

# Poetry in Motion

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**Little Sally Walker:** Movement improvisation that creates a dance concept vocabulary. This activity uses an African-American playground game to explore movement improvisation as well as rhythmic composition. This will bring us into a full movement and music composition with an improvisatory B section.

## Little Sally Walker

American Playground Chant

CL  $\frac{4}{4}$  Li - tle Sa - lly Walk - er, walk - in' down the street. She didn't know what to do so she

CL  $\sharp$  stopped in front of me; I said, "Do your thing and do your thing and do your thing and switch." "Do

CL  $\sharp$  your thing and do your thing and do your thing and switch."

- Take a walk in **general space**. When you hear "do your thing...", stop in **self space** and make a motion your own motion. When you hear "switch," look to me and watch my movement. I'm going to choose one really cool movement I see in the group. I'll be looking for change of levels/size/shape etc.
- Change a few times – teacher chants "Little Sally Walker" – encourage the group to chant along.
- The whole group walks for the first phrase of the song. When we get to the second phrase, stop in place and do your fun motion for 16 counts.
- Generate a list of movements under the heading of **self/general space** that we used during the chant i.e. run/jump/shake/bend/slide hopscotch – must happen in **self space**
- Change the game to incorporate two –three actions that "Sally" does i.e. wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle jump, jump freeze to create a **movement phrase**. Keep your movement phrase for the formalized version of the game.
- Play the game – one person is "Sally" taking a walk inside a ring of people. When she stops in front of someone, she does her composed movement phrase for 8 counts and then everyone copies her movement phrase for the last 8 beats of the chant.

- Decide on a unison movement phrase with the group
- Discuss and decide on a **Group Spacing** as well as a **Direction** and list the possibilities in columns on the board.
- Practice the full unison **movement phrase**

Going to Music! –

- Take the 8 beat movement phrase and transfer the **rhythm** to other **UTP**.
- As the musicians are discovering their jobs, the dancers continue to define their movement
- Show a **melodic movement map** for the barred instruments in F pentatonic. Give them the chance to **improvise with the melody** while the dancers dance and everyone chants the first part of the game.
- Ask for a volunteer to offer her **melody**. All musicians learn this melody with letter names over the words of the song.
- Introduce the new B section of the song:  
 “Dance Sally, dance Sally, all the way to France Sally,  
 Dance Sally, dance Sally, now dance \_\_\_\_\_”
- The musicians will chant this while dancers are frozen (Teacher models this the first time)
- One student will choose a card that indicates the level during the 16 beat opening of the B phrase. The musicians will call out a **level (high/low/middle)** and the dancers will improvise movement on that level while the musicians also melodically improvise on that level for the following 16 counts
- The card will be posted on the wall and then later added to our list of concepts under **SPACE**.
- Change the game to reflect **size (large/medium/small)**
- *Performance: perform as a simple ABAB’A form where B is improv with musicians and dancers. Try performing (after lots of practice!) with no words.*

**Where Go the Boats:** Exploration of relationship between dancers as well as relationship to the musical concepts. This is an opportunity to see Orff Schulwerk in choral literature. We will explore the concepts of shape, shape flow, and carving – modes of shape change. In this activity we will work with using movement to choreograph a set song using movement and movement concepts in a process oriented setting.

Music: Where Go the Boats – music: Roger Sams text: Robert Louis Stevenson

- Warm Up:  
Post Yoga Pretzel cards as well as abstract movement shapes on the board. Find a way to make that shape with your body – adapt that shape for what works best for you.
- Pick three of your favorite shapes. When I ring the chime bar you change the shape – grow into the shape and when I see stillness in the room, I'll ring the bell once that lets you **shape flow** into a new shape. *Shape flow is movement that starts in the core of the body*
- Discuss the qualities of the music: **tempo/musical expression: legato and fermata**
- Seated Circle
- Discuss the difference between positive space and negative space and show positive and negative shapes
- One person goes into the circle and makes a shape
- The next person makes a shape using the negative space around the first person but not touching – make sure to make a shape that gives the next person negative space to fill – absolutely no touching! *Carving (3D) acknowledging all three dimensions*
- The third person adds to the shape
- The first dancer moves away and the next dancer in the circle comes in and adds to the shape
- This progresses until everyone has had a turn
- Show the dancers the length of time (one phrase length – 16 counts) that they have to travel and make a shape – three dancers form the shape and then they have 16 counts to change the shape before the shape dissipates.
- Discuss the meaning or feeling of the song – how does this affect or change our shapes
- *Teacher discussion – how do you keep away from gestural movement? When do you add meaning?*
- Share the dances: ½ the room is audience and ½ are dancers. Have the audience look for concepts that we've created in the dances: Smooth/Sharp shapes – expressiveness.
- Perform the song with musicians/dancers and full length – decide on staging.
- Share reactions to the lesson – how it felt, how we could bring that to our classrooms etc.

**Langston Hughes Poetry:** We will create movement and music from the beginning and starting with movement. Using the concepts learned during the workshop, participants will be able to structure their own dances in a new meter of “swing.” Musicians will then create music in a pentatonic key that relates to the movement.

- Begin with movement warm-up using swings
- “What kinds of activities use a swing – sports – make a list
- Explore swing around the room
- Create a movement phrase with different body parts or different directions
- Swings travel around the room
  
- Musicians are watching the dancers for a melodic map and pentatonic key.
  
- One musician will notate the map and make changes for the group. Explore with the concept of matching the dancers or dancers matching musicians
  
- Create a group unison movement phrase with the concept of swinging– give them the assignment that it has to have diversity – level/direction/body part and yet fit together
- Practice the whole movement phrase with the music
- Dancers explore the movement on different levels and changing directions while the musicians explore adding harmony on BX, color part or melodic ostinato
  
- Read through the three Langston Hughes poems - divide into three groups
- Discuss the movement possibilities from the day and make a movement pyramid for the poem that shows the movement concept that is being addressed in the poem.
  
- Designate a “head choreographer” to gather and decide on group choreography  
Look for ways to vary the movement concept: **level/size and group shape**
  
- Analyze the musical possibilities i.e. sound effects/sound carpet or a song using the words or speech ostinato
  
- Perform poem for the group.
  
- Add the poems as differing sections to the dance with the unison group movement as the A section with original musical composition.

# Hazrat Bibi Maryam

Composer: Zuleikha Choreographer: Suzanne Mitten-Lewis (Sitara)

“This is a peaceful greeting song, which is an invitation to open the window of your heart and let the sunshine of kindness flow through.” - Zuleikha

## Text:

Hazrat Bibi Maryam, Asalaam Aleikhum  
Hazrat Bibi Maryam, Asalaam Aleikhum  
Asalaam Aleikhum, Asalaam Aleikhum  
Asalaam Aleikhum, W'aleikhum Asalaam

## Translation:

Honored Mother Mary, peace be with you...and also with you.

## Dance Directions (as written by Suzanne Mitten-Lewis)

### Movements:

“Hz Bibi Maryam” 4 steps toward the centre of the circle, starting right foot. Hands rising palm-up from the heart, as if offering the heart to Mary.

“As-salaam aleikum” 4 steps backward, pouring received blessing over head, face, downwards to feet. End with arms at the sides, fingertips downwards. Could be in “Mary full of grace” position if you wish (optional) with palms forward.

“Hz Bibi Maryam” 4 steps toward the centre of the circle, starting right foot. Hands rising palm-up from both sides, as if offering one’s whole self to Mary. At the end, arms are fully extended with palms upward, fingertips pointing towards the sky.

“As-salaam aleikum” turning to the left, spiral back to starting position in the circle, bringing arms down in Dervish-fashion, to end with hands on opposite shoulders and arms crossed over the heart. A slight bow at the end of the phrase. The hands cross the face only as part of the arc from extended turning to Dervish bow. It is a gesture of surrender and self-effacement.

“As-salaam aleikum” partners make a crescent of their arms and join right wrists. They are oriented so that their sides are facing each other – one is more-or-less facing into the circle and the other is facing out. They make a half turn together exchanging places.

“As-salaam aleikum” looking away from the previous partner, to the other side, there is a new partner. Engage left wrists (whilst disengaging right wrist from previous partner) and make a half turn together exchanging places.

“W’aleikum as-salaam” turn to the left in place and end with Dervish bow.

## Bibliography

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