

Alumna Jody Arnhold
champions dance
education as a Deweyan
medium for learning.
Now she's bringing it
back home.

■ BY WILL BUNCH

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEBORAH FEINGOLD

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Dance Ma

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Jody Gottfried Arnhold (M.A. '73) is passionate about dance. Her own story suggests a 19th century narrative ballet. The plot ranges from her decision to teach public school during the budget-strapped 1960s to her emergence as a national voice in dance education as
Founder of 92Y
Dance

Education Laboratory (DEL), Co-Chair of the New York City Department of Education *Blueprint for*

Teaching and Learning in Dance (Pre K-12), Chair (and now Honorary Chair) of Ballet Hispanico and executive producer of the recent EMMY-nominated documentary *PS DANCE!*.

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Now, in a spectacular development that reconnects her to dance education's very beginnings, Arnhold and her husband, John, have given \$4.365 million to establish a new dance education doctoral program at Teachers College. The focus is on preparing master dance educators — the teachers of aspiring dance teachers — along with dance researchers and policy experts who will advance Arnhold's ultimate goal: making dance education a staple in American public schools.

"We squirm before we squawk," Arnhold said this past fall at her Upper West Side apartment. Elegant and trim, with striking dark hair, she looks ready to step onstage at La Mama or Triskelion Arts. "Yes, literacy, yes, math, but principals must understand that the arts build artistically literate adults, encourage better attendance, behavior and self-esteem, and support the learning goals in other disciplines. Dance does this in a unique way because it engages the student's whole body and mind for expressive purposes."

CHANNELING HISTORY

Dance — meaning not just technique, but also improvisation and choreography — fosters "collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, citizenship," Arnhold says. Beyond its practice by gifted dance artists, she believes dance develops understanding of the world, as John Dewey, TC's iconic philosopher, argued education must. "I really believe that it will help foster world peace."

The field of dance education was conceived at TC in 1916 by Margaret H'Doubler (pronounced "Dobler"), a visiting biology doctoral candidate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison who studied with Dewey. H'Doubler's departmental boss wanted to expand physical education for women. Influenced by TC faculty member Gertrude Colby and Carnegie Hall instructor Alys Bentley, she developed a dance program in physical education built upon a vision of "creative dance," in which each person becomes a "creative dance maker" with an individual vocabulary of movement.

On the 100th anniversary of H'Doubler's work, Arnhold seems to be consciously channeling this history.

"Like H'Doubler and Colby, Jody is a maverick," says Barbara Bashaw (Ed.D. '11), Director of Graduate Dance Education at Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of

"We squirm before we squawk. Yes, literacy, yes, math, but principals must understand that the arts build artistically literate adults [and] dance engages the student's whole body and mind for expressive purposes."

the Arts and consultant to the TC committee shaping the new doctoral program. "She's mentored hundreds of dance educators to find their own truths and approaches. Now she's giving this field a home, where people can celebrate and respect the incredible transformation and knowledge dance brings to all people. And she's doing it at Teachers College, which so prominently celebrates all educators."

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

TC's own dance education master's degree program, closed in 2005, produced many leaders such as Martha Hill, the first dance director at Juilliard School of Music, and the Trinidadian dancer Beryl McBurnie ("La Belle Rosette"). Inevitably, Arnhold arrived there, too. As a young girl in Washington, D.C., she studied with modern dance pioneer Erika Thimey, who had trained in Dresden with Mary Wigman, a trailblazer of the form. Wigman had worked with modern dance theorist Rudolf Laban.

"It gets even stranger, because John's family is from Dresden and was completely involved in the cultural life there before the war," Arnhold says of her husband.



MOVER AND SHAKER Arnhold has worked for decades to ensure a quality, sequential dance education for every child. Her founding of the Dance Education Laboratory at the 92nd Street Y, endowment of a master's degree program at Hunter College and her co-leadership of the dance education *Blueprint* have dramatically increased New York City's roster of certified dance instructors.

Arnhold enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, but ultimately wanted to dance in New York City. Once there, however, she felt unmoored. "I was taking three classes a day, but needed structure," she recalls. "So I sold blouses at Bonwit's and then worked at the Department of Welfare, as it was then called."

After a departmental strike, Arnhold enrolled in an intensive teaching program at New York University. "I was always a teacher," she says. "I was the oldest of four siblings and was always organizing the kids in the neighborhood. At 15, I opened Erika's studio on Saturday mornings and taught the five-year-olds."

In New York, she taught general education at P.S. 165 and then at P.S. 180, across Morningside Park from TC. She was happy but missed dance — so "I literally walked up the hill and into TC's dance department," then led by Thais Barry, a Wisconsin alum.

"Teachers College put it all together for me," she says. "It reconnected me with my art. It gave me a vision of what I wanted — quality, sequential dance education for every child — and a network of people I work with to this day."

If TC shaped Arnhold's vision, P.S. 75 on the Upper West Side, where she first taught dance, was her finishing school. She was hired when Ballet Hispanico, a local cultural institution, received federal funding to do a six-week residency there. "The principal, Lou Mercado, said there was no dedicated dance space — I'd have to teach in a classroom and move the desks — but he believed in me. I showed up on the first day with my drum."

Arnhold immediately apprenticed herself to Tina Ramirez, Ballet Hispanico's Founder and Artistic Director, who she sensed was a master teacher. "I wrote down everything she did, joined in her classes, followed her back to the Ballet Hispanico studios during lunch." Today, Ballet

“Teachers College reconnected me with my art as a very young teacher. It gave me a vision of quality, sequential dance education for every child, and a network of people I work with to this day.”



Hispanico’s home on West 89th Street is called The Arnhold Center. Another teacher, Joan Sax, introduced her to the application of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) to dance education: “The guiding principles of LMA are process, not product, everybody can dance and you can make a dance about anything. Make a dance to Mussorgsky’s ‘Night on Bald Mountain’ and you’ll never forget Mussorgsky’s ‘Night on Bald Mountain.’ Create a dance about symmetry and asymmetry, and you’ll understand symmetry and asymmetry.”

Arnhold taught for 25 years, becoming a master teacher and a mentor to other teachers who also dreamed of bringing dance to their students.

“It was one of those moments when everything freezes,” recalls Bashaw of first seeing Arnhold teach. “You’re watching this person who is so brilliant, and you can’t breathe, because you’re thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, this is everything I want to be and do.’ It was about children making their own dances. I’d been looking for it, but I wasn’t sure it existed.”

AN ARMY OF TEACHERS

Since the mid-1990s, Arnhold has led a major expansion and improvement of dance instruction in New York. With Joan Finkelstein, she founded 92Y Dance Education Laboratory, which provides teacher training and professional development. In 2012, she endowed the Arnhold Graduate Dance Education Program at Hunter College. The city’s roster of certified dance teachers has grown significantly, to 256 in 2016.


In 2005, together with Finkelstein (then serving as Director of Dance for the New York City Department of Education) and Ramirez, Arnhold led development of the city’s *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance, Pre K-12*. The *Blueprint* is organized around five “strands”: dance making; developing dance literacy; making connections with other disciplines; working with community and cultural resources; and exploring careers and lifelong learning.

“It was the height of the No Child Left Behind era and during an arts teacher hiring freeze. The DOE had many mandates, but through thoughtful work with our dance teachers, we were able to address all of them,” Arnhold says proudly.

Last year, Arnhold teamed with director Nel Shelby and Finkelstein (now Executive Director of the Harkness Foundation for Dance) to create the documentary *PS DANCE!*, about the teaching of dance in five New York City public schools. The film promotes Arnhold’s mission, Dance For Every Child. Nominated for a New York EMMY, *PS DANCE!* aired on WNET/THIRTEEN in New York and public television nationwide. Narrated by the veteran TV journalist Paula Zahn, the film is the *Blueprint* in motion.

And now comes the Arnholds’ gift to TC. Beyond pre-

paring teachers of teachers, the program will feature policy, leadership and dance-focused movement science components. “Jody’s been working to ensure dance education for every child,” Bashaw says. “She’s been developing a mountain, and the TC doctoral program is the peak.”

“As the future of American education is debated, this program will help put dance at the table,” Arnhold says. “Our graduates will make dance education even stronger. The arts are for everyone, at all ages and stages of their lives. Our graduates are going to be doing work in dance education that we can’t even imagine.” 

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A Stepwise Process

A faculty committee shapes TC’s new dance education doctoral program

An interdisciplinary faculty committee is shaping TC’s new dance education doctoral program for faculty review and submission for state approval. ■ “This doctoral program will be devoted exclusively to dance education, bringing together TC’s faculty as well as the rich and extensive dance education community in and beyond New York City,” says committee chair **Mary Hafeli**, Professor of Art & Art Education. “That means being consultative, in and outside of the College.” ■ Priorities are to prepare dance educators to teach teachers of dance in diverse settings; develop dance educators as accomplished researchers; and foster leaders in dance education curriculum development and policy. ■ **Dirck Roosevelt**, Visiting Associate Professor of Curriculum & Teaching, believes aspiring master teachers must balance classroom teachers’ everyday experience against a broader understanding of dance in society. ■ “You have to join the novice’s perspective to the larger territory of importance that dance occupies,” says

Roosevelt, who designed coursework for TC’s doctoral specialization in Teacher Education. “In high school, I saw the film *Isadora*, in which Vanessa Redgrave plays Isadora Duncan. I was into politics, and it interested me in dance because of Duncan’s involvement with social causes.” ■ Finding connections for students, says **Kelly Parkes**, Associate Professor of Music & Music Education, requires “a focus on holistic education, not just on subject-specific skills, and an awareness of who’s in the classroom — and who’s not.” TC helps students find their own pathways as educators, she says, and “perhaps even more than music, dance is open to that, because it doesn’t privilege one form over another.” ■ Dance education is typically about the art and pedagogy of dance, but “we’ll have the science and policy components to enable students to think about a range of career goals,” says **Carol Ewing Garber**, Professor of Movement Sciences. ■ “I’ve loved this collaboration,” Roosevelt says. “It’s all about different, vigorous traditions being brought to bear.” — **JOE LEVINE**

ALUMNI FOOTSTEPS



MARGARET H' DOUBLER

As a visiting doctoral student at TC in 1916, she reconceived the field of dance education.



BERYL MCBURNIE

Known as “La Belle Rosette” and the grande dame of Caribbean dance, she promoted regional culture.



MARTHA HILL

Juilliard School’s inaugural dance director, she first taught high school students at TC’s Lincoln School.