

For ArtWorks

Teaching Artist: Amy Compton

Performance: Parsons Dance Company

Grades: Second-Fifth

Work of Art: Parsons Dance Concert with repertory including: “Caught”, “Whirlaway”, and “Hand Dance” choreographed by David Parsons and “Upend” choreographed by David Parsons and Ephrat Asherie.

***Line of Inquiry:** How does Parsons Dance Company use shape and joint manipulation to create movement phrases and spatial relationships among dancers?

Pre-Performance Class

Materials: Two feet piece of wire; music; smart board or paper with multiple writing colors; open space for dancing.

Name Game: With everyone seated in a circle, clap a medium pulse in unison on the thighs. Move around the circle one at a time. Each participant says their name in relationship to the pulse, then everyone repeats their name in relationship to the next pulse. The next person in the circle catches the following pulse, everyone repeats that person's name on the next pulse, etc.

Wire Warm-Up: Participants look at a long straight wire. Moving from left to right of the wire (like a sentence) approximately 5-8 volunteers are selected to design the wire by manipulating it with their fingers. Each volunteer bends their portion of the wire where the previous person left off until we reach the end of the wire.

Next, hold up the newly sculpted wire and ask students to imagine a title for our work of art. Have them share their title with someone seated next to them. Ask if anyone wants to share a great title someone else told them.

Last, everyone traces the wire sculpture from left to right with their finger in the air. Then try tracing it with an elbow, nose, knee, belly button, etc. Ask students for body part suggestions. Try all of them.

Bending Improvisation: Just like the wire sculpture, where can your body bend? Show me your answer by moving the bending parts in your body, not by telling me with your voice. Let's move and explore all of these parts big and small. What are the bending parts of your body called?

Go around the circle again. Each person takes a turn improvising a brief/simple bending dance. Everyone tries to copy it exactly.

Last, everyone at the same time, improvise your own bending movements in your spot until the music stops. Freeze and get caught in your last movement. What level are you in?

Imaginary Bubble: Blow up an imaginary bubble so big you can fit your body inside of it. We'll call the space inside your bubble, kinesphere. How far out does your kinesphere reach? How high? How wide? How low can you take your kinesphere?

When the music begins, take your bubble/kinesphere for a walk around the room. Don't let your bubble pop. Don't bump into anyone or anything. When the music stops, FREEZE.

Bending Freeze Dance in Bubbles: Next, add some bending movements in your joints as you move around the room inside your bubble/kinesphere. We'll call this locomotion. You can be non-locomotor sometimes too and stay in the same spot without traveling, but keep bending. When the music stops, freeze in whatever shape you happen to be caught in.

Moving only your eyes, notice all the other frozen shapes in the room. Notice the shape you like best and copy it on the count of three. Then find another shape and copy on the count of three. Find another shape and copy. End.

Artist and the Clay: Find a partner and decide who is the artist and who is the clay. The artist has 10 Mississippi's to manipulate the clay into a bending shape without using words, only touch. The clay person has to try their best to hold the shape. At 10 Mississippi's or whenever the artist is finished sculpting, the artist must mirror the clay's shape and together they hold in unison for 3 Mississippi's. Then dancers switch roles. (I like asking the dancers to "come to life" and dance their shapes around each other to "clean the slate" before they begin again in different roles.) Dancers begin by facing one another in stillness and don't start sculpting until they hear music. (*Sometimes it's helpful to show this in stages. First, one student volunteer dances it with a teacher and everyone else learns the structure by observation. Second, two new student volunteers attempt the structure as everyone watches... working out any misunderstandings. Third, everyone dances the duet structure simultaneously.)

Next have dancers perform their duets for one another in 2 groups. One group becomes the audience and the other the dance company. The audience watches the dance company perform their artist and clay duets, looking for things they really like. The audience claps when it's over and then shares what they saw with the performers. (Performers can consider and design entrances/exits and/or spacial design of the bodies onstage before the duets begin.)

Dance Phrase Map: Transition the class to sitting in front of the smart board. Beginning on the left side of the board, create/draw a brief section of a bending line. Next, choose a volunteer to draw the next section in a different color, yet connecting to the previous section. Repeat 5-8 times until the line reaches the right side of the board. Label each different colored section of the entire line with a number. Moving through each numbered section ask dancers to improvise what they think the line is showing them to do. The facilitator turns into a kind of curator, choosing the "best" idea in the room (or maybe the most commonly done idea in the room). Repeat this pattern until every numbered section has a movement. Rehearse the accumulation of movements through repetition, memorizing the choreography. Let's call our unison movement sequence a dance phrase. (*Sometimes I have students make their own non-unison choice on the last section of the phrase for variation and also so that everyone's ideas are part of the final dance.) Reinforce and practice details in performance of time, texture, shapes, space and relationship. Perform in smaller groups for one another. Ask the audience for possible titles of our dance phrase. Write some titles next to our multicolored line on the board.

Reflection/Discussion: Sit in a circle. Discuss your favorite parts of class today with someone nearby. Also tell them which parts were most challenging. Share some of your thoughts with the group.

Ask for a volunteer to write an open journal on the smart board. Document all the ways we remember dancing today.

Closing Comments: Together we will watch Parsons Dance Company at the Lensic on Friday. What is some advice you might give someone going to the Theater for the first time? What are some good ways to behave? Can you laugh? Can you talk? Can you eat? Chew gum? Anything else? Thank you for your work, focus and imagination today. I will see you all on Friday, April 6th at the Lensic.

Post-Performance Class

Materials: Music; smart board or paper with multiple writing colors; open space for dancing.

Check In/Warm Up: Sitting together in a circle, discuss...What do you remember from the Parsons Dance Company Concert? What did you notice? Can anyone remember a moment (or a movement, or a shape) and show it to us? Can everyone else try it too? Close your eyes. Can anyone remember a moment from the dance where dancers were using their bodies to make bending movements or shapes? Can you show me a frozen sculpture or dance of that moment? Can everyone try it too? Do you remember the moment where (something memorable)? What levels were they in? What shapes did they make? What quality/texture did their movement have? How did the dancer/dancers design space with their bodies? How do you think the dancers were feeling in that moment? What do you think they were communicating to one another? To us?

Review: Bending Freeze Dance in Bubbles. End the structured improvisation by simultaneously changing into someone else's shape on the count of three, 3 times.

Review: Artist and Clay Duets, picking the same partner as the pre-class or a different partner.

Review: Dance Phrase Map using our process from our pre-class to create a new dance phrase for today. Write possible names of this new phrase on the board.

Assemble: Keeping artist/clay duets together, divide the participants into 2 groups. Each group create a "dance concert piece" with a beginning, middle, and end using the sections we practiced today...

Beginning: Bending Freeze Dance

Middle: Artist and Clay Duets

End: Dance Phrase Map/Pipe Cleaner Dance

Consider writing the order above on the smart board. Also write the following questions... Do you begin on or off stage? Do you end on or off stage? What are the transitions between sections? How will you connect your sections for the audience?

Rehearse and prepare for showing. (Classroom teacher and visiting artist facilitate and rehearse both groups simultaneously on opposite sides of the room.) What is the title of your dance concert piece?

Perform: One group performs for the other a finished dance concert piece. Be sure to introduce it with your title. Have the audience tell the performers which parts of their performance they liked best.

