

Siomara Bridges “Cee Cee”

Lecture Demonstration

Fall 08

Niles, Alumni Report

Barbara Mahler: Alumni Report

All the Hunter Students may be familiar with this alumnus Barbara Mahler. She is no stranger to Hunter College dance space, Barbara continues to call hunter her home. She uses the space to create her magnificent work. Barbara graduated as a dance major from Hunter College in 1977. She got her Masters degree from University Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In her biography it was found that she was not extremely talented in dancing, but she was a determined student, and she agreed that she would not only learn how to dance but also that she would it well. And from the looks of it she has worked to be an outstanding dancer and choreographer. Barbara Mahler’s solo and groups’ work have been seen worldwide and she has been a guest artist at many dance festivals across the United States Europe and Canada.

However it took Barbara sometime to get to where she is today. She discovered throughout her years at Hunter that her passion for dance was there, but she seemed to figure out her interest and passion was the body. It was found in her Biography on her website www.barbaramahler.com that her studies at Hunter College really impacted her way of seeing dance. It was her professor

Dorothy Vislocky who was a pioneer in anatomy and kinesiology. Barbara then realized that there must be a way to use her body properly; she knew that there was a way to get those beautiful turns, a shape, and fluid movement. Barbara began to study with the Susan Klein School of dance in 1977. It took her sometime to understand her process of learning; this is a situation I feel all dancers may relate to. Including myself I feel we work ourselves up, by getting frustrated over us not getting movement right. But as Risa Steinberg a Jose Limon technique teacher, said, "We are not slow learners, we just haven't learned how we learn just yet." Barbara discovered that she was to first relax inside, and she would no longer be just a body that needed to obey the rules. After that she noticed her process of learning had changed, she began to realize her body movement was slowly improving.

I personally admire Barbara's discovery and I feel it's very valid. There was more of a groundness, and fluidity of dancing through the body. Really checking in with your body, and knowing what you should use to work through the movement is very important. Barbara's technique and flexibility, continued to improve and that's where it all started.

Barbara began to choreograph several solo and group work. Her pieces have been shown worldwide. Great reviews have been given to her in several articles, and newspapers. Her works have been described as using pure movement, finely structured, and strongly expressive. Viewing her piece title "Shorts" in our choreographic Project class at Hunter College, dancers floated

through the space. With intricate turns of the leg in the second positions flexed, done with such precision. I enjoyed the dancers focus, and their connection within their bodies. Barbara created duets that I felt had no ending to them. They rolled on to each other supporting with the arms, and head, allowing every movement to lead into itself. The choreography definitely seemed pure to the dancers, and as an audience member it was just as clean.

Barbara began teaching classes 2 years after she graduated in 1979, and taught daily classes starting in 1984. You can currently find her teaching in Manhattan and Brooklyn areas. She teaches people how to use and think about and be in their bodies. The Klein Technique is a dance technique that allows you to explore your capacity to move, and achieve greater technical facility. This supportive technique can branch off into choreographic ideas, and much more.

Speaking to her personally she is passionate about her work, and very clever. Overall she opens up not only your mind but also your body, and makes things happen you wouldn't think were possible. She continues to create works, performs, and teaches. Being a Graduate from Hunter College, she qualifies as an excellent role model for us current students. She gives us hope, and presents such great achievement. Barbara is an alumnus from Hunter College that has definitely made history.