



Young Audiences of Massachusetts

Educational Materials

Please forward to teachers

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Tara Ahmed: *Taal Tales*

Grade levels: 3-5

With elements of storytelling, rhythmic footwork and athletic grace, Kuchipudi relays vivid stories from Hindu mythology. TAAL TALES offers both a history of classical South Indian dance and performances of lively dance pieces. In this highly interactive program, participants are constantly engaged by watching and participating in dance sequences, and asking and answering questions.

LEARNING GOALS:

1. To observe and engage with South Asian Hindu culture through classical dance.
2. To understand the uniqueness of dance as an athletic, cultural, and artistic practice.
3. To examine how societies express their aesthetic, beliefs and culture through art.

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Dance in Action*

Have the students brainstorm about different kinds of dance they have seen. Talk about tap dance and how the dancers make rhythms with their feet. Have the students split into groups of four and make a rhythm, then make one long rhythm with all the groups.

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Stories through Movement*

Discuss dance as a language. Ask the students to make up or choose a story and demonstrate it, using their hands, facial expression and body movement.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Asian Studies, Multicultural Studies, Music, Physical Education, History, Social Sciences, Foreign Languages, Theatre

PRE-ACTIVITY: Dance in Action

LEARNING GOAL:

To learn the basics of rhythm in dance and how dance is rooted in the movements of everyday life.

TIME: 40 MINUTES

STEP 1:

Make a list of all the different kinds of dance that the students have seen or experienced (on the street, at home, in school, at the theater, in movies, etc.). Encourage them to think of family events, dance classes they may have observed, etc. Talk about the key elements of each dance form, and finish with tap dance. Discuss the importance of rhythm.

STEP 2:

Split the students into groups of four and ask each group to create a rhythm of four beats. Refer them to step dance, tap dance, Irish step dance, Stomp or other rhythmic dance forms they may have seen. Encourage them to use different ways of showing rhythm, e.g., with feet stomping, with sharp turns and staccato movement.

STEP 3:

Have each group perform their rhythm for each other, with the spectators commenting on the different ways that each group demonstrated rhythm. Ask the students to link their rhythms together one after another so that it becomes one long rhythm, and execute it in a loop.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Bring musical instruments into the performance. Experiment with ways to incorporate the instruments into the rhythm they have created. Use traditional instruments or objects in the classroom (eg. buckets, sticks, blocks).
2. Explore rhythm in the music of cultures represented in the classroom, community, or being studied in class. Discuss the connections between traditional dances and the rhythms found in traditional music.

POST-ACTIVITY: Stories through Movement

LEARNING GOAL:

To incorporate the students' knowledge of Indian dance and mythology with other popular stories and myths. Express both stories through movement.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

Book of Hindu mythology

TIME: 40 MINUTES

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION OF PERFORMANCE

1. What did you notice in the performance? Tell me what you saw/ heard/ noticed.
2. What questions do you have after viewing the performance? What are you wondering about?
3. How did Tara show what was happening in the story?

STEP 1:

Ask students if they could understand the Taal Tales dances, and see the stories in the movement. Discuss which movements they remember and which mudras seem to be universal.

STEP 2:

Have the students show fire, water, mountains, warriors, musicians, snakes, tigers, elephants, etc. Ask how they would tell a story without talking.

STEP 3:

Split the students into two groups. Read a story from Hindu mythology and have one group act it out. Have the second group pick a story that they know (fairy tale or commonly known story) and act it out. Ask the students to comment on the other group's performance, and discuss the challenges of conveying a new story versus a known one.

EXTENSIONS

1. Have students design costumes or sets for the stories they performed.
2. Play a game of charades using any mudras that students can remember or other dance moves. Create a list of stories familiar to the class and communicate the story to the other students with movement.

VOCABULARY:

Kuchipudi – A classical dance style from the state of Andhra Pradesh. This dance form began as a theater art (involving song, acting and dance) which celebrated Krishna. It is about 1,500 years old and was nurtured in the village of Kuchelapuram.

Bharat Natyam* – A classical dance style/technique from the state of Tamil Nadu, which has origins from 4,000 years ago. It began in the temples as a means of worship.

Namaskar – A bow or salutation to respect the lord of dance, the guru (teacher) and the audience, and to apologize to Mother Earth for stamping on her, and receive her blessings.

Mudras (also known as hastas) – Hand shapes that show emotions, gods, humans, animals, nature, actions.

Aramandi – The basic bent leg position, much like the plié in ballet.

Adavus – Basic dance steps

Nritta - Pure rhythmic movement

Nritya - Abstract or emotional element of dance

Abhinaya – Facial expression

Devasdasis – Temple dancers who danced as a means of worship

Natya Shastra - an ancient treatise on theater and dance

RESOURCES:

Grau, Dr. Andree. (2000). *Dance* (Eyewitness Books). New York: Dorling Kindersley. 64 pages, 0789466252, \$19.99. An excellent resource for learning a little about dances from all over the world, including a section on classical Indian dance, Bharat Natyam.

<http://www.kanakasabha.com/hastas/index.html>

http://www.nadanam.com/general/g_index.htm

<http://www.vimoksha.com/kuchipudi/kuchipudi.html>

http://www.chandrakantha.com/articles/indian_music/nritya.html

http://www.4to40.com/discoverindia/music/index.asp?article=discoverindia_music_kuchipudi

http://www.asiasource.org/news/at_mp_02.cfm?newsid=49956

<http://surdhwani.org.uk/asp/3-2-1.asp>

<http://www.indianfolkdances.com/kuchipudi-classical-dance-of-india.html>

<http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-dance/classical/kuchipudi.html>

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS:

Tara Ahmed is a classical Indian dancer who has performed or taught in Colombia, Brazil, Turkey, India and the U.S. She performed in the Bank of America Celebrity Series, dancing the title role in the critically acclaimed "Chitra." Her television appearances include WGBH's DanceFest and Greater Boston Arts. Tara was a selected performer at the 2003 New England Art & Education Conference. She has taught and lectured for organizations including the Solomon Schechter Middle School, Holly Cross College, Boston Ballet and New Hampshire Humanities Council. "Ahmed was a captivating presence..." - Boston Globe; "A very talented dancer and an extraordinary teacher..." - Newton Creative Arts & Sciences Committee. Tara loves dance because it exercises her mind, body and spirit.

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES:

Young Audiences of Massachusetts (YA) is the oldest, largest and most utilized arts-in-education organization in the state and one of the largest in a national network of 33 chapters. For 35 years, YA has distinguished itself as the vital link between Massachusetts schoolchildren (K-12) and nearly 120 of the region's most accomplished actors, dancers, singers, instrumentalists, and storytellers. Its 32 ensembles offer over 60 interactive arts programs that represent a range of cultures, historical periods and artistic disciplines. YA is unique in its flexibility to offer interactive performances, tailor-made residencies, workshops, teacher-training, curriculum planning and multi-year projects. All programs come with educational materials and satisfy local, state and/or federal arts education standards.

MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS CONNECTIONS

<i>Arts-Dance 1</i>	Movement Elements and Dance Skills...identify and demonstrate movement elements and dance skills.
<i>Arts- Dance 3</i>	Dance as Expression... demonstrate an understanding of dance as a way to express and communicate meaning.
<i>Arts-Dance 4</i>	Performance in Dance... rehearse...dance works.
<i>Arts-Dance 8</i>	Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change... demonstrate understanding of styles, influence, change by identifying when and where art works were created, and by analyzing characteristic features of art works from various historical periods, cultures, and genres.
<i>English Language Arts 1</i>	Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.
<i>English Language Arts 8</i>	Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation.
<i>English Language Arts 9</i>	Students will deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary work by relating it to its contemporary context or historical background.
<i>English Language Arts 16</i>	Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes, structure, and elements of myths, traditional narratives, and classical literature and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
<i>Foreign Languages 4</i>	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the traditions, perspectives, practices, and products of the culture studied, including human commonalities as reflected in history, literature, and the visual and performing arts.