



RAGAMALA DANCE COMPANY

WRITTEN IN WATER

STUDY GUIDE



ORDWAY | Education

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RAGAMALA DANCE COMPANY

CAN YOU
IMAGINE

Welcome to Ordway Education! We are thrilled that you chose to share an Ordway experience with your students. We have a fantastic line-up this year designed to create unforgettable arts learning opportunities. Nearly 60,000 students will join you this year and have shared, dynamic experiences interacting with the performing arts in your classrooms and on our stages.

We invite you to take a look at the unique work our partnership with Soultouch Productions is doing in and with the community through the Taking our Place Centerstage Initiative. More at Ordway.org/topc

We would love to hear from you. Let us know how we might be able to enhance or support your performing arts education this year. Contact us at education@ordway.org.

Enjoy the show!



Kelli Foster Warder
Director of Education and Producing Associate

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Coming to the Performance: For Teachers

Before the Performance:

- Please include all students, teachers, chaperones, and accommodation requests in your ticket order.
- Order buses to arrive at the Ordway 15-20 minutes prior to your performance start time.
- Performance Length: 60 minutes long. Plan bus pick-up time accordingly.
- Please be aware of your bus number so the Ordway staff can better direct you once the performance is over.
- Inform students that there is no food, drink, or gum allowed in the theater.
- Remember to turn off all cell phones or electronic devices before the performance begins.
- This performance will not have an intermission.

While at the Ordway:

Entrance and Seating

- There are no physical tickets distributed for school performances.
- Performances are general admission; groups will be seated by seating chart upon arrival.
- Please allow ushers to seat your entire group, then you can rearrange students, and take groups to the bathroom, etc.
- The Ordway takes into consideration accommodation requests, group size, and grade level. For specific questions regarding seating, please contact educationsales@ordway.org.

In the theater

- In case there is a medical emergency notify the nearest usher who will call the paramedic on duty.
- If an item is lost while your group is still at the Ordway please see an usher. If your group is no longer at the Ordway please contact the Stage Door at 651.282.3070.
- After the performance, please stay in your seat until your school has been dismissed from stage. Ordway staff will be stationed outside with bus order lists to help you find your buses. Often we have multiple buses for one school. Therefore, please remember your bus number.

After Leaving the Ordway:

- Please return the survey in the back of the study guide. All comments, feedback, and suggestions are appreciated!
- Fill out and return the bus reimbursement form in the performance study guide or online to receive your schools bus reimbursement.



Coming to the Performance: For Teachers

Accessibility:



The Ordway has an accessible entrance, accessible and family restrooms, provides accessible seating, and service animals are welcome.

Please see an Ordway staff member for noise-canceling headphones or assisted listening devices. Access services are available for school performances upon request with **at least two weeks advance notice**, including American Sign Language interpretation, audio description, or open captioning.

We will do our best to work with you to ensure access for all students to our school performances and programming activities.

Please contact educationsales@ordway.org with any questions.

Lunches:

The Ordway is unable to accommodate groups wishing to eat lunch in the building before or after a performance. There are, however, several locations nearby which may be able to accommodate your group:

- Rice Park—just across the street from the Ordway, Rice Park is a great space to eat lunch on warm days.
- Landmark Plaza—down the street from the Ordway, next to Landmark Center, another great spot for warm days.
- Landmark Center—next to the Ordway, bordering Rice Park. Spaces available for rent in advance: www.landmarkcenter.org
- George Latimer Central Library—next to the Ordway, bordering Rice Park.

Spaces available for groups under 70 people: <https://sppl.org/meeting-rooms>

Drop Off and Parking:

Buses

Bus drop off and pick up is on Washington Street, directly in front of the Ordway. Saint Paul police officers, security staff, Ordway staff, and volunteers will be there to assist you.

Buses are not able to stay on Washington Street during the performance unless specifically directed to do so by Saint Paul police officers.

Buses may park in the Comcast lot (2274 River Park Plaza) or the Sears lot (425 Rice Street).

Cars and Vans

Cars and vans are able to drop off students on Washington Street in front of the Ordway. Cars and vans are not able to park in front of the Ordway during performances and will need to find parking elsewhere. There is street parking around the Ordway in addition to several ramps:

- Landmark Towers Parking Ramp
336 Market Street
www.alliedparkinginc.com/parking/landmark-towers-parking-ramp
- Victory Ramp
344 Wabasha Street North
www.victoryparking.com/pages/victory_ramp
- Rivercentre—Lot #149
150 Kellogg Boulevard West
https://lots.impark.com/imp?utm_source=google&utm_medium=map&s&utm_content=0200149&utm_campaign=local_us#details=20,149
- Science Museum of Minnesota
120 West Kellogg Boulevard
www.smm.org/visit/parking-directions

Coming to the Performance: For Students

Your Role as an Audience Member

Audience members play a special and important role in the performance. The performers are very aware of the audience while they perform and each performance calls for different audience responses.

Lively bands, musicians, and dancers may desire audience members to clap and move to the beat. Other performers require silent focus on the stage and will want an audience to applaud only when they have completed a portion of their performance.

As you enjoy the show, think about being a part of the performance.

- What are the differences between attending a live performance and going to a movie or watching television?
- What are some different types of live performances?
- What kind of responses might an audience give in each circumstance?
- What are the different cues that a performer will give you so that you know how to respond? For example, might they bow or pause for applause?

Also, remember that a hall is designed to magnify sound, and even the smallest whispers or paper rustling can be heard throughout. When you come to the Ordway, you are part of a community of audience members and you all work together to create your performance experience.

Audience Member Checklist (Review at School)

- ☐ Leave your food, drinks, and chewing gum at school.
- ☐ Remember to turn off all cell phones before the performance begins.
- ☐ When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please turn your attention toward the stage.
- ☐ Cameras and other recording devices are not allowed in the theater.
- ☐ Talk before and after the performance only. Remember that not only can those around you hear you, the performers can too.
- ☐ Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage; they will let you know what is appropriate.
- ☐ Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience!
- ☐ After the performance, you will be dismissed when your school is called from the stage. Remember to check around your seat for everything that you brought into the theater.

Schools from all over the region attend the Ordway's student performances. Nearly **60,000** seats were filled by students and teachers last year!

About Ragamala Dance Company



Ashwini and Ranee Ramaswamy. *Photo by Ed Bock.* Ranee and Aparna Ramaswamy. *Photo by Ed Bock.*

Ragamala Dance Company was founded in 1992 by Ranee Ramaswamy. Now in its 26th season, Ragamala is directed by Ranee and her daughter Aparna; Ranee's other daughter Ashwini, a long-time Ragamala **soloist**, has recently joined the creative team as well.

As first generation Indian-American artists, Ranee and Aparna's **aesthetic** is deeply influenced by their cultural identities. In their work, they explore the myth and spirituality of their Indian heritage in order to engage with what they see as the dynamic tension between the historical, the ancestral, and the personal. They approach Bharatanatyam as a living, breathing language with which to speak about the contemporary human experience.

The company has been recognized with awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, National Dance Project, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Japan Foundation/New York, USArtists International, New Music/USA, MAP Fund, American Composers Forum, and two Joyce Awards from the Joyce Foundation.

About Ragamala: Raneer Ramaswamy

Raneer Ramaswamy founded Ragamala Dance Company in 1992 and currently serves as Co-Artistic Director, **Choreographer**, and **Principal Dancer** along with her creative partner (and daughter) Aparna Ramaswamy. As dancemakers and performers, their creative vision merges the rich traditions and deep philosophical roots of their Indian heritage with their hybridic perspective as first generation Indian-Americans.

Raneer's work has merged the classical language of Bharatanatyam with a contemporary Western aesthetic to create timeless pieces that freely move between the past and the present. Her training in Bharatanatyam under iconic dancer/choreographer **Alarmél Valli** in **Chennai**, India, is the bedrock of her creative aesthetic.



Photo by Ed Bock



Photo by Ed Bock

Raneer Ramaswamy was named a Distinguished Artist in 2011 by The McKnight Foundation. To read more about her life and her journey with dance visit:

www.mcknight.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf-5-mb.pdf

About Ragamala: Aparna Ramaswamy



Photo by Ed Bock

Aparna Ramaswamy is Co-Artistic Director, Choreographer, and Principal Dancer of Ragamala Dance Company with her creative partner (and mother) Raneer Ramaswamy.

Born in India and raised both in India and the United States, Aparna studies and performs in Chennai as senior **disciple** and **protégé** of legendary dancer/choreographer Alarmél Valli, while building her own body of work as a dancemaker and performer in the U.S. This cultural hybridity has given her the perspective to approach Bharatanatyam as a living, breathing language through which she creates works that speak to the contemporary experience.

Aparna is currently regarded both in the U.S. and in India as one of the **exemplary** soloists in Bharatanatyam. She is an **empaneled** artist with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and her solo work, with live music, has toured the U.S. and India with support from the National Dance Project and USArtists International. In summer 2018, she premiered a solo work **commissioned** by the

American Dance Festival. She is currently collaborating with **composer**/violinist Colin Jacobsen on a new work commissioned by and for the Silk Road Ensemble, set to premiere in 2019.



*Aparna performing in *They Rose at Dawn*.*

Photo by Ed Bock

About Ragamala: Company Members

Choreographic Associate, Dancer, Director of Marketing and Public Relations

Ashwini Ramaswamy has studied Bharatanatyam with Ragamala Dance Company's Artistic Directors Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy—her mother and sister—since the age of five. She now has the honor of studying under Bharatanatyam legend Alarmél Valli of Chennai, India, one of the greatest living masters of the form. Ashwini is Ragamala Dance Company's Director of Publicity and Marketing, and she holds a degree in English Literature from Carleton College. She currently serves on the board of Arts Midwest.



Dancer, Development and Outreach Director

Tamara Nadel is a founding member and soloist with Ragamala Dance Company. She is a disciple of the company's Artistic Directors, Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy, under whom she has engaged in intensive study of Bharatanatyam since 1994.

Tamara is Ragamala's Development & Outreach Director, and a teacher at the Ragamala School. She holds a degree in Religious Studies and Dance from Macalester College. Tamara served on the City of Minneapolis Arts Commission from 2008-2010, and currently serves on the board of Minnesota Citizens for the Arts.

Dancer

Jessica Fiala is a company member of Ragamala Dance Company and has studied with Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy since 2006. Jessica is a teacher at the Ragamala School and has led and supported outreach activities across the United States for audiences from K-12 students to senior citizens, as well as teaching a 2013 workshop in Bangkok, Thailand.

Jessica holds an interdisciplinary master's degree from the University of Minnesota focused in Museum Studies & Cultural Studies. Jessica is a Program Coordinator at Forecast Public Art and a Research Associate at Lutman & Associates.



About the Performance: Artist Statement

In *Written in Water*, we explore the concept of **spiritual ascension** through the age-old Indian board game **Paramapadam** (a precursor to Snakes & Ladders), the 12th century **Sufi** text ***The Conference of the Birds***, and the Hindu mythological story *Ksheerabthi Madanam*, the churning of the seven seas.

We have drawn upon *The Conference of the Birds* to frame the arc of *Written in Water*. The protagonists of this Sufi epic progress through seven valleys, representing states of being. With *Written in Water*, we mirror their journey through a world of psychological complexity, traversing experiences of spiritual longing, human love, unity with others, detachment from material life, and finally ultimate oneness with the divine.



The onstage band (left) performs along with the dancers in *Written in Water*.

Photo by Three Phase Multimedia.

In the first movement of *Written in Water*, we experience human life, love, and struggle, explored through the framework of the board game Paramapadam. The gameboard serves as a physical and metaphorical framework through which the seekers/dancers navigate snakes and ladders representing the heights of ecstasy and the depths of longing.

In the second movement, we explore the human quest for the divine. The mythological story of *Ksheerabthi Madanam* is a metaphor for a world in chaos. Amidst this dynamic tension between good and evil, **Vishnu** stands for the perfect center toward which humans strive.

In the final movement, we journey toward transcendence—toward unmediated union with the divine.

In developing *Written in Water*, we played the game hundreds of times, using the floor as the board and our bodies as the game pieces. The projected images are from original paintings by Chennai-based visual artist V. Keshav, specially commissioned by Ragamala for this work. *Written in Water* was developed through an ongoing collaboration in which choreography, music, and visual art were constructed simultaneously in an artistic dialogue that spanned four years.

- Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy

***Written in Water* trailer:** <https://vimeo.com/190648252>

Written in Water is commissioned by the Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi (Lead Commissioner) and Opening Nights Performing Arts at Florida State University, and supported by a 2016 Joyce Award from the Joyce Foundation, the Doris Duke Performing Artist Awards program, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, New Music/USA, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, and the Carolyn Foundation.

About the Performance: Bharatanatyam

Using movement, gesture, melody, and rhythm—**Bharatanatyam** (pronounced BAH-rah-tah-NAHT-yam), is India's oldest classical dance tradition. Bharatanatyam dates back more than 2,000 years to the Hindu temples of Tamil Nadu (in southeastern India), where dancers used music and movement to translate mythological themes and stories for the people. It is a living, breathing dance form that has evolved throughout the centuries. In the 1930s, Bharatanatyam moved out of the temples and became a **concert dance form**. Today, dancers and choreographers in India and around the world use Bharatanatyam in innovative ways to create their own work.

The word “*Bharatanatyam*” comes from four words in Sanskrit (an ancient language from India): Bha (*Bhava*, which means expression), Ra (*Raga*, which means melody), Ta (*Talam*, which means rhythm), and *Natyam*, which means dance. It was traditionally a **solo** dance form, performed by women. Today, men and women perform Bharatanatyam, both in solo and **ensemble** productions.



Photo courtesy of Valley Performing Arts Center

The two main aspects of Bharatanatyam are rhythmic dance and expressive dance. In rhythmic choreography—known as **nritta** (NRIT-tah)—dancers perform dynamic, often symmetric, movements with their entire bodies—torso, head, legs, arms, hands, and feet—while they use their bare feet to stamp out rhythms on the floor. Expressive dance—known as **abhinaya** (AH-bee-nah-yah) is the physical expression of emotions and states of being. Dancers use hand gestures, facial expressions, and body movements to tell stories and convey emotions.

Bharatanatyam technique is made up of a vocabulary of rhythms, postures, gestures, and movements which offer a beautiful language that can be used in creative ways. Just as a poet can use words to write their own poetry, a choreographer can use the Bharatanatyam vocabulary to create their own dances.

The dance is **accompanied** by live music: a vocalist singing in an Indian language (usually Tamil, Telugu, or Sanskrit), a melodic instrument (usually a violin or flute), a two-headed drum called a *mridangam* (mrüh-DAHn-gahm), and a **conductor**, who uses small cymbals and vocal percussion to mirror and complement the rhythms of the dancers' feet.

About the Performance: The Instruments

There are a variety of rhythms created by the musical ensemble and by the dancers—the musical instruments, vocals, and the movements of the feet.

Notice the mix of musical styles—South Indian classical music is called **Carnatic** (car-NAH-tik) music, and in *Written in Water*, it is blended with the classical music tradition of Iraq—known as **Maqam** (mah-KAHM)—and also with American jazz influences.

Listen for strong melodies backed by a **drone**, or a note that is held steady.

Written in Water also features **konnakol**. This is a vocal percussion language that is understood by both drummers and dancers. The vocalizations mirror and complement the rhythms of the dancers' feet.

Here are some of the instruments you will see:

Trumpet: a brass musical instrument that consists of a conical and cylindrical metal tube. It is played by buzzing the lips into a mouthpiece. The mouthpiece is cup-shaped and has a flared bell at the bottom for sound. The trumpet has three different keys that are pressed in order to play different notes.



Violin: the smallest member of the string instrument family, the violin has four strings and is held between the shoulder and the chin. It is played by moving a **bow** across the strings or by plucking the strings with the fingers.



Santur: a percussion-stringed instrument developed in Iran and **Mesopotamia**. It is a type of **hammered dulcimer**, meaning it consists of a wooded **sound board** with metal strings stretched across. The strings are plucked or struck with small hammers to create sound.



Mridangam: A double-sided drum made from a hollowed piece of jackfruit wood. Goatskin is stretched taut over the ends and held in place with leather straps. By changing the tension on the leather straps, the musician can change the **pitch** of the drum. The drum usually rests on the musician's legs and is played with one hand on each side.



Nattuvangam: metal cymbals that act as the timekeeper for the music and provide harmony. One cymbal is flat and the other is cup-shaped.



About the Performance: The Movement

Bharatanatyam has 36 fundamental movements that use the dancer's entire body—torso, head, legs, arms, hands, and feet. These movements, called **adavus** (AH-dah-voos), make up the alphabet of rhythmic choreography in Bharatanatyam.

Look for the **araimandi** (AH-rai-mahn-dee) position (half-seated with the dancer's legs bent and knees and feet pointed outward) from which many movements start in Bharatanatyam.

There are 28 single-handed **hastas** (gestures) called Asamyukta Hasta (AH-sahm-yook-tah HAHS-ta) and 24 double-handed hastas called Samyukta Hasta (SAHM-yook-tah HAHS-ta). It takes many, many years to study Bharatanatyam, and children will start as young as age six or seven.

In rhythmic choreography, these gestures are used to beautify the rigor of the line. In expressive choreography, they can have a wide variety of meanings when presented in context with body movements and emotional expression.

Watch this video from dance studio Kalavenue to see the great variety of single-handed hastas used in Bharatanatyam performance: https://youtu.be/Y_vUCoufnws



About the Performance: The Attire

Bharatanatyam dancers wear outfits stitched together from traditional **saris**. This design was created in the 20th century to make it easier for dancers to move freely. The outfit includes a blouse, pants, an upper sash and waist sash, and a pleated fabric that falls in front of the dancer's midline. When the dancer takes a bent-kneed position, the pleats open like the folds of a fan.

Dancers wear anklets called **chalangai** (SHA-lan-gay), pieces of leather sewn with many small metallic bells, to enhance the rhythms of their feet. Experienced dancers have the ability to **modulate** numerous different **percussive** sounds with different parts of the feet. This modulation yields delicate or more impactful sounds from the dancers' bells.

Dancers also wear South Indian temple jewelry, also known as **Araku**—gold-colored pieces embellished with stones made to look like rubies, emeralds, and pearls. A set of temple jewelry consists of long chains, pendants, short necklaces, headpieces, earrings, waist belts, nose pins, and bangles.

Dramatic makeup is carefully applied to dancers' faces—especially around the eyes—to highlight their expressions and subtle yet impactful facial movements. In concert dance, when the audience may be far away from the performer, this helps the audience see the performer's facial features more clearly.

Red dye known as **alta** (AHL-tah) is used to paint the dancers' fingertips and toes. The red color accentuates dancers' hand gestures and foot movements.

This image of Aparna Ramaswamy from *They Rose at Dawn*, demonstrates the intricate detail of a Bharatanatyam dancer's outfit, including the makeup, jewelry, chalangai, alta, and clothing.

Photo by Narendra Dangiya



Vocabulary

abhinaya: expressive dance, used to convey emotions or a story

accompany: a musician who plays live music for a dance or vocal performance

adavus: the basic rhythmic unit of dance within a specific tempo and time structure that involves composite movements pertaining to nritta

aesthetic: a set of principles underlying and guiding the work of an artist

Alarmél Valli: a leading Indian classical dancer and choreographer. Founded the Dipasikha Dance Foundation in Chennai. Performed at the Bolshoi Theatre, the Royal Albert Hall, The Vienna International Dance Festival, among others.

Alta: red dye used to paint the fingertips and toes of Bharatanatyam dancers

Araku: gold jewelry worn by Bharatanatyam dancers that is inspired by traditional temple-jewelry worn in Southern India

araimandi: a common position in Bharatanatyam where the dancer bends their knees into a half-seated position

Bharatanatyam: India's oldest classical dance style, dating back more than 2,000 years

bow: a music tool consisting of a curve shaped stick combined often with horsehair which forms a ribbon stretched between the stick's ends; a bow is used to vibrate the strings of a stringed instrument and create sound

Carnatic music: a classical South-Indian music style that is based in Hindu tradition. Most compositions emphasize vocal performance

chalangai: the anklets worn by Bharatanatyam dancers, usually made of leather with metallic bells sewn on

Chennai: the capital of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The biggest cultural, educational, and economic center in south India.

choreographer: a person that creates the dance steps, patterns, movements, and formations of a dance piece

choreography: the composition and arrangement of dances and dance steps

commission: to pay an artist to create a work of art for a specific event or purpose

composer: a person who writes music

concert dance: dance performed for an audience, oftentimes for entertainment purposes

conductor: a person who directs a musical performance

disciple: a follower or a student of a teacher, leader, or philosopher

drone: a single note that is held steadily during a piece of music

duet: a dance performed by two individuals

empaneled: to become part of a board or panel

ensemble: a group of dancers who perform together

exemplary: excellent; a good example

hammered dulcimer: a percussion-string instrument which consists of strings stretched across a resonant sound board.

hastas: hand gestures in Bharatanatyam; each gesture has a different meaning

improvisation: in this context, dance that is created in the moment, without prior planning by the artist, dancer or musician

interpretation: the meaning drawn from a work of art, such as a dance, song, or painting. Also, a

Vocabulary

particular adaptation or version of a work, method, or style

konnakol: the art of vocal percussion used in South Indian Carnatic music

Maqam music: an Iraqi music genre dating back four-hundred years. The focus is sung poetry accompanied by instrumental music

Mesopotamia: a historical region in Western Asia that roughly corresponds to the modern borders of Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, and Turkey. Many groups of people lived in this region including the Babylonians, Hittites, and Assyrians

modulate: to vary or change something

nritya: pure dance in Bharatanatyam; it reflects the mood of the music without a definite story or plot to the dance

Paramapadam: a board game developed in India that is the precursor to the game Snakes and Ladders (sometimes known as Chutes and Ladders)

percussion: music created by striking an object with a body part or another instrument

pitch: how high or low a sound is

principal dancer: the highest rank in a professional dance company

protégé: a person who is guided and supported by an older and more experienced person

sari: wrapped garments often made from handwoven silk

solo: a dance performed by one individual

sound board: the surface of a string instrument that the strings vibrate against

spiritual ascension: moving to a higher state of consciousness, gaining a deeper understanding of the world

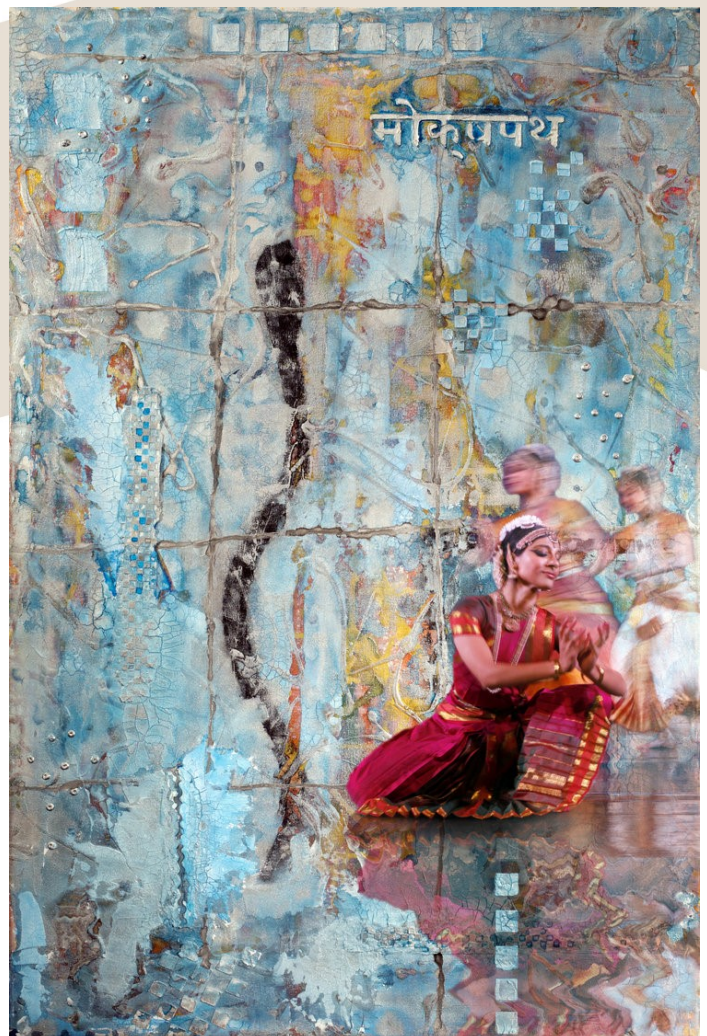
Sufism: a branch of Islamic practice focused on mysticism and seeking to find the truth of divine love and knowledge

The Conference of the Birds: a 12th century literary masterpiece by Sufi poet Farid ud-Din Attar

Vishnu: one of the principle deities in Hinduism, the protector and preserver of the worlds

vocal percussion: the art of creating sounds with one's mouth that imitate a percussion instrument

Photo and artwork by Ed Bock.



Understanding Dance

The Nature of Dance

People have been moving their bodies in patterns to music and rhythms even before there was the word, dance. Dance is often used as a way to express how one is feeling, to socially connect with others, and to have fun!

In what ways have you seen dance used? How do you use dance?

People around the world also use dance to:

- mourn
- celebrate
- worship
- honor
- heal
- demonstrate power
- exercise
- educate
- entertain

A **choreographer** is a person who uses their knowledge of dance to compose the sequence of steps and movements that make up a piece of dance. They bring ideas, themes, and emotions to tell a story through movement. Performed as a **solo**, **duet**, or **ensemble**, dance can be **improvised**, **choreographed** or a combination of both.

Improvised—movement that is created spontaneously or within the moment that it is being performed is improvised.

Choreographed—a planned sequence of movements that utilize the form and structure of dance.

Costumes can also be used to help bring the choreographed dance to life and to help communicate the story. In modern and ballet, costumes are often form-fitting, allowing the audience to see the detailed shapes made by the dancer's body and to highlight the dancer's movements.

What does dance communicate to you?

Dance can be a window into the nuances of cultures and time periods. Dance and rhythmic movement can often be used as a nonverbal way of communicating with other human beings on a social level.

Dance can communicate a:

- story
- purpose
- message
- idea
- visual effect
- emotion
- associations

How do you interpret dance?

Dance does not have a right or wrong **interpretation** to its meaning or purpose. Dance is an art form that can mean something different to everyone who experiences it.

Much of the art that is created is done so to provide a place where discourse can occur. It may be around a meaning or purpose, or simply the dance movement itself. This discourse can either be internalized or to provide an open discussion with those around you. Some art is created just so it can be experienced. Rather than focusing on “getting” a piece of dance, experience the piece and see what impressions it leaves you with.



Understanding Dance

Elements of Dance

Dance is the movement of the human body through space in time using energy. These are often referred to as **BASTE**, the five recognized elements* of dance including: **B**ody, **A**ction, **S**pace, **T**ime, and **E**nergy. It is important to understand each element as they come together to create the whole.

Body refers to the awareness of specific body parts and how they can be moved in isolation and combination.

Action refers to locomotor movement and non-locomotor movement.

- **Locomotor** action includes movement that travels through space such as walking, running, jumping, and leaping.
- **Non-locomotor** or axial action refers to movement with body parts while the main part of the body stays planted in one space. Examples of non-locomotor action are swaying, shaking, stretching, and twisting.

Space refers to the space the dancer's body moves through, the shape of the dancer's body, the direction of the body movements, and the shapes, levels and movement patterns of a group of dancers.

Time is applied as both a musical and dance element which includes beat, tempo, accent, and duration.

Energy refers to the force applied to dance to accentuate the weight, attack, strength, and flow of a dancer's movement.

Movement in the Classroom

By moving in the classroom, you are encouraging students to explore their personal relationship to movement, which in turns broadens and deepens their understanding of dance. Also, embodying each of the BASTE elements helps to make the elements of dance more concrete for your students.

If this is the first time that you have worked with students on movement in your classroom, here are some tips to help your activity be successful!

- Set some collective rules of behavior while the group is moving. These can include keeping hands and feet to yourself, etc.
- Start each part of the activity by demonstrating a movement before asking students to participate.
- Consult your dance or physical education specialist in your building or partner with another teacher who has experience leading students through group movement.



Teaching artist, choreographer, and dancer Karla Nweje, leads students in a dance lesson. Photo: Fourth Grade, Riverview Dance to Learn Residency, 2017-2018

Understanding Dance: Dance in the Classroom

The Dancing Mirror

Description: Introduction to ACTION, one of the basic elements of dance through exploration of locomotor and non-locomotor movements.

Duration: 45 minutes – 1 hour

Objectives:

- Identify locomotor and non-locomotor action
- Develop basic dance vocabulary
- Practice types of action

Materials:

- Open area
- Whiteboard and markers

Directions:

1. Write locomotor and non-locomotor action on the board and read the descriptions of each from the elements of dance action section (page 20)
2. Read through the examples of each type of action as a group and ask students to generate additional examples of each that can be listed on the board underneath the title of each type of action.
3. Ask the students to form a circle with you. Explain to students that they are to be your mirror image. If your hand moves, their hand moves; if your body sways, their body sways, etc. **This step could also be done in two lines facing each other.*
4. Demonstrate a number of examples of action from the board and ask students to name whether the action is locomotor or non-locomotor as they mirror the action.
5. Ask the students to form pairs and each take turns being the leader and the follower.

Discussion:

1. Describe how it felt to perform locomotor action.
2. Describe how it felt to perform non-locomotor action.
3. What was it like to lead your partner?
4. What was it like to follow your partner?
5. What did your movements remind you of, if anything?

Grooving to the Beat

Description: Introduction to Time and Space, two of the basic elements of dance, through beat creation and movement through space.

Duration: 30 – 45 minutes

Objectives:

- Identify and create a beat
- Change tempo of beat and movement
- Move through space to beat

Materials:

- Open area

Directions:

1. Ask the student to create a circle and clap 8 count beats while counting out loud: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
2. Explore variations in tempo by asking students to insert a word after each number such as “Mississippi” for a slow tempo, “art” for a fast tempo, or “dancer” for a medium tempo. I.e. “one, Mississippi, two, etc.”
3. Ask student to divide into two groups: A and B.
4. Ask group A to clap a beat using one of the tempo prompts from the previous step, while group B moves through the space such as stepping on each beat. To give the movement purpose and character, you may want to ask students to move like a certain kind of animal as they move, or as if walking on the moon, through water, etc.
5. Students in group A can experiment with different tempos, prompted by you, as students in group B change their movement to the beat.
6. Ask group A and group B to switch roles.

Discussion:

1. Describe the difference between moving to the beat and creating the beat by clapping. Was one more challenging for you? Why?
2. How did changing the tempo of the beat affect your group’s movement?
3. Describe some of the ways that everyone moved through the space (stepping, high or low levels, etc). What are some other ways that you might move through space to a beat?

Activities & Discussion Questions

Grades 4-12

Storytelling Through Movement

Description: Students will watch a video of a Bharatanatyam performance and interview with the dancer, observing the expressive storytelling of the movements in the dance. Working in pairs they will select a familiar story to work with, devise movements for telling the story, and perform it for the class.

Duration: 2 sessions

Objectives:

- Learn about a classical dance form from India, Bharatanatyam.
- Observe narrative storytelling through movement in Bharatanatyam.
- Create and share a story told exclusively through movement.

Materials:

- Open area for practice
- Computer and projector

Directions:

1. Ask students what they know about dance from India. Ask if they have ever seen it performed or done any themselves. Discuss what they know of narrative dance, which tells a story through movements. Ask if they have observed or performed a narrative dance. Ask what other cultures or types of dancers sometimes perform narrative dances.
2. Show this lecture by Ranee Ramaswamy at the Kennedy Center about Bharatanatyam: <https://youtu.be/GJ2FA8qYgOM?t=206>

(timestamps 3:26 to 27:22). As they are watching, tell them to be on the lookout for storytelling movements in the dance performed.

3. Ask students where they saw storytelling through movement in the video. Encourage students to discuss what they think the dance was communicating.
4. Discuss the fact that Bharatanatyam dances are often based on stories from Hindu scriptures. Ask students what stories they have read that they believe would translate well to movement.
5. Tell students they will be creating a short dance based on a story or a portion of a story. Divide students into pairs to choreograph a short narrative dance.
6. Give students a few minutes to decide on a story line and another 15 minutes to plan and practice their movement story. If students are having difficulties choosing a story or translating it to movement, remind them that a story with a simple plot will be easiest to turn into movement.
7. Gather all students together and have each group share their movement story with the rest of the class. Ask classmates to share what they thought the dance was about. Then ask the storytellers to describe what they were depicting.

Activities & Discussion Questions

Grades 9-12

From Page to Stage

Description: Students will analyze a literary work and identify its main themes, characters, and scenes. They will then adapt these main elements into a live performance.

Duration: 2 sessions

Objectives:

- Review the main elements of a story including plot, main characters, themes, etc.
- Understand how stories are created and adapted for the stage
- Develop an understanding of the different avenues of storytelling

Materials:

- Classroom space
- Internet or library access

Directions:

1. As preparation, review the main elements of a story including plot, characters, setting, and themes.
2. Discuss how Ragamala's *Written in Water* is inspired by the story *The Conference of the Birds*. Most commonly when we think of adapting a written work, we think of a movie or TV series. Discuss other mediums in which a story can be adapted (play, musical, song, dance, poem).
3. Ask students to brainstorm any stories they know that they would like to see adapted into another medium—4-5 different stories. These can be fiction or nonfiction. Then ask them to think about what sort of medium would best

that particular work.

4. Ask students to gather into small groups (3-5 students). Ask them to present their favorite idea to the group and discuss which idea they will continue with.
5. Once each group has decided on one story and the medium they would like to use, ask them to map out the main elements of the story (plot, characters, theme, etc.).
6. It is very difficult to include all elements of a story in an adaptation; ask students to examine the main elements of their story and decide which pieces are integral to maintaining the integrity of the story and which pieces can be cut. Having 4-5 main points will work for a short composition.
7. Give students time to work on their adaptation. It does not have to be a complete work, but it should give the audience an idea of what a complete work would look like.
8. Ask students to present their works for the full class. They should explain their initial story idea, why they chose their specific genre, and how they envision a full work looking.

The Conference of the Birds excerpt available here: <https://pen.org/the-conference-of-the-birds/>

Note from the translator: <https://pen.org/simorgh-thirty-birds-on-translating-farid-ud-din-attar/>

Before the Performance

- What did you notice about the work you created? What did you notice about your classmates' works?
- What was it like collaborating with your partner/group to create a story?
- How did you and your partner/group come up with the pieces of your story?
- What was challenging about creating your story?
- How do you think your work creating the pieces of your story is similar and different from how a professional choreographer creates a dance?
- What do you expect to see at the performance?

**After the Performance**

- How were your predictions of the performance similar to what you saw? How were they different?
- What surprised you about the performance?
- What did parts of the performance remind you of? Do you think this is similar to the story the performers were telling?
- What story do you think the choreographer was trying to tell in the performance?
- If you could ask the dancers about their performance, what would you ask?
- If you could ask the choreographer about the performance, what would you ask?

My Review!

Name: _____

You are a reporter for your school's newspaper!

Write and illustrate a review article to inform others about the performance you just saw.

I observed _____

I learned _____

The music and dancing made me feel _____

The performance reminded me of _____

My favorite part of the show was _____

I wish there was more of _____

My Review!

Name:

Illustrate your article below!

Name your article and illustrate a moment in the show!

Title:

Resources

Local Resources

- Ragamala Dance Company
www.ragamaladance.org
Located in Minneapolis, Ragamala Dance Company also operates Ragamala School where students 7 and up receive classical training in Bharatanatyam.
- Katha Dance Theatre
kathadance.org
Teaching Kathak, a classical dance style of North India, KDT is located in Crystal, MN and is dedicated to making dance accessible, inclusive, and relevant.
- India Association of Minnesota
www.iamn.org/en/
A non-profit organization located in Saint Paul that aims to connect Minnesota with India through events that promote cultural understandings and heritage.

Internet Resources

- Interview with Ragamala Dance Company
<https://youtu.be/TeSf6xnofQ8>
- MN Original on Ragamala Dance Company
<https://youtu.be/Eclm1u5gKkM>
- Ragamala Dance Company Vimeo
<https://vimeo.com/user4217913>
- Ordway Education
Ordway.org/education

Book Resources

- *A True Book—Geographies: Countries: India* by Sunita Apte (2009), grades 3-5
- *DK Eyewitness Books: Dance* by Andre Grau (2005), grades 4-7
- *Dancing: The Pleasure, Power, and Art of Movement* by Gerald Jones and Rhoda Grauer (1998), reference
- *India: A History* by John Keay (2011), grades 10-12

Ragamala Dance Company Performance Evaluation

Thank you for choosing an Ordway school performance for your field trip!
Please take a moment to complete this evaluation following the show.

Please return the evaluation as soon as possible. Your comments and suggestions are greatly valued, as they help us offer you and your students better services in the future. Thank you again!



School Information

School: _____

Your name: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Grades of Students attended: _____

Number of Students attended: _____

Study Guide Review

Which sections of this guide did you use? (*check all that apply*)

- ☐ Coming to the Theater
- ☐ About the Performance
- ☐ Understanding Dance
- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ "My Review!"
- ☐ Activities and Discussion Questions
- ☐ Resources

Please write any comments or suggestions regarding the *Study Guide*:

Which types of resource lists are most useful for you:

- ☐ Websites
- ☐ Local Arts & Cultural Organizations
- ☐ Books

Other Suggestions: _____

Performance Review

How well did the show connect to the classroom? (i.e. curricular areas, graduation standards, social skills, etc.)

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Poor

I rated it this way because...

How well did you feel your students identified with the performance/performers? (i.e. culturally, through the art form, wanted to meet the artist, etc.)

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Poor

I rated it this way because...

Performance Evaluation (cont.)

Experience Review

Rate your overall experience at the Ordway, please explain your answer:

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Poor

I rated it this way because...

Did you and your students feel that your Ordway experience was inclusive and met your needs?

- ☐ Yes ☐ Indifferent ☐ No

Did you or your students utilize any accessibility services during the performance? If so, please indicate which services:

What do you feel the value of Ordway's programming is to your students?

What overall improvements could be made?

Do you see cultural benefits for students attending the Ordway performances? (i.e. learning about the language, tradition, arts, etc. of other cultures)

- ☐ Yes ☐ Indifferent ☐ No

If yes, what cultural benefits do you see?

Do students attend the Ordway school performances:

- ☐ Multiple times a year
- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ Once every few years
- ☐ Other: _____

Please rate the most important factor when deciding to bring your students to the Ordway, **one** being the most important and **four** being the least.

- ___ Multicultural performances
- ___ Ticket Cost
- ___ Bus Reimbursement
- ___ Study Guides
- ___ Other: _____

Any Additional Comments:

- ☐ Please check here if we **DO NOT** have permission to quote or paraphrase your comments or name in future publications or funding proposals.

Please Return to:

Education at Ordway Center

345 Washington Street

Saint Paul, MN 55102

Or email to educationsales@ordway.org

NO LATER THAN 6 WEEKS FOLLOWING THE PERFORMANCE



2019-2020 Ordway Education Bus Reimbursement Form

All schools attending an Ordway Education School Performance* are eligible to receive bus reimbursement!

To receive bus reimbursement, please:

- ☐ Fill out this form. All lines should be filled in.
- ☐ Attach a paid copy of your transportation bill. **
- ☐ Attach a completed evaluation or fill one out online (a link is emailed after the show)
- ☐ E-mail or mail all documents no later than 6 weeks after your performance to:

Bus Reimbursements
Education at Ordway Center
345 Washington Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102
educationsales@ordway.org

Questions? Please call the education hotline at 651.282.3115.

School Name _____

School Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

County _____

School Phone _____ Fax _____

Order Contact Name _____ & E-mail _____

Office Contact Name _____ & E-mail _____

Performance _____ Date and Time _____

of students _____ # of buses for which you are requesting payment _____

City/Region/School District	Subsidy amount
Minneapolis Public Schools and Saint Paul Public School Districts	100%
Seven County Metro including Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott & Washington Counties	Up to \$180.00 per bus
Outside Seven County Metro	Up to \$450.00 per bus

For Ordway office use only

Paid Invoice	
Evaluation	
Check Req	

* An Ordway Education School Performance is defined as any school day matinee, including the Flint Hills Family Festival School Week

**For all schools outside of Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS), the Ordway Center will send the reimbursement check to your school. SPPS and MPS should request that district transportation forward their bus bill directly to the Ordway.