



unboxed

[tea]

WITH EDWAARD LIANG



Discussion Guide

This guide contains videos, discussion questions, activity prompts and pre-recorded activities to accompany Edwaard Liang's Chinese Tea variation created for the *Unboxed* project as we invite you to CONNECT, EXPLORE, CREATE, AND RESPOND.

LET'S GO!



- WHAT IS UNBOXED?
- MEET THE CHOREOGRAPHER
- ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS AND ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS
- VOCABULARY & INFLUENCES
- EDWAARD LIANG'S TEA
- DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
- MOVEMENT ACTIVITY
- MEET OUR PARTNER - FINAL BOW FOR YELLOW FACE
- REFLECTION
- STANDARDS

WHAT IS UNBOXED?

Unboxed is a project created and developed by Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and made possible through collaboration with **Final Bow for Yellowface**. We asked choreographers **Yin Yue, Edwaard Liang,** and **Peter Chu** to use their voices and vocabularies to reimagine the Chinese Tea variation from *The Nutcracker* on their own terms. These Asian-American dancemakers engaged in three-day workshops with the Hubbard Street Dancers. Their creative processes were not only artistically fascinating, but they also prompted the deep exploration of fundamental questions: **What are the traditions we want to protect? What do we want to leave behind?**

We are humbled by the work of Yin Yue, Edwaard Liang, and Peter Chu, without whose artistry this project could not exist. We are grateful for the insight of Phil Chan and Georgina Pazcoguin of Final Bow For Yellowface, who have led the conversation on eradicating cultural stereotypes from the dance field over the last 5 years.

Unboxed was created by Jessica Tong, Hubbard Street's Associate Artistic Director, and developed in collaboration with Jonathan Alsberry, Hubbard Street's Artistic Liaison. The project is championed by Artistic Director Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell.



A former dancer with New York City Ballet and Nederlands Dans Theater, Edwaard Liang has built an international reputation as a choreographer. Over the last decade, he has created work for the Bolshoi Ballet, Houston Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Kirov Ballet, New York City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Shanghai Ballet, Singapore Dance Theatre and Washington Ballet.

Born in Taipei, Taiwan and raised in Marin County, California, Mr. Liang began his dance training at age five with Marin Ballet. After studying at the School of American Ballet, he joined New York City Ballet in 1993. That same year, he was a medal winner at the Prix de Lausanne International Ballet Competition and won the Mae L. Wien Award. By 1998, he was promoted to Soloist. In 2001, Mr. Liang joined the Tony Award® winning Broadway cast of Fosse. His performance in Fosse was later televised nationally on PBS' Great Performances series "Dance in America: From Broadway: Fosse," and subsequently released on DVD. By 2002, Mr. Liang was invited by Jiri Kylian to become a member of the acclaimed Nederlands Dans Theater 1.

While dancing with NDT 1, Mr. Liang discovered his passion and love for choreography. Since establishing himself as a choreographer, his works have been performed by dance companies around the world and he has won numerous awards for his choreography including the 2006 National Choreographic Competition. In 2013, Mr. Liang was named Artistic Director at BalletMet where he continues to choreograph new works for companies both domestically and abroad. In 2017, he received an Emmy® Award for his short dance film, "Vaulted." In 2018, he created a new ballet with Roberto Bolle for the opening of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

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EDWAARD
LIANG

A stylized, handwritten signature logo for Edwaard Liang. The signature is written in a fluid, cursive style with a prominent loop at the end. It is positioned below the name "EDWAARD LIANG" and to the left of the name "LIANG".

A NOTE FOR OUR TEACH ERS



Essential Questions

What are stereotypes?
What is your relationship to your culture?
What do we think of as canon/who decides?
How is dance a part of your culture?
What is appropriation?

Enduring Understandings

Dance is varied and diverse.
Ideas can have multiple interpretations.
Dance has lineage and history.
People have lineage and history.
Dance steps evolve.
Cultural dance is not a monolith.
Cultural dance can be theatrical.
Culture is a part of all dance.

Discussion Objectives

Students will know ...
It is important to explore the lineage of the movement you are embodying.
I can create movement that is authentically me.
Appropriation is not inspiration.
Choreography is an act of self expression.
There are infinite ways to create dance.

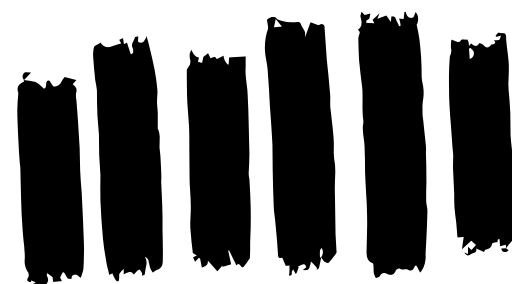
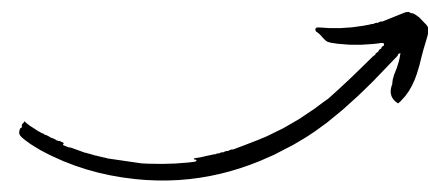
Students will be able to ...
Define stereotype, appropriation, and cultural dance.

VOCABULARY





CULTURAL DANCE



Forms of dance [that] reflect the cultural traditions within which they developed.

An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance, Joann Kealiinohomoku

VOCABULARY

* Stereotype

A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular group of people based on selected traits

* Appropriation

The action of taking something for one's own use, often without the permission of the owner. *Definition from Oxford Language*

* Cultural Appropriation

The unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices, ideas, etc. of one people or society by members of another and typically more dominant people or society. *Definition from Oxford Language*

* Canon

Often defined as a traditional collection of dance works, against which other dance works are evaluated. In other words, it means "a long list of works taken as authentic." Frequently critiqued for excluding non-western/European work. *Note: This does not refer to canon as a choreographic device.*

EDWAARD'S VOCABULARY

* Choreography

The art of composing ballets and other dances and planning and arranging the movements, steps, and patterns of dancers.

* Identity

Identity encompasses the memories, experiences, relationships, and values that create one's sense of self. This combination creates a steady sense of who one is over time, even as new facets are developed and incorporated into one's identity.

* Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to population groups distinguished by cultural ethos—the values, expectations, and symbols of the particular group - *Lum, 2004*

* Perspective

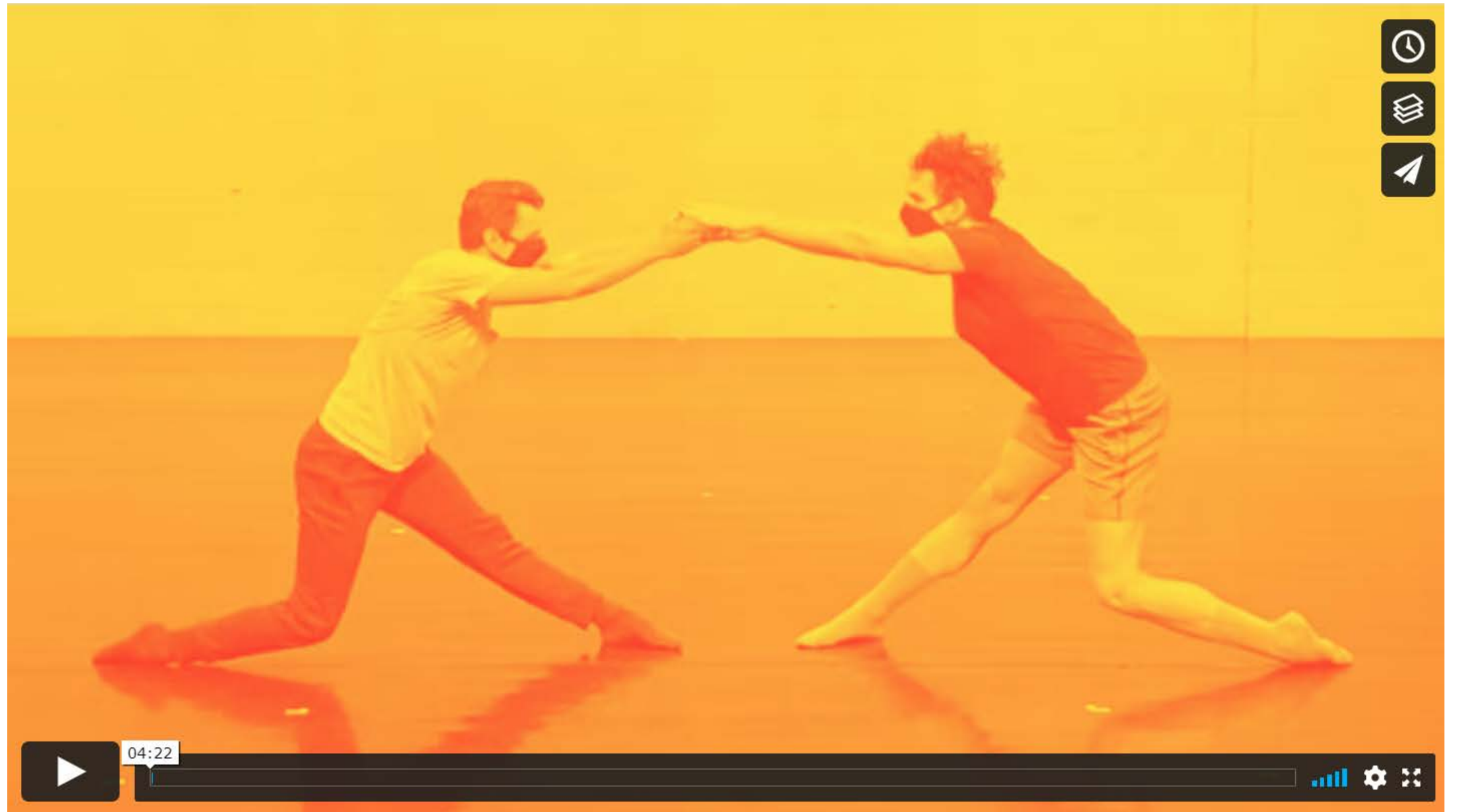
A point of view, specific attitude or manner through which a person thinks about something that was shaped by a person's identity & experiences.



EDWAARD'S TEA



"I don't think that any artist wants to be boxed into any sort of title or boundary. I cannot be myself if that doesn't come along with being a Chinese Asian American. Getting this chance to reimagine the Chinese variation triggered a lot of different things for me. I didn't realize how much responsibility I started giving myself — I wanted to do it justice. Unboxing, undoing, unbounding these restrictions and labels and constructs that have been a part of my life felt really heavy. I've never been so self-conscious analyzing my movement. At the same time, I loved having my button pushed to really self-reflect."



LET'S DISCUSS!

QUESTION



What was the dancers' relationship to the tempo of the music? What is the dancers' relationship to each other?

01

QUESTION



Why do you think the piece began in silence?

02

QUESTION

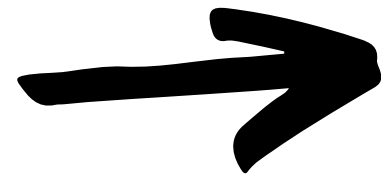


How do you become unbound from the stereotypes put on your culture or other cultures?

03

- What are recurring shapes in this dance? Why do you think this choice was made?

*LET'S DANCE
TOGETHER!*



It's your turn! Edwaard has created a fun dance phrase just for you to learn.

WORKSHEET



WHAT DID YOU SEE?

WHAT DOES YOUR EYE SEE?

As you watch the piece, note the dance elements you see below. Refer to the BEST dance vocabulary the Choreographic elements charts at the end of this lesson as needed.
Ex: I saw the dance begin in silence, & the dancer use straight arms and legs.

WHAT DOES YOUR MIND SEE?

Watch the piece again. What do you imagine is happening? What imagery do you see?

DANCE AS TEXT - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Using information from both columns, write your interpretation of this work. What story and/or characters did you see? Think back on what is informing what you see. How did this work 'unbox' what may be familiar to you?

MEET OUR PARTNER

FINAL BOW FOR

YELLOWFACE

Inspired by positive changes at New York City Ballet in 2017, we began to ask ourselves why other companies in America still present outdated representations of Asians in the Nutcracker and other ballet performances. We recognize that this conversation has been happening across the country every December, in communities large and small, from dance studios to professional companies - and want to consolidate the conversation. We also recognize the work happening in other performing arts disciplines, especially the great and productive conversations happening in opera and theatre, and wanted our ballet community to engage in the same self-reflection.

In the same way that Blackface is limiting and degrading to African Americans, continuing to present an 19th century view of Asians does not allow for character nuance for Asian American dancers today. If all audiences see is the bobbing and shuffling coolie from a bygone era as the only representation of Asians on stage, what message does that send to our Asian students who dream of dancing the Swan Queen? What does that say to the Asian audience members who want to see themselves on stage, only to find themselves as the butt of the joke? What does that say to the Board member, who writes checks and involves their friends, only to see a one-dimensional representation of their heritage?

In the spirit of making the ballet more inclusive, we invite you to join us by signing our pledge and committing to speak up against Yellowface on our stages, and working to create more positive and nuanced representations of Asians in ballet.

It's time for us to replace caricature with character; it's time for Yellowface in ballet to take a Final Bow! Sign the pledge now!

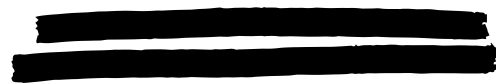
Phil Chan
Georgina Pazcoguin



Georgina Pazcoguin and Phil Chan
Photo by Kenneth Edwards

REFLECTION

What is your relationship to your culture?



Standards Addressed

National Core Arts Standards

DA:Cr2.1.3b Develop a dance phrase that expresses and communicates an idea or feeling. Discuss the effect of the movement choices.

DA:Cr2.1.4b Develop a dance study that expresses and communicates a main idea. Discuss the reasons and effectiveness of the movement choices.

DA:Cr2.1.5b Develop a dance study by selecting a specific movement vocabulary to communicate a main idea. Discuss how the dance communicates nonverbally. TH:Cr1.1.3c Collaborate to determine how characters might move and speak to support the story and given circumstances in drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr1.1.4c Imagine how a character might move to support the story and given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr1.1.5c Imagine how a character's inner thoughts impact the story and given circumstances in a drama/ theatre work.

MU:Pr4.2.3 Demonstrate understanding of the structure in music selected for performance.

MU:Pr4.2.4 Demonstrate understanding of the structure and the elements of music (such as rhythm, pitch, and form) in music selected for performance.

MU:Pr4.2.5 Demonstrate understanding of the structure and the elements of music (such as rhythm, pitch, form, and harmony) in music selected for performance.

Common Core Standards

ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events
ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.5 Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5 Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.



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