

Dance Theatre of Harlem



VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL 2026

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DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM

Dance Theatre of Harlem is a leading dance institution of unparalleled global acclaim, encompassing a performing ensemble, a leading arts education center, and extensive education and community outreach programs. Each branch of Dance Theatre of Harlem is solidly committed to enriching the lives of young people and adults around the world through the arts.

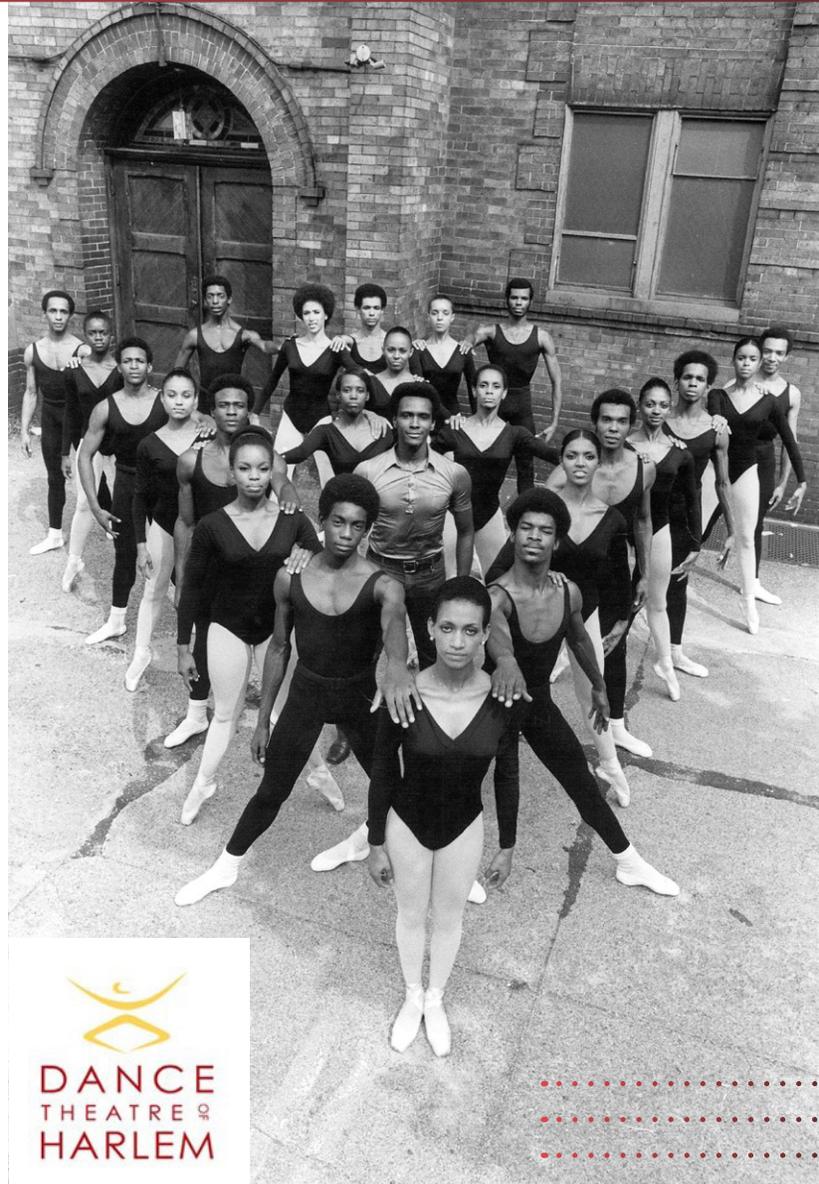
Founded in 1969 by dancer Arthur Mitchell and dance teacher Karel Shook, Dance Theatre of Harlem was considered “one of ballet’s most exciting undertakings,” according to *The New York Times*. Shortly after the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mitchell was inspired to start a school that would offer children—especially those in Harlem, the community in which he was born—the opportunity to learn about dance and related art forms.

Now in its fifth decade, Dance Theatre of Harlem has grown into a multicultural dance institution with an extraordinary legacy of providing opportunities for creative expression and artistic excellence that continues to set standards in the performing arts. Through performances, community engagement, and arts education, Dance Theatre of Harlem brings innovative and bold new forms of artistic expression to audiences around the world, and delivers its important message of empowerment through the arts for all.

Dance Theatre of Harlem’s mission is

- To maintain a world-class school that trains young people in classical ballet and the allied arts,
- To provide arts education, community outreach programs, and positive role models for all, and
- To present a ballet company of African American and other racially diverse artists who perform the most demanding repertory at the highest level of quality.

Source: Adapted from www.dancetheatreofharlem.org.



Ballet for Everybody: The History of Dance Theatre of Harlem



For centuries, ballet was a white, aristocratic art form. Ballet dancers of color were a rarity. Dance Theatre of Harlem changed all that.

From its official debut in January 1971 at New York's Guggenheim Museum—three small ballets performed by twenty dancers—to its zenith three decades later as an internationally acclaimed touring company of forty dancers with more than a hundred works in its repertory, Dance Theatre of Harlem demolished color barriers in the ballet world.

The company and its school were launched by former New York City Ballet dancer Arthur Mitchell and ballet teacher Karel Shook. The pair started the school in a church basement in the inner-city neighborhood of Harlem. At the time, Harlem was a rough place to live, with widespread poverty, joblessness, and crime.

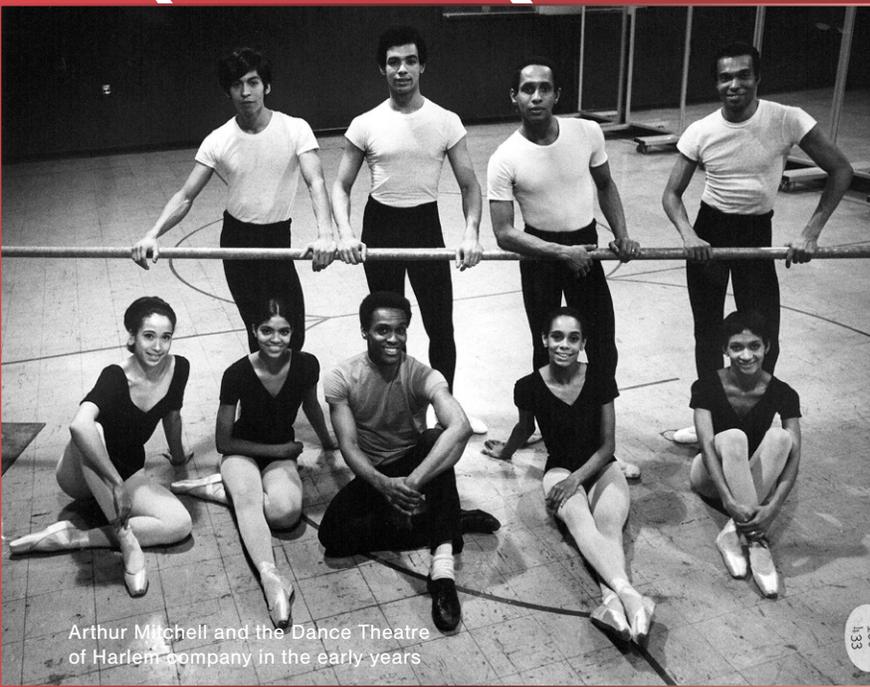
Dance in Harlem—a hotbed of African American creative culture, including jazz music—might be understandable. But ballet? Mitchell thought, why not? “Many people ask,

‘Is ballet relevant?’” he said. “But any sequence of steps put together in time with music becomes a ballet.”

At first, ballet was a hard sell in Harlem. “People would be walking by, and they’d see this man inside screaming and yelling and these kids dancing around. I said, ‘Come on in and try,’ and I remember the fellows said, ‘I’m not going to wear those things,’ meaning leotards. I said, ‘Well, put on [jeans] or put on a bathing suit.’ And that’s how I recruited dancers.”

While Mitchell was looking for promising dancers to train for his new ballet company, more important to him was jump-starting self-esteem and social change within the community where he was born and raised.

“The whole point when I started Dance Theatre was to make it accessible to people who were culturally deprived because they could not financially afford it,” Mitchell recalled. “If someone came to me with five kids, all five kids could study, not just the ‘talented’ one.... From that they develop a sense of ‘I am and I can do.’”



Arthur Mitchell and the Dance Theatre of Harlem company in the early years

Soon hundreds of students flocked to the school, which moved to larger facilities and expanded its offerings to include classes in modern, jazz, tap, and other dance traditions from around the world; acting; music appreciation and theory; choreography; percussion; even sewing, tailoring, and costume and set design. From its earliest years, Dance Theatre of Harlem regularly opened its doors to the community, offering free or nearly free lecture-demonstrations, as well as outreach programs to senior citizens and children with special needs. Mitchell's commitment to arts education expanded with the 1992 launch of the Dancing Through Barriers initiative, which to this day brings Dance Theatre of Harlem programming to schools across the country and around the world.

As Dance Theatre of Harlem's academy grew, so did the company's reputation for creative excellence and innovation. DTH dazzled audiences far and wide with its bold, dynamic performances incorporating brilliant costumes and elaborate sets. In 1988 Dance Theatre of Harlem became the first American ballet company to tour and perform in Russia. Another historic tour followed in 1992, this time to South Africa, which struggled with its own system of racial segregation, called *apartheid*. In 2000 the company performed in the People's Republic of China.

Despite its enduring popularity, Dance Theatre of Harlem's company was forced into an extended hiatus in 2004 due to financial difficulties. Still, the school continued to offer classes, and its performance arm, the DTH Ensemble, continued to thrill audiences. In 2009 Arthur Mitchell invited former DTH principal ballerina Virginia Johnson to become Artistic Director, and the performing company

was revived in 2013. Arthur Mitchell passed away in September 2018, but his legacy endures.

In 2022, Robert Garland assumed the role of Artistic Director of Dance Theatre of Harlem. Like Virginia Johnson before him, Mr. Garland was also a principal dancer with DTH. During his career with DTH, he also ran the Dance Theatre of Harlem School and became the organization's first resident choreographer. Some of Mr. Garland's work will be featured in DTH's performances at this year's Virginia Arts Festival.

From its church-basement beginnings to its status today as a major artistic force, Dance Theatre of Harlem remains committed to creating and sharing world-class ballet for all. As Mitchell once said, "The arts ignite the mind, they give you the possibility to dream and to hope."

• Try This!

- Imagine you're launching your own dance company, school for the arts, or other arts organization. What social or cultural cause might you support or explore? How would your organization support that cause or advocate for change through your art?



Arthur Mitchell teaching a class

Source: Mitchell quotes from "Dance Theatre of Harlem, Real People, George Schlatter," <https://youtu.be/SIWXkIM8qtk>.

Battling Discrimination with Ballet: Dance Theatre of Harlem and the Civil Rights Movement



Dance Theatre of Harlem performs in 1970

Dance Theatre of Harlem shares deep roots with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and '60s. It was the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, in fact, that gave birth to the world's first Black classical ballet company.

"With [Dr. King's] assassination...I felt it was very important that I come back to my community and do what I do well, which is teach dance," said company cofounder Arthur Mitchell. After studying on full scholarship at the School of American Ballet, in 1955 Mitchell had been invited to join the acclaimed New York City Ballet, becoming one of the first male African American dancers in a major ballet company. Mitchell would dance for New York City Ballet for fifteen years, rising to the rank of *premier danseur*, or the company's lead male dancer.

But King's assassination had a profound impact on Mitchell, awakening in him a need to give back to the African American community of Harlem in New York City, where Mitchell was born and raised. "I felt the discipline, the focus, and the technique young people would learn through the arts would transcend to their everyday life, and I'd be helping to make better human beings," he said.

Just as the Civil Rights Movement sought to end segregation and discrimination, Mitchell had to fight against prejudice and stereotypes to become a dancer with New York City Ballet and to launch a Black ballet company and school.

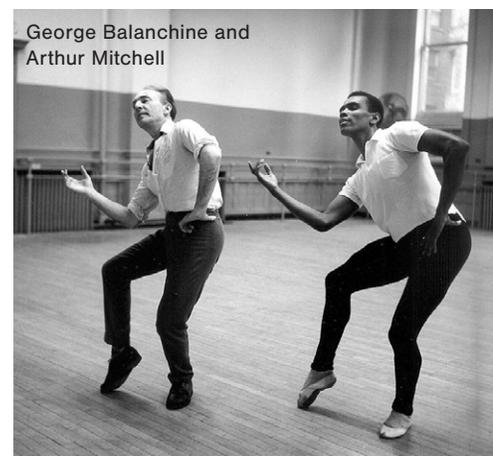
"There was a perception that Black people could not do classical ballet, that the body was not fit for it," he remembered. "When I got to New York City Ballet, [people] could say, 'Oh, you're the exception.' No, I had the opportunity." New York City Ballet director Lincoln Kirstein and choreographer George Balanchine believed in Mitchell's abilities and furthered his career. Even in New York City Ballet, though, efforts to include more Black dancers and students were frequently met with resistance from administrators who thought the ballet company should remain white. Moreover, most African Americans didn't have the chance to attend the dance classes where ballet teachers could see their potential.

The stereotype lingered that ballet couldn't be performed by Black dancers. "Rather than argue," Mitchell explained, "the best thing to do was provide the opportunity—make a company and school so that people could see that given the opportunity, anyone can excel."

When Mitchell launched Dance Theatre of Harlem with his mentor and ballet teacher Karel Shook, "it was two dancers and thirty children," he recalled. Over the years, as the company became internationally renowned for its artistic excellence, the school's enrollment swelled to over a thousand dancers, sixty percent of whom lived in Harlem. The rest of the students came from countries and cultures around the globe, underscoring Dance Theatre of Harlem's wholehearted embrace of diversity, which continues to this day.

Dr. King and his fellow defenders of civil rights—of equal rights for all—would surely approve. Mitchell is proud of DTH's legacy. "When I go home at night, I can sleep. I can rest [knowing] I've given back and done something," he said.

Source: Mitchell quotes from *A Walk Through Harlem*, Thirteen/WNET New York, 2000.



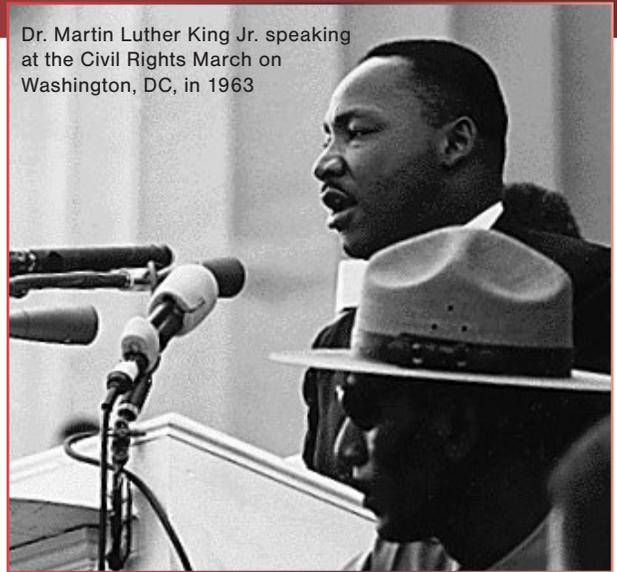
George Balanchine and Arthur Mitchell

Timeline of the Civil Rights Era

- 1954** Brown v. Board of Education. US Supreme Court rules against public school segregation, though many remain segregated.
- 1955** Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat, triggering a year-long boycott of the Montgomery, Alabama bus system.
Arthur Mitchell joins New York City Ballet, the first African American male dancer in a major ballet company.
- 1956** US Supreme Court rules segregation on Montgomery, Alabama buses unconstitutional.
- 1957** Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. helps found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to work for full equality for African Americans through nonviolent protests. Military soldiers escort nine African American students, the "Little Rock Nine," to desegregate a school in Arkansas.
- 1960** Four African American college students hold a sit-in at a Woolworth's "whites only" lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, sparking similar sit-ins in other cities.
- 1961** The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organizes Freedom Rides throughout the South in an effort to desegregate interstate public bus travel.
- 1963** Martin Luther King Jr. gives his "I Have a Dream" speech in front of 250,000 people at the March on Washington, at that time the largest Civil Rights demonstration ever.

Four African American girls are killed before Sunday services in the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.
- 1964** President Lyndon Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act, prohibiting discrimination in employment, voting, and education. Martin Luther King Jr. is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speaking at the Civil Rights March on Washington, DC, in 1963



- 1965** Dr. King organizes a protest march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, for African American voting rights. A shocked nation watches on TV as police brutally club and teargas the protestors.

Congress passes the Voting Rights Act, outlawing practices used to keep African Americans from voting.
- 1968** Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.
- 1969** **Arthur Mitchell founds Dance Theatre of Harlem.**

What Do You Think?

- Read or listen to all or part of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech of 1963. What was Dr. King's vision for America? In the years since his death in 1968, how have American ideas about race changed? What is your dream for America?
- Dance Theatre of Harlem helped break down barriers for African Americans in the dance world. What kinds of barriers to opportunity exist in today's America? How have they been challenged either in the past or today?



It Happened in Harlem



Before European colonization, Lenape indigenous people lived in the area that is now Harlem and cultivated crops in its lush meadows. In the mid-1600s, Dutch settlers formed a village there, naming it after the city of Haarlem in the Netherlands. Harlem remained mostly farmland for another two centuries. In 1776, its rolling fields were the scene of General George Washington's first victory over the British (the Battle of Harlem Heights).

As New York City expanded, it incorporated Harlem in 1873, and the former village became one of the bustling city's neighborhoods. Harlem rapidly became more developed as it was connected to New York City's railroad lines. Eager property developers rushed to build residential buildings in the area, especially row houses and apartment buildings. They hoped to attract middle-class or wealthy white buyers and renters moving out of more downtown neighborhoods. When white middle-class demand for housing in Harlem didn't match what developers had expected, rent costs dropped steeply in the neighborhood. The low price of housing in Harlem meant poorer workers could afford to move in. Many Jewish people who had recently immigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe moved to Harlem in the late nineteenth century, as well as Black people from other parts of New York City—both seeking better opportunities and a safer home for themselves and their families.

In the early twentieth century, worsening conditions and anti-Black violence in other Black neighborhoods of New York City meant that many Black New Yorkers were looking for another place to live. In 1904, Philip Payton, a Black businessman, created the Afro-American Realty Company—an organized way to rent Harlem landlords' apartments to Black tenants. Though they still had to pay the landlords higher rents than their white neighbors, thousands of Black New York City residents relocated to Harlem via Payton's company, bringing their own vibrant businesses and churches to the neighborhood.

Other Black people moved to Harlem from further afield in the following decades. In the 1920s and 1930s, millions of African Americans from the South moved north seeking a better life—a trend called The Great Migration. Many settled in Harlem. Others moved to Harlem internationally,



Photos top-bottom: Harlem farmland, 1765. A plaque commemorating the American victory at Harlem during the Revolutionary War. Three Harlem women in the 1920s.



from the Caribbean. As Harlem became majority Black, many white residents chose to leave rather than share the streets and apartment buildings, solidifying the neighborhood’s status as an African American hub. During the 1920s, around 200,000 African Americans lived in the relatively small community of Harlem (just three square miles), making the neighborhood the highest concentration of Black people in the world at the time—a “city within a city” (as one contemporary put it) with its own distinct sense of identity.

The African American protest movement, which sought racial equality and better opportunities, soon blossomed in Harlem. The community was home to Black sociologist and historian W. E. B. DuBois and the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), founded to advance the rights of people of color. Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association, advocating racial pride, were also based in Harlem.

Art and culture flourished in Harlem from the 1920s through the 1930s—a surge of artistic expression known as the Harlem Renaissance. African American artists working in literature, dance, music, theater, and visual arts used their creativity to celebrate Black culture, to give voice to their personal experiences, and to assert their rights and individuality despite the ways in which white American society treated them as inferior. During the height of the Harlem Renaissance, African American poetry, jazz, painting, and other creative arts became famous worldwide and were enjoyed across racial lines, defining the cutting

edge of culture. The Harlem Renaissance’s spirit of pride, self-determination, and activism laid the groundwork for the later Civil Rights Movement.

In literature, poet Langston Hughes wrote in the rhythms of the blues and jazz he heard around him, while Claude McKay’s poetry encouraged African Americans to stand up for their rights. Novelist Zora Neale Hurston’s novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* emphasized independence and empowerment. Stage actors like Paul Robeson set new benchmarks for electrifying dramatic performance.

In music, swinging jazz brought nightly crowds to hear famous pianists Duke Ellington and Jelly Roll Morton and trumpeter Louis Armstrong. Singers like Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday helped popularize jazz and blues vocals, drawing fans of all races.



Photos top-bottom: W. E. B. DuBois, Langston Hughes (credit: Carl Van Vechten), Zora Neale Hurston, Duke Ellington, Bessie Smith.

The Great Depression of the 1930s and the shrinking job market after World War II took their toll on Harlem. Unemployment, poverty, and crime rose, and audiences had less money available to spend on the arts. The combination of high rents, unfair hiring practices, and police brutality caused anger and social unrest. Frustrated Black Harlem residents clashed with police and the white owners of Harlem businesses.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and '60s saw heightening tensions and worsening living conditions for Harlem's residents. Since the early 1900s, the city of New York had made no real improvements or investments in Harlem's housing and infrastructure, which had only worsened as time went on and stately row houses and apartment buildings fell into disrepair. Many middle-class African Americans left Harlem for other neighborhoods and white business owners relocated elsewhere. In 1964, a white off-duty police officer, Thomas Gilligan, killed a Black teenager, fifteen-year-old James Powell, sparking outrage from Harlem's residents which turned into a violent, six-day confrontation with police.

In this unlikely environment, Arthur Mitchell launched his dance company in 1969, blending classical ballet's grace and elegance with the grit and soul of Harlem's city streets. With Dance Theatre of Harlem, Mitchell echoed the Harlem Renaissance's powerful messages of cultural celebration and empowerment.

Conditions in Harlem brightened in the late 1980s and early '90s when New York City finally made major upgrades to the neighborhood, installing new water mains and sewers, sidewalks, curbs, traffic lights, and streetlights, and planting trees. These and other improvements lured businesses, arts groups, and residents back to historic Harlem. Today, Harlem is once again a vibrant, one-of-a-kind neighborhood, proud of its heritage as the center of African-American culture, though wealthy newcomers moving in have meant increased costs for Harlem's longstanding residents.

: Harlem All-Stars

- : Choose a person connected with Harlem history.
- : Research the person's life and cultural contributions.
- : Using what you've learned, write a biography of your subject. Illustrate the biography with your own original artwork or with images you find online. Present your biography to your class using your visuals.

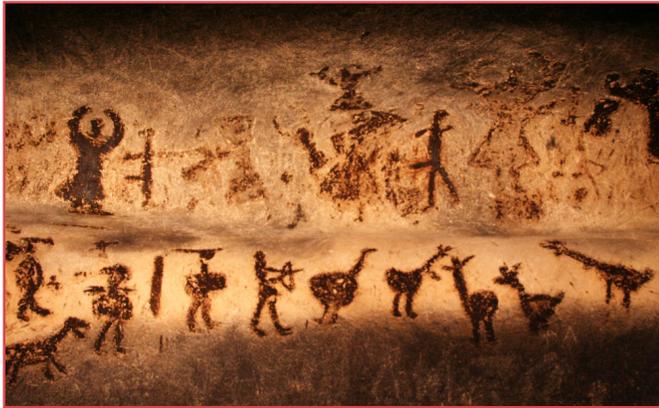
: Did You Know?

- : The Apollo Theater is a famous landmark in Harlem:
- : it was first established as a club for white people,
- : then became a center for the Black community after
- : becoming racially integrated in the 1930s. In reference
- : to this Harlem icon, Norfolk's Attucks Theatre
- : (designed, owned, and operated by African Americans
- : at its inception) was nicknamed "The Apollo of the
- : South" when it first opened its doors in 1919!



Shall We Dance?

People have always danced, historians believe. We can see representations of people dancing in prehistoric cave paintings!



Prehistoric cave pictographs. Kozarnika cave, Belogradchik, Daznaempoveche.

When people dance, they move their bodies to express emotions or ideas, usually accompanied by music. In this way, dance is like language, and the different steps and movements within each style of dance are the language's vocabulary. People can dance alone or with others. When people dance to entertain an audience, they often do so as part of a performing group called a dance company. Dance companies usually specialize in a certain type of dance, such as modern, jazz, tap, or ballet. Dance Theatre of Harlem specializes in ballet.



Ancient Greek dance depiction. Painter of the Berlin Dancing Girl, ArchaiOptix.



Carved dancing figure in 13th century Hindu temple. Ramappa temple, Rudresvara, Palampet Telangana India, Sarah Welch.

Choreography is the art of creating dances. A choreographer imagines how a dance will look and arranges steps and movements to tell a story or express a particular feeling or idea. Choreographers must be knowledgeable in their chosen dance form and its particular vocabulary to effectively convey their message to the audience. They also select the music that will accompany the dance and work with set, lighting, and costume designers so that all elements of the performance work together to express the dance's story or idea. Choreographers are usually dancers or former dancers too, like Arthur Mitchell and Robert Garland of Dance Theatre of Harlem.

• Research & Reflect

- Think of types of dancing people do in social settings, such as disco, moshing, break dancing, hip-hop, line dancing, waltz, salsa, swing... Pick one style
- and research its origins. How does this dance style reflect the culture or cultures from which it emerged?
- How does it use elements of dance? What does this dance style's language—its movement vocabulary—communicate to others?

ELEMENTS OF DANCE

All forms of dance can be broken down into its most basic parts. The acronym BASTE can help you remember these dance building blocks. As you watch Dance Theatre of Harlem’s performance, keep these elements in mind. How do the dancers use these elements to tell a story?



Body

A dancer uses parts of the body or the entire body to dance.

Example: A dancer might use their arms, legs, hands, or feet, or even their neck and head.

Ask yourself: How did the dancers use their bodies? What shapes did their bodies make?



Action

A dancer performs particular actions.

Example: A dancer might bend, sway, or leap.

Ask yourself: What actions or movements did the dancers make?



Space

A dancer moves through space in various ways.

Example: A dancer might move forward, backward, diagonally, up, or down.

Ask yourself: What patterns in space did the dancers use?



Time

A dancer moves in relation to time in different ways.

Example: A dancer might move at a quick tempo or in a certain rhythm.

Ask yourself: What aspects of time—speed, rhythm, accent—did the dancers use?



Energy

A dancer moves with varied energy.

Example: A dancer might move smoothly or suddenly.

Ask yourself: What kind of energy did the dancers use?



Try This!

Explore the elements of dance by demonstrating an example of each one yourself. Now become a choreographer by creating your own original work set to your choice of music using your classmates as your dancers. You and your classmates don’t need to know any specific dance steps; as Arthur Mitchell said, any sequence of steps set to music becomes a ballet. Perform your new dance for your class. Can your classmates identify the dance elements in your work?

Source: Adapted from *The Elements of Dance*, <https://www.elementsofdance.org>.

Ballet Basics

Ballet began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the royal court of France, with influences from Renaissance Italy. These court dances were part of lavish entertainment extravaganzas presented by the monarchy to show the ruler's greatness.

In the eighteenth century, ballet spread across Europe, coming into its own as a performance art with a well-defined vocabulary of steps, movements, and poses. Ballet was further refined over the course of the nineteenth century with the development of dancing *en pointe*, in which a ballerina dances on the tips of her toes with special shoes. Ballet dancers' training intensified, and ballets (ballet performances) became immensely popular—increasingly danced in theaters and enjoyed by the masses, not at court. Professional ballerinas were the celebrities of the day. Innovations in the twentieth century, especially from Russian ballet companies, included fresh ideas about movement and expression.

Ballet often tells a story or expresses an idea or emotion, the dancers' movements combined and ordered in a way that conveys meaning without words. Music, costumes, lighting, and scenery help set the mood or communicate the story.

Early ballet dancers did not perform steps as challenging as today's ballet dancers do. Modern ballet dancers are athletes as well as artists, capable of amazing technical feats. Professional dancers spend long hours in training, often up to eight hours a day, six days a week.

BALLET'S SEVEN MOVEMENTS

Just as all dance can be broken down into its basic elements, the specific dance form of ballet can be broken down into seven fundamental categories of movement, on which the rest of the technique is built. The names of ballet steps are French, as ballet began in France.

Bend: A **plié** (plee-AY) is a bending of the knees, with the feet and knees turned outward. Pliés are one of the first steps learned in ballet class. When dancing, pliés help the dancer's legs function like a spring, preparing them for jumps and cushioning their landings. A **demi-plié** is a small bending; a **grand plié** is a deeper bend.

Stretch: **Etendre** (eh-TAHND-ruh) is the stretching of the entire body, giving it lightness and lift—especially stretching the leg while pointing the foot, which gives a straight line along the leg. A **tendu** (tahn-DEW) is a move where one leg is extended straight out from the supporting leg—to the front, side, or back—with the foot fully pointed. Practicing tendus helps build strength.

Rise up: **Relever** (rel-eh-VAY) is to rise and is one of the most distinctive elements of ballet. **Relevé** (rel-eh-VAY) is when a dancer rises up to the balls of their feet or to the tips of their toes (in pointe shoes). This movement builds balance and calf and ankle strength.

Leap: **Sauter** (so-TAY) is to jump. A **sauté** (so-TAY) is one jump or leap. Successfully executed jumps seem to defy gravity, with the dancer descending softly to the floor. Jumps are often used in the faster, livelier dance passages called **allegro** (al-LAY-groh).

Dart: **Elancer** (ay-lan-SAY) means to dart, the dancer moving their body in a sudden, quick manner or changing direction. Any jump performed **elancé** is done just above the floor with straight legs and pointed feet.

Glide: **Glisser** (glee-SAY) is to glide or slide your feet across the floor. A **glissade** (glee-SAHD) is a smooth, gliding movement in which after starting in **plié** the dancer glides one foot across the floor and brushes it in an extension through **tendu** into the air before landing on that foot in **plié** and brushing the other leg closed.

Turn: **Tourner** (toor-NAY) is to turn and **tourné** is a turn. There are many turns in ballet, such as **chainé** (shen-AY) and **pirouette** (peer-o-WET). Chainés are a series of quick, successive turns done with alternating feet and travel across the floor in a straight line. In a pirouette, the dancer makes a turn of the body balanced on one foot while staying in place.

Ballet Glossary

arabesque (ah-ra-BESK): the position where the dancer stands on one leg with the other leg stretched out to the back, usually at a right angle to the body. The arms usually correspond to the position. There are many types of arabesques depending on the direction of the body, height of the leg, and position of the arms.

artistic director: the person at a ballet company who is in charge of choosing ballets to perform, hiring dancers, rehearsing the company for performances, and other artistic decisions.

ballerina (bah-lay-REE-nah): a female dancer in a ballet company. A female principal dancer (the leading dancer who dances the main roles) is also called a prima ballerina.

corps de ballet (core duh bal-LAY): the group of dancers, other than principals and soloists, who make up a ballet company. They work much like a chorus would for an opera.

jeté (zhuh-TAY): a jump in the air. There are many different types, but the most common is the grand, or big, jeté. In this jump, both of the dancer's legs are split in midair

pas de deux (pah de duh): a dance for two people, usually a man and a woman. Deux in French means two..

pointe (pwent): the tip of the toe. Most professional female ballet dancers dance “en pointe,” which means on the tips of their toes wearing special shoes called pointe shoes.

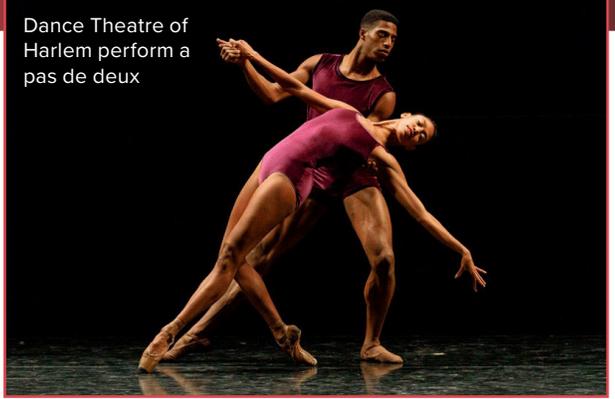
port de bras (poor duh brah): the graceful movement of the arms in ballet. There are five basic positions of the arms corresponding to each of the five positions of the feet

premier danseur (pruh-MYAY dahn-SUHR): a male ballet star or leading dancer of the ballet company. He is the male version of the prima ballerina.

tour en l'air (toor ahn lehr): a step in which the dancer jumps straight up in the air and performs one or more turns of the body.

tutu (TOO-too): a ballet costume made of a bodice and layers of netting.

Dance Theatre of Harlem perform a pas de deux



Ballet at the French court, 1573



Ballerina's foot en pointe

Try This!

- Research some ballet steps—either the ones listed here, or others that you find online.
- Can you find pictures or video showing how these steps are performed? Try executing the steps. Which are the most challenging?
- Which are easiest? See if you can identify any of these steps during the Dance Theatre of Harlem performance.

Athlete or Artist?

- Dance Theatre of Harlem dancers train as intensely as professional athletes, yet dancers are perceived as artists. Make comparisons and draw contrasts between professional athletes and professional dancers. How do they train? What do they wear? What personality characteristics does each professional need to achieve his or her goals? How are athletes and dancers similar? How are they different? Organize your thoughts with a chart or table.

Resources

Dance Theatre of Harlem

<http://www.dancetheatreofharlem.org>

Website of Dance Theatre of Harlem providing in-depth information on the company, its dancers, repertoire, and history, and the DTH school. Particularly fascinating is the Alumni Stories section, featuring videos of former DTH dancers reflecting on what the company has meant to them, in both their professional and personal lives, and how they were changed by their DTH experience:

<https://www.dancetheatreofharlem.org/alumni>.

Civil Rights Movement

<https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/b243b601-a18f-432c-84ff-1d0ca77e8020/the-civil-rights-movement-virtual-learning-journey>

Virtual learning journey of the civil rights movement from Georgia Public Broadcasting and the Georgia Department of Education, including comprehensive cross-curricular multimedia content.

A New African American Identity: The Harlem Renaissance

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/new-african-american-identity-harlem-renaissance>

Overview of the Harlem Renaissance, its key figures, and its impact on American culture and the later Civil Rights Movement, from the National Museum of African American History & Culture.

Drop Me Off in Harlem

<https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/interactives/drop-me-off-in-harlem/a-place-called-harlem>

Interactive online platform for students to explore the Harlem Renaissance and its prominent places and people, featuring classroom activities, lessons, and more, from the Kennedy Center.

Elements of Dance

<https://www.elementsofdance.org>

Online teacher resources for dance, featuring lesson planning and downloadable worksheets, graphic organizers, posters, and other tools for use in the classroom.



Virginia Standards of Learning

Dance: K.1, 3, 5-8, 11, 15, 18; 1.3-6, 11, 18; 2.3-6, 11, 18; 3.3-6; 4.3, 6; 5.3-7; 6.3-7, 11, 15; 7.3-7, 11, 16; 8.3-6, 16; DI.3-6; DII.3-4, 6; DIII.3-4, 6; DIV.3, 6



FEEDBACK FORM

We need your feedback to make our Education Programs even better! Please take a moment to complete this form and either return it to the Virginia Arts Festival office at 440 Bank Street, Norfolk, VA 23510, fax it to (757) 605-3080, or e-mail your answers to education@vafest.org.

Event: _____

How did your students respond to the performance?

How did you prepare your students for this performance? Did you use the Education Guide? If so, how?
Did students enjoy the materials?

How did this performance contribute to experiential learning in your classroom?

What role do the arts play in your school? In your classroom?

If you could change one thing about this experience, what would it be?

Please include quotes and comments from your students as well!

(Optional)

Name: _____

School: _____ City: _____

Would you like to be part of our database? Yes No