

SchoolTime 06/07



dance music theater

Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY



Study Guide Moscow Circus

Friday, November 3, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.

Zellerbach Hall



About Cal Performances and *SchoolTime*

The mission of Cal Performances is to inspire, nurture and sustain a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Cal Performances, the performing arts presenter of the University of California, Berkeley, fulfills this mission by presenting, producing and commissioning outstanding artists, both renowned and emerging, to serve the University and the broader public through performances and education and community programs. In 2005/06 Cal Performances celebrates 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

Our *SchoolTime* program cultivates an early appreciation for and understanding of the performing arts amongst our youngest audiences, with hour-long, daytime performances by the same world-class artists who perform as part of the main season. Teachers have come to rely on *SchoolTime* as an integral and important part of the academic year.



Sponsors of Cal Performances Education and Community Programs

Cal Performances' Education and Community Programs are supported by Berkeley Community Fund, California Arts Council, California Savings Bank, Citigroup Foundation, City of Berkeley Civic Arts Program, East Bay Community Foundation, Robert J. and Helen H. Glaser Family Foundation, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, McKesson Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The San Francisco Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, Western States Arts Federation, and The Zellerbach Family Foundation.

Welcome



October 19, 2006

Dear Educators and Students,

Welcome to *SchoolTime*! On **Friday, November 3, 2006**, at **11:00 a.m.**, you will attend the *SchoolTime* performance by the **Moscow Circus** at Zellerbach Hall on the UC Berkeley campus.

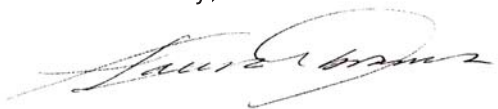
Circus dates back to the 1700s in Russia, and Moscow has traditionally been an important center of circus arts. The highly trained artists of Moscow Circus will amaze and amuse your class with centuries-old Russian feats and folklore performed by acrobats, equilibrists (hand balancers), contortionists, human puppets and clowns, plus Russian singers, dancers and music.

This study guide will prepare your students for their field trip to Zellerbach Hall. Your students can actively participate at the performance by:

- OBSERVING how the performers use their bodies
- MARVELING at the skill demonstrated by the the performers
- THINKING ABOUT all the ways circus is a theatrical art
- REFLECTING on the sounds, sights, and performance skills experienced at the theater

We look forward to seeing you at *SchoolTime*!

Sincerely,



Laura Abrams
Director, Education & Community Programs

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1 Theater Etiquette

Be prepared and arrive early Ideally you should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time and parking, and plan to be in your seats at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

Be aware and remain quiet The 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! Even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering, can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. 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 return their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience at the end of the show. It is always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it is 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 is focused while watching the performance, the artists feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!



2

About the Performance

Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What can we learn about Russian culture by watching the Moscow Circus?
- ♦ What are some different ways a story can be told?
- ♦ Who are the performers and what do they do?

The Moscow Circus presents centuries-old Russian fables and traditions told through a circus performance that will feature music, singing and amazing feats. Acrobats, contortionists, equilibrists, gymnasts and clowns will entertain and amaze with their ability to juggle, balance, dance, bend, twist and soar. Unlike most circuses which are performed in three separate “rings” or performance spaces in a large space like a sports arena, the Moscow Circus will perform on a proscenium stage in a theater setting.

The audience will walk into the theater and step into Russian culture. Circus artists and costumed characters will interact with the students in the lobby, adding an up-close and personal aspect to their experience of the circus performance. A trio of musicians, performing traditional Russian tunes on the balalaika, accordion and wooden spoons, will also play instrumental accompaniment and sing folk songs during the performance.



3

About the Artists

Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What kinds of skills and training do performers in a circus need to have?
- ♦ Do you think these performers are athletes, dancers, actors or a combination?



Vladimir Plugatar and Irina Pluhatar are both clowns, costumed performers who entertain with jokes and tricks. The team has performed for audiences of children and adults all over the world.

Sergey Toropov is an equilibrist or hand-balancer. Equilibrists perform feats of balance, defying gravity and holding themselves in unusual positions. Toropov trained at the State College of Circus in Moscow. Evgeny Vasilenko is a loose-rope equilibrist, another kind of balancer. He is a talented balance acrobat who performs his feats using ropes. Vasilenko is also trained as a dancer.

Andrei Lochkine is a dog trainer and an acrobat. He has worked as an acrobat, gymnast, equilibrist, juggler and animal trainer. In this show, he performs acrobatic feats, and so does Vasya, his dog!

Anna Mohkova and Julia Lopatkina are an acrobatic duo. Both trained as professional acrobats, they have competed on acrobatic teams and performed together since 1997. This tour is their debut with the Moscow Circus.

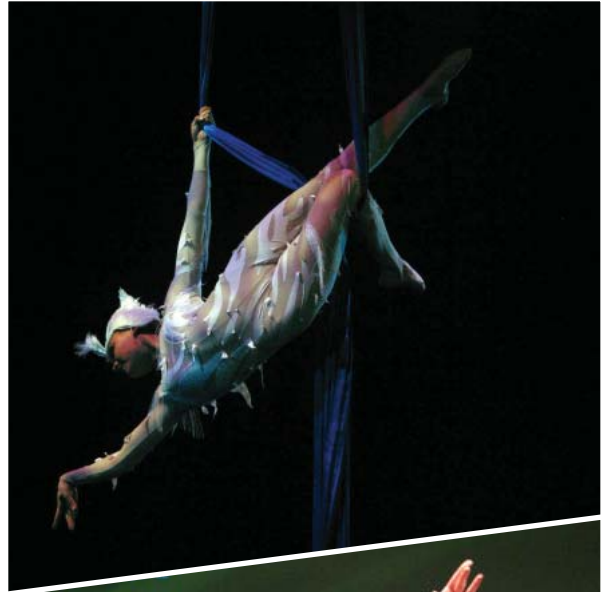
The Moscow Circus also features several kinds of gymnasts. Anna Stenyaeva is an aerial rings gymnast. She completes acrobatic feats in the air while keeping props spinning. Mykola Danyliv is an aerial straps gymnast. His act is performed suspended in the air by straps. Irina Khorkova is a silk aerial gymnast. She performs tricks while suspended in the air from long pieces of silk. Oleksandr Aniskin, Oleg Abramchuk, Igor Baybak,

Oleksiy Kryachek and Oleksandr Seleznev are a team of gymnasts from Kiev, Ukraine. They perform their tricks on the trampoline and horizontal bars.

Daria Bogdanova is an award-winning contortionist. A contortionist is very flexible and is able to move his or her muscles, limbs and joints into unusual positions.

Lev Rojouleia is a dancer and juggler. The child of a circus performer, he studied math, physics and acting in addition to dance and juggling. In addition to his work with the circus, he performs regularly as a professional dancer.

Musicians of the Smirnov Folk Band, including Rudolf Smirnov (accordion), Sergey Shchudlyuk (balalaika) and Sergey Krasnokutskiy (bass balalaika) provide musical accompaniment for the Moscow Circus performance. They perform Russian folk songs on traditional Russian instruments.



4

About the Art Form

Guiding Questions:

- ◆ How has the circus changed over time?
- ◆ How do circuses differ from country to country?
- ◆ How is the Moscow Circus unique?



What Is a Circus?

A circus is a group of performers that typically includes acrobats, clowns, jugglers, daredevils, and often, trained animals. Circuses usually travel from place to place to perform, and are set up in large open spaces, such as sports arenas, or are held in large tents. A circus performance is led by a ringmaster who acts as a narrator and introduces each performer. Most circuses have their own musicians or bands.

The circus is a theatrical performing art. It can involve lighting, props, sets, backdrops, costumes and makeup. Some

productions use all of these elements, but others are very simple. Lighting, set, prop and costume designers work closely with choreographers to create a specific mood or theatrical effect. Costumes and makeup are also important in a circus. Costumes help define a character, but they also affect a performer's movement or the way the audience sees the movement. Makeup can highlight a performer's own facial features, and it can also be used to exaggerate a particular feature or to create a transformation. As you watch the show, compare the makeup of the clowns to graceful aerial artists and gymnasts, to see whether you can tell what effect the makeup is intended to have.

When Did Circuses Begin?

Historians believe the circus began more than 4,000 years ago in ancient Greece, China, Egypt and Rome. Horse racing, juggling, balancing, tumbling, and clowning have always been a part of circuses. Historians have learned a lot about these circuses by examining paintings of circus acts on ancient vases, palace walls, and tombs. In Europe and Asia, circus performers traveled from village to village, entertaining rich and poor alike with their amazing acts. 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 on horseback.

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. Circus animals typically included bears, lions and elephants. Horses were also featured in circuses. Although they were familiar to many people as work animals and transportation, circus horses were trained to work with riders who performed stunts to make these acts more exciting.

History of the Russian Circus

Although in America the circus is thought of as entertainment, in Russia the circus is a well-respected art form—as important as ballet or opera. The Russian circus has a long history that began in the late 1700s during the rule of Catherine the Great. During her reign, an Englishman named Charles Hughes brought circus entertainers to perform in her court. Catherine the Great loved the performance so much that she ordered circus rings to be built in order to highlight Hughes' circus. Although Hughes eventually returned to England, his performers stayed in Russia, starting the tradition of the Russian Circus.

The circus became very popular in Russia. In the 19th century, it was the primary form of entertainment. In 1880, the Nikulin Moscow Circus was formed. Soon after its founding, Russian underwent many political changes. A great revolution took place, a civil war broke out and the Communist government took power. In 1922, Russia became the Soviet Union. The new government did not want its citizens to be influenced by



any ideas that went against its policies, so restrictions were imposed on the kinds of art and entertainment that people could experience.



However, the Communist government believed all people should be equal, and disagreed with anything that represented social class. Because it was enjoyed by people of all ages, races, education levels and classes, the Soviet government approved of the circus. Although circus performers required skills and creativity, performing in the circus did not require sophistication. Governmental approval led to the creation of State circus schools, which trained high-quality circus performers and to maintain a high quality circus tradition in Russia.

Beginning in the 1950s, Russian circuses traveled to perform in the United States and Europe. Prior to the end of Communism in Russia in the early 1990s, Russia was home to 70 permanent circuses and 50 traveling circuses. The Moscow Circus continues to thrive—it recently celebrated its 120th anniversary.



Circuses around the World

China

In China, acrobatic skills still admired today date back more than 2500 years. Acrobatic performances began as folk entertainment and later became popular with emperors. Acts were based on everyday materials, such as plates, vases, chairs, ladders and bicycles, which were all used as props for performances. Today, circus-style acrobatics still

flourish in China. Chinese acrobats are well-respected as artists, and are famous for plate spinning, contortionists, chair balancing and bicycle tricks.

Ancient Rome

The citizens of ancient Rome (743 BCE to 476 CE) were fans of many kinds of spectacular entertainment, including the circus. Stories from this era tell of jugglers and acrobats, trained animals performing in squares and amphitheaters, and tightrope walkers. Special buildings were built just for circus performances; the first building was called Circus Maximus. Roman circuses were well loved and well publicized. Parades promoting circus performances marched through the city, encouraging people to attend. Two Roman emperors, Pompey and Julius Caesar, sponsored violent performances of exotic animals. Animals fought against each other and even against human beings as large crowds watched.

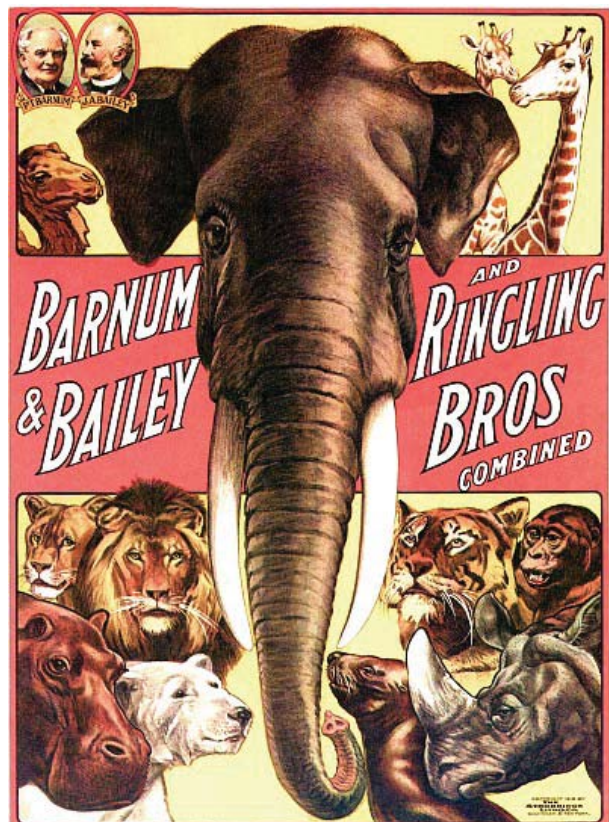
Europe

After the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE, small groups of traveling performers journeyed from town to town to perform in marketplaces or noblemen's courtyards. They drove their wagons into a circle to create a stage for acts such as juggling or tightrope walking. Later, during the era known as the Renaissance (1400-1600s CE), culture flourished and art, science and beauty were celebrated. Florence, Italy was the center of the Renaissance, and Florence's splendid festivals and parades included many theatrical elements of the circus.

America

The circus gained popularity in the United States in the late 1700s, and American circus owners like P.T. Barnum added the display of bizarre human characteristics (such as midgets, giants and conjoined twins) to the circus tradition. America also influenced circuses in other ways. Horse shows were replaced by acts featuring exciting props, as well as by complicated acrobatics and tricks of strength and skill that involved large numbers of performers.

Circuses are still changing today. For example, the use of animals in circuses has become controversial. Animal rights groups discovered that some circuses treat the animal performers cruelly, and in response, many countries have banned or limited the use of animals in circuses.

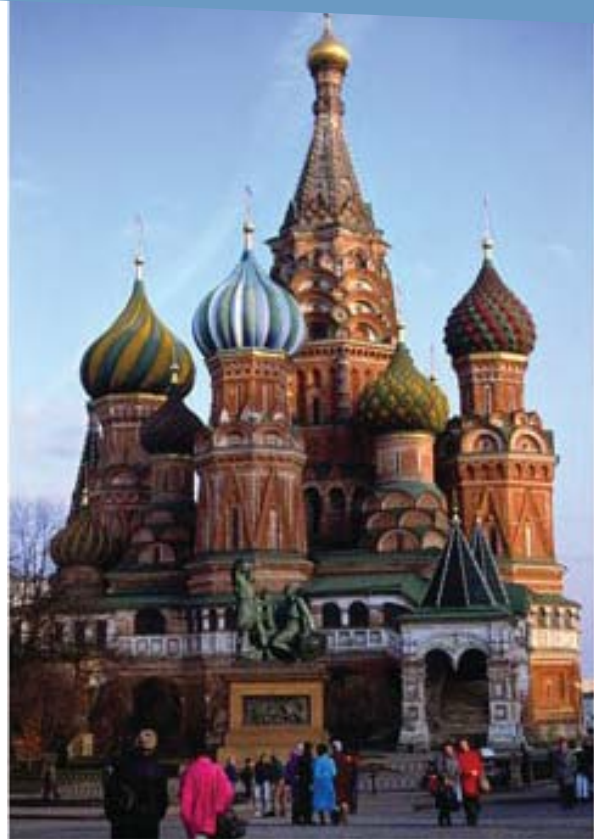


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About Russia

While Russia is physically the biggest sovereign nation in the world, it has the world's 8th largest population with roughly 141,862,00 people. Russia has 17,075,400 square kilometers of territory and shares a boarder with 14 other countries, and is even very close to Alaska in the United States, separated only by a small body of water called the Bering Strait.

Due to its latitude, the majority of Russia experiences only two seasons; winter and summer. The extreme nature of Russia's climate impacts all aspects of Russian society, from the type of food that can be grown where and when, to the materials used in building houses and machinery. Russian people have learned to live in the harshness of 48 degrees





below Fahrenheit freezing winters and 100 degree Fahrenheit summers. The average temperature in Russia is below freezing.

Moscow, the capital of Russia, is home to 7% of Russia's total population, making it the largest city in all of Europe. Moscow is the country's political, economic, financial, educational and transportation center. Throughout history, Moscow has been an important and vital city, especially in the performing arts.

As Russia's heart of music, dance, and theater, Moscow is home to the world famous Bolshoi Ballet and Moscow International House of Music. There are also two large circuses in Moscow, the Moscow State Circus and Moscow Circus on Tsvetnoy Boulevard. The Moscow Circus on Tsvetnoi Boulevard was the only circus in Moscow between 1926 and 1971, and it remains popular today.



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Learning Activities

Performance and Culture

Discussion:

The Moscow Circus portrays Russian fables and traditions through a circus performance. Can you describe a story featured in the performance? How do the performers tell the story? How is this different from other forms of storytelling?

The Moscow Circus has elements of Russian culture and heritage. What elements of Russian culture did you notice? What did you learn about Russian culture by watching this circus? How might the circus be different if it were from a different country? What elements would change and how?

Art as Social Commentary

Post performance discussion:

Animals have been a part of circuses since ancient times. However, some countries are now limiting or prohibiting the use of animals in the circus.

What are some reasons animals should be used in circuses? What are some reasons for banning animals from circuses?

Write a persuasive essay or public service announcement that states your opinion and makes a clear argument to support it.

Post performance activity:

Historically, circuses have presented acts that are unusual or amazing. The circuses of ancient Rome displayed

exotic animals, most circuses feature acrobats and jugglers, and some circuses even show humans with unusual characteristics. What part of the Moscow Circus did you find most amazing or unusual? Why?

Visual Arts

Discussion and Activity:

If you were going to create your own circus, what special kinds of amazing acts would you feature? Explain your choices, and create a poster advertising your amazing acts. Along with a fabulous illustration, remember to include the name, date, time, place and other important details

Vocabulary Builder

Practice dictionary skills and build vocabulary. Look through the *SchoolTime* study guide and make a list of unfamiliar words. Check the glossary on page 14, and then use a dictionary to look up the meaning of words. Write and share sentences using your newly learned words.

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Glossary

acrobat: a skilled performer of gymnastic feats, as walking on a tightrope or swinging on a trapeze

adeptness: skillful performance or ability without difficulty

aerial: in the air

balalaika: Russian musical instrument with a triangular body and three strings that produces sounds similar to those of a mandolin.

banned: to be prohibited, forbidden, not allowed

choreographer: a person who creates dance compositions and plans and arranges patterns of movements for dances

clowns: a comic performer, as in a circus, who wears an outlandish costume and makeup and entertains by doing exaggerated or ridiculous acts

contortionists: a flexible performer able to move muscles, limbs and joints into unusual positions.

controversial: a topic that is highly debatable since there are many different views and feelings connected to the topic

debut: the first public appearance of something

equilibrist: one who performs acts of balance

exaggerate: to increase or enlarge abnormally

fable: a story that where the characters in the story learn a valuable lesson

gymnast: a person highly trained to display strength, balance and agility

narrator: one who tells the story

proscenium: the area of a modern theater that is located between the curtain and the orchestra

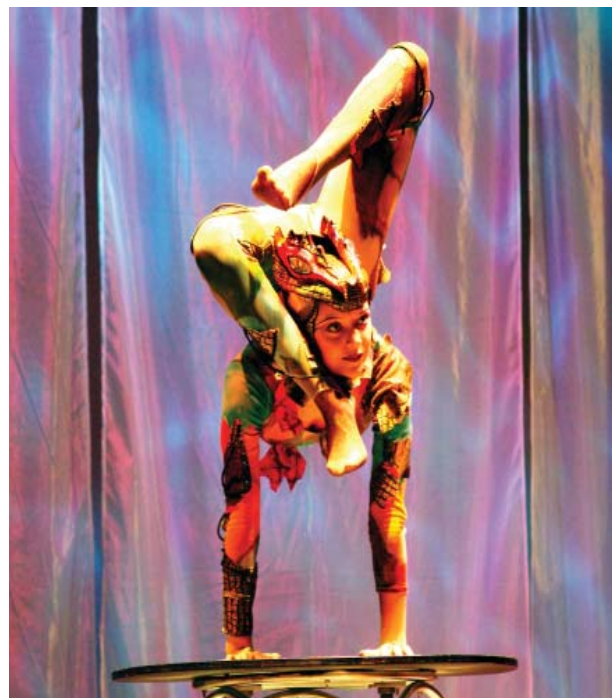
ringmaster: person in charge of the performances in a circus ring

social class: a range of people who are grouped together based on economic, cultural, or political status

somersault: a stunt in which the body rolls forward or backward in a complete circle with the knees bent and the feet coming over the head

sovereign: self-governing, independent, able to exercise supreme authority

vocalist: a singer



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California State Standards

Theater Grades K-12

1.0 Artistic Perception

Processing, Analyzing and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Theater

Students observe their environment and respond, using the elements of theater. They also observe formal and informal works of theater, film/video and electronic media and respond, using the vocabulary of theater.

Comprehension and Analysis of the Elements of Theater

1.2 Identify the structural elements of plot (exposition, complication, crisis, climax, and resolution) in a script of theatrical experience.

2.0 Creative Expression

Creating, Performing and Participating in Theater

Students apply processes and skills in acting, directing, designing and script writing to create formal and informal theater, film/videos and electronic media productions and to perform in them.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Theater

Students analyze the role and development of theater, film/video and

electronic media in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting diversity as it relates to theater.

Role and Cultural Significance of Theater

3.2 Interpret how theater and storytelling forms (past and present) of various cultural groups may reflect their beliefs and traditions.

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Theater, Film/Video and Electronic Media to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers

Students apply what they learn in theater, film/video and electronic media across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and time management that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to theater.





This Cal Performances *SchoolTime* Study Guide was written, edited and designed by Laura Abrams, Nicole Anthony, Janine Okmin.
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