



Community Activities

MY CASTLE

Objectives

- Work with a community group to provide an understanding of arts & heritage
- Develop movement vocabulary suitable for all ages
- Provide a safe and fun environment for creative exploration
- Improvise from chosen stimuli
- Choreograph within a partner and small groups
- Perfect work and Perform work

My castle

Introduction

- Provide an overview sessions
- introduce contemporary dance company clip 5 mins
[example 1 : Ascendance Rep My Castle

Warm up

- Warm up the body parts slowly ensuring that all the body is covered. A warm up sequence can be used for this or follow my leader type approach.
- Warm up the group waling in different directions (forward, back, side, circle) around the space on 8's, 6's, 4's, 2's 1's. This can be repeated in reverse or jogging. Try to get the group to shift through space, grounded to the floor and covering distance.
- Teach a short clapping sequence which can also translate to using body parts
- In pairs, A closes their eyes, B leads them round the space. This can be developed so that different body parts initiate movement. Use this language to set a sequence capturing the essence of the movement.

Repertoire

- Discuss 'My Castle' and the themes behinds the pieces. See Appendix A

Part 1

- Teach the Knights section extracted from the selected dance piece 'My Castle'
- Devise a marching pattern with the group

Part 2

- Teach short section of silence extracted from the selected dance piece 'My Castle'
- Ask the group to improvise on the themes of the five senses

Part 3

- Teach short section of the social dance extracted from the selected dance piece 'My Castle'
- Ask the group to improvise to develop their own social dance.
- Sequence the 3 sections together for a short performance of work which can be enjoyed by friends and family.

My Castle - stimuli

My Castle is both a light-hearted and melancholic study of pleasures and pastimes in medieval England, encompassing literature, paintings, music, social dances, banquets, war and loss.

The dance begins with Shenanigans in the garden with the traditional games of Chess, Blind Man's Bluff and piggyback wrestling. In the popular Dance of the Knights and Ladies we see the dancers march together with heroic strength with an inevitable end through the dance of death where we are asked to pause for reflection. The dance of peace embodies the daily strain of loss and loneliness experienced by women in powerful positions such as Anne Clifford who was the last Clifford to own Skipton Castle in the 17th century. A traditional social dance starts the celebration banquet dance – an escape from the reality of our daily lives.

Dance of the Knights



Inspired by Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, a late 14th-century Middle English alliterative romance outlining an adventure of Sir Gawain, a knight of King Arthur's Round Table. In the epic poem, Sir Gawain accepts a challenge from a mysterious warrior who is completely green, from his clothes and hair to his beard and skin. The "Green Knight" offers to allow anyone to strike him with his axe if the challenger will take a return blow in a year and a day. Gawain accepts, and beheads him in one blow, only to have the Green Knight stand up, pick up his head, and remind Gawain to meet him at the appointed time. The story of Gawain's struggle to meet the appointment and his adventures along the way demonstrate the spirit of chivalry and loyalty. Thought best known scripture is recorded from the 14th century; the story is one of the oldest Arthurian stories.
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Gawain_and_the_Green_Knight

Dance of the Banquet

i) Bayeux Tapestry



ii) Medieval dances – Carole dance

The thirteenth century also saw the beginning of the notation of instrumental music and secular music. The Carole, popular in first in France and then in England, was a dance-song possibly descended from the Greek *dithyramb*. It could be danced in a circle, in a chain, or as a processional.

<http://www.the-orb.net/encyclp/culture/music/kendall.htm>

Dance of Death



Dance of Death is a late-medieval allegory on the universality of death: no matter one's station in life, the Dance of Death unites all. The *Danse Macabre* consists of the dead or personified Death summoning representatives from all walks of life to dance along to the grave, typically with a pope, emperor, king, child, and labourer. They were produced to remind people of the fragility of their lives and how vain were the glories of earthly life. Its origins are postulated from illustrated sermon texts; the earliest recorded visual scheme was a now lost mural in the cemetery of the Holy Innocents in Paris dating from 1424-25. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danse_Macabre)

Medieval Games

Chess

Chess can tell you a great deal about the way people lived in medieval times. If you look at the way a chessboard is set up and study the pieces and how they are used, you will realize that chess is a miniature history of medieval times. The six different chess pieces on the board represent a cross section of medieval life with its many ceremonies, grandeur and wars.

The pawns on the chessboard represent serfs, or labourers. There are more of them than any other piece on the board, and often they are sacrificed to save the more valuable pieces. In medieval times, serfs were considered no more than property of landowners, or chattel. Life was brutally hard for serfs during this era of history. They worked hard and died young. They were often left unprotected while wars raged around them. They could be traded, used as a diversion, or even sacrificed to allow landowners to escape harm.

The castle piece on a chessboard is the home, or the refuge, just as it was a home in medieval times. In chess, each side has two castles, or rooks as they are sometimes called.

The knight on a chessboard represents the professional soldier of medieval times, whose job it was to protect persons of rank, and there are two of them per each side in a game of chess.

Knights in chess are more important than pawns but less important than bishops, kings, or queens. Their purpose in the game of chess is to protect the more important pieces, and they can be sacrificed to save those pieces just as pawns can.

There is a bishop in the game of chess, who represents the church. The church was a rich and mighty force in medieval times, and religion played a large part in daily life. It is no wonder that a figure that represented the concept of religion found its way into the game. A bishop was the title for a priest in the Catholic Church who had risen through the ranks to a more powerful position. In the game of chess, there are two bishops on each side.

The queen is the only piece on the board during a chess game that represents a woman, and she is the most powerful piece of the game. In chess, there is only one queen on each side. Many people do not realize that queens in medieval times often held a powerful, yet precarious, position. The king was often guided by her advice, and in many cases the queen played games of intrigue at court.

Kings, however, could set their wives aside or even imprison them in nunneries with the approval of the church (and without the queen's approval), and many women schemed merely to hold their place at court. The machinations of queens working either for or against their kings are well noted in history throughout medieval times, and the queen often held more power than the king did.

The king is the tallest piece on the board, and is as well defended on the chessboard as in medieval life. In medieval times, the surrender of the king would mean the loss of the kingdom to invading armies and that could mean change for the worse. It was to everyone's advantage, from the lowest serf to the highest-ranking

official, to keep the king safe from harm. The king is the most important, but not the most powerful piece in chess. If you do not protect your king, you lose the game.

(<http://saintlouischessclub.org/Media/08-The-History-of-Chess.pdf>)