

Kaitlyn Hardiman | Session 3:

Diggin' Up the Roots: African Dance (Movement)

List of Required Supplies:

- Open space to move
- Speaker system for music
- Reflection/exit ticket either printed or on laptops

Additional Links:

Optional Playlist:

- *U'Mbulu Song*, The Beating Heart of Africa
- *Iyo Djeli*, Oumou Sangaré
- *Dundunba*, Ballet Warraba
- *Djembe Dance*, Audio Skyway
- *Kalikan Tinya*, Ballet Warraba
- *Oya (Primitive Fire)*, Babatunde Olatunji
- *Lamban*, Palms Down
- *Mendiani*, Mamady Keita
- *Djole*, Mamady Keita
- *Beat the Drum, Soukouss Ta: African Drums and Music*

These are suggestions for your convenience in planning. However, each class will need different tempos per exercise depending on their level. Therefore, musical choice for this curriculum is up to the teacher to choose based upon the ability of their students.

All songs can be found on Spotify

Space/Facility Requirements: A clear, open room with ample space for students to spread out and travel.

Student Time Required: 30-35 minutes for movement; 10-15 minutes for reflection questions

Step-by-step Instructions:

1. Find the rhythm exercise
 - a. As we learned in the previous lesson, African dance movements rely heavily on the instrumentation that is being played, so it's important for dancers to be able to find the beat of the music.
 - b. For this exercise, students will begin to learn to find the rhythmic pulse of the music being played, as well as begin to identify counts in the music
 - i. Begin by:
 1. Have students stand, and walk in place to the beat of the song that is being played (try to play music in 4/4 for simplicity of this exercise)
 2. Once students are walking together on beat, have students continue walking in place, but clap on beat one.
 - a. Continue clapping on beat 1, 6-8 times.
 3. Add clapping on count 1 and 5.
 - a. continue clapping on beats 1 and 5, 6-8 times.
 4. Begin mixing up when students clap and how many times, allowing them to repeat the pattern 6-8 times.
Example claps on beats:
 - a. 1, 5, 8
 - b. 1, 2, 4, 7
 - c. For more advanced rhythms, add + counts to the patterns
 - ii. Once students are getting the hang of finding the different clapping patterns while walking in place, continue the same exercise but allow them to travel throughout the room in their walks.
2. Warm-up/center - have students find their own personal space, spread out throughout the room.
 - a. Have students stand with their feet about shoulder width apart, slight bend in their knees, and hands loose by their sides

*(*Note: In African dance, knees will mostly always be slightly bent. Stance is a more relaxed position than strict parallel/turned out**)*

- i. Play music that can be routinely counted in an 8.
- ii. Movement 1
 1. Step forward on the right foot (finding full foot on the ground w/bent knee) - 1, 2
 2. Place right foot back to neutral - 3, 4
 3. Repeat (5-8)
 4. Repeat movement to the side x2 (1-8)
 5. Repeat movement to the back x2 (1-8)
 6. Repeat side again (1-8)
 7. Repeat whole movement to the left
 8. Repeat whole movement on both the left and right in double time
- iii. Movement 2 (immediately after above sequence):
 1. Alternate above movement right and left 8 times
 - a. Right forward, Counts - 1, 2
 - b. Neutral counts - 3, 4
 - c. Left forward, counts - 5, 6
 - d. Neutral counts - 7, 8
 - e. Repeat a-d stepping side
 - f. Repeat a-d stepping back
 - g. Repeat whole sequence above (front, side, back) with arms
 - i. Front: Opposite arm as leg swings forward
 - ii. Side: Both arms sway to the side (like a bird) when stepping out and passing through a prayer position on the in

- iii. Back: Both arms raise above the head when stepping out, and to knees on the in (keep legs sinking low)
 - h. Repeat whole sequence double time, two times through
- b. Teach students the basic position in African dance.
 - i. Feet are at a wide stance with knees slightly bent with pelvis slightly tilted back and chest slightly pushed open (feet are neither parallel nor turned out)
- c. In the basic African dance position, students will continue warming up using isolations
 - i. Head Isolations:
 1. Look over right shoulder -count 1
 2. Look center - count 2
 3. Look over left shoulder - count 3
 4. Look over right shoulder - count 4
 5. Repeat
 6. Double time movement, skipping center, looking right and left for 8 counts
 7. Repeat same sequence as A-F by looking up and down
 8. Head roll to the right 8 counts
 9. Head roll to the left 8 counts
 10. Repeat right and left in halftime
 11. Look to the right and take a step with the right foot - count 1
 12. Look center and bring the left leg to meet the right - count-2
 13. Repeat 4 times (You should be moving towards stage right with each step)
 14. Repeat the above moving towards the left

15. Repeat moving towards the right x2
 16. repeat moving towards the left x2
 17. Repeat right and left x1
 18. Repeat the whole traveling sequence left and right again but add a corresponding arm with the leg. Arm should move from a down, up (shoulder height), down pattern with each arm moving like a wave/bird with each step.
 - a. Last step should end in the neutral position before starting next sequence
- ii. Ribs isolations (Remind students that rib and hip isolations are very prominent in African dance.)
- a. Rib isolations moving back and front on each count for 8 counts
 - b. Repeat moving side to side for 8 counts
 - c. Push ribs front-count 1, back center-count 2, right side-count 3, center-count 4, back-count 5, center count-6, left side-count 7, center count 8
 - d. Repeat pattern going towards the left
 - e. Repeat double time
 - f. Repeat the same traveling steps moving to the sides as the above head isolations but replace with rib isolations. After first set is complete, add the same arm for the second time through
1. Hip isolations
- a. Repeat same sequence of rib isolations but using the hips (a-e)
 - b. Repeat the same traveling sequence as head and ribs. Each step out, pelvis with shift back. When feet come together, pelvis comes neutral.

- i. Instead of adding arms the second time through, have students place hands on their hip flexors, so that the arms make a triangular shape. One each step out, have students squeeze scapulas together, bringing elbows towards the back, and push the ribs forward while hips shift back. When feet come back together, scapulas release, elbows are pointing towards the sides, and ribs are neutral.

3. Across the floor:

- a. Have students line up in rows, to move across the floor from stage left to stage right, moving one group at a time.
- b. Small jumps
 - i. Have students start in a neutral foot position facing the front of the room, with knees slightly bent. The jump will begin by picking up the right foot, only an inch or two from the ground (keep feet relaxed), jump onto right foot while picking up the left and traveling towards Stage right. Place left foot back next to right and repeat jump again.
 1. The goal of this jump is to travel across the room but staying grounded in the jump. The intention is not for the jump to be big, but to stay as small and close to the ground as possible.
 - ii. Repeat this jump again moving from stage right to stage left, starting by picking up the left foot.
- c. Making jumps slightly larger
 - i. Now have students make the jumps as big as they can with their legs (similar to a parallel pas de chat motion in ballet), but keep the upper body hinged forward and have students land in a big plié and repeat across the floor. Arms can float forward and meet at the wrist (in an x) while in the air, then float back down to sides when landing.

- ii. Repeat going to the other side
- d. Pulses
 - i. Still moving across the floor, have students face the direction they are traveling (stage right).
 - ii. Staying low, with knees bent and body loosely hinged forward, begin by taking a large step with the right leg to the right diagonal (large meaning the foot will come up towards the knee before stepping out), followed by a smaller step with the left to meet the right, then another small step on the right (Counts are 1, and, 2).
 - 1. While doing that foot pattern, arms will loosely press downward every time the right foot steps out. In addition, the ribs and pelvis should be free to roll (like a wave)
 - iii. Repeat traveling step to the left on counts 3, and, 4
 - iv. Moving towards the right diagonal, step out right, bring left together x4. (Counts 5, and, 6, and, 7, and, 8, and,)
 - 1. You should be stepping on right foot on the counts and left foot on the ands)
 - 2. While doing this step, have both hands make a triangle shape starting at the chest, on each count stepping out arms will push upwards at the diagonal, then back to the check on the and counts.
 - a. Again, make sure ribs are freely moving while taking the steps.
 - 3. Repeat pattern on the left
 - 4. Repeat both sides until they reached the other side of the room
 - 5. Repeat moving from stage right to stage left
- 4. Exit ticket questions: (These questions can either be asked as a conversation with the class or used as an exit ticket for students to independently answer.)

- a. Question 1: At what level did most of the African based movements occur? (low, medium, high)
 - i. Explain specifics from the class that made you think this.
- b. What parts of the body played an important role in the African movement?
- c. Should the upper body and arms be stiff or loose while executing the movements?
- d. What movements would you describe as sharp vs. smooth in African dance?
- e. Compare and contrast this movement to what you learned about Master Juba's dances.