



## My Body is My Instrument

David Hochoy

Artistic Director, Dance Kaleidoscope

My body is my instrument. It is my source of inspiration, my reason for living, my vessel, my joy, my frustration, my means of expressing my deepest thoughts and feelings.

My body is a very demanding master and a generous and rewarding boss. It gives me great insight into many aspects of life while I am in the process of living it. It teaches me many lessons, and allows me to learn from my students. I am deeply grateful to have this relationship with my body, and to have traversed the path that it took for me to get to this place.

I didn't all of a sudden wake up one day and say, "I want to be a dancer." It started when I was twenty years old, in graduate school in Theatre when I was asked to sing and dance in order to be cast in a musical. And when I found that indeed, miraculously, I could dance, and that I enjoyed it tremendously, I also found that I was drawn to the challenge of controlling my body with my mind. To me that seemed like the ultimate test you could put yourself through.

Only later did I realize I was embarking on a complete makeover of my body using every ounce of strength, discipline, self-control, persistence, intelligence, resourcefulness, creativity, and love that I could muster. Because my body was weak. It was hopeless, ugly, fat, ungainly, unresponsive and *never* going to make itself into the trappings of a professional dancer.

But underneath this seeming impossibility there was the hope, the dream, the belief that I could become something which I dreamed I could achieve, something which would make me beautiful in my own eyes and validate my existence to the world at large.

I hung on to that dream for a very long time, past the time when I told myself that I had given up, past any human being's reasonable waiting period. And then, finally and unexpectedly, my opportunity came, and I slipped into the doorway of a place where respectability and fame and genius resided. I came face to face with one of the greatest dancers and choreographers of the twentieth century and my life was forever changed. Her name was Martha Graham, and she was the most astounding person I have ever known.

One time I was backstage waiting for a performance to start and Martha appeared in the wings, ready to watch. I rushed to her and said, "Martha, thank you so much for letting me be in your company. I'm learning so much, and it's so exciting I never want to stop learning." She turned to me and smiled, and said in her characteristically wistful way, "You've discovered the secret of life!"