

Kaitlyn Hardiman | Session 5:

Diggin' Up the Roots: Irish Dance (Movement)

List of Required Supplies:

- Open space to move
- Speaker system for music
- Reflection/exit ticket either printed or on laptops

Additional Links:

Optional Playlist:

- *Killavil Jig/Nilly O'Rourke is the Bauchail Jill*, P.J. Hayes, Martin Hayes
- *Humors of Tullycrine*, Andrew Finn Magill
- *Waves of Tory*, Stephen Walker
- *Slip Jig*, Dean Crouch
- *Reels 113*, Ellery Klein, Ryan Lacey
- *Strings of Fire*, Ronan Hardiman
- *The Farmer's Frolic*, Gaelic Storm
- *Highlands Laddie*, The Royal Scots Dragon Guards

These are suggestions for your convenience in planning. However, each class will need different tempos per exercise depending on their level. Therefore, musical choice for this curriculum is up to the teacher to choose based upon their students' abilities.

All songs can be found on Spotify

Space/Facility Requirements: A clear, open room with ample space for students to spread out and travel.

Student Time Required: 30-35 minutes for movement; 10-15 minutes for reflection questions

Step-by-step Instructions:

1. Have students spread out throughout the room and stand in their own personal space.
2. Before starting class, go over body placement in Irish. Have students:
 - a. Roll their shoulders back to feel their scapulas pushing down their spine.
 - b. Engage their core and close their ribs.
 - c. Long neck with eyes looking directly in front.
 - d. Hands in a fist (with thumbs tucked between palms and fingers) and tightly placed by their sides.
 - i. This is the upper body position that students should remain in for every movement.
3. Warm-up counting exercise:
 - a. The following will be a counting exercise that will have students move through the basic body positions to counts of the music.
 - i. While standing holding their proper Irish posture, have students begin with putting their feet in a parallel position. Parallel position will always be returned to on count 1 and hold.
 - ii. On count 5, students will move from their parallel position to what is traditionally know in ballet as “first position.” Dancers will rock back on their heels and open their toes to find a V angle with their feet. Toes are apart, heels are together. Hold.
 - iii. On count 7, students will point their right foot towards their left diagonal while remaining facing frontward (similar to a tendu in ballet).
 - iv. Return to parallel on count 1.
 - v. Repeat moving through that sequence 4-6 times.
 - vi. Repeat the sequence on the left foot 4-6 times.
 - vii. Remind students to keep their upper body upright and tight while moving through the sequences.

- b. This next exercise will be very similar to the above but will incorporate new positions.
- i. Have students start with their heels together and toes turned out for count 1 (same position as count 5 in above sequence).
 - ii. On counts 2, 3, and 4 students will keep their foot on the floor but squeeze the right leg in front of the left so that the left toes are touching the middle of the right foot (similar to an over-crossed 5th position from ballet but is called 3rd position in Irish dance).
 - iii. On count 5, point the leg in front-similar to count 7 in the above sequence.
 - iv. On counts 6, 7, and 8 bring the right leg towards the left while rising onto the balls of the feet (similar to a releve in an over crossed sous-sous in ballet).
 - v. Return to the V position on count 1 and repeat 4-6 times on the right.
 - vi. Repeat the sequence on the left 4-6 times.

4. Warm-up slow points

- a. As an intro to the movement, have students begin with sequence from A (count 1 - feet in parallel, count 5 - toes open heels together, count 7 - point in front with the right leg).
- b. On the next count one, students will switch the feet they are pointing on. In this case they will go from point the right leg, to pointing the left leg. Have students think about making the transition with a small jump to be able to switch the legs.
- c. Hold point for count 2.
- d. Switch to point on the other leg on count 4.
- e. Hold count 5.
- f. Repeat through count 8.
- g. Repeat A-F, but beginning on the left leg.
- h. Repeat both right and left again for slow points.

5. Warm-up fast points
 - a. Repeat 4A, but double time switching the points, switching on every count.
 - b. Repeat both right and left sides 2 times through
 - i. While doing this, tell students to think about crossing their thighs, and try to keep thighs touching when executing each point.
6. Third sequence of points
 - a. For this final sequence, have students begin in a pointed position with the right foot front.
 - b. Switch points on every count for 32 counts.
 - c. Take a quick break then repeat on the left
 - i. While students are doing this, remind them to put their back heel on the ground each time they land, as well as keeping their upper body as tight as possible.
7. Warm-up calf raises/balances
 - a. Have students begin with heels together and toes facing away.
 - i. On count 1, rise to the balls of their feet, lower on count 2
 - ii. Repeat 8 times
 - iii. Hold on the balls of the feet and balance for 16 counts
 - iv. Lower and repeat the calf raises and balances again.
 - b. Have students move to the Irish third position with right foot in front.
 - i. Repeat above calf raises and balances x2
 - ii. Repeat calf raises and balances with left foot front x2
8. Stretch
 - a. Take 2-3 minutes to stretch out the calf and quad muscles as well as find some release through the back to give the posture a break.
 - i. Example stretched:
 1. Pike:

- a. Sitting on the floor pike position and relaxed feet, reach arms up overhead and stretch forward towards toes. Hold for 16 counts of music.
- b. Repeat with feet flexed.

2. Straddle:

- a. Open legs into a half straddle. Right leg is fully extended side while the other is bent in with knee pressing towards the ground.
- b. Stretch the left arm over the ear towards the right leg. Hold for 16 counts.
- c. Rotate body for nose to go towards knee and stretch towards foot for 16 counts.
- d. Repeat with the left leg.

9. Moving from upstage to downstage in lines

- a. Have students start from the back of the room in lines and prepare to travel forward.
 - i. Beginning in the Irish 3rd position with the right foot front, have students walk forward, taking a step on each count of the music.
 1. Each step will move forward while alternating feet in 3rd position.
 - a. Have students think about keeping knees touching as much as they can while taking each step forward.
 - b. Remind students to keep their body upright.
 - ii. Have students repeat the same movements but walking backwards from downstage to upstage.

10. Across the floor

- a. Skip-2-3s
 - i. Moving from stage left to stage right with body facing stage right.

1. Have students start in releve from 3rd position with the right foot front.
 2. Jump on the right foot while bending the left foot towards the glutes and keeping both knees as close together as they can.
 3. Left leg will come forward when landing and move into a chase
 4. Repeat on the other foot all the way across.
 - a. Think of this movement as a skipping action with a chase between each skip.
 - b. Remind students to keep upper body as still as possible while moving.
 - c. Counts - the jump is performed on count 1 and the chassé portion is on 2, 3.
- ii. Have students repeat the movement from left right to stage left.
- b. Jump-2-3s
- i. To execute this step, students will:
 1. Lift their right leg as close to 90 degrees as possible.
 2. While lifting their leg, they will hop on their left in a way that is similar to the skip-2-3. The heel of the foot will kick towards the glutes while trying to keep the knee pointing towards the ground.
 3. The left leg will land in front and finish in a chassé to repeat the jump on the left.
 - a. Counts - the jump is performed on count 1 and the chassé portion is on 2, 3.
 - b. Have students think about jumping over a puddle of water while doing this movement.

11. In groups

- a. Have students form a large circle. If your class is large, this can be done in different groups.

- i. Facing clockwise, have students perform their skip-2,3s in a circle 8 times, then instantly turn over their shoulder to do the skip-2-3s the other direction.
- ii. Practice again doing the jump-2-3.
 1. Give suggestions to ensure that students are keeping their circle the same distance from the time they start.
 - a. Example: Think about moving in a square so students don't cut corners which results in a smaller circle.

12. Exit ticket

- a. At what level did most of the Irish based movements occur? (low, medium, high)
 - i. Explain specifics from the class that made you think this.
- b. What parts of the body played an important role in the Irish movement?
- c. Should the upper body and arms be stiff or loose while executing the movements?
- d. What movements would you describe as sharp vs. smooth in Irish dance?
- e. Compare and contrast this movement to what you learned about African dance.