

LEARNING LINKS

**The Krasnoyarsk
National Dance
Company
of Siberia**

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 18 2015
9:30 AM & 11 AM

2015 > 2016

BROADEN THE HORIZONS
OF YOUR CLASSROOM.
EXPERIENCE THE VIBRANT
WORLD OF THE ARTS
AT THE McCALLUM!



McCallum Theatre Institute
Field Trip Series



McCALLUM THEATRE INSTITUTE
PRESENTS

The Krasnoyarsk National Dance Company of Siberia

WEDNESDAY
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9:30 AM & 11 AM

“The true richness
of Siberia lay in
its courageous,
hard-working people.”

National Dance Company of Siberia Website

Connecting to Curriculum and Students' Lives!

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY • Russia, Siberia

ARTS • Folk dance, music

IDEAS • Tradition

Expanding the Concept of Literacy

What is a “text”? We invite you to consider the performances on McCallum's Field Trip Series as non-print texts available for study and investigation by your students. Anyone who has shown a filmed version of a play in their classroom, used a website as companion to a textbook, or asked students to do online research already knows that “texts” don't begin and end with textbooks, novels, and reading packets. They extend to videos, websites, games, plays, concerts, dances, radio programs, and a number of other non-print texts that students and teachers engage with on a regular basis.

We know that when we expand our definition of texts to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, increase student engagement, and enrich learning experiences.

Please consider how utilizing your McCallum performance as a text might align to standards established for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

How do we help students to use these texts as a way of shaping ideas and understanding the world?

Please use this material to help you on this journey.

NON-PRINT TEXT • any medium/text that creates meaning through sound or images or both, such as symbols, words, songs, speeches, pictures, and illustrations not in traditional print form including those seen on computers, films, and in the environment.

The Work of Art

A Non-print Text for Study

- What's it made of? How can this work serve as a *Common Core State Standards*-mandated "text" for student study in the classroom?



"What has 1,000 toes and whirls through the air?" asks the *New York Times*. Answer: The Krasnoyarsk National Dance Company of Siberia. Actually, that figure has been rounded down just a bit in crafting this attention-catching question. There are in fact 55 dancers, each of whose ten toes contributes to this kaleidoscopic cavalcade of whirls, twirls, taps, leaps and bounds.

Partly curating a tradition, partly updating of that tradition, this performance features Siberian folk dances, expanded and rethought in light of contemporary concert-going tastes. In vibrant staging, these dancers exude charm, energy, and skill. Feet move in a blur. An acrobatic air flavors things. Steps and moves burnished over millennia are, in this iteration, outfitted with modern dance constructs and given a heightened production value.

The entire enterprise is shot through with joy!

Now, don't go imagining that Siberian dance is monolithic. Far from it! Just as there are various subcultures within the greater Siberian culture, and each on colorful display here, so too the dances reflect this diversity. The men often take on the persona of Cossacks, intensely masculine, competitive, fierce, and proud. At other times, both genders join to explore traditional dances of the peasant classes. And what charm there is in these! The costumes dazzle in their festive coloring and intricacy.

Founder of the company and chief choreographer, Mikhail Godenko, lovingly reworks folk dances into panoramic epics, in which precision and skill suggest balletic rigor. He creates a sequence of episodes whose rhythms contrast with each other. Village ritual is invigorated with modern technique and artistic insight. It's rather like a fairytale, whose various chapters unfold in splendor and excitement. The program kicks off with *My Siberia*, a suite by Godenko. Just imagine the wealth of deep feeling which characterizes this paean to the motherland! Here's how the company characterizes it:

"My free Earth, wide open, and beloved. This...folk dance welcomes the audience to Siberia, a rough and beautiful land of vast forests and mighty rivers. The true richness of Siberia lay in its courageous, hard-working people."

From there, we move on to *Siberian Lyric Dance*, also Godenko's work, this time accompanied by the sonorous strains of German composer Richard Wagner's music. In the company's own words:

"The best love themes can be found in the traditions of the Siberian folklore. Smooth movements of the girls, the proud posture of the men, gorgeous music and sincere feelings create a cheerful and romantic mood."

On the Bench comes next. A "choreographic picture," this is the work of choreographer Kondakov. Its charming theme revolves around couples flirting with each other on the titular bench. Then, it's time for females only – in *Outskirts of a Village* – choreographed by Izumova. After that, Godenko returns with *Siberian Fun*. This virile offering features:

"...balalaikas and elements of traditional folklore [which] reflect the Russian spirit and strength. Ability to laugh at themselves is one of the characteristic qualities of the Russian people."

Not to be outdone, Kondakov returns next: *Lilac-flowered and Cherry-blossomed*. The exquisiteness of nature wafts through this enchanting dance, or as the company puts it:

"This is a tender dance reflecting the reserve of the Siberian character. The young people move with grace and dignity."

The remaining entries are once again the handiwork of, you guessed it, Godenko. *By the Well* is what's called a round dance. Look for no square dancing here! But the company suggests you look for:

"...girls meeting by the well to...share some secrets. Their quiet and stately walk [reminds one of] a little river [whose] pure waters [flow] on – bringing us your pure, clean water, young beauties."

And this is hotly followed by *At the Poultry Farm*. No, don't pull that face. This particularly engaging work is a Facetious Comic Dance, and anyone with a pulse will succumb to its folksy, sweet charm. Smiles all around!

"Battalions of roosters, hens and fuzzy yellow chicks preen and compete."

The only possible way to follow this is, of course, with *Dance with Spoons* and *Birch Bark*.

And then, as if the spirit of Godenko had gently intuited our satiety with things folkloric, the finale brings us back into a more modern sensibility with another dance suite – *Along the Street*.



The Artists

Who has *produced* this text for study?



Here's an intriguing mystery! Depending on whose version of events you read, the founder of the Siberian Folk Dance Ensemble was one of three men.

Michael Godenko. Igor Moiseev. Yakov Kolomeitsev.

In its formative years, the company was called Siberian Folk Dance Ensemble. You can understand from the very name what sort of central role tradition played. The fledgling company was dreamed up by one Yakov Kolomeitsev, and from 1960 through 1963 he was its guiding light. A musician of substantial gifts, he also brought a depth of knowledge in the area of Siberian folk dance repertoire to the enterprise.

At the conclusion of these three fruitful years, Michael Godenko took over the reins of the company, ushering in a 28-year-long era of further glory. This extraordinary choreographer oversaw over 150 productions! His creations continue to serve as the backbone of the company's oeuvre.

In recent years, the ensemble has turned to Vladimir Moiseev for leadership. Born in 1963 in Moscow, this dynamo hails from one of the premier choreographing families in Russia. A graduate of the Moscow State Academy of Choreography, he was an active member subsequently of the company of the State Academic Bolshoi Theatre of Russia. Among his most highly valued contributions as a dancer are roles in *Swan Lake*, *La Bayadere*, *Giselle*, *Spartacus*, *Don Quixote*, *Le Corsaire*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Nutcracker*.

But wait, for elsewhere one reads:

"Acclaimed choreographer Mikhail Godenko, one of the former USSR's leading ballet masters, founded this unique troupe more than 50 years ago."

And then one encounters this unequivocal statement:

"...Igor Moiseev, the famous founder and leader of the Siberian Folk Dance Ensemble..."

This last mentioned founder is none other than the grandfather of Vladimir Moiseev, the current helmsman of the company.

So, an air of mystery pervades current accounts of those long-distant days of formation. No matter! What is clear is that each of these formidable titans in the world of Siberian traditional dance has lent his wisdom and gifts where they have been best able to flourish.

Vladimir Moiseev adds some further thoughts about the company, its history, and directions it has taken since:

"The ensemble of Siberian folk dances has its own history, its own traditions, its own individual repertoire fund, and its own choreographic language. But it is clear that it is impossible to endlessly dance like 50 years ago. Now, the main problem is how to develop ourselves to be interesting to young people – both for those who work at the theater, and for those who come to watch. That is why I invite different choreographers, and also try to stage some performances. It is not an easy question: the existence of an ensemble today. Folklore as such is gone from our lives, and now dances are merely variations of the theme. I would like to keep the best, and build something new on its base...make it fun today, and not to live the memory of past glory.

Siberian dances! Yakov Kolomeisky in 1960 created the Dance Ensemble of Siberia, distinguishing it from a regional choir, and Igor Moiseev supported him. At the time, many immigrants came to live in Siberia. Ukrainians, Belarusians, Tatars, and Caucasians [from Caucasus region of Russia] gathered together. Kolomeiskii founded an ensemble of folk dances of all these different nations, living in Siberia. In 1963, Godenko was invited to lead the ensemble and the trend to use multicultural folk dances had gradually diminished, and the ensemble changed the direction a bit. Godenko, after working for a few years in Leningrad's music hall, brought into the ensemble a pop direction. In addition, he turned all the girls into blondes (by dyeing their hair). Certainly, blonde girls represent Siberia, and it accounts to the 50 percent of our success.

In Krasnoyarsk, there is a very dignified choreographic college. The main problem, of course, is in recruiting boys. There are fewer boys who decide to go into a ballet school nowadays.

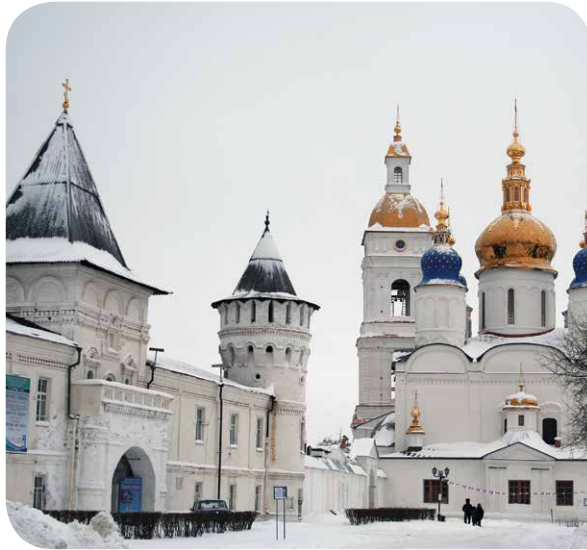
We have a large selection process; many people come to us, because they want to check where they stand at the moment or want to work with us. This is an indication that the ensemble is developing in the right direction. This means, working with us has become more interesting in all of the aspects."

"The main problem is how to develop ourselves to be interesting to young people."

Vladimir Moiseev

Contexts

- What *information* surrounds this text for study & could help make students' engagement with it more powerful?



SIBERIA!

Some people say that the name Siberia comes from the Tatar word for “sleeping land.” And given the deeply frigid state in which this part of the world wraps itself six months of the year, no wonder the land could be said to sleep! This mysterious and remote country constitutes more than 75% of Russia’s land mass. When we consider the forbidding nature of much of its climate, we should not be surprised to learn that relatively few human beings make their home there. In fact, it is one of the most sparsely populated areas on earth.

One group of people who did make their home in this frozen wasteland – which can also be referred to as Northern Asia – was the Huns - as in “Attila the...” When the thirteenth century rolled around, another group whose name strikes fear in the heart of the listener, the Mongols, took over. Cossacks invaded the area a mere 400 years later, and sometime thereafter, the Russian army showed up. Tough crews, every single one of them!

Siberia has famously served as the location to which those who fell afoul of the Soviet government were shipped. In the first half of the twentieth century, the GULAG state agency of the Soviet Union established a widely feared system of penal labor camps in the frosty zones of this wilderness. And it was not long before that – around the turn of the century – that the Trans-Siberian Railway was constructed, which paved the way to a closer union with the Russian center of power to the west. This was, of course, before the rise of the Soviet Union, when Czar Nicholas II still reigned.

Siberia has a lot going for it in terms of natural wealth. Its deposits of nickel, gold, lead, coal, gypsum, silver, zinc, and diamonds are practically without rival. Under the ground lie vast reserves of oil and gas. One would not however have wanted to be anywhere near central Siberia at 7:15 am on June 30, 1908, when millions of trees were suddenly felled in what is supposed to have been the air burst of a meteoroid or a comet. Mind you, there’s no crater on site, but the land still bears the scars of this strange cataclysm.

Greater Siberia goes eastwards from the Ural Mountains to the watershed between the Pacific and Arctic drainage basins. Siberia Proper is bounded by the Arctic Ocean, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and China.

In an interesting sidebar, scientists have recently determined that America's earliest human inhabitants came from Siberia.

FOLK DANCE

No one seems entirely sure just how many different folk dances exist in the Greater Russian culture. The number is thought to be practically uncountable. One thing is certain: these dances, each with its own name, exhibit great variety. Some basic elements, however, can be said to show up fairly consistently, uniting the various cultural strands. An example of one of these elements; is broadness of movement. There is also often found a certain quality of daring. Not surprisingly, an intrinsic cheerfulness pervades the genre. And there is also something just a bit ineffable, which might be called the poetry of the Russian – or in this specific case, the Siberian – soul. There is very often a sense of modesty, simplicity and quiet dignity.

Costuming is a crucial element. Based, as you might imagine, on traditional folk dress, stage-wear borrows from these historical garments' color and intricacy of design – ornaments and embroidery – but not the heavy materials which would weigh down the dancers. Fully as much thought, skill, and industry goes into the fashioning of these accouterments of the dance as is devoted to the dances themselves. If you know how to read them, these outfits tell not only what province but what district they hail from. This information is encoded in the particular designs, combinations of color, cut of the serafan (or peasant pinafore dress), headdress shape, and patterns used. In earlier times, women would devote years to fashioning their festive clothes. Such garb would naturally have passed from generation to generation.

A couple of styles of folk dance which will be on display in the work of art are described below.

Round dances are dances done in a circular configuration. Dancers may face toward the center of the circle or away from it. The speed of movement and particular steps may vary greatly. The unifying idea is the circle. Some see this as suggestive of the larger idea of community. Round dances are, by the way, quite ancient.

Dance squatting is something very often associated in people's minds with Russian Terpsichore. We've all seen examples of agile young men dressed in billowing blouses and trousers cinched at the knees kicking out their toes while upper legs describe a line perpendicular to the floor. In the Middle Ages, eastern Slavs used squatting movements in both fighting and in dances associated with fighting. Competition and endurance are two ideas with strong resonance in this form of folk dance.



To get ready for the performance, students could research these:

- Siberian folk dress
- Siberia, its history and culture



Here's a 60 minute lesson* in collaboration & problem-solving you could teach to help prepare students for this work:

Line of Inquiry* How does Krasnoyarsk National Dance Company of Siberia capitalize on history and aesthetics in borrowing color combinations, cuts, and designs from traditional dress for costuming?

Start a discussion in class by asking: What are some examples of traditional dress? In Scotland, for example? (kilts) In Japan? (kimono) In Alaska? (Parka) In Russia?

Show students some images of Russian folk dress. For example, print out some of the images at this site: www.thelovelyplanet.net/traditional-dress-of-russia-a-symbol-of-ethnic-diversity-in-the-russian-federation/

Deepen students' noticing of detail by asking questions like these:

- What kinds of colors do we see?
- Which colors really stand out?
- Which colors are combined?
- What about patterns?
- What do you notice about the style and cut of this particular costume? Or this one?

Share with students the following bit of context:

The Krasnoyarsk National Dance Company of Siberia bases its costuming on traditional Russian – and specifically Siberian – dress, such as we see here.

A VISUAL ARTS PROJECT

Tell students:

- You have been hired to design a costume for the Krasnoyarsk National Dance Company of Siberia.
- It could be a woman's outfit – or a man's. You choose.
- Try sketching out the style and cut of it. Borrow ideas from the images.
- Then, add in patterns.
- Finally, add colors.

Students, when done, move through the classroom as through an art gallery, noticing the choices their classmates have made.

**A Line of Inquiry is an Essential Question that generates a lesson*

After coming to the theater, students could research these:

- Folk dance in other cultures – perhaps based on ancestry?
- Krasnoyarsk National Dance Company of Siberia



Here's a 45-60 minute lesson you could teach after students have experienced the work:

Lead students in recalling details of the performance. After some describing, you will want to ask open-ended questions that get at the essential ideas. The questions listed below in the “What’s your read of this non-print text?” section would provide a good starting point.

A LANGUAGE ARTS PROJECT

Have students write a review of the performance. This would not be an opinion piece. Sentences like “The part I liked best...” would be set aside. Instead, the review would address questions like these:

- What was the performance made of?
- Who performed it?
- What kinds of skills did they use?
- How were they dressed?

When done, a couple of volunteers read their reviews aloud to the class. To help deepen students’ thinking about both the performance and the nature of reviewing, ask questions. For example:

- What language choices pop out at you? Why?
- What do you think this writer thinks is most important for readers to know about the performance? What makes you think that?
- What has the writer left out (as you recall your own experience of the work)? Why might that be?
- Would this review, if it appeared in the paper, make readers want to go or not? Why?

Then each student shares their review with a table partner.

“Folklore as such is gone from our lives...
I would like to keep the best,
and build something new on its base.”

Vladimir Moiseev



What's *your* read of this non-print text?

How would you answer these questions — and how could they be adapted as Guiding Questions to spark student discussion?

- What stands out about the movement style of these dancers?
- What kinds of movement most struck you — and why?
- How would you describe the quality of their movement?
- What emotions were expressed through the body? Through the face?
- What did you notice about the music?
- How did the movement and the music interrelate?
- What genres of music were represented?
- What evidence was there of ballet training?
- Which dances stood out to you particularly? Why was this?
- How did the performance flow? What were transitions between dances like?
- Which moments had the greatest impact on you? What contributed to this?
- If you were describing the costuming to someone who hadn't been to the performance, what would you say?
- Did certain dancers stand out from the ensemble? Why was this, do you think?
- What are some examples of ways in which the dancers achieved a strong sense of ensemble?
- What stories were told in the dances? When stories weren't told, what ideas or themes seemed to generate the dance?

Internet

Folk dance around the world

http://fitforafeast.com/dance_cultural_europe_italian_scarf.htm

For a lively bit of context, this kid-friendly page offers video clips of various cultures' folk dance, including Russian, Continental Europe, Eastern Europe, Mediterranean and the British Isles.

History of Siberia for kids

Page includes comprehensive view of each of the periods of Siberian history, starting with pre-history, moving through Imperial Russia's influence, and twentieth century.

The Siberian Arctic in pictures

www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2014/apr/28/traditional-life-in-the-siberian-arctic-in-pictures

Fascinating glimpse into a faraway world!

Siberian dance

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pj4ekcWHRD0

A collage of different dances including a glimpse of the *Pails of Water* dance. Delicious to see!

Books

Ancient Horsemen of Siberia

By: Buell Janet

Reading level: Ages 10 and up

Publisher: 21st Century (1998)

ISBN-10: 0761330054

Buell's description of the excavation of the burial site of a Pazyryk woman, her horses, and her possessions, all preserved in an icy tomb in the Altai Mountains of southern Siberia, is engaging. However, the author goes beyond the discovery to examine how the Russian archaeologist Natalya Polosmak and her colleagues made educated guesses about the lives and culture of individuals who rode horses and tended other animals 2500 years ago.

“To make it fun today
and not to live the memory
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Vladimir Moiseev

Books

The Endless Steppe: Growing Up in Siberia

By: Esther Hautzig

Reading level: Ages 10 and up

Grade Level: 5th and up

Publisher: HarperCollins (1995)

ISBN-10: 006440577X

The author of this deeply moving personal narrative spent her years between ten and fourteen as a Polish deportee in a remote, impoverished Siberian village. Taken prisoner by the Russians in 1941 and shipped by cattle car to a forced-labor camp, Esther, her mother, and her grandmother managed to stay together and to keep each other alive through near starvation and arctic winters.

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