

Jerome Robbins' *NY Export: Opus Jazz – The Film*

Conceived and Produced by Ellen Bar and Sean Suozzi
Directed by Jody Lee Lipes & Henry Joost
Performed by dancers from New York City Ballet



Improvisations section from *NY Export: Opus Jazz – The Film*

A Resource Guide for Dance Teachers

When Ellen Bar and Sean Suozzi embarked upon the ambitious project to create a film that would capture the essence of Jerome Robbins' ballet *NY Export: Opus Jazz*, they conceived it as a gift to future generations - as a loving tribute to a choreographic genius and his masterworks, as a means to further Robbins' legacy, and as a work of film art on its own terms. Educational use of the film - for children and teens and also for the general public - was part of their plan from the outset.

An arts education that neglects Robbins and his significant influence on classical ballet, jazz dance, the Broadway stage and film would be at best incomplete. Christopher Pennington and Allen Greenberg of the Jerome Robbins Organization both saw the potential in this approach and offered to support the creation of a film guide for dance teachers that would explore thematic and movement ideas in the piece and in the film and suggest lesson activities and unit arcs for teachers to adapt in their own way.

Author Ann Biddle is a dance education expert and consultant who has done a splendid job of walking the reader through the sections of the film, suggesting myriad ideas and essential questions to underpin instruction and providing examples of full units of study for elementary, middle and high school. Technique, improvisatory exploration, student composition, reconstruction/staging, research and reflective discussion are all addressed as instructional modalities. Guidance about using the film in a variety of ways for different age groups is extremely useful as well. All of this work is explicitly aligned with the NYC Department of Education's *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance PreK-12* - the learning standards for dance education in New York City.

For further information, contact Christopher Pennington (pennington@jeromerobbins.org) or see www.opusjazz.com or www.jeromerobbins.org.

Overview of *NY Export: Opus Jazz* – the Film A Resource Guide for Dance Teachers

Section 1 of this guide includes the following elements:

Descriptions of Different Sections of the Film

Each section of the dance is described visually to help the teachers navigate the different parts of the film. Excerpts of the descriptions can be read by students or by the teacher as an introduction to the dance sections. Students could also write their own descriptions to help narrate sections of the dance.

Guiding Questions:

These guiding questions can help generate student discussion and give teachers direction in terms of asking essential questions relevant to the different sections.

These questions are helpful in terms of suggesting possible student inquiry, to lead students to delve deeper into the meaning of the piece and help them gain an understanding of larger issues related to the piece.

Key Themes:

Key themes and ideas are identified in each section to help guide the teacher and student. Many different themes are evident in the film but certain specific themes are evident in each section. Teachers can choose which sections to focus on depending on age appropriate themes. This section also helps teachers know what kinds of connections to make in terms of interdisciplinary study.

Dance motifs/concepts:

Teachers can refer to this section to help identify key movement motifs and concepts, which are emphasized in the particular section. Dominant movement motifs exist, but it should be noted that there are an infinite number of ways to examine and analyze the dance in terms of general and specific movement vocabulary and choreographic structure.

Structure of Section:

This section provides a simple breakdown of the choreography and describes the overall structure of each section.

Lesson Plan Ideas:

This section outlines some basic lesson plan ideas for teachers to flesh out. The subsequent fully fleshed out sample dance units are offered in the second section of the manual.

Other aspects to look at:

Additional connections or extensions are offered in this section for teachers and students who want further ideas about how to develop this unit.

Section 2 includes instructional resources:

Sample Lesson Plans based on *Entrance: Group Dance*

This section provides teachers with fully fleshed out and developed lesson plan ideas, complete with assessment tools and support materials. The sample lesson plans are based on the first section of the dance filmed in the abandoned McCarren pool, *Entrance: Group Dance*.

Each unit plan for the three different age groups (Upper Elementary, Middle School & High School) can be mixed and matched depending on student group. All three dance units offer different approaches and foci combining dance reconstruction with improvisation and choreography as well as a more interdisciplinary approach in the High School unit.

Formative Assessment Tools & Tips

Learning and teaching are most effective and engaging when students have established criteria by which they and their teacher can measure their progress on an ongoing basis.

Section 3 includes:

Support materials/bibliography:

This section provides a thorough bibliography of resources as well as a list of support materials referred to in each sample dance unit. Additional websites, research ideas, articles, and interviews are offered to give teachers a broad range of support for the dance units.



Passage for Two from NY Export: Opus Jazz – The Film