



Teacher's Guide for Dance Theatre of Harlem

Founded in 1969, Dance Theatre of Harlem has received international acclaim for their superior artistry . After an 8-year hiatus, Dance Theatre of Harlem is touring and is honored to be presenting a one-hour program for student audiences which will include excerpts of both classic and newly commissioned repertoire.

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For information about attending a performance at Tilles Center:

http://www.tillescenter.org/pdf/education/attending_a_performance.pdf

Educational materials in this teacher guide provided, in part, by Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Introduction



Inspired by a dream

Dance Theatre of Harlem is a leading dance institution of unparalleled global acclaim, encompassing a performing ensemble, a leading arts education center and Dancing Through Barriers®, a national and international education and community outreach program. Each component of Dance Theatre of Harlem carries a solid commitment towards enriching the lives of young people and adults around the world through the arts.

Founded in 1969 by Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook, Dance Theatre of Harlem was considered “one of ballet’s most exciting undertakings” (The New York Times, 1971). Shortly after the assassination of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mitchell was inspired to start a school that would offer children — especially those in Harlem, the

community in which he was born — the opportunity to learn about dance and the allied arts. Now in its fourth decade, Dance Theatre of Harlem has grown into a multi-cultural dance institution with an extraordinary legacy of providing opportunities for creative expression and artistic excellence that continues to set standards in the performing arts. Dance Theatre of Harlem has achieved unprecedented success, bringing innovative and bold new forms of artistic expression to audiences around the world.

Arthur Mitchell, Founder / President/ Artistic Director

Arthur Mitchell began his dance training at New York's famous High School of Performing Arts. After graduation he was accepted to the School of American Ballet at a time when few African-Americans had the opportunity to pursue a dance career. In 1955, Arthur Mitchell became the first African-American to become a permanent member of the New York City Ballet debuting in the Fourth Movement of *Western Symphony*. He quickly rose to the position of Principal Dancer and is best known for his performances in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Agon*.

Included among his many achievements, Arthur Mitchell is the youngest recipient of the prestigious Kennedy Center Honors, the National Medal of Arts (the highest honor awarded by the President of the United States in the Arts and Humanities), New York City's highest arts award, the Handel Medallion. Most recently, Arthur Mitchell was inducted into the Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney Hall of Fame at the National Museum of Dance.

About the Program

Dance Theatre of Harlem's performance will include an informal presentation on the art and science of classical dance. In the first part of the program, the ballet master/narrator will engage the audience in the process of "making a dancer." In simulation of their daily technique class the dancers do a theatricalized barre (exercises at the ballet barre) and end the segment with partnering techniques and lifts.

The second half of the program will be devoted to the performance of various styles of ballet (classical, contemporary, neo-classical) interspersed with commentary from the ballet master / narrator. The similarity between ballet dancers and professional athletes is highlighted, but the underlying message of the presentation is "success is the result of your own work—you receive from your efforts what you put into them." Audience interaction is encouraged as time allows. Numerous opportunities for teachers to develop lessons in many subject areas are identified.

Excerpts from some of the following dances will be performed: *The Joplin Dances*, *Swan Lake Act III Pas de Deux*, *Contested Space* and *Return*.



Dance Theatre of Harlem: Timeline

1955 – 1969

Arthur Mitchell

In 1955 a miracle happened. Arthur Mitchell, an African-American ballet dancer selected by George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein, joined the New York City Ballet. This historic occurrence in pre-civil rights America set the stage for many firsts by Mitchell, which changed the face and future of dance forever. Through roles choreographed by Balanchine specifically for Mitchell, such as the pas de deux in *Agon* and the role of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he honed his craft to become a principal dancer with NYCB for 15 years.

1969

The Birth of Dance Theatre of Harlem

In 1969, shortly after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook founded the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Nurtured by the optimism and idealism of the Civil Rights Era, the school began with classes taught in a garage on 152nd Street in Harlem, the community in New York City in which Arthur Mitchell grew up. The school's curriculum was designed to give the children of Harlem the same opportunities Mitchell had as a teenager. Dance Theatre of Harlem flourished and the nucleus of a professional company was born.

One of the benchmarks of the school became the "Open House Series", which opens the doors of Dance Theatre of Harlem to showcase the activities of the professional Company, DTH Ensemble, students from the school as well as guest artists from all disciplines. These informal studio performances are a community concert series that continues today, offering quality entertainment at nominal ticket prices to families living in Harlem and the New York Metropolitan area.

1970 - 1979

A Decade of Triumph for Dance Theatre of Harlem

Almost immediately, Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook began an education-outreach program, which was eventually called Arts Exposure, giving lecture-demonstrations and small performances at public schools, colleges and universities to give the dancers experience in performing. In 1971, at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, a neoclassical ballet company named "Dance Theatre of Harlem" made its debut. Later that year, George Balanchine invited Arthur Mitchell to co-choreograph *Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra* in an exciting collaboration between New York City Ballet and Dance Theatre of Harlem. By 1979, DTH had toured internationally, had three successful Broadway seasons, received critical acclaim for a public television *Great Performances – Dance in America* special, expanded its repertory to 46 ballets and formed a choral and percussion ensemble. In the course of this lively decade, what begun as a modest performing company became a major force and established itself as something very unique and deeply needed on the scene of contemporary dance. What started out as a natural resource became a national and international resource, a moving, innovative force in dance, theatre and education.

Timeline (continued)

1980 - 1989

Dance Theatre of Harlem, a World-Class Neoclassical Ballet Company

In the 1980's, spectacular productions and rave reviews from the performances of *Firebird*, *Creole Giselle*, *Scheherazade*, *Bugaku*, *Agon*, and *Douglas* to name a few, have carved a niche for Dance Theatre of Harlem. The repertory is grounded in neoclassical technique, which enables DTH artists to dance all styles.

The verve in which the company performed, incorporating brilliant costuming and elaborate set designs is an indication to audiences that DTH is a major "tour de force" in dance. As the signature of this decade, Dance Theatre of Harlem was the first American ballet company to perform in Russia as a part of a cultural exchange initiative sponsored mutually by the United States and Russia (formerly the Soviet Union.) One of the highlights of this groundbreaking tour was the company's induction into the Kirov Museum.

1990 - 1999

Thirty Years of Dance Theatre of Harlem

During the 90s, Dance Theatre of Harlem continued its mission to be an organization that is artistic, educational and socially aware. As in the beginning, DTH continued to challenge widely held stereotypes, while bridging the gaps created by extreme cultural and economic disparity worldwide. DTH's historic tour to South Africa in 1992 known as the *Dancing Through Barriers* tour gave birth to the Dancing Through Barriers® program, wherein the company's reputation as a traveling university was formally institutionalized. Since that time, the DTB® program has become a cornerstone in Dance Theatre of Harlem's educational programming.

In 1999, Dance Theatre of Harlem celebrated its 30th Anniversary with a New York City season, and educational activities, including the company's world renowned *Firebird*, performed with live music for New York City Public School students. For some of the students, this event was their first time in a theater, especially with a live orchestra.

As an addition to the crowning achievement of the 30th anniversary and Arthur Mitchell's 50th year in performing arts, Dance Theatre of Harlem and Mitchell were inducted into the National Museum of Dance and the Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney - Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Timeline (continued)

2000 – 2004

Dance Theatre of Harlem: Using the Arts to Ignite the Mind

Eager to continue to shape the spirit of dance into the new millennium, in 2000, Dance Theatre of Harlem performed to sold-out houses in China, giving the country its first performances of *Firebird* and conducted extensive outreach and educational activities in Mandarin Chinese. That same year, the company returned to the legendary Apollo Theater in Harlem, which marked DTH's first performance on its stage in 25 years.

At home or abroad, DTH is met with sold-out performances and accolades. After successfully returning to the UK in 2002 and 2004, DTH celebrated its 35th Anniversary with an extensive U.S. tour, followed by performances in Greece prior to the opening of the 2004 summer Olympics.

In late 2004, the professional company went on hiatus; in keeping with the DTH philosophy of "using the arts to ignite the mind" the DTH Ensemble, the performing arm of the school, continues to thrill audiences with lecture-demonstrations at schools, colleges, universities and dance festivals. Most recently, the Ensemble was invited to perform for the President and First Lady of the United States at the White House and is the only performing arts group invited to dance in the elegant rotunda at the New York State Supreme Court for the annual African American History Month celebration.



"This remarkable institution has represented the best of New York,"
says New York Mayor
Michael Bloomberg.

The Silence Ends, the Music and Ballet Return: Dance Theatre of Harlem Ready to Tour

By [Trishula Patel](#) on Oct 16th, 2012



The Dance Theatre of Harlem prepares its first tour in eight years, beginning next week. (Photo by Trishula Patel)

A ballet dancer pirouettes around the Harlem studio, her spins reflected in the mirrors that surround her. But her foot, encased in a hardened toe slipper, suddenly misses a step and she trips. She catches herself before she falls, grasping one of the studio's barres. Her instructor gently tells her to try the move again. She does – and this time, her footwork is precise.

Only a year ago, Dance Theatre of Harlem's rehearsal studios at 466 W. 152nd St. were quiet. There was no music, no performances for which to prepare. There were no professional dancers, only students who one day hoped to make it to the world stage.

And now, after an eight-year hiatus brought on by a \$2.3 million debt, the studios are alive again as DTH prepares to launch its 2012-2013 season. The tour starts Oct. 20 in Louisville, Ky., and ends June 23 at the Jacob Pillow Dance Festival in Lee, Mass. The company will be in New York from April 8-14 at the Rose Theater.

"It's awesome that the company is back because I think it's a company that the world needs to see," said Ashley Murphy, 27, a returning dancer. "You don't see many African-Americans in ballet."

"It kind of came as a surprise because we didn't know anything about it," she said of the company's shutdown. "One minute we had a job, the next we didn't." Murphy had to return to her hometown of Shreveport, La., to teach at a local ballet school.

In 2004, the company's "valley of debt" was too deep to continue, and in order to keep running at all, artistic director Virginia Johnson said, the performance company shut down; the professional training program continued to operate.

Most dance companies operate at a deficit and DTH was no exception; several companies shut down in 2011 due to financial troubles, such as the 940 Dance Company in Kansas. “Expenses are tremendous, and you can’t keep raising ticket prices,” Johnson said.

To keep the company afloat, in 2009 the organization came up with a five-year plan to assess what was sustainable. It trimmed its roster of dancers from 44 to 18, which significantly reduced the company’s expenses. It raised nearly \$400,000 earlier this year at a gala honoring Harry Belafonte.

The cuts mean a change to the repertoire. DTH will no longer be able to perform Stravinsky’s “The Firebird,” in which Johnson once starred, and other large story ballets from its earlier years. But Johnson said trimming gives the company freedom with new works.

“We’ve got to be a leaner, meaner tour company than we ever were in the past,” she said. Meanwhile, board members went to major funders — the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, BNY Mellon and Bloomberg L.P. — and convinced them that DTH’s plan would work. The foundations agreed to help, but continue to closely monitor DTH’s finances, said Johnson.

Robert Garland, the company’s resident choreographer and a former principal dancer, will unveil a new work for the tour: “Gloria,” set to music by Francis Poulenc. He has taught since 1997 and, during the company’s break, learned to be a webmaster so the organization could take donations online. Garland said he wanted to choreograph a work that had a spiritual basis, in tribute to his church, which helped him through the past couple of years without DTH.

“I’ve had this music for about 20 years, but I was always afraid to do it,” he said. “I’m ready now to finally tackle this.”

“Gloria” will premiere in Louisville. As part of his choreography, Garland will find seven children in each city to perform the last act. The company has done this before with adults, but this is the first time they will be working with kids, part of an effort to engage communities. While the company was inactive, Garland spent much time teaching children to dance, something he described as a “blessing in disguise.”



Company members rehearse for their upcoming tour in the Dance Theatre of Harlem’s studios. (Photo by Elizabeth Stuart)

The company has performed around the world, including Covent Garden in London. DTH was honored at the White House in 2006, and founder Arthur Mitchell was awarded a United States Medal of the Arts.

Mitchell, now 78, focused on dance education when he first started DTH in 1969 with the late Karel Shook, one of the few white ballet masters in the 1950s and 1960s who encouraged black dancers. Mitchell was the first black male dancer in the New York City Ballet, which he joined in 1955. He quickly rose to principal dancer.

He left Ballanchine's company in 1966 for Broadway and in 1968, the U.S. State Department asked him to form the National Ballet Company of Brazil to help build stronger relations with South America. Mitchell was on his way to the airport when he heard that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated.

"He asked himself why he was going off to some foreign country when he had this expertise to give to the people in his own country, and to his own community," said Johnson. "He could see the power of this art form to make a difference in people's lives."

Mitchell wanted to share his art with not only the children of Harlem, but with any child who wanted to learn about ballet. So he opened a school of dance.

Johnson was there from the start, and became DTH's prima ballerina.

Johnson began her ballet training as a young child in Washington, D.C., and later majored in dance at New York University. But along the way, she recalled being told: "There aren't any black ballerinas. There's no place for you to do this." She found a place in the concrete and linoleum basement of a church on 121st Street and Morningside Avenue where Mitchell had started giving ballet lessons.

Johnson retired in 1997 and returned when Mitchell stepped down as artistic director in 2009 and asked her to take his place.

Lukas Jackhart, 18, is a scholarship student from London. As a child, he would dance around his grandmother's living room. He said he screamed when his mother took him to his first lesson because he had to wear what he thought were "girl's shoes." But dance became a passion for him – shoes and all. "I love it here," he said. "I'm doing what I want to do, and I think that's the most important thing. I feel like everyone here — we're all on the same page, we're all striving toward the same thing."

<http://theuptowner.org/2012/10/16/the-silence-ends-the-music-and-ballet-return-dance-theatre-of-harlem-ready-to-tour-2/>



CULTURE MONSTER

ALL ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Talking with Dance Theatre of Harlem's co-founder Arthur Mitchell

July 6, 2010 |



“I didn’t want to be a ballet dancer. My motivation was the musicals,” says Arthur Mitchell, one of the 20th-century’s noblest classical dancers, who grew up in New York City in the 1940s enamored of Broadway.

“Vaudeville was incredible. The Apollo, fantastic. Fred Astaire? When I auditioned for the High School of the Performing Arts, I rented top hat, white tie and tails, and sang *Steppin’ Out With My Baby*. They took me not because I was good but because I had so much nerve,” he says.

Memories flow freely, and with laughter, from Mitchell, 76, visiting Los Angeles to mark the July 4 closing of [California African American Museum](#)’s “Dance Theatre of Harlem: 40 Years of Firsts.” The exhibit celebrated the multiracial ballet troupe, which disbanded in financial insolvency in 2004. ([The Dance Theatre of Harlem](#) school still operates at 152nd Street and Amsterdam Avenue.)

Courtly in his demeanor and with noble carriage that screams “prince,” Mitchell seems born to *entrechat-six*. In reality, this son of a Harlem building superintendent was a plucky street kid, sneaking into Lucky’s nightclub to watch hoofers.

“I took over running the family when my father left. I was 12. I shined shoes and delivered meat for a butcher. He paid me in meat for my family. I ran errands for the girls in a neighborhood bordello. Growing up on Sugar Hill, attending Harlem’s incredible annual Easter Parade, I saw ‘class’ all around me.”

A huge contributor to American dance, Mitchell has offered more than 50 years of valiant service to two voracious dance organizations. He was one of New York City Ballet’s sparkling principal dancers during George Balanchine’s prime productive years. His peers: Allegra Kent, Suzanne Farrell, Edward Villella, Jillana, Violette Verdy, Patricia McBride and many more. After retiring from City Ballet in 1966, Mitchell co-founded Dance Theatre of Harlem, and for four decades ran the pioneering troupe. (He still advises DTH as artistic director emeritus; ballerina Virginia Johnson holds leadership reins).

“I just love to dance. Whatever I could do to dance, I did it. I studied Modern at the New Dance Group, with Pearl Lang, Katherine Dunham, Jane Dudley and Sophie Maslow. I took the subway to study with Murray Louis at the Brooklyn Academy.”

Bruising rejections Mitchell suspected stemmed from racial prejudice ironically drove him to ballet. He figured, “If I took ballet, that would make me so good they couldn’t refuse me.”

(Mitchell later did do musicals: “When NYCB took breaks, I did *House of Flowers*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *Carmen Jones*. In a cast of 100, I was the only black in Guy Lombardo’s *Arabian Nights*.)

Life changed for Mitchell in 1948 when he got a scholarship to the virtually all-white School of American Ballet, breeding ground for New York City Ballet. “You are a Negro,” Mitchell remembers Lincoln Kirstein, Balanchine’s patron, saying to him. Kirstein was reflecting Balanchine’s vision, written in a now-famous letter dated 1933, that City Ballet should ideally comprise “eight Caucasian and eight colored dancers.”

Mitchell joined the company in 1955. He was 21. “Jackie Robinson was making headlines in baseball, and I said I didn’t want any publicity about being a Negro barrier breaker. At my first performance, no one knew I was coming out.”

“Jacques d’Amboise was shooting *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* in L.A. and I debuted in his “Western Symphony” role” partnering Tanny (Balanchine’s wife, Tanaquil LeClercq). When I stepped onto the stage, some guy, right behind the conductor, cried out, “Oh my god! They got a ...!” In telling the story, Mitchell laughs while bleeping out the word. “And the place went crazy. The audience was catcalling, ‘Give him a chance!’ ”

In 1957, Balanchine set a new work on Mitchell and ballerina Diana Adams – the intimate and intricate pas de deux from *Agon*, a ballet for 12 dancers that’s considered the choreographer’s masterpiece. Now 52 years old, *Agon*’s unapologetic Modernism and its commissioned Igor Stravinsky score (written when the composer lived in L.A.) still challenges.

“Do you know what it took for Balanchine to put me, a black man, on stage with a white woman? This was 1957, before civil rights. He showed me how to take her (holding her delicately by the wrist). He said, ‘put your hand on top.’ The skin colors were part of the choreography. He saw what was going to happen in the world and put it on stage.”

In more than 50 years, only Mitchell and the just-retired Albert Evans have figured as African American principal dancers at NYCB. The company nonetheless proved a nurturing environment for Mitchell: “I rarely experienced racism at City Ballet even when we toured. The company supported me. Mr. Balanchine always said, ‘If Mitchell doesn’t dance, New York City Ballet doesn’t dance.’ ”

-- Debra Levine

Photo: Arthur Mitchell. Credit: Ian Foxx

Source: *Los Angeles Times* — <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2010/07/talking-with-dance-theatre-of-harlems-legendary-dancer-arthur-mitchell.html>

ABOUT DANCE AND BALLET

People have always danced. In some societies people dance mostly for religious reasons. They want to appease the gods, to ward off evil, to pray for rain, to have a good harvest. In other societies, people dance mostly for their own enjoyment, by themselves or with others. In some places, dance is a performing art in which people dance to entertain others.

When people dance they move their bodies rhythmically to express ideas or emotions. Most of the time, dance has a structure. Sometimes it is improvised, or made up on the spot. All dances are made up of sequences of steps and gestures called phrases. Phrases make up a dance the same way that words are put together to form a sentence.

In tribal societies, where dances are mostly religious, people usually dance in a group or in a circle. In societies where people dance mostly for their own enjoyment, two people usually dance together, and sometimes people dance in small groups. When people dance to entertain others, they usually do so in groups called companies. There are different kinds of dance companies, such as ballet, ethnic, modern and jazz.

Dance performed for audiences is almost always choreographed, or made up by one person, just as a composer makes up a piece of music. These dances may also be passed from generation to generation within companies. While dance companies perform some dances over a long period of time, new dances are still being choreographed.

Wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes, dance is one of the most powerful and interesting ways humans express themselves.

King Louis XIV, who ruled France from 1638-1715, gave great balls at which everyone danced in fancy clothes. Sometimes dances called ballets were performed for the King. The dances were of stories about Greek myths, Roman history and important events. Sometimes King Louis would dance in the ballets. The ballets became more and more complicated and difficult to perform. The King liked watching the ballets and moved them from ballrooms into theaters so everyone could see them better. He started the first school to train professional ballet dancers.

During the 18th century, Catherine the Great, the Empress of Russia invited French ballet dancers to Russia. Soon that country became the center of ballet. Ballet became popular in the United States during the 20th century. George Balanchine, a Russian dancer and choreographer who immigrated to America, did much to make it well known.

One of George Balanchine's students was Arthur Mitchell, who became a leading dancer for Balanchine's New York City Ballet. Arthur Mitchell was the first African-American to become a permanent member of a major ballet company and excelled in what had been considered a European art form. In 1969 Arthur Mitchell co-founded Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Choreography is the art of creating dances. Choreographers imagine how dancers can move -- alone and with others. Then they work with dancers to make what they have imagined become real. They organize phrases into dances.

Usually choreographers are dancers as well. Choreographers must know about many things besides dancing. They must be able to select music and be able to work with the people who design costumes, sets and lights. The choreographer is responsible for everything seen in a dance performance. Ballets are choreographed and rehearsed in a studio and are performed on a stage.

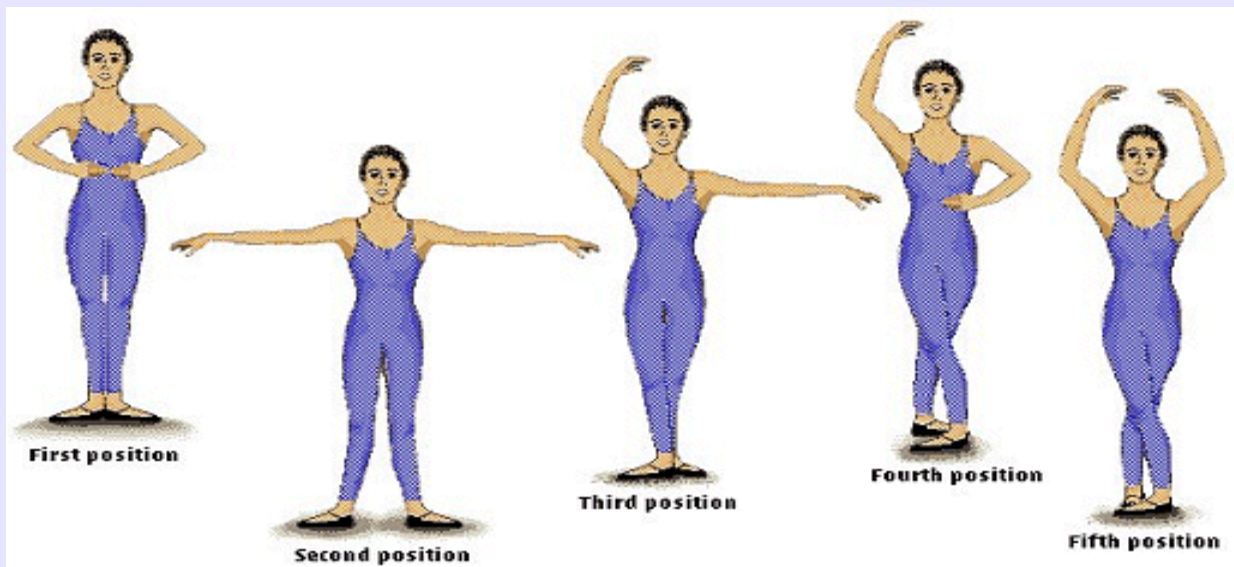
Arthur Mitchell and other American choreographers explore themes and movements special to the American experience.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS: Some American choreographers you may wish to find out about are Alvin Ailey, Katherine Dunham, Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Jerome Robbins, Gregory Hines, Bob Fosse, and Debbie Allen.

Basic Ballet Positions

The five basic positions of the feet in ballet were developed in the 1700s and remain essentially the same as when they were first introduced. They are the positions in which all steps begin and end. The following are some exercises that ballet dancers practice every day. You will see Dance Theatre of Harlem dancers demonstrate them in the program.

Study the positions illustrated here. Stand in each one of the positions by yourself or with others. How easy or how hard are they to do?



<http://www.artofballet.com/class2.html>

Ballet's Seven Movements are generally credited to 18th-century influences of Raoul Auger Feuillet and Jean-Georges Noverre. Feuillet, a part of the court of Louis XIV -- the emperor and ballet dancer who presided over the Renaissance's glory years -- attempted to create dance notations comparable to musical scores and wrote "Choreography on the Art of Writing Dance." Noverre transformed ballet from a relatively passionless dance form into a "ballet of action that told a story of human emotions," the Andros on Ballet website states. The following movements are used in ballet dances. The movements were given French names during the Court of King Louis XIV, where the rules for ballet were developed.

Bend, Stretch, Rise Up

Plié, in French, means to bend, and most ballet steps begin in a **demi-plié**, which means bending the knees with both heels firmly on the ground. This bridge step in ballet relaxes the dancer and prepares him for jumps and extensions. This position also keeps combinations light and bouncy. **Etendu**, to stretch, is the opposite of the demi-plié. Stretching involves the whole body and gives a dancer lightness and lift. **Relevé**, to rise up, is an essential movement for much of classical ballet.

Leap and Dart

Sauté, to jump or leap, is at the heart of ballet's allegro movements, and is cheerful and brisk. Jumping and leaping moves create a great diversity of allegro combinations. These movements often seem to defy gravity and pretend to stop in mid-air before the dancer descends like a feather. **Elancé**, to dart, means to move in a different direction while in the air, refining the body of the dancer in space as he alters positions.

Glide and Turn

Glissé, or gliding, is used in many center steps, especially during the slower movements known as **adagio**. **Tourné**, to turn, is performed in a fixed position, across the floor or in the air. It is essential for the advanced **pirouette**, moves involving full turns on the toe or ball of one foot, which requires proper weight transfer and good balance.

Source: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/510484-seven-basic-ballet-movements/#ixzz2Lvxdjmxl>

LOOK FOR THIS: As you watch the performance, look for the above movements in the dances performed during the program.

FORMS OF DANCE:

Ballet -- A formal style of theatrical dance with a codified set of steps and movements that originated in 16th century France. Ballet, requiring extensive training, precision, and artistry, emerged over the centuries as the classical dance form *par excellence* in Europe and America. In many respects, the development of modern dance in the United States was a reaction to the association ballet had with the aristocracy and upper class through most of its history, as well as to its strict adherence to very specific style of movement and body posture considered beautiful and graceful (the body held erect with the feet pointed and the legs rotated open). 20th century choreographers, such as George Balanchine and Agnes de Mille, began to loosen the traditional strictures of ballet, broaden its vocabulary, and, in truth, redefine the entire compass of ballet.



Folk dance -- Traditional, ethnically or culturally specific forms of dance, usually associated with social functions, festivals, or ceremonies.

Modern dance -- Theatrical dance form developed in the 20th century primarily in the United States. Modern dance resembles modern art and music in being experimental and iconoclastic. Choreographers idealized emotion and emphasized freedom of movement, sought to imitate and illustrate natural phenomena, and created illusionistic effects with lighting and costumes.



Social dance – Popular dances associated with social gatherings and celebrations. All presentational and concert dance forms were originally derived in some way from social dance and ceremonial dance for religious rituals. The steps and music used in social dancing, which allowed for great variation and improvisation, often became stylized and formalized for use in other contexts. Social dances exist in great variety in almost every culture.

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EXPLORE THIS: Many other forms of dance exist around the world. For an introduction to over 40 traditional and contemporary dance forms:

<http://www.artsalive.ca/en/dan/dance101/forms.asp>

Activities Before the Performance

What is a choreographer?

TRY THIS: As a class project, have students be choreographers and create their own original works. They can choose the music and choreograph the movements in small groups and then perform the finished dance for the rest of the class. Don't restrict your students in terms of movement - they may not know classical ballet steps, but dance can come from anywhere: sports, running, jumping rope, street dancing, acrobatics, gymnastics and martial arts. The important thing to emphasize is that each student's dance will be unique, reflecting his or her own personality and style. (For practical reasons, the dance should not exceed three minutes.)

Explore different types of dance:

- a. Have students try the five basic ballet positions shown on page 15 and discuss how other steps build from these basic five. For example, in first position, a person can prepare to demi-plié and jump in the air. In second position, a person can lunge from side to side, similar to the movement in fencing. Ask students to look for some of these positions in the Dance Theatre of Harlem performance.
- b. Assign older students to find out about different types of dance such as tap, folk, modern and jazz and present some information and examples to the rest of the class.
- c. Choose several different countries and help students find out about folk dancing in each one as well as the music and costumes of those decided. Have students relate folk dancing to their own lives. Do we have folk dancing here in our society?

DISCUSS THIS: Discuss recent forms of dancing we have, such as hip-hop, disco, punk or slamming, break dancing, and others. Are these folk dances? What kinds of music are used? What about costumes? Note how many of these steps are never officially preserved, but are taught and passed along from one person to the next, one neighborhood to the next. Do students know any group dances, such as square dancing or clogging? Do people have different dance styles based on their neighborhood, borough or city?

Discuss the concept of dance being the language of the body, and why it's a universal language. TRY THIS: See if students can give examples of how they understand other people's intentions and messages through their movements and not their speech. For example, how can you tell if someone's really nervous, excited or angry? Have you ever seen anyone on the street who seems frightening just from their body language? Ask students to use their own bodies to communicate some of these emotional states.

EXPLORE THIS:

Ask students to experiment with movement.

- a. Walk as if you are under water, or going uphill against a strong wind.
- b. Pretend you are as light as a fly.
- c. Pretend you weigh as much as King Kong.
- d. Pretend you are an egg frying, a snowman melting, or a flower growing in the sun.
- e. Pick an animal and move around as if you are that animal, without making noise. Can others guess what you are?

WRITE THIS:

Ask students to read some famous ballet stories (see bibliography). Afterwards, they can write a story of their own that might be converted into a ballet. It can be classical or modern.

RESEARCH THIS:

Ballet terms are in French because ballet originated in the court of King Louis XIV. Ask students to research other ballet terms and their translations.

FIND OUT ABOUT THIS:

Study the history of Harlem from the 1920s to the present, along with the golden age of music, dance and literature that thrived there.

Study African-American history along with the contributions of famous African- Americans in this century.



Activities After the Performance

REFLECTION:

In discussing a performance, it is often more constructive to ask “What did you see/notice in the production?” or “What do you remember most?” rather than “Did you like it?” The first two questions lead to observation or analysis of the performance, encouraging recall of details, while the third question encourages more judgmental responses. Although audience members respond positively and/or negatively to a work of art, critique should come in later in the discussion process. Discussion of which aspects of a performance remain in one’s memory often reveals the artistic choices at the heart of a work.

Have students describe a memorable moment from the performance in various ways - verbally, in writing, by drawing, or through movement

DISCUSSION:

What makes a ballet classical or modern?
What moves were smooth and graceful, or strong and powerful?
How did the dancers use their arms, legs, bodies and heads?
Did the ballet seem to convey stories, moods or emotions?
How did the dancing vary depending on the music used?

The values of **self-discipline**, **self-esteem**, **focus** and **goal-setting** are stressed at Dance Theatre of Harlem. **DISCUSS** with your students how these values cross over to other areas of their lives such as education. Make comparisons between dancers and athletes. For example, both have specific exercises for development of muscles and are constantly training their bodies. Both wear a kind of uniform that allows for freedom of movement. Athletes and dancers must concentrate and focus to achieve desired results, just as students must concentrate and focus on their studies.

WRITE A REVIEW:

Guide students in writing a review. Give them samples to read from newspapers and magazines, then ask them to write one for Dance Theatre of Harlem's performance. They can discuss the importance of such elements as music, costumes, lighting, scenery and choreography.

HARD WORK AND DEDICATION:

Arthur Mitchell was the first African-American male to be a permanent member of a major ballet company and encountered many of the prejudices faced by African-Americans in the 1950s. After the death of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in 1968, Arthur Mitchell was inspired to begin a ballet school in his neighborhood of Harlem. He wanted to show the world that anybody could succeed given the opportunity. When the students see Dance Theatre of Harlem, they will see dancers representing different nationalities and different cultures from around the world. Discuss with your students the idea of stereotypes and how this should not limit their goals and aspirations. Hard work and dedication always pay off!

ELEMENTS OF DANCE

ALL DANCE HAS THE SAME THREE BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS:

space — the whole design and use of the place in which a dance unfolds.

time — measurable period when movement or dance occurs. Dance articulates the passage of time through a myriad of movement patterns, from complex, rhythmic to long, unbroken stillness.

energy — amount or force of the movement; sometimes referred to as the color, texture or dynamics of the movement.

DANCE PRODUCTIONS INCORPORATE SOME OF THESE THEATRICAL ELEMENTS:

scenery — environment or setting of a dance, created, for example, through by painted flats, painted backdrops, back curtains, lighting and/or slides on a cyclorama (a white screen-like curtain at the back of the stage)

prop — item the performer handles, such as a hat or pocketbook, used to create a sense of time and place

score — musical or sound accompaniment (may be created for the dance or may be pre-existing music or sound)

stage lights — lights used to illuminate the stage, or an area of the stage, to suggest a mood or setting.

backstage — the area around and behind the stage where theatre technicians work, and where dancers enter and exit the stage

A DANCE PRODUCTION REQUIRES MANY PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT ROLES, WORKING TOGETHER AS A TEAM:

choreographer — artist who creates dances

composer — creator of the music

dancer — artist who executes and gives meaning to the movements of a dance.

artistic director — artistic leader of a dance company, who may or may not be a choreographer. He/she makes the decisions about hiring and casting the dancers, and about the repertory

rehearsal director — person responsible for coaching and rehearsing a dance after the choreographer creates the dance

designer — creator of the costumes (and sometimes the sets for a dance).

lighting designer — designs and arranges the lighting for a performance

stage manager — person who calls the cues (e.g., changes in lighting, raising and lowering curtains, moving scenery) and directs the theatre technicians backstage

RESOURCES

For Younger Children:

Ballet for Boys and Girls, Katherine Sorely Walker and Joan Butler, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1979.

Of Swans, Sugarplums and Satin Slippers: Ballet Stories for Children, Violette Verdy, Scholastic, NY, 1991.

A Very Young Dancer, Jill Krementz, Yearling Special/Dell Publishing, 1976.

For Older Children:

Ballet Steps: Practice to Performance, Anthony Dufort, Clarkson N. Potter Inc., NY, 1985.

Barefoot to Balanchine (How to Watch Dance), Mary Kerner, Anchor, NY, 1990.

Magic Slippers (Stories from Ballet), Gilda Berger, Doubleday, NY, 1990.

Black Dance in America: A History Through Its Peoples, James Haskins, Thomas Y Crowell, NY, 1990.

Ballerina: The Art of Women in Classical Ballet, Mary Clarke and Clement Crisp, Princeton Book Co., Pennington, NJ, 1987.

The Black Tradition in American Dance, Richard Long, Rizzoli, NY, 1982.

Winter Season (A Dancer's journal), Toni Bentley, Random House, NY, 1982.

The Dancer's Survival Manual: Everything You Need to Know About Being a Dancer Except How to Dance, M. Horoske and J.R.F. Kupersmith, Harper & Row, NY, 1987 .



Websites:

Dance Theatre of Harlem:

<http://www.dancetheatreofharlem.org/>

A History of Modern Dance, (Ballet Austin):

<http://www.balletaustin.org/education/documents/HistoryofModernDanceStudentHandout.pdf>

DanceAdvantage:

<http://www.danceadvantage.net/2009/09/22/ballet-origins-history/>

Contemporary Dance:

<http://www.contemporary-dance.org/>

