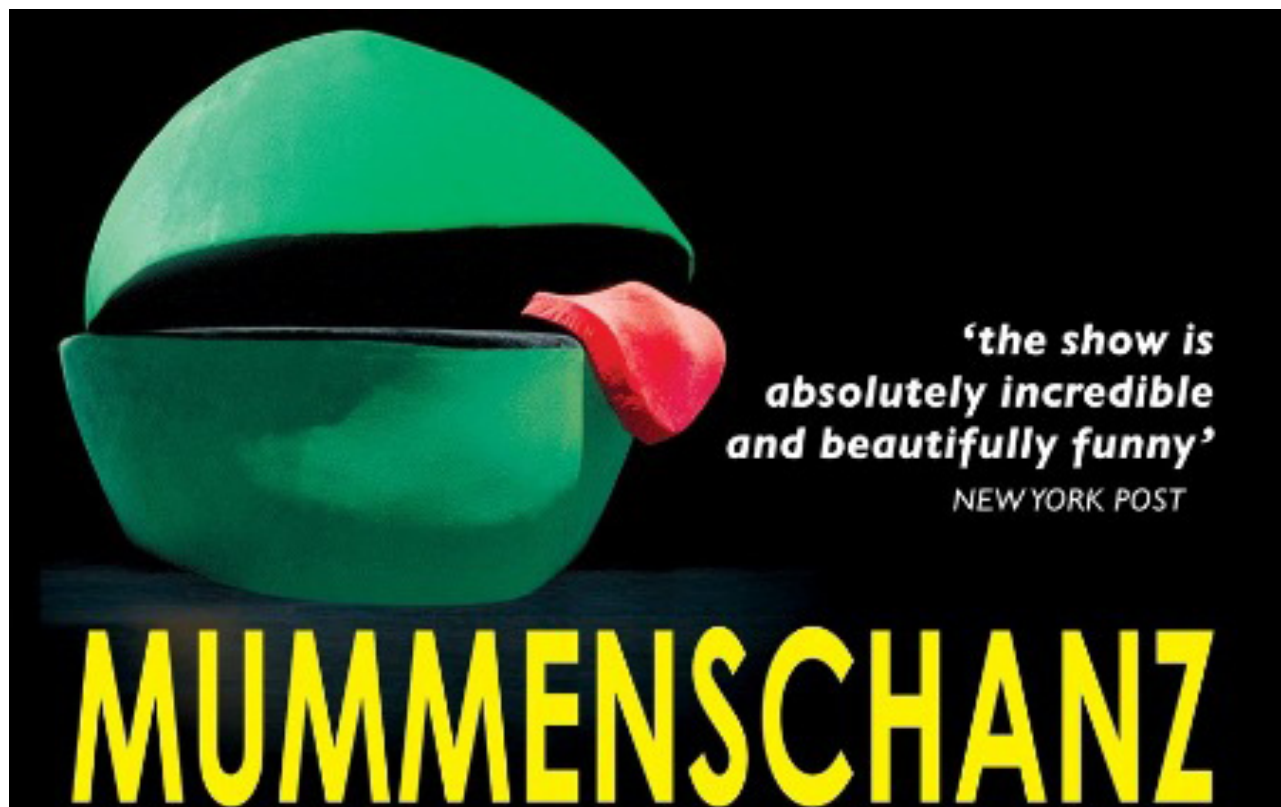# *FirstWorks* Arts Learning

Presents Mummenschanz

Switzerland's Magical Theatre of Illusion

For a special student performance/demonstration of *40 Years*, a retrospective celebrating the troupe's 40th anniversary.

January 22, 2015
10:00 am @ The Vets
1 Avenue of the Arts
Providence, RI 02903

Curricula Guide

'the show is absolutely incredible and beautifully funny'

NEW YORK POST

MUMMENSCHANZ

About FirstWorks Arts Learning

FirstWorks connects world-class artists with local schools, libraries and neighborhoods to enrich the lives of youth in Rhode Island's most economically disadvantaged areas. Our focus is engagement through arts-education and arts-creation. In particular, FirstWorks helps K-12 students build connections between art, their academic subjects, and their lives, meeting grade-level standards and modeling pathways to the future through exposure to cultural firsts. We have built deep, ongoing relationships with schools in some of Rhode Island's neediest districts, filling in the gap left from severe cuts to state public education.

"FirstWorks is clearly becoming a cultural beacon in its community and state. It's very exciting to see how they've mobilized a community." - National Endowment for the Arts

Along with electrifying performances, we develop programs with leading artists that reach deep into the community, inviting the public to engage in conversations about art and culture.

Through school-based Arts Learning, we also enable K-12 youth to interact directly with some of the most inventive, creative minds of our time. Along with our standards-aligned arts curriculum, FirstWorks bolsters student achievement and broadens career possibilities.

Please visit us online at www.first-works.org for further information about Arts Learning programming and season offerings.

This Curricula Guide is meant to prepare students for their visit to The Vets on Thursday, January 22, 2015 for a special student performance/demonstration given by Mummenschanz. It borrows heavily from a study guide prepared by the University of California at Berkeley for their Cal Performances SchoolTime program for a similar student performance in 2010 of Mummenschanz's performance of *3 x 11*. We are extremely grateful to have that guide as a resource as well as updated information from the troupe themselves.

2 Snapshot

Questions to Think About During the Performance

- What kind of theater did Mummenschanz's founders hope to create?
- How do Mummenschanz's characters communicate without using speech?
- What character types are seen in Commedia Dell'Arte? In mime?
- What makes Switzerland unique?

What You'll See

You will attend a FirstWorks Arts Learning performance by Mummenschanz, a theater company from Switzerland. Mummenschanz will perform selections from *40 Years*, a retrospective of the company's 42 years of performing. Using everyday objects like tubes, boxes and even toilet paper, Mummenschanz creates fantastical characters who say a lot without speaking.

About the Artists

Mummenschanz was formed in 1972 when Swiss performers Bernie Schürch and Andres Bossard joined with American-born Floriana Frassetto. Even though each artist had a different background, they shared a common goal to create a theater style that would appeal to people everywhere because it would use movement, and not language, to express itself. Mummenschanz's popularity grew during the 1970s and 1980s as they toured all over the world, even performing for three years on Broadway. In 1992, Mummenschanz had a great loss when one of its founders, Andres Bossard, died. In time, new members joined the company and today Mummenschanz continues to make worldwide audiences smile and wonder.

Commedia dell'Arte characters

Marcel Marceau as Bip

Buster Keaton

About the Art Form

The founders of Mummenschanz trained in mime, a style of theater that uses movement instead of words. Mime began in ancient Greece. It is characterized by actors who perform everyday scenes with large gestures (a gesture is movement that shows an idea or emotion.)

By the 1500s, an Italian theater style called Commedia dell'Arte used mime in comedic performances that poked fun at different types of people. Commedia dell'Arte's characters (called Zanni) were often silly old men, servants playing tricks on their employers, cowardly military officers and young lovers.

Through the next years, other mime characters developed, such as the dreamily unaware Pierrot, whose face is painted white. Marcel Marceau's creation, Bip, like Perriot, is another recognizable mime character. Bip wears a top hat with a flower sticking out and a short jacket. Marceau was influenced by silent film stars Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, and like their characters, bad luck seems to follow Bip everywhere.

About Switzerland

Geography

Switzerland is a small mountainous country in central Europe bordered by France, Italy, Austria, Germany and Liechtenstein. Most of the population lives in the plateau (level land) between the high Alps in the south and the Jura mountains in the north. The Swiss Alps are high, snow-covered mountains, and Switzerland's most famous peak is the Matterhorn which is 14,780 feet tall.

History

Switzerland was formed in 1291 as a union of three states and became an independent country in 1815. Because the constitution does not allow troops to serve in foreign wars, the country has stayed neutral (never takes sides) even during both world wars.

People and Culture

Switzerland has a population of around 7,446,000 people and is one of the world's wealthiest countries. The Swiss are well known for their watches and clocks. There is no single official language in Switzerland. People speak one of several languages including Swiss German, French, and Italian.
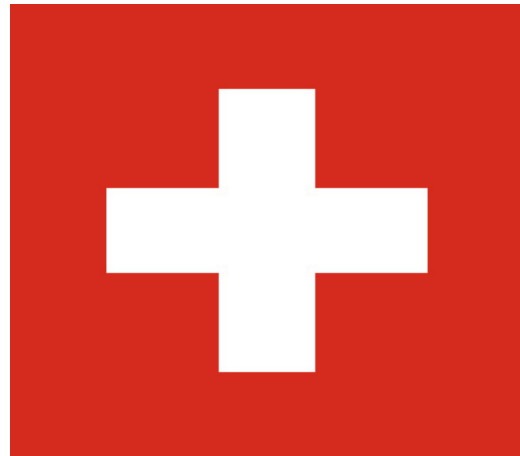
3   What is Mime?

The founders of Mummenschanz all trained in mime and based their form of visual the-
ater on mime's expressive movement and gesture without speech. The specificity of action
grounded in mime is what allows Mummenschanz to create distinct, emotional characters
from even the most abstract of objects.

The History of Mime

Mime is considered one of the earliest mediums of self-expression. Before there was spo-
ken language, humans used mime to communicate. When the spoken language evolved,
mime became a form of entertainment which developed into a true theatrical form in
ancient Greece.

Ancient Greeks and Romans

As an art form, mime's roots go back to the Theater of Dionysus in Athens. There, per-
formers enacted everyday scenes with the help of elaborate gestures. The principle mimes
were known as ethologues, and the scenes they performed were meant to teach moral les-
sons. Masked actors performed outdoors, in daylight, before audiences of 10,000 or more
at festivals in honor of Dionysus, the god of theater. The most elaborate form of mime,
known as hypothesis, was performed by companies of actors, who would often concen-
trate more on the development of their characters, than the plot itself. Often one actor
would play the part of several individuals in the production.

When the Romans conquered Greece, they brought the Greek art of mime back to Italy
and set about making it their own. The art form enjoyed much success and growth un-
der Emperor Augustus of Rome. But after the fall of the Roman empire, the Christian
church frowned on the bawdiness and indecency associated with mime. The church closed
down the theaters and ex-communicated the performers. Despite this, mime survived and
in later years, when the Church began to relax its attitude, religious-themed mystery and
morality plays began to appear, many performed in mime.

Commedia dell' Arte

Performers continued to entertain with mime through the Middle Ages. The form reached its height in sixteenth century Italy in the form of Commedia dell'Arte, which originated in the market places of the Italian streets in the early 1500's. Street performers wore masks with exaggerated comical features to draw attention to their acrobatic and comedic performances. The stock characters they created – foolish old men, devious servants, military officers full of false bravado, pompous learned men and lovers, became affectionately known as Zanni. By 1550, Commedia dell'Arte had become a firmly established genre.

Commedia's performances were accessible to all social classes and the subject matter was always contemporary. With masks concealing their identity, performers could ridicule any aspect of society and its institutions. Ironically, the more a troupe's performances displeased authorities, the more popular and successful it became.

Even though troupes travelled away from their homeland, language was no barrier. Skillful mime and Zanni antics conveyed the story lines to audiences throughout Europe. Soon, performers from other countries began to imitate the Zanni style. In 1576, a company of Italian players led by Flamino Scala went to France, where the art of mime became immensely popular. Many of commedia's traditional figures, such as Harlequin (a stock comic character recognized by his diamond-patterned, multi colored tights), became familiar at this time.

Modern Mime

Almost two and a half centuries later, around 1811 in Paris, Jean Gaspard Batiste Deburau, began converting the more slapstick form of mime, to the art form that we recognize as mime today. Deburau was a master of his art, and was responsible for creating the lovesick Pierrot, the eternal seeker.

Mime received new impetus after the First World War from mime master Jacques Copeau. Etienne Decroux, Copeau' pupil, took these beginnings a stage further, and together with his own pupil Jean-Louis Barrault, developed the first elements of modern mime. Barrault later went his own way, to create the first true mimodramas.

After the Second World War, Marcel Marceau, also a pupil of Decroux, created his own special character, known as 'Bip'. Now an iconic mime image, Bip, wore a top hat with the flower sticking out, and a short jacket. A down-trodden character, Bip shares similarities to Pierrot, who despite brief triumphs, always ends up at the bottom of the ladder.

Influenced by silent film stars like Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Keaton, Marceau was the architect of a totally new style and tradition, the true creator and master of modern mime.

Two Types of Mime

In current times, the major types of mime performed are literal mime, abstract mime, or a combination of both. Literal mime is primarily used for comedy and story-theater and usually tells a humorous story through a main character who encounters a conflict.

Abstract mime is used to generate feelings, thoughts and images from a serious topic or issue. Normally there is no plot or central character, so instead of watching a narrative unfold through literal actions, audiences engage in a more intuitive experience.

Charlie Chaplin

Marcel Marceau as Bip

4 Surrealism: A Mummenschanz Influence

Surrealism– a word that means "beyond what is tangible or real" – was an influential artistic movement during the early 20th century. It took its inspiration from the earlier Dadaist movement, which developed in Zurich, Switzerland around 1915 as a reaction to World War I. Dada, an artistic and literary movement embraced the absurd, encouraged deliberate irrationality and rejected traditional artistic values. Dadaists explored the element of chance, randomness and coincidence in art.

Although Dada was a precursor of Surrealism and some Dada artists became Surrealists, Surrealism emphasized more positive artistic expression. Surrealist artists rejected everyday reality and logic in order to find a direct channel to the unconscious through their work. This approach, strongly influenced by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's emphasis on dreams and fantasies, delighted many, but also shocked and disturbed people. In literature, Surrealism flourished primarily in France in the writings of poets Paul Eluard and André Breton and in the large body of work produced by writer, filmmaker and artist Jean Cocteau.

Surrealist visual art was popular in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s. Spanish painter Salvador Dali, French painter Yves Tanguy and Russian painter Marc Chagall used strange, haunting and sometimes poetic or supernatural symbols and figures from dreams to paint the vivid landscapes of their imaginations. German artist Max Ernst and Belgian artist Rene Magritte painted realistic objects and people relating in bizarre and incongruous ways. Spanish artist Joan Miro is perhaps the most playful of all the Surrealists. His vivid paintings reflect a child-like colorful and illogical world.

The creatively original, visually-striking, humorous and absurdist work of Mummenschanz has its roots in the Surrealist movement. The company brings to the stage the strange and beautiful world of dreams and the fantastic life of the imagination, which so many Surrealist artists invoked in art and literature.
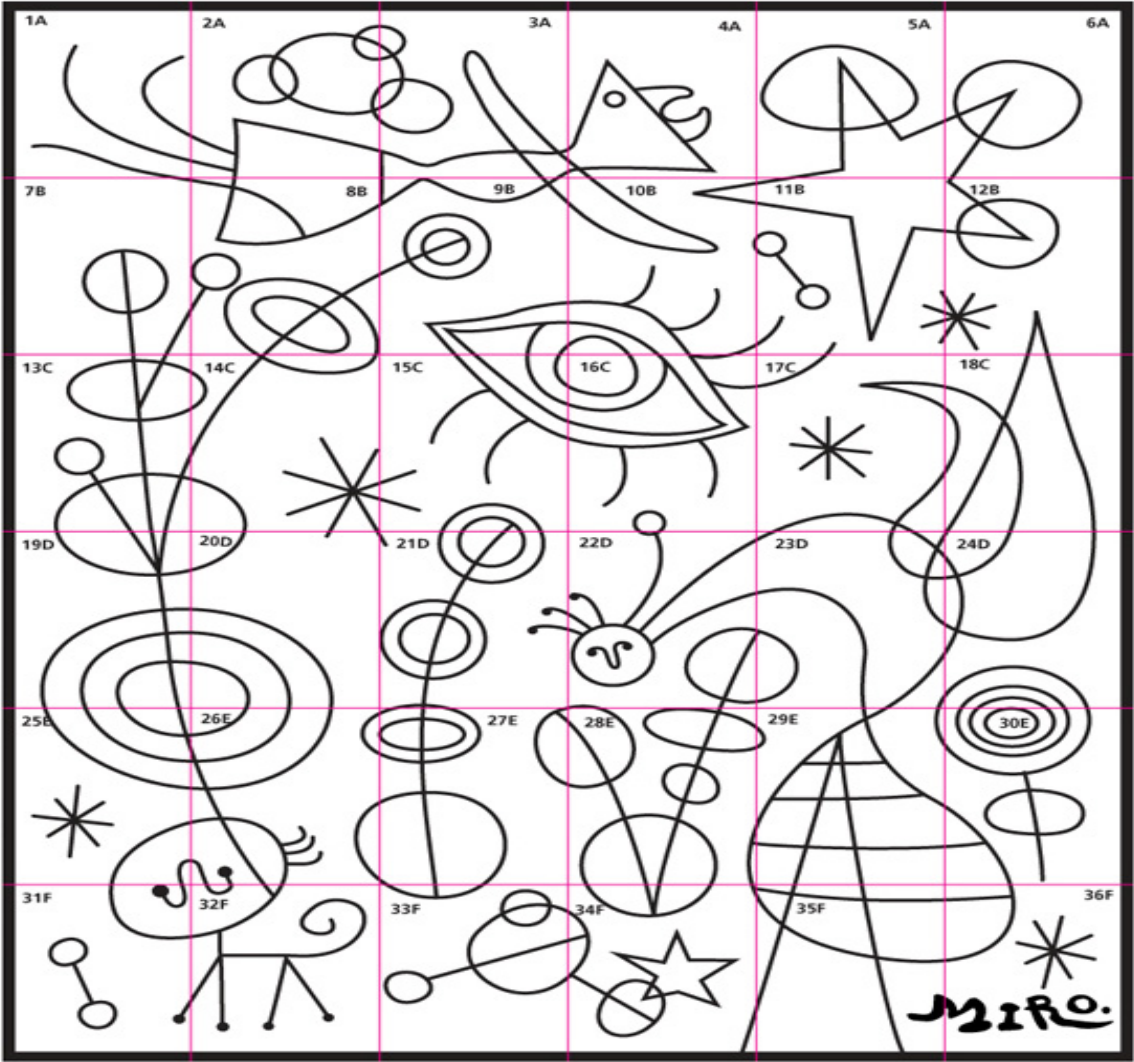
The Son of Man by Renee Magritte

private collection

The Circus Rider by Marc Chagall

Art Institute of Chicago collection

4a Joan Miro Coloring Page!

5 Let's Learn about Switzerland!

Geography

A land-locked country in central Europe, Switzerland is bounded by France on the west, Germany to the north, Austria and Lichtenstein on the east, and Italy to the south. Its 15,943 square miles is about the size of Massachusetts and New Jersey put together. The breathtaking Swiss Alps cover the southern 60% of the country with the Matterhorn (14,780 ft.) as the highest peak. In the northwest, the Jura Mountains extend into France. The remainder of the country is a hilly plateau, laced with lakes and stretching from south of Geneva to north of Zürich.

Two-thirds of the Swiss live in the area around the Italian border. Switzerland's climate varies from hot summers and mild winters in the Southern valleys and lake areas, to cold winters with heavy snowfall and warm summers elsewhere.

History

Switzerland was formed in 1291 when a union of three states became an independent country in 1815. The constitution, adopted in 1848, does not allow for troops to be sent to serve in foreign wars. The country has remained neutral in conflicts around the world, including both world wars. Switzerland did not become a member of the United Nations until 2002, and is not a member of the European Union.

Languages and Cultures

The Swiss are a diverse people, comprising of four separate linguistic and ethnic groups: German, French, Italian and Romansh. These groups contribute four different but over-lapping cultural influences. About 70% of the Swiss speak Swiss German, known as Schwyzerdutsch. French is the second most prominent language (20%). Approximately 9% of the Swiss speak Italian, while 1% speaks Romansh, the language of old Helvetia. (Switzerland was once the Roman province of Helvetia.)

Most Swiss speak two and often three of the country's languages. Additionally, many districts and villages have a local dialect. Children learn a second language early in their schooling. Signs are routinely printed in three languages.

The People

The population of Switzerland is about 7,284,000, with most people living in the northern and western urban centers. The Swiss are serious workers. Their level of employment and cost of living are high. In 1997, 89% of all men and 69% of all women between the ages of 15 and 64 worked, primarily in manufacturing, service industries, and health and social services. They also enjoy sports, cultural activities, and travel. Noted for their neatness, the Swiss are the world leaders in recycling.

Given the nation's variety of languages, dialects, and cultures, every Swiss person belongs to some minority. Thus people, in general, have an inherent tolerance of different lifestyles and recognize the right of each person to live as he or she chooses. History, geography, and perhaps the magnificent landscape, have made the Swiss fiercely patriotic.

Economy

Switzerland is one of the world's wealthiest countries. It is highly industrialized with plentiful hydro-electric power. Tourism and banking are major industries. Chief exports are machinery, electronics, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, clocks, watches, and precision instruments. Chocolate and cheese are also famous products. The monetary unit is the Swiss franc.

Arts, Cultural Life, and Folk Lore

There are internationally known art collections in Basel and Winterthur as well as notable art museums in Zurich, Bern, and Geneva. The Swiss National Museum in Zurich and historical and local museums throughout the country offer valuable exhibits on art, history, and archaeology. Roman ruins, churches, castles, and cities provide superb examples of architecture from earlier eras. Most cities have a resident orchestra and many also have a theater and/or opera house.

Festivals and traditional ceremonies are celebrated with enthusiasm. Several, surviving from pagan times, focus on the end of winter while others signal the beginning of Lent. Basel's carnival or Fasnacht, begins on the Monday after Ash Wednesday, features colorfully costumed revelers parading through the old town accompanied by fife and drum music.

Contests involving ancient games are also popular, as are yodeling events and celebrations marking when cows go to and return from their summer pasturage.

Additional Resources:

Mummenschanz web site: http://www.mummenschanz.com/

Video Clips of Mummenschanz http://www.mummenschanz.com/en/home

http://www.pinterest.com/pin/150870656242517135/

Books:

Mummenschanz by Michel Bührer 128 pages with more than 150 pictures.

ISBN 3-907506

Mummenschanz 1972 - 1997 by Flor Garduño & Guyette Lyr 120 pages with 80 photos

ISBN 3-907506-95-0

DVDs:

The Story of Mummenschanz - Told by Floriana Frassetto and Bernie Schurch.

ISBN 3-85612-139-6

The Musicians of Silence / Les musiciens du silence Film by Kamal Musale. © 2001 by
Mummenschanz. ISBN 3-907506

Mummenschanz 1972 – 2000 A portrait on Mummenschanz by Magdalena Kauz.

© 2000 by Mummenschanz & Credit Suisse ISBN 3-907506-97-4

Performers you might also be interested in:

Pilobolus http://www.pilobolus.com/

Dance company renowned for its imaginative and athletic exploration of
creative collaboration.

Lunatique Fantastique http://www.lunfan.com/ Found object puppetry performances.

Children's Books:

Harvey, The Child Mime by Loryn Brantz ISBN-10: 0982220588

http://harveymimes.com/

Bip in a Book by Marcel Marceau and Bruce Goldstone ISBN-10: 1584791306

Marcel Marceau: Master of Mime by Gloria Spielman and Manon Gauthier

ISBN-10: 0761339620

Websites:

Keith Haring Kids - Morphs http://www.haringkids.com/master_act_color. htm

Violet Juno: www.violetjuno.com.

Big Nazo: www.bignazo.com

9 Glossary

Abstract: having no reference to material objects or specific examples. In art: to express ideas using shapes, sizes, colors and movements

Absurd: contrary to all reason or common sense, laughably foolish or fake

Acrobat: a skilled performer of gymnastic feats, such as walking on a tightrope or swinging on a trapeze

Bawdiness: inappropriate or obscene references used in a comedic way

Character: a person represented in a theater piece or story

Comedy: a type of light and funny play that usually has a happy ending

Dadaist movement: an artistic movement of the early 20th century in Europe and the US, founded on principles of irrationality, incongruity, and irreverence towards traditional art

Ex-communicated: removed from membership or participation in the group

Gesture: a movement or position of the hand, arm, body, head, or face that expresses an idea, opinion or emotion

Icon: a person or thing regarded as a symbol of a belief, nation, community, or cultural movement

Intuitive: knowing naturally without relying on facts or any reasoning process

Language: spoken, written or gestural communication common to a people who are of the same community or nation

Literal: true to fact; not exaggerated; actual or factual

Mime: the art or technique of portraying a character, mood, idea, or narration by gestures and bodily movements

Mimodramas: drama completely performed in mime

Morality play: a type of drama written between the 14th and 16th centuries concerned with the conflict between personified virtues and vices

Mystery play: a medieval dramatic form based on a Biblical story, usually dealing with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ

Narrative: a story or account of events or experiences, whether true or fictitious

Nonverbal: not using words or sounds

Plot: the main story of a literary or dramatic work

Production: work created as a result of literary or artistic effort

Retrospective: a series of showings or performances representing the work of an artist or performer over a career

Self-Expression: the expression of one's own personality, feelings, etc, as in painting, poetry, or other creative activity

Spectacle: a public display or performance

Surreal: having the disorienting, unreal quality of a dream

Transformative: to change in condition, nature, or character

Mummenschanz enjoys receiving drawings from children inspired by their performances. Below is a Swiss student's drawing and impressions of the experience.
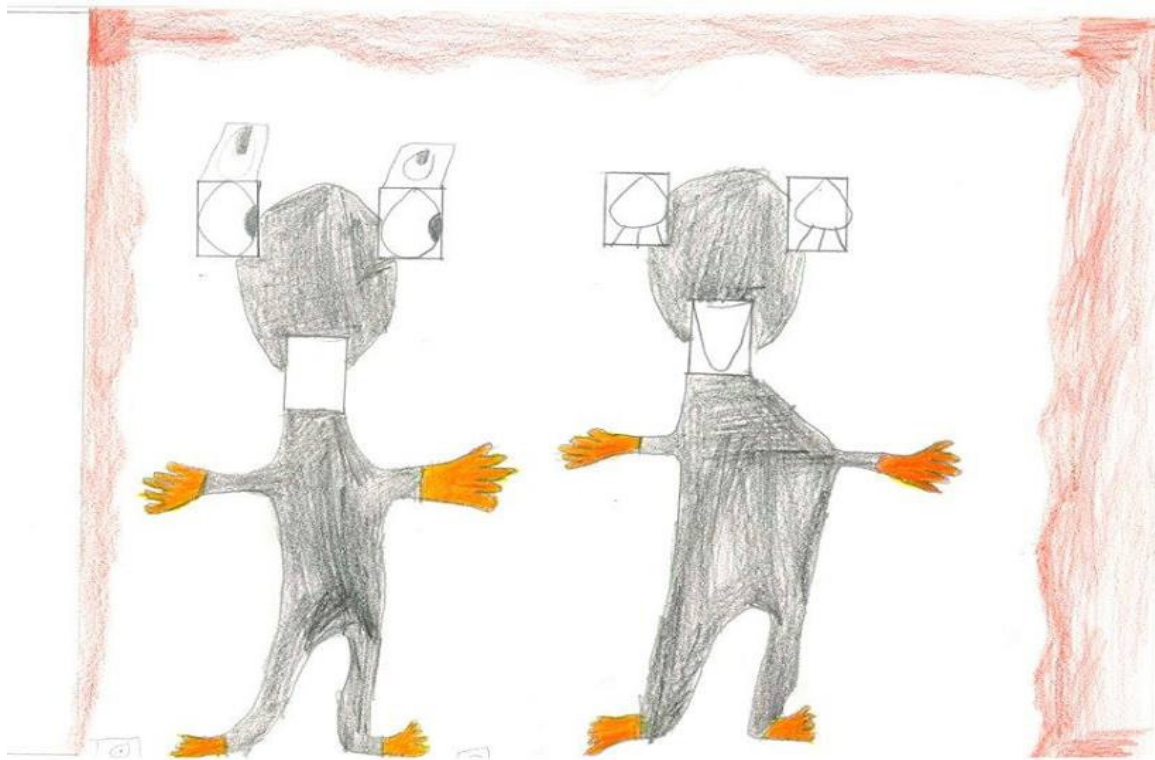
Liebe Mummenschanz

Es war lustig. Der grosse Tropfen war sehr spannend.

Ich habe der Drachen mit die Schlangen nicht verstanden.

Können sie mehr machen mie die weisse Hände.

Die Wurm war tol weil das Ball zu dem Leute gegangen hat.

Freundliche Grüsse, Sarthak.

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Fax 401.421.4282
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www.first-works.org