

## Shape Shifters 1: Shapes in space and time

### Lesson objectives

To be able to apply canon and geometric formations effectively in choreography.

### What am I looking for?

Performs a range of actions in canon with accuracy of timing and placement.  
Explores, selects, and refines a range of contrasting geometric formations to add interest to the dance.

### Warm up

**Ask the students to arrange themselves in a large circle.**  
**Explain that you are about to send a 'clap' around the group to be passed from person to person so that it returns to the start.**

*Indicate the direction of travel of the clapping action, guide the pupils to attempt to pass it as quickly as possible.*

*Repeat 2 or 3 times, changing the direction.*

**Ask for suggestions of other actions that could be passed from person to person. Clarify the action to ensure everyone is familiar with it; check the direction and again encourage speed.**

*The person suggesting the action could be the starting/finishing point and decide upon the direction.*

*When clarifying the action reinforce whether it is a:*

**GESTURE** - typically an upper body action that often communicates meaning - eg pointing, shrugging, jazz hands

**JUMP** - a moment of elevation where the body is not in contact with the floor

**TRAVEL** - a movement resulting in a change of location - (can include moving up and down)

**TURN** - a rotation, full or partial and may occur in different planes

**STILLNESS** - the absence of movement, commonly seen when holding a shape such as a static balance.

*Repeat several times to ensure a range of actions.*

*Encourage the actions are performed fully to maximise mobility and provide an effective warm up.*

Canon + a range of actions

### Context

*Explain that when a group perform an action at the same time it is called UNISON, whereas when the action is staggered so they perform it one after the other it is called CANON.*

*Often it is known as a Mexican Wave as it was brought to a worldwide audience in the 1986 football World Cup in Mexico.*

*Canon encourages an audience to follow the shape as it travels along a group with the geometric shapes of circle and lines being particularly effective.*

### Creative exploration

**Organise the students into groups of 3, 4 or 5 and number themselves 1, 2, 3...**

**Ask person 1 to demonstrate a simple action for the rest of the group to perform 1 at a time, thus creating a CANON.**

**Person 2 then creates an action; the pattern is continued so everyone initiates a CANON.**

*Arranging themselves in numerical order and in a circular formation may make the process easier. Encourage each person to have 2 or 3 turns at initiating the action.*

*Describe what the students doing such as "Lennox's group have combined a jump and turn", "Kylin's group are performing a pointing gesture" - to praise, prompts ideas and reinforce knowledge of the basic action groups.*

Canon + a range of actions + formations

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### Composition

**Ask the groups to select 5 actions to be performed in CANON.**  
**1** should be a **JUMP**; another a **TURN**; they also need to include a **TRAVEL**, a **GESTURE** and a **STILLNESS**. These can be performed in any order and the group decide who initiates each movement.

*Add the music for 4 to 5 minutes.*

*If possible, display the 5 basic actions for the pupils to reference.*

*Encourage the groups to recap their movement ideas regularly.*

**Ask the groups to notice the FORMATION they used when devising their work - probably a circle or a line.**

**Then decide upon a FORMATION for the start of their CANON dance and a different FORMATION for the end - eg start in a circle, finish in a line one behind the other.**

**Ask the groups to decide when to change between their different formations and how to do so.**

*Add the music for 4 minutes or so and ensure the groups continue to perform their movements in canon.*

*Formations are typically circles, lines or blocks - blocks come in a variety of geometric shapes: eg triangular, square...*

**To add extra challenge, ask the students to consider:**

- Make one of your actions also change **LEVEL**
- Make one of your actions also change **SPEED**
- Make one of your action also change **DIRECTION**
- Make one of your actions also change **FORCE**
- Make one of your actions change **SIZE**

*The FORCE of an action is the amount of effort applied making the action seem stronger or softer. This is often combined with SPEED and described as DYNAMICS (how an action is performed) - eg fast/slow, smooth/jagged, soft/strong...*

### Structure, formations + canon

### Performance

**Join groups into pairs and ask 1 to demonstrate their dance.**

**Ask observers to spot and comment on the contribution of:**

- Every action being performed in **CANON**.
- The range of **ACTIONS** (turn, jump, travel, gesture, stillness)
- The change of **FORMATIONS** within the dance.

*Add the music as the first group perform, allow time for feedback before changing roles and repeating the process.*

**Ask the groups to separate, taking note of any feedback as well as any further ideas, take 3 minutes to make any improvements.**

*Add the music and share any changes you noticed and the effect - eg*

*"I see you are now doing your first movement facing outwards, that makes it more visible to the audience".*

**If time permits, join the groups together again and repeat the sharing process to reflect upon the impact of any changes.**

### Performance + analysis

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Cool down

*Ask the students to create one large circle again.*  
*Explain that you will be sending movements around the circle for them to perform in CANON. Start with the first action being an upward reach and hold the shape until the canon is complete. Next introduce a lower shape, such as a twist. Once the circle is complete make the next shape lower again, such as a crouch and hold until everyone is performing it. Then a final low shape.*

Canon +  
levels