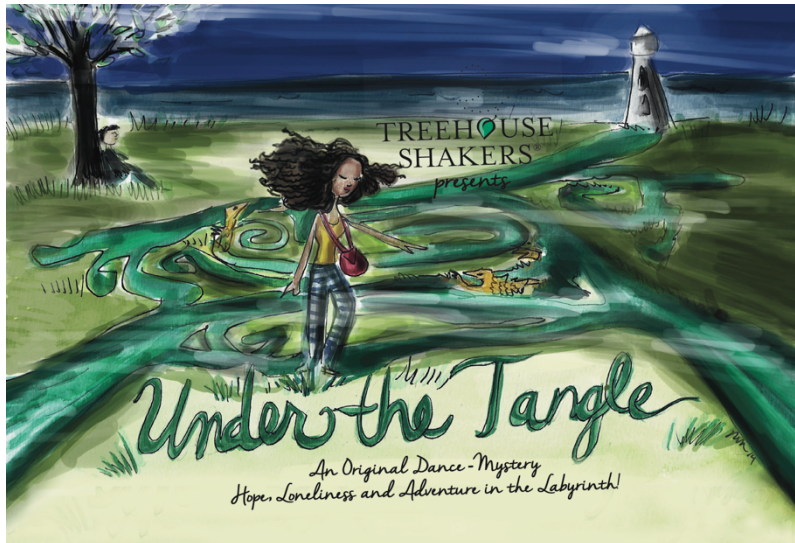


TREEHOUSE
SHAKERS®



Artwork by Rebecca Miller

UNDER THE TANGLE

Conceived and Choreographed by Emily Bunning

Costumes by Patti Gilstrap

Set by Ioannis Sochorakis

Original Lighting by Dan Ozminkowski

Original Sound Score by Martyn Axe

Created in Collaboration with the Original Performers: Ashley Chavonne, Trey Coates-Mitchell, Ashley Ervin, Katie Montoya, and Miranda Wilson

For Ages 8 +

Running Time: 55 minutes

Visually Vibrant, **Under the Tangle**, is the dance-mystery about an adolescent girl who becomes ensnarled in an intriguing labyrinth. Throughout her journey, she twists along the maze being confronted with obstacles, finding numerous clues revealing life lessons and meeting many unusual characters: a flock of birds, the daunting labyrinth guards, and the Queen of the Lost perched upon a grim tower. As a metaphor for adolescence, this visual and artistic adventure is filled with emotions of loneliness, otherness, hope, and accomplishment. It is this journey of obstacles, relationships, and discoveries, which strengthen the young girl's character, and eventually set her free from the labyrinth.

STUDY GUIDE

SYNOPSIS:

Please do not share the synopsis with your students before the performance. The synopsis should only be used as a framework for a discussion after the performance.

Under the Tangle is the vibrant dance-mystery about an adolescent girl ensnarled in a labyrinth looking for answers after the loss of her parents sets her off on an adventure.



The show begins with a short introduction to the family, when a fire is suddenly heard in the distance. The parents are pulled away from the girl, but before they go, they share a movement message with her. The girl does not quite understand what her parents are trying to communicate. Her feelings of loss and sadness send her running until she arrives in an unknown land with a mysterious labyrinth.



After drifting off to sleep, she meets a young bird-boy, and together they decide to enter the labyrinth in search of her parents' clue.



She is confronted by a living map.



Gets a purse from the laughing girls to hold her lessons.



Fights off
two
labyrinth
guards.



Is scared by and then befriended
by a flock of birds. Along the
way, she learns stillness, to be
clever, perspective, friendship,
and the power of aloneness.



Finally they reach
the water which is
the clue her
parents were
telling her about.



After the girl finds the water, she notices a towering lighthouse with the Queen of the Lost perched on top. The Queen of the Lost becomes a powerful reminder of the young girl's mom, who has been guiding her since the beginning of the journey. She bids farewell to the bird-boy and attempts to scale the tower, meeting more challenges, until she is face to face with the mysterious Queen. Ultimately, the Queen was teaching her life lessons to prepare her for her real journey out to sea.



Her parents' lost
boat is waiting to
take her towards
her future life.

Under the Tangle is a visual journey for the audience. We want them to be engrossed in the dance, to be a champion for the main character, and to be intrigued with the unusual characters she meets along her journey. There are many lessons to be learned.

“In today's information age, where we can look up an answer on the Internet and have it immediately, there isn't any room for the new generation to practice living in the unknown. UNDER THE TANGLE is a beautifully expressed and novel artistic gift for the students. By watching and seeing visual dance patterns reveal a moving story, they had the very unusual experience of trusting exactly where they are and what they know to get them to the end of the story where everything came together effortlessly.”

-Rashmi Singh, Audience Member, Private Language Teacher

CURRICULUM CONNECTORS

1. Arts Appreciation

a. Making Connections

By investigating historical, social and cultural contexts, and by exploring common themes and principles connecting dance with other disciplines, students enrich their creative work and understand the significance of dance in the evolution of human thought and expression.

- **Under the Tangle** incorporates dance, theater, music, and storytelling.

b. Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Students will respond critically to works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

- **Under the Tangle** is a visually exciting performance as well as imaginative and thought provoking.

2. Social Studies

a. Connecting Self with family, community, and environment

- What is the emotional Journey of the character? By watching **Under the Tangle**, students are given an opportunity to see how a young girl uses her friend and the environment to find her way through the maze of challenges. They see difficult situations of loss, loneliness, and otherness on stage and then can process these feelings with the characters. This performance teaches empathy, solace, solutions, and empathy through kinesthetic connections.

3. Greek Mythology

- a. Read or Tell the Greek Story of the Minotaur. In Greek mythology, the **Labyrinth** was an elaborate structure designed and built by the legendary architect Daedalus for King Minos of Crete at Knossos. Its function was to hold the Minotaur, a mythical creature that was half man and half bull and was eventually killed by the Athenian hero Theseus. Theseus was aided by

Ariadne, who provided him with a skein of thread, literally the "clew" or "clue", so he could find his way out again.

- In **Under the Tangle** the girl is guided and challenged by the three labyrinth dancers who use long sleeves, the set panels, and movement to provide clues as to the way out of the labyrinth. The boy is half-boy, half bird giving him mythical characteristic that leads to his transformation.
- In **Under the Tangle** our heroine follows her own journey, which doesn't involve a terrifying Minotaur, but does have some comparable themes to the aforementioned Myth. Encourage students to draw/write the heroine's journey while contemplating the thematic references to the story of *Theseus and the Minotaur*.

4. Visual Literacy

- a. Visual literacy is the ability to interpret, negotiate, and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image, extending the meaning of literacy, which commonly signifies interpretation of a written or printed text.
 - The story of **Under the Tangle** is told with very little dialog and uses dance and gesture as a form of communication and story.

5. Elements of Nature

- a. Elements are the fundamental powers of nature and are considered the simplest principals for which everything is a based. Many ancient cultures used the elements as a guide for healing and balancing life.
 - Fire, Wind, Earth, and Water are all represented in **Under the Tangle**.

BEFORE SEEING THE PERFORMANCE

1. Explore Labyrinths and Their Meaning

A labyrinth is a single path or a unicursal tool for personal, psychological and spiritual transformation. Labyrinths are thought to enhance right brain activity. <http://www.labyrinthsociety.org>. In colloquial English, *labyrinth* is generally synonymous with *maze*, but many contemporary scholars observe a distinction between the two: *maze* refers to a complex branching (multicursal) puzzle with choices of path and direction; while a single-path (unicursal) *labyrinth* has only a single, non-branching path, which leads to the center. A labyrinth, in this sense, has an unambiguous route to the center and back and is not designed to be difficult to navigate. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labyrinth>.

- The performance uses them synonymously.
2. Learn the History of Modern Dance. Modern Dance began in the early 1900's as a rebellion to the strict rules of ballet. Discuss or watch modern dance. You could

watch famous Modern dancers: Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Twyla Tharp, Alvin Ailey, and Merce Cunningham. Discuss other forms of dance including: ballet, jazz, tap, hip-hop, social dance, and clogging.

- **Under the Tangle** uses modern dance as a way for the body to express ideas, emotions, and story. Introduce Modern Dance to your students. Modern dance is the combination and freedom of creativity/inventiveness, rhythm (reoccurring sound or action), and movement, including energy, shape, space, and locomotion. It is often practiced with bare feet so the dancer has a full range of foot movement and can be grounded to the floor.

The labyrinth of loneliness is a universal experience, in one form or other, for all young people. In 'Under the Tangle,' the turmoil of being lost and alone is enacted kinesthetically before the audience's eyes; it is grappled with, danced through, and eventually overcome. Loneliness is no longer a frightening frontier; instead, through the arc of this tale, it becomes an archetypal journey filled with creative potential. In this poignant dance-play, we watch as the heroine moves from being lost and 'tangled' into a realm in which she learns to fashion her own path, construct new worlds, and realize, gradually, an authentic and empowered sense of Self. The audience benefits vicariously; we recognize ourselves in this odyssey, and know that we, too, may be stuck for a time in the mud and mire of Loneliness's stoic grip. Children, in particular, know this affective domain of unwanted isolation only too well. Like the best of children's literature, 'Under the Tangle' depicts beautifully how a young adventurer is capable of mapping out his or her own inventive routes (and roots!) through the darkest of emotional underworlds. The body, voice, and imagination are valuable tools and compasses. By employing these instruments alone - and eventually with others - a road to a higher, more creative ground is achieved one step and leap at a time.

--- Julia M. Morris, Ph.D.

Author, "Childhood Loneliness: The Creative Construction of Self and World Inside Story and Beyond" (dissertation, Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2014)

AFTER SEEING THE PERFORMANCE

1. After seeing **Under the Tangle** discuss the performance with your class.
What specific items does the girl collect in her red bag to represent these themes?

The queen encourages **stillness** to escape the moving labyrinth=panel with vine
The labyrinth guards (ninjas) require her to be **clever** to avoid their attack=mask
The **light** gives her direction and knowledge=lantern
The birds teach **perspective**, to look at the labyrinth from a new angle=goggles
The water is always **changing** and **flowing**=boat

2. Themes for classroom discussion from **Under the Tangle**.
 - a. **Loneliness**
Loneliness often plays a central role within children's literature, world folklore and oral storytelling, especially when children are the main characters. From time to time all children feel a sense of being the outcast, not belonging, or a sense of aloneness.
 - **Loneliness** is a strong theme within the piece. How was loneliness explored during **Under the Tangle**?

The girl is alone after the death of her parents and at times in the labyrinth. The bird-boy is alone and excited to interact with and be accepted by the girl.

- Are there times in your own life you have felt similarly? Compare this loneliness to another book or movie you have read or seen.
- There are many books and stories that are rich with literature that have an orphaned child character as the main character, who goes onto explore a fantasyland.
- What are some books or stories, other than **Under the Tangle**, you have read that reflect on this? Here are a few of Treehouse Shakers' favorites and recommendations:

Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rowling

Hazel and Bly the Deep Blue Sea by Ashley Herring Blake

The Bad Beginning by Lemony Snicket

Hurricane Child by Kacen Callender

James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl

Blackhope Enigma by Teresa Flavin

The Forest in the Hallway by Gordon Smith

The Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster

The Whispers by Greg Howard

The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupery

b. **Stillness**

Stillness can often times help us find clarity to a problem.

- Are there ways **Under the Tangle** that the themes of stillness were expressed?
- What do you do to find stillness?
- What helps you to solve problems?

Labyrinths are often used as a place of meditation.

- Discuss how meditation can be a useful way to understand a problem.

c. **Perspective**

Perspective often provides a new way of looking at something.

- Describe all the meanings of perspective?
- Which of these relates to **Under the Tangle** and why?
- Does the main character find different perspectives that help her untangle her path?
- How was dance used to tell the story of **Under the Tangle**?
- Did you understand how the labyrinth was portrayed in the piece?

By using the sleeves, the vines, and the fabric panels which at the end are removed to reveal her path to go forward on the boat in life.

ACTIVITES:

1. Stories can be told through words, theater, music, puppetry, and art. The ways to tell a story are endless. **Under the Tangle** was told primarily through modern dance. Have the students work together as choreographers to make a short piece (it can have a storyline or not.) Then have your students share their choreography with the other groups.

Terminology for Dance:

Choreographer is the person who makes dances.

Choreography is use of shape, space, locomotion, rhythm and dynamics to create dance.

Divide into groups with 4 students each. Each student then chooses a shape with their body, a path in space, and a way to travel on that path. Then the students share what they created and discuss how to put it all together. They may decide to learn each of the dances and dance it together in a sequence, or do one at a time, or do a combination of both. Another possibility; everyone travels to the center of the room from the sides of the room with their own movement and then combines their individual movements.

2. Have the students draw an intricate pattern. Then have them walk it in the room. Next have students create a character that walks the pattern, transform into a new character and walk back to the beginning.

For example: Walk like something is bothering you, when you reach the end, think of how it may be fixed and walk back as if it is solved.

3. Write a Shape Poem using a maze or labyrinth. Create a dance to express these poems. A Shape Poem is a type of poetry that describes an object and is shaped the same as the object the poem is describing.
(<https://www.youngwriters.co.uk/types-shape-poem>)
4. Share these labyrinth puzzles (below) with your students.

ABOUT TREEHOUSE SHAKERS

Treehouse Shakers, Inc., a non-profit dance and theater company, was founded in 1997. Treehouse Shakers has created and performed eighteen original dance-plays for young audiences and adults in many established performance venues, including theaters, festivals and schools across the nation. Most recently the company was awarded the Tides Center's Creatives Rebuild New York grant, which has allowed us to expand our Branching OUT programming focused on LGBTQIA+ youth. In 2019, we were awarded a commission from Performing Arts Center at SUNY Purchase under the leadership of Executive Director, Seth Soloway. We also have received the CUNY Dance Initiative, Flushing Town Hall 2015-2018 Space Grant, selected artists for the New York State Presenters Network Roster, and were chosen to participate in the prestigious BAM Professional Development Program in association with the DeVos Institute of Arts Management for the 2014-2015 cycle. Treehouse Shakers created and performed the dance programming for the Television show, **Alex & The Kaleidoscope**, which won an Emmy. In partnership with UOutlook and Star America Preschools, we began leading drama camps in Shanghai and Beijing, China and surrounding provinces in 2019.

Treehouse Shakers' original performances for young audiences currently include: **Hatched**, for ages 0-6, is about baby animals and their life on the farm. **Olive & Pearl**, for ages 2-5, follows the story of a young girl Olive and her grandmother. The company premiered **Flutter: A Discovery Play about the Seasons** for babies in 2021. **The Boy Who Grew Flowers** for ages 6-10 is about diversity, empathy and celebrating individualism. The dance-mystery, **Under the Tangle**, is about a young girl who becomes trapped in an enchanted labyrinth, for ages 8 and up. **Let's Talk About IT!**, for teens, incorporates dance, world folklore, and video interviews of teens. **The Littlest Cove** is premiering in 2023 for ages 2-6. Treehouse Shakers' new initiative, **Branching OUT**, focuses on LGBTQIA+ teens with after-school classes and a new play in development, **The Deepest Breath. Pillow Fort** is our 9-part web series for ages 3-7. We have also recently created **Dance Break**, a virtual series for classrooms to get students up and moving! All of our performance work is also available On Demand.

Since 2004 Treehouse Shakers has dedicated itself in providing free and low-income tickets and residencies to underserved, low-income and differently abled communities. We offer Title One schools tickets to the performances, and have created strong relationships with organizations across NYC to reach these disadvantaged communities. Treehouse Shakers also offers **Relaxed Performances in our New York City Seasons**. These performances are part of our commitment to making our work accessible to all. Relaxed Performances are designed to welcome audience members who will benefit from a less restrictive audience environment, including (but not limited to) those with sensory processing conditions, Autism, and learning or intellectual disabilities. Everyone is invited to these performances. Children with the tools of imagination are more likely to imagine themselves into a better set of circumstances as adults.

Treehouse Shakers
Under the Tangle
treehouseshakers.com

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**We would love to hear from you.
Send us your drawings from Under the Tangle or your activities.**

**We will post on our website and blog.
Thank you!**

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