

# SENSEABILITY



A Quarterly Newsletter of Applications of the FELDENKRAIS METHOD®

## Issue #3: Applications in the Performing Arts

We are moved by a wonderful performance, meaning that our spirits are touched, moved, changed by what we have experienced. Great performances do move us with the emotional interaction between artist and audience. But in a more literal sense, they also move us physically through the precision and artistry of the actual movements of the artist's body. For example, it is the quality of touch and movement that a master musician uses that brings forth a beautiful sound from an instrument. The FELDENKRAIS METHOD® provides us with an excellent tool for developing this artistry of movement and expressiveness in all performers, not just in those with special talents.

### Making Beautiful Music

**Allen Kaatz**, a professional guitar player, began having lower back pain after he had been standing for a few hours playing the guitar. Sometimes it would continue into the next day. This pattern changed with FELDENKRAIS® lessons and "...the back pain is a thing of the past." He gained the added benefits of improved coordination and skill as consequence of his organic improvement. In addition, "...there were fewer barriers between my internal self and the instrument. Whatever emotion I wanted to convey started to flow out of me and through the instrument in one graceful act of expression."

Allen was so intrigued with the results that he enrolled in a FELDENKRAIS Professional Training Program, an intensive study requiring

800-1000 hours of training over a three to four-year period. He now has a practice in Seattle.

"Different types of musical instruments can invite many different distortions in

patterns of movement and skeletal function because musicians need to adapt to the shape of the instrument they are playing." Instead of just focusing on the discomfort, "...it may be more useful for musicians to learn to broaden the field of their attention. Functions such as efficient sitting or standing, breathing, and a sense of 'inner quiet' are all very important to optimum performance in my experience."

In this way, the FELDENKRAIS METHOD helps performers relieve the anxiety associated with performing music, and move toward "a sense of joy of expression." ✎

### Joy of Movement

Choreographer/ practitioner **Nancy Galeota-Wozny** (<NGWOZNY@IX.NETCOM.COM>) discovered the FELDENKRAIS METHOD as a young dancer when she was recovering from a cycle of dance injuries. Not dancing and taking anti-inflammatory medication is not the road to dancer happiness. Nancy happened on a class taught by **Donna Blank** designed especially to meet the needs of dancers. Donna was trained as a dancer herself so she knew the rigors of dance discipline.

Musicians have seen such benefits that they have negotiated with their employers for FELDENKRAIS. For example, the players' committee of the *San Francisco Ballet Orchestra* negotiated to have group sessions and special small group tutorials with GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS TEACHERS **Paul Rubin** and **Julie Casson Rubin** written right into their labor contract.

Nancy discovered that, "Slowly and gradually I was able to see the relationship between how I was moving and my recurring injuries. I was able to let go of some of my rigid ways of holding and placing my body in space. I found a more organic and fluid source for movement."

*"Our intelligence depends upon the opportunity we take to experience and learn on our own. This self learning leads to full, dynamic living."* - Moshe Feldenkrais

Nancy sustained a full recovery and has been dancing professionally ever since. Now in her forties she finds AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT® lessons maintain a supple dancing body and enrich the creative process itself. Currently, Nancy teaches AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT classes for artists of all disciplines at Rice University and The C.G. Jung Education Center and directs the Dance and Writing Project at The Rice School.



*"Ordinarily, we learn just enough to function. But our ability to function with a greater range of ease and skill remains to be developed."*

- Moshe Feldenkrais

## Freeing the Voice

Singers, like actors, benefit greatly from FELDENKRAIS lessons since the body is their instrument. **Carol McAmis**, voice professor in the School of Music at Ithaca College (<mcamis@ithaca.edu>) says, "Any sort of illness or injury or postural imbalances will impact on the beauty of tone and ease of artistic expression in singing. As habits of movement are changed through FELDENKRAIS work, the natural beauty of the voice can emerge effortlessly."

CAROL teaches a course called "Feldenkrais for Musicians". She also incorporates AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT and FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION in her studio voice teaching. Students and faculty at Ithaca College report more efficient practice skills, reduction of stage fright, and more charismatic performances as well as reduction of the physical fatigue of practicing and performing for many hours.

Fellow voice professor Patrice Pastore comments, "The FELDENKRAIS experience has helped me realize there is no one right way to sing, that each person sings with very different experiences. The FELDENKRAIS METHOD has helped me achieve greater mobility and flexibility in singing through total physical involvement."

## About the FELDENKRAIS METHOD®

*"What I am after is to restore each person to their human dignity."* - Moshe Feldenkrais D.Sc.

The **FELDENKRAIS METHOD** is an educational system that develops a functional awareness of the self in the environment.

Moshe Feldenkrais D.Sc. (1904-1984), physicist, engineer, martial artist and educator, developed the **FELDENKRAIS METHOD** by studying the direct relationship between bodily movement and the ways we think, feel, learn and act in the world.

**AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT®** (pictured at left) is the group lesson form in which students explore movement sequences according to the verbal directions of the teacher.

**FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION®** is the private lesson form combining instructive touch and movement with verbal cues.

These lessons help students become aware of old habits and provide choices for more efficient action.

**GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONERS™** must complete 800-1000 hours of in-depth training over a three to four year period in a Professional Training Program accredited by The FELDENKRAIS GUILD.

The **FELDENKRAIS GUILD®** is an international organization of practitioners which maintains the professional standards of practitioners and provides a range of informative materials to the public.

For more information, please contact your **GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONER** or The FELDENKRAIS GUILD at (800) 775-2118.

Our website is: [www.feldenkrais.com](http://www.feldenkrais.com).

**Please Note:** The **FELDENKRAIS METHOD** is an educational system. It is not a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Consult your physician if you have pain or difficulty with movement.



## From Recovery to Mastery

**Cathy Paine** had been a (<cathypaine@mindspring.com>) dancer, choreographer and teacher for over twenty years when, at age 40, she began to develop severe, recurring pain in her right hip. She consulted many health professionals but the treatments didn't seemed to effect any lasting change. X-rays indicated early arthritis of both hip joints. The sports medicine doctor thought the arthritis would probably not worsen, and told her that her dancing would not affect it one way or the other.

Cathy says, " I could continue to dance without risking further damage to the hip joint, but I had to accept the pain involved." For another eight months or so she continued teaching, performing, and choreographing, but, "the joy went out of my art. The work I loved so much became just a job to be endured. I was not having very much fun!"

**Sally Nash**, a longtime friend and dance colleague, noticed Cathy limping in a rehearsal and offered to give her a FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION lesson. Cathy remembers her experience of her first lesson: "As I lay on Sally's table, she lightly pressed, lifted and rolled various parts of me. Standing up, I felt very relaxed, a little woozy in fact, but the pain in my right hip was still there. Sally asked me to walk a little, then posed some questions, and had me try a minor adjustment to

the way I thought about my walking. While I continued walking and concentrating on this new information, the realization hit me that the pain was no longer there!"

The following year Cathy began the West Virginia FELDENKRAIS training and will become a GUILD-CERTIFIED

FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONER in July, 1997. At forty six, Cathy is dancing and performing better than ever. The pain in her hip never came back. In 1996, Cathy received the Maryland State Arts Council Award for Solo Performance in Dance.

*"I am continually amazed that the entire body works together harmoniously to produce even the tiniest motion of one fingertip."* --Karl Paulnack, Associate Professor of Piano and member of the Piano/Vocal faculty at the Tanglewood Music Center



## Training the Actor's Instrument

What do Peter Brook, Whoopi Goldberg and Mike Nichols have in common? They use **AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT** for actor training.

Over thirty years ago, director Richard Schechner interviewed Moshe Feldenkrais for the *Tulane Drama Review*. He concluded that Feldenkrais' idea was to achieve a kind of potentiality which "...will allow the actor or dancer to assume whatever characteristics he wishes for the role." He added that it would be "very interesting to see a generation of actors... fully trained in this technique."

Since then, reports **Barbara Leverone**, a GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONER (<Brlev@aol.com>) in private practice in Sarasota, Florida, the FELDENKRAIS METHOD has been incorporated into actor training in institutions across the United States including Chicago's DePaul University and the University of Wisconsin. In addition, Barbara taught "Movement for Actors" for 12 years in the graduate acting program for Florida State University.

The emphasis in FELDENKRAIS lessons on noticing "how" a movement is done, attending to the quality rather than the quantity, teaches the actor to reduce effort and strain. This lead Kristen Linklater, internationally acclaimed voice teacher, to write that the Method could aid actors in "the release of limiting, habitual tensions" and in re-establishing connections "between instinctive emotional impulses and muscles that reflexively react to them."

The resulting potent state allows actors to extend their heightened awareness to their fellow actors, to their environment, and to truly listen and be present on stage.

Linklater wrote, "To have immediate access to emotional sources and to allow emotional energy to flow unblocked through a free body demands some re-ordering of the brain's priorities. FELDENKRAIS offers a detailed road map with which to explore one's territory and make conscious decisions about its use."



## Friends of Feldenkrais<sup>sm</sup>

### Individual Memberships:

**\$75** • Basic Benefits, ATM Audiotape by Moshe Feldenkrais, and *Friends of Feldenkrais*® polo T-Shirt

**\$50:** • Basic benefits, and *Feldenkrais Logo* T-Shirt

**\$25.** • Basic benefits:

- Quarterly Newsletter - *SenseAbility*
- 10% discount off books and tapes
- article "The *Feldenkrais Method*" by Moshe Feldenkrais
- discount on Annual Conference workshops

To join, call The FELDENKRAIS GUILD at (800) 775-2118 or email: membership@feldenkrais.com

## Further Reading

Many articles have been written on the FELDENKRAIS METHOD in the performing arts. Our website ([www.feldenkrais.com](http://www.feldenkrais.com)) has an extensive bibliography of articles referencing the Method. There you will also find an excellent reprint entitled "Linda Case Speaks With Paul Rubin", originally published in the *American Suzuki Journal* in 1995.

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## Tips for Performers

Here are a few points on learning that you can apply to your work right now, no matter what your discipline:

1. **Try three ways:** When you can do something at least three different ways, then you know what you are doing. Whether it's a movement, a way of holding the instrument or a vocal approach try varying how you do it. It may seem silly to sing a passage badly on purpose, or play your violin with your chin resting in a different angle, but when you go back to your standard way, you'll see something has changed.
2. **Slow down.** Practice your lines or your action in slow motion studying yourself. What do your eyes do? Where is the tension in your back? What is

happening with your feet? Then go to regular speed and see how it feels.

3. **Visualize.** Close your eyes and see yourself playing effortlessly. Imagine every movement of the body, the arms, legs, head. See it in your mind's eye in as much detail as possible then actually do the movement.
4. **Realize your intention.** When learning, learn. When practicing, practice. When performing, perform. Mixing learning, practicing and performing leads to confusion.

*"Learning how to learn has maximized my practice time and study efforts. I can understand the ebb and flow of intake and be aware of when enough is enough...."*

*--Cellist Liz Buchal, Berklee School of Music*

