

MOMIX: BOTANICA

Applause Series Curriculum Guide
April 9, 2013

MOMIX: BOTANICA

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of MOMIX: Botanica. As a dance company, MOMIX defies categorization. Its works have been called mesmerizing, magical, and imaginative. Now, MOMIX takes its inspiration from nature itself. Through jaw-dropping spectacle, MOMIX urges its audiences to re-examine the beauty and complexity of life on earth as they recreate the seasons, the blooming of flora, and the metamorphosis of living creatures.

We thank you for sharing this special experience with your students and hope that this study guide helps you connect the performance to your in-classroom curriculum in ways that you find valuable. In the following pages, you will find contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a variety of discussion questions and activities. Some pages are appropriate to reproduce for your students; others are designed more specifically with you, their teacher, in mind. As such, we hope that you are able to “pick and choose” material and ideas from the study guide to meet your class’s unique needs.



Photo by Don Perdue.

See you at the theater,

Des Moines Performing Arts Education Team

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ABOUT DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS



Des Moines Performing Arts is a private, nonprofit organization and is an important part of central Iowa's cultural community. It is recognized nationally for excellence as a performing arts center and is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities.

Des Moines Performing Arts presents professional touring productions, including theater direct from Broadway, world-renowned dance companies, family programming, comedy, and concerts.

Education and Community Engagement programs are core to Des Moines Performing Arts' mission as a nonprofit performing arts center.

Public education programs allow audience members and local artists to make meaningful and personal connections to the art they experience on our stages. Guest lectures and Q&As with company members allow audiences to explore the inner workings of the performance. In addition, master classes, workshops, and summer camps taught by visiting performers give local actors, dancers, and musicians the chance to increase their skills by working directly with those who know what it takes to succeed on the professional stage.

Through its **K-12 School Programs**, Des Moines Performing Arts strives to ensure that central Iowa students have affordable access to high quality arts experiences as part of their education. More than 46,000 students and educators attend curriculum-connected school matinee performances through the Applause Series annually. In addition, Des Moines Performing Arts sends teaching artists into the schools to provide hands-on workshops and residencies in special opportunities that engage students directly in the creative process. And, through its partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center, Des Moines Performing Arts provides teachers with in-depth professional development training on how to use the arts in their classrooms to better impact student learning.

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 350,000 people visit Des Moines Performing Arts venues each year.

Des Moines Performing Arts opened in 1979.

Des Moines Performing Arts has three theater spaces:

- *Civic Center, 2744 seats*
- *Stoner Theater, 200 seats*
- *Temple Theater, 299 seats (located in the Temple for the Performing Arts)*

No seat is more than 155 feet from center stage in the Civic Center.

Nollen Plaza, situated just west of the Civic Center, is a park and amphitheater that is also part of Des Moines Performing Arts. The space features the Crusoe Umbrella sculpture by artist Claes Oldenburg.

As a nonprofit organization, Des Moines Performing Arts depends on donor funding to support facilities, programming, and education programs.

The Applause Series started in 1996. You are joining us for our 17th season of school performances.

GOING TO THE THEATER . . .



YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Attending a live performance is a unique and exciting opportunity. Unlike the passive experience of watching a movie, audience members play an important role in every live performance. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience's mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Lively bands, musicians, and dancers may desire the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

- * What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
- * What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
- * What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
- * Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
- * Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE

Seeing a live performance is a very special experience. Although it is not required, many people enjoy dressing up when they attend the theater.

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Civic Center:

- * Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
- * Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
- * Turn off and put away all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices before the performance begins.
- * Do not text during the performance.
- * Respect the theater. Remember to keep your feet off of the seats and avoid bouncing up and down.
- * When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- * **Talk before and after the performance only.** Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound. Other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- * Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end. If you must leave the theater during the show, make sure the first set of doors closes before you open the second — this will keep unwanted light from spilling into the theater.
- * Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage — they will let you know what is appropriate.
- * Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

GOING TO THE THEATER information is adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts study guide materials.

CIVIC CENTER FIELD TRIP INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



Thank you for choosing the Applause Series with Des Moines Performing Arts. Below are tips for organizing a safe and successful field trip to the Civic Center.

ORGANIZING YOUR FIELD TRIP

- * Please include all students, teachers, and chaperones in your ticket request.
- * After you submit your ticket request, you will receive a confirmation e-mail within five business days. Your **invoice will be attached to the confirmation e-mail.**
- * Payment policies and options are located at the top of the invoice. **Payment (or a purchase order) for your reservation is due four weeks** prior to the date of the performance.
- * The Civic Center reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.
- * Tickets are not printed for Applause Series shows. Your invoice will serve as the reservation confirmation for your group order.
- * Schedule buses to arrive in downtown Des Moines at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This will allow time to park, walk to the Civic Center, and be seated in the theater.
- * Performances are approximately 60 minutes unless otherwise noted on the website and printed materials.
- * All school groups with reservations to the show will receive an e-mail notification when the study guide is posted. Please note that study guides are only printed and mailed upon request.

DIRECTIONS AND PARKING

- * Directions: From I-235, take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3rd Street and 2nd Avenue. Turn onto 3rd Street and head south.
- * Police officers are stationed at the corner of 3rd and Locust Streets and will direct buses to parking areas with hooded meters near the Civic Center. Groups traveling in personal vehicles are responsible for locating their own parking in ramps or metered (non-hooded) spots downtown.
- * Buses will remain parked for the duration of the show. At the conclusion, bus drivers must be available to move their bus if necessary, even if their students are staying at the Civic Center to eat lunch or take a tour.
- * Buses are not generally permitted to drop off or pick up students near the Civic Center. If a bus must return to school during the performance, prior arrangements must be made with the Civic Center Education staff.

ARRIVAL TO THE CIVIC CENTER

- * When arriving at the Civic Center, please have an **adult lead your group** for identification and check-in purposes. You may enter the building through the East or West lobbies; a Civic Center staff member may be stationed outside the building to direct you.
- * Civic Center staff will usher groups into the building as quickly as possible. Once inside, you will be directed to the check-in area.
- * Applause seating is not ticketed. Ushers will escort groups to their seats; various seating factors including group size, grade levels, arrival time, and special needs seating requests may be used to assign a group's specific location in the hall.
- * We request that an **adult lead the group into the theater and other adults position themselves throughout the group**; we request this arrangement for supervision purposes, especially in the event that a group must be seated in multiple rows.
- * Please allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging seat locations and taking groups to the restroom.
- * As a reminder, children under the age of three are not permitted in the theater for Applause performances.

IN THE THEATER

- * In case of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher. A medical assistant is on duty for all Main Hall performances.
- * We ask that adults handle any disruptive behavior in their groups. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
- * Following the performance groups may exit the theater and proceed to their bus(es).
- * If an item is lost at the Civic Center, please see an usher or contact us after the performance at 515.246.2355.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Education department at 515.246.2355 or education@civiccenter.org.
Thank you!

VOCABULARY



Photo by Don Perdue.

MOMIX practices a unique kind of modern dance with highly acrobatic, fearless dancers, theatrical costumes and props, improvised movement, a great sense of play, and most of all, collaboration.

Here are some words to get you started, as you prepare to experience the performance.

body: an element of dance that refers to the awareness of specific body parts and how they can be moved in isolation and combination.

choreography: the arrangement of movement in space and time. A series of moves usually set to music.

collaboration: sharing ideas and working together, like members of the MOMIX dance ensemble.

creativity: the ability to go beyond traditional ideas, rules, and patterns in order to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, and interpretations.

eclectic: describes a collection of very different things, like the different pieces of music in *Botanica*.

ensemble: a group of dancers performing together.

energy: refers to the force applied to dance to accentuate the weight, attack, strength, and flow of a dancer's movement. Adjectives such as explosive, smooth, free, restrained, wild, etc., describe some different types of energy that dancers can exhibit.

imagery: memorable sights, such as the lights and bright costumes in *Botanica*.

rehearsal: practice in preparation of a public performance.

space: the area in which a dancer moves, encompassing level, direction, floor pattern, shape, and design.

teamwork: to work together in order to create or solve a problem.

technique: a set of skills which dancers develop to perform a certain dance form. MOMIX uses a variety of modern dance and acrobatic techniques.

tempo: the time, speed, or rhythm of the beats of a piece of music or the pace of any movement activity.

surreal: larger than life or dreamlike. "The dancer's movements and tall hat made him look like a flower growing; it was surreal."

unison: the same movement or series of movements performed at the same time by more than one dancer.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE



Photo by Don Perdue.

Known internationally for presenting work of exceptional inventiveness and physical beauty, MOMIX has been celebrated for its ability to conjure up a world of surrealistic images using props, light, shadow, humor, and the human body. *Botanica* is MOMIX's exploration of nature.

Learn more about the performance prior to your visit to the theater.

Run Time: Approx. 60 minutes



Botanica features large-scale puppets, projections, and props that create a visual world. Photo by Don Perdue.

WHAT YOU WILL SEE

MOMIX: *Botanica* is an exploration of nature's forms. *Botanica* is visual theater, a moving picture show. Its wondrous world of nature comes to life as ten marvelously nimble dancers physically transform themselves into various plants, flowers, birds, and abstract patterns. They do so by using large scale puppets, projected imagery and larger-than-life props.

In *Botanica*, the dancers follow the rhythms of the New England seasons as well as the evolution of the world and the passing of a day. Flowers bloom, go to seed and die; vegetables, animals and minerals – all in human form–combine and metamorphose.

Botanica is dance at its most organic and inventive. With the performers using their entire bodies to tell a variety of different stories, they transform into everything from a snail to flowers to a dinosaur skeleton.

WHAT YOU WILL HEAR

The dancers are accompanied by a diverse score ranging from birdsong to Vivaldi's famous "Four Seasons".

INSPIRATION

The company prints the following quote in their programs when they perform *Botanica*. What do you think it means? As you watch the performance, think about where you see the ideas in the quote displayed through movement.

"The plant strains its whole being in one single plan: to escape above ground from the fatality below; to elude and transgress the dark and weighty law, to free itself, to break the narrow sphere, to invent or invoke wings, to escape as far as possible, to conquer the space wherein fate encloses it, to approach another kingdom, to enter a moving, animated world."

-Maurice Maeterlinck,
The Intelligence of Flowers

ABOUT MOMIX AND FOUNDER, MOSES PENDLETON



Photo by Don Perdue.

MOMIX is a company of dancer-illusionists under the direction of Moses Pendleton. Learn more about the company and Pendleton prior to experiencing *Botanica*.

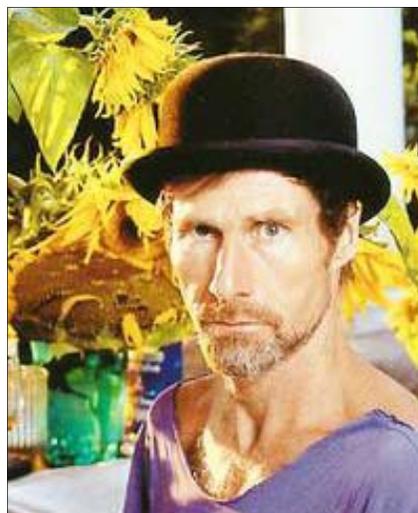
MOMIX

MOMIX practices a unique kind of modern dance, with highly acrobatic, fearless dancers; theatrical costumes and props; improvised movement; a great sense of play and most of all, collaboration. They are known internationally for presenting work of exceptional inventiveness and physical beauty.

In addition to stage performances world-wide, MOMIX has worked in film and television, recently appearing in a national commercial for Hanes underwear and a Target ad that premiered during the airing of the 67th Annual Golden Globe Awards.

MOMIX has been commissioned by corporations such as Fiat and Mercedes Benz.

"We don't really paint how the world is," Artistic Director Moses Pendleton explains, "but how it might be. If you walk out of the theater with a little less gravity in your step, perhaps we've been successful. Through years of hard work, we have tried to describe and show a view of humor, beauty and lightness of spirit that the world today is so much in need of."



Moses Pendleton, the founder and artistic director of MOMIX, has been considered one of the United States' most innovative choreographers for over forty years. Image courtesy of theage.com.au.

MOSES PENDLETON

(Artistic Director) has been one of America's most innovative and widely performed choreographers and directors for over 40 years. A founding member of the ground-breaking Pilobolus Dance Theater in 1971, he formed his own company, MOMIX, in 1980. Mr. Pendleton has also worked extensively in film, TV, and opera and as a choreographer for ballet companies and special events.

Mr. Pendleton was born and raised on a dairy farm in Northern Vermont. He received his BA in English Literature from Dartmouth College in 1971 and immediately began touring with Pilobolus. The group shot to fame in the 1970's, performing on Broadway, touring internationally, and appearing in PBS's *Dance in America*.

In addition to dancing and doing choreography, Moses is an avid gardener and photographer. Images of his sunflower plantings at his home in northwestern Connecticut have been featured in numerous books and articles on gardening.

Adapted from mosespendleton.com.

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCENES



Photo by Don Perdue.

When people see a performance, they often think only of the performers on stage; however, there are many other people who come together to make the performance happen.

WITH MOMIX

The following list covers many of the important roles that contribute to a professional dance performance.

Artistic Director: the person who makes sure the dance company is meeting the artistic standards of the company. Artistic standards include the quality of dancers, dances (choreography), sets, costumes, lights, and music. Moses Pendleton is the artistic director of MOMIX.

Composer: a person who writes music.

Lighting Designer: decides what kind of light (bright / dark / colors) will illuminate each dance piece.

Costume Designer: designs all the costumes the dancers wear on stage.

Puppet Designer: MOMIX is unique in that it also uses large puppets during its extremely visual performances. Michael Curry designed the amazing puppets you will see during the performance.

Technical Director: makes sure all the technical aspects go together and work, for example the set, lights and sound.

Rehearsal Director: schedules the daily rehearsal plan, ensuring each dance piece is given enough time at rehearsal.

General Manager: oversees all the business of the company, everything from advertising to insurance to paychecks to hiring the personnel who make artistic decisions. In general, making sure the company runs smoothly.

ON THE ROAD

In addition, each theater that MOMIX travels to on its tour has many people on staff to help with the show. This includes the theater's own Technical Director and stage crew that works with the MOMIX Technical Director.

As you can see, theater is a truly collaborative experience, requiring trust and teamwork among many people.

As you watch...

- ◇ Think about how the lighting, costumes, puppets, music and projections make the show more enjoyable and understandable, enhancing the mood of each section.

WHAT IS DANCE?



Photo by Don Perdue.

Dance is a fundamental part of the human experience. Read on to learn more about the many reasons why people dance and how dances are put together.

WHY WE DANCE

People have always danced.

In some societies, people dance mostly for religious reasons. They want to appease the gods, to ward off evil, to pray for rain, or to have a good harvest. In other societies, people dance mostly for their own amusement – by themselves or with others. In some places, dance is a performing art in which people dance to entertain others.

When people dance they move their bodies rhythmically to express ideas or emotions. Most of the time, dance has a structure. Sometimes it is improvised or made up on the spot. Traditional folk or tribal dances are passed down from generation to generation.

PHRASES

All dances are made up of sequences of steps and gestures called phrases. Phrases make up a dance the same way that words are put together to form a sentence. In tribal societies, where dances are mostly religious, people usually dance in a group or circle. In societies where people usually dance for their own amusement, two people usually dance together or in small groups. When people dance to entertain others, they usually do so in groups called companies. There are different kinds of dance companies, such as ballet, ethnic, modern, and jazz.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Dances performed for audiences are almost always choreographed, or created, by one person, just as a composer makes up a piece of music.

SPOTLIGHT ON: MODERN DANCE

MOMIX is a modern dance company.

Modern Dance changed the way choreographers made dances, allowing new and freer body movement and shapes than in traditional ballet. Modern dance does not always tell a story, concentrating instead on expressing the feelings, dreams, or ideas inside a person.

Before creating a dance, a modern dancer decides which emotions to try to convey to the audience. Many modern dancers choose a subject very near to their hearts, such as a lost love or personal failure.

Characteristics of modern and contemporary dance include:

- ◇ Bare feet
- ◇ Floor work
- ◇ Emphasis on gravity
- ◇ Emotional expression

"What is Dance?" partially adapted from Diavolo's "Young Person's Concert Study Guide."

ELEMENTS OF DANCE — B.A.S.T.E.



Photo by Don Perdue.

Dance is the movement of the human body through space in time using energy. Dancers use movement to express emotions, stories, ideas, and beliefs. The five elements of dance include: body, action, space, time, and energy. It is important to understand each element as they come together to create the whole.

Discuss each of the elements as a class and then explore each element through movement exercises. These can be as simple as the instructor asking students questions such as: “Show me low!”, “How can you make the body go high?”, “Show walking, skipping, etc.”, “Use your fingers and show fast.” “Show me stretching.” Other, more in depth ideas for exploring the elements of dance can be found on pages 12-13.

BODY refers to the awareness of specific body parts and how they can be moved in isolation and combination.

shape: curving, angling, twisting the body

parts: arms, legs, head, feet, hands, torso

ACTION refers to locomotor and non-locomotor movement.

locomotor: walk, run, leap, hop, skip, gallop, slide (anything that moves from one point to another)

nonlocomotor: bend, twist (anything that does not move from one point to another)

other action: following and leading

SPACE refers to the space the body moves through, the direction of movements, and the shapes, levels, and patterns of a group of dancers.

levels: low, medium, high

direction: forward, backward, diagonal, sideways

focus: straight, curved, open, closed, peripheral

TIME is a musical and dance element. It includes beat, tempo, accent, and duration.

tempo: fast, medium, slow

with or without music

long / short

patterned / counted

ENERGY refers to the force applied to dance to accentuate the weight, attack, strength, and flow of a dancer’s movement.

quality: strong, light, sharp, smooth, soft, sudden, sustained, free, bound

Adapted from “Dance Education Initiative Curriculum Guide”, Perpich Center for Arts Education. May be reproduced for educational purposes.

PREPARING FOR SUCCESS...

INTRODUCING MOVEMENT INTO THE CLASSROOM

Introducing movement into the classroom can be a richly rewarding experience, tapping into both visual and kinesthetic learning modalities. For the non-dance educator, however, the prospect can be intimidating.

Like any new concept and experience in the classroom, introducing dance is best done when scaffolded. The following are some helpful exercises to aid you in laying a foundation for integrating movement activities, such as the ones on page 13, into your classroom with success.

STEP 1: TALK ABOUT DANCE

Goal: To encourage students to realize that dance is for everyone and to lay the foundation to create a nonthreatening environment for movement exploration.

Explanation: In this activity, students will discuss their concepts of dance and will progressively explore how the body can convey emotion.

When: Prior to introducing movement to the classroom for the first time.

1. Explore what dance means. Ask questions like, "What is dance?", "What does dance mean to you?", "How do you dance?", "Who dances?"
2. Explain that dancing is for everyone and that it is a powerful means of human communication.
3. Now suggest several emotions for the students to show you without words or sounds. Call out happy, sad, love, fear, anger, etc., one at a time. Have the class show those emotions.
4. Repeat the exercise, this time without the use of any facial expression, and then without the use of different body parts, to encourage many different ways to express emotion.

STEP 2: SET EXPECTATIONS

Goal: To set expectations for class behavior during movement activities.

Explanation: To best ensure success, set collective rules of what is and is not appropriate during each movement activity. For example, keeping hands and feet to oneself, areas of the room that are off limits, when it is and is not okay to use our voices.

STEP 3: WARM-UP

Goal: To get students ready for movement activities.

Explanation: Warm-ups are important to warm up the muscles and prepare for physical activity; this helps prevent injury. Warm-ups also get us ready to focus and concentrate.

When: You should consider doing some sort of warm-up prior to each time you do a classroom movement activity. The following are two examples of warm-up activities that aid clarity and focus.

Name Game:

1. In a circle, have each student stand shoulder to shoulder, with a straight posture and hands out of their pockets.
2. Students one by one, will turn to their right, look that person in the eye and state their name with purpose and clarity.
3. When everyone in the circle has gone, evolve the activity by adding tempo (ex. Say your name but let's move through the circle faster, like the wind, or slow like molasses) or add a quality (ex. Say your name like a lion).
4. When ready to move on to another step, add the element of switching directions and saying names across the circle, using eye contact and a clear voice.
5. Make sure the students keep going, even with laughter, until a complete round is made with each variation.

Game of Ten:

1. Begin by having students walk around the space at varying tempos per the instructor's call.
2. Circle up.
3. Next, give different sets of movements to be done to a count of ten. You may choose to use some of the following examples.
 - ◇ Shake out hands, legs, arms, and whole body.
 - ◇ Stretch for 10 in various directions
 - ◇ Roll down through the spine to the floor for a count of 10
 - ◇ Push-ups, 10 times.
 - ◇ Roll over, sit ups, 10 times.
 - ◇ Stand up slowly for a count of 10, shake out the body again.
 - ◇ Repeat

"Introducing Movement into the Classroom" adapted from Diavolo's "Young Person's Concert Study Guide."

MOVEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM: EXPLORING ELEMENTS OF DANCE

1) THE DANCING MIRROR

Explanation: Introduction to ACTION, one of the basic elements of dance, through exploration of locomotor and non-locomotor movements.

Goals: To identify locomotor and non-locomotor action, to develop basic dance vocabulary, and to practice types of action.

Materials:

- ◇ Open area
- ◇ Chalkboard and chalk or whiteboard and markers

Activity:

1. Write 'locomotor movement' and 'non-locomotor movement' on the board and read the descriptions of each from the elements of dance ACTION section on page 11.
2. Read through the examples of each type of action as a group and ask students to generate additional examples of each that can be listed on the board underneath the title of each type of action.
3. Ask the students to stand up and form a circle with you. Explain to students that they are to be your mirror image. If your hand moves, their hand moves. If your body sways, their body sways, etc.
4. Demonstrate a number of examples of action from the board and ask students to name whether the action is locomotor or non-locomotor movement as they mirror the action.
5. Ask students to form pairs and each take turns being the leader and the follower using both locomotor and non-locomotor actions.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Describe how it felt to perform locomotor action.
2. Describe how it felt to perform non-locomotor action.
3. What was it like to lead your partner?
4. What was it like to follow your partner?
5. What did your movements remind you of, if anything?

2) GROOVING TO THE BEAT

Explanation: Introduction to TIME and SPACE, two of the basic elements of dance, through beat creation and movement through space.

Goals: To identify and create a beat, to change tempo of beat and movement, and to move through space to beat.

Materials:

- ◇ Open area

Activity:

1. Ask the students to create a circle and clap 8 count beats while counting out loud: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
2. Explore variations in tempo by asking students to insert a word after each number such as 'Mississippi' for a slow tempo, 'art' for a fast tempo, or 'dancer' for a medium tempo. ex. "one, Mississippi, two," etc.
3. Ask students to divide into two groups: A and B.
4. Ask group "A" to clap a beat using one of the tempo prompts from the previous step, while group "B" moves through the space by stepping on each beat. To give the walking purpose and character, you may want to ask students to move like a certain kind of animal as they walk, or as if walking on the moon, through water, etc.
5. Students in group "A" can experiment with different tempos, prompted by you, as students in group "B" change their movement to the beat.
6. Ask the two groups to switch roles.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Describe the difference between moving to the beat and creating the beat by clapping. Was one more challenging for you? Why?
2. How did changing the tempo of the beat affect your group's movement?
3. Describe some of the ways that everyone moved through the space (stepping, high or low levels, etc.). What are some other ways that you might move through space to a beat?

*Exploring Elements of Dance activities are adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts study guide materials.

PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION

1) NATURE'S INTERDEPENDENCE

Explanation: In this activity, students will use movement to illustrate the interdependence of nature and show how our actions can have an impact on others.

Goal: To visually and kinesthetically experience how one change can lead to additional changes in nature.

Materials:

- ◇ Open area

Activity:

1. Talk to students about how the performance they will experience, *Botanica*, celebrates the beautiful balance of nature. In nature, a small change in the environment can have a significant impact on the ecosystem. Similarly, a change in the flora or fauna can result in changes to the environment. As a class, you are going to experience an activity that shows how a change can affect many others.
2. Ask students to form a line and create a chain of shapes. To do this, the first person makes an interesting shape with his or her body, and the next person makes a new shape that connects to the first one.
3. After the chain is completed, have the first person in line change shape — perhaps becoming bigger or smaller, higher or lower, changing the position of their entire body or just one body part.
4. The second person in line lets the movement impact his or her shape and causes a change.
5. Invite students to notice how each change affects the subsequent person. Continue down the line.
6. Once the change has moved through the line, discuss what you noticed and experienced.

Follow-up Questions:

1. How many people did the original change affect?
2. If you initiated a change, how did that feel?
3. Was it possible not to feel the impact of the changes around you? What did you notice when the initial change was very small?
4. When have you taken an action that changed lives of people around you? How did it feel?
5. How has your life been changed as a result of actions taken by someone else?
6. Can you think of examples of where a change in nature affects other living things? (Think about habitats, food chains, etc.)

2) IMAGES OF NATURE

Explanation: *Botanica* uses projections, puppets and costumes that celebrate the beauty of nature. In this activity, students will explore nature and then document their observations through photography or drawing.

Goal: To observe and appreciate the complexity of nature around us.

Materials:

- ◇ Paper and pencils
- ◇ Camera (optional)
- ◇ Magnifying glasses (optional)

Activity:

1. As a class, take a walk through your school's neighborhood or playground.
2. Invite students to stop and make careful observations of flora and fauna that they see.
3. Ask students to then spend five to ten minutes writing as much as they possibly can about one item in nature that they see. They should include details about:
 - Color and hue
 - Texture
 - Size
 - Shape
 - Its different parts
 - Sound, if applicable
 - Smell, if applicableIf possible, provide students with magnifying glasses to help them explore very small details of their nature item.
3. Finally, allow students to then visually document what they see by taking both close-ups and wide-shots of the item they have chosen to study with a class camera. (They may also draw or sketch their item.)
4. When you return to the classroom, create a class gallery of their nature images.

Follow-up Questions:

1. As a class, compare and contrast the photos or drawings you made. What is interesting about comparing the close-ups to the wide-shots?
2. Are there any motifs that occur in multiple pictures?
3. What was it like to spend so much time studying just one item? Was it difficult? Was it surprising in any way?

Activity adapted from Overture Center for the Arts' Resource Guide: MOMIX 2011.

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION AND ASSESSMENT

DISCUSSION

The Art Form

1. Who dances?
2. Which parts of the body were the dancers using?
3. Were all the body parts moving together or separate from one another?
4. Were all the performers moving at the same speed? How would you describe their movement?
5. Did they all do the movements on the same beat?
6. What kind of spatial shapes did the dancers form?
7. What adjectives would you use to describe the energy of the dancers?

Performance Components

1. How did the lighting add to the show?
2. How did the costumes help to express the ideas or moods of each dance?
3. How did the projections or puppets help communicate the ideas of each dance?
4. How did the music add to the show? Did you have a favorite sound in the performance or a least favorite sound? Why?
5. A prop is an object handled by dancers or performers. What was your favorite prop?

Connections

1. What message do you think MOMIX wanted their audience to walk away with after seeing *Botanica*?
2. What themes did you see in the performance? Did any of those themes repeat in different ways throughout the show?
3. *Botanica* is inspired by nature. Will you think about or experience nature differently after seeing *Botanica*? Why or why not?

POST-SHOW ASSESSMENTS

1) WRITE A REVIEW

Ask students to imagine that they are a critic for the school newspaper. They are going to write a review of *Botanica* to inform others about what they experienced. They should describe with detail: what they saw; what they heard; how the performance made them feel; what the performance reminded them of; and what their favorite part was and why. Remind students that they must paint a picture of the experience with their words so that others who did not see the performance can imagine it.

2) YOUR ARTISTIC IMPRESSION

Create your own artistic impression of the performance. Using shapes, lines, colors, patterns and other artistic elements from your imagination, draw or paint a picture that expresses how the dancers made you feel. Use art to interpret your impression of the performance and qualities of the dance.

3) YES, IT IS!

Many props in *Botanica* are repurposed items—things that are used for a specific purpose but in *Botanica* are used in a myriad of different ways. Choose several inanimate objects (examples: feather duster, an umbrella, a shoe, a purse, etc.). Have players form a circle and pass one of the objects around the circle. The person who is in possession of the object will assign it another “job.” For example, the umbrella can become a guitar. The student says “This is my guitar!” while showing the umbrella being used as a guitar. The rest of the participants say “Yes, it is!” Everyone gets a turn to come up with a new way to use the object. See how many times you can pass the object around the circle without any repeats.

4) WRITE TO MOMIX

Once you have seen the performance and you and your students have had a chance to discuss what you saw and read, write to MOMIX and the dancers.

Letters may be sent to:

Education Department
Des Moines Performing Arts
221 Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

YOUR ARTISTIC IMPRESSION activity adapted from Overture Center for the Arts' Resource Guide: MOMIX 2011. YES, IT IS! activity adapted from Hopkins Center for the Arts. Family Study Guide. MOMIX: Botanica.

RESOURCES AND SOURCES



CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Web Resources:

ArtsEdge from the Kennedy Center Web Site. <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>

Contains resources on national grade-level dance standards, lesson plans for integrating dance into core curriculum areas, and multimedia resources for students to explore various dance styles.

Michael Curry Design. <http://www.michaelcurrydesign.com/>

Michael Curry is the puppet designer for Momix: Botanica. Explore the possibilities of art and physics by visiting Curry's studio website. His clients include Cirque Du Soleil, Britney Spears, and Disney's The Lion King on Broadway.

MOMIX: Works. <http://www.mosespendleton.com/works.html>

Learn about previous works of Moses Pendleton and his company, MOMIX. Explore evocative photography of dancer/illusionists of the company and signature large-scale props.

(Teachers note: pre-screen images before viewing in class; partial nudity in some repertory pieces, most notably in Baseball.)

Print Resources:

Dance Education Curriculum Guide. Perpich Center for Arts Education.

Frames dance as an integral part of learning for all students. <http://www.pcae.k12.mn.us/pdr/danceedinit.html>

STUDY GUIDE SOURCES

Diavolo. "Young Person's Concert Study Guide." <http://www.diavolo.org/>

Hopkins Center for the Arts. Family Study Guide. MOMIX: Botanica.

<http://hop.dartmouth.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/MOMIX-Study-Guide1.pdf>

MOMIX Official Website. <http://www.mosespendleton.com>

Ordway Center for the Performing Arts: Dance Study Guide Materials. <http://www.ordway.org/>

Overture Center for the Arts' Resource Guide: MOMIX 2011.

<http://overturecenter.com/file/upload/Momix-Botanica-Resource-Guide.pdf>