

A GUIDE TO PHILADANCO'S STUDENT PERFORMANCES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Philadanco formally known as **The Philadelphia Dance Company** was founded in 1970 by Joan Myers Brown who perceived a need in the Philadelphia area for a performing company for minority students. She resolved some day to provide young dancers with the opportunity she lacked. Today, **forty-two years** later, she is Executive/Artistic Director of a company that is held in high esteem by its peers and critics across the nation, Canada, the Caribbean and Europe.

Now one of the country's largest black dance companies **Philadanco** and **Joan Myers Brown** has received the legendary three R's - **Respect, Recognition and Rewards**.

Today **Philadanco** not only develops dancers that are constantly sought out by other professional companies, but it is also the Company that young people seek to join.

Philadanco presents a lecture/demonstration program that illustrates the company's stylistic and choreographic dynamism while paying homage to some figures in dance history that helped shape and build American character and culture.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

During the performance the dancers will demonstrate movement that has the clarity of ballet, the stretch and emotional commitment of modern dancers, the deep-grounded rhythms of ethnic dance, and the sharp attack of jazz dancers. The following excerpt from Philadanco's repertoire will be shared.



Photo Credit: Lois Greenfield

“Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner”, A table is used to exchange energies, forces, characters, beliefs, and opinions. To provide resolution to promote and destroy conflicts, to interrogate to expose a lie and to hide the truth. To covet things that others possess, but you really don't desire - a cold unset table waiting to invite all issues. Set sturdy, wondering, waiting to support and embrace all empty vacant unanswered prayers. Four pillars covered to shield the unstable voices that yearn for peace but promote fear. Whispers that circle around your left shoulder only to turn and face the head of the table to reveal another vise! All these issues that surround your being, and snatch you to a place that pleads for sweet release. The invitation has been methodically set, with all your secrets carefully considered. You have been cordially invited to dinner.

“Philadelphia Experiment”, Hip-Hop at it’s finest; is a retrospective of the city of Philadelphia. An acknowledgement of political, social and economic change; this dynamic, energetic piece alludes to the rhythms, posture, physicality and speed of the city of Philadelphia

SOME THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DANCE

Modern dance is, like jazz music, one of the few art forms that developed in the United States. Both these art forms are relatively young, tracing their beginnings to the time around the turn of the century. Modern dancers do not usually dance in ballet shoes or toe shoes, as ballet dancers do. Modern dancers dance with bare feet most of the time.

Sometimes dances tell a story. This is especially true of the “storybook ballets” such as *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*. Modern dance does not always tell a story, but rather uses gesture, expression, form, movement, rhythm, energy, and music to convey feeling and emotion and communicate with the audience. As some modern dances do tell a story, others are simply to enjoy the shapes, images and mood created by the lighting, the music, the costumes and the movement of the dancers.

Dance, like all art forms, is a type of language. Visual artists communicate in language made up of materials like paint, clay, paper, fabric, metal and glass; actors use words and physical action; musicians communicate through their music. The words of a dancer’s language are created from gestures and technique that make up a movement vocabulary. When you watch a modern dance performance, see if you can pick out common everyday movements that the dancers use to communicate feelings, emotions, and ideas to the audience.

At the center of the dance performance is the choreography. Just as the composer of a musical piece puts notes together to form musical phrases to be played by trained musicians; the choreographer creates the steps and phrases of movement to be performed by trained dancers.

Dance training is rigorous and both physically and mentally demanding. Athleticism and the ability to concentrate are both hallmarks of excellent dancers.

BEHIND THE SCENES

In addition to the dancers and the choreographer, there are many other important individuals that help create the magic of a dance performance. These may include:

*Lighting designer: The artist who designs the lighting seen on stage for each dance. Lighting is a very important element of the performance because it shapes the way we see the dancers, creates visual effects, and in every way enhances the mood of the piece.

*Stage manager: The person responsible during performances for calling lighting and sound cues for the dancers, and for supervising the technical crew that runs the curtains, sets, and so on.

*Sound technician: Since it is so expensive for dance companies to tour with live musicians, many companies use recorded music in their performances. Another advantage of recorded music is that it is played the same way in each performance so the dancer knows exactly when to dance each step. The sound technician is responsible for making sure the music is at its best in each performance hall-clear, static free and at the correct level.

*Costume designer: Whether dancers wear a simple leotard or an elaborately constructed outfit, you can be sure that the choreographer has thought about how the company should look on stage. All of the visual elements of a dance work are critical to its success and choreographers often work closely with the artists who design the costumes to achieve the effects that will best convey their vision of a particular dance

SOME DANCE VOCABULARY

Classical Ballet, dance based on five basic foot and arm positions – that combine these holding positions with, flowing leaps and turns.

Modern Dance, performance dance based on natural human movement, which uses very individual forms of movement and is continually changing.

Hip-Hop, a form of popular culture that started in African American inner-city areas, characterized by rap music, graffiti art, and break dancing

Choreograph (verb) to create a dance

Choreographer (noun), the person who invents a dance.

Compose (noun) to create music.

Composer (noun), person who creates music.

Movement Vocabulary in ballet, the names of all the steps (which all ballet dancers use); in modern dance, what each company calls the steps they create.

Pointe Shoes, ballet shoes with stiff toes designed for women dancers so they can balance on the very tips of their toes, also called toe shoes.

Review (verb) to evaluate a performer or performance - (noun) the evaluation of a performer or performance.

Reviewer (noun), a critic who shares his or her opinion about a performer or a performance with the public; usually a knowledgeable person who writes for a newspaper or a magazine or appears on radio or television.

Solo, a dance or part of a dance done by one person who is usually alone on stage

Duet, (partnering) a dance for two - at times there maybe lifts between a male & female dancer.

Pas de trios, a dance for three

Total Theater describes a dance in which the visual parts (scenery, costumes, and lights) are as important as the movement.

Downstage, area on stage closest to the audience

Upstage, the area on stage furthest away from the audience.

