



repertory dance theatre

## Vanguard Study Guide

2011-2012 Season

Matinee, October 5, 2011



**Repertory Dance Theatre**  
PO Box 510427  
Salt Lake City, UT 84151-0427

**801-534-1000**  
Website: [www.rdtutah.org](http://www.rdtutah.org)

### Upcoming events:

**Vanguard**  
Oct. 6-8, 2011  
7:30pm  
Rose Wagner PAC

### **Community School Open House**

Oct. 1, 2011  
9:00-3:00pm  
Sample all RDT Community  
School Classes for only \$10 for  
a full day of dance.

### **The Revolutionaries: Van- guards of the 1960's**

Free Symposium!  
Sept. 28, 2011  
7:00pm  
Rose Wagner PAC  
See website for more details!

## Vanguard Program Information

**Scramble** (1968) by Merce Cunningham

The premiere of *Scramble* was scheduled for July 25, 1967 at the Ravinia Music Festival

Music: Toshi Ichianagi

Set: Frank Stella

Original Cast: Merce Cunningham, Carolyn Brown, Barbara Lloyd, Valda Setterfield, Yseult Riopelle, Sandra Neels, Albert Reid, Gus Solomons

A benefit performance for the Cunningham Company was performed on June 3, 1967 at the estate of the architect Philip Johnson in Connecticut. The company hoped to raise enough money this way to pay off a debt. The performance included just 6 minutes of a new work-in-progress, *Scramble*, a word that suggested the kind of coming together and breaking apart in inter-weaving movements that Merce was creating. He also had in mind the "scrambling" of codes and messages (the Air Force slang expression for getting planes off the ground in a hurry) as well as the method of cooking eggs.

The day after the benefit, the company began to work intensively on *Scramble*, which was clearly going to be a "real dance dance," full of active, strenuous movement and intricacy, constantly shifting circles that required perfect timing. While Merce's pieces often used chance operation to determine elements of the dance, *Scramble* was **not** created using chance methods and sequences were determined. Once the choreography was established, every movement was scrupulously plotted and rehearsed.

A young New York painter, Frank Stella, known for his severe, geometrically striped and shaped canvases, was invited to design the set and costumes for *Scramble*. Stella had never designed a stage set before. He created a set of banners made of polished aluminum, broken down into lengths that fitted together. Strips of colored canvas, eighteen inches wide were each attached to two horizontal aluminum supports with Velcro tape fasteners. The costumes were simple leotards and tights in white, yellow, green, orange or purple. One man in a red jump suit, one in a blue one and Merce in all black.

Toshi Ichianagi, the composer invented his own form of musical notation for the piece consisting of exquisitely drawn symbols that referred to various kinds of sound. There was a symbol for pitched sounds, another for noises, and another for sounds electronically produced. There was a symbol for which instrument was to be played and a symbol for when a pitched sound was to "hit" a noise. The degree of loudness or softness was indicated by the position of the symbol above or below a horizontal line. Almost all the sounds were to be sustained for as long as possible. Each musician had a wide range of choices both in

*Dance is surely a most extraordinary fusion of thinking, doing, feeling. If we are concerned about the health of a child's mind, body and spirit, then how can we ignore the educational force of an art form which addresses all three at once?*

David Rockefeller

# Vanguard Program Information Cont.

...instruments and in the methods of sound production.

## **Trio A** (1966) by Yvonne Rainer

Premiered at the Judson Church on January 10, 1966.

Original Cast: Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton and David Gordon

*Trio A* came out of a turning point in Rainer's career, when in an effort to strip movements of all expressive qualities, she turned to game structures for inspiration in creating work. All movement aimed to be direct, functional, and to avoid stylization. In doing so, she aimed to remove the drama from dance movement, and to question the role of entertainment in dance. Throughout this stage of her choreography she worked towards movement becoming something of an object, to be examined without any psychological, social or formal motives. She opted for neutrality in her dances, presenting the objective presence of the human body and its movements, and refused to project a persona or create a narrative within her dances. In 1965 as a reaction to these feelings, Rainer created her "No Manifesto," which was a strategy formulated to demystify dance:

- **No to spectacle**
- **No to virtuosity**
- **No to transformations and magic and make believe**
- **No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image**
- **No to the heroic**
- **No to trash imagery**
- **No to involvement of performer or spectator**
- **No to style**
- **No to camp**
- **No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer**
- **No to eccentricity**
- **No to moving or being moved**



This exploration in reducing dance to the essentials climaxed with one of Rainer's most famous pieces, *Trio A* (1966), initially part of a larger work entitled *The Mind Is a Muscle*. *Trio A*

was a short dance that consisted of one long phrase. In *Trio A*, Rainer intended to remove objects from the dance while simultaneously retaining a workmanlike approach of task-based performance. Not simple but certainly not fancy, it was a demanding piece of work, both to watch and to perform. She explored such dynamics as repetition, the distribution of energy and phrasing. The movement consisted of task-oriented actions, emphasizing neutral performance and featuring no interaction with the audience. The dancer was never to make eye contact with her observers, and in the case that the movement required the dancer to face the audience, the eyes were to be averted from the audience or the head was to be involved in movement.

## **Chair Pillow** (1969) by Yvonne Rainer

*Chair Pillow* is one section from *Continuous Project—Altered Daily*. Most sections of this dance are task oriented and include the use of different kinds of props handled in a prescribed way, precisely on the beat in a casual manner.

## **GAMUT** (2011) by RDT dancers and Linda C Smith

RDT dancers were inspired to create this piece by a composition class taught by Neil Greenberg, a former member of the Merce Cunningham Company. They used compositional devices employed by Cunningham and many of his followers to develop this performance event. Each dancer was offered the opportunity to develop a movement section. Some are designed to be performed in a very exact manner and some give the performers choices or tasks to perform on stage. The order of the sections was determined by chance and the music was likewise assembled. The process was game-like. While RDT enjoyed more communal interaction than Cunningham employed in his process, it offered the dancers the opportunity to develop choreography objectively with "empty hands" and encouraged them to go beyond heritage and habits to welcome the unknown.

# About the Artists...

**Merce Cunningham** was a leader of the American avant-garde throughout his seventy-year career and is considered one of the most important choreographers of our time. Through much of his life, he was also one of the greatest American dancers. With an artistic career distinguished by constant innovation, Cunningham expanded the frontiers not only of dance, but also of contemporary visual and performing arts. His collaborations with artistic innovators from every creative discipline have yielded an unparalleled body of American dance, music, and visual art.

Of all his collaborations, Cunningham's work with John Cage, his life partner from the 1940's until Cage's death in 1992, had the greatest influence on his practice. Together, Cunningham and Cage proposed a number of radical innovations. The most famous and controversial of these concerned the relationship between dance and music, which they concluded may occur in the same time and space, but should be created independently of one another. The two also made extensive use of chance procedures, abandoning not only musical forms, but narrative and other conventional elements of dance composition—such as cause and effect and climax and anticlimax. For Cunningham the subject of his dances was always dance itself.

Born in Centralia, Washington on April 16, 1919, Cunningham began his professional modern dance career at 20 with a six-year tenure as a soloist in the Martha Graham Dance Company. In 1944, he presented his first solo show and in 1953 formed the Merce Cunningham Dance Company as a forum to explore his groundbreaking ideas. Over the course of his career, Cunningham choreographed more than 150 dances and over 800 "Events." Dancers who trained with Cunningham and have gone on to form their own companies include Paul Taylor, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Karole Armitage, Foofwa d'Immobilite and Jonah Bokaer.

Cunningham's lifelong passion for exploration and innovation made him a leader in applying new technologies to the arts. He began investigating dance on film in the 1970's and choreographed using the computer program DanceForms during the latter part of his career. He explored motion capture technology to create décor for *BIPED* (1999), and his interest in new media led to the creation of *Mondays with Merce*. This webcast series provides a never-before-seen look at the Company and Cunningham's teaching technique with video of advanced technique class, Company rehearsal, archival footage and interviews with current and former Company members, choreographers and collaborators.

An active choreographer and mentor to the arts world until his death at the age of 90, Cunningham earned some of the highest honors bestowed in the arts. Among his many awards are the National Medal of Arts (1990) and the MacArthur Fellowship (1985). He also received the Jacob's Pillow Dance Award in 2009, Japan's Praemium Imperiale in 2005, the British Laurence Olivier Award in 1985 and was named Officer of the Legion d'Honneur in France in 2004. Cunningham's life and artistic vision have been the subject of four books and three major exhibitions, and his works have been presented by groups including the Ballet of the Paris Opera, New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theater, White Oak Dance Project and London's Rambert Dance Company.

Cunningham passed away in his New York City home on July 26, 2009. Always forward-thinking, Cunningham developed the precedent-setting Legacy Plan prior to his death to guide his company and ensure the preservation of his artistic legacy.

**Yvonne Rainer**, choreographer and filmmaker, was born in 1934 in San Francisco, California, and moved to New York City in 1957 to study theater and modern dance at the Martha Graham School and later with Merce Cunningham. Rainer was one of the organizers of the Judson Dance Theater, a focal point for vanguard activity in the dance world throughout the 1960s, and formed her own company for a brief time after the Judson performances ended. Rainer was particularly concerned with the investigation of everyday objects and activities. Her choreography stripped dance of its emotion, symbolism and narrative, producing a raw series of physical movements. Many of the elements she employed in the early 1970s—such as repetition, patterning, tasks, and games—later became standard features of modern dance. Her best-known dance, "Trio A," is a section of a larger work called "The Mind is a Muscle." She has choreographed more than 40 concert works and has completed seven feature-length films. In 1990 she was a recipient of a MacArthur Foundation award.

**Frank Stella** (1936-) is an American artist born in Malden Massachusetts. In his early "black paintings" Stella exhibits the precision and rationality that characterized minimalism, employing parallel angular stripes to emphasize the rectangular shape of his large canvases. His innovative and influential use of irregularity shaped canvases first appeared in his metallic series in 1960. Later examples of his work stress color in decorative curved motifs. In the 1970s and 1980s, Stella abandoned the studied, minimalist aesthetic in favor of a more improvised, dynamic, and dramatic idiom in mixed-media. During that time he abandoned flat paintings and instead created large, jutting, multipart, three-dimensional painting-constructions that often incorporated bright colors, enlarged versions of French curves and lively brushstroke patterns.

Stella's work became fully three-dimensional in the early 1990s in a series of dense abstract sculptures composed of found and cast elements in stainless steel and bronze. These unpainted and often large-scale metal wall constructions, with their tangles, layered and looping shapes, project an air of vibrant spontaneity. One of his most important and monumental sculptures is *Prince of Homburg* (1995-2001), installed outside the National Gallery of Art's East Building, Washington, D.C. Throughout his career, Stella also has been a prolific printmaker. The Whitney Museum, New York City, has several of his paintings, and his works are included in numerous museum and corporate collections worldwide.

**Toshi Ichianagi**, was born in 1933 in Kobe, Japan and studied composition with Kishio Hirao and John Cage and piano with Chieko Hara, Barnhard Weiser and Beveridge Webster. After attending the Julliard School of Music and the New School for Social Research in New York, he returned to Japan in 1961 and introduced many new musical concepts, including Cage's idea of indeterminacy, exerting a strong influence on the direction of Japanese contemporary music.

As one of the leading composers in Japan, Ichianagi has composed in most genres of music: operas, orchestral, chamber and instrumental works. Among his major works are his Violin Concerto "Circulating Scenery" (1983), Piano Concerto No. 2 "Winter Portrait" (1987) and Opera *Momo* (1995), based on a novel by Michael Ende. While composing these large scale pieces, he also became known for his compositions using Japanese traditional instruments such as *sho* and *gagaku* ensemble. Many of them have been performed throughout the world, especially by the Tokyo International Music Ensemble, an organization where he serves as Artistic Director.

Ichianagi won the Elizabeth A. Coolidge Prize (1954) and the Serge Koussevitzky Prize (1956) during his studies in New York. He was also a member of Fluxus. Since his return to Japan, he has received numerous awards including the prestigious Nakajima Kenzo Award (1984), the Orde des Arts et des Lettres of the French Government (1985) and the Grand Prix of the Kyoto Music Award (1989). In 1990, he was awarded the Otaka Prize for the fourth time, for his unique symphony "Berlin Renshi".

His recent works include "Coexistence" for ondes martenot and orchestra (1996), Symphony No. 5 "Time Perspective" (1997), "Coexistence" for orchestra (1997) and "Mirage" for shakuhachi and piano (1998).



# Lesson Plan Activities...

Merce Cunningham wanted to arrive at a more objective and less predictable way of framing a dance. He did not want to follow musical structure, story line or psychological motivation. He also did away with the traditional use of stage space. Cunningham's philosophy was that every point in space is interesting whether it is occupied or not. Stillness and motion are aspects of the same reality, and so are form and emptiness, density and sparseness. Essentially, Cunningham made the following claims:

- Any movement can be material for a dance. "Dance, he said, begins with walking."
- Any procedure can be used to compose a dance. He used chance methods like tossing coins or throwing dice to determine the order of movements in a phrase.
- Music, costumes, lighting, props and dancing have their own separate identities. The music composed for a dance was often never heard by the dancers before they performed. This made every concert a most spontaneous and creative act.
- Any dancer in the company might be a soloist. In ballet there is a distinction between the corps and the soloists...modern dance is more democratic
- Any space might be used as a performance space...a street, a parking lot, a museum, an elevator, a tennis court. Many dances in the 1960s and 70s took place on roof-tops, in subways and especially in loft spaces.
- Dance can be about anything, but primarily, it is about pure movement.

In a Cunningham piece the only subject is the dancing. He is concerned with the individual, not the mold into which a dancer is poured. The goal of his work is not for the audience to like the piece, but rather that the movement will evoke interest, the unexpected and refreshment. His methods of dance composition have attracted co-collaborator, painters such as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Robert Morris, Andy Warhol, and composers such as John Cage, Morton Feldman, Gordon Mumma, Conlon Nancarrow and David Tudor.

**The RDT dancers used these philosophies as they created GAMUT. Here is one idea by dancer, Nick Cendese. Keep in mind the following goals: Cooperation, Teamwork, and Exploration of Chance Choreographic Methods.**

## **Generate movement material**

Make a list of movement qualities; for example: threading, sharp, fluid, staccato, jumpy, etc. Write these words on small pieces of paper, repeating the words enough times so that each group can select a total of 4 words. (If you have eight groups, you would need 32 pieces of paper.) Fold the small pieces of paper so the words can't be seen and put them in a pile, hat, or bowl. Divide the class into groups of four. Have each group select four slips of paper. Some words may appear twice, that's ok. Using these words, each group must create a group movement phrase that interprets that word. Length is not important. Keep these four chunks of movement separate, do not link them together.

## **Use chance to determine order**

Write 1, 2, 3, and 4 on four more slips of paper. Fold these like before and mix them up. Ask each group to select the slips of paper, unfold them, and lay them out in front of the group. The order of the numbers represents the order of the chunks. For example, if a group selected 2, 3, 1, 4 their second chunk would start, followed by their third chunk, their first, and ending with their fourth. Ask them to now link all four chunks together so that they have one sequence.

## **Develop each group phrase further**

Come up with four ways to manipulate the phrase further. For example: 1- freeze for 10 seconds and repeat something. 2- travel through space 3- do something facing a new direction 4- speed something up and slow something down. Each four of these elements represent one of the four slips of paper. Once the new sequence has been finished, ask each group to redraw their four slips of paper. The first slip of paper will represent the method of development for the first section. For example, our sequence of moves is chunk 2, chunk 3, chunk 4, and then chunk 1. My group draws 3, 1, 2, 4. This means chunk two (which is now the first part of my phrase) has to face a new direction. Chunk 3 (which is the second part of my phrase) has to freeze and have something repeat, etc. Give them time to develop their movement further. When everyone is done, show to the group and discuss the process.

## Why Use Dance in the Classroom?

Dance is the oldest language. Dance is a total experience involving the physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and aesthetic dimensions of an individual which helps us perceive and communicate who we are and what we aspire to become. Dance is a great resource for teaching and opening minds and imaginations. Dance is a form of non-verbal communication, a powerful language that everyone can understand. Dance allows all children to explore their own physical and creative potential in a non-competitive environment.

**Standards for Arts Education:** Utah Core Curriculum

- **Moving:** Increasing strength, flexibility and endurance
- **Investigating:** Discovering the elements of dance: time, space energy and the body
- **Creating:** Exploring the creative process
- **Connecting:** Appreciating dance, its historical, cultural and personal

## The Elements of Dance

There are four elements of dance: **time, space, energy (force and flow) and the body.**

The **body** is the instrument of dance. It is the vehicle of communication, based upon the dancer's kinesthetic sense.

Dance exists in both time and space. **Time** can be rhythmic and based upon meter, or body rhythms and breath rhythms.

**Space** is concerned with the visual design of dance. It consists of body shape, levels, floor patterns, group relationships and volume.

**Energy** relates to the force with which the movement is released. Another term for energy is dynamics and may be described by specific qualities such as: percussive, staccato, sustained, swinging, suspended, vibratory and collapse. A variety of energy levels make a dance more interesting and create texture within the movement.

It is important to realize these elements are also those of everyday life as we move through time and space with varying degrees of energy.

## How to Prepare for the Dance Performance

Turn off and put away all cell phones, mp3 players and any other device which may cause distraction, and remove any chewing gum. Clear your mind of other thoughts (general or personal). Open your mind and spirit to the moment; concentrate and raise your awareness to the immediate environment. As the lights lower and/or the music begins, take a deep breath and relax in your seat. You are beginning to watch motion, movement, shape, line, rhythm, tempo, color, space, time, energy...dance.

Allow yourself to release the notion that you already know what dance means, or has to mean, or that you have to figure something out. Release the notion that you have to look at dance as if you were reading a book. Dance doesn't necessarily have a storyline. If you watch the dance with openness, you may experience an emotion, an image, or a feeling that you may not be able to describe. You may not know why or where reactions come from, but don't worry. That is a part of the magic of theater.

Every piece of choreography has a reason for being. Dances may be celebrations, tell stories, define moods, interpret poems, express emotions, carve designs or visualize music. As you watch a dance, a story may occur to you because of your past experience. However, not all dances tell stories. The sequences do not have to make literal sense. Allow images and personal feelings to come to the surface of your consciousness.

After the performance, feel free to discuss your thoughts with others, but do not be disturbed if you find others have a different reaction than yours. Think about your own personal images and thoughts. Was it fun to watch? Did the dance remind you of any experiences in your own life? Did the choreography inspire you to express yourself, write a poem, draw a picture, or make up your own dance?



## Dance Criticism and Questions for Written Analysis and Discussion

Criticism (writing or talking about dance) or evaluation of a dance performance is affected by past experience, sensitivity, involvement, and personal judgment. Criticism involves three processes: **description**, **interpretation**, and **judgment** of a particular piece being analyzed.

When you write or talk about a dance performance you should consider or analyze four different aspects of the dance.

- The **choreographic elements**: the overall form, use of space, rhythmic and timing factors, use of dynamics, style, music, and movement invention
- The **performance elements**: the technical skill of the dancers, their projection, commitment, ability to communicate.
- The **production elements**: the costumes, lighting, props, sets, and music
- The **general impact**: the clarity of intent, concept, invention of the dance performance.

When answering the following questions, try to be multi-dimensional in your responses by describing visual and auditory perceptions and feelings. Make sure you state your reasons for anything you liked or disliked.

1. What emotional reactions did you have? What moved you?
2. What was the most interesting feature of the performance?
3. What in particular do you most remember about the experience?
4. Was there an apparent motive for the dance? Was it dramatic, abstract, a mood piece, etc.?
5. Were there any social, political, or historical elements?
6. What did you notice about the form of the dance?
7. Were the performers skilled technically?
8. How well did they portray their characters or communicate with movement?
9. What kind of music was used?
10. What were your reactions to the technical or production elements, the staging, décor, props, lighting, costumes?

These questions may stimulate great discussions in the classroom, or may allow the students to delve deeper into their performance experience.

## RDT's Goals for Arts-in-Education

Using dance as a way to help people become more:  
*Connected, Compassionate, Aware, Inspired, Original, Focused, Courageous, Passionate, Human*

- To provide alternative ways of learning in order to achieve basic educational objectives such as concentrating, creative problem solving, planning, visualizing and conceptualizing
- To develop skills and insights needed for emotional maturity and social effectiveness-sharing, cooperating, integrating, and interacting.
- To develop an individual's physical and mental discipline at all levels of ability.
- To open participants' minds and imaginations by developing tools of communication
- To develop feelings of self-worth, confidence, and achievement by giving students and teachers opportunities to explore movement, the art of improvisation and the creative process.
- To develop an understanding and appreciation of American Modern Dance.
- To deepen the understanding of the relationship between art and life.
- To develop Life Skills by encouraging good citizenship, by helping students be responsible and understand their relationship to the other members of their group, family, class or community.





## RDT and Arts Education

REPERTORY DANCE THEATRE founded in 1966, is a professional modern dance company dedicated to the creation, performance, perpetuation, and appreciation of modern dance. RDT's long standing commitment to arts in education focuses on enriching young students lives and providing on opportunity for students to experience the joy of living through dance. The company of outstanding performers, teachers, and choreographers has created new pathways for audiences to experience and value the art of dance. Residency activities that include demonstrations, movement classes, and teacher in-service workshops encourage students to integrate movement into their learning and teaching process. RDT's residency activities are specifically designed to assist teachers and students in achieving the standards for arts education.

### The following organizations and donors generously support Repertory Dance Theatre's Arts-in-Education Activities:

- Arts Learning Program Salt Lake City Arts Council
- Daybreak Corporation
- Emma Eccles Jones Foundation
- George S and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation
- L.T. & J. T. Dee Foundation
- Marriner S Eccles Foundation
- Rio Tinto Corporation
- Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts and Parks Program
- Union Pacific Foundation
- Utah Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts
- Utah State Office of Education
- Weber Sustainability
- Xmission



**For more information about Repertory Dance Theatre, our upcoming workshops, performances, residencies, etc. Please visit our website at [www.rdtutah.org](http://www.rdtutah.org) or contact us at 801-534-1000.**