

Erinn Liebhard: Dance Artist

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Artist Statement

I make opportunities for people to experience the reflective and connective power of groove through performance and education. Growing up social dancing at my dad's rock band's gigs, I discovered my love of moving in rhythm with others. Guided by this inspiration and a fondness for jazz and American social dance ideas, I'm driven to help connect people to themselves, one another and the moment through rooted, equitable and innovative embodiment of groove!

With 20+ years of professional experience contributing to others through my work in performance and education, own training serves as a strong base: I hold a BFA in Dance from the University of Minnesota and an MFA in Dance from the University of Colorado Boulder with a concentration in music. I'm always seeking out new learning opportunities both in and outside of structured educational environments, striving to remain a student myself as I continue developing my work.

I'm deeply curious about embodying music, particularly where groove, improvisation and social interaction are concerned. This has led me to research the intersections of social and presentational dance ideas in teaching and creating dance that is historically rooted and contemporarily relevant. These interests have led me to train and perform in styles of jazz, tap, Appalachian clogging, house, breaking, jazz, tap, house, body percussion and Haitian, Ghanaian, Guinean and Brazilian traditional forms and many other kinds of dance, including modern and contemporary styles, which also inform my work greatly. These explorations are rich ways to process the world, encouraging the pausing of the fast-paced world in favor of immediate sensory and kinesthetic experience, thinking on one's feet, specificity, intra and interpersonal connection, finding grooves and getting out of ruts, freedom to express while keeping an inner cool, and respect for the past while reaching for innovation.

I'm driven by rooted yet innovative movement because I value equity: I believe that everyone's got groove, and can and should use it! As rhythm is at our shared human core, embodying and improvising with it is an accessible way to interact with, connect to and appreciate oneself and one another while developing playfulness, joy and resourcefulness. I'm interested in framing rhythm's potential through dance to create work that is accessible to all, and I give primacy to American social dance ideas and their Afro-Latin roots in my approach to my focus area of jazz.

This is in part because I've come to find they are what I enjoy most as a mover, and in part because those roots have become invisibilized, be it due to racism, commercialism or ignorance, as more Europeanist approaches to jazz have gradually come to dominate the dance landscape. It is among my goals and responsibilities as a dance educator and choreographer to operate with anti-racists mindsets and actions and to celebrate the vibrant Afro-Latin root ideas of jazz while also moving through how modern and contemporary (and to a far lesser extent ballet) ideas inform my approach. Below is a list of my movement interests, and where I've come across them in my own training:

- Grooving: African traditional and diasporic styles, Latin traditional and diasporic styles, Polka, Square Dance, Swing, Salsa, Jazz, Tap and House
- Syncopation: African traditional and diasporic styles, Latin traditional and diasporic styles, Swing, Tap and Jazz
- Polyhythm: African traditional and diasporic styles, Tap and Jazz
- Rhythmic Footwork: African traditional and diasporic styles, Latin traditional and diasporic styles, Polka, Square Dance, Swing, Salsa, Jazz, Tap and House
- Isolation and Micro-Isolation/ Democracy of Body-Parts: African Traditional and Diasporic styles, Jazz, Transnational Fusion Bellydance, Popping
- Groundedness/ Pelvis & Knees Flexed Toward the Earth: African and Latin traditional and diasporic

styles, and Modern and Contemporary styles

- Expansiveness and Traveling: Modern and Contemporary styles, Ballet
- Floorwork: Modern and Contemporary styles and Breaking
- Facing and Spacing Shift: Modern and Contemporary styles, Ballet
- Weight-Sharing via Hands and Whole Body: Polka, Square Dance, Swing, Salsa and Modern and Contemporary styles
- Improvisation: African and Latin traditional and diasporic styles, Jazz, Tap and Modern and Contemporary styles (and really, any social dance style I've studied)
- Interaction: All social and concert dance has varying amounts of this, as the medium of the art form is people themselves.

Dance ideas are cultural conduits: researching their roots and pathways is crucial to creating rooted yet innovative work with equity at its core. My own focus continues to require enthusiastic research into how Afro-Latin diasporic movement ideas have moved through time and space to inform American social dance ideas: this research has been paramount in my ability to define my aesthetic priorities of groove, interaction and improvisation in moving to jazz and jazz-related music. I believe in rooted innovation in dance as a vibrant intersection of history, equity, the self, others and the moment. I believe dancing together to be our values in action. My work in performance and education explores the above themes as a continued commitment to contribute to others through the creation of opportunities for people to experience groove.

Bibliography in the form of publications read (via sources used for my own scholarly writing) and training undertaken (via my curriculum vitae) available upon request.