

Dance

By Bill T. Jones and Susan Kuklin
Hyperion Books for Children, 1998



Reviewed by
Elaine Larson

"I am a dancer. I want to dance." begins this exquisite book coauthored by dancer and choreographer, Bill T. Jones and children's author and

photographer, Susan Kuklin. Look at the Bill T. Jones Web site (www.billtjones.org), and you will find an amazing list of credentials including awards, television, books, and works that he has choreographed. Susan Kuklin has photographed and authored an impressive list of books, particularly children books, as well as other media. Their collaboration captures the artistry and expression of both photography and dance. It also provides a wonderful teaching tool in a number of subject areas, particularly dance.

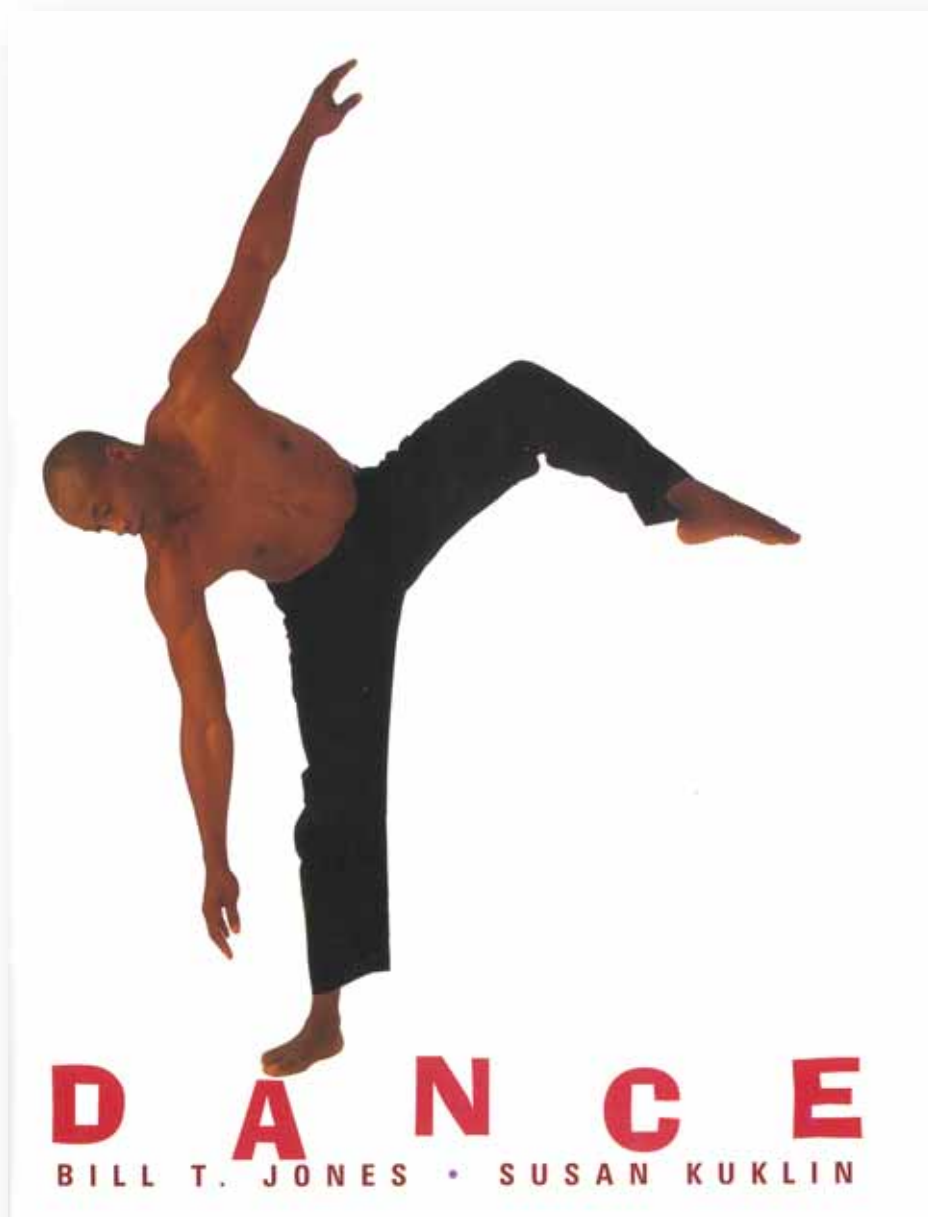
The photographs of *Dance* artfully reflect the beauty of human form and movement. Jones is clad in simple black pants in each image and they are all on a plain white background with no other props. Because of this, the shapes and forms are sharp and clear, and the movement appears to be suspended in space. The images are aesthetically pleasing and appeal to any reader, young or old. They provide a beautiful role model for a dancer of any age, especially for boys who sometimes need more encouragement. My student's initial reactions were, "How does he do those things with his body?"

Classroom teachers and visual art teachers can easily integrate this book into a unit on the human body at any grade level. The photographs provide inspiration for the drawing of human forms and can easily be combined with the study of other art images that emphasize dance or human form.

(Degas' works that focus on ballet dance come to mind, as does the work of Leonardo Da Vinci.) Physical education teachers might use the book as an example of physical conditioning.

The text consists of simple sentences in the first person. This convinces the reader that he or she is the

dancer or "I can do this." In fact, the simplest movement lesson would be to "dance" the book from beginning to end. Most pages consist of a sentence or phrase that describes an aspect of dance. Again, classroom teachers could use this as a writing prompt for an individual or class book beginning



with, "I am a dancer. When I dance".....and on it would go.

Almost every aspect of dance is included or implied in the photographs or the text. This relatively short book touches on the physical warm-up, the elements of dance, and most importantly, the feeling and emotion of dance. Teachers can choose to focus on any aspect of this in the book and develop a movement lesson from there. For example, a lesson can be designed on shapes; curved, straight, angular, twisted, symmetrical, and asymmetrical. Students can scan the book for examples of these and then carry those into making their own shapes. Other concepts include individual parts of the body, (neck, shoulders, hand, etc.,) front, back and side. Space is another clear dance concept demonstrated in the book—levels, directions, range, focus, and pathways. Nonlocomotor movement is obvious in the book while locomotor movement is implied through the photographs that seem to suspend the dancer in the air. Students can be guided in creating movement sentences from a list of locomotor and nonlocomotor words.

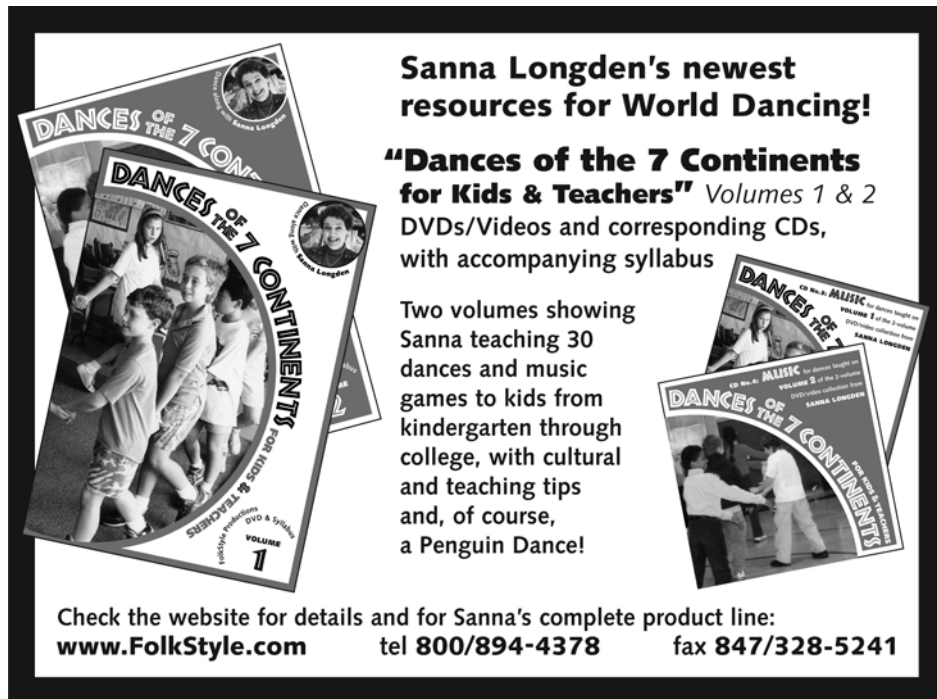
Musically, there is an implied ABA form. The book begins and ends with stillness and the same sentence, "I want to dance." The middle section implies a crescendo and decrescendo with increased and more energetic movement and then less vigorous movement toward the end. Students can create a dance form that begins with a frozen position, and then stretches into space, with various pathways. As the text gets to the part, "I am everyone," dancers can begin to connect with others, gradually coming to rest at the end. This can be performed with the book alone or with music that has the implied crescendo and decrescendo.

Dance will occupy a permanent place in my toolbox of lesson plans for teaching movement at all grade levels. "I want to dance" reads the final sentence. This is my wish for all of my students.

Elaine Larson teaches K-6 music at the Kaleidoscope School of Arts & Science in Kenai, Alaska.

Note: This book is available through the Bill T. Jones Web site.

www.billtjones.org/store/index.php



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