

STUDY GUIDE

DISCIPLINE:
DANCE

ARTIST:
STUTI MUKHERJEE

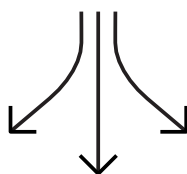


The following package is provided as a supplemental resource to enhance and support the artist’s visit.

It includes curricular connections, assessment strategies, and suggested classroom extensions. All materials are intended for use at the teacher’s discretion and may be adapted as necessary to suit the specific needs of the students.

THIS STUDY GUIDE

Discipline / Artist Example:



**Curriculum
Connections**



Suggested Classroom Extensions



**Assessment
Strategies**

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STUDY GUIDE: DANCE

INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE: BHARATANATYAM WORKSHOP

Program Overview

Artist Name: Stuti Mukherjee

Artist Bio: Stuti is an Ottawa-based Bharatanatyam artist trained since age 5, holding a diploma from Kalamandalam, Kolkata. She further trained under Guru Amarnath Ghosh and studied Kuchipudi and Nattuvangam. Owner of Kalagriha School of Performing Arts in Kanata, Stuti teaches Bharatanatyam to South-Asian kids, youth, and adults at all levels.

Program Description: Join Stuti in this unique travel through time and space to the South Indian region and learn everything about the invention of the Bharatanatyam, an Indian classical dance form. Stuti will present a cultural and historical context of this ancient dance form, connecting its elements to contemporary dance practices and performing excerpts from her repertory. Participants will learn the basics of Bharatanatyam, including its relationship to yoga and storytelling, the meaning of the salutation, rhythmic footwork in squatted legs, and hand and facial gestures to express emotions.

Artistic Discipline: Dance

Recommended Grade Levels: 4 – 12

Session Logistics: In person or online



Cultural Context: South Asian Culture

Vocab bank/glossary: [Click here](#)



INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE: BHARATANATYAM WORKSHOP

Curriculum Connections

Learning Themes:

- Strand A – Creating and Presenting
 - Learning Bharatnatyam advus (basic steps), mudras (hand gestures), and basic postures.
 - Using facial expressions and body language to tell a story or convey emotion.
 - Exploring how traditional gestures can be adapted to new themes while keeping cultural authenticity
- Strand B – Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing
 - Discussing the meaning of the mythological or devotional stories in Bharatanatyam pieces
 - Identifying the dancer's purpose in a piece (spiritual, narrative, celebratory, etc.).
 - Observing peers' performances and suggesting ways to refine movement or expression.
- Strand C: Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts
 - Understanding its South Indian temple roots and connection to Hindu devotional practice.
 - Learning how ancient performance theory shaped gesture, rhythm, and staging.
 - Comparing Bharatanatyam's storytelling with other dance forms students knows, noting similarities and differences.

INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE: BHARATANATYAM WORKSHOP

Extend the Learning (Discussion Prompts)

Here are optional discussion prompts to extend the artist session in the classroom. These are recommended and are not mandatory. Please use what is best for your classroom. You can also find suggested activities in the additional resources package.

GRADES
4-6

Pre

- What story do you think we could tell using just our bodies and hands?
- What do you expect this dance will look or feel like?

During

- How does changing your face change the meaning of a movement?
- Which movement reminds you of a real-life action?

Post

- Which step or movement felt most fun or meaningful to perform?
- Which part of the performance made you want to watch more?

GRADES
7-8

Pre

- What clues do costumes or props give about the story?
- How could you use traditional movements to tell a story from your own life?

During

- How does the dancer's expression help you understand the story?
- How can you combine two adavus into a short phrase?

Post

- How do you know when the dancer is portraying a character vs. narrating?
- How might you adapt Bharatanatyam to tell a modern story?

GRADES
9-12

Pre

- How can choreography balance classical Bharatanatyam with your personal style?
- How might cultural context affect how you interpret a performance?

During

- What spatial choices make the performance more engaging?
- How does abhinaya (expression) change your interpretation of the narrative?

Post

- When adapting for a new audience, what must remain for authenticity?
- How can we evaluate Bharatanatyam without using Western dance standards?

DANCE OVERVIEW

Dance is a powerful form of cultural expression that celebrates diversity, fosters connection, and supports healing. By exploring various dance forms, students build empathy, challenge stereotypes, and gain global awareness. Dance promotes physical literacy and mental well-being through movement, creativity, and emotional release.

The creative and critical analysis process helps students generate, refine, interpret movement, encourage collaboration, resilience, and emotional intelligence. When used to complement artist-led sessions, these frameworks guide students to become thoughtful creators, reflective learners, and active participants in building a more just and connected world.

Dance also supports cross-curricular learning. It brings stories to life in language arts, explores cultural traditions in social studies, and connects to science through anatomy and body mechanics. These interdisciplinary links highlight the dynamic role of dance in education and deepen student engagement across subjects.



APPENDIX

Vocabulary bank/glossary:

- **Adavu:** A basic step or movement sequence in Bharatanatyam that combines footwork, posture, and hand gestures.
- **Abhinaya:** The art of expression in Indian classical dance, using face, eyes, and body to convey emotion and story.
- **Mudra:** A symbolic hand gesture used to represent objects, emotions, animals, or ideas.
- **Rasa:** The “flavour” or emotional essence that a performance aims to evoke in the audience (e.g., joy, anger, devotion).
- **Tala:** The rhythmic cycle or beat pattern that guides the dancer and musicians.
- **Nritta:** Pure dance movements that focus on rhythm and technique, without storytelling.
- **Nritya:** Expressive dance that combines movement with abhinaya to tell a story.
- **Natyam:** Dance-drama performance combining nritta, nritya, and abhinaya.
- **Kauthuvam:** A traditional invocatory dance item, often in praise of a deity.
- **Varnam:** A central piece in a Bharatanatyam performance that blends pure dance and storytelling.
- **Jathi:** A rhythmic sequence performed with footwork, often in between storytelling sections.
- **Nattuvangam:** The practice of keeping rhythm with cymbals while reciting dance syllables (spoken by the dance master).
- **Araimandi:** The half-sitting posture that is the foundational stance of Bharatanatyam.
- **Alarippu:** The opening dance item in a performance, meant to warm up and symbolically “blossom” the dancer.
- **Carnatic Music:** The classical music tradition of South India, which accompanies Bharatanatyam.
- **Salangai / Ghungroo:** Anklet bells worn by dancers to emphasize footwork rhythms.

- **Banī:** A stylistic school or lineage of Bharatanatyam, each with unique interpretation and movement qualities.
- **Navarasas:** The nine main emotions in Indian performance tradition: love, laughter, compassion, anger, courage, fear, disgust, wonder, and peace.

Student Health and Well-Being

How did today's activity make you feel (body and mind)?

- Choose a colour to describe that feeling. Use one word to describe how your energy changed after the activity.

Mini-Activity: Feelings Freeze Frame (Tableau)

- Ask students to create a freeze-frame (tableau) that shows how they're feeling right after the activity.
- Then, they can:
 - Share it with a partner or small group
 - Draw their freeze-frame in a journal
 - Write or talk about what made them feel that way

Additional Resources

- Assessment Guide
- Cultural Protocol/Sensitivity Guide
- Evaluation Document
- Resource Database for Further Learning