Invisi’BALL
Nadine Bommer Dance Company
For 135 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our region has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to sponsor TPAC’s Humanities Outreach in Tennessee (HOT). What an important program this is – reaching over 30,000 students, many of whom would never get to see a performing arts production without this local resource. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves, and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers,

for giving your students this wonderful experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.
Teachers,

Thank you for choosing to bring your students to experience Invisi’BALL! In this guidebook you’ll find fascinating background information, helpful information about what to expect, ideas for classroom discussions and lessons to make this thrilling performance even more meaningful.

We look forward to seeing you at TPAC!

TPAC Education Staff

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Invisi’BALL is a high-energy, theatrical, comical, and often times frenetic immersion into the spectacle of professional football in Europe. (Soccer, as we know it in the US). Through a unique dance technique developed by Invisi’BALL’s choreographer and company founder, Nadine Bommer, the dancers use exaggerated facial expressions, gestures, full-body characterization, and dynamic movement to capture the drama and enthusiasm of players, referees, and fans. Live-action “replays”, complete with slow motion, rewinds, and freezes, capture the essence of a televised match with the impressive energy and agility of a live, technology-free performance.

The audience feels the intensity of a high-stakes championship match between two teams, whose yellow and red colors are a tribute to Tel Aviv’s two largest soccer rivals. From the entrance to the field to the locker room after the match, the all-female cast embodies the machismo, physicality, and over-the-top personalities of professional athletes in a sport where passion of fans and players borders on fanatic in parts of the world. High-energy techno music blended with Israeli football chants underscores the liveliness of this performance, where the personalities of the athletes overpower the game action and the ball itself is invisible.

Segments of the performance include the singing of the Israeli national anthem, engaging with fans through chants, warming up on the field, game action, referee drama, locker room antics, a dance off between teams, and at one point, the performers transitioning to represent the fans instead of players. Simple set changes take us from the field to the locker room to the stadium stands.

Throughout the show, performers will engage with the audience from onstage and sometimes in the aisles. The audience will be divided into red and yellow team fans, so be prepared to root for your team!
• Football, as soccer is known outside the US, is the most popular sport in Israel, as well as the most popular sport in the world. In Europe, it is not just a pastime for many fans; it is an all-encompassing cultural experience.

• The Red and Yellow costumes in Invisi’BALL represent Tel Aviv’s two most fiercely competitive professional soccer teams: Hapoel Tel-Aviv Football Club (Red) and Maccabi Tel Aviv (yellow)

• In Israel and elsewhere, fans show their team loyalty by waving scarfs with team colors. Often, these scarfs will have the team names imprinted.

• Israel is recognized in the contemporary dance world as a place where much of the most cutting-edge and influential dance technique and choreography is being created. This is due, primarily, to the huge influence of Ohad Naharin, artistic director of Tel Aviv’s Batsheva Dance Company and creator of the Gaga dance language. Naharin’s choreographic style of freedom, individualism, and strong focus on feeling and sensing movement from within, paired with sharp articulation and physicality of movement, has rocked the dance world. Nadine Bommer worked with Ohad Naharin before forming her own company and was inspired by the freedom and sensation of his movement language. Naharin’s Gaga technique has become a warm up and training standard for dance companies across the world.

• The fake beards in Invisi’BALL have some resemblance of real-life male impersonations in the Middle East. For decades, women in Iran were banned from attending stadium football matches. Some dressed as men and wore fake beards to sneak into matches. Doing so, they risked arrest, jail terms, or fines. June 2018 marked the first time in 37 years that women were allowed to watch World Cup matches broadcast on huge stadium screens in Iran.
SPARK ACTIVITIES

Suggested explorations to introduce concepts that could be developed into more thorough investigations.

Slow Motion Sports Moment
1. Choose a short video clip of a sports game action that has at least one slow motion sequence, as well as footage of fans. Have students watch clip and notice body language and emotions of players and fans.
2. Divide students into small groups of 5-8. Each small group should assign roles within the group: 2-4 students are players on opposing teams. 2-4 students are sports fans divided equally among sides. The players will show, in slow motion, the game-winning goal as best they can. Fans will show, in slow motion, their reaction to their team’s loss or win.
3. Practice, then encourage students to exaggerate their emotions and body language.
4. Let the groups share for each other and reflect on how others used body language to convey emotions, and how slowing the action affects viewing and the ability to execute the moves.
5. Example of sports clip, 2 minutes, Croatia vs. England, FIFA World Cup. https://youtu.be/gi_2GELMwfY

Full-body Characterization
1. Students individually and silently choose a type of athlete – soccer, football, basketball, tennis, etc. They create a full-body frozen statue OR short movement as that athlete. Facilitator will then call out a list of words such as competitive, macho/manly, comical/cartoonish, and students should adjust or refine their pose or short movement in accordance with each word.
2. Pick two or more statues exhibiting different traits. Have students hold poses while the rest of class compares and contrasts the body language and posture.

Stop, Go, Rewind, Slow Motion
1. Have students walk in an open space around the classroom. They are to freeze when you say stop, walk again when you say go. Tell them to remember their walking path.
2. After one of the stops, tell them to rewind their steps – walking backward.
3. Play with a different combination of these commands, adding slow motion to forward or rewind walking, and possibly fast forward. To extend/enhance the exercise, change the setting to soccer field, basketball court, or other well-known sports to encourage a variety of movements and physical challenges while incorporating stop, go, rewind, and slow-motion commands.

Sports Culture in Different Countries
1. Research Football (soccer) in Israel and compare and contrast it with American Football. Criteria can include popularity per capita, cultural customs related to game watching, and how politics and geography affects team choices and fan behavior. Include visual images of fans and players.
2. To expand this idea, use body language to explore embodying fans and players in the two different countries. What is similar? What is different?
Pre-Performance Reflection

- What are some gender stereotypes, and how are they amplified in sports?
- In what ways is dance like a sport, and sport like a dance?
- How does our culture and geographic location affect how people view and/or play sports?
- If you were telling a story with no words, what could you use to convey meaning?
- How are dance and theater different? How are they similar? How might you combine the two?

Post-Performance Reflection

- What did you notice about the way the dancers moved? If this particular type of dance had a name, what would it be, and why?
- In what ways was the performance similar to the events or segments of a soccer game, and in what ways was it different, or abstracted?
- Near the end, two players repeat a motion of punching each other in a comical way, with seemingly no resolution. What do you think the choreographer was trying to say?
- How would this performance have been different if the dancers were men portraying men? What about men portraying women?

NADINE BOMMER DANCE COMPANY

Nadine Bommer was born in New York City and raised in both New York and Israel. She studied with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and American Ballet Theatre while in New York, and later was influenced by Ohad Naharin of Batsheva in Israel. She has won numerous awards for her unique choreography and dance language, a three-part method that combines Technique (Nevet), The Body (Kinetica), and The Character (Animato).

After choreographing for multiple companies in Europe and beyond, Nadine founded the Nadine Bommer Dance Academy in Rishon Lezion, Israel in 2002. In response to an invitation to create in the US, she relocated to New York City and founded Nadine Bommer Dance Company in 2015. Nadine’s work emphasizes collaboration between cultures, and both companies perform locally and abroad.

Nadine Bommer quotes on choreographic language and inspiration, from the video “Nadine Animato, About Us”:

“I always look for a character, for a plot that I already have in mind; a comic situation from the world of animation.”

“I can’t accurately define whether it’s dance or theatre. It looks like acting skills, but it’s actually all about movement. It’s instinctual and honest.”

“It’s really a unique style. You have to find the right people who have that combination of physical ability and quality along with emotional intensity. A kind of spice that’s laced with a bit of madness, a lot of humor, and a unique personality.”
Embodying Machismo as a Team

Invisi’BALL uses an all-female cast to portray male athletes with machismo/stereotypical masculine characteristics in a comedic way. This lesson will guide students through embodying a male athlete in an animated way and introduce them to movement patterns found in the show.

Time: 45 minutes

Needs:
- Open space for movement and something to mark “center field”
- Audio player and Spotify playlist with rewind sound effects (optional. Sound effects can be easily found on Spotify by searching “rewind audio”)
- Reference Resource: 2 ½ minute video of football player Cortez Lewis’ multiple player handshakes, if needed for inspiration https://youtu.be/DtNPrxqHBc4
- Definition of machismo from Merriam-Webster:
  a strong sense of masculine pride: an exaggerated masculinity

Athletes displaying their machismo

Discuss and Reflect: What is machismo?
Have class define their understanding and read the definition. Capture responses to these questions:
  - What are some stereotypes of ways men act or behave?
  - What are some stereotypes of ways women act or behave?
  - How is this different in athletes?

Warm Up:
- Students all stand and walk in the open space, silently. Encourage different patterns of walking – straight paths, zig zag, curved. Practice these commands: freeze, go, rewind steps, or go in slow motion.
- On the count of three, students make a pose that is masculine. While students hold their pose, invite them to also look around room and see what they notice. Using one person’s pose as example, ask what could be done to exaggerate it and make it even bigger, and have the student demonstrate suggestions.
- Repeat with a feminine pose. Go back to masculine, and try a different pose. Students will stick with masculine characteristics for the rest of the activity.

Activity:
1. Divide the class evenly in half and form two lines facing each other on opposite sides of the room. Put tape or other visual indicator on the floor to mark “center field”. Choose or have the class choose a team sport, played on a field or court, to portray.
- “Center Field” divides the students into two all-male teams that are sports rivals. Standing in place, on a count of three, students create a full-body pose to become their athlete character.
Without touching, and at the same time, teams walk toward each other embodying this male athlete. Teams freeze when they reach “center field”. Each student should be facing someone from the opposite team.

Have students rewind their walk, moving back to the starting point without losing their character.

2. Now invite students to take their characterizations up a notch – exaggerate the movements, their facial expressions, and/or their energy, and again approach the opposing team, stopping at “center field.”

Each student athlete should have a partner on opposing team. Partners will create some kind of handshake. It can be competitive, but has to be safe. (If students need ideas, have one pair share an example).

After the handshake, athletes turn around to face their imaginary fans in the stadium and make a pose/gesture, relating to their enthusiastic fans.

Allow students to practice this all together a time or two, calling out “freeze”, “rewind”, “go” and “slow motion” at random times to break up the action and explore switching direction and timing.

3. Divide class in half again with an equal number of students on each team, so they can share and observe. Have each group share their approach to “center field”, handshake, and fan recognition with the rest of the class. Consider allowing an observing student to call out “go, freeze, rewind, and slow motion” cues. Ask reflection questions after each share. What did you notice? What stood out, and why? Etc.

Closure:
In the end-of-game tradition, both teams line up and do a high five or other gesture with opposing team while passing each other. Students on the teams should stay in character during this exchange.
Sports Fan Chant Writing

Recorded fan chants are heard throughout the Invisi’BALL performance. These chants are an important link between fans and players in Israel, and many parts of Europe. This lesson will help students consider sports culture in Israel as well as the US, through a reading and writing exercise.

Time: 45 minutes

Needs:
- white board or device for capturing written words for all to see
- pen and paper if students are working individually or in small groups
- print out of fan chant lyrics below
- ability to play online audio
- basic info on a chosen American basketball, football team

Resources:
Football fans in Israel have notorious, sometimes violent or even racist chants, so be careful with student access to websites. Here is one of the tamer examples from a team in Haifa, Israel:

My Heart is Green, Maccabi Haifa

My heart is green,
I love you,
Go on Maccabi,
give us all your heart.
lalalala...
Now everyone knows,
That there isn't other than you,
I am dedicating you my life,
ready to die for you.
lalalala...
Come on here everyone,
Take your scarves out,
Rave now, break all the stands. lalalala...

Listen to the chant online (sung in Hebrew): [https://www.fanchants.com/football-songs/maccabi-haifa-chants/my-heart-is-green/](https://www.fanchants.com/football-songs/maccabi-haifa-chants/my-heart-is-green/)

Discuss and Reflect: What do you notice about the lyrics?
What do you notice about the mood of the song? What can this tell you about fans of this team? List imagined characteristics of these fans based on what you read and hear in these chants.
What is the purpose of a fan chant?
How do cheer teams and use of popular music in American sports influence the way US fans chant?
How would a chant for an American team be different than the Israeli example?
Warm Up:

Use one of your school’s sports teams OR pick a particular American basketball, football, or soccer team to use as a focus for writing a chant. Make sure the whole class understands the basic identifiers for this team: geographical location, team colors, standout players, mascot, and perhaps rival teams.

Look at each of these sports mottos as examples: “Elevate your Game” and “All In”. What message does each one send? What is the purpose of a sports motto or tagline?

Individually, every student creates one (hopefully original) motto for the team. Have volunteers share out. List somewhere all can see.

Individually or as a group popcorn style, students suggest words or short phrases about winning or scoring that might be found in a cheer or a fan chant. Make a separate list for these.

Individually or as a group popcorn style, students suggest “We (are) (will) (want) …” statements from the perspective of the fans. How do the fans feel about their team? What do they want from them, or what will they do for their team? Make a separate list for these.

Activity:

As a whole group, individually, or working in small groups, students create a sports chant for the identified team. They may use the listed lines and phrases like magnetic poetry, choosing what they want to use and rearranging them and adding words as needed.

As a group, read the chant(s) aloud, and then chant it, adding volume and emotion. If time allows, divide the class in half and have a competition to chant the best, as if for rival teams.

To Expand the Activity:

Students choose a popular song and try to work the fan chant(s) into the rhythm of the song.

Or

Compare and contrast the Israeli fan chant and one that the students created. How do they show cultural differences?

Invisi’BALL Music

There are many fan chants as well as techno songs in the soundtrack of the performance. Here are some examples of music on the program:

- Underworld – Cowgirl
- Israeli National Anthem, “Hatikvah”

More to explore

Israeli Fan Chants

https://www.fanchants.com/football-songs

NOTE: these are examples and not the exact chants used in Invisi’BALL. Use caution if playing for students, particularly if you have Israeli or Palestinian students in your classroom; they are in Hebrew and are not all appropriate.

Israeli Football Culture

Exploring Kinetica and Animato
(For the Theater or Dance Teacher)

Choreographer Nadine Bommer’s unique movement language has a Gaga influence from her studies with Ohad Narahin. The addition of characterizations, kinetic energy, and exaggerated situational explorations places her movement style in a category of its own. Her work has three segments: NBT (Nadine Bommer Technique), Kinetica (a language of movement) and Animato (artistic creativity and theatrical expression). See Resources on the following page for video links.

This lesson will help students physicalize and explore some of the qualities found in Bommer’s choreography and process.

Time: 45-60 minutes

Needs:
- open space for movement
- background instrumental music if it helps students feel comfortable
- resource: 53 second rehearsal process video demonstrating Nadine Bommer’s dance language, Kinetica: https://youtu.be/CA4Xvhvs5s8

Discuss and Reflect:
What does it mean to embody a character from the inside out? How could we blend dance and theater to do this? You may also want to include some context about Nadine Bommer and her choreographic style, and show the short video listed above.

Warm up
Students begin walking silently through the open space. They respond to these called out commands with their walks: go, freeze, rewind, and slow motion, in various order.

Warm up part two: Let students know this is more of a free form warm up than most – it is guided but not directed. Side coaching is recommended for this exercise – have students continue to move as you give instructions.

Begin with circling and moving hands and wrists in different directions. Let this movement progress into the arms. It can become more of an undulating movement. Invite students to imagine they are moving in warm water, in the ocean.

Continue the undulating, circling, and flowing movement into the shoulders, the chest, the spine, the hips. Students who are more comfortable with free form movement or who have been exposed to Gaga technique may be able to do this progressively, adding movements in each body part while keeping the other body parts moving. Students with less free form movement experience may do better with isolating body parts at first.

Let the legs become flowing, like water. They still hold weight, but they are fluid.

If students have been isolating body parts, ask them now to use their whole body to explore these textures of movements:
- move as if you have no bones, floating in the ocean, and the inside of you is all water
- move with swift, jagged or staccato motions, using multiple body parts

You may also wish to interject freeze, go, rewind, and slow-motion commands during this exploration.
Reflection:
Discuss the different feelings of the two different embodied movements: flowing and staccato. If we were to create a human character that moved in a flowing, underwater way, who would that character be? What gender? What situations might that character get into? What emotions might that character experience? How might a situation be comical? List where all can see. Repeat this reflection process with the staccato movement.

Activity:
Each student chooses a character and an associated movement quality from the reflection exercises above. On the count of three, each student makes a full-body pose as that character. Take a moment to notice and reflect on the body language and see if it is obvious who is which character, and why.

Invite students to walk and move as that character, keeping the quality of movement – either flowing or staccato – of their character. As they move ask them to animate their movement by making it bigger. They need to travel — move across the open space — as their character all at one time, exploring different floor patterns.

Pause. Students choose a situation for their character from the reflection list, or you may wish to give them one. Without using words, embody or pantomime that situation, thinking how your character would react emotionally to that situation. Feel it from the inside out, using the flowing or staccato movement quality of your character.

Pause and ask for a volunteer to show their character embodying a situation. Ask students how we could exaggerate this to make it more extreme? Can it be made comical, and how?

Have students revisit their embodiment and movement, exaggerating the facial expressions, the movement. While they are moving, begin to call out commands such as “freeze,” “rewind”, “slow motion” and “go”.

Divide the class in half and have half share their movement phrases while the other half observes, including calling out the “‘freeze,” “rewind”, “slow motion,” and “go” commands. Reflection questions might include “What did you notice?” “How does the slow motion affect the energy or quality of movement?” “Which quality of movement is most difficult, and why?” Groups switch roles and repeat process of sharing or observing.

Closure:
To end with a self-reflection, ask students to think of any character they want to be. This could be a larger-than-life version of themselves. Ask them to put that character into their bodies and think of how they could make that character exaggerated, or bigger than life. On count of three, all students make a full-body pose as that character.
Resources

Nadine Bommer Dance Company: http://www.nadinebommerdance.com/

Israeli Football Culture: https://haam.org/2013/11/24/ultras-and-la-familia-israeli-football-culture/

Kinetica Technique Video: https://vimeo.com/227654777

Animato Technique Video: (excerpts from a different performance than Invisi’BALL, but good example of exaggerated characterizations) https://vimeo.com/112413863

Images of Invisi’BALL from Nadine Bommer Dance Company
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