



THURSDAY
JANUARY 16 2020
10 AM

BACKHAUSDANCE IN CONCERT

FEATURING
THE STUDIO PROJECT ENSEMBLE



2019-2020 FIELD TRIP SERIES

BROADEN THE HORIZONS OF YOUR CLASSROOM.
EXPERIENCE THE VIBRANT WORLD OF THE ARTS
AT THE McCALLUM!



EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

What is a "text"? We invite you to consider the performances on McCallum's Field Trip Series as non-print texts available for study and investigation by your students. Anyone who has shown a filmed version of a play in their classroom, used a website as companion to a textbook, or asked students to do online research already knows that "texts" don't begin and end with textbooks, novels, and reading packets. They extend to videos, websites, games, plays, concerts, dances, radio programs, and a number of other non-print texts that students and teachers engage with on a regular basis.

We know that when we expand our definition of texts to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, increase student engagement, and enrich learning experiences.

Please consider how utilizing your McCallum performance as a text might align to standards established for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

How do we help students to use these texts as a way of shaping ideas and understanding the world?

Please use this material to help you on this journey.

NON-PRINT TEXT > any medium/text that creates meaning through sound or images or both, such as symbols, words, songs, speeches, pictures, and illustrations not in traditional print form including those seen on computers, films, and in the environment.

THE WORK OF ART

WHAT IS IT MADE OF?
HOW CAN IT SERVE AS A "TEXT"
FOR STUDENT STUDY IN
THE CLASSROOM?

Hive and Scene **Unseen** are two of the choreographic works that make up this power-packed concert by Backhausdance, known for its lush, athletic movement vocabulary and strong ensemble aesthetic. The company recently completed a milestone 15th anniversary season that included its first European tour and an engagement at New York City's internationally renowned Joyce Theater. In this performance, founder and artistic director Jennifer Backhaus, a longtime artistic collaborator on McCallum's Open Call and The Palm Desert Choreography Festival, has invited local young dance students, who by audition earned coveted spots on the 2019 edition of The Studio Project, to share the stage with the professional dancers. Engaging demonstrations and fun audience participation make this a full experience and includes choreography by Jennifer Backhaus and Dwight Rhoden.



Hive, created in 2017, is a percussive and intricate repertory piece for the full company. The 23-minute-long work, to the music of Kevin Volans (entitled *White Man Sleeps*) and performed by the Kronos Quartet, offers a complex series of interactions. The unfolding and dissolving relationships are musically driven and create a strong group dynamic.



THE ARTISTS

WHO HAS PRODUCED THIS WORK?

Backhausdance was formed in 2003 by Jennifer Backhaus. The company has won awards from Dance Resource Center of Los Angeles, helping position the company at the forefront of Southern California contemporary dance. Words that come up frequently in describing the Backhausdance aesthetic are eclectic, fluid, powerful, athletic, emotionally-charged and whimsical. Their dances provide glimpses into the human experience. Orange County's critically-acclaimed contemporary dance company has performed in Pisa, Warsaw, New York, British Columbia and countless other venues. Through Arts Teach and the Segerstrom Center for the Arts Education and Community Programs, Backhausdance serves thousands of public and private school children throughout Orange and San Bernardino Counties each year, as well as partnering with McCallum Theatre Education. Backhausdance also performs pieces that focus on younger audiences and incorporate master classes.

Jennifer Backhaus is Founder and Artistic Director of Backhausdance. She was honored by Chapman University with the 2017 Distinguished Alumni Award. Jennifer's works have been commissioned and produced by Brigham Young University, Chapman University, Los Angeles Ballet, McCallum Theatre, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, TDC of the Bay Area and Utah Regional Ballet, among others. Her piece *Disintegration* was selected for national performances with the American College Dance Festival at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. She has created many works for her own company and won awards for her achievement, including three from the McCallum Theatre's Dance Under the Stars Choreography Festival. Currently on dance faculty at Chapman University, Jennifer is also a teaching artist for the Segerstrom Center for the Arts Education Programs, where she shares her love of dance and choreography with hundreds of students in public and private schools across Southern California. A life-long learner, she holds a BFA in Communications and Dance from Chapman University, and received her MFA in Choreography from Hollins University.

CONTEXTS

WHAT INFORMATION SURROUNDS THIS WORK OF ART AND COULD HELP MAKE STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH IT MORE POWERFUL?

Jennifer Backhaus classifies her work as **contemporary dance**. In the ever-evolving world of dance, the term contemporary dance is the art form's latest label. So what does *contemporary dance* actually mean? Let's look at the history of *early modern* and *post-modern* dance. **Modern dance** began in the 1920s as a rebellion against formal classical ballet and populist show dancing. A concert form, it was dance as a vehicle for personal expression. Toe shoes and tutus were cast aside. Barefoot dancers whirled fabric, torsos contracted and released, feet turned inward, and bodies formed angular shapes. The goal was unrestrained self-expression through the moving body. Martha Graham, the mother of modern dance, said, "Like the modern painters and architects, we have stripped our medium of decorative inessentials." Over the next 20 years, *modern dance* was challenged and reinvented by each new choreographer until it had been liberated from the early moderns' drama-inspired emotional expression. New York City Ballet master George Balanchine distanced himself from emotion in favor of *line*, putting nothing of his own life into his ballets, focusing instead on structure. Choreographers experimented with movement for movement's sake, challenging viewers' preconceptions about dance and urging them to find their own meaning in works. Balanchine's *modern ballet* fused *modern dance* ideas with this new aesthetic in ballet. In the 60s, **post-modern dance** emerged. It employed every day, pedestrian movement, maintaining that any movement was dance and any person, trained or not, was a dancer. One *post-modern* choreographer, Steve Paxton, developed a system of partnering movement called *contact improvisation*, dancers giving and taking each other's weight.

So when it comes to the term *contemporary dance*, there is not a specific technique or class that teaches contemporary. Rather, the term identifies dance that is happening *right now*, often a blend of styles, techniques, and forms. On the time continuum we have moved past the early moderns and the post-moderns to arrive at this time — the *now* in dance we call contemporary.

From the blog website *Beyond the Bubble* comes this post:

What do "contemporary" dances look like? They...

- ...are interested in blending or drawing from the ballet, jazz, modern and other techniques in which they've trained.
- ...are athletic and have a strong technical focus which allows them to move between and bend genres with ease.
- ...are willing to borrow or dabble in ideas and approaches to choreography from the past.
- ...often experiment with movement disciplines outside the realms of theatrical or concert dance.

How would you describe it? The conversation is open to everyone!

— adapted from an article by Teaching Artist April Rhodes

"The underlying philosophy of Backhausdance is the creation of excellent art."

> JENNIFER BACKHAUS

TEACHER-LED CLASSROOM LESSONS

HOW CAN YOUR STUDENTS EXPLORE THIS WORK OF ART IN YOUR CLASSROOM THROUGH ART MAKING, RESEARCH, QUESTIONING AND REFLECTION? TRY TEACHING THESE LESSONS.

LESSON 1 BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

LINE OF INQUIRY

How does **Backhausdance** use shape, movement, and groupings to create a contemporary dance?

QUESTIONING

What do we know about dance? (Enter responses on board) We will be going to see a style of dance called contemporary dance performed by Backhausdance Company. What does the word contemporary mean?

SHARE

Contemporary dance comes out of modern dance which was a rebellion against ballet. Modern dancers threw away their toe shoes and tutus. Bodies made different shapes from those made in ballet and moved differently, too. Instead of telling stories like the ballets did, modern dance focused on structure and 'movement for movement's sake.' After that, every generation kept reinventing modern dance until it was called post-modern. Post-modern dance said that any movement was dance and any person, trained or not, was a dancer. There could be simple walking and everyday sort of movement in post-modern dance. Contemporary dance borrows from all of that – and it is called contemporary because it is happening right now!

RESEARCH

Let's look at a short clip from *Hive*, one of the works we will be seeing.

<http://www.backhausdance.org/repertory>

QUESTIONING

What did you notice? What were some shapes they made with their bodies? Describe how they moved. How were they grouped (2s, 3s, etc.)? How were they dressed?

ART MAKING

Let's watch the clip again. This time look for a particular moment you like and memorize what it looks like. You will sketch this moment of the dance on paper, so look at the groupings, the shapes, and the colors – and anything else you can notice. Students then sketch the moment and fill it in with color.

QUESTIONING

What did you notice about the performance? (see QUESTIONING section above) How would you describe the dancers' movement? What do you make of the titles? For example, what might *Hive* refer to?

REFLECTION

Students write a paragraph: If contemporary dance is all about the now, what other kinds of dance are happening right now – and how might contemporary dance relate to those?

LESSON 2 AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

QUESTIONING

What did you notice about the performance? (see QUESTIONING section on previous page) How would you describe the dancers' movement? What do you make of the titles? For example, what might Hive refer to?

ART MAKING

Each student makes an individual list of ways in which the dancers moved and then assembles these into a free-form poem. Just as contemporary dance resists telling a story, students are given the challenge to not create a poem that leans toward story but focuses instead on movement more abstractly. The poem could have the title *Movement for Movement's Sake*.

QUESTIONING

These are shared aloud. You can ask questions that direct students to consider word choice, content, and structure.

REFLECTION

Why make dances that don't tell stories? What's a hive? What ideas and movement would be shown?



QUESTIONS

PUT THESE QUESTIONS TO GOOD USE HELPING STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE.

- > What did you notice?
- > What are some good words for describing how the dancers moved?
- > What qualities do the dancers bring to this work?
- > How do the dancers interact?
- > How does the choreography relate to the music?
- > What, if any, distinct roles do the two genders play here?
- > How are the elements of levels, directions faced, reach and contact used here?
- > What did you notice about groupings?
- > Which of the dances stood out to you particularly – and why?
- > What did you observe about the sequencing of dances and transitions between? Did the term flow apply?
- > Which moves stand out in your memory? What role do shapes made by bodies and the force with which these moves were made play in making these memorable?
- > What themes were explored, do you think?
- > What meaning did you make from this work of art?



EXPLORE & DISCOVER

ACTIVITY PAGES FOR
THE STUDENT AND FAMILY.

"In addition to performing, we have a strong drive to engage and educate the community about the relevance of concert dance."

> JENNIFER BACKHAUS

The following two pages can be sent home with students as a homework assignment. It has been designed to serve two purposes:

- 1 To inform the people at home about the experience their student is about to have, and give them enough information to dialogue about it.
- 2 To allow the student to become a bit familiar with some of the aspects of the performance before they attend it at the McCallum.

Really young students will need an adult or older sibling/friend to guide them through the pages, and help them with writing, whereas older students can do this on their own. More mature students (middle or high school) might need your to help to understand which activities they can go deep with based on their frame of reference. Ideally there's little bit of follow up in the classroom on students' experiences with these pages prior to going to the show. If not utilized as homework, these pages can be also be distributed and completed in class.

EXPLORE & DISCOVER

ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS, FAMILY MEMBERS AND/OR FRIENDS.

You will be going with your class to see **Backhausdance** perform a concert dance program at the McCallum Theatre in the near future. They are a contemporary dance company based in Los Angeles. Backhausdance performs as part of the **McCallum Theatre Education Field Trip Series**. If you want to know more about **The Field Trip Series**, visit this website: www.mccallumtheatre.com/index.php/education/field-trips

IN THIS PERFORMANCE you will see dynamic dances in a contemporary style in which dancers trained in ballet technique, among others, explore the human experience.



If people who dance are called dancers, what are people who create dances called? _____

WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY DANCE?

Back in the 1920s, some choreographers got tired of ballet with its storytelling and strict rules about how a dancer could move. They tossed tutus and toe shoes aside – along with stories – and started making new kinds of dances featuring new ways of moving. They called this modern dance. Martha Graham (1894-1991), is a famous example of this kind of choreographer. Here's a picture from one of the dances she created, *Dark Meadow*, performed by The Martha Graham Dance Company. **What are five details you notice?**



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

In the 1960s, modern dance gave way to **post-modern dance**. Post-modern used every day, ordinary kind of movement like walking. To a post-modern choreographer, any movement was dance and any person, trained or not, was a dancer. **With a friend or family member try out these basic moves:**

1. Walk the space at a comfortable speed.
2. Walk close to each other.
3. Walk away from each other.
4. Circle each other.
5. Stop walking for a moment and reach as far away from the center of your body as you can.
6. Walk again, this time changing your levels as you do: highest level, lowest level, medium level.
7. Speed up your walking, and then slow it way down.
8. With more than one friend or family member, you could – as you walk – make different groupings: twos, threes, fours, and so on.

What are you noticing about these ways of moving? _____

What natural abilities does this require of you? _____

EXPLORE & DISCOVER

If contemporary dances don't tell stories, they can still express meaningful **ideas or themes**. Choreographer Jennifer Backhaus says that her dances "provide glimpses into the human experience." Since we are all human and we have experiences, does this mean a dance could be created based on our *OWN* experiences? **What are three important parts of your life that could be themes of a contemporary dance?**

ONE

TWO

THREE

What title would you give that dance? _____

In concert dance, moves you make with your body while traveling across the stage space are called *locomotor* moves. Those you make while standing in one spot are called *non-locomotor*. With a friend or family member try these moves out, locomotor and non-locomotor, while staying safe:

TWIST | REACH | LUNGE | ROLL | KICK | JUMP | MOVE YOUR ARMS LIKE A WINDMILL | COLLAPSE upper body only

Circle the ones that must be done locomotor. Have your partner make one of these moves and freeze it midway while you sketch the shape made by his or her body in one of these three squares below (do this for three different moves/frozen shapes):



Now...both of you try doing these three moves one after the other. Pay attention to how you move from one shape to the next.

Could you change the order of moves? Try several different sequences. Which order do you like best – and why?

Choreographers might call this sequence of moves a movement phrase. A dance could be made with a series of movement phrases. What do you think the movement phrase you just made might express to an audience?



Here is a frozen moment from *Hive*, one of the dances you will see at the performance.

With the help of a friend or family member, answer the following questions:

What do you notice about the shapes?

What about the angles?

Directions they are facing?

Colors?

What's a hive?

What do you predict this dance will look like?