

Thursday, Jan 11, 2018

OU's 'Take Root' to host creative movement classes in Pontiac

Take Root, a contemporary dance company-in-residence at Oakland University, will host a series of creative movement classes for pre-K children from Jan. 16-18 at the Baldwin Center and Oakland Family Services in Pontiac, Mich.

"Creative movement refers to a more exploratory method of teaching children dance," said OU Dance Associate Professor **Thayer Jonutz**, who co-founded Take Root in 2013 with fellow Associate Professor of Dance **Ali Woerner**.

"Traditionally a lot of dance forms are taught by teaching specific steps demonstrated by the teacher and in essence mimicked by the student," Jonutz added. "With creative movement the instructor is more of a guide than a teacher. The guide offers games, problem solving tasks, and imagery to the children to inspire authentic movement. Whatever the children create within the framework of the creative movement tasks is celebrated."

According to Jonutz, Take Root will teach approximately 72 children at Oakland Family Services on Tuesday, Jan. 16. The children will be divided into six groups and the classes, which last about 45 minutes, will be taught simultaneously by company members.

On Wednesday, Jan. 17, Take Root will offer classes at the Baldwin Center in Pontiac, which offers after-school programs that are open to children of all ages.

"The teachers and directors at both locations are weaving Take Root's visit into the schedule for an arts enrichment activity," Jonutz said. "On Thursday, Jan. 18 we will be presenting a show at both locations as a culminating activity."

According to Jonutz, the show and the classes will be based on Take Root's theme for the season, "I Have a Story to Tell You."

"The theme allows us to explore why stories are important to us as human beings," Jonutz said. "During class, the children will be prompted to think about something that happened in their lives recently. They will then be given the task of distilling their stories down to three words and then will create three shapes on their bodies that will represent their words."

"One task that will be given to the class to utilize these three-movement story telling dances is to teach a partner your movement story and in turn learn your partner's movement story," Jonutz added. "The goal of this sharing activity is to illustrate how sharing stories fosters empathy."

There is no registration required, and parents and families are invited to attend the show.

"The Baldwin Center and Oakland Family Services are incredible organizations that are changing lives every day in multiple ways," Jonutz said. "Including my own."

About two years ago, Jonutz and his wife opened their home to provide a safe, loving space for children as licensed foster parents through Oakland Family Services.

The experience would change their lives forever.

"To our surprise, our first placement was 7-month-old identical twin boys," Jonutz said. "In the end, it was decided that the best thing for the boys was for us to adopt them, so we did in past August. As a result, I have a deep, personal connection with Oakland Family Services, and it is an honor for me to offer OFS my talent of dance by aligning our missions for this event."

The Baldwin Center is located at 212 Baldwin Ave., while Oakland Family Services is located at 114 Orchard Lake Road.



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