

Shape Shifters 4: Shaping the dance

Lesson objectives

To be able to develop, improve, and present a piece of group choreography inspired by geometry.

What am I looking for?

The ability to explore and include changes of size, orientation, and forming/reforming.
Apply transitions effectively.
Communicate your dance ideas clearly through effective rehearsal and performance.

Warm up

Ask the pupils to find a space and travel around the room as you countdown to zero when they should freeze in whatever shape they are making.

It may help to gather from the pupils a few suggested ways of TRAVELLING such as jogging, jumping, walking, sliding...

Prompt attention by varying the starting number each time - eg counting from 7 to zero; then from 4 to zero...

Repeat 5 or 6 times.

Repeat the game but on 'zero' they should listen to a second instruction to get into a specific FORMATION such as a line, circle, triangle or square.

Ideally this should be performed as a whole-group activity, or you may wish to organise the class into smaller groups seeing which are the quickest.

It is beneficial to start with 'circle' - then encourage travelling in a variety of ways until the next shape is called.

If asking for a 'line' you may need to specify if this is one behind the other, side by side or diagonal.

Repeat the game 5 or 6 times.

Clarify these are FORMATIONS - the pattern is clearly seen when viewed from above. They are often geometric shapes such as lines, squares, triangles etc.

Ask the pupils to get into (or return to) groups of 3, 4 or 5 and repeat the 'countdown' game but on 'zero' they need to find their group and create the named shape.

Continue to vary the number from which the countdown commences and encourage the students to continue to explore different ways of travelling.

Travelling, formations + group shapes

Context

Explain that changing from one FORMATION to another is used to add interest to a dance and/or communicate meaning.

Whilst FORMATIONS are clearly evident when viewed from above, dancers also use their bodies to create shapes easily visible to the audience. They are about to include both FORMATIONS and creating shapes using their bodies (as covered in the previous lesson).

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Exploration

Ask the pupils to remain in a space with their groups and create...a circle...line...triangle... square...rectangle... as a FORMATION or as a group shape using their bodies.

Encourage finding alternative ways of making each shape.

Highlight any inventive responses by describing how they have created the shape - the body parts used; the level and the direction...

Ask the groups to select 3 arrangements they felt particularly successful (or 3 that they wish to attempt - eg a triangle; hexagon; and parallelogram) and create them using their bodies and/or using formations. Then decide upon the order.

Add the music for 3 minutes and support groups as required.

Ask the groups to make their first shape, then make their shape smaller or larger (SIZE).
Add the music for 1 minute or so. It is up to the groups to decide how much to increase/decrease the shape as well as how they do it: eg jump/slide/reach...unison/canon...smoothly/suddenly...

Focusing on their second shape - find a way of rotating it.

This could involve moving clockwise/anticlockwise, but it may tip forwards/backwards or be a sideways rotation. Encourage the groups to consider whether it is a full or partial rotation.

Follow this with a recap of both shapes and their adaptations.

Ask the groups to recall their third shape and find a way to make the shape disperse then reform.

Typically, 'disperse' would suggest spreading and implies travelling apart, but this could also be achieved by changing LEVELS with some moving upwards and others moving down. Also, the shape reforms but group members could adopt different positions.

Add the music for 2 minutes or so and support as necessary.

Group shapes, size, orientation + space

Composition

Ask the groups to decide upon the order of their 3 shapes (including the additional task) but to focus on

- Shape 1 + varying the change of size
- Shape 2 + rotating in different planes – either partial or full
- Shape 3 + finding unusual ways of dispersing and reforming

Add the music for 3 minutes or so to ensure that all groups can recall their ideas fluently.

Ask the groups to consider how they move from the end of changing size from Shape 1 into Shape 2...then how they move from the rotation at the end of Shape 2 into Shape 3. Explain that these are known as TRANSITIONS and are like the conjunctions in sentences. Encourage the groups to consider adding in extra movement material to easily connect the end of one movement to the start of the next.

Add the music for 3 to 4 minutes to decide on and practise their transitions. Then add an extra minute or two to rehearse - emphasise clarity of shapes and formations as well as the inclusion of the adaptations and smooth transitions.

Ask the groups to take a final 2 minutes to rehearse their work thoroughly and prepare for performance.

Add the music and encourage the students to rehearse their work without giving each other instructions.

Transitions

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Performance

Ask for or select 1 or 2 groups to show their work at a time.
Ask the observers to pay attention to:

- The clarity of the shapes and formations
- How the shapes were adjusted
- How the work linked together (effective transitions)

Add the music and observe the dances, followed by feedback from the audience members and the performers.

Repeat the process with different groups.

Ask the students to feedback on the impact of the work viewed - how the choreography maintained the viewers interest and how the performance skills assisted the communication of the ideas.

Performance + analysis

Cool down

Ask the pupils find a space of their own and make a shape that they can comfortably hold...then find a way of making it bigger or smaller...
Then create a different shape...and find a way of making it rotate. Then on to a different shape...and find a way of making this disperse and reform...
Repeat the process 2 or 3 times, encourage the pupils to create different shapes each time. Gradually increase the length of time they hold the shape before adjusting it...slowing down the instruction will indicate they should move more slowly.

Size, mobility + extension