

TRACES

A 7 fingers PRODUCTION 



STUDY GUIDE

FOX THEATRICALS TOM GABBARD AMANDA DUBOIS
THE DENVER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
NASSIB EL-HUSSEINI AND TOM LIGHTBURN

PRESENT

A 7 fingers PRODUCTION

TRACES

Produced for **FOX THEATRICALS** by
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LES 7 DOIGTS DE LA MAIN/7 FINGERS

Direction & Choreography
SHANA CARROLL GYPSY SNIDER



photos by Michael Meseke

Teachers are encouraged to use this guide to elicit student discussion before the show, guide them through aspects of the production, and engage them in activities once they return to the classroom. Our goal is to help teachers utilize the production as a catalyst for student education, collaboration, and inspiration.

TRACES showcases the diverse and energetic talents of dynamic performers as they work on individual feats and cooperate to accomplish others. We hope that your students are inspired by the production and can learn from you, from themselves, and from each other through these activities.

Please feel free to copy the materials in this guide to aid you in sparking classroom interest and discussion before and after the performance.

Enjoy the show!

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by Timothy Reid for:



www.showstudies.com

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THE STORY BEHIND *TRACES* AND 7 FINGERS

What do you think of when you hear the word “circus?”

For most people it’s a blur of high-wire stunts, dancing animals and peanuts. Tents and elaborate costumes are nearly mandatory. And who could forget the clowns?

But what would circus performers do if they had it their way? What kind of circus troupe would they create if they were allowed to do more than just their specialty act and push themselves to the furthest limits of their abilities? Enter 7 Fingers.

Founded in Montreal in 2002, 7 Fingers’ initial goal was to bring circus to a human scale. Les 7 Doigts de la Main translates literally as “the 7 fingers of the hand.” It is a twist on a French idiom (“the five fingers of the hand”) used to describe distinct parts united tightly, moving in coordination towards one common goal. Here it refers to the seven founding directors of the company (Shana Carroll, Isabelle Chasse, Patrick Léonard, Faon Shane, Gypsy Snider, Sébastien Soldevila and Samuel Tétreault) who,

by combining their distinct talents and experiences, work towards their common artistic goals with the beautifully awkward dexterity of a 7-fingered hand.

Their first show, Loft, rejected the fanciful production qualities of standard circuses for the intimate environment of an artist’s loft. All the while blending such diverse forms as acrobatics, avant-garde dance, physical comedy, music, song, spoken word, interactive video projections and live DJ-ing. The result was a brand-new type of show. Since LOFT, 7 Fingers has created five shows including *TRACES*, *LA VIE*, *PSY*, *FIBONACCI PROJECT*, and *PATINOIRE*; each show offering a distinct setting and yet carrying the same 7 finger-print.

In addition the 7 Fingers have developed a special events department through which they deliver a diverse range of custom projects. The 7 Fingers have performed for the Queen of England during The Royal Variety Performance, performed during ceremonies for both the Turin and Vancouver Olympics, have created performances for large corporate events and much more. Each project is custom-made and approached with the same hands-on creativity.

MEET THE DIRECTORS/CHOREOGRAPHERS OF *TRACES*

We asked the directors/choreographers to introduce themselves using the creative methods from *TRACES*:

SHANA CARROLL

PLACE OF BIRTH:
Berkeley, CALIFORNIA

PARENTS’ OCCUPATIONS:

FATHER: *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist (Jon Carroll) since 1983.

MOTHER: Freelance writer and editor, ex-restaurant critic, author (‘sportsfitness for women’), most recently tech columnist for *California Lawyer*, now retired but still writing.



3 DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVES: Creative, Passionate, Talkative.

INSPIRATION TO BECOME A CIRCUS ARTIST: “At the age of 18 I saw a trapeze artist and thought it was the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen. I somehow saw myself in her and decided that was who I had to become and I’ve since devoted my life to it”

MESSAGE FOR STUDENTS: “A hope and belief that they can also attempt the seemingly impossible, courage to confront fears and surmount them, whatever they are, confirmation that normal people of all shapes and sizes can be extraordinary, and that anything is possible if you are passionate enough and relentless enough and daring enough, and that still, after all that you need to speak and move and sing and jump from the heart.”

GYPSY SNIDER

PLACE OF BIRTH:
San Francisco, CALIFORNIA

PARENTS’ OCCUPATIONS: My mom and step dad were Circus performers (jugglers to be precise) and they ran the Pickle Family Circus, one of the first contemporary Circuses in the US. My real father was and still is a theater technician (audio/visual)



3 DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVES: Shameless, Demanding, Ticklish.

INSPIRATION TO BECOME A CIRCUS ARTIST: “I was born and raised in the circus, my parents were performers, but in my teen years my family and I were cast in the Robert Altman film, *Popeye*, starring Robin Williams. After 4 months of filming, I was convinced I wanted to be an actress. Running away from the circus was to be my rebellion until I realized that circus was not only my true love, it was also the realm of the infinitely possible. The place where I could really make all my artistic dreams come true.”

MESSAGE FOR STUDENTS: “I want people to leave *Traces* inspired to take risks, to put themselves fully and honestly into everything they do, to fall and to get back up again and to catch and support others around them. Oh, and to Enjoy!”

TUMBLE INTO THE SHOW



AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS

Going to see a live theatrical show is an incredibly exciting and entertaining experience. To enhance that experience, here are some things to keep in mind:

- **WATCH FOR YOUR ENTRANCE.** Look for our audience cam as you come into the lobby. After you take your seat, watch the screen on stage to see a video of the audience entering the show. See if you can spot yourself and your friends making an entrance!
- **TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE.** The messages and texts can wait until later - get into the world of the show completely!
- **GET READY TO WATCH CAREFULLY.** The wonderful thing about live theater is that it's happening right there before you! *Traces* happens at a quick pace so be observant and ready to be wowed!
- **SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION.** Unlike other shows, it's ok for you to applaud when you see something that amazes you, or to "ohh" and "ahh" at the talents of the artists in *TRACES* during the show. When the show is over, applaud for the artists and wait for the curtain call to be over before leaving your seat. To show them your highest praise, give them a standing ovation.

IDEAS FOR STUDENTS TO CONSIDER

- Use the information in this guide and the web resources as a starting point to get to know *TRACES*. It's always a good idea to have some background information about the production and the subject matter so you can get deeper into the show. Get your brain thinking about what you'll experience.
- Become a fan of the show on www.Facebook.com/TracesUSA and follow the buzz circulating the production on www.Twitter.com/TracesUSA. Get the inside scoop and find out what's happening surrounding the show - then let us know how you liked the performance!
- After absorbing all of this important background information, think about what your expectations of the production are. What will you see on stage? How will the artists interact with each other? How will this performance piece be structured? How will it begin and end?

THEMES

Live theatre holds a mirror up to life and *TRACES* reflects an incredibly energetic one. Use the themes below to make connections to your school work and to your own lives.

- **BALANCE.** The artists in *TRACES* balance themselves, others, and objects throughout the show. What do you have to balance? Why is balance in life important?
- **COOPERATION.** It takes a tremendous amount of cooperation to create and to perform *TRACES*. What activities are you involved in at school that require cooperation? Outside of school? With your family? Why might a talent for cooperation be an important talent to have?
- **DIVERSITY.** The show contains a diversity of performers, styles, techniques, tempos, and artistic media. Where can you celebrate diversity in you class? Your school? Your life?
- **LEAVING YOUR TRACE.** *TRACES* takes it's name from the concept of "leaving a trace" and asks: "What are the *Traces* you'll leave behind?" Think about the images and moments you remember from the show. What stays with you? What are the traces you leave behind in your life?

GLOSSARY OF ACROBATIC STYLES & TERMS



HAND TO HAND

Demanding acrobatic discipline performed by two or more acrobats on the ground in which the carrier executes various moves involving strength, balance, elevation and flexibility by carrying the flyer on the hands or sometimes the head. Dynamic Hand to Hand makes use of the entire performance space with much larger movements and a faster rhythm to some moves, since the

carrier provides the propulsion via a push of the arms to the flyer, who is able to perform different acrobatic jumps landing on the shoulders of the partner, another carrier, or the ground.

TEETERBOARD

Collective number involving several acrobats wherein one or two pushers leap onto one end of a rocking board from atop a pedestal and catapult flyers into the air. The flyers perform acrobatic feats before returning to the ground, to the shoulders of a team of carriers, or to a perch or chair.



WHEEL

Of Chinese origin, this apparatus is comprised of one large metal circle, inside which the acrobat stands and uses his own impetus to propel the wheel, whirling and performing acrobatics while defying the laws of gravity.



BANQUINE

An acrobatic act with a group of minimum three people, with two or more bases and at least one flyer. The bases, or spotters, form a platform with their arms and hands interlocked which the flyer uses as a take-off position for somersaults and other aerial tricks.



CHINESE POLES



Apparatus of Asian origin consisting of one or several vertical metal posts fixed into the ground, generally 3-to-9 metres in height, along which acrobats move, climbing and executing various moves and acrobatic jumps.

CHINESE HOOPS



Specialty originating in China, consisting of a set of wooden or metal hoops of varying diameters that are balanced one on top of the other on the ground, through which the acrobats propel themselves while performing various acrobatics.

SOURCES: <http://www.nationalcircusschool.ca/en/artiste/circus-arts-disciplines>
<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Banquine>

CONNECT CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS • UTILIZING STANDARDS

Blueprint

NYC Blueprint for the Arts: Theater
Benchmarks for Grades 2, 5, 8 & 12

THEATER MAKING: ACTING

Imagination, Analysis & Process Skills
Performance Skills

THEATER MAKING: PLAYWRITING/PLAY MAKING

Understanding Dramatic Structure
Imagination, Analysis & Process

THEATER MAKING: DESIGNING & TECHNICAL THEATER

Understanding Design
Using Theatrical Space & Elements
Communication and Organization Skills
Knowledge and Understanding
Imagination, Analysis and Process

DEVELOPING THEATER LITERACY

Responding to Theater Performance

MAKING CONNECTIONS THROUGH THEATER

Connecting Theater to the Arts and Other
Disciplines

Connecting Theater to Personal Experience,
Community and Society Through an Exploration of
Themes, Culture and History

WORKING WITH COMMUNITY & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Partnering with Theater Organizations Outside of
School

EXPLORING CAREERS & LIFELONG LEARNING

Awareness of Careers in Theater
Theater for Enjoyment and Lifelong Learning

SOURCE: <http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/blueprint.html>



COMMON CORE
STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE
PREPARING AMERICA'S STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE & CAREER

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts
& Literacy in History, Social Studies Science & Technical Subjects

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

CCSS WRITING K-5

- Text Types & Purposes
- Production and Distribution of Writing
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

CCSS SPEAKING & LISTENING K-5

- Comprehension & Collaboration
- Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

CCSS LANGUAGE K-5

- Conventions of Standard English
- Knowledge of Language
- Vocabulary Acquisition & Use

CCSS WRITING 6-12

- Text Types & Purposes
- Production and Distribution of Writing
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge
- Range of Writing

CCSS SPEAKING & LISTENING 6-12

- Comprehension & Collaboration
- Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

CCSS LANGUAGE 6-12

- Conventions of Standard English
- Knowledge of Language
- Vocabulary Acquisition & Use

LITERACY IN HISTORY, SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE & TECHNICAL SUBJECTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

CCSS READING 6-12

- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
- Range of Reading and level of Text Complexity

CCSS WRITING 6-12

- Text Types & Purposes
- Production and Distribution of Writing
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge
- Range of Writing

SOURCE: <http://www.corestandards.org/>



ELEMENTARY LEVEL LESSON IDEAS



ACTING OUT - Using Kinesthetic Learning

Students use physical activities to enhance engagement and retention.

TRACES is a show that is constantly in motion. Students, especially kinesthetic learners, can become more focused in tasks that require them to move around as they're learning. Approaches can be as varied as throwing a ball around the class to elicit responses, having students move to sections of the room to "respond" to a question choice, or encouraging students to act out scenarios from textual material. Teachers can utilize concrete learning aids that students can handle which provide tactile reinforcement for abstract concepts.

ME IN 3 WORDS - Descriptive Adjectives

Students use 3 words to describe themselves fully and creatively.

The artists in **TRACES** speak of themselves by utilizing a creative yet personal vocabulary. Ask students to think of creative words to best describe themselves. Students could introduce themselves using the **TRACES** model with date of birth, place of birth and then some interesting fact about themselves. Students could be encouraged to think about their word choices and could check in with classmates to ask their opinions on what words could best describe them.

FINDING BALANCE - Exploring Equilibrium

Study the balances in math, language, art, science and nutrition.

Students can explore the concept of "balance" in a number of subject areas. After a class discussion of the balance utilized in many ways in **TRACES**, students could discuss balancing words to create sentences (agreement), balancing sides on simple equations, balancing elements in art (symmetry), balances in nature (food chain), balances in physical education, and even discuss a balanced diet.



STANDARDS UTILIZED

CCSS WRITING K-5

- Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.
- With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.
- Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print or digital sources.

CCSS SPEAKING & LISTENING K-5

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.
- Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.
- Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

CCSS LANGUAGE K-5

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL LESSON IDEAS



RULE OF 3 & ME - Creative Biography

Students utilize 3 creative adjectives to describe themselves.

The artists in **TRACES** introduce themselves using 3 adjectives or phrases, contrasting the first 2 with a third choice that's unexpected. That's the "rule of 3," a classic comedic device that's also helpful in written composition. The **TRACES** artists had to agree that the descriptions were right for each other. Ask students to create a series of 3 words/phrases to describe themselves with the 3rd phrase having an unexpected twist. Students then prepare an explanation for their word choices and present/explain/defend their ideas to the class. Lead the class in a discussion on how apt the students' word choices are and how important descriptive language is.

TELLING TABLEAU - Physical Storytelling

Creating collaborative physical arrangements to make meaning.

TRACES utilizes a great deal of physical movement to convey artistry and to create narrative throughout the performance. Break students up into small groups and ask them to use gestures, physical combinations, and physical relationships/dynamics to convey a situation/location such as: "dinner at home," "school recess," or "at the zoo." Move into more conceptual ideas: "friendship," "confusion," "excitement," or "invention." Come up with your own simple and complex phrases. Extend the activity by having students use one of the tableaus as the stimulus for a creative writing assignment.



STACKING STYLES - Utilizing Multimedia

Students combine a variety of media to present ideas to the class.

The production design for **TRACES** involves a multitude of artistic elements working together seamlessly to elevate and enhance the main elements of the production. Ask students to enhance the presentation of material to their classmates by utilizing a variety of multimedia. Students could present a range of material in this manner: a history lesson using relevant music and images, mathematical problems with coordinating physical moves and objects, or a poem/story while drawing the subject matter, situation, or speaker.

STANDARDS UTILIZED

CCSS WRITING 6-8

- Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using specific technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively.

CCSS SPEAKING & LISTENING 6-8

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and sufficiency of the evidence.
- Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and emphasize salient points.
- Adapt a speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

CCSS LANGUAGE 6-8

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.



HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL LESSON IDEAS



STORY “TIME” - Exploring Idioms Across Disciplines

Discuss the notions and usage of “time” across academic subjects.

An artist in **TRACES** speaks about our many notions of *Time*: “Time Flies,” “Save Time,” “Time is on Our Side,” “Time of My Life,” “Out of Time,” “Time’s Up.” Teachers from a variety of disciplines (Science, Mathematics, Language Arts, Physical Education, Visual Art, Social Studies) can explore the notions of “time”. Discover with your students how time is used as a word or concept in the particular discipline in a class discussion. Extend the activity by asking students to compare how your class discussed time with ideas of how the concept might be utilized in other academic subjects.

CAUGHT IN A GOOD BOOK - Novel Connection

Students and teachers discuss a captivating book.

One of the performance sections of **TRACES** follows an artist who can’t seem to let go of a good book. Conduct a class discussion that asks students to explore the notion of reading a book that one just can’t seem to put down. For students who may not have this experience, ask the class to come up with a consensus of what makes a compelling book and ask students without a specific title what would engage them as readers. Students then write an expository essay on their books. Extend this activity by having students create a book swap of captivating books. For a multidisciplinary angle, talk to the class about a book that has made a profound impact on the specific academic discipline (ex: Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*).



FIVE FINGERS - Classroom Collaboration

Explore the possibilities of student cooperation & collaboration.

TRACES, in its artistic creation and performance, presents many dynamic examples of the power of cooperation and collaboration. Artists assist each other in myriad ways. Present a project where students must cooperate in order to complete it. Students could begin a project and pass it on to each collaborator to create a finished project or could take roles in which each participant must contribute to completed the whole. Ideas include: collaborative painting, poetry, physical tasks, scientific experimentation, cooking, research, storytelling...

STANDARDS UTILIZED

CCSS WRITING 9-12

- Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using specific technique, well-chosen details, and well structured event sequences.
- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish and update individual/shared writing.

CCSS SPEAKING & LISTENING 9-12

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats.
- Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric.

CCSS LANGUAGE 9-12

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and composition.
- Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- Apply knowledge of language to understand functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

RESOURCES



WEB

Official Site for Traces USA

<http://tracesusa.com/>

Les 7 Doigts de la Main / 7 Fingers Official Site

<http://7fingers.com/en>

National Circus School

<http://www.nationalcircusschool.ca>

Academy for Physical Theatre in Switzerland

<http://www.teatrodimitri.ch/scuola/>

Circus Center San Francisco

<http://circuscenter.org/>

VIDEO

Traces USA Official YouTube Channel

<http://www.youtube.com/user/tracesusa>

Check out clips of the show and our behind the scenes videos:

Traces Behind the Scenes: Diabolo, Wheel, Hand, & Hoops

SOCIAL MEDIA

Official Facebook Fan Page for Traces USA

<http://www.facebook.com/tracesusa>

Official Twitter Fan Page for Traces USA

<https://twitter.com/tracesusa>

PRINT

Pickle Family Circus by Terry Lorant. Chronicle Books (January 1, 1986)

ISBN-13: 978-0877013778.

