

Young Audiences of Massachusetts Educational Materials

Please forward to teachers

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The ancient art of Kathak is one of the eight forms of Indian classical dance. Its name comes from the Sanskrit word for “story.” Kathak dancers use rapid footwork and graceful gestures to tell traditional Indian stories and perform irresistible rhythms and captivating choreography and improvisation. Through movement, music and math (yes, math!) a dancer from the Chhandam Institute of Kathak Dance (Chhandika) will also perform “Kathak Yoga” - a technique which unifies the recitation of taal (rhythm), the singing of a melody and the dancing of complex footwork and rapid spins. Throughout the program, students will use mathematics to help the dancer keep time, and a few volunteers will get to learn some basic Kathak dance steps.

Chhandika: Kathak, North Indian Classical Dance

Grade levels: K-12

LEARNING GOALS:

1. To explore elements of the dynamic art of Kathak, North Indian classical dance and its four key elements: Tayari (powerful technique), Layakari (deep understanding of rhythm), Khubsoorti (beauty and grace) and Nazakat (subtly in movement and expression) in an accessible and age-appropriate manner.
2. To engage young audiences in experiencing the history, philosophy, story telling and rhythm of Kathak as well as the traditional and improvisational aspects through performance, demonstration and participation.
3. To foster an appreciation for and connection to the dynamism, imagery, physicality, relevance and universality of the art of Kathak across age, culture and disciplines, emphasizing values and traditions from my own training such as the power of hard work, discipline, overcoming fear, taking chances, confidence, creativity, improvisation, positive attitude, possibility and joy.

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Kathak, North Indian Classical Dance*

Talk about India – where it is on the map, point out different regions, find Lucknow, Jaipur, Kolkata (Calcutta) and Mumbai (Bombay). Lucknow and Jaipur are where Kathak originated.

Inform them that they will be seeing Kathak, which is an ancient storytelling dance that changed over hundreds of years and now also includes rhythm, footwork, movement and spins.

Have them watch the 30th Anniversary video at www.kathak.org and other videos in the Video section to get a flavor of Kathak and the style that Chhandika performs.

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Seva (Service to society) and “Upaj” (improvisation/creativity)*

Seva means selfless sacrifice. It means thinking about someone else and what they might be going through and what they might need instead of only thinking about ourselves. This is important for children at any age. The first lesson is to always take care of your needs so that you are able to help others.

Regardless of age group, have students write down one thing they promise to do to take care of themselves and one thing they will do to help someone else, even if just once (i.e. get your mom/dad a glass of water after they come home from work, help a friend, neighbor, teacher with a task, etc. They

will come up with many ideas! Teachers can help them with ideas on how to do some of these things as well or create a class project out of it. How can art/dance/music be used to help others?

Upaj means “from the heart” and refers to the idea of improvisation. Students can work alone or in groups to improvise or create stories, skits (without words) or rhythms based on any theme they choose and perform it for the class. Since they may learn the 16 beat rhythm cycle you could have them use that rhythm as a base. Anything that sparks their creativity – even if not dance – that they feel good about creating and sharing. Just have fun and maybe try something new even if a little scary (lessons in overcoming fears)!

You could also sit/stand in a circle and have everyone clap/tap a basic beat and have the teacher lead or have everyone go around in the circle and take turns creating a rhythm that everyone copies. Everyone maybe gets a certain number of beats to create a rhythm. Older students can elaborate more and do some rhythm exchanges.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Dance, Music, Theater, Visual Arts, English Language Arts, Foreign Languages, Health & Physical Education, Invention, History/Social Science/Asian-Pacific Studies, Multicultural studies

PRE-ACTIVITY: Kathak, North Indian Classical Dance

LEARNING GOAL: To engage young audiences in experiencing the history, philosophy, story telling and rhythm of Kathak as well as the traditional and improvisational aspects through performance, demonstration and participation.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION: Map of World, Regional map of India, ability to play YouTube video
TIME: 15 mins

STEP 1: Talk about India – where it is on the map, point out different regions, find Lucknow, Jaipur, Kolkata (Calcutta) and Mumbai (Bombay). Lucknow and Jaipur are where Kathak originated.

STEP 2: Inform them that they will be seeing Kathak, which is an ancient storytelling dance that changed over hundreds of years and now also includes rhythm, footwork, movement and spins.

STEP 3: Have them watch the 30th Anniversary video at www.kathak.org (opening video) and other videos in the Video section to get a flavor of Kathak and the style that Chhandika performs.

STEP 4: Ask them to write or describe something they observed or learned from the video

STEP 5: Ask them to write down a question they have that they may get to ask

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) Watch additional videos on www.kathak.org
- 2) Talk about classical versus folk or pop music and dance.

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: Seva (Service to society) and “Upaj” (improvisation/creativity)

LEARNING GOALS: To engage young audiences in experiencing the history, philosophy, story telling and rhythm of Kathak as well as the traditional and improvisational aspects through performance, demonstration and participation.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

Seva - Place to write down ideas of students

Upaj – Space to sit or stand in circle

TIME: 5-60 minutes

Seva

STEP 1: Decide on whether you will be discussing Seva and creating a platform for students to explore self-care and service to others/a class project/a community art project/other

STEP 2: Have students individually or in pairs/groups brainstorm ideas for Seva

STEP 3: Review ideas

STEP 4: Ask students what they need to do one thing for themselves and one thing for others

STEP 5: Follow up with students

Upaj – stories or rhythm

STEP 1: Choose or have the class choose a story theme to develop a skit around

STEP 2: Break into groups and see if they can come up with a skit that stays in a rhythm without using words (can be improvised or crafted)

STEP 3: Share with the larger group

STEP 4: Ask everyone to make one observation about what they see and ask creators to describe their process

STEP 5: Ask what they learned/gained by doing this and see if they want to share these thoughts through an artistic medium (write, speak, paint, dance, etc.)

Or Rhythm...

Have students sit/stand in a circle. Everyone starts out clapping together to set the beat and speed.

For older groups if everyone keeps the rhythm then one person at a time can take turns creating rhythms for 4, 8 or 16 counts each. Try to stay in the 16 beat rhythm cycle they will learn in the assembly. It becomes fun and tricky for older groups.

For younger ages you can have one person create rhythms and the rest of the group follows. Take turns as you like.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) Explore storytelling, rhythm and dance – watch additional videos, attend a Chhandika or Chhandam dance performance, invite Chhandika back for a workshop or residency
- 2) Explore ways we can communicate without words
- 3) Start a class/community arts project, document/video/share

RESOURCES:

History, videos, photos, events and other information available on the following sites:

www.chhandika.org (MA and New England area institution, founded by Gretchen Hayden)

www.kathak.org (Main school in CA, founded by Pandit Chitresh Das)

www.anjali-nath.com (Website for senior performer, Anjali Nath)

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS:

The Chhandam Institute of Kathak Dance (Chhandika) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to kathak dance. Based in Massachusetts, Chhandika is affiliated with the Chhandam Chitresh Das Dance Company in San Francisco, California, as well as the Nritya Bharati Institute in Kolkata, India. Chhandika provides a stimulating, supportive and multi-cultural environment in which to explore the physical, intellectual and spiritual benefits of kathak dance as a student, professional practitioner or curious observer.

Chhandika is dedicated to maintaining and contributing to the rich tradition of kathak dance, a classical storytelling art from North India. Chhandika offers classes for men, women, and children of all ages; enriches the community through performances and demonstrations; and fosters personal growth and cultural exploration through its workshop and outreach activities.

Anjali Nath is the senior performer for Chhandika and is thrilled to be sharing the art of kathak with the young audiences of Massachusetts. Anjali is a senior disciple of Ms. Hayden and Pandit Das and one of the most dynamic artists of a new generation of Kathak soloists. Known for her swift chakkars (spins), crisp footwork and delicate abhinaya (gesture), Anjali's solo performances are rooted deeply in the kathak tradition and dazzling to watch.

Anjali holds a Masters in Public Health from Boston University and a B.A. in Psychology from Tufts University. She has passionately pursued her career in Kathak and public health simultaneously for over

14 years working with communities and engaging youth in leadership and activities to improve self-esteem and overall health and well-being.

Anjali believes in the art as a vehicle for service to society and a path to self-awareness available to everyone. As an artist and teacher Anjali strives to highlight the relevance, universality, and overall benefits of the multi-faceted art of Kathak regardless of age, gender or culture.

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES:

Young Audiences of Massachusetts (YAMA) 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 been serving as a link between teaching artists and the region's school children, providing dance, storytelling, music and theater programs to children in schools, libraries and hospitals in the form of assembly performances, workshops and residencies. The organization's mission is to encourage lifelong engagement with the arts by making them an integral part of every child's education.