

September 8, 2014

I didn't have very high expectations walking into Victor Adebusola's Beginning Jazz: Hip-Hop class last Friday. I was once in those general-education dance classes before I became a dance major. I've also taught non-dancers before, and it was very hard for me, so I was wondering how Victor was going to command the attention of an entire room of almost 30 or more general education students.

When we walked into class the students weren't warming up at all. This was a bit of a shock to me because I'm used to walking into a studio and everyone is in some kind of crazy yoga pose or working on their abs. Once the instructor came in their energy changed. They spread out fairly quickly as he was getting ready and were standing in a relaxed position, yet they seemed ready to dance. The students clearly got along with each other and the instructor which was crucial in helping create a positive learning environment.

He seemed very calm for someone who was rushing from Baltimore that day. During warm up he kept the cardio movement very simple (such as grapevines and jumping jacks) which helped some students who were less coordinated and helped them find the beat to gradually move on to try harder stuff. His use of verbal cueing also helped keep the students together because it was a clear change that they could easily identify. The students were clearly focused on him and getting the steps. Once the stretching started, he let the dancers be a little more independent while he walked around and corrected their positioning while verbally cueing them through that section of the warm up. Even though they weren't as enthusiastic as some of the dance majors might have been in a hip-hop class, they still seemed focused and interested in what they were learning. The warm-up took about 30 minutes and included finding the rhythm, body isolations, strengthening and stretching.

He didn't do any work in the center but he went on to across the floor work. He started with simple slides that the students had done before and then he moved on to hard steps such as little kick switches. When harder moves or moves that weren't as familiar came up, he would slow down the pace and verbally cue the movement as he did it. It was easy to see that that really helped the students get it quickly. Then as the students went across the floor he was all over the place. He was looking at them from the front, back, and sides while accenting different parts of the rhythm. He was being just as active and mobile as the students which was a lot more encouraging than someone just standing at the front of the room. He said the class didn't have any set choreography but they did combine some of their across the floor combos to make one long phrase. When they were doing that he gave verbally cueing, verbalized accents, even marked it while other groups did it full out. He gave lots of praise throughout this section of the class which helped encourage the students through this challenging movement. The students were a lot more energized at this point which was great to see. Both the instructor and students were smiling more. The end of the class was concluded with a cypher which is a big circle where people can go in and do a little solo dance when they feel ready. That created a really open and welcoming environment that I think the students will bring back to class on Tuesday.