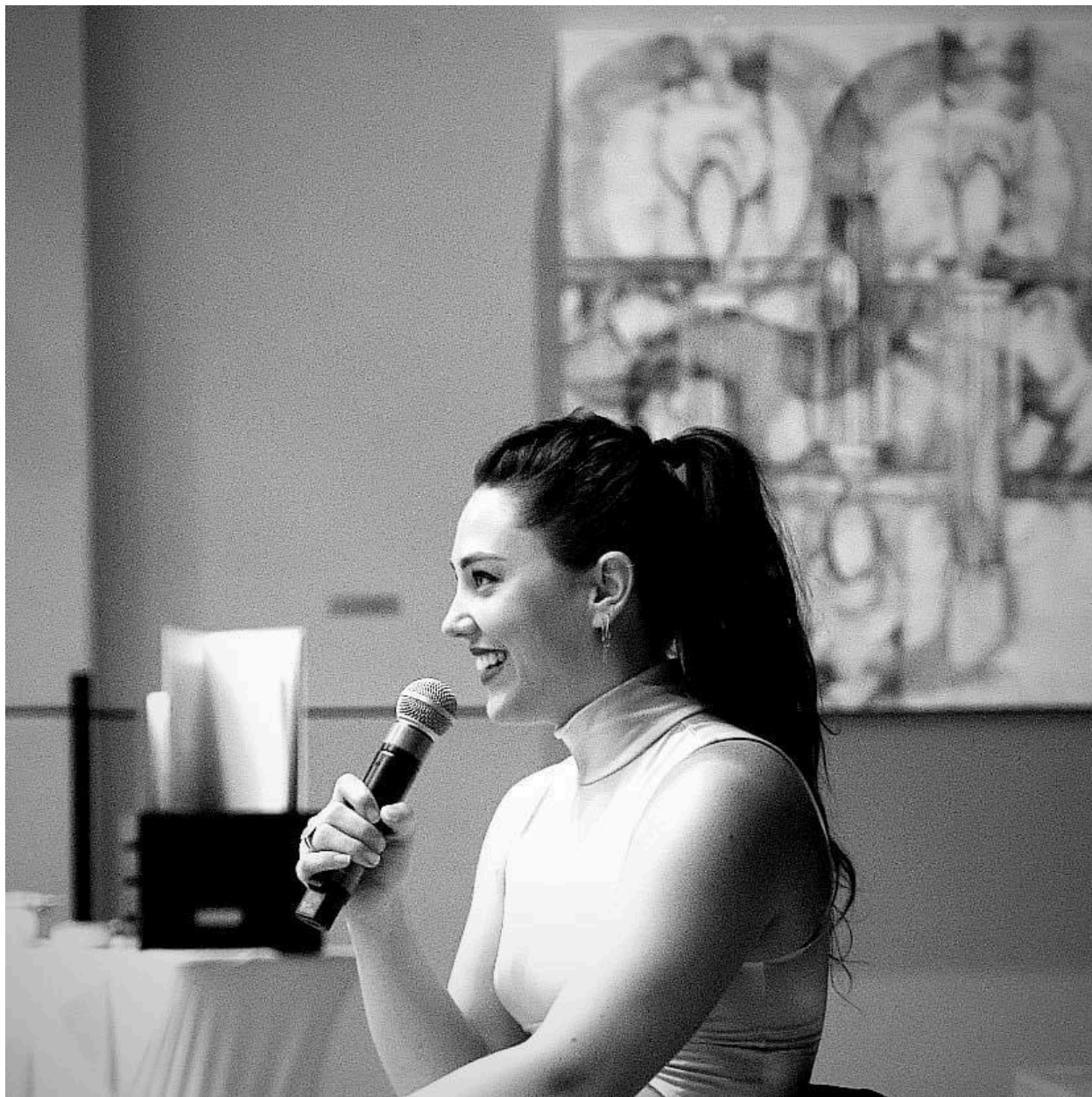
My discovery of physically integrated dance began after my freshman year of college. While studying for a bachelors of science in nursing and a minor in dance at Auburn University, I became a dancing body suddenly challenged to change. In a car accident, I sustained a severe spinal cord injury leaving me paralyzed from the waist down and questioning if I would ever be able to dance again. My perspective on this question pivoted one day in rehabilitation at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, GA when a company member with Full Radius Dance introduced me to the world of physically integrated dance. Inspired by this life giving encounter, I returned to AU determined to complete my nursing degree and dance minor in a wheelchair. With the guidance and the collaboration of my university dance instructors, Adrienne Wilson and Jeri Dickey, the AU Department of Theatre and Dance was transformed. Working collaboratively we explored the challenges and changes of physically integrating the dance minor courses. Our work led to a presentation highlighting movement translation and the physical integration of the dance program at the 2018 National Dance Education Organization conference in San Antonio, TX. Furthering this exploration of movement translation, I was invited as a guest artist by my home studio, North Alabama Dance Center in

Huntsville, AL to choreograph and direct a three day intensive for advanced competition level dancers age 11-18. The intensive culminated in the studio's first performance of physically integrated dance. Currently, I am a company member with Sanspointe Dance Company in Birmingham, AL and am proud to represent physically integrated dance with this group of artists.

I share my personal experience as an invitation to explore what the world of physically integrated dance offers us all. "Movement Matters" is a forthcoming series of articles focused on expanding the understanding of what dance CAN be by revealing the crucial role of an underrepresented group of artists. By providing resources on a monthly basis for communities touched by the Alabama Dance Council, the series aspires to influence conversation among dance programs, organizations, educators, and performers by raising awareness of current happenings in physically integrated dance.

Please enjoy!

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Shepherd Center Photographer. Featured: Anne Nelson, 2022. Shepherd Center, Atlanta, GA.



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Auburn University Photographic Services. Auburn University Department of Theatre and Dance presenting "Dancing Community: Cultivating Our Roots" at 2019 annual dance concert. Auburn, AL.