

LIED CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS STUDENT MATINEE PROGRAM **PASSING IT FORWARD**

2018-2019 SEASON
PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



LIED CENTER
FOR PERFORMING ARTS

2017 | 2018 SEASON

ABOUT THIS PLAY GUIDE

Hello teachers!

On behalf of the Lied Center Department of Education, thank you for your support of the arts. We hope this document proves to be a useful tool for presenting this piece of art to your students. In this packet, you will find multiple layers of potential support, including information about the featured piece, its creators, and general information about the artform itself. Additionally, exercises are included to help enhance your students' experience of the performance. These exercises take the form of both teacher-led activities and worksheets. We hope that this guide assists you to build educational context ranging from a brief introduction on the way to the performance up to one or two class periods.

THEMES AND VALUES



WHO'S WHO OF PASSING IT FORWARD

ABOUT ACIA GRAY

Acia Gray is Co-Founder / Producing Artistic Director of Tapestry Dance Company. As soloist, choreographer and master teacher, Ms. Gray has toured extensively across the U.S. and abroad and in 1989 co-founded Tapestry Dance Company in Austin, TX with Deirdre Strand and currently serves as Producing Artistic Director and Artistic Director of The Soul to Sole Tap Festival.

She toured her work *The Souls of Our Feet – A Celebration of American Tap Dance* through the National Endowment for the Arts American Masterpieces throughout the US and China. Her numerous awards include the “Hooper Award” by The New York City Tap Festival and a premiere member of the Austin Arts Fall of Fame. She has received numerous “Best Of” awards by the Critics Table in Austin and her work *The Souls of Our Feet - A Celebration of American Tap Dance* was chosen as an NEA American Masterpiece production and toured throughout the US, Canada and China.

Currently she can be seen in the tap documentary *Tap or Die*. Ms. Gray served as the President of the International Tap Association from 2008-2014 and is currently the organization’s Director.



ABOUT ZELL MILLER

Zell Miller III is a hip hop artist, poet, and theater maker. A citizen of Austin, Texas since the age of four, Miller is deeply engaged with his community. His work is known for its strong social messages and is revered by his fellow citizens of Austin. Miller’s engagement with his community doesn’t stop there. When he isn’t performing, Miller teaches poetry at local high schools and middle schools as part of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant Program. Miller has a variety of accolades, most notably: Best Author/Poet in the Chronicle’s 2004 Best of Austin Readers Poll, member of the Austin Slam Team in the 2004 National Poetry Slam, winner of the 1999 Heman Sweatt Symposium Slam and 1999 Austin Poetry Slam, featured performer at Austin International Poetry Festival and SXSW, opener for Nikki Giovanni.

ORIGINS OF THE ART

HISTORY OF TAP DANCE

Tap dance is an American dance genre that evolved over a period of some three hundred years. Initially a fusion of British and West African musical and step-dance traditions in America, tap emerged in the southern United States in the 1700s. The Irish jig and West African gioube mutated into the American jig and juba. These became fused into a form of dancing called jigging which, in the 1800s, was taken up by minstrel-show dancers who developed tap into a popular nineteenth-century stage entertainment. Early styles of tapping utilized hard-soled shoes, clogs, or hobnailed boots. It was not until the early decades of the twentieth century that metal plates appeared on shoes of dancers on the Broadway musical stage. It was around that time that jazz tap dance developed as a musical form parallel to jazz music, sharing rhythmic motifs, polyrhythm, multiple meters, elements of swing, and structured improvisation. In the late twentieth century, tap dance evolved into a concertized performance on the musical and concert hall stage. Its absorption of Latin American and Afro Caribbean rhythms in the forties has furthered its rhythmic complexity. In the eighties and nineties, tap's gradual absorption of hip-hop rhythms has inspired a new generation of innovative tap dancers from a variety of backgrounds.



SPOKEN WORD

Spoken word poetry first emerged in the 1920s as Jazz Poetry, a style fueled by the jazz music of the era. The Harlem-based genre followed the non-traditional rhythms of jazz to create work with a unique beat. This style would go on to inform Beat Poetry of the 1940s and '50s. The Beat movement focused on creating work that defied convention, both socially and stylistically. Since the Beat era, questioning the mainstream has continuously been a facet of spoken word poetry. In the 1960s, spoken word became a major part of the American Civil Rights movement. As the Poetry Foundation describes, "poets influenced by the Civil Rights movement use their art to instill a sense of pride in one's identity, to praise freedom fighters and honor fallen leaders, to chronicle acts of resistance, and to offer wisdom and strength to fellow activists." The political nature of spoken word has persisted since its use in the Civil Rights Movement. In the late 80s and 90s, spoken word gave way to modern day hip-hop and rap, giving spoken word an even broader reach and moving the art form into the mainstream. Alongside this development, spoken word poetry continued to flourish in the form of slam poetry. Louder than a Bomb, a Chicago-based slam poetry contest, hosts hundreds of youth

THEATER LEARNING ACTIVITY:

"I AM" STATEMENTS

The focus of Passing it Forward is identity. In the show, the performers look within to ask themselves "What makes me, me?" In order to do this, Tapestry developed what they call "I Am" statements. Using this exercise, students can develop their own "I Am" statements to help foster a sense of their own

EXERCISE: "I AM" STATEMENTS

1. To begin, have your students think about words that describe them. Start with some words that describe their personality. Are they more silly or serious? Loud or quiet? Provide similar prompts using words learned in class. As they find words they think fit, instruct them to start building a list. They should end up with four to six words.
2. Next, prompt your students to consider other things that make up who they are. Maybe it's an interest (athlete, artist) or where they or their family comes from. Have your students add these words to their list. The goal is three to five additional words added.
3. Have your students look over their lists. From the list they have developed, instruct them to circle the three words that most describe them or that they like most. Using these three words, they can begin to build their "I Am" statements.
4. Instruct your students to take each of the three words and pair them "I am," creating three sentences that read "I am _____. Have them finish with their name, adding a fourth sentence reading "I am (student's name.)" By doing this, they have created their own "I Am" statements.
5. Now it's time to share with the class. Go around the room and invite each student to stand up and share their "I Am" statements with their peers.

PRE SHOW QUESTIONS WORKSHEET

What are you expecting from the performance?

What do you think the performers are expecting from the audience?

What do you know about tap dance already? What about poetry?

Have you ever seen a live performance before? What was it like? How do you think this piece will be similar? How will it be different?

MORE RESOURCES:

<https://www.britannica.com/art/tap-dance>

<https://www.tapestry.org/about>

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/brief-guide-jazz-poetry>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/146367/poetry-and-the-civil-rights-movement>

SOURCES:

<https://www.britannica.com/art/tap-dance>

<https://www.tapestry.org/about>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3n2s9pWr6FI>

<https://www.tapestry.org/executive-artistic-director>

<https://www.broadwaydancecenter.com/faculty/acia-gray>

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/brief-guide-jazz-poetry>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/146367/poetry-and-the-civil-rights-movement>

<https://www.austinchronicle.com/arts/2008-08-22/663184/>