

THEATER SGARAMUSCH

WOLF THE UNDER BED

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE 

Teachers Notes
HOUSE: ED 08

SUITABILITY

Years 5 – 9

DATES

July 22 – 25

Introduction



These teacher's notes have been designed to assist you with classroom preparation and extension work in relation to the Theatre Sgaramusch production of *Wolf Under the Bed*. 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 5-9. 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 broad themes and 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

The performance of *Wolf Under the Bed* is based on 12 separate stories about wolves, written and developed collaboratively with Theatre Sgaramusch and school students in the Swiss town of Schaffhausen. The performance engages students with its story telling and playful theatricality. The three performers use music, rhyme and physicality in an engaging and often amusing telling of these dark, absurd and sometimes gruesome stories.

The key themes of fantasy, fear of the unknown and the power of stories are addressed in this production and 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- Music - Listening*



Curriculum Links - Secondary

Drama: *Making, Performing, Appreciating*

English: *the study of drama, responding to and composing texts*

Performance Event Description and Synopsis

The performance begins in subdued lighting. The sound of a guitar sets an eerie mood and a narrator begins the performance by tracing his finger across a map of Europe. As he speaks he leads the audience into the foreboding forests of Finland during Winter, where hungry wolves wait for their next meal.

In reference to many European folk and fairy tales, *Wolf Under the Bed* is set in an isolated house somewhere in the woods. Three characters, having seen animal tracks in the snow outside, entertain and frighten each other with tall stories about hungry and treacherous wolves. As the play progresses these stories come to life, each one with its own bizarre, absurd or sinister intriguing twist.

The performance includes a variety of theatrical techniques to heighten the drama of the story telling. Each performer uses a range of vocal and physical skills to play a number of characters. The simple and functional set is transformed during the performance to create new settings and the accompaniment of a solo guitar provides effective changes in mood and atmosphere.

Pre Performance



Curriculum Links

Drama Upper Primary/Secondary

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

1.1 The following web link provides information about the town of Schaffhausen, the home of the performers and the location of the schools where students contributed stories about wolves. Ask your students to visit the website and respond to the following questions:

Wikipedia - Schaffhausen

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schaffhausen>

- Where is Schaffhausen?
- How old is this town?
- What is its population?
- How does this population size compare to the population of Sydney?
- What do you think life might be like for a student in this town?
- What are the differences in the seasons between Sydney and Schaffhausen?

1.2 The following activity is to help your students imagine the environmental context that backgrounds the stories in *Wolf Under the Bed*. Ask your students to find a place to sit in the space and ask them to recall times when they have been to the snow. Ask them to share their experiences. Ask the class to stand and using their imaginations, pretend they are in the snow. Ask them to show you how cold it is through the use of body movement, facial expression and gesture. Ask your students to walk through the room on their own without interacting with others. As they walk ask them to imagine they are in a forest landscape in Winter. If they have seen the film *Narnia*, you might like to refer to the scene where the character, Lucy goes through the back of the wardrobe for the first time and finds Narnia in Winter. Use the following description to help the students imagine the environment:-

The trees seem heavy, silent and are covered in snow, and it is difficult to see too far in the distance as the trees seem to grow closer together the further you go into the woods. The air is thick with the freezing temperature and the blue sky is not visible due to cloud. And it is quiet, very, very quiet. Listen.



Allow your students time to play with this imagining.

Repeat the description and ask your students to pretend they are lost in these woods. They are trying to find their way back to a house where their friends/and or family are but the way back has been covered in snow, all paths through the forest seem to look the same. Allow your students to play with this imagined situation for a few minutes. Ask the class to freeze. Explain that when they un-freeze they will suddenly notice the prints of animal tracks in the snow. These tracks are wolf tracks and they lead into the trees. Ask your students to carefully follow the tracks into the woods. Ask the class to sit on the floor and share the images they imagined in their role-play.

1.3 Ask your students to divide into pairs. Each pair is to list as many children's stories as possible that have a wolf or wolves as characters. Ask the class to share their lists. Ask pairs to join with pairs. Each group of four is to choose one story from the list created by the class. The group is to create a series of four freeze frames that tell the story in summary. Allow the groups time to prepare and then present the work to the class. Provide feedback on groups who create effective images that clearly show character or are visually interesting through a strong use of levels, space and posture.

1.4 Ask your students to play the game 'What's the Time Mr/Mrs Wolf?' This game is similar to Giant's Treasure. One person stands with their back to the class at one end of the room. They have a shoe, pencil case etc at their feet, which the rest of the class is aiming to steal without being caught. The class asks the person playing the wolf 'What's the time Mr/Mrs Wolf?' and she/he replies 'two o'clock' or 'seven o'clock' at which point the class tries to move up behind without being seen. If the wolf turns and catches anyone moving they must go back to the start. The person who gets to the wolf first must grab the shoe etc and run back to the start without being caught. At any time during the game when the class asks 'What's the time Mr/Mrs Wolf?' he/she can reply 'Time to eat you up!' at which point he/she chases the class back to the starting point. If he/she tips anyone before they get to the end they are out of the game.



1.5 Ask the class to stand in a circle. Choose one of the following lines and ask each person in the circle to say the line in a different way by using a different intention:

- Did you hear that?
- He was hungry, very, very hungry.
- I think I saw something moving, over there, in the woods.
- Did you lock the door?
- I saw his footprints in the snow outside.
- She heard a sound coming from the cellar.
- All the better to see you with my dear.
- He tried to keep still but the more he tried the more he began to shake.
- A long shadow slowly crept up the wall

Repeat this exercise choosing another of the lines.

Ask the students to create new groups of three or four. In these groups the students will choose three of the lines listed above and link them together to create a moment of dramatic action. Explain to the class that each group is aiming to create a feeling of suspense by emphasising tension in the action. In their presentation they can play with the rhythm of the lines by using repetition of words, repeating lines and saying the lines together. They do not need to provide details of characters, plot or setting, as this is more a moment of dramatic action rather than a whole story.

Allow the students time to prepare and then ask each group to show their work to the class. Ask the groups to reflect on the ways in which tension was used to create suspense.

Pre Performance



Curriculum Links

English/Drama Upper Primary/Secondary

Storytelling

In this activity your students will try various activities to develop their skills in story telling. Ask the class to work individually. They are to recall stories they have been told that they found entertaining, funny or scary. They might write their recollections in a journal or take time to sit quietly and recall them.

2.1 Ask your students to work with a partner. Each person must have one story they would like to tell. It does not need to be a story that has happened to them but must be one they feel is interesting or entertaining in some way. Ask each person in the pairs to name themselves either 'A' or 'B'. The person who is 'A' tells their story to 'B' first. 'B' is not permitted to interrupt to ask questions. 'A' can use gesture, inflection, facial expression etc to heighten the events in their story. Once 'A' has finished, swap over so that 'B' has their turn.

2.2 Ask all the pairs to return to the circle. Ask for volunteers to share their partner's story with the class. Have a class discussion about what makes a story interesting. Include a discussion about what makes the telling of a story engaging including tone of voice, facial expression, the use of pauses, rhythm etc.

2.3 Explain to your students that they will each act as the writer of a story of their own that uses 'The Wolf' as its title. Provide your students with background to the performance they are about to see and the collaborative process that was used to create the performance. Ask your students to work independently to create their stories. Remind them of the structure of the text type of narrative:

- Orientation- Complication - Resolution

Ask your students to write points as to what elements of the story might be in each of the three parts of the structure.



Also remind students about the following:

- Narratives have specific character/s and settings
- They use time words to connect events
- They use action words for the complication and resolution
- Nouns and adjectives are important for character and setting
- This activity may take two lessons to complete.

2.4 Divide the class into groups of four. Each person in each group is to read their wolf story to their group. Ask each group to vote and choose the wolf story they like the most. The person who wrote the story will read it to the class while the other group members will create freeze frames of the key images. They may also add a phrase, word or sound to each freeze frame. Ask the groups in their preparation to be clear about which freeze frames are part of the orientation, complication and resolution. Allow the groups time to prepare. Ask each group to share the selected story. Ask all of your students to keep their stories as they will use them in activities after the performance.

Post Performance



Curriculum Links

English/Drama Upper Primary/Secondary

Performance Reflection

3.1 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 questions in 3.3 could also form a scaffold for a written review of the performance.

3.2 Ask the class to divide into pairs. Below is a list of the stories told in the performance. Explain to the class that once you have read a description of the story, each pair is to create a frozen picture that represents a key moment.

1st story

A girl is playing near the forest. A wolf attacks her. As she screams the whole village comes running. The wolf eats them all.

2nd story

A wolf has eaten up everything edible in the wood. Then he goes to the next village and devours more than 1000 people.

3rd story

A wolf disguises himself as a wolf. He goes to play a game of football. After a foul his costume falls apart. He runs after the goalie. The goalie runs home and shuts the door behind him. The wolf gets in through the open kitchen window. The goalie shoots the wolf.

4th story

A wolf, stung by a scorpion, grows scorpion legs. He has to eat the liver of a child, to become normal again. He finds a dead child in an ambulance and eats its liver.

5th story

A wolf attacks five pigs. They kill the wolf and lay him into a grave. The wolf flies up to heaven. The pigs want to fly as well and lay down into the grave. After they have starved they fly to heaven as well.



6th story

A wolf is very hungry. He follows the traces of a little boy. But the boy has vanished. The wolf lies down in the snow and dies.

7th story

A girl hears a wolf under her bed. She takes a cushion and chases the wolf out of the window. In the next morning her mother gives her a rose for she had been so brave the last night...

8th story

Mr Malvoy is untrue and drinks a lot. Mrs Malvoy therefore tells his liver to rebel against him so he has to have an operation. The liver does so. Mr Malvoy dies and the liver is free.

9th story

An old lady hears a wolf down in her cellar. The wolf has his foot caught in a drawer. The lady frees the wolf and tells him stories in her living room.

10th story

A wolf invites a stork for dinner. The stork can't eat the soup, because of his long beak. Then the stork invites the wolf. The wolf won't eat worm soup. So he eats the stork.

11th story

A dog transformed into a wolf and a liver transformed into a rose live in the forest. A brave liver goes into the forest to see the wonderful rose. He marries the rose and the rose and the dog are transformed back to what they were.

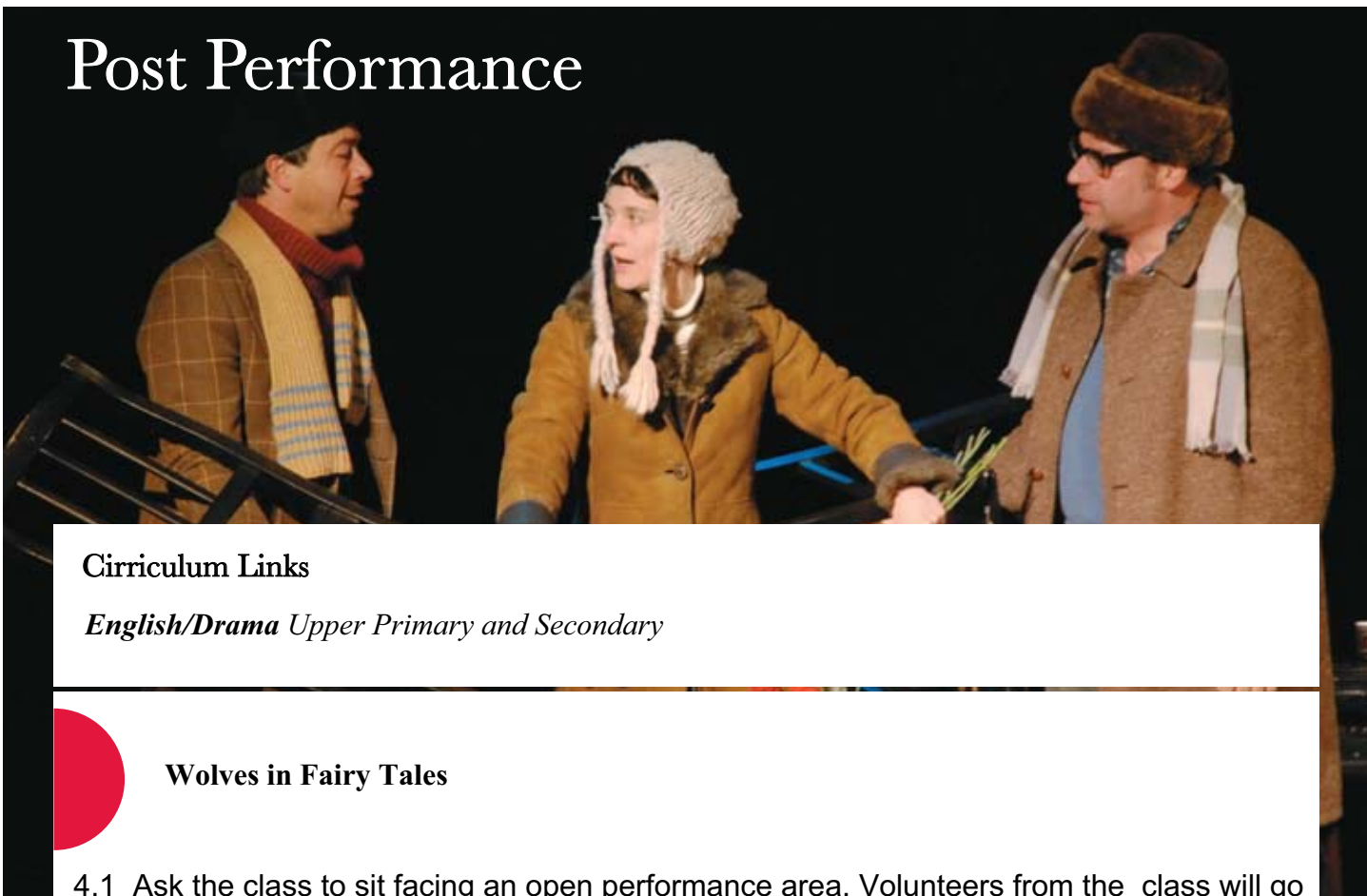
12th story

Two wolves marry. They have 4-6 kids.

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

1. What are your initial responses to the performance? Often using a rating out of say ten or twenty helps you to find where your initial reaction sits. By answering the rest of the questions you will be able to identify specifically the strengths and weaknesses of the performance.
2. Briefly summarise the narrative journey of the performance.
3. What were the key issues and themes?
4. How effectively were the themes and issues addressed? Describe one example from the performance where you felt a theme or issues was communicated powerfully.
5. Describe the overall look of the production. How did this add to the mood and atmosphere?
6. What sounds and music were used? How effective was this?
7. Analyse the acting in the performance. How clearly was character/role established? How strong was the use of focus, commitment and belief? Comment on the performers and their effective use of the expressive skills of voice and/or movement.

Post Performance



Curriculum Links

English/Drama Upper Primary and Secondary

Wolves in Fairy Tales

4.1 Ask the class to sit facing an open performance area. Volunteers from the class will go into the performance space to create a picture of a collage of types of wolves. Each person holds a frozen pose of their wolf character and others join in. Encourage the class to use exaggerated facial expression and body movement to show the wolves in various situations. It is best to start the first tableau slowly until the class understands the aim of the activity.

Repeat this activity but this time the picture will be of a collage of wolves from fairy tale stories and the supernatural. Begin making the picture by asking some volunteers to be the human characters and then ask others to join them as wolves. The interaction between the humans and the wolves will develop as the picture is created.

4.2 Have a discussion with your class about the acting style in the performance. Ask your students to describe the more effective moments they recall. Help the students understand the idea of transformational acting by referring to the way the actors in the performance of *Wolf Under the Bed* became different characters in each story.

To help the class practice this, ask them to stand and walk through the room as themselves. Call 'stop' or 'freeze'. Explain to the class that the next time you call stop or freeze, you will say a character name or type from fairy tales and everyone in the class must become that character by the end of five counts. This change must be smooth - a kind of morphing from themselves into being the character. The character names/types you might ask the class to be are:

- A grandmother
- The Wolf
- Little red riding hood
- A huntsman
- A magic goose



4.3 Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to visit the following websites and read each of the stories listed below:

The Wolf And The Fox

<http://www.ongoing-tales.com/SERIALS/oldtime/FAIRYTALES/wolfandfox.html>

The Wolf And The Man

<http://www.familymanagement.com/literacy/grimms/grimms165.html>

The Wolf And The Seven Little Kids

<http://www.authorama.com/grimms-fairy-tales-37.html>

4.4 In this task your students might like to use their stories from activity 2 or they can choose one of the stories they read online. The group is to workshop the story into a play performance using transformational acting. This will take more than one session to complete. You may need to help your students convert the stories into script by helping them identify the key moments in the narrative as in activity two. Each group may like to use the role of a narrator to help link the scenes in their plays. Allow the groups time to rehearse and then present the work to the class. As part of their preparation, ask your students to consider the following elements of drama to help with their decision making:

- Role/Character - Who?
- Time/place - Where?
- Situation - What?
- Tension - What is at risk? What questions will the audience want answered?

Allow each group sufficient time to prepare and present the work to the class. Provide feedback on the key issues in each role-play and how the characters dealt with the challenges they faced.

4.5 Ask the class to complete a written reflection on this activity using the following questions:

- In your opinion which was the most effective group and why?
- Describe one moment or scene that was amusing.
- Why do these stories put the wolf into the role of the villain?
- What other personality qualities of the wolf do these stories convey?
- What is the key message of one of the stories?

Post Performance



Curriculum Links

English/Drama Upper Primary/Secondary

In Defense of Wolves

5.1 Ask your students to visit the following web sites and make summary notes on the information provided about wolves:

Wolf Country

<http://www.wolfcountry.net/>

Wolves of the World

<http://www.cosmosmith.com/wolfpage.html>

International Wolf Centre

<http://www.wolf.org/wolves/index.asp>

Your students might like to do this in teams and then report their findings to the class.

5.2 Using the information in the websites and from your own school's library and resources, ask our students to write a short narrative in first person from the perspective of a real wolf rather than one in a fairy tale or other fantasy story. The story should be based on one brief moment. For example the sighting of prey, or seeing a human for the first time. Encourage your students to use descriptive language to capture the sensory experiences of his animal.

5.3 Ask your students to work in pairs to create a parody of an interview program like 'Oprah' where a real wolf is interviewed. They will need to use their research on wolves to help prepare for this activity. During the interview the wolf is asked questions about their behaviour, habitat etc. They are also asked questions about the wolves in stories like 'Little Red Riding Hood'. The wolf being interviewed must defend the reputation of all wolves by pointing out how the versions of wolves in fairy tales are a misrepresentation of what wolves are really like.

References

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