

Obituary: Trish Arnold



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Trish Arnold pioneered an innovative approach to the teaching of movement and dance specifically designed for actors that is now widely employed across the theatre industry and in education.

Over a 40-year teaching career, she gathered together elements from her own training in ballet, in ‘alternative’ dance and movement to relate and connect the physical function and facility of the actor’s body to breathing and speaking. Pure Movement is now employed in the core curriculum of the UK’s leading acting schools and informs the practice of major choreographers and voice coaches on stage and film.

At the core of her method was the notion of allowing the body to follow natural ‘gravity swings’. Designed to encourage and enable actors to move with ease, expressivity and an attention

to physical placement and alignment more usually associated with dance, it regarded the body as a dynamic and expressive movement system.

Stressing the useful study of the expressive actions of animals, together with mask work, period dance and the placing of the body in space, Arnold’s emphasis on breathing also proved hugely important for voice teachers. Her former student and collaborator Kristin Linklater is now herself considered a world authority.

Prominent among current proponents of Pure Movement is Jane Gibson (the first person Arnold trained to be a teacher) and Sue Lefton, both of whom have extensive high-profile theatre, opera and screen credits.

Born in Peebles, Scotland, to a wool-manufacturing father, Arnold was one of five children.

After serving with the Entertainments National Service Association during the war, she trained at the Sadler's Wells ballet school and graduated to become a dancer with the Royal Ballet company. Later training included studies with Sigurd Leeder

at the School of Dance, Darlington Hall, and with Jacques Lecoq in Paris.

She began teaching movement at LAMDA in 1955 and was promoted to head of the department from 1963 until 1972.



Trish Arnold teaching dance students when she was younger (second from right)

In the 1960s, she contributed to workshops led by William Gaskill and Peter Gill for the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre, London, and in 1967 was appointed movement coach at the Stratford Festival Theatre, Ontario, a post she held until 1974 (and again in 1982).

Dividing her time between the UK and the US, she was movement teacher for the New York University theatre arts programme (1968) and contributed to Common Stock theatre company's training activities, presenting the children's play *Tales from Whitechapel* at the Cockpit Theatre, London (1972) and Brian Phelan and Olwen Wymark's *Watch the Woman* at the same venue in 1973.

After a spell with Working Theater in New York, she became a visiting professor and head of the movement department at Carnegie Mellon

University (1978-80) in Pittsburgh before teaching at Syracuse University's London Studio (1980-83).

She was a movement teacher at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama from 1985, spending her summers teaching with Shakespeare and Company in Lenox, Massachusetts.

In 1989, she became head of movement at the Guildhall School, a post she held for six years (and where she continued to contribute to the Movement Teacher Training master's programme until 2010), during which time she also worked periodically with the Linklater Center in New York leading voice classes.

Patricia 'Trish' Arnold was born on June 19, 1918, and died on February 2, aged 98.