



FOR GRADE 10 AND 11 ARTS (DANCE)

Learning Expectations supported by using clips from the *Dance in the Shadow* DVD-ROM:

(All clips are available free of charge on the Education page of larche.ca.)

Grade 10 — Students will:

Dance A2.1 Construct personal interpretations of dance pieces that depict stories, issues, and themes.

Dance A2.2 Analyze [the *First Encounter* dance clip] using dance vocabulary.
(see suggestions below)

Drama B2.1 Express personal responses and preferences and make connections to the themes presented in *First Encounter*.

Visual Arts D1.1 Create two-dimensional, three-dimensional and multimedia art works that explore feelings ideas and issues. Suggestion: ...as conveyed in *Revel in the Light* or in the short dance clip *First Encounter* or in the clip of dancers, Michael Barrett and John Delazzari:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wICA8AabGEI>

Grade 11— Students will:

A1.3 use the elements of dance to generate and perform increasingly complex dance vocabulary through improvisation and experimentation with a partner or in a group (e.g., Use contact improvisation to develop movement with a partner, with attention to considerations such as trust, the sharing of weight, and non-verbal communication).



Suggestions for Teachers

Use PDF 1 to introduce students to Rebecca and her early dance history, drawing on questions from the video *Revel in the Light*. Now go to the dance videos found in the EXTRAS section. We suggest working first with *I Can Dance!!!* (2:30 min.)—see PDF 2 for questions and related material on this video, or for more advanced students, you may wish to go directly to the dance video *First Encounter*. Teachers will want to emphasize the process of choreography in this video.

An introductory note for Students and Teachers in Arts (Dance):**The Choreography of *First Encounter*—a co-creative process**

For the dance *First Encounter*, Toronto choreographer Heryka Miranda initially served as a witness to the relationship that was emerging between SarahAnn and Rebecca during a leadership day at L'Arche for senior high students. Heryka then worked with them to choreograph the dance. She explains:

The role of the witness is seeing what is going on in their body action and then making suggestions built on some of these images. Facial expressions are important to highlight. At the leadership day, I could tell they were both keen to meet, especially SarahAnn, who seemed very interested in Rebecca but wanted to be very respectful. I introduced them during a break, but I had no idea at that point that they were going to create a dance together. SarahAnn asked me at first what was okay—for instance, whether she could take Rebecca's hand, and I told her that she could ask these questions directly to Rebecca. I explained, 'Rebecca is very expressive with her face and arms and shoulders—she gets very stiff when she is tense and doesn't like something. Rebecca indicates "yes" by responding with a smile, but she may need time to form the smile.'

I could see they were connecting and I took note of some of the elements and gestures of this first meeting. Later, I suggested I could work with them to create a dance. (It turned out that SarahAnn had studied dance when she was younger and had had a dance partner who had a disability at that time.) She was very pleased to be asked. I found some music and they listened to it several times and rehearsed a few times at Rebecca's home, in her studio.

I used what I observed from when they first met and suggested a structure around these observations, and then it became a co-creative process. For example, when SarahAnn puts her head on Rebecca's shoulder, this was a spontaneous gesture on their part. They decided to call the dance "First Encounter." We showcased the dance at the 64th Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy Annual Conference at the Marriott Hotel in 2011. Later, we filmed the dance at the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto.



About her own relationship with Rebecca, Heryka says, "Rebecca inspired me to try to understand more deeply what it means to have programming that is accessible. And she inspired me to actually dance again. I had not danced for a long time and then Rebecca came along and supported me in different solo performances. That's been an incredible gift she has given me."

Suggestions for meeting Expectation A2.2: "Describe how the elements of the dance are used to convey messages and ideas. (E.g. Pairing free flowing movements with slow music or silence suggests a dreamy mood; short quick movements suggest busyness; using symmetry and asymmetry conveys the idea of change or transformation.)"

At the beginning of *First Encounter*, SarahAnn speaks of coming to know Rebecca. Then we see SarahAnn dancing with Rebecca after several rehearsals in which Heryka helped them capture stages in their actual first encounter. Ask students to construct their own personal interpretation of *First Encounter* using dance terminology. What story does it tell? Then ask them to write a response to the video: What message(s) does it convey? Is it effective? Explain your answer.

Additional Questions on *First Encounter*

Introduce *First Encounter* by pointing out that the overarching theme is of a first meeting. Play the video inviting students to think about what is happening for SarahAnn. For Rebecca? What are sub-themes? (Above, Heryka describes stages in their getting acquainted.)

1. In the first 30 seconds SarahAnn speaks of her experience dancing with Rebecca. How do you think Rebecca would describe this same experience? (You may want to replay this opening section.)
2. What does respect look like? How does SarahAnn show that she respects Rebecca? How does Rebecca show she respects SarahAnn?
3. SarahAnn says, "We collaborated on the dance." What does "collaboration" mean? How do you suppose they collaborated?
4. Why is the title "First Encounter"?
5. How does the dance symbolize a first encounter? How is the progression in the relationship shown?
6. How is SarahAnn a leader in this clip? Given Rebecca's gifts and talents, how is she a leader as well?
7. How can/do you use your gifts and talents collaboratively to help others?
8. At the end of the dance, SarahAnn puts her head on Rebecca's shoulder. What does this signify in your opinion?

“The story of each one of us is the story of accepting that we are fragile.”
—Jean Vanier



You may wish now to play and discuss the following dance videos using the questions below or others you may develop:

Gratitude (8 min.)

1. Rebecca is not able to express herself in words because the type of cerebral palsy she has does not give her much muscle control of her voice and face. For example, smiling is difficult for her. But she can express joy and displeasure by sounds.
What do you think her silence means in this video? (The video takes place in a church... could it be reverence?)
2. How does the video teach about gratitude?
3. What are some of the challenges and opportunities when working with dancers with special needs?
4. (a) What effect do the dancers achieve by positioning themselves below Rebecca?
(b) By rolling across the floor themselves as they roll Rebecca's wheelchair?

Massey Hall Dance (6 min.)

1. How does Rebecca's involvement in the dance become apparent?
2. Was there a moment in the dance that especially touched you? Why?
3. At the end of the dance the narrator speaks of "a celebration against all odds."
 - (a) What does he mean?
 - (b) What do you think should be the role of dance in challenging society's values and perceptions?
 - (c) Is this important? Why or why not?

You Raise Me Up (4:30 min.)

1. What role do the two scarves play?
2. What is the significance of the song in this video? Who is being raised up?

“To be fully human is to discover who I am...”
—Jean Vanier

Video clips by Rebecca's dance partners: Anna Bruno and Heryka Miranda**(Click on SCENES)**

- Play the *Anna Bruno* clip, which focuses mainly on the development of her friendship with Rebecca over several years since they came to know each other in high school.
- Play the *Heryka Miranda* clip, which focuses more on choreography.

Questions for either of these videos:

1. What struck you about Anna's or Heryka's account of getting to know Rebecca and their description of their relationship with Rebecca?
2. What might you carry of their experience into opportunities you may have (now or in the future), to relate to someone who communicates differently or uses a wheelchair?