

# The Summer Dance Program Circuit: Doug Varone

By: Max Hershenow  
Jul 30 2009

tags: Dance, Doug Varone, SUNY Purchase

Category: Dance, Intensives/Dance Programs

Original URL: <http://maxhershenow.wordpress.com/2009/07/30/the-summer-dance-program-circuit-doug-varone/>

Last month, I spent three weeks at SUNY Purchase participating in the Doug Varone Summer Intensive, which is part of the reason my posts have been so sporadic this summer (not that I have many consistent readers). I have been wanting to write a post to comment on and celebrate the program (as well as to encourage anyone considering dance programs to attend Doug's), but have needed almost a month to digest the incredibleness of the experience.

While there are many aspects of the intensive that I could comment on (and might in future posts), what struck me most about the experience was the deep mutual respect everyone involved had for each other and the warmth and cohesion the company emitted. Maybe this is just my experience, but it seems like several of the choreographers I have worked with recently or heard a lot about are known as divas and assholes who, because of the huge number of people wanting to dance for them, can afford to treat the people around them inhumanely (and do). Doug Varone was not like this in any way. Within several days, he had every single person in the intensive's name memorized (and insisted his company members learn our names as well). He was genuinely interested in us as people and that culture of mutual recognition filtered down throughout the entire program.

This is not to say that it wasn't immensely challenging. We began classes every morning at 8AM, had a two hour break for lunch, and danced until 6. Then we had a short break for dinner and showers, and then a performance or activity of some sort every evening until around 10, when I came home totally dead and crashed. Weekends, thank god, were off. Except most people went into New York City and some actually went to take more class! Crazy. I stayed at home.

The performances themselves, however, were INCREDIBLE. I had never seen the company live before and I found myself totally wrapped up in almost every piece. I especially loved *Boats Leaving* and *Lux*. GO SEE DOUG VARONE AND DANCERS IF YOU HAVE THE CHANCE!

I was also fortunate enough to get into Doug's Choreographic Devices class, where he talked a lot about his process creating these pieces, which I found illuminated the choreography in a way that I would not have gotten. And I loved that class more generally. It was so fun, so challenging, so revolutionary. I'll be working through the information I got in three weeks for years.

Overall, I found the intensity of the intensive (it's all in the title) to be invigorating, but I also would have also loved a little more time for reflection and to work on my own choreography. Also, the company members, who taught all day, rehearsed with Doug during lunch, and performed at night, seemed to be even more exhausted than we were and I always felt a little guilty asking questions or for anything extra. So adding a little more downtime would be my one suggestion and the lack of it is a warning for anyone who is thinking about attending the program.

One more thing. If you ever, EVER have a chance to take a class with Peggy Baker, the amazing Canadian dancer and choreographer, DO IT! I took Irene Dowd technique with her and it totally, totally changed my life. You can see some more stuff about her [here](#). And actually, if you see classes offered by any of the other Varone dancers, take them. They are all incredible. I especially loved Ryan Corrison, Julia Burrer, and Netta Yerushalmy's classes (but they really are all great).

For more information about Doug Varone and Dancers, and to see information about their 2010 Winter and Summer Intensives, visit [www.dougvaroneanddancers.org](http://www.dougvaroneanddancers.org). I highly recommend the program.