



Walton Arts Center

# Performance Guide



## Jessica Lang Dance



Photo Credit: Sharon Bradford

*Founded in 2011, Jessica Lang Dance (JLD) is a New York City based dance company whose mission is to present and perform dance works around the world that immerse global audiences in the beauty of movement and music. As one of the most celebrated choreographers of her generation, Lang choreographs and teaches throughout the world.*

### Ideas for Curriculum Connections

Arkansas Learning Standards: Fine Arts  
Standards Music: P.6.5.3; CRA.SL.1; R.7.6.1,  
R.7.7.1, R.7.8.1; R.7.6.3, R.7.7.3, R.7.8.3;  
R.8.6.1, R.8.7.1, R.8.8.1; CN.10.6.1, CN.10.7.1,  
CN.10.8.1; Cn.11.6.1, CN.11.7.1, CN.11.8.1,  
CN.11.6.2, CN.11.7.2, CN.11.8.2; P.6.MA.2;  
R.9.MA.1. Fine Arts Standards Dance:  
R.1.DAP.1, R.1.DAP.2, R.1.DAP.3; R.2.DAP.1;  
CN.5.DAP.1; CN.5.DAP.3; CN.5.DAP.5



Photo Credit: Christopher Jones

## The Choreographer

Jessica Lang started dancing when she was three and starting taking it seriously at 14. She attended Juilliard and dabbled in choreography. She was accepted into Twyla Tharp's company, THARPI, her senior year and was able to dance for a living. It was exciting for about the first six months, she says, and then she realized that dancing in a company was not the career for her. She became tired of touring and performing the same six pieces over and over. "You keep repeating what you're doing. And I am not a repetitive person in that respect."

After two years of dancing with Tharp, Lang decided to enter a choreographic competition for Chicago's Hubbard Street Dance. She was one of two winners and from there, her career as a choreographer took off. Since 1999, she has worked for companies nationwide. Companies in Britain and Japan have commissioned her dances. Yet, in 2011, she decided to put together a group of people who she trusted and she felt would do the work the way she wanted to see it done. Out of that, Jessica Lang Dance was born.

## The Company

Founded in 2011, Jessica Lang Dance is a New York City based dance company whose mission is to create and perform dance works around the world that immerse audiences in the beauty of movement and music. Lang's

group is made up of dancers whom she met while working for other companies or while choreographing for schools and benefit performances. Because of her background in ballet and jazz and her time spent with Twyla Tharp, Lang's work is very physical and very technical. She is an artist in terms of sculpting the space with dancers and creating a world onstage.

## The Art Form of Dance

Dance, a universal activity, is movement performed with purpose often set to rhythm or music. People everywhere use dance to express their thought, and feeling, share their traditions or history, and to exercise. Prehistoric glyphs show repeated gestures and figures moving in lively ways. Work patterns, rhythms and motions of early planters and harvesters inspired many traditional dances. Over time these folk dances began to move in patterns with more formalized steps. Ballet began as entertainment for royal families and introduced formal foot positions and movements. In recent times ballet has developed to include elements of folk dance and steps made famous in specific countries. Dance changes over time and reflects the ways that different cultures express thought and feeling through the body. Modern dance developed in the U.S. during the early 20th century. Choreographers simplified the costumes and footwear and explored more natural ways of moving to tell the stories of everyday people.



# Learning Activities

## Analyze Dance

Prepare to see dance by thinking about BEST: **Body, Energy, Space** and **Time**.

The elements of dance are useful to help plan what to look for and guide reflection and discussion after a performance.

- **Body** – Parts of the body, like head, arms, hands, hips, legs and feet are used to create shapes and perform actions like stretching, bending, falling, walking or leaping.

- **Energy** – The way the body moves with force, weight, strength or flow.
- **Space** – Direction, pathway and destination in space. Levels, like low, medium and high are important for still bodies in space. Focus of the dancer (where the dancer looks in space) is important.
- **Time** – Speed and duration of movement, and also rhythm, accents and use of dance patterns.

## Analyze the artistic choices made in each dance.

What elements of music, storytelling and performance were employed by the artists?

- How did the elements work together to create an overall experience?
- How did the performers communicate with each other onstage?
- How do the elements that the artists chose work together to create meaning?
- How do the skills of cooperation and trust play a part in the performance?

## Choreograph

Assign five small groups to each think, share, plan and create one system of the body:

- Five of the major systems of the body - Circulatory, Respiratory, Nervous, Muscular-Skeletal, and Digestive
- Organs and components of each system
- Basic terminology of each system (esophagus, peristalsis, alveoli, capillary, valve, synapse, digestion, neuron, etc.)

**Create movements** that represent the following words taken from the body's systems in action, such as: push, inhale, beat, connect, flow, digest, churn, etc. Have students move through the room, using the given words as the movement stimulus. Have them freeze between movements, and call attention to the interesting or unusual or evocative shapes they form as they remain frozen.

**Perform mirror actions in pairs.** Divide students into pairs. Have partners face one another, with one as leader and one as follower. Give them one action word at a time. The leader does the action while the follower attempts to move like the leader's mirror image. Alternate who leads as you go through the word list. Allow time for partners to discuss afterwards.

**Explain to students** that they will, within their groups, choreograph a simple dance that expresses information about how an organ or a major system functions. The guidelines for the choreography are:

- Each performance must have a beginning, a middle, and an end; the beginning gets our attention, the middle is the movement content, and the end lets us know you are finished.
- Only the body can be used; neither props nor vocal sound effects can be used.

**Have each group share their initial results, the "first drafts," with the class.**



Photo Credit: Christopher Duggan



Photo credit: Todd Rosenberg



Photo credit: Luke Behaunek

## Reflect and Assess

Help students develop and expand their responses to concert dance.

- Describe the performance of one dance in as much detail as possible.
- How was the dance organized? (Simple or complex floor patterns? Movement sequences? Pantomime representation? Solo or ensemble?)
- Describe the characters. Who were they? What were they doing? Why?
- What choices did the choreographer make that you noticed?
- What did you like most about the live performance? Dances? Costumes? Set? Props? Music?
- How did movement elements of body, energy, space and time convey mood?
- How did the music help tell the story?
- Can you connect your own experience with any movement in the performance?
- Did the artists express a universal feeling or idea?

## Learn More Online

Official website of Jessica Lang Dance

[www.jessicalangdance.com/](http://www.jessicalangdance.com/)

Learn more about the history of dance and see video samples of dance artists.

[danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org](http://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org)

Twyla Tharp Dance Foundation

[www.twylatharp.org/](http://www.twylatharp.org/)

## Volume 16 Number 1

Colgate Classroom Series performances help students meet Arkansas Learning Standards.

## Learn more at:

**[www.waltonartscenter.org](http://www.waltonartscenter.org)**

## Walton Arts Center

### Learning & Engagement

Laura Goodwin, *Vice President*

Dr. Patricia Relph, *Arts Learning Specialist*

Mallory Barker, *School Services Specialist*

Meghan Foehl, *Engagement Coordinator*

Sallie Zazal, *Learning Coordinator*

Juniper Patel, *Learning & Engagement Intern*



Find us on Facebook!

Walton Arts Center

Learning & Engagement

Walton Arts Center **2018/19 Learning programming** is **generously supported** by these funders, sponsors and benefactors:

### Education Sponsors:

Colgate-Palmolive  
JB Hunt  
Tyson  
Unilever  
Saatchi & Saatchi X  
Walmart

### Education Grantors:

Arkansas Arts Council  
Bank of America  
Baum Charitable Foundation  
The John F. Kennedy Center  
for the Performing Arts  
Walmart Foundation  
The Walton Family Foundation

### Education Partners:

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art  
Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative  
UA Center for Children & Youth

Additional support for arts education programs comes from all *Friends of Walton Arts Center*.

### Become a Friend!

More than 900 *Friends of Walton Arts Center* support arts education programming with their annual support. Become a *Friend* today and help Walton Arts Center continue to serve even more students over the next year.

For more information on the *Friends of Walton Arts Center* program, please call **479.571.2784** or visit **[waltonartscenter.org/donate](http://waltonartscenter.org/donate)**



Walton Arts Center