

# **Music Education in the Dance Classroom**

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## **Abstract**

As dance educators and as peer collaborators in the SFU Masters of Arts Education program, we have developed the following units of dance instruction as a means to apply ideas explored in EDUC 869 - Music Education as Thinking in Sound directly into our teaching practice. This document includes a rationale that highlights the parallels between music education and dance education, a brief overview of the context of our teaching environments (such as our provincial curriculum, school culture and dance program dynamics), a series of detailed multimedia unit and lesson plans, and a brief note on holistic process-based assessment.

## **Rationale**

In dance education, music is embedded in the learning experience. As we study, challenge and explore the strengths and limitations of our physical bodies, we also play, analyze, respond to and partner with music through dancing. Christopher Small includes dance as an example of *musicking* when he explains that “to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance. That means not only to perform but also to listen, to provide material for performance, to prepare for a performance, or to take part in any activity that can affect the nature of that style of human encounter which is a musical performance (12). When we learn about dance we also learn about music. So in the dance classroom, every day we music. Everyday we practice and prepare for a musical performance.

The first unit of study is a Body Percussion unit. The objective of this unit is to explore how our bodies can be used as instruments to create music. Students will be

introduced to the history of body percussion. They will work through a progression of basic body percussion rhythms and will also be creating their own student-choreographed body percussion combinations. In his book, "Music as Social Life," Turino explains that through moving and sounding together in synchrony, people can experience a feeling of oneness with others. (Turino, 2). Our goal for our students by the end of this unit is not only to develop confidence through their individual movements and sound but also to achieve unison and maintain rhythm as a group. At the class level, we hoped to establish a stronger sense of ensemble. This unit was created to suit all levels of dance ability and will be taught to all off the dance classes within our programs in order to promote music appreciation, rhythm and team building.

The second unit of study is entitled, "Madonna Percussion," which is an extended body percussion unit that is meant for more advanced level dancers and includes a formal performative component. In David J. Hargreaves, Nigel A. Marshall's and Adrian C. North's article, "Music Education in the Twenty-First Century," the influence of media and the pop music industry was described as "such a central part of teenager's lives that it becomes a 'badge of identity' for many of them" (156). In attempt to balance musical learning in and out of school, this unit combines body percussion with pop music. By taking inspiration from the rhythms that are found within some of Madonna's most popular hits, this unit is an invitation for students to identify with the work. Students will be encouraged to analyze and interpret the musicality and rhythmic complexity of popular music. They will be introduced to a brief overview of the highlights of Madonna's career as an influential woman in the music industry, while also engaging with more challenging body percussion combinations. Students will create collaboratively with

peers, contributing to the creation of a complete class dance performed at the Year-End Dance Show in June.

While varying in difficulty of steps and the complexity of rhythms, both units of study are designed to encourage our students to develop a deeper understanding of both dance and music. These units were created with the attempt to balance both pupil-centered and teacher-centered activities so that both student self-expression and skills acquisition are valued (Hargreaves, Marshall, & North, Page 156). Taking inspiration from Marshall's studies, some activities also include a competitive element to help motivate students and increase their stylistic sensitivity (154). These units were also created to be flexible in terms of time allotment per lesson/activity to allow time for repetition and practice, "like the good human relationships they index, good musical relationships are difficult to achieve and require continual work to sustain" (Turino, 20). While these units are set in a linear fashion, we expect that they will change, adapt, and transform as we work through them with our students. They will be used as a soft guideline so that we, as "good" teachers, can be sensitive to the flow of the creative process and the needs of our students.

## **Context**

As a teaching team, we developed the following unit plans with the secondary dance classroom in mind. These plans will be applied in the upcoming 2018-2019 school year at Moscrop Secondary (Burnaby) and North Surrey Secondary (Surrey). As educators based in British Columbia, our assessment strategies and teaching practices

are heavily inspired by the core and curricular competencies that are outlined in our provincial curriculum.

## **Unit Plans**

Click on the corresponding links to view complete lesson plan details including images, step-by-step videos and accompanying music.

### Body Percussion Unit *Introductory Unit for All Levels*

Lesson 1: History

<http://planboard.it/f50eeb0a-90bd-48fa-b438-7283646aac14>

Lesson 2: Basic Combinations

<http://planboard.it/ed254720-4217-4902-964a-5e1cd26b3bc7>

Lesson 3-4: Student Exploration & Creation

<http://planboard.it/8c141c7a-5d3e-4873-ba13-d41e84b1fa8e>

Lesson 5: Student Exploration & Creation Share Out

<http://planboard.it/b4dbcd15-166f-49b8-9819-c239ece9fe81>

### Madonna Percussion Unit *Extended Unit for Advanced Dancers*

Lesson 1: This is Madonna (Freestyle Friday)

<http://planboard.it/cd8cc438-6c87-4cf1-a8ba-dc84d1a60a1d>

Lesson 2: Vogue Intro (Part A) <http://planboard.it/36d230d2-7c05-49bd-af4a-9017ff154b93>

Lesson 3: Vogue Intro (Part B)

<http://planboard.it/3b151faf-67e1-4a36-9611-eef064f08d70>

Lesson 4: Vogue Outro (Part A)

<http://planboard.it/ccd6a9e5-68bf-4f02-aa9d-da9b4001eb23>

Lesson 5: Vogue Outro (Part B)

<http://planboard.it/c75eb9d6-521b-43b1-b7c3-e2b95611b4f3>

Lesson 6-9: Student Small Group Choreography

<http://planboard.it/fc1dce24-01ae-4390-8877-f589672ca1d2>

Lesson 10: Student Small Group Choreography Share Out

<http://planboard.it/4c568d2f-edf4-446f-9a7f-46ec37051602>

Lesson 11-15: Class Dance Composition, Blocking & Practice

<http://planboard.it/260e84b2-dd7e-4e77-8639-c236622caa8b>

## **Assessment**

Assessment for both unit plans are process-based and holistic. Students will identify their progress in the course as a whole by assessing themselves on a Learning Map (see below). Students will make reference to learning evidence that they have collected throughout the term in their journal entries and/or their online student portfolios. At the end of the term, students will speak to their creative process and learning journey at their term-end exit interview.

## **Works Cited**

Turino, Thomas. *Music as Social Life - The Politics of Participation*. The University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Christopher Small (1999) Musicking - the meanings of performing and listening. A lecture, Music Education Research; 1:1, 9-22, DOI: 10.1080/14613809900190102

Hargreaves, David J, et al. "Music Education in the Twenty-First Century: a Psychological Perspective." B. J. Music Ed, 20 Feb. 2003, pp. 154–156., doi:10.1012/S0265051703005357.

## **Related Website Material**

Body Percussion Warm-Up Example Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INbZLgq5Oy0>

Seated Body Percussion Choreography

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2-GP6LV8DM>

Interesting Percussion Dude in Spanish

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bauBhGtniq4>

Body Percussion History Prezi

<https://prezi.com/ne9mufjlrv7/body-percussion-the-history/>

Stomp Live clapping video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0XdDKwFe3k>

Body Percussion Information Site

<https://hubpages.com/entertainment/Body-percussionthe-art-of-utilizing-the-human-body-to-create-sounds-and-rhythms>

Wikipedia Page for Body Percussion

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body\\_percussion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_percussion)