EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: The Frontiers of Dance
Subject: Ledoh & the Salt Farm Butoh Dance Company
Discipline: Dance

SECTION I - OVERVIEW ......................................................................................................................2
EPISODE THEME
SUBJECT
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
OBJECTIVE
STORY SYNOPSIS
INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
EQUIPMENT NEEDED
MATERIALS NEEDED
INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT ..................................................................................................3
CONTENT OVERVIEW
THE BIG PICTURE
RESOURCES – TEXTS
RESOURCES – WEB SITES
VIDEO RESOURCES
BAY AREA BUTOH RESOURCES

SECTION III – VOCABULARY.............................................................................................................7

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK .........................................................................................8

Butoh dancer Ledoh during a solo performance.
Still image from SPARK story, January 2004.
SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME
The Frontiers of Dance

SUBJECT
Ledoh

GRADE RANGES
K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
Dance, Music, Theatre & Social Studies

OBJECTIVE
To introduce students to the dance form of butoh through the choreography and performance of Ledoh and members of his company, Salt Farm Butoh Dance Company

STORY SYNOPSIS
The Bay Area has become a flourishing center for butoh, a modern dance of darkness that originated in post-war Japan. SPARK goes into rehearsals with veteran butoh dancer Ledoh, as he uses this contemporary Japanese form to explore the ancient, agrarian roots of his Ka-Ren ancestry in Burma with his group The Salt Farm Butoh Dance Company.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES
To introduce students to the concept of butoh and the art of dance/movement as a form of creative expression and social commentary
To inspire students to find outlets for self-expression through creative movement and the expression of their own impulses and ideas
To encourage students to think about different creative dance practices and the differing expectations of dancer(s) and of audience(s)
To inspire students to learn more about butoh and its many diverse practitioners

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
Individual student work on creative projects
Individual student writings
Participation in group discussion
Participation in group creative projects

EQUIPMENT NEEDED
SPARK story “Dance of Darkness” about Ledoh on DVD or VHS and related equipment
Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sound card, and color printer

MATERIALS NEEDED
Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
Clear, open space for movement activities

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED
Linguistic - syntax, phonology, semantics, pragmatics
Interpersonal - awareness of others’ feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Intrapersonal - awareness of one’s own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Bodily-Kinesthetic - the ability to use one’s mind to control one’s bodily movements

See more information on Multiple Intelligences at www.kqed.org/spark/education.
“Only in the moment do we not suffer. It is in the past and future that we dwell on all our suffering.”
– Ledoh

During the social upheaval and rapid Westernization of Japan following World War II, the dance form known as butoh emerged through a number of dancers now renowned for their innovation. Like nothing traditional Japanese or Western culture had seen before, butoh (then called Ankoko-Butoh, meaning dance of darkness) began as an avant-garde dance practice that offered not just a means of expression to its practitioners, but a fundamentally different way of life. Now one of the most unique dance forms in modern history practiced throughout the world, early critics reviled it. At once grotesque and humorous, erotic and violent, the first butoh performers explored a range of issues not before considered appropriate for the content of dance: decay, devastation, and the loss of nature in post-A-bomb Japan. Today, almost 50 years later, there are nearly as many ways of performing butoh as there are artists exploring the form.

The veteran dancer Ledoh was born into the Ka-ren hill tribe of Burma, relocated to the US, and then returned east again in the late 1980s to Japan, where he first encountered butoh. Ledoh remained in Japan through the early 1990s as a member of the Saltimbanques dance troupe, led by long-time butoh dancer Katsura Khan. Today a resident of the Bay Area, Ledoh is using butoh as a vehicle to uncover his Burmese ancestry, while also exploring the universal themes of understanding that connect dancers and audiences.

In this SPARK story “Dance of Darkness” we follow Ledoh as he and the dancers of his Salt Farm Butoh Dance Company work on a new piece called “River of Sand,” an exploration of Ledoh’s birthplace and background. Complete with music and visual projections, the group has been working on the various elements of the performance for months before the event at the Headlands Center for the Arts (HCA). As participants in the HCA’s resident artist program, the Salt Farm members have been working on the costuming, set design, lights, and music, as well as sharing the activities of their daily lives.

Unlike many modern dancers who are also choreographers, Ledoh resists the structure of choreography in his work and the work of his company. He opts instead to invite the dancers to improvise within a constantly changing framework – one in which the dancers explore themes and movements together, alternately leading and following. Though such a loose format may seem potentially chaotic, the close attention between dancers and the resulting improvisations ensure some form of interrelationship in the movements. Ledoh directs and guides the dancers, but ultimately even the performance is not choreographed in the traditional sense.

The success of a butoh performance is also gauged differently from more traditional forms. One of the form’s fundamental features is that the audience must be physically, mentally and emotionally present – participating fully in the moment. Thus, Ledoh and the members of Salt Farm aim to be fully present in a performance, drawing the audience into the moment with them through their focus and energy.

Most butoh practitioners do not think of the art form as a kind of self-expression. Instead, they think of it...
as a potentially transformational experience, requiring full presence and focused attention of both dancer(s) and audience. The transformational potential a butoh performance is in those elements most unlike other dance forms – the exceedingly slow-paced movements of the dancers, the spar set and lighting designs, and the simple or non-existent musical accompaniment. These elements focus the audience on the dancer(s), allowing time for thoughtful reflection.

THE BIG PICTURE

The origin of butoh is generally attributed to two dancers living in Tokyo, Japan in the 1950s - Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno. The form is conceived of as both a life practice and an attitude about movement/dance. Ohno and Hijikata were both trained in Western dance styles as well as Neue Tanz (or new dance), a German modern dance movement that was popular during the time of the Bauhaus art movement. In the late 1950s, both men were searching for new forms of dance that were distinctly Japanese, but without the traditional characteristics that had defined Japanese dance up until that time, such as the formal relationship between dancer and body, and between the dancer and audience. Ohno and Hijikata believed that traditional, proper and socially acceptable dance was incapable of expressing truly contemporary ideas. A form that was capable of expressing the living moment was open form not limited by learned sets of movements or controlled traditional choreography.

It was by exploring taboos as sources for movement that the dancers realized that the body could free itself from artificial, socially codified movement. Rejecting the traditional notion of dance as a form of self-expression, Hijikata and Ohno instead drew their inspirations from nature, the imagination, and from a range of physical movements that lay outside polite society. By allowing their movement vocabularies to be animated by the memories and explorations of taboo sexual passions and desires, and the movements of people living with physical disabilities and blindness, Hijikata and Ohno found an approach to life and dance that has revolutionized the discipline.

The first work performed by Hijikata and Ohno together was Kinjiki (or Forbidden Colors) in 1959. A direct response to the effects of the war and the ever-growing Westernization of Japan, Hijikata’s performance included many elements that have come to exemplify butoh – a lack of musical accompaniment (the dance was performed in silence), dance techniques that challenge a body’s physical limitations, and the expression of natural forms and concepts being lost in contemporary society. These qualities, along with the use of white paint on a mostly exposed if not naked body are what many people associate with butoh. These first performances of Hijikata and Ohno were reviled by the Japanese, and were criticized openly for their lack of refined movements, and their awkward and often vulgar body and facial expressions.

Hijikata has been quoted as saying that he adopted butoh not as a technique or a dance vocabulary to be mastered, but as a practice “to be lived.” For Hijikata, butoh was a transgressive gesture aimed to displace the limits of acceptable social behaviour. Over the years, many dance scholars have described the direct connection between the tendency towards transgressive behaviour and the fracture of control and passivity in Japanese culture due to the effects of the atomic bomb, World War II, and the existential crises they precipitated. One example of this is Hijikata’s leading role in a film called “Navel and Atomic Bomb” (1960) by Eiko Hosoe that explicitly addresses the relationship between the body and the effects of the war.

The many artists who have taken up butoh make it their own, expressing a myriad of beliefs and ideas.
that reflect their life views - and this is the point of the butoh practice. For butoh practitioners this includes explorations of the many difficult and deadly issues that face our contemporary world and its peoples.

RESOURCES – TEXTS


Kozel, Susan. "Moving beyond the double syntax.” Dance Theatre Journal 13 (1) Summer 1996: 36-37. – The second of two articles considering how Western dance has embraced butoh's potential for "altered awareness.” The writer also investigates the shift in butoh from familiarity to “otherness” as well as issues of gender.


RESOURCES – WEB SITES
Absolute Butoh - Article by dance critic and journalist Akiko Takichi titled “EX...it!99 IN GERMANY – Absolute Butoh.” The article was originally published in Ballet International, Heft 11, Nov. 1999. - http://www.ne.jp/asahi/butoh/itto/ex-it/tachiki-E.htm

Butoh – An article about butoh by writer Liz Waring- http://www.honors.sbc.edu/HJSpr03/Waring.htm

Kazuo Ohno - The official Web site of butoh co-founder and dancer Kazuo Ohno and his son Yoshito Ohno. - http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/%7Eab4t-mzht/index.html

RESOURCES – WEB SITES
Butoh - Revolt of the Flesh in Japan and a Surrealist Way to Move by Johannes Bergmark. A reprinted article about butoh, including quotes from several practicing artists. - http://home.earthlink.net/~bdenatale/Butoh&Surrealism.html

Flesh & Blood Mystery Theatre – Web site for a West Coast butoh ensemble, including descriptions of the dance form and many good links to other butoh sites and dance groups. - http://home.earthlink.net/~bdenatale/AboutButoh.html

Kobo Buto - Holland-based butoh group Kobo Buto, including historical information and a comprehensive bibliography. - http://www.xs4all.nl/~iddinja/butoh/index.html

Tangentz Performance Group – The group’s Web site with links to other butoh companies, teachers, and Web sites. - http://www.butoh.net

Tatsumi Hijikata - The official Web site of dancer and butoh co-founder Tatsumi Hijikata. - http://www.hijikata-tatsumi.com

VIDEO RESOURCES

Yukio Waguri worked with Hijikata in the 1970’s and created a fascinating and beautiful CD-ROM demonstrating Hijikata’s choreographic method during that period. - http://www.otsukimi.net/koz/e_bk_outline.html

Blackwood, Michael. “Butoh: Body on the Edge of Crisis,” 1990. [videorecording - VHS]. 90 minutes/color with b&w sequences (PAL). Produced by Michael Blackwood Productions in association with Westdeutscher Rundfunk, BBC Television. – A documentary on the origins and development of Butoh, including statements by some of its major exponents in Japan, such as co-founder Tatsumi Hijikata (interview recorded in 1985), Akaji Maro, leader of the company Dai Rakuda Kan, Min Tanaka, leader of Maijuku, Kazuo Ohno, Natsu Nakajima, leader of Muteki-Sha, Isamu Ohsuka, leader of Byakko-Sha, and its principal dancer Sanae Hiruta, and Yoko Ashikawa, leader of Hakutobo. These dancers and companies, as well as Ushio Amagatsu and Sankai Juku, are seen in numerous rehearsal and performance excerpts. Commentaries are also offered by Akiko Motofuji, Hijikata’s widow; dancer/choreographer Yukio Waguri; and dance critic Nario Goda.


BAY AREA BUTOH RESOURCES


Salt Farm Butoh Dance Company – Web site for this collective of performers, videographers, and composers led by artistic director, Ledoh. - http://saltfarm.org

Flesh and Blood Mystery Theater – Web site for San Francisco-based butoh company, including descriptions about many artists, links, press clippings, and photos. The group also hosts other individual artists. - www.ne.jp/asahi/butoh/itto/butoh-e.htm

Headlands Center for the Arts (HCA) - Web site for the Headlands Center for the Arts, including descriptions of programs, facilities, and public performances. - http://www.headlands.org
DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND WORDS AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY
(See also SPARKed Dance Vocabulary at http://www.kqed.org/spark/education.)

Avant-garde
A group active in the invention and application of new techniques in a given field, especially the arts

Ankoko-Butoh
Dance form developed in the 1950s in post-war Japan meaning “dance of pitch darkness,” given by one of its founders, Tatsumi Hijikata. Later the name was shortened to simply ‘Butoh’. In Japanese characters, “Bu” means “dance”, and “toh” means “step,” literally “stomping dance.”

Burma
A country in Thailand

Chaotic
A state of confusion or disorder

Choreography
Creation or composition of dances by arranging or inventing steps, movements and pattern of movements

Cross-cultural
An event or work that crosses over boundaries between different cultures by implementing elements/characteristics of those cultures

Edit
To eliminate, delete, or otherwise prepare a work for publication or performance

Envelope
To surround completely, embrace or wrap

Expression
The act of conveying or representing in words, art, music, or movement

Framework
A structure for supporting or enclosing something; a basic arrangement, form or system

Honesty
Telling the truth

Rear-projection
The process of projecting a filmed image onto a screen or other viewing surface; rear-projection refers to the fact that the source of the image or light will come from behind the stage to be projected forward towards the audience.

Rehearsals
The act of developing and working on a piece of art with the intention of performing it to an audience in the future; can be done by an individual or by an ensemble

Social upheaval
The act of political and social change collectively executed by the populace

Suffering
The condition of physical, emotional or psychological pain

Universal
A trait or pattern of behavior characteristic of all the members of a particular culture or of all human beings; something that is applicable or common to all purposes

World War II
Known as the “war to end all wars,” WW II was a conflict that took place from 1939-1945, in which Great Britain, France, Russia, Belgium, Italy, Japan, the United States, and other allies defeated the countries united under Adolph Hitler, including Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria.
SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

**Basic Dance Movements**
Kindergarten – Grade 5
Create simple dance movements and shapes that relate to a personal experience, such as feeling happy, angry, sad, surprised, etc. Also try having students respond with movement to different stimuli, such as music, words, sounds and visual images.

**Rhythmic Movement Exercise**
To help students discover natural body movements and rhythmic movements, try this exercise. Have students respond to the name of an object or animal that contains movement, such as a bicycle, or a washing machine, an airplane, a rocking chair, a kangaroo, a cat licking its paws, etc. by creating a movement that represents that object. Once the students have become familiar with their movements and it seems easy, have them walk around the room continuing their movements. Then, suggest a different object and have them transform into the new object without stopping any motion. Challenge students to forget the object and really transform, or be the object, feeling its rhythm. To make it even more difficult, try introducing a setting, so that students must respond to their surrounding imagined environment while continuing their movement.

**Subtlety & Mindful Practice**
In butoh, movement can be extremely subtle, or wild and big. Try this movement game to develop an understanding of movement, but also of keeping the mind still. Students start by slowly raising their arms, but stopping the flow of the movement every few moments as if they were watching a series of photographs of someone raising their arms. As they start to increase in speed, concentrate on the smallest moments of pause, eventually getting back to regular speed. They can engage the same principles in conducting an activity like walking around the room, or picking up a pencil. The purpose is to gain a better understanding of the elements involved in a specific movement and to attain a state of mental stillness, so that eventually, students find moments of “rest” within a regular activity – there is no more attitude about the action. This develops a clear mind while performing an action, leaving open the abilities to listen, see and react to the environment.

**RELATED STANDARDS**

**DANCE**
Kindergarten
2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION
2.1 Create movements that reflect a variety of personal experiences (e.g., recall feeling happy, sad, angry, excited).
2.2 Respond to a variety of stimuli (e.g., sounds, words, songs, props, and images) with original movements.

Grade 3
1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION
1.3 Perform short movement problems, emphasizing the element of force/energy (e.g., swing, melt, explode, quiver).

Grade 4
2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION
2.5 Convey a range of feelings through shape/postures and movements when performing for peers.
2.6 Perform improvised movement and dance studies with focus and expression

Grade 8
2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION
2.1 Create, memorize, and perform dance studies, demonstrating technical expertise and artistic expression.
**Dance & Costume**
Discuss with students how the use of costuming, lighting, sets and music can change the way a performance feels and is interpreted. Sometimes it enhances a performance and sometimes it can take away from it. Consider some modern dance pieces in which there are no sets and sometimes no music, but just the dancer in a simple costume with some lighting. How does this feel compared to something like the Nutcracker? How does it compare to the sometimes shocking appearance of butoh?

**Movement & Culture**
Research different world dance traditions such as:
- Butoh
- Western modern dance
- Indian Kathakali or Bharata Natyam
- Mexican folklórico
- Russian folk dance
- Hawai’ian hula
- Chinese folk or military dance
- Japanese Fujimusume, Shiyokumi or Rengishi
- Korean drum dances
- Cuban/Latin dances (son, chachacha, tango, etc.)
- Plains Indian (Native American) dances

Develop a chart or rubric for isolating the elements that comprise the different forms, including musical accompaniment, response to music, costuming, singing, number of dancers (is it for couples, regalia/costuming singles, or an ensemble), masks/headdress, rhythms, steps, patterns, type of expression, origins, purpose, overall attitude or tone, etc. Compare and contrast these traditions to one another. Invite students to present their findings to the class either in written form, oral presentation, or multi-media presentation, including a demonstration of a step or dance.

**Responding to Butoh**
Watch the Spark story and ask students to discuss their reactions to butoh. How do they feel when they watch the movements? When they hear the philosophy behind the dance? What does Ledoh mean when he says he was “struck by the honesty” of butoh.” How is movement honest or dishonest? Consider what the movements represent, how the performers interact with the audience. Contrast the idea of directing energy (butoh) versus expressing oneself (other forms of modern dance). What are the differences and similarities? Survey the students to discover if any study martial arts or meditation. Ask them to describe the similarities and differences between these studies and butoh. Have they had experiences in which they felt “enveloped by the performance and the space” as Ledoh describes?

**RELATED STANDARDS**

**DANCE**
Grade 4
- 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING
  - 4.3 Describe ways in which a dancer effectively communicates ideas and moods (strong technique, projection, and expression).
  - 4.4 List the expectations the audience has for a performer and vice versa.

Grades 9-12 – Proficient
- 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT
  - 3.4 Explain how dancers from various cultures and historical periods reflect diversity and values (e.g., ethnicity, gender, body types, and religious intent).
- 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING
  - 4.4 Research and identify dances from different historic periods or cultures and make connections between social change and artistic expression in dance.

**MUSIC**
Grade 2
- 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING
  - 4.3 Identify how musical elements communicate ideas or moods.

Grade 8
- 5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS
  - 5.1 Compare in two or more arts forms how the characteristic materials of each art (sound in music, visual stimuli in visual arts, movement in dance, human relationships in theatre) can be used to transform similar events, scenes, emotions, or ideas into works of art.

**THEATRE**
Grade 7
- 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT
  - 3.2 Compare and contrast various theatre styles throughout history, such as those of Ancient Greece, Elizabethan theatre, Kabuki theatre, Kathakali dance theatre, and commedia dell’arte.
- 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING
  - 4.1 Design and apply appropriate criteria or rubrics for evaluating the effective use of masks, puppetry, makeup, and costumes in a theatrical presentation.
Origins of Butoh
Research what it was like in Japan before, during and after World War II, including the rapid Westernization that followed and the Japanese reactions for and against it. What characterized the country and the culture prior to World War II? Decide on a number of criteria to assess, such as economy, traditions/customs, dance culture, theatre culture, news reporting, civil code, literature, attitudes towards money, property, marriage, etc. How was Japanese society different after the war? How is it different today?

Research and identify the origins of butoh in Japan. Does the form respond to ideas and/or attitudes prevalent in the post-war period? How and what ideas does it manifest? Research the traditional dance forms of Japan, extending back to the Middle Ages and the dominance of the Shogun and accompanying rituals and forms. Make connections between beliefs, social change, and artistic expression in art (dance particularly). These can also be compared to another culture’s dance history. What does dance say about a culture? How does it say it?

RELATED STANDARDS
DANCE
Grades 9-12 – Proficient
3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT
3.4 Explain how dancers from various cultures and historical periods reflect diversity and values (e.g., ethnicity, gender, body types, and religious intent).
4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING
4.4 Research and identify dances from different historic periods or cultures and make connections between social change and artistic expression in dance.

SOCIAL STUDIES
Grade 7
World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times
7.5 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Medieval Japan.
Study the ninth and tenth centuries’ golden age of literature, art, and drama and its lasting effects on culture today, including Murasaki Shikibu’s *Tale of Genji*.

Grade 11
United States History and Geography: Continuity and Change in the Twentieth Century
11.7 Students analyze America’s participation in World War II.
Discuss the decision to drop atomic bombs and the consequences of the decision (Hiroshima and Nagasaki).