

ExxonMobil

DISCOVERY SERIES



Free Rein with Musiqa and NobleMotion Dance



 **MUSIQA**
new music
made in Houston


NOBLEMOTION

THE
HOBBY
CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

2026-2027 Season 5th Grade Curriculum Guide

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About the Performance

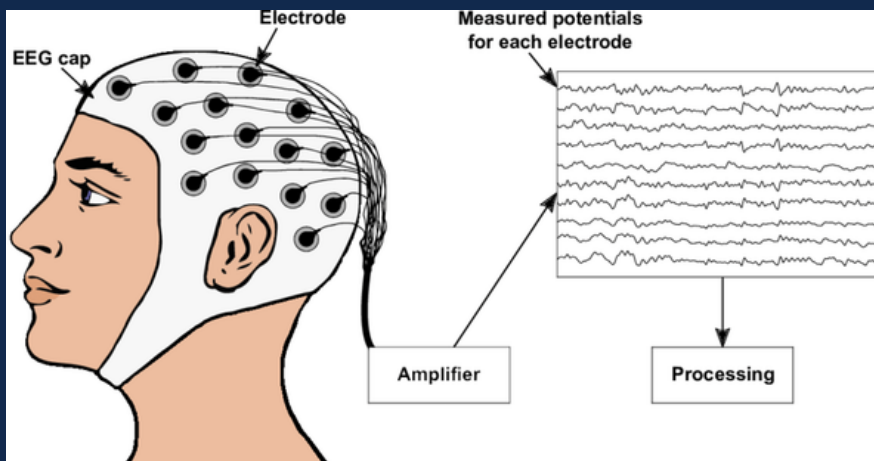
Free Rein

Free Rein is a live performance that combines music and dance, visual projections, and a science experiment to investigate the art and science of creativity. You will watch and listen to a composition written and choreographed by artists from Houston! There will be nine performers on stage: a pianist, flutist, clarinetist, violinist, and five dancers and neuroscientists collecting data. Some of the performers will wear wireless mobile brain caps, allowing our neuroscience team to collect their brain signals while they perform. The performers will alternate between scripted and improvised dance and music, with live visualizations of their brain activity, so you can explore their brains in real-time!



Scan this QR code for a preview video from a past art-science collaboration!

How the Science Works



A special brain cap records performers' brain activity during the show, and neuroscientists analyze the data afterward to study how the brain works during live performance.



Musiqua & NobleMotion Dance

Musiqua is one of the leading new music organizations in the country. Led by four composers, Musiqua's mission is to enrich and inspire our community through programs and performances that integrate new music with other modern art-forms. With its innovative collaborations and educational programming, Musiqua strives to make modern repertoire accessible and vital to audiences of all ages and musical backgrounds.

NobleMotion Dance, celebrated as Houston's Best Dance Company three times by the Houston Press—is recognized for its intense physicality and interdisciplinary ethos. Founded in 2009, NMD has collaborated with industrial, lighting, set, projection, and A.I. designers; composers, actors, poets, and scientists; and with organizations such as the Holocaust Museum Houston and the environmental agency Trash Bash.

noblemotiondance.com



About the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts opened to the public in 2002 in downtown Houston, at the edge of the city's renowned Theater District. The district is home to several major performing arts organizations, including Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Houston Symphony, Performing Arts Houston, Theatre Under The Stars, DaCamera, and Alley Theatre. Located beside Tranquility Park and one block from Houston City Hall, the Hobby Center was named in honor of former Texas lieutenant governor and Houston businessman William P. Hobby Jr. after his family foundation made a significant contribution to the project. The Hobby Center was built on the site formerly occupied by the Houston Music Hall and Sam Houston Coliseum, both of which were demolished in 1998. Today, the Hobby Center includes three performance spaces designed specifically for theater, music, and live performance experiences:

- **Sarofim Hall** is a 2,650-seat proscenium theater designed to accommodate large-scale touring Broadway productions and major live performances. Resident companies include Theatre Under The Stars and Broadway Across America. The hall's design combines grandeur with theatrical elegance. Golden latticework frames the space, while multi-storied gold-leaf columns stand in contrast to deep midnight-blue walls. Overhead, the Joe and Lee Jamail Celestial Dome Ceiling features twinkling fiber-optic stars arranged to mirror the Texas night sky.
- **Zilkha Hall** is an intimate 500-seat "jewel-box" theater, a term used to describe smaller performance spaces designed with rich detail, warmth, and close audience connection. Home to many of Houston's local arts organizations, the hall features excellent acoustics, deep-rose tones, and walnut wood accents across two seating levels.
- **The Founders Club** is an intimate live music venue with cabaret-style seating. Guests may purchase tables of four or be seated with others, creating a social and relaxed atmosphere. The series features both local performers and nationally recognized artists in a format not commonly found in Houston. Concerts span a variety of genres, including Broadway songbook, jazz, and world music.

ExxonMobil DISCOVERY SERIES

The ExxonMobil Discovery Series is the Hobby Center's flagship education program, welcoming 5th grade students from across Houston to experience live performances by local and touring artists. Aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the series brings dance, music, and theater to life in ways that connect directly to what students are learning in the classroom. Every performance is free—including transportation—and includes curriculum materials and artist Q&As that deepen the experience.

For the 2026-27 school year, the Hobby Center is thrilled to be partnering with 22+ school districts to serve nearly 50,000 5th graders.

Special thanks to lead underwriter ExxonMobil and generous supporters: Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, Elkins Foundation, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Albert and Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, The John M. O'Quinn Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts, H-E-B, Vivian L. Smith Foundation, and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

Theater Etiquette

Before you come to the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Please take some time to talk with your students about what to expect. Going to a live performance is a group experience unlike any other, and many students are more familiar with going to the movies or sporting events. Please help them prepare for what they'll see and how they should act. Other things to Keep in Mind: Make sure your students use the restroom before they leave school or at the theater before the show. If you get up during the performance, you may miss the best part! The performance runs approximately one hour long with no intermission. In entering or exiting the theater, safety is the primary concern. Please follow instructions from the house managers and ushers in taking your seats.

Going to a performance is different than going to a movie:

- This production is performed live. The performers can see, hear and react to the audience!
- Audience members can show the performers when they appreciate their performance! If something is funny, you can laugh! If the performers are doing a great job, then you can clap!
- Sometimes, the performers will ask you to participate by singing or clapping; please do not talk unless the performers ask you to!
- At the end of the show, the performers will bow. This is called a curtain call. If you really loved the show, you can give them a standing ovation to show that you appreciate their hard work!
- School clothes are appropriate, but some people like to dress up to go to the theater. Just make sure you are comfortable.

Going to a performance is the same as going to a movie:

- The lights dim before the performance begins and the theater stays dark during the show.
- Audience members are expected to stay quiet in their seats during the performance.
- Audience members may NOT take any pictures or video during the performance. (This is distracting to the performers and other audience members and this show contains copyrighted artistic material.)
- All cell phones and other electronic devices should be powered OFF or put on SILENT as soon as you enter the theater.

VISIT RESTROOM BEFORE - NOT DURING.

ARRIVE EARLY.

QUIET & SEATED DURING SHOW.

NO PHOTOS OR VIDEOS DURING SHOW.

PHONES OFF/SILENCED.

RESPECT THE SPACE & OTHERS.

LISTEN & ENGAGE.

APPLAUD APPROPRIATELY.

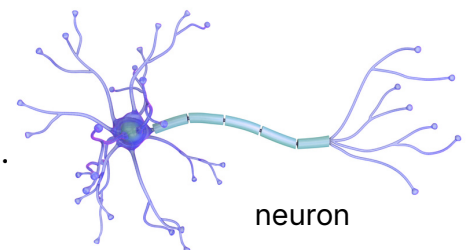
Vocabulary

Music & Dance

- **Musician** - Anyone who creates, performs, or conducts music.
- **Composer** - The musician who writes the composition that is performed by the musicians on stage.
- **Musical score** - The script for a musical performance that tells the musicians when and what to play. When the *Free Rein* musicians are playing rehearsed music, they will be playing from a score.
- **Improvisation** - Spontaneous creation or action, without a pre-determined script. In music, improvisation is what happens when performers compose “on the fly!” Many of the sections of *Free Rein* are improvised.
- **Choreographer** - A person who creates and arranges dance movements.
- **Choreography** - Planned sets of movements that make up a dance. Choreography is often set, rehearsed, and executed.
- **Dance Composition** - The aggregation of all dancers’ respective choreography. If choreography is a microscope, composition is the telescope (the big picture). This can include symmetry & asymmetry, unison, canon, dancers’ relationships to space, themselves, and each other, tableaux & “picture” moments, and more.
- **Qualitative efforts** - This refers to how movement is performed—with what level of muscular tonality. Is it light or heavy; free or bound; direct or indirect; quick or sustained.
- **Dance score** - A set of parameters and rules to structure and guide improvisational dance explorations.

Neuroscience

- **Neuroscientist** - A scientist who studies the nervous system, including the brain and the spinal cord.
- **Neuro-engineers** - A scientist who combines neuroscience and engineering to study the brain.
- **Scientific Research** - A logical investigation to gain more knowledge of the natural world. It involves making observations, asking questions, forming an educated guess or hypothesis, testing the guess with experiments, and analyzing the results to see if the guess was right.
- **Scientific Data** - Information (words or numbers) that are collected during a scientific experiment.
- **Brain caps** - A wearable, hat-like technological device used by neuro-engineers to study the brain, often during an activity, like walking, dancing, or playing an instrument!
- **Electrodes** - Small metal disks on a brain cap. They act like microphones, listening for electrical signals coming from your brain and sending them to a computer for analysis.
- **Neurons** - A cell in your brain that sends and receives electrical messages. There are about 86 billion of them in an adult human!
- **Neuronal networks** - Complex systems of communicating neurons in the brain that work together to perform different tasks.



PRE-SHOW

DISCUSSION

Listen & Discuss

- Scan each QR Code and Discuss
- How does the music or dance make you feel while it's being made up on the spot?
- What parts seem like something you've seen or heard before, and what parts feel brand-new or surprising?
- How is making it up as you go (improvising) different from following steps or notes that are already written down?

Finding Patterns

- What do all four performances have in common, even though they come from different cultures and time periods?
- How do the performers communicate or respond to one another without speaking?
- What clues tell you that the performers are making creative choices in the moment?

Predict the Performance

- Based on these examples, what do you think you'll see during *Free Rein*?
- How do you think musicians, dancers, and neuroscientists might work together in one performance?
- What are you most curious to discover about creativity, improvisation, or the brain?

Scan each QR code

Louis Armstrong



Ravi Shankar, Ali Rakha



Mozart



Steve Paxton



PRE-SHOW

ACTIVITIES



Storytelling

As a class, create a story one sentence at a time. Each student begins with "Yes, and..." to build on the previous idea without changing it.

Rhyme Challenge

In pairs, choose a word and take turns thinking of as many rhyming words as possible. Discuss how creating ideas quickly is a form of improvisation.

Movement Improvisation

Create a short improvised dance without stopping. Imagine movement flowing through your body, then safely pass that movement to a partner using gestures or mirrored motion.

Collaborative Art

Working in groups, create a shared drawing or painting for several minutes before passing it to another group to continue. Notice how each artist builds on someone else's ideas.

Reflect & Share

After each activity, discuss: What were you thinking? How did it feel to create without a plan? What surprised you most about the experience?

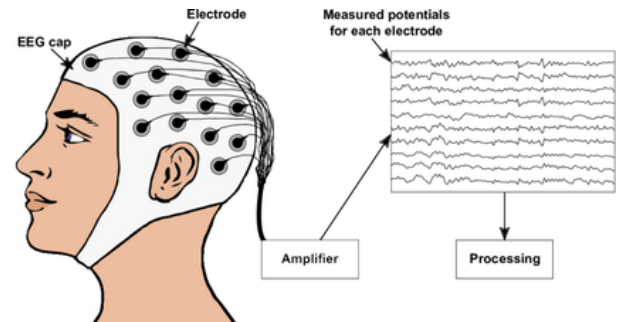
PRE-SHOW

PRINTABLE ACTIVITY

Worksheet - Make Your Own Braincap

Name: _____

Date: _____



Dancers will wear a brain cap on stage during the performance you will see. It will measure brain activity and you'll be able to see it projected onto a big screen LIVE during the performance. Make your own brain cap using paper and markers to personalize it.

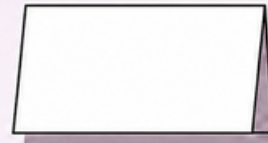
PART 1: Using a piece of paper, follow the prompts to make your own brain cap

A

1. Start with a rectangular sheet of paper.

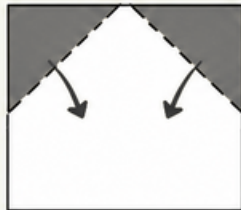


2. Fold in half horizontally.

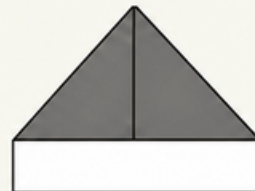


B

1. Fold down the top two corners as shown.

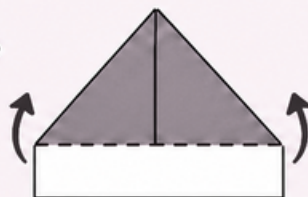


2. It should look like this.

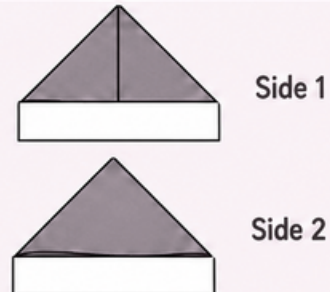


C

1. Fold the bottom edge upwards on both sides.



2. You will have two sides.



PART 2: Label & Share

Personalize each section by labeling with activities/things you like & share

FIFTH GRADE

TEKS Alignment

ELAR & READING- §110.7

TEKS: 5.3(A), 5.6(C), 5.9(D)

Student Learning Connection:

Students interpret the stories told through improvised music and dance. They compare familiar and surprising elements, identify tone and emotion expressed without a script, and discuss the message behind spontaneous artistic choices.

Science -§112.16

TEKS: 5.6(D), 5.7(A), 5.11(C)

Student Learning Connection:

Students analyze how improvising dancers use balance, force, and motion. They connect music improvisation to vibration and sound energy, and explore how physical systems like muscles and coordination support creative movement on stage.

Mathematics - §111.7

TEKS: 5.4(G), 5.5(A), 5.8 (C)

Student Learning Connection:

Students observe choreographic patterns, formations, and timing in improvised movement. They recognize symmetry, transformation, and sequencing in dance, and connect improvisation to visual math models such as charts or timelines.

Social Studies - §113.16

TEKS: 5.4(A), 5.5(B), 5.22(B)

Student Learning Connection:

Students explore how improvisation has been part of cultural traditions across history — from jazz in America to Indian classical music to European cadenzas. They recognize the contributions of diverse artists and trace the cultural development of improvisation as an art form.

Health - §115.17

TEKS: 5.1(B), 5.5(B), 5.12(B)

Student Learning Connection:

Students see how improvisation encourages self-expression, risk-taking, and teamwork. They reflect on how improvisation builds confidence and identity, and how creativity supports emotional health and belonging.

Fine Arts -§117

TEKS:5.1(A), 5.2(B), 5.3(C)

Student Learning Connection:

Students evaluate how improvisation brings dance, music, and cultural traditions together in performance. They identify expressive tools, reflect on cultural influences, and respond to the unique meaning of a performance created in the moment.

FIFTH GRADE

STAAR Alignment



RLA

STAAR Reporting Category:

Comprehension; Author's Purpose & Craft

Student Learning Connection

Identify themes of creativity, risk-taking, collaboration. Compare how improvisation conveys purpose and emotion versus written texts.

Mathematics

STAAR Reporting Category:

Computations, Algebraic Relationships

Student Learning Connection

Recognize patterns and sequences in rhythm and movement. Observe symmetry, rotations, and spatial design in formations.

Science

STAAR Reporting Category:

Force & Energy, Body Systems

Student Learning Connection

Connect balance, momentum, vibration to motion, sound. Explain how body systems support improvised movement.

FIFTH GRADE

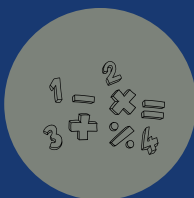
Curriculum Connections



English Language Arts

In The Classroom

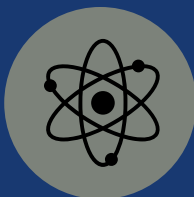
Compare how musicians and dancers communicate ideas without a script. Have students analyze theme, purpose, mood, and point of view, then explain how performers conveyed meaning through movement and music instead of words.



Mathematics

In The Classroom

Explore patterns, rhythm, symmetry, and sequencing in improvised movement. Students can identify repeating patterns, compare timing, and describe how mathematical concepts appear in dance formations and musical structure.



Science

In The Classroom

Investigate how force, motion, sound, and the human body work together during performance. Students can explore balance, vibration, coordination, and the role of the brain in creativity and movement.



Social Studies

In The Classroom

Examine how Houston's artists, scientists, and cultural organizations work together to shape the city's identity. Students can explore how local partnerships, public performances, and creative innovation strengthen communities and contribute to Houston's cultural life.



Health / SEL

In The Classroom

Reflect on how improvisation builds confidence, creativity, communication, and teamwork. Discuss how listening, taking positive risks, and adapting to unexpected situations are valuable life skills.

Discussion



Performance Reflection

- What surprised you most about the performance?
- How did the performers create music and movement in the moment?
- What part of the performance stayed with you the longest? Why?

Creativity & Collaboration

- How did the performers work together while improvising?
- What challenges do you think come with creating without a script?
- Why is listening important when you're creating with others?



Connections & Culture



- Did any part of the performance remind you of music, dance, or stories you already know?
- What was completely new or different to you?
- What did you learn about improvisation from different cultures?

Creative Thinking

- If you were performing, what creative choices would you make?
- How could improvisation help you solve problems or think differently in everyday life?
- What did this performance teach you about creativity?

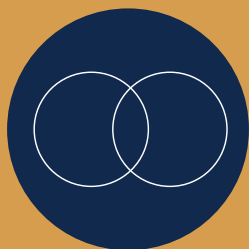


POST-SHOW Activities

Reflective Writing

- **Creative Journal**

Write a journal entry describing how the performance made you think or feel. Include one moment that surprised you and explain why.



Compare & Contrast

- **Improvised (made up) vs. Rehearsed (planned)**

Create a Venn diagram comparing an improvised performance with one that is fully rehearsed or scripted. What makes each one unique?

Create & Perform

- **Movement Response**

Working in small groups, create a short improvised movement sequence inspired by the performance. Share your performance and explain one creative choice your group made.



Culture & Connections

- **Improvisation Around the World**

Research one improvisational tradition—such as jazz, Indian classical music, or another cultural art form. Share one interesting fact about how performers create in the moment.

Career Spotlight

- **Explore Careers Behind the Performance**

Choose one career that contributed to *Free Rein*, such as musician, dancer, choreographer, neuroscientist, lighting designer, sound engineer, or stage manager. Research what that professional does and identify one skill they need to be successful. Share your findings with the class.



THE CREATIVITY LAB

Feel • Move • Create

Think back to Free Rein. Explore how the performance affected your emotions, movement choices, and imagination.

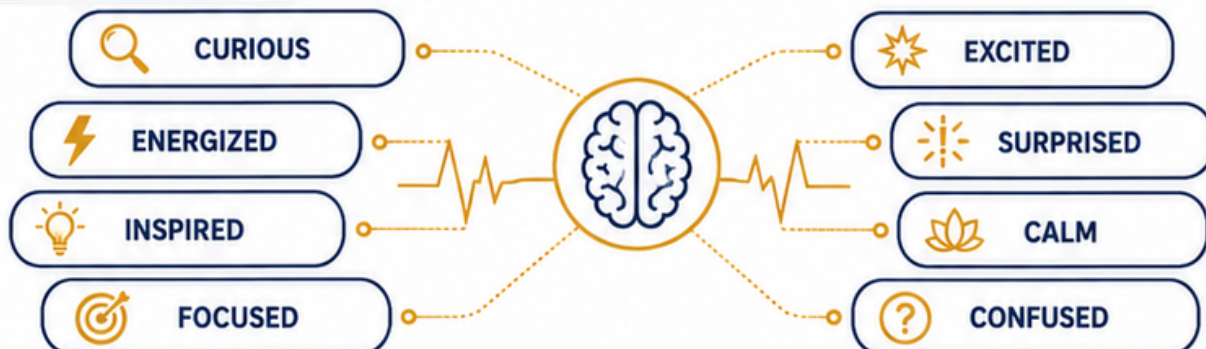


Name: _____

Date: _____

1 MAP YOUR REACTION

Choose the words that describe your experience. Then support one choice with evidence.



I chose _____ because I noticed _____.

2 30-SECOND IMPROVISATION CHALLENGE

With a group, create a short dance in the moment. Plan only the rules—do not plan every move.

STARTING SHAPE 	MOVEMENT RULE Choose one. ☐ repeat ☐ mirror ☐ take turns	USE THE SPACE Choose one. ☐ high/low ☐ near/far ☐ travel/stay	ENDING CUE How will everyone know it is time to stop? _____
---------------------------	--	---	--

Three words that describe our dance:

1 _____	2 _____	3 _____
---------	---------	---------



3 BUILD A PERFORMANCE POEM

Use details from the show to complete the poem. Your words do not have to rhyme.

	The music _____.
	The dancers _____.
	My brain imagined _____.
	I left feeling _____.

Add one final line of your own:

★ CREATIVITY CONNECTION

Improvisation helped our group _____.

One choice we made together was _____.



HOW READY WERE YOU TO TAKE A CREATIVE RISK?

☐ NOT YET
 ☐
☐
☐
☐ VERY READY

FIFTH GRADE RESOURCES

Websites

Hyperscore



An innovative, game-like music composition app originally developed at the MIT Media Lab, with an updated in-browser version recently released by New Harmony Line. Hyperscore's interface is tactile, engaging, and immediately rewarding. It features real-time playback!

Link: [Hyperscore](#)

Sound Reasoning



Music is designed to express itself completely in sound. Sound Reasoning is designed to help you listen. This course encourages you to be self-reliant—to get up close to the music, without mediation or interference. It's completely free, and designed by Anthony Brandt, Musiqa's Artistic Director and the composer. Explore Sound Reasoning at this QR code.

Link: [Sound Reasoning](#)

Creativity and Imagination Lab



The Creativity & Imagination Lab studies how people use creativity and imagination to learn, solve problems, and generate new ideas. Their research helps us better understand how thinking, learning, and innovation work.

Link: [Research Lab](#)

Musiqa



Experience contemporary music through performances that connect sound with dance, theater, literature, and visual art.

Link: [Musiqa](#)

NobleMotion Dance



Explore a Houston dance company known for athletic contemporary movement and innovative stage technology.

Link: [NobleMotion](#)

Nordin Lab



Learn how researchers use science and technology to study the brain and body during human movement.

Link: [Nordin Lab](#)

CONNECT WITH US

thehobbycenter.org/education

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Let us know what you think.
Please take our survey!



[Post-Show
Student Survey](#)



[Post-Show
Teacher Survey](#)