

**REPERTORY DANCE THEATRE LESSON PLAN Inspired by:
PASSENGERS choreographed by Viola Farber (1970)**

PASSENGERS is a dance choreographed by Viola Farber in 1970.

It is structured in such a way as to let the performers make spontaneous decisions and movement variations which make the dance different each time it is performed. There are many different sections, each with specific movement and specific rules.

An order is created for each performance which lists what sections will be explored, how long each section is, where the dancing will take place on stage, and who will perform.

PASSENGERS is performed in silence and two stop-watches on either side of the stage let the dancers track the time. The dance could take 20 minutes or as long as one hour.

RDT encourages you to make up your own sections, movement material, and rules based on this method which was typical of the compositional exploration developed by Post-Modern explorations

HISTORIC INTRODUCTION

Many modern dancers in the early 1960's wanted to experiment with a freer choreographic process. Composition workshops were often held in the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village which emphasized chance procedures, improvisation, tasks and game-like structures, spontaneous determination and other unorthodox means of creating dance. Some regarded the Judson Church phenomena as a meeting of artists as important historically as Paris in the 1920's. It created an explosion of interacting ideas from a variety of fields that opened up new attitudes about what dance could be.

Artists such as Steve Paxton, Rudy Perez, Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, David Gordon, Alex and Deborah Hay and painter, Robert Rauschenberg explored a process of composition that was often prized higher than the choreographic result. In the early 1970's, another collective of choreographer/performers called *The Grand Union* made group improvisation, embracing dance, theater, and theatrics in an ongoing investigation into the nature of dance and performance. Most had studied or danced with Merce Cunningham and also been connected to the Judson Church experiments.

Viola Farber bio

Born in Heidelberg, Germany, Ms. Farber came to the United States with her family at the age of 7 and became a naturalized citizen six years later. She met Mr. Cunningham and his collaborator John Cage in 1952 at Black Mountain College, where she was studying dance with Katherine Litz and music with Lou Harrison.

In 1953, Farber became a founding member of the [Merce Cunningham](#) Dance Company. She created many roles in Cunningham's works and was described as being "one of the great individualists of the company".

Ms. Farber formed the Viola Farber Dance Company in 1968, creating most of her choreography for the troupe which disbanded in 1985. Farber was inspired by many of

Cunningham's idea about how to create choreography, but she often allowed her dancers to improvise with movement material she created during a performance.

Ms. Farber was especially popular in France, where she and her partner, Jeff Slayton, won a gold medal in the Ninth International Dance Festival in Paris in 1971. From 1981 to 1983 Viola was the artistic director of the Centre National de Danse Contemporaine in Angers, establishing, at the same time, an institute for the training of dance teachers in Paris. Ms. Farber returned to the United States in 1988 to teach at Sarah Lawrence College, but continued to teach and choreograph in France into the 1990's. She also taught at the London Contemporary Dance School from 1984 to 1987 and, from early in her career, at universities and dance festivals throughout the United States. The French Government recently named Ms. Farber an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France.

CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCEEDURE: INSPIRED BY VIOLA FARBER'S: *PASSENGERS (1970)*

Students will:

1. Develop movement material to create: Individual steps, Duets, Groups, traveling patterns.
 2. Establish rules for sections as they explore Time, Space, Energy
 3. Create a performance order indicating who, what, where, when the sections will be performed.
- Establish how long each section is and how you are going to cue or begin each section. (You may use a stop watch or just have ways to cue verbally or with movement)

Be sure to let students develop the material for some sections through the creative process.

SECTIONS FOR STRUCTURED IMPROVISATION

INDIVIDUAL STEPS:

(Each student should create an individual step. Use vocabulary words and locomotor patterns to inspire simple phrases which can then be varied, explored in Time Space, Energy)

Select a locomotor pattern (jump, hop, leap, skip, gallop, slide) ADD a movement task. Example an INDIVIDUAL STEP might be inspired by two ideas such as:

- Slide.....Ronde Jambe leg in air
- Walk....make a shape
- Step Hop..... Arms that Jab
- Skip.....Arms that circle
- Leap....hands that flutter
- Balance on one foot.....fall and roll
- Turn.....Battement

- Huge steps.....Tendu (brush the foot)
 - Trick of choice
 - Stomp....twitch
-

DUETS: (Work in couples to develop partnering sections. Establish rules and tasks.)
DUET IDEAS TO EXPLORE

- Sculpture and clay Sculptor moves the clay 3 times then makes a complimentary shape.
- Mirroring.
- Concept: One person places a hand on their partner. The other person removes the hand as if to say, "Please take your hand away."
- Choreograph duets. (Lean, support, lift, counter-balance)
- Hold on to one or two hands and find ways to assist your partner. While standing on one leg, the other leg in the air, lean away from one another and slowly move to another shape.
- Travel through space with your partner while holding onto hands. Explore hopping, turning, changing direction, lifting, changing the position of legs and arms.
- Leap frog and wheelbarrow (support your partner while traveling through space.)

GROUP SECTION IDEAS (Adapt for skill level of group)

The *Passengers* group sections included:

Long Positions, Lean and Leave, Run and Fall, Arm Flips, Point and Swoon, Tangle trio, Slow walk. Note: Instructor can make other groups sections.

Long Positions

Working in groups: Dancer will make a "long positions" of choice. Hold position long enough for design to register. Change the position at will. Consider change of level, negative space and general compositional aesthetics. Choice: Dancers may manipulate someone's design by gently altering the position of his/her body.

Lean and Leave

Design shapes that "lean" on another person, audience member, self, architecture, etc. The "supportive" person may choose "leave" or to slowly sink to the ground to alter the design. When the activity dissolves, repeat concept leaning on someone or something else.

Run and Fall

Starting from off stage, dancers choose to enter the space and run in a counter-clockwise circle as long as they wish. Dancers may choose to jump and fall in designated areas. After you fall, stay put until another section begins.

Tangle Trio

Three dancers will hold hands to form a small circle. Explore ways to tangle and untangle hands. Travel in space while tangling and constantly moving.

Arm Flips

Part I: One arm bends and crosses the body to touch the opposite shoulder. Arm opens out and points in a direction. Dancer may choose to walk in the direction indicated. Action may be fast or slow. Part II: Plie and round the back to make a crouching position. Stay in that low shape but try lunging front, side or back with one leg. Part III: Fall to the ground.

Point and Swoon

Travel: Walking with Ronde Jambe action (One leg traces a half circle moving from back, to side, to front keeping toes on the floor) Arms: point in different directions as you walk.

Swoon: Place a hand on forehead while sinking to the floor in a “hinge” position.

Slow Walks

Travel in a group from up-stage left to up-stage right. Face stage right and walk slowly. You may choose to change your space within the group by advancing. You may add a “twitch” occasionally.

Adagio

Create a simple movement phrase that can be performed slowly then varied. Dancers may explore tempo changes, space and direction, order of the movement elements

Jump Section

Create a simple phrase of movement that jumps and travels through space.

Tricks: Dancers may enter and exits perform their favorite “trick such as a cartwheel, handstand, sommersalt, Hip-hop movement, head-stand, etc. They may also call out the name of someone in the group to assist them in performing partnering sequence.

Shapes

Have class design a series of “Shapes” which everyone will memorize. Use photos or words to inspire the shapes. (Example: bent, straight, curves, gnarl, balanced, bridge, spaghetti, strong-man, submissive, hide) May rules about ow the shapes are to be perform.

5's: LOCOMOTOR PATTERN traveling in path accross stage. Enter and Exit

Preparation: Practice a classic triple phrase: Down, Up, Up. Down, Up, Up,,

Practice traveling using a Five count traveling pattern (From *Passengers*)

[illegible]

Note:

- Participants must only travel in a straight line across stage.

- Everyone must travel using the same tempo (the first person to start the phrase will set the tempo)
- Everyone must relate to the same counts.
- Participants may enter and exit when they wish. (beginning on count one)

Variations:

- Perform the 5 count phrase traveling backwards,
- Add a turn on count 1,2,3
- Add a hop. Go into the air on count one and land on count three.

CREATE AN ORDER

Create a performance order indicating who, what, where, when the sections will be performed.

Establish how long each section is and how you are going to cue or begin each section. (You may use a stop watch or just have ways to cue verbally or with movement)

SECTION	HOW LONG	WHERE	WHO
1.			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

