



Young Audiences of Massachusetts

Educational Materials

Please forward to teachers

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Ensemble: Tara Ahmed

Program: Taal Tales

Grade levels: K-2

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, students are constantly engaged by watching and participating in dance sequences, and asking and answering questions.

LEARNING GOALS:

1. To observe and engage with Indian Hindu culture through classical Indian dance.
2. To understand dance as a language, and classical Indian dance as relaying stories.
3. To see the commonalities between different dance forms across cultures.

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Indian Dance Tradition*

Look at a map of Asia to find India's location and size. Read the attached story while students color in the attached handouts of Indian dancers.

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Interpreting Stories with Dance*

Read a story from Hindu mythology. Have the students act out and interpret the characters and story, using their hands, facial expression and body movement.

CURRICULUM LINKS: Asian Studies, Multicultural Studies, Music, Physical Education, History, Social Sciences, Foreign Languages, Theater

PRE-ACTIVITY: *Indian Dance Tradition*

Learning Goal:

To see that India is located in Asia and to understand its distance from the U.S. To become acquainted with a story from Hindu mythology and to anticipate what an Indian dancer will look like.

Materials/Preparation:

World map or map of Asia;
Handouts of Indian dancers

Time: 30 minutes

Teacher Tips:

See http://www.indian-child.com/population_of_india.htm for demographic information on India.

Step 1: Show a map of the world. **Ask** students to find India, and identify which continent it is in. **Discuss** the population of India and how large it is compared to the U.S., and how there are many different languages, cuisines and cultures there.

Step 2: Talk about the Hindu mythology and its many gods and characters, and how there are dancers who demonstrate these stories. **Discuss** ballet and the stories told, and what costumes ballet dancers wear. **Talk** about how classical Indian dancers wear special costumes in bright colors.

Step 3: Give students handouts of Indian dancers to color.

Step 4: Read the attached story while the students color. **Ask** the students if they can imagine how the dancer might show the story with his or her body.

Extensions

1. Investigate colors and fabrics used in Indian dance. Use these to create their own dance costumes or costumes for dolls.
2. Brainstorm a list of different forms of dance familiar to the students. Discuss where these forms may have originated and the differences among the forms. How do we learn about dances in our culture?

POST-ACTIVITY: *Interpreting Stories with Dance*

Learning Goal: To extend the students' knowledge of Indian dance and culture.

Materials/Preparation:
Attached story

Time: 30 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 the students if the dance was what they expected, and what was surprising to them. Have the students recount the stories, and show any mudras they remember.

Step 2: Split the class into two groups. **Read** one story while one group reenacts it, using their faces, hands and movement. Have the other other group act out the other story.

Step 3: Ask the students to watch the other group and make observations about what they see.

Extensions

Give the students a chance to narrate the stories while the other students dance. Alternately, assign one student to be choreographer and experiment with directing her classmates.

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.indianfolk dances.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 over 45 years, YA has distinguished itself as the vital link between Massachusetts schoolchildren (K-12) and more than 95 of the region's most accomplished actors, dancers, singers, musicians, and storytellers. Its 36 ensembles offer 57 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 include educational materials and satisfy local, state and/or federal arts education standards.

MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS CONNECTIONS

<i>Arts-Music 5</i>	Interpret more complex music through movement.
<i>Arts-Dance 3</i>	Dance as Expression...demonstrate an understanding of dance as a way to express and communicate meaning.
<i>Arts-Dance 8</i>	Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change...demonstrate understanding of styles, influence, change.
<i>Arts-Theatre 4</i>	Demonstrate an understanding of the relationships among scenery, properties, lighting, sound, costumes, and make-up in creating a unified theatrical effect.
<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.

VOCABULARY:

Kuchipudi – A classical dance form 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 form 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; 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

ENCLOSURE: STORIES (To be told in your own words)

1. Ganesha the elephant faced God is one of the most popularly worshiped forms of divinity - as a remover of obstacles and the embodiment of good luck, in the Indian system of beliefs and practices. Ganesha is regarded as the son of Shiva and Parvati (Shakti), the Universal parents, and the brother of Skanda.

Legend has it that Parvati, created a beautiful boy from the dirt of her body, treated him as her son, and gave him the responsibility of guarding her home. Shiva, upon returning home was affronted by this lad, hitherto unknown to him. The lad, true to his word to his mother, refused to let Shiva into his own home. An enraged Shiva sent his Bhuta Gana attendants to scare the lad and to obtain entry into his own home. The lad single-handedly defeated the Bhuta Ganas in battle. A clash of egos followed, as Shiva sent several of the Gods, to fight against Ganesha and an equally enraged Parvati sent several of her attendants to fight them. In the resultant fight, the valorous lad's head was chopped off by Nandi deva, and the lad lay lifeless.

Parvati's grief knew no bounds, and Shiva sought to assuage her, by promising to bring the boy to life. Alas, his head could not be found in the battlefield. A quick fix was sought, and it was decided that the first available head would be used to bring the boy to life.

Accordingly, the boy was fitted with the head of an elephant and brought back to life. Even this did not placate Parvati, who sought that this boy (who successfully created obstacles to his father's mission) now fitted with the head of an elephant, should be regarded by one and all, as the remover of obstacles, and should be offered worship first, before any form of worship was offered to any other manifestation of divinity.

This boon granted, Ganesha, the lord of the attendants of Parvati, came to be regarded as Vigneshwara the remover of obstacles.

2. Krishna is the eighth avatar or reincarnation of the god Vishnu. Also Krishna is one of the most popular Hindu gods.

One day Krishna was playing with his friends by the water. "Come, come, let's build a sand castle." They built a beautiful sand castle and decorated it. While playing in the sand, Krishna put a bit in his mouth. His brother got angry and went to tell their mother. His mother, Yashoda, comes up to him with a wagging finger. "You shouldn't eat dirt, you naughty boy," she scolds him. "But I haven't," says the unchallenged lord of all and everything, in sport disguised as a frightened human child. "Tut! Tut! Open your mouth," orders Yashoda. Krishna does as he is told. He opens his mouth. Yashoda gasps. She sees in Krishna's mouth the whole complete entire timeless universe, all the stars, the moon, the oceans, mountains, lightning, fire; not a pebble, candle, creature, village or galaxy is missing. She sees Krishna, and she sees herself. She faints in astonishment. Krishna says, "Arise Mother, don't be alarmed. I am Lord Krishna. I have come to this world to uplift it." Yashoda is overcome with joy and gathers her son in her arms.









