

Dance Leadership

Session 1 - Purpose/Emotion/Theme

What is dance ministry?

Ministry- Wikipedia defines ministry as "an activity carried out by Christians to express or speak their faith."

Minister- verb- 1. To give aid or service

Matthew 28:18-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Baptize- to purify or cleanse spiritually especially by a purging experience or ordeal.

Using dance as a vehicle for what? Discipleship, worship, sharing the gospel, community...

What is the difference between teaching dance and being a dance ministry leader?

What goals are the same?

What goals are different?

What does the outcome look like to you, the leader?

What does the outcome look like to others?

How do you measure success?

Why Dance?

Purpose driven choreography:

Know what you're dancing about. Is it an expression of worship? Are you telling a story? Creating a feeling or atmosphere? Drawing a crowd? Know the purpose this dance will serve.

- *Get inspired.* Find images, videos, free write, be absorbing at all times- searching for inspiration
- *Edit yourself until you have something valuable to say.* Avoid the dances that cry, "look at me!" Don't waste the time of your audience. Have something to say ("have fun" counts as saying something). Edit yourself, find depth, inspiration, keep exploring until you find something of value that you are proud to share.
- *Care about what you're sharing.* The most powerful dances I've seen have included an element of vulnerability from both the choreographer and the dancers. Do you have a personal connection to the story or message you are sharing?
- *Share/explore the purpose with your dancers.* The dancers are the ones who are going to be sharing your message/story. Take time to let them explore the movement, the message and the purpose. They need to feel connected to what they are sharing. They need to care. It's your job to make sure that connection happens. It's easy to skip over this step because we are often creating with a time crunch. DON'T SKIP IT. When the dancers care about what they are sharing, their movement becomes infused with power. Take the time. It's worth it.

***Try it out:** Emotion driven improvisation.

- Identify 1 emotion
- Explore movement out of that feeling (pose based)
- Can we read what you're feeling based on improv?

Come back to the purpose of why you are there in the first place- "Go and make disciples"

How can you use the time and space you have with your dancers to draw them closer to Jesus?

How can you utilize what you're creating to clearly communicate a message to your audience?

Session 2 - Expand Your Movement/Pause- Breakdown

Choreography

Every choreographer has a style, a look to their movement. That style can be one of your greatest strengths as a creator. However, we want to ensure that we are not repurposing the same movement to a new song.

How can you expand your vocabulary?

- Choreograph using your purpose or theme
- Create a phrase as your starting point
- Create from emotions/feelings
- Start with a motif or theme pose/movement

Phrase development:

- Counts
- Instrumental
- Lyric
- Change the music

Pastor your group.

Encourage them to expand the way that they think, the way they express their emotions, their faith...

Practical tips on pastoring your cast (*information borrowed from the Jesus Theater Director's Manual*)

- Allow people time to get comfortable.

Before diving too deeply with your dancers, give them time to settle in. Everyone needs a few hours together to get comfortable, to laugh, to feel each other out before they are ready to process or connect with the purpose you're focusing on.

- Set the vulnerability bar yourself.

Transparency in groups generally comes through one courageous person who is willing to be vulnerable. After this vulnerability bar is set, it is much easier for the rest of the group to enter into trust with one another. It is recommended that you, as the leader, be that person. Share honestly about your life, your story, your relationship with the Lord and your connection to the purpose behind what you're doing.

- Find "Holy Spirit" moments.

As you are teaching you will find moments that you can pause and process on a more personal level with your dancers. You can use

lyrics as a place to start from, or if your choreography is emotionally driven, start there. There are endless possibilities of where to start, the thing to remember is that you have to start somewhere, so pick a point and go for it.

-Ask questions.

Questions will help draw out what is inside of your dancers. Here are some helpful questions you can pull from. Their answers should be specific to the piece or focus you have.

- What is one moment in this piece that feels personal to you?
- What do you think is significant about this moment?
- Is this moment real for you? Do you know it from experience?
- What do you need to let go of?
- What does this movement mean to you?
- How do you think Jesus feels in this moment?
- What motivates people to run from God

-Prayer.

Spend time in prayer together as a group. Pray for each other, pray for whoever your audience might be, pray about the impact of the ministry of your group. Set a routine for starting and ending your time together by focusing on the Lord. Maybe include a simple practice that can be done right before performances as well to center your group back on the purpose.

Session 3 - Find Layers/Practical planning & Structure

Choreography

Once you have settled on some choreography. Look at it again and see where you can add layers to create more interesting pictures.

Ways to layer:

- Cannons
- Levels
- Facings
- Groupings
- Formation changes
- There are many more options! Play. Be creative.

Things that will help set you apart as a choreographer:

- Keep stretching yourself creatively.
- Choreograph transitions.
- Give your audience space for breath. Choreograph for the impact moments. Are you creating pictures that you want them to remember?
 - Allow yourself rehearsal time to clean your work.
 - ALWAYS consider your audience. Don't forget you are trying to communicate something to someone. You want THEM to understand what you are saying. There has to be a point in the creative process that your focus shifts from what feels right to you to seeing the piece through the eyes of an audience member.
 - Create context for your audience. What do they need to know to be able to receive what you are sharing?
 - Costume in a way that enhances your message and doesn't distract. If you have a more traditional audience, know that they will be distracted by seeing too much of the body. This doesn't mean you need to cover every inch of skin. But be creative and thoughtful so that no one is focusing on what is being worn, but rather what is being shared.
 - Consider every dancer when choosing costumes. Every body type looks different in costumes. Make your dancers feel good about what they are wearing. They should always feel comfortable. Rehearse in your costumes to give them time to adjust.

In every step of the process refer back to your purpose for the piece. Is what I'm creating supporting the purpose? Is this decision adding to the purpose or taking away?

Leadership

Things that will help set you apart as a leader:

- Know your circle of influence.
- Be generous every chance you get.
- Over prepare. Consider any question you may get- lighting, program placement, entrance & exit plans, where your dancers go before the piece and after so that they don't distract.
- Be flexible. With program placement, with stage space, with tech time. Everyone will respond to you better if you are flexible and gracious.
- Recognize the value in what other groups and people bring to the table.
- Say something, creatively, every chance you get. Don't be a program fluff filler. Use every opportunity to further the use of dance in a worship setting.
- Pray.
- Take deep breaths and remain calm. When it comes time for performance, it is your job to make the people around you comfortable. Your dancers are your first priority. After them you want to find ways to serve the people around you. Encourage your dancers to do the same.
- Lead by example. Be the servant in the room. Pick up the trash, fold the programs, fix the chairs. Be there and serve, even if you are alone. This also applies when it is just you and your dancers. How can you serve them? You will find that the more you humble yourself the more people will do the same to support you and what you're doing.
- Trust that people see and value your time and effort. Sometimes you will receive affirmations and sometimes you will not. That does not change the value of what you offered. Trust that sometimes we just plant the seeds, other times we get to see the fruit. Be ok in either scenario.

Planning classes & rehearsals

1. Pray & check in. (10 minutes)

-The key to building community is to allow time for people to connect with each other. This check in can be anytime in your rehearsal. But don't miss it. Pray together, for each other.

2. Physical warm-up. (5-20 minutes)

-Dancing without properly warming up can result in injury. Don't skip this no matter how rushed you are. Warm ups can be quick or you can utilize this time for technical training with your group.

3. Choreography rehearsal (15-20 minutes or more if you have it!)

-Know what you are going to teach. We can all tell when someone is making it up on the spot.

-Set goals for how much you would like your dancers to learn that class.

-Determine the purpose for what you are working on.

4. Cooldown & Stretch

-Wait to stretch until the end of your time together, this way your muscles are warm and ready to stretch out.

-This is a great time to unpack some of the content that you've been working on.

5. Close in prayer.

What is considered a good warm-up?