

njpac
arts
education



jess

leprotto

**the david g. berger
master class series**

A photograph of Jess LeProtto, a Broadway performer, dancer, and actor. He is captured in a dynamic pose on stage, wearing a dark grey zip-up jacket over a dark blue shirt and olive green pants. He is sitting on a black stool, leaning forward with his mouth open as if singing or speaking passionately. His hands are raised, palms facing forward, with fingers slightly spread. In the foreground, the back of a person's head with curly brown hair is visible, looking towards Jess. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting a stage setting with some red structural elements.

about jess leprotto

Jess LeProtto is a Broadway performer, dancer and actor who's credits include *Newsies*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Cats* and *A Beautiful Noise: The Neil Diamond Musical*. LeProtto's specialties include storytelling, musical theater choreography and character embodiment through movement. LeProtto brought his signature energy and insight to NJPAC, leading a hands-on exploration of storytelling through choreography. His masterclass invited students to merge technical precision with emotional intention — helping them understand that every gesture, step and glance contributes to the narrative.

workshop overview

By the end of this masterclass and follow-up work, students should be able to:

- Integrate expressive movement into ensemble storytelling
- Demonstrate character understanding through physical choices
- Collaborate effectively in scenes requiring group coordination
- Translate emotion, rhythm and intention into choreography

seed questions to consider

1. How does physical storytelling change when you shift from a lead to an ensemble role?
2. In what ways can “The Noise” or ensemble energy influence a principal performer’s emotional journey?
3. How does choreography communicate what words cannot?
4. What choices make an ensemble performer stand out while still supporting the story?

exercises

1: A Beautiful Noise

Focus: Ensemble communication and emotional connectivity

Students explored how movement can express shared emotion and audience impact. Portraying “The Noise” — a symbolic representation of Neil Diamond’s early fans — artists practiced embodying sound, rhythm and feeling through physical storytelling.

Key Concepts:

- Using gesture to communicate tone and narrative emotion
- Understanding ensemble responsiveness and unity
- Translating music and lyrics into expressive movement

Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate how group movement can mirror emotional energy
- Interpret music physically to support a character or theme
- Reflect on how ensemble presence influences a lead performer’s arc

2: Newsies

Focus: Character development and scene dynamics

Students dissected an ensemble scene, switching between principal and supporting roles to examine storytelling from multiple perspectives. Through repetition and role rotation, they developed backstories and learned how to maintain energy, focus and intention even without scripted lines.

Key Concepts:

- Active listening and responsiveness on stage
- Building character depth through backstory and physicality
- Maintaining engagement and purpose as an ensemble performer

Learning Outcomes:

- Apply acting choices that support a scene’s central conflict
- Exhibit ensemble awareness by listening and reacting authentically
- Develop character motivation and physical life beyond dialogue



creative extensions

- Assign students to choreograph a short ensemble piece that represents a shared emotion (i.e., joy, protest, hope, fear)
- Have students journal reflections on how ensemble energy influences leadership in a performance
- Invite them to storyboard a short scene where movement replaces dialogue

resources

Books

The Viewpoints Book by Anne Bogart and Tina Landon

The Actor’s Art and Craft
by William Esper and Damon DiMarco

Dance and the Performative by Laurence Louppe

Videos

Newsies Live: “Carrying the Banner”
youtube.com/watch?v=YcUDZ88lyCY

bring the arts to your school

In-School Residencies

NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development

Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

arts training for students

Saturday Programs

NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs

Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in our immersive programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

NJPAC Arts Education Berger Masterclass Series team

Dr. Sherri-Ann Butterfield

*Senior Vice President,
Social Impact*

Jennifer Tsukayama

Vice President, Arts Education

Rosa Hyde

*Senior Director,
Performances & Initiatives*

Dr. Patricio Molina

*Senior Director,
Faculty & Creative Practice*

Roe Bell

*Director of Creative Practice
& Student Learning*

April Jeffries

*Manager,
Outreach & Sales Manager*

Andrea Seigal

Teacher Resource Guide Committee

Sarah Mickle

Teacher Resource Guide Committee

Azriel Wallace

Teacher Resource Guide Committee

Rob Reddington

Teacher Resource Guide Committee

contact us!

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our team at artseducation@njpac.org. Or visit njpac.org/education

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