



## **OPUS CACTUS** BY MOMIX

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*Applause Series* Curriculum Guide  
March 2, 2018

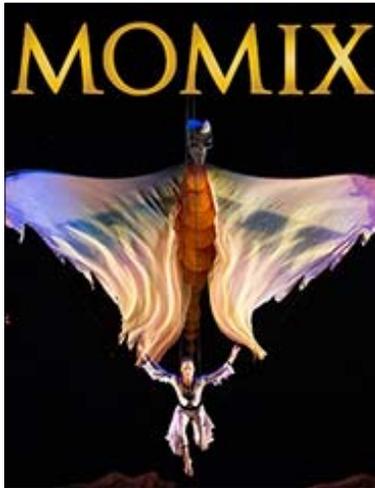


CIVIC CENTER • STONER THEATER • TEMPLE THEATER • COWLES COMMONS

# OPUS CACTUS

## Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of *Opus Cactus* by MOMIX. As a dance company, MOMIX defies categorization. Its works have been called mesmerizing, magical, and imaginative. The company last appeared on the Applause Series with their piece *Botanica* in 2013, and we have no doubt that *Opus Cactus* will similarly thrill students — giving them new appreciation for the amazing capabilities of the human body as well as for the beautiful complexity of our natural world from which MOMIX draws its inspiration.



We thank you for sharing this very 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 assessment 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.

See you at the theater,

Des Moines Performing Arts Education Team

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This study guide was compiled and written by Kathleen Hurley and edited by Karoline Myers.

# ABOUT THE APPLAUSE SERIES



TAKE THOUSANDS OF IOWA STUDENTS OUT OF THEIR CLASSROOMS, PLACE THEM IN A THEATER, SPRINKLE THE STAGE WITH WORLD-CLASS PERFORMERS, AND WHAT DO YOU HAVE? A RECIPE FOR LEARNING THAT REACHES NEW LEVELS OF POSSIBILITY—FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

WE CALL IT THE APPLAUSE SERIES.

## BRINGING ARTS EDUCATION TO LIFE

The Applause Series is a flagship education program of Des Moines Performing Arts. Since its launch in 1996, more than a half million students and teachers have attended school-time performances as part of the series. You are joining us for the 22nd season of school performances!

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Each year, more than 55,000 students and teachers attend an Applause Series performance. The actual cost per person is \$8, but thanks to the caring contributions of donors, schools pay just \$1 per ticket. By removing the financial barriers to participation, donors introduce a whole new generation to the power of arts in action. That means stronger schools and communities now and in the future.

## TICKET TO IMAGINATION

The Applause Series annually delivers 60 age-appropriate performances for pre-school to high school students. The impact stretches far beyond the Des Moines metro, reaching schools in over 35 Iowa counties. The theater becomes the classroom. One-hour matinees energize students to imagine new ways of creative expression, cultural diversity and even career opportunities.

## BEYOND THE STAGE

For many performances, we offer the opportunity invite a professional teaching artist into the classroom or visit another cultural destination in Des Moines to help students make more meaning of a piece of theater. The students' experience can be deepened by an exploration of an art form or theme that connects with what is seen on stage.

## ABOUT DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS

Des Moines Performing Arts is central Iowa's premier not-for-profit performing arts organization.

More than 300,000 guests attend performances and events in our four venues each year:

- ◇ *Civic Center, 2744 seats*
- ◇ *Stoner Theater, 200 seats*
- ◇ *Temple Theater, 299 seats*
- ◇ *Cowles Commons (outdoor plaza)*

Guests experience a wide variety of art forms and cultural activities, with presentations ranging from Broadway, comedy, professional dance, to family programming.

Des Moines Performing Arts education programs serving more than 75,000 Iowans annually.

Programs for schools, such as the Applause Series and teacher professional development, help enliven students' learning. Public education programs such as master classes, workshops, Q&A sessions and summer camps allow audience members and aspiring artists to make meaningful and personal connections to the art they experience on our stages.

# GOING TO THE THEATER



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.

WHAT ROLE WILL YOU PLAY?

## YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Artists on stage are very aware of the mood and level of engagement of the audience. As such, each performance calls for a different response from audience members.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

- ◇ What kind of live performance is this (a musical, dance, or concert)?
- ◇ What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
- ◇ What is the mood of the artists? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
- ◇ Are the artists encouraging the audience to clap to the music, move to the beat, or participate in some other way?
- ◇ Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

### REMEMBER....

THE THEATER IS DESIGNED TO MAGNIFY SOUND. EVEN WHISPERS CAN BE HEARD!

### DID YOU KNOW?

ALTHOUGH NOT REQUIRED, SOME PEOPLE ENJOY DRESSING UP WHEN THEY ATTEND THE THEATER.

## THEATER ETIQUETTE CHECKLIST

- Do not bring food, drinks or chewing gum into the theater.
- The use of cameras and recording devices are not permitted.
- Turn off and put away cell phones and other electronics before the performance begins.
- Do not text during the performance.
- Respect the theater. 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 only before and after the performance.
- Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end.
- Remember that this is a special experience. The artists are creating something just for you. Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists — they will let you know what is appropriate.
- Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. **Enjoy yourself!**

# CIVIC CENTER FIELD TRIP INFORMATION



**WE WANT YOUR FIELD TRIP TO BE SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL!**

**PLEASE READ BELOW FOR IMPORTANT TIPS AND DETAILS TO ENSURE A GREAT DAY.**

## GET ORGANIZED

- ◇ Double-check that all students, teachers, and chaperones were included in your ticket order. Request an adjustment if your numbers have increased. We want to make sure we have enough seats for you!
- ◇ Tickets are not issued. Bring a copy of your invoice, which will serve as your group's "ticket".
- ◇ Schedule arrival for 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This allows time to park, cross streets, find your seats, and go to the restroom.

Let drivers know that Applause performances are approximately 60 minutes, unless otherwise noted.

- ◇ Remind chaperones that children under the age of three are not permitted in the theater for Applause Series events.

## DIRECTIONS/PARKING

- ◇ The Des Moines Civic Center is located at 221 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Iowa.
- ◇ Directions from I-235: take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Turn onto 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and head south.
- ◇ Police officers stationed at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust Streets will direct buses to reserved street parking near the Civic Center.
- ◇ Buses are not allowed to drop groups off in front of the theater. Contact us in advance if there is a special circumstance.
- ◇ Buses remain parked for the duration of the show. Drivers must be available to move the bus immediately following the performance.
- ◇ Personal vehicles are responsible for securing their own parking on a nearby street or in a downtown parking ramp.

**QUESTIONS?  
We are happy to help!**

Please contact us at:  
[education@dmpa.org](mailto:education@dmpa.org)

## ARRIVAL/SEATING

- ◇ An usher will greet you at the door and ask for your school name.
- ◇ Each group will be assigned a specific location in the theater based on various factors. An usher will escort you to your section.
- ◇ Your school may be seated in multiple rows. Adults should position themselves throughout the group.
- ◇ Allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging student seats or taking groups to the restroom.

This helps us seat efficiently and better start the show on time.

## IN THE THEATER

- ◇ In case of a medical emergency, notify the nearest usher.
- ◇ Adults are asked to handle any disruptive behavior in their group. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
- ◇ Please wait for your group to be dismissed by theater staff prior to exiting the theater.

# VOCABULARY



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 *Opus Cactus*.

**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 *Opus Cactus*.

**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



Known internationally for presenting work of exceptional inventiveness and physical beauty, MOMIX has been celebrated for its ability to conjure a world of surreal images using lights, props, shadow, humor and the human body.

*Opus Cactus* is inspired by the southwestern desert of the United States.

**Run Time:** 60 minutes, including brief Q&A

## WHAT YOU WILL SEE

*Opus Cactus* is MOMIX's exploration of the landscape, flora and fauna of the American Southwest. Human bodies become cactuses, slithering lizards and fire dancers.

MOMIX has been described as a mixture of art and eye candy. The group is known for their inventive and illusionist choreography.

*Opus Cactus* was originally made as a 20-minute dance in 2001, but was recently made into a full-length evening work.

The dances have a range of costumes from lizard-like unitards to flowery fabric dresses and props. Often the dancers wear costumes that showcase the musculature and geometric lines of their bodies.

## WHAT YOU WILL HEAR

In this program, there are twelve sections. Each has its own distinct music. You will hear music from Bach, to tribal, to world music, to new age, to contemporary and everything in between.

*Opus Cactus* utilizes a great deal of percussion sounds that provide strong accents and aural landscape for the scenes on stage.

**"I continue to be interested in using the human body to investigate non-human worlds."**

**-Moses Pendleton,  
Artistic Director**

**"I'd love to be able to see into Pendleton's dreams just one night, but dreams alone don't make theater like this."**

**—The Philadelphia Inquirer**

## PROGRAM

Below are the names of the different movements or sections of *Opus Cactus*. What do you predict each section will look, feel or sound like based on its name?

**Desert Storm**

**Cactus Wren / Morning Star**

**Pole Dance**

**Desert Blooms**

**Ostrich of Imagination**

**Prickly Pair**

**Black Mesa**

**Sidewinder**

**Gila Dance**

**Tracking the Earth**

**Caravan**

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS



MOMIX is a company of dancer-illusionists directed by a man named Moses Pendleton who started the group in 1980. The company has been running for 37 years and has performed in 55 different countries all over the world on stages, film and television. Dancers use lights, props, shadows and human bodies to create unusual moving designs. Much of the choreography is inspired by things found in nature.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Moses Pendleton is the Founder and Artistic Director of MOMIX for over 40 years. He co-founded another dance group called “Pilobolus Dance Theater” in 1971 with a group of friends and then formed his own company, MOMIX, in 1980. He also choreographs for film, TV, opera and other ballet companies.

Pendleton was born and raised on a dairy farm in Northern Vermont and remembers exhibiting his family’s dairy cows at the fair. He received a BA in English Literature from Dartmouth College in 1971.

Pilobolus began touring their performances and the dance company shot to fame in the 1970s. Pendleton soon began to do work outside the dance company for the Paris Opera and choreographed the Closing Ceremonies of the Winter Olympics at Lake Placid in 1980, the same year he began MOMIX.

Among many international credits, his television works have won 10 international awards and one International Emmy for Best Performing Arts Special (1991). Pendleton has made music videos with Prince, Julian Lennon, and Cathy Dennis, among others.

Most recently, Pendleton choreographed for the Opening Ceremony of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.



In addition to dancing and making choreography, Pendleton 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.

## ABOUT THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Cynthia Quinn is the Associate Director of MOMIX. She grew up in Southern California and earned the “Outstanding Young Graduate Award” from the University of California at Riverside. As a member and choreographic collaborator of Pilobolus, she performed on Broadway and throughout the United States, Europe, Canada, Israel and Japan. Quinn began performing with MOMIX in 1983 and toured all over the world with appearances on TV and music videos.

## ABOUT THE DANCERS

The MOMIX dancers come from all over the world including France, Italy, and various states within the United States. Their training includes ballet, modern dance, jazz, gymnastics, and yoga.

Visit [www.momix.com/about/dancers](http://www.momix.com/about/dancers) to see pictures and read the biographies of the dancers in the company.

### DID YOU KNOW?

MOMIX dancers have been featured in commercials for Hanes underwear and Target!

# OPUS CACTUS AND THE SONORAN DESERT



Theforagerspath.com

If you have ever traveled to the Sonoran Desert located in the state of Arizona, you might find yourself fascinated (as MOMIX was) by desert life and feel inspired to write a poem, create a dance, compose a song or draw a picture!

Learn more about the Sonoran desert, which inspired the creation of *Opus Cactus*.

## LOCATION

The Sonoran Desert stretches over 100,000 square miles. It encompasses southwestern Arizona, southeastern California, half the Mexican state of Sonora, and nearly all of the Baja California Peninsula.

## CLIMATE

Because it is so close to the ocean, the Sonoran Desert receives more rain than any other desert — about 10 to 14 inches per year. As such, it is lush in comparison to most other deserts.

The Sonoran Desert experiences two distinct rainy seasons each year.

From December to March, storms from the North Pacific Ocean occasionally bring widespread, gentle rain to the northwest areas. From July to mid-September, the area experiences frequent and violent thunderstorms.

Winters in the Sonoran Desert are very mild, as most of the area rarely experiences frost.

## PLANT & ANIMAL LIFE

The Sonoran Desert supports a rich ecosystem of plant and animal life.

More than 2,000 species of plants grow in the region. Two types of plants distinguish the Sonoran Desert from other North American deserts: legume trees and columnar cacti.

A wide variety of animals also make the Sonoran Desert home, such as:

- ◇ Anna's Hummingbirds
- ◇ Bark Scorpions
- ◇ Bobcats
- ◇ Cactus Wrens
- ◇ Collared Lizards
- ◇ Coyotes
- ◇ Desert Centipedes
- ◇ Desert Tortoises
- ◇ Diamondback Rattlesnakes
- ◇ Elf Owls
- ◇ Gila Monsters
- ◇ Gila Woodpeckers
- ◇ Gray Fox
- ◇ Great Horned Owls
- ◇ Harris Hawks
- ◇ Jackrabbits
- ◇ Kangaroo Rats
- ◇ Mule Deer
- ◇ Pepsis Wasps
- ◇ Tarantulas
- ◇ Vultures

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The word '**opus**' refers to any artistic work, especially one on a large scale.

A cactus is a succulent plant with a thick, fleshy stem that typically bears spines, lack leaves, and may have brilliant colored flowers. Cacti are native to arid regions of the Americas. They are often cultivated as houseplants. The Sonoran Desert, which inspired the creation of *Opus Cactus*, is known for its large saguaro cacti.

# PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCENES



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

This list contains 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.

**Technical Director:** makes sure all the technical aspects, such as the set, lights and sound, go together and work.

**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 hiring the personnel who make artistic decisions. In general, they are the person who makes sure the company runs smoothly.

ABOVE: Dancers use their bodies to create the illusion of a slithering lizard. What do you notice about the costumes they are wearing? How do they help create the illusion?

What do you notice about the lighting in this particular scene? How does it support the illusion?

## 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 lighting, costumes, puppets, music and projections make the show more enjoyable and understandable, thus enhancing the mood of each section.

# WHAT IS DANCE?



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, modern, world 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. However, as with MOMIX, some dances can be a collaboration of many people's ideas that might begin with improvisation and culminate in a set dance with a detailed sequence of steps repeated the same way, at the same tempo, and in the same place on stage every time.

## 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.



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 page 14.

**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.

# PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION, pg. 1 of 3

## 1) SHADOW IMAGING

**Goal:** To physically experiment with body shape, lighting, projection and perspective

**Explanation:** *Opus Cactus* uses projections, lights and shadows for some scenes. In this activity, students will create their own shadow performance.

**Materials:**

- ◇ A large piece of white fabric or paper
- ◇ A projecting light
- ◇ Cardboard pieces
- ◇ Scissors
- ◇ Student-selected props
- ◇ A clear wall

**Activity:**

1. Talk to the students about the performance they will experience and tell them some scenes may include shadow imagery. Body shapes, props, and cutouts can combine to make shapes other than the original. *Opus Cactus* celebrates the desert of the southwest part of the USA. Many unusually shaped plants, animals and landscape can be found in this part of the country.
2. Ask students to find images of flora, fauna or plants in the southwestern desert.
3. In groups, pick 2-3 of their favorite images.
4. Using a light projected on one side of the white screen, have students in small groups try to re-create their desert images in silhouette. They can work singly and in group shapes.
5. Once students have created some shapes have them show the class and choose background music that they feel matches the mood of their desert shapes.
6. For more advanced students, ask them to create transitions between the shapes or make the shapes move, dance, undulate, blow, etc.

**Follow-Up Questions:**

1. How hard or easy was it to create the image in your mind? What modifications or problem solving did you have to do when you were creating your image?
2. Did you come up with unintended images that were just as or more interesting than the one you initially tried to make?
3. What happened when your subjects were closer to the light source? Farther from the light source?
4. What happens if you have more than one light source?

## 2) IMAGES OF NATURE

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

**Explanation:** *Opus Cactus* uses projections, puppets and costumes that celebrate the beauty of the desert in southwestern United States. In this activity, students will explore nature and then document their observations through photography or drawing.

**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?

## PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION, pg. 2 of 3

### 4) WHO DANCES?

**Goal:** To understand that dance is a shared art form around the world

**Explanation:** Students will view a short video featuring people from around the world dancing, paired with guided discussion.

**Materials:**

- ◇ Internet connection with YouTube access
- ◇ Projector or other way to show the video
- ◇ Chalk board or chart paper

**Activity:**

1. Explain to students that they will be going to the theater to see a professional dance performance. Today, you would like to explore the question of ‘Who dances?’
2. Write “Who Dances” on the board or flipchart paper. Ask for students to volunteer ideas about who dances. (Ideas may include ballerinas, cheerleaders, brides and grooms, etc.)
3. After you have gathered responses, tell students that they are going to watch a short video that may give them some additional thoughts on who dances.
4. Play the “Where...is Matt 2012” video by clicking on the image below.

**Follow-up Questions:**

1. Did anything surprise you about the video?
2. Are there additions we need to make to our ‘Who dances’ list? (Eventually, the goal is to have a student suggest that everybody dances in some form.)
3. Now that we’ve explored who dances, why do you think people dance? (To celebrate, to entertain, to worship, to express themselves, etc.)



Show students the video “Where the Hell is Matt? 2012” in which Matt Harding engages people from all around the world in dancing with him.

### 4) INSPIRATION INTO MOTION

**Goal:** To understand that MOMIX draws inspiration from nature to create movement

**Explanation:** Students will use inspiration from the flora, fauna and landscapes of the American Southwest to create (frozen pictures) that they will then put into motion.

**Materials:**

- ◇ Images of the American Southwest from sites such as [DesertUSA](#) or the [National Park Service](#)
- ◇ Large sheets of paper
- ◇ Glue

1. Explain that *Opus Cactus* was inspired by the geography and life of a specific region—the American Southwest. Students are going to use images from the region to create their own movement sequences.
2. Ask students to look for photos of flora, fauna or landscapes in the sites above or in books from your school library. Allow each student to select one photo that particularly inspires them to print out or make a photo copy of.
3. Next, divide the class into small groups of 4-5. The group should agree on a sequence for the photos they each selected and then glue them to a large sheet of paper.
4. Ask each group to create a “live” version of the first photo in the sequence, with the roles (or parts of the subject) played by the members of the group. Invite them to create a still life tableau (or frozen picture) with their bodies to recreate the photo.
5. After they have practiced with the first image, challenge them to create tableau of the remaining pictures — guiding them through each creation.
6. Then, ask each group to perform its photo sequence fluidly, with each of the four tableau flowing into the other.
7. Last, have the class view the photo sequences on paper at the same time as each human tableau is performed by the group.

**Follow-Up Questions:**

1. Compare the live image with the two-dimensional images on paper. Do the images look like a dance when the images are performed in sequence?
2. What was striking about one of the tableau sequences? Why was that moment or movement memorable?

## PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION, pg. 3 of 3

### 5) THE DANCING MIRROR

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

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

**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 12.
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?

**Teacher Tip:**

If you have not introduced movement activities within your classroom before, be sure to check out "Preparing for Success: Introducing Movement Into the Classroom" on page 17 for some simple exercises and pointers to get your class started.

### 6) GROOVING TO THE BEAT

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

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

**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?

**Teacher Tip:**

If you have not introduced movement activities within your classroom before, be sure to check out "Preparing for Success: Introducing Movement Into the Classroom" on page 17 for some simple exercises and pointers to get your class started.

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

# POST-SHOW DISCUSSION & ASSESSMENT

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### The Art Form

1. Which parts of the body were the dancers using?
2. Were all the body parts moving together or separate from one another?
3. Were all the performers moving at the same speed? How would you describe their movement?
4. Did they all do the movements on the same beat?
5. What kind of spatial shapes did the dancers form?
6. What adjectives would you use to describe the energy of the dancers?
7. What animals did you see represented in *Opus Cactus*? What plants, or flora did you see?
8. How did the dancers collaborate to use their bodies in the illusions?

### Performance Components

1. How did the lighting add to the show or contribute to the illusions?
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 props did you see? What was their function? What did the prop(s) represent?
6. How did the dancers collaborate to make images such as the gila monster?

### Connections

1. What message or feeling do you think MOMIX wanted their audience to walk away with after seeing *Opus Cactus*?
2. What themes or motifs did you see in the performance? Did any of those themes repeat in different ways throughout the show?
3. *Opus Cactus* is inspired by nature. Will you think about or experience nature differently after seeing *Opus Cactus*? 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 *Opus Cactus* 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 *Opus Cactus* are repurposed items—things that are used for a specific purpose but in *Opus Cactus* 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

## 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 15, 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.

# RESOURCES AND SOURCES



## CLASSROOM 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.*

MOMIX: Works. <http://www.momix.com/works/#>

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

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

Opus Cactus Video Excerpts.

*Preview select excerpts from Opus Cactus in this YouTube Playlist.*

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXA3d44Cbd5rFYaXiOWK397ft-ggl2\\_qI](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXA3d44Cbd5rFYaXiOWK397ft-ggl2_qI)

Science of the American Southwest. National Park Service.

*Explore the vegetation and animal life of the American Southwest.*

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/swscience/plants-animals.htm>

“Sonoran Desert Fact Sheets.” Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.

*Student-friendly fact sheets about the Sonoran Desert and many of its plant and animal species.*

<https://www.desertmuseum.org/kids/oz/long-fact-sheets/>

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## STUDY GUIDE SOURCES

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. <https://www.desertmuseum.org>

Chadwick, Douglas H. “Life in the Desert: Songs of the Sonoran.” National Geographic.

<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/habitats/sonoran-desert/#page=1>

Diavolo. “Young Person’s Concert Study Guide.” <http://www.diavolo.org/>

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

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

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

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