

Big Dance Pledge 2016
Created by Akram Khan

Written Guide to the Choreography



A step-by-step guide to the movement, to be used with or independently of the Tutorial Films, including:

- introductory notes from Akram Khan
- themes of the choreography
- section breakdowns with time codes for the music track.

www.bigdance.org.uk

A Welcome from Akram Khan

Hello and thank you for signing up to the Big Dance Pledge 2016.

Themes

In the choreography, I've explored a number of themes and ideas including:

- Identity, journey and migration
- Connection, human ritual and spirituality
- Hope, aspiration and achievement



They are introduced at the beginning of each section of the tutorial films. In understanding the ideas behind the creation of the movement, I hope that you'll be able to use your own experiences to create dance works that are personal to you and your participants.

Create Something Unique

There are 3 variations of the choreography that are designed to be performed all together, as shown in the main Big Dance Pledge film. Their main difference will appear to be the starting position, so that's how we've named them – Kneeling, Standing, Seated - . Mix and match the different variations considering the size, formation and needs of your group. If you decide you'd like everyone in your group to dance the same variation, that's ok too.

As well as these variations, there are some additional differences and options within the movement that give the work flexibility, that we've identified as Version A, B or C. Use these or your own alternatives in the way that is right for you. I'd like you to make your own creative choices to explore and develop movement that is right for you, however different it might become. On 20 May 2016, I hope we'll see a huge variety of dances and people dancing, all connected and inspired by the same ideas.

To help with your creative planning and to encourage all types of people and their dance groups to take part in the Big Dance Pledge, we've created four 'Inspired By' films. They show different dance practitioners and participants making this choreography their own and telling us a bit about how they found the experience.

It's important that however you work with the movement, that your dance builds gradually in momentum, size and energy. Nitin Sawhney's wonderful music, created especially for this work, really gives this sense of journey and I hope will help you to tell epic stories of your own.



How to use the tutorial films

In each of the three variations, the choreography is split into five sections. At the beginning of each one, the title, themes, timings for the music track and counts for the movement are given. You're then taken through each movement step by step including options within each variation so that you can make choice about what is right for you and participants you are working with.

The tutorial films are not mirrored. Follow the instructions of the audio-commentary or the text on screen. This means that if you dance whilst watching the films, you'll be moving in the opposite direction to the dancer on screen.

You can view these films online or download them to view offline on your own computer. There is a detailed written guide to the choreography for you to download, that has been created along side these tutorial films, so that you shouldn't need to refer to the films whilst rehearsing. The audio-commentary and on-screen instructions are both given in greater detail within the written guide.

Planning your sessions

How and when you create your Big Dance Pledge piece is completely dependent on your creative aims and the needs of your participants. There are no rules or restrictions!

We advise allowing a minimum of 1 hour to work on each section to allow some creative exploration of themes and the creation of new movement that works for you. The basic movement can be learned in shorter periods of time. Plan as much time as you need to enjoy the process and to work as creatively as you can.

Warming up is important to prepare bodies for safe and enjoyable dancing. We advise a minimum of 15 minutes of fun and creative exercises that you can develop using any of the themes of the work. The choreography requires use of some areas of the body that participants may not often use intensively. We recommend warm up exercises to include:



- mobilisation of the head and neck
- the spine and back muscles
- upper legs
- joints, especially wrists, knees, shoulders and hips
- hands and mobilization of the wrists and fingers
- group connection and spatial awareness.

Finally, I really hope you enjoy using these resources and are able to explore ideas and tell stories that are important to you and those you dance with. I'm looking forward to seeing your performance on 20 May 2016. Good luck!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Akram Khan', with a stylized, cursive script.

Akram Khan
Choreographer, Big Dance Pledge 2016


Section 1

Title: SKY

Themes: Aspiration, awakening, sense of connection

Length of the section: 8 bars of 8 counts, lasting around 1 minute and 6 seconds

Music timing: No music to start, the track begins after 21 seconds of movement and runs to 00:45

Step by Step Movement:	Counts and Music Timing	How it looks
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Starting position – a preset. Each dancer should take neutral position – any of kneeling, standing and seated – with the eyes looking down, with the right hand inside the left hand.2. We start as a group, as close to each other as possible, but not in organised rows. The shape and formation of the group can be flexible with the only requirement being a nominated person at the front of the group who gives the audible cue for everyone to start.3. From starting position, on the cue of a sharp and audible out breath, unfurl arms up to the sky, leading with the shoulders, then elbows and finishing with the hands and the fingertips – the	<p>Start in silence with no music:</p> <p>-00:21 – -00:14, counting down 1 bar of 8 counts</p> <p>-00:14 - -00:07, counting down 1 bar of 8 counts</p>	 A photograph of a person sitting in a wheelchair on a paved street at night. The person is wearing a dark jacket and patterned pants. The background is blurred, showing city lights and a building.

palms are facing down. Look up at the same time.

4. On the second breath, lean back, arching the back and so that the chest reaches towards the sky. The wrists stay still, acting as the anchor for your body as the spine leans back. Support the spine using the abdominal muscles.
5. On the third breath, the fingers sharply close in with the arms slowly making a giant hug shape. The right hand is higher than the left as they lower. The body melts down to the neutral starting position with the right hand inside the left. The music starts here.
6. The eyes start to look down, moving only the head, slowly – down to the earth and up to the sky. Although there's a sense of connection, each dancer moves in their own time and differently to their neighbour. This continues – repeating this movement – for 4 bars of 8 counts, around 30 seconds.
7. We begin to include the body in the same movement when we hear a beat in the music track. Ripple down, with the chest leading the body forwards and the upper spine leading backwards. Using the abdominal muscles will

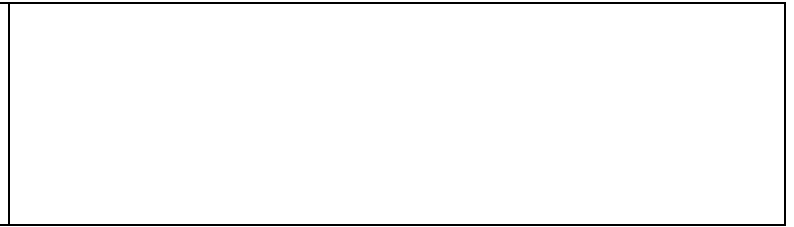
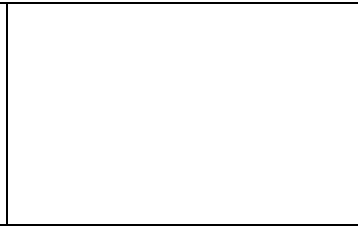
-00:07 – 00:00,
counting down
1 bar of 8 counts

With music:
00:00 – 00:29
4 bars of 8 counts

00:30 – 00:45
4 bars of 8 counts



make this movement smoother and more effective. This movement is still slow with timing different to your neighbour, until the last bar of 8 in the music, when the body ripples and finishes down on the count of 8.




Section 2

Title: CLEANSING

Themes: Water, breath and rippling

Length of the section: 8 bars of 8 counts, lasting around 34 seconds

Music timing: The music begins at 00:46 in the track and runs to 01:19.

Step by Step Movement:	Counts and Music Timing	How it looks
<p><u>Body rippling in unison</u></p> <p>All dancers move together, at the same time, continuing the rhythm and the movement of the rippling in Section 1. There are four full body ripples of 8 counts each. We come up sharply on 1 and then take 7 counts to slowly ripple all the way down.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. On the first ripple, the body goes up on 1 and down for 7 counts.2. On the second ripple, the body goes up on 1 and down for 7 counts. The elbows pull back and away from the spine on the counts of 5, 6, 7, 8 and return sharply to the starting position on the next count of 1.	<p>4 bars of 8 counts 00:46 – 1:02</p>	 A photograph of a person in a wheelchair on a paved street at night. The person is wearing a dark jacket and is looking towards the camera. The background is blurred, showing streetlights and other vehicles.

3. On the third ripple, the body goes up on 1 and down for 7 counts. (Same as the first.)
4. On the fourth ripple, on the count of 1 the body comes to a rise, fully extending. Coming down, the hands slowly open outwards.

Remember: lead with the chest going forwards and upper spine going backwards using the abdominal muscles.

Body rippling with hands

Continuing the body rippling, add the hands and arms in a motion of scooping water from the Earth and pouring water over the body. This movement happens four times, and builds gradually in momentum, size and energy.

5. On the first 8, the hands come up in front of the face on the count of 1 with the palms facing upwards and the hands touching or as close together as possible. Brush downwards over the face and body for 7 counts.
6. On the second 8, cross the right wrist in front of the left and reach around as far as possible to brush the face and head, downwards into the

4 bars of 8 counts
1:03 – 1:19



body.

7. On the third 8, the timing is increased to twice the speed of the previous scoops – double time. This time, the palms face down so that the hands come up on the count of 1, and brush downwards down the back of the head, around the neck and body on the counts 2, 3 and 4. The right hand pushes out directly in front and back in to meet the face and stays there, while the left hand pushes directly out and back in on the count of 5, to brush down the body on the counts of 6, 7 and 8, finishing at the side.
8. On the fourth 8, still at double time, turning to the right diagonal at around 45 degrees, the body does two scoops with the palms facing up, reaching the face on the counts of 1 and 5.

Tip: Take a deep breath in each time you come up. Keep the hands, arms and body relaxed and fluid-like, using your abdominal muscles for stability.



Section 3


Title: JOURNEY

Themes: Travelling, resistance, endurance

Length of the section: 8 bars of 8 counts, lasting around 30 seconds

Music timing: The music begins at 01:20 in the track and runs to 01:53

Options: There is a Version A and a Version B for part of this section

Step by Step Movement:	Counts and Music Timing	How it looks
<p>Swinging</p> <p>Remember: everything in this dance builds gradually in momentum, size and energy.</p> <p>Continuing the movement and rhythm of Section 2, there are four movements, each repeated twice. The reaching up - the 'accents' of each phrase of 8 – should be on the count of 1 and 5. The weight shifts out to the left each time you scoop.</p> <p>1. On the first 8, turning to the left diagonal at around 45 degrees, making two scoops with the palms facing up, reaching the face on the counts of 1 and 5.</p>	<p>4 bars of 8 counts 1:20 – 1:35</p>	

If you are kneeling, this is the point you move to halfway up – to be on the left foot and right knee.

2. On the second 8, repeat the movement of the first 8, making the movement bigger. At the end of the second 8, twist backwards through the right shoulder.

If you are kneeling, this is the point you move to standing in a lunge position with the left leg ahead.

3. On the third 8, continue repeating the movement a further two times, with the right arm unfurling and reaching through to the upper left diagonal.

Remember: The 'accents' mean reaching the top of the movement on the counts of 1 and 5.

4. On the fourth 8, continue repeating the movement a further two times, with the right hand becoming a fist, with the right arm still unfurling and reaching through to be caught by the left arm at the upper left diagonal. The catches should be sharply on the counts of 1 and 5.

Running Body

01:36 – 01:53
4 bars of 8 counts



Swings continue on same rhythm as Section 2. The upper body folds over, so that the top of the back is the highest point with the eyes looking down.

Version A

5. (a) Shifting the weight forward on the left side on the count of 1 and taking 3 counts to shift back to the right, swinging the right arm moving forwards and the left arm moving backwards. Think of recreating an image of a body running in slow motion. This movement is repeated 8 times.
6. (a) With each weight shift and set of arm swings, turn slowly in a clockwise direction so that the fourth swing is facing directly to the front and the seventh swing is facing directly to the right.
7. (a) At the end of the seventh swing, we turn to the front and complete the eighth swing facing directly forwards and on the final shift back, the arms reach up on the count of 8 with the back of the wrists facing each other, in preparation for the next section.

Version B

Version B is exactly the same as version A, but with



a delay of 1 bar of 8 counts, created by repeating the last two scooping movements in Section 2 before beginning the movement from Section 3.

5. (b) On the fourth 8, still at double time, turning to the right diagonal at around 45 degrees, the body does two scoops with the palms facing up, reaching the face on the counts of 1 and 5.

6. (b) Begin Section 3 instructions. This means you are 8 counts behind Version A dancers who you catch up to on the third swing of the Running Body.




Section 4

Title: BIRD

Themes: Undulation, rising and flight

Length of the section: 4 bars of 8 counts, lasting around 16 seconds

Music timing: The music begins at 01:54 in the track and runs to 02:10 in the music track.

Step by Step Movement:	Counts and Music Timing	How it looks
<p>The movement consists of the arms reaching up and down like bird's wings five times, with a different timing for each bar of 8.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Starting with the arms overhead with the wrists facing, elbows and wrists should be appear soft and relaxed.2. Lowering of the arms should be slower and softer, while raising arms should be sharp and fast, always led by the wrists in both directions.3. On the first 8, the wrists bend on the count of 1 and lower down on the counts of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, returning to the top on 8.4. On the second 8, the wrists are held at the top for the counts of 1, 2, wrists bend on 3 and lower on 4 and 5, return to the top on 6 and hold for 7	<p>01:54 – 02:10 4 bars of 8 counts</p>	 A photograph of a person standing on a path, seen from behind, with their arms raised high above their head, mimicking the wings of a bird. The person is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The background is a blurred natural setting with green foliage and a path.

and 8.

5. On the third 8, the wrists are held at the top for the counts of 1, 2, wrists bend on 3 and go sharply down and return on 4 and then lower again on 5, 6, 7 and 8.
6. On the fourth 8, the wrists push outwards and slightly upwards on 1 and 2, then again on 3 and 4, on 5 and 6, and finally on 7, returning to the top position on 8.



Section 5


Title: RISING

Themes: Recognition, identity and hope

Length of the section: 16 bars of 8 counts, lasting around 60 seconds

Music timing: The music begins at 02:10 in the track and runs to the end, with a few seconds of silence.

Options: There is a Version A, a Version B and a Version C that apply to the turning movement in this section.

Step by Step Movement:	Counts and Music Timing	How it looks
<p>This section consists of 4 arm movements of 8 counts each that we cycle through twice, moving continuously throughout. There are turning options within Versions A, B and C.</p> <p><u>Arm movements:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. On the first 8 – starting with the arms in the top position at the end of the Section 4, arms lower down and outwards, the back rounding like you're trying to gather the whole world in towards your body.2. On the second 8, the arms open slowly using the	<p>8 bars of 8 counts 2:10 – End</p>	 A photograph of a person standing on a city street at night, performing a dance move. The person is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and black pants, with their arms raised and hands clasped above their head. The background is blurred, showing city lights and a street.

back, while the chest and the focus of the eyes rise up to the sky. The head drops down and forwards on the count of 8.

3. On the third 8, the right hand extends upwards and to a 45 degree angle, the head and focus of the eyes rise up.
4. On the fourth 8, the arms start to lower and curve towards the front and centre of the body. The back rounds again, and the hands slowly curl around to hold an imaginary pole, with the right hand above the left.


Remember: the arm movements are very slow and should use the whole bar of 8 to complete the movement.

Turning

There are three options for the turns, Version A, B and C. The choreography includes all three versions and they can be mixed to create variation amongst your dancers. Whatever combination of the variations you use, ensure you increase the amount of turning on the second cycle so that the dance builds gradually in momentum, size and energy.

Version A



<p>1. On the first cycle, there is a quarter turn to the left on the count of 8 of each arm movement.</p> <p>2. On the second cycle, there are four turns per arm movement that take 2 counts each. The pattern is three half turns and a three-quarter turn, all to the left, and stepping on the right side each time. This pattern is repeated for each arm movement, so that the 'front' will change with each bar of 8, with the last time finishing facing the front.</p> <p>Version B</p> <p>1. On the first and second cycle, there is a quarter turn to the left on the count of 8 of each arm movement.</p> <p>Version C</p> <p>1. On the first and second cycle, remain facing the front for the variation of each arm movement.</p> <p><u>The Reveal</u></p> <p>1. At the end of the last cycle of arm movement and / or turning, all dancers should be facing the front. The left hand reaches behind the right</p>	<p>8 bars of 8 counts</p>	
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hand up to the face, and the right hand floats underneath to cradle the left elbow.

2. With the chin leading, the head goes left on the count of 1 and continues into a side-to-side movement taking 2 counts each time as you shift slowly back. So the counts are left 1, 2 then right 3, 4, then repeat this motion at least 16 times.

The side-to-side movement gradually gets smaller until you find a stillness in your own time. Take your time.

Once you have reached stillness, take a breath and then slowly, slide the right hand inside the left elbow to gently push the left hand away to finally reveal the face. This should happen in your own time.

