



Strand: Drama  
Level: Grade 5  
Content: 45 minute broadcast + hands-on activities

## LIVE Arts: Verbatim Theater with Joel Bernbaum

Joel Bernbaum is a theatre artist and journalist. He specializes in “verbatim theatre” - making plays out of interviews. Students will be introduced to different ways of creating art with interview material, including script writing and movement pieces. Joel will teach students about the art of asking engaging questions, and lead them through an interviewing exercise. The main objectives are to learn how to generate interesting interviews and how to use the material to create short theatre pieces.

\*The **Teacher-Guided Post-Broadcast Activity** on pages 3-4 will give students the opportunity to apply what they have learned during the broadcast.

### About the Artist

Joel is an actor, director, educator, journalist, playwright, and the founding artistic director of Sum Theatre. He is a graduate of Carleton University and the Canadian College of Performing Arts, where his Masters’ thesis on Verbatim Theatre’s relationship to Journalism passed with high distinction. As an actor, Joel has performed across Canada with companies including The Belfry Theatre, Carousel Theatre, Puente Theatre and Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan. Joel toured Italy and Switzerland with ACLE Theatrino and worked for the Usuki Board of Education in Japan using drama to teach English. Three of Joel’s plays have been professionally produced: *Home Is A Beautiful Word* at the Belfry Theatre (Victoria BC), *Operation Big Rock* at Dancing Sky Theatre (Meacham SK) and *My Rabbi* (co-created with Kayvon Kelly) at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival/Canadian tour. Joel was selected as the 2015-2016 Urjo Kareda Outstanding Emerging Artist in Residence at Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, the first person from Saskatchewan to receive this honour.

### **Curriculum Aims & Goals**

#### **Creative/Productive:**

Students will learn how to create a short scene from material gathered during interviews. They will use symbolic representations/ gestures and, optionally, spoken words.

#### **Critical/Responsive:**

Students will learn how to craft effective interview questions and how the use of verbatim material differs from acting out a traditional script.

#### **Cultural/Historical:**

Students will learn about the origin and practice of verbatim theatre.

**Curriculum Outcomes:** [www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca](http://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca)

**CP5.4**

Create drama using pop culture as inspiration (e.g., pop musicians and movie stars, street theatre, or stories and myths from pop culture).

**CR5.2**

Respond critically and creatively to a variety of pop culture expressions.

## **Broadcast Program (45 min)**

### **Artist Bio**

### **Activity 1** Warm-up

### **Activity 2** Asking questions

### **Activity 3** Asking better questions!

### **Presentation** Verbatim theater mini-history

### **Activity 4** Symbolic representations/ gestures

### **Activity 5** Symbolic representation/ gesture monologues

### **Artist Demonstration** How to work with verbatim material

### **Questions/ Wrap Up**

If you are watching from a distance text questions to 306.291.7355 or email [liveartsaskatchewan@gmail.com](mailto:liveartsaskatchewan@gmail.com) during the presentations or activities and we will try to answer them on air!!!

### **Materials/ Resources needed during broadcast**

- Each student will need a pen or pencil and a few sheets of paper.

## **Teacher Guided Post-Broadcast Activity: Collaborative Scene**

OVERVIEW: The post-broadcast activity has two parts. In the first part, students will write questions, conduct an interview, and take notes. In the second part, students will combine raw material into a short scene.

Joel has created sample questions in line with the following Arts Education Curriculum Outcomes for each grade.

### **Materials/ Resources for Post-Broadcast Activities**

- Chalkboard or whiteboard
- Pencil, paper
- Space to move around and act out scenes

Grade 5: [CP5.4](#)

Create drama using pop culture as inspiration (e.g., pop musicians and movie stars, street theatre, or stories and myths from pop culture).

### **Part 1: Develop Questions and Conduct Interviews (60 minutes)**

1. During the broadcast, Joel demonstrated how to ask open-ended questions. Lead a group discussion with your class to review.  
For example;
  - using good question words: how, why, describe, finish the sentence
  - staying open ended
  - picking a theme
2. Choose a theme and discuss with your class. We recommend using the conceptual focus for grade 5 (Pop Culture). With the class, brainstorm a list of questions that students can refer to while conducting interviews. Write them on the board or, if students will be conducting interviews outside the classroom, ask them to write out the list of questions on paper.

Sample questions:

Being a celebrity is ...?

If you were a celebrity what would you want to be famous for...?

If you were a celebrity, how would you spend your money?

3. Do interviews in pairs OR interview a family member or someone else outside of the school setting. Students should take thorough notes- the results of the interview will be used as the basis for the next activity.

### **Part 2: Use interview material to create a short scene (60 minutes)**

1. As a class, briefly discuss the interview process. What worked, what did not? If students were to do it over again, what would they change?
2. During the broadcast, Joel demonstrated how he works with verbatim material using gestures and transcripts. Review this process with the students. For example:
  - What are symbolic representations/ gestures?
  - Did Joel use all of the interview material, or did he pick certain parts to use?
  - How did Joel re-arrange portions of the interviews? (using cue cards)
3. Work with students to combine the material collected during their interviews into a short scene. Students may work in small groups to create several scenes or as a class to create one single scene. Have students:
  - a) Experiment jamming with symbolic representations/gestures to the different words and phrases they transcribed.
  - b) Select 5 symbolic representations/gestures
  - c) Decide as a group on the order of the symbolic representations/ gestures

- d) Discover transitions between the gestures
- e) Decide if they would like to add spoken words to the gestures (bits of transcribed interviews)
- f) If using spoken words, remember that there is no “acting” needed. These are real people’s lines, not characters. Ask the students to respect the exact words from their notes.

4. Rehearse the scene(s).

5. If working in small groups, ask each group to perform their scene in front of the class. If working as one large group, you may want to perform the scene for another class or at an assembly.