

Resources pages: all stages Using photographs as stimuli

by Sue Cottam and Penny Perrett

A collection of dance photographs is a highly useful resource for work at all key stages.

CHOREOGRAPHY

While photographs relating to the GCSE and A Level set works displayed around the teaching space will support learning specific to those works, photographs can trigger creative, choreographic responses at all key stages. At a basic level, a photo – for example, an image of a trio – can be used as the starting or ending position for a phrase of movement and to initiate thinking about how and when each dancer gets in or out of the position. The whole class could use the same photograph, which gives the opportunity to compare different responses at the end of the lesson. Alternatively, each trio could use a different photo and the rest of the class observe and then guess which photo was used. As an extension activity, students could be given two or three photographs to incorporate into a phrase.

PERFORMANCE

Photos can contribute to understanding of high quality performance. By looking at a still image, attention can be drawn to: focus, projection, alignment, extension and expression. Students can be encouraged to recreate shapes and posi-

tions and support each other in doing so, maybe with one being the 'clay' and one being the 'sculptor'.

APPRECIATION

Appreciation of different aspects of dance can be emphasised in a way that is sometimes more difficult when using the moving image, including: use of levels; symmetry; unison; contrast; complementary shapes; aspects of the production, such as costume and physical setting.

Sorting photos into groups can support teaching. For example: duo, trio and group relationships and patterns; contact work; dance styles; use of props. Students love the opportunity to be the professional dancer in the photograph and enjoy selecting their own photo to work with.

As a final tip, leaving a cover teacher with a wallet of photos and a music CD may just provide a quick lesson too!

The following resource includes a number of photographs kindly provided by professional dance companies that we hope you will find inspirational. In some instances we have provided examples of how the photographs could be used in a lesson. Other photographs are shown without commentary for your own use.

HOFESH SCHECTER DANCE COMPANY
Uprising (2006) Choreography: Hofesh Schecter. Photo: Andrew Lang. www.hofesh.co.uk



BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Cyrano (2007)

Choreography: David Bintley

Photo: Bill Cooper

For *Cyrano*, David Bintley devised a clever choreographic vocabulary, in part based on sign language, particularly for the main character of *Cyrano*. This photo shows Iain Mackay in the role of the provincial and naive Christian with Elisha Willis as Roxanne, the girl he loves. It is clear from their positions, facial expressions and her gesture that they are in love and that she is silencing him from speaking. Their left arms are extended from open torsos and he holds her effortlessly.

Duo task – for experienced students, Key Stage 3+

Look carefully at the photo. Create a safe way of moving into this lift. Create a safe way of moving out of the lift. Using this position as the highlight of your choreography, use the idea of sign language and gesture to create a short piece of movement which tells part of a story of your choice to the audience. Try to convey emotions through your gestures, movements and facial expressions. (Note: the emotion demonstrated may not be love but could instead be anger, jealousy, fear, worry, success, etc.)

www.brb.org.uk



JONZI D PRODUCTIONS

TAG...just writing my name (2008)

Choreography: Jonzi D and Ivan Blackstock

Photo: Patrick Green

TAG...just writing my name fuses the elements of hip hop culture – break dancing, body popping and graffiti art. *TAG* tells the story of a young, obsessive graffiti writer in search of acceptance. It delves into the world of graffiti writing and explores the idea of 'physical calligraphy', bringing the graffiti to life through movement. Part of the set is made up of 3D sculptures and lighting and brightly coloured everyday costumes of jogging pants and hoodies add to the street feel of the performance.

Task

Working in a group, select a word of your choice then create it in a 3D form in which each body takes on a shape which depicts one of the letters. Choose another word. Create the shapes of the letters. Work out a way of moving from the first to the second word. Add on more words in the same way. Use stillness and different speeds to add variety to the choreography.

www.jonzi-d.co.uk



ENGLISH NATIONAL BALLET

Dancers in class

Photo: Asya Verzhbinsky

This photograph shows six dancers warming up, with perfect unison in their position. To perform high quality dance, a dancer's body needs to be strong and flexible. Warming up in a safe environment, wearing suitable clothing is essential.

- Which parts of the body are being stretched?
- Which dance genre do you think they will be performing?
- Why is a barre used?
- Why is there a mirror?
- Which clothing items will need to be removed when they start travelling work?

Task

Stand opposite a partner. Hold hands extended in front as if holding the barre. Both partners take up the position in the photo, with one partner acts as the mirror image. Copy carefully the turned out foot, the extended, pointed foot and the strong straight torso. Correct each other if necessary.

Use the position as a stimulus and/or starting point for a short movement motif in a dance genre of your choice. The motif could include, for example, a balance, a travel and contact with the floor, three changes of direction and two changes of speed. Experiment with different dynamic qualities – sharp, smooth, heavy, light, etc.

www.ballet.org.uk

LUDUS DANCE

ID:me (2008)

Choreography: Dylan Quinn

Dancer: Booca Thomas

Photo: Merfin Handy

www.ludusdance.org



FUZZY LOGIC

Dark Laughter (2008)

Choreographer: Zoie Golding

Photo: Brian Slater

Although this photo is taken mid-performance, high quality dance is clearly seen in the use of each dancer's eye focus, the posture and alignment of bodies and their relationship to each other and the ladder, and the perfect symmetry of the dancer holding on to the ladder upside down.

Fuzzy Logic uses a unique style of high tempo and energetic contact work fused with exciting narrative contemporary dance.

- What might have sparked the narrative in this piece?
- Is the piece comic, serious, happy or sad?
- Are the dancers working together or is there an outsider among the group?
- Is the prop a symbol of something else?

Task

Choose a prop as a stimulus for your own group choreography. What narrative does it inspire? How creative can you be with the prop? Use high tempo, emotionally charged, energetic contact work and concentrate on using eye focus throughout the choreography to convey your intentions and feelings to the audience.

www.fuzzylogicedance.com



MOTIONHOUSE
Delicate (1996)

Choreography: Kevin Finnian and Louise Richards
Dancers: Lee Powell and Lisa Perry
Photo: Chris Nash
www.motionhouse.co.uk

