



The World of Dance

Curricular Guide



ABOUT THIS PERFORMANCE

Connecticut Ballet is pleased to bring *THE WORLD OF DANCE* to your students. This program introduces students to a wide range of dance forms, exposes them to the diversity of world music and dance, and allows them to interact with dancers and musicians in a stimulating assembly program format.

Traditional western dance forms of ballet, jazz, tap and hip-hop are fairly standard fare on television and in other media. The dance forms of indigenous peoples are rarely presented by the media, much less as the cross-cultural phenomenon they represent. In *The World of Dance* assembly, we present dance as a 'cultural mirror' for students to consider their own ethnic diversity and help them to honor one another's unique cultural make-up.

The following background information will help prepare your students for the upcoming performance. At any given assembly, Connecticut Ballet presents five artists representing different cultures.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Connecticut Ballet Headquarters

20 Acosta Street
Stamford, CT 06902
Tel: 203-964-1211
Fax: 203-961-1928

Hartford Office

99 Pratt Street, Suite 209
Hartford, CT 06103
Tel: 860-293-1039

www.connecticutballet.com

Email: ctballet@ix.netcom.com

THE WORLD OF DANCE BACKGROUND

BRAZILIAN DANCE

Capoeira, a martial art technique that some scholars say was developed centuries ago by Africans enslaved in Brazil as a defense against their captors. Originally masked as entertainment, capoeira (pronounced cop-WAY-ruh) is concealed within dance and acrobatics and set to live music. Legally banned at the end of the 19th century, capoeira's practice was legitimized in the 1930s and has been resuscitated as Brazil's 'national sport' and a symbol of Afro-Brazilian culture.

Popular in Europe and gaining popularity in the United States, the form looks like something between an animal-mating ritual and a break-dance competition. Regardless of which form is being practiced, the players stand in a circle (*roda* or "hoda"). They cut a rhythm on the *berimbau*, a long bow with a hollowed gourd attached to it. Others play tambourines, conga drums and bells while chanting in Portuguese. Two players perform a brief spiritual ritual prior to beginning the dance, including the familiar side-to-side movement called *ginga* ("zheeinga") and moving on to lightning-fast kicks similar to the martial art of *karate*.

CHINESE DANCE

The art of Chinese dance marks its origins around the 4th millennium BC. A study of ceramic artifacts with dramatized dancing figures foretells that people of the Neolithic Yangshao culture had choreographed group dances. After the establishment of the Music Bureau during the Han Dynasty in the year 206 BC, continues efforts were made to develop the folk songs and dances in the country. During those days each regional group of China has its own folk dance forms. The Miao also known as Hmong people of southwestern China developed a lively form of submissive, singing and rival dances. The inhabitant of Taiwan created handholding line dances as part of a harvest ritual. Folk dances showcase the lifestyles and customs of a people, though there are numerous folk dances, every dance is a precious and an ingenious part of China's rich cultural heritage.

Traditional Chinese Dance includes the stalwart Lion Dance with drum music, the spirited Ribbon Dance with long Silk Ribbons fabricating calligraphic designs in the air; as well as the exquisite *Fan Dance* mesmerized by spectators all over the world. The Art of Chinese Dance convey the hue, extravagance and splendor of the Chinese culture all over the world.

The evolution of modern Chinese dance has taken up by zealous talents. Normally, young people undertake study ballet dance and modern dance initially, later on they study the procedure and linguistic rules of traditional Chinese dance. Slowly the learners take over to the new Chinese style body expressions and movements with a challenging mind for experimentation. Since about 1970, the original and unique synthesis of young dancers has brought a reawakening in Chinese Dance and Drama.

The basic concepts represented in Chinese and Western dance are: Chinese dance uses the gravity while Western dance resists the gravity; and Chinese dance involves facial expression and gestures. The upper body is emphasized as part of the dance form, and Western dance often emphasizes only the lower body — kicking and jumping.

The Fan Dance is one type of art that represents Chinese traditional culture. It normally appears with dancing and singing together. It is known for its beautiful and delicate poses. The fan dance is a popular traditional Chinese dance. It is a graceful and elegant dance that shows off the beauty of the fluttering fans. The fans are skillfully used to portray illusions of flowers and waves. By stringing together simple moves in complex formations, the soft fan dance is a beauty.

The Fan Dance can be ‘feminine’ — soft and tender — or it can be used as a symbol of culture, education, and wisdom for male performers. The fan can also be used as a weapon in the martial art dance form where it is used as a tool of attack and protection for both male and female performers.

GHANAIAN DANCE

The Republic of Ghana is a country in West Africa. It borders Côte d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast) to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south. The word “Ghana” means “Warrior King,” and was the source of the name “Guinea” (via French Guinoye) that is used to refer to the West African coast (Gulf of

Guinea). Ghana was inhabited in pre-colonial times by a number of ancient kingdoms, including the Ga Adangbes on the eastern coast, inland Empire of Ashanti and various Fante states along the coast and inland.

In Ghanaian dance, the orientation of the body is downwards, towards the earth, with a relaxed body. In addition, there is an organic relationship between the drum music and the dance. The dancer embodies the music and must therefore learn to listen attentively to drum music while dancing. Ghanaian dance encourages individual self-expression within the structure of the dance. While the dance is generally energetic and free, dancers must learn to be attentive to the rhythms and the instructions played by the master drummer. They must therefore learn to express their individuality and enjoy themselves, but at the same time exhibit the self-control required by the dance. This skill is a useful and important tool against violence: to be able to do what you want, but always be attentive to your surroundings and exhibit self control when necessary; to express your individuality within the limits and structure of society.

Kpanlongo is a recreational dance of the Ga ethnic group of southern Ghana and it is performed by the youth. It started around the time of Ghana's independence as a music and dance type for entertainment in Accra, the capital of Ghana. Kpanlongo is presently performed at life-cycle events, festivals, and political rallies.

HAITIAN DANCE

Haiti is one of the major nation-states of the Caribbean. It shares an island with the Dominican Republic and was formerly Hispanola. Tainos people inhabited the island until the Spanish conquest all but annihilated them and their culture. After the Tainos vanished, the Spanish enslaved people from the West African coast and the Congo Basin to work in the colony. Uprisings were frequent, and many people ran off into the mountains to maroon (refugee) havens. In 1791, after the western part of Hispanola had been under French domination for one hundred years, the Africans rose up to overthrow the French. They declared independence in 1804 and renamed the country, "Haiti-Taino" for "mountainous land." The Haitian revolution is the only successful slave revolution in modern history. Haiti became the second free nation in the America (after the United States) and the world's first black republic.

Music and dance are performed for the purpose of calling the spirits. When spirits come to the congregation through possession, they speak to the congregants, give advise, and share meal that the faithful have prepared for them. Each nation of spirits has its own dance, and each dance is accompanied by its own set of drum patterns and its own repertory of songs. *Ibo*, for example, a dance of the Ibo nation of Nigeria, expresses the pride and majesty of the Ibo people, who preferred death to enslavement. One of the characteristic dance movements depicts men and women breaking the chains of slavery.

In the ritual and folkloric performance styles of Haitian *vodou* (“voodoo”), there are three forms: Rada, Kongo, and Petro, each standing for the different ‘nations’ which made up the African-derived pantheon. Within this system, there are thirty-three rhythms with more than a hundred variations representing different regional styles.

Like the very nature of *vodou* itself, Haitian dance stands for tolerance, respect for our brothers and sisters and the natural world we live in.

IRISH DANCE

Irish dances can broadly be divided into social dance and performance dances. Irish social dancing can be divided further into céilí (pronounced kay-lee) and set dancing. Irish set and céilí dances are usually danced by formations (sets) of couples, often in squares of four couples. Irish social dance is a living tradition, and variations in particular dances are found across the Irish dance community.

Irish performance dancing is traditionally referred to as *stepdance*. Irish stepdance, popularized in 1994 by the world-famous show *Riverdance*, is notable for its rapid leg movements, body and arms being kept largely stationary. Most competitive stepdances are solo dances, though many stepdancers also perform and compete using traditional set and céilí dances. The solo stepdance is generally characterized by a controlled but not rigid upper body, straight arms, and quick, precise movements of the feet.

The dancing traditions of Ireland probably grew in close association with Irish traditional music. Originating in Pre-Christian Ireland, Irish dance was later influenced by dance forms from the Continent, especially the *Quadrille*. Traveling dancing masters taught all over Ireland as late as the early 1900s.

Irish set dances are folk dances of Ireland based on French *quadrilles*. Most are done in square sets of four couples and consist of several “figures,” each of which has a number of parts. The styles of the various steps in a dance vary from place to place and from set to set. The sets come from various parts of Ireland and are often named for their place of origin; examples are the Corofin Plain Set, the South Galway Set and the Clare Lancers Set. The music can be a reel, jig, slide or polka, but though types of tunes are frequently mixed within the set, only one type is used for a given figure. Irish set dancing is popular throughout Ireland as well as in Canada, the United States, Australia, Europe and other countries. Social set dancing is not usually competitive.

Irish solo stepdances fall into two broad categories based on the shoes worn: hard shoe and soft shoe dances.

Soft shoe dances include the reel, slip jig, light jig, and single jig. Reels have a 4/4 (or sometimes 2/4 or 2/2) time signature. Slip jigs are in 9/8 time. Light and single jigs are in 6/8 time, with different emphasis within the measure distinguishing the music. Hard shoe dances include the hornpipe, in 2/4 time, the treble jig, in a slow 6/8, the treble reel, and traditional sets, which are a group of 36 dances with set music and steps. Many traditional sets have irregular musical phrasing. There are also more advanced “non-traditional sets” done by advanced dancers. These have set music, but not steps.

The céilí dances used in competitions are more precise versions of those danced in less formal settings. There is a list of 30 céilí dances which have been standardized; these are called the “book” dances by competitive stepdancers.

Two types of shoes are worn in step dancing: hard shoes and soft shoes. The hard shoe is similar to tap shoes, except that the tips and heels are made of fiberglass, instead of metal, and are significantly bulkier. The first hard shoes had wooden or leather taps with metal nails. Later the taps and heels were changed into resin or fiberglass to reduce the weight and to increase the footwork sounds. The soft shoes, which are called *ghillies*, resembles a ballet shoe minus the hard toe and the ribbons for laces. Ghillies are only worn by girls while boys wear a black leather shoe called a reel shoe, which resembles a black jazz shoe with a hard heel. Boys soft-shoe dancing features audible heel clicks.

Irish dancing schools have team dresses, but dancers, once they reach a level decided by their school, may get a solo dress of their own design and colors. Today most women and girls curl their hair or wear a wig for a competition or *féis* (pronounced fesh). Today in competition, most men wear a shirt, vest, and tie assigned by their school paired with black pants. But when they get into the higher levels, as the girls do, they get to pick their own vest, shirt and tie.

PERUVIAN DANCE

Peru ranks amongst the world's great centers of ancient civilization. Peru is located in the west central part of South America and is a country of geographical and cultural contrast. Peru is the 19th largest country in the world and is bordered on the north by Ecuador, to the south by Chile and Bolivia, to the east by Columbia and Brazil and to the east by the Pacific Ocean. Peru is a diverse country due to the climatic, natural and cultural variation of its regions, which include coast, sierra and jungle.

African slaves were brought over to the Spanish colony of Peru in the 16th century to work mainly in the gold and silver mines of the high Andes. Unused to the high altitudes of the Andes, they died by the hundreds. The Spanish or Creole (descendants of European settlers in Latin America) masters sent them to work in the milder climate of the desert coast, where they labored in the large -or private farms. It was in their small huts, on the packed dirt floors of the courtyards overrun with animals, and in the fields of cane and sugar cane that Afro-Peruvian music, song and dance were born. Peruvian slaves were progressively integrated into the culture and language of their new country. As a result, Afro-Peruvian music and dance are a unique blend of Spanish, Andean and African traditions.

* * *

SPECIAL NOTE FOR TEACHERS

Excellent Bibliographic Reference:

Dancing: The Pleasure, Power, and Art of Movement by Gerald Jonas (Harry N. Abrams, Publishers, 1992)

Irish Step Dancing: A Brief History (Don Haurin & Ann Richens, Richens Academy of Irish Dancing, Ohio)

Toss the Feathers by Pat Murphy (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995)

My Irish Dance by Peggy Carty (Galway: The Connacht Tribune Ltd., 1987)

ATTENDING A LIVE DANCE PERFORMANCE

- Attending a live performance is not the same as listening to a recording or watching television at home. Discuss with your students the nature of a live performance.
- Name a few live performances that people attend (rock concerts, baseball and football games, opera, etc.).
- What is the difference between live and recorded performance?
- Can a live performance ever be repeated exactly? Why or why not?
- What is the role of an audience member? (Courtesy to fellow audience members, applause to show appreciation.)
- Is an audience member a participant in a live performance? How?
- Have you ever performed for an audience? How did it make you feel?

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR

Before the performance:

- After you are seated, it is appropriate to talk quietly to the person next to you until the performance begins.
- If you need to use the restroom, do so before the performance. Make sure you are back in your seat in time for the beginning of the performance.
- How to let performers know you are enjoying the performance:
- Watch closely and listen quietly. If you can hear the performers, they can also hear you — talking, crinkling paper, and so on -- and it will distract them from their performance. Encourage them to do their best by being attentive.
- If something on stage is meant to be funny and you enjoy it, laugh if you want. If something on stage is meant to be serious, but for some reason you find it funny, do NOT laugh out loud. You may ruin the moment for many other people.

STANDARDS FOR DANCE K-12

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- Content Standard 1:** Identify and Perform Movement Elements and Dance Skills
- Content Standard 2:** Understand Choreographic Principles, Processes and Structures
- Content Standard 3:** Understand How Dance Creates and Communicates Meaning
- Content Standard 4:** Apply Analytical and Evaluative Thinking Skills in Dance
- Content Standard 5:** Demonstrate Understanding of Dance in Various Cultures and Historical Periods
- Content Standard 6:** Make Connections Between Dance and Healthful Living
- Content Standard 7:** Make Connections Between Dance, Other Disciplines, and Daily Life

*Please note: detailed information on each content standard by grade level can be found on the Connecticut State Department of Education's website (www.sde.ct.gov/sde/site/default.asp)