**Australian Lesson for Nora Davis Magnet School (Fall 2015)**

**Researched & Instructed by USM dance majors in**

**DED 360 (Methods of Teaching Dance)**

**Written by Julie Hammond White**

*Nora Davis Magnet School is located in Laurel, Mississippi. Teachers teach academics artfully every day and in many ways. All four arts are taught as distinct disciplines in and of themselves at this school, and the arts specialists weekly work with regular classroom teachers to integrate arts and academics together. USM dance education majors do much of their fieldwork at NDMS for this reason – the teachers are dedicated to individualized and creative instruction, and the students excel in this curriculum despite most of them being on free or assisted lunches and living in a relatively isolated and socio-economically depressed town.*

*Researching, designing, and instructing this cultural dance class is an annual assignment for students enrolled in DED 360, organized and guided by myself. NDMS lets us know what culture we will present, as the larger school celebrates this culture not just in arts experiences, but in the food they serve, the attire they wear, the concepts they learn, and the activities they have that special day. It is taught to every student in the school as well – PreK – 6th, SPED and gifted and midline, thus the material (movement as well as supporting information and commentary) needs to easily be differentiated to stay developmentally and ability appropriate. There is an intentional balance between doing creative movement (focused on the dance elements) and traditional cultural dances with authentic music as accompaniment. The class is 30 minutes long and is taught seven times in a row. In this way, our majors get a “real life” experience with what K12 teachers do daily in terms of the amount of teaching they do, the stamina and energy this requires, and how many students are in their charge by day’s end. The lesson plan is written after instruction takes place so that best practices across the full spectrum of students and class periods are recorded and not just our original ideas. For this reason, this lesson is “tested and good to go” in terms of being immediately ready to teach. We hope you do!*

**Introduction**

* Gooday! This is the common greeting in Australia when you see a friend. Let’s take a minute and say it to the people sitting around us. We say “gooday!” to you. We are Southern Miss dancers who are excited to be here with you today to teach you a little about dance in Australia.
* As you might know, Australia is on the other side of the world. It is completely surrounded by water and the center of the country (which is also one of the 7 continents) is largely desert and uninhabited. If you were to fly there, it would take you almost 20 hours before you arrived and it would be in a very different time zone – there is a 17 hour difference between MS and this country. It has been called “the land down under” for this reason. Regardless of this, in a lot of ways Australians are a lot like us. Both cultures speak English and love popular music. Fashion is important and good food is too.
* Australia is known for its rich culture, its amazing coral reefs, and its many aboriginal peoples. What does this mean? Aboriginal translates to “first peoples.” It is believed that the first humans migrated from Africa to Australia over 70,000 years ago. Currently, there are between 125 – 140 tribes that exist in Australia. They are defined by their unique customs, cultures, languages, and dances.
* Today we will be learning several Aboriginal dances or movement that is inspired by what matters to them. We will also be dancing to traditional Australian music which is very different from what we normally hear. Listen for unique instruments and know that today you won’t just know these traditional dances but you will also know what music they are done to.
* We do want to tell you that there is a lot of dance in Australia, and not just in the tribes. Latin dance, ballet, and contemporary dance are performed often, with dance companies doing these dance forms. If you travel to Australia, make sure to check out the many different kinds of dance this country offers!

**Warm-Up**

To get our minds and bodies ready for learning we are going to do a simple warm-up that introduces you to some key movements in Aboriginal dances. These include stomping, chugging, walking, running in place, and squatting. Just follow along! Getting our bodies warm is “very important” as a dancer or “fellow” (fella) as the Australians say. The music for this is a traditional Australian folk song that is well known in the country and sung to show patriotism.

* Breathing with arms going up and down and fingers spread (4 times slowly)
* Walk in place slowly, then quicker, then with knees up to chest
* Stomping right and left (16 times)
* Chugging (forward, back, side, side): repeat four times  
  Big squat plie with arms into chest (bunny) to standing with arms overhead (four times slow, four times faster)
* Running in place (an easy jog)…16 counts facing front, 16 counts facing side, 16 counts front
* Breathing in place with arms going up and down four times (on the last one they return to a seated position)

**Kangaroo Dance**

Many Aboriginal tribes have a dance about the kangaroo which they call the “gongaroo”. Say this together: “gongaroo!” Great! The kangaroo is an important animal in Australia but it is also respected because it never moves backwards, only forwards or in place. Many tribes dance in honor of the kangaroo to remind themselves that they should never move backwards in life, but always be prepared for what is next. This dance is created by us in the spirit of the kangaroo!

* Hands in chest: twist upper body right, left, right, left
* Touch ear: right, left, right, left
* Squat down and up slowly: four times (arms stay in chest)
* Hop (two feet to two feet) four times forward quickly, four times (making a box around one’s spot): 16 counts total
* Squat down and up with a jump on top slowly: four times (arms stay in chest)

Repeat!

The students will be praised for their focus and energy and asked to sit in place once more to hear about the final dance that they will learn.

**The Traditional Aboriginal Crane Dance**

The Crane Dance is based on the movements and habits of the crane, which is a large bird commonly found in Australia. The dance is about searching for food, then sharing it with the other birds, having a full belly, and being so happy that they dance. This is a dance specifically for children and gives them a chance to show off and have everyone’s attention when dancing takes place in the tribes.

* Knees and arms up (right, left, right, left) – similate wings and flying – 8 times
* Stepping (right, left, right, left, etc) slowly with alternating hands pointing to the ground (the body is hunched over and close to the ground – 8 times
* Running in place (sharing food with others) – 8 times in place facing front, 8 times in a circle around oneself to the right, 8 times circling to the left, and 8 times facing front once more
* Chugging in place 8 times (celebrating being full and happy)

Repeat! Time allowing, have one side of the room stand and dance while the other side sits and observes as an audience and then switch roles. Reinforce that good audience members give their complete attention and good performers dance with full energy. Praise them for their efforts and ask them to sit for closure.

**Closure**

Well that was cool or as the Australians say “Dardy!” Can you say that with us? Dardy! Great. Today we learned a bit about Australian Aboriginal Dance and how this is unique. We hope you had fun and encourage you to share this with your families tonight so everyone can go “down under!”