



## RULES@PLAY - STUDY GUIDE

### MEET THE PIECES or MEET THE DANCES

Rules @ Play is a lively, interactive show created specifically for a youth audience. Throughout life, we all encounter rules, and we usually view them negatively. Rules @ Play explores how rules actually provide opportunities to solve problems and overcome challenges. They spark creativity, and in our case, give us tools to make dances. In this fun, engaging and accessible show, Pilobolus dancers perform and analyze four of the company's pieces through movement and discussion on and off stage, showcasing the benefit of playing by the rules.



*Walklyndon (1971)*, the oldest Pilobolus piece currently performed, showcases the challenge the original company members faced when they were forced to stick to an unusual rule: **Make a dance without dancers**. Also, make note that this is the only piece without any music or sound; might that have been another rule? Running time 12 minutes.



**Solo from the Empty Suitor (1980)**, is introduced by starting with an onstage experiment which calls for audience volunteers to collaborate, improvise, and surmount a self-imposed rule; the same one that was applied in the creation of this piece: **Make a dance without using your feet on the floor.**

Running time 14 minutes



**Behind the Shadows (2021)** is an excerpt from a larger piece, *Shadowland*, which has toured to audiences all over the world. In this piece, *Pilobolus* had a rule imposed on them by someone other than themselves, forcing them to reach beyond their normal ways of doing things, resulting in magical discoveries. The rule for this piece: **Make a dance in Shadow.**

Running time 10 minutes

### **“Rules @ Play” or “How we put together this performance”**

*Throughout life we all encounter rules, and we usually view them negatively. Rules @ Play explores how rules actually present opportunities in order to solve problems and overcome challenges. — Pilobolus*

For Pilobolus, the idea of “rules” was a jumping off point in creating a theme, just like in a book, as a means of tying a group of dances together to create a performance, in this case, the one you are about to see.

So, let’s start at the beginning. We’re pretty sure you know what the word “play means” but what exactly are rules?

According to Merriam Webster, *rules are a prescribed guide for conduct or action; an accepted procedure, custom, or habit.*

Closer to “home,” you may have rules you adhere to. If a game you like to play, like tag, has no rules, there is no game. Rules can provide the structure in which you can create the fun. . And therein lies the “ah ha” moment; for Pilobolus, creating rules that may appear to constrain an idea, became the perfect challenge for their collective creativity and the overarching theme for this performance.

Here’s the rule they gave themselves: create a series of dances where a rule is set forth, which may constrain some element of their art form, but ultimately, results in a piece that is both fun and playful. And then, just for good measure, they added one more rule: they must connect with you, the audience. Often, when you come to the theater for a performance, the performers are on the stage, and you sit facing them. In *Rules @ Play*, the company bent and stretched this rule, by not only interacting with you, the audience, but also presenting an opportunity, or two, to collaborate with them.

Now, sit back, and read about the dances, and the rules upon which they were formed, in Pilobolus’ *Rules @ Play*. Enjoy!

## QUESTIONS FOR THE KIDS

- What was your favorite piece and why?
  - What do you notice about the costuming, lighting, and music?
- Can you list three feelings you had watching the show?
  - If you could ask the creators of any piece any question, what would you ask them?
- Were there rules you noticed during the performances that we didn’t mention?

## THE PILOBOLUS DICTIONARY

Here are some words you might hear at the performance and those that are part of the company’s toolbox when they make a dance:

**Collaboration** (noun): one of the foundations of the way in which Pilobolus works, by working together...in tightly knit groups/teamwork.

**Improvisation** (noun): often the manner in which Pilobolus creates a dance: by trying things out and/or inventing new movement; the art of creating something without advance preparation.

**Partnering** or **Weight Sharing** (verbs): in Pilobolus, the physical process of connecting one or more dancers together by taking and receiving weight. In doing this, new shapes are created which may or may not move as a single unit.

**Pilobolize/Pilobolizing**: (verb): to make something the way Pilobolus would.

**Pilobolean** (adj.): to act or be like a Pilobolus dancer/company member.

**Piloboli** (noun): more than one Pilobolus dancer/company member.

## What's in a Name?

*Where did the name PILOBOLUS come from?*



*Fabulous Youtube of the (poo loving) fungus in action:*

<https://youtu.be/T8OAmcUnm4g>

If you read the story about how PILOBOLUS came to be, you might recall the group of “dancers” from Dartmouth. One of those dancers had a father who was a biologist, studying Pilobolus the fungus in his lab. The first dance they made was inspired by the incredible physical nature of the fungus a mushroom, found in barnyards and pastures. “It’s a feisty little thing—only ¼ inch tall, the length of your fingernail—and can throw its spores nearly 6 feet!”

The image of a spore shooting itself through the air was the perfect metaphor for the style dance they were creating, and hence, the perfect name for their new dance.

Later, when they started touring as a dance company, they needed a name for their company, they decided it was a perfect name for their dance company.

## RULES TO PLAY WITH AT HOME

### Alphabet letters

Make the first letter of your name using only bodies. Then make an animal or object that begins with the same letter. Take a picture and send it to [info@pilobolus.org](mailto:info@pilobolus.org)/  
[info@joyce.org](mailto:info@joyce.org)



### Do Something Impossible

*All Is Not Lost* uses a camera taking video from a strange angle. It looks up at the dancers. Even though the dancers are sometimes lying down, they look like they are standing straight. Can you take a picture with the camera looking down so it looks like you are doing something impossible?



### What's Your Rule?

We have a Rule for you! We want to hear what you thought about our show today. But you can only use 6 words to say it. Please send your responses to [info@pilobolus.org](mailto:info@pilobolus.org)/  
[info@joyce.org](mailto:info@joyce.org)



## Pilobolus and Music

In Katherine Teck's "Ear Training for the Body," she addresses the connection between music and dance; it can help establish where you are, how to move, what the story or theme is, even bring unity to the piece.

The work of Pilobolus is no different. More often than not, the company seldom completes a dance without the added element of music, or sound. Though there are occasions where the absence of sound or music helps tell a "different story."

The process of adding that aural element can happen in several ways: a work can be choreographed in the studio without music or sound; or, existing music (or pieces from a variety of compositions), that has the "feel" the choreographers need to express their idea, is

used. Another way is when a composer observes and participates in the creation of the work as it develops. When this occurs, an original score evolves from the “back and forth” or “give and take” relationship between choreographers, musician(s), and dancers. This collaboration is yet one more example of how important the collaborative process is to PILOBOLUS.

As you watch, and listen to our show, consider how the music or sound, or perhaps its absence, connects to each piece. How important is the music or sound to the dancers’ movement? Is it another part of the story or helping illuminate where the story takes place?

It’s up to you to decide, because as the audience member, what you see and how it makes you feel, is an important part of experiencing dance, and the amazing PILOBOLUS.

## FUN FACTS ABOUT PILOBOLUS

Pilobolus shares its name with a fungus that grows in pastures on cow manure.

Pilobolus was founded by four guys without any dance experience.

P I L  
O B O  
L U S

Pilobolus is 42 years old. (That means it started in 1971.)

Pilobolus makes art in groups.

### Dance is Timeless

PILOBOLUS came to be in 1970. In today’s performance of RULES @ PLAY, you will see two pieces that were first performed before an audience more than 40 years ago. That may seem like a very long time ago, but for dance, it’s barely an eye-blink.

Just as in literature, take Shakespeare for example, where themes transcend centuries, the life of a piece of choreography continues to speak in a language that knows no time limit. So, let’s take a look back at how dance evolved.

Centuries ago, in Europe, only the men danced, in fact, women weren’t even allowed onstage; in early theatre, women’s roles were played by young boys or men. And just as today’s dancers

use movement to tell a story, those early dances would be most likely to be about myths or war.

**Ballet**, as we now know it, originated in the 1400s and was used as entertainment for Italian and French royalty. That is why all the names for the various ballet positions are in either French or Italian. In ballet, the body is held mostly upright, with the legs turned out from the hip.

In the early **1700s**, dancing for both males and females became popular. Female dancers, or **ballerinas**, began wearing short skirts, or **tutus**, so that audience members could see their legs and appreciate and understand the new dance techniques being developed. During the **1800s**, most ballets told a story from beginning to end; famous examples include the Christmas holiday ballet, **The Nutcracker**, or **Swan Lake**, which is based on a fairy tale.

Then in the 1900s, dance began to change. Dancers removed their shoes; they performed in clothes normally reserved for rehearsal; and the way in which their bodies moved, changed. Dancers felt free to show off their athleticism in new and different ways along with their individual personalities and range of emotions.

This was the beginning of **modern dance**. Certainly, an interesting journey dating back centuries when **only men danced**, and fast forwarding to 1970 when four men came together, and in turn, PILOBOLUS was born.

