



## Dance Workshop Study Guide

**“I believe that dance came from the people and should always be delivered back to the people” ~ Alvin Ailey (1931-1989)**

The **Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey (KCFAA) Dance Workshop** is an engaging experience for students grades K through 12. The workshop’s main emphasis continues Mr. Ailey’s vision of bringing dance to the community by exposing students to the art of modern dance and by providing artistic opportunities for students to make learning connections through the arts.

Students will receive information on Alvin Ailey, the components of dance, learn basic dance movement and vocabulary. In addition, particular techniques and methods for learning will be utilized to teach students about the importance of focus and effort as it relates to building skill, memorization, sequencing, work ethic, stamina, determination, and artistic expression.

### General Outcomes for Students

*We wish for students to:*

- Learn the elements of dance: Body, Action, Space, Time, Energy.
- Demonstrate teamwork, while working with others in the dance environment.
- Understand the directions of movements.
- Demonstrate the changing of levels throughout movements.
- Perform proper pathways introduced in the lesson.
- Use dance vocabulary introduced in the lesson.
- Develop a greater awareness of techniques and methods to assist learning.
- Receive a positive dance experience.
- Increase their knowledge of the arts, Alvin Ailey and dancers and to develop skills of perception and communication.

### Teacher Information

Please prepare students by informing them that they will participate in a movement workshop. Collect knowledge from this study guide to discuss with students before, during, and after the workshop. Connect the arts across the curriculum by freely adapting this study guide to fit your needs.

### Meet the Teaching Artists

#### **Michael Joy - Director of Artistic and Educational Programs**

Michael began dance training at age twenty-one as a certificate/scholarship student at The Ailey School in New York City. By age twenty-four Michael was dancing professionally with several New York based dance companies including Ailey II, under the artistic direction of Sylvia Waters. Shortly before Alvin Ailey’s death in 1989, Michael was personally asked by Mr. Ailey to join Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT), making him the last dancer to join the Ailey Company under Mr. Ailey’s direction. Mr. Joy continued with AAADT under the artistic leadership of Judith Jamison until 1997 when he became an original cast member of the Tony Award winning Broadway musical, *The Lion King*. Mr. Joy has choreographed several local musical productions including *RENT*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Smokey Joe’s Café*, *Dream Girls*, *Chicago*, *In The Heights*, *The Adams Family*, *Babes In Arms*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *The Wiz*, *Into The Woods*, *Seussical*, and *Anything Goes*.

#### **Elaina Levingston - Master Teaching Artist**

Elaina Levingston is a Kansas City, MO native. Ms. Levingston is very versatile in her dance forms and styles. She is trained in Modern, Ballet, Jazz, Hip Hop, Tap, African, and certified in Yoga. Elaina has participated in workshops with well-known choreographers such as Debbie Allen, Shayne Sparks, John Silver, Jamaica Craft, Cleo Parker Robinson, Anna Maria Forsythe, Theo Jamison and Chris Tyler. She is an AileyCamp alumnus (2001), and has taught dance for AileyCamp in Kansas City, Mo and in Chicago, IL. Ms. Levingston has international credentials from a 4 month 15 city tour in China, with the international girl group FEME, and danced on tour in Italy, with the international star Sunni Stephens. She had the great opportunity of performing on stage at the Chicago Theatre for “America’s Got Talent” in 2011 and graced the stage with Grammy winning superstar Beyoncé’, for the debut of “Run the World” on “Oprah’s Surprise Spectacular”, in Chicago, IL and also at the Billboard Music Awards in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2011. She has performed in choreographic works by the well-known Frank Gatson and has worked with HipHop, R&B artist including Tyrese, Jeremiah and Tech 9. She was also a principle dancer for the 2013 IMAX feature film “Dhoom3”. Elaina Levingston received her BFA in Dance from Columbia College Chicago in 2012. Currently, she is employed as Master Teaching Artist at Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey.

## Alvin Ailey

Alvin Ailey (1931-1989) was an African-American choreographer who founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York City. He is credited with popularizing modern dance and revolutionizing African-American participation in 20th-century concert dance. His company gained the nickname "Cultural Ambassador to the World" because of its extensive international touring. Ailey's choreographic masterpiece *Revelations* is believed to be the best known and most often seen modern dance performance. Mr. Ailey received several honors and awards during his life, including the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP and the Kennedy Center Honors. In 2014, President Barack Obama selected Ailey to be a posthumous recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

## Elements of Dance

The Elements of Dance are the foundational concepts and vocabulary that help students develop movement skills and understand dance as an artistic practice. The acronym BASTE helps students remember the elements:

- **Body** [What We Move]
- **Action** [What the Movement Is]
- **Space** [Where We Move]
- **Time** [When We Move]
- **Energy** [How we Move]

This framework is a way to discuss any kind of movement. While different dance styles call for specialized skills and stylization choices, the underlying elements of dance are visible in all dance experiences. These five elements are inter-connected and at times may be difficult to separate one from the other.

## Elements of Dance Activity

Discuss the elements with the class, then have students demonstrate the concepts of B.A.S.T.E. For example, call out "Show me low!", "How can you make the body go high?", "Show walking, skipping, etc.", "Use your fingers and show fast." "Show me stretching. Use some of the examples below and have students examine and demonstrate how each element can be manipulated to create different results.

- **Body shape:** curving, angling, twisting the body parts: arms, legs, head, feet, hands, torso
- **Action locomotor:** walk, run, leap, hop, skip, gallop, slide (anything that moves from one point to another) other action: following and leading
- **Space levels:** low, medium, high **direction:** forward, backward, diagonal, sideways **focus:** straight, curved, open, closed, peripheral
- **Time tempo:** fast, medium, slow with or without music long/short patterned/counted
- **Energy quality:** strong, light, sharp, smooth, soft, sudden, sustained, free, bound

## Mighty Movers

One theory about the word "muscle" is that it comes from a Greek expression meaning, "to enclose," because layers of muscle enclose the body. There are more than six hundred muscle groups in the human body. The muscles that you can see on the body's surface are called "landmarks". You can find pictures that show these landmarks, such as the deltoids, triceps, biceps quadriceps, etc. Just like other athletes, dancers' muscles are well defined.

Muscles make up about 40 percent of the weight of a man and about 30 percent of the weight of a woman. The *Blood and Guts* book [see *Resources* on page 4] lists two amazing facts:

- If all the muscles in the body could pull in one direction in one mighty heave, the force would equal 25 tons.
- The average person's muscles do daily work amounting to loading 24,000 pounds onto a four-foot-high shelf. Think about that over a lifetime.

## Move and Remember

[Concentration, Sequencing, Physical Memory] Have each student make up three different "classroom-sized" movements that can be connected into a combination, or movement sequence. For example: both arms start stretched above the head; arms drop even with the shoulders (a "T") with palms up, then both elbows bend and palms touch shoulders, elbows straighten back to "T" position. Working in partners, each student repeats his/her own combination while watching the other student repeat theirs. The challenge is to be able to concentrate and not "pick up" the partner's combination. Do this several times with different partners. Next, combine into groups of four students. Have each student learn the other three combinations. Then, as a group, they put together all four combinations into one 12-count combination. (NOTE: Some of the movements may need to be altered slightly in order to connect to the next set of three.) Ask the group to rehearse their combination until they can do it without error. Finally, the group demonstrates their combination to the rest of the class and then they watch while the class tries to repeat their combination. The students in the performing group serve as "judges". Was any student able to perform the combination with only one viewing?

## Contour Drawing

Contour drawing means drawing only the outside edge of a thing—an outline. Students can quickly do a contour drawing of their hand; place one hand, with fingers spread apart, on a paper and draw around it. By questioning, you can help them discover that this drawing doesn't show whether or not the person is wearing rings (at least not what kind) or where the knuckles, scars, wrinkles and lines come, or whether the hands are clean or dirty. A contour drawing only talks about edges, but it can be very useful. It speaks of shape, size, and sometimes spacing. Rembrandt made telling contour drawings. So do a number of cartoonists and commercial designers.

Have each student gather three to five objects between the size of an eraser and a pair of scissors. They can probably find them in their desks, pockets or book bags; or, several days before you do contour drawing, ask them to bring in some small objects like juice cans, bottle tops, shells, spools, toothbrushes. To reinforce the concept of contour, the students will draw around these objects repeatedly, to create a design or pattern. It is most fun to use wrapping paper or butcher paper so they can draw long lines of shapes moving across the paper in a variety of ways.

This experience provides the opportunity to talk about and arrange shapes to convey a visual idea, just as every artist does. With organization, an artist and a dancer/choreographer attempt to bring different units together to create a satisfying whole. Some of the principles of organization in both visual art and dance are **balance** (symmetrical, asymmetrical, radial), **unity with variety**, **movement**, and **spacing**. Although the principles overlap in actual practice and cannot be separated, it is less confusing for the student if one is emphasized at a time and their relatedness unfolds naturally.

How much space do you fill? Can you fill a lot of space? The space you don't fill with your body is still space—it is called *negative space*. How little space can you occupy? Can two people occupy the same space? Where is the negative space in their connection? Can we move around the room in our own paths without colliding? How important is the negative space? The answers to these questions about space are of vital importance to anybody who has ever had to fill a stage with “presence,” or for a member of a basketball team working in conjunction with other players in the carefully delineated space of a playing court. The use of space, spatial relationships, and negative space are part of the dance workshop.

To experiment with **spacing** and **unity with variety** in a non-movement way, have students fold a paper in half horizontally, then in half vertically, so when opened it has four equal boxes. Pick one shape and draw around it in the same way in the same spot in each rectangle. Ask them if this repetition would tend to get boring after five or six pages. How could they vary it? Choose another shape of a different size, and draw it next to or over part of the first shape, in all four boxes. Try a third shape if needed. A pattern occurs, giving a kind of unity with variety. This makes it possible for us to look at two or three different kinds of objects at one time because of the structure and order in which they occur.

Encourage students to notice the effects of *negative space*! They can see negative space in the patterns of their **contour** drawings as well as in their **unity with variety** drawings.

**Resources:** Barlin, Anne and Paul. *The Art of Learning Through Movement*, 1971.

**Attention Teachers and Students:** We would like to read essays and poems, view and listen to video and/or audio-tapes, and receive artwork and photographs resulting from activity choices made after your dance workshop. Send to: *Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey, School Programs*, 1714 East 18th Street, Kansas City, MO 64108; E-mail: michael@kcfaa.org