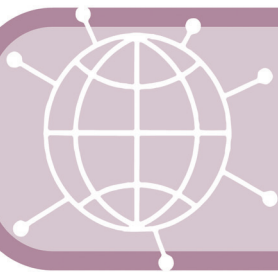


2011 > 2012 **Learning Link**

Tomáš Kubínek

Wednesday, November 16, 2011, 9:30am & 11:00am

Recommended Grades: 1–12



McCallum Theatre Institute
Field Trip Series

A WORLD OF MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE & PERFORMANCE

Learning Links presents

Tomáš Kubínek

Wednesday, November 16, 2011 at 9:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

"My performance has the usual effects one can expect: mass hypnosis, attempts on my life, marriage proposals..." — Tomáš Kubínek

Connecting to Curriculum and Students' Lives!

History & Geography: Czechoslovakia, Moravia, France

Arts: clowning, comedy, acting, magic tricks, mime

Physical sciences: the body & how it functions in this disciplined presentation

What is it?

Remember the first time you saw someone do a backward somersault while whistling and drinking a glass of water balanced on his forehead AND plucking the strings of a ukulele? The first time is always the most special, isn't it? Even so, Tomáš Kubínek, born Czech, raised Canadian, manages to make this standard feat fresh and exciting. And to add a touch of sobriety to the proceedings, he whirls over the McCallum Theater stage, dangling from a bungee cord, looking for all the world like a bat with Mozart-style hair. Well, some art is high, some low. In this elevated performance, Tomáš Kubínek demonstrates selfless courage as he flays his giant canvas wings in ever widening circles through the air. Moments later, he dances on six feet across the floorboards. Yes, we know it's an old trick --- but oh how he enlivens it! One note on theater etiquette: audiences have been heard to laugh occasionally during T. K.'s work. Since he does not seem to be unduly disturbed by this phenomenon, the usual restrictions against merriment in the theater will be temporarily lifted.

Who Does It?

Tomáš Kubínek (say: Toe-Mosh Koo-Bee-Neck. No, really, say it!) is the International Grand Champion of Housefly Catching at the Moucheville (Flytown) Open in Moravia, beating out competitors from over 11 other nations. Need we say more?

Oh, we do? Well then, Tomas K. --- whose complete oeuvre in the discipline of fly catching may be sampled online --- also dabbles in avant-garde theater and clowning. A circus performer from a tender age, his first sizeable success came as the back end of a horse. In the act, as the horse came apart, he was revealed in his underwear, an accomplishment which led quite naturally to, among other things, appearances on TV --- a succession of career events much in evidence before the television-viewing public today! In Mr. Kubínek's case, however, those appearances were with celebrated Czech clown Boleslav Polivska.

One may also point to the avant-garde theater as an influence on Kubínek's art. He has worked at, for example, the HBO Workspace in Los Angeles, doing guerilla-style absurdist theater sketches (think of them as Mad TV with a political edge!). Not only a performer of exquisite skills, but a writer as well, he has written "Moose," "Bed," and "Not Yet, At All." I haven't seen those --- have you? You have? Then you'll know that these works --- along with others of Mr. Kubínek --- have garnered praise worldwide. He claims to receive a new award every week, but from the looks of the list, they must come in considerably more often than that.

Oh, and he's an acrobat.

“Mainly inspiration comes from constant rediscovering what a miracle it is that we exist and how beautiful and fragile it all is.” —Tomáš Kubínek

What Are Its Contexts?

Teacher Jacques Lecoq always used to tell his students as they graduated from his school for mime: “Now your job is to get over me.” Wanting to dig down beneath the traditions of French mime, Monsieur Lecoq went looking for ways to create mime from deep within the performer. He founded his own school, the Ecole Lecoq. A hugely influential “voice” in the discipline of mime, Lecoq explored the boundaries of physical discipline, emotional and comedic content, and spontaneity. “Like Grotowski, Lecoq was a master,” wrote Jack Lang, Former French Culture Minister, referring to the theater director Jerzy Grotowski. “He inspired others.” Among those others is Tomáš Kubínek.

Bolek Polivka has had some cute ideas, among them an international housefly catching contest (the flies are released afterwards, unharmed), which Tomáš Kubínek, as we already know, has won. But these two funny men have shared other connections as well. Born in Eastern Moravia, Polivka studied acting at the national dramatic academy. He’s done film. He’s done TV. In the latter, he’s had his own long-running show, Manez Bolka Polivsky, a cavalcade of loopy, off the wall sketches and comedic skits. He’s a beloved clown, and Tomáš K., appearing with him in annual television specials, considers this Czech institution a mentor and teacher.

Other influences include Pierre Byland and Monika Pagneaux. Look them up.

Did someone say circus? A lifelong clown and devotee of the circus --- since encountering his first at age five --- Tomáš Kubínek plied his comical trade at the U.S.’ own Circus Flora. Named for the orphaned offspring of a poached elephant, this intimate, one-ringed, European styled circus was founded in 1985 by, among others, David Balding. (He adopted the baby elephant Flora.) This circus was to blend elements of traditional circuses with theater techniques. “It is a circus with a soul” the internet tells us. And indeed, the soulful Tomáš Kubínek worked for Circus Flora --- in boxers and horse outfit.

Before the viewing

Research projects might focus on these subjects:

Mime
Czechoslovakia
Clowns
Circuses
Jacques Lecoq

In experiential activities, could students:

View videotapes of clowns? What are some of the hallmarks of a great clown? How can students each create a clown persona and present these to the class?
Read books about the circus, focusing particularly on the performers? How about a mural of circus performers doing what they do?
Create a large map of Czechoslovakia? What are the most significant exports from this country --- in art? In music? In literature? In other areas? Can students fill the map borders with illustrations of these?
Try converting one of the stories or books from the curriculum into a mimed version?

After the viewing

Research could include:

Guerilla theater
Theater of the Absurd
Acrobatics
Tomáš Kubínek interview on his website
Magic tricks

In experiential activities, could students:

Explore magic tricks, such as those which deal with playing cards, coins, rope, as a way of looking at the principles which underlie their effects?

Research guerilla-style theater, beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present day? How can students create their own guerilla theater piece, using subjects suggested by current curriculum and/or issues from students' lives?

View an episode of I Love Lucy, or a film in which physical comedy is a prominent feature. Lead a discussion: What makes a particular moment funny?

Demonstrate their own feats of physical prowess (within safe boundaries) in a special class presentation. Have observing students describe what a particular performer does; then have the performer repeat his/her feat, for additional noticing. What skills are required for performing such a feat? What body parts come into play --- and how?

Read the interview Tomáš Kubínek gives on his website. How do the things he says accord with his performance? Can students create questions for Mr. Kubínek and submit them to his site?

"The performance is unique and personal in that I am simultaneously author, director, and performer in every moment being created before the public's very eyes." — Tomáš Kubínek

What do you think?

How would you answer these questions --- and how could these questions be adapted for student use?

How does he DO that???

How does this work explore human boundaries?

How do the things he does evoke laughter --- and why?

What effect does such a presentation have on us?

What is the overall structure of this performance?

How do theatrical elements enhance the presentation?

What is the effect achieved by juxtapositioning familiar things with unfamiliar usage?

How is sound used?

What are all the things used in place of sound?

How is color used?

Which motions/movements/gestures stand out to you now --- and why?

Which moment had the greatest impact --- and why?

What emotions were called up? When? How? Toward what possible purpose?

Following the Flight Paths:

Internet

<http://www.kubinek.com>

MIME

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/X/X-mime.asp> (needs ency. Membership)

MARCEL MARCEAU

<http://www.britannica.com/ebi/article?tocId=9329104>

GUERRILLA THEATER

http://www.diggers.org/guerrilla_theater.htm

http://www.diggers.org/guerrilla_theater.htm

<http://www.sfmt.org/history.html> www.sfmt.org/history.html

THEATER OF THE ABSURD

honors.montana.edu/~oelks/TC/Absurd.html

CLOWNING

<http://www.clown-ministry.com/History/history-detailed.html>

<http://www.theclownmuseum.org/history.html>

CIRCUSES

<http://www.circusweb.com/cwhistory.html>

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0857671.html>

Books

Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Czechoslovakia (Favorite Fairy Tales, Book 10)

by Virginia Haviland, Anca Hariton (Illustrator)

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Paperback: 94 pages

Publisher: HarperTrophy; Reprint edition (September 1, 1995)

ISBN: 068812593X

Czech Republic (Enchantment of the World. Second Series)

by JoAnn Milivojevic

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Library Binding: 144 pages

Publisher: Children's Press (CT) (September 1, 2004)

ISBN: 0516242555

Jojo's Circus: Clown School - Easy-to-Read #2 (Jojo's Circus)

by Tennant Redbank

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Paperback: 24 pages

Publisher: Disney Press (April 1, 2005)

ISBN: 0786846801

Circus Clown ABC (Heinemann Read and Learn)

by Denise Jordan

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Library Binding: 24 pages

Publisher: Heinemann Library (May 1, 2002)

ISBN: 1588105466

Be a Mime

by Mark Stolzenberg

Reading level: Young Adult

Hardcover: 128 pages

Publisher: Sterling (August 28, 2001)

ISBN: 0806964170

Mime Time: A Book of Routines and Performance Tips

by Happy Jack Feder, Marc Vargas (Illustrator)

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Meriwether Publishing, Ltd.; 2nd edition (October 1, 1992)

ISBN: 0916260739

“Over the course of numerous performances, a new idea keeps being refined and shaped. It’s all very delicate, instinctive work. Faith and listening are a big part of it.” — Tomáš Kubínek