Wolfgang
in the stars
BY CIRCA
QPAC's
OUT OF THE BOX
FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN
EIGHT YEARS & UNDER

QPAC'S OUT OF THE BOX PRESENTS

A PRODUCTION CREATED BY YARON LIFSCHITZ AND THE CIRCA ENSEMBLE

Wolfgang in the stars BY CIRCA

Buckle up and prepare for lift-off in this world premiere music-fueled circus space romp of galactic proportions.

Join the boy-genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart as he embarks on an interstellar journey to seek inspiration for the beloved early masterpiece "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star".

From the internationally acclaimed creators of *Wolfgang's Magical Musical Circus* and *Carnival of the Animals*, this brand-new show will feature four of Circa's daredevil ensemble members and live music performed on a wind synthesizer by the indomitable Quincy Grant.

Wolfgang in the Stars is a dazzling delight for audiences of all ages filled with sparkling acrobatics, side-splitting gags, and stunning video projections transporting you to a world where music and imagination collide.

OOTB'S KEY INGREDIENTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD ART MAKING

What is quality arts education for early childhood?

Children:

- Engage with rich stimulus materials that provide springboards for their individual artmaking
- Have voice and agency in their learning and art making
- Direct their own play with support from adults as required to maintain the play flow
- Choose the art form they want to create and make in
- Engage in story making, dramatic play, puppetry and miniature world play for themselves and for sharing with an audience.

This means that educators and artists:

- Support children's play and art making responses by identifying and sharing resources and springboards for learning that are likely to engage and stimulate creative and imaginative responses
- Offer rich aesthetic and open-ended materials which provide opportunities for children to respond in a variety of ways and across multiple arts disciplines (for example: via socio-dramatic play, miniature world play, puppetry, music, dance, visual arts)
- Set up learning environments which ensure children are able to exercise agency in their responses
- Support children's creative expression by considering the level of scaffolding each child requires to engage effectively in the response they have selected
- Include opportunities for playful, embodied, active, language rich and visual learning.

PERFORMANCE PREPARATION

PURPOSE: To prepare the children for the Out of the Box performance experience

RESOURCES: Images of QPAC and live theatre performances

- Show children an image of QPAC, the building, and some images of a performance on a stage. Also explain how they will be getting there.
- Ask the children if they have ever been to a cinema or to see a movie before? Ask them what that was like. What happened? What did they sit on? Were there other people there? Did the lights in the cinema go out sometimes? How did they feel?
- Ask the children if any of them have ever been to a play with live actors in a theatre. Invite children to share what they saw and what happened.
- Discuss how the experience of a live performance might be similar or different.
- What might be different about going to a theatre with live actors compared to going to a movie at a cinema?
- What might be the same?
- Following the discussion, reinforce to the children that before, during and after the performance, the lights will go up and down - sometimes it will be very dark. Reassure the children that this is meant to happen and that it will be okay. Explain that this is all part of what makes going to the theatre special.
- Also share that at times the sound will change. Sometimes they might be very loud, while at other times the sounds might be soft and there will be music.
- Explain that sometimes there will also be clapping, laughing and noises from the audience.
- Most of all, ensure that the children are excited about the forthcoming experience. Tell them that it will be like stepping into a story book!

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK V2.0

Children are connected with and contribute to their world.

Children are confident and involved learners.

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

Personal and Social Capability / Critical and Creative Thinking.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM V9.0

This performance will provide teaching, learning, and assessment opportunities to cover the Achievement Standard aspects in the below examples from Prep to Year 2.

In The Arts Prep students:

- describe experiences, observations, ideas and/or feelings about arts works they encounter
- use play, imagination, arts knowledge, processes and/ or skills to create and share arts works in different forms.

In The Arts Year 2 students:

- identify where they experience the arts
- demonstrate arts practices and skills across arts subjects
- create arts works in a range of forms
- share their work in informal settings.

In Health and Physical Education Prep students:

- describe similarities and differences between themselves and others, and different emotions people experience
- apply fundamental movement skills to manipulate objects and space in a range of movement situations.

In Health and Physical Education Year 2 students:

- explain how personal qualities contribute to identities
- describe how emotional responses affect their own and others' feelings
- apply fundamental movement skills in different movement situations and explain how they move with objects and in space effectively
- describe factors that make physical activity beneficial
- develop and apply rules while collaborating with others in a range of movement contexts.

CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS

THE ARTS

Dance, Drama and Music: F-3

Explore where, why and how people across cultures, communities and/or other contexts experience drama/music/dance (AC9ADR2E01 / AC9AMU2E01).

Explore how and why the arts are important for people and communities (AC9ADRFE01 / AC9ADAFE01 / AC9AMUFEO1).

Exploring how facial expressions, gestures and other ways of moving, and using voice or language, can communicate emotions and feelings in arts works; for example, characters in portraits, cartoons, songs, chants or dances from different times and cultures (AC9AMUFE01).

Explore where, why and how dance is choreographed and/or performed across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts (AC9ADA4E01).

Health and Physical Education: F-2

Investigate who they are and the people in their world (AC9HPFP01).

Experiment with different ways of moving their body safely and manipulating objects and space (AC9HPFM02).

Describe their personal qualities and those of others and explain how they contribute to developing identities (AC9HP2P01).

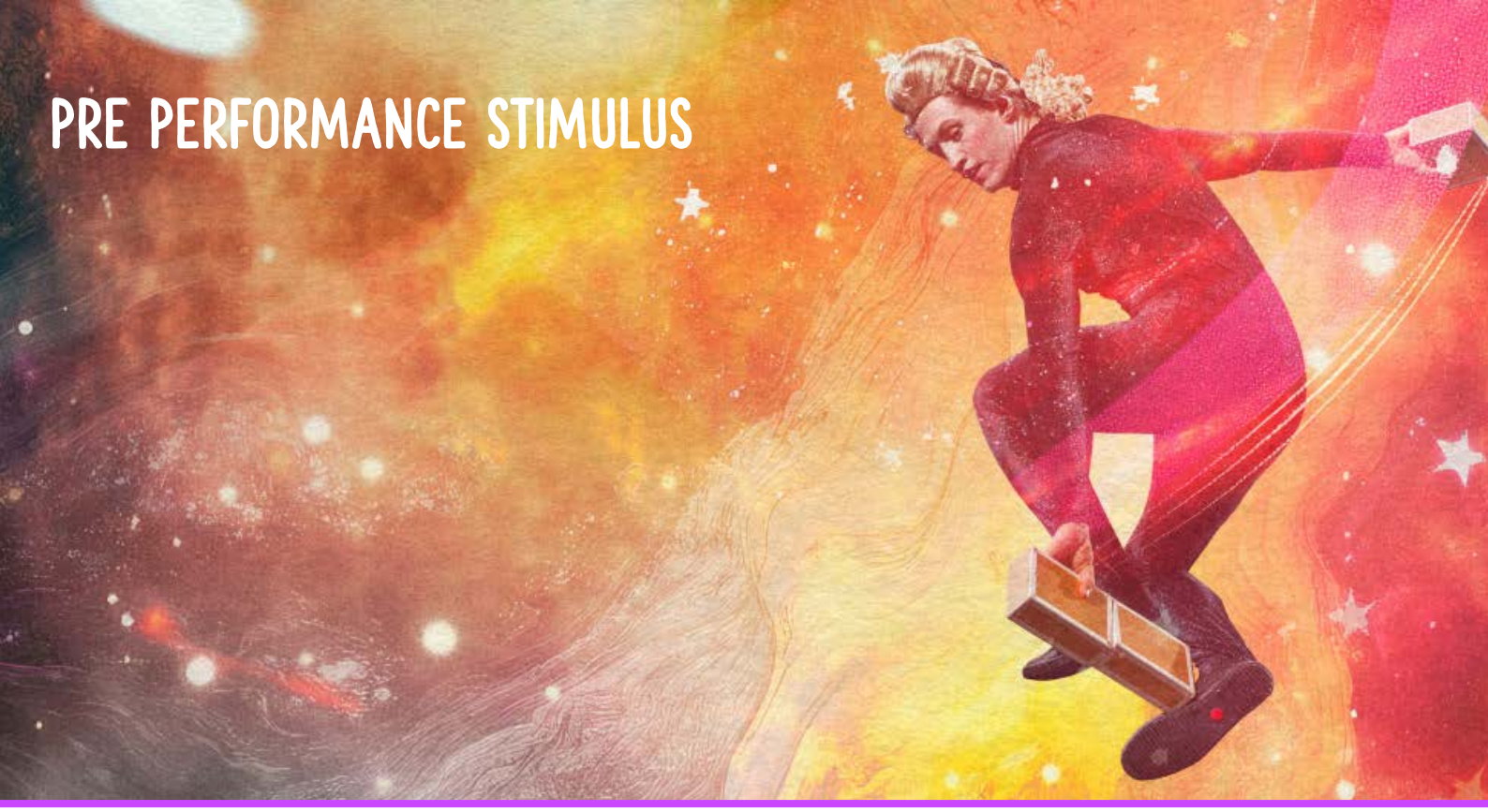
Identify how different situations influence emotional responses (AC9HP2P03).

Learning Experiences

KEY WORDS: creativity, composition, composer, problem-solving, imagination, journey, artist

KEY QUESTIONS: What could be in space? How can imagination inspire artworks? What would you like to make? What is Wolfgang making? Why does Wolfgang make a composition?

PRE PERFORMANCE STIMULUS



Activity 1: Exploring the idea of a star and the artist Mozart.

Purpose: To familiarise children with the song 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' and circus.

Resources: Story book *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* or *How to Catch A Star* by Oliver Jeffers, *Starry Night* by Judith A. Proffer Yoko Matsuok (illustrator) *Zoo in the Sky: A Book of Animal Constellations* by Jacqueline Mitton.

Step 1: Recalling Twinkle Twinkle

Discuss the song, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* Song. When did you first start singing it? Where did you learn it? Did someone sing it to you as a lullaby? Why is it a good lullaby? Did it make you sleep? Can you remember the actions you learned with it? Ask the children to share the actions they learnt and see if there are any variations.

Ask students to work in pairs and create freeze frames of stars, a full moon, half-moon, a falling star, a star on the ground, in the sky.

Step 2: Other versions of this tune

Ask children if they know other songs that use the same tune as *Twinkle Twinkle* (Baa Baa Black Sheep; A, B, C, D, E, F, G…alphabet song). Divide group into three and ask children to sing the three songs at the same time. Did they sound the same?

Step 3: Introducing Mozart and his variations

The famous composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart created the variations of *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* in the 1780s based on the French folk tune *Ah Vous Dirai -je, Maman*.

The lyrics to the song *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* were written by Jane Taylor in 1806.

Artists use other art all the time to provide motivation and create more art. Mozart's variations played a role in its lasting popularity. Listen to the variations below.

These extra 12 variations are now what we recognise as *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCKBl-TpRzc).

Ask children to listen for when the music changes from the one they know and put their hands on their heads when the music makes the change. Ask them to try to sing along to the more complex versions/do the hand actions for the more complex versions. Which of these variations do you like the best?

Then, let's listen to and watch an orchestra play a segment of one of his famous concertos, for example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71AgofmDSjs (Make sure you keep it playing until the piano section)

Ask children what is different about that music compared to *Twinkle Twinkle!* (full orchestra, complex rhythms, longer, no singing, conductor, adult audience etc.)

Now for the students to create variations. Play *Mary had a Little Lamb, Little Lamb Little Lamb*, point out that it uses notes B A G D. Using the xylophones (or other suitable instruments) can they vary this to come up with something different? What compositions/variations can they come up with?

Allow students time to create their own variations and then to play for each other.

Step 4: Introducing the play and the idea of circus

Explain that in the play they will see a modern circus performance to tell a make-believe story about Mozart needing to travel to the stars to get some inspiration for his versions of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.

What is a circus ?

Do you know what Circus is? Have you ever been to a circus? What kind of performers do you see at a circus? Do they mostly use language or their bodies to entertain the crowd? What equipment do they use? Can you imagine how the performers in the show we will see might tell this story? What equipment might they use?

Traditional circuses are very different to contemporary circuses.

Traditional circus can use animals, have many different acts and a ring master, is often one family travelling together e.g The Ashton Family Circus which was founded in Tasmania in 1847 and still exists today. It is the longest surviving circus in Australia and pre – dates most circuses in the world.

Contemporary circus can explore themes and issues, is often abstract and poetic. Music is very important in conveying the themes and moods of the piece.

Show students the following images, explore the differences.

ACTIVITY 2: TRAVELLING TO THE STARS

Purpose: To use fundamental movement skills (some of which the Circus performers might use) to creatively explore what it might be like to travel around in space to the stars.

Resources: A range of different percussion and keyboard instruments (including xylophones, glockenspiels, miniature keyboards, ipads), masking tape for a pattern to follow on the floor, a large clear space for movement and play.

The teacher sets up the space with masking tape (or something similar) to create circles on the floor in different areas of the space and diverse patterns to follow to travel to each circle. There is an X at the start of the journey and a star at the end.

Step 1: Using safe dance practices throughout, the teacher leads children through a warm-up as a class, including stretching using different levels and dynamics (percussive, sustained) as well as travelling and non-travelling movements (reminding the children of fundamental movement skills).

Step 2: Remind the children that people and objects can move through space at various tempos. For example, they might float slowly through space if they are attached to a spaceship and skywalking, they might zoom quickly through space if they are in a rocket, or they might move at a steady pace if they are a satellite.

- The teacher asks for a volunteer to lead the class through the journey they are going on today using the shapes and lines on the floor as the map (the floor).
- They must begin by using the slow, floating pace.
- The class physically follows the team leader through the map on the floor in a line with appropriate a safely spaced distance between all children.

Step 3:

- The teacher then uses a prop (e.g. hat or a cape) to transform into the Space Director in charge of all objects, human or otherwise, that pass through their universe using the power of their mind control (or a remote control for those still in the 21st century).
- The teacher (Space Director) enrolls the children as creatures/aliens and guides the play, as the children play with how their creature/alien moves.
- Children respond to the instructions of the Space Director; forwards, backwards, high, medium and low levels, glitching or repeating their movement. They experiment with a range of fundamental movement skills guided by the Space Director to complete the map and finish at the star.
- Half the class watches as children share how their creature/alien completes the map and then swap. This activity can be further developed into a freeze game where when the music stops, all creatures/ aliens need to freeze or the Space Director will eliminate them (into a different universe) before they complete the map.

Extension for Year 2 onwards

- Children then use the experimentation to create their own movement sequence for their creature/alien, including sounds and/or words. In pairs, children interact and experiment with playing as they introduce themselves to another creature/alien and incorporate:
  - o repetition
  - o rewind/reverse and
  - o level changes

  into their interaction sequence. Some pairs share their play with their peers for feedback.
- Children find creature/aliens with similar movement styles and combine movements to create a short 32 count sequence to communicate the style of the group. Incorporating travelling and non-travelling movement (fundamental movement skills), they experiment with transitioning between two formations in their sequence as well as using a range of levels and directions.
- Children name their alien group and share their movement sequence with the class.

PURPOSE: To explore how to use imagination to create (compose) an artwork.

RESOURCES: Instrumental music (with a range of timbres and tempos), a large space

Step 1:

- Play a game of clumps where the children move around the space as instructed by their teacher (e.g. skipping, skating, hopping on one leg) and when the music stops, the teacher will call out a number for the children to jump into a group of that number and sit down. Repeat this with different instructions and numbers until the game ends with groups of about 4-5 children.

Step 2:

- Discuss how a pizza can be made, with someone making the dough and rolling it into a base, someone putting the sauce on the base, chopping vegetables and sprinkling them on and then putting it in the oven to cook. Ask children to demonstrate how their group could make a delicious pizza with each person having a role. Children experiment with ideas and share their pizza creation lines with the class. Explain how following a process like the pizza creation line or experimenting with ideas is needed to make something creative like music.

Step 3:

- Discuss and brainstorm how artists could follow a process to compose (create) a piece of music. What steps could be in their process? Experimenting with lyrics/words, matching sounds, trial and error etc. As a class, experiment with ways to represent some of the suggested steps as a class using actions and sounds e.g. thinking of ideas could rolling hands around one another and then doing a turn on the spot to show the ideas spinning.

Step 4:

- Use the ideas from the class discussion to create a music machine in your groups from the previous activity. Like the pizza, the first person starts the process and hands it to the next person to add the next ingredient to the machine. The teacher puts music on to help inspire ideas. The children share their music machines and as they share their work, the teacher extends students by speeding up, stopping, repeating and slowing down the machine. Children respond to one another's machines to describe and reflect on ideas.

Extension for Year 2 onwards

- Children add a silly sound to their action (e.g. bop bop, meow). Rather than passing their part of the machine on, they continue their sound and action and the next child in the machine responds physically and interacts with the previous part of the machine. For example, if someone is going up and down with their hands, the next part of the machine might complement this action by kneeling on the floor and standing tall and then bending to complement the shape already created.
- Children consider levels, directions and dynamics as they add to the machine.
- The sounds and actions accumulate to create a fully functioning composition machine.
- The machine might overload and combust and collapse or slow down to a stop.
- Children share their creations with the class and discuss their ideas.

POST PERFORMANCE STIMULUS

Curriculum Links (Prep – Year 3)

Drama (The Arts)

- Explore role, situation, movement and expression
- Create, practise, and share short drama sequences
- Respond to drama through discussion, reflection, and observation

English

- Engage with stories through movement, play, and performance
- Develop vocabulary, oral language, and storytelling skills
- Retell and create narratives with beginning, middle, and problem

Why Play and Comedy Matter in Learning

Play is a powerful way for young children to make sense of the world. Through play and comedy, students experiment with ideas, relationships, emotions and stories in ways that are joyful, safe and deeply engaging. Comic performance invites students to take creative risks, explore physical expression, and develop confidence without fear of "getting it wrong".

Comedy supports learning by:

- encouraging imagination and curiosity
- developing physical awareness and control
- strengthening collaboration and empathy
- supporting early storytelling and language development
- creating positive emotional connections to learning

The performance *Wolfgang in the Stars* uses gentle humour, physical play and visual storytelling to invite children into the world of theatre. These learning experiences build on that invitation, offering students opportunities to explore drama through movement, play, music and story after seeing the performance. The activities are designed to support both creative exploration and curriculum outcomes, while centering joy, safety and student voice. Please adapt to suit your year level and class dynamics.

This performance offers multiple entry points for playful exploration. A list of key moments from the production is provided below to support student recall and serve as creative starting points.

Students are invited to explore how bodies, facial expression, space, and objects can be used to tell stories and create humour in ways that are safe, inclusive, and joyful. The following activities are drawn directly from moments in the performance.

Before beginning, support students by sharing photographs from the production and revisiting characters, relationships, and key scenes.

Resources: Collect soft objects for juggling, plastic plates, stretch materials for balancing, music to accompany play and the tune The Teddy Bear's Picnic, masking tape, cameras, shadow screen materials

Warming Up: Preparing the Body to Play

Begin with a reminder that play is pretend, and we look after ourselves and each other. Establish your guidelines e.g. check with your partner before you do something different

Walk around the space like Mozart:

- tiny steps
- bouncy steps
- very slow motion
- very fast (but controlled) motion
- freeze when the teacher calls "Freeze!" and make a funny face.

Activity 1: Exploring Comedy Through Play

1. Funny and Silly Walks

Students explore how changing the way we walk can make an audience laugh. (Music may help in these activities)

Try this:

- Walk as if your shoes are too big
- Walk like the floor is sticky
- Walk proudly like a famous composer
- Walk as if the music is pulling you along

Reflection prompt:

"How did your body change the story?"

2. Accidental Trips (Safe Comedy)

Mozart often appears to trip or stumble — without ever getting hurt. Explain to students that the performer by making actions bigger can convey different emotions and tricks.

Try this:

- Practise pretend slips and falls using slow motion
- Freeze before falling and turn it into a pose
- Add a surprised facial expression

Drama focus: Timing, control, and safety in physical comedy.

3. Being the Conductor

Mozart plays as a conductor and invites laughter from the audience. Remind the students of the scene and demonstrate. He controls the audience with his baton.

Try this:

One student conducts, others follow with movements or claps or a conductor's baton

Change the conductor's style and pace:

- very serious
- extremely excited
- sleepy conductor

Students to play with as they enjoy the trick of controlling the audience.

Extension: Conduct imaginary music using big and tiny gestures. All the class are enrolled as the "conductor".

4. Slow Motion and Speedy Motion

Students explore contrast, one of the key tools of comedy.

Try this:

- Move like you are walking through honey
- Suddenly switch to fast-forward
- Walk through space without touching anyone

Reflection: "Which was funnier — slow or fast? Why?"

5. Balancing With a Partner

Mozart plays with balance and teamwork depending on the group carefully explore some balances.

Try this:

- Balance back-to-back
- Balance holding hands
- Balance an imaginary object between you

Focus: Trust, cooperation, and awareness of others.

6. Doors and Entrances

Comedy often begins with how a character enters a space.

Try this:

- Enter like you're late
- Enter like you're very proud
- Enter and exit the wrong door
- Keep missing each other's entrances

Prompt: "What does your entrance tell us about your character?"

7. Plates and Spinning Plates (Imaginary Play)

Inspired by the spinning plates in the performance.

Try this:

- Spin an imaginary plate on one finger
- What happens when it wobbles?
- Can you save it before it falls?

Extension: Add a character who is trying very hard not to drop anything.

8. Juggling and Object Play

Mozart uses juggling to create playful moments.

Try this:

- Juggle with scarves, soft toys, or foam
- Practise pretending to juggle first
- Drop something on purpose — then react!

Drama focus: Exaggerated reactions and facial expression.

9. Doors and Entrances

Comedy often begins with how a character enters a space.

Try this:

- Enter like you're late
- Enter like you're very proud
- Enter and exit the wrong door Keep missing each other's entrances

Prompt:

"What does your entrance tell us about your character?"

10. Silly Handshakes

Mozart plays with unexpected greetings.

Try this:

- Invent a handshake with a partner
- Make it too long, too complicated, or too gentle
- Perform it for the class

Reflection:

"What made this funny — the movement, the surprise, or the timing?"

11. Bringing It Together

Invite students to create a short playful moment using:

- a silly walk
- an entrance
- an object
- a freeze

Students can perform for a partner or small group, focusing on:

- clear actions
- safety
- making the audience smile

12. "If You Go Down to the Woods Today"

In the performance the bears perform their own dance to this popular music. Talk to students about what they can create .

In small groups, students work together to create a playful movement sequence inspired by the music.

Try this:

Listen to the music together first

Identify moments that sound:

- sneaky
- surprising
- calm
- funny

Create: A beginning pose, Three to five movements, A clear ending

Encourage fun: Bear walks, tiptoeing, hiding, freezing.

Reflection:

"How did the music help you decide how to move?"

Extended Ideas

13. Literacy and Story Connection

The performance highlights the journey of a rocket. Students can use this as a starting point for a story.

Rocket Story: Three-Step Storytelling

Students connect drama play to narrative structure.

Create a "Rocket Story":

Where does it start? (On Earth / in the classroom / in the woods) Where does it go? (Space / somewhere unexpected) Is there a problem? (Lost fuel, wrong planet, silly mistake).

Act out each step using movement Freeze at each stage and describe what is happening.

Draw or write one sentence for each step

Literacy link: Beginning, middle and problem (early narrative structure).

Bringing Play, Drama and Literacy Together:

Invite students to choose one activity and:

Act it Draw it Tell it or Film it

Emphasise that play helps us think, imagine and tell stories.

Share the stories around the class.

14. Floor Mapping and Bird's Eye View

One of the most lyrical, magical moments in the performance is the use of a live camera to capture the movement of the characters on the floor. In the classroom, you can adapt this technique to encourage play, creativity, and storytelling.

Classroom activity:

Create shapes: Using masking tape, mark out a shape or space on the floor. Each student prepares three shapes in advance.

Movement exploration: Students experiment moving slowly within the shapes. Encourage them to explore different levels, directions, and interactions with others.

Story connection: Students use their rocket stories (or another narrative) as inspiration for movement within the shapes.

Optional media element: If a camera or tablet is available, let students observe their movements from above or stream to a screen. This creates a "bird's eye view" effect, similar to the performance, where performers lying down appear upright on the screen.

Reflection: Discuss how the shapes, movement, and perspective changed the story or feeling. Encourage students to share observations and consider how different positions or camera angles change what the audience sees.

This is an aesthetic approach that can be applied across performances in your classroom. Use it to build confidence in group work and media skills.

15. Shadow Screen and Journeys

In the performance the audience can see the technical crew moving the pieces and creating a story. If resources prevail students can use their rocket stories to create a shadow screen performance.

Materials: Light source (lamp or projector), screen (or a white sheet), open space, props (optional), students' rocket stories or other narratives.

Activity Steps:

1. Introduce the concept: Explain how, in the performance, the audience can see the technical crew moving pieces and creating a story in real time. Discuss how movement, light, and shadow can tell a narrative.
2. Plan the story: Students choose a section of their rocket story (or another narrative) to adapt for shadow play. Encourage them to focus on key moments, character journeys, or emotional highlights.
3. Experiment with movement: Students use their bodies, hands, and props to create shapes and figures that cast shadows. Emphasise creative experimentation: distortions, abstract shapes, layering, and transitions can all enhance the story.
4. Collaborate and refine: Work in pairs or small groups to explore timing, sequencing, and interaction. Encourage students to try different positions and distances from the screen to see how shadows change.
5. Perform and reflect: Share the shadow stories with the class. After each performance, discuss how movement, light, and shadow contributed to storytelling. Highlight creative choices and inventive solutions.

Activity 2: Making your creature

PURPOSE: To provide children with opportunities to respond to the performance to inspire their own artmaking.

RESOURCES: Drawing materials, clay, playdoh, recycled materials, images from the performance, recordings of Mozart's versions of Twinkle Twinkle (see above), video clips of the stars, mirror balls to reflect the mood of stars in the sky.

STEP 1: Support children to recall the performance by showing images of the show and encouraging children to respond using observations, feelings and descriptions. Ask the children discussion questions such as:

How did the main character feel at the start of their journey? How did you feel?

How did the main character feel at the end of the journey? How did you feel?

What character or creature did you like the most on the journey and why?

What type of artist are you? A visual artist, a musician a performer?

What would they like to create or make as an artist ?

Consider what you would like to meet in space (use the space videos or the mirror ball videos to set the atmosphere). Ask the children what character or creature they would like to meet when they go on their space adventure and share their ideas. OR

Explore what you would like to create or make; a movement sequence, a painting, a piece of music. Ask the children if they have other ideas?

STEP 2: Provide resources for students to create their creatures or creation. Children are given the opportunity to respond using a range of resources provided and in the form of their choice. Play Mozart's various versions of *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and videos of the mirror ball or space to inspire ideas as the children create and make their artwork.

Encourage the children to share their creature with the class and why they would like to meet this creature on their space adventure.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Draw me a Star Eric Carle

How to Catch a Star Oliver Jeffers

Vincent: Starry Starry Night Judith A. Proffer Yoko Matsuok (illustrator)

Zoo in the Sky: A Book of Animal Constellations by Jacqueline Mitton