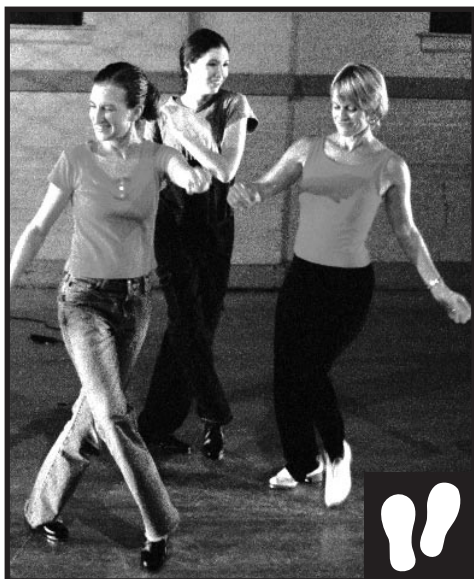


PROGRAM 10: TAP AND PERCUSSIVE DANCE

THE BLENDING OF MUSIC AND DANCE



Program Objective

To explore the unique origins and characteristics of tap and other percussive dance forms.


Program Description

Tap is the art of jazz, expressed as both dance and music. In this art form, as in any form of **percussive** dance, the dancer is not only the instrument of expression, but he/she plays an instrument as well—a percussion instrument. Tap dance embodies the jazz tradition of interaction and inter-connectedness of music and dance. A unique expression of American culture, it is a classic art form, yet continually evolving and shedding light on the complexity and diversity of this country and its culture.

The program is divided into four segments that examine the nature of percussive dance, giving particular attention to tap and its origins.

- Tap History – This segment explores the origin of tap dance, its roots in West African dance and music and **Irish step dance** and English **clogging**. Its development within the jazz narrative and its relationship to jazz music and other forms of early jazz dance are examined.
- Tap Technique – This segment explains some of the complexity of training involved in playing a musical instrument with one's feet, from learning a vocabulary of steps, to understanding musical concepts like syncopation, and to applying that information to improvisation.
- Tap Styles – This segment explains some of the elements of style in classic jazz tap dance and looks at the variety of other styles of tap dance that have evolved over the years.
- Percussive Dance – This segment looks at other examples of percussive dance, including **flamenco**, Irish step dance and **body percussion**.

Before You Watch



Find out what students already know about tap or some other form of percussive dance (clogging, flamenco). How would they describe percussive dance? Have they ever seen a performance of it? Have they ever taken tap or clogging lessons or tried to do it on their own? Maybe there's someone in the class or within the school who would be willing to demonstrate some steps.

Who are some famous tappers? If they watched *Sesame Street* as youngsters, they may know one of the nation's best contemporary tappers, Savion Glover. They may have also seen him on commercials or Monday night football. Perhaps they've seen some older tap dancers, e.g. Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Fred Astaire, Gregory Hines. Research and compare some of these dancers. Go to the video rental store and check out one of their movies.

After You Watch

During the program, the “tap instrument” is explained. Find and bring in a pair of tap shoes as well as other percussion instruments. Explore the similarities and differences between the variety of these instruments, including tap shoes, hand drums, snare drums with sticks, triangles, xylophones, etc. What do they all have in common? What are their differences? How is a tapper’s shoe a percussive instrument?

Percussive dancers of all kinds use the three elements of dance: time, space and force. Ask students to describe how they see each of these elements being used. (Refer to the chart of elements in the teacher’s guide for Program 4.) Which element gets the most attention in percussive dance? [time] Why? [Time is an element of both dance *and* music.] Discuss with them how they see each of the characteristics of time being used in tap dance. [beat, rhythm, accent, duration, tempo]

Move It

Rhythm and the percussive nature of tap: Have one student at a time clap a short rhythm. The rest of the class copies the rhythm, clapping. Next, each student takes a turn clapping a rhythm and the rest of the class tries to put that rhythm in their feet. Ask them to use accents on some of the beats in their rhythms to create syncopations. Put these accents in unusual places. Think of them as surprises.

Rhythmic phrases: Have the students pick a rhyming song, rap, poem, phrase or nursery rhyme and clap the rhythm of the words, e.g. Hickory Dickory Dock or the words in a line of a favorite song. Next have them say the rhyme and put it in their feet or in a body part (head, shoulders, hips). Have them put it in their feet without saying it out loud and see if the class can recognize the rhyme.

Call and Response: Have two students volunteer to have a conversation with their feet, using the rhythms and sounds of their feet to communicate, trading back and forth. As they are making up their conversations they are also using **call and response** as a form/structure and they are improvising.

For more information

Visit the **DanceSense** web site at www.ket.org/dancesense

Key Kentucky Core Content Addressed

(See Kentucky Core Content for Arts & Humanities: Dance in Appendix)

- AH-E-2.1.31
- AH-E-2.1.32
- AH-E-2.2.31
- AH-H-2.1.31
- AH-H-2.2.31
- AH-H-2.2.33
- AH-H-2.3.31 I
- AH-M-2.1.24
- AH-M-2.1.25
- AH-M-2.1.31
- AH-H-2.1.25
- AH-M-2.1.35
- AH-M-2.2.32

Key National Standards for Arts Education: Dance Addressed

Content standards addressed in video and teacher’s guide:

CS1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance

CS2: Understanding choreographic principles, processes and structures

CS3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning

CS4: Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance

CS5: Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods

CS7: Making connections between dance and other disciplines



KEY TERMS (see Glossary for definitions)

- body percussion
- call and response
- clogging
- flamenco
- Irish step dance
- percussive
- tap

