**Italian Lesson for Nora Davis Magnet School (Fall 2012)**

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

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

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*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** (sit the students down as they enter the room)

1. Ciao! This is how you say hello in Italian, so Ciao! We are dance majors from the University of Southern Mississippi and we are so excited to be dancing and learning about Italy with you today.
2. Italy has many different regions in their country and each region has a unique culture, but there are some things that Italy as a whole country is known for:

* Food! Pasta, pizza and ice cream originated in Italy. Raise your hand if you like any of these!
* A joy of life and passion for living life fully. Italians are an expressive and happy people. They talk loudly, they gesture when they talk and they appreciate the beauty of all that life holds.
* A rich history in the arts. Opera started here. Many famous composers were born and worked here, like Mozart and Beethoven. One of the most well known visual artists of all time, Leonardo daVinci was Italian. And some say that the ballet dance style originated in Italy.

1. Let’s all say hello with a lot of enthusiasm and some pretty big gestures. Ciao! Good, but try again…exaggerate your hands and make sure you smile: ciao! Great!

**Transition** (to stand students up and spread them out): A quick question before we start moving. Does anyone know what Italy is shaped like? That’s right – a boot! Where you are sitting pretend to put on a pair of boots and then quickly and quietly stand up in place. When everyone is still with eyes on us, we will then tell you what to do. Great – everyone is ready. We want you to step and kick those Italian boots to spread out a little in the space and find a spot to yourself. Be careful not to kick anyone!

**Warm-up: Traveling Through Italy**

There are so many amazing places to go in Italy and we’ll only be visiting a few right now, but we want you to come along with us. Just follow along and listen carefully to our directions, so you don’t get left behind.

* Plant your feet in your place. The alarm clock just went off and it is time to get up. **Stretch** your bodies in every direction…front, back, side to side and use your whole body to wake yourself up. Move slow and big…it’s early!
* We need to **pack a bag** for your trip. Pick up and open a big suitcase and start putting everything you need in: shirts, pants, shoes, socks, toothbrush, hat, blanket, jacket, passport, airplane tickets. Close it up tight and throw it in the back of the car.
* Have a **seat in the car**, put on your seatbelt (have them pretend to sit but remain standing). Have them gently bounce as they ride in the car. Then have the car speed up and take turns hard because they are late! Have them get out of the car and run (in place) to the airport gate. Can’t miss the flight.
* They get on the place and pretend to be the **airplane** leaning side to side with arms out to the side. Tell them that it is an eight hour trip because they are traveling thousands of miles over the ocean to Europe.
* They land in **Rome**. Rome is home to ancient Roman buildings, like the **Acropolis**. Have them pretend to be pillars and be as still as they can while you tell them that Rome was the first major capital in the world.
* Rome is also the birthplace of the **Olympics**. Before you leave Rome, have them pick their favorite Olympic sport and pretend they are doing it!
* Next we will go to **Venice**. Venice is a city surrounded by water. To get around in the city, you must ride in special boats called gondolas. Let’s all pretend we are **rowing a boat** through the city of Venice.
* A trip to Italy wouldn’t be complete without seeing the famous **Leaning Tower of Pisa**! This tower leans because the ground continues to shift underneath it. The city continues to repair it to keep it from falling over, but it leans a lot. See how much you can lean to the side without taking a step! Try it to the other side! Good!
* Finally, we are going to visit **Sicily**, an island off the coast of Italy but a part of Italy nonetheless. To get there, we will need to swim. Do your **favorite swim stroke** to get to the island!
* After a long day of travel, we need to rest. **Make a shape** based on something you did during our travels and freeze it! Then slowly, for eight counts, **melt it down** until you are sitting in place. Good job!

**Activity One: A Spaghetti Story**

One of the greatest things about Italy is its food! As we mentioned earlier, Italy originated pizza, ice cream and spaghetti. After our travels through Italy, we need to eat! So, we are going to **cook up some spaghetti** and take a bite. Just like in the warm-up, we want you to follow our movements but also listen to what we say so you know what to do. This time you can move around the room (2nd – 5th ONLY, preK – 1st stay in place) as you dance. The word understand in Italian is **“capishe.”** So is what we are about to do clear? Yes? Then say “capishe!” Great!

* If we are making spaghetti, we need **noodles.** Noodles before they are cooked are stiff. There are lots of **different types** of noodles too. They are identified by their shape. We have:
  + Linguini = long and flat and wide
  + Angel hair = long and skinny
  + Fusilli =
* Pick your favorite kind of **noodle** and make that **shape** with your body. Great job! Now we need to cook the noodles. When we **heat noodles up in boiling water they get soft and wiggly.** Let your body slowly get less stiff and start to move. Maybe just your hand at first, or your arm, but eventually your whole body. Pretend that you are in a pot of boiling water so you move slowly and float and twist once you are fully cooked.
* After the noodles are cooked, it is time to make the **sauce.** Pretend you are a each a **tomato** in a big pot and you are being gently mashed. Now, the pot is heating up and you are **simmering (run in place),** and now its **getting hotter (run faster in place)** and now it’s so hot that the sauce is starting to **bubble and pop!** Fantastic! The sauce looks **delicioso!** which means delicious in Italian. Well done.
* No good spaghetti is complete without **meatballs.** **Be a meatball**…nice and round and heavy. Without moving your feet, see if you can’t roll that meatball around. Now pretend to **roll the meatball** through the space around you (2nd – 5th only). Excellent! Now pick that meatball up and **throw it (**students jump back to their original place in space) into the pot. Kerplop!
* Now we need to **mix everything up**. Be your floppy noodle again, and now imagine that the sauce is being poured over your head, and catch a few meatballs and then mix it all up (have students pretend they are mixing themselves!).
* The last thing we must put on spaghetti is a little **parmesan cheese.** Put your hands up to the sky and catch the cheese sprinkling down on you like rain. Every time a little piece lands on your spaghetti, let your body react gently.
* Now let’s **take a big bite** (just have students chomp)!  **Rub that tummy, and say delicioso**! Great job!

**Activity Two: The Tarentella**

The food is SO good in Italy that if we don’t get some dancing in, we’ll gain a lot of weight! So it’s time to dance. The dance you are about to learn is called the Tarentella and it is danced all throughout Italy for a lot of different types of celebrations. It is considered both a folk dance and a social dance, in that it is done at social occasions, is done to bring people together, and to have fun. The music we are dancing to is a traditional Italian folk song with some Italian lyrics as well. This dance is usually done in a circle, but today we’ll do it facing front. Do your best to try to get it down!

* Prance forward RLRL, Prance backwards RLRL (8 counts)
* Pony four times RLRL (8 counts)
* Run forward RLRL (reaching and curving forward), Run backwards RLRL (8 counts)
* Pony four times RLRL (8 counts)
* Heel slaps R foot (in out) quick run RLR, Heel slaps L foot (in out) quick run LRL – repeat both sides once more.
* Repeat entire dance.

***Instruction suggestions for the Tarentella***

1. Teach one section at a time. For PreK – 1st kids accumulate as you go, for 2nd – 5th kids teach it in the order it occurs. When you are done teaching the steps initially, have them go through it all one more time without music. Teach it slower when they are first learning it to take the time for them to get it right, but when they do this last run through, get them up to tempo. For this reason, you might want to do this part several times: slowly at first to solidify the steps and the order that they occur, then moderate in tempo to really get it down, then up to tempo to make sure they know how fast it will be.
2. Then have them do it with the music. Have them try it once, and leave the music on, tell them great job and have them try it again right away (don’t start the music over). After the second attempt, praise them for their efforts and ask them if they’ve got it. Go over any steps that you see they are confused about but DON’T worry if they have any of them perfect…this is not a technique class…the focus today is on culture and fun.
3. Give them one thing to do better/more of (more energy, make things bigger, etc.) and do it with them two times in a row. Warn them before they dance that they will do it two times in a row and to try not to stop dancing. Briefly show them the last step connecting into the first step to help them with this.
4. If appropriate and time allowing, have one half of the room do it while the other half watches and claps to the beat. Then have the groups switch. It would be cool for the kids to dance for an audience and also see the dance for themselves. Don’t stop the music in between groups. Just cue the next group to start. You may want to let each group go twice.

**Closure**

1. In Italian when you do something terrific, you say “**Molto Bene!”** That was terrific so Molto Bene! Now let’s say it altogether with full Italian enthusiasm and big gestures – ready? – Molto Bene! Fantastic.
2. We hope you had a great time visiting Italy with us, eating some delicioso spaghetti and learning a traditional Italian dance. Have a great rest of your day and thank you so much for being with us!