

DREAMCATCHERS

THE LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL BANK POPEJOY SCHOOLTIME SERIES TEACHING GUIDE



MOMIX

Opus Cactus

Presented by MOMIX
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2017

Grades: 4-12

Dreamcatchers Teaching Guides align with the Common Core State Standards and New Mexico State Learning Standards.

Standards Addressed By Attending the Performance

New Mexico State Standards

Visual and Performing Arts:

Standards 3, 6



There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique.”

— MARTHA GRAHAM



INTRODUCTION

What is MOMIX? Modern dance, experimental dance, gymnastics, illusion, magic? MOMIX's performances are inspired by a number of different sources. MOMIX stretches dance performance into innovative and creative new realms.

Opus Cactus brings desert landscapes to life in MOMIX's signature illusionistic dance style. Dynamic images of cactuses, slithering lizards, and fire dancers fill the stage in this unique experience. Under the direction of Moses Pendleton, MOMIX's breathtaking ode to the American Southwest is truly unique.

Utilizing movements through modern dance, MOMIX will be performing portions of *Opus Cactus Part 1*. The multi-media spectacle is inspired by the flora and fauna of the American Southwest. As in most of their theatrical productions, the show uses props, light, shadow, projected imagery, inventive choreography, music and constructed costumes.



Vocabulary

aesthetic — have a sensitivity for beauty and art

choreography — a planned sequence of movements that utilize the form and structure of dance

choreographer — a person who uses their knowledge of dance and adds their own interpretation of ideas, themes, and emotions to create a piece of dance art

collaboration — to work jointly with others to create something new

concert dance — dance performed on a stage; concert dance is more formal than social dances

contemporary dance — an evolving collection of training and choreographic approaches to dance that is derived from the intention to make dance performances relevant to contemporary cultures and to break from the tight structure of classical forms

contort — to bend or twist something out of its normal shape

costume — article(s) of clothing used to help communicate the story that a performer is trying to tell

ensemble — is a way of dancing in which the performers dance together, each providing an equal and important contribution

improvisation — movement that is created spontaneously or within the moment that it is being performed

modern dance — is a style of theatrical dancing that is not as restricted as classical ballet; movements are expressive of feelings, ideas, and experiences

partnering — is an approach in which two people dance together, taking and receiving weight

unison — all dancers moving together at the same time doing the same movement

variation — repeating thematic material in a different way or form

An Overview of Dance History

The first forms of dance might be considered to have had their origin in the desire to tell a story. The earliest dances reflected the ideals of the culture in which they were created. Often these ideals were connected to religious traditions and the dances depicted spiritual figures and their lives. Classical dance traditions developed from these beginnings, as movements and specific sequences were formalized. “Classical dance” took a wide variety of shapes as it evolved in different cultural climates. Important examples of these classical dance forms are: ballet, which emerged in Europe, kabuki, found in Japan, and kathakali, created in India.

It wasn't until the late 1800s, that a

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major shift took place in the world of dance. Sparked by the literary trend of Romanticism, which celebrated the individual and the natural world, dancers began to experiment with nontraditional movements and expressions in dance. One of the famous dancers of the period, Isadora Duncan, said, “the real source of dance is in nature and inside oneself.”

In the early 20th century in Europe, a great many changes were taking place in the arts. Excited by the many new discoveries in science and psychology, many artists began to explore their work in new ways. In painting, cubism presented objects seen simultaneously from several points of view. Composers were also discovering new sounds and structures in music. The Ballet Russe was breathing new life into the art of classical dance, which had decayed into an empty show of technique.

In the United States, however, there were no professional dance

companies. Serious dancers had to work in vaudeville—a lowbrow style of variety show popular in the early 20th century—in musicals, or go to Europe. Many early American professional dancers spent time in Europe launching their careers and gaining inspiration.

Soon though, a small group of American dance pioneers broke the mold of traditional dance techniques, and in doing so, changed the course of dance in the 20th century. Dancers and choreographers like Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Doris Humphrey, Jose Limon, Louis Falso, and Mary Wigman greatly impacted the development of what we know today as modern dance. Two women in particular, Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, became international stars of the new dance movement.

Isadora Duncan was a dance instructor in San Francisco before travelling to New York to introduce her new style of interpretive dance to the public. Duncan’s free flowing

movements were a mixture of traditional ballet and natural-seeming moves that engaged her whole body. Inspired by the simplicity of classical Greek art, Duncan rejected the corset and danced barefoot wearing a Greek tunic. She believed that dance should convey the entire human experience, including joy, sadness, and love. Using the music of classical composers such as Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, many of her dances concerned social protest, and she has become a symbol of female emancipation.

Ruth St. Denis began her dance career in vaudeville before being inspired by a poster of the Egyptian goddess Isis. Attracted to “Oriental” mysticism and later South Asian traditional dance, Denis reinterpreted what she saw as the dances from the “East.” While St. Denis’ dances were not accurate, they did contribute to breakthroughs in the modern dance movement. St. Denis created multiple techniques in which the dancers’ bodies synchronized with the music, known as “music visualizations.”



Interesting Facts for Students

Dance is a sport. As much as dancers are artists, they are also athletes because they have to follow very strict training routines in order to stay in shape. They need these exercise routines in order to maintain flexibility, physical and mental endurance, and muscular strength. Most of them have been known to exercise for an average of six hours every day!

Because of the high physical demand on their bodies, most professional dancers retire from dancing during their mid-30s.

“Opus” refers to any artistic work, especially one on a large scale.

Dance is a diverse art form. There are countless types of dance in various countries such as belly dancing, break-dancing, ballroom, salsa, tango, tap, body-popping, and so on. Most

countries have their own style(s) or dance type, and will showcase them as part of their culture. Dance can be done for purely entertainment purposes, or it can be used to tell stories and communicate feelings to the audience.

Research proves that dancing reduces stress and tension for the mind and body. Studies by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute have shown that dancing helps prevent heart disease.

Dance is Passionate: No matter what kind of dance routine, one cannot fail to detect the passion with which the routine is done. This is because dancing releases endorphins in the body resulting in positive moods.

The “Dancing Plague” of 1518 was a mania that lasted a month and killed dozens of people in Strasbourg, France through exhaustion or heart attack. People just danced uncontrollably until they collapsed! One other famous case of “death by dance” involved people dancing on

a bridge. Eventually so many people danced that they broke the bridge and fell into the river.

Opus Cactus was inspired by the Sonoran desert in the state of Arizona.

Cacti are succulent plants with a thick, fleshy stem that typically have spines, lack leaves, and may have brilliantly colored flowers. Cacti are native to arid regions of the Americas but are also cultivated elsewhere, especially as houseplants.

There are over 2,500 species of cactus plants. The Lady Finger cactus has bright colored flowers and lives only a few days.

The saguaro cactus stands like a giant in the desert. It can grow up to 50 feet tall and live 200 years. A whole forest of these amazing plants live in the Saguaro National Monument in Arizona! The saguaro’s blossom is the Arizona state flower.

Today 27 kinds of cactus are on the endangered species list.

Self - Identity - Names

Lesson 1

Grades 4 - 12

NMCCSS

SL.1, SL.5, SL.6

New Mexico
State Standards

Visual and
Performing Arts:

Standard 2

Objectives

Students will:

- create a symbol or notion of self, strengthening self-concept.
- combine several individual ideas to form a larger idea.

Materials

- A clear space providing freedom for movement

Procedure

1. Have the students warm up by silently mirroring the motions of a leader. Instruct the leader to reach high, go down low, stretch their whole bodies — including fingers, neck, rotating joints, etc. This should be done slowly so that the class can easily follow the movements.
2. Have the students form a circle, either one large one or several small ones with 6 — 8 in each.
3. Explain that each student, in turn, will create a shape or simple motion while saying his/her name. Students' names can be emphasized in syllables, drawn out in a sustained way, or repeated once or twice.
4. Have students learn the motion as accurately as possible and do it

together 2 or 3 times.

5. After the first person has given a shape or motion, and the second name is learned, combine the first and second together. A sequence of 4 or 5 names and movements works well. After the first 5 names, begin a new sequence with a second 5.
6. Then demonstrate the following steps with 3 students before the class begins working independently.
7. Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4. Each student will learn the shape or motion of each other, and then the group combines their motions in a specific order to create a beginning, middle, and end. They can change direction for

each name; form a repetitive action; travel to a new place for each name, etc.

8. Have each group share its idea.
9. Have them work toward refinement and fulfillment of the idea.
10. Instruct them to create a moment of focus before beginning and to hold the ending a few seconds for a more complete feeling.
11. Have each group perform their choreography for the class.
12. After each performance, the class should tell the group what their motions reminded them of. Did they think of an ocean? A desert? An animal? Why?

Modification

Have two or more groups combine their movements in a manner that tells a short story without words. Have the class tell them the story they viewed. Was it what they intended? Where were they clear or not clear? How could they have made it better? Make sure the class uses positive criticism techniques. If they wish, have them make modifications and try their story again utilizing the class' input.

Assessment

- Quality of participation

Nonverbal Communication

Lesson 2

Grades 4-12

NMCCSS

SL.1, SL.2, SL.6

New Mexico State Standards

Visual and Performing Arts:

Standard 2

Objectives

Students will:

- increase their ability to confront others in a positive way.
- increase the ability to communicate and create nonverbally.

Materials

- a clear space providing freedom of movement

Instructions

Explain to the students that all of the following activities are done in silence after they are explained. It is important that you stress that there is “no talking” during the movement. Either you or a couple of students will demonstrate each problem before the class does it.

1. Have the students form a circle with boys and girls mixed.
2. Look around the circle until you connect with another through eye contact.
3. Identify that you see each other by a gesture (e.g. both slapping thighs).
4. Then run and change places.
5. Since several may be moving at once, it is important to move through space without any bumping or touching (this could be practiced first as a separate skill).

Procedures

This activity can be done one pair at a time, or several pairs at a time. Predetermine how you will do this. Have a leader call out the following instructions:

1. Make eye contact. Identify each other with a new gesture. Run to each other. Take both wrists of your partner and spin. Each is responsible for the weight of the other – using counterbalance.
2. Make eye contact. Identify a different classmate with a new gesture. Choose a traveling

motion by which you will meet. One partner moves and makes a statement with their choice of movement while the other “listens” by holding a shape. Reverse roles. Each makes 2 or 3 movement statements, then exits to the other’s place.

3. In slow motion, the leader then makes contact with another classmate. Identify each other with a new gesture. Move toward each other in a very sustained, slow motion. When you meet, keep

eye contact, and continue moving backwards to the other’s place. Encourage level changes and a variety of slow motions.

4. Have the class create additional problems based on this same concept.
5. After everyone has had a turn in the center, have the class divide into partners to work out movement conversations. There could be a meeting, greeting or conversation, and a parting.

Modifications

Have the students take turns giving clear instructions of their own design to the class. Discuss how individuals interpret instructions and movements differently and the importance of clarity in verbal directions.

Assessment

- Quality of participation

Questions to Engage & Connect

After seeing the show, ask your students to answer these questions:

While watching the dance and listening to the music, did you find yourself coming up with images? What were they?

How do you think today's society impacts dance and culture?

How does one's background, culture or identity impact the way a person views or makes a dance?

How is choreography like photography? How do they differ?

How would you describe Momix's choreography?

Other than dance, what kinds of elements were used? How did they add to the show?

What seems to be the most difficult thing about dancing? Did the performers make it look easy? Explain.

If you were the choreographer, what is something you would have designed into the show?

Bonus Explorations Lessons & Activities

Writing Activity — After seeing the performance, invite students to discuss what they saw and record their impressions creatively. Students might want to write a short poem about the dances they watched. This can include the ways their understanding of dance may have changed, elements of the dances that surprised them, and ways that the dancers challenged their ideas about movement.

Geometry and Dance — Dance can easily be linked to math through geometry and the study of shapes. Have students analyze dance positions they saw in the performance. Look for shapes that dancers' bodies make as they move across the stage. The students can draw the dance positions they observed in the performance, then identify the geometric shapes they created.

The Sonoran Desert — Research natural life in the Sonoran desert. Identify your subject. Is it animal, mineral, vegetable, human? Create a vocabulary based on your subject. What does it look like? Where does it live? How does it survive? What part does it play in the eco system of the desert? If it were to disappear forever, what would happen to the environment and ecosystem including humans?

Resources

Books

Moving Still, is a unique photography book that portrays the world of modern dance in eye catching pictures.

Greenfield, Lois, and William A. Ewing. *Moving Still*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

Websites

A link to all things **modern dance**.

From poetry to history, **a website** linked to everything contemporary dance.

Check out a lesson plan that explores the **history of dance**.

Videos

Here is a website that offers numerous **videos** on dance.

Momix Lunar Sea (Sun Flower Moon)
- Watch another amazing Momix performance.

About the Director



For over 40 years, **Moses Pendleton** has been one of America's most innovative and widely performed choreographers and directors. A co-founder of the groundbreaking Pilobolus Dance Theater in 1971, he formed his own company, Momix, in 1980. Pendleton has also been active as a choreographer and performer for numerous other companies and events including the Joffrey Ballet, the Ballet de Nancy, US Spoleto Festival, and the Metropolitan Opera. He is well known for his extensive film choreography credits and awards for his work from around the world.

About the Company

Known internationally for presenting work of exceptional inventiveness and physical beauty, **Momix** is a company of dancer-illusionists under the direction of Moses Pendleton. They have been celebrated for their ability to conjure up a world of surrealistic images using props, light, shadow, humor, and the human body. In addition to stage performances world-wide, Momix has worked in film and television, and with symphonies.



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About the Schooltime Series

The Los Alamos National Bank Popejoy Schooltime Series brings you national and international touring companies and performers you can't see anywhere else in or around Albuquerque. Each touring company is selected with youth and family audiences in mind, and our repertoire reflects the cultural diversity of our global community. The Schooltime Series includes new plays, familiar stories, literary works, biographies, mythologies, folk tales, music, dance, and puppetry. These professional performing artists create educational experiences designed to encourage **literacy, creativity, communication, and imagination.**

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Popejoy Hall

Popejoy Hall is New Mexico's premier nonprofit venue for the performing arts and entertainment. Our mission is to provide access to the performing arts for all New Mexicans.

Etiquette

The inside of a theatre is called a "house" and to get along, have fun, and enjoy the shows, there are rules to follow. Schooltime provides a wonderful opportunity to learn how good behavior in a live theater is different from watching television at home. For guidelines to practice with your class and chaperones go to schooltimeseries.com/house-policies.

House Policies

Please visit our website for detailed information about **House Policies**. This includes our guidelines on safety, special needs, food and drink, backpacks, cell phones, photography, recordings, and more.

Credits

Dreamcatchers are Teaching Guides produced by the Education Department of Popejoy Hall, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Selected Dreamcatchers Teaching Guide materials provided by **Momix**, **The University of Arizona**, **Pilobolus**, **Popejoy Presents**, **10 Fun Facts About Dance**, **kidsbritannica.com**, and other resources noted within this guide.

The University of New Mexico



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