ArtesAméricas

TEACHERS' RESOURCE GUIDE

Grades 6–12

DELFOS CONTEMPORARY DANCE
What is Dance?

What makes a dance a dance? Everyday we move through space: walking to class, playing basketball, or eating lunch. How could our lives be seen as the dance of life? Professional dancers practice their craft for years, typically starting at a very young age. But everyone can dance in his or her own way.

Play different types of music for your class. How does this music make you feel? How does your body want to move? How can you tell a story through movement? Try telling the story of your day through dance. This can be literal or abstract. Now have everyone gather and share his or her stories. Have each student lead the rest of the class in a section of his or her dance.

Who Is Delfos Contemporary Dance Company?

Located in Mazatlán, Mexico, Delfos was founded in 1992 by the Mexican dancers and choreographers Victor Manuel Ruiz and Claudia Lavista with the objective of opening a space for creation, exchange of ideas, formation, and communication through contemporary dance. Delfos is a laboratory of images and emotions in movement whose aesthetic vision has given the company its own stamp of individuality characterized by the meaning of the movement and the poetry that is contained in each one of its works. The group has done shows for the general public and for children, as well as co-productions with other artistic groups and stagings for opera, television, and video. Its work has been critically praised and presented in Canada, the United States, Brazil, Italy, Spain, Greece, Korea, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Mexico. Along the way, Delfos has won numerous recognitions. Those that stand out are the Mexican National Dance Award in 1992, 1997, and 2002, the award as the Best Dance Group in Mexico, and the Brazilian Artistic Merit Award. Delfos is recognized as one of the most important dance companies of Latin America and is the house resident of the Angela Peralta Theater in Mazatlán, Mexico, and a member of the Cultural Promoters Net of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Mazatlán Professional School of Contemporary Dance

Since 1998, the company has run the Mazatlán Professional School of Contemporary Dance (MPSCD), one of the principal formative centers of the art of dance in Mexico. The school trains first-rate dancers and cultivates new audiences for dance. Directed by Delfos and with the support of the Mazatlán city hall, MPSCD currently features 50 students from Mexico and other countries, including Chile and Venezuela.

MPSCD trains highly capable dance professionals in fields such as dance execution, creation, production, and promotion. MPSCD offers
a staff of 14 teachers of international-level quality specializing in contemporary dance, ballet, choreography, music, theater, jazz, and art and dance appreciation.

In November 2001, through the initiative of the students, the Experimental Stage of the Municipal Arts Center was founded. This allows the students to develop and experiment with their creative and interpretive capacities.

**Activity:**

**What Do You Think? What Do You Know?**

After reading about the MPSCD, ask your students to create a day in the life of a student and dancer at the school. How might things be different or similar for students studying dance in a concentrated way? What skills or characteristics might someone who wanted to pursue training like this need?

Now ask your students to use the internet to research a typical day of students attending a dance school full time. Ask students to compare their speculation with information they discover and then share their findings.

**Activity:**

**Applying and Demonstrating Critical and Creative Thinking Skills in Dance**

**Activity:**

**Focus on the Dance**

Del amor y otras barbaridades (From Love and Other Atrocities) embraces the theme of human relations through 5 short stories about love as seen from different angles that range from a parody of tender loving cannibalism to the reflection that the loss of a loved one produces in each of us. In this program the spectator will see many diverse situations that will ask him to identify with and see himself reflected in a mirror of his own findings and misunderstandings.

**Activity:**

**Focus on the Dance**

**Frozen Pictures**

Reread aloud the description of the dance "Del amor y otras barbaridades." Ask students to brainstorm situations that Delfos may portray in this dance. Encourage students to realize there are no right or wrong answers. Now divide the class into groups of 3-5 students. Have each group present a frozen picture of a situation that asks the audience to see themselves reflected in a mirror of their own beliefs and misunderstandings.

**Activity:**

**Making Connections Between Dance and Healthful Living**

**Activity:**

**Los amorosos** (The Lovers)

Using the poem of the same title by Mexican poet Jaime Sabines and the work of Venezuelan painter Janeth Berrettini, the piece deals with the theme of union and separation seen through the vision of two beings who blend into each other and become one body that is destined to be divided.
**ACTIVITY:**

**Translating a Painting**

Have your students find a painting by the Spanish surrealist painter, Salvador Dalí. He is known for creating a beautifully chaotic piece of art from what appears to be a chaotic. How does it make you feel? What music do you hear? What is the story? What is the feeling? Compare with other people. How is this related to the work by Delfos?

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**NA-V.A.9-12.4 UNDERSTANDING THE VISUAL ARTS IN RELATION TO HISTORY & CULTURES**

**NA-V.A.9-12.5 MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS & OTHER DISCIPLINES**

**ACTIVITY:**

**Express Emotion**

Ask students what are three distinct movements for the emotions of despair or excitement. Think of the details of every finger and edge of the body. Although thinking about facial expression is a way to start, think about the body and how it can express emotion. Have pairs of students find space around the room. Have one student be A and the other be B. Ask A to think of an emotion and what an image of that emotion might look like. Now have A “sculpt” B into a sculpture representing that emotion. Students may sculpt by modeling the pose or by gently moving their partner. After all the A’s finish and walk around the classroom of sculptures, switch and have B’s do the sculpting. During this activity, encourage students to think beyond facial expressions and more about the lines of the body and the whole body.

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**NA-D.9-12.2 UNDERSTANDING CHOREOGRAPHIC PRINCIPLES, PROCESSES, AND STRUCTURES**

**NA-D.9-12.3 UNDERSTANDING DANCE AS A WAY TO CREATE AND COMMUNICATE MEANING**

**NA-T.5.8.2 ACTING BY DEVELOPING BASIC ACTING SKILLS TO PORTRAY CHARACTERS WHO INTERACT IN IMPROVISED AND SCRIPTED SCENES**

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**ACTIVITY:**

**Poetry In Motion**

Delfos creates many of their dance pieces by reading poetry. Read the above poem to your students. Ask them to close their eyes and imagine the words pictures. Have students brainstorm images and words that come to mind. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students. Have each group create 3 frozen pictures of their bodies inspired by the poem. Share the pictures with the rest of the class.

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**NA-T.5.8.2 DEVELOPING BASIC ACTING SKILLS TO PORTRAY CHARACTERS WHO INTERACT IN IMPROVISED AND SCRIPTED SCENES**

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**NL-ENG.K.12.1 READING FOR PERSPECTIVE**

**NL-ENG.K.12.2 UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE**

**NL-ENG.K.12.3 MULTICULTURAL UNDERSTANDING**

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**ACTIVITY:**

**Poetry Soundscape**

Read the poem and ask students to imagine the sounds and instruments that might accompany the words. Ask students to find ways to create the sounds. They may use their voices, bodies, and found objects. Now read the poem again and ask students individually or in small groups to accompany you.

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**NA-M.3-12.8 UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MUSIC, THE OTHER ARTS, & DISCIPLINES OUTSIDE OF THE AREA**

**bajo los dedos de mi amor la noche brilla como relámpago**

**mi amor inventa mundos en que habitan serpientes cuajadas de brillantes mundos en que la música es el mundo mundos en que las casas con los ojos abiertos contemplan el amanecer**

**mi amor es un loco girasol que olvida pedazos de sol en el silencio**

**Mi amor descubre objetos**

**mi amor descubre objetos sedosas mariposas se ocultan en sus dedos sus palabras me salpican de estrellas**
Mazatlán, Mexico

Before the arrivals of the Spaniards in Mexico, Mazatlán (which means “place of deer” in Náhuatl, an indigenous language) was populated by the Tohono O’odham who lived by hunting, gathering, fishing, and agriculture. A group of 25 Spaniards led by Nuño de Guzmán officially founded a settlement here on Easter Sunday in 1531, but almost three centuries elapsed before a permanent colony was established in the early 1820s.

The port was blockaded by U.S. forces in 1847, and by the French in 1864, but Mazatlán was little more than a fishing village for the next 80 years. ‘Old’ Mazatlán, the traditional town center, dates to the 19th century.

Tourists started coming in the 1930s, mainly for fishing and hunting, and some hotels began to appear along the Playa Olas Altas, Mazatlán’s first tourist beach, in the 1950s. Thus began a period of growth that continued steadily through the 1960s. From the 1970s onward, a long strip of modern hotels and tourist facilities has spread north along the coast.

Who Can Vote?

Notice that women were not allowed to vote for president in Mexico until 1958. When did women get the right to vote in the United States? When did African Americans get the right to vote in the United States? Why do you think a group of people would not be allowed to vote?

As students come into class, give them a strip of colored paper, either yellow or purple. Only allow the students with purple paper to sit down. All yellow students need to stand or sit on the floor. Tell the students that some important decisions will be made today. You may wish to decide something really happening in your school or you could ask them to decide the rights of the students with yellow paper. These rights could include restroom privileges, homework assignments, lunch breaks, and other important activities. Yellow students may participate in the discussion but may not be allowed to vote. After the activity, ask students what it feels like to be left out of the decision-making process when the decision affects them.

What did the purple group feel like being in charge? How were the dynamics of the classroom changed just by having some students able to sit in desks and others on the floor?

1821 – Mexico wins independence from Spain.
1836 – The Mexican territory of Texas declares independence from Mexico; the battles of the Alamo and San Jacinto follow.
1914 – Octavio Paz, the Mexican writer who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1990, is born.
1930 – Mazatlán is acknowledged as a tourist destination.
1934 – The Institutional Revolutionary Party, which rules Mexico for more than 60 years, is formed. It introduces a program of reform and land redistribution.
1941 – World War II, after Pearl Harbor, Mexico, under President Avila Camacho, declares war on the Axis. U.S.-Mexican friendship begins.
1958 – First time women are allowed to vote for president of Mexico.

1968 – Groups of university students in Mexico City express their outrage with the conservative Díaz Ordaz administration. Discontent with single-party PRI rule, restriction of freedom of speech, and heavy economic spending resulted in widespread protests. Olympics held in Mexico City.
1970 – Mexican government’s debt grew to $20 billion. Inflation grew by 20% a year.
1979 – Mexico becomes the fifth largest oil producer in the world.
1985 – Earthquake measuring 8 on the Richter scale in Mexico City kills 7,000 people.
1992 – Delfos Contemporary Dance is founded in Mazatlán.
Guidelines for Your Students

Etiquette:
1. Arrive at the theatre early. You can read the program or sometimes there is a lobby display that will help you to enjoy the production.
2. Order tickets ahead of time if possible. Then you don’t have to worry if there are seats left.
3. Take your seat at least 5 minutes before the show begins. This allows you to get situated so you can fully enjoy the production.
4. When the lights go out at the beginning of the show, you can relax and applaud. The show is about to begin.
5. Feel free to applaud whenever you feel moved by the production. Good places to applaud: when a dancer completes an amazing jump, at the end of a dance, or at the end of a solo dance section.
6. Wait until intermission to leave the auditorium.
7. Discuss your reactions with friends during intermission or after the show.
8. If you truly enjoyed the performance, feel free to give a standing ovation at the end of the production!

Activity:
Before the show...
- Learn everything you can about the company and choreographer
- Read articles from the newspaper
- Read the program at the performance
- Research the culture from which the company originates

During the show...
Notice all the different aspects that make up a dance piece:
- Contrasting or complementary colors
- Quick, sharp, slow, or smooth movements
- Consistent or varied styles
- Upbeat, big, quiet, or small expressions
- Loud, slow, soft, or fast music
- Costume changes and colors
- Group or individual dances
Enjoy the show!
Relax and allow yourself to enjoy what is most interesting to you.
There isn’t one right way to interpret or enjoy a dance, do it your own way!

After the show...
Now is the time to talk to your friends or teachers who saw the dance piece and to engage in activities to extend your learning about dance.
Notice the similarities and differences in:
- Your reactions
- Your interpretations
- Your enjoyment level

NAS-5.7 EVALUATING MUSIC AND MUSIC PERFORMANCES

NL-ENG.K-12.4 COMMUNICATION SKILLS
For More Information
Lonely Planet Online: www.lonelyplanet.com

Mazatlán Mexico Tourist Info: www.mazatlan.com.mx

Anamia site dedicated to poetry and Mexico:
http://anamia.tripod.com/menue.html

Mexico Connect: http://mexconnect.com

The Latin American Network Information Center (LANIC):
http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/mexico/

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