

# EISENHOWER DANCE DETROIT

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## *Performance Study Guide*

This study guide is a resource designed for teachers in preparation for a performance or lecture demonstration by Eisenhower Dance. It is intended to help develop the students' ability to better understand the art of dance.

### **Contents**

I. History of the company

II. Pre-performance questions: These questions help in understanding the dances the students will see. They help identify the elements of dance and concepts of movement in everyday life.

III. Post-performance questions: These questions help the teacher conduct meaningful discussions with the students after the performance and explore theatrical concepts and personal opinion.

IV. Dance Glossary: The terms found in the glossary are intended to help both the student and teacher understand dance vocabulary and the language used to create dance.

V. Audience behavior guide: This section includes the do's and don'ts of behavior when attending a dance performance for both teachers and students.

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## I. History

**Eisenhower Dance Detroit**, Established in 1991 in metropolitan Detroit by Founding Artistic Director, Laurie Eisenhower, EDD has a mission to be “a professional repertory company that, through outstanding performances and educational services, strives to deepen the understanding and appreciation of contemporary dance regionally, nationally, and internationally.” For the past 28 years, EDD has commissioned repertory from a wide variety of internationally known choreographers and performed the highly acclaimed work of its founder. Last year, Eisenhower Dance began a new chapter as Ms. Eisenhower retired and long-time Assistant Artistic Director, Stephanie Pizzo, took over the helm as Artistic Director. Ms. Pizzo continues to expand the company's innovative style and artistic vision while still honoring the legacy of Eisenhower Dance's founder.

Eisenhower Dance Detroit presents an annual local subscription series and tours nationally and internationally. The company has performed works by choreographers Edgar Zendejas, David Parsons, Lar Lubovitch, Ron de Jesus, Gina Patterson, Lauren Edson and Harrison McEldowney, to name a few. In addition, EDD's mission of collaboration has resulted in performances with the Michigan Opera Theatre, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, the Warren Symphony, the Immigrant Suns, Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings, the Rackham Symphony Choir, the Motor City Lyric Opera and the Toledo Opera, among others. The company has also produced several evening-length touring productions including “Motown in Motion,” a visual salute to the tunes that made the Motor City famous; “The Rite of Spring” set to Igor Stravinsky's iconic score; and “The Light Show” which pairs four choreographers with four lighting designers for a visually stunning evening of dance.

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**II. Pre-performance questions**

- A. Have you ever been inspired by music to get up and dance? How did you decide what moves to do? Did you think about what to do before you moved, or did you just move? What about the music made you want to dance?
- B. What type of music was played in your house when you were a child? Do you remember dancing with your family to these songs? How did you learn these dances? C. What are some special occasions where we learn to dance with someone else? D. Does a story have to be told in words? How can a story be told without words? Can a story be told with just movement?
- E. Can you think of gestures that can tell a partner to stop? Go? Say Hello? By performing these gestures are you communicating without words?
- F. Can you think of gestures that show emotion?
- G. How many of you have been to a dance performance before? What did you like about it?

**III. Post-performance questions**

- A. What was your favorite part of the performance?
- B. What kind of energy and motion were used?
- C. How did the movement and music make you feel?
- D. Did the movement go with the music or against it?
- E. Did you see gestures that we use in real life? In what way were the dancers' movements different from everyday life?
- F. Did any of the dances tell a story? Did any of the dances make you think about a memory from your own life?
- G. How did lighting and costumes add to the dance?
- H. Were the performers technically skilled?
- I. What are the elements of dance?
- J. Where is Motown?
- K. What do you remember most about the experience?

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## IV. Dance Glossary:

Dance: The art of movement expressed with the body.

Ballet: An artistic dance form performed to music using precise and highly formalized set steps and gestures. Classical ballet, which originated in Renaissance Italy and established its present form during the 19th century, is characterized by light, graceful, fluid movements and the use of pointe shoes.

Modern Dance: A free, expressive style of dancing started in the early 20th century as a reaction to classical ballet. Modern dance stresses versatility and improvisation, unlike the strict, structured nature of ballet. Modern dancers focus on floorwork, using gravity to pull them down to the floor. This dance genre is often done in bare feet and can be performed to many different styles of music.

Contemporary Dance: Dance that is current and happening right now. It is a genre of concert dance that employs systems and methods found in modern dance, post-modern dance, jazz dance and classical ballet.

Choreography: The art or practice of designing sequences of movements in dance. Literally means “dance-writing.”

Choreographer: The person who makes up the choreography or movement sequences.

Gesture: A form of non-verbal communication made with a part of the body, used instead of or in combination with verbal communication.

Props: A property, commonly shortened to **prop**(plural: **props**), is an object used on stage during a performance. In practical terms, a **prop** is considered to be anything movable or portable on a stage or a set, distinct from the artists, scenery, costumes and electrical equipment.

Patterns: Spatial designs created by repeated movements of an individual dancer or by formations of a group of dancers.

Elements of Dance: The elements of dance include direction, level, speed and shape (or the more abstract terms space, shape, time and energy). All the elements are in every movement we make, but a choreographer can highlight one element over another.

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**V. Audience Behavior in the Theatre**

Coming to a live dance performance is a special activity that all should enjoy. By keeping some very simple guidelines in mind, the students and the performers will have a wonderful experience.

- A. Remind students to be a respectful audience, which will help the dancers deliver a great performance. Unlike watching television at home, anything that is said will disturb the performance. You are not alone in the theatre. Be considerate of others who are also watching this special performance.
- B. Make sure you consider whether or not you will need to go to the restrooms during the performance. Before or after the performance and at intermission are appropriate times.
- C. Remind the students they will need to be in their seats before the performance begins. Once the performance starts, they will be held outside the audience area until there is a break in the performance.
- D. Being a respectful audience member also means listening quietly and being attentive to the performers on stage. If there is a funny moment and it is meant to be funny, you can laugh. If something happens on stage that you find funny but it is not meant to be funny, keep your laughter inside. Remember the dancers' reactions to the audience and can also hear what is happening in the audience.
- E. To show your appreciation, applause is always a great way to show you liked the show or segment of the performance.
- F. If questions arise remember the audience will have a chance to ask the narrator or dancers questions at the end of the performance.