



Mark Morris Dance Group & Music Ensemble: *Mozart Dances*

Go behind the scenes! Explore our creative Learning Guides with insights, fun facts and activities to enrich and inform your performance experience at The Broad Stage. For families, students and learners of all ages, Learning Guides place arts education center stage.

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THE BROAD STAGE AT THE SANTA MONICA COLLEGE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
THEBROADSTAGE.ORG/COMMUNITY
1310 11TH STREET, SANTA MONICA, CA 90401 | 310.434.3650



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Choreographer Mark Morris has been referred to as “the Mozart of Modern Dance” for his shared characteristics with musical genius, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Mark Morris’ prolific dance making, devotion to European classical music, and his early expression of talent have distinguished him as a choreographer and director of ballet, modern dance, and opera. In honor of the European composer to whom he is likened, Mark Morris was **commissioned** to create a dance for the 250th birthday celebration of Mozart. The result was the widely regarded *Mozart Dances*, which his company, Mark Morris Dance Group, premiered in 2006. Three piano compositions inspired these dances and are played live as his company of dancers performs what reviewers and fans alike have called “music visualizations.” Mark Morris is so skilled in music, as well as dance, that he often creates his dances by reading sheet music and responding to the notes with his own movement invention. Vital to Mark Morris’ creative process are his collaborators; the lighting director, costume designer, set designer and musical director, all of whom are renowned artists in their field and partners in fulfilling Mark Morris’ vision for each dance work.

“If you could capture the essence of childhood play - the boundless energy; the unselfconscious immersion in pretending; the relentless inventiveness; the sheer delight in creativity...you’d have the Mark Morris Dance Group in *Mozart Dances*.”

- Austin Chronicle

WHAT IS MODERN DANCE?

Modern Dance emerged in the early 20th century in the U.S. and in Germany as dancers rebelled against the rigid rules of classical ballet. Choreographers started to invent their own movements instead of using the pre-structured steps of traditional ballet. This new style offered a chance to explore and expand creativity in movement. It encouraged dancers and choreographers to use the body and space in new ways. From being on the floor to unique partnering and the use of improvisation, the pioneers of modern dance broke the boundaries of what dance could be in order to express their ideas and emotions in a new modern era. Like the pioneers of modern dance, Mark Morris choreographs original works for his performance ensemble. Each dance piece is his own concept and interpretation through music, movement, costumes and visuals on stage.

WHO WAS WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART?

Born in the European country of Austria in 1756, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a musical **prodigy**. He started composing by age 5, was performing for royalty at 8 and, by the time he was 12, he had written three operas, six **symphonies**, and hundreds of shorter works. Young Wolfgang was part of a very musical family. His father, Leopold, was a composer and teacher, and his older sister, Maria Anna, was an accomplished musician in her own right. At the time of Mozart's early death at age 35, he was composing *Requiem in D minor*, a musical mass honoring the dead. In his short life, Mozart composed more than 600 works and could write in all musical styles of his era. His genius not only impressed his contemporaries, it also continues to live on today in his extraordinary music.

WHAT IS THE MOZART EFFECT?

Scientists have conducted many studies to test whether listening to classical music has positive effects on the human brain. Results have shown that improved sleep, memory, mood, productivity, and creativity are some of the benefits of listening to classical music. Specifically, Mozart's music has been found to have the most positive effect on our brain. In 1993, scientists at the University of California, Irvine, reported that listening to Mozart improved the **spatial intelligence** of college-aged students. Dubbed the "Mozart Effect" this study showed that just 10 minutes of listening to Mozart could improve IQ (Intelligence Quotient) test scores. According to researchers from Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, people who listened to Mozart increased their brain wave activity linked to memory, understanding and problem solving. Apparently, the music activates the nerve cells in the brain related to attention and **cognitive** function. So, next time you have to learn or memorize something, you might want to listen to the music of Mozart while you study.



FUN FACTS

Not only is Mark Morris a world famous and award winning choreographer, but he is also a doctor. He is not the kind of doctor that works in the hospital, but he does hold several Doctorate of Fine Art degrees. To date, Mark Morris has been awarded eleven honorary doctorate degrees for his contributions and accomplishments in dance, including awards from the University of Washington and Princeton University.

VOCABULARY

CACOPHONY: A loud, mixture of sound.

CADENCE: A variation or change in the tone, pitch or strength of the voice.

COMMISSIONED: When an artist is hired to create a work of art.

COGNITIVE: Involving the act or process of knowing, perceiving, reasoning, thinking and remembering.

PRODIGY: A person, especially a young one, with exceptional talents or abilities.

SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE: The ability to comprehend and visualize three-dimensional images and shapes in the mind. One of the eight multiple intelligences identified by Dr. Howard Gardner.

SYMPHONY: An elaborate musical composition for full orchestra, typically in four movements, or sections of music.

TRY THIS

PAINT TO CLASSICAL MUSIC

How would you draw or paint music?

Wassily Kandinsky was a famous painter known for his abstract style of painting, often inspired by music. He saw colors when he heard music and heard music when he painted. The color, lines and shapes he created were interpretations of his rhythmic visual experience. Not surprisingly, Kandinsky gave many of his paintings musical titles, such as *Composition* or *Improvisation*.

Take a look at his painting below, *The Cutting Line*, and see if you can visualize the rhythm, volume, flow and movement of the music he painted. Now let's see what you can come up with.

Select a piece of Mozart music to inspire you. You will need a way to play your piece of classical music, some paper and your choice of drawing or painting supplies (i.e. pencils, paint, brush, crayons, oil pastels, markers etc). Turn on the music, close your eyes and listen for a few minutes. What colors, shapes and movement do you see in your mind's eye? After you have listened for a while, put the brush to paper and let your hand follow the music. Keep listening to the notes, think about how you might represent them and fill the page.

CHOREOGRAPH TO MUSIC

Music is a language that, just like when we speak, has a **cadence**, or rhythm. Listen to a piece of music that has no words and pay attention to how it flows like a conversation. To create choreography, or dance movements and sequences, we respond to the speed, volume, accents, pace and emphasis within a piece of music. When you hear the music, how does it make you want to move? Do you bob your head, tap your toe or shake your hips? Perhaps it gives you a feeling or conveys a mood. Does it sound heavy, light, sharp, or carefree?

Listen to a piece of classical music and try to identify each instrument that you hear. Can you follow the cadence of each instrument with your body? Try to create movements for what you hear; the beats, patterns and the flow of the music. Imagine what each instrument is saying. Now bring in a friend or family member and have a dance "conversation." Each person follows one instrument and everyone dances together to the music. You can follow one instrument the whole time or choose to switch instruments at different sections in the music. You are sure to create a dancing **cacophony**!



TAKE IT FURTHER

Check out our **Resource** page with website links and relevant state standards to use for the classroom.

WEBSITE AND RESEARCH LINKS:

PROMO VIDEO FOR MOZART DANCES

HISTORY OF MODERN DANCE

CONVERSATION WITH MARK MORRIS

INTERPRETING & DEFINING CONTEMPORARY DANCE

10 BENEFITS OF CLASSICAL MUSIC

MOZART BRAIN POWER MUSIC (2.5 HRS OF MUSIC)

DRAWING TO MUSIC

*TRANSLATING SOUND INTO PAINTINGS:
SYNESTHETE & ARTIST MELISSA MCCrackEN*

*WHAT DOES COLOUR SOUND LIKE?
KANDINSKY & MUSIC*

SUGGESTED CA STATE STANDARDS:

SIXTH GRADE STANDARDS

CA VAPA DANCE GRADE 6: 1.5 Describe and analyze movements observed and performed, using appropriate dance vocabulary.

CA VAPA DANCE GRADE 6: 2.2 Compare and demonstrate the difference between imitating movement and creating original material.

CA VAPA DANCE GRADE 6: 4.1 Apply knowledge of the elements of dance and the craft of choreography to critiquing (spatial design, variety, contrast, clear structure).

CA VAPA DANCE GRADE 6: 4.4 Discuss the differences between viewing live and recorded dance performances.

CA VAPA DANCE GRADE 6: 5.1 Describe how other arts disciplines are integrated into dance performances (e.g., music, lighting, set design).

CA VAPA MUSIC GRADE 6: 4.2 Explain how various aesthetic qualities convey images, feeling, or emotion.

CA VAPA MUSIC GRADE 6: 4.3 Identify aesthetic qualities in a specific musical work.

CCSS.ELA/Literacy W6.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS ELA/Literacy W6.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS ELA/Literacy SL6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SOCIAL JUSTICE STANDARDS

ID.6-8.3 I know that overlapping identities combine to make me who I am and that none of my group identities on their own fully defines me or any other person.

ID.6-8.5 I know there are similarities and differences between my home culture and the other environments and cultures I encounter, and I can be myself in a diversity of settings.

JU.6-8.11 I relate to people as individuals and not representatives of groups, and I can name some common stereotypes I observe people using.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Self-Awareness: Identifying emotions, Accurate self-perception, Self-confidence

Social Awareness: Appreciating diversity, Respect for others.

Relationship Skills: Communication, Social engagement, Relationship building, Teamwork.



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