



center dance ensemble

Presents

**From Ballet
To
Beyoncé**

STUDY GUIDE GRADES K-6

Dear Educators,

Center Dance Ensemble is pleased to present “From Ballet to Beyoncé.” This program is designed to introduce your students to the cultural history of music and dance. We hope we will inspire not only interest in, but also an appreciation of dance. This is a fast-paced 45-minute program emphasizing the importance of music and how it has influenced social and studied dance, while also allowing physical and verbal participation throughout the program. After the performance, the students are encouraged to ask the dancers any questions they may have.

This Study Guide has been created for use both before and after the performance. It includes background information for each of the dance styles you will see, and a Movement Study guide that is designed to help get your students creative juices flowing. The final page is an Evaluation Form that we’d like you to complete and return to us.

We realize your “extra time” is at a premium but encourage you to look over the Study Guide and share with your students any information you feel will assist in making “From Ballet to Beyoncé” a truly educational and enjoyable experience. If you have any questions, feel free to call me.

Thank you,
La Tonya Pentzer
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Classical, Romantic, Modern and Contemporary Ballet

Classical Ballet in the dance world, is the most formal of the three ballet styles, because it follows a traditional “set of rules” or technique. It is said that when the French king Henri II married the Florentine Catherine de Medici in 1533, French and Italian culture came into close and formal relationship, and here is when the history of ballet begins. Ceremonies from then on were “choreographed” with lavish costuming and theatrical presentation. Including golden veils and Venetian masks.

The Romantic ballet is defined primarily by an era in ballet in which the ideas of Romanticism in art and literature influenced the creation of ballets. It is typically considered to have begun with the 1827 début in Paris of the ballerina Marie Taglioni in the ballet *La Sylphide*. The Romantic ballet had no immediate end, but rather a slow decline. Arthur Saint-Léon's 1870 ballet *Coppélia* is considered to be the last work of the Romantic Ballet. During this era, the development of pointe work, although still at a fairly basic stage, profoundly affected people's perception of the ballerina. Four dancers who are very famous for this period in ballet history include Maria Taglioni (Stockholm 1804), Fanny Elssler (Vienna 1810), Carlotta Grissi (Italy 1819), and Fanny Cerrito (Italy 1817).

Contemporary Ballet is a form of dance which incorporates elements of both classical ballet and modern dance. It takes its technique and use of pointe work from classical ballet; however it allows a greater range of movement that does not support the strict body lines that are traditional in any of the methods of classical ballet technique. Many of its concepts come from the ideas of modern dance, including floor choreography and turning in of the legs.

George Balanchine is often considered to have been the first pioneer of Contemporary Ballet. Today, the style he developed is known as neoclassical ballet, which is a technique that is between classical ballet and today's contemporary ballet. Balanchine used flexed hands and sometimes flexed feet, turned-in legs, off-centered positions and non-classical costumes, namely, leotards and tunics instead of tutus, to get away from the classical and romantic ballet traditions.

Modern Dance

America grew up with dance. From the American street to the stage, dance captures everyday gestures, social dances, cultural elements, social and political issues, and spiritualism. These sources— combined with independence, risk-taking, exploration, and persistence—have shaped American modern dance. The term modern dance encompasses a wide variety of styles and content; some themes or characteristics recur in its history. What emerges is that modern dance is more a point of view than a movement vocabulary or style. Modern dance is not defined in terms of mastering a vocabulary, but as a mode of expression. Innovation, personal and/or cultural identity, and social relevance are resonant themes. Modern dance is in constant motion, changing and reinventing itself, valuing reinterpretation, self-expression and innovation, as it powerfully illuminates the human condition.

Three Women Who Influenced Modern Dance



Isadora Duncan, was born in San Francisco, California in 1817. The kind of dancing Isadora wanted to do was new and different from other dances at the time. She thought dancing should be an art, not just entertainment. Isadora Duncan did not like ballet. She said that ballet dancers had too many rules to follow about how they should stand and bend and move. She said ballet was “ugly and against nature.” She wanted her “modern” dance style to be free and natural. Isadora liked to move her arms and legs in very smooth motions. She said this was like waves in the ocean, or trees swaying in the wind.



Doris Humphrey, born in 1895, is acknowledged as one of the greatest choreographers of the American modern dance movement of the twentieth century. Championed as an American modern dance pioneer, Humphrey is celebrated not only as a prolific choreographer but also as teacher, mentor and author. Her professional career began in 1913 as part of a Santa Fe Railroad vaudeville tour, and four years later she traveled to Los Angeles to study at Denishawn School of Dancing and Related Arts, the enterprising school and company spearheaded by Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn.



Martha Graham, born in 1894, had one of the longest dance careers in history, as she was active for 75 years. She died in 1991, but her company, the Martha Graham Dance Company is still going strong and features many principles of modern dance that are recognizable from the time period when Graham was dancing the solos herself.

Graham's motto was taken from her father, a psychologist: "Movement never lies." Very early in her career, in 1925, Graham had already left the companies that she was working with in order to start her own productions. Her first show, in April of 1926, received rave reviews not only for the dancing, but for the ingenuity of the

movement. Perhaps one of the keys to Graham's success as she strayed from the traditional world of dance was that she used modern music instead of 18th and 19th century music. Traditionally, all dancing was done to older music, but the musician and accompanist, Horst, with whom Graham worked extensively, had introduced her to the world of modern music and convinced her that her movement style would mesh well with the modern composers. Horst proved to be right, as Graham furthered the development of her own style once she used the modern music almost exclusively. Martha Graham's dancing soon took a focus on emotions and themes of Americana. These two themes are her signatures, as well as her modern approach to movement; she remains one of the most famous female dancers of all time.

TAP, JAZZ, HIP-HOP

The genres of tap, jazz and hip-hop are each distinct, yet they all have an emphasis on music. These three styles also place an emphasis on entertainment, whether in a more traditional sense of engaging viewers on a one-on-one basis, or by staging competitions with other dancers, as is common in tap and hip-hop. All three, however, showcase the best of America's melting pot spirit in lively, highly interpretive, physical, and expressive dance styles.

JAZZ DANCE

The varieties of jazz dance reflect the diversity of American culture. Jazz dance mirrors the social history of the American people, reflecting ethnic influences, historic events and cultural changes. Jazz dance has been greatly influenced by social dance and popular music. The origins of jazz music and dance are found in the rhythms and movements brought to America by African slaves. The style of African dance is earthy: low, knees bent with emphasizing body isolations and hand clapping. As slaves forced into America, starting during the 1600's, Africans from many cultures were cut off from their families, languages and tribal traditions. The result was African cultures that created a new culture with both African and European elements. The rhythms and movements, foot stamping and tapping, hand clapping and rhythmic vocal sounds, were woven into what we now call jazz dance.

Through the end of the 1920's, Dixieland jazz music, with its fast ragtime beat, spread from New Orleans to Chicago and New York. The growth of jazz dance was directly influenced by this musical genre. In 1923 the Charleston was introduced and Americans quickly adopted it. Just when social dancing was at its height, World War 2 put a stop to its popularity.

During the 1940's jazz dance was influenced by ballet and modern dance. Jack Cole, "The Father of Theatrical Jazz Dance," began developing his technique using a combination of modern, ballet and ethnic dance. Jack Cole was the one who started developing trained jazz dancers for Hollywood musicals.

In the 1970's Bob Fosse became the outstanding name in jazz dance. He performed on Broadway and in films, but his true success was as a choreographer. His work includes the films *All That Jazz* and *Sweet Charity* among many other famous works. He was a one man jazz phenomenon whose style continued to make its mark on the Broadway stage and in Hollywood throughout the 1980s.

The 1980s saw the introduction of MTV a new medium for dance and professional dancers. When MTV began broadcasting in 1981, music videos combined high energy jazz, ballet, street dance and social dancing. Some major choreographers of the period were Michael Peters, Jeffrey Hornaday, Lester Wilson, Janet Jackson, and Paula Abdul. The supreme video star of the 1980s was, of course, Michael Jackson, who made a major impact on the direction of jazz dance.

TAP DANCE

Tap dance evolved from West African dances done by slaves with influences from the British Isles, including Irish step dancing and English clog dancing. In the 18th century, jig dancing contests were held on makeshift wooden plank stages with awards for the most intricate routines and exciting dancers who maintained their balance.

The best known artist of the 20th century is Bill “Bo Jangles” Robinson. Bill Robinson, a black tap dancer, achieved world fame through the clean and clear percussive rhythms of his feet. His signature routine was the stair dance, in which Robinson would tap up and down a set of stairs in a rhythmically complex sequence of steps. Robinson is also credited with having introduced a new word, *copacetic*, into popular culture, via his repeated use of it in vaudeville and radio appearances. After Robinson was signed by 20th Century Fox, it was decided that he would perform his famous stair dance with Shirley Temple. While Robinson liked the idea, he quickly realized that he could not teach his complex stair dance to a seven-year-old. Instead, he taught Temple to kick the riser of each stair step with her toe. After watching her practice his choreography, Robinson modified his routine to mimic her movements, so that it appeared on film that she was imitating his steps. Robinson and Temple became the first interracial dance partners in Hollywood history.

Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire represented two very different faces of tap. Kelly wore slim fitting clothing and blended tap with the form of jazz, with its deep plies and bent arms held away from the body. He carried himself with a confident attitude that seemed to personify the US, as seen in the movie *An American in Paris*. The jazzy notes found in Kelly’s routines could be found on Broadway and in film. In contrast, Astaire was all about grace and elegance. Often wearing a tuxedo with a top hat or cane, he was a silver screen star who evolved from black and white into color with ease.

HIP-HOP

Hip-hop dance emerged as one strand of a larger movement that encompassed four elements: deejaying, emceeing, break dancing and graffiti. It took root in the Bronx where DJ Kool, using a couple of turntables and a mixer, pulled out the breaks in funk records and looped these sampled percussion segments for long repeating spans. Dancers developed particular moves to go along with these breaks, and became known as b-boys or b-girls, the “b” for break. Breaking has roots in salsa, Cuban mambo and rumba, and jazz dance. It also draws from martial arts like kung-fu and Capoeira, a form of Brazilian martial arts. Breaking and battling were tests of athleticism, attitude, originality, and dominance. B-boys and b-girls would dance against each other, hoping to earn pride and respect through one-upping their opponent. The dancers, DJs, and emcees all created an environment where everyone was respected for who they were and how they expressed it.

By the early 1980s, the media had taken notice of hip hop culture in general, giving breaking its first opportunities for exposure on a larger scale. Films like *Style Wars*, *Beat Street*, and *Breakin'* were significant in introducing breaking and street dance culture to a wider audience. There were a number of other moves that emerged from the hip hop scene, like the Snake, Chicken-head, Cabbage Patch, Running man, and more. Social dances weren't created for competition. These dances were for people to share and create a sense of unity. It was their way of partaking in the culture of dance without the intensity of the training that b-boys and b-girls engaged in.