



Telling Stories Without Words-- *La Belle: Lost in the World of the Automaton*



IMAGO Theatre Company's SchoolTime performance of

La Belle: Lost in the World of the Automaton

Monday, November 27, 2017 at 11am

Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley

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Justine Davis as Rose acting out the story of Beauty and the Beast in IMAGO's *La Belle*.

How to use this Engagement Guide

If you have photos or lesson plans to share, please let us know! Use #IMAGO@Cal.

We invite you to challenge yourself and your students to think with the curiosity and passion of the arts. This engagement guide is organized around four key artistic practices (as identified by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards at <http://nccas.wikispaces.com/>)

Investigating: Questioning, exploring and challenging.

Imagining: Opening the door to what's possible, and even to what seems impossible.

Creating: Making artistic choices with a work of art in mind.

Connecting: Reflecting on both process and product and making connections to other aspects of life and study.

You'll be able to link on specific subjects that you or your students may want more information about. The body of the Engagement Guide invites exploration before and after the performance, giving each student tools to make personal and meaningful connections during the show.

We've included pre-performance engagement activities and a post-performance activity for artistic practice and reflection. By no means should you feel limited by these suggestions! Go, make art, learn more...and share your experiences where you can.

Artistic Literacy: Having the skills and knowledge you need to connect meaningfully with works of art—that's what we mean by artistic literacy. We think that means something different than knowing the names of all the different instruments musicians might play, or being able to reproduce the exact melodies you might hear during a show. To us at Cal Performances, it means you and your students will have a significant glimpse into the artistic process and will have a chance to try to solve the problems the artists aim to solve creatively. It means that the next time you see a performance, you'll be able to use these same insights to connect with a work of art through the artist's process and that this will deepen your experience as an audience member.

The artistically literate student audiences come to understand that every artist draws from a core set of concepts skillfully chosen and applied in performance to create a work of art both unique to the artist, and connected to other works of art.

And along the way, we hope that students of all ages—and their teachers and adult mentors—will be inspired to experiment with artistic decision-making and creativity themselves.

Enjoy the show!

Your ★ STARRING Role in the Theater



As an audience member, you are a STAR, too! You play an important role in the performance community. The artists need YOU in order to give you their best work.

S.T.A.R. Audiences

S = Support the artists by being attentive and focusing on the performers.

T = Tune in: listen and watch for understanding (and for Imago, watch for how all the pieces of the performance—actors, puppets, shadows, automatons – have been arranged to tell a story without words.)

A = Appreciate the performers by clapping at the right time. For example, when a scene or dance ends, or when the stage lights fade to dark.

R = Respect the performers and other audience members. At a performance, you, the others in the audience and the artists are sharing this experience together and are part of a performance community. Think about ways you can best support the community's performance experience.

We know you will be a STAR today and will help your classmates shine too!

About the Performance



La Belle: Lost in the World of the Automaton

Is it a fairy tale? Is it a giant work of art with over 100 moving parts? Is it animated (like cartoons?) Is it funny? Is it dramatic? Are they real people? Are they puppets? The answer is: YES, it's all those things.

A grimy engine room of a steamship becomes an enchanted playground where the story of Beauty and the Beast comes to life with puppetry, shadow theater, lots of special effects, song, drama and comedy. The two human characters—Sam and Lady Rose—use all the aspects of the steam engine to connect to each other and to tell a very old story (Beauty and the Beast was first written over 300 years ago).

What does the subtitle of the play --*Lost in the World of the Automaton*—mean? An automaton (aw-TOM-uh-ton) is a self-operating machine, moving by itself apparently without human control, to perform certain tasks. Automata often look like they're imitating a human. So robots are a kind of automaton. And the big machinery of a steamship—especially when there's a bit of magic and fantasy thrown in—can be seen as an automaton, at least in this performance.

See the photo below and notice what might make sense of the subtitle: *Lost in the World of the Automaton*.



About Imago Theatre



The founders of Imago Theatre, and the company of artists who make up Imago today, are trained in mime, a style of theater that uses movement instead of words. Mime began more than 2,000 years ago in Greece, when actors performed scenes using gestures and large movements.

Mime developed over the centuries, up through the 20th century when Jacques Lecoq, an actor became fascinated by mime through his interest in sports. He saw the rhythm of athletics as a kind of physical poetry and he used mime as a research tool to further dramatic creativity. He developed a special training program for performers that mixes

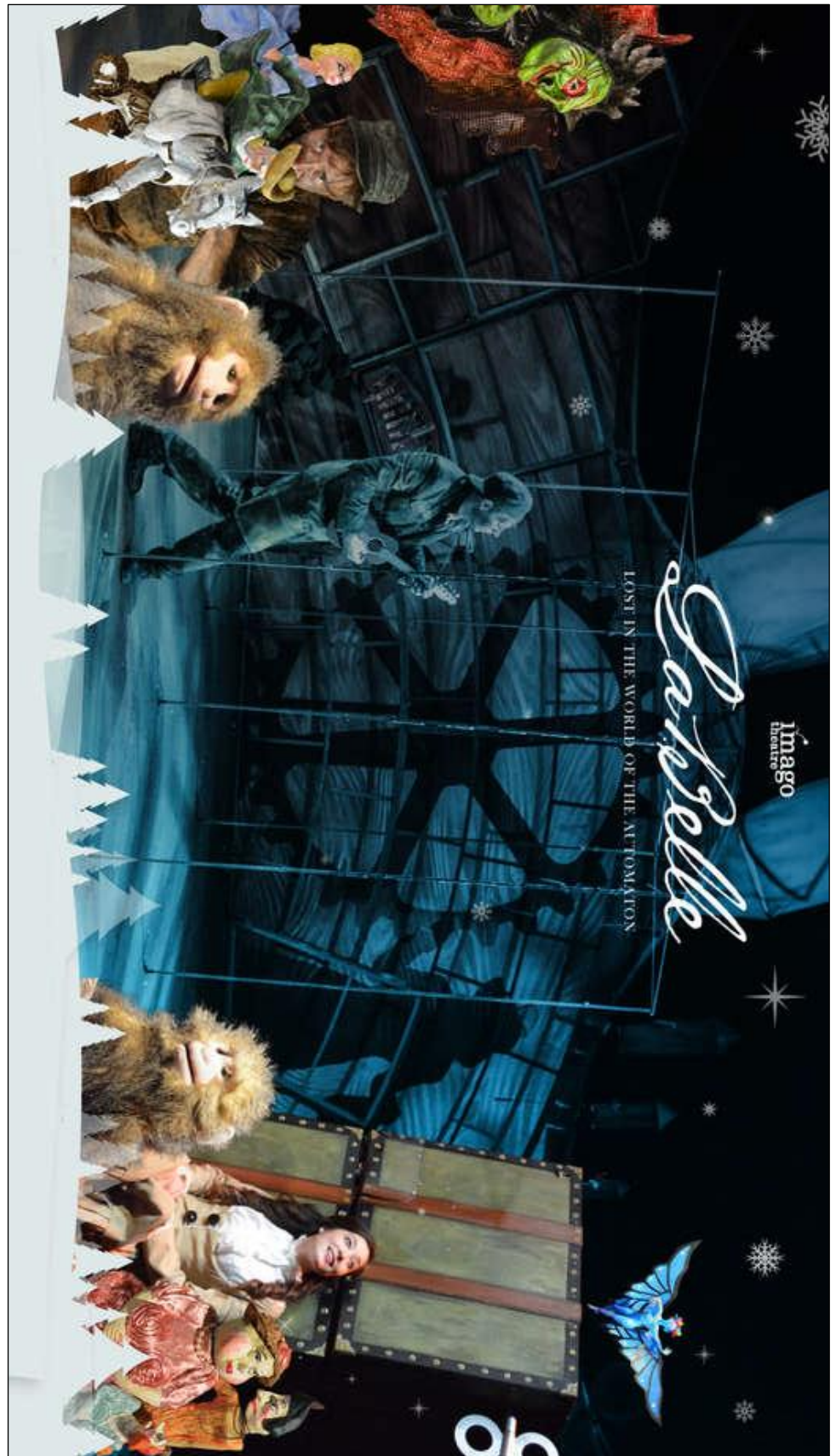
clowning, melodrama, acrobatics, dance and natural body movement among other styles. Lecoq thought it was important for performers to closely observe movement and strive to imitate it. He remains a great inspiration for the founders of Imago Theatre.

Imago's mission since 1979 is to create theater that "crosses boundaries traditionally associated with language...", so mime, masks, puppets and full body costumes are an essential part of their performances. Without words, the audience notices the movement of the actors, the movement of the machines onstage, the sounds and the music, the costumes and the scenery, and the amazing movement of the puppets working together to tell a story in an almost magical way—magic that takes a great deal of training and hundreds of people to create.

From its home theater in Portland, Oregon, Imago tours all over the world...including here to Berkeley, California.

You can see all the elements of *La Belle* here: automatons (machinery), puppets, shadow theater, live actors, music, fantasy, magic.

When you put it all together, you can tell an old familiar story in a new way.





Artistic Concept: Telling stories without words

Often when we think of someone telling us a story, we think of listening to their words, whether they are reading out loud from a book or remembering a story they heard from someone else, or making up a brand new story as they go. And when we think about fairy tales or fantasies, we might think of the words, "Once upon a time..."

But our hands, faces and bodies can be as expressive (and sometimes far more expressive) than any words. We do, in fact, often communicate to one another without words. We hug to show affection. We back away from people who make us uncomfortable. We even just nod or shake our heads to answer "yes" or "no," or shrug our shoulders to say "I don't know." Standing too close to someone you don't know might feel threatening to them. Refusing to touch someone you do know could communicate that you are angry with them, or afraid of them. And think about all the sounds we make that aren't about talking: crying, laughing, snorting, stomping, sighing, coughing. All those sounds aren't words, but they convey strong ideas or emotions. Music does the same thing; even without words, we can hear ideas and feelings in music.



We also can look at a drawing or painting, and see a story in it. Sometimes we see real things: a boy in a striped sweater, a dog, a bandage. We then imagine the story that put them together and what has just happened, and what might happen next. (What story do you see in the drawing here? What story do you see in the collage painting below?)

Colors, movements, facial expressions, music, clothing, even just the kind of room or scenery we



see, can "tell" us about characters, situations, actions, ideas—with no need to speak a word..

Engagement Activities

ARTISTIC CONCEPT: Telling stories without words Engagement Activity #1 (Pre-Performance)

Guiding Question

How might our expectations about a performance affect our enjoyment of it?

Artistic Literacy Tool Box

- Bringing what you already know into your experience of a performance
- Preparing oneself as an audience member to see both familiar and unexpected things

Overview:

Time needed: 15 minutes (can be extended with layers of exploration and discussion)



1858 Illustration by Edward Corbould

Students will recognize that they have pre-conceptions of the story of Beauty and the Beast, and also may have expectations of what a “play” is supposed to be. They will explore their own ideas of the story and how it “should” go, and be prepared for what the Imago theater artists may do that is different from their expectations.

Step 1 Set up the Conversation: Addressing Expectations

Ask your students: Have you ever had an idea in your mind about a place you’d never been to, but when you got there it was different from how you’d imagined it?

We do this all the time – create expectations of what we’ll see and experience using the memories and knowledge we already have. But this can sometimes get in our way of fully participating in a new experience.

When you come to the Imago Theatre Company’s SchoolTime performance of *La Belle: Lost in the World of the Automaton*, you may have a certain expectation of what a story looks like, or how Beauty and the Beast should be told, but we encourage you to open your mind (and eyes!) to a story that is told in a brand new way without words and with machines and puppets.

Step 2 Activity: What You Already Know – Brainstorm and discussion

Discuss what each student already knows or thinks about plays and the story of Beauty and the Beast. Chart pad expectations (it’s okay if expectations include worrying that it will be “boring” or “stupid”). Set up an expectation that this play might be different from what they might expect. Ask the students to set themselves the goal of being surprised by what they’re going to see.

Sample Questions for conversation

- When you hear that we're going to see a play that includes the story of Beauty and the Beast, what do you guess we might be seeing?
- What else do you think will be on stage besides actors in costumes?

Let your students know that movies they've seen about Beauty and the Beast, or books they may have read, tell their own versions of the story. The artists who created, designed and perform this version made a lot of choices to create their own artistic expression.

The original story of *La Belle et La Bête* (which means Beauty and the Beast in French) was written by a Frenchwoman in 1740, about 33 years before the American Revolution. It's such a good story that people keep making movies about it. But the story changes just a little bit with each telling

Step 3 **Optional Activity:** Images of Beauty and the Beast from various artists

Review the images of Beauty and the Beast on the following page, and ask the students what they notice about the differences. You can do this briefly by looking at all six, and comparing the different settings and imagined versions of the Beast. Or go deeper, assigning small groups to look at pairs of images and imagine what the artist might have been seeing in their own imaginations when they created the paintings or drawings.

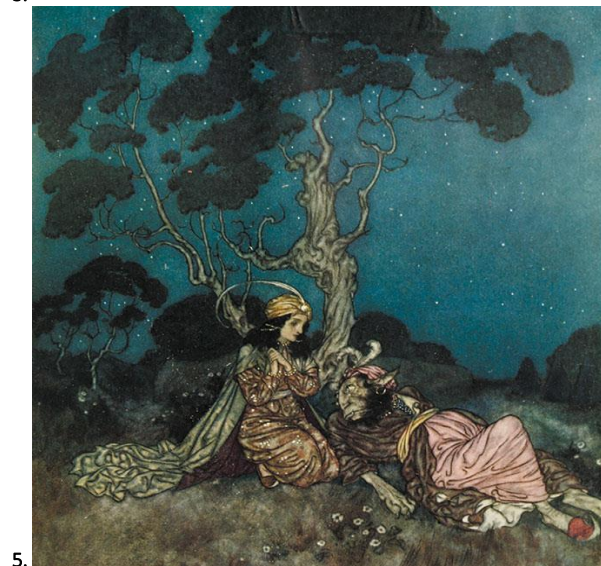
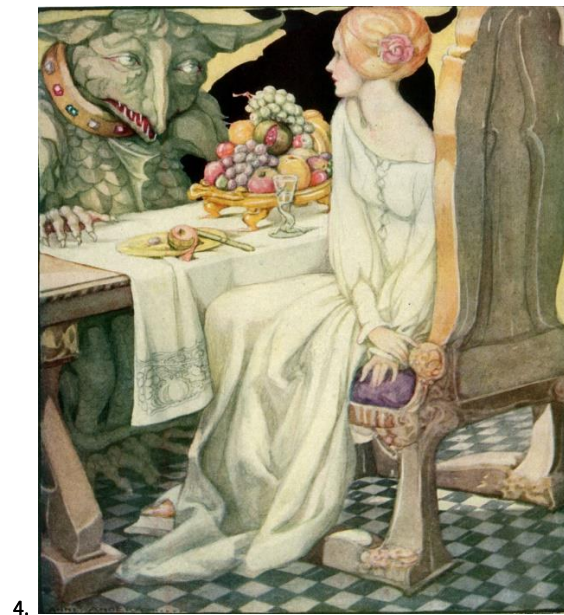
And don't forget these very recent images that your students are most likely to be familiar with: The animated Disney musical film from 1991, and the 2017 live action movie with Emma Watson as Belle:



Next Page: 1. Warwick Goble, 1913 2. Walter Crane, 1875 3. Eleanor Vere Boyle, 1875 4. Anne Anderson, around 1925 5. Edmund Dulac, 1910 6. W. Heath Robinson, 1921

Beauty and the Beast – How artists have painted and drawn it since the 18th century

Images from <http://www.pookpress.co.uk/project/beauty-and-the-beast-history/>



Engagement Activity #2 (Pre-Performance)

Guiding Question

How can artists give life to objects, to make them seem like they are doing human things?
How can artists convey emotions and ideas without words?

Artistic Literacy Tool Box

- Animation (as in “animating an inanimate object”)
- Focus
- Artistic decision-making
- Tempo
- Opposites
- Expressive movement

Overview:

Time needed: 30 minutes (can be extended with layers of exploration and discussion)

When children play with toys, they often pretend the toys are alive and speak for them. Your students will take this one step further by examining how to bring an inanimate object to life. Jacques Lecoq used the following approach to guide actors in bringing objects to life – first examining the physical nature of the object and then finding its opposite nature

Step 1 Close Observation and Artistic Decision-Making

- Have students each choose an object, something they can carry in their hands, for example a pencil, water bottle, ruler, or another every day object.
- Prompt for students: - Look at your object. What is its shape? - How would something with a shape like that breathe? Move through space? - What is the opposite move?

Step 2 Exploration of movement with objects

- Ask students to bring their objects to life by going from one extreme to the other. For example, they might start with sharp, fast moves and then change to slow, curvy moves. Invite students to add sound to each of their two extreme movements.
- Have the whole group explore these movements, then invite half the class to watch while half performs, then switch groups.
- Repeat this movement exploration with different objects.
- Reflect together on what they saw each other do and on the experience of observing, imagining and becoming these objects in motion.

Step 3 Make a story without words

- Pair up students (or small groups of 3 students) to share the movements they have created with their objects. Ask them to decide what the movements looks like and what



they can imagine the objects “doing”. Make up a sentence they might say in this exploration stage.

- Make up a story where the two (or three) objects might meet up: where would they be? What would bring each of them there? How might they feel about each other? Make up a sentence that your object might say in these circumstances.
- Practice the story at first with your objects being able to talk. Make sure the story has three parts: everyone meets up, everyone notices everyone else then they all leave or do something together.
- Now practice your story with NO WORDS. You can use your body and your face to help the object be as expressive as possible.

Step 4 **Share and discuss**

- Ask students to share their “story with objects, but with no words.”
- Discussion: what problem did you have to solve to tell your story with no words? How could the audience tell what was going on? Note that this meant the students were “reading” the story by using their eyes, ears and their own knowledge.



Engagement Activity #3 (Pre- or Post-Performance)

Guiding Question

How can performers give life and shape to imaginary objects through their own movements, gestures, and actions?

Artistic Literacy Tool Box

- Focus
- Mime
- Expressive movement
- Artistic decision-making
- Physical engagement

Overview:

Time needed: 20-40 minutes (can be extended with layers of exploration and discussion)

How performers react to real or imaginary objects changes the way the audience experiences the objects. Students will explore how they can evoke an invisible object by the way they interact with and demonstrate its physical properties, as mimes do.



Step 1 Magic Bag

- Have students sit or stand in a semi-circle. The teacher, or a selected student who has been prepped for it, will mime carrying a large bag and then placing it in front of the students.
- Prompt for students: “This magic bag has an infinite number of objects in it. One by one you will come up, pull open the sack, reach in, and pull out an object. Your job is to show us what the object is by the way in which you handle it and how you use it.”
- Reassure students to trust their imaginations and not to talk. They can even reach into the bag without having an idea and, by believing in the bag, an object will come to them. Remind students to take a minute to see the object in their mind’s eye and to use slow, precise movements to show size, shape and weight. Ask students to remain silent until the student returns to his or her place, or if you choose, until everyone has removed their “object” from the “bag.”

If needed, guide the students to notice the specific gestures, facial expressions, etc. that help identify the object and make it more “present.”

Step 2 Reflection and discussion

- Reflect together on what it was like to mime using and handling these objects and what was observed and wondered about.

Optional Extension: Explore how movements can convey emotion, attitude, energy and tone.

- Hand out cards with different adverbs on them to all the students.
- Have each student use their object in keeping with the adverb they received. For example, a student might “peel an orange” angrily, fearfully, joyfully, proudly, nervously, lovingly, etc.
- After a student performs, ask the class to guess the adverb they were portraying.
- **Discuss** the impact of playing with an emotion and an imaginary object. How did that change your artistic decisions to “show” us the object? Why is this a useful activity for people who do mime?

Step 3 Ways to prepare your students to focus at the performance

Audiences are invited at the performance to connect what they will see and hear to their own creative process, and watch and listen to the choices the artists have made.

Ask students to select one or more of the focusing questions to use while they watch and listen to the performance. Because so much is happening on stage, a focusing question can bring you back to a central idea that can help you make meaning that is both fun and interesting to you.

- How do the performers draw our attention to a specific place on the stage?
- How do the performers use the puppets to show an idea or emotion? What moves did they make with their own bodies, to give us the idea that the puppets were moving on their own?
- What effect did the machinery movement (the automaton world) have on your feelings about the story?

Step 4 After the performance

Encourage students to connect their expectations before the performance to their actual experiences: what did they see and hear? What surprised them? What seemed a little familiar? What seemed really strange? What questions would they want to ask the artists if they could? What artistic advice might they share with someone who was going to see the performance?

Resources

Web Sites

Imago Theatre web site: <http://www.imagotheatre.com/>

Imago performers discuss the story of *La Belle*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWRqUBBsfnU>

Interview with Imago Co-artistic Directors: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR94x9S1Yos>

Video Clips of Imago Theatre Performances

La Belle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbzToSb4xDg&t=10s>

FROGZ: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bevb3ByXscI>

ZooZoo: <http://www.imagotheatre.com/zoozoo.html>

Biglittlethings: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XR_88zJoYS0

Puppetry Video Clips

Puppet tips

- Focus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrAW3s5tlx8>
- Fixed point: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyRePk7HnIE>
- Breath: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HK0U5kKO1WA&t=1s>

Beauty & the Beast

Websites:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beauty_and_the_Beast

<http://www.pookpress.co.uk/project/beauty-and-the-beast-history/>

Video clip about the story through time and world cultures:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iW1JdoT-6XE>

Books

Beauty and the Beast by Marie-Michelle Joy (Author), Walter Crane (Illustrator)

The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre by Jacques Lecoq

The Mime Book by Claude Kipnis

Puppetry: A World History by Eileen Blumenthal

Dressing the Naked Hand (Book + DVD): The World's Greatest Guide to Making, Staging, and Performing with Puppets by Amy White, Mark H Pulham and Dallin Blankenship

Stories without words:

- *Ice* by Arthur Geisert
- *Fox's Garden* by Princesse Camcam

Local performers you might also be interested in...

Lunatique Fantastique: <http://www.lunfan.com/> Found object puppetry performances.

ShadowLight: <http://www.shadowlight.org/> Shadow puppet performances.



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And thanks to our many individual donors for their generous and continued support!

For information on supporting our Artistic Literacy (Education & Community) Programs, contact Sarah Sobey. Phone: 510.643.7053 / Email: ssobey@calperformances.org.

About Cal Performances and the Cal Performances Classroom

The mission of Cal Performances is to produce and present performances of the highest artistic quality, enhanced by programs that explore compelling intersections of education and the performing arts. Cal Performances celebrates over 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

What is a Cal Performances Classroom?

Your classroom, of course!

The arts are an endlessly replenishable resource for a lifelong love affair with thinking, learning and feeling across disciplines and cultures. They connect fluidly with curriculum throughout the school years, and – perhaps with more endurance – they connect us to ideas and reflection on human experience that can't be easily expressed any other way.

Each season at Cal Performance, you will find a menu of compelling performances and classroom opportunities for any age. You can create your Cal Performances classroom through any or all of our artistic literacy programs for grades K-12.

Cal Performances holds artistic literacy on a par with language and numerical literacy. Those who are artistically literate hold the keys to a lifelong engagement with the arts, able to unlock and make personal connections to any work of art, regardless of level of familiarity with the work and the artists.

Artistic literacy skills are developed in the Cal Performances classroom as students and teachers are engaged in the artist's process. These skills are embedded in everything we do, from pre-performance talks to community conversations to teacher workshops and artist visits to the classroom.