

CREATE & DANCE

FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER

TOP TIPS

A HOUSE OF STORIES

The Royal Opera House is a house of stories. The corps de ballet work together to drive a story forward. We invite you and your students to become honorary members of The Royal Ballet's corps de ballet no matter what your age, experience or ability.

This CPD will develop your knowledge of creative dance and the creation and performance of a mass-movement choreography – exploring ways of working with large groups of students and maintaining engagement throughout via storytelling.

MASS-MOVEMENT TOP TIPS

When devising mass-movement choreography, it's important to remember:

- The focus is on 'the big picture', not on the 'details'.
- Use gestural movements that everybody can do with confidence.



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- The 'upper body' is more visible - create simple yet effective moves.
- Be creative and ambitious when devising choreography. But take time at the end for 'simplifying' and slowing sections down.
- Include 'mass movement moments' such as canon and accumulation, as they are effective and rewarding for the performer.
- Select music carefully. Fit the choreography to the music as clearly as possible with clear sections and musical cues. Avoid complex rhythms which can be challenging for mass-movement.
- Verbal cueing/imagery is key - a story that links one movement to the next can make the choreography easier to remember.
- Choreographing travelling steps needs consideration:
 - o Movements which travel forwards, and side to side, may be simplest as the dancers can still watch their leader when dancing.
 - o Backwards: If you are asking the dancers to face the back, bear in mind that the dancers at the back may not be able to hear you and will no longer be able to see you!
 - o Moving backwards but still facing the front is also tricky in large groups if there is not a lot of space.
 - o Moving around in all directions is possible, but consider the time for the dancers to get back to their starting positions too.
- Incorporate moments of improvisation. This allows the dancers to input their own creativity and get into character without worrying about 'getting the steps right'. The improvised section needs to be set out with a clear task/instruction. If travelling across the space is part of this, then the destination and how long they have needs to be clear (e.g. you have 8 counts to come together as a group).

- Repetition is recommended. The 'ABA' model can work well, whereby the choreography starts and ends with the same material. This means that the piece finishes on a crescendo with movements that the participants are all confident with. Material may develop as it is repeated e.g. getting faster/facing a new direction.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Below are some examples of the 'Building Blocks' of dance that can be found in the *Faster, Higher, Stronger* choreography – body, action, dynamics, space, relationships.

BODY

'Body' refers to which body part is moving or initiating an action. Selecting and exploring interesting variations and use of body parts in choreography can support students to think 'beyond the obvious' and to generate original responses to a stimulus.

- Isolated body part: checking the watch and reaching for your best time
- Whole body: 'Faster' position with the whole body poised as if on the starting line for a race

ACTIONS

The dance begins with the *House of Stories motif*. Opening the doors and calling friends to dance are clear examples of GESTURE and MIME.

The 3 positions for 'Faster, Higher, Stronger' demonstrate different actions for each, there is a LUNGE for 'Faster' as if competing in a race or trying to beat a personal best, a REACH for 'Higher' as if striving to reach your goals, and a BEND for 'Stronger' symbolising a strong base (which could be shown equally with a gesture or first for example) .

Other clear actions throughout the choreography include:

- Reaching for the finish line: EXTENSION
- MARCHING on spot
- Slow motion WALKS which TURN on the spot

- After the 'Higher section' the dancers perform 4 big JUMPS or ways to elevate on the spot which also have the option of TURNING.

SPACE

- Different LEVELS are used throughout to draw the audience's eye to the different action in the choreography and the contrast works well en mass. The dancers in the 'Higher' section lower to the ground whilst the 'Faster' dancers perform their section, and then they swap over.
- In the 'Higher' section, the choreography TRAVELS the dancers forwards and backwards, towards and away from the audience.

DYNAMICS

- Different dynamics are used for the different sections of the dance. Notice how the 'Higher' section has a LIGHTER, MORE FLUID dynamic quality, with the emphasis on sending the energy up and out, compared to the 'Faster' section which has a WEIGHTED RIGID quality, with the emphasis on being grounded and moving quickly to the drumbeats.
- The whole dance BUILDS IN PACE and energy. Notice how the House of Stories motif at the beginning of the dance is much slower than when it is performed at the end of the dance.
- The 'Faster' section has the 'slow motion' walks which then INCREASE IN SPEED to become fast-paced marches.

RELATIONSHIPS

- Whilst the dance starts and ends together, there is a strong sense of the 'Faster' groups and the 'Higher' groups being distinct.
- Despite the separate groups, everyone works together to perform en masse, and the use of canon, a choreographic device, emphasises the sense of cohesion as the 'Faster, Higher, Stronger' positions are passed along the lines.