

Best of Rochester 2012: Critics' Picks

Best Therapeutic Dance

Kinections

Tucked away in a small dance studio next to Writers & Books on University Avenue is Kinections, a center for dance therapy run by Dr. Danielle Fraenkel, an internationally recognized expert in what is still a relatively new field. During her workshops, students are guided through using movement and dance as the form in which to access and express emotional truths. The purpose is for them to then go on and use that kinesthetic self-knowledge for personal growth and advancement, expanding their movement repertoires and pushing past perceived boundaries.

The American Dance Therapy Association defines dance/movement therapy as "the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process that furthers the emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual." Interestingly, dance therapy was first used in the United States during the 1940's by psychiatric hospitals attempting to provide unreachable patients with alternate means of communication and expression. More recently, it has shown particular success as a therapy in working with victims of sexual and other forms of abuse, as well as with patients with eating disorders.

In Fraenkel's workshops, people from all walks of life gather simply to move, feel, and learn how to more fully inhabit their bodies. They may be given exercises in which they "become" another material — clay or wire, for instance — in order to explore how physical boundaries can be malleable or fixed. Music, discussion, individual and group work are all part of a class at Kinections. Being a dancer is not a prerequisite. Desired outcomes for students include better management of stress, building confidence, improving relationships, succeeding in interviews and presentations, and breaking through blocks.

Fraenkel is a New York State licensed creative arts therapist and licensed mental health counselor. She holds an M.A. in dance movement therapy, and a second M.A. and a Ph.D. with a specialization in counseling from the University of Rochester. Kinections, established by Fraenkel in 1984, is the only institute in the country that is not attached to a university yet still offers all the dance/movement

therapy courses required for certification by the American Dance Therapy Association. Fraenkel also teaches dance therapy at the University of Rochester and is the dance/movement therapist for The Healing Connection, a program for people struggling with eating disorders. Class listings, descriptions and schedules can be found on the organization's website: kinnections.com. (CC)