

## EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: The Jet Set  
Subject: Alonzo King  
Discipline: Dance

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Alonzo King reflects on his world-class dance choreography work and lifestyle. Still image from SPARK story, February 2004.



## SECTION I - OVERVIEW

### EPISODE THEME

The Jet Set

### SUBJECT

Alonzo King, dance choreographer

### GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Dance

Language Arts

### OBJECTIVE

To introduce educators to the life and work of Alonzo King, as well as the special circumstances and opportunities presented by choreographing new works as a visiting choreographer across the US.

### STORY SYNOPSIS

Choreographer Alonzo King has created contemporary ballets for more than fifty international dance companies as well as dozens of pieces for film, television, opera and his own company, LINES Ballet. Easily one of the most sought-after ballet masters in the world, King often lives out of a suitcase, traveling to multiple locations in short order. SPARK travels with Alonzo King to New York City as he works on new ballets with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Cedar Lake Ensemble.

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Individual student work on creative projects  
Individual student writings  
Participation in group discussion  
Participation in group creative projects  
Individual and group performance

### INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Introduce dance as a form of artistic expression  
Learn about the versatility and desirability of

Alonzo King as a choreographer in the international dance arena

Understand Alonzo King's unique approach to dance and choreography

Explore basic performance aspects of dance and movement exploration

### EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story about Alonzo King 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

Space for movement and dance activities

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper & pencils

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

Access to VHS or DVD recordings of theatre performances, or live theatre performances

Space to dance, such as a dance or multipurpose room, gymnasium (ideally, floor should be free and clear of debris, and be off pliable substance)

### 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



Find more information on  
Multiple Intelligences at  
[www.kqed.org/spark/education](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education).

## SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

Choreographer Alonzo King has created contemporary ballets for more than fifty international dance companies as well as dozens of pieces for film, television, opera and his own company, LINES Ballet. Easily one of the most sought-after ballet masters in the world, Alonzo King is often living out of a suitcase, traveling to multiple locations in short order. Spark travels with King to New York City as he mounts new ballets with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Cedar Lake Ensemble.

LINES has grown steadily since its founding in 1982. The company has received international recognition for choreographic innovation, creative collaborations and world-class dancers. King's choreography adapts the forms and disciplines of classical ballet in ways that appeal to contemporary audiences. One of the hallmarks of King's method is how he communicates his ideas: rendering the abstractions of complex choreography into directions that the dancers can feel and see, activating all their senses, and demanding that the dancers dig deep within themselves to expose their true emotions. For him, it is not about the steps. He wants to create "what is real."



Alonzo King working on his new choreography with the dancers from Alvin Ailey Dance American Dance Theatre in New York City. Still image from SPARK story, February 2004.

The drive to make art is what keeps King on such a rigorous travel schedule and why he continues to search for new ways of sharing and expressing his art. In 1989, under the direction of King, LINES founded the San Francisco Dance Center which serves as a resource for the entire Bay Area dance community. It has become the largest public dance space on the West Coast, offering instruction in a wide variety of movement and dance forms, including ballet, modern, jazz, flamenco, Afro-Latin, East Indian, and Brazilian, as well as classes in yoga and pilates. In 1994, LINES launched a major initiative to expand the involvement of world-renowned artists in the creation of new work and became one of the resident companies at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

### THE BIG PICTURE

For many viewers the question "what is contemporary ballet" preempts any conversation about what differentiates Alonzo King's choreography. While most people are aware of classical ballet and if asked, could name well-known ballets such as The Nutcracker or Swan Lake, the question of what defines contemporary ballet can be more elusive.

Ballet was first developed in Italy during the Renaissance (1500s). The word "ballet" comes from the Italian word "ballare," meaning to dance. Louis XIV, the king of France is largely credited with introducing ballet to the world by dancing it and teaching it to others in the French court during his 72-year reign (1638 – 1715). The movements and vocabulary of ballet were gradually articulated over the years and France, Italy and Russia developed their own individual styles. There was a lot of cross-fertilization as ballet masters from one style were invited to teach and choreograph at theaters and schools in other countries. Both England and

America only began to have their own styles in the early twentieth century, though these evolved from the other three. Ballet is comprised of a range of dance movements, often refined from folk dance steps that are arranged into various series and sequences that are called choreography. Dancing *on pointe* (on the tip of the toes) by female dancers, the first thing people think of in ballet, only began in the 1840s. In traditional ballet, excellence is measured by the virtuosity and flawlessness of execution of the movements, as inspired by long-held ideas about beauty and lyricism in dance and aesthetics.

Contemporary ballet can be described as ballet choreographed with the freedom of modern dance. Many contemporary ballet choreographers are influenced by the great modern dance choreographers: Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman and Jose Limon. Today, there is frequently a fine line between modern dance and ballet, the defining element being the use of pointe shoes. Many contemporary ballet companies have a far more avant-garde style than traditional modern dance troupes. Quite a number of ballet companies choose to commission contemporary works from present day modern dance choreographers such as Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, and Paul Taylor to name a few. By commissioning new works, the companies sustain an ever-changing, dynamic repertoire of works.



Alonzo King watches dancers from the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre rehearse a newly choreographed work. Still image from SPARK story, February 2004.

It is the rare ballet choreographer, the one who fights against tradition and calls attention to his or her unique vision, and gives a new voice and shape to his

work who is ultimately successful. Because audiences want to experience something different, the truly innovative creator of dances who is invested in what moves him/her and seeks what moves others, speaks to them. Alonzo King is such a choreographer, not satisfied with the apparent beauty of an arabesque, but asks of its purpose, demanding it careen off-kilter, if that is what the emotion calls for. Yes, when you experience King's choreography, you will recognize the ballet vocabulary, but pushed beyond mere aesthetics into another realm in which there is a visible and palpable connection between movement and idea.

King wants audiences to feel the texture of his choreography, its bumps and jagged edges as well as its silky smoothness. He is not as concerned with the technical correctness of a particular ballet position as he is with the emotion and truthfulness of the movement. King speaks about how often dancers learn to "cut their hearts off" in rigorous training, becoming "roses without fragrance, a beehive without honey." To King, this makes no sense. The dance form is present but the substance is missing. For King, the substance is the point. He wants dancers to focus on the interior, not the exterior.

Such objectives make it much more demanding for the dancers, as they are asked to give of themselves personally to create the characters. With this philosophy, King choreographs pieces of great depth and poetry – characteristics often missing from a majority of contemporary ballet more concerned with the array of shapes that can be obtained by dancers in point shoes. The defining difference for King is that he actively expresses his connection to humanity, making him unique among contemporary ballet choreographers working today.

## RESOURCES – TEXTS

Alter, Judith B. [Dance-Based Dance Theory: From Borrowed Models to Dance-Based Experience](#). Peter Lang Publishing, 1991.

Banes, Sally. [Terpsichore 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.

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

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

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, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 1994.

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

Moore, Carol-Lynne and Kaoru Yamamoto. Beyond Words: Movement Observation and Analysis. New York: Routledge Inc., 1989.

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.

Varriale, Jim, and Eliot Feld. Kids Dance: The Students of Ballet Tech. Dutton Children's Books, 1999.

## RESOURCES – WEB SITES

Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre - <http://www.alvinailey.org>

American Ballet Theatre – <http://www.abt.org>

BayDance.com - 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>

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

Dance Net - A full-bodied magazine from the Bay Area. - <http://www.dancenet.org>

Dance Online - <http://www.danceonline.com>

Dance Theatre of Harlem - <http://www.dancetheatreofharlem.com>

Joffrey Ballet of Chicago – <http://www.joffrey.com>

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

LINES Ballet - <http://www.linesballet.org>

Mark Morris Dance Group – <http://www.mmdg.org>

New York City Ballet (George Balanchine's company) - <http://www.nycballet.org>

Paul Taylor Dance Company - <http://www.ptdc.org>

Proximity Magazine - <http://users.bigpond.net.au/dcorbet/proximity>

Twyla Tharp Web site – <http://www.twylatharp.org>

## RESOURCES – VIDEOS

Four by Ailey (VHS) with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. (108 minutes). A studio recording of two of Ailey's masterpieces (Revelations and Cry), as well as two other significant works (Divining and The Stack Up). Kultur Video, 1986. (Available from [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com).)

Nederlands Dans Theater, 4 by Kylian (VHS) "Svadebka", "La Cathedrale Engloutie", "Sinfietta", "Torso." - An exquisite Contemporary Ballet Company. Kultur Video 1997 (Available from [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com).)

Paul Taylor Dance Company, Dance in America: Esplanade and Runes (VHS) - Taylor uses everyday gestures and simple locomotion to give shape to thoughts, images and ideas. Warner Home Videos 1989. (Available from [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com).)

Baryshnikov Dances Sinatra and More. (VHS) "When Push Comes To Shove", "The Little Ballet", and "The Sinatra Suites." - A chance to see ballets

foremost male dancer stretch beyond the structure of classical ballet, as well as experience one of modern dances most respected choreographers, Twyla Tharp. Kultur Video 1989. (Available from [Amazon](#).)

## **BAY AREA RESOURCES & FIELD TRIPS**

Cal Performances

University of California

Zellerbach Hall

Berkeley, CA 94720-4800

510/642-9988

<http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu>

Alonzo King's LINES Ballet

Dance Center

26 - 7th Street @ Market (5<sup>th</sup> Floor)

San Francisco, CA 94103

415/863.3040

<http://www.linesballet.org>

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Third and Mission Streets

San Francisco, CA 94103

<http://www.yerbabuenaarts.org/splash.html>

San Francisco Ballet

455 Franklin Street

San Francisco, CA 94102

415/861.5600

[sfbmail@sfballet.org](mailto:sfbmail@sfballet.org)

<http://www.sfballet.org>

San Francisco Performances

(various locations)

500 Sutter Street, Suite 710

San Francisco, CA 94102

415/398-6449

<http://www.performances.org>

San Francisco Performing Arts Library & Museum

401 Van Ness Avenue, Veterans Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

San Francisco, CA 94102

415/255.4800

[info@sfpalm.org](mailto:info@sfpalm.org)

[www.sfpalm.org](http://www.sfpalm.org)

Young Audiences of Northern California

415.974.5554

<http://www.ya-nc.org>

## SECTION III – VOCABULARY

### **Abstraction**

An idea or concept conveyed through movement and removed from its original context.

### **Ballet**

A form of Western classical dance that originated in the European Renaissance courts. The dance form was formally codified by the time of King Louis XIV (mid-1600s), who was an accomplished dancer, responsible for extensive notation as well as support for dance.

### **Character**

Giving movement emotional content, attitude, texture, dynamics and or all of the above.

### **Contemporary Ballet**

An illusive term, but since contemporary means ‘of the time’, contemporary ballet can be considered a dance form that uses ballet as its core but is not bound by its specific classical structure.

### **Contrast**

To set side by side to emphasize differences; in dance, two movements that differ in energy, space (size, direction, level), design (symmetrical/asymmetrical, open/closed), timing (fast/slow, even/uneven), themes, patterns, or emotional content.

### **Dance**

To move rhythmically often to music, using improvised or prescribed gestures and steps. And or an art form used to comment on the human experience.

### **Dynamics**

Energy of movement expressed in varying intensities, accent, and quality.

### **Improvisation**

Movement created spontaneously, which ranges from freeform to highly structured environments, always including an element of chance.

### **Isolation**

Movement executed with one body part. Examples are rolling the head, shrugging the shoulders, and rotating the pelvis.

### **Locomotion**

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

### **Rhythm**

A structure of movement patterns in time; a movement with a regular succession of strong and weak elements; the pattern produced by emphasis and duration of notes in music.

### **Shape**

A position of the body in space, such as curved, straight, angular, twisted, symmetrical, asymmetrical, etc.

### **Tableau**

Performers arranged for dramatic effect into a still visual image that neither speak nor move.

### **Texture**

The look or feel of a movement or shape.

### **The four elements of dance**

The four elements of time, space, shape and energy comprise the world of dance and, if you think about it, these are the basic elements of life. Knowledge of these elements is essential to anyone contemplating teaching, choreographing or performing dance.

## SECTION III – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

### STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

#### Dance Concepts

The concepts of *abstraction* and *mood and character* are great topics to discuss with the students in conjunction with viewing the video and or after completing several of these movement lessons.

*Abstraction* - Periodically through the history of dance the question whether dance should be pure form or whether it should imitate life has caused controversy. In practice, dance has seemed to alternate between periods that emphasize expression or emphasize form. Of course, this distinction is not absolute. All dance, whether abstract or mimetic, is supported by a well-formed structure. No dance, whether mimetic or abstract, can escape the expressiveness of human movement. Using familiar gestures and movements as a source, students can explore the effects of abstracting movement. They can examine the effects of form on literal and abstract movement as well as the use of expression.

*Mood and Character* - “Her heart was hard against him.” “That is a pressing issue.” “He has a weak character.” In everyday vocabulary people use words such as “hard,” “pressing,” and “weak,” to describe characters, moods as well as movements. This verbally reflects that who we are and how we feel is revealed in our bodies and our movement. King talks about this in his section of “The Jet Set.” King relates a story of when he was young he noticed that what adults would say wasn’t always the truth, how they held their bodies and moved was what was real.

#### Feelings (Grades K +)

Objective: Encourage variety in movement, (not doing the same thing over and over), level changes are important, and stress that every movement made must communicate the feeling being explored. Music is an additional helper in this lesson, so it is best to choose feelings for which you have appropriate music. The main goal is to get the students to dance with conviction.

Give your students an emotional word such as fear, (or one with the same intention). Ask them what makes them afraid. Have them first try a low-level shape using this word, a mid-level, then a high level shape. Explore.

Now give the students movement words. Have them show you fear with twists, turns, runs, hops, collapses, stretches, moving fast and slow etc. (see locomotor movements from the vocabulary list if you need suggestions). Give them time to explore each new movement word.

The children can create their own movement words while exploring fear. You can turn on scary music to help the students. When you turn the music off, they must freeze in a shape. Turn the music on for different durations to keep the students on their toes.

Now choose other words for them to explore such as, silly, and sad. Make sure that the words you use convey drastically different feelings.

Observe, Perform, and Discuss.

#### RELATED STANDARDS - DANCE

Grade 1 - 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION - 2.1 Use improvisation to discover movements in response to a specific movement problem (e.g., find a variety of ways to walk; create five types of circular movement).

Grade 3 - 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION - Creation/Invention of Dance Movements - 2.1 Create and perform complex improvised movement patterns, dance sequences, and studies.

## Textures in Dance (Grades 1+)

*(This can also be used for Kindergarten students by simplifying.)*

**Objective:** Encourage the students to capture the feeling of texture while continuing to dance with conviction and variety.

**Materials Needed:** A bag of articles of differing textures and properties, such as a rock, a wad of cotton, string, a piece of wide elastic, a balloon, etc.

Have the students sit in a circle and pass the items one at a time, discussing the textures and properties of each item.

Now have the students spread out in the room. Reminding them of the textures and properties discussed, have them explore each item in movement. Example: Show me the shape of this rock with your body. Now it's texture. How it feels to the touch. Show me cold and hard. Is the rock smooth or rough? Now show me in movement its heaviness, its solidity. Does it have jagged edges? If I dropped it to the ground, how fast would it fall?

Continue to encourage the students through all the items in this manner. When working with the string, have the students explore its texture when tight and loose. The elastic and balloon also react in different ways.

*It is important to encourage the students to thoroughly investigate the movement textures of each item through isolation and the body as a whole.*

Now run the students through all the items. Examples: rock, string, cotton, elastic, rock. Keep mixing the order of items and varying the duration.

Now have the students choose their favorite item. First have them dance its texture, what it feels like to the touch. Then, what it looks like. Then dance what it does. Practice. Break them into groups to observe and show. Have the audience guess what articles are being conveyed.

## Tableaux (Grades 5+)

**Objective:** The students gain a clear understanding of abstraction.

Half the students are in the space. The other half is audience. The performing group chooses a situation and creates a tableau that suggests the chosen situation. **Possible tableaux: family picture, tug-of-war, boredom, it's raining, on strike, a football lineup, watching a movie.** Each student should memorize his starting position.

1-The group moves, elaborating on the situation suggested by the tableau, and finds an ending within one minute. Change groups.

2-The groups form their previous tableaux. They take a moment to observe their shapes and placement relative to each other. They improvise, now using the tableau as a source of shapes, spatial relationships, and abstract movement ideas. Break them into groups to observe and show. Discuss.

Since abstraction is considered 'not the norm', the teacher should help the students explore the four elements of movement: time, space, shape, and energy, (see vocabulary list), to help abstract their chosen literal task. The previous lessons will also help inform the students for this lesson. The teacher can also bring in other abstract forms of art such as paintings, and music as well as non-abstract for comparison, to help explain abstraction to the students.

### RELATED STANDARDS

#### DANCE

##### Kindergarten - ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.3 Understand and respond to a wide range of opposites (e.g., high/low, forward/backward, wiggle/freeze).

##### Grade 1 - 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

2.1 Use improvisation to discover movements in response to a specific movement problem (e.g., find a variety of ways to walk; create five types of circular movement).

##### Grade 2 - 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.1 Use basic dance vocabulary to name and describe a dance observed or performed (e.g., levels, rhythm patterns, type of energy).

### Coloring Movement (Grades: 3+)

Objective: The students should differentiate between textures while staying true to their personal shapes.

Materials Needed: Fun, energizing music as well as something lyrical.

When the music is playing, the students walk anywhere in the space to the rhythm of the music. When the music is turned off, the students freeze in interesting shapes and memorize them. Encourage them to invent shapes they have never done before, but ones they can easily hold and quickly move out of. To help the students with this, the teacher can call out a different *locomotor* movements each time as well as letting them know what level their next shape should be on.

Continue in this manner until the students have 5 memorized shapes. Assign each shape a number one-five. Run them through their personal shapes one after the other, varying how many counts held between each shape. Example: 8 counts between each, then 4, then 2, and then 1. Discuss what they need to do to get through their shapes effortlessly as the counts get fewer in between, as well as how important it is to hold shapes with conviction when one has more counts.

Now it's time to play with texture and dynamics! Here are some words you can work from, or make up your own. Keep in mind the grade level of the class and use words they know or challenge them with new words. Make sure they have been introduced to new words through movement exploration as well as spelling and definition beforehand. This will set your students up for success, not failure.

<i>Shaky</i>	<i>Smooth</i>	<i>Percussive</i>
<i>Explosive</i>	<i>Flitting</i>	<i>Heavy</i>
<i>Pressing</i>	<i>Floating</i>	<i>Undulating</i>
<i>Flickering</i>	<i>Bouncing</i>	<i>Darting</i>
<i>Hard</i>	<i>Soft</i>	

Choose words that have textural differences for the students to explore. Run them through the 8, 4, 2, and 1 several times with the music while calling out the chosen textures.

*Example - The students have 8 counts and the word is bouncing. The students can change their levels, but they must continue to bounce through all 8 counts without falling out of their shape.*

More advanced students can play with the subtle differences between similar words.

Allow the students to choose the texture and timing they would like to color their personal shapes. Younger students will need the teacher to help them with this. (Maybe the whole class uses the same shapes, textures and counts.)

Split into smaller groups. Show. Discuss.

#### RELATED STANDARDS – DANCE

##### Kindergarten - ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.3 Understand and respond to a wide range of opposites (e.g., high/low, forward/backward, wiggle/freeze).

##### Grade 1 - 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

2.1 Use improvisation to discover movements in response to a specific movement problem (e.g., find a variety of ways to walk; create five types of circular movement).

##### Grade 2 - 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.1 Use basic dance vocabulary to name and describe a dance observed or performed (e.g., levels, rhythm patterns, type of energy).

##### Grade 8 - 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.5 Identify and analyze the variety of ways in which a dancer can move, using space, time, and force/energy vocabulary.

##### 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

2.3 Apply basic music elements to the making and performance of dances (e.g., rhythm, meter, accents).

##### Grades 9-12 (Prof.) - 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

2.6 Collaborate with peers in the development of choreography in groups (e.g., duets, trios, small ensembles).

2.7 Demonstrate originality in using partner or group relationships to define spatial patterns and the use of overall performing space.

## **Mood & Character (Grades 4 +)**

Items Needed: Brown grocery bags, paint, crayons or magic markers. Glue, glitter and cutouts are also fun!

Using the grocery bags, the students make masks using implements provided - giving the masks definite expression (angry, happy, sad, etc.). Eyeholes must be included and can be pre-cut. A few bags should be left blank with only eyeholes.

Each student chooses a mask without seeing which. Each one also chooses a mood, attitude or character.

The group is split into audience and performers. Line the performers up with the bags on their heads. One by one, the students move according to the mood, attitude, or character they have chosen, which most likely will not be the same as the expression of the mask. Which is stronger for the audience, the expression of the mask or the expression of the body? Change groups.

Students repeat the exercise with blank bags. Does the movement still succeed in being expressive?

Without the bags, help students to expand the expression of their bodies. The elements explored in the previous lessons will be helpful in this task.

Observations: The first 3 sets of tasks may be more revealing for the observers than for the performers. If the students cannot rely on their faces for their expression, does their movement still transmit expression? Ideally the movement can speak for itself. The audience may even see more expression in the body when not distracted by the faces.

## **Choreographer Visit (Grades K+)**

Invite a local dance choreographer to your class or school to lead a question and answer period dealing with the topics 'Dance as a Career' and 'The Art of Making Dances.' Young Audiences of the Bay Area's artist roster includes many companies that offer assembly demonstrations as well as workshops and classroom visits for schools. In addition, some companies and presenters offer special ticket prices and/or fieldtrips to a dance concert (such as Cal Performances' SchoolTime program (see Bay Area Resources section).

7 – Teaching students how to assess dance performance in well-written or oral critique is a good way to develop a creative (and critical) eye.

## Dance Critique Guidelines

Always specify the name of the performance, the date attended, and the theater at which the performance was presented. Cite the full name of the dance company and the choreographer. If the show consisted of a series of short dances, note each individual choreographer. Please be sure to use correct grammar, with proper punctuation and spelling. Papers should be well written, with a beginning, middle, and an end. Introduce the subject of discussion; go into more in-depth discussion of the performance and conclude your critique with your overall opinion, conclusion, or proper closing statement. This critique should read like a newspaper review.

## The Dance as a Whole

1. Was there an identifiable theme?
2. How was the theme portrayed by the dancers?
3. Did the title reflect the idea of the work?
4. Did the floor patterns and spatial patterns contribute to the theme?
5. Were there elements of surprise, humor, drama or tension? Did these add to idea?

## Structure of the Dance

1. Was there a story?
2. Was there a beginning, middle and end?
3. Did the choreographer introduce a concept that was different or new?
4. Were you able to see the piece in terms of the basic ingredients?
5. Were the movements and movement phrases visually interesting and appropriate for the content?

## Performance Considerations

1. Was the choreographer's idea adequately translated into the dancer's bodies?
2. Were the dancers well trained for what they did?
3. Were the dancers well rehearsed?
4. Did the dancers seem secure and at ease with the movement of the piece? Focus? Presence?

## Technical Considerations

1. Did the lighting design enhance or detract from the dance?

2. Were the costumes in keeping with the theme?  
Were they distracting?
3. Were the props an integral part of the work?
4. Was the make-up and hairstyle in keeping with the theme of the dance?

#### Final Questions

1. Did the work succeed? Why? How are you defining “success”?
2. Would you like to see the performance again? Why?
3. Whether or not the work was successful, did you enjoy it?

These are suggestions to help students start looking actively at art. And defining what they feel about the things they see, to form opinions and know why. These are also the questions a good choreographer is always asking his/herself when creating a work. Writing critiques helps to prime the pump and make group discussions more meaningful and in-depth. These questions can be used in their entirety, elaborated upon, or picked through and geared towards a specific class and grade. It is also a good template to use for other art subjects.

#### **RELATED STANDARDS – LANGUAGE ARTS**

- Grade 5- Listening and Speaking  
Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication
- 1.4 Select a focus, organizational structure, and point of view for an oral presentation.
  - 1.5 Clarify and support spoken ideas with evidence and examples.
  - 1.6 Engage the audience with appropriate verbal cues, facial expressions, and gestures.
  - 1.9 Use volume, pitch, phrasing, pace, modulation, and gestures appropriately to enhance meaning.

- Grade 8- Listening and Speaking
- 1.3 Organize information to achieve particular purposes by matching the message, vocabulary, voice modulation, expression, and tone to the audience and purpose.
  - 1.1 Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.

- Grade 8- Writing
- 1.0 Writing Strategies- Organization and Focus
  - 1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.

#### **RELATED STANDARDS – DANCE**

Grades 9-12 Proficient - 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

- 2.6 Collaborate with peers in the development of choreography in groups (e.g., duets, trios, small ensembles).
  - 2.7 Demonstrate originality in using partner or group relationships to define spatial patterns and the use of overall performing space.
- 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).
- 5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS
- 5.3 Explain how dancing presents opportunities and challenges to maintain physical and emotional health and how to apply that information to current training and lifelong habits.
  - 5.4 Explain how participation in dance develops creative skills for lifelong learning and well-being that are interpersonal and intrapersonal.

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>.



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