

MONKEY SHINES

KABARET 4 KIDS

ROLL UP!

ROLL UP!



DR. SWEET PEA MCGEE



SIDE SHOW PONN



GORGEOUS GEORGE



SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

Teachers Notes
HOUSE: ED 08

SUITABILITY
Years K - 6

DATES
Dec 15 - 16

Introduction



These teacher's notes have been designed to assist you with classroom preparation and extension work in relation to the Sydney Opera House production of *Monkeyshines*. We hope that this resource will assist you to further enjoy your performing arts experience back in the classroom. The activities are designed for students from Years K-6. Drama educator Mathew Clausen, has prepared the notes. Included in these notes are a number of activities that you can use with your students. These activities provide an opportunity for students to explore the style of the performance.

Syllabi written by NSW Board of Studies have been used as a guide for the planning of these activities. You should consider rephrasing the questions and activities to suit the particular terminology, curriculum foci and outcomes used in your school.

Some websites are suggested in this kit. It is recommended that before setting activities based on these, that teachers first visit the sites and assess the suitability of the content for your particular school setting.

Classroom Context and Curriculum Links

Monkeyshines is all about entertainment. Through a series of comical acts driven by fast-paced madcap humour, the performers in *Monkeyshines* slip in and out of exaggerated characterisations, revel in ridiculousness and touch on the borders of the bizarre in sixty minutes of high-spirited fun.

Monkeyshines borrows from the dramatic forms of cabaret, sideshow and circus. The activities in these notes focus on aspects of circus performance as the basis for drama work. In particular clown characters and comic performance will be explored. The comic performances in this production provide the classroom teacher with many opportunities for related learning activities that link to the following subject areas:

Curriculum Links- Upper Primary

English: *Listening and Talking (language structures and features), Reading(reading and viewing text)*

Creative Arts: *Drama - Making, Performing, Appreciating*

Performance Event Description and Synopsis

Join hosts Dr Sweetpea McGee, Gorgeous George and Sideshow Pony for madcap vaudevillian antics, acts of illusion, and general tomfoolery. Sideshow boss Dr McGee, is a self-proclaimed world expert in 'Circus Home Surgery'.

This unique and bizarre field of expertise offers students a rare opportunity to see her strange brand of creative medicine before their very eyes and allows Dr McGee to introduce some very odd acts to the carnival. Thrill to the sight of Cha Cha - the world's first sideshow monkey-man; be amazed by Pipi the levitating midget; and ogle at the spectacle of Olga and Golga the slap-happy Siamese twins, conjoined at the hand. These performers join husband and wife trapeze act 'The Incredible Flying Beavers', a disobedient disembodied hand and a maniacal fan called Hedda Hair to complete a vaudevillian line-up that is delightfully eye-opening, strange and unexpected.

Pre Performance

SHINK!
SHINES

Curriculum Links

Drama Early Stage 1 - Stage 3

Activity One - Circus Characters

In this activity your students will list and act out circus characters.

1.1 Ask your students to close their eyes and imagine they are watching a circus. Ask them to use their imaginations to see the inside of the circus tent. Use the following prompts to encourage their imagining: What does the tent look like? What colours can you see? How does do you feel being at the circus? What sorts of performances can you see in your imagination?

Ask your students to open their eyes and share their imagined circus experiences with the class. Use questions to encourage detailed descriptions of circus images.

1.2 Ask your students to list as many types of circus performers as they can. You might do this as a class activity or ask your students to complete this task in pairs. Have your students describe the tricks or acts these characters perform. Ask your students to describe what the performers might be wearing. You could extend this part of the activity by asking your students to draw a circus performer.

1.3 Have the class sit as a group leaving a space for performance. Explain to the class that they will create a frozen picture of a circus performance. Volunteers will come into the performance space one person at a time and take a frozen position as a character, animal, person or object you might find at a circus. Give feedback as the tableau takes shape to help your students use space and levels effectively. See if the class can create three or four very different tableaux.

1.4 Each student is to choose a circus character they would like to pretend to be. Some students might like to work with a partner or in small groups and create a circus performance group. If you have access to dress ups, wigs and props, provide these for your students to costume their characters.

Ask your students to create a performance name for their character. Depending on the ability of the age group you teach, encourage the use of alliteration in the performer names or names of the acts like Dotty the Daredevil Diver or Harry, Hettie and Horace, the Human Cannon Balls.

Ask your students to practice being their characters by finding a space in the room to act. Ask them to imagine they are in a circus arena performing for a large audience. If you feel comfortable, adopt the role of ringmaster. Demonstrate to your students how to make an entrance into the arena. Announce your performer name and take a bow. Encourage the class to applaud.



Activity One - Continued

On your signal, ask your students to make an entrance into the imaginary arena. Encourage them to use strong body language, theatrical gestures and exaggerated facial expression. Have your students repeat their entrance but now ask your students to introduce themselves using their performer name. For example, "Ladies and gentleman, (I am / we are) the Amazing Alice(s) in Tights!"

1.5 Ask your students to sit in a circle. Explain that the area in the centre of the circle is the circus arena and when you enter the arena you will become your character and the class will become the audience at the circus. Ask your students to enter the arena as their performer or performance troupe, announce their performer name and then sit down.

If you have access to iTunes, type in "Circus Music" in the iTunes store search box. There are many tracks here that would be fun to play as background music for the circus character entrances.

Pre Performance

MONKEY

Curriculum Links

English/Drama Stage 1 - Stage 3

Activity Two - Circus Acts

In this activity your students will develop a short performance trick or act as their circus character. You will need to adjust the activity to suit the age level of your students.

2.1 Ask your students to work individually. Ask them to pretend they are performing each of the following circus acts:

- Walking on a tightrope wearing army boots
- Riding a show horse that leaps over elephants
- Juggling plates and flaming batons
- Performing a high dive into a tub of jelly
- Escaping from a locked tank of water in twenty seconds

Give feedback to encourage your students to control their use of movement and to use their imaginations to create convincing performance work. Ask your students to sit in a circle. Ask for volunteers to show one of the acts they rehearsed to the class.

2.2 Have a class discussion about other types of acts or tricks that could be performed at a circus. These acts could be very unusual, for example:

- Turning a human into an exotic animal, plant or object using magic
- Eating one hundred pizzas in one go
- Using hypnotism to get a performer to walk through a ring of fire without being burnt

2.3 Divide the class into small groups. Each person in each group is to use their circus performance character from activity one. Ask each group to create a short performance act to present to the class. You will need to allow a good length of time for each group to practice.

2.4 Ask the class to sit in a circle again. Ask each group to present their performance to the class. Provide each performance with positive feedback on their character work, focus and presentation of their circus act.

Curriculum Links

English/Drama Stage 2- Stage 3

Activity Four - Performance Reflection

This activity is an opportunity for your students to share their responses to the performance. The questions provided cover all aspects of the performance and you are encouraged to select those questions that will be relevant for your students depending on the age group.

The following questions can be used as a guideline for a discussion or written review of the performance:

1. What did you like about the performance?
2. What were the names of some of the characters in the performance?
3. Which character was your favourite? Why?
4. Recount some of the acts the characters performed.
5. Which act did you find the funniest? Why?
6. Describe two of the costumes in the performance. You might like to draw these and show them to the class.
7. What sounds and music were used?
8. What sorts of feelings did the music/sound create?

Post Performance

MIDWINTER

Curriculum Links

Drama Early Stage 1 - Stage 3

Activity Five - Fun With Balloons

For this activity you will need a couple of packets of balloons, an assortment of tennis balls and sports balls and skipping ropes if you have them.

5.1 Ask your students to blow up one balloon each. Place all the balloons to one side of the room. Explain to the class that they have to work as a team to keep the balloons from landing on the floor. You will throw one balloon at a time into the air and the class will work together to keep it afloat. As the game progresses throw more balloons into the air, one at a time. If a balloon touches the floor then everyone must pretend to explode like a balloon popping and the game starts again.

5.2 Divide the class in half. Give half your students a balloon each. Ask them to hold the balloon between their knees. The aim of this game is for students who have balloons to pass their balloon onto another student without using their hands.

5.3 In this exercise your students will work individually. Give each student two balls. Ask them to practice bouncing one ball from one hand to the other in a steady rhythm. You could make this a competition to see which student can keep this going for the longest. Now ask your students to use two balls to see if they can juggle the two from one hand to the other.

If you think your students would like to develop their juggling skills further, you can use the web link below for more detailed instructions:

Learn to Juggle Three Balls

http://www.frontiernet.net/~steve_glimpse/juggle1.html

5.4 Divide the class into pairs. Each pair is given two balloons. Ask your students to transform the balloons in the following ways:

- o Pretend the balloons are musical instruments
- o Pretend that the balloons are pets
- o Pretend that the balloons are big tummies
- o Pretend the balloons are tennis balls in an international tennis tournament between famous tennis players.



Activity Five - Continued

5.5 Ask your students to work with a partner. Give each pair a skipping rope. Have the class sit in a circle. Explain to the class that they are to transform the skipping rope into something that might be part of a magic act. Ask your students to work with their partner to transform their skipping rope into the following:

- o a snake that is charmed by a dancing and singing performer
- o a tight rope
- o a very long piece of spaghetti from a giant bowl of pasta
- o a magic circle in which people are forced to tell the truth
- o a fuse to a very big bomb

5.6 Each pair is to make up a thirty second circus act where they transform a skipping rope and/or a ball and/or balloons to be part of a circus act. Allow at least twenty minutes for preparation and then have each pair show their work to the class.

Curriculum Links

Drama Stage 2 - Stage 3

Activity Six - Clown Duos

T6.1 Ask the class to divide into pairs. Each pair will develop a comedy duo using some of the principles of comic character work. You do not need to use red clown noses for this activity but you can if you have access to them.

Explain to your students that each person will need to create a comedy clown character. Ask them to list some comic characters from films or television. Either in writing or discussion, ask your students to identify and list the things they find funny about these characters using the following two questions:

What makes the characters' appearance funny?

What does the character do that makes you laugh?

6.2 Divide the class into pairs or groups of three at the most. Each pair or group is to complete the following activity:

One person is the boss and the other is the assistant. To make this activity funny, the boss must be very bossy or high status and the assistant must be very low status, always agreeing to the demands of the boss. If there are groups of three have one boss and two assistants. Some times it helps if you have hats or dress ups to distinguish between the boss and the assistant. Oversized clothes and funny hats can also add to the comedy of the performance.

Give the groups a scene to act out from the following list:

- Painting a fence in hot sunshine
- Preparing Queen Elizabeth's favourite soup
- Training for surf rescue
- Stealing jewels from a safe inside a mansion
- Hunting a dangerous escaped tiger in the jungle

Ask each group to create three freeze frames that show the beginning, middle and end of these situations where the status of the characters is made very clear.



Activity Six - Continued

Explain to your students that they are to choose one of the scenarios to develop into a short play. In each situation the demands of the boss character should create more problems so that the assistants find it difficult to complete the task.

Before each group rehearse their scene ask them to sit down and write an outline or scenario of their narrative using the narrative text type to guide them in the development of their scenario:

Text Type	Purpose	Structure	Language Features
Narrative	To entertain, amuse or instruct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Orientation• Complication• Evaluation• Resolution• Coda (opt.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usually specific participants• Time words used to connect events• Action words predominate in complication and resolution• Noun groups important in describing characters and setting

6.3 Allow the groups time to prepare their performances. This may take more than one lesson. As your students prepare provide rehearsal feedback to help them develop the comedy of the scene. This might be through suggestions that help build the tension or through suggestions for slapstick comedy moments.

References



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