Exploring improvisation

Technical skills: composing and appreciating

Duration: 5 weeks

Driving question

How does improvisation aid in developing an intent through various movement qualities?

Overview

Students begin to investigate the process of composition through improvisation tasks exploring the elements of dance: space, time and dynamics. Students will work through each task in the lesson sequence, developing knowledge, understanding and skill in generating diverse movement quality.

| Stage 4 outcomes | Stage 5 outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| A student: | A student: |
| 4.2.1 identifies and explores aspects of the elements of dance in response to a range of stimuli | 5.2.1 explores the elements of dance as the basis of the communication of ideas |
| 4.2.2 composes dance movement, using the elements of dance, that communicates ideas | 5.2.2 composes and structures dance movement that communicates an idea |

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Content

Students will explore a range of tasks based around improvisation, enabling them to explore their own bodies capabilities in movement qualities. Students will work through the **attached PowerPoint presentation** exploring space, time and dynamics to create original movement. The connection of reflection and refinement within the practical work will further engage students, creating deeper understanding within the compositional process.

| Cross-curriculum content and key competencies |
| --- |
| Literacy |
| Numeracy |

Assessment

All activities require students to demonstrate their learning and are all formative assessment activities.

Teaching and learning activities

Students are to work both individually and in small groups through improvisation activities throughout this unit, exploring how to generate movement from instructional based tasks. Students will be required to reflect on this practice through literacy and numeracy tasks with regular process diary entries.

Suggested student learning activities include:

* discussion and reflection activities around each of the improvisation tasks
* creating a vocabulary list throughout the lesson sequence
* exploring the process of improvisation through questions such as
* what is the purpose of improvisation?
* when could you use improvisation?
* the elements of dance
* exploring space, time and dynamics and discussing the qualities within each
* analysing how each element could be used within improvisation
* completion of the activities below.

Personal space

Students will:

* discuss the purpose of stage space and personal space within composition
* complete the instructions on slide 4 of the PowerPoint presentation, exploring the stage space around them
* write a reflection on the success of the exercise exploring how the tempo altered throughout the activity, and how the use of personal space changed throughout.
* repeat this above activity with only half of the class, concentrating on how they manipulate the space, time and dynamics.
* discuss the effectiveness of this task in utilising stage space.

Action words

Use the **action words template for this activity**. Print as many copies as per the students in your class.

Students will:

* complete slide five and six of the PowerPoint presentation, exploring how different instructional words could hold different meanings for movement. The following activities will break it down:
  + phrase one
    - students are to perform the actions in the original order, creating unique and diverse movement for each action
  + phrase two
    - students are to shuffle the cards and re-select the order of actions, performing these in the new order
    - students are to perform phrase one and two in order in small groups for the class
    - discuss and write an entry in your process diary on how the deconstructed version changed the feeling and transitions within the phrase
  + phrase three
    - students are to pair up and combine cards, choosing a new random order from one to ten
    - students are to perform this phrase as a duet, altering the use of level and directions to one another
    - discuss the probability and percentage of each selected card
    - draw a bar graph showing the amount of times each action was selected.

Points in space

Students will:

* follow the instructions on slide seven of the PowerPoint presentation, exploring how the use of different directions in space can create intrigue and diversity within choreography
* use directions such as: turn your head to each number, point your right index finger to each number, point with your elbow, then knee, then your whole body. Take this further and step, walk, run or turn towards the number, making each movement natural and unforced
* discuss and write an entry on the effectiveness of utilising different directions within a work.

Body parts take control

Students will:

* complete the instructions on slide eight of the PowerPoint presentation, exploring the use of abstraction with different body parts and varied levels within choreography
* discuss and write a process diary entry on the effectiveness and exploration of locomotor movement on different levels.

Temporal variations

Students will:

* complete the instructions on slide nine of the PowerPoint presentation exploring temporal variations
* learn and manipulate a sequence taught by the classroom teacher, adding stillness and dynamics to the movement
* retrograde the movement, exploring how the timing and transitions would alter
* reflect on the task discussing how the temporal variations make the phrase more interesting.

Isolating an impulse

Students will:

* complete the instructions on slide ten of the PowerPoint presentation exploring dynamic qualities in soft and forceful movement
* discuss and write a process diary entry on the effectiveness of adapting to these dynamic qualities.

Building and manipulating

Students will:

* read and complete the improvisation task on slide 11 of the PowerPoint presentation, exploring space, time and dynamics through movement
  + improvisation task
    - choose a beginning shape on any level
    - melt to the floor and hold a finishing shape
    - reach out in any way or form from this position
    - rewind/return to your original starting shape
    - take two to ten steps the choice is yours
    - create a balance or hold on one leg in any shape
    - walk in any direction for as long as you like
    - run in any direction as quickly or slowly as you like
    - travel as though you are in quicksand
    - change this level: laying down, front, back, side on, etc, walking through quicksand
    - find a finishing shape on any level and hold this
    - wait for the rest of the dancers to finish and hold their position.
  + students are to remember this phrase and manipulate it through the following ways
    - change the timing and tempo of your movements
    - add one to two stillness
    - change the direction and planes of the movement whenever you would like
    - add dynamic qualities through the movement, e.g.: percussive (hard) versus sustained (soft) movement qualities.

Moving energy

Students will:

* complete the instructions on slide 12 of the PowerPoint presentation exploring dynamic qualities through locomotor movement
* discuss how feelings and emotions are connected to the dynamic qualities and how this enhanced the movement explored.

Problem solving

Use the **dynamic cards template** for this activity.

Students will:

* discuss the task on slide 13 of the PowerPoint presentation exploring the generation of a short work, including three sections of different dynamic movement
* perform for the class, enabling discussion around the selected dynamic qualities
* reflect on the use of each dynamic and what it is like to only use one quality for an entire section.

Impulse dance

Students will:

* discuss the task on slide 14 of the PowerPoint presentation exploring four prior tasks
  + points in space
  + body parts take control
  + temporal variations
  + isolating an impulse
* create an original impulse work exploring each of these activities to develop movement from focal points, body-part leads, varied timing and action and reaction to force
* perform for the class, enabling discussion and feedback around the success of using these different tasks to create a short work
* reflect on the benefits of exploring these tasks to generate movement and how this could be adapted when it comes to creating a composition work.

Creation and manipulation

Students will:

* discuss the previous ten tasks and how each explored and manipulated space, time and dynamics.

When structuring the lessons aim to work through two tasks per week. Some tasks will run over more than one lesson. Allow students to explore the tasks to their full extent to build their knowledge, understanding and skill within improvisation. The appreciation and practical composition lessons are to be explored in partnership. Attempt to engage in reflection tasks at the end of each activity, building students competencies in writing an effective process diary.

Making skills

Composition and appreciation

Students are to:

* demonstrate a willingness to engage in improvisation tasks
* explore performance opportunities presenting group works and phrases to the class around each improvisation task
* demonstrate understanding and skill in manipulating the elements of dance to create engagement within their work .

Communicate

Written reflections are documented and shared within collaborative discussion facilitated by the teacher.

Process diary

Students are to:

* document the process through composition classes in a process diary. This should be a journal, exploring reflections of each activity and lesson investigating the various modes of improvisation. This can be their class workbooks, a dance process diary, or an online blog through sites such as [Class Notebook](https://www.onenote.com/classnotebook) or [Google classroom.](https://edu.google.com/k-12-solutions/classroom/?modal_active=none)

Differentiation

Extension

Students could:

* create a short work, linking four of their chosen tasks together developing sections of movement
* explore the use of variation and contrast to create unity within the work
* write an analysis of the unity formed through these tasks

Life skills

| Life skills outcomes |
| --- |
| A student: |
| LS2.1 explores the elements of dance to create movement and communicate ideas |
| LS2.2 explores, selects and sequences movement to express feelings and ideas |

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Students could:

* explore improvisation tasks to create movement
* perform these routines to their class.

Evaluate

Feedback is formative for the duration of the unit.

Reference list and resources

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**Action cards template**

**Dynamic cards template**

[Dance advantage: Improvisation tasks](http://www.danceadvantage.net/improv-composition/)