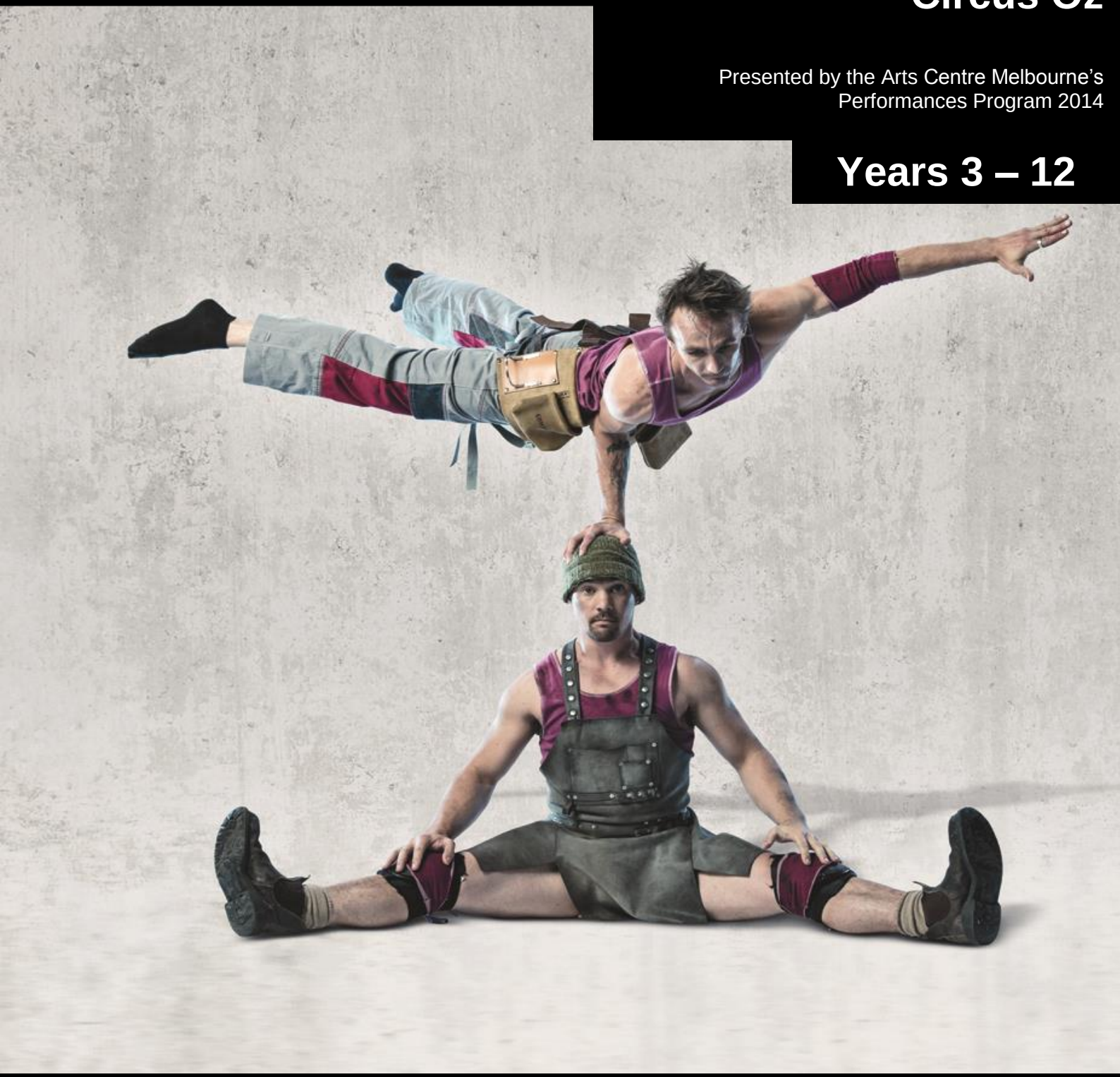
Arts Centre Melbourne

Teachers' Resources

Circus Oz

Presented by the Arts Centre Melbourne's Performances Program 2014

Years 3 – 12



ARTS VICTORIA

Victoria

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The Arts Centre Melbourne's Performances Program is dedicated to fostering the arts by giving schools the opportunity to see a diverse range of excellent theatre in fully produced form.

These teacher notes have been designed to complement the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

Activity suggestions are arranged according to theme and/or broad focus area. This arrangement is designed to serve educators as a useful guide toward drawing cross-curricular links across AusVELS domains and to complement whole school planning.

Themes will be addressed across learning strands via activities relating to domains of relevance that draw upon applicable knowledge, skills and behaviours (AusVELS dimensions).
Activity suggestions can be adapted by teachers to suit student levels

Teacher notes by Jack Migdalek.

NOTE: *Please remember to arrive 30 minutes before the starting time of the show.*

WARNING: *This performance may contain fire, smoke machines, haze and strobe lighting*

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ABOUT CIRCUS OZ

Founded in 1977, CIRCUS OZ are renowned for wild skills, daredevil attitude, and revitalizing a traditional artform in a uniquely Australian way. Circus Oz has delighted and amazed audiences in Melbourne and around the world with hilarious, irreverent and top-notch circus performances for over thirty years.

Artistic Credits
Artistic Director: Mike Finch
Artistic Associate: Antonella Casella
Touring Show Director: Deb Batton
Founding Member & Senior Circus Artist: Tim Coldwell
Set Designer: Felipe Reynolds
Guest Song Writer: Casey Benetto
Founding Member & Costume Designer: Laurel Frank
Indigenous Programs Manager: Joshua Bond
AND … thirteen mega-talented ensemble members

Production Credits
Production Manager: Margaret Murray
Assistant Production Manager: Andrew Dyson
Rigger: Beau Dudding
Lighting Designer: Paul Jackson
Lighting Operator: Tristan Bourke
Props Builder: Michael Baxter
Audio Engineer: Joe Ferguson

CIRCUS OZ acts will include some of the following skills:
- Juggling
- Unicycling
- Flying Trapeze
- Rou Cyr Rim (wheel apparatus)
- Acrobatics
- Tumbling
- Live Music

For details about the CIRCUS OZ team, CIRCUS OZ history, news, reviews, promotional video clips, archive video clips, and more visit the CIRCUS OZ website: www.circusoz.com

For some students, seeing CIRCUS OZ may be a first experience of live theatre. The following page can be used as a worksheet to promote discussion on what constitutes appropriate audience behaviour at a live performance.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Live theatre differs greatly from other medium such as film or television. For audiences, the experience of seeing a live performance differs to that of watching a pre-recorded one. For performers as well, working to a live audience is vastly different to performing in a studio to a camera.

What constitutes appropriate audience behaviour at a live theatre event?

Certain behaviour is expected of audiences at live theatre events. Please ensure that you observe the following;

- Arrive on time. Missing the start of a performance will diminish your enjoyment and/or understanding of the piece. It will also disrupt the show for others.
- Turn off any mobile phone, MP3 player or other electronic device. These are disruptive to the performance and distracting to audience members and performers.
- If necessary, visit the bathroom prior to the commencement of the performance. Going to the bathroom during the performance disrupts the show for yourself as well as others.
- A member of the front of house staff will usher you to your seats. Follow their directions.
- When the lights dim, it is a signal to quiet down.
- During the performance observe the following;

  No photography

  No talking

  No eating food

  Remain seated
- Applauding or cheering is the most appropriate way to acclaim the performance and performing artists. Ordinarily this occurs at the conclusion of performance items.

All of the above are to ensure that you and other audience members get the most out of the production and your visit to the theatre.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

THEME #1: THE HUMAN BODY

The focus of the following activities is on the physical demands and discipline of circus.

• CIRCUS WARM UP

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; PE*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Health knowledge and promotion; Movement and physical activity*

Where students have seen the performance, have students try to recall what each artist did throughout the show - e.g. performing specialty act/s, setting up props and apparatus, playing music, dancing, delivering dialogue, clowning, assisting other performers, spotting, etc.

Have students reflect on the types of movements executed by circus performers - e.g. jumps, leaps, rolls, lifts, falls, tumbles, stretches, etc. What sorts of muscle groups are involved in executing these? Is the same vocabulary of movement involved across all circus acts? Where students have seen CIRCUS OZ refer to demands made on the Circus Oz members. (Students can watch CIRCUS OZ LIVING ARCHIVE clips at http://www.circusoz.com/living-archive.html)

Consider the importance of warming up one's body prior to activity. What are the dangers for an inadequately warmed up body? Would a circus performer's warm-up be appropriate for other athletes? Vice versa?

Have students **design and create a warm-up appropriate to the types of movement and muscle groups involved in a circus performance**. Students can be given the option of creating their warm-ups to music. Have students teach their warm-ups to one another. Where students have seen CIRCUS OZ, assess if the warm-up would be appropriate to the demands made on CIRCUS OZ performers.

Alternatively: after discussing the importance of warming up to protect one's body, have students design and then **conduct warm-ups** for specific occupations or activities, eg. footballer, cleaner, golfer, tennis player, swimmer, bricklayer, gardener, etc.

• CIRCUS SKILLS

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; The Arts; PE*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Exploring and responding; Movement and physical activity*

Where resources or expertise are available, give students the opportunity to **take circus skills classes**. A useful reference is*' Circus in A Suitcase'* by Reg Bolton for basics on acrobatics, clowning, juggling, stilt walking, tightrope, trapeze and fire-eating.

THEME #2: CIRCUS HERITAGE

The focus of the following activities is on circus tradition and history

• CIRCUS RESEARCH

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; English, Humanities; ICT*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Historical knowledge and understanding; ICT for communicating*

Working individually or in small groups, have students **research an area of interest regarding circus**, eg. history of circus, circus in Australia, Circus Oz, Flying Fruit Fly Circus (Australia's only full time circus training institution for children), circus stars, circus design, circus troupes, circus schools, children in circus, animals in circus, etc.

Have students present findings in written, spoken or data show format. Allow time for Q & A

• ANIMALS IN CIRCUS

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; Civics and Citizenship; English; The Arts; ICT*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Civic knowledge and understanding; Speaking and listening; Writing; ICT for communicating*

Traditionally circuses have used animals in their shows. CIRCUS OZ do not.

Have students reflect on and **argue/debate how and why animals should/should not be used in the circus**. Should the use of animals in circus be a legal issue? If so, how should policy be made, and by whom?

Working individually or in small groups, have students **draft a formal policy document** in which students:

1) define animal abuse
2) argue where and how animals might be used in circus, theatre, film, television.
3) present strategies to protect animals at risk of abuse.

Policy could be presented in written, spoken or data-show format. Policies could be compared and amalgamated into a single document.

• CHILDREN IN CIRCUS

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; Civics and Citizenship; English; The Arts*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Civic knowledge and understanding; Speaking and listening; Writing; Creating and making*

Traditionally children of circus families have been raised to perform in circuses. Together with students, brainstorm positive and negative aspects to being a child of the circus. **Debate whether children should be in circus**. Have students consider how the social and physical well-being of child performers in circus, television, film, theatre should be protected. Research and evaluate ways in which Australian law protects children.

Information on the Child Employment Act can be accessed via:
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cea2003180

Findings and evaluation can be reported in forms of written, spoken, or theatrical presentation.

Circus Oz 2013: Cranked Up
(L-R): Kai Johnson-Peady, Flip Kammerer, Mason West
Photographer: Rob Blackburn

• FREAK SHOW

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; Civics and Citizenship; English, Humanities; The Arts*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Civic knowledge and understanding; Speaking and listening; Writing; Historical knowledge and understanding; Creating and making*

Traditionally circuses presented visually unusual individuals as freaks - e.g. giant man, fat lady, dwarves, midgets, bearded women, individuals missing limbs, individuals with extra limbs, etc.

Have students **consider why freak shows were mounted and why the general public may have been attracted to them**.

Have students discuss and consider how and why the number of freak shows have declined. In doing so, encourage students to research and think about social consciousness.

Findings can be presented through writing, oral or dramatic presentation.

The movie, *'The Elephant Man'* (Paramount 1980) highlights a disturbing human fascination for that which is different, and may be a useful resource for this topic.

Circus Oz 2013: *Cranked Up*
Shane Witt
Photographer: Rob Blackburn

THEME #3: CIRCUS AND CHANGE

The focus of the following activities is on changes that have occurred through developments in time, technology and social consciousness.

• CIRCUS PAST, CIRCUS PRESENT

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; English, Humanities; The Arts; Civics and Citizenship;*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Historical knowledge and understanding; Creating and making; Community engagement*

Have students **interview older persons about their memories of circus in Australia and other countries**. What was circus like in the past?

Have students compare this data to their own knowledge and/or experiences of circus, and present their findings of how circus has changed in recent times. In doing so encourage students to consider aspects of risk, safety, alternative circus, side-shows, freak-shows, circus children, animal acts.

Findings can be presented in written, spoken or theatrical form. Follow this up by having students conjecture on the future of circus.

• CIRCUS AND SOCIETY

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; English; Humanities; The Arts; ICT*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Historical knowledge and understanding; Creating and making; ICT for communicating*

Together with students brainstorm and discuss the impact that social and technological developments may have had on the circus - e.g. electricity, computer technology, electronics, amplification, mass media, fashion, morality, the law, social consciousness, etc.

Working individually or in small groups, **comment on the interrelationship between the arts and society**: What effect do changes in the Arts have on society? What effects do changes in society have on the Arts?

Students can present findings in written, spoken, theatrical or data-show presentation.

THEME #4: SHOW BUSINESS

The focus of the following activities is on circus as an industry and circus as a vocation.

• CIRCUS BUDGET PLANNING

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal learning; Civics and Citizenship; English; The Arts; ICT; Mathematics*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Civic knowledge and understanding; Speaking and listening; Writing; ICT for communicating; Working mathematically*

Together with students brainstorm a list of all the personnel whom they think are involved in the production and performance of a circus.

Have students work in small groups to create a report and **calculate a budget for the production of a circus season** to be staged at a chosen venue such as Birrarung Marr. Groups should decide how many performances to produce. Accordingly, they should list and estimate expenses they think would be involved. Remember to include salaries for all personnel (don't forget riggers and technical crew), venue rental, costume design and making, design and construction of set pieces, publicity, stage management, technical costs, front of house costs, insurance, maintenance of tent, sets, costumes, other costs ... (perhaps the services of a physiotherapist?).

The CIRCUS OZ tent seats 1300. What ticket prices should be charged? What prices for adults, children, students? How many shows per week and how long a season would be necessary in order to break even?

Ask students to consider and discuss the need and justification of government and corporate sponsorship. How important is it to make performances equally accessible to all people? How much control should sponsors have? Thoughts on these issues can be presented in written, spoken or data-show format.

Compare reports and projected budgets. Students may wish to revisit and revise their reports and budgets as further considerations come to mind.

• ASPIRING PERFORMERS

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; English, The Arts; Civics and Citizenship;*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Creating and making; Community engagement*

Discuss with students: What sort of character traits would be necessary to work as a circus performer? E.g. disposition, commitment, trust, cooperation, concentration, etc. How do the **disciplines and lifestyle of an aspiring circus performer** differ from the disciplines and lifestyle of aspiring dancers, singers, musicians, actors? Have students identify character traits that they themselves possess which they consider would make them suitable circus members.

Where possible, interview professional or aspiring circus artists (or artists from other performance disciplines), and find out about the time, energy, mindset and expenses that they and their families commit to their professional goals.

Report findings in written, spoken or dramatised form.

• PERFORMANCE ARTS – CAREER AND RETIREMENT

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; Civics and Citizenship; English, The Arts; PE*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Community engagement; Speaking and listening; Writing; Creating and making; Health knowledge and promotion*

Discuss the likely length of a circus performer's career. In order to continually perform, **what kind of lifestyle would circus performers have to lead?** Discuss what options may exist for an ex-performer?

Where possible have students locate and interview retired performance artists from circus or other disciplines. What are their feelings about changes in their art-form? When and why did they retire? How were they prepared for, and how did they adjust to retirement?

Report findings in written or spoken form. Alternatively, students could draw on their interview findings and prepare monologues as ex-performers reflecting back on their performing (and post performing) lives.

• PERFORMANCE ARTS HIERARCHY

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; Civics and Citizenship; English, Humanities; The Arts; ICT*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Civic knowledge and understanding; Speaking and listening; Writing; Historical knowledge and understanding; ICT for communicating*

Have students address the following: How does the prestige of opera and ballet differ to that of circus? Comment on differences and similarities between these art forms. In doing so, consider: audiences who attend; ticket prices charged; performers' salaries; star system; accessibility; historical backgrounds; government subsidy; corporate sponsorship; etc.

What causes some art forms to be perceived as *'higher'* than others? Compare and comment on hierarchies in the world of performance arts. Do similar hierarchies exist in the worlds of fine art, literature, and sport?

Findings can be reported in written, spoken, data-show or performance format.

• PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal development; English; The Arts; ICT*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Speaking and listening; Creating and making; ICT for communicating*

Together with students browse some of the CIRCUS OZ promotional video clips in CIRCUS OZ LIVING ARCHIVE via http://archive.circusoz.com

Working in small groups or as a full class, have students **design and prepare a short video clip** to promote CIRCUS OZ or an upcoming school production/event. The clip could involve interview footage, excerpts of the production (be they real or simulated through special effects technology), graphics, background music, etc.

Appraise the effect and appeal of the finished product.

Circus Oz 2013: *Cranked Up*
(L-R) Ania Reynolds, Carl Polke, Bec Matthews
Photographer: Rob Blackburn

• ON CIRCUS OZ

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; English; The Arts; ICT*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Creating and making; ICT for communicating*

Have students surf the CIRCUS OZ website at www.circusoz.com and **research the history of the company, company members, indigenous programs, engagement with issues of social justice**, reviews, etc. Share findings and impressions of what the company stands for, and discuss what makes CIRCUS OZ unique.

Have students comment on the look and feel of the website and, where students have seen the production, exchange views on if and how the website reflects the character of the troupe. Have students brainstorm how the site might be improved.

Where changes are suggested, new pages could be written, designed and mocked up.

• ARTS FUNDING

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; Civics and Citizenship; English; The Arts; ICT*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Civic knowledge and understanding; Speaking and listening; Writing; ICT for communicating*

Have students discuss or debate the following:

Many art forms receive funding/subsidies from government bodies and/or corporations. How much control should government or corporate sponsors have over form and content of arts that they fund? Explain and justify answers.

Working individually or in small groups, have students prepare and present policy on how government moneys should be divided across areas of arts and sports. **How should moneys allocated for the arts and sports be divided?**

Regarding arts funding:

- What percentage of moneys should be allocated to circus, dance, drama, music, puppetry, children's theatre?
- What percentage of moneys should be allocated to mainstream vs. avant garde?
- What percentage of moneys should be allocated to live performance vs. recorded performance?

Students should explain and justify their decisions on funding allocation.

Presentations can be in written, spoken or data-show format.

Circus Oz 2013 *Cranked Up*
BACK (L-R): Jeremy Davies, Shane Witt, Stevee Mills, Kai Johnson-Peady, Flip Kammerer
FRONT (L-R): Ania Reynolds, Bec Matthews, Carl Polke

THEME #5: THEATRE ARTS

The focus of the following activities is on theatre craft, creation, production, review and appreciation.

• REVIEW

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; English; The Arts*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Responding*

The following can be used to frame a written or spoken review of CIRCUS OZ:

- What was the impact of the production? How did it make you feel?
- What stood out most in the production? Why?
- List any elements in the performance that you did not find engaging. How might the production be improved?
- Identify the skills of the ensemble members. Did anyone stand out in particular? Why?
- How long do you think it would have taken the troupe to prepare the production?
- Identify design, music and sound elements in the production. How did these contribute to the piece? How else could CIRCUS OZ have been designed and staged?
- Identify if and how CIRCUS OZ reflects aspects of contemporary Australia.
- Compare CIRCUS OZ with other Circus that you may have experienced.

• MUSIC FOR CIRCUS

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; The Arts*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Creating and making*

CIRCUS OZ music is composed specifically to match and enhance the acts performed. Where students have seen CIRCUS OZ, discuss the impact of the music in CIRCUS OZ. In what ways was it different from traditional circus music?

Together with students listen to the first couple of minutes of the following sound grab of CIRCUS OZ music:

http://artscentremelbourne.com.au/~/media/files/education pdfs/sound files/nodropspart1and2.ashx

Working in small groups, have students use the grab as inspiration and **create/choreograph a circus performance to go with the music** (or part thereof). Encourage students to work with and use the playful quirks and changes within the composition. (Other *Circus Oz* music is available for purchase via iTunes).

Alternatively, have small groups of students create and perhaps record a short piece of accompaniment (music, soundscore or soundscape) to match a specific circus act they have seen or would like to see (or to match performances created via BALANCING ACT and/or STYLE activities on final pages of these teachers' notes). Encourage students to use CIRCUS OZ as inspiration and integrate the musicians into the acts that they are accompanying. Remind students not to forget the impact of pause, drum rolls, silence, etc.

• CLOWNS AND COMEDY

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; The Arts*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Creating and making*

Discuss with students what makes them laugh. Where students have seen CIRCUS OZ identify: What was funny? Why? How?

Together with students, list elements and the types of scenarios which make for comedy, eg. exaggerations of reality (voices, walks, clothes, etc.), a character trying to learn or imitate something (unsuccessfully), a character who is continually interrupted and unable to complete an action/job, an innocent character roped into a situation he/she has no connection with, a character who is unaware of something others see (eg. danger), mistaken identity, etc.

Organise students into small groups. Bearing the previous discussion in mind, students are to **design clown characters and a scenario** for themselves. They are then to create and rehearse a circus style act for their clown characters' scenario/s. Acts may include props, costumes, music, make-up. If students find it hard to get moving on this, a solid starting point may be to have them design their act around a simple prop such as a chair, a book that won't open/close, a hat that won't stay on, a mobile telephone that keeps ringing, etc.

View acts. Motivate audiences to be active in encouragement and response.

Circus Oz 2013: *Cranked Up*
(L-R) Carl Polke, Ania Reynolds
Photographer: Rob Blackburn

• FLEA CIRCUS

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; The Arts*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Creating and making*

Together with students define what a flea circus might be. Imagine circus acts that could be executed by fearless performing fleas that could weightlessly swing/fly from object to object.

Give small groups an empty matchbox each, explaining that in each box are invincible flea performers for a unique circus act. Groups are to conceive an amazing, stupendous act for their highly skilled fleas. It may involve swinging, climbing, balancing, loads of special equipment, etc.

Using craft materials such as matches, card, paper-clips and fishing wire, have groups **construct an arena and apparatus for their flea-circus**.

Drama activity: Have groups **train, rehearse and execute their flea-circus acts**. The focus here is to make the fantasy of the fleas doing their act/s seem real. How can this be achieved? E.g. gently taking fleas from their matchbox dressing rooms to the circus ring, group members following fleas' motions with (synchronised) awestruck eyes, pointing, gasping, lining up for flea autographs, etc.

Acting as ring-masters and astounded audience members, have groups present their stupendous acts to one-another.

• CIRCUS DESIGN

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; Personal Learning; The Arts*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Creating and making*

Circus is traditionally performed in a tent. Have students **design and make models of a circus** for alternative venues such as a sports stadium, proscenium arch stage, shopping mall, school hall, etc. Is it possible to retain something of a circus-tent feel? How can this be achieved? What sort of materials, colours, patterns might be useful?

Have students design costumes for specific circus acts, e.g. trapeze, clowns, acrobats, balancing act, fire diving, acts with ropes, hoops, poles, bikes, etc. Remember, costumes must not restrict performers' movements. Remind students that there are many different styles of circus they can design for, e.g. traditional, sumptuous, raunchy, new age, hi-tech.

Designs may be prepared and presented on paper, as models, or via to-scale production.

Visit the Arts Centre Melbourne's 'Page to Stage' web pages at http://pagetostage.artscentremelbourne.com.au/making for practical and informative inspiration for costume design and production.

• STYLE

AusVELS Information:

Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; The Arts*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Creating and making*

Point out to students that simply being able to perform a trick or an action does not guarantee a strong audience response. The style, flair or panache with which an act is performed is what can make it unforgettable.

In a circle, pass a ball from one to another. Find different ways of tossing and transferring the ball, eg. under legs, facing in a different direction, with eyes closed, rolling, bouncing, etc.

Next, **mime tossing an *imaginary* ball** around the circle. As the ball is tossed, students' focus should be on convincingly conveying its size, weight, texture and how difficult/easy it may be to manipulate.

Next, **explore even more spectacular ways of tossing and catching the imaginary ball**, e.g. using shoulders, noses, pelvis', bottoms, breath. Explore how it may be possible for students to make these mimed transfers seem to be really difficult, amazing, spectacular and/or wonderful. Consider the dramatic effect of pausing before a (seemingly) difficult feat. Encourage students to use their voices, bodies, eyes and breath in order to convey the mimed *magic* of the ball.

In small groups create and rehearse a short act based on the above improvisation - using an invisible ball (or other prop) and doing *stupendous* things with it. Alternative themes may be a lion act (with invisible ferocious lions), a knife throwing act (with invisible knives), a juggling act (with mimed objects of different weights and sizes, eg. *try elephants for starters*), a tight-rope act (on a line on the floor), etc. Allow students to choose/create music as accompaniment for their acts.

Groups can also incorporate an entrance, bow and encore into their acts.

View acts. Motivate audiences to be active in encouragement and response.

• BALANCING ACT

AusVELS Information:

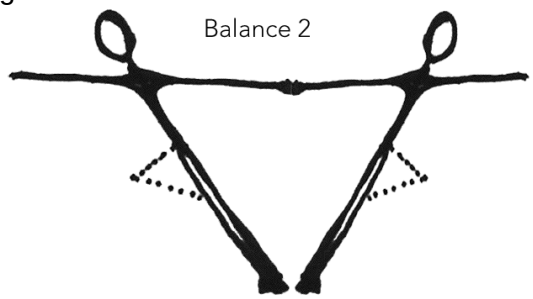
Domains:	*Interpersonal Development; The Arts; Health and Physical Education*
Dimensions:	*Working in teams; Creating and making; Movement and physical activity; Health knowledge and promotion*

NOTE: students need to be made aware of safety issues, and act responsibly when lifting and balancing with others. When trying different balances, have students spot for one another. Spotting is *standing by to assist* a performer as they practice or execute a trick.

In small groups, practice simple balances. Balances such as low pyramids with students on all fours are generally a safe challenge. Be sure to do these on gym mats or on soft grass. Other balances to try: 1) pairs sitting and standing, all the while leaning back to back; 2) pairs standing side by side, holding hands and leaning away from one another without stepping out.

Balance 1

Balance 2



"Circus in A Suitcase" by Reg Bolton is a useful reference for this work.

Organise students into small groups of different numbers, eg. 3-6. Using their bodies, each group is to **make several still shapes or balances** (tableaux), each of which must involve the entire group. View the shapes created.

Have each group choose 4 of their own tableaux, and **decide on an order in which to perform them**. Suggest making the most spectacular one be #4.

Using a tambour, beat a slow regular rhythm and ask students to be in each of their 4 balance-tableaux positions by count 8 of every 8 beats. eg. using counts 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 to move into the next tableaux.

Give groups some time to **consider and rework how they might move between their tableaux** (on counts 1,2,3,4,5,6,7) for maximum effect. In addition, have groups create an entrance for themselves into a performance space. Allow students to use music if they wish to.

The suggested sequence is set out below:

	COUNTS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	COUNT 8
1st bar of 8	ENTRANCE ... and move into TABLEAUX #1	TABLEAUX #1
2nd bar of 8	Move from TABLEAUX #1 to TABLEAUX #2	TABLEAUX #2
3rd bar of 8	Move from TABLEAUX #2 to TABLEAUX #3	TABLEAUX #3
4th bar of 8	Move from TABLEAUX #3 to TABLEAUX #4	TABLEAUX #4

Perform these balancing acts.

RESOURCES

Practical

Circus in a Suitcase by Reg Bolton (1982) - handbook on how to create a circus: props, acrobatics, costumes, clowning, juggling, stilt walking, unicycling, tightrope, trapeze, fire-eating and publicity. The focus of the book is young people, but suitable for all ages. ISBN 0932720080

Basic Circus Skills by Jack Wiley (1974)

Be a Clown: Techniques from a Real Clown by Ron Burgess (2001) - helps young readers develop a clown character

The Most Excellent Book of How to Be a Clown by Catherine Perkins (1996) - for intermediate grades.

How to Be a Clown by Charles R Meyer (1977) - for older levels

Informative

CIRCUS OZ website: http://www.circusoz.com

The circus in Australia: its origins and development to 1856 by Mark St Leon (2005)

Under the Big Top by Judith Janda Presnall (1996) - background reading

Old Bet and the Start of the American Circus by Robert McClurg (1993*)*

The Circus Comes Home: When the Greatest Show on Earth Rode the Rails by Lois Duncan (1993) - history of Barnum and Bailey circus'

Circus: An Album by Linda Granfield (1998)

The New American Circus by Ernest Albrecht (1995)

Circus: A World History by Peter Cotes (1976)

Circus! From Rome to Ringling by Marian Murray (1956) - about circus before the 1970s *Step Right Up! The Adventure of Circus in America* by LaVahn Hoh and William Rough (1990) - introductory chapters explain how circus evolved in response to social and economic changes

For schools studying Circus and Performance

CIRCUS OZ Living Archive is made up of an ever-expanding range of videos from the history of Circus Oz. New video material is being added to the archive all the time. The Living Archive can be found online at: http://archive.circusoz.com

Visit the Arts Centre Melbourne's 'Page to Stage' web pages for practical and informative inspiration on theatre creation, including interviews with theatre arts designers and practitioners: http://pagetostage.artscentremelbourne.com.au