



EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Leaders
Subject: ODC's Brenda Way
Discipline: Dance

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SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME

Leader

SUBJECT

ODC's Brenda Way

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Visual Arts & Language Arts

STORY SYNOPSIS

With more than 70 modern dance pieces to her name, Brenda Way has earned a reputation as one of the most important choreographers of her time. In the three decades since she founded the Oberlin Dance Company, she's managed to inspire her dancers and staff to work harder and accomplish more than they ever dreamed possible. In "Leaders," Spark follows this tough taskmaster at work as she directs her dancers through the rehearsal of Noir, her latest collaboration with composer Jay Clويدt.

OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the concepts of artistic leadership and vision.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing as a group

Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance

Hands-on individual projects in which students work independently

Critical reflection on personal expressions and how they are seen and received by others

Hands-on group projects in which students assist and support one another

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

To introduce students to exemplary artist-leaders

To provide context for the understanding of organizational vision and excellent through leadership

To inspire students to consider careers in the arts

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story about ODC/Brenda Way on DVD or VHS and related equipment

Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer

Cassette player, CD player, or computer audio program

MATERIALS NEEDED

Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers

Pencils, pens, and paper

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body, control in handling objects

Interpersonal - awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations

Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations

Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems

Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically



See more information on Multiple Intelligences at www.kqed.org/spark/education.

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

With more than 70 modern dance pieces to her name, Brenda Way has earned a reputation as one of the most important choreographers of her time. In the three decades since she founded the Oberlin Dance Company (ODC), she's managed to inspire her dancers and staff to work harder and accomplish more than they ever dreamed possible. In "Leaders," Spark follows this tough taskmaster at work as she directs her dancers through the rehearsal of Noir, her latest collaboration with composer Jay Clويدt, and auditions new dancers for the company.

In 1971, a group of dancers, musicians, and artists from Oberlin College formed the ODC—a collaborative project dedicated to developing and performing new modern dance works. One of the founding enthusiasts was Oberlin College faculty member Brenda Way, who, more than 30 years later, has managed to preserve the spirit and intention of this original inspiration in her ODC/San Francisco company, theatre, and educational programs. Trained at the School of American Ballet and as a student of dance legend George Balanchine, Way is both a dancer and an intellectual whose impressive body of work pushes the boundaries of modern dance to fully explore the potential of movement. Thanks in great part to Way, ODC is now the premier contemporary dance company of the West coast, performing for more than 50,000 people a year. To maintain a constant rate of development, performance, and outreach, ODC members work 40-44 weeks a year, an unparalleled commitment in the dance world.

In ODC's new performance, Noir, Way borrows from the visual and musical vocabulary of the American film noir genre that emerged in the mid-1950s, a style closely associated with dark tales of hard-boiled detectives and femme fatales.

Way believes that film noir was the expression of a nation deeply embedded in McCarthyism and the Cold War, where, much like in the current era, reality was a shifting and fugitive prospect, and nothing was as it appeared. Noir uses themes from 1950s era film to get at contemporary issues of terrorism, debates over civil liberties, and increased government authority.

The three women who run ODC and choreograph its performances – which, along with Way includes co-artistic director KT Nelson and associate choreographer Kimi Okada – are considered to be among the finest contemporary choreographers in the United States. Under their leadership ODC became the first modern dance company in the US to build its own facility, including the ODC/San Francisco School, Theater, and Gallery. The facility is home for the resident dance company, classes for adults and young people, and a presentation program of national and international dance performers and companies.



ODC Founder and Director Brenda Way watches 18 dancers audition for the three available spots in her company. Still image from SPARK story, August 2003.

CONTENT OVERVIEW (continued)

Since its founding, ODC has performed for over a million people in 32 states and 11 countries. Way has received numerous awards and accolades for her innovative work, including a Guggenheim Fellowship awarded in 2000. Way and ODC have also won awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the United States State Department, and many state and local arts agencies.

THE BIG PICTURE

Modern dance breaks from traditional ballet through its development of new, expressive styles of movement, its incorporation of improvisation, and its innovative use of costuming, set design, and lighting effects.

The emergence of modern dance in America is often associated with Loie Fuller, who began her dancing career as a burlesque dancer in Chicago in the 1880s. In the early 1890s, Fuller moved to Paris to perform at the Folies Bergères, where her innovative use of costume materials and stage lighting earned her the accolades of critics and audiences alike, including the attention of renowned Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé. Fuller became known as an inventor and stage craft innovator, and held several patents for stage lighting. She was the first to use chemical mixes for gels and slides, as well as the first to use luminescent salts to create lighting effects. She was also an early innovator in lighting design, and pioneered the use of mixed colors and dramatic lighting angles. Fuller was well respected in the French scientific community, where she was a close personal friend of Marie Curie and a member of the French Astronomical Society.

Though a San Francisco native, Isadora Duncan followed on the heels of Fuller, beginning her career in Chicago's Augustin Daley Dance Company. In 1897, she traveled to London with the Daley Company, where she gained a reputation as an innovative solo performer. Returning to America for a brief period, Duncan found American taste to be less adventurous than that of European audiences, and soon returned to London to dance for the great cities of Europe. She developed a theory of movement based on spiritual rather than geometric principles. She enjoyed a very successful career in Europe and eventually in America too, until her tragic death in 1927.

THE BIG PICTURE (continued)

Choreographer Martha Graham was born in a small town just outside of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania in 1894. Her father, a well-known psychologist, was particularly interested in the way that people express their innermost feelings and desires through unconscious body language. Years later, Graham adopted her father's dictum, often repeating that "movement never lies." After finishing her studies in California, Graham moved to New York, where she initially took a job with the Greenwich Village Follies before going out on her own as an independent choreographer. Graham developed her own method of breathing and impulse control she called "contraction and release." According to Graham, movement originated in the tension of a contracted muscle, and continued in the flow of energy released from the body as the muscle relaxed. This method of muscle control gave Graham's dances and dancers a hard, angular look, one that was very unfamiliar to dance audiences used to the smooth, lyrical bodily motions of Duncan and others. Over the course of her 75-year career, Graham became known as the most important choreographer of the century and before her death in 1991, she had produced some of the greatest masterpieces of American modern dance. The Martha Graham Dance Company is still a vital force and can be seen in residence in New York City and on tour.

SECTION III –RESOURCES

TEXTS

Alter, Judith B. Dance-Based Dance Theory: From Borrowed Models to Dance-Based Experience Peter Lang Publishing, 1991.

Banes, Sally. Terpischore in Sneakers. Wesleyan University Press, 1987.

Bartenieff, Irmgard. Body Movement: Coping with the Environment. Gordon & Breach Science Publications, 1980.

Blom, Lynne Anne, and L. Tarin Chaplin. The Moment of Movement, Dance Improvisation University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988.

Bremser, Martha. Fifty Contemporary Choreographers. Routledge, 1995.

Boas, Franziska. The Function of Dance in Human Society. Dance Horizons, 1972.

Cass, Joan. The Dance: A Handbook for the Appreciation of the Choreographic Experience. McFarland & Company, 1995.

Dance Spirit (periodical) – New York: 212 265-8890 - <http://www.dancespirit.com>

Friedler, Sharon E., and Susan B. Glazer, eds. Dancing Female (Choreography and Dance Studies Series). Routledge, 1998. – “In dealing with some of the tensions, joys, frustrations, and fears women experience at various points of their creative lives, the contributors strike a balance between a theoretical sense of feminism and its practice in reality. This book presents answers to basic questions about women, power, and action.”

Horst, Louis and Carroll Russel. Modern Dance Forms. Princeton Book Company Publishing (reprint) 1987.

TEXTS (continued)

Humphrey, Doris. The Art of Making Dances. Princeton Book Company Publishing (reprint) 1991.

Joyce, Mary. First Steps in Teaching Creative Dance to Children. Mayfield Publishing Co. 3rd Edition, 1994.

Laban, Rudolf. The Mastery of Movement on the Stage. Play, Inc., 1971.

Moore, Carol-Lynne and Kaoru Yamamoto. Beyond Words: Movement Observation

Morgenroth, Joyce. Dance Improvisations. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987.

Roseman, Janet Lynn (includes an interview with Alonzo King). Dance Masters: Interviews With Legends of Dance. Routledge Inc., 2001.

WEB SITES

BayDance.com - A resource Web site for Bay Area dance, including performances, classes, publications, auditions, reviews, and education resources (scholarships, academic programs, classes, and workshops). - <http://www.baydance.com>

California Dance Network - <http://www.dancersgroup.org/dancecalifornia>

WEB SITES (continued)

Dance Horizons – A division of the Princeton Book Company, Dance Horizons is a definitive resource for books, videos, and printed resources related to dance. <http://www.dancehorizons.com>

Dance USA - <http://www.danceusa.org>

Dancers' Group (including the *In Dance* newsletter for SF) - <http://www.dancersgroup.org>

Isadora Duncan Dance Awards - <http://www.izzies-sf.org>

National Dance Education Organization - <http://www.ndeo.org>

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts- <http://www.nypl.org/research/lpa/lpa.html>

Performing Arts Workshop - Area arts education non-profit offering K-12 programs in dance and all of the arts. – <http://www.pawsf.org>

San Francisco Arts Education Project – Area arts education non-profit offering K-12 programs in dance, music, theatre, and vocal performance. – <http://www.sfartsed.org>

San Francisco Performing Arts Library & Museum(PALM) - <http://www.sfpalm.org>

SPARK Educator Guide for “Joe Goode - Points of Entry”
<http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=4478>

Voice of Dance - <http://www.voiceofdance.org>

MEDIA VIDEO

Falling Down Stairs. (VHS) Mark Morris Dance Company. Available on the company Web site - <http://www.mmdg.org>

Faces of Dance. (VHS) (65 minutes) Directed by Bernar Hébert. 1996 - This video offers an overview of the major dance trends of the twentieth century by showcasing the work of four contemporary dancers and interviewing them about their individual artistic approaches to dance. Featured performers include Evelyn Hart of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and partner Rex Harrington, of the National Ballet of Canada; Antonio Canales, a master of flamenco; Maya Plisetskaya, the legendary Russian dancer and former star of the Bolshoi Ballet; and American dancers Andrea Boardman and Derek Reid.

Fosse. (VHS & DVD) Directed by Matthew Diamond. Image Entertainment, 2002. - The 1999 Tony Award winner for Best Musical, *Fosse* celebrates the work of director-choreographer Bob Fosse, one of Broadway's and film's truly innovative and distinctive talents.

Hard Nut, The. (VHS) Mark Morris Dance Group, 1991. Mark Morris's choreography puts a contemporary spin on the original Nutcracker story set in 1960s America.

Isadora. (VHS) Universal Studios, 1968. Vanessa Redgrave stars as the passionate and unpredictable dancer and choreographer Isadora Duncan.

Making Dances: Seven Postmodern Choreographers. (VHS) (87 minutes) 1980. - This film explores the contemporary dance scene through the work of seven New York based choreographers as they discuss the nature of dance and the evolution of their own work. The artistic roots of these seven artists can be found in Martha Graham's concern with modern life as a subject for dance and in Merce Cunningham's emphasis on the nature of movement.

Martha Graham - An American Original in Performance. (VHS & DVD) Kultur Studio, 1988.

Merce Cunningham - A Lifetime of Dance. (VHS & DVD) Winstar Entertainment, 2000.

MEDIA (continued)

VIDEO

Retracing Steps: American Dance Since Postmodernism. (VHS) (88 minutes) Produced by Michael Blackwood Productions and Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 1988. - A compilation video including choreographic excerpts by Bill T. Jones.

Zelda Fichandler Lecture at the 2002 Americans for the Arts Conference – A 53-minute lecture about the current arts leadership and the state of the arts nationally can be viewed using Real Audio player or Windows Media Player on the Americans for the Arts Web site. – <http://napd.americansforthearts.org/av/>

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

A SELECTION OF BAY AREA MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANIES

Dance Repertory/San Francisco –
<http://www.dancerepertory.org>

Dandelion Dancetheater -
<http://www.dandeliondancetheater.org>

Nguyen Dance Company
<http://www.dannydancers.com>

EmSpace Dance - <http://www.emspacedance.org>

High Release Dance - <http://www.highrelease.org>

Joe Goode Performance Ensemble -
<http://www.joegoode.org>

Kunst-Stoff (Dance Theatre, Independent Film Screening, Art Exhibition) -
<http://www.transmitmedia.com/kunststoff>

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS (continued)

Limon Dance Company (San Jose and New York) -
<http://www.limon.org/home.html>

Liss Fain Dance Company -
<http://www.lissfaindance.org>

Margaret Jenkins Dance Company -
<http://www.mjdc.org/main.html>

Moving Arts Dance Collective -
<http://www.movingartsdance.org>

Nancy Karp + Dancers -<http://www.nancykarp.org>

New Trails Dance Theatre - P.O. Box 33 Danville, CA 94526

ODC San Francisco - <http://odcdance.org/>

Robert Moses' Kin - <http://www.robertmoseskin.org>

Savage Jazz Dance Company -
<http://www.savagejazz.org>

Zohar Dance Company - <http://www.zohardance.org>

SECTION IV – VOCABULARY

DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

Canon

A passage, movement sentence, or piece of music in which the parts are done in succession, overlapping one another.

Choreographer

One who creates dances by arranging and or inventing movements.

Construct

To make or form by combining elements or parts together. In the SPARK story, this refers to the manner in which Brenda Way assembles her dance pieces.

Film noir

A type of crime film popular in the 1940s and 50s featuring distrustful, ill-spirited characters in low-character, foreboding environments of dark skies, sinister buildings, and foreboding music. Many characters sported raincoats, tilted hats, sunglasses, and dark clothing.

Fragments

Pieces of movement or text brought together to complete an idea.

Hierarchy

A ranked series of things, ideas, people, or objects.

Locomotion

A form of physical movement progressing from one place to another. Basic locomotion steps include walking, running, galloping, jumping, hopping, skipping, sliding, and leaping.

Movement phrases

Steps put together to form a movement sentence.

Orchestrator

One who composes or arranges to achieve a maximum desired effect. In the SPARK story, this

term refers to Brenda Way's process of choreographing when she includes input from the dancers in her decision-making about a dance work.

Phrase

A sequence of two or more movements or words that form a meaningful syntax.

Port a bra

A dancers use and positioning of her/his arms.

Repetitive motif

A motif (element, movement, or series of movements) that is repeated.

Spatial relationship

The relationship in terms of distance between two or more given people or objects.

Unison

Dance movement that takes place at the same time in a group.

SECTION V – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

NOTE: For any dance engagement, students should ideally work in an open space, free of clutter, such as a multipurpose room, gymnasium, playground, empty classroom, dance studio, etc. Students should wear close but easy fitting clothing that will not bind them or impede movement. Sneakers are fine if outside, but if possible, bare feet (or dance shoes) are best if indoors. In addition, educators may want to address the idea that “anyone can dance” before undertaking an activity since many adults and young people are under the assumption that only thin, strong bodies are able to dance. All bodies can dance, so encourage a positive attitude on behalf of the students towards their bodies and their abilities to explore movement as a means of expression and exercise.

Thinking About and Writing About Dance

Cue the SPARK story to the NOIR sequence, ODC's new performance, in which Brenda Way borrows from the visual and musical vocabulary of the American film noir genre that emerged in the mid-1950s. Mute the sound and spend time on the extract, inviting students to describe the mood of the piece, the atmosphere, movements, gestures, clothing, and lighting. Allow students time to really think about the visual language and the way a reality is constructed through dance.

Organize a trip to the ODC if possible or to a dance concert. Explain that you will be asking students to write a 500-word review of the performance afterwards, using the dance program as a resource. Prepare students by introducing key concepts that they can use to understand and write about the performance, including: environment (set), lighting, costuming, choreography (how the dancers move and when), execution (how the dancers dance), and overall effect.

Students may find it helpful to make notes during the performance about their impressions.

Older students who have seen other dance performances, and/or are more experienced with dance or the arts can expand the description into a review, extending the length and offering their own critique of the elements and overall quality of performance. Both level activities can also be carried out with dance performances on VHS or DVD rented from a local library, performance library, or dance company.

Invite students to read out selections from their reviews for discussion.

SPARKLERS:

* Many dance companies offer lecture demonstrations as well as classes designed for K-12. Suggest a program such as this to the school. “Bay Area Modern Dance Companies” offers a selected list of area companies. Some companies indicate on their Web site whether or not they offer school programs and many dance companies (modern and otherwise) offer school performance programs, workshops, and artist residencies through local arts provider organizations, such as Young Audiences of the Bay Area, San Francisco Arts Education Project, and Performing Arts Workshop to name a few (see Resources for a selected list).

RELATED STANDARDS

DANCE

Grade 9

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Development of Dance Vocabulary

1.5 Apply knowledge of dance vocabulary to distinguish how movement looks physically in space, time, and force/energy).

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Description, Analysis, and Criticism of Dance

4.1 Describe how the qualities of a theatrical production contribute to the success of a dance performance (e.g., music, lighting, costuming, text, set design).

4.2 Apply criteria-based assessments appropriate to various dance forms (e.g., concert jazz, street, liturgical).

4.3 Defend personal preferences about dance styles and choreographic forms, using criteria-based assessment.

Choreographing a Dance

There are many ways one can approach choreographing a dance. One process is to assume the role of an orchestrator, whose role is to bring out the beauty of the piece. As an orchestrator, a choreographer often gives his/her dancers a task related to the performance piece. Material for generating ideas can come from other art forms, current events, personal experiences, history, fantasy, nature – the source of material is limitless. The dancers then create movement ideas based on their given tasks, and the choreographer fine tunes these ideas. Little by little, the collective creation comes into being. For this method to work the choreographer must trust his/her dancer's abilities to create, and in return, the dancers have to be dedicated to and trust the choreographer's vision. Although this way of working raises the expectations of the dancers, many dancers find that sharing themselves in this way enhances their performance abilities and helps them develop their own choreographic voice.

Helpful Hint: At the end of each of the following improvisation exercises, students should be invited to perform for each other, followed by a discussion in which students are encouraged to discuss what they observed and to ask questions. Teachers should facilitate these discussions in a positive spirit so that the students can actively think about the improvisations as a group, learn from one another, and reflect upon their own participation objectively.

Orchestrated Movement Invention

By directing a dancer to new ways of moving, a choreographer develops a rich source of material from which to work. After the first round of engaging in the following activities, students can become the orchestrators, rotating this responsibility by taking turns in inventing movements for their peers or other groups.

Environmental Improvisation – Part I

(Grades 5 and up)

To begin, name an action (see list below or develop your own). Challenge all of the students to move at the same time, interacting with each other as appropriate. All students should have the chance to observe the different solutions from the role of the orchestrator.

Environmental Improvisation – Part I

(continued)

Walking into the wind
Walking on an icy surface
Walking in mud
Running through a rain storm
Walking on a boat
Climbing up a hill
Sliding down a hill
Carrying a heavy pack
Balancing a tray
Riding a horse

Play with changing the locomotion with others, such as sliding, hopping, skipping, jumping, leaping etc. Try splitting the group in half and performing the various movements again. Then discuss the improvisations as a group.

Now the students are ready to assume the role of orchestrator. Challenge one of the groups to take a beginning shape while the other group watches like an audience. Initiate the improvisation as before, calling out the different environments. As the performing group moves to respond to the call, those students watching should call out descriptive words to help the students enhance their movements.

For example: The teacher calls out "Walking into the wind." The audience members can call out "slowly," "quickly," "sadly," "proudly," etc. to give their peers more ideas from which to work. This activity is also a great way to work on language development, particularly nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. Make sure that students have enough time to explore what is being asked in the action. If two actions are given at once, the students should choose only one to execute. Once the group has worked on a number of actions, have the groups switch sides. Afterwards discuss as a group what worked and what did not, what was helpful, and what was not.

SPARKLERS:

***Improvisation - Part II** (Grades 5 and up)

Ask the students to choose two or three of the action improvisations they enjoyed from the activity above, and ask them to string them together, creating a new movement phrase, including a beginning, middle, and end. Provide a limit to the length of the phrases, such as 15 or 16 counts

*Invite the audience students to take the role of the orchestrator, rearranging the performing students into different relationships, proximity, and juxtapositions that they feel will bring more interest to the group's movements as a whole. Following this input, ask the students to perform the phrases again, then discuss.

***Improvisation Part III** (Grades 5 and up)

Allow the groups to become their own orchestrators by teaching their movement phrases to the people in the other group. The group can choose to edit or repeat movements, combine each other's phrases, dance in unison, as a group, or as individuals. . Perform and then discuss.

The Big Machine

(K-4 and offers a good way to teach nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives)

Invite students to imagine they are all individual parts of a big machine. Without moving from their spot on the floor, invite them to play with some of the basic actions from the list below (or your own). The actions should be easy to repeat. Call out different body parts to perform the action. Ask the students to repeat the one they liked the best. Have them perform their action on different levels, (high, medium, and low). Let them chose the level they like best. If possible, challenge the students to perform the movement while changing levels without stopping. Afterwards, call out different speeds, such as fast and slow. Have the children choose their speed. Then add different movement qualities, using adverbs and adjectives.

Example actions: twist, poke, hop, bend, push, lunge, pull, turn, wave, slice.

The Big Machine (continued)

Once students know their movement repertoire, it's time to "assemble" the machine. Split the class in half, asking one half to watch the other. After the first group performs their actions, invite the observing students help build the machine. With younger students, tell a story of how the machine came apart, telling them that they are the only machinists who know how to put it back together. (You can tell this story while the students perform.) Let the observers suggest different spatial relationships that make it look like each child is performing an important role that effects the movement of the whole machine. Then perform as a group. Afterwards, invite the students to guess at the kind of machine. Switch sides.

Older children can be broken into smaller groups (after both groups have performed once) to create their own machines. Perform and then let the observers guess what kinds of machines have been created.

RELATED STANDARDS

DANCE

Grade 4

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Dance

Students perceive and respond, using the elements of dance. They demonstrate movement skills, process sensory information, and describe movement, using the vocabulary of dance.

Development of Motor Skills and Technical Expertise

1.1 Demonstrate mental concentration and physical control in performing dance skills.

1.2 Demonstrate the ability to use smooth transitions when connecting one movement phrase to another.

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Students apply choreographic principles, processes, and skills to create and communicate meaning through the improvisation, composition, and performance of dance.

Creation/Invention of Dance Movements

2.1 Create, develop, and memorize set movement patterns and sequences.

2.2 Improvise extended movement phrases.

Application of Choreographic Principles and Processes to Creating Dance

2.3 Describe, discuss, and analyze the process used by choreographers to create a dance.

2.4 Create a dance study that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Review, revise, and refine.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.



For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/>