

Blue Sky Theater Teacher Guide #1  
(Accompaniment to Youtube Tutorial #1)

# Body as an Instrument

Reimagine  
**TEACHING**

RIRIE-  
WOODBURY  
DANCE  
COMPANY



Hello, and welcome to Teacher Guidel #1. In this Teacher Guide, we will provide you with essential information and inspiration for successful classroom activities. Before we start, remember these are just a few ideas to start a plethora of others, including your own.

**Let's begin!**

## THE INSTRUMENT

Each art form has its instrument. In painting, you need a brush, paint, and a canvas; in drawing, you need a pencil and paper; in music, you need a musical instrument and perhaps a sheet of music; in singing, you need your voice and a good posture, and in dance, you need only your body. Presenting these ideas to your students will help them understand the importance of the body as an instrument.

Teachers you may ask your students: What happens if we do not take care of our dance instrument? What are some of the ways we can take care of our instruments? What if parts of our instrument break?

# THE BODY

Help your students understand that each instrument - every person's body - is unique. We all have different bodies, they come in all kinds of shapes and sizes, and are capable of doing a wide variety of actions. We all have distinct ways of moving, and that is what makes us unique.

Our bodies consist of a number of different systems that helps us function in our daily life. There are 206 bones in the body complete with an awesome muscular system of 605 muscles that helps us think, move and dance around. Understanding the different body parts and their relationship as a whole increases the knowledge of human body structure and function, and informs creative responses of the body as an instrument of expression.

The instrument in dance - your whole body - includes many parts, for example:

**HEAD**

**ARMS**

**LEGS**

**TORSO**

## 4 WAYS OF MOVING AND THINKING ABOUT YOUR BODY AS AN INSTRUMENT: PARTS AND THE WHOLE

1. **Moving:** Allowing the body to explore movement without limitations or formalities.
2. **Investigating:** Discovering the mobility of the different joints and body parts. Shaping or exploring how the elements of dance influence the student's movement choices.
3. **Creating:** Learning about how you can create a pattern or a sequence. Discovering the many possibilities for movement and how we think about the choices we are making along the way.
4. **Contextualizing:** Making connections about what it means to use your body as an artistic instrument by placing ideas of space, shape, time and energy in an imaginary place.

# 1. MOVING

You can create a follow the leader or **mirroring warm-up activity**. In that, think about the body from top to bottom or bottom to top. Once you have gone through the entire body, you can use different body parts, levels in space, and various timings. It is possible to start demonstrating some symmetrical movement ideas before introducing concepts later in the lesson.

Remember that for your students to follow, try not to turn, drop your head too low, or go too fast. The goal is to have your students follow you as close as possible. This exercise will increase their level of concentration, self-regulation, and ability to listen with the senses.

In the video, Juan shows an example. The easiest way is to start with the arms in symmetrical forms, one body part at a time, and you can make intricate patterns as you see it necessary.

Music suggestions:

- 1. Strathspey and Reel Medley by The Music Makars (1988)
- 2. The Snow Queen by Tristan Moore (2013)

## 2. INVESTIGATING

Investigate and discover various rotatory and mobility options the body has. For example, circular motion, side to side, up and down, pendulum (side-up, down, side-up), or what we call in dance, swinging. Also, flexing and extending - hinging motion in your joints. Rather than thinking about how many ways your body can move while being still, start moving and exploring! You can move your heads, arms, legs, and torso. Can you move a few parts together? Can you move your head and your legs at the same time? Can you move your arms and torsos together? What if you move the entire body altogether?

Music suggestions:

- The Man Who Danced Too Slowly by Baka Beyond (1993)
- Night Run by René Aubry (2008)

### Brain Dance

Another option is by creating a brain dance warm-up. Braindance was developed by Anne Green Gilbert.

**Brain Dance concepts are breath, tactile, core-distal, head-tail, upper and lower body, body sides, cross-lateral and vestibular or rotatory**, and also touches on folding and unfolding of the body, symmetry, and asymmetry.

For more information, visit the wonderful Creative Dance Center where Anne teaches, and their incredible resources:

<https://www.creativedance.org/>

## 3. CREATING

A Dance: Using the numbers from one to ten, students will dance with different body parts. Repeating four times to a steady beat, instruct the following, have them put an imaginary chalk in the specific body part.

1. Head: write the number one in space
2. Nose: write the two in space in space
3. Shoulder: write the number three in space
4. Arms: using one arm at a time or both simultaneously write the number four in space
5. Elbows: write the number five in space
6. Legs: write the number six in space
7. Knees: write the number seven in space
8. Hips: write the number eight in space
9. Torso (chest, belly): write the number nine in space
10. The whole body: write the number ten in space.

Once they have repeated several times, you can turn this exercise into a dance. Depending on the age group, you can keep it as improvisation or ask them to remember their chosen movement. You can also start with numbers one to five, then five to ten, and so on. Have the students write the numbers in space, small and big, high, medium or low levels, with different body parts.

## 4. CONTEXTUALIZING

How do we contextualize what we have done so far? How do we help students make connections?

By now, hopefully students have a sense that your body as an instrument is capable of making a lot of interesting movements and there is a multitude of expressive ways the body can move.

Having students use their imagination as they move their bodies will help them deepen their understanding of the body as an artistic instrument.

Pick one of the exercises you have done with your students and place the dance into an imaginary environment they may be familiar with. In a pool of water, in a jar of peanut butter, in an open field with lots of beautiful flowers, in a scary place and see how student's efforts, and approaches to movement change. Have a post-activity discussion with your students about how they felt and what they discovered about their body as a tool for their artistic expression.



# Thank you!



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