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HOT Season for Young People
Teacher Guidebooks

Urban Bush Women





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Urban Bush Women

Hailing from Brooklyn, New York, Urban Bush Women is not just a dance company, but also a community of activists. Through extensive educational programs, leadership institutes for youth, and choreography with a social justice message, these women promote self-expression, personal responsibility, leadership and problem-solving skills through dance and community outreach. The company's mission is to use dance to tell the untold and under-told stories of disenfranchised people from the perspective of African-American women.

Urban Bush Women is a company that values a sense of community as much as dance training, and therefore each member makes a company pledge. Their style is contemporary modern, their choreography often bold and life-affirming. Urban Bush Women's Artistic Director and founder, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, was profoundly influenced by anthropologist/choreographer/activist Pearl Primus. Primus was a pioneer of modern dance and a leader among a generation of American dancers who studied traditional African dance and brought it to the U.S. Like Primus, Zollar utilizes dance as a form of activism. Since its founding in 1984, Urban Bush Women has performed throughout the U.S., as well as in Asia, Australia, South America and Europe.

GUIDEBOOK

Compiled by
Amanda Cantrell Roche
with contributions from
Urban Bush Women's Study Guide

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Regions is proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee Community. We care about our customers, and we care about our community. We also care about the education of our students.

That is why we are proud to support TPAC's Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is - reaching over 25,000 students and teachers - some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to our community and education and, in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we will have over 76 associates teaching financial literacy in local classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.



Jim Schmitz
Area President
Middle Tennessee



Urban Bush Women

Program Descriptions

Give Your Hands to Struggle (GYHTS)

This dance is a solo and excerpted from a larger work entitled "Hands Singing Song." The name was inspired by a speech given by Adam Clayton Powell, Congressman representing Harlem from 1945 until 1971, called "What's In Your Hands?". The dance is a tribute to civil rights leaders, many of whom gave their lives in the struggle for freedom and justice.

Part one is danced with no music: the only sound, beyond the breath and sounds of the dancer's body, is the spoken names of several civil rights leaders. The names are of both well known leaders, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, as well as lesser known figures

such as Medgar Evers (WWII soldier, set up chapters of NAACP, college desegregation), Michael Schwerner (CORE member murdered by KKK during Freedom Summer) and Shirley Chisholm (first African-American Congresswoman). The dancer's movement is initiated by her hands, which are the focus of most movement, although she uses her entire body.

The second segment is performed to the spiritual "Give Your Hands to Struggle." As the dancer labors and rejoices, reaching outward and upward and pulling in, she symbolically adds her own spirit and efforts in the struggle for justice, and the lyrics call for us to join the cause.

Walking with Pearl ... Africa Diaries

"Dance is my medicine. It is the scream which eases for a while the terrible frustration common to all human beings who, because of race, creed or color, are 'invisible.' Dance is the fist with which I fight the sickening ignorance of prejudice. Instead of growing twisted like a gnarled tree inside myself, I am able to dance out my anger and my tears."

-- Pearl Primus

(spoken during "Africa Diaries": a statement by Primus to *Dance Magazine* in 1968)

Created as a tribute to Pearl Primus, Zollar used excerpts from Primus' unpublished journals from her travels to various parts of Africa in the late 1940s. Primus, working both as anthropologist and artist seeking a spiritual and artistic heritage, studied and learned authentic tribal dances. At one point she was even made an honorary male by the Watusi tribe so that she could experience a dance forbidden to women. One of the dances she learned in her multiple trips to the African continent was from Zaire's Bantu tribe. This dance, performed every 20 years, was to bring out forces of war from the community so they could be unleashed, defeated and laid to rest. In 1984, Primus used this dance as a foundation for her own

which she entitled "Bushache." Pearl's vision for this short dance was that it would be taught in every American high school as a means of addressing and defeating violent tendencies, thus creating a space for peace.

"Walking With Pearl ... Africa Diaries" was created when Zollar was commissioned by Five Colleges consortium to "re-imagine Bushache and create a new work which reflects contemporary aesthetic and cultural concerns." (*UMass Magazine Online*, Spring 2002)

Some of the movement in "Walking with Pearl ... Africa Diaries" is very fluid, and dancers use their breath audibly as they leap, jump, turn, and move around the stage. Though it is not traditional African dance, the movements are heavily influenced by it, noticeable in torso and arm undulations, quick, light stomps, and jumps where the energy is grounded. Soloists emerge from the group of seven dancers, then blend back into the community. A writer for *UMass Magazine* describes the ending: "Resolute, wrapped with rousing drumbeats, they stomped the floor, they slashed the air with their arms. In the end, tireless warriors for justice, they stared out at the audience, fierce with peace."

Cool, Baby, Cool

This dance is a lighthearted tribute to choreographer Zollar's love of funk music and the band Parliament. Dancers don sunglasses and groove to the music, usually keeping their cool but sometimes breaking out into athletic, enthusiastic jams. One dancer loses her cool at the end, dancing fervently even after the music has finished, until another dancer arrives and she re-establishes her "cool."

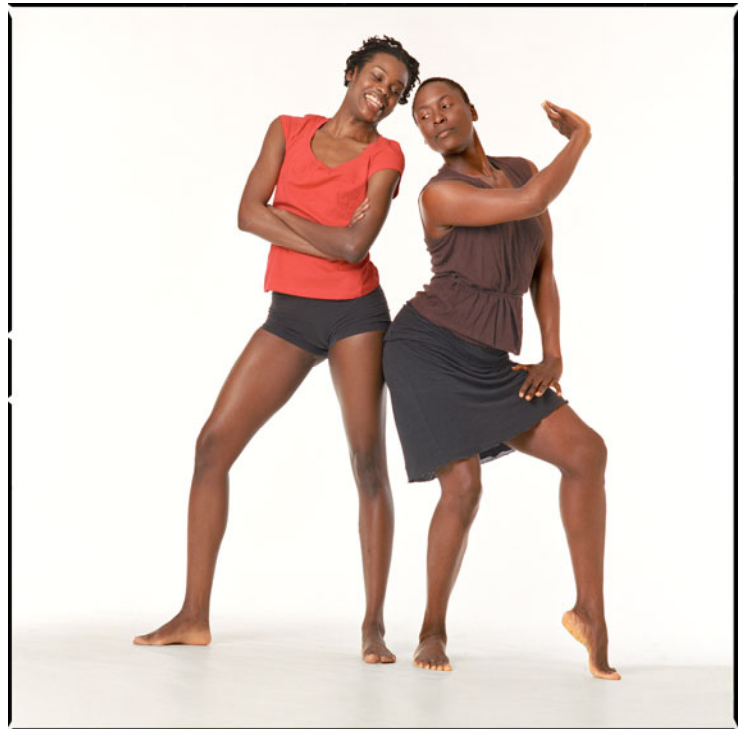
Teacher note: The dance is set to the song "Make My Funk the P-Funk", and the music has the following lyrics as the chorus:

*"Make my funk the P-Funk. I want my funk uncut.
Make my funk the P-Funk. I wants to get funky up
I want the bomb, I want the P-Funk. I want my funk uncut
Make my funk the P-Funk. I wants to get funky up."*

P-Funk refers to the specific funk music of the band Parliament. If not understood prior to the performance, it could easily be construed to have a different meaning.

Girlfriends

Inspired by three close college friends of the choreographer, plus Zollar herself, this dance is about individual personality and group dynamics among a circle of friends. Performed in silence, each dancer has solos in which she asserts her personality –her strengths and sometimes her flaws. Wordlessly, using exaggerated body language, gestures, facial expressions, and dance movements, the dancers have arguments, crises, and triumphs as they interact with each other. Even through their conflict, the support and love among these friends is evident. Face-offs turn into tickling and back slaps, and one fallen dancer is left alone to stand up again by her own power and will, while the others stand back but watch with palpable care and concern. The dance concludes with the women huddling and sharing a fall-on-the floor guffah, via gesturing recalling the conflicts they had and laughing about them before collectively snapping off the lights.



Creating and Embodying a Class Pledge

Grades 3 and up

In part one, students will discuss the meaning and reasons for pledges, then create one for their class which shows commitment to community. To continue the exploration, you can have students explore expressing the pledge with shapes and movement in part two. This exploration will help students understand that Urban Bush Women is more than just a dance company. The group is also a community with values and beliefs.

Part 1: Creating a Class Pledge

DISCUSS

What is a pledge?
What kind of pledges do we hear or say in daily life?
What does it mean to say or make a pledge?
Why do we make pledges?

The dance company Urban Bush Women has a company pledge that all of the members accept. Share the company pledge with students (p. 5 sidebar), modifying language as needed for understanding. Ask students what they think each statement means.

The dancers in Urban Bush Women are a type of community, just like a class of students is a type of community. In the classroom, there are rules to follow, ways we treat others and ways we would like to be treated, ways we work together to be able to do our best, and times when we work alone. Each class member contributes something to the class community.

BRAINSTORM

Using the format below or one you create, lead a class brainstorming session in which students, as a group, complete the sentences to create a class pledge.

WE have...

WE believe...

WE accept...

WE make...

WE will...

Part 2: Embodying a Class Pledge

This segment will need some open spaces within the room, and need not immediately follow part one.

WARM UP

Ask students to stand, allowing enough space so they can stretch their arms out and not touch anyone or anything.

- Ask students to create a pose or statue showing how they feel right now.
- Ask students to create a pose or statue showing words that are related to the class pledge you created in part one.
- Have students create poses that embody these characteristics, e.g. kindness, responsibility, etc.
- Ask students to hold their pose, but at times look around the room at the various ways other students are posing.
- Ask what they notice in common about certain poses, what is different, and why. Note how levels are used – low to the floor, up high, standing height – and on the next pose, ask students to change their level.

ACTIVITY

1. Divide the class into small groups – ideally one group for each of the class pledge statements you have created. Each group gets one of the class pledge statements written on a piece of paper. Ask students to explore ways to show what this pledge means with their bodies. Depending on the students' ability level and time allowed for the activity, they could make a group statue that illustrates their given pledge statement, or they could create a small, silent scene which demonstrates the pledge. To encourage dance movements and not just miming or charades, you can ask students to make it more like dance by adding different levels, extending arms and legs more, and/or perhaps adding a jump or turn.
2. Ask each group to share their pose or movement phrase, and ask students to **describe what qualities** of movements or poses they notice first, then what they think each pose or phrase represents and why.
3. To expand this activity, you can let students choose appropriate music or "vote" on two or three selections you provide. Position groups around the room either in a line or a formation in which there is a logical sequence and all groups can see each other. Students can be asked to hold a beginning pose if they have a movement phrase or scene, or start at a neutral position (standing) if they have just created one pose for their pledge statement.
4. "Perform" the entire class pledge by reading aloud each statement and have each group form their poses or dance scene after or during the reading of each statement. Make sure to ask the students to watch other groups, remaining still, when their group is not performing.

➔ *If your class is successful at this, it might be a great opportunity to perform for your principal or other administrators, faculty members, or parents!*

Company Pledge

As members of Urban Bush Women:

WE embrace our personal histories and honor the memory of our ancestors;

WE possess strong bodies, keen minds and resilient spirits;

WE remain willing to show our authentic selves and to stand up for what we believe;

WE hold ourselves accountable for our words and actions even when others don't;

WE believe in establishing a more equitable balance of power in the world;

WE make the time to reach out to our younger sisters and brothers;

WE dance with abandon.

CORE VALUES

Validating the Individual

Catalyst for Social Change

Building Trust through Process

Entering Community and Co-Creating Stories

Celebrating the Movement and Culture of the African Diaspora

Place Matters

-- Pledge and Core Values excerpted with permission from Urban Bush Women Study Guide

Hero Tribute: Using the Arts to Honor Leaders

Grades 5 and up

The dance, "Give Your Hands to Struggle," is a tribute to Civil Rights Leaders. This exploration will help students understand the concept of using the arts to pay tribute to historical figures, and to learn how to express appreciation.

DISCUSSION

Who are some historical figures who have made life better for us?
Create a list as a class, or discuss ones you have studied recently.

In what ways do we honor or pay tribute to these people?
How are the arts used to honor famous people, such as Abraham Lincoln or Dr. Martin Luther King, who have done good things for other people?

As a class or individually, have students choose one figure from the list to honor.
Think about the good things that this person did for society. Write down some descriptive words or phrases to represent who they are and what they did.

ACTIVITIES (options)

- Create a poster that pays tribute to that person. You may want to draw a picture of the person and utilize some of the descriptive words or phrases you came up with that tell of their good qualities or deeds.
- Write a paragraph that could be written on a stone monument honoring that person and their accomplishments.
- Create a poem about that person that could be read aloud at a ceremony honoring him or her.
- Think about how that person might be posed if there was a statue made of him or her. Explore creating that statue with your body.
- Create a collage of pictures and words as a tribute to people, either in the past or right now, who you think of as leaders building a better future for all of us. * (This last option used, with permission, from Urban Bush Women Study Guide)

REFLECTION

Questions to ask after the tribute is complete:

What can you do to be like this person? How can you help make things better in your world? Consider what it would be like to do a tribute for several people in one activity. How would it change what you did? Imagine how someone might create a dance that was a tribute to many different people who all worked to make sure people were all free and treated fairly.



Conversations with Body Language and Movement

Grades 5 and up

The dance “Girlfriends” is performed with no music, and is based on three women who were good friends of the choreographer in college, plus the choreographer herself. The four dancers use body language, (exaggerated gestures and facial expressions) to portray their personalities, the group dynamic and to converse. This exploration will help students recognize and create dance as a form of communication and language.

Introduction Ask students to think of a good friend. How does that friend act? What kinds of attitudes does your friend have at different times? What are some good things about that friend? What happens when you and your friend have an argument? What happens when you make up after an argument?

Warm Up Have students stand in an open space, ideally in a circle formation. Ask for two or three volunteers to show a pose or statue using the full body that shows how they stand when they are angry. Have students notice the body language. How are the arms used? What is the energy like? How is the facial expression used to tell us what this person is feeling? Point out different ways to show anger with body positioning. Ask everyone to make their own pose for this emotion. Repeat with other emotions: e.g. proud, excited, worried.

Activity Have students again think of their friend, and ask them to act like their friend. Begin with just standing like their friend. Then ask them to demonstrate, all at one time, how that friend might stand, position his/her arms, use his/her facial expression in different situations:

Some examples (adapt for your students):
Waiting for the bus on Monday morning
Just found out you aced a test
Saw something really funny

Continuing to be pretend to be your friend, move around the room and use your body language and your facial expressions to try to show off your friend's personality. Try to do it so well that people who know your friend will know that you are pretending to be that person.

Silently... Find a partner or two other people, and say hello to those people using only body language – no words. Ask students to tell you what a conversation is. Note that a conversation is one person saying something, and others responding. Then ask students to have a **conversation** with their partner(s) without words -- just body language and facial expressions. They should continue to be “in character” as their friend. They can add snaps and claps if they wish. Ideas for topics for the conversation may be:

An argument over who has the best attitude
A friend is in trouble and you are worried about him/her
Something funny that one of the partners just did

Observation Have students watch two or three students having a “conversation” and ask them what they notice about use of arms, facial expressions, or speed of movements. Ask students what you think they are saying to each other, and what about the movements or poses made them think that. If we were going to make this into a dance to be performed on stage, how could we make the movement bigger or more exciting?

Sharing Music Traditions and Exploring Funk Music

Grades 1 and up

“Cool, Baby, Cool” is a tribute to funk music, which influenced much of the music that followed it.

Generational storytelling and sharing

Prior to this activity, direct students to ask their parents and/or grandparents what kind of music they listened to when they were young, and did that music influence any of today’s music?

Encourage students to ask parents and/or grandparents to tell them a story about the way they danced to music at parties when they were young.

- Ask students to think about their favorite music, and why they like that type of music.
- Ask students to explain what they think “cool” is. Have them think about someone, maybe a person they know or a celebrity, who they think exudes the attitude of cool. Explain that funk music was the Hip-Hop of its era, and the musicians were considered very cool.
- Play a piece of funk music, such as Sly & the Family Stone’s “Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin).”
- Ask the class to listen to the beat and clap out the beat, counting 1 through 8, then starting over again at 1.
- Write a list of 4-6 body parts on the board. For example: head, shoulders, chest, feet. You may wish to have students contribute to the list.
- Round 1: Ask the class to then move one body part for 8 counts then change to the next body part on the list.
- Round 2: Ask the class to do the same thing again, but this time to infuse the movement with the attitude of “cool.”

Activity used with permission from Urban Bush Women Study Guide

Calling Forth and Defeating Destructive Forces

Grade 5 and up

The dance, “Walking with Pearl ... Africa Diaries” is a tribute to anthropologist, choreographer, and activist Pearl Primus. Zollar’s tribute dance was based on Primus’ 1984 dance, “Bushache.” “Bushache” was based on a traditional tribal dance of the Bantu people of Zaire. The tribe performed this dance every 20 years to call forth the evil forces within their community so they could defeat them and ensure the safety of the next generation. Both Primus’ and Zollar’s dances address this issue.

Discuss

- What is a community?
- What are some good things about our community?
- What are some things that are not good for our community?

On a sheet of paper, have students individually make a list of bad things about their community that they would like to make better.

Read description of “Bushache” above, or paraphrase.

Have students stand, and place the paper on the floor. What if you were a warrior who was able to make those things go away by stomping or dancing on them? Have students stomp or jump (if your floor is not slick) on the paper, or make a warrior-like pose above the paper. Try two or three times, encouraging different stomps or poses each time. Adding African drumming behind the poses will likely encourage more movement from the students.

Ask students to imagine that they have defeated those bad things, like the Bantu people. Now they can be strong and peaceful. Tell students to pick up the paper, changing their movements from angry or war-like to calm and triumphant. Hold the paper in a way that shows you have conquered those bad things, and you can be peaceful now. Have each student make a full-body pose. You can ask them to say aloud one sentence about what bad thing in the community they have defeated: e.g. "I have defeated crime in my neighborhood."

Research

Grades 5 and up

- What is the African Diaspora? Look at a map that shows the many places that African slaves were sent (see Web Resources for a link to a map if needed). Look at a current map of Africa and see which modern-day countries represent the areas from which most slaves were shipped to America.
- Find the definition of an anthropologist. Who was Pearl Primus?
- Pick a community you have learned about in school and research how dance is used in that community.
- Research how music, dance, visual art or theater has historically been used to make political and social changes. Ask family members and friends if they know of any examples, and ask them to tell you about what it was and what happened. Make a list and write one sentence describing how each song, play, painting or dance was used to make things better.



Post Performance Questions

How was it different watching a solo dance, as in "Give Your Hands to Struggle," and watching a dance with seven dancers, such as "Cool, Baby, Cool?"

Also discuss the different moods or messages these dances had, and the differences in the way the dancers moved.

Why do you think the company is only made up of women?

What are some stories you would like to tell about yourself, your family, or your community? What art form – writing, dance, acting, music or visual art – would you use and why?

Discussion Topics

Why is dance used to tell stories in certain cultures or communities?

Where do we see dance in our community? How is it used?

In what ways could dance be used to make a community better?

What is social justice?

Who are some Civil Rights Leaders? What does it mean to be a Civil Rights Leader? Why do we honor them?

Post Performance Activity

Translating Dance into Dialogue

Recall the dance “Girlfriends” in which the four women with different personalities “talked” to each other with body language and gesture. Ask for volunteers to reenact (without touching each other and with no words) something like the part in which two of the women have a face off, a conflict, and then start laughing.

Have other students watch and imagine what the two are saying to each other while they are dancing or gesturing. Then, ask the two to repeat what they just did, select two students to say aloud an imagined dialogue while the other two do the movements. For older students who can write quickly, you can have them write the dialogue for a scene that is enacted in class.



Glossary

Diaspora – a dispersion of a people from their original homeland; the community formed by such people; in Urban Bush Women, we draw inspiration and movement from cultures of the African Diaspora.

(from Urban Bush Women Study Guide, used with permission)

Modern Dance: A form of contemporary dance developed in the United States in the 20th century which utilizes the full body and is less confined to rigid body positioning found in more traditional forms of performance dance, such as ballet. Not to be confused with popular or street dance, modern is performance art and usually performed barefoot.

Funk: Funk is a distinct style of music originated by African-Americans, e.g., James Brown and his band members, and groups like The Meters. Funk best can be recognized by its syncopated rhythms; thick bass line (often based on an "on the one" beat); razor-sharp rhythm guitars; chanted or hollered vocals; strong, rhythm-oriented horn sections; prominent percussion; an upbeat attitude; African tones; danceability; and strong jazzy influences.

(source: History of Music: Encyclopedia II)

Web Resources

Urban Bush Women: The company's official site.

www.urbanbushwomen.org

Extravagant Crowd: Pearl Primus This site has a bio of Primus and two photographs of her from the Van Vechten portrait collection.

<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/cvvpw/gallery/primus1.html>

Adam Clayton Powell: "What's in Your Hands" speech:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRIJYzhELU>

NPR: Interview with Pearl Primus about Bushache: This six-minute segment gives background on Bushache, feedback from Primus about the dance and the role of dance in society, and describes Zollar's process of creating "Walking With Pearl ... Africa Diaries"

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1138487>

Planetary Dance: A Community Dance of Planetary Healing: A modern-day example of how ceremonial dance is used in a community to call for healing and peace.

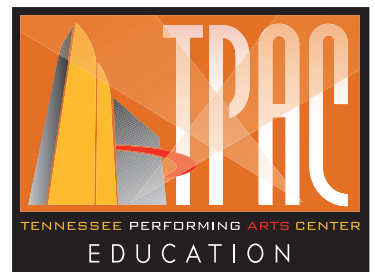
<http://www.planetarydance.org>

MOAD: Museum of the African Diaspora: Includes sections on slave narratives and a large collection of black and white photographs of people of the African Diaspora.

<http://www.moadsf.org/salon/index.html>

African Diaspora Map: Two maps based on the research of Joseph E. Harris, Ph. D.

<http://www.howard.edu/library/Search/Diaspora/default.htm>



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