

SchoolTime 05/06



dance music theater

Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

1906
Centennial Season
2006



Study Guide

Imago Theatre *Big Little Things*

Friday, February 3, 2006 at 11:00 am

Zellerbach Hall

Welcome!



January 25, 2006

Dear Educator and Students,

Welcome to *SchoolTime*! On **Friday, February 3** at **11:00 a.m.**, you will attend the *SchoolTime* performance of ***Biglittlethings*** by **Imago Theatre** of Portland, Oregon.

Biglittlethings is a series of skits about cuddly and quirky animals and other anthropomorphized creatures. Each segment is a fascinating display of mime, choreographed movement and dance. The performers create characters and puppets using masks, costumes and gestures, resulting in hypnotic, surprising and fully alive creatures on the stage.

This study guide will help you prepare your students for their experience in the theater and give you a framework for how to integrate the performing arts into your curriculum. Targeted questions and exercises will help students understand the magic behind this unique and playful field trip experience.

Your students can actively participate at the performance by:

- OBSERVING how the performers use their bodies to communicate.
- WATCHING for characteristics of different animal movements.
- THINKING ABOUT how magic is created on stage.
- REFLECTING on what they have experienced at the theater after the performance.

We look forward to seeing you at the theater!

Sincerely,

Laura Abrams
Director
Education & Community Programs

Rachel Davidman
Education Programs Administrator



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.



Cal Performances' Education and Community Programs are supported by the California Arts Council, the Walter & Elise Haas Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, The Wallace Foundation and the Zellerbach Family Fund. Additional support is provided by Berkeley Community Fund, California Savings Bank, Citibank, East Bay Community Foundation, Robert J. and Helen H. Glaser Family Foundation, The McKesson Foundation, The San Francisco Foundation and Union Bank of California.

SchoolTime Study Guide

Imago Theatre

Biglittlethings

Friday, February 3, 2006, at 11:00 am

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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 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 Setting the Stage

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about mime and the art of telling stories without words.
- Students will learn to distinguish between reality and illusionary effects.
- Students will recognize the different art forms used in the performance: masks, dance, drama, mime, and music.

Pre-Performance Activities

Choosing at least one of these pre-performance activities will give your students a framework for their field trip and will allow them to better understand what they will experience in the theater.

- Introduce students to mime with Activity I: “The Magic Bag” on page 13.
- Discuss different animals and how they move. Discuss the characteristics of how some particular animals move, followed by a game of animal charades.
- Discuss special effects and illusions.

Teacher Note: Imago Theatre is a unique dynamic multi-faceted performing arts company. It is only through the live experience that one can truly comprehend their amazing illusions and mimed skits. With special effects, spectacular lighting design and original music, Imago Theater is a feast for all the senses.

Questions to Think About While at the Performance

Reviewing these questions with your students prior to the performance will help prepare them for *SchoolTime*. Students who are familiar with the vocabulary, concepts, and themes they will encounter on stage are much more likely to enjoy and understand the performance.



- What are some of the techniques used by the performers to create the illusion of magic?
- How do costumes and masks help explain the meaning of the skit?
- How would you describe what you saw to a friend?

Vocabulary

A vocabulary list is provided on page 11 with words that are related to Imago and their style of theater. Students can look up the words and use them to write about the performance.

Teacher Note: The material in this guide is intended to prepare young audiences for the *SchoolTime* show *Biglittlenthings*. It is recommended that you read through the study guide and summarize the material for your students.

3 About the *SchoolTime* Performance



Imago Theatre Presents *Biglittlethings*

Rabbits from *Biglittlethings*

Developed over the past four years by Imago Theatre co-founders and artistic directors Carol Triffle and Jerry Mouawad, *Biglittlethings* tells the tales of off-beat animals and unruly objects through costume-oriented skits about cuddly and quirky creatures such as hitchhiking rabbits, disembodied eyes, operatic ducks and roaming polar bears. Each skit is a well-executed display of mime, choreographed movement and dance accompanied by an original score composed by Katie Griesar. Inspired by the theatrical innovations of Jacques Lecoq, Robert Wilson and Richard Foreman, Oregon-based Imago Theatre infuses its work with unique physical technique, and dazzling technical wizardry intermixed with whimsical situations taken from everyday life.

Imago blends a variety of art forms: drama, dance, mime, music and visual arts. Scenes unfold for the viewer through the use of mime and masks. Imago uses illusion, engineering, architecture and physics to make each of their productions a one-of-a-kind theatrical experience. Visual arts are utilized in the creation of the masks and costuming. Mood is set through the use of silence or diverse sounds such as folk music from Bali, Italy and Indonesia, movie scores and rock 'n' roll. The company uses traditional masks along with contemporary costumes, so that legends, myths and stories are presented in a creative and animated form, encouraging the viewer's imagination to take over and allow the illusion to be "real."

***Biglitlethings* Program**



Rabbits

Four frolicking rabbits encounter the novelty of riding in cars and tackle the problem of how to get transportation back to civilization.

Anteaters

What's a hungry anteater in a restaurant to do when he can't get the waiter's attention and the menu is a little hard to read when his eyes are on the sides of his head?

Bugeyes

With the magic of lighting, Imago brings us snakes that change color, eyes that have a mind of their own and a bug collecting child who thinks he can keep the bug eyes under control.

Larvabatic

One of Imago's most popular works features a worm performing incredible acrobatic feats. In this illusion, our eyes see one thing, but our mind wants to see another.

Hippos

It's one thing to have trouble sleeping when you're a person. Imagine how much worse it is when you're the size of a hippo: thunderous snoring and earth-shattering tossing and turning.

Dress Caper

Through sound, mime and lighting, a group of spies find that the rules of space can change as barriers slip in and out of their environment and paper frames prove to have unexpected transformative properties.

Polar Bears

This piece is just for pure fun as these curious polar bears include the audience in their play time.

4 About the Artists

Imago Theatre

Imago Theatre began in 1979, performing exclusively mask theater in small communities in the Pacific Northwest, and six years later, in 1986, that the company's international touring began. Imago's explorations of the stage began as a combination of theater, movement and visual arts as influenced by renowned theater master **Jacques Lecoq** of Paris, France. First working in physical comedy and mask theater, the ensemble progressed toward creating and staging experimental works and original text works. In 2001, Imago's *FROGZ* completed a two-week run on Broadway and then returned to New York's New Victory Theatre for a four-week run in May 2002.

The ensemble's ingenuity has manifested itself in numerous stage "theatrics" including a tilting stage in Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*; underground projections of Triffle's *Buffo*; a giant 14-foot metallic wheel in Richard Foreman's *Symphony of Rats*; the underwater soliloquies in Triffle's *Oh Lost Weekend*; the matrix puzzle of a set in Mouawad's *House Taken Over*; and most recently the United States premiere of Caryl Churchill's *A Number*. Claiming numerous nominations and awards, and recognition from the National Endowment for the Arts, Imago's work has been seen on television and throughout the world with extensive tours to Europe, Asia and North America.

Artists

CAROL TRIFFLE (Creator) Carol danced professionally before seeking a more theatrical medium. She became inspired by movement theater after discovering the teachings of Jacques Lecoq. She is a graduate of the acclaimed L'Ecole Jacques Lecoq, with whom she worked as assistant in 1997. She is one of 40 people authorized to teach his work. Triffle has been the recipient of two Oregon Arts Commission Fellowships and has served as a panelist for National Endowment for the Arts. She produced the United States premiere of Caryl Churchill's *A Number* at Imago Theatre.

JERRY MOUAWAD (Creator) Jerry was drawn to the physical theatricality of Lecoq when he studied at the Lecoq-based Hayes-Marshall School of Theatre Arts in Portland. He has staged work for Portland Center Stage, the Portland Opera and the Oregon Symphony as choreographer, puppet play designer, and writer/director. His excursions into experimental work led to his direction and design of two Richard Foreman plays—*Samuel's Major Problems* and *Symphony of Rats*. Mouawad has received Arts Commission Fellowships from the state of Oregon.



KATIE GRIESAR (Composer) Katie is a graduate of Vassar College and the American Repertory Theatre Institute at Harvard University, and is resident composer for Imago.

JEFF FORBES (Light Design) Jeff is a Portland-based lighting designer working primarily in theater and dance. He has designed lights for many of Imago's productions.

SAM KUSNETZ (Production Stage Manager/Lighting Director) Sam is a designer, composer, stage manager and theatrical problem-solver with over 140 productions to his name. He spends his summers as the Head of Sound at Buck's Rock Camp, a visual and performing arts camp in Connecticut. This is Sam's third season with Imago. *Sam loves cake!*

JONATHAN GODSEY (Performer) Jonathan became interested in theater in 1998 at the ripe young age of 28. Since then, he has performed in numerous national tours with Imago. He currently studies aikido at Two Rivers Aikikai in Portland, and eventually plans to apply his extensive studies of tai chi chuan and aikido to the art of stage combat.

KERRY SILVA (Performer) Kerry Silva graduated with a degree in theatre, speech, and dance from Brown University in 2002. She works with many theaters in Portland, performing, puppeteering, teaching, writing, directing, dancing, clowning, booking, managing, and other such gerunds. She is delighted to be working with Imago, and proud to be a professional frog. This is Kerry's fourth season with Imago. *Kerry likes to climb trees, and her favorite food is chocolate cake.*

PHILIP CUOMO (Performer) Philip Cuomo appeared in the world premiere of *Biglittlethings* (2003.) He is a founding member of the New York-based contemporary *Commedia dell' arte* group *Lick the Spoon*, with which he wrote and performed several original pieces including Arlecchino in *Pantalone's War*. He has created and performed several one-man, curriculum-based, character-driven, interactive shows for school audiences.

EMILY GLEASON (Performer) Emily is ecstatic to be embarking on her second season with Imago Theatre in productions of *FROGZ* and *Biglittlethings*. Her background includes nearly a decade as an equestrian vaulter (gymnastics and dance on a cantering horse—yes, really); plus dance, pole vaulting, distance running, yoga, gymnastics and cake decorating. *Emily loves climbing trees, eating chocolate and watching weird films.*

LEAH JAMES ABEL (Performer) Leah began clowning around in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the age of four. She has training in theater, dance and a variety of circus arts, and has been a proud company member, performer and choreographer with two New York-based circus-theater companies, Kirkos and Cirque Boom. When she's not hanging from a long piece of cloth or other aerial apparatus, she might be perched in a tree or developing her new one-woman show, *Dirty Ol' Men*. This is Leah's debut season with Imago.

MATT CAFFONI (Performer) Matt is thrilled to be a part of Imago Theatre's production of *Biglittlethings*. This is his debut season with the company. Before graduating from Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts, Matt also worked as a choreographer, assistant director and producer.



Anteater from *Biglittlethings*

6 About the Art Form: *Theater Arts*

An Introduction to Mime

By Imago Theatre Staff with excerpts from the Greek Mimes to Marcel Marceau and Beyond: Mimes, Actors, Pierrots and Clowns: A Chronicle of the Many Visages of Mime in the Theatre by Annette Lust

Mime is centered around the philosophy of detailed simplicity. It is a creative dramatic expression, usually without the use of words. The similarities between mime and spoken acting include: an imaginative actor; a dramatic composition involving character, conflict, theme and story; an audience; and a commitment to the material being presented. Although it might be considered silent acting, mime has a style of its own. Today, the terms “mime” and “pantomime” are interchangeable.



Marcel Marceau

Mime is considered one of the earliest mediums of self-expression. It was first used as a part of formal theater in the Asia. Mime has been a part of the theater traditions of both Japan and China. In Europe, the ancient Greeks used mime as a form of acting in conjunction with dance, while the traveling jester was one form of mime practiced during the Middle Ages. Church dramas of that time also used a form of mime in “miracle plays.” The art form was “reborn” in Europe during the Renaissance in the court jesters and clowns as seen in Shakespearean comedies. By the 19th century, mime was known worldwide, as practiced in the *Noh* theatre of Japan, *commedia dell'arte* in Italy and the melodramas of France and America.

By the mid-20th century, Paris was the place for mimes. There, several great masters gave new life to the mime art and merged it with other forms. Etienne Decroux, Marcel Marceau and Jacques Lecoq developed schools of mime that no longer represented traditional, 19th-century pantomime. Their schools and styles differed from one another as much as they differed from Eastern European and Asian styles.

Marcel Marceau converted corporeal (“body language”) mime into an art that could be readily communicated. Through his distinguished style and characters he made this art known to the world. Marceau opened a school in Paris in 1978 and also taught workshops in America. He appeared at Zellerbach Hall almost annually for 20 years, from 1972 to 1992



Jacques Lecoq

Jacques Lecoq had a different approach: he taught mime not as a separate art but as a research tool to further dramatic creativity, as well as one which could be combined with other arts. Lecoq’s global training method fused the clown and the

buffoon, juggling, acrobatics, spoken text, dance, plastic arts and all of life with body movement. His expression, based on the observation of natural movement, opened up new directions for physical theater.

Mime can be literal, abstract or a combination of both. Literal mime is primarily used for comedy and story theater, and generally tells a story with a conflict through the use of a main character. The actions and visual design clearly tell the viewers the story which is usually humorous. Abstract mime is used to generate feelings, thoughts and images from a serious topic or issue. Normally there is no plot or central character. It is considered a more intuitive experience.

The Essence of Drama and Theater

Drama originated with early people using rhythm, music and dance to worship nature, the harvest or a successful hunt. Stories grew out of their imitations of nature and their gods. The stories became important for viewing rather than for religious ceremonies and literature evolved. Drama is a type of literature that tells a story through the dialogue and actions of its characters and is designed to be performed for an audience. The story or play can be serious and are referred to as tragedies. Play that emphasize the ridiculous and are comic are called comedies. Some plays have a mixture of both characteristics, such as the melodrama or the tragicomedy. A theater is a place, indoors or outdoors, where people perform before an audience. The term "theater" implies action and many times is connected with performances on a stage by live actors as well as film and television.

Imago's Perspective: Mask Theater

Modern mask theater is a combination of mime, dance and ritual, which is an art form in itself. A mask allows an actor to change into an entirely different being. As the actor changes, so does the mask itself. It is a magic experience for the artist and audience alike.

Imago's perspective and theatrical presentations have been influenced by various historical developments within theater and the use of masks. From classical Greek tragedy to the potlach ceremonies of the Northwest Indians, masks have fascinated, intimidated and entertained people throughout the world. Although it is not the traditional art in the United States that it has been for centuries in other cultures, mask theater has had an influence on American life. For example, the street theater of Italy and Europe set the stage for both for American slapstick movies and Imago's improvisational comedy. People in the Pacific Northwest, Imago's home, are touched frequently by the influence of the Kwakiutl Indians, whose masks and woodworking skills are mirrored in the Indian art of the community.



Masked and costumed performers from Imago's *FROGZ*

The use of masks in the tribal and ceremonial rites of Northwestern Indian, Indonesian and African cultures have many elements in common. With their rich traditions of mythology, folktale and legend, these cultures illustrate important events in their histories with masks, special effects, puppets and mechanical devices.

The masks used in these ceremonial theatrics were ornately carved, painted and frequently inlaid with shell or glittering pieces of metal. Bark or fur might have been used to represent mustaches and hair, and many of the masks had movable parts for the eyes and jaws that could be opened and closed. Mythological creatures such as monsters or animals were well-represented and many featured the more spectacular elements of mask making and movement.

Commedia dell' arte was the most popular form of entertainment in 16th-century Italy (a period known as the Renaissance). This type of drama was almost entirely improvised and could be adapted to almost any performing conditions. The word “*arte*” signified that the *commedia* actors were professionals, in contrast to the amateurs who performed dramas at courts and academies. In a *commedia* work, the actor was the most important element, while the script was merely a scenario that summarized the principal action and its outcome. Actors improvised much of the dialogue and developed any plot complications as the situation demanded. The troupes, often composed of several generations of the same family, traveled from place to place, often using wagons for both transportation and staging. Another basic characteristic of *commedia* was the set of stock characters that appeared in all the plays with the same actor always playing the same role. These characters had stock characteristics and even often had the same names in the various plays.

Imago embraces the rich past of world theater and ceremonies and effectively combines the use of masks, mime and movement from these observed traditions within their contemporary presentations.

MASK SAMPLES



Native American
(Pacific Northwest)



Arlecchino (Italy)



Harlequin (France)



African (Zaire)



Masked spies from Imago's *Biglittlenthings*

VOCABULARY	
abstract	illusion
anthropomorphic	improvisation
characteristics	literal
choreography	pantomime
commedia dell'arte	stock characters
corporeal	theater

7 Activities and Exercises

Based on *Meaning Through Motion: A Study Guide*
prepared by Trent Arterberry and Bev Sawatzky

Post-Performance Discussion Questions: Communication Through Mime



- How do you know when a skit begins and ends?
- How do you know when to applaud?
- How is live performance different from TV?
- Give examples of how people communicate without words in everyday life.
- How do the performers make themselves understood without using words?
Can you give an example?
- Name some of the movements that the performers used to tell what was happening in the skit (such as walking in-place or swimming under water).

Commonly Asked Questions About Mime

Pose these questions to your students and solicit their answers before sharing the following information. Use their answers as a point of departure for further discussion.

Is it all right for mimes to talk?

Strictly speaking mime is silent, but some mimes feel that dialogue enhances their performance and allows greater range of communication. Most mimes today feel that mime can use words, but must communicate primarily in movement to be considered mime.

What is the difference between mime and dance?

Mime is like dance in that it uses stylized (not natural) movement. While dancers evoke feeling with movements that are abstractly related to the theme, mime communicates with movements that are more literally related to the theme. Furthermore, the styles of movement in dance and mime are different. Dancers leap through the air and attempt to achieve “weightlessness.” Mimes stay rooted on the stage. Dancers move to a consistent rhythm. Mime employs broken rhythms and stillness.

What is the difference between mime and acting?

Mime is a form of acting because it portrays characters and stories. In other forms of theater, actors rely on dialogue and costuming to create a character. Mimes rely on body positioning, movement and rhythm to do the same. Actors with speaking roles communicate

emotion in a natural fashion, where mime does so in a stylized or symbolic fashion. An actor using speech would tell another “I love you” in a heartfelt voice, whereas a mime would put his hands to his beating heart. A dancer might communicate the same motion with a series of acrobatic leaps.

What is the difference between mime and clown?

Mimes and clowns are related and often overlap, because both rely on physical movement to communicate, but clowns are different from mimes. The essence of the clown character is that he fails at whatever he attempts to do. The mime attempts to find the truth of the human condition, and his characters may fail or succeed. He also attempts to identify with the elements, and all things animate or inanimate. These are not usually the concerns of the clown.

Activity I: The Magic Bag

1. Students sit in a semi-circle.
2. The teacher, using mime, carries a large bag and places it in front of the students.
3. Teacher says: “This magic bag has an infinite number of objects in it. One by one you will come up and pull open the sack, reach in, and pull out an object. Your task is to define the object by the way in which you handle it and by using it to demonstrate its function.
4. Reassure students to trust their imaginations and not to talk too much. 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.
5. Students should refrain from shouting out the name of the object until the student returns to his or her seat. This is not charades or a time for discussion. If any dialogue is needed, the teacher can help guide the students to notice what kind of gestures, facial expressions, etc. help to communicate and what gets in the way of audience recognition. If students are shy, then no talking is encouraged until everyone has presented. This helps to create a safe and focused environment.



Shadows from Imago's *Biglittlthings*



Activity II: Frozen Picture Warm-up

1. Students work in groups of three, scattered around the room.
2. The teacher calls out cue words: e.g. beach, family, football, zoo, test, on the moon, underwater—give about ten. (You can make up a list of words together as a class before you begin the activity.)
3. Students respond spontaneously, quickly forming tableaux (frozen group pictures) that represent these words.
4. As students begin to move and use the imagination, they will learn to use gesture as an efficient way of communicating.

Activity III: The Adverb Game

1. Students sit in a semi-circle with a chair in front of them.
2. One student is given an adverb. She or he must then pick up the chair, move it and sit down on it in the style of the adverb. For example, a student might be asked to move the chair quickly, romantically, angrily, fearfully, clumsily, joyfully, slowly, proudly, rigidly, gently, anxiously, etc.
3. The rest of the class guesses the word.
4. The purpose of this game is to teach how simple movements can convey emotion, attitude and tone.
5. It may be helpful to have the student start in a neutral position to make the presentation clean and clear. Likewise, a freeze at the end will give a sense of completion.

8 Connections to California State Standards

California State Content Standards Theater Grades K-12

For the particulars to your grade level please visit
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/damain.asp>

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.

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Creating, performing, and participating in theater

Students apply processes and skills in acting, directing, designing, and scriptwriting to create formal and informal theatre, 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.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Responding to, analyzing, and critiquing theatrical experiences

Students critique and derive meaning from works of theater, film/video, electronic media, and theatrical artists on the basis of aesthetic qualities.



This Cal Performances *SchoolTime* Study Guide was written, edited and designed by Rachel Davidman, Laura Abrams, Hollis Ashby, James Coleman and Nicole Anthony
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