



# Olga Volt

The Electric Fairy

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE 

Teachers Notes  
HOUSE: ED 2010

SUITABILITY

Years 2 – 6

DATES

20 – 21 April

# Introduction



## A. Introduction

These Teacher's Notes have been designed to assist you with classroom preparation and extension work in relation to the production of *Olga Volt the Electric Fairy*. We hope that this resource will assist your students to further enjoy and enhance their performing arts experience back in the classroom. The activities are designed for students from Year 2 to Year 6.

The activities included in this resource, provide opportunities for students to explore the broad themes and style of the performance. NSW Board of Studies syllabi have been used as guides for the planning of these activities. You should consider adapting and rephrasing the questions and activities to suit the particular terminology, curriculum foci and outcomes used in your school.

Some websites are suggested throughout this resource. It is recommended that you first visit the sites and assess the suitability of the content for your particular school environment before setting the activities based on these.

## B. Classroom Context and Curriculum Links

The Shone Reppe Puppets production of *Olga Volt the Electric Fairy* is an entertaining fantasy tale about falling stars, the joy of adventure and how our identity is inextricably linked to our past. Key themes and messages related to resilience, personal history and the uniqueness of individual gifts are conveyed through the many comic and intriguing moments in the performance. This performance provides excellent opportunities for class room activities and discussions with links to various curriculum areas including:

**English:** *Listening, Language and Text (language structures and features)*

**Visual Arts:** *Making, Appreciating*

**Drama:** *Making, Performing, Appreciating*

**Music:** *Listening, Appreciating*

## C. Performance Event Description and Synopsis

*Olga Volt the Electric Fairy* is a one-woman show that combines story-telling with the magic of shadow puppetry, miniatures, theatrical illusion and lighting. Olga Volt is a vaudeville circus performer married to fellow performer Francis Watt. Olga's electric powers enthrall audiences as she turns on lamps, appliances and other electrical devices all with a wave of her wand. On this occasion the performance doesn't go quite to plan and Olga, in a moment of diversion, takes the audience back to the beginning of the history of the Volt family. With the aid of cleverly designed props and concealed miniature lighting, the performance visually tells the stories of previous generations of electric fairies just like Olga. Performer, creator and designer, Shona Reppe, demonstrates excellent comic timing, skillful manipulation of puppetry and an engaging rapport with young audiences. Aided by a wonderful soundtrack and an ingenious set design that continually transforms to illustrate the stories, Shona keeps audience members constantly enthralled. You can read more about this production at the following web link:

Shona Reppe Puppets - Olga Volt the Electric Fairy Reviews:

[http://www.shonareppepuppets.co.uk/shonareppepuppets/Reviews\\_Olga.html](http://www.shonareppepuppets.co.uk/shonareppepuppets/Reviews_Olga.html)

# Pre Performance

## Activity One - Fairies



### Curriculum Links Drama/English

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1.1 In this activity, your students will develop and perform as their own fairy character. Divide the class into pairs and ask each pair to list fairy characters they remember from different stories. Ask them to think of describing words that say something about each fairy and what they are like. You might like to give an example of a fairy character and write the adjectives underneath for the class to see. The following web link may be helpful for this activity.

Wikipedia - List of Fairy and Sprite Characters

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_fairy\\_and\\_sprite\\_characters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fairy_and_sprite_characters)

Talk to your students about the performance they are going to see. Ask them to describe what they think Olga Volt the Electric Fairy might look like, what her personality is like and what powers she might have.

1.2 Find an extract from a children's story appropriate for the age group you teach. The extract could be about the fairy's powers, their interaction with humans or give an example of their personality. If you teach an upper primary age group they could work with a partner and find an extract from a story they like and read this to the class.

1.3 Explain to students that they are to work individually. Ask them to find somewhere in the space away from other students. On your instruction ask your students to move through the room in the following ways:

- As though they are made of earth and stone
- As though they are made of feathers and dust
- As though they are gliding
- As though they are marching
- As though they are floating
- As though they are pushing something heavy.

Once they have completed this activity, get students to identify the types of movements they felt were more fairy like. Repeat these movements again for practice.

1.4 Instruct students to sit on the floor and imagine the type of fairy they would like to be. The fairy can be male or female and might live in a variety of different places. Ask them to use their imaginations to see exactly what their fairy character looks like including the type of clothing they are wearing and any tools, wands or other special objects they might be carrying. Ask your students to think of a name for their fairy. They should also devise a unique power their fairy is very good at. This power is always used for good deeds. Direct the class to stand and to practice being their fairy character. Give the fairies a job to do that helps students explore how they might represent the scale of their size compared to the human world around them: for example, they may need to wipe some leaves or catch a lady bug or fly onto a window sill, etc.

1.5 Bring the class together to sit in a circle. Each person is to stand and introduce themselves as their fairy character and explain their power. You might like to extend this acting task by asking each fairy an additional question about their work, their lives or how they feel about humans, etc.

1.6 To finish this activity, ask your students to create an image of their fairy character using collage and coloured pencils. Ask each student to show their art work to the class and explain their fairy character. Display the art works for visitors to the classroom.

# Pre Performance

## Activity Two - Electricity

### Curriculum Links    English/Science/Drama

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2.1 This performance alludes to the power of electricity and light within the fantasy of the story. This presents an opportunity for you to help your students engage with the study of electricity in Science. The following web links provide lessons and resources for primary school students who are studying electricity as a topic:

Energy Australia

<http://www.energyaustralia.com.au/Common/Education.aspx>

The Electrical Safety Council - Switched On Kids

<http://www.switchedonkids.org.uk/>

Integral Energy

<http://www.electrickids.com.au/>

2.2 The class sits in a circle. Each person is to say the name of an object that requires electricity. See if the class can list as many objects as possible without too much thinking or hesitating. As a challenge, students must name objects in alphabetical sequence.

Now ask the class to stand and play a game, 'Roll, Jump, Electric Shock'. In this game the class moves through the room and must respond to your command to roll (roll on the floor), jump (jump as high as they can) and electric shock (vibrate all over as though being electrocuted).

2.3 Ask the class to walk through the drama space. Call out different groupings: for example, groups of three or groups of two or groups of eight. When the students form their group they must then create an object that requires electricity that you call out (use the list of objects that the class came up with in activity 2.2). Their object must include movement to show how electricity powers the object. They may be invited to incorporate sound.

2.4 In this activity students will work in groups of four or five. Each group is to create a dramatised performance that tells the class about electricity and its uses. As they highlight a function of electricity or explain how it is created they are to show an image with movement that illustrates the information. Allow the groups time to prepare and then present this work to the class. Students may need to draw on some basic research from exercise 2.1 in this section.

2.5 As a writing exercise, ask your students to write an imaginative fantasy story about how electricity was discovered. Alternatively, they may write the story of a day in the life of an electrical object. Encourage them to use evocative and descriptive language to engage the reader. When they have completed their stories ask for volunteers to share their work with the class.

# Pre Performance

## Activity Three - Fairy Improvisations



### Curriculum Links Music/Drama/ English

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3.1 In this activity your students will use the skills of improvisation and the characters they created in Activity One to create short plays. Begin with a physical warm up that explores fairy movements.

3.2 All improvisation requires performers to work together spontaneously and agree with the situation that is created. If your students have not had practice at improvisation before, use this activity to introduce some of the basic skills concerning spontaneity, making offers and yielding, and strategies for avoiding/dealing with blocking behaviours.

Instruct students to walk through the space and on your signal ask them to work with the nearest person to them. Explain that you are going to give the characters a situation that they will improvise until you call freeze. There are six situations and your students should work with a different partner each time:

- Two fairies go shopping for a new wand
- Two fairies try to carry a large flower from one side of the forest to the other
- Two fairies practice some new magic that keeps going wrong
- Two fairies try to capture a dragon-fly
- Two fairies spy on humans who are digging in the garden
- Two fairies prepare a forest clearing for a fairy party

Although the whole class participates in this activity, you can use 'spotlighting' to see some of their work. For example, when the class is working on an improvisation call, 'Freeze...spotlight on (point to group)'. Everyone then watches as the group continues to improvise.

3.2 Extend the improvisation work to create scenes. Ask your students to find a partner to work with. Each pair is to choose one of the improvisation situations or devise one of their own to develop into a performance of the class. Allow the pairs time to rehearse their scenes and then watch each pair.

# Pre Performance

## Activity Four - Shadow Puppets

### Curriculum Links    English/Drama

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4.1 The web links below provide short clips of shadow puppets to show your students. When they have watched the two clips ask them to complete the following questions:

Richard Bradshaw - Shadow Puppeteer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNsJ6kDVbfk&feature=related>

Wonderful World of Shadow Puppet

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WlbQPmXg08&feature=related>

- What characters did you see in the clips?
- What moments did you enjoy?
- Why are shadow puppets different from other puppets?
- Do you know of any other countries where shadow puppets are part of their culture?
- How did the puppeteer create the shadows?
- If you shine a light on a wall and create a shadow, how do you make the image bigger or smaller?
- In the Richard Bradshaw clip, how did puppeteer remain hidden?

4.2 Use an over-head projector or data projector and shine the light onto a wall. Ask volunteer students to come up to the screen and practice making shadow puppets with their hands. Encourage your students to explore how their distance from the light source changes the size of the shadow. Ask two volunteers to create hand shadow puppets of ducks or swans (the easiest hand shadow puppet). Ask the pair to pretend that the birds are talking to each other by synchronizing the movement of the hands with their voices. Call for several more volunteers to have a turn at this.

4.3 This activity asks your students to create simple rod shadow puppets. The skill level required for this task is suitable for upper primary students. You will need to provide your students with sheets of sturdy card, scissors, bamboo rods (bamboo cooking skewers can work well with the pointy ends removed), sticky tape. You will also need a shadow puppet theatre space. This can be easy to create with the use of an overhead projector, a blank wall or a length of white sheeting hung over a freestanding clothes rack, etc.

Divide the class into groups of three. Each group is to invent a short story about three animals. You might like to read some Aesop's fables as a class to get inspiration for story lines. Once the groups have decided on their story ask them to create their shadow puppets. If they need assistance with drawing an animal shape, find templates from picture books that can be used as a model for the puppets. The following web link is a simple but useful resource for your students to explain how a shadow puppet performance works. You may not be able to create a rear projection set-up, but using an over-head projector on a wall is fine for this activity.

Shadow Puppets and Their Presentation

<http://www.magicalmoonshine.org/shadow.htm>

# Post Performance



## Activity Five - Performance Reflection

### Curriculum Links English/Drama

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5.1 This activity is an opportunity for students to share their responses to the performance. Ask students to refresh their memories of the performance by viewing images of *Olga Volt the Electric Fairy* at:

Shona Reppe Puppets - *Olga Volt the Electric Fairy* Images

[http://www.shonareppepuppets.co.uk/shonareppepuppets/Gallery/Pages/Olga\\_Volt.html](http://www.shonareppepuppets.co.uk/shonareppepuppets/Gallery/Pages/Olga_Volt.html)

Get students to identify moments from the performance as seen in the images.

5.2 The narrative in the performance is quite complex. Students may require some assistance in recalling the names and events in the performance. Ask your students to recount the performance. In their recount, have them to identify and describe the moments they liked the most. As a class, draw up the Olga Volt family tree. A version is provided for you below:

- Lucia Volt (fallen star from the constellation Osram and the first ice dancer)
- Christina Volt (created from Lucia's impact with the earth)
- Eureka Volt (flew back to constellation Osram with her husband and sent back stars as presents)
- Vanda Volt (a performer in the circus)
- Joanna Volt (worked in a silent movie theatre)
- Stella Volt (worked testing light bulbs and saved her husband from a storm at sea)
- Olga Volt (the electric fairy and vaudeville performer).

5.2 The following questions can be used to help students recount the narrative. As well as asking them to answer the questions, ask students to describe how Shona Reppe used performance skills and techniques to make these moments visual:

1. What was the name of the constellation that the Volt family comes from?
2. What did the constellation look like and how did you see it?
3. What makes the Volt women special?
4. Give an example of how the audience knew Olga Volt was special.
5. What attracted Diego Garcia Fernandez and his sleigh dogs to the North Pole?
6. What prop was used to show this?
7. What is Christina Volt most famous for?
8. What was used to show Christina dancing?
9. What was Christina's daughter's name?
10. What was the name of the place where Eureka Volt settled and in which country was this city?



## Activity Five - Performance Reflection - Continued

11. Who was Vladimir Trobalt and what did he specialise in?
12. What did he look like?
13. What did they build together?
14. How was their journey to the stars shown to the audience?
15. How did Vanda Volt know her mother, Eureka, was okay?
16. What prop was used to show this?
17. What came to Star City to change Vanda's life?
18. Who did Vanda fall in love with and what did they do together?
19. How was their circus act created on stage?
20. What happened to Vanda and her husband Giovetto?
21. What was done on stage to show this moment?
22. What did Vanda's daughter Joanna do after her mother died?
23. Who did she marry from the movie theatre?
24. How did the performer show this character?
25. What did Stella do for a living and how did she meet her husband?
26. Describe how the performer showed Stella saving her husband.

5.3 The following questions can be used as further discussion and evaluation of the performance:

1. Describe one example of how the performer used her facial expressions to create a funny moment in the performance.
2. What were some funny moments in the performance? Can you describe them? Can you explain why they were funny?
3. Describe how the performer used battery-operated lights to create special moments in the performance.
4. What did you like about the use of the set?
5. What moments in the performance made you feel excited? Why?
6. What types of music were played during the performance and what sort of mood and atmosphere did they create?

# Post Performance

## Activity Six - Circus

### Curriculum Links Drama

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6.1 Ask students to close their eyes and imagine they are watching a circus. Use the following prompts to encourage their imagining:

What does the tent look like? What colours can you see? How do you feel being at the circus? What sorts of performances can you see in your imagination? Ask your students to open their eyes and share their imagined circus experiences with the class. Use questions to encourage detailed descriptions of circus images.

6.2 Ask your students to list as many types of circus performers as they can. Students might do this as a class activity or in pairs. Have your students describe the tricks or acts these characters perform. Get students to describe what the performers might be wearing. You could extend this part of the activity by asking your students to draw a circus performer.

6.3 Have the class sit as a group leaving a space for performance. Explain to the class that they will create a frozen picture of a circus performance. Volunteers will come into the performance space one person at a time and take a frozen position as a character, animal, person or object from a circus. Give feedback as the tableau takes shape to help your students use space and levels effectively. See if the class can create three or four very different tableau.

6.4 Each student is to choose a circus character they would like to pretend to be. Some students might like to work with a partner or in small groups and create a circus performance troupe. If you have access to dress ups, wigs and props, provide these for your students to costume their characters.

Ask students to create a performance name for their character. Depending on the ability of the age group you teach, encourage the use of alliteration in the performer names/names of the acts like Dotty the Daredevil Diver or Harry, Hettie and Horace, the Human Cannon Balls.

Direct students to practice being their characters by finding a space in the room to act. Ask them to imagine they are in a circus arena performing for a large audience. If you feel comfortable, adopt the role of ringmaster. Demonstrate to your students how to make an entrance into the arena. Announce your performer name and take a bow. Encourage the class to applaud.

On your signal, instruct students to make an entrance into the imaginary arena. Encourage them to use strong body language, theatrical gestures and exaggerated facial expression. Have students repeat their entrance, but now ask students to introduce themselves using their performer name: for example, "Ladies and gentlemen, (I am / we are) the Amazing Alice(s) in Tights!"

6.5 Ask students to sit in a circle. Explain that the area in the centre of the circle is the circus arena and when they enter the arena they will become their character and the class will become the audience at the circus. Ask students to enter the arena as their character or performance troupe.

If you have access to iTunes, type in "Circus Music" in the iTunes store search box. There are many tracks here that would be fun to play as background music for the circus character entrances.



## Activity Six - Circus - Continued

6.6 In this activity your students will develop a short performance trick or act as their circus character. You will need to adjust the activity to suit the age level of your students. Ask your students to work individually. Ask them to pretend they are performing each of the following circus acts:

- Walking on a tightrope wearing army boots
- Riding a show horse that leaps over elephants
- Juggling plates and flaming batons
- Performing a high dive into a tub of jelly
- Escaping from a locked tank of water in twenty seconds.

Give feedback to encourage students to control their use of movement and to use their imaginations to create convincing performance work. Ask students to sit in a circle. Call for volunteers to show one of the acts they rehearsed to the class.

6.7 Have a class discussion about other types of acts or tricks that could be performed at a circus. These acts could be very unusual, for example:

- Turning a human into an exotic animal, plant or object using magic
- Eating one hundred pizzas in one go
- Using hypnotism to get a performer to walk through a ring of fire without being burnt.

Divide the class into small groups. Each person in each group is to use their circus performance character from Activity One in this section. Each group is to create a short performance act to present to the class. You will need to allow a good length of time for each group to practice.

The class sits in a circle again. Ask each group to present their performance to the class. Provide each performance with positive feedback on their character work, focus and presentation of their circus act.

# Post Performance



## Activity Seven - My Family

### Curriculum Links English

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7.1 *Olga Volt the Electric Fairy* highlights the importance of knowing our family history and how the events of the past contribute to our identity. This activity helps students trace their own family history. To begin, ask students to list all their immediate family members and relatives. They might like to write the names of family members down. Have a class discussion about families and encourage your students to share their own personal stories. Alternatively, the class could discuss the families in a story or film text they have studied together.

7.2 Demonstrate for your students the drawing of a basic family tree. You may use templates of family trees from various applications. Using their lists of names, ask them to draw up a draft of their own family tree. Encourage them to go home and add levels to the family tree to show great grand-parents and great-great grand-parents.

7.3 Ask them to bring in one object from home that is part of the family's history. Hold a show-and-tell session where students talk about their object and why it is significant to their family.

7.4 In this activity students will work in pairs. Explain to the class that they will need to ask their partner the questions given below. Students must listen very carefully to the answers as they will need to share this information with the class when they have finished.

- How many people are in your family, including cousins and partners?
- What is the name of the street where your family lives?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have, and what are their names and ages?
- What do you like most about your family?
- What is your family's favourite meal?
- Who is the oldest member of your family?
- Describe a 'legendary' family moment or story.

7.5 Ask students to interview a grandparent or close relative about a memorable moment at school. Before they undertake the interviews, ask students to brainstorm ideas for questions to ask. When they have completed the interviews, ask for volunteers to share their interview responses with the class. Alternatively, students may form pairs and act out their interviews.

# References

Energy Australia

<http://www.energyaustralia.com.au/Common/Education.aspx>

The Electrical Safety Council - Switched On Kids

<http://www.switchedonkids.org.uk/>

Integral Energy

<http://www.electrickids.com.au/>

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Wonderful World of Shadow Puppet

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WlbQPmXg08&feature=related>