

## DANCE OF THE DESERT SANDS

Music	Falco Borsboom
Dance	Maria Speth
Time	4/4
Prelude	none
Formation	free in the space, the mountains form their own poses, the snakes lie upon the ground
Equipment	stretch cocoons or 1-person (single bed size) fitted, stretch matrass covers, the leg parts of children's sized tights (often referred to as nylons or leotards) or long stretch socks
Target group	suggested 9 to 12 years

### ***Explanation***

- The desert is continuously changing shape. In actuality it is made of moving sand hills created by a strong yet playful wind. This is the origin of the inspiration for this dance. One desert animal also enters this scene, the snake.
- In order to easily distinguish between the various parts of this dance the music is made in 3 different tracks. These are indicated in the dance as such: track A as #1, track B as #2 and track C as #3.

### ***Organisation***

Costumes are essential to this dance:

- Sand hills: Stretch matrass covers are an excellent choice for the moving sandy hills. Hold the cover behind you and place your hands and feet into the four corners of the cover. Stand with your back to the audience. The effect is direct and obvious. Simply by stretching your arms the entire visual effect changes. Observing each other and participating in the motions are both inspiring activities for the pupils.
- Snakes: Cut off the legs of a pair of tights and pull these over hands and arms. This creates the illusion of a snake and helps to develop the creative imagination of the motions of a snake.
- The ratio of sand hills and snakes is 1:2. Two snakes accompany each sand hill.

## ***Dance Exploration***

### **Moving Sands**

- Use photographs of deserts to introduce this subject to the students. Explain how sandstorms re-shape the desert landscape and the hills themselves. It is for this reason that the term 'moving sands' is often used. Search 'pictures of desert moving sands' on the internet and you will find stunning photographs!
- Allow the pupils to take turns observing each other as they experiment with the bedcovers. It might prove to be somewhat challenging in the beginning but with some guidance and a simple framework the magic of the changing shapes will evoke creativity and awe.
- Encourage using large and expanding shapes with slow and flowing movements. Swaying back and forth and leading to changing shapes. Stop the movement once in a while to get a good look at the shapes that are exhibited. Remark upon the difference between slow, flowing motions and sudden quick shape changing. Explore all directions, levels and speeds of motion.
- Using stretch bedcovers will enhance the slow character movements. Place much emphasis upon creating new shapes both with and without the stretch bedcovers. Ask a pupil to repeat a short movement phrase; first without the cover and the second time with the cover. The contrasting visual results may be particularly surprising, inviting further exploration.
- Another inspiring method of exploring observation: a pupil, covered in a bedcover, creates an interesting form. The observation group must then attempt to create that same shape exactly but without the bedcover. Remove the bedcover from the posing pupil who holds her shape. Are the observers creating the same physical shape with their bodies? Explore these variations.
- Allow them to observe each other and work in partners. The observer may remark upon which motion has the best effect or even offer advice to improve effects. Exchanging roles often allows the pupils to arrive at marvellous results.

Practice Music #4 and #12

### **Dancing Snakes**

- The exploration of the dancing snakes may begin with one hand. Just as a real snake, allow it to carefully come out of its den while hesitantly turning or rising to exert a sudden attack, quickly piercing the space in front of you. The hand waves and twists exploring all around you. The other hand may join in as well. Two dancing snakes circling and passing each other. Eventually, you are the snake. Gently swaying, bending, subtle motions with your entire body. You may even venture out to explore the entire space meeting and dancing with other snakes along the way.
- Encourage the pupils to create their own snake story during their dancing. For example, is their snake a sleepy reptile who enjoys being lazy in the sun or is it a dangerous hunter searching for its next prey. Identifying the story of their snake may help to inspire the movements in their snake dance. A good option is to consider allowing the pupils to work in partners for this exploration.

Practice Music #17 and #18

### **Dance Structure**

- A general outline of the dance structure is offered here. You are encouraged to create your own group dance together with the pupils. The focus is upon a group interpretation of the Dancing Sands.
- Considering the 'New Age' style of character of the music, track A does not have a measure of time. The initiation of movement by the sand hills is signalled by a rustling sound that is clearly distinguishable in the music. The snakes emerge in track B.

#### Track A

a

Creating the scene: The sand hills stand in various poses. The snakes lie upon the ground all coiled up. Movement of the hills commences with the rustling in the music. The sand hills begin to move in slow motion, altering their height, direction and shape. The snakes remain still. Track A concludes with a freeze pose of the sand hills.

#### Track B

b

#### Bars

1 - 8

The snakes begin to move for the first time. They slowly wake up. Very carefully lifting an arm, a leg or the head. Uncertain, searching, turning around and then withdrawing somewhat.

9 - 40

Dance of the snakes. They move to new spots in the space. They could move independently, all together in a circle or in partners, ending in a chosen pose. Choreograph this together with the pupils.

41 - 52

The hills begin to move again. Slowly changing shape. The snakes remain frozen in a pose while sitting or lying down.

#### Track C

c

#### Bars

1 - 32

Snakes come back into action. A united dance with sand hills and snakes. Again, choreograph this together with the pupils.

33

1st thunderclap: the sand hills take their first pose and the snakes coil themselves up

35

2nd thunderclap: the sand hills take their second pose and the snakes move over the ground to their beginning spot in the space

37

3rd thunderclap: the sand hills take their third pose and the snakes stretch out and then slowly coil themselves up again

fade out

the sand hills move in slow motion to their final freeze poses while the music slowly fades away

### *Tips*

- Costumes for this dance are welcome, even if there is not plan for a presentation. The stretch material bedcovers are essential.
- If you wish to make cocoons yourself, ensure that the material stretches well. When stitching the seam of the cocoon use a lock-function on a sewing machine to allow the seam to become stretchy.
- Snake costumes are easy to make from an old pair of children's tights (nylons, leotards). Cut off the legs and stitch them to the short sleeves of a t-shirt. The heads of the snakes may be decorated by the pupils with snake tongues, eyes, etc.

