



dance music theater

Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

2008-2009 Season

# *SchoolTime Study Guide*



## Circus Oz

Friday, February 6, 2009 at 11 a.m.  
Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley



# Welcome to *SchoolTime*!

On **Friday, February 6 at 11:00 a.m.**, your class will attend a performance by **Circus Oz of Australia**.

Along with traditional circus acts of juggling, tumbling, and balancing, Circus Oz performs daring physical feats in their distinctive style, mixed with Aussie humor and original live music.

## Using This Study Guide

This study guide is designed to engage your students with the performance and enrich their field trip to Zellerbach Hall.

Before coming to the performance, we encourage you to:

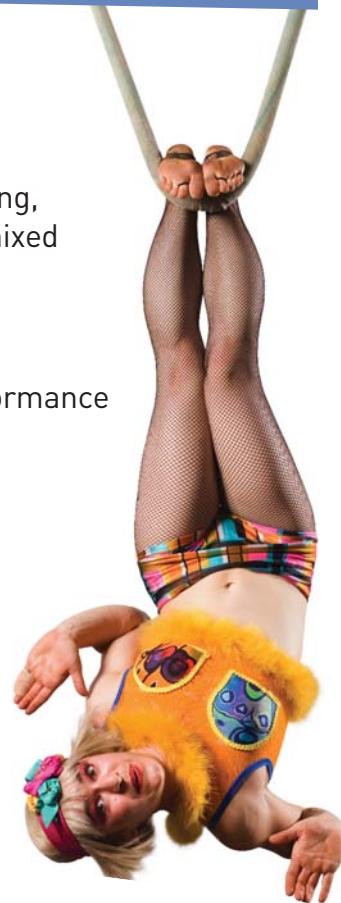
- **Copy** the student resource sheet on pages 2-3 and hand it out to your students several days before the show.
- **Discuss** the information on pages 4-7 about the performance and the artists with your students.
- **Read** to your students from About the Art Form on page 8-10 and About Australia on page 12-14.
- **Assign** two or more of the activities on pages 15-17 to your students.
- **Reflect** with your students by asking them guiding questions, which you can find on pages 4,6,8, and 12.
- **Immerse** students further into the art form by using the resource and glossary sections on pages 17-18.

## At the performance:

Students can actively participate during the performance by:

- **OBSERVING** how the performers use their bodies, and how they work together
- **NOTICING** how the music, lights and sound are used to enhance the acts
- **MARVELING** at the skill, technique and preparation required by the performers
- **THINKING ABOUT** all the ways circus is a theatrical art
- **REFLECTING** on the sounds and sights experienced at the theater.

We look forward to seeing you at *SchoolTime*!



# Table of Contents



1. Theater Etiquette	1
2. Student Resource Sheet	2
3. About the Performance	4
4. About the Artists	6
5. About the Art Form	8
6. About Australia	12
7. Learning Activities	15
8. Glossary	18
9. California State Standards	19
About <i>SchoolTime</i>	20



“ The essence of The Circus is probably diversity combined with cooperation— a lesson for the planet. ”

— Circus Oz

# 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.** These artists use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience is focused while watching the performance, they feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!

**Please note:** *Backpacks and lunches are not permitted in the theater. Bags will be provided for lobby storage in the event that you bring these with you. There is absolutely no food or drink permitted in the seating areas. Recording devices of any kind, including cameras, cannot be used during performances. Please remember to turn off your cell phone.*



# 2 Student Resource Sheet

Circus Oz

## Questions to Think About During the Performance

- What makes Circus Oz unique?
- How is Circus Oz different from a “Big Top” circus?
- What skills do the performers need to develop to be part of the company?
- What ideas do you think Circus Oz is trying to share through their performance?

## What You’ll See

You will be attending the *SchoolTime* performance of Circus Oz’ *30th Birthday Bash!* in Zellerbach Hall. Known for their high energy and zany sense of humor, members of the troupe will juggle, balance on tall poles and giant see-saws, spin inside a giant wheel, swing on a trapeze high in the air, twist their bodies into unbelievable shapes, and perform other amazing acrobatic feats. Singers and musicians playing live music add to the fun, as do the troupe’s comedy bits, outrageous costumes, and theatrical lights and sound.

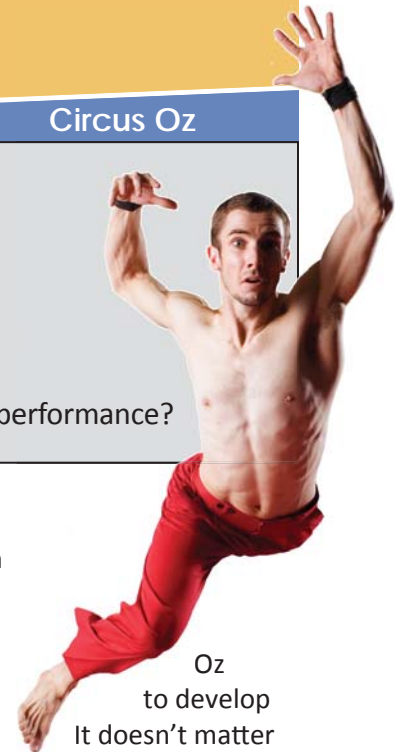
## About Circus Oz

Created in Australia in 1978, Circus Oz took its name from a slang term for Australia – “Oz.” All the the performers pitched in to start the company. They sewed their own costumes, built their show tent and props, and drove their trucks from town to town. Unlike many traditional circus companies, there were no “stars.” Everyone in the ensemble (performance group) had an equal role and worked together to make the show a success. Soon they realized their cooperation, teamwork and sense of equality was central to who they were as a company, and to what they believed.

While performers in traditional acrobatic companies only work on their special skill, Circus encourages its members several different skills. if certain feats are of as “male” or “female.” In Circus Oz’s show, acts usually reserved for men—like the *Bricksmash*, where concrete slabs are broken on the performer’s stomach—are often performed by women.

Circus Oz has an equal number of men and women in the company, and their bodies are all different shapes and sizes. When a company member leaves, instead of finding someone with the same set of skills, Circus Oz looks for a performer who has his or her own special talents and who is creative, friendly and works well with everyone else in the group. Then, they create new material around the performer’s skills and personality. Circus Oz has performed all over the world—from Broadway in New York, to refugee camps in the Middle East, to a glass opera house in the Brazilian rainforest.

Showing a group of very different people working together to perform acts that look impossible points out one of Circus Oz’s main messages: If people are willing to take risks, cooperate, embrace differences and be kind to each other, anything is possible.



## Life in the Circus

Circuses can be traced back over 4,000 years, when countries like Greece, China, Egypt and Rome held events that included horse racing, acrobatics and clowning. The kind of “big top” events that we think of as circus today started in the mid-1700’s in England and featured animal acts, acrobats, trick horseback riders, high-wire acts, clowns and musicians. As circuses began to tour they needed a large tent to perform in that could be easily set-up and taken down.

To make performances more exciting, circuses added theatrical elements like lighting, sound, backdrops, and more elaborate costumes and makeup. In the last thirty years, many circuses, including Circus Oz, choose to only have human performers, because using animals is thought by some to be cruel.

## About Australia

Australia is an island continent in the southern hemisphere that is the world’s sixth largest country. While there are beaches, reefs, tropical rainforests, swamps and grassland, most of the country is a flat, dry desert. Since Australia has such a wide variety of climates, it also has many unique and diverse plants and animals.

The Aboriginal Australians (original inhabitants) were hunters and gatherers who believed the earth was sacred. They didn’t write, but passed along information through their oral traditions, which means their culture and traditions were passed along by telling stories.

In 1770, Britain made Australia one of its colonies. Over the next 100 years, the British government sent thousands of male and female prisoners to live and work there. Later, people moved to Australia because, like America, it was seen as a land of opportunity where they could make money as farmers, traders, miners, builders and factory workers. Unfortunately, as more people came to Australia, the Aboriginal people suffered under unfair laws that forced them to move and took children away from their families. Many also died from diseases they caught from the settlers.

Since then, Australians have come to respect Aboriginal people and their culture, as well as the different cultures of people from Asia, Europe and the Middle East who have come to live there during the last 50 years. Today, around 21 million people live in Australia.

“ We believe in social justice and a good time for all. ”

— Circus Oz

### Native only to Australia:



Kangaroo



Koala



Gum Tree



Great Barrier Reef



World's Largest Salt Lake



Platypus



Emu



Kookaburra



Wombat



Echidna

# 3 About the Performance

## Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What physical skills do the acrobats need to master to perform their acts?
- ♦ Which of Circus Oz's acts are from traditional acrobatics and which ones are unique to this group?

Circus Oz will present a selection of the following acts from their *30th Birthday Bash!* show for the *SchoolTime* performance.

### ***30th Birthday Bash! Show***

#### **Pole**

The pole is a spectacular act performed solo, duo or in groups as performers execute a variety of dangerous movements on a thin pole. Circus Oz learned this act from a Chinese genius called Lu Guang Rong,

#### **Sway Pole**

Well, it's a pole, twenty-four feet tall, and it sways. Sound simple? Of course, you have to get up first... try wobbling on one of these for ten minutes. Then, try it while doing a handstand.

#### **Cloudswing**

A piece of rope is attached to the ceiling at both ends. Hanging from the swinging rope by her hands, feet and neck, the acrobat performs dives, rolls, drops and other dynamic moves. This act requires great strength, razor sharp moves, discipline, and grace.

#### **Contortion**

A performer twists and bends into incredible and seemingly impossible shapes.

#### **Rim**

Imagine using your body to keep a giant top continuously spinning ... by the acrobatics inside it.



### **Teeterboard**

A giant see-saw propels acrobats high into the air with enormous force, and they still manage to twist in all sorts of carefully judged, spectacular directions.

### **Hoop Diving**

Precariously balanced bamboo hoops sit atop each other as acrobats dive through them in a series of increasingly implausible moves. The hoops are gradually stacked higher and higher...

### **Group Bike**

Get someone fairly brave to ride a VERY strong bike around and around in a circle. Then stack people on!

### **Juggling**

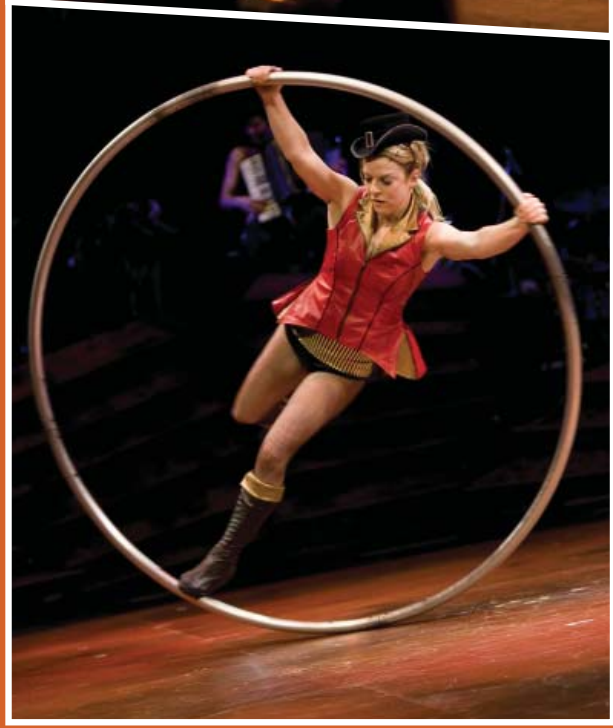
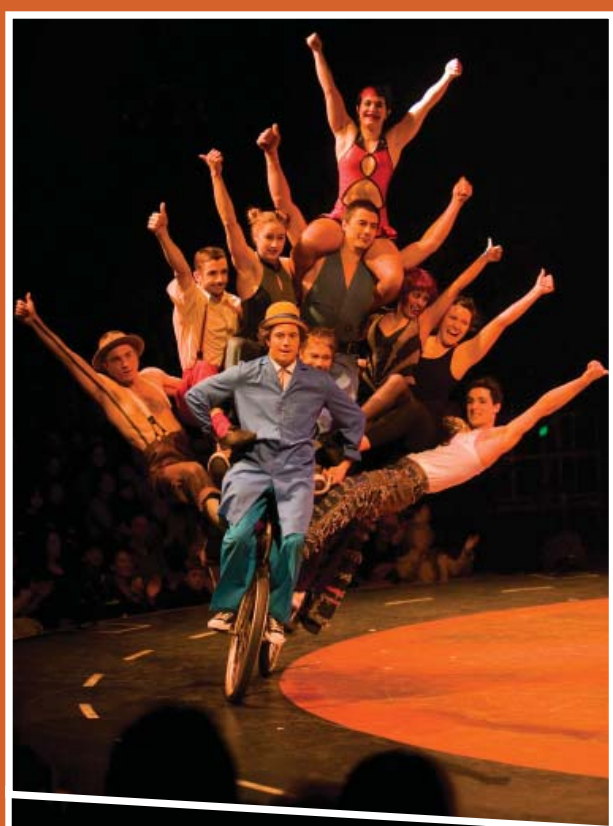
Juggling presents many possibilities—from bouncing seven tiny white balls, to tossing clubs in the air while executing back somersaults, to tossing an array of clubs between an array of people in lots and lots of different patterns.

### **Hula Hoops**

Circus Oz takes the humble hula hoop to a whole new level! Spinning more than one hoop at a time is a skill that takes hours of practice every day for years, and requires incredible muscle control.

### **Musicians**

The music is the colorful heart of the Circus Oz performance. Members of the band, both individually and collectively, composed all original music to fit the acts, sometimes following the mood, sometimes driving it along.



# 4 About the Artists

Circus Oz

## Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What are some messages Circus Oz might want to tell its audience?
- ♦ What would it be like to be a member of Circus Oz? How is it different from being part of another acrobatic troupe?

## Origins of Circus Oz

Circus Oz first performed in 1978, when two already-successful Australian groups, Soapbox Circus and the New Circus joined together. The principles at the heart of the original Circus Oz are still reflected in their company today: collective ownership and creation, gender equity, a uniquely Australian signature, and constant team-work.

The founding members of Circus Oz loved the skills and tricks of a traditional circus but wanted to make a new sort of show that a contemporary audience could relate to, so they added elements of rock and roll music, popular theater and satire. They wanted their shows to be funny and spectacular, a celebration of the group as an

ensemble of multi-skilled individual women and men where everyone's talents are showcased equally. Above all, they didn't want to take themselves too seriously. They sewed and welded their own circus tent and took their show on the road. Circus Oz was a fresh and original voice, and the company was immediately popular with Australian audiences. Within a few years, they began to tour internationally.

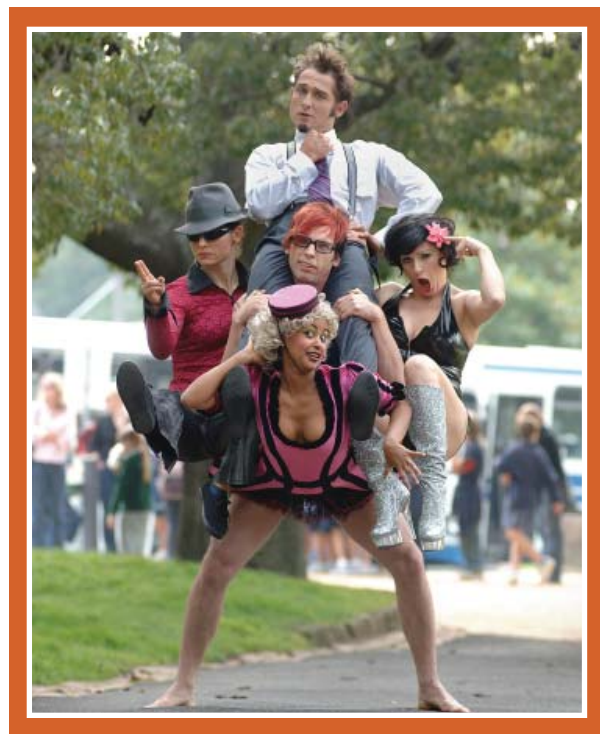
## Circus Oz's Distinct Style

In the mid-1980s, new circus and physical theater troupes began to appear across the world. Circus Oz went through a major skills development phase through intensive training with acrobats from China's Nanjing Acrobatic Troupe. Many



of the skills they learned from the Chinese acrobats, such as pole-climbing and hula-hoop, continue to flavor the show; reinterpreted and presented in Circus Oz's own funny, fresh and distinctly Australian style.

While the company has had many different performers, Circus Oz has managed to keep its co-operative philosophy and distinct style over the years, making it a unique group. There are usually eleven to thirteen performers (normally with at least two specialized musicians) who present an extravaganza of unrelenting energy, humor, multi-skill playing, surreal imagery, grace and strength, fully integrated with a live and original music. Circus Oz stays at the forefront of international contemporary circus by continuously being revitalized with the introduction of new ideas, skills and people.



### Circus Oz's Message

Named after Australians' slang term for their country—Australians refer to themselves as "Aussies" and to Australia as "Oz"—Circus Oz strives to reflect diversity, equality and cooperation in their performances. The company is made up of an equal number of men and women whose body shapes and sizes cover the spectrum. When someone leaves the company, instead of finding a replacement performer with the same set of skills, Circus Oz looks for a uniquely talented performer who is creative, friendly, and capable of working well within an ensemble. Then, they create new material around the performer's skills and personality.

Showing a group of very different people working together to attempt the impossible illustrates one of Circus Oz's main messages—anything is possible if people are willing to take risks, work together, embrace differences and practice good will and kindness. With a belief in "Social Justice and a Good Time for All," Circus Oz supports land rights for Australian indigenous people, opposes uranium mining, raises money for sick children and the homeless, assists asylum seekers and refugees to Australia, and more. All the while, the company keeps its tongue-in-cheek attitude, poking fun at figures of authority and self-importance in extraordinary, one-of-a-kind performances that are hilarious, intelligent, and beautiful.

# 5 About the Art Form

## Circus Performance

### Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What kind of performers would you see at an old-fashioned circus as opposed to a “New Circus”?
- ♦ What staging elements are used to make the productions more exciting?
- ♦ How was the circus in ancient Rome different from the circus in China? How is the European circus different from the American one?

### What a Circus Is

A circus is a group of performers that typically includes acrobats, clowns, jugglers, aerial artists, daredevils, and sometimes, trained animals. Circuses usually tour from place to place, setting up “rings” or performance areas in big open spaces, such as sports arenas, or large tents. A circus performance is led by a ringmaster who acts as a narrator or “Master of Ceremonies,” and who interacts with the audience. Each act is accompanied by music, and most circuses have their own musicians or bands.

Since the circus is a theatrical art, it may use special lighting, props, sets, backdrops, costumes and makeup to dress up its acts. Some productions use all of these elements, but others are more simple. Lighting, sound, 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, and also affect a performer’s movement or they way the audience sees the movement. Makeup can highlight a performer’s own facial features and, like costuming, can enhance a performer’s stylized look. It can also be used to exaggerate a particular feature or to create a transformation.

### The New “European-Style” Circus

Cirque Nouveau or New Circus emerged in the 1970s in Europe, North America and Australia as a new and important performance art. Traditional circus began to lose popularity to other forms of entertainment, particularly since the use of animals in circuses started becoming controversial. Animal rights groups discovered that some circuses treat animal performers cruelly, and in response, many countries have banned or limited the use of animals in circuses.

Moving in a fresh direction, the New Circus chose to use human performers who accomplished phenomenal feats staged in ways that captured the imaginations and stirred the emotions of the public. Merging traditional circus acts with elements from theater and contemporary culture, the New Circus introduced characters, narrative, and modern live music to their productions.

### Origins of the Circus

There is evidence that the circus began more than 4,000 years ago in ancient Greece, China, Egypt and Rome with activities like horse racing, juggling, balancing, tumbling, and clowning.



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. Spectacular new feats were constantly added to keep the acts exciting.

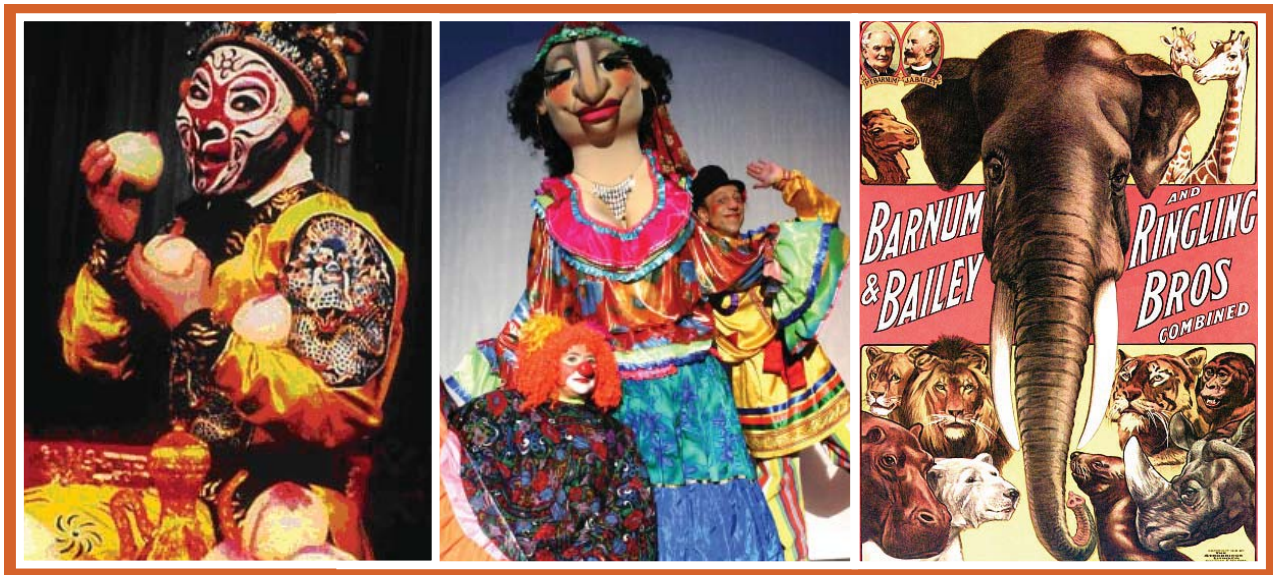
Juggling three balls evolved into juggling lighted torches; when seeing riders standing on running horses lost its thrill, riders learned to do somersaults on horseback. Animals were a part of the circus since the beginning. People who had never traveled far from home clamored to see animals from foreign lands. Circus animals typically included bears, lions and elephants. And although horses were familiar to many people as work animals and transportation, in circuses they were trained to work with riders on increasingly daring stunts.

The circus we're familiar with today became popular in England and then Europe in the mid 1700's when Philip Astley produced events which included trick horseback riders, acrobats, aerial artists, clowns and musicians. Performances were held in a circular arena; soon Astley built a structure around the arena, 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 descendants became one of the most famous circus dynasties in Europe.

## Circuses around the World

### *China*

Acrobatic performances in China began as folk entertainment over 2500 years ago, and later became popular with Emperors. The first Chinese acrobats incorporated everyday materials into their acts, using objects like plates, vases, chairs, ladders and bicycles as props.



Today, circus-style acrobatics flourish in China. Chinese acrobats are well-respected as artists, and are famous for plate-spinning, contortionism chair balancing and bicycle tricks.

### ***Ancient Rome***

The citizens of ancient Rome (743 BCE to 476 CE) were fans of spectacular entertainments, including the circus. Stories from this era tell of jugglers and acrobats, and tightrope walkers, and trained animals performing in public squares and amphitheaters. Special buildings were erected for large public entertainments, including the first known as 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 where exotic animals fought with each other and with people 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 their acts. Later, during the era known as the Renaissance, (1400-1600s CE), culture flourished and the public celebrated art,

science and beauty. Florence, Italy was the center of the Renaissance, and Florence's splendid festivals and parades included many theatrical elements of the circus.

### ***Russia***

In Russia, the circus is a well-respected art form—as important as ballet or opera. In the late 1700s during the rule of Catherine the Great, an Englishman named Charles Hughes brought circus entertainers to perform at court. Catherine the Great loved the performance so much she ordered circus rings built to highlight Hughes' production. After Hughes returned to England, his performers stayed in Russia, starting the tradition of the Russian Circus. The circus steadily gained in popularity and by the 19th century it was the primary form of entertainment. In 1880, the famous Nikulin Moscow Circus was formed.

### ***America***

The circus gained popularity in the United States in the late 1700s, and American circus owners like P.T. Barnum added displays of unusual human characteristics (such as Little People, 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.

## Circus Oz Staging Elements

Technical and staging elements help make Circus Oz exciting. These important behind-the-scenes factors include:

### *Lighting*

Stage lighting can define and shape a performance space, make one area of the stage seem more compelling than another, single out one performer surrounded by many others, isolate one place from another and determine the overall tone of the performance, whether it is warm, cold, bright, somber, etc.

Each Circus Oz show is lit with around 100 lights, including “Par Cans,” which are used at concert performances, and specialist lights called “Profiles.” Probably the best-known theater light is the followspot, which needs a human operator. Circus Oz uses three followspot lights and of the company’s four light operators, three manipulate the followspots. The fourth is the lighting operator who communicates with the followspot operators via headset and maneuvers the moving lights using a computerized lighting board. The lighting operator’s job requires a great deal of skill as the whole look of the show (and the safety of the performers) depends on how they control the brightness, color and timing of the lights.

Circus Oz redesigns their lighting each time they invent a new act, so the lighting operator is also a designer and a highly creative member of the team.

### *Sound*

Since Circus Oz’s acrobats talk to the audience, sing and play music, the show uses around thirty microphones. Like the light operator, the sound operator has to juggle the various sound elements of the show. At times, up to twelve performers might be playing music all at once, so the sound operator must integrate all of the different sound levels.

### *The Riggers*

Riggers set up the physical equipment and have the weighty responsibility of making sure all of it is safe for the performers to use. It’s a job that takes skill, experience, spatial ability and imaginative thinking, because figuring out how to fit the company’s acts into different venues can be difficult. The multi-skilled and creative riggers at Circus Oz not only ensure that the performers stay alive and unhurt during the most daring of feats; they also perform in the show themselves.



# 6 About Australia

## Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What makes Australia unique?
- ♦ How have other countries helped shape Australian culture?
- ♦ What role have the Aboriginal people played in Australia?

## Geography

Australia is an island continent in the Southern Hemisphere and is the world's sixth largest country. Australia also consists of the island of Tasmania and a number of other islands in the Indian, Pacific and Southern Oceans. The name "Australia" comes from the Latin word "Australis," meaning southern. Australia has 4,730,735 square miles of landmass and is separated from Asia by the Arafura and Timor seas.

The flattest and driest inhabited continent, the largest area in Australia is desert or semi-arid land. The south-east and south-west corners of the continent have a temperate climate, and most of the country's population lives along the south-eastern coastline in cities like Sydney and Melbourne (Australia's two largest cities). Canberra, Australia's capital city, is halfway between Sydney and Melbourne.

The northern part of the country has a tropical climate and the landscapes include rainforest, woodland, grassland, mangrove swamps and desert. The Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef, lies a short distance off the north-east coast and extends for over 1,250 miles.





Aboriginal man



Koala



Willem Janszoon

## Plant and Animal Life

Because of its long-term geographic isolation, much of Australia's plant and animal life is unique and diverse. About 85% of flowering plants, 84% of mammals, more than 45% of birds and 89% of in-shore fish are native to Australia. Well-known Australian animals include the platypus, echidna, kangaroo, koala, wombat, and birds like the emu and kookaburra.

Many plant and animal species became extinct after the first human settlement, and more species disappeared after the European settlement of Australia. Today, several of Australia's ecoregions and the species living within those regions are threatened by human activities and plant and animal species introduced from other countries. Numerous protected areas have been created under the national Biodiversity Action Plan to protect and preserve unique ecosystems. Sixteen World Heritage Sites have been established, including the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu National Park (famous for its ancient rock paintings); Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, containing the large sandstone rock, Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock) which is sacred to the local Aboriginal people; several rainforest sites, and many other extraordinary places.

## History

Australia's first inhabitants, the Aboriginal people and the Torres Strait Islanders who live on the islands near Queensland, are believed to have migrated around 50,000 years ago via land bridges and short sea-crossings from what is now Southeast Asia. Most of these people were hunter-gatherers, with a complex oral culture and spiritual values and traditions based on reverence for the land.

The first recorded European contact with Australia was in March 1606, when Dutch explorer Willem Janszoon sighted the coast of Queensland in the northeast. Over the next two centuries, European explorers and traders continued to chart the coastline of Australia, then known as New Holland. However, it was not until 1770 that Captain James Cook claimed the country on behalf of Great Britain.

Since jails in Great Britain were overcrowded, the British government decided to use its new outpost as a penal colony. Believing hard labor and isolation would punish yet ultimately redeem prisoners, the British had previously sent criminals to work as indentured servants in America. Now, as a way of colonizing Australia, the British government sent

thousands of male and female convicts to Australia from 1788 to 1868. Upon arriving, the prisoners were forced into a life of labor. The men were employed according to their skills as brick makers, carpenters, cattlemen, shepherds and farmers. Most of the women worked in textile factors, although some became servants, and some were married off to settlers or convicts.

Immigrants began coming to Australia in the 1790's attracted by the wool industry. The Gold Rush of the 1850's brought even more settlers. The need for laborers, the vastness of the land and the new wealth based on farming, mining and trade made Australia a land of opportunity. Yet during this period of growth, Indigenous Australians suffered death and illness from infectious diseases brought by the settlers, forced resettlement, and cultural disintegration as children were removed from their families, supposedly for protection from what the government considered an "uncivilized" people.

Australia follows a system of government and law inherited from the British, and Great Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is considered their queen. However, in 1901, the country formed the Commonwealth of Australia through a federation of six states under a single constitution. Since federation, Australia has maintained a stable liberal democratic political system.

## Culture

Today, around 21 million people live in Australia. While much of Australian culture is influenced by that of the British settlers who arrived from the 1700s on, distinctive features have also evolved from the unique environment and indigenous culture. Over the past 50 years, large scale immigration from Asian, Pacific Island and other non-European countries has also enriched the culture.

Sports play a central role with Australians, yet Australia also has an active tradition of music, ballet and theater, with many performing arts companies receiving public funding through the federal government's Australia Council. Australian Aboriginal music, dance and art have had a strong influence on Australian visual and performing arts.



# 7 Learning Activities

## Science & Physical Activity (Grades 2-8)

### *The Science of Balancing*

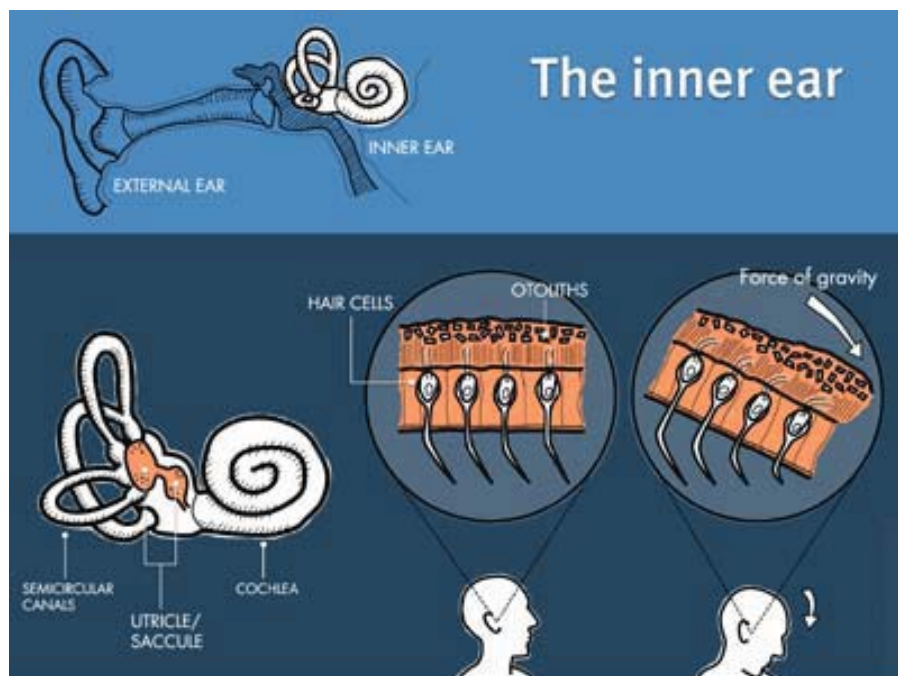
Many of Circus Oz's acts involve the performers balancing solo, in pairs and in groups. In order to balance, humans rely on signals that are sent to the brain from different parts of the body.

Ask students to walk across the room in a straight line. Easy, right?

Now have them spin around 5 times and try to walk in a straight line. What happens? Discuss why you think this happens with the class, or in small groups.

**Explanation:** Your inner ear has a network of tubes and sacs that are sensitive to changes in the position of your head. When your head tilts or rotates, tiny, sensitive hairs in the ear are nudged which trigger impulses to a part of the brain stem called the vestibular nuclei. This region converts the signals it receives into a representation of your head's movement in space; it helps your body keep itself righted and lets your eyes track objects as your body moves. When you spin around, the extreme motion causes your inner ear to send confused information regarding your body's placement in space.

Have students stand straight up away from any walls and fold their arms. Then, ask them to lift one leg off the ground and try to balance. Now have them try this with their eyes closed. What was that like? Challenge them to try it standing on the other leg and only closing one eye.



Is it easier or harder with eyes closed? Discuss with the class.

**Explanation:** The retinas of your eyes also relay information to the vestibular nuclei. Closing your eyes disrupts the visual signals which part of the brain receives.

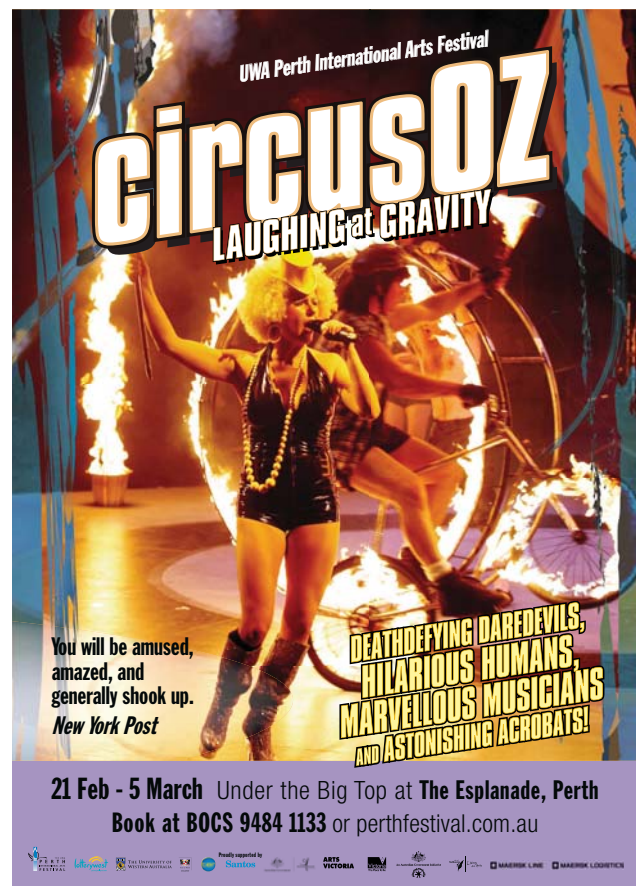
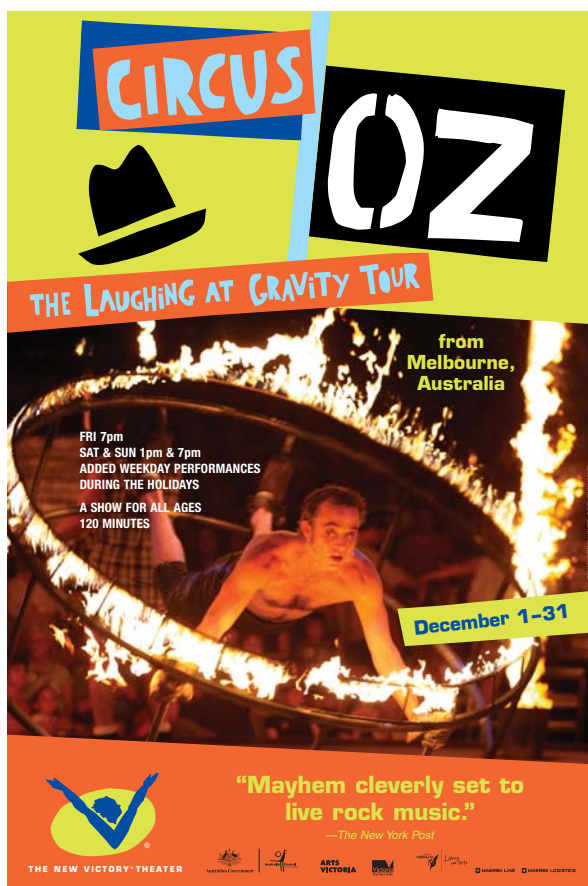
## Visual Arts & Literacy (Grades 1-5)

### *Your Circus Act*

Each of the performers in Circus Oz has a distinct personality which shapes the presentation and style of their act. Sometimes performers take on a “persona,” or role they display in public, which may be a heightened version of a part of their personality, or a character they’ve chosen to play.

Ask students if they were performing their own circus act what would their persona be? What name, nickname or catchphrase would they have? What kind of an act would they perform? How would they use music, sound and lighting to add to their act?

Have them to describe their persona and their act in a paragraph or two. (Younger students may share verbally instead.) Then, using crayons, markers or paints, ask them to create a poster advertising their amazing act. Along with a fabulous illustration, they should include the date, time, place and other important details of their performance.



## History (Grades 4-12)

### *Australia & America: Compare and Contrast*

Great Britain had a large role to play in the histories of both America and Australia. Ask students to do some research about the history and culture of Australia. Then, have them write a few paragraphs describing the ways in which Australia and America may share similarities historically and culturally, and ways in which they differ. They can also compare and contrast the geography, economy, politics, etc. of both countries.

## Literacy (Grades 3-8)

### ***Message to the World***

In their performance program, Circus Oz states one of their beliefs, “The essence of The Circus is probably diversity combined with cooperation – a lesson for the planet.” Through their shows they hope to promote a message of “Social Justice and a Good Time for All.”

Ask students to think about what they believe in, what they value, and what they’d like to see happen in the world. Then, in one or two paragraphs, have them create their own message for the planet about what they believe, their vision of how the world might change for the better, and what their role in that change might be.

## Resources

### **Circus Oz**

<http://www.circusoz.com>

### **Circuses:**

<http://www.circushistory.org/>  
<http://www.moscowcircus.biz/>  
<http://www.cirquedusoleil.com>  
<http://www.chinaacrobats.com>  
<http://www.ringling.com/>  
<http://www.fairrosa.info/lists/circus.html>

### **Video & Audio clips on the web:**

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=jPixZM7KdAs>  
<http://youtube.com/watch?v=Cg-BSUo20tA>  
[http://youtube.com/watch?v=o9hRbabiT\\_g](http://youtube.com/watch?v=o9hRbabiT_g)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGXnC18nLTg>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eP6AJXprOXc>

### **Australian Culture and History:**

<http://www.about-australia.com/facts/>  
<http://www.dfat.gov.au/aib/history.html>  
<http://www.convictcreations.com/history/index.htm>  
<http://www.freespirit.com.au/workingholiday/quickstart/>

### **Circus Literature:**

Circus Dreams: The Making of a Circus Artist by Kathleen Cushman.  
Circus Days Under The Big Top by Glendinning.  
Harriet Goes to the Circus By Betsy Maestro and Giulio Maestro.  
The Family Circus by Bil Keane.  
You See a Circus, I See... by Mike Downs.

### **Images:**

<http://www.flickr.com>  
[search circus]  
<http://www.images.google.com>  
[search circus]  
<http://www.webshots.com>  
[search circus]  
<http://www.circushistory.org/Photos/Photo.htm>

### **Local venues featuring**

#### **Circus Acts:**

##### **Red Panda Acrobats**

<http://www.redpanda2000.com/>  
phone: 415-731-5037

##### **Trapeze Arts**

<http://www.trapezearts.com/>  
phone: 510-419-0700

##### **Head Over Heels Gymnastics**

<http://www.hohgymnastics.com>  
phone: 510-655-1265

##### **Splash Circus**

<http://www.splashcircus.net/>  
phone: 510-655-1265

##### **Prescott Circus**

<http://www.prescottcircus.org/>  
phone: 510-482-1674

##### **ACROSPORTS**

<http://www.acrosports.org>  
phone: 415- 665-2276

## 8 Glossary

**acrobat** – a skilled performer of gymnastic feats, as walking on a tightrope or swinging on a trapeze.

**aerial artists** – performers who do their acts high in the air.

**amphitheater** – an oval or round building with rows of seats around a central open area.

**choreography** – the art of composing dances and planning and arranging the movements, steps, and patterns of performers.

**contortionist** – an acrobat capable of twisting into extraordinary positions.

**daredevil** – one who performs dangerous stunts.

**followspot (light)** – a powerful stage light which can be controlled by a human operator to “follow” actors around the stage. Sometimes known as a spotlight.

**hula-hoop** – the trademark name for a light plastic hoop that is whirled around the body for play or exercise by the movement of the hips.

**par can** – a stage lighting fixture widely used in theatre, concerts and motion picture production when a substantial amount of broad, general lighting is needed to cover a large playing area.

**profile (light)** – a spotlight with a moving head that is operated via a computer.

**somersault** – an acrobatic stunt in which the body rolls forward or backward in a complete revolution with the knees bent and the feet coming over the head.

**tightrope-walker** – a rope or wire cable, stretched tight, on which acrobats perform feats of balancing.

**troupe** – a company, band, or group of singers, actors, or other performers that travels about together

**trapeze** – a short horizontal bar suspended from two parallel ropes, used for gymnastic exercises or for acrobatic stunts.



# 9 California State Standards

## 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.

## 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

Responding to, analyzing, and making judgments about works of theater

Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of theater, performance of actors, and original works according to the elements of theater and aesthetic qualities.

## 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.



## 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 celebrated 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. *SchoolTime* has become an integral part of the academic year for teachers and students throughout the Bay Area.



### Cal Performances Education and Community Programs Sponsors

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