

Study Guide

Table of Contents



1. Welcome	3
2. Theater Etiquette.....	4
3. Unit-Long Understanding Goals	5
Each section includes questions for understanding (at the beginning) and exercises (at the end). Designed to meet some of the requirements of the Reading/Language Arts Framework and Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, these questions and exercises can be used to help students integrate the material presented into subjects they are already studying in the classroom.*	
4. About the <i>SchoolTime</i> Program: <i>Rain</i>	7
5. About the Artists: Cirque Éloize	11
6. About the Art Form: “Circus as Theater”	19
7. The Circus in History.....	23
8.-9. Teacher and Student Evaluation Forms	32-33

* A full list of VAPA standards and content standards for related disciplines such as history, social studies and language arts can be found online at:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp>

For a sneak peek of the performance, view the trailer at:

<http://www.proctors.org/index.php/CirqueEloize>



Productions Éloize 2004 - Solomon Krueger

1. Welcome to *SchoolTime*!

Dear Teachers and Students,

On Monday, January 31, 2005 at 11:00 a.m., you will see a *SchoolTime* performance by the members of Cirque Éloize, a troupe of circus performers from the Magdelene Islands off the coast of Quebec whose name means “heat lightening.”

Cirque Éloize has been traveling the globe for over a decade, performing a magical brand of circus artistry that draws on the big-top tradition—and yet is entirely original. This unique ensemble trades the tent for the theater with a show that combines time-honored circus acts with music, dance, theater, and performance in a new and exciting way. Since its inception, this award-winning Canadian troupe has performed for more than two million spectators in more than 200 cities and 20 countries. Their shows serve up a visual and aural feast that’s at once poetic, mystical, humorous, and fun.

This study guide provides materials to answer the question: “How will attending a performance of Cirque Éloize help us better understand theater arts.” Targeted questions and exercises in each section will help focus students’ understanding about the artists, the performance, and the art form, as well as the history and traditions of the circus. Then, you and your students can actively participate if you:

- OBSERVE how the circus acts work with the overall story line of the show
- MARVEL the physical and mental discipline of the performers
- WATCH for the amazing characteristics of each spectacular feat
- IMAGINE how the performers learn their skills and how they must prepare for the performance
- REFLECT on what you have learned about the history of the circus

By participating with your imagination, heart and mind, you’ll be on your way to becoming an expert at enjoying the performing arts. You’ll find that you’ll be inspired, you’ll see how performances communicate many things, and your spirits will soar!

Sincerely,

Laura Abrams
Manager, Education and Community Programs

2. Theater Etiquette

Be Prepared and arrive early

Allow yourself plenty of time to travel to the theater and locate parking. You'll want to arrive early enough to be seated in your seats well before curtain time (when the performance begins).

Be Aware and remain quiet

A theater is a “live” space—you can hear the performers easily, but they can also hear you, and you can hear other audience members, too! Because even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering, can be heard throughout the theater, it's best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. If you need to use it, the international sign for “Quiet Please” is to silently raise your index finger to your lips.

Show Appreciation by applauding

Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation. Performers show their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience. It's always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it's customary to continue clapping until the curtain comes down or the house lights come up.

Participate by responding to the action onstage

Sometimes during a performance, you may respond by laughing, crying or sighing. By all means, feel free to do so! Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form. For instance, an audience attending a string quartet performance will sit very quietly, while the audience at a gospel concert may be inspired to participate by clapping and shouting.

Concentrate to help the performers

Performers use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience watches in a concentrated way, the performers feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!



3. Unit-Long Understanding Goals

For Teachers:

The material in this study guide is designed to introduce Cirque Éloize to your students. You may copy the pages for students to read, or else read these sections together in class.

Questions at the beginning of each chapter set the stage for the *SchoolTime* performance you will see with your class. You can prepare your students for the performance by setting understanding goals and using the exercises provided at the end of each chapter, as well as reinforcing students' impressions with a post-performance class discussion. By adapting the materials presented to the level of your students, you can address grade-appropriate California Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards.

Questions for Understanding

These questions address the material presented in the study guide as a whole and are designed to help students learn more from and better appreciate the performance.

- 1 How will attending a performance of Cirque Éloize help us better understand theater arts?
- 2 How are circus performance techniques integrated with other theatrical elements in this unique company?
- 3 How can knowledge of circus and theater history enhance our understanding of this performance?

Questions for Understanding

About the SchoolTime Program

Cirque Éloïze presents circus acts within the context of a theatrical story. Its acrobats are actors and musicians as well as skilled circus performers. As you sit in your theater seat, you can ask yourself:

1 What is the mood of the performance? Name some elements that contribute to creating the overall atmosphere?

2 Can you trace a narrative or storyline that is introduced at the beginning, develops with the action on the stage, and then comes to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the performance?

3 The show's creator Daniele Finzi Pasca says "Unexpected things can come from the sky: messages, signs, promises. On our stage, not only rain will fall. Surprises will pour down as well." What are they?



4. About the *SchoolTime* Program



“Like rain in your eyes”

Written and directed by Daniele Finzi Pasca

“I come from a family of photographers. My great-grandfather, my grandfather, and my father were all photographers. Later, my mom took up painting. I grew up in a world where memories were made up of moments snatched from time and frozen forever. In my shows, I simply make these images move.

The story takes place in a theatre where a circus show is in rehearsal, where theatre and reality blend into one another and you can’t tell where one begins and the other ends. The protagonists exchange glances revealing little love stories, secret passions, flashes of intimacy. Their fragilities have slowly blossomed, surfacing in the ultimate moments of effort in the interplay of extreme equilibria. The artists are out of the past, characters from collections of old photos, handsome and strong like our grandparents. And then there is the sky, a vast sky.

When I was little, when the first summer storm came, I was allowed to go out in the garden and play in the rain and get soaked to the skin. I still love that feeling of freedom—shoes full of water, clothes drenched, hair dripping. “Let it rain,” we’d say. It was as if we welcomed whatever came from the sky, sun or rain, we didn’t care.

Unexpected things can come from the sky: messages, signs, promises. On our stage, not only rain will fall. Surprises will pour down as well.

There's a certain kind of feeling in this show, almost a sense of nostalgia, like a strange need to go back to the house you came from, the house where a family once lived, where your roots are. In our house we called this kind of beautiful, sweet sadness that you feel when you look at a sunset, 'rain in your eyes.'

I want this show to be like a caress, simple, direct, filled with sensuality and tender hope. The protagonists in this adventure appear and gaze searchingly at the audience from the front of the stage. They begin a dialogue with the spectators, looking them straight in the eye. Then they are once again swallowed up by the surreal images of the story.

If I had to describe this show, I would say it is full of hope, joy, and a sweet longing, and that it is made of the stuff of my grandmother's stories. I dedicate it to all those who love to feel the rain pouring down on them."



Vocabulary Exercises

acrobatic	moments
blend	photographs
dialogue	protagonist
equilibrium	proscenium stage
images	rehearsal
juggle	spectator
lightening	stories
memories	theater (theatre)

Vocabulary is a gateway to understanding

Use the vocabulary list as appropriate for your grade level for greater understanding of the performance.

Early Elementary grades:

Relate the vocabulary words to your own experience. For example: A gymnast performs physical exercises that develop and display strength, balance and agility. What can you do to demonstrate your strength and balance?

Upper Elementary grades:

Practice your dictionary skills! Write sentences about the performance using at least six vocabulary words.

Middle School:

Choose 2 terms from the list and discuss how these concepts are related to acrobats and theater, and how this might be expressed in the performance.

Questions for Understanding

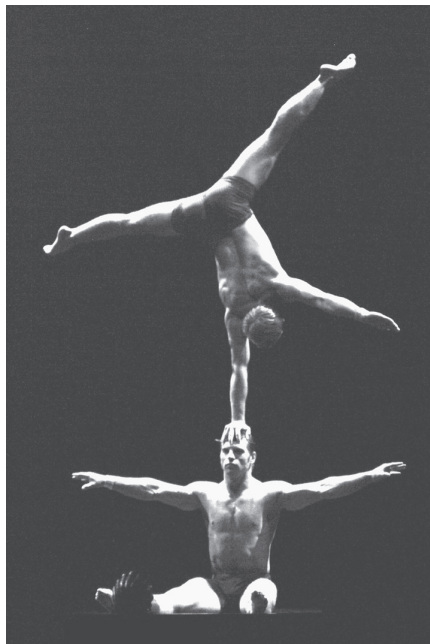
About the Artists

Cirque Éloize performers are experts in circus arts, but they are also actors, musicians and clowns. Think about all the different skills it takes for a performer to be a part of this company and try to answer these questions as you watch the performance:

1 How is Cirque Éloize like theater? What are some things on the stage that you would not expect to see at a circus?

2 How is Cirque Éloize like a traditional circus? What must the performers know how to do to be real circus performers?

3 What are some creative jobs that are required to put a show like “Rain” together?



4. About the Artists: Cirque Éloize

Cirque Éloize was founded in 1993 by seven young performers who honed their skills at Montreal's National Circus School in the Canadian province of Quebec. A great passion for the circus led them to create a new "Quebecois Circus," a European-style, character-driven, animal-free production intended for the proscenium stage.

The name Cirque Éloize, (pronounced "serk EL-wahs") refers to a local expression for "heat lightening" from their hometown in the Magdelan Islands off Quebec's coast.

Cirque Éloize offers performers a working environment that makes every person part of the creative process. The group's mission is to introduce the circus arts to young people all over the world. For these performers, the circus is a stimulating, creative environment for collaborations between theater, music and dance. It is a friendly space that values teamwork and respects differences. Each production brings together artists with different backgrounds.

It is unusual for a circus to be created for the proscenium theater stage instead of a ring. More in line with the dramatic tradition of the theater, this company is interested in developing character and action-driven stories. Live music and dramatic lighting create a stronger link to theatrical presentation.

The multi-skilled performers of Cirque Éloize actually haven't strayed all that far from the circus: you will see their remarkable expertise in the arts of gymnastics, acrobatics, juggling and old-fashioned slapstick clowning.

Creators:

Jeannot Painchaud: Cirque Éloize Co-Founder and Artistic Director

Daniele Finzi Pasca—Author, Director, and Song Lyrics

Daniele Finzi Pasca founded Teatro Sunil in Lugano, Switzerland in 1983. Fascinated by clowns, he developed the concept of *Teatro della carezza* (“the Theatre of the Caress”). In 1991, he defined his style with the one-man show *Icaro*. In work marked by profound humanity and a playful spirit, Finzi has written and directed 14 stage plays and produced 20 shows with his own troupe and around the world. He presents his unique acting technique and vision of the theater at many universities and theater schools. Casa Grande has published his collection of short stories entitled *Come Acqua allo specchio* as well as the complete script of *Viaggio al confine*.

Daniel Cyr—Technical and Acrobatic Research & Development

A native of the Magdalen Islands, Daniel Cyr is a co-founder of Cirque Éloize. He studied at the National Circus School and has worked with many Québec circus troupes and became known for his ladder act. Following the creation of Cirque Éloize, he travelled the world for almost nine years with the company’s first two productions: *Cirque Éloize* and *Excentricus*. In his ongoing artistic quest, he has designed new acts and new circus apparati including the Cyr Wheel.

Dolores Heredia—Acting Coach

Actress, filmmaker and producer, Ms. Heredia is a member Spain’s El Teatro Sunil. She has collaborated with El Centro de Experimentació Teatral, La Compañía Nacional de Teatro, and Madrid’s El Teatro de la Plaza. She has also appeared in 15 feature films. She received the Best Actress award at El Festival Internacional de Cartagena in Colombia and was similarly honored at Le Festival International du Cinéma d’Amiens in France.

Guillaume Lord—Set Design

A versatile set designer, Mr. Lord is equally interested in dance and theatre, opera and film. Choreographer Jean Grand-Maître has hired him to work with some of the world’s most prestigious ballet companies. He regularly collaborates with director Serge Denoncourt, with whom he received the Gascon-Roux award and a trophy for best set design at the Gala des Masques in 1995.

Krzysztof Soroczynski—Head Trainer, Group Acts Designer, Casting Agent

A lifelong circus lover, Mr. Soroczynski began his acrobatic career in Poland in 1965. He worked with Cirque du Soleil as a performer and then as a trainer. A cofounder of the Verdun Circus School, he joined Cirque Éloize in 1999. He has passed his passion on to his son, who appears in *Nomade – At night, the sky is endless*.

Lucie Cauchon – Music Composer and Arranger

A trained pianist with expertise in classical music and jazz, Ms. Cauchon has composed for the jazz band A Few Colors, worked in television, and accompanied many singers. She traveled with Cirque du Soleil for three years as tour musician. She composed music for Cirque Éloize’s productions *Excentricus*, *Nomade* and *Typo*.

Maria Bonzanigo—Composer for Trapeze Acts, Straps Act & Finale

Ms. Bonzanigo joined El Teatro Sunil in 1984 and, with the troupe's founder, Daniele Finzi Pasca, quickly became one of its pillars. Her music is part of many of its shows, and she also performs as actress, dancer, stage director and choreographer. She studied composition with Paul Glass and dance with Rosalia Chladek.

Martin Labrecque—Lighting Design

Known for the originality and texture of his lighting, Martin Labrecque has worked on many stage plays and in television and dance. He has designed the lighting for more than 70 productions, and in 2001 he won the Masque for his work on *L'homme en lambeau* at Theatre l'Opis. *Rain* is his second collaboration with Daniele Finzi Pasca and Cirque Éloize.

Méridith Caron—Costume Design

Ms. Caron has designed sets and costumes for many major theatrical events in Montreal. She has close to 200 stage and film credits and has won Théâtre du Nouveau Monde's Gascon-Roux award, a Masque award, and several Gemini award for Best Costumes. She teaches art history and costume design at the National Theatre School of Canada and has been invited to the Stratford Festival since 1998.

Nicolas Descoteaux—Moving Lights Programmer

Since 1992, Mr. Descoteaux has created lighting for Canadian theatrical productions. He has collaborated with renowned artists Robert Lepage and Marie Chouinard, and has participated in many international tours and events in Quebec. He was nominated for awards by the Académie Québécoise du Théâtre in 1995 and 1998 and was a Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec winner in 1999 and 2001.

Roch Jutras—Artistic Coordination

Roch has performed on stage, in the ring, on television and in film. National Circus School's student of the year in 1985 he went on to perform with Cirque du Soleil's *La Magie Continue* in 1986 and *Cirque Réinventé* in 1987; joined Switzerland's Le Cirque Knie; and became Cirque Éloize's very first clown in 1994. As a member of *Cirque du Monde* he worked with street youth in Chile. Later he was artistic coordinator for Cirque du Soleil's *Dralion*.

Suzanne Trépanier – Make-up Designer

A dancer for the past two decades, Ms. Trepanier developed a deep interest in the art of make-up application. She concentrates primarily on theater, and also works in television and film. *Rain* is her third collaboration with Cirque Éloize.

Patrick Loubert – Assistant Director and Stage Manager

Mr. Loubert trained in set design at Collège Lionel-Groulx from 1992 to 2000. In 2002, he joined Cirque Éloize team to direct the American tour of *Nomade*. He is now tour manager for *Cavalía*.

Artists

*All artists sing and participate in group acts
in addition to their specialties*

Jean-Philippe Cuerrier (Russian bar, banquine, teeter board) was introduced to circus arts at age eight when he attended the Verdun Circus School and discovered a passion for acrobatics and juggling. He attended the National Circus School in Montreal. While perfecting his skills in his favorite disciplines, he mastered other apparatuses including the aerial cradle. He recently toured in Switzerland with the Circus Starlight. Jean-Philippe tries to pass on his first passion by teaching at the Verdun Circus School.

Jocelyn Bigras (Piano, lyra glockenspiel) studied classical repertoire before branching out into other genres. He has collaborated as musician, accompanist, programmer or arranger, in many studio and stage productions, and is also an author-composer and performer. He tours Quebec and France and has won many prestigious prizes for his songs and music. He joins Cirque Éloize after involvement in two original albums and is delighted by this opportunity for magical exchanges and collaboration.

Nadine Louis (Contortion, tissue, swinging clubs, strong acrobats number, teeter board, accordion) trained at the National Circus School in Montreal, then toured with the Cirque du Soleil for seven years. She and her three contortionist partners have received many awards. She has appeared on the Johnny Carson Show and performed the main role in the film *Satie and Suzanne*. She completed her studies in arts and communications at Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, then trained for four years in acting at the National Theatre School of Canada.

Stéphane Gentilini (Juggling, object manipulation, teeter board, strong acrobats number) is a native of France who began his training with street theatre groups. He entered the École Nationale de Cirque de Châtellerauld in 1998 where he specialized in juggling. This gained him admission to the National Circus School in Montreal. Since 2002 his work has focused on manipulation of objects.

Catherine Girard (Aerial hoop, double fix trapeze, tissue, teeter board, swinging clubs, saxophone) began classic ballet, gymnastics and theatre at age 4. After graduating from college in dance, she concentrated on circus, a discipline that combines all her interests. She studied with Cirque Éloize's Jean-Philippe Cuerrier at the National Circus School, with whom she now works in aerial cradle acts. She has also worked with the Circus Starlight in Switzerland and with the Tout Fou Tout Fly in France. She won a Bronze Award at the Festival de Tournai in Belgium in 2003.

Krin Maren Haglund (Roue Cyr, highwire, tissue, swinging clubs, teeter board, saxophone) fell deeply in love with the circus as a little girl. After years of ballet, modern dance, gymnastics, and climbing everything in sight, she discovered an emerging voice in physical performance. While continuing to dance, Krin studied in Japan for two years and completed her B.A. in pre-med and Asian languages at Smith College in Massachusetts. Then, she knew she had to give her childhood dream a chance and headed for San Francisco to train at the Circus Center, where she attended the Clown Conservatory and danced, acted and performed in circus shows including two seasons with the New Pickle Circus.

Aimée Janaan Hancock (Double fix trapeze, tissue, teeter board, strong acrobats number, solo trapeze, violin) found gymnastics too scripted and violin too subtle, but she discovered the world of the circus: the perpetual challenge of living intensely, the commotion, lights, applause, and all the visual pleasures. She began circus training at age 15, and has accumulated new skills through professional experience across Europe, America and the Caribbean. Firm in her belief in the potential of circus training, Aimée has flown with people from all walks of life pursuing trust, confidence, humanity and passion.

Jonas Woolverton (Roue Cyr, strong acrobats number, teeter board, rolling globe, accordion) is from New York City where he studied dance and theatre, played accordion in a circus-rock band, Circophonique!, and graduated with a B.A. in film production. When he saw Cirque Éloize's *Excentricus*, his life and career path were forever changed. San Francisco's Clown Conservatory at the Circus Center gave him the training he needed to realize his new ambition to master the enigmatic Cyr Wheel. He was hired to perform German Wheel and play accordion in the New Pickle Circus' *Circumstance*, which received rave reviews. He is ecstatic to be a part of the international ensemble of *Rain*. One day, Woolverton plans to combine his passion and circus experience with his love for making films.

Bartłomiej Pankau (Hand-to-hand, banquine, Russian bar, teeter board, strong acrobats number) was born in Poland and began doing Acro Sports at age 8. He placed first in international competition in Switzerland in 1997 and won several championships in Poland. He toured Europe with Ocelot's circus production, *Master* from 1999 to 2002, while he worked with Germany's Circus Sarassani during winters. Pankau met Jacek Wyskup at Ocelot, where they began their hand-balancing act. Pankau's first theatrical experience was in Verdi's opera *Nabucco*. More recently he performed in the play, *Ghetto* which toured Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Lichtenstein. He realizes a lifelong dream as a cast member of Cirque Éloize's *Rain*, which he considers a perfect fusion between circus and theater.

Oksana Burliiy (Banquine, Russian bar, teeter board, juggling & swinging clubs, tissue, tambourine) began studying acrobatics with her sister from age 6 in Kiev, Ukraine. Her passion for the discipline has never faded and she has been able to discover the world through her skills. She has performed her Russian bar act with many international circus companies such as Zaparojia, the Cirque Gasser Olympia (Switzerland), the Cirque Arlequin (Poland), Cirque Imagine and Zavata (France) and Cirque Voyage (Germany). Oksana was also a trainer for École de cirque Michellete in France before joining Cirque Éloize's production *Rain*.

Jacek Wyskup (Hand-to-hand, Russian bar, teeter board, strong acrobats number, cymbal) was born in a small town in Poland. He studied with two coaches who were world champions in Acro Sports. Wyskup became a full-time performer when he was hired by the legendary cabarets Winter Garten in Berlin and Apollo Variete in Düsseldorf, where he perfected the art of hand balancing. Wyskup and his partner, Bartek Pankau, mastered their hand-balancing act in their spare time when both were performing in the circus troupe, Ocelot.

Soundtrack

Maria Bonzanigo	Soundtrack coordination Le Divan Vert Recording & mixing studio (Montréal)
Michel Lambert	Sound Engineer Recorded in Switzerland in “La Darsena” at Matteo Mazza’s “La scima” Studio and in Montreal at Le Divan Vert

Musicians in Switzerland

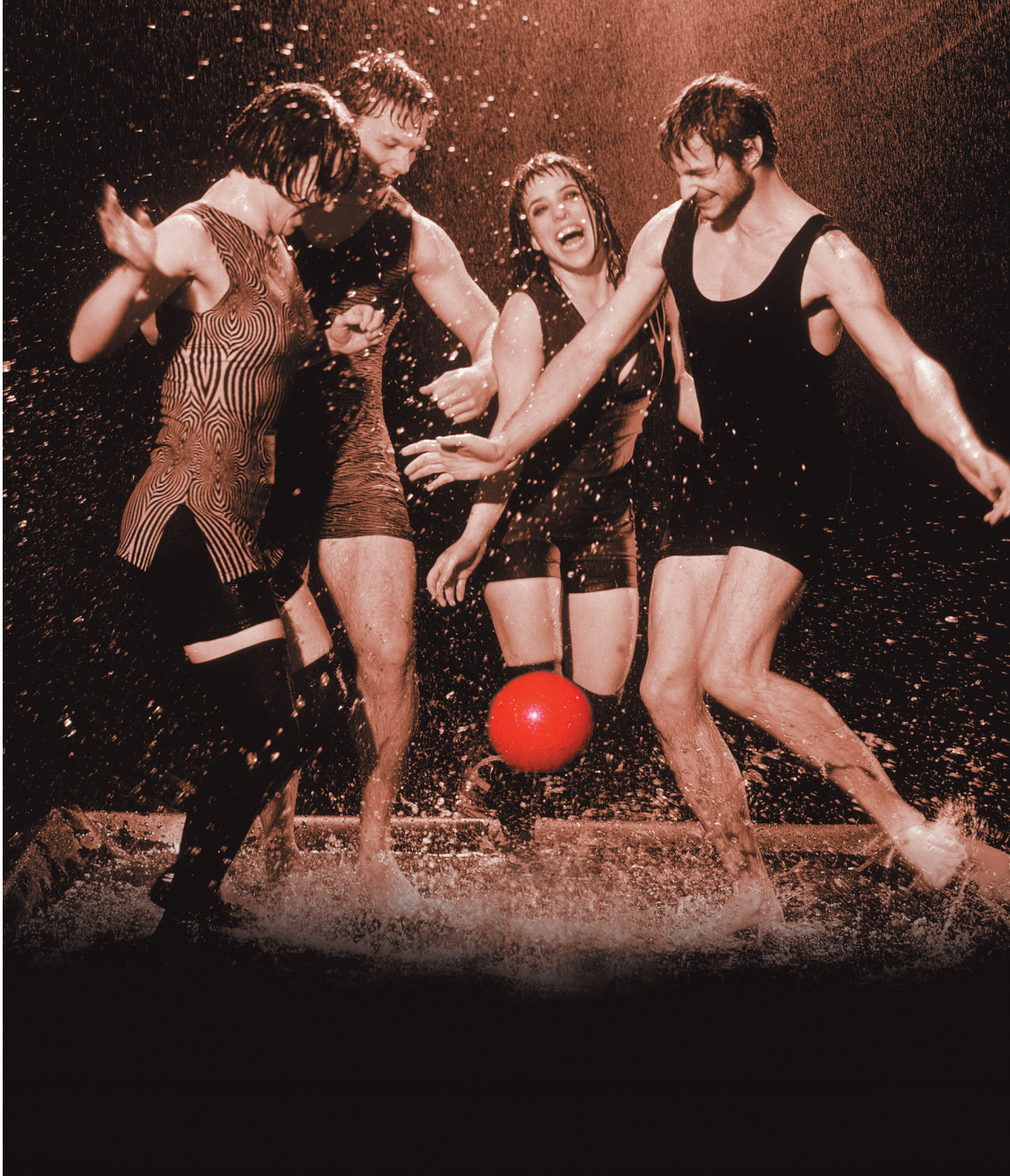
Pre-editing:	Rino Ross,
Mezzosoprano:	Yiping Li,
Violin:	Chunhe Gao, Yoko Miyagawa, Luisa Moraru, Viola: Gian Paolo Guatterì, Nancy Benda, Yoko Miyagawa,
Cello:	Johann S. Paetsch, Double bass: Anton Uhle,
Accordion:	Marco Fratantonio

Musicians in Montreal

Double bass:	Yannick Chênevert, Viola: Marie-Clairre Cousineau,
Accordion:	François Covan
Percussion:	Josianne Laporte
Violin:	François Pilon
Cello:	Sheila Hannigan

Interpretive Exercise

What is this picture about? You can use this exercise to start a class discussion; as a writing assignment; or even prior to the performance to imagine what the performance will be like.



Mandatory Credit: © Productions Éloïze 2004 - Solomon Krueger

Questions for Understanding

About the Art Form

Theatrical values and traditions are expressed in the performance of Cirque Éloize. Look and listen carefully to observe as many of these dramatic details as possible.

1 Name three things that contribute to the overall dramatic effect of the performance.

2 Is this performance light or dark? What is the importance of lighting on the action on the stage?

3 What do the costumes, sets, props and other design elements in this show make you think about?



6. About the Art Form: Circus as Theater

Cirque Éloïze is performed on a proscenium stage in a theater. It is character driven, with a storyline and a theme.

As a performing art, circus is theatrical. It can involve **lighting, props, sets, backdrops, costumes** and **make-up**. Some productions use all of these elements and may even be inspired by one or more of them, while others are staged with the simplest theatrical treatment. In either case, theatrical components are never used haphazardly or arbitrarily (although the use of such things might be limited by the budget), but are integral to the act's total logic. It is important to remember that lighting, set, prop and costume design are all arts unto themselves. Designers work in close collaboration with choreographers to create the desired theatrical effect.

The human eye responds first and foremost to **motion** and **light**. This means that for acts performed on a stage, lighting is particularly crucial. Lighting can define and shape a space; make one area of the stage seem stronger than another; single out one performer surrounded by many others; isolate one place from another; and determine the overall tone of the performance, be it warm, cold, bright, somber, etc. The lighting designer's primary tools are color (intensity and hue) and design. Sometimes film, slide projection and other media are incorporated into lighting design.

In circus, sets and props (shortened term for "properties") are integral members of the on-stage cast. In other cases, these elements might be purely decorative, intended to provide additional atmosphere

and detail.

Like props and sets, costume can define a performance historically, culturally, and/or environmentally. Costume has the unique ability to extend a performer's movement and/or affect the audience's perception of it. For example, Lois Fuller, a modern dance pioneer of the early 20th century, transformed herself through elaborate costumes into gorgeous, illusory birds, butterflies and spinning ornaments. Martha Graham created one of her most memorable dances, "Lamentations," to be performed while the dancer is seated on a bench, encased in stretch fabric manipulated to express the powerful emotional state embodied in the title of the dance.

Make-up can play a major or minor role on the stage. At the very least, it is used to highlight a performer's own facial features and expressions, which might otherwise look ill-defined under powerful stage lights or from the distance of the audience. It can also be used to draw attention to a particular feature, if such distinction is desired. Occasionally, make-up creates character, through extension of actual features or full-body transformations such as the Phantom in the stage production of "Phantom of the Opera." Kabuki Theater of Japan is well known for the transformational power of the actor's make-up, which is ritualistically applied hours before



performance.

All of these elements can also be used in tandem with the traditional circus arts of juggling, acrobatics, high-wire, etc. When they are combined, each is taken to a new level of performing arts expression, as you'll see with Cirque Éloize.

Visual Arts Exercise

Thinking Ahead:

Collecting Data for Visual Arts Exercises

Begin with a class discussion about the program the students will attend. Students can make a list of things to look for at the performance based on the descriptions of the artists, the performance, and the art form in the preceding chapters. This exercise will help them recall details when they return to the classroom.

Following the performance, students can use their memories to complete the following exercises. After the performance, students can use their collected perceptions to complete these visual arts exercises:

Elementary School

Draw a Scene: Choose a favorite scene from the performance. When you get back to school, you can draw a picture of it. What are the colors? How many performers? Are there both women and men, or is it just for men or women? How do they move their legs and arms? Are the performers telling a story? How can you show this in a drawing?

Middle School

Make a poster: Choose a scene from the most spectacular stunt to use as your centerpiece. What can you say about Cirque Eloize's performance that will make people want to see it? Remember to include the troupe's name, the dates, and the place. Are there other elements that should be on a poster?

Questions for Understanding

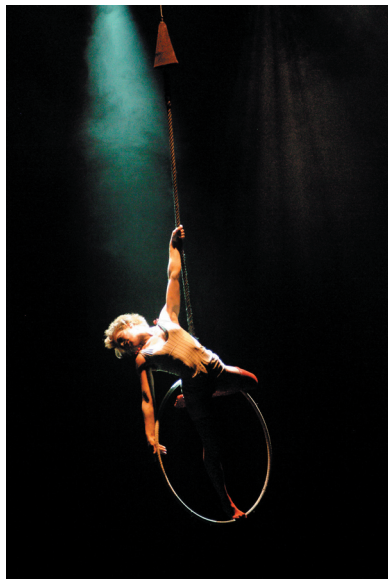
The Circus in History

History lessons can help students better understand the performing arts traditions used in Cirque Éloize, and to put this performance into historical context.

1 How has the circus changed over time? What were the first circuses like?

2 How does the circus compare and contrast with how circus acts are performed in different parts of the world?

3 What do modern circuses like Cirque Éloize incorporate from traditional circus acts? What qualities are new?



7. The Circus in History

While the performers of Cirque Éloize are young and innovative and their material is completely original, the source of their artistry comes from the rich history of circus, going back thousands of years.

Beginnings

The circus emerged more than 4,000 years ago on several continents in the ancient civilizations of Greece, Egypt, China, and Rome. Juggling, balancing, tumbling, horseback riding and clowning have always been part of the circus. Other elements over the ages have included menagerie (animal acts) sideshows, and the parade.

Historians have learned a lot about circus acts of long ago by studying paintings on ancient vases, bowls, palace walls and tombs. These include pictures of young men leaping over a bull's back entertaining nobles and other citizens. These ancient "bull-leapers" wore elaborate costumes, jewelry, hairdos, and make up, much like today's circus entertainers.

Familiar circus acts date back to about 2500 BC (about 4500 years ago). In Europe and Asia roaming acrobats, jugglers, magicians, musicians, and jesters roamed from village to village entertaining rich and poor people alike. New wonders were constantly added to keep the acts exciting. Juggling three balls evolved into juggling lighted torches; when seeing riders standing on running horses lost its thrill, riders learned to do somersaults; when elephants became a familiar sight, they were taught ballet.

Animals have been a part of the circus since the beginning. Imagine how exciting it must have been for people who had never traveled far from home to see animals from foreign lands! In many places, particularly in Europe, troupes of entertainers included bears, lions, elephants and horses.

Even though horses were familiar to many people as work animals and transportation, they were trained to work with trick riders performing stunts to make these acts more exciting.

Circus all over the world

China

In China, acrobatic skills still admired today date back more than 2500 years. First formally developed as entertainments for emperors at court, acrobats also became popular with the public at large. Acts were based on materials in people's everyday lives, and traditional acrobatic props include household items such as plates, bowls, vases, tables, chairs and bottles, or instruments of labor like wicker rings, benches, ladders and bicycles.



Chinese acrobat

Circus-type acrobatics have flourished in China over the centuries. Chinese acrobats are famous for plate spinning, contortionism, chair balancing, bicycle tricks, juggling and balancing large objects on their feet. In China today, acrobats are respected as artists, and the children of acrobats often follow in their parents' footsteps. Many accomplished troupes vie for the title of "National Acrobatic Company" and perform all over the world.

Rome

The ancient Romans (753 B.C.- 476 A.D.) were enthusiastic fans of spectacular entertainments, circus acts included. Stories and images from this era tell of jugglers, acrobats, fortune tellers and snake charmers. Trained animals performed on corners and squares as crowds gathered to watch. Tightrope walkers balanced high above the crowds. Entertainers from Asia were even imported to perform in the Roman Empire. Towards the end of the Roman Empire, people celebrated

so much that 175 days each year were devoted to festivals!

Two Roman emperors, Pompey and Julius Caesar, sponsored elaborate parades of exotic animals, pitting them against each other and against men in the ring. These were violent fights to the death, which attracted huge crowds and apparently thrilled the people of Rome.



Circus Maximus in Rome

Trained animals delighted Romans in the amphitheaters. Elephants danced, sat at tables, fought like gladiators, walked across ropes, and wrote holding the writing implement in their trunks. Bears fought and danced; cranes, wild bulls, lions, tigers, leopards, boars and wolves were all trained to perform, as lions, tigers and elephants are in some of today's circuses.



Roman circuses were well publicized. Big parades marched through the city, featuring the patron of the circus dressed in his flowing toga and riding his glittering chariot. Soldiers, animals in cages, musicians, statues of gods on ornately-decorated chariots, priests, acrobats, gladiators, and riders provided a spectacle attracting the populace to the performances.

Europe



After the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D., European artistic and scientific growth slowed down in an era now known as the Middle Ages. Even during this “cultural darkness,” small groups of traveling performers journeyed from town to town to perform in market places or noblemen’s courtyards. They would draw their wagons into a wide circle to use as stages to juggle, walk tightropes or swallow fire—whatever it would take to draw

a crowd. Sometimes there were dancing dogs and bears, equestrian acts, contortionists and clowns.

Most people in those days lived and worked their whole lives in one small village; they didn't travel or see any new people. It was the most exciting event in their lives when a circus came to town. Imported animals from conquered or newly explored lands were truly an amazing sight, as were the entertainers performing exciting feats of derring-do.



A model of a circus wagon

During the era known as the Renaissance (1400-1600s A.D.), culture flourished, and art, science and beauty were celebrated. The “age of exploration” opened European culture to previously unknown ideas and areas of the world. Florence, Italy was the center of the Renaissance, and splendid festivals and parades included many of the theatrical elements of the circus.



*“Pulcinella,” a stock comic figure
from Italian theater Commedia dell’Arte*

A theatrical form known as *Commedia dell’Arte*—improvised theater based upon stock characters, scenarios and pratfalls—contained many comic characters such as Harlequin that have evolved into standard archetypal clowns. Later, in English Pantomime, a style of theater based on the *Commedia dell’Arte*, John Rich completed the evolution of Harlequin to a starring position, while new characters evolved to assume the supporting roles. One of these was the white-face clown.

Modern Circus

In the mid 1700s, Philip Astley, an officer of the British Cavalry who was enthusiastic about fancy riding, combined trick horseback riding with performers including acrobats, rope-walkers (*pictured*), clowns and musicians. He covered the ring with a shed, added seats, and the modern circus was born. Astley's business boomed, and he eventually established eighteen circuses in Europe. An Italian family, Antonio Franconi and his sons, took over Astley's French circus and built it into the biggest circus of its day. Their descendents became one of the most famous circus dynasties in Europe.

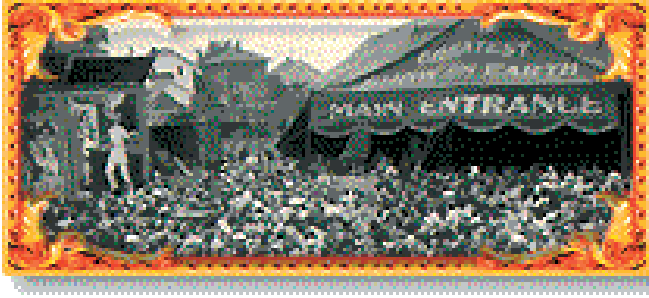


Circus, with horse tricks, clowns, rope walking and juggling, came to the United States in 1785, with the first performance in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Theater at the time was considered silly and sinful, so to attract audiences, promoters added educational pageants with performers acting out bible stories and historical dramas, or portraying ancient Egyptians.

The old-style, permanent equestrian shows were replaced by rolling shows that pitched their tents on village greens, which led to the current tented circuses. An American contribution, this kind of circus was started as a showcase for Old Bet (*pictured*), an African elephant purchased by



Hackaliah Bailey in 1815. Old Bet was such a hit with the local population that Bailey arranged to buy more exotic animals. Traveling at night to avoid free spectators, Bailey's show took place in barns or other buildings. When "Uncle Nate" Howes



acquired Old Bet, he exhibited her in a tent with a round canvas top—the first recorded use of the “big top.”

In the mid-1800s, P.T. Barnum, an amazing businessman, opened his first circus in Brooklyn, New York. Later, he joined with James A. Bailey to create “Barnum and Bailey, The Greatest Show on Earth.” Their circus featured all the elements of animal acts, tumbling, juggling, aerial acts and clowning, as well as a sideshow where people came to gawk at giants, midgets, Siamese twins, the fattest man on earth, the oldest woman in the world and a mermaid. At the turn of the 20th century, another prominent circus bought “The Greatest Show on Earth” to form the enormous circus we know today.

Traditional Circus Life

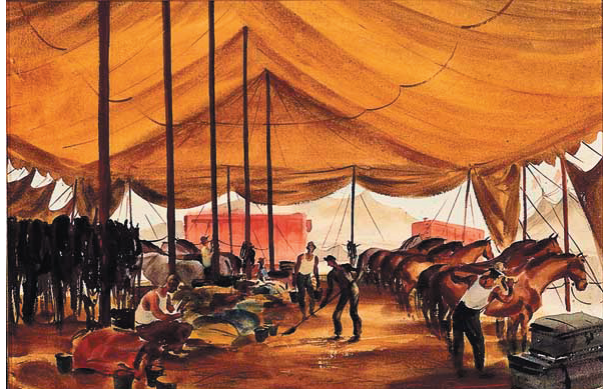
A lot of hard work goes into a traveling show, starting with a late-night arrival in town, followed by setting up the equivalent of a small city just a few hours before the public starts arriving for the first performance. While crews set up the standard tent, seating, and production equipment, performers are typically responsible for setting up their own rigging. There can be as many as one or two performances on set-up day, two on weekdays, and three on weekends. Then everything is taken apart and packed into trucks, and everyone hits the road to the next town. Many circuses perform this entire ritual every day (“one-night stands”) regardless



of weather, fatigue, or the presence or absence of paying customers.

Circus folk form a very close-knit community due to the amount of work and interdependence involved, and limited contacts outside of the show. Children are schooled by their

parents; holidays are often celebrated en masse; and weddings in the center ring are not uncommon. Many circus performers, even today, come from circus families. Some of these families can be traced back for more than nine generations, and they often intermarry. Other circus performers train at circus schools and form their own circus “families,” like the members of Cirque Éloize.



A painting of a workers in a circus tent

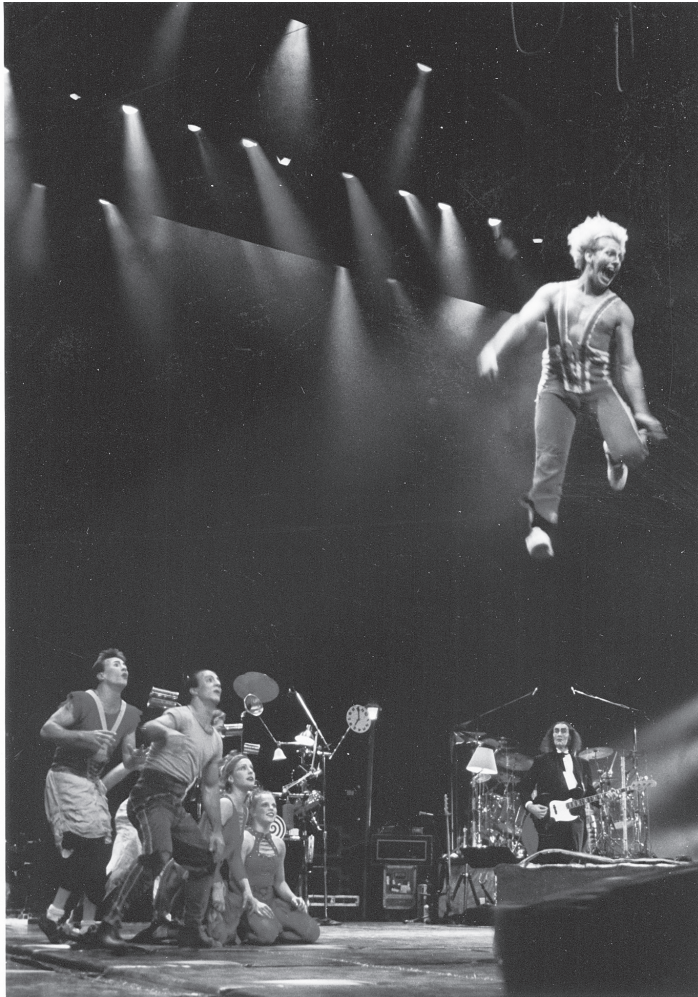
The New “European-Style” Circus

Today in Europe and North America, the circus is considered a dignified art. Circus troupes tour worldwide—they are today’s version of traveling minstrels. They perform imaginative, theatrical acts that combine



Cirque Éloize’s Eccentricus

dance, mime, acrobatics, juggling and more. These entertainers combine the traditional circus arts with traditions of the theater, and have created a new theatrical art form of circus arts, characters, narratives and live music. This type of circus does not usually include animals. Cirque du Soleil and Cirque Éloize (both Canadian) are two examples of this style of circus, although Cirque Éloize moves further into the theatrical realm by staging its acts on a proscenium stage in a theater instead of in the traditional circus tent and ring.



Left: A typical Cirque Éloize moment on stage.

Below: A poster for a traditional circus, with the trains, animals, and hubbub of a circus arriving in town.



Social Studies/Writing

Elementary School Level:

After the performance, think about the stories, music, dance and drama that are a part of the performance by Cirque Éloize.

- * Write a journal from the point of view of one of the performers as he or she travels the world on tour with Cirque Éloize.
- * Write a letter to one of the creators or performers of Cirque Éloize. What would you like to ask him or her?

Middle School Level:

Compare and contrast the performance elements of Cirque Éloize to other shows you have seen or an art form that you practice yourself (i.e. a musical instrument or rock band, gymnastics, dance, juggling, poetry; etc). Then, select one writing topic:

- * Write a short story about your ideas for a staged performance.
- * Using what you have learned about life in the circus, compare and contrast your impressions about performers' lives in a traditional circus and Cirque Éloize.

8. *SchoolTime* Evaluation Form for Teachers

It is important for us to hear about your *SchoolTime* experience. Your comments help us plan future presentations and write reports to our funders about this vital program.

Cirque Éloize

SchoolTime performance, Monday, January 31, 2005

Your School _____ Grade Level _____

Your Name (optional) _____

How many *SchoolTime* performances have you attended in the past? _____

Was this Study Guide useful in preparing your students for the show? If yes, how so? If not, please recommend elements you would use instead.

What was your students' reaction to the performance? Did the class discuss the experience afterwards?

Was the performance useful or appropriate for your curriculum? Was the Study Guide useful in terms of your curriculum? In what ways?

Are the performing arts part of your school's curriculum? ___Yes ___No
Which ones? ___Music ___Dance ___Theater _____Other (explain)

Cal Performances appreciates seeing student
work based on *SchoolTime* performances! Send to:
Laura Abrams, Cal Performances, 101 Zellerbach Hall, UCB, 94720-4800
eduprograms@calperfs.berkeley.edu
Thank you!

9. *SchoolTime* Evaluation Form for Students

Cirque Éloize

SchoolTime performance, Monday, January 31, 2005

Your School _____ Grade Level _____

Did you know anything about this performance before you came to see it?
How was the performance different from or the same as you expected it to be?

Did you have a favorite part of the show? Explain your favorite part and why you liked it. Was there anything you didn't like?

After seeing the performance, what can you say about the performers?
If you can't think of anything to write, describe their costumes or their skills.

Do you take classes in any of these performing arts, or practice any of them for your own enjoyment?

_____Dance _____Music _____Theater _____Singing

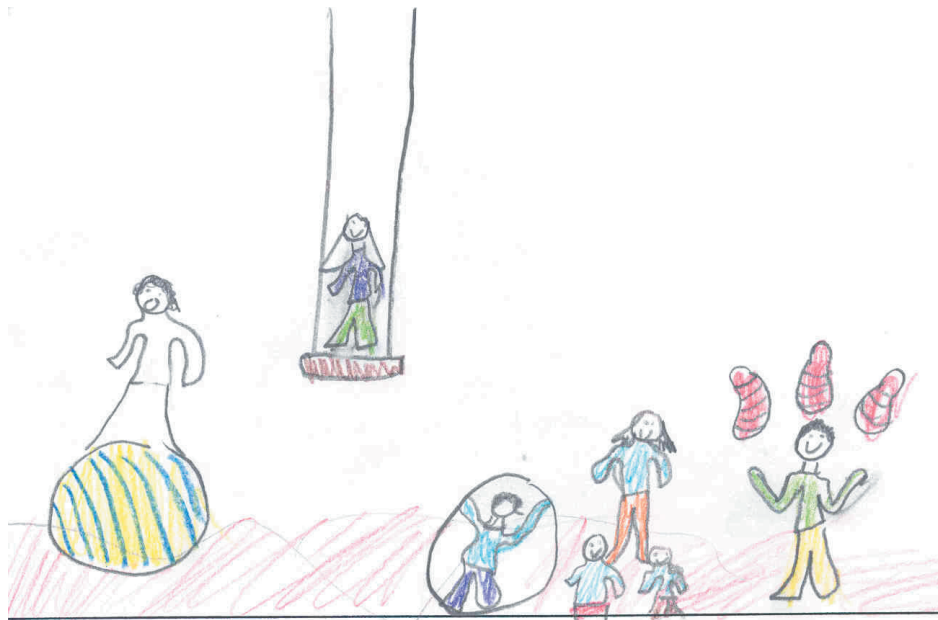
Would you like to? ____Yes ____No

YOUR OPINION COUNTS!

How did you like the show?

We'd love to see your
class work, letters and artwork!

Send materials to Laura Abrams, Cal Performances
Manager of Education and Community Programs
101 Zellerbach Hall #4800
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720-4800
eduprograms@calperfs.berkeley.edu



This Cal Performances *SchoolTime* Study Guide was
written, edited and designed by
Laura Abrams, Marti Stephen,
Maggie MarkdaSilva and Nicole Anthony
Copyright © 2004 Cal Performances