



School Residency for Discoveries in Modern Dance: Grades 9-12

Lesson 1, Day 1: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Techniques

Instructor: Rokaya Mikhailenko

Lesson Title: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Part I

Guiding Questions: Who are Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham? What is their unique influence on the dance world? Note: Students must bring to class a personal notebook/journal to reflect and write their thoughts as part of the curriculum.

I. Lesson Objective: 1. To introduce students to Graham and Cunningham Techniques and history. 2. To introduce students to the philosophy and process of “choreography by chance.”

II. Florida State Standards:

DANCE: DA.912.F.1.3, DA.912.O.1.1, DA.912.O.2.1, DA.912.S.1.2, DA.912.S.2.3

LANGUAGE ARTS: LAFS.910.WHST.4.10, LAFT.K12.W.4.10

III. Focused Instructional Activity: Movement Question: Does posture, sitting and standing, change with our mood? How about how we walk? Students will be instructed to bring qualitative differences to various poses and walks based on mood prompts.

IV. Lesson Elements: **Presentation Activities:** The teacher speaks to the history of Martha Graham, her philosophy of physical expression of emotion and her focus on ‘the core’ as the origin and facilitator of movement. The teacher speaks to the history of Merce Cunningham, his philosophy of random phenomenon to determine structure and his pursuit of ‘pure movement,’ devoid of emotional influence, and ‘choreography by chance.’ **Practice Activities:** Lead students through a structured warm-up, Graham floor barre, barre and/or center, and exercises across the floor from both Graham and Cunningham Techniques with increasing, level-appropriate complexity throughout the workshop.

V. Lesson Extension:

Tutorial Activities: Discuss movement in relation ‘the core’ as a stabilizer and originator of movements and as a connection between movements. **Enrichment Activities:** Students will be instructed to “choreograph by chance.” Students each create a movement phrase which is then rearranged through a random name draw to create an entirely new piece choreography. Students may even choose different music for each new arrangement.

VI. Lesson Closure/Assessment: Students will create their own movement scores influenced by Graham and Cunningham Techniques and apply the theory of “choreography by chance.” Students will create personal phrases that will be randomly ordered before presentation; music will also be by random draw. Assessment is conducted as an informal discussion where students self-evaluate their experience, they are then expected to write a personal conclusion and summary of the lesson experience in their notebooks.



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Lesson 2, Day 2: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Techniques

Instructor: Rokaya Mikhailenko

Lesson Title: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Part II

Guiding Questions: How do Graham dancers appear different than Cunningham dancers in their choreography? Note: Students must bring to class a personal notebook/journal to reflect and write their thoughts as part of the curriculum.

I. Lesson Objective: 1. To understand how to use the body as a whole and in parts. 2. To cultivate understanding of the mechanics and technical achievement in balance.

II. Florida State Standards:

DANCE: DA.912.C.2.1, DA.912.S.3.5, DA.912.O.2.2, DA.912.S.3.8

LANGUAGE ARTS: LAFS.910.WHST.4.10, LAFT.K12.W.4.10

III. Focused Instructional Activity: Employing Graham and Cunningham Techniques, move only one part of the body at a time, then move as a whole using isometric abdominal contraction.

IV. Lesson Elements: Presentation Activities: Teacher will present truncated movement and sequencing of Cunningham and contrast that to the flying, “static” shapes and bound flow movements of Graham. **Practice Activities:** Lead students through a structured warm-up, Graham floor barre, barre and/or center with focus on balance, and exercises across the floor from both Graham and Cunningham Techniques with increasing complexity throughout the workshop.

V. Lesson Extension:

Tutorial Activities: How is our balance different when we use our whole body, (as in a sous-sus) as opposed to dividing our body, (as held passé while the upper body spirals). **Enrichment Activities:** Students begin in a static, familiar dance shape, like an arabesque in first, and are asked to mobilize in a flowing sequential manner one body part or body half. Students then try to move that shape through the space trying to keep the shape as close to the original shape as possible. Movement question: As the shape must change in some way to facilitate travel, how does the audience still see it as a related shape?

VI. Lesson Closure / Assessment: Students will learn a phrase that they must then modify to become closer to the Graham aesthetic and then modify to become closer to the Cunningham aesthetic. They will then apply the whole/part concept to themselves as a group, pulling soloist and duets out of the group phrase and applying timing and movement quality parameters.



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Lesson 3, Day 3: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Techniques

Instructor: Rokaya Mikhailenko

Lesson Title: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Part III

Guiding Questions: How is sound different than music? How is it the same? Is silence sound?
Note: Students must bring to class a personal notebook/journal to reflect and write their thoughts as part of the curriculum.

II. Florida State Standards:

DANCE: DA.912.F.1.3, DA.912.H.3.1, DA.912.O.2.1, DA.912.S.1.1, DA.912.S.3.4, DA.912.S.2.3

LANGUAGE ARTS: LAFS.910.WHST.4.10, LAFT.K12.W.4.10

III. Focused Instructional Activity: Question: Can we dance to silence? To sounds of nature or industry? Students will be asked to attempt improvisation and demonstrate musicality to sound, silence and music.

IV. Lesson Elements: **Presentation Activities:** The teacher speaks to the influence of “Orientalism” on Martha Graham’s staging and aesthetic, and the influence of music on Merce Cunningham’s choreography, and his use of sound scores. **Practice Activities:** Lead students through a structured warm-up, Graham floor barre, barre and/or center, and exercises across the floor from both Graham and Cunningham Techniques with increasing complexity. Compound phrase taught first to music then practiced to various sounds (as opposed to composed music) and, lastly, silence using breath cues.

V. Lesson Extension: Tutorial Activities: Discuss movement in relation to music and sound. How are our movements influenced under various conditions of sound? **Enrichment Activities:** Students each create a movement phrase which is then rearranged through a random name selection and then danced to both orchestrated music and environmental sounds as a comparison activity, and lastly to silence. Discuss how was group precision affected and how it can be enhanced?

VI. Lesson Closure / Assessment: Students will create their own movement scores influenced by Graham and Cunningham Techniques and perform to at least three different sound scores (examples: traffic, waves, crow sounds). Assessment is conducted as an informal discussion where students self-evaluate their experience, they are then expected to write a personal conclusion and summary of the workshop experience in their notebooks.



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Lesson Plan 4, Day 4: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Techniques

Instructor: Rokaya Mikhailenko

Lesson Title: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Part IV

Guiding Questions: How is our movement influenced by dancing as a part of a group as opposed to when we dance as an individual? How is dancing in a large group different than in a small group (duet, trio, quartet)? Note: Students must bring to class a personal notebook/journal to reflect and write their thoughts.

II. Florida State Standards:

DANCE: DA.912.F.1.3, DA.912.C.2.1, DA.912.S.1.2, DA.912.O.2.1

LANGUAGE ARTS: LAFS.910.WHST.4.10, LAFT.K12.W.4.10

III. Focused Instructional Activity: Discuss the concept of patterning. Do humans fall into patterns naturally? Students will walk randomly and naturally at will. Most students will fall into cadence and “flock” together.

IV. Lesson Elements: **Presentation Activities:** The teacher speaks to techniques used by Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham to create choreography and stage work. **Practice Activities:** Lead students through a structured warm-up, Graham floor barre, barre and/or center, and exercises across the floor from both Graham and Cunningham Techniques with increasing complexity. Compound phrase to various sounds and/or music with an improvisational element of “flock and follow” upon verbal command.

V. Lesson Extension: **Tutorial Activities:** Discuss what is different about dancing in a group or as an individual. **Enrichment Activities:** How can we increase awareness so that our group dances have more precision (examples: through use of breath and proprioception)? Perform improvisation exercises of leading-following in large groups and small groups, and a variety of facings.

VI. Lesson Closure / Assessment: “Flocking and following”- Individual movements are adapted to groups and patterned. Students will achieve this through verbal command by following, and patterned in space through flocking. Assessment is conducted as an informal discussion where students self-evaluate their experience, they are then expected to write a personal conclusion and summary of the lesson experience in their notebooks.



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Lesson Plan 5, Day 5: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Techniques Instructor: Rokaya Mikhailenko

Lesson Title: Introduction to Graham and Cunningham Part V

Guiding Questions: How can you use the theories and techniques associated with Graham and Cunningham in dance training and performance? Note: Students must bring to class a personal notebook/journal to reflect and write their thoughts.

II. Florida State Standards:

DANCE: DA.912.C.2.1, DA.912.F.1.3, DA.912.S.3.8, DA.912.O.1.1
LANGUAGE ARTS: LAFS.910.WHST.4.10, LAFT.K12.W.4.10

III. Focused Instructional Activity: Students will modify an 8 to 32-count ballet phrase by applying Graham and/or Cunningham Techniques to the movement. Modifications should include, spiraling, contraction, release, use of breath, change in pattern, speed or direction. Students will be asked to identify the qualities and lines associated with Graham and Cunningham Techniques that were used in their modifications.

IV. Lesson Elements: Lesson Elements: Presentation Activities: The teacher summarizes the information from days 1-4. **Practice Activities:** Lead students through a structured warm-up and review closures/assessments from the week in groups.

V. Lesson Extension: Tutorial Activities: Through open dialogue and impromptu movement demonstrations, students will identify the qualitative and technical differences and similarities between Graham and Cunningham Techniques. **Enrichment Activities:** How does control and use of the core enhance our dance training and performance, overall? How does understanding Cunningham's theory of chance enhance our ability to perform? Students will be prompted to demonstrate their responses, using a previously learned movement phrase, technical concept or choreography.

VI. Lesson Closures / Assessment: Teacher will pose key questions based on material taught across the week. Students will articulate through dialogue and movement demonstrations, aspects of Graham and Cunningham Techniques. Assessment is conducted as an informal discussion where students self-evaluate their experience, they are then expected to write a personal conclusion and summary of the lesson experience in their notebooks.



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Vocabulary

Modern dance: Theatrical dance that began to develop in the United States and Europe late in the 19th century, receiving its nomenclature and a widespread success in the 20th. It evolved as a protest against both the balletic and the interpretive dance traditions of the time.

Codified: Organized or collected together (laws, rules, procedures, etc.) into a system or code.

Graham Technique: A codified modern dance training process developed by Martha Graham in the early part of the 20th century. Three signature moves define Graham technique: the contraction, the release and the spiral.

Cunningham Technique: A codified modern dance training process developed by Merce Cunningham in the mid-20th century. A strong sense of one's spine is an integral part of Cunningham technique, which explores the way that the back works either in opposition to the legs or in unison with them

Improvisation: Creating or performing without preparation, using available skill sets.

Core: In dance and other athletics, the muscles of the torso, including those of the abdomen, back and chest, that stabilize the spine, pelvis and shoulder. The core is where the body's center of gravity is located and where all movement originates.

Contract: In Graham Technique, the strong pulling back and curving of the torso.

Release: In Graham Technique, the return of a contraction to a straight torso.

Hinge: A tilt of the torso in which the knees are bent and at a 45° angle, the back is flat, and the heels are lifted.

Spiral: In Graham Technique, rotation of the torso around the pelvis.

Torsion: The action of twisting or the state of being twisted.

Isometric contraction: Tensing of the muscle without involving movement.

Isotonic contraction: Shortening of the muscle through movement around a joint.

Truncate: To make something shorter or quicker.

Proprioception: The unconscious perception of movement and spatial orientation arising from stimuli within the body itself.