

EXPLORING Grrrrr

A contemporary dance solo – Ages 3 and up
Company SYLEX – Sylvie BALESTRA
Duration 35 min

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This guide will help you prepare your class to experience GRRRRR and welcome the performance into your school or organisation.

Grrrrr offers young children an introduction to the arts as well as an opportunity for everyone to discover contemporary dance. It is an encounter with a choreographer and a dancer. It is a 30 minutes shared experience. A magical ritual in which the audience's attention helps bring the dance to life.

1 .THE YOUNG AUDIENCE CHARTER

- Because it allows everyone to experience emotions,
- Because it sharpens our senses and nourishes our imagination,
- Because it helps us develop our own judgement,
- Because it brings people together and sparks interaction,
- Because it is a moment of pleasure and sharing,
- Because it offers a different perspective on the world and on ourselves,
- Because it is both an individual journey and a collective experience,

Live performance for young audiences is subject to the same principles and standards as any other form of artistic creation. What makes it distinctive is its purpose and the specific audience it addresses.

To ensure that children get the most out of the performance, it is important to help them become attentive and respectful, consistent with the conventions of attending a live performance.

2. INTRODUCING Grrrrr staging and themes

This choreographic work arose from the desire to share a moment of dance with young audiences, from the age of 3, by going directly to meet them in their schools/organisations. For many reasons, it can be difficult for pupils/groups of young children to travel, particularly in rural areas, where SYLEX is based.

By bringing Grrrrr into schools/organisations, and thanks to its minimal technical requirements, the performance gives everyone the opportunity to experience dance.

The performance and its workshops also exist in a more classic theatrical version, allowing families to share this ritual and explore it further, particularly through parent-child workshops.

The aim is also to offer a recreational performance that introduces its audience to the anthropological dimension that has been central to the work of Compagnie SYLEX / Sylvie Balestra for many years. A kind of ritual within the class/group's daily life seemed particularly appropriate.

Dance rituals from all over the world feed the imagination behind this piece. During the performance, animal totems take over the dancer and the surroundings.

THEMES EXPLORED BY GRRRRR : ANIMALS, RITUAL, DANCE

Animals are familiar to children who, even if they have never seen them in real life, know them well. Books, films, fables and performances reveal their many secrets.

This theme, very accessible to young children, allows the dancer to explore as many different worlds as animals are evoked.

Through accessories made from different materials — fur, wool and sequins — the body transforms, from tiger to bird through horse. A bestiary of hybrid creatures with dancer legs gradually emerges.

These many animals offer a wide range of movements, ranging from extremely gentle to intensely energetic.

Animality is also about everything we no longer allow ourselves to do with our domesticated bodies: breathing heavily, shaking, rubbing, crawling and giving free rein to our movements.

Grrrrr is not afraid of being grrrrotesque!

Animals have always provided an imaginative medium for transgression and catharsis, representing either what we would like to become or what we fear. For children, they offer both a mirror and an endless space for projection.

The dance takes place within the three-metre-diameter circle formed by the children.

A THREE - DIMENSIONAL CHOREOGRAPHY

1. **Ground level :** crawling, creeping and rolling over (monitor lizards, caterpillars, hibernating animals).
2. **On all fours:** felines, bears, frogs**.**
3. **Standing:** horses, hooved animals and birds.

The dancer does not imitate any particular animal, but explores different ways of moving and their dynamics, allowing everyone to form their own interpretation. She transforms from a wild animal into a more domesticated creature, before finally becoming a bird.

The dance therefore takes place in great proximity to the audience. Children discover that dance can be minimal, involving only a small part of the body (eyes, mouth, hands), or, on the contrary, engage the whole body in the sheer joy of movement.

This closeness creates a sense of connection between the dancer and the audience.

The ritual dimension is an important part of this dance: gathering in a circle and sharing this magical moment. By watching, the children bring the dance to life and accompany the dancer through her many transformations.

At the end of the dance, all the animal skins (shed skins) remain in the centre of the circle, forming a kind of animal totem.

To conclude this joyful and wild experience, Grrrrr invites everyone, children and adults alike, to join in a final dance, continuing the ritual together.

The dancer invites the seated children to stand up, hold hands with their neighbours and form a circle. If this circle dance works (listening, attention, rhythm), the dancer introduces movements from her own choreography, gradually building a collective dance in which all the children move together to the same rhythm.

Maximum duration: 6 minutes.

This circle dance can be revisited and developed further in future workshops and gym sessions.

To explore this collective dance further, SYLEX also offers workshops both before and after the performance, allowing children to remain immersed in the energy of the dance and the show.

3. PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

Teachers can prepare their pupils for the performance by exploring several themes:

ANIMALS & ANIMALITY

Observation and discussion activities, using picture books to explore different animals, their representations and ways of moving (four-legged, two-legged, invertebrates, flying, crawling, strength, slowness, speed, etc.). These can be followed by a gym session exploring the different movements and sounds animals can make.

Visual arts activities can also help the group explore and engage with the theme: drawing animals while considering the choice of colours (which colour for which animal?), creating three-dimensional animal sculptures (using clay, salt dough, modelling clay, etc.), or inventing imaginary animals by combining cut-out images of three different body parts (e.g. an elephant's head, a zebra's body and a turkey's legs).

SUGGESTED READING Please note: The books listed below are mainly available in French

> *CARNAVAL !*, Catherine Loizeau et Béatrice Veillon - Édition La Partie > *Axinamu, Oxiseau*, Pittau et Gervais - Édition Grandes Personnes > *MAX et les MAXIMONSTRES*, Maurice Sendak – Édition L'école des Loisirs > *Mon grand tour du monde des monstres et des créatures mythologiques*, Laure de Faÿ - Édition Sarbacane
> *Nakakoué*, Claude Ponti - Édition Acte Sud junior
> *Au pays des cauchemars*, Peggy Nille - Édition Acte Sud junior

RITUALS & DANCES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Before the performance, one or more sessions can be organised to introduce children to different dances from around the world.

Many dances are performed in circles (African dances, Native American dances, Indian dances, traditional dances throughout Europe, particularly in South-West France and Occitan culture). Everyone dances — men, women, children and older people — at important moments in our lives, such as festivals and celebrations.

Costumes play a very important role in these celebrations. They are often carefully prepared, combining precious materials with recycled or everyday objects. The best example in Western culture is carnival.

SUGGESTED ONLINE VIDEOS

- **Occitan traditional and folk dance festival** – Jigs, circle dances, *Cercle Circassien*, etc. Ten dances performed by children and teenagers: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYD5123THR0
- **Traditional Breton dance – Rond de Saint-Vincent:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjTZ13zRNPw
- **Capoeira Roda (Brazil)** – A combination of dance and martial arts accompanied by music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIY_NiCUms4

4. BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

To ensure the performance runs smoothly :
> Pupils/groups must be informed that the performance is coming to their school/organisation.

> It is essential to prepare children, prior to the performance, by standing or sitting in a circle, while marking a boundary (hula hoops, string, or chalk) that they must not cross or step over.
You can also practise by dividing the class into two groups and forming two concentric circles — a small circle inside a larger one— and have the children move around their circle while remaining attentive and silent (this can be done with music).

These activities help prepare the children for the final circle activity led by the dancer.

> Ensure the children have seen the image of the dancer, her costume, and the visual materials provided in this document.

On the day of the performance:

> Teachers should review the guidelines for a smooth performance: remain silent, sit properly in a circle, do not touch the boundary line, and do not talk to classmates during the show.

> Staff should ensure that all children have used the restroom so they can remain comfortable throughout the 30-minute performance.

> Everyone—children, teachers, and any accompanying adults—must remove their shoes before entering the performance space.

> Enter the performance space quietly.

> Sit around the circle, close together.

> Do not cross the circle or touch the string boundary.

> In the event of a "meltdown" (crying, etc.): be aware of the exit doors; please feel free to calmly take the child outside to prevent the crying from spreading to others.

> In the event of a significant issue with attention or focus, the dancer may be forced to stop the performance.

AND AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

> Invite the children to talk: share everything they saw, understood, and felt.
> Invite the children to keep a record of this special experience through writing or drawing.

The company would be delighted to receive your drawings and accounts—feel free to send them to coordination@sylex.fr

5. VISUAL REFERENCES



Above :
Zaouli community
Africa - Country: Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)



Left :

Portraits of imaginary animals
Asia - Country: Japan

Charles Fréger - French photographer

See also his Wilder Mann series:

charlesfreger.com/portfolio/wilder-mann/





Top & Bottom : Carnival, Kukeri community Europe - Country: Bulgaria





Top : WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE - Extract from the book
(the scene where the monsters dance and celebrate).

Bottom : The Dance - Henri Matisse – 1909





BONUS : PERFORMANCE EXCERPT

Top: photo by Cyrielle BLOY
bottom : photo by Eric DEGUIN

Grrrrr

Ages 3 and up
At school – In a physical education or activity room
In a theatre – On stage or in the meeting hall **In a library**
Outdoors…
35 minutes
School performances – Maximum audience capacity: 80
Public performances – Maximum audience capacity: 90 (for larger audiences, please consult the SYLEX team).
A maximum of 2 performances per day, with a minimum break of 2 hours between the end of the first performance and the start of the second.

SYLEX TEAM

Sylvie BALESTRA, Choreographer Garance BRÉHAUDAT, Performer Anne BERGER, Production director Emilie THOMAS FRAY , Production & Development Manager

TOURING TEAM – 2 peoples

Garance BRÉHAUDAT, performer
Sylvie BALESTRA, choreograph or Emilie Thomas Fray,production & development manager

CONTACT COMPAGNIE SYLEX

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Website sylex.fr
Vidéos vimeo.com/sylex/videos
Production SYLEX
Co-production
Fumel communauté avec le soutien du Carré-Colonnes, scène nationale
Ce projet a bénéficié de l'aide à la création de la DRAC Nouvelle-Aquitaine et du Conseil Départemental du Lot-et-Garonne
SYLEX est conventionnée par le ministère de la Culture et de la Communication / DRAC Nouvelle Aquitaine, par la Région Nouvelle Aquitaine et le Département de la Dordogne.

COMPAGNIE SYLEX SYLVIE BALESTRA

Founded in 2010 around the work of choreographer Sylvie BALESTRA, SYLEX explores what sets each of us in motion.
Sylvie BALESTRA's choreographic practice draws on anthropological observation and an attentive understanding of the intimate and unique knowledge held by individuals in motion within working, sporting, geographical and other communities.
SYLEX develops an art of connection and attentiveness to both the physical body and the social body. For each creation, the artistic team develops research processes involving local residents or community members through interviews, group activities and workshops, filming, photography and gatherings. This research leads to choreographic works performed on stage or in other settings, depending on the nature of the project, as well as what the company calls *intermediate artistic works*. These works reflect and document the creative process and are presented in public places or online (video installations, mapping projects, photographic narratives, etc.).