

# Study Guide for Teachers

## NIMBUS DANCE WORKS *Stories from Around the World*

Presented by  
Young Audience NJ & Eastern PA  
(866) 500-9265  
[www.yanjep.org](http://www.yanjep.org)



### **ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

The connection between dance and literacy is illuminated with enchanting music, live narration, colorful costumes, and audience interaction as students join the six company dancers of Nimbus Dance Works on a journey around the world. Time-honored stories such as the “Wizard’s Garden” and “Honor Among Thieves” hailing from Sweden and Majorca are explored through dance while students are introduced to the traditions of distinct world cultures through choreographed presentations of popular folktales.

### **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

Students will

- understand that choreographers create dances to express their imaginations, ideas, feelings, and/or a purpose.
- Experience dance as a way that people communicate and express meaning.
- Explore the messages presented in dances like the importance of honesty, being kind to others, friendship and teamwork.
- understand how culture influences dance and how dance influences culture.
- be able to recognize cultural similarities and differences between themselves and others.
- Understand that the cultural values, beliefs, and behavioral attitudes of a society are often recognizable in the dances created, performed, and observed within that society.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

People dance for different reasons. Some people dance for recreation. Some people dance as part of their culture, in rituals and religious settings. Dance can also be an artistic form of expression, like painting, music, theater, and literature. Some people choose to tell stories through dance.

There are several aspects of dance through which a story can be conveyed. Character can be developed and discerned through posture (the way a dancer holds their spine and shoulders) as well as through quality of movement (how a dancer moves—sharp, large, small, fluid, etc.) Sometimes specifics of a story told through dance use mime. Other times, a choreographer will choose to use props and costume to help the story proceed. Music is also an important aspect in developing a story, particularly in setting tone and ambience and conveying emotion. Last, a choreographer might use multiple dancers—either purposely grouped or separated—to indicate relationship, harmony, disparity, or conflict.

Take notice of some of the creative choices made by the choreographers in their dances, such as number of dancers, music, and costumes. You can also notice how each choreographer utilizes the elements of dance: Body, Space, Time, Energy, and Relationship. Choreographers also make timing and energy choices about when and how their movements are to be performed.

## **BEFORE THE PROGRAM**

### **Discussion Questions/Writing Prompts:**

- What can inspire someone to create a dance?
- Why do people dance? (To express an idea, emotion or story, exercise, cultural ritual, social enjoyment)
- How do costumes and props help further tell the story in a dance?
- If you choreographed a dance, what would it be about. What would it look like?
- Write about an experience you have had with dance.

### **Activities:**

- Choose 3 or 4 songs of different styles and origins. Play each song 2 times. The first time, have students listen with their eyes closed and reflect on what the music makes them think of, feel like, and want to move like. Play the song again, and have students dance to the song in response to what they thought and felt the first time.
- Read some folktales from different countries and continents. Notice the similarities and differences.

## **AFTER THE PROGRAM**

### **Discussion Questions/Writing Prompts:**

- Discuss the country of origin of each dance presented. Remember details about the story. Do you know any other folklore from that country? What folklore or folktales do you know from the culture you are from?
- Which choreography did you enjoy most at the performance? What did you think and feel while watching the program? What do you think the choreographers were trying to communicate?
- Write or draw a picture about something you saw during the performance. Include descriptions of the costumes, music, props, and actions that you saw.

### **Activities:**

- Read a short story with several characters. Assign characters and have students create short dances enacting the story.
- Practice using different body parts to describe adjectives through movement (sharp, smooth, sticky, fluid, sad, happy)

## **GLOSSARY**

**Aesthetics:** Values about beauty.

**Choreography:** The combination of movements that make up a dance composition.

**Dance Step:** An expressive gesture.

**Folklore:** The expressive body of culture shared by a particular group of people, including oral traditions such as tales, proverbs, and jokes.

**Folktale:** A traditional tale or legend, especially one forming part of the oral tradition of the common people.

**Improvisation:** Spontaneous movement.

**Stage:** A raised floor or platform on which actors, entertainers, or dancers perform.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Books:**

Joanna Cole, *Best-Loved Folktales of the World*.

Jane Dyer and Jane Yolan, *Once There Was a Story*.

Anne Green Gilbert, *Teaching the R's through Movement Experience*.

Eric Jensen, *Arts with the Brain in Mind*

### **Online:**

[www.ndeo.org](http://www.ndeo.org): The National Dance Education Organization

Kennedy Center Arts Edge: [www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/how-to/encouraging-arts/encouraging-your-students-to-become-choreographers](http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/how-to/encouraging-arts/encouraging-your-students-to-become-choreographers)

## **ARTIST INFORMATION**

Nimbus Dance Works focuses on the intersection between high-level dance and innovative ways of involving communities and audiences. In addition to work by Artistic Director Samuel Pott, the company commissions dances by leading international dancemakers, including Pedro Ruiz (Cuba/USA), Huang Yi (Taiwan), Korhan Basaran (Turkey), and Xiao-Xiong Zhang (Australia/Taiwan). The company also leads communities in the creation of dance works that respond to sociopolitical subjects of significance in their community. Through company performances, programs for youth and seniors, partnerships with institutions such as the Jersey City Board of Education and Rutgers University, and collaborations with notable composers and visual artists, Nimbus weaves together artistic excellence and community impact.

Nimbus's programs impact more than 12,000 people each year, including educational programs that serve over 1,000 students annually in the Jersey City public schools.