

## CITY OF SAN JOSE'S Arts Express Program Presents:

# Margaret Wingrove Dance Company *The Magic of Modern Dance*

## Teacher Guide

Grades 4-5

Updated 8/25/08

**Arts Organization Contact:** Margaret Wingrove  
**Phone:** (408) 993-9233  
**Email:** Mewingrove@aol.com  
**Website:** www.mwdance.com

### About the Arts Organization

Founded in 1981, the critically-acclaimed Margaret Wingrove Dance Company remains San Jose's longest-standing modern dance company. Blending both modern and ballet techniques with high energy and physicality, the company's style is fluid enough to allow for bold experimentation in a wide range of repertoire of over 80 choreographic works. The company is dedicated to the innovation and presentation of emotionally compelling and dynamically driven dance. It performs not only works of its founder and artistic director, Margaret Wingrove, but also showcases the works of emerging choreographers and noted guest artists. This mission to present young, promising dancers and choreographers has been very much a company mainstay since its founding.

### About the Program

"The Magic of Modern Dance" provides students with a multi-faceted introduction to modern dance. The program begins with a lecture about the history and evolution of modern dance, including some basic dance vocabulary and an explanation of choreography. Students then watch a technique demonstration a piece from Margaret Wingrove's repertoire. The program concludes with the audience participating in an interactive choreography and technique exercise.

### Learning Objectives

Students will--

- Understand how modern dance evolved from other dance forms, adding to the language of dance and incorporating multiple vocabularies;
- Learn about the role of the choreographer in modern dance;
- Experience dance as an expressive art that can convey emotion, story, and idea;
- Understand the connections between dance movement and everyday life, learning that dance is for everyone.

### Historical and Cultural Context

A Brief History of Modern Dance

- This term 'Modern Dance' designates a concept of dance rather than a specific school or studio. Developed in the 20th century, primarily in the United States and Germany, modern dance resembles modern art and music in being experimental.

- Modern dance began at the turn of the century; its pioneers were Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, Martha Graham, and Ruth St. Denis in the United States, Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman in Germany.
- The modern dance form came about due to the need for more freedom of movement not allowed by the strict structures of ballet.
- The dancers use their natural instincts, impulses, a release of natural feeling when moving. The dancer tries to release their inner feelings in an outer expression. Modern dance has a strong technique combining both ballet and movement designed by choreographers such as Martha Graham, José Limon and Paul Taylor.
- Modern dance is based on the vision of the particular choreographer, who may use any vocabulary of steps, movement, or music to interpret his or her ideas.

#### A Brief Introduction to Margaret Wingrove's Choreography

Margaret has choreographed 110 dance pieces, each one based on a different idea. Her pieces have been inspired by the artists Van Gogh and Chagall, works of literature, the music of Chopin, Mexican poetry, and historical events, among others. Margaret's work is an example of the diverse influences that can be drawn upon to create a modern dance piece.

#### **Vocabulary**

Choreographer—An artist who creates dances

Choreography—A sequence of steps that makes up a dance

Contract/Release—Ways of moving the body found in modern dance choreography

Flex/Point—different ways of holding the feet

Parallel/Turn Out—different ways of placing the feet and legs

Triplet—A series of three movements

Fall/Recover—A movement sequence found in modern dance

Jumping/Turning—ways of moving through the space

#### **Preparation for the Program**

1. Review the histories of ballet and modern dance (see websites in “Resources” below) and think about how the historical and cultural context of each dance style influenced it. Discuss possible differences in the two styles.
2. Look at pictures of Margaret Wingrove's dance pieces and discuss which visual elements provide clues to their diverse influences and styles.
3. Ask students to devise a series of gestures, or short movements based on emotions, then combine them to create their own short movement piece (this can be done individually or in small groups). Have students show their pieces and discuss which emotions, actions, or ideas they express.
4. Ask students to observe everyday movements and think about how they could translate into dance.

#### **Curriculum Connections--CA Visual and Performing Arts Standards**

[arts.express@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:arts.express@sanjoseca.gov)

[www.sanjoseculture.org/artsexpress/](http://www.sanjoseculture.org/artsexpress/)

Note: The California Visual and Performing Arts Standards were created based on the premise that each student is receiving comprehensive and sequential arts instruction in all four major arts disciplines. Since this is rarely the case, the following standards may not correspond to the grade levels served by the Arts Express program.

*Artistic Perception*

1.5 (Grade 5) Use appropriate dance vocabulary to describe dances.

1.5 (Grade 7) Use appropriate dance vocabulary to describe everyday gestures and other movements observed in viewing live or recorded dance performances.

*Aesthetic Valuing*

4.2 (Grade 3) Explain and demonstrate what it means to be a good audience member.

4.3 (Grade 4) Describe ways in which a dancer effectively communicates ideas and moods (strong technique, projection, and expression).

*Connections, Relationships, Applications*

5.2 (Grade 3) Describe how dancing develops physical and mental well-being (e.g. control, flexibility, posture, strength, risk taking).

**Resources**

History of Modern Dance: [www.infoplease.com/ce6/ent/A0833540.html](http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/ent/A0833540.html)

History of Ballet: w

Paul Taylor Dance Company: w

Biography of Martha Graham: w

Biography of Isadora Duncan: w

José Limon Dance Company: w

**Extending the Experience**

Student and group tickets are available for Margaret Wingrove Dance Company's performances. In addition, the company offers lecture/demonstration programs to schools (if a studio theater or stage setting is available).