

ScreenDance Study Guide

for Middle & High School

January 2026



Miami Theater Center and **Miami Light Project** work in close partnership, quite literally under the same roof, to support artists and expand access to high-quality contemporary performance. While MTC focuses on engaging young audiences and students, MLP centers its work on adult audiences and experimental performance. This complementary relationship makes collaboration a natural fit, allowing both organizations to support artists across generations and bring exceptional live-performance and dance on film experiences to Miami-Dade Public School students.

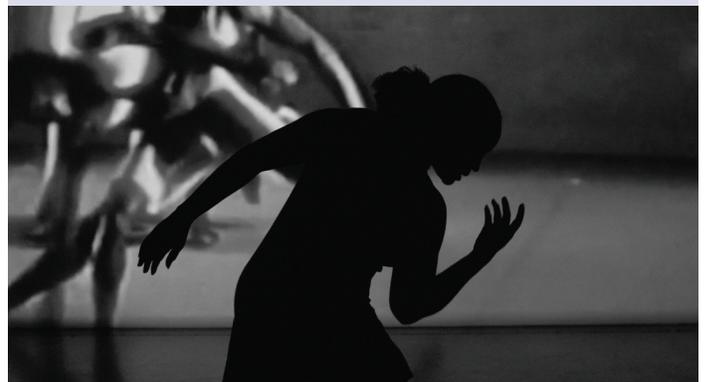
Program Overview

This program invites students to experience dance through the lens of film, exploring how movement, space, editing, sound, and environment shape storytelling. The selected short films span cultures, landscapes, and artistic approaches, offering students an expanded understanding of what dance can be and where it can exist. Students will view a curated selection of dance films, participate in a Q&A with filmmakers, and explore the relationship between dance and film.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Explore dance as a cinematic art form
- Analyze how choreography changes when created for the camera
- Identify themes such as identity, nature, time, joy, and belonging
- Understand collaboration between dancers, choreographers, and filmmakers
- Reflect on embodied knowledge and multiple forms of intelligence



Featured Short Films & Discussion Prompts

kopitoto (8:34)

FILM MAKERS: Lisa Kusanagi & Juju Kusanagi

Set within snowy Japanese forests, *kopitoto* invites viewers into a mythical world where humans and nature coexist. The film challenges ideas of morality, emphasizing presence and coexistence rather than good versus evil.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the environment influence the movement quality?
- In what ways does the film create a sense of mythology or ritual?
- How is the camera used to deepen our connection to the landscape?

itsy bitsy (6:37)

FILM MAKERS: Lisa Kusanagi & JuJu Kusanagi

Inspired by Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, *itsy bitsy* reimagines intelligence through movement, visual composition, and playful choreography.

Discussion Questions:

- Which of Gardner's intelligences do you see expressed in this film?
- How does the film challenge traditional academic definitions of intelligence?
- How do framing, editing, and repetition support the film's ideas?

Memories of Future Past (9:03)

FILM MAKERS: Dale Andree

Filmed in the Everglades, this work meditates on time, memory, and cycles of life. Nature becomes both subject and collaborator.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the natural setting function as a character?
- What emotions or reflections on time does the film evoke?
- How might this work change if performed on stage instead of on film?

Where We're Going (3:00)

FILM MAKERS: Heidi Duckler & Katherine Helen Fisher

Filmed on a rooftop in downtown Los Angeles and performed by dancers alongside building workers, this film explores belonging and chosen family.

Discussion Questions:

- Who is included as a "dancer" in this film?
- How does location shape the meaning of the work?
- What does belonging look like in movement?

Still Moving (3:53)

FILM MAKERS: Jonny White

A concise, kinetic work that plays with stillness, motion, and perception.

Discussion Questions:

- What moments feel still, even when movement continues?
- How does pacing affect your experience of time?
- How might this film translate into a live performance?

On My Way to You (8:07)

FILM MAKERS: Andreia Rodrigues, Miroslav Kochánek, Astrid De Haes, Brecht Van Vliet, Jonathan Van Hemelrijck

A poetic exploration of connection, distance, and arrival through movement and cinematic storytelling.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the film communicate relationships without words?
- What role does editing play in shaping emotional connection?
- How does the title influence your interpretation?

Workshop Leaders

Lisa Kusanagi

Lisa Kusanagi is a multidisciplinary artist working in dance, film, performance art, and visual art. Her work has been presented in over 30 countries at major venues and festivals, including Film at Lincoln Center, Eye Filmmuseum in Amsterdam, and the Ann Arbor Film Festival. Her dance films *itsy bitsy* and *kopitoto* have received international awards and critical recognition. Kusanagi is a Pola Art Foundation Fellow in Japan and a recipient of Miami Individual Artists Grants. She holds an MFA in Dance from Hollins University and a BA in Dance from Sonoma State University.



Osmani Tellez

Osmani Tellez is a Cuban-born choreographer, dancer, and teacher, and a graduate of Cuba's Escuela Nacional de Arte. He has performed with leading companies across Latin America and the U.S., including Danza Abierta, Danza Hoy, Rajatabla Danza, and Neodanza, where he served as resident choreographer. A long-time collaborator of David Zambrano, Tellez is deeply

committed to improvisation and has worked with internationally renowned artists across Europe and the U.S. After 12 years in New York City, he relocated to Miami, where he continues to create and teach. His recent recognitions include a Miami Light Project commission, multiple Miami Individual Artist Grants, and the 2025 Dance Miami Choreographer Award.

Creative Activity Ideas:

- Create a short movement phrase inspired by a natural environment and film it using a phone.
- Choose an everyday object and explore how it can become a dance partner.
- Experiment with framing: film the same movement close-up and wide to compare impact.
- Write a reflection on how dance on film differs from dance on stage.

Closing Reflection

Dance on film invites us to see movement differently, blurring the boundaries between choreography, cinema, and lived experience. These works encourage curiosity, empathy, and creative risk-taking, reminding us that dance can exist anywhere and tell stories in endless ways.



Useful Resources for Teachers

Here is a Florida and M-DCPS–friendly list of classroom resources, tailored for high school dance and dance on film, with direct links and notes on how each supports standards-based learning.

Dance on Camera Festival (Dance Films Association)

dancefilms.org

WHY IT WORKS:

- Excellent introduction to **screen dance vocabulary**, form, and analysis
- Supports Florida standards around **critical response, artistic literacy, and media integration**
- Includes short films that work well within class periods

Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive

danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org

WHY IT WORKS:

- Free, high-quality video clips with contextual essays
- Strong for **dance history, composition, and reflection**
- Aligns with M-DCPS benchmarks for **historical and cultural connections**



Teacher Survey

→ Please take a moment to complete this brief teacher survey - your feedback helps us secure grants that cover tickets and transportation.

National Dance Education Organization (NDEO)

www.ndeo.org

WHY IT WORKS:

- Standards-aligned lesson plans and screendance resources
- Clear connections to **Florida Arts Standards** and assessment language
- Professional development and classroom-ready tools

PBS Learning Media – Dance Collection

www.pbslearningmedia.org/subjects/the-arts/dance/

WHY IT WORKS:

- Curriculum-aligned videos with discussion guides
- Strong support for **cross-curricular learning** (ELA, Social Studies, Media Arts)
- Easy to integrate into M-DCPS lesson plans

Florida Dance Standards (High School) (Grades 9–12; visible on CPALMS and NGSSS Arts documents)

DA.912.F.3.In.b – Create, interpret, and respond to a variety of dance that integrates experiences or resources from outside dance class.

Students generate original movement, interpret choreography, and reflect on dance works by incorporating diverse influences and media (such as film).

DA.912.F.3.In.b – Creating and Interpreting

Students interpret and respond to a variety of dance through film analysis and embodied inquiry. They use creative thinking to explore movement ideas and filmic expression on screen.

DA.912.F.3.In.c – Career and Contextual Connections

Talking with working filmmakers and choreographers helps students analyze postsecondary opportunities in dance and dance film and understand required skills.

High school students looking for a paid summer internship working with kids in the arts, email info@mtcmiami.org for more information.



MIAMI BEACH

