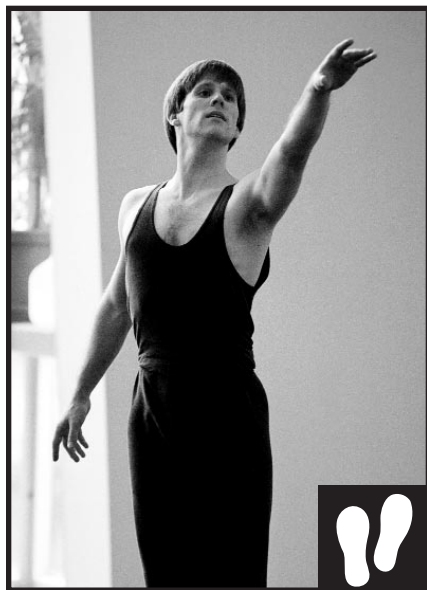


PROGRAM 7: BALLET

HISTORY, VOCABULARY AND STYLE



Program Objective

To explore dance as a means of creative **expression**, focusing on ballet, its history, vocabulary and style, and the viewer's role in responding to and appreciating a dance performance.

Program Description


The four parts to this program will help students better understand ballet **style** and appreciate **ballet**.

- ✦ **Ballet Style**—Ballet is a **classic** form of dance, growing out of the French nobility. This segment briefly traces the history of ballet and describes the **vocabulary** of ballet movement, which has evolved over the years and become an international dance language that is the foundation of the form. This segment also briefly looks at other aspects associated with ballet—music, lighting and costuming; ballet attire such as the tutu and the pointe shoe; and body positions, such as turn-out, and steps, such as the five positions for feet and legs.
- ✦ **Ballet Training**—Ballet communicates a sense of **weightlessness** and **grace**. Dancers work hard to conceal the effort that goes into making ballet look easy. Dancers talk about how they train, **rehearse**, and get advice from their teachers.

- ✦ **Ballet Innovators**—Throughout the history and evolution of this dance form, many exceptional choreographers and dancers have developed. Some were responsible for significant changes and trends in the dance form as a whole, others introduced new techniques, and many produced choreography and companies that have spanned more than the individual choreographer's lifetime. Two examples are George Balanchine and Mikhail Baryshnikov.
- ✦ **Watching Ballet**—The audience has an important part to play in a dance performance. Dancers give suggestions about how to watch a ballet.

Before You Watch

What do we know? How many students have seen a ballet? taken a ballet class? What do they know about ballet? any technical terms? names of ballets? What words or phrases come to mind that describe ballet in their minds?



Invite someone who has taken a ballet class (from your class or within the school) to be interviewed by the class. Find out what their experience has been and what they know about the dance form. Perhaps they have a pair of ballet slippers or pointe shoes or a tutu that they can bring in to show the class. Invite them to watch the **DanceSense** program on “Ballet” with the class and discuss it with the class afterwards, providing insights from their experience.

Watch a video of a ballet and ask students to write descriptions and impressions of what they see. Perhaps you can find a tape of a George Ballanchine ballet or one featuring Baryshnikov—both have been featured on PBS (search their web site at www.pbs.org). Make a list on the board of some of the dance terms, elements, and ideas about choreography that students have learned about from watching previous **DanceSense** programs. Use these to help them watch and write about dance. Watch the same video after seeing the **DanceSense** program and write a new description (or revise the first one). How much more were they able to describe? How were their impressions similar/different?

After You Watch

Several aspects of ballet have evolved so that it would have a particular look. From watching the program, students should be able to answer these questions: Why do ballet dancers “turn out” their legs? Why do ballerinas wear tutus? Why are pointe shoes used?

Research. Have students trace the development of ballet from the court dances through the Golden Age of Ballet to today’s world and contemporary ballet. How has the form changed and developed?

Ask students to research either George Balanchine or Mikhail Baryshnikov, creating a timeline that reflects his most significant career choices and contributions to dance. Extension: There are many more “ballet innovators.” Any good book on the history of ballet will contain examples. Have students skim such a history or search the Internet to learn more about choreographers and dancers who have had an impact on the development of this art form. Create a timeline with photographs or illustrations to recognize some of these artists, making sure to find contemporary examples.

Probably the ballet most performed throughout the U.S. is *The Nutcracker Suite*. This is a **narrative** ballet—it tells a story through dance. The storyline becomes the main structure for the dance. Research and find out: What is the storyline? Who are the characters? Who wrote the music? Who are some of the choreographers associated with the ballet? Bring in a recording of Tchaikovsky’s music for *The Nutcracker* and listen. Imagine the story. What are some other famous narrative or story ballets?

This program contains excerpts from two ballets — *Scheherazade* and *Lucy*. One is a **traditional** ballet, the other was created by Alun Jones, **artistic director** for the Louisville Ballet. Can students describe how these ballets are alike and how they are different? Suggest to them that they consider the costuming and lighting as well as the dance performance itself. What impact do these have on the overall impact and meaning of the dance? If students are interested in learning more, ask them to research *Scheherazade*, using the same questions listed above for *The Nutcracker*.

Move It

Ballet style and technique are rooted in the five “turned-out” positions. Learn the five basic ballet positions for legs and feet.

- First Position—heels touching, feet forming a straight line.
- Second Position—heels wide apart, feet forming a straight line.
- Third Position—one foot in front of the other with heel against the instep.
- Fourth Position—feet apart, one in front of the other, heels in line.
- Fifth Position—one foot in front of the other with the heel against the joint of the big toe.

In each of these positions, try executing a *plie*, a bend of the knees. Be sure that you use proper alignment. The knees should point directly over the toes when they bend. The upper body should stay upright with shoulders over hips. Using proper alignment in this way helps to avoid knee and back injuries. If you need help, use a book, someone in the school who may have studied ballet, an outside instructor or the **DanceSense** program.

For more information

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

Key Kentucky Core Content Addressed

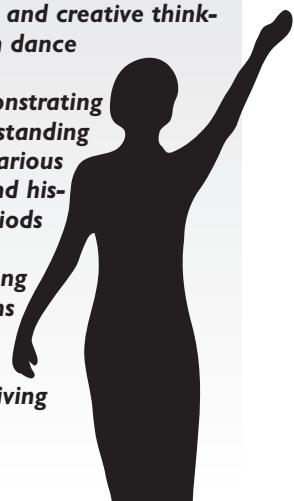
(See Kentucky Core Content for Arts & Humanities: Dance in Appendix)

- AH-E-2.1.31 AH-H-2.1.25
- AH-E-2.1.32 AH-H-2.1.31
- AH-E-2.1.35 AH-H-2.1.35
- AH-E-2.1.36 AH-H-2.1.36
- AH-E-2.2.31 AH-H-2.2.31
- AH-E-2.2.32 AH-H-2.2.33
- AH-H-2.3.36
- AH-M-2.1.24 AH-H-2.3.37
- AH-M-2.1.25 AH-H-2.3.39
- AH-M-2.1.31 AH-H-2.3.31
- AH-M-2.1.34
- AH-M-2.2.31
- 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
- CS6: Making connections between dance and healthful living



KEY TERMS

(see Glossary for definitions)

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|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| artistic director | grace | tradition |
| ballet | narrative | vocabulary |
| classic | rehearsal | weightlessness |
| expression | style | |

