

Kim Hancock

A Community for Life

I have always believed in the healing and transformative power of dance. Dance gives me the space to slow down and breathe, the space to get out of my head and into my body. Junior year of high school, I made the difficult decision to quit the competitive dance team I was on due to the rigor and lack of creativity in our competition routines. I wanted dance to be an exploration of movement rather than cookie-cutter routines. At this point in high school, I would have told you that my dream job was teaching dance in elementary schools so children could be exposed to the creative power of movement while young and uninhibited.

Coming to Bowdoin allowed me to have my first shot at achieving this dream. The first club I joined on campus was the modern dance collective. Open to all dance levels and abilities, our mission was to make dance accessible to everyone. Our classes focus on improvisation exercises that are not about learning specific moves, but about creating unique movements. Improvisation prompts include everything from “start all of your movement from your head,” to “stick to the ground and imagine you are moving through water,” and now with COVID, “think about how you can reimagine the small spaces in your home more as playgrounds than as obstacles.”

As I became more involved in the club, I looked forward to the 2 hours each week I could enter an open space and communicate primarily with my movements instead of my words. The people in the club became my rock, my inspiration, my release. We renamed ourselves The Movement Collective to better suit our mission as a group, and have experimented in combining dance with visual art, live music, and poetry.

One of my favorite pieces we did was in the art museum on campus. There was an installation in a circular room that had contour lines all over the walls; instrumental music was played out loud based on the type of motion occurring. For example, faster movements in front of an area with really close contours would play higher-pitched, faster sounds. As a group, we learned to collectively use space and movement as our ‘instruments’, with a keen sense of awareness of one another. This awareness was physical as well as audible, for we were working together to ‘play’ the instrument of the room.

The Movement Collective has expanded my sense of what artistry in dance means and made me realize the importance of community in creative movement. This community has provided me not only an artistic outlet during the snowiest parts of finals, but also an emotional outlet and some of my closest friends on campus. We exist in our bodies together; we dim the lights and cover the mirrors to block all inhibitions. I hope to create a web of movement creators throughout my life by spreading the joy of uninhibited movement in other communities I become a part of.