

C

!

R

C

A





Welcome to the State Theatre’s school day performance of 46 Circus Acts in 45 Minutes, performed by Australia’s Circa. These Keynotes will get you and your students ready for the show by telling you more about the company, where they’re from, the history of circus, and even showing you how to do some circus-related acts on your own.

We encourage you to use these *Keynotes* with your students to enhance their understanding and appreciation of the performance. Enjoy the show!

Contents

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Welcome!..... | 2 |
| Meet Circa..... | 3 |
| The Show..... | 4 |
| Circus History..... | 5 |
| The Land Down Under..... | 6 |
| Activities..... | 7 |
| Get Ready!..... | 8 |

Bank of America



Keynotes are made possible by a generous grant from Bank of America Charitable Foundation.

The State Theatre’s education program is funded in part by Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Colgate-Palmolive, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, E & G Foundation, Gannett Foundation, The William G. & Helen C. Hoffman Foundation, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies, J. Seward Johnson, Sr. 1963 Charitable Trust, Karma Foundation, The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, McCrane Foundation, MetLife Foundation, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, National Starch, New England Foundation for the Arts, New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour, PNC Foundation, Bill & Cathy Powell, The Provident Bank Foundation, PSE&G, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, TD Bank, and Wachovia Wells Fargo Foundation. Their support is gratefully acknowledged.



This tour of Circa is made possible by a grant from Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Funding has been made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.



Continental Airlines is the official airline of the State Theatre.



The Heldrich is the official hotel of the State Theatre.

*State*TheatreNJ.org
Keynotes

Keynotes are produced by the Education Department of the State Theatre, New Brunswick, NJ.

Mark W. Jones, President & CEO
Lian Farrer, *Vice President for Education*

Online at www.StateTheatreNJ.org/Keynotes

Keynotes for 46 Circus Acts in 45 Minutes written and designed by Lian Farrer and Jennifer Cunha.
© 2011 State Theatre

Find us at www.StateTheatreNJ.org

Contact: education@StateTheatreNJ.org

The State Theatre, a premier nonprofit venue for the performing arts and entertainment.

Meet Circa

Based in Brisbane, Australia, Circa is dedicated to exploring and extending the limits of circus arts. Their performances for adult audiences fuse traditional circus with dance, theater, and high-tech sound and lighting to create a new art form that is both challenging and entertaining. Their shows feature breathtakingly beautiful dance and amazing acrobatics pulled apart and re-imagined.

Since 2006, Circa has performed in 18 countries on five continents. In 2010 alone, their touring program was enjoyed by more than 60,000 people all over the world. The company also runs a training center out of their studio in Brisbane.



Darcy Grant is an acrobat, tumbler, unicycle rider, diabloist and hand balancer. He joined the Flying Fruit Fly Circus at age 13. After touring Australia and overseas for six years, he went on to teach at the Little Big Tops in Melbourne, Australia. Darcy is a

highly skilled circus trainer and regularly leads Circa's community training programs. He has a strong partnership with the Blackrobats, which is a youth circus dedicated to working with Aboriginal children in northern Australia.



James Kingsford-Smith is a professional circus artist who has performed at international circus competitions, major sports events, and with the famous Cirque du Soleil. James began his training in gymnastics at the age of five, and has been performing since he was

15. Since then he has trained and performed as an actor, stunt man, high diver, physical comedian, trainer, acrobat, and aerialist. He graduated from the National Institute of Circus Arts.

Jess Love has brought her unique performance style all over the world—from New York to London to Paris to Kathmandu, from 42nd Street to the Sydney Opera house to lounge rooms and sidewalks. Jess has performed with Circus Oz, Circus Monoxide, and Dislocated Physical Theatre, and is one of the founders of the group The Candy Butchers. Jess is famous for her skill with hula hoops; she even set a record for the most hula hoops spun at one time: 115!



EMMA SERJEANT is a graduate of Australia's National Institute of Circus Arts, majoring in hand balancing under the guidance of internationally renowned Master Trainer Lu Guang Rong. In March 2007, Emma was one of Australia's first invitees to the annual European circus school gathering, La Piste Aux Espoirs

Festival in Belgium, proudly representing her university and country at this prestigious international event.

The Show

In *46 Circus Acts in 45 Minutes*, the four multi-skilled performers from Circa bend, fly, juggle, and balance their way through 46 different circus stunts, racing to beat the clock. During the show, you can watch the minutes count down on the giant clock at the back of the stage. Will they get through all 46 acts in just 45 minutes? You'll have to wait and see. The show features many types of stunts you'd see at the circus, including:

Gymnastics

The performers in Circa use a lot of the same skills as gymnasts, such as vaulting, tumbling, balancing, and performing difficult moves on special apparatus. It takes a lot of strength, flexibility, balance, grace, and precision to execute these moves.

Gymnastics began in ancient Greece. Jumping, running, and wrestling kept men physically fit and helped prepare them for war.

Juggling

Jugglers skillfully toss and catch all kinds of objects: everything from balls and beanbags to clubs, rings, knives, and flaming torches! It's a skill that requires perfect balance, timing, and control. Juggling can be as basic as one person keeping two balls in the air by continually throwing and catching them—or it can involve five or six jugglers manipulating a dozen or more objects in complicated patterns. The most common type of juggling is toss juggling—throwing and catching the objects so that at least one of them is in the air at any one time.

Contortion



Contortionists have the ability to bend their bodies into impossible shapes and positions. They develop this skill through intense gymnastic training. Most contortionists have spines that are more flexible bending in one particular direction; they are either "frontbenders" or "backbenders."

Aerial Silk

Aerial silk—also called tissue, ribbon, or fabric—is a circus art where performers execute acrobatic moves while hanging from long pieces of fabric. They use the fabric to pose, hang, fall, swing, and spiral their bodies into and out of various positions.

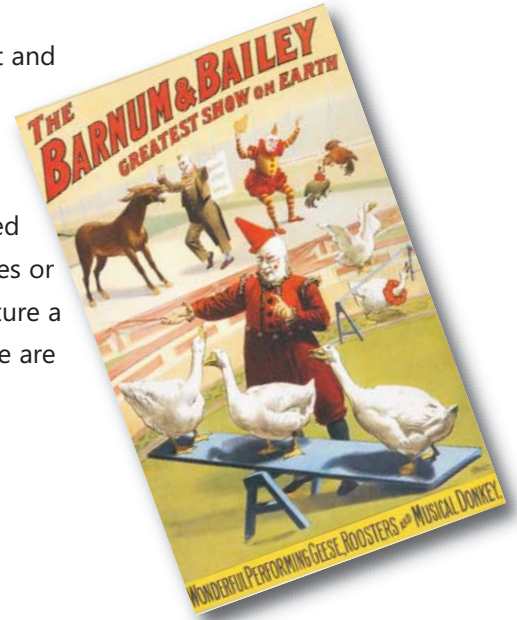


Circus History

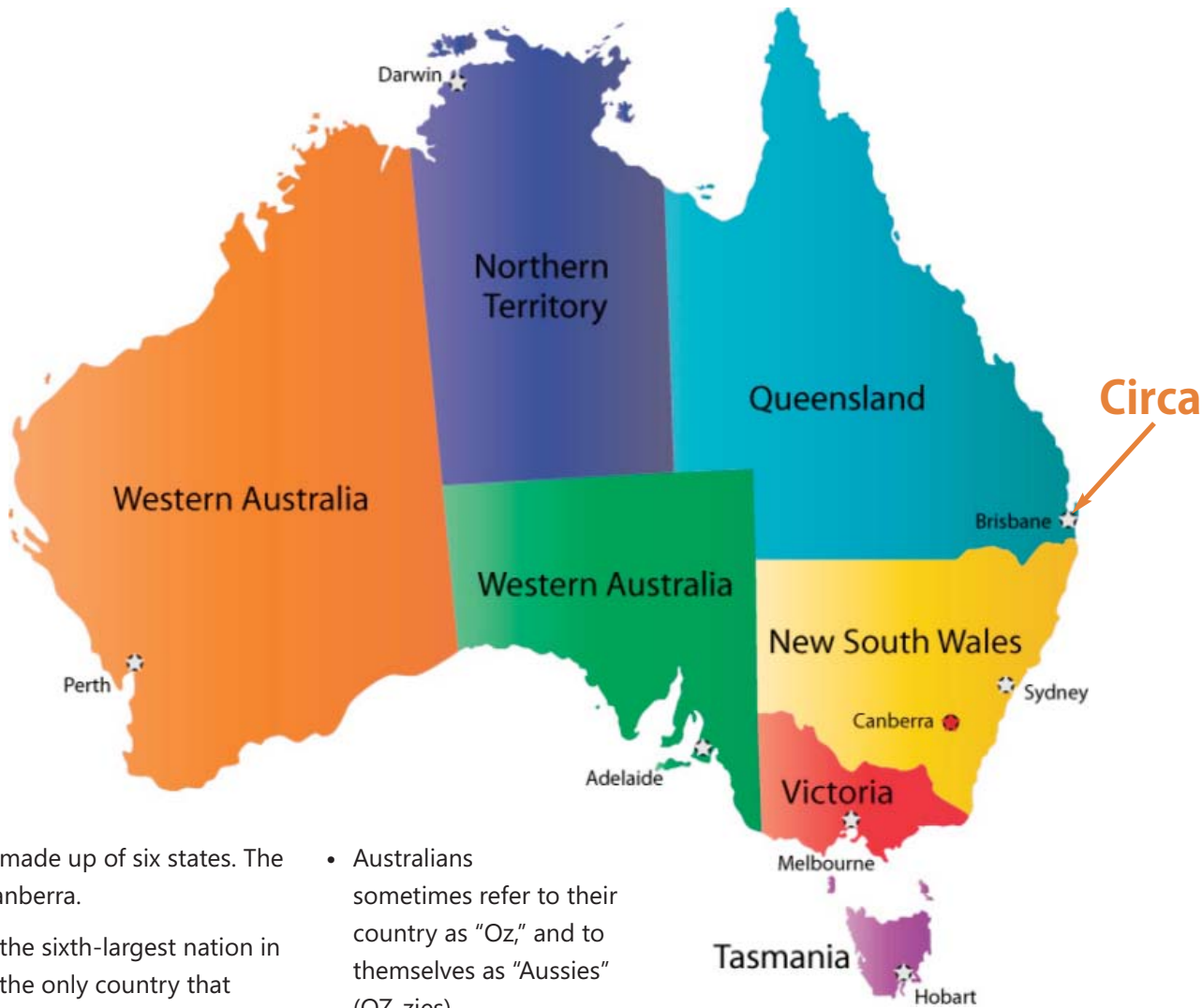
The word "circus" comes from the Latin word for circle. In ancient Rome, the first and biggest circus was the Circus Maximus (great circus), a huge outdoor stadium used for chariot races, gladiator battles, and other spectacles. Its capacity was around 250,000—enough to hold more than one-fourth the population of Rome!

In the 1870s, American P.T. Barnum established his traveling circus, which featured exotic animals and a "freak show" (an exhibition of people with odd physical features or unusual talents). Barnum's show evolved into the circus most of us know today. Picture a huge tent with performances going on simultaneously in three different rings. There are elephants, lion tamers, bareback riders, trapeze artists, clowns, and more—all introduced by the ringmaster.

In the 1970s, performers from France, Australia, the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain created *nouveau cirque*, a hybrid of circus and theater.



The Land Down Under



- Australia is made up of six states. The capital is Canberra.
- Australia is the sixth-largest nation in area and is the only country that covers an entire continent.
- The indigenous peoples of Australia are called "Aborigines" (ab-uh-RIDG-in-eez). They have lived there for over 50,000 years.
- Aborigines invented the boomerang, a curved piece of wood that, when thrown, will come back to you.
- Europeans discovered Australia around 1606. The British began colonizing the continent in 1770. Today, about 92% of the population is white, 7% Asian, and 1% Aborigine and other groups.
- While Australia is an independent country, Queen Elizabeth II of England is the head of the executive branch of the government.

- Australians sometimes refer to their country as "Oz," and to themselves as "Aussies" (OZ-zies).
- Since it's in the southern hemisphere ("the Land Down Under"), Australia's seasons are the exact opposite of ours; when it's summer here, it's winter there—and vice versa.
- About 40% of Australia is desert. There are also grassland, tropical, subtropical, and temperate regions. Australia has more beaches than any other country in the world.
- Australia is the world's largest exporter of coal, wool, opals, lead, and diamonds.
- Australians have invented some useful and important things that we use every day. Among their inventions are notepads, aspirin, and the pacemaker.

In December 2010, and into January 2011, the State of Queensland (where Circa is from) was hit by terrible floods. Three-quarters of the state was declared a disaster area, and thousands were left homeless.





Before the Show

- What do you think of when you hear the word circus?
- The group Circa comes from Australia. What do you know about Australia? Can you find it on a map?

After the Show

- What are the different acts you saw in the show?
- Pretend you are telling about the Circa show to someone who didn't see it. How would you describe the circus acts, costumes, scenery, lighting, music, and anything else you noticed?
- Have you ever taken an everyday object (like a pencil, a plate, or a ball) and tried to do astonishing tricks with it?
- Can you name some examples you saw in the show where the performers had to work together to be successful? What kinds of things do you do where you have to cooperate and work as part of a team?

Body Spelling Bee

The performers in Circa have to stay in great physical shape to be able to do all their difficult stunts. Just like dancers and athletes, they make sure to warm up their bodies before they perform. Here's an easy warmup activity you can do in class.

1. Practice writing out your first name in the air with your right arm.
2. Then try your left arm, the right leg, and left leg. Now you are ready for the next step.
3. Clear a space in your classroom so you and your class can move around without bumping into anyone or anything.
4. Working as a group, use your bodies to make letter shapes that spell out different words. Try spelling the word "circus" with your bodies. Are there any other words you can make with your bodies?



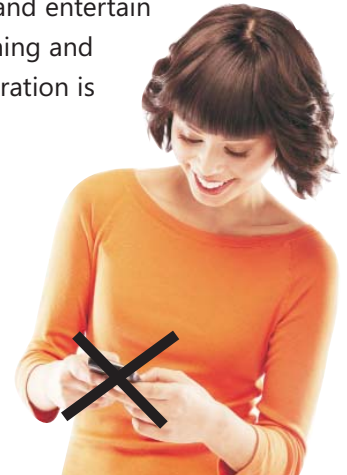
Draw What You Saw

After the show, decide: what was your favorite of all the circus act that Circa performed? Draw a picture of yourself doing that act and then share the picture with your classmates. Did you all choose the same acts, or different ones?

Get Ready!

One essential collaborator needed to create a live performance is the audience. The weeks and months of thought and preparation that go into a show are directed toward creating a performance that will inspire and entertain you and the other people who are watching and listening. Your role in this artistic collaboration is very important to the success of the performance. Make sure you know your part:

- When you arrive at the theater, follow an usher to your seat.
- Before the show begins, make sure to turn off and put away all electronic devices, including cell phones, portable games and music, cameras, and recording equipment. Keep them off for the entire performance.
- Once the house lights (the lights in the part of the theater where the audience is sitting) go down, focus all your attention on the stage. Watch and listen carefully to the performance.
- Attending a play in the theater is not the same as watching television at home. At the theater, talking, eating, and moving around disturbs the performers and other members of the audience. And please—**no texting or checking messages during the show!**



No Texting



No Pictures



No talking



Resources

BOOKS

The Circus: 1870-1950, by Noel Daniel. Taschen, 2008.

Clown Child, by Amy Littlesugar. Philomel, 2006. A little girl is a clown in a traveling circus and dreams of settling down. Grades K-3.

Olivia Saves the Circus, by Ian Falconer. Simon & Schuster, 2001. The entire circus is sick, but the show must go on! Can Olivia help? Grades K-3.

WEBSITES

Circa Home Page
www.circa.org.au

The Circus in America, a guide to the people, places, acts, and promotion of American circus from 1793-1940
www.circusinamerica.org/public

Dedicated to helping teachers and others give effective instruction in circus arts.
www.teachcircus.com

Australian Slang Dictionary
www.koalanet.com.au/australian-slang.html#O

- If something in the show is meant to be funny, go ahead and laugh. And of course—feel free to applaud at the end of the performance if you liked what you saw.
- After the performers are finished taking their bows, stay in your seat until your group gets the signal to leave the theater.