

# Soldier's Mass

## YEARS 11 & 12

**Strands** Making (Choreography, Performing)

**Prior Knowledge** Knowledge, understanding and application of elements of dance applicable in Year 7 to Year 10

**General Capabilities and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills** Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Communication, Personal and Social Skills, Collaboration, Teamwork and Intercultural Understanding

**Syllabus Objectives** Demonstrate an understanding of dance concepts and skills; apply literacy skills; organise and apply the dance concepts; apply technical skills; realise meaning through expressive skills; create dance to communicate meaning; evaluate dance, justifying the use of dance concepts and skills.

**Access or download these free classroom resources to complement this Activity Sheet:**

**WEBSITE ACTIVITY REFERENCE** [The Master Series Production Notes for the Classroom — Soldier's Mass](#)

**FLASHCARDS** 1.4.1, 1.4.2, 6.1.4, 6.1.5, 6.1.9

**OTHER RESOURCES** Photographs of war images, mostly consisting of young men going off to war. For example, soldier's being given parades before going off to war, or young men in uniforms both before and after war.

### ACTIVITY 1: DEVELOPING UNISON MOVEMENT

- As a class, read *The Master Series* production notes for Jiří Kylián's *Soldier's Mass* and discuss the viewpoint questions. Focus on the use of formations and unison.
- Provide students with photographs of war images showing young men going off to war and discuss the types of imagery that arises i.e. How do the images make the students feel? Do they see shapes in the images — curved or angular? Can they imagine how the soldier's felt in the images? How do you think you could portray this in dance?
- After this discussion, get students up and walking around the space whilst thinking about the images. Do the images make them feel heavy or light when they walk? What pathway across the floor do they feel like taking? Ask students to change their walking patterns i.e. try walking beside another student in the room then break away into their own pattern again. See if students can join in with several other students and walk around the space together before breaking away again. Continue this exercise until students feel comfortable moving fluidly around the space.
- Break students into groups of approximately six students. Show and discuss QB Flashcards for pathways (geometric and curved).
- Students map out a pathway for their group to follow, walking as a straight line of six people. Keep the pathway simple — it may just cross the room several times. Individual groups practice walking this pathway in unison (QB Flashcard).
- Once each group has perfected this, put the walking to music to see if it changes the speed of the walking or the dynamic of the movement.
- Discuss with students how music can impact movements and select a piece of music that will become the set piece for the next activity.
- As a class, discuss any challenges or surprises. Discuss how it felt to work in unison. Did the students need to watch each other as they walked? Was it easy to keep in line as they moved? Did the music help keep them together or did it make it more difficult?

### Viewpoint Questions

- What are some of the elements that are typical in Jiří Kylián's works?
- How does Kylián utilise unison movement in his works?

### Extension Activity

- Students can experiment with different pathways, i.e. curved and angular pathways or a combination, to find the one that works best for their group.



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### ACTIVITY 2: ABSTRACTION AND ACCUMULATIVE CANON

- Refer to Activity 1. Begin the lesson by revising the original walking sequences in groups of six with music.
- Once each group has practiced their unison walking sequence, explain the concept of abstraction using the QB Flashcard.
- Get the students in groups to develop six literal movements using the photos viewed previously as stimuli. For example, they could copy the shapes in the pictures or create movement from the feelings they felt when looking at the pictures. Once they have affirmed these movements, students abstract them so that the meaning is obscured. Simple methods of abstraction could include using only the arms (fragmentation), changing the direction/level/pathway or performing it backwards (retrograde). Once these abstracted movements are created, students are to create a sequence joining the six movements together.
- In the groups of six, students are to then break into pairs and assign each pair a number (one, two or three). Pair one will only perform the first two movements of the six-movement-sequence. Pair two will perform the first four movements of the sequence and pair three will perform the entire sequence. Use the QB Flashcard for accumulative canon to further explain this concept.
- Groups decide how many steps they will take as a group in their walking canon before pair one will stop and perform the first two movements. The rest of the group will continue walking. Once complete, pair one will fall back into line with the group and walk (they may be two steps behind but as long as they walk in unison). The same number of steps will be taken by the group before pair two performs their sequence and then pair three. Each group is to practice this by counting aloud until they have the pattern organised. They will need a large space to do it all together, or perform one group at a time in a smaller space.
- Once the groups are confident with their sequence and break-out pair sequences, put on the selected piece of music from last lesson, and get each group to practice working their sequence to the music.

### Viewpoint Questions

- How does Kylián utilise "break-out" pas de deux's in *Soldier's Mass*?
- What is Kylián trying to communicate by moving the dancers out of the unison formations in partners or trios?
- How does Kylián create meaning in his works without using a narrative structure?

### Example Assessment Task

- Lengthen the activity by allowing students to create longer sequences from the stimulus photos and experimenting with different formations for the walking sequence. Ask students to select their own piece of music to perform this to.

