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HOOP DANCE
(American Indian)

SOURCE: The Winnebago (win-nee-bay-go) Hoop Dance was presented by Millie von Konsky at the 1977 Teacher Training Dance Conference at Merritt College, Oakland, California. Mrs. von Konsky studied Indian lore and crafts with Nahum Hersom, whose ancestry dates back to the Pequot tribe of the Algonquin Linguistic group. Mr. Hersom's Indian name, Wanagi-Waciso (dancer with the ghost rhythm in his feet) was bestowed on him because of his skill and performance of Sioux dances. Chief Whirling Thunder, of the Winnebago Indians of Central Wisconsin, honored him with the name Kanuga, or First Born Son.

The following description of the Hoop Dance was written by Mrs. von Konsky for those teachers of dance who attended her workshop:

MUSIC: Hand drum and drummer. The drum head is usually of rawhide, made from calf or deerskin. The drums are often decorated with painted symbols and designs having religious or protective meanings. The drum should not be tapped with the fist or hand; a drumstick is always used.

Sleigh bells on one's ankles complement the drum....they add animation to the dance and they stimulate and inspire the dancer into action.

Mrs. von Konsky has made a recording of the drum rhythms; she suggests, however, that the rhythm be carried by a drummer. He can watch the feet of the dancer and beat out a steady, even rhythm.

The hoop is made of a green cut sapling, which is wrapped around a suitable object and allowed to dry. Bound with bright colored cloth or ribbons, it is used to accentuate the dancing action, and at the same time, gracefully coincide with the body action. It is better to do a good job with one hoop than to fumble with many. A hoop should be 24 inches in diameter; a variation of an inch or two should meet the needs of anyone.

FORMATION: The Hoop Dance is a solo dance. The dancer should stand with feet together, holding the hoop in the right hand and downward at the right side. The drummer should stand forward, to the right, and facing the dancer.

STEPS: Toe-heel step, toe-heel-heel-heel step.

The 1,2, or toe-heel step, is one of the simplest, yet one of the most generally used, of all Indian dance steps. There are two dance positions in the toe-heel step pattern. The first position is taken on the loud No. 1 beat of the drum. On this beat, step with the foot touching the floor lightly with the toe. The second position is taken on the soft No. 2 beat of the drum by coming down hard on the heel. Alternate by dancing these two movements, first with one foot and then with the other.

Entrance.....Swing Hoop: Holding hoop in the right hand and at the right side, swing hoop forward and up above the head on counts 1,2. Bring the hoop down and backward on counts 3,4. Swing the hoop up and forward on counts 5,6

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SUGGESTED RHYTHMS UNITS AND RHYTHMICAL ACTIVITIES

PRIMARY GRADES: 50% rhythmical activities in physical education program:

1. Kindergarten and First Grade
 - a. Free rhythms - running, hopping, jumping, turning, walking forward and back and other combinations.
 - b. Identifications - rocking horse, trotting pony, swing, giants, elephants, trees and other objects, people or animals.
 - c. Few simple singing games in small groups.
2. Second and Third Grades
 - a. Farm life - planting, growing, harvesting.
 - b. Transportation - trains, airplanes, trucks, including loading, etc.
 - c. Simple singing games in small groups.
 - d. Indian dances with primitive culture unit.
 - e. Simple folk dances based on fundamental steps for eight-year-olds.

INTERMEDIATE GRADES: 35% rhythmical activity in physical education program:

1. Fourth Grade
 - a. Mission life in California.
 - b. Mining life.
 - c. Simple early California dances.
 - d. Dances of Mexico.
 - e. Introduction of folk dances based on dance steps.
2. Fifth Grade
 - a. Colonial life on east coast.
 - b. Activities of pioneers.
 - c. Early American dances.
 - d. California dances.
 - e. Thanksgiving.
3. Sixth Grade
 - a. South American and Island Dances.
 - b. By the conclusion of the sixth grade, each boy and girl should know how to schottische, two-step, polka, and waltz, even if these skills have not been mastered.

UPPER GRADES: 30% of rhythmical activities in the physical education program:

1. Seventh Grade
 - a. African primitive culture.
 - b. European folk dances with all basic dance steps.
 - c. Oriental dances.
2. Eighth Grade
 - a. Contrast of slavery and freedom.
 - b. American melting pot.
 - c. American square dances.

When dancing is introduced at this age, mixer-type, circle, line, and square dances are most successful. Boys and girls at this age do not like to keep partners for a long time unless they are advanced dancers.

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HOOP DANCE (continued)

and bring the hoop down and backward on counts 7,8. Change the hoop to the left hand, swinging hoop forward (on left side) on counts 9,10 and down and backward on counts 11,12. Change hoop back to the right hand, swinging hoop forward on counts 13,14. Swing the hoop down and backward on counts 15,16. Change the hoop again to the left hand, swinging hoop forward on counts 17,18 and down and backward on counts 19,20. Change hoop back to the right hand for the last time, swinging the hoop forward on counts 21,22 and then down and backward, counts 23,24.

The above hoop manipulation requires 24 moderate drum beats.

Now to add the footwork.....Starting with the right foot, step forward on the right toe (count 1), lower the right heel to the floor (count 2). Repeat the toe-heel step starting with the left foot. Continue this action alternating with the right and left foot as 12 toe-heel steps are taken (24 drum beats).

This foot action is done simultaneously with the hoop manipulation.

1. Hoop Over Head. Hold hoop in the right hand and at the right side. Swing the hoop above the head....then, slipping it over the head, shoulders, hips, and down to the feet....step out of the hoop with the right foot and then with the left foot. Beginning with the right foot, dance four toe-heel steps as this hoop figure is performed to 8 drum beats.

Perform this hoop sequence 4 times (32 moderate drum beats).

2. Step-In Hoop. Hold the hoop in the right hand and at the right side. Step sideways into the hoop with the right foot and then the left foot. Bring the hoop up, passing the hips, shoulders, and over the head, then out and back down to the right side. Beginning with the right foot, dance 4 toe-heel steps as this hoop figure is performed to 8 drum beats. Repeat 4 times (32 moderate drum beats).

3. Knee High. Hold the hoop in the right hand. Put right leg through the hoop, raising the right knee high. Bend forward and slip the hoop over the head, taking the hoop in the left hand. Step out of the hoop with the right foot. Pass the hoop back to the right hand and, at the same time, step out with the left foot. This manipulation requires 8 drum beats.

Now combine the hoop and foot action as follows:

After putting the right leg through the hoop, step on the toe (ball) of the left foot on count 1 and top the left heel on count 2. Raising the hoop over the head, tap the left heel 2 times (counts 3,4). This is done as the hoop is lowered below the hips. Change the hoop to the left hand as a toe-heel step out of the hoop with the right foot is taken (counts 5,6). Now change the hoop back to the right hand while taking a toe-heel step (counts 7,8) with the left foot. Repeat this sequence 4 times (32 slow drum beats).

4. Step Back into Hoop. Hold the hoop in the right hand. Begin the action for this figure by leaning forward as the hoop is brought backward at the right side. Extend the right leg back and through the hoop, stepping with the

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right toe (count 1) and then tap both heels 3 times (counts 2,3,4). Simultaneously, with the heel tapping, the hoop is slipped forward over the hips, shoulders and head. Also, during this action, change the hoop to the left hand. Now, step with the right toe (count 5) and then with the right heel (count 6). Change the hoop back to the right hand as a left toe step (count 7) and a left heel step (count 8) is taken. This entire sequence is danced to 8 drum beats. Repeat 4 times in all (32 slow drum beats).

5. Sitting in Hoop.

(a) Hold hoop in right hand and in front of legs. Lean far forward, bringing the head down as the hoop is moved between the legs and as far back as possible. As the movement is continued into a squat position, slip the hoop up in back, over the hips, back, shoulders and head. While manipulating the hoop in this fashion, tap both heels four times (counts 1,2,3,4). This is done to 4 drum beats.

(b) Now, as you begin to straighten your body, stepping out of the hoop with the right foot, take one toe-heel step (counts 1,2). This takes 2 drum beats. Then step out of the hoop with the left foot, taking one toe-heel step (counts 3,4). This takes 2 drum beats.

..... (a) and (b), as detailed above, require a total of 8 drum beats. Repeat the sequence 4 times in all (32 slow drum beats).

6. Tap Foot Through Hoop. Hold the hoop in the right hand at the right side. Hopping on the left foot 2 times (counts 1,2), tap the right foot through the hoop one time (tap count 1, lift count 2). Again, hopping on the left foot 2 times (counts 1,2), withdraw the right foot from the hoop (count 1) and tap it in place, beside the left foot, one time. Repeat this action for a total of 8 times (16 moderate drum beats).

To complete the movement on one side requires dancing a total of 8 tapping steps through the hoop and 8 back in place, as 16 hopping steps are taken on the opposite foot.

Change the hoop to the left hand and repeat the above movements, hopping on the right foot and tapping the left foot in through the hoop and out to place.

The above sequence requires 32 fast drum beats.

7. Cross Feet Alternately in Hoop. Hold hoop in right hand and forward in front of legs. Step into the hoop with the left foot....1 toe-heel step (counts 1,2). Leaving the left foot crossed in the hoop, repeat the above movement, starting with the right foot (the right foot should be crossed in front of the left foot this time). Perform this sequence 8 times, alternating left and right foot in the hoop with a toe-heel step.

In total, this action requires 16 slow drum beats.

8. Rocking Movement Without Hands. Maintain the crossed position of the feet (the hoop symmetrically framing the legs), as held at the end of the aforementioned (7). Take the hands off the hoop and bring the arms out in front and to the side, shoulder high. Move toward the audience in this position with 2

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rocking steps (rock forward on the right foot on count 1 and backward on the left foot on count 2, etc.). This is danced to 4 moderate drum beats.

Turn right and travel toward the back of the dance area, continuing the rocking movement 3 more times. This is danced to 6 drum beats. With 2 rocking steps, turn right to face the audience again. This is danced to 4 drum beats.

Take the hoop with the right hand....step out of the hoop for the finale. This takes 6 moderate drum beats.

9. Finale (Figure of 8) with Hoop. Hold the hoop in the right hand. Swing the hoop in a "figure of 8" design in front of the body. Start the first loop of the "figure of 8" at shoulder height to the right. As this hoop figure is performed, dance 12 toe-heel steps in place, alternating with the right and left foot. This requires 24 fast drum beats.

End the dance by tossing the hoop high in the air with the right hand, catching it as it comes back down. Holding the hoop in the right hand, swing it forward and up above the head to the right side.....hold this position for a final pose.

(Note: The foregoing notes are not to be reproduced without permission from Mrs. von Kinsky.)