



## ***The Writer's Pen*** Performance Guide

From a writer's mind to the tip of their pen lies expression from deep within. DCDC expressionists deliver poetry in motion to reflect the modernization of Shakespeare's sonnets to the poetic verses of rap/hip-hop artists and performance poets' musical and lyrical spoken word monologues. The writer's pen gives voice to our history and provides an insightful platform to our commentary on life.

### **This performance guide includes:**

- Artist bio
- A warmup activity
- Pre-show thinking prompts
- Key vocabulary
- Suggested Q & A questions
- Post-show discussion questions
- A student survey link
- Post-show exercises
- Related Ohio Learning Standards

# BEFORE THE SHOW

## Meet the Artists



**Dayton Contemporary Dance Company** was founded in 1968 to create performance opportunities for dancers of color. Five decades later, the 10th largest modern contemporary dance company in the nation remains rooted in the African American experience and committed to the development of diverse movement artists on the global stage.

**DCDC<sub>2</sub>** is an elite cohort of early career performing dance artists comprised of recent graduate and undergraduate dance students, created in 1975 to engage a new generation of performing artists and prepare them for success in a new and exciting arts ecosystem. DCDC<sub>2</sub> engages school communities in dance performances every year.



**Shonna Hickman-Matlock, Director of DCDC<sub>2</sub>** has taught, performed, and choreographed modern dance works, plus developed education and outreach programs, for three and a half decades.

**24-25 Dance Artists:** Maiya Caldwell, Mercedes Hicks, Taylor Knighton, Michaela McKenzie, Macy Perry, Keilani Reynolds, Jaylyn Sanders, Bella Schwarz, Brittini Van Dine, Ansley Seiffert

Find DCDC at [www.dcdc.org](http://www.dcdc.org) and on Instagram [@daytoncontemporarydancecompany](https://www.instagram.com/daytoncontemporarydancecompany)

### Classroom Warmup: Fluency in the Language of Dance

**Review** the vocabulary on page 3 of this guide.

**Watch** this [video](#) about the five elements of dance: *body, action, space, time, and energy*. Write or discuss the definitions of each element.

**Next**, watch a 60-second clip of DCDC<sub>2</sub> from TEDxDayton 2015 [here](#). Make observations using the notepaper on page 4 of this guide.

**Finally**, discuss with a partner or as a class: What did you notice? How did the dance make you feel? What do you think was the choreographer's intention?

### Think While You Watch

DCDC<sub>2</sub>'s performance incorporates words (songs, raps, narration) as well as movement. When the choreography and the words come together in a moment that excites or interests you, think: **How are the elements of dance being used right now? How does the moment make you feel? What are the dancers trying to communicate?**

# Vocabulary

The following concepts and terms are helpful to understanding DCDC<sub>2</sub>'s performance.

## Dance

- **Contemporary dance:** Art whose working material is the movement of humans. Produced in conventional and non-conventional stages and frequently incorporates audio/visual elements.
- **Choreography:** The sequence of steps and movements in dance.
- **Choreographer:** The artist who arranges movements and creates the choreography.
- **Improvisation:** Spontaneously creating movement, without pre-planning any steps.
- **Rhythm:** The coordination of movement with music.

## Hip-Hop

- **Bars:** A measure of time in music, or the rapper's lyrics in hip-hop.
- **Cypher:** A gathering of rappers freestyling together in a circle.
- **Freestyle:** A rap performed with no previously written lyrics.
- **Flow:** A concept that refers to the rhythm, cadence, and style of a rapper's lyrics as they are delivered over a beat.
- **Lyricist:** A person who writes lyrics. In rap, a rapper known for their complex and thoughtful lyrics.
- **Turnt up:** A state of excitement and high energy.

## Poetry Elements

- **Iambic Pentameter:** A rhythm structure in poetry that combines unstressed syllables and stressed syllables in groups of five.
- **Imagery:** Figurative language that creates a picture with words.
- **Rhythm:** The beat and pace of a poem, created by the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line or verse.

# The Q & A

Artists love to answer thoughtful questions! If you are having trouble thinking of a question, here are some that the artists would love to answer for you.

- What drew you to this art form?
- What similarities do you see between contemporary dance and rap/hip-hop?
- What kind of training/education did you complete?
- What advice would you have for someone wanting to follow in your footsteps?



## BODY

How do the dancers carry themselves? What lines, shapes, and forms do they make?

## ACTION

What kinds of actions do you notice?

## SPACE

How do the dancers use space? Are movements large or small? Close or far away?

## TIME

Is the pacing fast or slow? Are there pauses?

## ENERGY

Describe the energy level and changes in energy.

# AFTER THE SHOW

## Post-Show Discussion

Discuss or write a reflection:

- What parts of the performance stood out for you and why?
- Did the dance artists effectively interpret the lyrics and poems? Why or why not?
- Do you think that interpreting lyrics/poems through movement enhances or detracts from the original author's intent? Why?

## Student Survey

Tell us about your experience at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MR796HN>.

## Post-Show Exercise

### The Shakespeare Cypher

- Have students stand in a circle. Give each student (or pair of students) a single line from [Shakespeare's Sonnet 18](#) (reprinted on page 6 of this guide).
- Have students read the line to themselves and decide on how to interpret their line through movement in the large group circle. Movements can be based in dance or gesture, literal or abstract.
- Starting with the student holding the first line, have students share their movement interpretations. Go around the circle quietly without comments, so that you experience the sonnet wordlessly.
- As a class, students will guess what the sonnet is about. **Discuss:** What seems to be happening? What emotions seem to be present?
- Finally, ask each student to read their line aloud. **Discuss:** Did interpreting the verses through movement give you any insights into the meaning of the sonnet? Why or why not?
- Watch this [short video](#) of hip-hop artist The Sonnet Man rapping Sonnet 18. **Discuss:** Did the use of hip-hop bring the verses to life in a different way? Why or why not? How might you change your movement interpretations of the sonnet in response?

**Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?**

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date;

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;

Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

# FOR TEACHERS

## Related Ohio Learning Standards

The following standards are linked to the artist’s performance and/or the activities in the performance guide. Teachers may be able to make additional connections.

### Dance

<i>Enduring Understandings:</i> Artists/students engage in analysis and interpretation to understand and evaluate artistic works. Artists/students understand and communicate the value of creative expressions in internal and external contexts.	
<b>Responding (RE)</b>	
6-8.1RE	Recognize and articulate the relationship between production elements, music, and movement in creating meaning for dances performed or observed.
6.2RE	Recognize appropriate audience etiquette during class, rehearsal, and performance.
6.3RE	Observe the movement characteristics or qualities of a specific dance genre and make connections to attitudes and movement preferences.
7.3RE	Critique a dance using genre-specific dance terminology to determine how effectively the various aspects communicate a theme or idea.
HSP.1RE	Recognize and identify fundamental dance concepts in selected dance works.
HSP.4RE	Recognize the importance of artistry and technical proficiency in dance.
HSAC.1RE	Critique a dance based on fundamental dance concepts.
HSAC.3RE	Develop and refine personal beliefs and questions about dance experiences based on aesthetic opinions.
<b>Connecting (CO)</b>	
8.2CO	Examine and discuss ways various external contexts impact dance and articulate how meaning in dance is communicated and understood.
7-8.3CO	Explore how dance supports the development of 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills.
HSAC.4CO	Explore a diverse range of dance in global cultures, screen dance, theatrical styles, and historical periods.

### Music

<i>Enduring Understandings:</i> Artists/students engage in analysis and interpretation to understand and evaluate artistic works. Artists/students understand and communicate the value of creative expressions in internal and external contexts.	
<b>Responding (RE)</b>	

6.7RE	Compare and discuss the musical traditions of various cultures.
7.1RE	Identify aurally the style and historical period of various musical examples.
<b>Connecting (CO)</b>	
6.7CO	Identify different functions and uses of music in American and other cultures.
8.4CO	Discuss the purpose and value of music in various cultures and settings.

## Social Studies

American History	Topic: Social Transformations in the United States (1945-1994)
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## Writing

CCR Anchor Standard 1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
CCR Anchor Standard 2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
CCR Anchor Standard 4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCR Anchor Standard 10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## Speaking and Listening

CCR Anchor Standard 1	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
CCR Anchor Standard 2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
CCR Anchor Standard 3	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

## Social and Emotional Learning

Self-Awareness	A4: Demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility, confidence, and advocacy
Relationship Skills	D1: Apply positive verbal and non-verbal communication and social skills to interact effectively with others and in groups D2: Develop and maintain positive relationships
Responsible Decision-making	E4: Explore and approach new situations with an open mind and curiosity while recognizing that some outcomes are not certain or comfortable



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Language Arts & Hip-Hop

- Explore Flocabulary poetry lessons  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DL6n-v5MAxU>
- The Sonnet Man, Devon Glover  
<https://www.youtube.com/@TheSonnetMan>
- How Hip-Hop Can Bring Shakespeare to Life | KQED  
<https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/46215/how-hip-hop-can-bring-shakespeare-to-life>
- Shakespeare for Life | Akala – Comedy, Tragedy, History rap  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rx5WmVRAqU>
- Hip-Hop & Shakespeare? Akala at TEDxAldeburgh  
[https://youtu.be/DSbtKLA3GrY?si=wrDwASmK\\_I5V2JIA](https://youtu.be/DSbtKLA3GrY?si=wrDwASmK_I5V2JIA)
- Othello: The Remix | Unicorn Theatre 12 - 29 Sep | A hip-hop adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CI40t4KVbV4>

## Hip-Hop Dance Choreographers

- Rennie Harris Presents Rome & Jewels (Nov. 9-11, 2023)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9zGSrYZSnM>
- If Cities Could Dance | Hip-Hop Dance Legend Rennie Harris Shares Five Major Moments | Season 4 | Episode 7 | PBS  
<https://www.pbs.org/video/hip-hop-dance-legend-rennie-harris-shares-five-major-moments-ap525k/>