

Episode #6: “Move It” with Mitchell Larsen

Targeted Age Group: Grades 6-9 – Identity

A passionate and entrancing performer, Mitchell Larson embodies expression and shows students what a belief in oneself and courage to take risks can look like in practice. Students will develop creative expression and work toward a final group performance of a movement piece.

What to expect?

Part 1: Mitchell addresses students with an introduction to their practice; sharing advice, guidance and anecdotes.

Part 2: Mitchell introduces their practice with featured exercises, skill building, creation techniques, and artistic discussion.

Part 3 is an extension of Part 2 with additional activities, explanation, and discussion.

Part 4: Mitchell presents a performance they created with the combination of exercises and ends with “10 Things” (that they turn into 14 Things), with a list of advice, wisdom, lived experience, dos and don’ts, etc.

Episode Highlights

Artistic Skills: Live performance, communication, connection, sharing, collaboration, warming-up, movement exercises, cooling down, building movement phrases, inspiration, focus techniques.

Social Themes: Be weird, what is a multidisciplinary artist?, life is training, breaking down expectations, life outside of art, queerness, gender fluidity, finding identity through art, coming out, coming from religion, self-love and compassion, exploring comfort zones.

Possible Arts Education 6-9 Curricular Outcomes:

- Dance-specific Creative/Productive Outcomes including **CP6.1, 6.2, 6.3; CP7.1, CP7.2, CP7.3; CP8.1, CP8.2, CP8.3; CP9.1, CP9.2, CP9.3**
- Various Critical/Responsive and Cultural/Historical Outcomes, including:
 - **CR6.1** Create personal responses to a variety of arts expressions (e.g., respond to music using poetry, or respond to visual art using music).
 - **CR6.2** Investigate and identify ways that the arts can express ideas about identity.
 - **CH6.1** Investigate how personal, cultural, or regional identity may be reflected in arts expressions.
 - **CH7.1** Investigate how artists' relationship to place may be reflected in their work.
 - **CH7.3** Investigate and identify a variety of factors that influence artists, their work, and careers.
 - **CR8.1** Respond to professional dance, drama, music, and visual art works through the creation of own arts expressions.
 - **CR8.2** Investigate and identify ways that today's arts expressions often reflect concern for social issues.

- **CH8.1** Research and share insights about arts expressions that incorporate social commentary.
- **CR9.3** Investigate and identify how arts expressions can challenge thinking about values, ideas, and beliefs.
- **CH9.1** Investigate and discuss the role of artists in raising awareness or taking action on topics of concern.
- **CH9.3** Investigate diversity of artistic ideas, styles, and media in contemporary arts expressions.

Run Times:

Part 1: 22:56 Meet the Artist

Part 2: 29:33 Getting Comfortable with Movement

Part 3: 26:09 Creating a Dance

Part 4: 24:19 Dance Performance

Total: 1:42:57

Part One: Meet the Artist

Running Time: 23 minutes. Suggested Class Time: 30-60 minutes (Watch the video and follow-up discussion)

Getting to know Mitchell and their art practice. Mitchell discusses their journey, history, identity, education, influences, relationships, collaborative processes, and what a typical day is like as a professional dance artist.

Mitchell addresses the following questions:

1. How did you get started?
2. Was training part of your artistic journey?
3. What do you love about creating and performing?
4. How have people reacted to your performances?
5. What about your life outside of your art?
6. What are you most proud of?
7. What's a typical day like for you?
8. What advice would you give to young Mitchell Larsen?
9. Who inspires you?
10. How has art been important in your life?

Part Two: Getting Comfortable with Movement

Note: Students will need to be spread out with a comfortable amount of space around everyone. Suggested Time to complete Part Two is 60-120 minutes.

Warm Up (0-7:00 minutes): Moving your body and getting acquainted with self through movement. Warm up exercises include moving body in weird ways, isolating parts of body and shaking it, and isolating parts of the body and exploring swinging motions. Suggested time: 5-10 minutes.

Exercise One (7:00- 9:57 minutes): Walking through Space Imagining Air as Thick or Thin. Suggested Time: 5-10 minutes

Students will explore connecting to core muscles of their body through imaginative processes. Guiding movement, students will be instructed to imagine the air as thick or thin. Teachers can expand on this exercise and imagine walking through other forms of mass, such as water, molasses, concrete, etc.

- 7:00: Explanation
- 8:32: Activity – Teacher calls out “thicker” or “thinner” to suggest movement interpretations.
- 8:42: Discussion

Exercise Two (9:57-13:05): Leading with Different Parts of the Body. Suggested Time: 5-10 minutes.

Students will be encouraged to think about how it feels to move with different parts of the body and imagine the kind of person they embodied.

- 9:57: Explanation
- 12:01: Activity – Move through the space leading with different body parts as the teacher calls them out
- 12:11: Discussion

Exercise Three (13:05-16:40): Mirroring. Suggested Time: 5-10 minutes

Mirroring can be magical. It's about connecting with other people, and it takes on its own life. This exercise teaches students to engage in role of leading and following. Students will learn the responsibilities of taking on a leadership role, paying attention, and taking care of the person who is following you.

- 13:05: Explanation
- 15:29: Activity – Take turns mirroring each other's movements
- 15:36: Discussion

Exercise Four (16:40-20:44): Viewpoints. Suggested Time: 5-10 minutes

Students will break up different components of movement and think about movement in different ways through spatial and tempo exercises. Students will learn about topography; where we are in space and where we are in relationship with everyone else.

- 16:40: Explanation
- 20:44: Activity – Move around the space using different viewpoints: 1) the grid you're walking on, 2) your speed, and 3) the shape your body is making.

Exercise Five (20:52-25:17): Breath. Suggested Time: 5 minutes

Students will learn how to connect to their bodies through breathing exercises. They will gain an understanding about breath and mind-body awareness.

- 20:52: Explanation
- 23:41: Activity – Let your breathing guide you from a small position to a big position and back.

Cooldown (25:18). Suggested Time: 5-10 minutes

Students will go through various cooldown exercises, loosening up and relaxing the muscles they used.

Part Three: Creating a Dance

Students will create their own dance through various explorative exercises and will learn to make movement phrases that will be eventualized to complete a section of a dance. A completed dance performance will be created by combining multiple sections through collaboration into a finalized choreographed dance piece. Suggested Time to complete Part Three: 1.5-3 hours

Exercise One: Creating a Dance – Inspiration. Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Students will brainstorm by creating a list of different things their dance could be about, inspired by something like an object, place, event, activity, etc.

- 0:00: Explanation
- 2:06: Activity – Write a list of things your dance could be about and circle the one that is your favorite.

Exercise Two: Making a Phrase (2:48-16:02). Suggested Time: 15-30 minutes.

Students will explore shapes and movement, drawing inspirations from the list each has created.

- 2:47: Explanation
- 7:12: Activity – Start with a shape or a gesture and see what movements that leads to. Do a few movements in a row. (Suggested Time: 5-10 minutes)
- 7:20: Discussion – Connecting Phrases and Building Content (Suggested Time: 10-20 minutes)
- 13:13: Explanation – Structured Improvisation
- 13:48: Activity – Create a Structured Improvisation Based on Video Games.
- 15:30: Explanation – Notation and Recording

Exercise Three: Creating a Section (16:02-17:00). Suggested Time: 10-20 minutes

Students will string together phrases and incorporate structured improvisation techniques to create dance sections.

- 16:02: Explanation
- 16:30: Activity – Create a Section or Two. String together more movements or use structural improvisation and put a few phrases together to make a section.

Exercise Four: Collaboration (16:44-24:46). Suggested time: 30-60 minutes.

Students will work with one or two partners and complete a choreographed dance piece combining the phrases created. They will learn the ability to stay true to who they are while creating space for others to work with.

- 16:44: Explanation – Combining Phrases and Sections with Others
- 19:31: Explanation – Sharing Creative Space
- 20:32: Activity – Have Fun-Combine-Enjoy. Combine your movements with someone else's. Think of different ways to join them. (Suggested Time: 10-30 minutes)

Part Four: Dance Performance

Mitchell shares tips and tricks to prepare yourself when getting ready to perform a piece you created for others.

- 1) Getting Ready to Perform-(1:24: Explanation)
- 2) Focusing Exercises (1:39-8:00: Explanation and Exercises). Suggested Time: 15-30 minutes
- 3) A Bit about Mitchell's Process (8:14)
- 4) Mitchell's Performance (10:46)
- 5) Ten Things to Remember (10:42)
- 6) Thank You and Final Thoughts (18:18)
- 7) Bonus Performance (21:09)

Biography

Mitchell Larsen (They/Them)

Mitchell Larsen is a multidisciplinary artist who grew up across Saskatchewan and graduated from Grant MacEwan University's theatre arts program. They are a company member of Free Flow Dance Theatre and La Vióle Theatre. Mitchell has performed at the Remai Art Gallery, with the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra, at Saskatoon Pride Mainstage, as an opener for RuPaul's Drag Race-winner Alaska, and as a part of Logan Martin-Arcand's New York critically-acclaimed multiple-award-winning production, *The Gay Card*. Mitchell is currently developing a play entitled *Ethereal* through Persephone Theatre's TYA Playwrighting Unit and rehearsing for a multidisciplinary piece, *Unmasked* by Megan Zong, exploring a young woman's journey with psychosis. Mitchell has also taught performance arts for community organizations, including for Saskatchewan's GSA summit, Camp fYrefly and as a teacher and director at Dance Saskatchewan Inc's Creative Camps. Mitchell lives in Saskatoon with their husband, two roommates, two cats and a dog.

“In the end, when I am most happy and fulfilled is when I am connecting with other people”