

# INTERNATIONAL DANCE DAY

## GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE  
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS

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## INTERNATIONAL DANCE DAY

April 29, 2010

### CELEBRATE / EDUCATE!

Dear Teacher,

This April, join in the International Dance Day celebrations taking place all over the world. This UNESCO-designated day aims to celebrate dance and initiate new audiences to a unique art form.

#### **Tie International Dance Day to your curriculum and invite everyone to participate.**

The Dance Department of the National Arts Centre would love to see schools in the Ottawa-Gatineau region and throughout Canada hold a one-of-a-kind International Dance Day event or activity that is **fun, free, instructive** and **interactive** on April 29 or during the last week of April.

The possibilities are endless. You could make a morning school announcement; read the International Dance Day message in class; invite a guest artist to facilitate an in-school dance workshop; open your dance class or rehearsal to parents, and students not familiar with dance; attend a dance performance in your community; hold a dance-related art-project exhibition or film screening; write a dance or dance-related article for your school newsletter or local community newspaper; create a mini-documentary about dance in your school ... or develop your very own event, perhaps in collaboration with other classes.

Still not sure? Here's another idea. In recent years, the NAC Dance Department has reproduced a series of choreographic dance steps created by several renowned Canadian choreographers as part of an initiative entitled *Dance Steps, Life Steps!*\* Why not consider this project? It is well suited to a class or group setting and can involve both dance and non-dance students. Once painted, the choreographic steps are highly conducive to interaction and can prompt other educational activities. Detailed "how-to" instructions are included in this document.

However you choose to celebrate International Dance Day, please let us know how you plan to mark the day! And, send us a photo or photos and documentation on your activities so we can share in the excitement. Include your full contact information in the event we need to get in touch with you to request permission to use one or more of your photos for our Web site or annual report. Our mailing and e-mail addresses are on the last page of this guide.

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

\* - *Dance Steps, Life Steps!* is an annual event created in 2005 by the Regroupement québécois de la danse (RQD).

## **The National Arts Centre**

The National Arts Centre (NAC) raised its curtains for the first time in 1969. Created by the Parliament of Canada as a Centennial project during the 1960s, the NAC has become Canada's foremost showcase for the performing arts. It is the only multidisciplinary, bilingual performing arts centre in North America, and one of the largest in the world.

Since 2000, Dance Producer Cathy Levy has programmed the best the world of dance has to offer for NAC audiences of all ages. Strongly committed to education, the NAC and the Dance Department give their support to teachers in bringing dance education to young people in the schools.

Join us in celebrating dance by marking International Dance Day!

## **International Dance Day**

International Dance Day was established in 1982 by UNESCO to attract the attention of the wider public to the art of dance. Since then, International Dance Day is celebrated all over the world every April 29. Every year, new international messages written by the President of the International Dance Council and a well-known dance personality are circulated around the planet as part of the International Dance Day celebrations.

## **2010 International Dance Day Message**

You are dancers, all of you. Life moves you; life *dances* you. To dance is to investigate and celebrate the experience of being alive. Like life, a dance creates and destroys itself in every moment. Like love, it is beyond reason. Ephemeral as breath, concrete as bone, dance is made of you. You sculpt space. You write with your body in a wordless language that is deeply understood. You grace the space within and around you when you dance. Force, trajectory, inertia, and recovery: dancing is a ride, a duet between your instinct and imagination. To dance is to heighten your experience of the present moment. Your body is your *location* - when you dance, you are profoundly engaged in being there. To dance is to feel the resonance of your life, to delight in your existence. To be human is to *be danced* by experience, energy and emotion. On International Dance Day, let's celebrate the life that moves us.

*Crystal Pite*

*Choreographer, Dancer and Associate NAC Dance Artist*

**LET THE FUN BEGIN ...**

# DANCE STEPS, LIFE STEPS!

## The Project

In 2005, the Regroupement québécois de la danse (RQD) created the initiative *Pas de danse, pas de vie!* (translated in English by the NAC as *Dance Steps, Life Steps!*) to celebrate and highlight the vitality, diversity and importance of dance artists in Quebec. Since then, thousands of people within and, more recently, outside the province reproduce the steps in the days leading up to April 29, in indoor and outdoor spaces to spread awareness of the art of dance.

With this goal in mind, we ask that you partner with the NAC Dance Department in showing how important dance is to our culture and our lives. By painting the dance steps inside or outside your school, you are making a symbolic gesture. **You are demonstrating the important role that schools play in educating and inspiring the dancers, choreographers and audiences of tomorrow.**

This year, we are happy to provide you with the dance steps created by Montreal-based dance artist José Navas, an associate dance artist of the NAC.

## The Artist – José Navas

**Born in Venezuela in 1965, José Navas has been based in Quebec since 1991. He has proven himself a talented and charismatic soloist on the international scene and has also created many audacious and striking group pieces. The creator of nearly thirty works as an independent choreographer or as the artistic director of Compagnie Flak, he now focuses his artistic research on the essence and purity of movement. Abstraction, sobriety, intensity and depth are the words that best characterize his current work.**



José Navas began his dance training in Caracas and continued it in New York, at the Merce Cunningham Studio. During that period, he collaborated with Stephen Petronio, Michael Clark, Lucinda Childs and various other independent choreographers.

José Navas moved to in Montréal in 1991 which marked his debut as a choreographer. In 1995, he founded Compagnie Flak. He fully dedicated himself to the company and the result has been more than three hundred performances in twenty countries over eleven years. Since 1996, the artist has been honored abroad and the choreographer

Photo: Valerie Simmons

has been much sought after by other companies and filmmakers. In 2000, the French magazine L'Express listed José Navas amongst the '100 personnalités qui font bouger le Québec' (100 people who make Quebec tick).

Since 1995, José Navas has choreographed for and danced in many highly acclaimed films. *The Village Trilogy*, by Laura Taler won the Prix Cinédanse for Best Canadian Dance Film and *Lodola*, by Philippe Baylaucq, earned José Navas the prize "Choreography for the Camera" at Toronto's Festival of Moving Pictures. In 1999, he was nominated for a Gemini Award for his performance in *The Golden City*, a film by Moze Mossanen

An engaged citizen in his field, José Navas has made his studio a research centre, a meeting place, and a laboratory of ideas. Seeking to promote the interaction between cultures, disciplines, and generations, José Navas/Compagnie Flak have initiated various activities relevant to the artistic community through residencies, choreographic seminars and master classes for dance professionals.

Source: [www.flak.org](http://www.flak.org)

## Dance Steps Template

Here is a template of the dance steps created by Jose Navas. The NAC Dance Department hopes to see them reproduced in numerous locations throughout the Ottawa-Gatineau region and across Canada in celebration of International Dance Day.



### José Navas choreographic dance steps © RQD

Number of steps: 14

Reproduce over area of 1.5 x 3 meters

Replace 'Départ' with 'Start' and 'Arrivée' with 'Finish'

The dance steps are for a solo dancer and represent an actual excerpt of one of José Navas' own choreographies. The template shows the placement of the feet in movement. Dancing the 14 steps will take only a few seconds but they can serve as a springboard for a related activity or activities imagined by you and your students.

### Before you start

1. Decide when and where you are going to create the steps. You can paint them on the floor in the main lobby of your school, cafeteria, classroom, gymnasium or corridor. You can also paint them outside the building on a pathway leading to the front door, or in the playground. The choice is entirely yours. If you choose to execute the project outside, keep the weather in mind.
2. Make sure you have permission to paint the steps in the desired location from your school administration and chief custodian before proceeding.
3. The choice of materials for this project is up to you but we highly recommend that you use water-based paints and soluble chalk as both will fade and disappear with time or make for a quick and trouble-free clean-up.

4. The ideal number of students (Grades 5 and up) to paint the steps is six: one to paint the right foot, one to paint the left foot, one to paint the numbers, one to paint the text, one to do touch-ups, and one to help where needed. If you have a larger group, consider painting the dance steps in more than one place.
5. Make certain that the following text appears next to the dance steps.

*Dance Steps, Life Steps!*  
International Dance Day 2010  
Choreographer: José Navas  
© RQD

By doing so, you acknowledge the artist who created them and the Regroupement québécois de la danse which conceived this wonderfully interactive initiative.

### Time Required

The first part of the project, the planning and **preparation**, is best done in the classroom at least of few days before the dance steps are painted.

The second part of the project, the **execution**, can take up to 90 minutes –one hour or so to transfer and paint the footsteps and add the numbers and text, and 20-30 minutes of drying time. The next phase, exploring dance concepts, is optional. A number of **suggested learning activities** are provided later on in this document.

### Preparation

1. Materials
  - one right-foot template transfer
  - one left-foot template transfer
  - two 8½ x 11-inch sheets of cardboard, clear plastic or vinyl (*to make your footstep template*)
  - X-Acto knife and/or scissors
  - tape measure, string and masking or painter's tape (*to create a grid from which to transfer the footstep design*)
  - 1 large bottle of white water-based paint or gouache (*for footsteps*)
  - 2 small bottles of contrasting colour water-based paint or gouache (*for numbering the right and left footsteps and writing the text*)
  - small paint rollers (*according to number of participating students*)
  - ¼-inch paint brushes (*according to number of participating students*)
  - paint trays or plates suitable for paint rollers
  - chalk (*optional*)
  - rags and water to clean-up unexpected messes
2. Print the **left foot** and **right foot** templates shown on the next two pages.

Enlarge the images to a more realistic foot size.

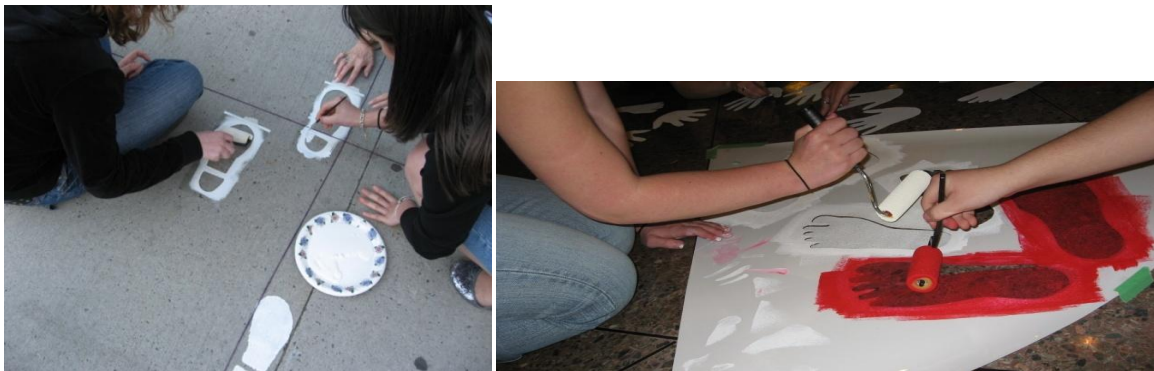




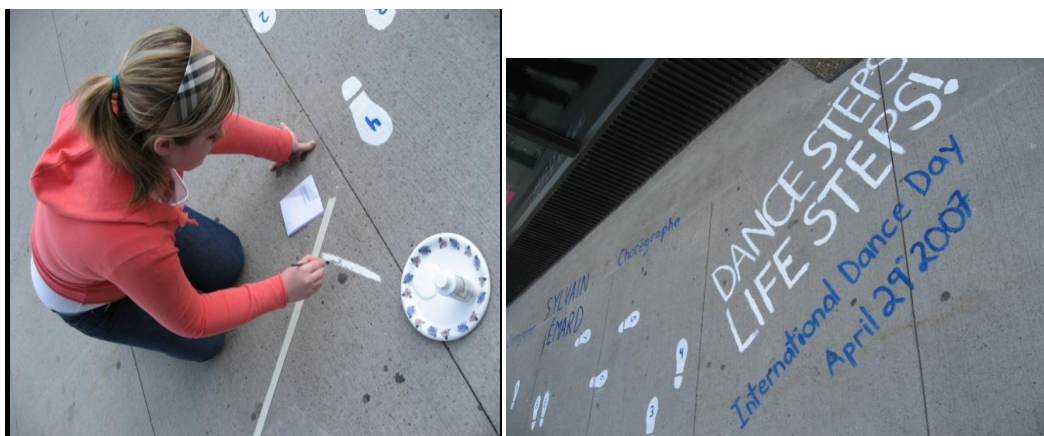
3. Transfer each foot shape onto cardboard, plastic or vinyl.
4. Using an X-Acto knife and/or scissors, carefully cut out the foot from the cardboard, plastic or vinyl, so you are left with an empty space in the shape of a footprint. This is the stencil you will need to paint each footprint.

### Execution

1. Now that you have decided where to paint the steps, make sure the surface is clean and dry.
2. Measure out and mark, with the help of a grid made from strings held in place with masking or painter's tape, your entire series of steps over an area of 2 x 5 metres.



3. Fill paint trays or plates with diluted (50/50) water-based paint or gouache.
4. Using the dance steps template as a guide, position the stencils and apply the paint. Paint all of the steps.



5. Now number the steps 1, 2, 3 ... Paint left foot numbers one colour and right foot numbers a different colour.
6. Write START and FINISH at the beginning and at the end of the footsteps.
7. Finally, add the following text:

*Dance Steps, Life Steps!*  
International Dance Day 2009  
Choreographer: Margie Gillis  
© RQD

**BRAVO, you have completed the dance steps!**

**Now, while the paint is drying, prepare to execute the next segment of your International Dance Day project.**

## SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### Now Dance it!

Exploring a few suggested dance concepts will allow you to build a longer dance project with your students. Concepts to explore include patterning, solo and group movement, gesture and placement of upper and lower body, timing, musicality, costumes, repetition, and improvisation.

1. Give each student an opportunity to try out the steps. Encourage them to try to remember the pattern after they have followed the painted steps. Put on music of your choice for inspiration.



2. Once everyone has had a chance to try out the steps and learn them, get your students to spread out in the space, then count them in to start “we’re all going to move together on one, after I count you for 4 counts, one, two, three, four, move”; do the steps all together as a group in unison. You may need to model the steps. Repeat a few times, so everyone feels confident that they know the pattern.

3. Now, comes time to play. Here are some ideas to get you started:
- a. **SHAPE:** The dance steps only show where to put your feet; there is no direction given to how you move your upper body. Experiment with setting specific movements for the arms and torso, or encourage your students to improvise.
  - b. **REPETITION:** As one large group, repeat the step pattern three times. Try repeating the first six or first fourteen steps a number of times.
  - c. **FORM:** Try the pattern now in canon form. Divide the class into three groups. Count them in and get group A to do the steps three times, group B does them twice, starting after group A has gone once, group C does them once, after groups A and B have gone. Experiment with when each group begins (i.e. try beginning the second group after six footsteps/counts in).
  - d. **SPACE:** Staying in three groups, experiment with beginning the steps in different areas of your space. You could try starting the steps in the downstage area (toward the front part of the stage) of your space with your back to your audience, so that you end the steps upstage (toward the rear part of the stage) facing the audience.
  - e. **MUSICALITY:** Try the steps to various different styles of music. Choose one that suits the length and quality of the movement and provides inspiration.
  - f. **LEVELS:** Although standing on two feet, the steps do not specify what level the body is at. Experiment and improvise with using different levels – try to see how low you can get, and how high you can reach.
  - g. **BALANCE:** Play with adding in a balance pose.
  - h. **SPEED:** Play with doing the steps quickly, or in slow motion, or speeding up and slowing down.
  - i. **QUALITY:** Pretend you are doing the steps as if in mud, or as if floating on a cloud, or on bright summer day, or on the middle of a hurricane.
  - j. **INVERSION:** Try to do the steps backwards. Start at the end.
  - k. **COSTUMES:** Bring in scarves or pieces of fabric and improvise with them while doing the steps. Play with adding in costume elements (hats, coats, shoes etc.)

For more information on dance composition techniques refer to:  
<http://www.artsalive.ca/en/dan/make/toolbox/chttoolbox.asp>

## OTHER CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

High School **Literature, Theatre, Media Arts** and **Visual Arts** classes can celebrate dance by:

- Creating a video that would be played in your school lobby the week of April 29.
- Writing a column for your school newsletter or local community paper.
- Taking photographs to document dance in your school.
- Highlighting dance projects that happen in your school, such as dance classes, dance clubs, dance performances. *Remember we're focusing here on the art form of dance, not on dancing at prom night.*
- Interviewing students and asking them to finish the sentence **I love dance because...**
- Photo documenting the creation and performance of the *Dance Steps, Life Steps!* project.

Elementary and High School **Visual Arts** classes can include dance in their visual arts lessons. Some ideas:

- Partner with your visual art class, and have the class paint the dance footsteps for you in advance of your dance lesson using the steps.
- Create a poster for a dance event in your school or community.
- Have students sketch a dance class or school dance performance.
- Have students paint as if they were dancing, including movement in their visual art creations.
- Use dance as the subject matter of an art project or mural in your school. Have students brainstorm and paint as many dance styles as they can think of, and research and introduce new dance styles to add in. Or, have students create art works that represent what dance means to them.

For High School **Canadian and World Studies** classes:

- Include a lesson on Canadian dance history, or on the evolution of contemporary dance in relationship to other world events taking place in the 1900s.

For Elementary and High School **Geography** classes:

- Create a dance project that thematically ties into other world days celebrated in April, such as Earth Day or World Malaria Day.
- Create a dance performance based on the rain cycle or the watersheds, or on a specific aspect of human impact on the environment.

**As mentioned at the beginning of this study guide, there are numerous other ways of celebrating International Dance Day, along with the *Dance Steps, Life Steps!***

**Past school activities include:**

- Making a morning school announcement
- Doing a conga line circling your entire school
- Bringing in a guest artist to facilitate a dance workshop in your school
- Giving a dance class to the football team
- Attending a dance performance
- Inviting the students new to dance to a dance rehearsal
- Having a dance movie night
- Screening the 14-minute film *A Very Dangerous Pastime – A Devastatingly Simple Dance Guide*:  
<http://www.artsalive.ca/en/dan/mediatheque/videos/videosDetails.asp?mediaID=462>
- Exhibiting a photo display of your dance projects
- Encouraging students to volunteer with a local dance organization to fulfill their community service hours

Keep admission to all events free of charge and remember to invite people who do not normally attend dance events.

## **RESOURCES**

National Arts Centre - [www.nac-cna.ca](http://www.nac-cna.ca)

*ArtsAlive.ca* - The NAC's performing arts education Web site - [www.artsalive.ca](http://www.artsalive.ca)

Regroupement québécois de la danse - [www.quebecdanse.org](http://www.quebecdanse.org) (*French only Web site*)

Compagnie Flak - [www.flak.org](http://www.flak.org)

International Dance Council - [www.cid-unesco.org](http://www.cid-unesco.org)

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