



# ***THE GREAT ILLUSIONIST***

## **TEACHERS RESOURCE NOTES**





## Introduction

These Creative Learning Journey Resources have been prepared to help you get the most out of *The Great Illusionist*. These resources are full of activities and inspiration to prepare your students before coming to see the Sydney Opera House, what you can do on the way, what you can do at the Sydney Opera House and then unpacking the experience back in the classroom.

You should adapt these Resources to suit the student age and stage of your class and the curriculum foci and outcomes used in your school. These Resources are written as a creative document for you to bring to life. If you have questions about exercises or provocations please feel free to make contact to talk it through. We are always open to feedback, comments and working with you to assist and learn from you. Contact details are on the back page.

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.

## Performance Description and Synopsis

There's more to magic than meets the eye

Jump into this enchanting tale of a young boy who longs to be an illusionist. A tale of daring and willpower, the importance of a good assistant, and of course, a white rabbit! Packed with cleverly executed illusions and tantalising tricks, it proves there's more to magic than meets the eye!

This rich, multilayered production from the Netherlands' acclaimed Het Foliaal theatremakers is sure to captivate your students with live music, impressive illusions, magical puppetry and marvellous tricks.

**Presented by Sydney Opera House and Het Foliaal Theatremakers**

## **SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CREATIVITY FRAMEWORK**

These Creative Learning Journey Resources have been written using the Sydney Opera House *Creativity Framework* as the pedagogy. This Framework underpins much of what we do in our work with schools. More information can be found at the Sydney Opera House website. In short the Framework aims to define the creative process in a way that educators can use to teach and be inspired by.

At a glance this Creativity Framework is:

**Prepare: Tools and Pathways**

Preparing mind, body, space, materials and time

**Buy in: Presence and Enthusiasm**

Convincing students that they want to be there

**Imagine: The Fertile Unknown**

Exploring a subject through arts practice. Using form to uncover content. Allowing uncensored expression to reveal new ways of seeing a subject

**Question: Analysis, investigation and revelation**

Creating new understanding by analyzing what just happened when honing the imagination

**Make: forging form from content**

Putting shape to content and moving towards a project; scripts, composition, choreography, project design

**Show: Commit, frame, judgement**

Performing and presenting the work

**Reflect: Remembering, Processing, exiting**

Creating understanding and healthy memories from the creative process and product.

## Classroom Context and Curriculum Links

This performance provides the classroom teacher with many opportunities for learning activities that link to the following curriculum. See below for the suggested links to specific curriculum, however creative teachers will find many more.

Subject	Content	Outcomes		
		Stage 2	Stage 3	General capabilities and cross-curriculum
English	C. think it ways that are imaginative, creative, interpretive and critical	EN2-10C thinks imaginatively, creatively and interpretively about information, ideas and texts when responding to and composing texts	EN3-7C thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information and ideas and identifies connections between texts when responding to and composing texts	 Critical and creative thinking  Personal and social capability
	D. express	EN2-11D responds to and	EN3-8D identifies and	

	themselves and their relationships with others and their world	composes a range of texts that express viewpoints of the world similar to and different from their own	considers how different viewpoints of their world, including aspects of culture, are represented in texts	
Drama	Appreciating	DRA S2.4 Responds to, and interprets drama experiences and performances	DRA S3.4 Responds critically to a range of drama works and performance styles	
Music	Listening	MUS2.4 Identifies the use of musical concepts and musical symbols in a range of repertoire	MUS3.4 Identifies the use of musical concepts and symbols in a range of musical styles	



## Pre and post show activities

The below activities are designed to respond or prepare students to see the Great Illusionist. They play with form more than content and explore simple illusions and ways of presenting them. We have included one way to build stories around these illusions but other play building exercises can be found in the notes for other shows on the Sydney Opera House [teachers resources page](#)

There are many websites which deal with fun magic tricks for young learners. Some are super simple and others more extensive requiring preparation and practice.

This link is full of easy tricks to learn, some of which are highly theatrical.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWw\\_1-gEdLA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWw_1-gEdLA)

Get your class to watch these tricks. Split the groups into pairs and get them to pick one or two tricks.

They must at first learn the trick so that they can do the trick for each other, before they perform it for others. Tricks require practice and feedback which is why they need to work in pairs. They must both learn the trick.

### Presenting the trick

A good presentation requires some theatricalisation of the routine. This can be the classic magician routine where they are over confident and full of pomp and ceremony, or it can be the bumbly clowns getting it all wrong. Or anything in between. In the Great illusionist Het Fillial, the performance company, weave their tricks into a narrative. We will make suggestions for this further down below.

To practice the presentation ask students in their pairs to think of a name for their characters. Ask them to respond quickly and intuitively. This will give you lots of information as to whether their magicians are the over confident show biz type or leaning more towards the bumbly clowns.

A great way to start a presentation is to make an 'entrance'. A good entrance sets the scenes and can be the funniest part of a routine.

### Exercise:

Get the class to look around the room from where they could make an entrance. This could be from behind curtains, entering through the door or from under the desk. Many classrooms have nooks and crannies that can be used as mini theatres with a small off stage areas where a student can hide and pop out from. A nice way to get students to see these nooks and crannies is to play hide and

seek in the class room. Play hide and seek until as a class you have found some good theatrical spaces to emerge from. Play at least 5 times to stretch people's imaginations. Encourage crazy places to hide. Sillyness will elicit the best and most theatrical places.

Get five or six students to go to their favourite hiding spots and then one by one get them to make an entrance. After a couple of these entrances, give the direction for the next person to start very slowly. Just make a hand or foot enter first. See if they can slow it right down and make the hand or foot perform for up to 10 seconds before the rest of their body is revealed. See how slowly they can do this. Can they enter backwards? Is this funny or dramatic. Can you play music to make it have an emotional tone?

With the next group get them to enter (learning from their friends ) and then introduce their character by saying something like:

“Welcome ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming. My name is ..... and I will now perform for you a magic trick”

Explore entrances and simple performances of the tricks in as many of the nooks and crannies around the classroom or hall you are working in. There are always more options than you see at first. Hide and seek is a great way to flush these. Play it to the point of silliness where people are hiding behind people or in completely ridiculous places. These will be great mini theatre where they can make entrances from.





## Presenting in Pairs

Using all the entrance spaces from the above exercise get the pairs to present their trick together. Before they do their trick, they have to make an entrance that fits with their characters. Two people entering can be super fun. Once they are onstage they have to introduce each other and then introduce their routine.

In most two-handers, whether it's a magic trick or joke telling duo, there is usually a high status character and a low status character. Or a boss and slave, or boss and helper. Get the students in their pairs to play either the boss or the slave. This will help them when they start to introduce their characters and do their trick. The more the boss is bossy or the helper is not so helpful, the funnier it can be. The boss is not always the magician! Sometimes the boss in the routine is actually the magician's assistant.

## **Narratives and illusions**

There are many ways to develop a narrative and to include magic. Here we present one entry point, but any play building exercise can be adapted to incorporate illusions.

This will work best for the students who have picked a trick that uses an object such as a coin, stick or rope.

### **Story writing exercise**

Get the pairs of students to sit together. Make sure they have pen and paper.

They have to answer the following questions

This (insert object) comes from.....? ( they have to write at least 2 sentence here. They cant just write- Sydney)

It used to belong to .....?

This person loved this (insert object) because.....???

It was lost when..... ????

This (insert object ) makes me (insert emotion- happy, sad, scared, angry) because.....

This(insert object) is special to me because.....???

One they have answered these and other questions you may invent they will have almost written a story. Get them to clean up the story and add in other characters or events. Get them to write it in normal prose. Not dialogue.

When the story has a good beginning middle and end in which ever story writing conventions your class works with, you now have the beginnings of a narrated story.

Give each pair two different coloured high lighters and get them to break up the story into dialogue by highlighting one or two sentence each. This then is their dialogue.

Following on from their entrance they can think about where they would like to perform their story. because the style of the performance is narrated they can use all the work around entrances to begin their performances. They can even introduce their characters from before and tell the audience they will be telling them a story.

The question the students need to answer is when will they do their magic trick. At what point in their story will they reveal the illusion for maximum theatrical effect. How will they then use this object throughout the rest of the performance.

A nice rule to follow is they have to use their object in three different ways once it has been introduced.

If you can turn the lights off in the class room and use desk lamps to light the area or other lights you have available then the better the performances will be. Enjoy.