



ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER
GRADES 3-5



INTRODUCTION

Great American Dance Learning Guide

The goal of the *Great American Dance Learning Guide* is to help students engage fully with the dance performances featured in the Lincoln Center at the Movies inaugural season. It is suitable for those who are already dance lovers and those who have no previous dance experience. Each guide enables educators to engage students in experiencing the thrill of the artistic process, and in understanding how artists think as they develop their work, how they face artistic challenges and make important choices before they present the world with their creations.

The guide has been created by LCE Teaching Artists who work in pre-K–12 and Higher Education classrooms throughout New York City and the tristate area, and are mindful of the learner of any age. In the guide, you will find information about dance and different takes on the performances in film, books, and other media. There are three lessons with activities and discussion questions that prepare students for the performance they will see on film, and a lesson that makes them reflect on the performance with a wholly different point of view after they've seen it. These lessons are flexible, so teachers can adapt them to specific grade levels and student populations in-school and out-of-school. Most important, the lessons have been designed for anyone curious about the art of dance.



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INTRODUCTION

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater grew from a now-fabled performance in March 1958 at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. Led by Alvin Ailey and a group of young African-American modern dancers, that performance changed forever the perception of American dance. The Ailey company has gone on to perform for an estimated 25 million people at theaters in 48 states and 71 countries on six continents—and has reached millions more online and through television broadcasts. In 2008 a U.S. Congressional resolution designated the Company as “a vital American cultural ambassador to the world” that celebrates the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage. When Mr. Ailey began creating dances, he drew upon his “blood memories” of Texas, the blues, spirituals, and gospel as inspiration, which resulted in the creation of his most popular and critically acclaimed work, *Revelations*. Although he created 79 ballets over his lifetime, Mr. Ailey maintained that his company was not exclusively a repository for his own work. Today the Company continues Mr. Ailey’s mission by presenting important works of the past and commissioning new ones. In all more than 235 works by more than 90 choreographers have been part of the Ailey company’s repertory. Before his untimely death in 1989, Mr. Ailey named Judith Jamison as his successor, and over the next 21 years she brought the Company to unprecedented success. Ms. Jamison, in turn, personally selected Robert Battle to succeed her in 2011, and *The New York Times* declared he “has injected the company with new life.”

Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs

In fulfillment of Alvin Ailey’s long-standing dictum, “dance is for everybody,” the Ailey organization is committed to bringing dance into the classrooms, communities and lives of people throughout the world. Its innovative Arts In Education programs include special performances, lecture/demonstrations, technique classes, and curriculum-based residencies which use dance to teach academic subjects in a unique way. Each program is designed to develop self-respect, confidence, discipline, and creativity while fostering an appreciation for the joy of dance.

For information about Ailey’s Arts In Education programs visit the Ailey website:
www.alvinailey.org/about/company/ailey-arts-education-community-programs



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WELCOME

Welcome to the *Great American Dance* Learning Guide for elementary school students, grades 3-5. This guide is composed of four lesson plans designed around Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's performances of *Chroma* by Wayne McGregor, *Grace* by Ronald K. Brown, *Takademe* by Robert Battle, and *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey: three "before the performance" lessons and one "after the performance" lesson.

We strongly encourage you to read through each lesson before sharing it with your students, so that you can familiarize yourself with the pace of the activities, the discussion questions, and the suggestions for online resources should you wish to include them. Additional resources on dance and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater are listed in "Continue Your Exploration" at the end of this guide.




Questioning is an essential component of this guide. We have constructed it in a way that empowers you and your students to ask questions, and through them, make discoveries and find new understanding. On the next page, you will find a suggested "Line of Inquiry" — a theme that can help you focus your questioning. Remember: there are no small or big questions, no good or bad questions. Questions are a great learning tool. So allow them to inspire you as you explore *Chroma* by Wayne McGregor, *Grace* by Ronald K. Brown, *Takademe* by Robert Battle, and *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey.

You now have front row seats to a Lincoln Center performance. Enjoy the show!

Let us know what you think! Send us your comments at LCE@lincolncenter.org.

If you have photos of your students' work that you would like to share, please do! You can find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Description of symbols used in this guide:

-  Indicates a section to be read aloud
-  Indicates a question to be asked
-  Indicates an optional resource for further exploration



LINE OF INQUIRY

How do choreographers Alvin Ailey, Ronald K. Brown, Robert Battle, and Wayne McGregor communicate emotional and abstract themes through their diverse use of space, shape, movement qualities, color, and sound?

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the lessons in this guide, students will be able to:

- Understand that movement can communicate emotion as well as abstract design;
- Create movements and body shapes in response to words and images;
- Understand how shapes communicate emotions;
- Create a movement scene from the performance, communicating a specific event;
- Recall sense memories from the performance and transform them into words;
- Understand that dance can communicate specific details and universal meanings;
- Understand that choreographers sometimes make dances from their own life experiences.

**A line of inquiry can be used as a guiding question that incorporates elements and ideas found in a work of art you're studying. It is an open guiding question, meaning that it provides you with a focus, but invites questioning and reflection of your own.*



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BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

Grace: Meaning and Movement

Materials needed for this lesson:

- Index cards
- Pens
- Computer access with speakers
- Shakara by Fela Kuti & Africa 70 in Lesson I, Slide 19

INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER:

Many of the dances forming the core of the repertory of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater reference the experiences—slavery, racism, and discrimination—of African Americans in the United States. At the same time, these dances are imbued with the role of religion, spirit and faith in providing strength and motivation to endure. Alvin Ailey reflects the black Baptist traditions of his childhood in Revelations, while a generation later, choreographer Ronald K. Brown echoes Alvin Ailey’s spiritual inspiration and reaches even farther back to African ancestral roots in his ecstatic work, Grace. With a movement vocabulary of modern dance and West African, Brown embodies “grace” on several levels—grace as the smooth elegance of the dancers, and grace as the bestowing of blessings, strength, support from a divine source. With movements of opening and closing, giving and receiving, 12 dancers reach toward sky and earth, set on a journey to a better place by a solo figure—mother, angel, spirit. This lesson explores the physical metaphors—movements of open/close and give/receive—used to express the actions and feelings of Grace.

OPENING ACTIVITY

OPEN AND CLOSE, GIVE AND RECEIVE

 10 minutes

Have students form a standing circle.

Introduce the idea of movements that open and close by giving several examples:

- open and close a hand
- open by expanding the whole body, reaching and stretching as wide as you can
- close by contracting your limbs in towards yourself
- open and close the arm and leg on one side of the body,
- lunge out on one leg and then close by bringing the legs in towards each other

Have students watch your demonstrations of each open/close movement. They will then repeat the movements along with you.

Going around the circle, each student will contribute an open/close movement with the rest of the class copying the movement.

Encourage students to find new ways of opening and closing so that each student’s choice is different.



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

Grace: Meaning and Movement

(continued)

If necessary, prompt students to explore new possibilities by using another part of the body to open/close. You can also introduce other movement ideas such as twisting or crossing to enhance the actions of open/close or changing levels by sitting on the floor or resting on your knees.

Remaining in the circle, introduce the idea of open/close as representing the actions of giving and receiving the movement of opening as “giving” and the action of closing as “receiving.”

Demonstrate several examples for your students:

- “Give” (open) an imaginary gift to the student standing next to you and have the student “receive” by closing their hands inward
- “Give” (open) a gesture, such as a fluttering hand or a swinging arm or a swiveling leg to the student standing next to you and have the student “receive” it by repeating the gesture movement, only this time *in* towards their body

Set the “giving” and “receiving” movements in motion around the circle.

One person starts by “giving” a movement to the person standing next to them who “receives” the movement as given.

The receiving person will “give” a new movement gesture to the person standing next to them who will continue the action of “receiving” the new movement and “giving” a different movement to the next person in the circle.

The action will continue in this way traveling around the circle from person to person.

Ask your students:

- *Now that you know that open means to **give**, and close means to **receive**, do you feel differently about it than the first time we went around in the circle? If so, how?*
- *Do you think other gestures besides “open” and “close” can have special meanings?*



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

Grace: Meaning and Movement

(continued)

ACTIVITY 1: **OUR EXPERIENCES OF GRACE**

 15 minutes

Distribute index cards and pens or pencils. Have students find a quiet place in the room for writing.

Introduce students to the word “grace” and its different meanings by asking the following questions:

- *When have you heard the word “grace” used?*
- *Have you ever seen someone move gracefully?*
- *What did that look like?*
- *Have you ever seen someone behave gracefully through kindness, support, encouragement, or forgiveness?*
- *Can you describe a moment in which you experienced this kind of grace from another person? Did someone encourage you or forgive you? Describe how that felt.*

Possible responses may include athletes or entertainment professionals who “move gracefully”; teacher, coach, friend, or family member who “behaves gracefully” by giving encouragement or forgiving a fault.

Students will write about the experience on their index card. Encourage them to think about the person who gave them encouragement or was forgiving with them, and how it felt to receive that kind of graceful behavior.

Let students know that they will be sharing their writing with a partner.

Divide students into pairs.

Each student will create a short movement phrase inspired by their writing.

The movement phrase will consist of 2 movements that represent their experience— 1 movement for “giving” (open) and 1 movement for “receiving” (close).

Challenge students to show the feeling or power of their experience in their movement choices.



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

Grace: Meaning and Movement

(continued)

Students may choose to have their partner “give” while they do the “receiving” or they may choose to show both of their “giving” and “receiving” movements at the same time.

Each pair will have two different combinations of “giving and receiving”—4 movements total.

Students will practice their short movement phrases with their partners so the phrases flow smoothly.

Challenge student pairs to repeat their “giving and receiving” patterns 3 to 4 times.

ACTIVITY 2:

THE JOURNEY OF GRACE

 15 minutes

Have students walk slowly around the classroom.

Mid-walk, stop your students and ask them to notice the relationship between the opening and closing actions of their walk. (Almost all traveling movements of the body involve opening and closing actions).

Ask students to walk again, only this time they will pay close attention to *how* they walk.

Students may choose to walk in a step-together-step-together pattern, or continue their regular walk with legs and arms swinging alternately between open and close actions.

Next, have students find their partners. You will divide the pairs into two large groups: the **movers** and the **viewers**.

Position the **movers** in a corner of the room, with the **viewers** observing off to the side.

Use the Fela Kuti music or other West African music to accompany the movers. *Shakara* by Fela Kuti & Africa 70 in Lesson I, Slide 19

Movers will travel in their pairs diagonally across the room before performing their short movement phrase.

Ask each pair to walk one at a time, in their own way, down the diagonal line towards the center of the room.



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

Grace: Meaning and Movement

(continued)

Each pair will stop in the center and perform their short movement phrase of “giving and receiving”, repeating it 3–4 times.

After they perform, the pair will continue walking down the diagonal line towards the opposite corner of the room, at which point the next pair will begin.

Encourage each pair to take their time with their walking journey and movement phrase.

Ask the viewers:

- › *What do you notice about the giving/receiving movements you saw?*
- › *Were some of the movements similar to each other? In what ways?*
- › *Which parts of the body were used in the giving/receiving movements?*
- › *How did the pairs stand in relation to each other? Do you think they would have chosen different positions if they had less space? How about if they had more space? What words could you use to describe the feeling of the performance?*
- › *What words could you use to describe the feeling of the performance?*
- › *What makes you say that?*

Ask the movers:

- › *How did it feel to tell your story without words?*
- › *What problem did you solve with your partner?*
- › *What did you learn about your story that was new when you showed it to other people?*

Switch roles so that the movers become the viewers and the viewers become the movers. Repeat the exercise and reflection questions.



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BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON I

Grace: Meaning and Movement

(continued)

CLOSING ACTIVITY DISCUSSION

DID YOU KNOW?

Choreographer Ronald K. Brown created a dance called *Grace*. Ronald K. Brown, like Alvin Ailey, is a choreographer whose work draws on his roots as an African-American man living in the United States. The title of his dance reflects the inspiration of spirit and faith. In making the dance, he celebrates the grace of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater company and its dancers with his smooth and elegant choreography. He also celebrates the “grace” of the human spirit – the giving and sharing of strength, support, and forgiveness.

Lead a brief discussion with your students, inviting them to reflect on their experiences with the grace of the human spirit:

- *Have you ever felt “grace” received as a gift or words of encouragement?*
- *How did it feel to receive it?*

DID YOU KNOW?

Grace by Ronald K. Brown uses many of the movements of West African dance, which use exaggerated actions of open and close. This is one of the reasons why *Grace* is so exciting and beautiful to watch. In Ronald K. Brown’s *Grace*, you will see a solo dancer representing a spiritual or religious leader set off a group of dancers on a journey to a better place. The mood of *Grace* is serious at times, but also celebratory and high-energy.

Based on their experience of the lesson, ask students:

- *What movements do you imagine you’ll see in the Ronald K. Brown’s *Grace*?*
- *What do you think seeing the performance will be like?*

 5 minutes





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BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

Shapes of Emotion, Shapes of Revelations

Materials needed for this lesson:

- Chart Paper
- Wade in the Water included in Lesson II, Slide 3
Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham included in Lesson II, Slide 26

INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER:

Alvin Ailey's Revelations has become one of the most beloved dances ever created, seen by over 21 million people in 71 countries. Inspired by Alvin Ailey's childhood memories of his Texas Baptist Church, the dance embodies the African American experience of slavery and discrimination in America. At the same time it speaks to audiences of all races and religious backgrounds with its universal themes of struggle, forgiveness, determination, hope and salvation. These profoundly deep emotions are present in the spirituals that Alvin Ailey drew from to create Revelations. They are also present in the shapes of the dancers' bodies. This lesson explores some of the ways in which emotion is conveyed through shape and architectural design.

ADAPTING/MODIFYING THE LESSON:

In this lesson, students will build a sequence of four movement shapes that express different emotions presented in Revelations. The lesson may easily be modified or shortened if students are young or are having trouble retaining material and adding new ideas. The sequence of four shapes may be shortened to two or three shapes, or you may choose to build on the shapes by having your students practice each new shape in connection to the shape that came before it. The shapes need not be repeated in a sequence and can be explored individually.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Bring students into an open space. If the space is small, you can divide your students into small groups and have them walk in place.

Play any of the suggested music clips above, and have students walk around the room.

Direct your students to stop and freeze into a position as soon as the music stops.

Allow them a few minutes to walk and enjoy the music. Stop music.

Replay the music and repeat the activity stopping and starting the music several times.

Emphasize a complete body freeze each time the music stops. Remind students to be aware of where they are in the space at all times so as to avoid collisions.

Add a new direction every time the music stops: ask students to freeze into a statue that has an open shape.

¹The curriculum writer for this guide has titled the Revelations photos as educational tools to help students understand the emotional themes of the dance in age-appropriate terms. The section of the dance from which the photo is taken is listed next to the photo. Please note that the titles listed have no affiliation with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

 5 minutes



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BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

Shapes of Emotion, Shapes of Revelations

(continued)

Then ask students to freeze into a statue that has a closed shape.

Repeat this activity several more times encouraging students to come up with different statue positions each time.

Ask your students:

- › *What do you notice about the open statue shape?*
- › *What do you notice about the closed statue shape?*

ACTIVITY 1

FOUR SHAPES OF REVELATIONS

 20 minutes

Explain to your students that the statues they have made are examples of physical shapes that can be used in dance. Just as pictures can help tell stories, so too can shapes communicate ideas and express emotions.

Ask for a student volunteer to demonstrate the following:

At the count of “3,” make a shape or statue that means, “Please, forgive me!” Allow them a few moments to think about the shape they want to make.

At the count of three, “1, 2, 3,” clap your hands (or slap a drum, shake a tambourine, ring a bell, or create some other sound signal that may be used in place of a handclap).

Have the student hold the “Please, forgive me!” shape so that the class can observe it.

Ask your students:

- › *What do you notice about the shape?*
- › *How are different parts of the body (the hands, face, or legs) being used?*
- › *What do you notice about his or her position in space (are they low to the floor, are they standing tall, or are they in the mid-range)?*

Document student responses on chart paper under the title **Please, forgive me!**

Explain to the class that they are going to create their own version of a shape expressing “Please, forgive me!” The shapes can and should be different, but they should all be expressive of the idea of asking for forgiveness.



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

Shapes of Emotion, Shapes of Revelations

(continued)

Give students some time to create.

Practice having the whole class practice their forgiveness shapes at the same time using the "1,2,3" handclap or sound signal.

Next, have half the class practice their forgiveness shapes while the other half observes.

Switch roles so that the group that observed has a chance to practice their forgiveness shapes while the other half of the class observes.

Ask your students:

- › *What words would you use to describe the shapes you are seeing?*
- › *How are these shapes alike?*
- › *How are they different?*

Continue documenting student responses under **Please, forgive me!**

Explain to the class that they will be making three more shapes expressing different emotions.

Introduce the next shape idea which is the desire to escape or to fly away. Call it the "Wanting to Fly Away" shape.

Repeat the exercise giving students time to create.

Practice having the whole class practice their shapes at the same time using the "1,2,3" handclap or sound signal.

Switch roles so that the group that observed has a chance to execute their fly away shapes while the other half of the class observes.

Ask your students:

- › *What do you notice about the "Wanting to Fly Away" shape?*
- › *Does any particular part of the body seem especially important to this shape?*
- › *What do you notice about the focus of the eyes?*



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

Shapes of Emotion, Shapes of Revelations

(continued)

Document student responses up on chart paper under the title **Wanting to Fly Away**.

Have the class practice their two shapes for “Please, forgive me!” and “Wanting to Fly Away”. Use the handclap or other sound signal to guide the transitions from shape to shape.

At the count of three “1,2,3,” students will practice their shape for “Please, forgive me!”.

At the count of three “1,2,3,” students will practice their shape for “Wanting to Fly Away”.

Introduce the second idea which is to help another person. Call it the “Helping Each Other” shape. This shape can be created individually or with a partner. Partners can explore different ways of supporting one another. Soloists can give a helping hand to an imaginary partner. Allow students to make a range of creative choices.

Have half the class practice their helping shapes while the other half observes.

Switch roles so that the group that observed has a chance to practice their helping shapes while the other half of the class observes.

Ask your students:

- ▶ *What do you notice about the “Helping Each Other” shape?*
- ▶ *How does a helping shape change if you do it as a solo compared to when you do it as a duet?*
- ▶ *Did you notice open or closed shapes? Explain.*

Document student responses up on chart paper under the title **Helping Each Other**.

Have the class practice their three shapes for “Please, forgive me!”, “Wanting to Fly Away”, and “Helping Each Other”. Use the handclap or other sound signal to guide the transitions from shape to shape.

At the count of three “1,2,3”, students will practice their shape for “Please, forgive me!”.

At the count of three “1,2,3”, students will practice their shape for “Wanting to Fly Away”.

At the count of three “1,2,3”, students will practice their shape for “Helping Each Other”.



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

Shapes of Emotion, Shapes of Revelations

(continued)

For the fourth and final shape, introduce the idea of joy and celebration. Call it the “Joy and Celebration” shape.

Allow students time to create.

Have half the class practice their joy-and-celebration shapes while the other half observes.

Switch roles so that the group that observed has a chance to practice their joy-and-celebration shapes while the other half of the class observes.

Ask your students:

- › *What do you notice about the “Joy and Celebration” shapes?*
- › *Which parts of the body seem important in the expression of joy and celebration?*
- › *What do you notice about their position in space (are they low to the floor, are they standing tall, or are they in the mid-range)?*
- › *Did you notice open or closed shapes? Explain.*

Document student responses up on chart paper under title **Joy and Celebration**.

Have the class practice their four shapes for “Please, forgive me!”, “Wanting to Fly Away”, “Helping Each Other”, and “Joy and Celebration”. Use the handclap or other sound signal to guide the transitions from shape to shape.

At the count of three “1,2,3”, students will practice their shape for “Please, forgive me!”.

At the count of three “1,2,3”, students will practice their shape for “Wanting to Fly Away”.

At the count of three “1,2,3”, students will practice their shape for “Helping Each Other”.

At the count of three “1,2,3”, students will practice their shape for “Joy and Celebration”.



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

Shapes of Emotion, Shapes of Revelations

(continued)

ACTIVITY 2: MOVING SHAPES OF EMOTIONS

 10 minutes

Explain to your students that they will be doing all four of their shapes in a sequence to the music of *Revelations*.

You're going to give your students 8 slow counts between shapes. During those 8 slow counts, students are to move freely in the space by incorporating walking, turning, or other traveling steps of their choosing.

Play either *Wade in the Water* or *Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham* included in Lesson II, Slide 26.

On the first handclap or sound signal, have students freeze in their "Please, forgive me!" shape.

Count to 8 slowly but rhythmically, "1,2,3...8" and encourage students to travel freely for all 8 counts.

On the second handclap or sound signal, students will freeze in their "Wanting to Fly Away" shape.

Count to 8, "1,2,3...8" and students will again move for those 8 counts.

Repeat this process of having students move freely through the space and freezing until they have tried all 4 shapes. Students may add walks, turns, and traveling steps between movements.

Ask your students:

- *What was it like to add movement between shapes?*
- *Did the music affect the way you moved?*



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

Shapes of Emotion, Shapes of *Revelations*

(continued)

CLOSING: COMPARING/CONTRASTING

Explain to your students that they are going to see *Revelations*, a famous dance piece choreographed by Alvin Ailey in 1960.

DID YOU KNOW?

Alvin Ailey drew on his experience as an African American living in the United States when he created *Revelations*. It communicates many emotions, specifically as they relate to the history of slavery: the struggle, the hard work, and the resilience of the human spirit able to overcome difficult times and find joy. The dance reflects Alvin Ailey's memories of the church he attended as a youth. Yet, people of all ages and backgrounds can connect to this piece for the experiences and emotions that are common to us all. The shapes and emotions we have just explored can be seen in *Revelations*.

Show students the following images from *Revelations*:

Wanting to Fly Away

From *I've Been 'Buked*

<http://pressroom.alvinailey.org/photo?id=502060f829371a7548000083&fid=50225b9929371a6e51000904>

Please, forgive me!

From *I Wanna Be Ready*

<http://pressroom.alvinailey.org/photo?id=502060f829371a7548000083&fid=5022a8a929371a6e51000b9e>

Helping Each Other

From *Fix Me, Jesus*

<http://pressroom.alvinailey.org/photo?id=502060f829371a7548000083&fid=5021c7dd29371a6e510003c4>

Joy and Celebration

From *Move, Members, Move*

<http://pressroom.alvinailey.org/photo?id=502060f829371a7548000083&fid=5021f-f4929371a6e5100056f>

 10 minutes





BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON II

Shapes of Emotion, Shapes of *Revelations*

(continued)

Ask your students to connect the images with the shapes they have made.

Can they find images for?

- "Please, forgive me!"
- "Wanting to Fly Away"
- "Helping Each Other"
- "Joy and Celebration"

Ask your students:

- *How are your shapes similar to the images you see in photographs of Revelations?*
- *How are your shapes different from the images you see in photographs of Revelations?*



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BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

Wade in the Water— From the Abstract to the Specific

Materials needed for this lesson:

- Chart Paper
- Painters Tape (non-stick blue tape)
- Wade in the Water included in Lesson III, Slide 21
- Photo from Wade in the Water
<http://pressroom.alvinailey.org/photo?id=502060f829371a7548000083&fid=5021534129371a6e5100018d>

INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER:

Alvin Ailey's masterwork Revelations was inspired by memories of his Texas Baptist church in the 1930s. Revelations is both specific and universal, referencing the rituals and people of his boyhood, while encompassing the larger themes of African-American struggle, and universal themes of faith, forgiveness, and celebration. The Wading in the Water section of Revelations is also specific and universal. The dancers enact baptism in a river, also becoming the element of water themselves. This lesson provides students with some contextual information and also explores the movement qualities of water.

OPENING ACTIVITY

 5 minutes

Bring your students into a standing circle with hands held and eyes closed.

Tell your students that, as a group, you will pass a current of energy around the circle from person-to-person.

Initiate the first hand squeeze. The student who receives the squeeze will pass it on to the student standing next to them by squeezing their hand, and so on, until the hand squeeze has traveled around the circle at least once. If all goes well, the hand squeeze should return to your opposite hand.

Have your students open their eyes.

Repeat the activity with a small ripple of energy that begins in the arms and passes into the hands where it is felt by your neighbor. The ripple should eventually return to you.

Repeat the wave action around the circle increasing its size and intensity. The arms should become more involved.

Encourage students to wait for the pulse of the wave and to pass it along as smoothly as possible without changing the size or energy of the wave.

As soon as the wave comes back to you, increase the size of the wave so that the wave involves the upper back, chest, shoulders, and arms. The wave should intensify so that the motion travels up and down more fully.



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

Wade in the Water— From the Abstract to the Specific

(continued)

It is recommended that you ask your students to close their eyes and to focus on working together.

If the wave gets out of control, stop and ask your students to begin again with a small and gentle ripple.

Increase the size of the wave one last time, so that the wave involves the entire body, including the legs and knees.

When the wave is successfully established, have students open their eyes and continue creating a large and fluid wave that travels from person to person.

Ask students to place the movement wave into their “muscle memory bank” to be used later on.

ACTIVITY 1:

WATER BRAINSTORM

 15 minutes

On a large piece of chart paper, write “Water” and circle the word. Draw lines or rays coming from the circle.

Have students brainstorm words and phrases they associate with the word “Water.”

Responses can include words that describe water, colors, names for bodies of water, uses for water, and activities done in and around water.

Draw a longer line radiating out from the “Water” circle.

Draw a small circle connected to that line creating a web chart. Label the smaller circle “Uses for Water.”

Ask students to brainstorm “Uses for Water,” and write their responses on the lines coming from that smaller circle.

If “bathing” or “cleaning” do not come up, elicit those words from the students.

Draw another long line from the “Water” circle.



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

Wade in the Water— From the Abstract to the Specific

(continued)

Draw a smaller circle connected to that line. Label this smaller circle “Water Activities.”

Ask students to brainstorm “Water Activities,” which may include water sports, swimming, boating, diving, water slides, saunas, and bath tubs.

Write their responses on lines radiating out from the “Water Activities.”

Focus students’ attention on the “Water” circle in the center of the brainstorming chart.

Ask your students:

➤ *Which words on the brainstorming chart describe the qualities of water?*

Underline the words on the chart.

➤ *Which words on the brainstorming chart refer to bathing or cleaning?*

Underline those words on the chart.

ACTIVITY 2:

WADE IN THE WATER—CREATING THE SCENE

Explain to your students that dance can create a movement picture or ‘scene’ that shows a particular place or setting.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the dance you are about to see called *Revelations*, one section shows a scene called *Wade in the Water*. It represents a religious ceremony that Alvin Ailey experienced.

Invite students to create the “Wade in the Water” scene by transforming themselves into the people and the ceremonial water.

Have students come into an open space in which you have taped two parallel lines with the blue painters’ tape. The lines can be 6–10 feet apart, depending on the size of the space on the floor.

Challenge students to transform themselves into water, using their muscle memory bank to recall the movement action of the wave they explored in the opening activity.

 20 minutes





BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

Wade in the Water— From the Abstract to the Specific

(continued)

Have students experiment with creating undulating, rippling movement. Use the following movement prompts:

- › How can you make a wave movement using only one arm?
- › How can you make a wave travel from your arm into your chest, from the chest into the other arm, and back again to the arm you started with?
- › How can you make a wave that travels from your feet to your fingertips?
- › Through your spine?
- › Into your neck, head and shoulders?
- › How can you coordinate these wave movements into one smooth dance movement? The wave should travel through your whole body.

Divide your class into two groups.

One group will be the “river” and will stand on the parallel blue-taped lines.

The other group will be the “waders” and will walk into the river to cross it.

To create the scene, have the **river** group move in wave movements, rippling in place and using the movement ideas they have explored.

Have the **waders** walk with dignity in slow and controlled steps outside of the taped blue lines.

As the **waders** cross the river, challenge them to take on the movements of the river group. Encourage waders to cross the river one at a time and in small groups.

As they reach the other side of the river, **waders** will emerge outside of the taped blue lines.

Waders should resume their walk indicating that they have left the river.

If possible, use the music of *Wade in the Water* to accompany the scene. (Lesson III, Slide 21)



Reverse roles so that the **river** group becomes the **waders**.



BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

Wade in the Water— From the Abstract to the Specific

(continued)

CLOSING ACTIVITY: REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

Ask your students:

- › *How did it feel to move as the river?*
- › *How did it feel to move as the wader?*
- › *What did you, as a wader, experience when you moved through the river alone?*
- › *When you moved through the river as part of a group?*
- › *How is the experience of moving in and out of water like starting over or embarking on a new beginning?*
- › *How are the feelings similar?*

DID YOU KNOW?

The part of *Revelations* titled *Wade in the Water* shows us a specific scene in a particular place. Ailey adds details like costumes and props to communicate the details of the event. In *Wade in the Water* you will see blue fabric used to create the running river in which the characters bath. Ailey also uses movement to express emotions that all adults have felt at one time or another, such as asking for help, feeling tired after a long day's work, the desire to escape, and the feelings of joy and celebration.

- › *Why do you think it was important for Alvin Ailey to include a scene like "Wade in the Water," which is symbolic of a new beginning?*
- › *What other experiences in life might make you think of new beginnings? For example, have you ever joined a club or team, moved to a new home or city, or started in a new school?*
- › *What other connections can you make between Ailey's water scene and your own life?*

Prior to seeing *Revelations*, ask students to pay close attention to the movement they see in the dance. They should identify a favorite movement that they will share with the rest of the class after viewing the performance.

 10 minutes





ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE LESSON III

Wade in the Water— From the Abstract to the Specific

(continued)

The spiritual *Wade in the Water* has biblical references as almost all spirituals do. During the era of the Underground Railroad, this spiritual took on new meaning. The phrase “wade in the water” became a warning to runaway slaves that they should cover their tracks by immersing themselves in water, so that the dogs of slave owners would lose their trail.

For more information on the subject of “Wade in the Water”, see:

Wade in the Water lyrics:

www.negrospirituals.com/news-song/wade_in_the_water.htm

Contextual information about the song:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wade_in_the_Water



View Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s *Grace* by Ronald K. Brown, *Chroma* by Wayne McGregor, *Takademe* by Robert Battle, and *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey.



ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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AFTER THE PERFORMANCE LESSON IV

Through the Senses: A Memory Poem

Materials needed for this lesson:

- Chart paper—4 large pieces of chart paper labeled, or use the pages included in the Lesson Printables.
"I Hear....."
"I See....."
"I Feel....."
"I Remember....."
- Additional plain large chart paper, 6–10 sheets
- Blue painter's tape
- Pastels, markers, colored pencils, crayons
- Index cards
- Pens/Pencils
- (Optional)—**Cinquain** structure chart included in the Lesson Printables

INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER:

The rich diversity of works in this Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performance: Ailey's own classic Revelations, Artistic Director Robert Battle's Takademe, Ronald K. Brown's Grace, and Wayne McGregor's Chroma provide a cornucopia of sense memories for the audience. Ears take in the percussive vocal sounds of Takademe, the soaring melodies of spirituals in Revelations, and the kinetic rhythms of Fela Kuti from Grace. Eyes remember the deep browns and vivid yellows of Revelations, the spectrum of colors in Chroma against the light and dark of its set, and the luminous whites and deep reds of Grace. Bones and muscles feel the push and sweep of Revelations, the angular geometries of Chroma, the release and fling of Grace, and the rhythmic flexions of Takademe. The brain, in turn, takes in and crafts words to express those sense memories. Because dance engages our senses, it invites us to make meanings for ourselves in individual ways. In this post performance lesson, students are encouraged to access their own sense memories of the performance, and create a collective poetic response.

OPENING ACTIVITY:

SENSE MEMORIES

Distribute 3-4 index cards per student with a pen or pencil for writing. Students will find their own space in the classroom for writing.

Begin by having them close their eyes and directing their attention to the performance they viewed.

Focus their attention on the sounds they heard in the performance: the words, lyrics, rhythms, melodies, stomping sounds or handclaps.

➤ *What did you hear?*

Invite students to write or draw their responses.

Next, focus their attention on the colors they saw by asking:

➤ *What colors stood out to you in the performance (costumes, sets)?*

Invite students to write or draw their responses.

 5 minutes



AFTER THE PERFORMANCE LESSON IV

Through the Senses: A Memory Poem

(continued)

Have students focus their attention on any of the shapes they remember seeing the dancers make with their bodies.

➤ *What shapes did their bodies make?*

Invite students to draw the shapes they remember.

Finally, focus their attention on their own muscular responses to the performance:

➤ *Describe a moment of tension?*

➤ *When were you surprised?*

➤ *What movement did you want to try?*

Invite students to write or draw their responses.

ACTIVITY 1:

ASSEMBLING OUR SENSE MEMORIES

 15 minutes

Divide the class into 4 groups.

Ask each group to begin in a corner of the room. Each corner will have one large piece of chart paper taped to the wall or floor with markers for writing.

The four chart papers will be labeled:

"I Hear..... "

"I See" "

"I Feel" "

"I Remember....."

The "I See....." chart paper will have an assortment of pastels, colored pencils, and crayons.

Explain that each group will have 3–5 minutes to visit each corner and record their sense memories on the chart paper.



AFTER THE PERFORMANCE LESSON IV

Through the Senses: A Memory Poem

(continued)

After a signal from you, groups will rotate to the next corner.

The Four Sense Memory Corners:

- "I Hear" "** Record the sounds you remember in words. Draw, sing or create the lyrics, melodies and rhythms you heard.
- "I See" "** Using the pastels, colored pencils, markers and crayons, show the colors you remember. Use the colors to draw or record shapes, movements, and textures you saw.
- "I Feel" "** Using the markers or pencils to draw or describe shapes and movements you remember. Create the shapes on your own body or dance the movements you remember.
- "I Remember"** Using words, phrases and descriptive language, write or describe a moment you remember from the dances.

After students have made a full rotation of the room, ask them to do a "gallery walk" around the room to observe the memories written down by the whole class.

Ask your students:

- *What do you notice about these sense memories?*
- *Did one kind of sense memory seem especially powerful? Why do you say that?*
- *What surprised you about these sense memories?*

ACTIVITY 2: SENSE MEMORY POEM

 15 minutes

Ask each group to work together to create a "sense memory" poem. You may want to create smaller work groups depending on the size of the class.

Note: Depending on your class, you may choose to assign a poem structure for the "sense memory" poem. Some classes might tackle and enjoy free verse, such as spoken word or rap. Others might prefer the constraints of simple cinquain form:



AFTER THE PERFORMANCE LESSON IV

Through the Senses: A Memory Poem

(continued)

Cinquain is a class of poetic forms that employs a 5-line pattern:

For example, you could suggest:

- 1) **Noun**
- 2) **2 Adjectives**
- 3) **3 Verbs**
- 4) **4 or 5 word phrase**
- 5) **Noun—repeat the first line or use a synonym**

Example:

cat

black, smooth

skipping, jumping, playing

pretends I am her prey

feline

Give each group time to work and create. Encourage groups to incorporate colors, sounds, movement words, and descriptive words in their poems from the Four Sense Memory Corners. Groups may also add drawings, sounds, and/or movement to create a performance piece that compliments their poem.

CLOSING ACTIVITY:

TRANSFORMING OUR SENSE MEMORIES

 10 minutes

Ask groups to share their poems with the class.

The presenting group may choose to speak their poem or have someone outside the group read their poem out loud while they perform.

Ask observers:

- *What do you notice about the poems?*
- *How do the color, sound, and movement words connect with what we saw in the performance?*
- *Do you think we experience life/art through our senses in the same way? What makes you say that?*



Common Core Standards Addressed in this Guide

College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for Reading

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS ELA-Literacy.CCR.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCR Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

CCSS ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on each others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

National Core Arts Standards Addressed in this Guide

Anchor Standard #7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard# 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard#11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.



Capacities for Imaginative Thinking Addressed in this Guide

At Lincoln Center Education (LCE), we value not only what is learned but how it is learned and believe that the people best prepared to perform in our dynamic world are those who think like artists. Artists solve problems, collaborate, communicate, imagine, persevere, and create. The Capacities for Imaginative Thinking is a learning framework designed to help learners interact meaningfully with a work of art and to develop habits of mind to enable them to think like artists.

(For the full list and definitions, see the next page.)

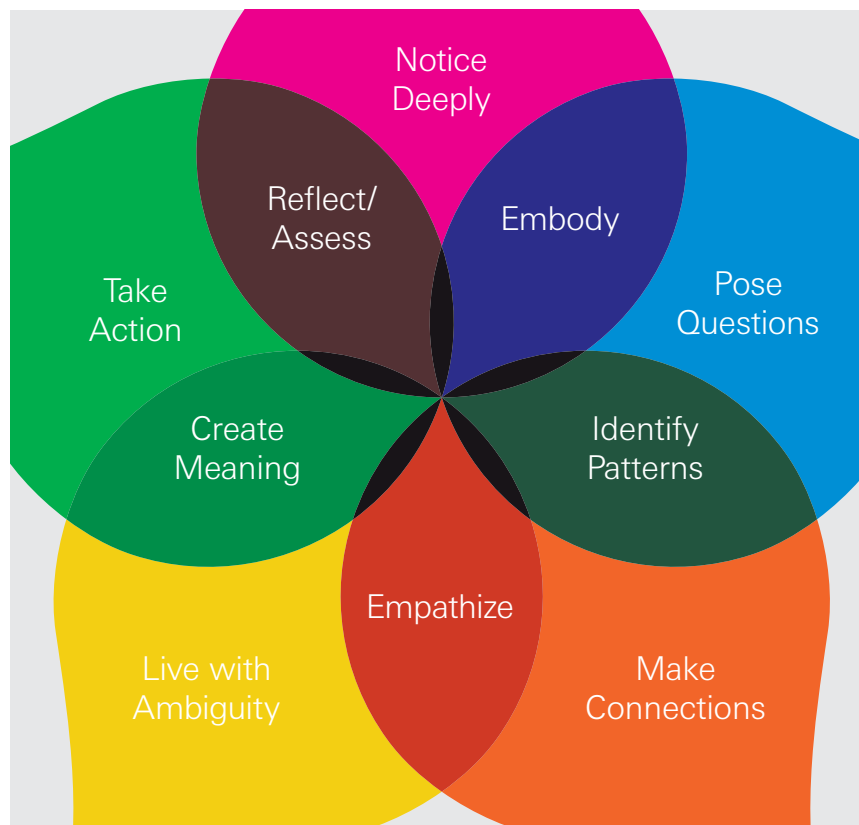
Notice Deeply: How many layers of detail can you identify if you take the time? Can you go deeper?

Embody: Use your body to explore your ideas. Try it out.

Make Connections: How is this like something else? Make personal, textual, and wider connections



Helping young minds perform in a dynamic world



NOTICE DEEPLY

How many layers of detail can you identify if you take the time? Can you go deeper?

EMBODY

Use your body to explore your ideas. Try it out.

POSE QUESTIONS

What do you wonder?

IDENTIFY PATTERNS

How might different details relate? Analyze them.

MAKE CONNECTIONS

How is this like something else? Make personal, textual, and wider connections.

EMPATHIZE

Can you understand how others think and feel? What are their perspectives?

LIVE WITH AMBIGUITY

What if there is not just one answer? Be patient with complexity.

CREATE MEANING

Bring together what you've thought so far. What new interpretations can you make?

TAKE ACTION

What will you choose to do with your ideas? Put them into practice.

REFLECT/ASSESS

Look back on what you've experienced. What have you learned? What's next?



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CONTINUE YOUR EXPLORATION

Modern, African and Brazilian Dance

Modern Dance

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_dance

History of Modern Dance Student Handout

<http://www.balletaustin.org/education/documents/HistoryofModernDanceStudentHandout.pdf>

Common Ground / 5 Modern Techniques for the 21st Century
Dunham, Limón, Horton, Graham, and Cunningham demystified

By Lisa Traiger for Dance Magazine (March-April 2008 Volume 13 Issue 2)

<http://www.dancestudiolife.com/common-ground-5-modern-techniques-for-the-21st-century/>

African Dance

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/african_dance

Five(ish) Minute Dance Lesson: African Dance: Lesson 1: Dinhe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3W-YloW8Bw>

Katherine Dunham: Library of Congress Collection, includes tutorials of Dunham technique

<http://www.loc.gov/collections/katherine-dunham/>

Katherine Dunham Biography

<http://kdcah.org/katherine-dunham-biography/>

Lester Horton Technique Description and History

http://www.dancespirit.com/2009/04/Horton_Technique/

How to: Horton Technique

<https://vimeo.com/71110456>

Anna Sokolow Dance Foundation

<http://www.annasokolow.org/>

Capoeira class at The Ailey Extension

<https://vimeo.com/channels/ailey/29730425>



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CONTINUE YOUR EXPLORATION

West African class at The Ailey Extension
<https://vimeo.com/channels/ailey/10725616>

Horton Technique class at The Ailey Extension
<https://vimeo.com/channels/ailey/10725553>

Ronald K. Brown teaches a master class at Harvard:
<http://youtu.be/gm1kHuNcg7w>

Katherine Dunham's influence on American modern dance:
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.200003839/default.html>

Lester Horton biography:
http://www.danceheritage.org/treasures/horton_essay_prevots.pdf

Katherine Dunham:
<http://www.danceheritage.org/dunham.html>

Alvin Ailey and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Website
<http://www.alvinailey.org/>

Alvin Ailey Biography
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alvin_Ailey

History and Timeline
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater/exhibition-items.html>

Documentary: *Beyond the Steps: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater*
Order at: <http://www.aileyshop.com/cd-dvds.html>

Book: *Alvin Ailey: A Life in Dance*.
Jennifer Dunning. New York, NY: De Capo Press. 1998.

Book: *Alvin Ailey*.
Andrea Davis Pinkney. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children. 1993.



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CONTINUE YOUR EXPLORATION

Revelations by Alvin Ailey

Music from *Revelations: Revelations Audio Cd*
Order at: <http://www.aileyshop.com/cd-dvds.html>
Includes an 11-minute interview with Judith Jameson

Book: *Revelations: The Autobiography of Alvin Ailey*.
Alvin Ailey and A. Peter Bailey. Secaucus, NJ: Birch Lane Press. 1995.

Book: *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture*
By DeFrantz, Thomas

New York Times: Ailey dancers describe their experience of performing the different sections of *Revelations*
By Gia Kourlas, November 29, 2010
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/30/arts/dance/30revelations.html?_r=0

Spirituals Brief History
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_%28music%29

Comprehensive Guide to the History of Spirituals
<http://www.negrospirituals.com/index.html>

Video Clips of Modern Dance Choreographers

Anna Sokolow
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWivJg7T1sw>

Martha Graham
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pb4-kpClZns>

Lester Horton
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uq--drAx11s>

Katherine Dunham
www.youtube.com/watch?v=FetuMAG0zBc
<http://www.loc.gov/item/ibas.200003869>



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CONTINUE YOUR EXPLORATION

Additional Resources

My Story, My Dance: Robert Battle's Journey to Alvin Ailey

<http://www.amazon.com/My-Story-Dance-Battles-Journey/dp/1481422219>

Dance & Democracy: Politics & Protest, World War I Through the Cold War

http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=5611

This recorded lecture from the Library of Congress contextualizes Alvin Ailey's work alongside other modern dance luminaries

"Making Rich Tales of Diaspora Take Flight," *New York Times* February 12, 2008

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/12/arts/dance/12brow.html>

Choreographer, Ronald K. Brown

<http://www.evidencedance.com/#ronald-k-brown/cb08>

Choreographer, Robert Battle

<http://www.alvinailey.org/about/people/robert-battle>

Choreographer, Wayne McGregor

http://www.randomdance.org/wayne_mcgregor/biography



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Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

Lincoln Center, the world's foremost performing arts center, is a private non-profit organization. Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts presents over 350 performances annually through its different performance series, and administers educational and community outreach programs.

The mission of Lincoln Center is fourfold: 1) to celebrate the performing arts with a dazzling array of programming, performed by an international roster of virtuoso artists; 2) to engage thousands of schoolchildren in active learning through its arts-in-education organization, Lincoln Center Education; 3) to extend the range of the performing arts presented at Lincoln Center, complementing the extraordinary offerings of the eleven other Lincoln Center Resident Companies, all of which are flagship institutions in the world of the arts; and 4) to provide support and services for the Resident Companies and the 16-acre Lincoln Center campus, which together make up the world's leading performing arts center.

Lincoln Center Education

Lincoln Center Education (LCE) is the educational cornerstone of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Founded in 1975 as Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education, LCE enriches the lives of students, educators and lifelong learners by providing opportunities for engagement with the highest-quality arts on the stage, in the classroom, digitally, and within the community. For four decades, LCE has offered unparalleled school and community partnerships, professional development workshops, consulting services, and its very own repertory of music, dance, theater and visual arts. LCE's work has reached more than 20 million students, teachers, school administrators, parents, community members, teaching artists, pre-service teachers, university professors and artists in New York City, across the nation and around the world.



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