

Mo`olelo Performing Arts  
Company Presents  
A Kaotic Good Production

# self (the remix)

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## Teacher Study Guide

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February 2010

Mo`olelo Performing Arts  
Company  
www.moolelo.net  
619-342-7395  
[tickets@moolelo.net](mailto:tickets@moolelo.net)

Financial support for this project is  
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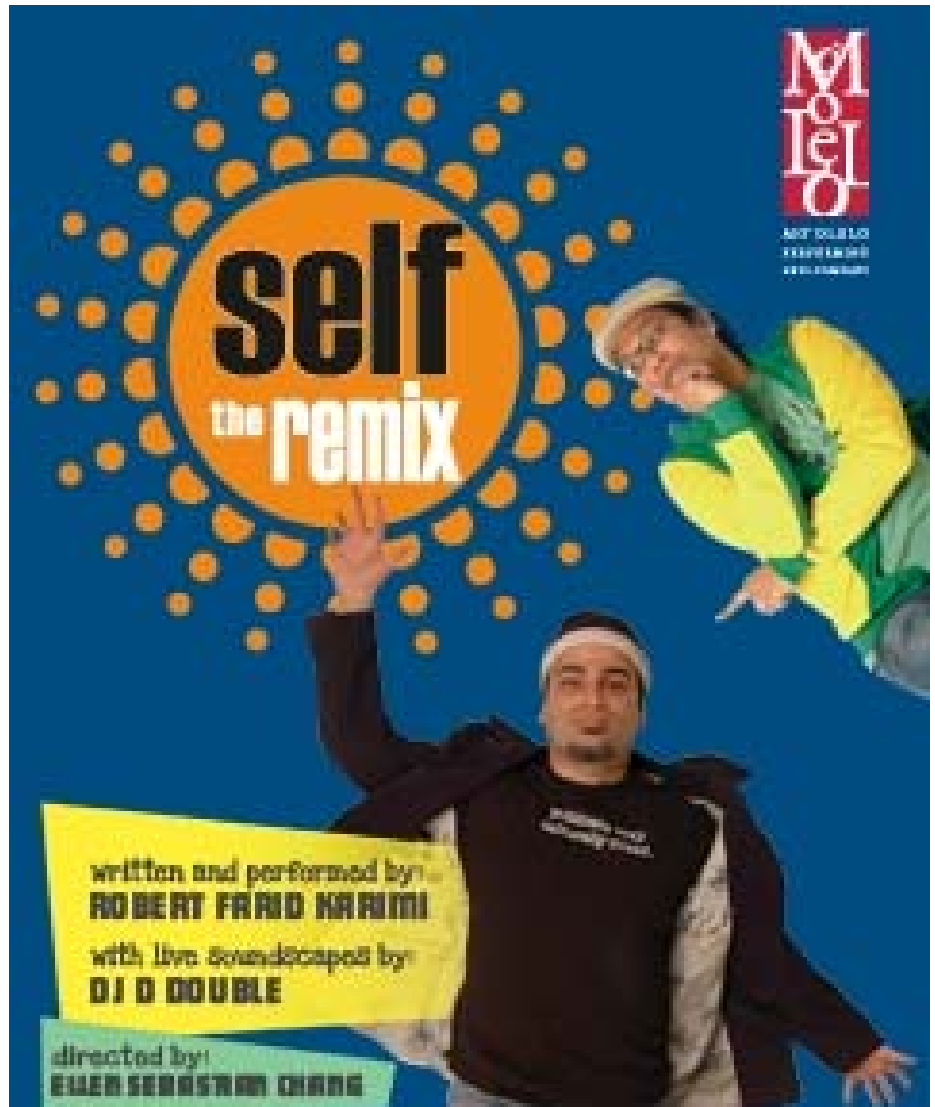
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### *What is Robertito to do?*

He is half-Iranian and half-Guatemalan growing up in Union City, California at a time when the shadow of the Iranian Hostage Crises looms large. In *self (the remix)*, acclaimed playwright and performer Robert Farid Karimi, accompanied by a soundscape created by DJ D Double, tells a "remixed" autobiographical tale of a boy struggling to learn about manhood, nationhood, and neighborhood.

A spoken word, hip hop play with one man, one DJ and 26 characters.

*The bottom line is [karimi] has discovered a powerful, distinctive voice; all he needs now is an audience.*

-Nick Green, Chicago Reader

GREENING MO`OLELO: As part of Mo`olelo Performing Arts Company's Greening Initiative, this study guide is printed on recycled paper (30% post-consumer content).

## The Artistic Team

Writer & Performer.....Robert Farid Karimi  
Sound Design.....Karimi/DJ D Double  
Director/Lighting Design.....Ellen Sebastian Chang  
Stage Manager/Lighting Design.....Kathy Maxwell  
Costume Design/Prod. Director.....Erin Lavelle  
Choreographer.....Leah Nelson/Karimi/DJ  
Technical Director.....Chris Borreson  
Artistic Director, Mo`olelo.....Seema Sueko\*

*\*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.*



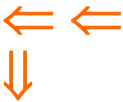
## Writer & Performer: Robert Farid Karimi

Robert Karimi is an educator, performance artist, cook, and interdisciplinary playwright from the San Francisco Bay Area. He has been teaching for over 15 years in school, universities and community centers, making curriculum for poetry, cooking classes, and theater. He has been performing over 20 years acting plays and facilitating happenings and documentary theater projects. His cooking performances have fed audiences across the Americas, and his work has been recorded and published internationally in *Callaloo*, *Latino Literature Today*, *Raza Spoken Here 2*, and most recently featured in *Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip Hop*, edited by Jeff Chang.

Karimi has collaborated with many artists including Guillermo Gomez Peña and Laurie Carlos; projects include *Shaving Time*, *McMuertos* and *Reverend of the DiscoChurch*. Solo works include: *Farid Mercury*, *The Cooking Show*, & *the Approximate Value of a Foot Bubbler*.

Karimi is a UCLA graduate, and has studied improv and clowning with Second City, 500 Clown, and Plasticene Physical Theatre. A National Poetry Slam champion & a Def Poetry Jam performer, Karimi was recently honored as a 2009 Creative Capital recipient to create *The Cooking Show con Karimi y Comrades: Diabetes of Democracy*.

Robert also does a comedy cooking show called *The Cooking Show con Karimi y Comrades* and a show called *Farid Mercury*, a show about Freddie Mercury and Persian masculinity. To learn more about Robert or DJ D Double, go to [Kaotic Good.com](http://KaoticGood.com). Or send him questions about the show or your thoughts about the show at [info@kaoticgood.com](mailto:info@kaoticgood.com).

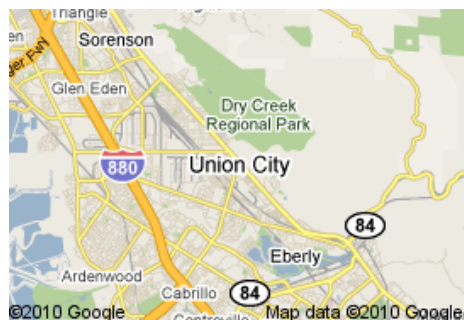


## Soundscape: DJ D Double

Violator All-Star DJ D Double a.k.a. Dave Dimaano is a household name for Chicago clubgoers. Sought out for his eclectic blend of music ranging from underground hip-hop to classic soul, 80's to Deep House, D Double has rocked every major city within the U.S. from LA to NYC. With over 20 years as a DJ, he has taken his passion nationally, launching for acts such as Camp Lo, Common, De La Soul, The Roots, Slum Village, Lupe Fiasco and Wu Tang Clan. He has also has been a premiere DJ in the Asian American Spoken Word Scene, which led to him co-sound designing and touring with Robert Farid Karimi in *Self (the remix)* and *Farid Mercury*. Now based in Las Vegas, D Double holds weekly residencies and continues to tour the U.S. and overseas. He is the Resident DJ for Kaotic Good Productions.

# Union City, California ⇒ where Guatemala met Iran

Much of *self (the remix)* takes place in Union City, California, where the writer's Guatemalan mother met his Iranian father.



Union City, California, is located 23 miles southwest of Oakland, CA in the San Francisco Bay Area. Over 60% of the population is either Filipina/o or Latina/o. Its first mayor, Tom Kitayama, was the first Japanese American to hold public office in California.



The Country of Guatemala is located in Central America and shares borders with Mexico, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras.



The Country of Iran is located in the Middle East on the Persian Gulf and shares borders with Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

## The Iran Hostage Crisis: 1979 - 1981

The Iran Hostage Crisis plays a significant role in *self (the remix)*, shaping how the writer was perceived by others in his youth and how he perceived himself. As you watch the play, consider how the political or national shapes the personal.

source: Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran\\_hostage\\_crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran_hostage_crisis)

The Iran hostage crisis was a diplomatic crisis between Iran and the United States where 53 Americans were held hostage for 444 days from November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981, after a group of Islamist students and militants took over the American Embassy in support of the Iranian Revolution. On November 4, 1979, as thousands of Iranian demonstrators filed past the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, a smaller group of radical students broke through the Embassy gates and took American Embassy employees captive. The students were angered by President Jimmy Carter's decision to allow Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi to enter the United States to receive medical treatment.

The episode reached a climax when, after failed attempts to negotiate a release, the United States military attempted a rescue operation, Operation Eagle Claw, on April 24, 1980, which resulted in a failed mission, the destruction of two aircraft and the deaths of eight American servicemen and one Iranian civilian. It ended with the signing of the Algiers Accords in Algeria on January 19, 1981. The hostages were formally released into United States custody the following day, just minutes after the new American president Ronald Reagan was sworn in.

The crisis has been described as an entanglement of "vengeance and mutual incomprehension". In Iran, despite the freezing of all Iranian assets held in the United States (Executive Order 12170), the hostage taking was widely seen as a blow against the U.S. and its influence in Iran, its perceived attempts to undermine the Iranian Revolution, and its long-standing support of the recently overthrown government of the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The Shah had been restored to power in a 1953 coup against a democratically elected nationalist Iranian government organized by the CIA at the American Embassy and had recently been allowed into the United States for medical treatment. In the United States, the hostage taking was regarded as an outrage, violating a centuries-old principle of international law granting diplomats immunity from arrest and diplomatic compounds sovereignty in their embassies.

## Timeline: Iran

### A chronology of contemporary events from The Shah to Ahmadinejad

source: BBC News: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/806268.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/806268.stm)

- 1923** - Reza Khan becomes prime minister.
- 1925** December - Parliament votes to make Reza Khan ruler.
- 1926** April - Reza Khan crowned Reza Shah Pahlavi.  
Mohammad Reza, the Shah's eldest son, is proclaimed Crown Prince.
- 1935** - Formerly known as Persia, Iran is adopted as the country's official name.
- 1941** - The Shah's pro-Axis allegiance in World War II leads to the Anglo-Russian occupation of Iran and the deposition of the Shah in favour of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.
- 1950** - Ali Razmara becomes prime minister and is assassinated less than nine months later. He is succeeded by the nationalist, Mohammad Mossadeq.
- 1951** April - Parliament votes to nationalise the oil industry, which is dominated by the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Britain imposes an embargo and a blockade, halting oil exports and hitting the economy. A power struggle between the Shah and Mossadeq ensues and the Shah flees the country in August 1953.
- 1953** August - Mossadeq is overthrown in a coup engineered by the British and American intelligence services. General Fazlollah Zahedi is proclaimed as prime minister and the Shah returns.
- 1963** January - The Shah embarks on a campaign to modernise and westernise the country. He launches the 'White Revolution', a programme of land reform and social and economic modernisation. During the late 1960's the Shah became increasingly dependent on the secret police (SAVAK) in controlling those opposition movements critical of his reforms.
- 1978** September - The Shah's policies alienate the clergy and his authoritarian rule leads to riots, strikes and mass demonstrations. Martial law is imposed.
- 1979** January - As the political situation deteriorates, the Shah and his family are forced into exile.
- 1979** 1 February - The Islamic fundamentalist, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, returns to Iran following 14 years of exile in Iraq and France for opposing the regime.
- 1979** 1 April - The Islamic Republic of Iran is proclaimed following a referendum.

*Continued...*

## Breaking down the show

### Behind the Sound Design

When Robert Karimi created the original sound design, he wanted to make something that reflected the “soundtrack of his life,” researching the music of his parents, his neighborhood in the 70s, and mining his memory for the music of his childhood. During this journey, he felt that a DJ would be the best person to play the music because of the way a DJ blends, fuses, and crossfades. Robert feels that’s how we create our identity, like a DJ plays records. We recall what song will make up the identity we have. Sometimes it’s one, sometimes many records. The show uses music from 4 decades, 8 countries, and the mix of music never the same in any city. The DJ has a new remix. Some folks call this work “**Mash-up theater.**” What do you call it?

### DJ

A DJ uses two turntables and a mixer to manipulate music to create a mood in a room. Sometimes they do it to make you dance (aka “rock a party”), other times they experiment with sounds to make new songs. What makes *self (the remix)* unique is the live DJ, who creates the soundscape in the theater, based on Karimi’s original design. There is certain terminology to describe the actions of the DJ.

### Terms

**call & response** - Some DJs do this. It’s the act of getting the audience to respond what he DJ says.

**scratch** - manipulation of a song to make noise

**fade** - raising the volume up or down

**crossfade** - transitioning between songs

**blend** - matching beats together, making seamless transitions between music

**mash-up** - taking two different songs, usually of different genres, to create new song.

### Cultural perspective of a DJ

Also, key to the show is that the DJ is Filipino. The neighborhood Robert grew up in was mixed. Most of the DJs were Filipino. The SF Bay Area has a history of Filipino DJs and some of the most accomplished DJ in the world are Filipino. Examples: Cuttin Kandi (who lives in San Diego), 5th Platoon, and Invisible Scratch Pklz. Many DJs spin records and scratch to create sounds. Others blend records well in order to get people to dance. DJ D Double spins music of all genres, and is an expert on fading and rocking parties. How do you think culture affects how a DJ would pick records or make a mix?

## Timeline: Iran

**1979** November - Islamic militants take 52 Americans hostage inside the US embassy in Tehran. They demand the extradition of the Shah, in the US at the time for medical treatment, to face trial in Iran.

**1980** January - Abolhasan Bani-Sadr is elected the first President of the Islamic Republic. His government begins work on a major nationalization programme.

**1980** July - The exiled Shah dies of cancer in Egypt.

**1980** 22 September - Start of Iran-Iraq war which lasts for eight years.

**1981** January - The American hostages are released ending 444 days in captivity.

**1981** June - Bani-Sadr is dismissed, he later flees to France.

**1985** - After the US and Soviet Union halted arms supplies, the US attempted to win the release of hostages in Lebanon by offering secret arms deals, this would later become known as the Iran-Contra affair.

**1988** July - 290 passengers and the crew of an Iran Air Airbus are mistakenly shot down by the USS Vincennes.

**1988** July - Iran accepts a ceasefire agreement with Iraq following negotiations in Geneva under the aegis of the UN.

**1989** February - Ayatollah Khomeini issues a religious edict (fatwa) ordering Muslims to kill British author, Salman Rushdie, for his novel, 'The Satanic Verses', considered blasphemous to Islam.

**1989** 3 June - Ayatollah Khomeini dies. On 4 June, President Khamene'i is appointed as new supreme leader.

**1989** August - Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani is sworn in as the new president.

**1989** November - The US releases 567 million dollars of frozen Iranian assets.

**1990** June - A major earthquake strikes Iran, killing approximately 40,000 people.

**1990** - Iran remains neutral following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

**1990** September - Iran and Iraq resume diplomatic ties.

**1995** - US imposes oil and trade sanctions over Iran's alleged sponsorship of "terrorism", seeking to acquire nuclear arms and hostility to the Middle East process. Iran denies the charges.

**1997** May - Mohammad Khatami wins the presidential election with 70% of the vote, beating the conservative ruling elite.

*Continued...*

## Breaking down the show

### Mixed Race

The Mixed Race American identity is one of the lenses through which *self (the remix)* was written. NPR ran this story on Mixed Race Americans in November 2009: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120209980>

NPR

The 2000 U.S. census was the first to give Americans the option to check more than one box for race. Nearly 7 million people declared themselves to be multiracial that year, a number that's expected to shoot up in the 2010 count. As more of the nation's population identifies itself as being of mixed race, the authors of a new book say Americans' traditional ideas of racial identity are in for a challenge.

In the book *Blended Nation*, photographer Mike Tauber and producer Pamela Singh combine portraits of mixed-race Americans with stories of living beyond the sometimes rigid notions of race. The husband-and-wife team tell host Liane Hansen they wanted to highlight the personal experiences of life between categories. "We really wanted to know what it was like for somebody who checks more than one box to exist in that realm," Tauber says.

Though Singh says she considers race to be a social construct instead of a biological one, she points out that notions of racial identity have concrete applications. "The concept of race and ethnicity and ancestry are so highly muddled," says Singh. "Yet so many of our educational, social, business and governmental policies are based on fixed racial categories."

According to U.S. Census estimates, multiracial Americans have become one of the country's fastest growing demographic groups. Nicholas Jones, chief of the U.S. Census Bureau's Racial Statistics Branch, says the number of mixed-race individuals has increased about 25 percent since the 2000 census. "These are mainly driven by births of children from interracial parent couples," he says. Researchers say that as the number of interracial marriages increases, so does the level of social acceptance and awareness about multiracialism.

It's the culmination of a trend that started centuries ago, says Alan Goodman, professor of biological anthropology and dean of faculty at Hampshire College in Massachusetts. "There were certain barriers to having individuals of different ethnic groups and cultures coming together. The first one was barriers of space. But in 1492, those barriers began to fall. Then, there were barriers of law in the United States, and those finally fell in the 1960s. "I think the real change that is taking place [is] in the way people think about themselves," Goodman says.

The results, like the images in Tauber and Singh's book, create a new portrait of America — which Jones says he expects the next census results to show.

"In 2010, that new portrait will provide information on the racial and ethnic diversity in the population, as well as the changes in the multiracial population," Jones says. "So we are excited to see what we get next year."

## Extended Remix: Questions for *self (the remix)*

©Kaotic Good Productions

### **Timeline: Iran**

**1998** September - Iran deploys thousands of troops on its border with Afghanistan after the Taleban admits killing eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Mazar-e Sharif.

**1999** July - Pro-democracy students at Tehran University demonstrate following the closure of the reformist newspaper 'Salam'. Clashes with security forces lead to six days of rioting and the arrest of more than 1,000 students.

**2000** February - Majlis elections. Liberals and supporters of Khatami wrest control of parliament from conservatives for the first time.

**2000** April - The judiciary, following the adoption of a new press law, bans the publication of 16 reformist newspapers.

**2001** June - President Khatami re-elected.

**2002** January - US President George Bush describes Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an "axis of evil", warning of the proliferation of long-range missiles being developed in these countries.

**2002** September - Russian technicians begin construction of Iran's first nuclear reactor at Bushehr despite strong objections from US.

**2003** June - Thousands attend student-led protests in Tehran against clerical establishment.

**2003** September - UN nuclear watchdog, IAEA, gives Tehran weeks to prove it is not pursuing an atomic weapons programme.

**2003** November - Iran says it is suspending its uranium enrichment programme and will allow tougher UN inspections of its nuclear facilities. IAEA concludes there is no evidence of a weapons programme.

**2004** February - Conservatives regain control of parliament in elections. Thousands of reformist candidates were disqualified by the hardline Council of Guardians before the polls.

**2004** June - Iran is rebuked by the IAEA for failing to fully cooperate with an inquiry into its nuclear activities.

**2004** November - Iran agrees to suspend most of its uranium enrichment under a deal with the EU.

**2005** June - Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Tehran's ultra-conservative mayor, wins a run-off vote in presidential elections, defeating cleric and former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

**For more Iranian history, visit BBC News:**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/806268.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/806268.stm)

From Robert Farid Karimi:

*This is not an autobiography. This is a slice of truth using real characters' names. Some events have been radically altered to protect the innocent and due to the writer's severe case of bias. Please, see your own truth in this piece. Hopefully this story will help you see the value of your own personal history and the need for your own self journey and the powers that music, politics, and environment have to influence an individual. No one people owns a culture, just like no one culture owns a person; that's why dave chapelle made the race draft. I am still undrafted.*

*Many words are not translated, and you must know what the Iranian Hostage Crisis is. If you need help, ask a neighbor, or talk to us after the show. We love to talk to the audience.*

What do you think about Robert's statements in the first paragraph?

How does music affect your vision of a show?

Which song do you relate to best? Why?

What do you know about the Iranian Hostage Crisis?

Which character do you connect to the most? Why?

What music moves you? What music in the show moved you?

If you wrote your own one person show, who would be in it, what stories would you tell, what would be the music?

What does the last line of the play mean to you?

What part of the play engaged you the most? Why?



# Suggested Lesson Plans from Robert

©Kaotic Good Productions

*As an educator, I often think of curriculum to fit with the ideas in my performances. Below are two lesson plans to work with students. The first is an in-class assignment. The second is more for homework, but can be adapted as an in-class assignment. As I tell my students, you get out what you put in. These assignments are based on their commitment to the process of writing. If they lack commitment, the fun of the assignment is lost. Remind them that they bring their own joy to any task, and I hope these assignments will spark revelations about themselves and about the world around them.*

– Robert Farid Karimi



## **I. Lyrics spark**

Students bring in lyrics of songs they like. They take them, and cut them in strips. Place a strip on the paper, and write 4 lines or more underneath each strip until they have filled both sides of the paper with lyrics and their own words. (If students are not big writers, go with only one side.) Then, take out the lyrics, and make an 8-10 line poem using what you have written. Add the song lyrics sparingly into the poem you wrote. (no more than 3 times if you can). When satisfied, read the poems out loud.

## **II. A favorite song to bring out a character in your heart**

Bring in a song that reminds you of someone you have an emotional attachment to. This must be someone you know, or have known. Then, listen to the song, and write whatever comes to the top of your head about them — stories, poems, words, your only goal is to fill the page as you listen to the song.

Next, read what you wrote on the page to yourself. Then, using what you wrote, create a monologue in their voice. Try to fill  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the page, you can add more ideas in the new draft (And continue to use the song if it helps you write.) Imagine how that song fits in the piece. Will it be played behind, while the person speaks? Or will it be sung by the character? Or something I can't even think of, only you, the genius, can conceive.

## Recommended Texts, Videos & Links

### **Book: *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi**

A French-language autobiographical graphic novel by Marjane Satrapi depicting her childhood up to her early adult years in Iran during and after the Islamic revolution. The title is a reference to the ancient capital of the Persian Empire, Persepolis

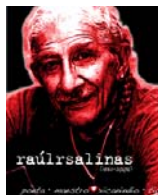
**The 2009 Iranian Election Protests** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009\\_Iranian\\_election\\_protests](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_Iranian_election_protests)

### **Shuffled - MJ**

<http://robertfkarimi.wordpress.com/>

**raulrsalinas: The Cockroach Poet** [http://www.calacapress.com/raulrsalinas/raul\\_bio.html](http://www.calacapress.com/raulrsalinas/raul_bio.html)

The character *Chicano Hipster* in *self (the remix)* is based on raulrsalinas



### **Videos of Robert Farid Karimi**

[www.kaoticgood.com/Video](http://www.kaoticgood.com/Video)



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## THEATRE ETIQUETTE

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Please remind students of theatre etiquette:

- 1) Turn off all cell phones, ipods, watch alarms, and other noisemakers when in the theater.
- 2) No foods, drinks, or gum chewing during the performance.
- 3) No recording devices of any kind, video or audio, allowed in the theater.
- 4) Any backpacks, books, purses, lunch bags, ipods, etc. that the students bring to the theater will be stored in the lobby during the performance.
- 5) No talking during the performance as a courtesy to the actors and your fellow audience members.
- 6) The theater can sometimes be cold, please remind students to bring a jacket.
- 7) Each performance is completely unique. As the audience, you can control the quality of the performance by the level of focus and respect you give the actors.

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## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT – A NOTE TO TEACHERS

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During the in-class workshops we ask teachers to assist in creating an environment that encourages creativity and learning. Please manage all discipline problems in the classroom. If a student requires further discipline outside the room, please devise a plan that does not involve you leaving the classroom at any time during the workshop. It is important that the workshop facilitators are not left alone without a faculty representative present. Please prepare students for the participatory nature of our workshops. We may push back chairs and desks, get students on their feet, and have them move around the room. We request that students who are not participating be asked to leave the classroom so that we can send a consistent message to all students. We look forward to working with you and your students. For more information, please contact Mo`olelo at 619-342-7395 or [schools@moolelo.net](mailto:schools@moolelo.net).

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## ABOUT MO`OLELO PERFORMING ARTS COMPANY

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*Mo`olelo* means story in Hawaiian. Mo`olelo Performing Arts Company is a socially-conscious, community-focused, Equity theater organization dedicated to broadening the scope of San Diego's cultural environment by telling powerful stories that are as diverse as the islands of Hawaii, by paying Equity wages to local actors and developing environmentally-friendly theater practices. A recipient of the Patté, McDonald Playwriting and the Anti-Discrimination Awards, its mission is to create new works based on research within various communities, produce lesser-known works by master and contemporary playwrights, and educate youth. To learn more, visit [www.moolelo.net](http://www.moolelo.net) or call 619-342-7395.