

Setting the Stage

“Dance came from the people and should always be delivered back to the people.”

~ Alvin Ailey

Dance is an important part of people’s heritage that follows them wherever they go. Even if they leave the culture in which they were born, by choice or by force, when they reach their new home, they do the dances they remember. Whether they know it or not, they are recreating actions that remind them of the place and people they left behind.

Setting the Stage a theatrical dance production was inspired by *Classic Black* a photo exhibit created by the Lincoln Center Library to honor the contributions of African American classically trained dancers prior to 1970. Many of these artists went on to have great careers in Modern dance, Jazz dance, Ethnic dance, and Broadway productions. They were unable to work with white ballet companies with the exception being Arthur Mitchell who worked with New York City Ballet because of the racial, social and political climate in America at that time.

Elements of Dance and Critical Viewing

GENERAL OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

We wish for students to:

- Receive a positive dance performance experience.
- Increase their knowledge of the arts, Alvin Ailey, and dancers, to develop skills of perception and communication.
- To share the importance of the African American contribution in American dance history.
- Collect knowledge before, during, and after the show, aided by a teacher who freely adapts our study guide or his or her own use! Please adapt this guide to fit your needs.
- Connect the arts across the curriculum.

TEACHER REMINDERS

- **Teacher Guide.** We hope that teachers will photocopy this guide as needed for all instructors to use with their students.
- **Preparation for Students.** Please remind students that they will be seeing a live performance.

Things to *Think* about & Things to *Do*

Setting the Stage

When reviewing the differences between being an audience member for a film vs. a *live* performance, you should also let the students know what to expect. The dancers will not only be performing—they will talk to the students, encourage their participation, and answer questions.

Sometimes students are not exposed to dancers, especially men, who appear in leotards and tights. Spend some time discussing what different professionals wear as *uniforms*. Corporate executives, doctors, nurses, policemen, firemen, ranchers, *etc.* have a particular uniform for their job. Most students will have seen dancers at work—at least on TV or film. Discuss what they will expect the dancers in *Setting the Stage* to be wearing as a uniform.

To begin breaking down *Setting the Stage* for your students you can look at the following:

- The Middle Passage/ Slavery
- Music: Ragtime, Blues, Jazz, Gospel Rock in Roll, Disco, Rap
- African American Writers/The Harlem Renaissance
- Emancipation, Segregation, Civil Rights Movement, Affirmative Action
- Research Ballet, Modern, Jazz/Broadway and Ethnic dance techniques in *Setting the Stage*.
- Make a time line beginning with the Middle Passage and ending today.
- Look at costumes and household appliance how have they changed over time.
- What was going on in Kansas City (Politics, The Arts, Race Relations, etc.) during the 1850’s, 1890’s, 1920’s, 1930’s, 1950’s, and today?

ATTENTION TEACHERS & STUDENTS

We would like to read essays and poems, see and listen to video- and audiotapes, and enjoy artwork and photographs resulting from activity choices you make after seeing *Setting the Stage*.

Send to: *The Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey*

Arts Education Programs

1714 East 18th Street

Kansas City, MO 64108

Find us on the web at www.kcfaa.org

Send E-mail to: michael@kcfaa.org