The Spirit of Kwanzaa
Illstyle & Peace Productions

Kwanzaa events at NJPAC are made possible through the generosity of Leon & Toby Cooperman

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Teacher’s Guide 2012–2013

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The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) Arts Education Department presents the 16th season of the Passport to Culture SchoolTime Performance Series.

Teacher’s Resource Guide
This guide will help you prepare your class for an enriching experience at our SchoolTime Passport to Culture Performance. We provide discussion ideas, activities and reading resources that promote arts literacy in your classroom and link to New Jersey’s Core Curriculum Content Standards. You can find additional resources online at artsed.njpac.org.

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NJPAC Arts Education
At NJPAC, our mission is to join with parents, teachers and community to cultivate an appreciation of the arts for all children in all schools. We believe the arts provide an effective means of knowing and learning that helps children find the self-esteem, poise and confidence they need to succeed in every facet of life. Our innovative programs are designed to engage the artist in every child.

In-School Residencies
NJPAC brings the joy of dance, music and theater directly into your classroom with In-School Residencies. Our teaching artists create stimulating performing arts experiences that engage students’ imaginations and encourage self-expression. Residencies are customized to meet the curricular goals of the classroom teacher. Each residency ends with a performance that teaches students to work together and believe in themselves.

SchoolTime and Family Performances
Open a world of culture to your students through performances of music, dance, storytelling, theater, and puppetry through professional stage productions by local, national and international artists. Performances are enriched by teacher resource guides as well as Q&A sessions with the artists.

Arts Training Programs
Students interested in acting, dance, musical theater, vocal or instrumental music will find an artistic home at NJPAC where creative expression and solid technique serve as cornerstones of the Arts Training programs. Teaching Artists with exceptional professional experience guide students at all levels of arts learning (beginner, intermediate and advanced) to greater creative understanding and self-confidence.
Artistic director Brandon “Peace” Albright choreographs works full of energy and variety for his 22-member company, Illstyle & Peace Productions. The ensemble’s main style of dance is hip-hop, which features a blend of locking, breaking and popping.

Popping involves the dancer quickly contracting and relaxing muscles to make his or her body jerk, while in locking the dancer appears to lock his limbs into certain positions in time with the music. Because of their similarities, popping and locking are often categorized together as “pop ‘n’ lock.”

Breaking includes many kinds of movements, from acrobatics to frozen poses, most of which are done on the floor.

What makes Albright’s dances so exciting is the intricate use of rhythm, speed, control, and precision. He believes all dance styles are connected because they center around one common theme: moving joyfully to music. For this reason, he infuses elements of jazz, tap, ballet, modern, African dance, belly dancing, and house dancing (a social dance that originated in the clubs of Chicago and New York).

For the Spirit of Kwanzaa performance at NJPAC, Albright created a number of works—among them Fly Like a Bird, Become Your Dreams, Divide Collaboration, Impossible Izzpossible, and Robotic Souls—set to a mix of hip-hop recordings by DJ Darrin Ross. “Everything we do will be filled with the spirit of Kwanzaa,” Albright says, “as we celebrate the community through movement.”

For example, he made Impossible Izzpossible to inspire kids to fulfill themselves. “I want them to feel they can create anything,” he says. “To wake up, get up, go out the door, take on the impossible, and know if they work hard and never turn back that they’ll achieve their dreams.”

Albright takes a stance on the topic of bullying in No-Bullying STOP-Bullying, let’s be friends. “I know all about the name-calling, pushing and ganging-up,” he says, “and I wanted to find a way to show how unnecessary and cruel it all can be.”

Albright recalls an incident from his school days when a classmate cried uncontrollably to a teacher, expressing that he knew he was a bully and needed help. Albright understands the complexities surrounding bullying and wants audiences to realize that support has to be given to both the tormentor and the child being threatened.


For more about Illstyle & Peace Productions, visit pentacle.org.
Inspired by watching his mother listen to James Brown on the radio, Brandon “Peace” Albright started dancing in his hometown of Philadelphia when he was 10 years old. Observing other kids spinning on their heads, doing back flips, standing on their hands, and moving rhythmically to all kinds of music made him want to try the moves, too.

“I knew then I wanted to make a career of dancing,” he says. “That it wasn’t going to be a hobby for me.”

Albright entered talent shows and earned a lot of attention in the dance community for his enthusiasm and style. “I learned to be original at a very early age,” he says. “You’re not going to go anywhere copying the people around you.” At age 15, he joined a group called the Scanner Boyz and later landed a place with Rennie Harris’ Puremovement, a major hip-hop company in Philadelphia, where he was a member for 15 years.

Despite his young age, Albright not only performed with Puremovement, but because he was so mature and eager he also became the assistant artistic director. “It gave me some understanding of what it takes to run your own company,” he says. “Rennie gave me a lot of responsibility, so I learned about managing people and how to do the best you can, no matter the circumstances. People sometimes think that performing is all about fun, and we do have fun. But we have to rehearse all the time and learn new movement and adapt to different theaters, audiences and even countries.”

Then and now, Albright has danced in videos by recording artists such as Will Smith, LL Cool J, Boyz II Men, and the Beach Boys.

In 2002, he founded Illstyle & Peace Productions to present his own message about hip-hop’s relevance to people’s lives. He recognizes Alvin Ailey, who established the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958, as one of the most important influences in his young life.

Choreographer Chuck Davis, who founded the DanceAfrica festivals, mentored Albright from the time he was 11 years old, helping him build enough confidence to eventually start his own troupe. Albright also credits George Faison, choreographer of the hit musical *The Wiz*, with showing him how to develop the more commercial aspects of his art.

As proof of his success, Albright’s company has entertained audiences worldwide. “It’s fascinating to see so many different places on Earth, and find so many people who love what we do,” he says.

— V.G.
Kwanzaa is a non-religious, African-American holiday that celebrates African culture and values. The holiday, which has grown to be a worldwide phenomenon, was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor and chair of the Black Studies Department of California State University in Long Beach, California. Dr. Karenga established the holiday in 1966 in an effort to revitalize, preserve and promote Pan-African culture and foster a sense of pride and community among Africans and people of African descent around the world.

Celebrated from December 26 to January 1, Kwanzaa offers African-descended people a time to be together to rejoice in their heritage. The word Kwanzaa comes from the Swahili phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, which means “first fruits.” Dr. Karenga chose Swahili because of its significance as a Pan-African language.

To appreciate the meaning and significance of Kwanzaa, one must understand the *Nguzo Saba* or The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa. The *Nguzo Saba* teaches the fundamental African values that are the building blocks of family, community, tradition, and culture. On each successive evening of the seven-day Kwanzaa celebration, activities, especially in family settings, often focus on one of The Seven Principles.

In addition, one must understand the Symbols of Kwanzaa, which also reflect these fundamental values. The symbols are often used in decorating the home or a table for Kwanzaa or in observing rituals associated with the holiday in communal or family settings.

### The Nguzo Saba: The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa

**Umoja** (Unity) — to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

**Kujichaguila** (Self-Determination) — to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves.

**Ujima** (Collective Work and Responsibility) — to build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers’ and sisters’ problems our problems and solve them together.

**Ujamaa** (Cooperative Economics) — to build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

**Nia** (Purpose) — to make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

**Kuumba** (Creativity) — to do always as much as we can, in any way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.

**Imani** (Faith) — to believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

### The Symbols of Kwanzaa

**Mazao** (The Crops) — symbolic of African harvest celebrations and of the rewards of productive and collective labor.

**Mazao** (The Crops) — symbolic of African harvest celebrations and of the rewards of productive and collective labor.

**Mkeka** (The Mat) — symbolic of our tradition and history and, therefore, the foundation on which we build.

**Kinara** (The Candle Holder) — symbolic of our roots and of our parent people: continental Africans.

**Muhindi** (The Corn) — symbolic of our children and our future, which they embody.

**Mishumaa Saba** (The Seven Candles) — symbolic of the *Nguzo Saba*, the central set of values, which African people are urged to live by in order to rescue and reconstruct their lives in their own image and according to their own needs.

**Kikombe cha Umoja** (The Unity Cup) — symbolic of the foundational principle and practice of unity, which makes all else possible.

**Zawadi** (The Gifts) — symbolic of the labor and love of parents and the commitments made and kept by the children.

**Bendera** (The Flag) — The colors of the Kwanzaa flag are black for the people, red for their struggle and green for the future and hope that comes from their struggle. It is based on the colors given by the Hon. Marcus Garvey as national colors for African people throughout the world.
**Before the Performance**

1. Discuss the skills and training involved in the various careers related to dance, from being a dancer or choreographer to working backstage as a scenic, costume or lighting designer or a stagehand, etc. If there are students who take dance classes, ask them to talk about what goes on in their classes and have them demonstrate some specific movements. Invite a local dance teacher or professional dancer to speak to the class. Have the class make a list of questions they would most like to ask, for example: How long does it take to become a professional dancer or dance teacher? As performers, do the dancers ever get nervous before going on stage? (1.4)

2. “Why Dance?” is an arts integrated resource of Verizon’s [Thinkfinity.org](http://www.thinkfinity.org). In this lesson, one of a multi-part unit from ARTSEDGE, students identify reasons why people dance. Centers are set up to research various kinds of dance. After exploring three centers, students create a dance, poem, report, or collage to explain why people dance. [Artsguide.kennedy-center.org/content/2319](http://www.artsguide.kennedy-center.org/content/2319) (1.1, 1.2, 1.3)

**After the Performance**

1. The dancers of Illstyle & Peace Productions use locking, breaking and popping to create complicated rhythms. Ask students to think of other movements dancers can make by manipulating parts of their bodies. Then, ask the class to choose four favorite moves. Have the students practice those movements in a sequence until they can perform the sequence several times in a row. This activity can be done in small groups with each group performing in sequence for the class. (1.1, 1.3)

2. Ask students to compare and contrast their expectations of the performance with their actual experience. Then, ask them to write a review of the performance by answering the following questions: What parts of the performance did they especially like? Why? What parts did they dislike? Why? Were there any story elements to the dances? What did the dancers communicate to the audience? What did they communicate to each other? (1.1, 1.3, 1.4)

* Numbers indicate the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standard(s) supported by the activity.

**More Resources**

**Books for Students**


**Books for Teachers**


**Websites**

- [Thinkfinity.org](http://www.thinkfinity.org) Verizon Foundation website for classroom educational resource material.

- [officialkwanzaawebsite.org](http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org) Official Kwanzaa website.

- [pentacle.org](http://www.pentacle.org) Website for Illstyle & Peace Productions.

**Videos**

- [youtube.com/watch?v=1VI_j06adhU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VI_j06adhU) Illstyle & Peace Productions performance at DanceAfrica, Brooklyn Academy of Music.


**DVDs**

Teaching Science Through Dance (Grades 5–12)

By Sharon J. Sherman, Ed.D.

Arts education allows students to refine their perceptual, physical and technical skills by creating dance, music, theater, and/or visual arts. The NJ Core Curriculum Standards say that by the end of grade 12, students will be able to interpret the meanings expressed in works of dance and create works that communicate personal opinions, thoughts and ideas.

Using dance to teach science engages students as they show what they know, use their imaginations, and demonstrate performance and participation skills by working and creating with others. The NJ Core Curriculum Science Standards say that all students will develop an understanding of how people of various cultures have contributed to the advancement of science and technology and how major discoveries and events have advanced science and technology. In the classroom, use dance to illustrate some of these principles.

Form groups of students who will create dance together. Introduce the basic dance elements so that each group can select from a variety of movements. Have them choose two or three movements to incorporate into the dance. Suggested dance elements include relationships with others, flow, shape of movement, and position in space. Relationships with others include working with partners, groups, leading, following, meeting, disconnecting, or connecting. Flow includes varying speed, duration of movement, rhythm, and movement quality (light, heavy, strong, or weak). Shape includes symmetry, asymmetry, expansion, and contraction. Position in space includes levels (high, medium, low levels of space), direction (up, down, forward, backward, sideways) and pathways (zigzag, curved, straight, intersected). Before they create dance, have students experiment with these movements as they explore space, time and energy. Then integrate the science content.

Students should understand and be able to explain the relationships among scientific investigation and discovery, the events of world history, and the contributions of diverse cultures. Discuss the contributions of scientists George Washington Carver, Benjamin Banneker, Marigold Linton, Manuel Phillip Berriozábal, or Michelle Buchanan. Have students create dance to represent inquiry, discovery, historical events, and diversity. As they work, they will practice inquiry skills such as observation, experimentation and validation. Have students select a scientist from an underrepresented group and create a dance that portrays his/her ideas.

Teaching Science Through the Arts is made possible through the generous support of Roche.

visit artsed.njpac.org

Find additional resources by clicking on SchoolTime Performances

The Spirit of Kwanzaa vocabulary list

All dance has three basic building blocks:

- **space** — the whole design and use of the place in which a dance unfolds.

- **time** — a measurable period during which movement or dance occurs. Time is indicated in dance in many ways that may range from complex rhythmic patterns to periods of long, unbroken stillness.

- **energy** — the intensity, amount or force of the movement, also sometimes referred to as the quality, color or texture of the movement. Adjectives such as restless, restrained, unrestrained, calm, smooth, free, concentrated, furtive, tense, explosive, fiery, etc., may be used to describe this aspect of dance.

* * *

- **choreographer** — the person who creates or invents a dance.

- **choreography** — the process of creating a dance.

- **dancer** — a performer who executes and gives meaning to the movements of a dance on stage. Generally, dancers train in one or more techniques for at least five years before performing professionally.

- **ensemble** — a group of dancers on stage.

- **gesture** — the use of motions of the body or limbs as a means of expression or non-verbal communication.

- **pattern** — a design made by dancers in a space to create a visual configuration.

- **polyrhythms** — simultaneous, distinct rhythmic patterns that overlap to create one complex rhythmic pattern.

- **props** — items used to create a mood, a setting or a sense of place, or items held or used by the dancers to add to the movement of their bodies.

- **rhythm** — a series of movements or sounds in which some action or element recurs with regularity.

- **score** — the musical or sound accompaniment for a dance. The score may be created for a dance or may be pre-existing music or sound.

- **space** — the area that the dancer can reach around his or her body while staying in place, plus the general space through which a dancer travels when dancing.

- **wingspace** — the area just offstage on the right and left, where performers make their entrances and exits.
Acknowledgments as of 8/10/12


New Jersey Performing Arts Center

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Linda Fowler ................................................................. Editor of Teacher’s Resource Guides

visit artsed.njpac.org

Find additional resources by clicking on SchoolTime Performances or scan the QR code displayed here.

For even more arts integration resources, please go to Thinkfinity.org, the Verizon Foundation’s signature digital learning platform, designed to improve educational and literacy achievement.

arts education@NJ PAC

NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

One Center Street
Newark, New Jersey 07102
Administration: 973 642-8989
Arts Education Hotline: 973 353-8009
schooltime@njpac.org

Writer: Valerie Gladstone
Editor: Linda Fowler
Designer: Bonnie Felt
NJPAC Guest Reader: Marcel L. Coleman
NJPAC Teacher’s Guide Review Committee:
Laura Ingoglia
Judith Israel
Mary Lou Johnston
Amy Tenzer

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