

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Dance Masters
Subject: Margaret Jenkins
Discipline: Dance (Modern)

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Modern dancer and choreographer Margaret Jenkins
Still image from SPARK story, 2005.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME

Masters of Dance

SUBJECT

Margaret Jenkins

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Dance

OBJECTIVE

To introduce educators and students to modern dance as a form of artistic expression as well as a vehicle for personal, political, and social commentary

STORY SYNOPSIS

In the episode, “Masters of Dance,” SPARK takes a look at Jenkins in the role of artistic director as she rehearses her company dancers in preparation for “Danger Orange,” an outdoor site-specific performance at Justin Herman Plaza across the Embarcadero from the Ferry Building in downtown San Francisco.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing
Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance
Hands-on individual projects in which students work independently
Hands-on group projects in which students assist and support one another
Critical reflection on personal expressions and how they are seen and received by others

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

To introduce students to modern dance, modern choreography and the challenges of public performance of dance

To introduce the idea of modern dance as artistic expression

To illustrate the presence and role of performances in public spaces

To explore movement as a form of personal, social, and political commentary

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story about Margaret Jenkins on DVD or VHS, and related equipment

Computer(s) with Internet access, navigation software, sound card, speakers, and access to a 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

Different examples of modern and post-modern dance (see Resource section)

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

For more than 30 years, choreographer Margaret Jenkins has been expanding the physical and conceptual boundaries of modern dance in the Bay Area. Her dance company has spawned an entire generation of experimental dancers and artists. In the episode, "Masters of Dance," SPARK follows Jenkins from rehearsing "Danger Orange," in San Francisco to conducting workshops on composition and sharing choreographic ideas with the Beijing Modern Dance Company in China.

"Danger Orange," a 45-minute outdoor site-specific performance in San Francisco's Justin Herman Plaza, was performed in October 2004 before the Presidential elections. Collaborating with renowned visual designer Alex Nichols, sound designer Jay Cloidt, and poet/writer Michael Palmer, Jenkins wanted "Danger Orange" to address the times. The color orange metaphorically referenced the national alert systems that had recently been set in place.

A native of San Francisco, Jenkins began her dance training with Judy and Lenore Job, Welland Lathrop and Gloria Unti. She continued her studies in New York City at the Julliard School of Music with Jose Limón and Martha Graham. After training at UCLA she returned to New York to dance with a number of modern dance companies, including those of Gus Solomons, Viola Farber, Twyla Tharp and Sara Rudner. She was on the faculty of the Merce Cunningham Studio for twelve years.

Jenkins returned to San Francisco and opened a school to train professional modern dancers, forming the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company in 1973. In 2004, Jenkins and her company began Choreographers in Mentorship Exchange (CHIME), a program to foster creative interaction and long-term relationships between emerging and established choreographers. Jenkins is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Irvine Fellowship in Dance, the San Francisco Arts

Commission Award of Honor, and two Isadora Duncan Dance Awards. For her contributions to the San Francisco Bay Area arts community, she was awarded the Bernard Osher Cultural Award in 2002.



Two of Margaret Jenkins' dancers rehearse for "Danger Orange," a public dance performance in San Francisco. Still image from SPARK story, January 2005.

THE BIG PICTURE

American modern dance has its roots in the end of the 19th and the beginning of 20th century, primarily in the work of three solo female performers, Loie Fuller (1862-1928), Isadora Duncan (1878-1927) and Ruth St. Denis (1877-1968) who made innovations in the discipline, including the development of theatrical presentation. Now well-renowned for their contributions, all three worked in direct opposition to the formal aesthetics of classical ballet, the prominent high culture dance form of the era.

Fuller's main contribution is the development of special lighting effects on moving and undulating fabrics. Duncan, also originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, spent most of her career in Europe, as did Fuller, where a more sophisticated audience was receptive to new ideas. Her style was emotionally expressive and her dancers wore loose costumes reminiscent of Grecian tunics, totally unlike

the laced bodices and tulle skirts used on the ballet stage, to further demonstrate her revolt against artificiality and her embracing of natural movement.

St. Denis' approach was to combine dance and drama. Many of her dances utilized stories from other cultures and had a strong spiritual element. Her stylized movements and costumes were flavored with exoticism. When the popularity of solo performers waned, she joined forces with Ted Shawn to create the Denishawn dance company and school.

Several important dancer/choreographers were trained by St. Denis and Shawn and danced in their troupe. All three - Doris Humphrey (1895-1958), Charles Weidman (1901-1975) and Martha Graham (1895-1991) – eventually left to pursue their own visions of dance and establish their own companies.

Humphrey and Weidman performed, taught and directed their own company from 1928 until 1944. They based their movement on the principle of “fall and recover” which had a lighter and more lyrical feeling than the style of Graham whose choreography utilized the idea of “contraction and release,” yielding a more intense muscularity and an emotionally charged look.

Out of the Humphrey-Weidman group came Jose Limón (1908-1972), a charismatic Mexican dancer and choreographer who danced with them during the 1930s. After serving in WWII he started his own company with Humphrey as the artistic director. His company – Limón Dance Company – still performs his choreographic masterpieces more than thirty years after his death, and offers classes and intensive programs of study.

Martha Graham developed her own unique vocabulary, which is still taught at the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance in New York City. Her company, founded in 1929, provided the backdrop for her own riveting performances. The stark, angular choreography coupled with music by such composers as Aaron Copeland and sets by the renowned sculptor Isamu Noguchi remain part of her rich legacy.

Merce Cunningham danced as a soloist with the Martha Graham Dance Company from 1940-55, but formed his own company in 1950. His style is radically different from hers, relying on such

elements as chance to determine the order of the choreography and a lack of intentional connection between the music and the steps. Where many choreographers use emotions and dramatic situations as inspiration for their dances, Cunningham comes from an intellectual realm where the movement is abstract and relates to itself within its own context, often creating intriguing movement architecture.

Another dancer from the Graham Company who struck out on his own is Paul Taylor. He worked briefly with Cunningham in 1953 and worked with Graham from 1955 to 1961, while simultaneously founding his own group in 1954. Though his early work was quite witty and often had social commentary, his more recent pieces are in a very traditional modern dance vein.

Another important American choreographer, Alwin Nikolai (1910-1993), traces his lineage back to the great German expressionist dancer and teacher, Mary Wigman. He studied with two of her students, Truda Kaschmann and Hanya Holm and went on to develop an abstract dance theater uniquely his own where the dancer was not an artist of self-expression, but was a part of the overall multimedia picture created by the sets, costumes, music and movement.

While these are only the most important founders of the different styles of modern dance that exist today, there are many others who have drawn on their teaching and have been influenced by their choreography and gone on to create their own highly personal dance language.



Margaret Jenkins directs in the rain.
Still image from SPARK story, December 2004.

RESOURCES – TEXTS

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

Banes, Sally. Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964. Duke University Press, 1993.

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

Bartenieff, Irmgard. Body Movement: Coping With the Environment. Gordon and 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.

Chujoy, Anatole and P. W. Manchester, ed., The Dance Encyclopedia, Touchstone, 1978.

Duncan, Isadora. My Life by Isadora Duncan. New York & London: Liveright, 1927

Goldberg, Rose Lee. Performance: Live Art Since 1960. New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishers, 1998.

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

Howell, A. The Analysis of Performance Art A Guide to its Theory and Practice.

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.

Kurth, Peter. Isadora, A Sensational Life. The most comprehensive biography on Isadora's life and art to date. Little Brown, 2001.

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.

Reynolds, Nancy and Malcolm McCormick, No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century, Yale University Press, 2003.

RESOURCES – REVIEWS

Renouf, Renee. Review of "Three Decades of Dance". Ballet Magazine May, 2003. Published on-line at http://www.ballet.co.uk/magazines/yr_03/may03/rev_jenkins_0403.htm.

Ulrich, Allan. "Looking Back with a Legend – News – Margaret Jenkins," Dance Magazine April, 2003. Published on-line at http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1083/is_4_77/ai_98593993

RESOURCES – WEB SITES

Margaret Jenkins Dance Company – The Web site profiles Jenkins and all members of the company, upcoming performances and labs, reviews and collaborations. <http://www.mjdc.org>

BayDance.com – A key Web resource in the Bay Area, including performances, publications, auditions, reviews, and educational resources (scholarships, academic programs, classes and workshops). <http://www.baydance.com>

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>

VIDEO RESOURCES

Isadora Duncan: Movement from the Soul Documentary. Narrated by Julie Harris. Produced by Geller/Goldfine c.1987 One-hour documentary on the life and art of Isadora Duncan. 60 minute VHS. Call 212-691-5040 for information.

Four by Ailey (VHS) with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. 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)

BAY AREA RESOURCES

Cal Performance, UC Berkeley
Cal Performances presents a wide variety of music, dance, and theater events. The Web site offers extensive information, online ticketing and a calendar
Zellerbach Hall @ UC Berkeley
510/642.9988
<http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu>

Dancers' Group
Bay Area site that offers events, performances and workshops for (mostly) modern dance -
3252A 19th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110
415/920-9181
<http://www.dancersgroup.org>

Deborah Slater Dance Theater
Art of the Matter
3288 21st Street, #PMB71
San Francisco, CA 94110
415/267.7687
<http://www.artofthematter.org>

Joe Goode Performance Group
1007 General Kennedy Avenue, Suite 209
San Francisco, CA 94129
415-561-6565
<http://www.joegoode.com>

ODC Theater
3153 17th Street
San Francisco CA, 94110
415/863-6606
<http://www.odcdance.org>

San Francisco Performances
SF Performances presents a wide variety of music, dance, and theater events in a number of SF venues. The Web site offers extensive information, online ticketing, and a calendar of upcoming programs. –
415/398.6449
<http://www.performances.org>

San Francisco Performing Arts Library & Museum
A vast resource library on the performing arts, including books and videos.
401 Van Ness Avenue, Veterans Building, 4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102
415/255.4800
<http://www.sfpalm.org>

Young Audiences of Northern California
YA offers a roster of 100s or artists including dancers, musicians, visual artists, spoken word artists, media producers and theatre performers to provide quality hands-on instruction in the arts with students aged pre-K- grade 12 as well as teachers and communities.
<http://www.ya-nc.org> or 415.974.5554

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
YBCA hosts exhibitions of visual arts, performing arts and film and video. The works represented reflect the San Francisco Bay Area's diverse cultural populations. The center's Web site includes information and schedules of events.
701 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103
415/978.ARTS (2787)
<http://www.ybca.org>

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

VOCABULARY & CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

Active viewing

The act of observing something with intense focus and attention, so as to absorb or notice as much as possible

Charged field

In dance, a performance space which has a lot of energy, even if it is negative space, created by the intensity of the movement around it

Diligence

Persistent application to one's occupation or studies; To apply attentive care or painstaking effort

Epicenter

In dance, a focal point

Gesture

Movement of a body part or combination of parts, with emphasis on its expressive characteristics, including movements of the body not supporting weight

Isadora Duncan

The pioneer dancer and choreographer credited with beginning the modern dance movement at the turn of the 20th century

Manifestation

The demonstration of the existence, reality, or presence of a person, object, or quality

Martha Graham

Highly influential modern dancer and choreographer known for her angular, stark and thematic works, often inspired by mythology and historical subjects and later focused on the female figure. She trained a whole generation of dancers that later became renowned choreographers.

Mentor

A trusted counselor or teacher

Merce Cunningham

Dancer and choreographer at the forefront of the postmodern dance movement. Cunningham is known for his avant-garde techniques, which liberated dance from spatial restraints, eliminating strong central focus from choreographic patterns and devising dances that can be viewed from any angle. He also introduced new musical elements such as electronic music, and incorporated elements of chance in his own choreography.

Modern dance

A twentieth century idiom that began as a rebellion against steps, positions and values that suppressed expressive, original or authentic movement

Negative space

In dance, the area in a space defined by that which is not there - no dancers, nothing

Ominous

Menacing, threatening

Physical language

A means of communicating through movement and gesture

Poignant

Touching or appealing to the emotions; pertinent or relevant; agreeably intense or stimulating

Post-modern dance

A movement of dance that developed in the 1960's, out of the social, political and artistic movements. It represented a further departure from classic elements of choreography, use of music, and structural or thematic constraints, and took dance outdoors to public spaces.

Repertoire

The stock of songs, plays, dances, readings, etc. that a company or individual is prepared to perform

Social Commentary

Choreography that satirizes or otherwise makes a statement on social conditions and beliefs

Spatial arrangement

The balance between the negative space on stage and the placement of dancers to create a visual image that is viewed by a particular or multiple standpoints

Twyla Tharp

Postmodern dancer and choreographer who incorporated elements of jazz, ballet and modern dance in her work. Her choreography is characterized by high energy, loose-limbed yet meticulous movements and she is known for taking dance outdoors in New York City.

Vignettes

A short scene or incident

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Talking about modern dance

In the SPARK story on Margaret Jenkins, a dance reviewer asserts that when watching one of her pieces it is the responsibility of the spectator to be “present” – to know what to attend to as the dance unfolds in the space. “She doesn’t tell you when to look or what to look at.” Watch the story on Jenkins and discuss the role of the spectator.

Using your local papers, research upcoming performances of modern dance and if possible, attend a concert with the students, or get a video of a dance performance and watch it with the class. Talk about what they saw. Challenge students to write an analysis or critique of the performance. Using the dance vocabulary list, have students use dance terminology to describe the elements of dance they observed, such as abstraction, axial movement, contrast, dynamics, force/energy, rhythm and shape. (See also the SPARK Educator Guide for Alonzo King – See “Dance Critique Guidelines”)

Encourage students to consider questions like:

- Was there an identifiable theme?
- How was the theme portrayed by the dancers?
- How does the composition communicate different ideas or emotions nonverbally?
- Was there a story? What is the piece saying?
- How much interpretation is left to the viewer?
- How do students’ interpretations differ?
- Was the choreographer’s idea adequately translated into the dancers’ bodies?
- How is watching dance on video different from seeing it live?

Create a Modern Dance

(See also the activities on dance concepts, such as abstraction and feelings in the SPARK Educator Guide for Alonzo King)

In this assignment, take the class outside to study an environmental scene. It could be overlooking the ocean, or the schoolyard, or a park. Encourage

students to make careful observations of all the elements they see, hear, or experience, such as the way the clouds move, the trees bend in the wind, maybe utter stillness interrupted by a squirrel or bird. Notice the tempos at which things move – the difference between a boat moving on the water in the distance and someone jogging past in the forefront of view.

Using the four elements of movement: time, space, shape and energy (see dance vocabulary list), explore different gestures that could represent the different things they witnessed. Working in small groups, have each group recreate the environmental scene through movement. Remind students that the movements don’t have to be a literal translation of what they saw – they are abstracting movement to represent real life. Focus on recreating the rhythm or tempo of what they saw, or create different levels of action such as events close to the viewer or far away, as opposed to trying to literally be a squirrel or bird or boat. Think of all the space as a charged field, and that even the negative space on stage has a purpose. Perform and discuss.

RELATED STANDARDS

DANCE

Grade 3 - 2.0 Creative Expression

2.6 Compare and contrast the role of the performer with that of a member of the audience

Grade 4 – 1.0 Artistic Perception

1.5 Describe a specific movement, using appropriate dance vocabulary.

Grades 9-12 – 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

4.5 (Proficient) Identify and evaluate the advantages and limitations of viewing live and recorded dance performances.

4.5 (Advanced) Evaluate how aesthetic principles apply to choreography designed for technological media (e.g., film, video, TV, computer imaging).

Political and Social Commentary in Dance

Referring to Margaret Jenkins' *Danger Orange* or some of her past works, invite students to discuss a socio-political issue that Jenkins has illuminated. Ask students how a choreographer might come up with ideas for a political piece? Where does s/he get their issues? Radio? Television news broadcasts? Newspaper articles? Discussions with friends? Then, discuss political issues that are important to the students. How might they show how they feel about these issues when expressed through movement? Challenge them to think of how they might express an idea(s) humorously while still conveying passion and conviction.

Brainstorm a number of situations that are close to their daily experience, such as the food in the school cafeteria, riding the bus, a school policy, or any recent social event. Invite students to create a five-minute piece pertaining to an issue that is important to them personally. Consider public spaces as possible locations for the presentation of their piece, and consider how the space augments or contributes to the piece.

As an extension of this project, research the evolution of Western dance and how socio-political issues have been implemented throughout its history. Write an essay on this subject.

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 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 4 – 2.0 Creative Expression

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

Grades 9-12 - 2.0 Creative Expression

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

SPARKLERS

* Compare Margaret Jenkins' approach to the work of other modern dance groups featured in the SPARK series, such as Jo Kreiter, or Joe Goode, a long-time collaborator of Jenkins. Compare their methods, similarities and differences, considering the following:

- use of music in the piece
- the title of the piece and how it is reflected in the work
- the use of negative space
- the quality of movements
- their use of collaboration
- use of public spaces as performance locals

* Research the history of modern and postmodern dance masters and reflect on their contributions through a 500 word essay.

* Autobiographical Dance

Ask the students to create a simple self-portrait based on dance elements. Have them choose 3-5 characteristics about themselves and express those through movement. Point out that it doesn't have to represent them in a literal way, it can be abstract and they can incorporate humor, or exaggerated characteristics.

RELATED STANDARDS

DANCE

Grade 4 – 2.0 Creative Expression

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

Grade 4 – 5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

- 5.4 Analyze the choreographic process and its relation to the writing process (e.g., brainstorming, exploring and developing ideas, putting ideas into a form, sequencing).

Grades 9-12 – 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

- 3.3 Explain how the works of dance by major choreographers communicate universal themes and sociopolitical issues in their historical/cultural contexts (e.g., seventeenth-century Italy, eighteenth-century France, the women's suffrage movement, Chinese cultural revolution, the post-modernist movement of the 1960's).

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/be/st/ss/index.asp>.