

Guide for Facilitators

Program 2. Responding to the Arts

Description

How is our perception of a work of art influenced by what we know about the time and place it was created? How does music establish a mood or atmosphere? How do you evaluate a work of art?

In Program 2, you will

- come to understand how social and historical context can affect the creation and perception of art,
- recognize the creative intentions behind works of art and discover techniques artists use to carry out their intentions,
- explore how form and style help shape a work of art, and
- master and apply a process of critical evaluation to decide whether the work of art successfully carries out the artist's intention.

In this program, Learner Teams and students examine two multi-arts performance pieces from different eras, *Quidam* (1996) and *Parade* (1917), to identify and examine elements that audiences might perceive as art. In four hands-on lessons, they

- research *Quidam* and *Parade* to learn more about their characters, imagery, context, and the art forms they use to express these;
- study the concept of “program music” to explore how composers express ideas and images;
- investigate the early-20th century theatrical form of vaudeville to see its influence on the creators of *Quidam*; and
- assume the role of critic and learn to evaluate works of art.

In this session you will write, share, and discuss your own critiques of the opening sequence of *Quidam*.

Learning Objectives

- Investigate *Parade* and *Quidam* through individual and group research in order to understand the social and historical settings in which these works were conceptualized and produced.
- Recognize melodic themes and nonmusical sounds in *Parade* and *Quidam* and discuss their significance within the dramatic context of each piece.
- Perform a piece of music using body percussion and percussion instruments.

- Explore the theatrical traditions of vaudeville and create a performance piece in the style of vaudeville.
- Understand the purpose of criticism and a process for performance criticism.
- Analyze written criticism to identify the purpose and the author's process. Respond to *Quidam* in-role as a critic.

Guiding Questions

These are questions for your group to consider as you work through the session.

- What does “multi-arts” mean?
- What is criticism?

Key Concepts/Vocabulary

- *Body percussion*: using the body as a percussive instrument; in the music lesson, Susanne uses different parts of the body to introduce parts that will be played on specific instruments, preparing students to be successful when they transfer them to instruments.
- *Listening map*: a simple picture representation of what is being heard; it is a useful visual reinforcement to help students with auditory focus
- *Solfège*: general music training to help develop sight-reading skills; the term also refers to hand signs that help singers learn pitches (Susanne uses these signs when she teaches the melody for “Rolling in the Grass”)
- *Tuning fork*: a small, two-pronged, steel instrument that gives a fixed tone when struck and is useful for tuning musical instruments or setting a vocal pitch

Four-Hour Workshop Session

Times are approximate. Actual length of sessions may vary, depending on the size of the group and the length of discussions.

Materials and Resources

- Videotape or broadcast of Program 2 — Responding to the Arts
- Classroom Demonstration Materials videotape
- Handout: Jean Cocteau’s Scenario for Parade
- Handout: Listening Map for *Quidam*
- Handout: Criticism: Purposes and Process
- Handout: Teacher Notes for Program 2
- Reading: Costumes Used in Program 2
- Reading: Cirque du Soleil
- Reading: Listening Map for *Parade*
- Reading: Criticism
- Reading: *Quidam*
- Reading: *Parade*

Introduction

(30 minutes)

Review Program 1 — What Is Art?

Discuss responses to the opening three minutes (or the entire performance) of *Quidam*.

- In what time and place does the action appear to occur?
- How do these cultural clues affect your experience of the performance?

Discuss the question:

- What is criticism in the arts?

Lesson 1: Researching Clues

(30 minutes)

View

(12 minutes)

Watch the beginning of Program 2 through the end of the “Researching Clues” lesson. Pause the tape when you see the title “Musical Cues” (running time approximately 12 minutes).

Discuss

(18 minutes)

Distribute the handout, Jean Cocteau's Scenario for *Parade*. Discuss these questions:

- What kinds of images come to mind? Think in terms of dance, music, theatre, and visual art.
- What are the advantages of group research, and how have students been prepared for success in this model?

Play the three-minute beginning of *Quidam*, which you will find on the Classroom Demonstration Materials tape (on-screen time counter at 22:18).

Divide into small groups and discuss these research questions and topics about the opening sequence of *Quidam*. You may wish to share your research with the group.

- What do you and your colleagues want to know about *Quidam*?
- Who are the most significant characters in *Quidam*?
- Describe some of the ways each art form impacts another in this excerpt.
- List the elements of fantasy present in this excerpt.
- Describe the realistic elements present in the excerpt.

Lesson 2: Musical Cues

(40 minutes)

View

(16 minutes)

Watch the "Musical Cues" lesson in Program 2. Pause the tape when you see the title "Vaudeville."

While watching the lesson, consider the following focus questions:

- What is program music, and how does the music in *Quidam* express mood?
- How have key vocabulary words been integrated into this lesson?

Discuss, View, and Discuss

(24 minutes)

Discuss your responses to the focus questions above.

Play the three-minute opening music of *Quidam*, which you will find on the Classroom Demonstration Materials tape (on-screen time counter at 25:39).

Using the listening map, follow the images along the visual pathway that correspond to what you are hearing in the opening music from *Quidam*. Discuss the following questions:

- What mood is being communicated through this music?
- What tools does the composer use to get his ideas across?

- What nonmusical sounds are important to the score, and why?
- How does this musical excerpt help us get to know Zoe?

Lesson 3: Vaudeville (40 minutes)

View and Discuss (20 minutes)

Discuss what you know about vaudeville, a popular form of entertainment of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was characterized by a series of individual acts performed by comedians, singers, jugglers, dancers, etc.

Watch the “Vaudeville” lesson in Program 2. Pause the tape when you see the title “Critic School” (running time approximately 11 minutes). While watching the lesson, consider the following focus questions:

- What are the important elements in the theatrical style, vaudeville, and where do you see influences of this style in *Quidam*?
- How do the students mix elements of reality and fantasy to create their vaudeville performances?

Discuss your responses to the focus questions above.

Experience and Discuss (20 minutes)

Get together in pairs to create your own version of “Hands Behind the Back”:

- Each pair will decide upon a process to describe and demonstrate (e.g., how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, how to iron a shirt).
- Agree upon the steps in the process.
- Start the process with partner B describing the action while partner A pantomimes the action. Clarify and add details as necessary.
- Now, turn the realistic demonstration into a vaudeville act. Partner B stands with his hands behind his back. Partner A hides behind him, extending her arms around his sides. B then does all the verbal instruction, while A makes all the gestures. A can make the gestures exaggerated or even outrageous for comic effect.

Share the work with the group. then discuss these questions:

- How is physical humor used in a traditional circus?
- Where do you see physical humor used in *Quidam*?

Lesson 4: Critic School
(40 minutes)

View
(18 minutes)

Watch the “Critic School” lesson and through to the end of Program 2 (running time approximately 18 minutes).

While watching the lesson, consider the following focus questions:

- What are the essential elements of criticism? How is criticism useful in understanding works of art?
- How does this performance task serve to assess student understandings in dance, music, theatre, and visual art?

Discuss and Experience
(12 minutes)

Discuss your responses to the focus questions above.

Distribute and discuss the “Criticism: Purposes and Process” handout.

Replay the three-minute beginning of *Quidam* from the Classroom Demonstration Materials tape (on-screen time counter at 22:18), with the purpose of writing a critique of this segment.

Divide into three groups:

- Group 1 will write a description of the opening sequence without interpretation or judgment.
- Group 2 will write an analysis of how artistic elements were employed and to what effect.
- Group 3 will write an evaluation of the opening sequence with supporting evidence for their opinions.

Share the findings with the group. Discuss points of disagreement and why people have different opinions.

Reflect
(10 minutes)

Use the following questions to focus a closing discussion:

- Identify the progression of Bloom’s Taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation) in the four lessons you saw. In what ways are students challenged to synthesize and evaluate through these lessons?

The Arts In Every Classroom: A Workshop for Elementary School Teachers

Extended Workshop Session

Program 2: Responding to the Arts

- How has your understanding of “multi-arts” and “criticism” changed?
- In what ways will an expanded understanding of the criticism process lead your students to higher levels of thinking?
- How do you envision collaboration with your colleagues as you begin to think about integrating the arts into your curriculum?

Between Sessions (On Your Own)

Homework Assignment

If possible, introduce the purposes and process of criticism to your students and have them work in small groups to write a critique of a work of visual art, dance, music, or theatre with which you all are familiar. Discuss students' ideas together as a group.

See the handout, Teacher Notes for Program 2, at the end of this document for ideas and observations to help you apply the lessons from this program in your classroom.

You can find the complete lesson plans and handouts on the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom. Audio and video materials related to these lessons can be found on the Classroom Demonstration Materials videotape, which will be provided free to purchasers of the workshop.

If you are able to apply these ideas in your classroom, please be prepared to respond to the following questions at the next workshop session:

- What knowledge base was necessary for the students to succeed?
- How did the students work together?
- With what kinds of vocabulary did they need the most help?

If you are unable to explore these activities with your students at this time, think about how you could adapt this lesson for your classroom. Prepare a lesson plan in your journal.

Optional Activities

Other enrichment activities can significantly boost your learning between workshop sessions. Consider the recommended activities below and choose those that best meet your needs. Time permitting, you might plan to share the results of your homework with other participants informally before or after your next workshop session.

Watch some or all of these programs from *The Arts in Every Classroom: A Video Library, K-5*:

- Expanding the Role of the Arts Specialist
- Teaching Dance
- Teaching Music
- Teaching Theatre
- Teaching Visual Art
- Developing an Arts-Based Unit
- Working With Local Artists
- Bringing Artists to Your Community
- Borrowing From the Arts To Enhance Learning

Research resources on costumes, vaudeville, and criticism at your school or public library or on the Web.

The Arts In Every Classroom: A Workshop for Elementary School Teachers
Extended Workshop Session
Program 2: Responding to the Arts

Attend a show at a museum, theatre, dance company, or orchestra in your community. Write a critical appraisal of the performance. Share the experience with students in your classroom.

Reading Assignment

To support your understanding of Program 2, see the following readings:

- Costumes Used in Program 2
- Cirque du Soleil
- Listening Map for *Parade*
- Criticism
- *Parade*
- *Quidam*
- Vaudeville

To prepare for Program 3, study the following additional readings:

- Alwin Nikolais
- René Magritte
- Role-Play

You also can find complete lesson plans and handouts on the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom.

Handout

To be distributed at the end of the session.

Teacher Notes for Program 2

Creative Work: When students are asked to make creative decisions and collaborate on creative tasks, they are provided with specific criteria and given time constraints from the beginning. It is important for them to know what outcomes are expected before they begin their work.

In-Role Teaching: The teacher engages in role-play along with students, taking on a character appropriate to the drama. Kathy uses in-role teaching during “Critic School.”

Reinforcing Vocabulary: It is helpful to reinforce new vocabulary for students when they are describing what they hear. Sometimes this means interpreting physical representations as auditory descriptors. Wavy hands or remarkable facial expressions may need a bit of clarification: “Do you mean the music is getting louder?”

Restating Questions: There were times when the Learner Teams had trouble responding to Susanne’s questions about the music they heard. It helped them focus their thinking when the questions were restated in a simpler way.

“What is the difference between Zoe’s first theme and her second theme?”

(No response.)

“Just look at the music — what is different?”

The second theme has more notes.

Tuning Fork: In order to sing the musical examples at the correct pitch, Susanne used a tuning fork to get the right note before she began singing.

Handout

Jean Cocteau's Scenario for *Parade*

The Parade

The set represents a street in front of several houses in Paris on a Sunday.

A traveling theatre troupe, the Théâtre Forain, is present on the street performing three music hall acts — the Chinese Magician, Acrobats, and the Little American Dancing Girl. Together, the acts are called a *Parade*.

Three managers of the theatre troupe organize the publicity. They communicate in their extraordinary language that the crowd should join the *Parade* to see the show inside, and they grossly try to make the crowd understand this. No one enters.

After the last act of the *Parade*, the exhausted managers collapse on each other. Seeing the supreme effort and the failure of the managers, the Chinese Magician, the Acrobats, and the Little American Girl try to explain to the crowd that the show takes place inside.

Handout

Listening Map for *Quidam*



Criticism: Purposes and Process

Purposes of Criticism:

- To give your opinion of a performance in order to advise other audience members.
- To give your opinion of a performance in order to attract an audience.
- To give your opinion of a performance in order to inform the production team.

A Process of Criticism:

- Describe the elements of the experience without interpretation or judgment.

- Analyze how the elements were employed by the various artists and to what effect. What did they do and how did it make us feel? Consider the artists' presumed goals, other options the artists might have chosen, and related observations and evaluations by other critics.

- Evaluate the work as a whole. What were the artists trying to do? How well was it done? Was it worth doing?

The Arts In Every Classroom: A Workshop for Elementary School Teachers

Extended Workshop Session

Program 2: Responding to the Arts

Reading

Costumes Used in Workshop Program 2

Contemporary Costumes (Parade and Quidam)

Costumes for these two works are representative of the real and absurd use of clothing, fabric, color, and design. Normal attire was juxtaposed with specific elements of cultural dress as well as fantasy “costumed” attire.

In *Parade*, the little American girl wears a rendition of schoolgirl attire: hat with long dangling bow, shirt with collar, full skirt, and matching stockings. The Chinese conjurer is dressed in clothing stereotypical of the Chinese culture: a side button jacket, short pants below the knee, and a pointed hat. The acrobats are in geometric designed skin-tight body suits.

Quidam's schoolgirl figure is dressed in overalls and a T-shirt. The fantasy figure wears a white jump suit with a bulls-eye appliqué on the abdomen; the headless figure wears a recognizable bowler hat and suit.

The costumes in both pieces draw from costume attire that ranges from everyday clothing to bizarre character creations designed to define the movement, plot, and character.

Costumes of the 16th and 17th Centuries

In western dress, the early 16th century was dominated by loose flowing garments, wide at the shoulders, rich in velvet and brocades, with low simple headdresses and delicate white shirts. Women's hairstyles show braids with jeweled coifs and fillets.

At mid-century, style was much more flamboyant, with the use of puffs and slashes, large hats and plumes, and broad-toed shoes.

The latter half of the 16th century featured a more rigid look known as Elizabethan. During this period, clothing was exaggerated in form for both men and women and extremely elaborate in cut and material. The farthingale held skirts out in grotesque outlines. Brocades, satins, embroidery in gold, and velvets were used extensively. Also, the introduction of starch helped make possible the enormous ruffles of muslin, gauze, or lace.

The early 17th century is known as the Cavalier period. Clothing was romantic, graceful, simpler, and much more wearable than the preceding period.

Late 17th century styles are essentially French in character. Men's attire included lace ribbons, exaggerated wigs, and petticoat breeches, all symbolic of the frivolity of the times. Women's gowns were simple, beautiful, and delicate, often made out of satin with pearls and lace.

Costumes of the 20th Century

The Arts In Every Classroom: A Workshop for Elementary School Teachers
Extended Workshop Session
Program 2: Responding to the Arts

In the early 20th century, the costume trend was toward functionalism and away from formalism. Bust or waistline definition became less prominent in ladies' wear. Hemlines reached an all time high, barely covering the knee. The cloche, a tight-fitting hat, was introduced and worn slipped down to the eyebrows.

Evening attire saw a return to more feminine contours with sweeping gown styles. Men wore standard attire, plain business suits of flannel or serge, as opposed to the bulky, broad shouldered suits of preceding years. The zoot suit was popular in the 1940s. It consisted of a long, tight-fitting jacket, exaggerated padded shoulders, and baggy trousers extending above the waist, then tapering down to tight cuffs around the ankles.

Japanese Kimono

This traditional garb of Japan dates back 1,000 years. Kimono means "clothing" but the word usually refers to the traditional wraparound, full-length, one-piece robe worn by women and men.

Kimonos have gone through many transformations stylistically. During one period, a person would wear more than a dozen kimonos at a time for contrasting layered effects.

As the kimono evolved into outerwear so did its potential for creative and expressive design. Gold and silver thread were used to embellish the garments. Various scenes were displayed in brilliant colors. Design elements from nature, such as flowers, trees, and streams, were reflected in the decorative scenes along with bits of poetry and hand-painted characters. Men wore blue, black, brown, gray, or white kimonos. Bright colors were only for the young.

Reading

Cirque du Soleil

In the early 1980s, a group of young street performers in Quebec, Canada, pooled their talent and dreams and founded the “Club des Talons Hauts” or “High-Heels Club,” aptly named because most of them were stilt-walkers. The club also featured fire-eaters, jugglers, and other performers, who were known collectively as buskers. At that time, Quebec did not have a circus tradition, so the club organized a festival where street performers could come together to exchange ideas and techniques. They called it the “Fête Foraine de Baie St-Paul” (the Baie Saint-Paul Fair). That was all a few visionaries needed to hatch the idea of bringing all this talent together under one roof, or — why not? — a big top! Cirque du Soleil was born.

Cirque du Soleil was officially created in 1984 with the assistance of the Quebec government, as part of the celebrations surrounding the 450th anniversary of Jacques Cartier’s arrival in Canada. Cirque was based on a totally new concept: a striking, dramatic mix of the circus arts and street entertainment, featuring wild, outrageous costumes, staged under magical lighting, and set to original music. With not a single animal in the ring, Cirque’s difference was clear from the very start. The show debuted in the Quebec town of Gaspé and was then performed in 10 other cities throughout the province. The first blue and yellow big top seated 800.

Since its creation, millions of people from around the world have seen Cirque du Soleil’s productions. In 1996, the Cirque du Soleil International Headquarters was completed in Montreal. This \$40 million project made it possible for more than 500 permanent Montreal employees to work together. It is here that all of Cirque du Soleil’s shows are created and produced.

Cirque today runs several simultaneous productions worldwide. Some of the productions, such as *Mystère* and *O* in Las Vegas, *La Nouba* at Walt Disney World, and *Alegria* in Biloxi, Mississippi, enjoy permanent runs. Others, including *Quidam*, *Saltimbanco*, and *Dralion*, are touring in both the United States and Europe. Cirque du Soleil also has released its first feature film, *Alegria*, inspired by the show of the same name, and its first-ever large-format (IMAX) production, *Journey of Man*.

Cirque du Soleil also is known for its commitment to social causes, particularly youth at risk. One percent of potential revenues from ticket sales every year is devoted to outreach programs. Cirque du Soleil can identify with the situation at-risk youth are facing because, in its own way, the Cirque lifestyle is also a wandering, marginal one. The creators of Cirque du Soleil were young self-taught artists who couldn’t be pigeonholed, and before they began playing under sumptuous big tops, their only stage was the street.

Cirque du Soleil’s social action knows no borders, reaching out to youth worldwide. This outreach is proactive and committed, since Cirque chooses its partners and undertakes to

The Arts In Every Classroom: A Workshop for Elementary School Teachers
Extended Workshop Session
Program 2: Responding to the Arts

work with them long term for a common goal. Just as their shows seek to stimulate the imagination and inspire dreams, so they strive to work creatively with youth at risk, opening up new avenues to help them find their place in the community without forcing them into highly structured and disciplined roles.

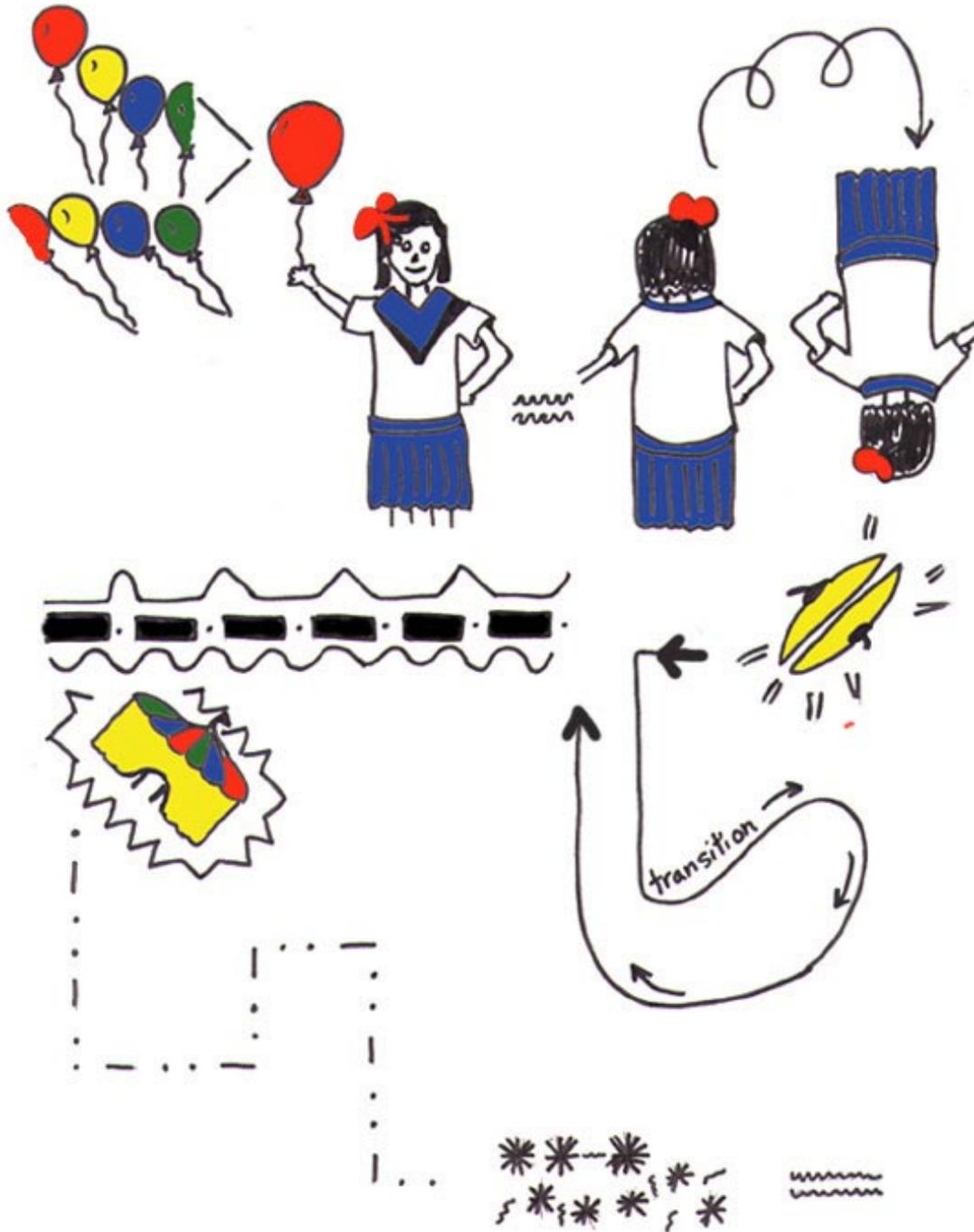
Cirque du Soleil wants to achieve a multiplier effect for its social action by building a solidarity network centered around its chosen cause. Alliances have been forged with numerous partners from all sectors of society that share in the commitment to helping youth in difficulty.

The international success story known as Cirque du Soleil is above all the story of a remarkable bond among performers and spectators the world over. For at the end of the day, it is the spectators who spark the creative passions of Cirque du Soleil.

Adapted from the Cirque du Soleil Web site, www.cirquedusoleil.com

Reading

Listening Map for *Parade*



Reading

Criticism

Criticism is a process used to describe, interpret, and evaluate works of art. It is informed by experiences in creating art (production), historical and cultural context (history), and criteria for evaluating a work (aesthetics). Criticism also is about questioning the choices made by artists in creating or interpreting a work.

Students should be encouraged to make informed judgments about the art they create and experience. Significant evaluations are more than generalized opinions (“I liked this. I did not like that.”). They include *whys* — reasonable explanations for opinions and value judgments. While objectivity in evaluating arts experiences is the goal, complete objectivity is impossible to attain.

Responses are influenced by the critic’s age, background, artistic experience, and natural predilections. Critical judgments about choices made by artists should be informed by aesthetic criteria derived from knowledge about the nature of art and the cultural and historical context of the work.

Criticism involves perception, description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of artwork. Critical inquiry focuses on questions about what is there (perception and description), what it means (analysis and interpretation), and its value (judgment). Criticism also involves comparing and contrasting works to one another and consideration of aesthetic criteria derived from social, cultural, and historical context.

One approach to criticism is to describe, analyze, and then evaluate.

- Describe the elements of the experience without interpretation or judgment (descriptive statements are basically statements of fact).
- Analyze how the elements were employed by the artists and to what effect. What did they do? How did they make you feel?

Consider:

- the artists’ presumed goals,
- other options the artists might have chosen, and
- related observations and evaluations by other critics.

Evaluate the work as a whole. The principles of German writer Johann Goethe (1749 – 1832) can be useful for evaluating works of art:

- What were the artists trying to do?
- How well was it done
- Was it worth doing?

Reading

Parade

In May 1917, a collaboration among famous artists from various disciplines resulted in a unique ballet entitled *Parade*. The scenario was written by Jean Cocteau, the music was created by Erik Satie, costumes were designed by Pablo Picasso, and the choreography was created by Léonide Massine.

“Parade,” according to a French dictionary, is a “comic act, put on at the entrance of a traveling theatre to attract a crowd.” Therefore, the play is based on the idea of a traveling theatre troupe whose “Parade” is mistaken by the crowd for the real circus act. The managers and performers try to get the crowd to enter the circus tent, but no one enters.

Characters in the work include a Chinese magician, a little American girl, acrobats, three managers, and a horse.

Audiences of 1917 hated *Parade*, but it is remembered today as one of the first surrealist productions. After studying *Parade*, you will notice many similarities to *Quidam*, which many call a contemporary surrealist performance.

Parade followed this simple story line, written by Cocteau:

The set represents a street in front of several houses in Paris on a Sunday. A traveling theatre troupe, the Théâtre Forain, is present on the street performing three music hall acts — the Chinese Magician, Acrobats, and the Little American Dancing Girl. Together, the acts are called a Parade. Three managers of the theatre troupe organize the publicity. They communicate in their extraordinary language that the crowd should join the Parade to see the show inside and grossly try to make the crowd understand this. No one enters. After the last act of the Parade, the exhausted managers collapse on each other. Seeing the supreme effort and the failure of the managers, the Chinese Magician, the Acrobats, and the Little American Girl try to explain to the crowd that the show takes place inside.

What was unique about this piece was the artists’ nonrealistic approach to performance. A 1917 description of the performance may help:

Picasso painted a drop curtain — a Cubist depiction of a cityscape with a miniature theater at its center. The action itself began with the First Manager dressed in Picasso’s 10-foot-high Cubist costume dancing to a simple repeated rhythmic theme. The American manager was dressed as a skyscraper and his movements were very accented and strict. The Third Manager performed in silence on horseback and introduced the next act, two acrobats who tumbled to the music of a fast waltz played by xylophones. The ballet ended with the Little American Girl in tears as the crowds refused to enter the circus tent.

Reading

Quidam

In 1996, Cirque du Soleil premiered a work entitled *Quidam*. According to Cirque du Soleil's Web site, the character *Quidam* is meant to be "a nameless passer-by, a solitary figure lingering on a street corner, a person rushing past. It could be anyone, anybody. Someone coming, going, living in our anonymous society. A member of the crowd, one of the silent majority. One who cries out, sings and dreams within us all. This is the *Quidam* that Cirque du Soleil is celebrating."

This work is different from previous productions in that it contains a narrative story line. The performance opens with Zoe, a young, angry girl who already has seen everything there is to see. *Quidam*, the anonymous character, invites Zoe into a mysterious, magical world, and she discovers that there is a lot more out there than she ever could have imagined. She meets John and Fritz, who befriend her and dazzle her. She is very excited about her new discoveries in this world, but then she sees her parents. Her parents, though, cannot see her, just as they don't notice her in the real world. In the end everything works out for Zoe. She is reunited with her parents and is glad to see them again. She is much appreciated in the real world now, but is sad to leave the excitement of *Quidam* behind. For just a second, Zoe is reluctant to leave and looks to John for advice. He hates to say good-bye to her, but he knows she must return to her own world and her own life.

Quidam was written and directed by Franco Dragone, who has been working with Cirque du Soleil since 1985. Dragone came to the circus from a background in theatre, working with several theatrical companies across Europe. It was his experiences in Europe that led Dragone to propose an integration of theatre and circus that is now the trademark of Cirque du Soleil. The rest of the creative team included Michel Crete, set designer; Dominique Lemieux, costume designer; Benoit Jutras, composer; Debra Brown, choreographer; Luc Lafortune, lighting designer; and Francois Bergeron, sound designer. *Quidam* has more than 50 performers, ranging in age from 12 to 43. The current cast members hail from Canada, United States, France, Russia, Ukraine, China, England, Argentina, Belgium, Australia, and Israel.

Cirque du Soleil means "circus of the sun." *Quidam*, like all of Cirque du Soleil's shows, can be considered a circus performance. A circus is a type of performance staged in a circle surrounded by tiers of seats, usually under a tent. While the tradition of travelling performers can be traced back to the middle ages, the first modern circus was staged in London in 1768 by Philip Astley. His circus included only one act — a show of trick horsemanship. Over time, circus performances expanded to include many different kinds of acts. Today, a circus performance typically includes displays of horsemanship; exhibitions by gymnasts, aerialists, wild-animal trainers, and performing animals; and comic pantomime by clowns. The founders of Cirque du Soleil loved the circus, but wanted to change it. Cirque du Soleil is not about elephants and lion tamers. It is more the circus of the future, a fusion of street performance and theatre.

The structure of *Quidam* (circus acts linked by a storyline) imitates the style called vaudeville. The American tradition of vaudeville grew out of saloon entertainment during the late 1800s. The pattern of a vaudeville performance was always the same: separate acts to musical accompaniment by comedians, serious and comic singers, jugglers, dancers, magicians, trick cyclists, etc., all structured in a single program or “bill” to be performed twice nightly.

One of the comments you will hear about *Quidam* is that it is visually breathtaking. The set for *Quidam* is stunning. One of the production’s most spectacular features is a 120-foot overhead conveyor, whose five imposing rails take up the entire interior surface of the Big Top. This system is used to bring performers onto the stage and to create a multitude of special effects in various acts. The costumes for *Quidam* are colorful, spectacular, and unique. The costumes were designed to let the individual personality of each performer and character come through.

The music of *Quidam* is of remarkable dramatic intensity. Drawing on influences that range from classical music to the most eclectic and contemporary sounds, the music accompanies, envelops, and accentuates the magic of the show. The music is played live by six musicians using violins, cellos, percussion instruments, saxophones, synthesizers, samplers, electric guitars, classical guitars, and a varied assortment of other string instruments. For the very first time at Cirque du Soleil, the voices of a man and a child add texture and unique color to the music.

Adapted from the Cirque du Soleil Web site, www.cirquedusoleil.com

Reading

Vaudeville

The term “vaudeville” may derive from a part of France known as the Vau (valley) de Vire, where a certain kind of light song was popular. In the United States, however, the entertainment form known as vaudeville is a variety show that developed from the saloons of the mid-1800s, where light entertainment was provided for hard-working cowboys, lumberjacks, and miners.

While vaudeville was mostly light-hearted, performances invariably conformed to a strict structure: Up to 20 live acts by acrobats, clowns, comedians, contortionists, dancers, jugglers, magicians, mimes, singers, and trick cyclists were presented in a single program or “bill” performed twice each night. Acts were presentational, aimed directly at the audience. Anything that promised to astound or entertain — from humorous sketches and short plays to feats of strength and animal tricks — was fair game. The bill was organized to guarantee something for everyone, but acts were not related in any way.

Acts traveled from place to place, usually performing in the theatres of a single vaudeville circuit or chain, to find new audiences. Highly critical of poor performances, vaudeville audiences were known to hiss and catcall when displeased. Audience members often ate, drank, smoked, and talked during performances.

By the early 1900s, vaudeville evolved into the theatrical form of the American musical, which to this day uses a storyline and related music performances to patch together often distinct “acts.”

Adapted from *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, ed. J. R. Brown, Oxford University Press, 1995.

Reading

Alwin Nikolais

Alwin Nikolais (1910/12?–93) was a dancer, choreographer, director, teacher, and composer. He began his professional career in the theatre as a musician, then became a puppeteer, and finally a dancer. His principal dance teacher was Hanya Holm, and he also studied with Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Louis Horst. He attended Bennington College Dance Sessions (1937–39) and Colorado College (1947). He had his own studio 1938–42.

In 1948, Nikolais was appointed director of the Henry Street Playhouse in New York City. He built a company of dancers, later known as the Nikolais Dance Theater, for his very special form of abstract dance-theatre, in which lights, props, and sounds were of equal importance with the dancers. He frequently used electronic music, which he composed himself. The dancers themselves are dehumanized, and become wonderful instruments for the formation of ever-shifting patterns.

Works of interest:

- *Tensile Involvement* (1953)
- *Mask, Props, and Mobiles* (1953)
- *Kaleidoscope* (1956)
- *Totem* (1960)
- *Imago* (1963)
- *Structures* (1970)
- *Crossfade* (1974)
- *Talisman* (1981)

Reading

René Magritte

On November 21, 1898, René Magritte was born in Lessines, Belgium. His father was a tailor, and his mother a hat maker. René was the oldest of three sons. When he was 13 years old, René's mother committed suicide one night by throwing herself from a bridge into the Sambre River. The next morning, René and his brothers found her corpse on the riverbank, her wet nightgown drawn over her face. The image of a shrouded face would appear in paintings throughout the artist's career.

The young Magritte took painting classes to feed his growing interest in art. At 15, he met Georgette Berger, who posed for many of his figure paintings. Following studies at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels and less than a year of military service, René married Georgette in 1922. At that time, he worked as a graphic artist, mostly drawing patterns for wallpaper. Aside from three years in Paris, the Magittes would stay in Brussels for the rest of their lives.

Magritte was strongly influenced by avant-garde fashions in painting. Early on, he became interested in Cubism, a style of painting pioneered by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in which many sides of objects are rendered visible at once. Magritte was perhaps most powerfully affected by Dada, a stylistic movement that further rejected conventions of traditional art. Indeed, Dadaist musicians, poets, and visual artists were concerned mainly with recording the accidents of creativity that might occur on the way to making a work of art. These artists often aimed to shock, surprise, or amaze audiences, as when Marcel Duchamp took an ordinary toilet and titled it "Fountain."

The practice of showing something and calling it by another name is common in Magritte's work, where extraordinary paradoxes and contrasts are the norm. For example, in a painting called "La trahison des images" ("The Treason of Images"), an object is shown above the words "Ceci n'est pas une pipe." The object is, of course, a pipe. Another painting, *Golconde*, juxtaposes ordinary images in a fantastic way: men in bowler hats appear suspended in the air like raindrops before a horizon of city buildings. Images of men in bowler hats, resembling both middle-class businessmen of the time and the artist himself, appear throughout Magritte's work.

Other Surrealist artists include Salvador Dali, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Frida Kahlo, Paul Klee, Joan Miro, and Dorothea Tanning. Magritte befriended many of these artists. He died in 1967.

For more information on Magritte, see Alden, T. *The Essential Magritte*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999.

Reading

Role-Play

Role-play is the act of pretending to be someone or something you're not. This technique is an excellent way to elevate attention and focus energy in the classroom. Role-play also motivates students to listen, think, and speak

There are three basic aspects of a role to take into account when improvising:

- *Purpose.* As you develop your role, it is helpful to keep in mind the purpose you have in the drama. A character's purpose may change.
- *Status.* All relationships have an element of power. This means that one person has some hold over the other, some special knowledge or a higher position. We call this status. Consider your role in relation to other roles in terms of status. Will your role be of higher, lower, or equal status?
- *Attitude.* Each character in every drama has attitudes towards the subject of the drama and the other characters in the drama.

These aspects of role became visible through the physical, vocal, and word choices made by the students.

The Arts In Every Classroom: A Workshop for Elementary School Teachers
Extended Workshop Session
Program 2: Responding to the Arts