

**Hopkins
Center for
the Arts**
at Dartmouth

School Matinee Series
Study Guide



Viva MOMIX

Fri, Dec 3, 10 am



Welcome to the Hop

A performance needs an audience so be prepared to play your part!

Theater Guidelines

When entering the Hopkins Center, show consideration for all those sharing the building by being respectful in common areas. Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation! Backpacks, food, drink and gum are not allowed in the theater. Please turn off all cell phones and note that recording the performance or taking photos is not allowed.

Information for Teachers

Review this study guide for context and activities that will help your students engage with the performance. Please read the email that accompanies this guide—Hop staff often share important information and request details about your visit.

This study guide's content was created by Ally Tufenkjian and Jelinda Metelus. If you have questions about this guide, please direct them to Ally Tufenkjian at ally.s.tufenkjian@dartmouth.edu. To download copies of this and other guides, visit hop.dartmouth.edu/study-guides.

Enjoy the Show!

The Hopkins Center's mission is to ignite and sustain a passion for the arts within Dartmouth and its greater community and to provide the core educational environment for the study, creation and presentation of the arts.

Did You Know?

- The Hopkins Center is located on the ancestral homelands of the Abenaki people.
- The Hopkins Center opened in 1962.
- The Hopkins Center was designed by Wallace Harrison, architect of Lincoln Center and the United Nations Building in New York City.

About the Show

A magical desert filled with puppets and wizards. Optical illusions. A floating dance on the moon. A colorful tour through the seasons. These are some of scenes in *Viva MOMIX*, a mix-and-match variety of sections from the company's most popular works. The performance features vignettes from *Botanica*, *Alchemia*, *Remix*, *Opus Cactus* and *Lunar Sea*. Founded by Dartmouth alum and Pilobolus co-founder Moses Pendleton '71, MOMIX is known for using special lighting and video effects, imaginative costumes and sets, and offbeat choreography.



Dancers and the dreamcatcher in Viva MOMIX.

About the Company

For over 40 years, MOMIX has mesmerized audiences with light, props and human bodies to create “beguiling, eye-filling and often impressive visual and movement theatrics” (*The Washington Post*). MOMIX has also worked in film and television with performances on PBS’s “Dance in America” series, France’s Antenne II, and Italian RAI television, and the company’s repertory has been broadcast in 55 countries. The company collaborated with the Montreal Symphony in the Rhombus Media film of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, winner of an International Emmy for Best Performing Arts Special. MOMIX was also featured in *IMAGINE*, one of the first 3-D IMAX films to be released in IMAX theaters worldwide.



Dancers in MOMIX Forever.



Contemporary dancers balancing each other.

Contextual Background

MOMIX is a dance company that primarily practices **contemporary dance**. Contemporary dance was formally created in the mid-20th century by American dancer Isadora Duncan as she searched for a way to free herself from the rigidity of ballet. As a result, contemporary dance is all about flexibility and connection of body and mind through fluid movements. While some techniques and fundamentals of ballet are still used, contemporary dance emphasizes improvisation and versatility.

Contemporary dance is also a combination of dance styles including classical, jazz and modern. Classical dance is characterized by graceful and precise movements that rely on formal gestures, steps and poses. Jazz, created by African Americans, was a combination of the dance that enslaved Africans danced in Africa and the dance forms they saw in the United States. Modern dance is similar to contemporary dance, but focuses more on the emotion of the dancer than improvisation.

Pre-performance discussion questions

English Language Arts:

- What is **imagery** and where have you seen it before in writing?
- How can dance tell a story?

Science:

- What aspects of nature do you see most often?
- How do those aspects of nature interact and work together in an ecosystem?

The Arts:

- How can music influence the way you move?
- How can certain qualities or kinds of movement convey emotion? (For instance, moving quickly versus slowly or using small movements versus big movements).

Post-performance discussion questions

English Language Arts:

- What imagery did you see in the performance?
- How did the performers use their bodies and movement to tell a story?

Science:

- What elements of nature did you see represented in the performance?
- What was your favorite **optical illusion** in the performance?
- What forces were at work when the performers danced? (For instance, balance).

The Arts:

- How would you describe the kinds of movement you saw?
- In what ways do you think the performers had to work together to create this show?
- What did you notice about the show's music, lighting and scenic elements? If this was your show, what other artistic elements would you have included?

An example of optical illusion in MOMIX Forever.



Learning Activities

Nature Dance (Grades K–5)

This activity asks students to explore some of the aspects of nature they saw in the performance while teaching them the core elements of dance.

Have students reflect on what they think of when they hear the word “nature” and what parts of nature they saw in the performance. Make a list as students share. Explain that a lot goes into making a dance, with dancers and **choreographers** making specific choices about how to create individual movements and put them together.

In an open space, ask students to start walking or moving around the room depending on their physical abilities. Encourage them to respect others’ physical space and to move in a way that is safe and comfortable for their bodies. Begin playing music; this activity often works best with instrumental music with no lyrics. Using the Body, Action, Space, Time and Energy chart, prompt students to explore various elements one at a time as they continue moving throughout the space. When you give students a prompt, give them at least 30 seconds to try it out before moving on to the next one. Some prompts might include:

- Move with a focus on your head (Body)
- Explore what it’s like to leap (Action)
- Move in a zigzag (Space)
- Move slowly (Time)
- Move with a strong energy (Energy)

Next, have students explore some different aspects of nature through movement. You can use the list you generated earlier as prompts. As students move and dance, encourage them to think about which elements of dance they are using. Some prompts might include:

- Move like a flower
- Move as if you are floating on the moon
- Move like a leaf on a windy day

Afterwards, ask students the following reflection questions:

- What did you notice about the ways you moved your body during this activity?
- Which kinds of movement were most enjoyable? Which were more challenging? Why?
- Think about one of the parts of nature that we explored. Which parts of your body did you use when moving like that part of nature? What actions did you use? How did you use space?
- How do you think the different parts of dance—Body, Action, Space, Time and Energy—work together and relate to each other when creating a dance?



Children dancing in nature.

This Is A...and Also A... (Grades K-2)

This activity asks students to use imagination, pantomime and creative thinking to explore object transformation, a device that is used often in *Viva MOMIX*.

Ask students to sit in a circle and place a few objects in the middle, such as a triangle-shaped piece of paper, an empty paper towel roll and a ball of tin foil.

Explain that one of the objects will be passed around the circle and each person's goal is to, by demonstrating with a clear action, turn the object into something else; this is called 'object transformation.' When the object reaches them, the person will say what the object is followed by what the object has become.

Model an example; if using the triangle say "This is a triangle and also [pretend to take a bit out of the corner] a piece of pizza!" After the person has completed their object transformation, they pass the object to the next person. Encourage students to come up with an idea and action that has not been done before and to be as creative as possible. After one object has made it completely around the circle, you can move on to a different object.

Afterwards, ask students the following reflection questions:

- What did you notice about the way each of us made our objects into something else?
- How did the characteristics and qualities of your object inform how you transformed it? (For instance, the paper towel roll is shaped like a cylinder or tube and therefore, you transformed it into another object with a similar quality).
- Where did you see object transformation in MOMIX's performance? How did the performers convince you that they were something else?

Stage to Page (Grades 3-5)

This activity asks students to use a strong image or moment from *Viva MOMIX* to inspire a piece of creative writing. Depending on curricular goals, this could be an original story or a poem.

Brainstorm images and moments from the performance that students found exciting and visually compelling and create a list. Take one of the images listed and model how to turn that into part of a story or poem. Concepts to explore include main idea; beginning, middle and end; strong adjectives; metaphor; and simile.

Example using the flower image from *Viva MOMIX* below:

I came across a field of flowers
In hues of orange and red.
As they danced and swayed in the wind,
I listened as they said:

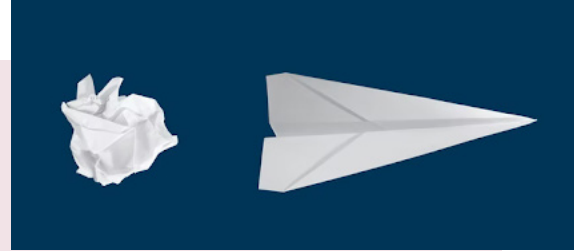
"Our lives move quickly,
With no time to waste
And before the season's end,
Our joy must be embraced."

So I took their advice and joined their dance,
Moving blissfully in the breeze.
Because in life, as I have learned
There are no guarantees.

Ask students to choose one image/moment from the brainstormed list or others that they remember to create their piece of writing.

Afterwards, have students share their writing with each other in pairs or small groups. After they read each other's stories, ask them to reflect on the following:

- As the reader/listener, what did you notice about this piece of writing? What elements of creative writing did the author use?
- As the author, how would you describe your writing process and the creative decisions you made?
- What discoveries did you make about creating a piece of writing from a moment from MOMIX's performance?



A piece of crumpled paper turned into an airplane.



A nature-inspired moment from Viva MOMIX.

Vocabulary

Choreographer: a person who designs and directs a dance, often in collaboration with a dancer or group of dancers.

Contemporary dance: a combination of dance styles including classical, jazz and modern that focuses on flexibility and connection of body and mind through fluid movements as well as improvisation and versatility.

Imagery: the formation of mental images, figures, or likenesses of things, or of such images collectively.

Object transformation: using an object as if it was something else or in a way in which it is not normally used.

Optical illusion: a perception, as of visual stimuli, that represents what is perceived in a way different from the way it is in reality.

Resources

www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/entertainment/arts/2018/10/18/momix-dance-troupe-defies-traditions/38194293/

www.nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/Dance_resources/ElementsOfDance_organizer.pdf

www.pittsburghcurrent.com/momixs-viva-momix-and-exhalations/

www.wsj.com/articles/momix-partners-dance-with-illusion-1532966263

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thedramateacher.com/transformation-of-objects/

www.decidedlyjazz.com/in-schools/jazz-dance-history/

www.dictionary.com/browse/illusion

www.dictionary.com/browse/imagery

www.momix.com/about/

www.momix.com/portfolio-view/w-momix-forever/

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