



### FAD Collections *Making Mill Town*

**Grade level:** 9-12

**Film:** Making Mill Town

**Disciplines:** Dance, US History

**Core Arts Anchor Standard:**

#7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.

**Dance Standard(s):**

HS Accomplished:

- Analyze dance works and provide examples of recurring patterns of movement and their relationships that create structure and meaning in dance.
- Synthesize content generated from stimulus materials to choreograph dance studies or dances using original or codified movement.
- Analyze dances from several genres or styles, historical time periods, and/or world dance forms. Discuss how dance movement characteristics, techniques, and artistic criteria relate to the ideas and perspectives of the peoples from which the dances originate.
- Use established research methods and techniques to investigate a topic. Collaborate with others to identify questions and solve movement problems that pertain to the topic. Create and perform a piece of choreography.

1. Before watching the film, have students do research (or provide the information) on Bates Dance Festival and Stephan Koplowitz
2. Choose the focus—choreographic process or historical connections
3. Watch the film. While watching, have the students use the graphic organizer to take notes
4. Use the general questions for student discussion or a written assignment

5. Assign the written and movement exploration assignments for the focus you chose
6. Have students share their work and discuss

Before watching the film, share the following information with students about Bates Dance Festival and Stephan Koplowitz:

### **Bates Dance Festival**

You can choose to direct students to <https://www.batesdancefestival.org/about/history/> for information or provide the key points below

- Summer dance festival in Lewiston, Maine on the Bates College campus
- Started in 1983
- Has trained dancers across the country AND world for 35 years
- Known for its non-competitive and its community spirit. Unlike similar festivals, there is no audition required but applicants must have studied modern and one other dance discipline continuously 4 or more years
- Festival includes a Young Dancers Workshop, Professional Training Program, Youth Arts Program and a Performance Series

### **Stephan Koplowitz**

Again, students can be guided to Stephan Koplowitz's website to research and find their own information or the list of key points below can be shared. <https://www.skoplowitz.com/about>

- Award winning director, choreographer and media artist
- Most known for his site-specific work
- BA in Music composition & MFA in choreography both from University of Utah
- Lived and worked in NYC for 23 years before becoming the dean of The Sharon Disney Lund School of Dance at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts, Los Angeles) where he served for 10 years
- He is a contributor to the first book published on site-specific choreography, *Site Dance*
- FOR MORE INFO: [www.koplowitzprojects.com](http://www.koplowitzprojects.com)
- See his work at [www.youtube.com/user/lanycart](https://www.youtube.com/user/lanycart)

### **General Discussion or Written Prompt questions after viewing:**

1. I enjoyed...  
I learned...  
I observed...  
I wonder...
  
2. Around 13:50 in the film, a child performer from the first section of the piece asks—"Is it a dance?" in response to what they learned. The rehearsal director responds: "That is always a question. For me everything is a dance"
  - What is your definition of dance? What do you think the difference between movement and dance is? Do you believe that the section the child is referring to is "dance?"
  
3. Near the beginning of the film, Laura Faure discusses why she thinks site work is important and how it builds dance audiences. Look at the quote below.

"Site work is an incredible audience builder. Particularly when you're making work in public places. People collide with it. The police are there, the kids are there, the skateboarders are there, and they get curious and I just love that collision that happens completely by accident in public spaces. And I love the way that it shifts people's perspectives on what is performance and what is place. I think it's a really great thing for our field because just being stuck with trying to get butts in seats and survive on how many tickets you can sell is a model that doesn't work anymore."

  - Do you agree or disagree with her? Please explain why.
  - In what ways can we bring dance to our community?
  
4. There were multiple collaborators who worked on this project including Music Composer, Costume designer, Rehearsal Director, Lighting Designer, Visual/media Installation Producer, Core dancers, etc. Who is "1" collaborator you found most interesting , "2" questions you still have about their work and "3" things you learned that you found interesting regarding their process and/or contribution.

### **Focus: Choreographic Process**

Every choreographer has their own way of creating a piece and the possibilities are endless. In “Making Mill Town”, choreographer Stephan Koplowitz, touches on many aspects of his process from inspiration, movement creation, choice making, and collaboration with other artists. As you watch the film, use the provided graphic organizer to take notes on what you learn about his choreographic process.

#### **Written Assignment:**

Based on your notes, describe Stephan Koplowitz's creative process as a choreographer. Choose one area where your personal choreographic process is different from Koplowitz and explain how it differs. Lastly, what new ideas can you take from his process and try to implement or inform your own choreographic process in the future? Be specific

#### **Movement Exploration assignment:**

Koplowitz used old time photographs of factory workers to recreate the shapes as well as bring out the essence of looking into their eyes and use the personal stories that may come out. Choose one of the following photographs and create a short movement phrase. Be sure to use the two ways Koplowitz used images: shape and story inspiration. Your phrase should begin and end in a static shape from your image. When creating your story to go along with the image, consider:

- What might have been happening before this moment in time?
- what happens next?
- Study the environment and surroundings
- The subject's clothing, facial expression and interaction with the environment

\*Your phrase should be a minimum of 2 8's in length.

**Extension:** Pair two dancers together and have them teach each other their phrases. As the dancers to combine into a longer duet study by deciding on the sequence, creating transitions, using a minimum of 2 choreographic tools. Remind dancers to be sure they consider elements of dance and how they can vary them (body, energy, space and time) to create interest.

**Use this chart to take notes about Koplowitz choreographic process as related to the categories, while you watch the film. You can write words, quotes, draw pictures or anything else that will jog your memory when the film is not playing.**

Inspiration	Movement Creation	Choice Making	Collaborators & their influence	Other points of interest based on Koplowitz process

### **Focus: Historical Connection**

*Mill City* is inspired by the mill factories of Lewiston, ME. Throughout the film, historical information about the Lewiston mills is presented. As you watch, please take notes on the provided graphic organizer with the information you hear and see.

#### **Written Assignment:**

Use your notes and choose one of the sections from the dance (listed below) to discuss where and how you see the historical information influence the choices within the work as well as ways it is abstracted into movement. There is no literal or pantomimed movement within the choreography, yet the work is based on interviews, photographs, historical information, and artifacts—where do you see the connections?

Sections for purpose of this assignment:

1. Outside with slubbers (33:45-35:10)
2. Inside (35:16-36:23)
3. Video projection sections (36:26-37:35)
4. Audience seated (37:38 -40:47)

#### **Movement Exploration assignment:**

One of the ways that Koplowitz conducted research to gain historical information was through interviews.

1. Choose a historical location in your hometown that has a rich story that you are interested in finding more about
2. Find someone who is still living that can give you information about the location.
3. Conduct an interview, using the Interviewing document as a guide
4. Pull out verbs and adjectives from the interview that you can express through movement
5. Create an abstracted phrase based on #4 that you will share with the class

Try to stay away from literal movement. Look back at the ways you saw Koplowitz use historical information to influence the creation of dance choreography from your written assignment.

### Interviewing

In order to hear good stories, you have to be a good listener and interviewer. The person you talk to will be the subject of the interview. Be prepared with a few questions.

#### **Six Tips for Getting a Good Interview**

1. *Ask permission to share the information you learn.* Tell the subject that you are looking for information as part of a school assignment. If you selected a particular person because you heard they are very knowledgeable and a good storyteller, you might mention that, as well.
2. *Look interested.* If you are conducting your interview over the telephone, indicate that you are listening by asking relevant questions and responding appropriately to what they are telling you.
3. *Do not try to write down every word that your interviewee says.* Spend most of your time simply listening. Do make note of names, specific events, and colorful words or expressions that he/she uses.
4. *When your interviewee stops talking, wait.* Do not rush in with another question or comment. You will find that people often add interesting tidbits at the end of a statement or section of the story. Try to wait five seconds before asking another question.
5. *Ask a follow-up question or two.* If the person you are interviewing briefly mentions something that you think is interesting, ask him or her to tell a little bit more about it.
6. *Remember that a good interview is a conversation.* It's okay to go in with a few questions written down, but do not walk in with a list of ten or twelve questions that you mechanically ask one by one.

## Dance Observation Notes (ELA Connection)

What do you **first** notice when you watch a dancer perform? Do you notice the *colors* of their *costumes*? Do you notice the props they hold or the *speed at which they move*? Do you perceive *emotion* in the performance? All of these observations contain meaning! Colors, movements, and everything else help the dancer express through movement what cannot always be expressed through words. Try to watch without judgement and overthinking.

Use this chart to record your observations. Then use your observations to determine the meaning of the performance

What do you see?	Describe the movement? How does the performer(s) move?	What emotion do you feel coming from the performers?	What meaning do all of these have? (Because of these things, I believe the dance is about _____) <b>A THESIS STATEMENT</b> EX: This dance may be about a young girl having trouble with a relationship as evidenced by the dark colors, quick anxious movements, and the inconsistent distance between the dancers.
 (number of dancers/ costumes/ colors/ props) <b>ADEJECTIVES / NOUNS</b> EX: PURPLE DRESSES EX: SEVEN ALES	 <b>VERBS/ADVERBS</b> EX: SHUFFLE QUICKLY EX: CRAW CAUTIOUSLY	 <b>ADJECTIVES</b> EX: SORROW EX: JOY	

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