



Walton Arts Center

Performance Guide



Blue Man Group



Photo Credit: Blue Man Group

Blue Man Group, known worldwide for stage productions that combine music, technology and comedy, offers three bald and very blue men who surprise the audience at every turn. Formed in New York City in the late 1980s, the group began as street performers whose comedic “bits” morphed into small shows in downtown clubs and finally into large-scale spectacles. Now a global phenomenon, Blue Man Group explores the adventures of three very blue, very naïve and innocent outsiders.

Ideas for Curriculum Connections:

Arkansas Learning Standards: Fine Arts Standards Theatre: CR.1.3.2, CR1.4.2; P.5.3.2, P.5.4.2; R.7.3.1, R.7.4.1; R.8.3.1, R.8.4.1; R.9.3.1, R.9.4.1; R.9.3.3, R.9.4.3; CN10.3.1, CN.10.4.1; CR1.7.1; CR1.5.3, CR1.6.3, R.7.5.1, R.7.6.1; R.7.7.1; R.7.8.1; R.8.5.1, R.8.6.1, R.8.7.1, R.8.8.1; R.8.5.3, R.8.6.3, R.8.7.3, R.8.8.3.

Fine Arts Standards Dance: R.7.4.1, R.7.4.2, P.5.8.4; R.7.5.2, R.7.6.2, R.7.7.2; R.7.8.2; CN.11.5.1, CN.11.6.1, CN11.7.1, CN11.8.1. Fine Arts Standards Music: P.6.5.3; CRA.SL.1; R.7.5.3, R.7.6.1, R.7.6.3, R.7.7.1, R.7.7.3, R.7.8.1, R.7.8.3; R.8.6.1; R.8.5.1, R.8.6.1; R.8.7.1, R.8.8.1; R.9.5.1, R.9.6.1, R.9.7.1, R.9.8.1; CN.10.5.1; CN.10.6.1, CN.10.7.1, CN.10.8.1; CN.11.4.2, CN.11.5.1, CN.11.6.1, CN.11.7.1, CN.11.8.1, CN.11.6.2, CN.11.7.2, CN.11.8.2; P.6.MA.2; R.9.MA.1.



Photo Credit: Blue Man Group

The History

Blue Man Group, founded in 1987, have become known for their wildly popular, always evolving theater pieces. Their shows are absurd and wondrous blends of music, painting, science and technology as the nonverbal Blue Men engage a variety of set pieces that run the gamut from primitive and childlike to witty and sophisticated. In addition to the stage theater show, Blue Man Group has had multiple national and global tours, appeared on various TV programs as both characters and performers, had a show on a Norwegian Cruise Line, released multiple studio albums, contributed to a number of film scores and appeared in ad campaigns.

Blue Man Group grew out of a collaboration between three close friends, Chris Wink, Matt Goldman and Phil Stanton, in Manhattan in 1987. They are innovators, educators, artists, and contemporary comedians. Their first public appearance was a celebration of the end of the 1980s. Eager to see an end to the decade, they staged a “funeral for the ‘80s” in Central Park in New York City.

The Character

The traits of the Blue Man have developed gradually over time. “There was something about him that seemed

timeless, and something that seemed a little bit futuristic,” says founder Phil Stanton. “He seemed to have the ability to be beautiful and comic at the same time. I’m not even sure we thought about that at first. We were trying to create a character that somehow represented humanity, but was able to be outside of humanity and look at it at the same time. We wanted to make a statement about community, about the power of a group, as opposed to the American individualist mentality. We thought the character would express community through something tribal, and drumming seemed the way to go.”

The Performers

You may see three figures up on stage, but it takes a (blue) village. There are many more trained actors ready to take on a part as needed. There’s also a band and some 17 crew members (on wardrobe, video, sound, stage management, deck and props) working to make the show an unforgettable experience. A typical Blue Man production employs 7-9 full-time Blue Men who are selected through an audition process. Half of the Blue Men are professional musicians who learn the character, and the other half are professional actors who learn the music. There are currently about 75 Blue Men worldwide.

Learning Activities

Blue Man Scenes

The Blue Man finds humor in nooks and crannies. Asking questions with eyes. Tossing a marshmallow. Eating Cap'n Crunch. The Blue Man is funny. He shifts, invites, plays, jokes, and cajoles. Much like Charlie Chaplin, the Blue Man applies physical tactics to bounce musically toward desired ends, bringing the audience along as a full partner in the comical journey. In this lesson, learners will be given the opportunity to find humor in everyday situations by creating scenes where simplicity can inspire laughter.

Learn

Ask learners to watch four short video clips. Blue Man Group "Feast"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=HubV2-QJA40

Charlie Chaplin "Modern Times Coffee Drinking"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mYtNMDfyXQ

Blue Man Group "Breakfast Symphony"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=c816_ZK_Q8I

Charlie Chaplin "The Lion's Cage"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=79i84xYelZI

Ask learners to consider the following questions while watching the video clips:

Did the video clips tell a story? Did the story have a beginning, middle, and end?

What was the main action in the story?

Describe the characters in the story? Did the characters have a problem to solve? Did the characters want something?

Create

Continue the lesson by dividing the class into groups of 3-5 learners. Assign groups the task of creating a 3-minute scene that will be performed for the large group. Each group will need to develop one scene. Possible scenes might include a birthday party, Christmas morning, a dentist appointment, or the first day of school, for example. In developing their scene, the groups will need to write scene summaries, character sketches, and setting descriptions. No words will be used in the scenes. Communication will take place non-verbally.

Once scenes have been chosen, learners will need to write basic scene summaries that outline the beginning, middle, and end of each scene. The scene summaries will also need to include the central conflict

of the scene and how that conflict gets resolved.

Also, ask groups to complete character and setting sketches for each scene. Each group member will need to portray a character. Character sketches need to include the character name and age. They might also describe where the character was born, the character's career, and the character's family status, for example. Setting descriptions will need to detail where and when the scene is occurring. Encourage learners to provide as much detail as possible.

Once learners have created scene summaries, character sketches, and setting descriptions, they can begin to rehearse their scene performances. After groups have rehearsed, they can perform their scenes for the large group.



Photo Credit: Lindsey Best

Write About

Blue Man Group grew out of series of "happenings." The first televised "happening" was called "Funeral to the 80's" which involved a group of people painting themselves blue and taking a casket of various pop culture references, music and art to Central Park and lighting it on fire. MTV covered the event. Many more "happenings" occurred before the Blue Man Group officially started in 1991. Blue Man Group started as an organic, creative, critical, physical and funny reaction to the society and culture of the 80's. The Blue Man created art in a specific world. Humor grew from the humanity of the Blue Man reaching out to the world. Into what world did the Blue Man enter? Who was famous? What was invented? What did people watch? To what did people listen? What made people laugh?



Photo credit: Lindsey Best

Reflect and Assess

Ask the following questions. Record the group's answers on the board and discuss.

- What did you already know about Blue Man Group before seeing the performance?
- Describe the performance of one act in as much detail as possible.
- Describe the Blue Men. Who were they? What were they doing? Why?
- What did you like most about the live performance?
Costumes? Set? Props? Music?
- How did movement elements of body, energy, space and time convey mood?
- How did the performance make you feel?
- Did the artists express a universal feeling or idea?
- What moment of the show do you remember most?

Learn More Online

Official website Blue Man Group

www.blueman.com/

Atlas Obscura - The Exit Interview: I Spent 12 Years in the Blue Man Group

www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-ao-exit-interview-12-years-in-the-blue-man-group

ShowTickets.com: 25 Things You Didn't Know About 'Blue Man Group'

broadway.showtickets.com/articles/25-things-you-dont-know-about-blue-man-group/

Volume 17 Number 2

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Learning & Engagement

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