

April 8, 2000 - Saturday In The Studio, Malaysia

We began this lesson by sitting in a circle and discussing a little bit about Malaysia. We talked about where it is located and what who lives there. We also discussed how much the people there like dance and that men, women, and children all dance. Finally we talked about how different Eastern dance is than our western dance. We talked about intricate movements in the hands, feet, fingers, toes, and even eyes. This prepared the dancers for a new way to move.

Warm Up

- Begin standing, with arms to sides of the body and fingertips lengthening towards the floor. Initiating with the fingertips, move arms down and out until arms are long to the sides (second position). Try to curve your fingers back as much as possible. Next, bring the hands together in prayer position in front of you. Lift the hands in the prayer position above your head until your arms frame your face. Look to the right with the eyes only and then look left. Release the arms down to the sides to begin again. Repeat it four times.
- Float the right arm up gently from the belly to the high right diagonal. Return the gesture back down the belly. Repeat this movement, but this time add a circle of the wrist from the inside - out as you keep the fingers long. When the arm returns to the belly switch the wrist motion to the outside - in. While the arm is moving up and down diagonally, make your head and eyes follow the gesture of the hand. Repeat the right side four times, and then try it on the left four times.
- Roll slowly down the spine head first until the hands reach the floor. You may need to bend your knees to do this. With the hands on the floor lower the hips down and come to a squatting position. From there, use the upper body to allow you to sit on the bottom with the legs stretched out long in front of you.
- From here we articulate fingers and toes. There are many variations. Begin by holding the hands out in front of you with all fingers touching and hands long. Try to separate the fingers in segments moving from the thumb; to the thumb and index; then the thumb, index, and middle finger, etc. Next try to reverse the segments from the pinky to the thumb. (The movement often reminds dancers of the Vulcan symbol from the series Star Trek.) For variation #2 lengthen all of the fingers and one at a time touch them to the thumb, then reverse directions. Try your best to keep the fingers not touching the thumb extended up and away. The last variation begins the same way as the first with the fingers touching and hands long. Next, begin to bend each finger one at a time down from the knuckle. Reverse directions. Again try to keep the fingers not being bent extended long, up and away. Finally challenge the dancers to find a way to do these three variations on the toes.

Segmentation Dance

- Come back to standing. Encourage dancers to think about all of the intricate movement done in the warm up. Then have them explore ways to move the body in small little pieces. You may demonstrate examples of a shoulder moving up and down, or ribs shifting side to side, or a neck moving forward and back. Encourage the dancers to share their new movement ideas with the group. Dancers may still use the finger variations and eye movements from warm-up if they can't think of anything new.
- Next we add a small heel - toe walk done in a figure eight pattern. For younger children it could be done in a small circle around themselves. It is helpful to give the imagery of walking on a tightrope and connecting each heel to the top of the toes before putting weight on that foot. Finally challenge the dancers to do the walk as quickly and accurately as they can.
- Begin the segmentation dance from the segmented movement exploration and move into the heel-toe walk. We changed from nonmetered music for the exploration to metered music for the walk. Dancers had to listen to the music to know which part of the dance to do.

Moving In Opposites

This exercise teaches the dancers differences in extremes. They will be switching back and forth from the Eastern Movement (small in the space with specific articulations) to big in the space (More Western Movement). For clarity, we chose big arching circles as our big in the space dance. We listened carefully to our musician, and when the "Eastern music" was played we danced with small specific articulations, and when "Western music" was played we carved big circles in the space. We repeated moving in opposites 6 or 7 times.

Dance Phrase

We learned a dance phrase based on a traditional Malaysian dance.

- To begin face front with feet slightly turned out (1st position) with the hands resting the hips. Step out diagonally to the right on count one. By count two bring your left foot to the right foot and touch it down to the floor. Allow both legs to bend when you do this (plie). Now reverse the step by moving the left foot diagonally back on count three. Then bring the right foot to the left foot and touching it to the floor on count four. Repeat this movement 4 times.
- Next, try the same four steps on the left side, beginning with the left foot moving diagonally left. Repeat this 4 times.
- Then go back to the beginning of the dance and start on the right side. This time add your upper body to the dance. Use the hand gesture we did in the warm-up. *Float the right arm up gently from the belly to the high right diagonal. Return the gesture back down the belly. Repeat this movement, but this time add a circle of the wrist from the inside - out as you keep the fingers long. When the arm returns to the belly switch the wrist motion to the outside - in. While the arm is moving up and down*

*diagonally, make your head and eyes follow the gesture of the hand.
Repeat the right side four times, and then try it on the left four times.*

- Finally take a walk in a circle around yourself using the toe-heel walk. We made it in 16 counts to the right, switched and made it another 16 counts to the left.

Shadowing

Once the dancers know the dance phrase they can make a shadow dance. Shadowing movement means that one dancer follows in back of another dancer, performing the same movement at the same time. Before we began making our dances we talked about the properties of a shadow. Sometimes it is long, and sometimes it is so short you're stepping on it. Other times your shadow is cast to the left, and other times to the right.

- Divide dancers into duets. Dancer #1 does the dance phrase regular. Dancer #2 is the shadow. The shadow stands behind the regular dancer and follows their steps, but they are also allowed to incorporate the properties of a real shadow (standing near or far, big or small, moving right to left, etc. Once the dance is over the dancers switch roles.

Moving Across the Floor

We all began on one side of the room. We divided our large group of 20 into two groups of 10. Each group spread out and had a turn moving across the floor.

- To begin, the dancers walked using the small heel-toe walk & suspending on the 5th step (floating the knee up and balancing on one foot for four counts).
- Once the dancers reached the halfway mark (black tape on the floor) they did their best segmentation dance in place.
- Next when the music changed, the dancers moved out big in the space across the wood floor curving and circling with fingers, head, hips, feet, etc. Encourage the dancers to use all different levels (low, middle, and high).
- Last, when we got to the other side of the room we built a temple. Everyone made a shape that had to connect with someone else's shape until we had created a great "building". Once everyone was connected we melted into the ocean by slowly descending to the floor, careful not to hurt anyone. Then we rolled around and stood up in order to finally run and do the biggest jump we could across the ocean, back to America.

