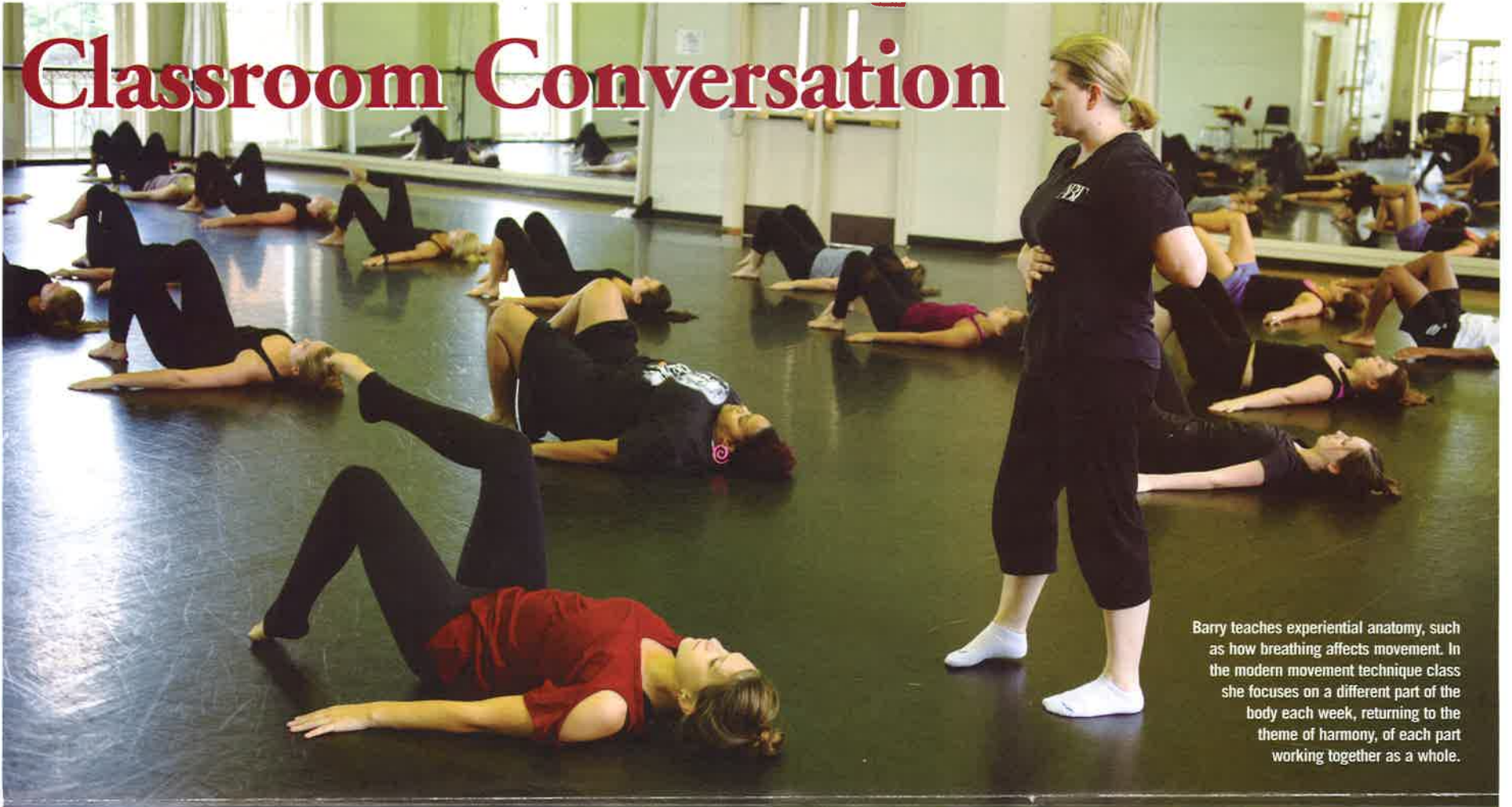


# Classroom Conversation



Barry teaches experiential anatomy, such as how breathing affects movement. In the modern movement technique class she focuses on a different part of the body each week, returning to the theme of harmony, of each part working together as a whole.

*Sarah M. Barry is an associate professor in the department of theatre and dance and a winner of the 2013 Outstanding Commitment to Teaching Award.*

Sarah M. Barry begins her modern techniques dance class not with warm up stretches but with a mini-lecture on experiential anatomy. Today's topic is the anatomy of the spine. She describes the different vertebrae, the muscles attached to the vertebrae, and how bones and muscle work together to allow the dancer to move and breathe. Without bone and muscle there is no movement and breath; without movement and breath there is no dance.

During improvisation she calls the dancers to self-awareness of how their spines feel when they turn, of how their breath fills their bodies. Anatomy is entwined with dance. Barry wants the dancers to understand and feel the connection.

A lifelong student of dance, she earned a BFA in dance from Sam Houston State University and

an MFA in modern dance from the University of Utah. Then, nine years ago, UA dance program director Cornelius Carter called her about teaching here. The rich variety of the UA program was a good fit for her philosophy: "Finding the connections where none seem to exist — history, choreography, technique — they all work together."

Students come with a desire to be performers or teachers, and as they go through the program, possibilities open before them. They could become critics, photographers or dance company managers, dance therapists or fitness trainers. They could become choreographers for stage or film.

Barry herself is a choreographer, and sees choreography and teaching as entwined, like anatomy and movement.

"Successful teaching and successful choreography are both

linked to the ability to be in the moment with the students or dancers. You might have an idea about what to teach, but if the students are in a different place, you have to change your plans to bring them to where you want them to go. The same is true with making dances. The ability to improvise and be flexible is crucial to both teaching and choreographing, as is the concept of the student or dancer taking new ideas and creating new material, ideas and experiences with what is given," Barry said.

Whatever career her students choose, Barry hopes they have experienced many styles and have a wider view of what's possible.

"I hope they will continue sharing their passion and pass that love on and be an advocate for dance. I hope that they leave inspired." ●



"In dance, you are in a community and you are vulnerable. We are sweating, falling down, trying new things, moving our bodies in new ways. We are working it out together. I tell students it's a safe place. You're putting a part of yourself out there, but we are there to support each other." — Sarah M. Barry



More than 30 students gather in Clark Hall's third floor dance studio for Barry's class. Enrollment in the dance program has burgeoned. Televised competitions and shows have increased popular interest in the many forms of dance, and this interest has brought more students to UA's program, attracted to the variety it offers. Many dance students pursue double majors to combine dance with other academic or career interests.

The Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre returns to Morgan Auditorium Sept. 23-26 with an all-new concert, choreographed by UA's dance faculty. For tickets and more information on the ARDT, go to [theatre.ua.edu](http://theatre.ua.edu). ●