

P I L
O B O
L U S

Pilobolus Is A Fungus Study Guide



Table of Contents

Theater Brochure.....	3
<i>Pilobolus Is A Fungus</i> Description.....	4
Pilobolus: A Brief History.....	5
What's in a Name?	6
Pilobolus and Music.....	7
Dance is Timeless.....	8
The Pilobolus Dictionary.....	9
Embedded Links.....	10
Classroom Discussions.....	11
Classroom Activities.....	12

Pilobolus Is A Fungus

THEATER BROCHURE

Pilobolus Is A Fungus

Created by Renée Jaworski and Matt Kent in collaboration with Emily Kent.
Written by Matt Kent.

Pilobolus Is A Fungus is an interactive performance for young audiences based on *Branches*, a site-specific dance piece commissioned by Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival and the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes a great nation deserves great art.

BRANCHES

Created by Renée Jaworski and Matt Kent in collaboration with Itamar Kubovy, Mark Fucik and Antoine Banks-Sullivan, Nathaniel Buchsbaum, Krystal Butler, Isabella Diaz, Heather Jean Favretto, and Jacob Michael Warren

Music: David Van Tieghem, David Darling, Riley Lee, Olivier Messiaen, Stuart Bogie

Sound Design: David Van Tieghem

Costume Design: Liz Prince

Original Lighting Design: Thom Weaver



***Pilobolus Is A Fungus* Description**

Join Pilobolus for a one-of-a-kind student matinee experience that melds artistic excellence with the wonder and joy of childhood!

- Tailored to engage all ages, our performances feature material that captivates young minds, with child-friendly costuming, and a soft start to accommodate those unexpected delays.
- Prepare to be part of the action with interactive audience engagement, and enjoy laughter-filled moments that spark creativity and connection.
- With Pilobolus, artistry and fun take center stage – a perfect outing for students and families alike!

Pilobolus Is A Fungus is an interactive performance for young audiences based on *Branches*, a site-specific dance piece commissioned by Jacob's Pillow. In this show, the audience takes a journey through nature, perceiving the sounds, shapes, colors and movements of birds, water, trees, and of course, our namesake fungus, in new and unexpected ways. With the help of the Pilobolus dancers, audience members learn to express their deep connection to the world through movement and dance.

***Pilobolus Is A Fungus* has four acts:**

Down by the Water

People are animals and animals have a community too. They all meet at the watering hole! This is the center of their community, interaction, and social life.

Up in a Tree

Have you ever noticed the movement of trees and plants outside your window? The world outside is full of movement and motion, wind and light. The animals in the landscape are in constant interaction with these elements.

Mr. Right

Humans have dances they do to attract love. Animals do too! We dance the tango, and the bird of paradise performs an equally intricate mating dance. In this section we invite the audience to join us onstage to teach and perform Pilobolus choreography the dancer will perform in this "Mr. Right."

What's Left?

The sun goes down, flowers wilt, light falls and the cycle of life continues. Our inspiration doesn't only come from the beautiful things in nature, but sometimes the decay that is necessary to create new life.

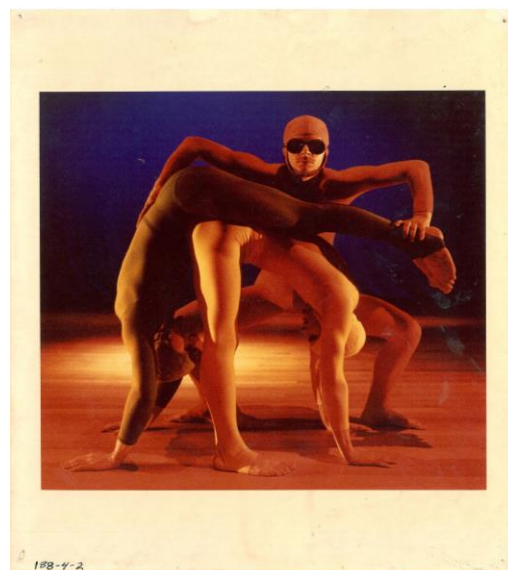
Pilobolus: A Brief History

In 1970, several young men enrolled at Dartmouth College, took a dance class...to fulfill a physical education requirement. With interests as diverse as history, philosophy, and psychology, the idea of standing alone, in front of a class, and moving, was frightening. So, they “clung to one another for both moral and physical support” building dances as a collective while at the same time creating something they thought was “cool”.

Following graduation, the “company without a name” headed to a member’s dairy farm in Vermont where they continued their movement discoveries; creating choreography that relied on their collective creativity, humor, and interest in telling stories with their bodies. It was here that PILOBOLUS was born; and audiences loved this new kind of Modern Dance.

This collective creativity continues to this day. Dancers along with members of the Artistic Team and often artists from different genres, create dance collaboratively. Their physical inventions often appear to defy gravity or create new life forms right before your eyes.

As you watch our show, keep in mind how this company came to be. Watch for those moments of connectedness; when one or more bodies join together to support another while moving through space; when dancers appear to transform into something completely new. In those moments, you too will become connected...to PILOBOLUS.



What's in a Name?

Where did the name PILOBOLUS come from?



image of Pilobolus Crystallinus fungus

Fabulous Youtube of the (poo loving) fungus in action:

<https://youtu.be/T8OAmcUnm4g>

If you read the story about how PILOBOLUS came to be, you might recall the group of “dancers” from Dartmouth. One of those dancers had a father who was a biologist, studying Pilobolus the fungus in his lab. The first dance they made was inspired by the incredible physical nature of the fungus, a mushroom, found in barnyards and pastures. “It’s a feisty little thing—only $\frac{1}{4}$ inch tall, the length of your fingernail—and can throw its spores nearly 6 feet!”

The image of a spore shooting itself through the air was the perfect metaphor for the style dance they were creating, and hence, the perfect name for their new dance. Later, when they started touring as a dance company, they needed a name for their company, they decided it was a perfect name for their dance company.

Pilobolus and Music

In Katherine Teck's "Ear Training for the Body," she addresses the connection between music and dance; it can help establish where you are, how to move, what the story or theme is, and even bring unity to the piece.

The work of PILOBOLUS is no different. More often than not, the company seldom completes a dance without the added element of music, or sound. Though there are occasions where the absence of sound or music helps tell a "different story."

The process of adding that aural element can happen in several ways: a work can be choreographed in the studio without music or sound; or, existing music (or pieces from a variety of compositions), that has the "feel" the choreographers need to express their idea, is used. Another way is when a composer observes and participates in the creation of the work as it develops. When this occurs, an original score evolves from the "back and forth" or "give and take" relationship between choreographers, musician(s), and dancers. This collaboration is yet one more example of how important the collaborative process is to PILOBOLUS.

As you watch, and listen to our show, consider how the music or sound, or perhaps its absence, connects to each piece. How important is the music or sound to the dancers' movement? Is it another part of the story or helping illuminate where the story takes place?

It's up to you to decide, because as the audience member, what you see and how it makes you feel, is an important part of experiencing dance, and the amazing PILOBOLUS.

Dance is Timeless

PILOBOLUS came to be in 1971. That's more than 50 years ago. That may seem like a very long time ago, but for dance, it's barely an eye-blink.

Just as in literature, take Shakespeare for example, where themes transcend centuries, the life of a piece of choreography continues to speak in a language that knows no time limit. So, let's take a look back at how dance evolved.

Centuries ago, in Europe, only the men danced, in fact, women weren't even allowed onstage; in early theater, women's roles were played by young boys or men. And just as today's dancers use movement to tell a story, those early dances would most likely be about myths or war.

Ballet, as we now know it, originated in the 1400s and was used as entertainment for Italian and French royalty. That is why all the names for the various ballet positions are in either French or Italian. In ballet, the body is held mostly upright, with the legs turned out from the hip.

In the early 1700s, dancing for both males and females became popular. Female dancers, or ballerinas, began wearing short skirts, or tutus, so that audience members could see their legs and appreciate and understand the new dance techniques being developed. During the 1800s, most ballets told a story from beginning to end; famous examples include the Christmas holiday ballet, *The Nutcracker*, or *Swan Lake*, which is based on a fairy tale.

Then in the 1900s, dance began to change. Dancers removed their shoes; they performed in clothes normally reserved for rehearsal; and the way in which their bodies moved, changed. Dancers felt free to show off their athleticism in new and different ways along with their individual personalities and range of emotions.

This was the beginning of modern dance. Certainly an interesting journey dating back centuries when only men danced, and fast forwarding to 1971 when four men came together, and in turn, PILOBOLUS was born.

The Pilobolus Dictionary



Here are some words you might hear at the performance and those that are part of the company's toolbox when they make a dance:

Collaboration (noun): one of the foundations of the way in which Pilobolus works, by working together...in tightly knit groups/teamwork.

Improvisation (noun): often the manner in which Pilobolus creates a dance: by trying things out and/or inventing new movements; the art of creating something without advance preparation.

Partnering or Weight Sharing (verbs): in Pilobolus, the physical process of connecting one or more dancers together by taking and receiving weight. In doing this, new shapes are created which may or may not move as a single unit.

Pilobolize/Pilobolizing: (verb): to make something the way Pilobolus would.

Pilobolean (adj.): to act or be like a Pilobolus dancer/company member.

Piloboli (noun): more than one Pilobolus dancer/company member.

Embedded Links

Tailored to engage all ages, Pilobolus features material that captivates young minds, with child-friendly costuming, and a soft start to accommodate those unexpected delays.

- As the audience enters the theater, the dancers are warming up and soon begin to interact and transform the theater into a giant playground that it is.

[The Whole Theater Does the Wave with Pilobolus](#)

- Story and dance meld seamlessly together as the narrator evokes the inspirations behind the choreography.

[Pilobolus Is A Fungus \(excerpt\) Our Interactive Young Audience Production](#)

- The audience joins in the fun learning and performing Pilobolus Choreography on stage with the dancers.

[Audience Does the Strong Dance from Pilobolus Is A Fungus Family Matinee](#)

Classroom Discussions

Before the Show:

Ask students

- What do you think a dance show might be like?
- What do you hope to learn or see during the show?
- What are some things you see in nature that you really like?
- How do you think dancers can show different parts of nature through their movements?

After the Show:

Debrief with the students

- What was your favorite part about the performance?
- How did the dancing make you feel?
- How do you think the dancers feel when they are performing and making all those shapes with their bodies?
- What did you learn from seeing dance express things found in nature?
- If you were in a dance group like Pilobolus, what kind of shape or animal would you like to pretend to be? Why?

Classroom Activities

Shapes of Nature

Objective: To explore creativity in body movements and encourage students to mimic shapes inspired by nature.

- **Activity:**
 - Ask students to think about the performance and where dancers created shapes resembling animals, plants, and natural elements.
 - Ask students to work individually or in pairs to create their own body shapes inspired by animals or objects found in nature. For example, they can pretend to be a tree, a butterfly, or a flowing river.
 - Encourage them to experiment with different poses and movements.
 - Have each student or pair show their shape to the class and explain what they are portraying.

Dance and Music Connection

Objective: To explore how music can inspire movement and creativity in dance.

- **Activity:**
 - Play different types of music (e.g., classical, nature sounds, upbeat rhythms) and ask students to move their bodies in response to the music.
 - Guide them to think about how different types of music make them feel and how they can express those feelings through their movements.
 - Discuss with students how music can be used in dance to create different moods or tell a story.

Dancing in Nature

Objective: To practice listening and responding to cues while exploring movement inspired by nature.

- **Activity:**
 - Play nature-themed music softly in the background.
 - Instruct students to move around the room freely, exploring different movements inspired by nature (e.g., hopping like a bunny, swaying like a tree).
 - Pause the music randomly. When the music stops, students must freeze in a pose that represents a specific element of nature.
 - Rotate through different cues related to nature (e.g., freeze like your favorite animal, freeze like a flower in the wind).
 - Encourage students to observe each other's poses and discuss how they used their bodies to express different aspects of nature.