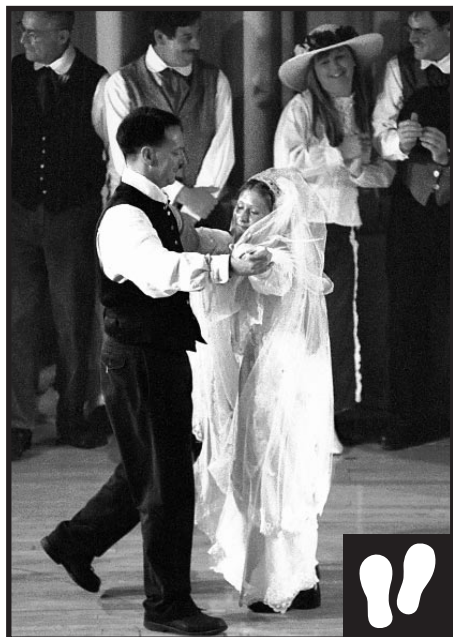


PROGRAM 2: THE DANCE OF CULTURE

THE ORIGINS AND FUNCTIONS OF DANCE IN VARIOUS CULTURES



Program Objective

To explore the origins of dance, develop an understanding of some of the commonalities and differences between dances of various cultures, and encourage respect for dance as a part of our many cultures.

Program Description

Throughout time dance has been a part of every **culture**. Dance is a reflection of the needs, values and experiences of both society and the individual. This expression can be seen in ancient dances, passed on for centuries, as well as in contemporary dance **crazes** and trends. As well, dance **traditions** can travel and change across time and cultures.

This program examines several specific dance forms with examples of both ancient and contemporary dance and dances that have become **classic** or been recycled with subtle changes. In each case we see that the different cultures from which the dances stem produce a myriad of differences in the dance styles, and yet the similarities that exist between many are fascinating.

The four program segments each explore a variety of dances from various cultures and time periods to see how dance is a reflection of culture.

- ✦ Culture—looks at five dances representing five different cultures: the **Kathak** of India, the **Kabuki** from Japan, the **Yoruba** dances from West Africa, a folkloric dance from Cuba, and a Native dance from Alaska.
- ✦ Popular **Social Dance**—includes some 20th century American social dances such as the **Charleston**, **Lindy Hop**, **jitterbug**, and **swing** dance.
- ✦ Cultural Changes—explores how dances have changed, using examples from Europe (the **waltz**) and the Acadian tradition of Louisiana.
- ✦ Comparing Cultures—shows the influence of two cultures—Spanish and African—on the dances of the Caribbean, such as the **salsa**.

Before You Watch

What do we already know? Ask the class these questions: What are some of the oldest **civilizations**? Did they dance? What was their culture like (e.g., values, lifestyle, foods, customs)? How are these expressed in their dances? What other forms of art—music, visual art, etc.—did they create? Are there similarities or differences in these various art forms? Research these answers further on the Internet or in the library.

Has anyone in the class seen a live or televised performance of any form of ancient or early dance (Native American, colonial, etc.)? What cultures or time periods are students studying in their social studies classes? Ask them to research dances associated with these cultures or time periods. Discuss the relationship between the dance/s and the culture they grew out of.

Interview a dancer who does some form of Native American, African, European or Latin American dance. Ask questions that help to clarify the relationship between the culture and dance. Ask the dancer to come in to speak with the class and/or demonstrate some of the dance form.

After You Watch

Compare the similarities and differences between a very old dance form (a West African or Native American dance, Indian Kathak, Japanese Kabuki) and a dance from the 20th century (salsa, Lindy Hop, twist, hip hop). Bring in examples or demonstrate.

Discuss attitudes toward dance. How do adults feel about the dances being done today? Why? Can students think of any examples of dances that were/are looked down upon? Point out that some dances that were once looked down upon later became completely accepted. Examples include the waltz (dancers first held one another and twirled) and the Charleston (was considered vulgar).

Create a dance timeline. Go back as early as you can to find references to dance or choose a specific period of time and a particular country or culture. Find photos of as many dances as possible.

Move It

Learn a circle dance and a line dance from any culture. Use a video, a local dance teacher or a book with instructions. The KET video series *Dancing Threads* contains instructions and demonstrations of four dances from various cultures (Appalachian, African American, Zuni) or consider more contemporary dances like the Electric Slide. Make a list of similarities and differences between the dances. What happens if you change the circle into a line or vice versa? Why do you think they used the circle or line to begin with?

Choose movements from three very different dances and blend them into a new dance. (You can use dances from the video or others.) Try dancing the new dance you've created to the original music that accompanied these dances and then choose a new style of music to use. How does the music change the dance? What are the similarities and the differences between the new dance you've created and old forms of the dance?

Bring a local dance instructor in to teach a country western line dance.

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-2.2.31
AH-E-2.2.33

AH-M-2.2.31
AH-M-2.2.32

AH-H-2.1.34
AH-H-2.2.31
AH-H-2.3.31
AH-H-2.3.310
AH-H-2.3.311

Key National Standards for Arts Education: Dance Addressed

Content standards addressed in video and teacher's guide:

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

KEY TERMS

(see Glossary for definitions)

Charleston
civilization
classic
craze
jitterbug

Kabuki
Kathak
Lindy Hop
salsa
social dance

swing dance
tradition
waltz
Yoruba

