

Michael Moschen

Juggler & Illusionist



SHOWTIME for Teachers

Welcome to *Show Time*, a performing arts resource guide published for the CSB/SJU Fine Arts Education series. This edition of *Show Time* is designed to be used before or after a performance of *Michael Moschen: Juggler & Illusionist*.

Suggested activities in this issue include background information and ideas for integrating the performance with several subject areas. The activities may be adapted to meet your classroom time and needs.

Please feel free to copy pages in this guide as needed for student use.

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Michael Moschen

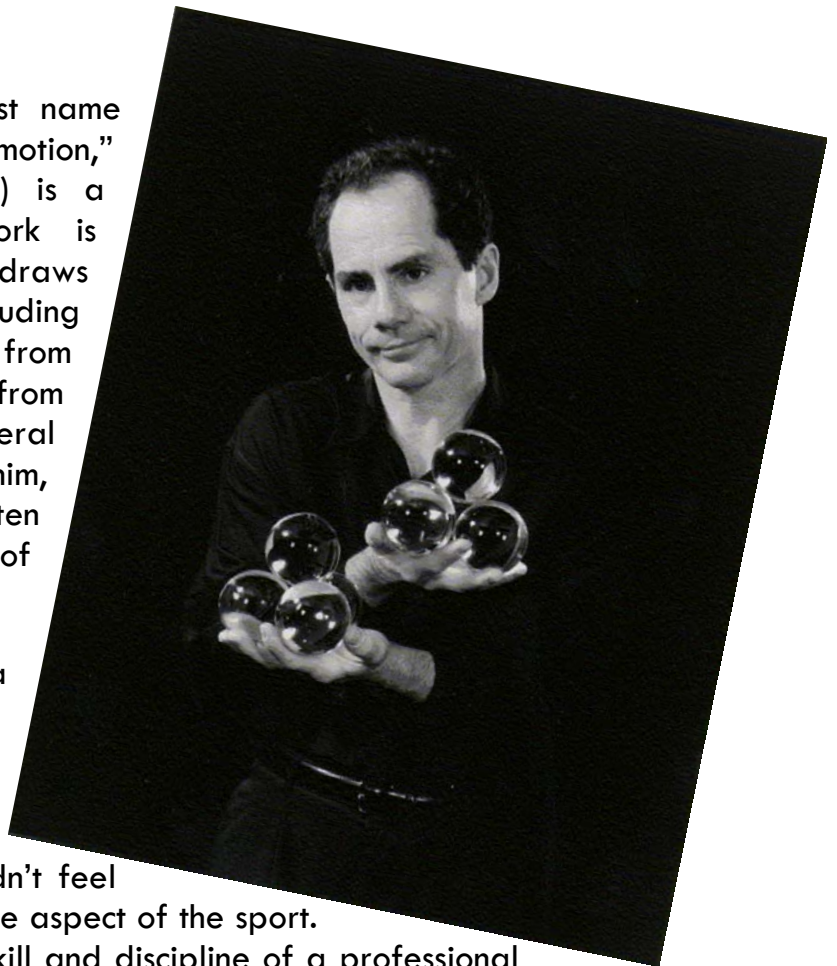


Michael Moschen (yes, his last name really sounds like the word “motion,” but it is spelled differently!) is a performing artist whose work is difficult to categorize. He draws from several art forms, including dance and architecture, from mathematics and science, from spiritual exploration, from general observation of life around him, and from juggling or as he often refers to it, “the manipulation of objects in space.”

Michael Moschen is more than a juggler. He has been a great athlete since he was a child. In fact, he was such a good golfer he would have pursued it professionally except he didn't feel comfortable with the competitive aspect of the sport.

His work today combines the skill and discipline of a professional athlete; the style, beauty, and grace of a professional dancer; the sensitivity and patience of a philosopher; and the curiosity, intellect, and dedication of a physicist.

His juggling skills are so impressive and juggling influences his work so tangibly that we have included a brief, general overview of the history of juggling, which we hope you find interesting and pertinent to Michael Moschen's upcoming performance.

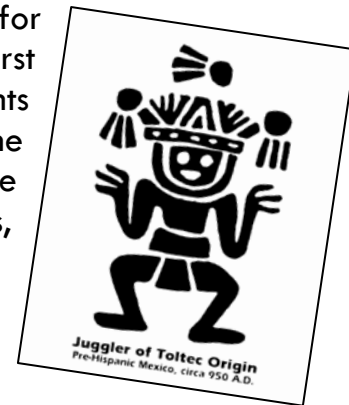


A Brief History in Juggling



Juggling is an ancient world-wide tradition, first recorded through hieroglyphs in an Egyptian tomb in the 1700's BC. Drawings depicting juggling have been found on ancient Greek vases, as well. Historians have discovered that between 500 BC and 500 AD, there were Chinese, Jewish, and Irish jugglers who juggled swords, torches, and apples. Written records of juggling in the 10th Century have been found describing a person juggling glass bottles in a Bagdad marketplace.

Throughout history, juggling has provided entertainment for the ruling classes. In the Middle Ages, it was also performed at fairs for ordinary folks by wandering jugglers. The first written record of juggling in the Americas recounts juggling by Aztecs, by indigenous peoples in the Pacific Islands, and by Native Americans in the 1800's and early 1900's. They juggled limes, gourds, and nuts.



Still today, juggling is seen as light-hearted entertainment, and at its best is now appreciated as an art. We admire the capabilities of the human mind and body as they work together in skillful jugglers.

Juggler of Toltec Origin
Pre-Hispanic Mexico, circa 950 A.D.

Juggling is a universal art; it can involve no spoken language! Michael Moschen's contribution to this historic craft is to bring it to some of the world's greatest stages as an art form.

Unit Overview



These classroom activities can be done in one period or can extend into more if needed. The teacher begins the lesson with a guided brainstorm session exploring the question “What is art?” (or “What are some examples of art?”), and then moves the students into several different small-group activities. Each of these activities culminates in students performing for one another. The objective is to prepare the students for the performance of Michael Moschen. These activities will help students understand and appreciate his extraordinary work.



Michael Moschen’s graceful performance is physically challenging and philosophically profound, yet there is a clear and simple message, which we can all take to enrich our own outlook on learning and our own personal growth. Tremendously resourceful, Michael Moschen sees possibilities for artistic exploration everywhere; he incorporates every-day objects and simple movement in such thoughtful ways and with such disciplinary vigor that he really has created his own unique art form. This important idea—that possibilities are everywhere, objects simply await our imagination, attention and respect—is simple and is the guiding theme of this unit.

We have taken this fundamental idea and broken it down into five different elements:

1. Balance
2. Movement
3. Shapes
4. Emotion
5. Patterns

Each activity is clear and fun to do, and focuses on one of these elements. Ideally, students will be given the opportunity to partake in all of the activities.

Lesson Plan

Items you'll need: An assortment of props such as

- ✘ a toilet-paper roll
- ✘ ball of yarn
- ✘ small bottle of bubbles
- ✘ hula hoop
- ✘ yard stick or wand of some kind
- ✘ rubber ball
- ✘ balloon (blown up)
- ✘ an umbrella or parasol

In addition, it would be great to have at least one flashlight for each group; save these for the activity on light, shadow, and reflection.

Brainstorm the question: **What is art?**

Write on the board all of the students' ideas. Thoughts will likely include: painting, drawing, sculpture, and other visual arts. Encourage inclusion of performing arts as well, such as dance, drama, and music.

When all ideas have been recorded, cross out any which are not arts (such as "gymnastics" or others which fit in an athletic category). Then divide the others into two categories: "visual arts" or "performing arts".

Focus on the performing arts category. Ask: **What does a person need to be a performing artist?** Guide responses toward the following ideas: imagination, practice, strength, passion, concentration, discipline, sometimes props (musical instruments, etc.).

Now, the discussion should go something like this: "Right! Imagination, passion and practice! Let's try some. You'll be combining dance, juggling, and more and you'll be using a lot of imagination! We're preparing to go and see a performing artist by the name of Michael Moschen. He does amazing things with just his imagination, his passion, lots of practice, and a few simple props. We're going to work in groups, with props, exploring the ideas of *balance, movement, shapes, emotions, and patterns.*"

A word about Props

“Props” (short for the word “properties”) in theater are pieces that entertainers use to enhance stage performance. They can be more important than they may seem, and are of particular importance to the work of Michael Moschen. When they are used thoughtfully, they can give dimension and depth to performances. Props serve as an extension beyond the artist and the concept of the work being presented. If students realize the importance of the use of props, it will give them direction and more success in their group activities, and more insight into Michael’s work.



Objects, or props, allow an artist to do two important things: create a relationship with other performers and elicit emotion in their audience. For example, if a student-group has a pencil as its prop, one student can create a supportive, warm, and nurturing relationship with another by using it to help him/her learn to write with it. Using that same prop, one student could steal it from another, creating an aggressive, antagonistic relationship. These two uses of the pencil elicit very different emotions in the audience; the first, helpful: use of the pencil causes the audience to feel warm and comfortable, even secure. The second, hostile: use of the pencil elicits tension, possibly fear or anger in the audience.

When students realize the power they have to create relationships and elicit emotions, and they realize how simple it can be, they will enjoy their group work and find greater success in it.

Divide students into groups of 3-5 each. Give each group a prop you have brought to class. After each activity, you can rotate props from group to group, if you like.

Groups should take five minutes to prepare each performance. The teacher should stop students promptly after five minutes. Each group performs its act for the others. (This is a fitting opportunity to discuss and practice good audience behavior, another key to a successful show with Michael Moschen.)

Note: All activities can be adapted for any age-group. Ideally, your students should do the following activities before attending the Michael Moschen performance. Have fun and remember: **Risk leads to discovery!**

Balance

Activity #1

(Write “Balance” on the board and announce it as the theme for this activity.)

Do:

Using only your props and your bodies, create balance.

Keep in mind:

Minimize your own existence; highlight the movement of your prop.

Ideas to get you started:

- ✘ Balance your object and pass it smoothly from person to person.
- ✘ Balance on one foot as you toss the object.



M o v e m e n t

Activity #2

(Write “Movement” on the board and announce it as the theme for this activity.)

Do:

As each member of your group stays in motion, do something creative with your prop. Try to make your prop’s movement fit gracefully into your movement.

Keep in Mind:

- ✘ Stay in constant, graceful motion; your body should never stop.
- ✘ Work cooperatively to plan your movement so that it is graceful.
- ✘ It doesn’t have to be fancy or difficult; simplicity is the key!

Ideas to get you started:

- ✘ Keep prop perfectly still as you all move.
- ✘ Roll your prop, toss it, pass it, twirl it, bounce it!
- ✘ One person’s movement can be low and slow; another’s high and slow; another can move like a wave between the other two.



SHAPE

Activity #3

(Write “Shapes” on the board and announce it as the theme for this activity.)

Do:

Each group should decide on a shape, such as a circle, triangle, figure 8. Choreograph some movement involving yourselves and your prop which portray this shape. When you perform for your classmates, have them guess your shape.

Keep in mind:

Your focus is your shape. Everything you do with your bodies and your prop should reinforce the idea of this shape.

Ideas to get you started:

- ✘ Consider incorporating rhythm.
- ✘ Tap your foot or click your tongue in threes for a triangle. Sing a song in rounds for a circle.



Emotion

Activity #4

(Write “Emotion” on the board and announce it as the theme for this activity.)

Do:

Your group will choose an emotion, such as happiness, anger, sadness, surprise, frustration, humor. Choreograph movement, incorporating your prop, so that you express the emotion to your classmates. After you perform for the other students, they will guess which emotion you are expressing.



Keep in mind:

- ✘ To portray the emotion, you should use your body’s movement, your facial expression, the way you interact with the others in your group, and the movement and use of your prop.
 - ✘ Remember pace (slow or fast movement).
- ✘ This should be a completely silent activity.

Ideas to get you started:

- ✘ First choose an emotion.
- ✘ Each student can start by facially expressing the emotion.
- ✘ Next, try expressing the emotion with your body.
- ✘ Finally, try interacting with others in your group to portray the emotions.

P.a.t.t.e.r.n

Activity #5

(Write “Patterns” on the board and announce it as the theme for this activity.)

Do:

Your group will use their prop, their bodies, their sense of rhythm and even their mathematical minds to develop a pattern, in which they repeat certain sounds and sights in a particular way and rhythm. When your audience watches, they should be able to figure out what the pattern is.

Keep in mind:

Developing a rhythm will be central to this project. Have fun with the sound and the look of it, using your movement and the movement of the prop.

Ideas to get you started:

- ✘ Start with a sound that each group member makes, and decide on a rhythm in which to chant or sing it.
- ✘ Then plan a movement for each of you, keeping the rhythm in mind.
- ✘ Be sure to practice it and repeat several times, making sure your pattern is clear to you.



LIGHT, Shadow and REFLECTION

Activity # 6

(Write “Light, Shadow and Reflection” on the board and announce it as the theme of this activity.)

Do:

Use your flashlight, your prop, and your bodies to create light, shadow, and reflection which delight, surprise, and amaze your audience. Remember, simplicity is the key!

Keep in mind:

- ✘ Choose any of the other themes: Balance, Movement, Shapes, Emotion, or Patterns.
- ✘ Create a mood, using light, shadow, and/or reflection to highlight your theme.
- ✘ Groups can use more than one flashlight at a time.

Ideas to get you started:

- ✘ Flashing light or repetitive reflections can reinforce a pattern.
- ✘ Illuminating one’s face from below can look eerie, while shining light from another angle might help convey sadness, happiness or humor.
- ✘ Shapes can be made with shadows, as with the classic bunny and wolf finger-shadow show.



Possibilities are Everywhere

Activity #7

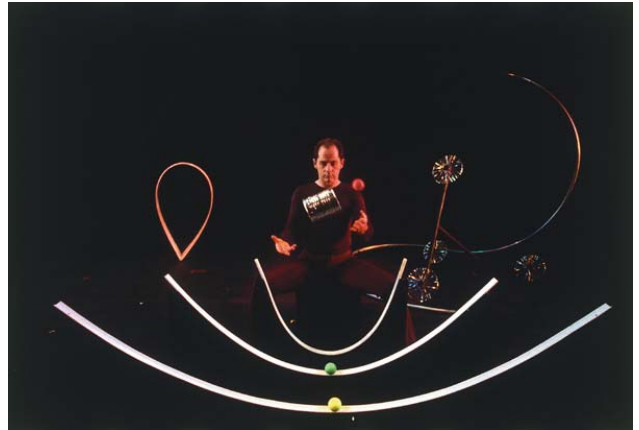
(Write “Possibilities are Everywhere!” on the board and announce it as the theme of this activity.)

Note:

This activity is the culmination of this unit, and it presents a good opportunity to review the five themes with which you have worked. These are some of the themes which guide Michael Moschen’s work as well.

Do:

Individually and/or in your groups, find an object in this classroom to be your prop. Choose any of the themes you have worked with: Balance, Movement, Shapes, Emotion, or Patterns. Incorporate light, shadows and reflection; create a performance using your body, your prop, and your imagination!

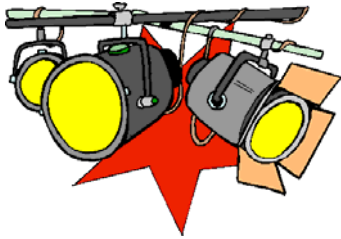


Keep in mind:

Feel free to use any of the ideas you have worked with in your groups.

Ideas to get you started:

- ✘ Go back to your favorite activity and try to make it better, incorporating the use of your new prop.
- ✘ Go back to your least successful activity and rework it, incorporating the use of your new prop.



Theatre Etiquette

Each year, thousands of teachers, students, bus drivers, and parents take part in CSB/SJU's Fine Arts Education Series. Please review the **LOOKING** and **LISTENING** information with your students to help make your theater experience the best it can be.

LOOKING and **LISTENING**

Attending the *Michael Moschen: Juggler & Illusionist* act will be interesting and enjoyable for everyone if you remember to...

- ~observe the movements created when the mind and body work together
- ~watch for how the different properties are used to illustrate emotion

The performers in the *Michael Moschen: Juggler & Illusionist* act need help from you, the audience. You are an important part of the play. Being an audience member in a theater is different from watching a movie or television show. The performers are in the same room with you and are affected by what you do. To do their best, the performers need you to watch and listen closely. Audience members also depend on your quiet attention during the performance so that they can enjoy their theater experience as well.

Please review the **PROCEDURES** information below to help your theater visit go smoothly.

PROCEDURES

- ~Please bring a minimum of one adult chaperone for every fifteen students.
- ~Please remind chaperones that the theater etiquette they model speaks volumes to your students.
- ~Prepare your students to enter the theater in single file in order of seating.
- ~Position your chaperones to maximize adult supervision of your group.
- ~Please wait until your whole group is seated before making trips to the rest room. Then students may go in small groups with the teacher's permission. Younger students making trips to the rest room will need to be chaperoned.
- ~The theater is a food, gum, drink, radio, camera, tape, and video recorder free zone!
- ~Please leave inappropriate behaviors behind when visiting the theater.
- ~Please remain seated following the performance. Your group will be dismissed from the theater by a Fine Arts Programming staff member.

Enjoy Michael Moschen!

This study guide was adapted from material provided by Stanford University and modified by the College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University Fine Arts Programming Department.