

WOLF TRAP FOUNDATION PRESENTS

# *New Beginnings*

Valerie Branch



**WOLF  
TRAP**

INSTITUTE FOR  
EARLY LEARNING  
THROUGH THE ARTS

# ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Valerie Branch joined Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning through the Arts as a Teaching Artist in 2014 and became a Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist in 2018.

She conducts classroom and community based residencies, provides Baby Artsplay workshops, and acts as a trainer and coach for new Wolf Trap Teaching Artists. She also provides professional development workshops for educators and others working with children and families across the region and country.

Valerie graduated magna cum laude from the University of Maryland, College Park with a bachelor's degree in dance. Valerie is the founder and artistic director of VB Dance Ensemble, a professional contemporary company focused on bringing social and cultural awareness and change through the power of dance

## FOR THE TEACHER/PARENT/CAREGIVER...

### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Valerie is a dancer and choreographer. In this field trip, you'll see dances that she created herself, especially for this performance. Each of Valerie's dances reflects a different idea or emotion, using a variety of different kinds of movement. You'll learn how to make your own dances too! Here are some things you can do to prepare for your Field Trip experience.

#### **Get Ready to Dance and Create!**

- Find an open space. Clear a space on the floor around you before the field trip. There will be opportunities to stretch, hop, jump, roll, move your arms, and move in lots of different ways - so if possible, join from a space where you can move freely.
- Wear comfortable clothes. Put on something that allows you to move around easily!
- Everyone can join. We encourage you to share this experience with everyone you're with. You can adapt the experience to fit each person individually. Dances can be created and interpreted in endless original ways to fit your body, movement and style.

#### **Learn Something New About Dance and Movement**

- A choreographer is someone who creates and plans the movements for a dance experience or performance. Valerie will show you how to become a choreographer!
- Do you know what non-locomotor movement is? A non-locomotor movement takes place in one spot -- like waving your hands over your head, or bending up and down at your waist. How about locomotor movement? A locomotor movement takes you from one place to another, like walking, crawling, rolling or galloping. Can you think of some other locomotor and non-locomotor movements? Try them! Both locomotor and non-locomotor movements can become part of a dance.
- Make a frozen pose. You make a frozen pose by getting into a position and staying very still. There is no limit to the number and kinds of frozen poses you can make! You can make them on your own or with other people. You can make a frozen pose anywhere it's safe to stand quietly. Watch someone else make a frozen pose, and describe what you see!

## AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

### Create Your Own Dances!

- **Get inspired!** Check out the books listed here for themes and content for your dances that build on the ideas Valerie presented today. You can also use other books, music, or interesting things you have seen, to create new dance material. Can you think of anything special that you would like to make a dance about?
- **Who will you dance with?** You can make dances by yourself or with another person. Is there someone you would like to create a dance with?
- **For the little ones.** If your child is too young to create their own dances and movement, you can make up movements and movement sequences that they can do with you. Moving together with or without music is fun! You can also “narrate” your child’s movements for them, like - “I see you stretching your arms high up in the air”, or “I see you turning from side to side”. In addition to helping to build new vocabulary, this shows the child you are engaged with their dance, and watching them with care.
- **Dancing together from far away.** If you have a cell phone, computer or mobile device, and can access a video communication platform, you can dance together even when you’re not in the same place! You can share your dances, frozen poses, movements and even choreograph together.
- **Be safe!** Whenever it’s time to dance, be sure that the floor is clear, and that you are in a good place to do different kinds of movement, without bumping into anything or anyone!

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Children's Literature

These books explore themes related to identity and emotions, and can provide inspiration for new movements and dances like the ones created by Valerie for this Field Trip.

- **Caterpillar Dreams by Clive McFarland**  
(McFarland, Clive. Caterpillar Dreams. New York, NY: Harper, 2017.)
- **I Like Me by Nancy Carlson**  
(Carlson, Nancy L. I Like Me! New York, NY: Penguin Group USA, 2016.)
- **Anything Is Possible by Giulia Belloni**  
(Belloni, Giulia. Anything Is Possible. Toronto: Owlkids Books, 2014.)
- **Brave by Stacy McAnulty and Joanne Lew-Vriethoff**  
(McAnulty, Stacy, and Joanne Lew-Vriethoff. Brave., Philadelphia, Running Press Kids. 2017.)

## ABOUT THIS PERFORMANCE

This performance features several dances, including “Change,” “Explore,” and “Fly”. Valeris’s interactive dances encourage children to dance along as she explores feelings and emotions surrounding change, exploration, and chasing after your dreams.

## ABOUT WOLF TRAP INSTITUTE FOR EARLY LEARNING THROUGH THE ARTS

Research has proven that the arts are a powerful tool through which children can learn. Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts was established in 1981 under a grant from Head Start, a program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to support teachers' professional development and young children's learning. Through residencies and workshops across the country, early childhood professionals in partnership with Wolf Trap Teaching Artists learn arts-based techniques and strategies that empower them to integrate the arts in all developmental domains of curriculum. Age-appropriate experiences in music, movement, drama, and puppetry foster a love of learning and help support young children's skill development in social relations, creative representation, initiative, logic, mathematics, language, literacy, movement, and music.

### WOLF TRAP INSTITUTE OFFERS A VARIETY OF SERVICES INCLUDING:

**Professional Development Workshops** for teachers that are designed to provide age-appropriate performing arts strategies that are linked to early childhood curricular learning outcomes.

**Family Involvement Workshops** offer parents and caregivers of young children an introduction to performing arts activities that can be employed at home, in the car, and even in line at the grocery store.

Wolf Trap Institute operates successful programs across the United States and has taken its services to nearly 100,000 children, educators, and parents/caregivers throughout 28 states.

For more information about Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts, please visit: [www.Wolftrap.org/Education](http://www.Wolftrap.org/Education), or call 703.255.1933 or 1.800.404.8461.

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