**Greek Lesson for Nora Davis Magnet School (Fall 2011)**

**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**

“Hello, we are dance majors from USM and we are so excited to be here today and teach you a little bit about Greece and Greek dancing. Before we start, I want to ask how many of you got really excited about something this week – raise your hand if you did. Fantastic! Well, in Greece when you are excited or just feel great doing what you are doing you say “OPA!”. Try it. Now try saying it a bit louder with a fist in the air. Now say it one more time and jump, pump your fist and say it. Great! In class today when we say OPA to you, we want you to say OPA back to us, ok? Great. Let’s try it one more time (do call and response with OPA). Fantastic! Now let’s get started!”

**Warm-Up**

Share: Greece has one of the oldest civilizations in history. A civilization is a group of people who share a culture and live in the same place. Some of the things Greece has always been known for are its architecture (buildings), good theatre and acting, important scientific discoveries and philosophy (thoughts on life and how to live it well).

The language of Greece is Greek. They have a different alphabet than ours in how they are written and spoken. Today, Greek is still the active language of the country. For our warm-up today, we are going to learn letters of the Greek alphabet. (NOTE: the actions below are just suggestions…do what you feel is best and tend to safety and spacing above all. You want to do about one minute for EACH letter. Keep your movement explorations diverse and build in energy as you go…you are warming them up!)

1. Alpha. Make the shape with your body. Good! (breathing, stretching, reaching)
   1. Shrink and expand it (improv on their own…moving slow…point out what you see that you want more of)
   2. Tie in your inhale and exhale and really reach out into space and then back into the shape
   3. Get as small as you can in your body (squat) and take 8 counts to arrive in the Alpha shape. Then shrink back down for 8 counts. Try it in 4 counts. Try it in two counts. Try it in one count!
2. Gamma. Make the shape with your body. Good! (more energy, small kinesphere)
   1. Bounce (just bending the knees not jumping) the shape
   2. Wiggle the shape
   3. Twist the shape
3. Omicron. Make the shape with your body. Good! (finding the curves)
   1. Take the “0” from over your head and put it on the right side of your body, now the left
   2. Bend the body to the right and the left with the “0” on top
   3. Move for four counts any way you would like in place and then freeze in an omicron!
4. Tau. Make the shape with your body. Good!
   1. Twist the arms on their axis and then swivel your body like a washing machine
   2. Do the wave!
   3. Do jumping jacks where you go in and out of the Tau.

***Transition:*** Now that we are warmed up, we are going to GO to Greece and take a look around the country. Grab your bag (sling it on your shoulder), put on your hat (put on a cap) and walk with me! (march in place). NOTE: The lead teachers of the warm-up should march backwards at this point and the new teachers should march forward and take over.

**Tour of Greece**

Welcome to Greece everyone! (Group makes a kinesthetic shape of the map. Everyone makes the map except for the teacher who uses a pointer to highlight different things. Most of you will be the border. Try to represent the shape and actual locations accurately). Let me tell you a few interesting facts about this incredible country!

Greece is a part of Europe. It is over 50,000 miles large and 11 million people live there. It includes 1200 islands and 227 are inhabited or have people living on them. The capital of Greece is Athens, just like the capital of Mississippi is Jackson. It is an ancient city full of important and interesting building as it used to be the center of their government. Let’s start there!

\*Jump really high and say OPA when I say to and we’ll land in Athens. Ready, set OPA!

1. **Welcome to Athens!** The Parthenon is a temple that was built 2400 years ago. It is made of marble and is considered by many to be one of the seven most amazing manmade things on our planet. It is defined by its huge marble columns and the many sculptures carved into its walls called “reliefs.”
   1. Ask the students to be a column. Tall, strong, immovable. Have them notice the other columns around them and talk about how the columns at the Parthenon were arranged in squares and circles to help share the weight of the roof. Have the students quickly gather with students around them to make a shape as pillars/columns and hold their roof up!
   2. Have the students be a statue. Tell them that the Olympics originated in Greece with the marathon run and is still around today as they know! Have them pick their favorite sporting event and make a shape of that. Encourage them to use their whole body and stress that this is a shape not a movement and to be still. Have them try another one. Then ask them to make their 3-D shape 2-D or flat as this what it is in the Parthenon (as a “relief”) – how can they make it flat? (this is best for big kids not little – and for little kids you may want to tell them what sports to do).
   3. Shake it out! Now shake one more time and we’ll land at the base of a mountain!
2. Look up. You are now staring at the tallest mountain in all of Greece. It is called **Mount Olympus** and Greeks used to believe that Gods lived there. Greeks are famous for telling the best stories about different people who do interesting and powerful things, and Mount Olympus was thought to be where these Gods lived.
   1. Climb the mountain – slow steps into faster steps. Have students lean forward as they walk, and then use their arms to pull themselves up the side of the mountain.
   2. Look out at the top of the mountain and then point north, south, east and west (forward, back, side, side). Then reach FBSS with the whole arm. Repeat with a leg. Repeat with the head. For older kids, have them to their own movement that based in movement qualities in each direction.
   3. Spin in place and act like they are tumbling down off the mountain.
3. **Crete** is famous for its fishing, its crystal blue water, and its beaches. It is the largest of all the Greek islands and one of the most visited by tourists.
   1. Let’s go for a swim to get there! Lead the students in breaststroke, freestyle, backstroke, butterfly. Do them all slowly and with a sense of play. For humor, you can throw in things like racing a boat (going faster), or kicking their feet (have them shake their legs as they do their arms), etc. Then students choose their favorite stroke for the last ten feet to the beach.
   2. Playing in the sand. Kick the sand (forward kicks), sink into the sand with heavy steps, grab sand with your hands and let it stream out of them, etc.
   3. Enjoy the sun – plant your feet, put your arms up, tilt your head back and get some sun!

***Transition:*** To get back to NDMS let’s jump up and when we land say OPA!

**Hassapiko Dance**

The *Hassapiko* is considered a panhellenic dance because it is danced throughout Greece by many different people. Usually Greek dances are specific to the town they are from – in other words, the people that live there are the only ones that know and do them – but this dance is different. Because of this it also has many of the characteristics of Greek dance. It has important footwork and steps that are done with certain rhythms. You can repeat the steps again and again and should because this dance is done for social reasons – it is a way to entertain yourself and have fun during a gathering with friends and family. It is also high energy and uses the whole body.

What you will learn today are some traditional steps from the *Hassapiko* (step touches) but also our version of this dance. This dance is done at celebrations and often at birthday parties. Does anyone have a birthday this month? Great – we’ll do this for you especially today!

Teach the dance. Teach it by accumulation – 4 to 8 counts at a time then go back and repeat and add on. Don’t put music in the mix until the steps are down and make it a big deal to try it with music – get the kids excited about it and affirm how they need to stay focused. For PreK – 2nd do just the first 16 counts. For 3rd – 5th do all 32 counts.

**Differentiated Learning (for last combination if needed):**

***To increase difficulty:***

1. Do a hand hold. There are four kinds in Greek dancing
   1. Holding hands up by head with elbows bend (looks like a “w”)
   2. Holding hands with arms straight down by sides (looks like a “v”)
   3. Holding onto shoulders
   4. Holding hands across the body – the “basketweave” (arms crossed and hands linked)
2. Increase the speed of the dancing
3. Add in a turn/rotation, jump something, make a kick higher

***To decrease difficulty:***

1. Do just the feet on certain sections
2. Slow it down
3. Take out jumps

**Closure**

Thank you so much for dancing with us today! We hope you had fun and learned something new about Greece and Greek dancing. Before we leave let’s do a minute of free dance! When the music plays dance however you would like. You can do some things you learned today if you want! When we turn the music off, freeze in a statue position so we can see your fantastic Greek selves one last time. Ready, set, go! (Let the music go for 10 seconds, then pause and praise who is absolutely still). Send the students off with a “wait, one more thing: OPA!” if you feel like it =).