



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1985 Volume II: American Musical Theater

Stepping Into The World of The American Musical Theatre, Dance Sets the Pace

Guide for Curriculum Unit 85.02.04
by Donna Lombardi

As a dance teacher at Conte Arts Magnet, not only have my students been introduced to the world of dance, but because of the unique curriculum at school, they have also had the opportunity to study art, music, and drama, all the elements used in the making of a musical. The eighth-grade students whom we will be using for the project have a background in all of the art areas necessary, so it would seem a fitting ending for them to appear in a production or review, using the skills they have developed since fifth grade.

The purpose of my unit will be to explore the American Musical Theatre and to explain how “dance” is called upon to provide an extra dramatic dimension. One of my main objectives will be explaining “modern musical dance”. It means much more than just movement set to music. The unit is divided into three sections. Section one introduces students to the history of the Broadway musical. Section two focuses on choreography, the choreographer, and the different types of staging used in musical numbers. Section three includes activities and lesson plans that I will use with the students.

This unit is part of a collaboration with two of my colleagues at Conte, Ms. Melillo, drama teacher, and Ms. Long, music teacher. The two musicals we have chosen for our review are “West Side Story” and “Fiddler on the Roof.” The unit will leave the students with a complete understanding of the musical and all its components, and will better prepare them to utilize the skills needed for a successful production.

(Recommended for Dance and Language Arts classes, grade 8)

Key Words

Drama Literature Shaw George Bernard Pygmalion Musical Theater Literary Sources Exercises Performances

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