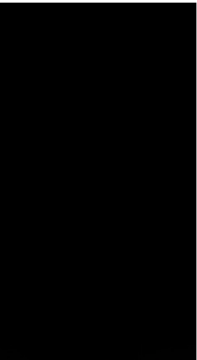




MOSS ARTS CENTER



kodo
warabe
study guide



study guide

**kodo
warabe**

School-Day Performance
Friday, February 28, 2025, 10-11 AM
Recommended for students in grades 6-12





table of contents

about the program	6
About Kodo	7
essential vocabulary	8
learning activities	10
language arts	10
The Rhythms of Language	10
science	11
The Beats of Biology	11
Taiko Tones	13
social studies	15
Echoes of Sado	15
physical education	16
Kodo Kickoff: Where Rhythm Meets Action	16
social emotional learning	17
Kodo Kinship	17
additional resources for teachers	19
what to know before you go	21



we want everyone to enjoy the show

Please prepare your students for their visit to the Moss Arts Center by practicing audience etiquette before you attend a live performance. The following guidelines will ensure that everyone can enjoy the show:

- Arrive early to find your seat and settle in before the show begins! This is for the safety of the students and artists, as the lights go down promptly at show time. If you happen to arrive after the performance has started, the ushers will assist you in finding a suitable time to be seated without disrupting the experience for others.
- For the enjoyment of all, please turn off any devices that may create light or sound during the performance.
- While we love capturing memories, please note that photography, audio, or video recording are not permitted in the theatre.
- Food, gum, and beverages are not allowed inside the theatre.
- Buckle up! Keep all feet on the ground and hands, legs, and bodies in the seats at all times so everyone has a great view of the stage.
- Many performers enjoy engaging with the audience and may invite you to clap, sing along, or even dance in your seat! Feel free to join in and have fun, but save conversations with classmates for the journey back to school to maintain the magic for everyone.

about the program



Exploring the limitless possibilities of the traditional Japanese *taiko* drum, Kodo entralls audiences with its athleticism and energy. Known worldwide as the “grandfather group” of *kodo* drumming, the ensemble transcends the boundaries of traditional musical experiences, where ancient rhythms meet dynamic contemporary expression.

The performance typically begins with a single, powerful strike on the drum. Other drummers join in, creating a layered and immersive sonic landscape. The physicality of the performance is as captivating as the sound — Kodo’s drummers move with a combination of strength and grace, navigating intricate choreography. Alongside folk dances and songs from regional Japan, experience the soul-stirring rhythm of life firsthand.

about kodo

Kodo is the world's master *taiko* drumming ensemble. The group first formed in 1981 by men who moved to Sado Island in the Sea of Japan in order to devote themselves to the study of *taiko*, the traditional Japanese drum. They dreamed of creating a school for the traditional Japanese performing arts and crafts to share the sound not only with the next generation, but the entire world. Since then, Kodo has become known and regarded as the world's foremost *taiko* ensemble. Since the group's debut at the Berlin Festival in 1981, Kodo has given over 6,500 performances on all five continents, spending about a third of the year overseas, a third touring in Japan, and a third rehearsing and preparing new material on Sado Island. Beyond this, members on tours and research trips all over the globe have brought back to Sado a kaleidoscope of world music and experiences that now exert a strong influence on the group's performances and compositions. Collaborations with other artists and composers extend across the musical spectrum, and Kodo's eagerness to play with abandon of preconceived structure continues to produce startling new fusion and forms.

The name Kodo comes from the kanji characters "child" and "drum," reflecting Kodo's desire to play the drums with the simple heart of a child. However, it can also be translated as "heartbeat," the primal source of all rhythm. For its 40th anniversary in 2021, the ensemble created two works based on its name: *Tsuzumi* takes its name and theme from the drum character and *Warabe* from the child element.

Tsuzumi was Kodo's touring production in 2023 across North America, and *Warabe* is the continuing production highlighted in Moss Arts Center's 2024-2025 season. In *Warabe* Kodo looks to its classic repertoire and aesthetics from the ensemble's early days. This production blends simple forms of *taiko* expression that celebrate the unique sound, resonance, and physicality synonymous with Kodo — forever children of the drum at heart.

essential vocabulary



Bachi (bah-chee): The sticks used to play *taiko* drums. Large drums are played with large *bachi* and small drums are played with small *bachi*. They are often made from dense wood such as oak.

Emperor: The supreme ruler of an empire. For much of Japan's history, the country was ruled by emperors. Today, it is the only country still governed by an emperor, although Japan's modern emperors have served as more of a figurehead than a political power.

Etymology: The study of the origin of a word and how its meaning can change through history.

Japan: The string of islands east of Asia extending 1,300 miles between the Sea of Japan and the western Pacific Ocean. More than 127 million people currently live in Japan.

Kanji (kaan-jee): A system of writing that uses Chinese-based pictorial characters. The *kanji* symbols for *Kodo* (鼓童) mean "child" and "drum."

Myth: A traditional or ancient story that was told to answer serious questions about how important things began or occurred. The myth *Amaterasu and the Cave* explains how *taiko* was created.

O-daiko (oh-dye-koh): The largest of the *taiko* drums. It means "big fat drum." *O-daiko* can reach huge proportions. It is made of a hollowed tree trunk, over which a cow hide is stretched and tacked.

essential vocabulary, cont.

Percussion: Musical instruments played by striking (typically with your hand, but also with sticks or mallets); percussion instruments include drums, cymbals, xylophones, gongs, bells, and rattles.

Pitch: The quality of a sound governed by the speed of vibrations producing it; the degree of highness or lowness of a tone.

Repertoire: A stock of plays, dances, or music that a group performs. Kodo's repertoire consists primarily of pieces based on the traditional rhythms of Japan mixed with other musical stylings, such as rock, jazz, and other traditional cultural music from around the world.

Rhythm: The recurrence of a pattern of contrasting sounds. For example, the sounds Kodo drummers play on the drums create rhythm!

Taiko: In Japanese, it literally means "great drum." Outside of Japan, the word often refers to various types of Japanese drums and the ensemble of *taiko* drummers (which are also referred to as *kumidaiko*).

Tempo: How fast or slow a song can go. Tempo is often measured in beats per minute (bpm).

Solo: A performance by just one performer. Kodo often features soloists.

Unison: The same movement or series of movements performed at the same time by more than one performer. Much of Kodo's performance features drumming and movement that is done in unison.

Volume: The degree of loudness or the intensity of a sound.



learning activities

language arts

Rhythms of Language

The name Kodo comes from the *kanji* characters “child” and “drum,” reflecting Kodo’s desire to play the drums with the simple heart of a child. However, it can also be translated as “heartbeat,” the primal source of all rhythm. Just like the name Kodo, language can convey different meanings, and translation can often affect how we understand.

Ask students to brainstorm words or phrases in English that have multiple meanings or are difficult to translate into other languages. After creating a list, assign students to small groups and provide each group with specific vocabulary related to Kodo, such as heartbeat, drum, child, rhythm, and celebration. Each group will research the etymology and different meanings of their assigned words, both in English and, if possible, in other languages (e.g., Japanese, Spanish, etc.).

Encourage groups to explore how their words relate to Kodo’s philosophy of playing with the heart of a child. How do these meanings resonate with cultural expressions in different contexts? Facilitate a discussion on what students learned about language, translation, and the cultural implications of Kodo’s philosophy. Discuss how understanding the nuances of language enhances appreciation for different cultures and artistic expressions.

Optional Extension:

After their research, each group will write a creative piece (poem, short story, or personal narrative) that incorporates their assigned words. They should consider how to express the dual meanings and cultural significance within their writing. Encourage them to use vivid imagery and sensory details related to drumming, music, and childhood experiences, in the style of Kodo. Once their creative pieces are complete, each group will translate their key words into another language, discussing how the meanings might change. If possible, students can use online translation tools or consult bilingual classmates.

▶ **VIRGINIA LANGUAGE ARTS SOLS:** 6.1, 6.3, 7.1, 7.4, 8.1

▶ **VIRGINIA WRITING SOLS:** 6.5, 7.5, 8.5

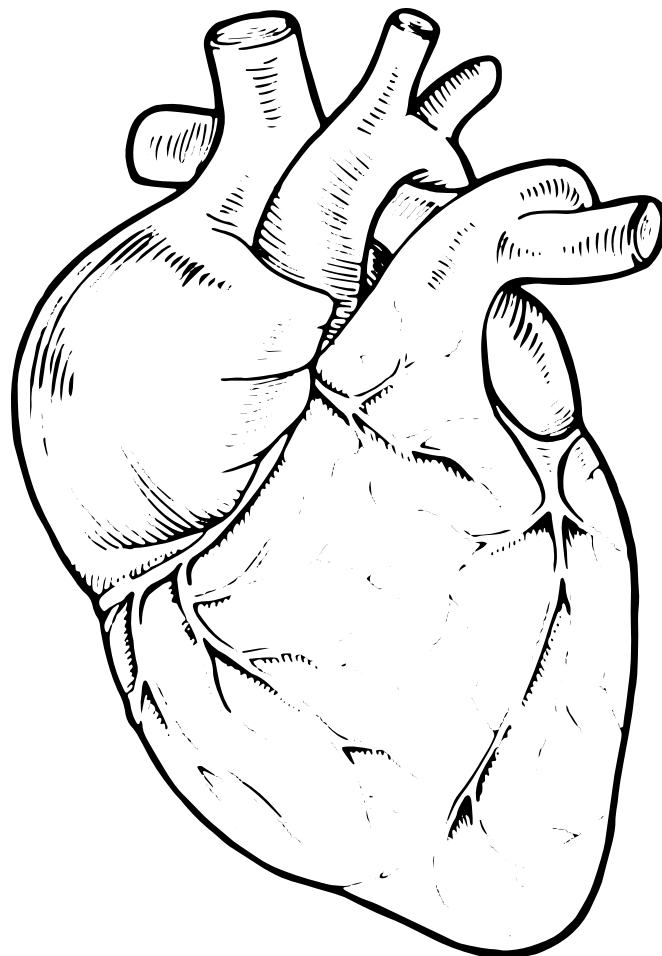
learning activities, cont.

science

The Beats of Biology

After the performance, review with students not only the significance of the heart within the context of Kodo's name, but also the stamina and heart health it takes to put on such a show of musical endurance. Engage students in a discussion about the importance of the heart and a healthy circulatory system. Ask students what they know about heart function and its role in overall health, introducing key anatomical terms (e.g., atria, ventricles, valves, arteries, veins, etc.) and their functions.

Provide students with a blank diagram of the heart and have them label the parts as you discuss them. Use color coding for different parts (e.g., blue for deoxygenated blood pathways, red for oxygenated pathways, etc.). After labeling, explain to students they can always begin to measure their own heart health by manually checking their pulse on their wrist or their neck. Discuss the normal resting heart rate range (60-100 beats per minute, or bpm) and factors that can affect heart rate (e.g., age, fitness level, emotional state, etc.).



learning activities, cont.

Encourage students to measure their resting heart rate and record it. After brief exercise (e.g., jumping jacks or running in place for one minute), have students measure their heart rates again and record the post-exercise values. Then, calculate the difference between individual and class resting and post-exercise heart rates.

Play different pieces of music (including Kodo's drumming) and ask students to listen for the beat. Introduce the concept of tempo and have students use a metronome app or the simple tap method to find the beats in each piece of music. Additionally, the students could count the bpm and compare that to their heart rates, graphing which student's heart rates best match the bpm of specific pieces of music.

Discuss how different heart rates are comparable to different tempos (i.e. faster heartbeats are often after exciting activity; faster tempos are often with exciting and grand songs). Ask students how understanding the heartbeat can enhance their appreciation of music, especially the philosophy behind Kodo. Encourage students to think about how rhythm is a vital part of both music and biological function.

Optional Extensions:

- Explore concepts like recovery time and how quickly the heart returns to resting rates.
- Ask students to research the impact of different music genres on heart rate and mood, creating a report or presentation on their findings.

learning activities, cont.

Taiko Tones

What is sound? How is it produced and how does it travel? Kodo is no stranger to utilizing scientific concepts such as vibration, frequency, amplitude, and pitch to their advantage. Group members know that different sizes, shapes, and tensions on instruments produce different sounds. For example, the components of a *taiko* drum (e.g., head, body, shell material, etc.) all affect sound production.

- **Nagado-daiko:** The long-bodied *taiko* is the most popular drum. Its sound is deep and reverberant. This drum can be placed on various stands for different styles of playing.
- **O-daiko:** The largest drum is the *O-daiko* (Kodo's *O-daiko* drum is over 800 pounds!). It is made of a hollowed tree trunk, over which a cow hide is stretched and tacked. These drums can take years to build and complete.
- **O-kedo:** Believed to be the oldest *taiko* drum, the body of the *o-kedo* (oh-keh-doh) is made from staves or planks rather than a solid piece of wood.
- **Shime-daiko:** The *shime-daiko* (shee-me-dye-koh) are similar to the *o-deko*, however, they are much smaller with a high, sharp sound.
- **Uchiwa:** This handheld drum is shaped like a paddle or fan. In fact, *uchiwa* (oo-chee-wa) means "fan."



learning activities, cont.

Divide students into small groups and give them materials to create their own mini drums. Suggested materials include paper cups or plastic containers (for drum bodies), balloons or plastic wrap (for drumheads), and tape, rubber bands, or string (for securing drumheads). Instruct students to experiment with different sizes and materials to observe how these affect the sound.

Introduce students to sound measurement tools such as tuning forks or smartphone apps that can measure sound frequency and amplitude. Have each group strike their drums and use these tools to measure the frequency/pitch of the sound produced. Groups can play their drums and compare the sound produced by different drum designs using the provided organizer.

After exploring sound, facilitate a discussion on what students learned about sound, vibrations, and the construction of their drums. If time allows, prompt students to reflect through writing on the science of sound and what they found most interesting.

TOPICS	HYPOTHESIS	OBSERVATION
Pitch		
Volume		
Quality of Sound		

► VIRGINIA SCIENCE SOLS: 6.2, 6.3, PH.1, PH.4, PH.5

learning activities, cont.

social studies

Echoes of Sado

Following the performance, reference the About Kodo section of the study guide (page 7) in order to explain the group's connection to the Sado Islands. Highlight key aspects of their traditional instruments and the cultural significance that entails.

Divide students into small groups, assigning each group a specific element related to Kodo (e.g., *taiko* drums, traditional garments, the significance of rhythm in Japanese culture, etc.). Provide students with resources such as videos, articles, and websites to gather information about their assigned element, including its history, usage, and cultural importance.

After researching, explain to students they must now make a replica or representation of their researched topic (e.g. the group that researched *taiko* drumming may choose to build a replica of a mini *taiko* drum, the group that researched traditional clothing may choose to design traditional garments, etc.). Encourage creativity in your students! They are free to incorporate different materials or techniques that reflect the original element's significance.

In the last few minutes of their design time, students will write on a notecard information for their artifact, including:

- Name of the artifact/element
- Cultural significance
- Brief description of how they made the replica

Arrange the classroom to create a gallery space. Each group will set up their artifacts and display their labels. Students are free to circulate around the gallery, examining each artifact and reading the labels. Encourage students to ask questions and engage in discussions about the elements of Kodo they find interesting. After the walk, gather students for a debriefing session, discussing what they learned about Kodo and its cultural significance.

► **VIRGINIA SOCIAL STUDIES SOLS:** 6.1, 6.4, 7.1, WHII.1, WHII.7, CIVICS.1, VUS.1

learning activities, cont.

physical education

Kodo Kickoff: Where Rhythm Meets Movement

Involve students in a dynamic warm-up involving stretches and movements that mimic drumming (e.g., arm circles, foot stomps, etc.). Incorporate rhythmic clapping to introduce the concept of heartbeat.

Provide a brief overview of Kodo, its meanings, and its cultural significance (found in the About Kodo section, page 7). Ask students to recall and demonstrate some of the movements, physicality, and energy levels from the performance. From this brief recall, work as a group to create a simple rhythmic pattern using body percussion (claps, stomps, snaps) involving movements the students demonstrated.

Ask students what would happen if we made these movements more childlike. How does a child move? Do they jump, spin, run, skip? Combine rhythmic patterns with these movements.

Split students into small groups to create a short sequence (one to two minutes) that incorporates their rhythmic patterns and movements, emphasizing the use of space, creativity, and expression.

After the small groups perform for each other, separate the small groups once more and have each student create individual movement to eight counts of music, which everyone in that small group must mirror. This continues around the circle until everyone has had a turn to be the leader.

Emphasize that just as Kodo drummers must support one another, we can uplift each other in our everyday interactions. Conclude the lesson with a powerful message about resilience and self-expression: "Like Kodo, let's embrace our inner child, celebrate our unique rhythms, and support each other as a community."

learning activities, cont.

social emotional learning

Kodo Kinship

Following the performance, begin your lesson by focusing on Kodo's emphasis of community, rhythm, and creativity. Share how Kodo drummers work together to create powerful performances that reflect both individual and group identities.

Divide students into small groups (four to six students each). Each group can create a team name based on their shared interests and values (this will encourage student discussion and discovery of what makes their specific small group unique). Upon creating their small group team name, students must come up with a motion/movement they can execute that pairs with their team name.

Provide paper and markers and ask each group to create a visual representation of their identity, incorporating keywords and images that symbolize their group's essence. Display the visuals around the classroom as a reminder of their collective creativity.

Instruct each group to create a short movement sequence (one to two minutes) that reflects their team identity, as they have already notated on paper. This could include rhythmic clapping, stomping, or other body percussion. Encourage groups to listen to each others' ideas and incorporate the elements that symbolize their shared interests or values. If time allows, students can also create a simple chant or sound to accompany their movement.

Have each group perform their creative movement and rhythm sequence for the class. Encourage supportive applause and positive feedback after each performance.

learning activities, cont.

After the small group performances, facilitate a discussion:

- What did you notice about the different expressions of identity?
- How did working together enhance your performance?

Conclude with a powerful message about the importance of community and creative expression: “Like Kodo, we can harness our unique identities to create something beautiful together. Every voice matters in the rhythm of our community.”

Optional Extension:

Work with administration to create a Kodo Day or a Multicultural Day event, where they can showcase their performances and visual art to the school community.

additional resources

Teacher Resources

[Kodo](#)

[Warabe Tour Promotional Video](#)

(Please note that at 17:29, the performer is wearing a traditional fundoshi loincloth garment.)

[Learn Taiko Basics](#)

Bibliography

[Taiko Drums](#)

[Kodo](#)

[Relationship Between Heartrate and Preference for Tempo of Music](#)

[Tradition: Sado Island Culture](#)

[Kodo and the Heartbeat of Drums](#)

[Taiko Center Online Shop](#)

[Map of Japan](#)



what to know before you go

Changing Your Reservation

If you cannot attend or your party turns out to be smaller than the number of tickets you have reserved, please inform the Moss Arts Center as soon as possible by contacting **Bethany Costello**, engagement manager, at bethanycostello@vt.edu so that Moss staff can release your tickets to those on the waiting list.

Accessibility

The Moss Arts Center is committed to being accessible to all of our patrons. Differently-abled, neurodivergent individuals and their companions are accommodated through wheelchair seating, parking, and other special requests throughout the center at all levels. Assistive listening and noise-canceling devices are available. Service animals are permitted. Sign interpretations and large-print programs are available with advance notification. Sensory free rooms and sensory aids are available upon request. If you or your students have questions regarding accessibility or would like assistance, please contact **Jamie Wiggert** at wiggertj@vt.edu.

Bus Parking

The bus drop-off location is on the Alumni Mall side of the Moss Arts Center, located at **190 Alumni Mall** on the Virginia Tech campus. Drivers may pull their buses into the driveway loop directly in front of the center. Staff and volunteers will be on site to assist (please look for an individual in a Moss Arts Center T-shirt). Recommended arrival time is 15-30 minutes before the start time of the performance.

Bus staging will be located in the upper section of the Chicken Hill lot (Football Lot 5) on the Virginia Tech campus. The lot entrance is on Southgate Drive, opposite Sterrett Drive. Parking passes will not be required for buses. For more information about parking at Virginia Tech, please visit parking.vt.edu. Please note that buses are not permitted to park adjacent to the Moss Arts Center's Turner Street entrance.

Please provide your bus driver with the Moss Arts Center field trip guide for easy parking directions. Hard copies will be available in the Grand Lobby.

what to know, cont.

Cars, Vans, and Personal Vehicle Parking

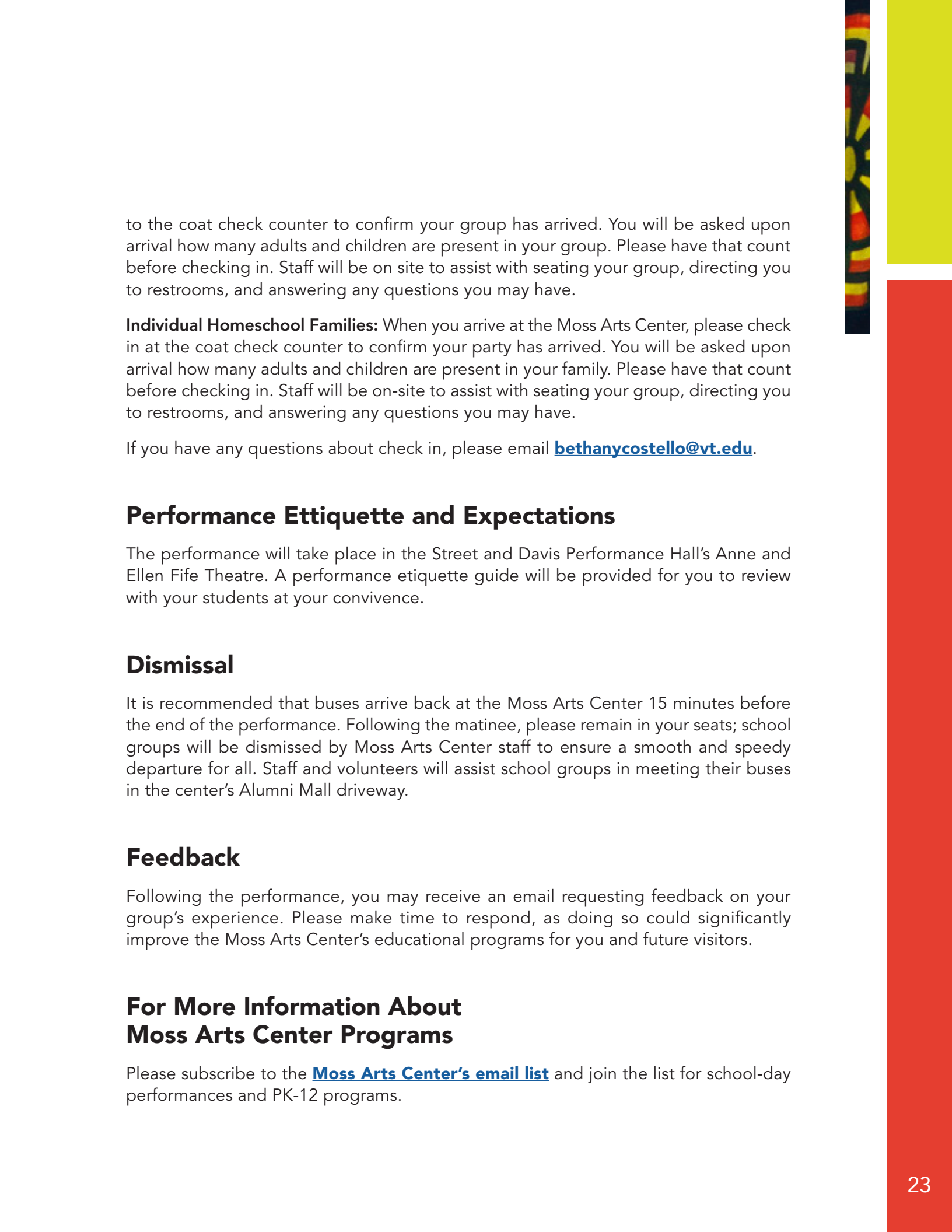
Those driving cars and vans may park in the North End Center Garage (**300 Turner Street NW**), which is one block from the Moss Arts Center's Turner Street entrance. A valid university parking permit, validation from one of the retail tenants, or payment of the daily fee is required to park in the North End Center Garage. Please allow adequate time for parking and walking to Moss Arts Center from your vehicle. Estimated time of walk from North End Center Garage to Moss Arts Center is seven minutes. An additional parking guide for personal vehicles is linked [here](#) for your convenience.

Checking In

Public School and/or Bus Groups: When you arrive at the Moss Arts Center, please check-in with Bethany Costello in the Grand Lobby to confirm that your party has arrived. You will be asked upon arrival how many adults and children are present in your group, as well as your bus number. Please have that count before checking in. Staff will be on site to assist with seating your group, directing you to restrooms, and answering any questions you may have.

Homeschool and/or Private Groups: Prior to arriving at Moss Arts Center, please discuss with your party where you want to meet before checking in. We recommend an easy spot like Upper Gallery, the lobby elevator, or the Grand Lobby sofa seating. When you arrive at the center, please head to your group's meeting spot and look for your group's sign being displayed by a fellow group member (similar to airplane pickup). Please do not check in at the coat check counter until all the members of your party have arrived. However, if you do not see your group's sign at your meeting location, you may proceed to the coat check counter to retrieve your group's sign and become your group's check-in representative. Once your full party has arrived, please proceed





to the coat check counter to confirm your group has arrived. You will be asked upon arrival how many adults and children are present in your group. Please have that count before checking in. Staff will be on site to assist with seating your group, directing you to restrooms, and answering any questions you may have.

Individual Homeschool Families: When you arrive at the Moss Arts Center, please check in at the coat check counter to confirm your party has arrived. You will be asked upon arrival how many adults and children are present in your family. Please have that count before checking in. Staff will be on-site to assist with seating your group, directing you to restrooms, and answering any questions you may have.

If you have any questions about check in, please email bethanycostello@vt.edu.

Performance Etiquette and Expectations

The performance will take place in the Street and Davis Performance Hall's Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre. A performance etiquette guide will be provided for you to review with your students at your convivence.

Dismissal

It is recommended that buses arrive back at the Moss Arts Center 15 minutes before the end of the performance. Following the matinee, please remain in your seats; school groups will be dismissed by Moss Arts Center staff to ensure a smooth and speedy departure for all. Staff and volunteers will assist school groups in meeting their buses in the center's Alumni Mall driveway.

Feedback

Following the performance, you may receive an email requesting feedback on your group's experience. Please make time to respond, as doing so could significantly improve the Moss Arts Center's educational programs for you and future visitors.

For More Information About Moss Arts Center Programs

Please subscribe to the [Moss Arts Center's email list](#) and join the list for school-day performances and PK-12 programs.