

Hello!

The content here is for the fifth and eleventh month of our Contemporary Lesson Plan Sets that go along with our Once Upon a Ballet Story Ballet Curriculum for ages 7 to 12 years old. In the first month you teach these materials, you'll want to introduce the material to your students. The goal here is exposure. In the second month you teach them, you'll be revisiting these same materials. You'll want to further refine your students' technique and their grasp of the concepts taught the second time around.

The ballet side of this curriculum is all about teaching ballet through the stories of classical ballet. When we decided to add a contemporary element to the curriculum, it seemed fitting to continue our historical approach and follow the pioneering artists of modern and contemporary dance.

This curriculum follows six artists in total. This month's artist is Charles Weidman. He lived from 1901 to 1975 and was a pioneer in modern choreography and technique. In 1927, Weidman started the Humphrey-Weidman Company with Doris Humphrey (another pioneer in early modern dance). He wanted to create a uniquely American style of movement and sought to break free from traditional movement found in popular dance forms of his time.

His work was heavily based on gravity. He focused much on gravity, the fall, and how one could balance against gravity to create movement. He also placed emphasis on movement occurring just before and after falling. He created an entirely new movement vocabulary with his focus. His technique included much more jumping, falling, and floorwork than the status quo of his time.

The following lesson plans have been inspired by Weidman's work and adapted to younger, beginning age groups. We hope you and your dancers enjoy this introduction to contemporary dance. If you'd like to share more resources with students, you'll find them below. You'll also find recommended music links and class lesson plans. Contemporary A is designed for ages 7+ (correlating with our Ballet 1A and Ballet 1B levels). Contemporary B is designed for ages 9+ (correlating with our Ballet 2 and Ballet 3 levels).

Rooting for you, friend!

Ashley

Ashley Hartford, Director of Once Upon a Ballet

Resources + References

[Charles Weidman \(Wikipedia\)](#)

Recommended Music

[Charles Weidman Music Playlist in Spotify](#)

Videos

[Charles Weidman Video Playlist for Inspiration](#)

[OUB Contemporary Lesson Plans Videos: Months 5 and 11 - Charles Weidman-Inspired](#)

Warm-up (15 Minutes / Ages 7+)

Bends: Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes (5 minutes)

[Warm-up Video](#)

Head

Lean head to right and left shoulder 4x

Forward, center, back, center 4x

Forward roll right side, center, forward roll left side, center, roll back all the way around repeat starting left.

Shoulders

Roll shoulders back with plie 4x

Front shoulder rolls 4x

Alternating shoulder rolls from toe ball heel into plie on left, right, 4x

Backstroke with alternating feet and arms

Knees

Bends in 2nd parallel position with arms and legs

Plie in parallel first and straighten legs while ascending arms

Breathe out arching back looking up descend arms down

Concave forward in plie having arms back and around to front

Both arms swing back, and around while lengthening up and gazing upwards

Side bend right - over, windmill arm to flat back over in center

Plie legs, bending elbows in towards body, shoot back out to a flat back straightening legs

Bend with hands on ground roll up, roll back down, roll up

Repeat doing side bend on left

Repeat whole sequence in first parallel position

Toes

Lift up toes 4x keeping heels on the ground

Lift up heels 4x keeping toes on the ground

Rock back and forth between heels and toes 8x

Alternate feet doing pedals 8x

Lunges/ Counterbalance (5 minutes)

[Lunges/Counterbalance Video](#)

Starting in parallel first. Alternate forward lunges catching self with counterbalancing body and utilizing muscles to bring torso back upright to a standing position 4x right and left. .

Repeat in turned out first, parallel side, turned out side, right and left.

Drop to a deep Lunge, curve back, lengthen back drop knee and reach for back toe to stretch straighten legs and come up to switch sides

Floorwork (5 minutes)

[Floorwork Video](#)

Starting on shins, lay out to the front sliding out on hands, slide back to shins, repeat out to both sides, and then to the back always coming back to a neutral shin position. Using your core muscles to stack back up to your neutral starting position.

Exercise 1: Exploration of “How did you fall?” (15 Minutes / Ages 7+)

[Exercise 1 Video](#)

Using a slapstick form of comedy expression, discuss all the ways in which you could fall down REALLY silly! Whether it's Slippery Ice, tripping over shoes, or the crazy notion of a banana peel we all fall with or without intention. Our faces do a lot too! What's your face look like when you're about to fall? How do we use counterbalance in our bodies to prevent us from falling down? In slow motion, stand up and go through the motions of slipping on ice. As an instructor, show an example that the class can mimic. Are you balancing on one foot? Why do our arms want to go in circles? What parts of the body are trying their hardest to stay upright that need extra muscle power to control. In dance, it's so important to teach how to control our bodies for “safe falling.” How could we fall safely on our “ice?” Each week, you think of a different way to fall. You can play charades with it, or play a version of what Simon says. Remember this activity is based not only on the ice, banana, or what have you but it's HOW you fell. What kind of moves did you do before and after the fall?

Exercise 2: REWIND! (15 Minutes / Ages 7+)

[Exercise 2 Video](#)

This is a great activity to visually and physically understand your body moving from one direction to the pull of gravity reversing itself. Start out in this age group by all spreading out and doing simple moves that explore reversing levels. Start by a simple movement such as walking and then yell out REWIND! Have them not only walk backwards but in the same path that they walked forward. As each week progresses. Make combinations. (i.e. walk walk lunge- rewind- chasse chasse lunge crawl- rewind.)

- Walking
- Running
- Lunging
- Crawling
- Chasse forward
- Tuck and Roll

Combination (15 Minutes / Ages 7+)

Give each student a different sequence and put to music and see it unfold into a dance.

Week 1

Have students explore traveling across the floor then coming to center, each assigned with a different movement. You can choose the movements from Exercise 2 above, or your own. Next, have them rewind their movement and pathway.

Week 2

Give your students a short combination:

- Walk forward starting on the right leg for 4 count
- Run in a circle around yourself to the right for 4 counts
- Lunge forward onto the right leg
- Tuck and roll, tucking the left leg in
- Repeat on the other side

Weeks 3 & 4

Students each have a different entrance to get travel across the room, then come to center. Everyone does the same combination (from week 2). Then students rewind their entrances to go off.

Warm-up (15 Minutes / Ages 9+)

Bends: Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes (5 minutes)

[Warm-up Video](#)

Head

Lean head to right and left shoulder 4x

Forward, center, back, center 4x

Forward roll right side, center, forward roll left side, center, roll back all the way around repeat starting left.

Shoulders

Roll shoulders back with plie 4x

Front shoulder rolls 4x

Alternating shoulder rolls from toe ball heel into plie on left, right, 4x

Backstroke with alternating feet and arms

Knees

Bends in 2nd parallel position with arms and legs

Plie in parallel first and straighten legs while ascending arms

Breathe out arching back looking up descend arms down

Concave forward in plie having arms back and around to front

Both arms swing back, and around while lengthening up and gazing upwards

Side bend right - over, windmill arm to flat back over in center

Plie legs, bending elbows in towards body, shoot back out to a flat back straightening legs

Bend with hands on ground roll up, roll back down, roll up

Repeat doing side bend on left

Repeat whole sequence in first parallel position

Toes

Lift up toes 4x keeping heels on the ground

Lift up heels 4x keeping toes on the ground

Rock back and forth between heels and toes 8x

Alternate feet doing pedals 8x

Lunges/ Counterbalance (5 minutes)

[Lunges/Counterbalance Video](#)

Starting in parallel first. Alternate forward lunges catching self with counterbalancing body and utilizing muscles to bring torso back upright to a standing position 4x right and left. .

Repeat in turned out first, parallel side, turned out side, parallel back, turned out back on both right and left sides.

Drop to a deep Lunge drop back knee, stretch. Drop back knee stretch. Put weight on the front supporting foot,

lengthening the front leg straight and place your hand on the ground to do a standing spit. Bring leg back down and through to lunge on opposite side to repeat.

Come up doing an L handstand repeat 4x

Floorwork (5 minutes)

[Floorwork Video](#)

Starting on shins, lay out to the front sliding out on hands slide back to shins, repeat out to both sides, and then to the back always coming back to a neutral shin position. Using your core muscles to stack back up to your neutral starting position. Repeat that from a higher level. On one knee to the forward, sides, and back. How is it different? What muscles had to work harder. Finally, Fall from both knees upright. It should be progressively harder to stack back up to a higher position.

Exercise 1: Exploration of “How did you fall?” (15 Minutes / Ages 9+)

[Exercise 1 Video](#)

For this 9-12 age group start out by using different forms of balancing they do in dance. Starting with passe, then releve, arabesque en l'air, ect. Where do we fall when we lose our balance. What crazy movements might our core, arms, or body do to stay balanced? This can be a contest of who can stay balanced the longest, who touches the floor first is out, the most creative movement of balancing or falling... Each week can be different introducing this exploratory exercise.

Using a slapstick form of comedy expression, discuss all the ways in which you could fall down REALLY silly! Whether it's Slippery Ice, tripping over shoes, or the crazy notion of a banana peel we all fall with or without intention. Our faces do a lot too! What's your face look like when you're about to fall? How do we use counterbalance in our bodies to prevent us from falling down? In slow motion, stand up and go through the motions of slipping on ice. As an instructor, show an example that the class can mimic. Are you balancing on one foot? Why do our arms want to go in circles? What parts of the body are trying their hardest to stay upright that need extra muscle power to control. In dance, it's so important to teach how to control our bodies for “safe falling.” How could we fall safely on our “ice?” Each week, you think of a different way to fall. You can play charades with it, or play a version of what Simon says. Remember this activity is based not only on the ice, banana, or what have you but it's HOW you fell. What kind of moves did you do before and after the fall?

Exercise 2: REWIND! (15 Minutes / Ages 9+)

[Exercise 2 Video](#)

This is a great activity to visually and physically understand your body moving from one direction to the pull of gravity reversing itself.

Start out in this age group by recording them do improv across the floor challenging them to explore different levels while they travel. When the class is done, have them watch their improv back, IN REVERSE. This will give a great introduction to this REWIND exercise.

Start by the first week giving them simple combinations, to then yell out REWIND! Have them not brainstorm how to rewind their movements.

Combinations can include:

- Walk walk lunge - rewind
- chasse chasse lunge crawl - rewind
- Run run tuck and roll - rewind
- Turn turn plie fall - rewind

As a class, have students work together on each.

Combination (15 Minutes / Ages 9+)

Give each student a different sequence and put to music and see it unfold into a dance. Try this as a combination with different sequences of movements.

Week 1

Have students explore traveling across the floor then coming to center, each assigned with a different movement. You can choose the movements from Exercise 2 above, or your own. Next, have them rewind their movement and pathway.

Week 2

Give your students a short combination:

- Walk forward starting on the right leg for 4 count
- Run in a circle around yourself to the right for 4 counts
- Lunge forward onto the right leg
- Tuck and roll, tucking the left leg in
- Repeat on the other side

Weeks 3 & 4

Students each have a different entrance to get travel across the room, then come to center. Everyone does the same combination (from week 2). Then students rewind their entrances to go off.

Week 2

They all come on differently. Then they do the same sequence, together.

Weeks 3

They all come on differently. Then they do the same sequence, together. Then half the class does a sequence forward while the other half reverses the movements.

Week 4

Repeat week 3 or continue on with your own choreography!