MOMIX Botanica
Study Guide
For Teachers and Students

Performances begin promptly at 10 AM & 1 PM
Monday, November 5, 2012
Zoellner Arts Center, 420 E. Packer Avenue

Compiled by Zoellner Arts Center Outreach staff based on a guide from Dance Affiliates

Sponsors include:
About Dance ~ What is Dance?

**From Webster’s...**
1. to engage in or perform a dance
2. to move or seem to move up and down or about in a quick or lively manner

**From Dictionary.com...**
1. to move one’s feet or body, or both, rhythmically in a pattern of steps, especially to the accompaniment of music.

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### Class Discussion

- Where do people dance?
- Why do people dance?
- What kinds of dance have you done, observed or studied?
- Have you seen dance in a theater? or in a movie?

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**What to look for in the MOMIX production**

There are many types of dance ~ some of them include folkloric, hip hop, tap, ballet, modern, and jazz.

Every performing group has something very special that makes them unique! In classical ballet productions, the female dancers probably wear pointe shoes and tutus. Modern and contemporary dancers may be barefooted and dressed in unitards or everyday clothes. Tap dancers need their tap shoes. Hip Hop performers enjoy good sneakers. African dancers often wear colorful costumes and perform with live drummers. Folkoric companies wear traditional costumes and dance to music of a specific culture and/ or country.

MOMIX is unusual among contemporary dance companies. The MOMIX dancer is part-athlete and part-gymnast. **Athletic feats** are as much a part of the performance as traditional dance steps. The company’s performances are widely known for being imaginative, creative and stretching the definition and perception of dance. The company is also known for their **creative production elements** as well as their choreography.

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**Production elements to pay attention to:**

- Costume
- Lighting
- Music
- Set/Props
- Special Effects

(See next page for more details!)
**PRODUCTION ELEMENTS**

**NOTE:** In a MOMIX production, the line may be blurred between any of these elements.

**Costumes**

Costumes are the clothing a performer wears in a production. Costumes help to tell the story, define the time period or create a mood. Notice the costumes for each section of BOTANICA; think about how and what they add to the piece. Be prepared to be wowed by the dancers in colorful feathers, beaded skirts, unexpected ornamentation and yards of parachute material.

**Lighting**

Lighting allows the audience to see the dancers. It helps to create a mood. The lighting designer selects the color, intensity, and focus of the lights that illuminate the stage. Stage lighting is crucial to create a sense of space where the dance exists. It can focus the attention of the audience on particular performers or particular parts of the stage. Think about what mood the lighting evokes in the production. Does the lighting change within each dance; between the dances? How does it direct your attention?

**Music**

Music is a rhythmic force and can be used to move the performance in time, setting the mood or atmosphere. The company MOMIX uses a range of music: different periods and different styles. Where else might you hear the music used for the dances shown today?

**Sets/Props**

Sets are constructed or collected pieces put on stage to help define or suggest a locale like a garden or forest. Sets help to establish a tone or time period. List other productions that use sets.

Props or properties are small inanimate pieces not affixed to the performer that are used to adorn the set or are used by the performer to enhance or further the action of the piece. Like a king’s crown or a telephone booth, these props augment a performance, establishing a more detailed setting in which the artist more easily develops their character. MOMIX showcases a variety of props, including handheld tubes and a gigantic fan. Try to differentiate between set pieces and props used in the performance.

**Special Effects**

Special effects, standard in movies or films, are also used on stage. They include things like fog, raindrops, laser lighting. Moses Pendleton, the Artistic Director of MOMIX, transforms the space into a fantasyland by using colorful backdrops, special lighting and eye-catching projections. MOMIX audiences can expect to be taken into a magical place. Where else might you find special effects? What value do the special effects in the performance bring to the show?
About the WORK

**MOMIX** will be performing *Botanica*. The program features short works consisting of solos, duets, trios, and large ensemble numbers set to a wide range of music. Based on the changing of the four seasons, MOMIX takes the audience on a journey through nature from winter’s cold, to spring’s awakening, to summer’s heat and on to autumn’s colorful changes. The work is not necessarily narrative but viewers may feel or experience a story. In *Botanica*, dancers transform their bodies into bees, flowers, bugs, trees, snakes, butterflies and even dinosaurs. The production is divided into two acts—Winter/Spring and Summer/Fall. Moses Pendleton (the director and creator) is recognized for his creative imagination and passion for nature.

**Special note:** The dancers are often costumed in form-fitting leotards and when in skin-tones, give the illusion of nudity; in fact, the dancers are always clothed. In addition, the dancers are also often embellished with a series of props or mechanicals which they manipulate.

**About The Company**

Known internationally for its ability to conjure a world of surrealistic images using props, light, shadow, humor and the human body, MOMIX is a Connecticut-based company of dancer-illusionists under the direction of Moses Pendleton. In addition to stage performances world-wide, MOMIX has worked on special projects in film and television. MOMIX was featured in PBS’s *Dance in America* series and was selected to represent the United States at the European Culture Center at Delphi.

MOMIX dancers Cynthia Quinn and Karl Baumann played the role of Bluey in the film *FX II*, under the direction of Moses Pendleton. The company is featured on a Decca Records laser disc, appearing with Charles Dutoit and Montreal Symphony in the Rhombus Media film of Mussorgky’s *Pictures at an Exhibit*, winner of an International Emmy for Best Performing Arts Special. In 1992, Mr. Pendleton created *Bat Habits* to celebrate the opening of the San Francisco Giants’ new spring training park in Scottsdale, Arizona. This work was the forerunner of *Baseball*, which was created by Pendleton in 1994. MOMIX is featured in one the first IMAX films in 3-D, *IMAGINE*, which premiered at the Taejon Expo 93 and was subsequently released at IMAX theaters world-wide. In 2004, *White Widow*, co-choreographed by Moses Pendleton and Cynthia Quinn, was featured in the Robert Altman’s movie, *The Company*. For more than 28 years, MOMIX has been celebrated for presenting work of exceptional inventiveness and physical beauty.

**Classroom ACTIVITY:**
After reading about MOMIX, list three words you would use to describe the company.

____________________          __________________         ___________________

List three facts about MOMIX:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
ABOUT THE FOUNDER
MOSES PENDLETON

Moses Pendleton (US dancer, choreographer, and company director) was born March 28, 1949, and raised on a dairy farm in Lyndonville, VT. In the early 70’s he was a cross country skier and English major who attended (at that time the all-male) Dartmouth College. With two fellow students a philosophy major and a pre-medical student, Pendleton decided to take a dance class taught by Alison Chase. They named their dance Pilobolus, after a sun-loving fungus that grows in the barnyards. Eventually, they formed the ground-breaking troupe Pilobolus Dance Theater which became known for its sculptural style, physicality and weight-sharing techniques. Pendleton stayed with this group as a full time member until 1980.

THE STORY OF HOW MOMIX GOT ITS NAME

Moses Pendleton, as one of five artistic directors of the company Pilobolus, was invited in 1980 to choreograph the closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics at Lake Placid. At the Games, he performed a solo, called MOMIX, shorted by Moses Mix. The next year, he founded a dance company called MOMIX. MOMIX is also the trade name for a milk supplement that the farm-bred Moses used to feed his veal calves. MOMIX emerged as a five-member dance company in 1984.

What do choreographers make dances about?

A Choreographer (ko ree OG ruh fer) is a person who composes, invents or creates a dance. “CHOREO” from the Greek (Khoreia) “Dance” and “Graphe” Writing, thus “Dance Writing.”

A choreographer designs the steps or patterns of steps and how the body is used to communicate an idea. A choreographer may begin by using improvisation to discover new movements or create movements from their own dance vocabulary. Sometimes a choreographer starts with an idea, image, mood or feeling as the starting point for making a dance. Often choreographers are inspired by a certain piece of music and create visual pictures to the music. Some choreographers are movement storytellers using a narrative form for the physical action; others think in abstract forms where they allow the viewer or audience to interpret the dance. The dancers in MOMIX collaborate with the director/choreographer in making the work.

Moses Pendleton believes inspiration for his productions can come from anywhere. “When you go to make dance,” says Pendleton, “you don’t necessarily begin to make the dance in the dance studio. You might find it in the desert, or in the ball park . . . or maybe watching the sunflowers.”

“You have got to use your imagination, and in our shows, we try to create what I call ‘optical confusion,’ designed to excite the brain cells and stimulate creativity.”

MOMIX mixes gymnastics, sports, classical dance, multimedia to create spectacular visual theater.
Program may include some of the following selections:

**Blacklight** 8:26
This portion highlights MOMIX's skill at illusion, as various body parts sheathed in glow-in-the-dark fabric are used to create images of plants, animals, people and shapes that transform and float in midair, defy gravity, time and space.

**Sandpiper** 9:30
A transitionary segment in which a dancer, with only legs showing under a leaf-like costume, moves with brisk yet delicate precision across the stage.

**Marigolds** 5:27
An example of the company's use of props, in this portion the dancers' tu-tuesque costumes continually change, moving down their bodies from head to toes. The dance has a balletic quality in the dancers' formations and footwork, yet is still to contemporary music.

**Hornets** 3:35
A quartet of male dancers with movement that is sharp and quick, reflecting the frenetic movement of flying insects, often in unison.

**Suffis/Owl** 1:16
A transitionary segment of owl and bird noises, accompanied by tiny, flickering lights that move around the stage like fireflies.

**Centaurs** 4:36
Pairs of dancers work together to create one creature with two human bodies. This piece explores animal characteristics and behavior, and highlights the dancers' considerable physicality.

**Storm** 5:30
Sailing fabric, lighting, music, sound effects and choreography blend to bring to the stage the power and ominous beauty of weather.

**Beadskirt** 4:26
An abstract solo with a female dancer spinning constantly in the same direction, with a mesmerizing prop of stringed beads which form a dancing circle around her. A great example of using centrifugal force to manipulate a prop.

**Snail** 1:19
A male dancer with a giant snail shell on his back makes his way slowly across the stage while other, rectangular-backed insects scuttle quickly across upstage.

**Bird** 1:37
Two dancers, each wearing one roller blade skate, capture the sound and soaring movement of tropical birds in this short piece.

**Sunflower Fans** 4:29
Giant feathered, half-circle fans help to transform four dancers into sunflowers which twirl, dance together and individually, quiver and eventually succumb to wilting.

**Man Fan** 5:55
A particularly innovative and wondrous use of a prop as a solo dancer manipulates a huge piece of fabric that seems to have life and breath of its own. Images of nature are projected on the fabric as it rises and falls to ethereal music.

**Solar Flares** 4:38
This upbeat dance utilizes noodle-like props and rhythmic choreography to explore the energy of solar flares. A STROBE LIGHT IS USED BRIEFLY IN THIS PORTION.
Being A Good Audience Member

When you attend any live performance, it’s important to know how to act as a good audience member. There is a difference between being at home watching television, being at a movie complex watching a film, or being in a theater watching a live performance.

Good Audience Members...
- Are good listeners,
- Remain in their seats during the performance,
- Enter the theater respectfully and sit quietly,
  - Are attentive and polite,
  - Keep their hands and feet to themselves,
- Do not talk or whisper during the performance,
  - Laugh when it is appropriate,
- Do not chew gum, eat or drink in the theater,
- Participate when they are asked to do so,
- Turn cell phones OFF or SILENT and do not text unless invited by artist,
- Do not take photos.

Applause!
As a rule, audience members at live performances express their appreciation with applause. Show appreciation to the dancers by clapping or applauding at key moments during the performance as well as at the end of the performance. In dance, it is traditional to applaud at the end of each solo or group piece, unless the performance is choreographed in such a way that the dancing ends with dramatic action that shouldn’t be interrupted.

The dancers and sometimes the choreographer will often appear on stage after the performance for “curtain calls” (or bows). Clapping and cheering is appropriate. If the audience really enjoys the performance, they may stand up and clap; this is known as a standing ovation.

These suggestions are known as theater etiquette. Exercising good theater etiquette is as important to your fellow audience members as it is to the performers.
After your class has seen a performance by MOMIX use some class time to write or talk about the experience. Use the following questions* to encourage the discussion:

1. Can you identify/talk about the overall structure of the piece ~ i.e., small sections creating a larger overarching theme.
   - Is Botanica a good name for the show you saw?
   - Which costume/character was most memorable to you?

2. Talk about the discipline of dance as a way to create and communicate meaning.
   - What did you like or appreciate most about the performance?

3. Identify other disciplines integrated into the performance ~ e.g., music, film, theater.
   - How did the integration of multiple disciplines impact the performance?

4. Was your idea of dance changed in any way after seeing MOMIX. Describe.

5. Discuss the people and processes in the entire production and presentation. Please note that Zoellner Arts Center includes a full staff of technical crew, box office staff, etc., all working together to produce a successful event. Share teamwork experiences in which you have participated.

* Post performance questions prompted by National Core Curricula Content & Achievement Standard: Grades 5-8
Standard 2: Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures
Standard 3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning
Standard 7: Making connections between dance and other disciplines
Thank you for coming to the MOMIX performance of *Botanica* at Zoellner Arts Center.

This season we have other dance and dance-related performances that may interest you:

For special group rates and educational packages, please call the Zoellner Box Office: 610-758-2787 (7LU-ARTS)

Next year during the 2013-2014 Season, our school performance will feature the ancient and time-honored Japanese drumming tradition. The show, TAO, will be offered to schools on Monday, March 31, 2014. The stars of TAO live and train in a compound in the mountains of Japan, reaching the highest levels of virtuosity only after years of intensive study. They offer a young and vibrant modern take on a traditional art form. You can guarantee space for your group this year; please contact Rachel Van Dyke at the Zoellner Box Office: 610-758-2787.