

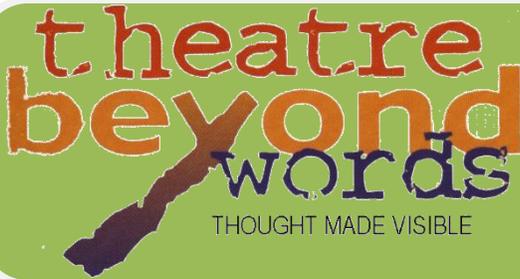
Theatre Beyond Words and Young Company Sprouts present

Tales from the Garden



Teachers' Resource Guide

About the Company

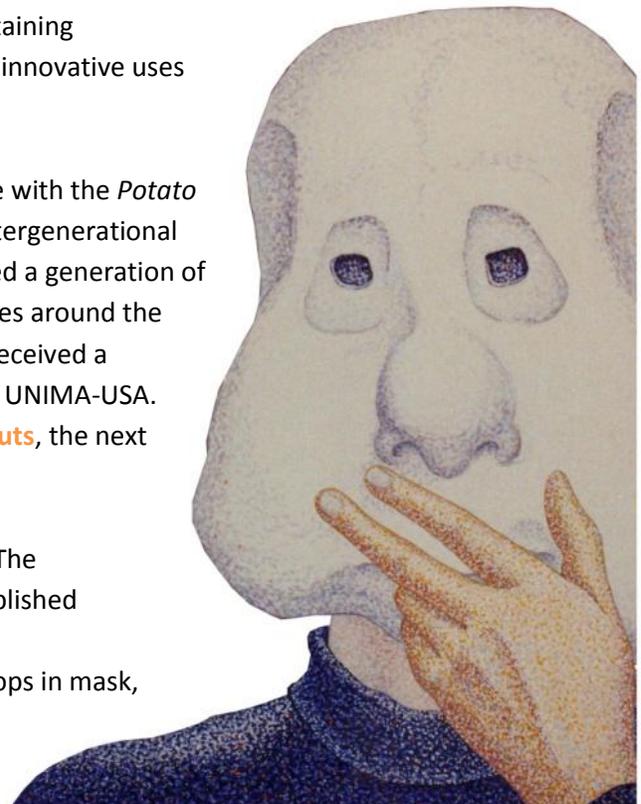


Theatre Beyond Words is an internationally renowned physical theatre company that has played to over 2 million people since its inception in 1977, delighting audiences from New York to Madrid and Toronto to Tokyo with its unique style of visual theatre.

The ensemble develops original works for both family and mature audiences, garnering international acclaim for its artistic and entertaining performances that transcend language barriers with the innovative uses of mask, puppetry, mime and music.

Theatre Beyond Words created a unique style of theatre with the *Potato People*, a series of 14 non-verbal larval mask plays for intergenerational audiences. This original form of visual storytelling inspired a generation of artists across the country and won the hearts of audiences around the world. In 1987 the *Potato People (a theatrical cartoon)* received a Citation of Excellence Award in the Art of Puppetry from UNIMA-USA. Since 2006 TBW has mentored the young company **Sprouts**, the next generation of Potato People.

The company hosts a play development program called The Wednesday Salon for new and emerging as well as established artists to read or walk through their work in a nurturing environment. The ensemble also gives intensive workshops in mask, clown and physical theatre.



Theatre Beyond Words has had a proud history of mentoring young and emerging artists, especially those in the Niagara community. In 2006 TBW formalized this practice by creating a young company affectionately dubbed '**Sprouts**'.

Since inception, **Sprouts** has trained a number of young artists into the Potato People style of mask theatre and created a highly successful Potato People vignette show called *Potato Chips* which toured across Ontario for over 2 years. *Tales from the Garden* and *Tales from the Street* will be Sprouts' first full length, all new Potato People shows. They will give the Potato People a brand new look for a new generation of artists inspired by graphic novels.

Tales from the Garden Introduction

Story Synopsis

Nancy and George find themselves magically transported into a world where insects are the size of people and summer rain water feels like a typhoon. There's a lot they never knew about their own backyard! Nancy learns about gently caring for living, growing things. George discovers his inner strength which will give him the self confidence to stand up for himself and make new friends! Along the way they meet a host of fantastically strange characters and a misunderstanding with a disgruntled Mama bird provides an adventure with high flying suspense!

Think you've seen the Potato People? You haven't seen them like this!!!

Inspired by graphic novels, these tales will challenge audiences to see the world from new and unusual points of view!

Masks, music and comic mayhem abound as Nancy Potato and George Beanstalk try to sprout a seed in their garden – with some amazing results!



Creative Team

Tales from the Garden was first produced in January 2011. The following individuals were part of the vibrant ensemble that collectively created this original show.

Artistic Committee

Robin Patterson,
Artistic Director

Terry Judd,
Co-Artistic Director

Harro Maskow,
Artistic Director Emeritus

Young Company

Katharine Dubois

Brandon Pachan

Carlene Thomas

Jacqueline Costa

Charles Dominic

Design & Construction

Costumes

Bobbi Pidduck

Coloured Panels

David Reyfield

Masks

Clelia Scala, Trish Leeper, Harro Maskow, Sartori,
Arlyn Coad & Christina Rosendal

Pre-Show Discussion

Theatre Etiquette

Seeing a live production can be a very exciting, educational experience. Please take a moment to review theatre etiquette with your students before the performance so that everyone may get the most out of the production.

1. To respect the performers and other audience members please don't talk during the performance and try to remain still in your seats.
2. Clap to show your appreciation at the end of a performance. However, clapping and laughing during the performance is great too if there is a moment you particularly like!
3. For teachers and parents, please remember to turn off cell phones during the performance and kindly refrain from taking photos as it can be very distracting for the masked performers on stage.

Primary Discussion

1. Ask students what the difference is between seeing live theatre and watching a movie or TV. Which live plays have they seen before?
2. Ask students what puppet or mask shows they have seen or been a part of. What kinds of puppets have they used? What is it like to wear a mask?
3. Activate students' schema on gardens. What types of creatures do they think they might see in a show that is called *Tales from the Garden*?

Did you know?

Ants are very beneficial creatures! They are known as '**Mother Nature's Recyclers**' because they are able to eat and reuse many things that other insects, plants and animals leave behind! They can even aerate soil which helps our gardens grow!

Have you ever seen an ant doing this? What else do you already know about ants?

Junior Discussion

1. Tell students that this show contains ants, caterpillars and birds that are played by actors. How do they imagine this could be done? What are some ways a human could move to make them look like one of these creatures?
2. Let students in on this secret! Some of the actors in this play perform more than one character or puppet. Tell students to see if they can watch closely enough during the show to guess which parts are played by the same actor. What do they think it would be like for an actor to play several different parts?

Primary Post-Show Activities

The activities below have been designed to fulfill many of the objectives for the Primary drama and dance curriculum as well as expectations from cross-curricular subjects. They require little to no preparation and can be used in the classroom with desks pushed aside or in gymnasiums. Keep them in mind for your DPAs or use them as a drama/dance unit over the course of several days! Your primary students may also enjoy working on some of the junior activities in this book so check them out!

Discussions

1. As a class **retell** the story of the play from start to finish. Students may find it helpful to add in dialog based on the gestures the characters made.
2. One of the characters in the play was Mother Nature. What was her role in the show? Can you make a connection to another story you have seen or heard that used a character like this?
3. There were several life cycles explored in the play. Which ones can you remember and what was the cycle? (*i.e. caterpillar turning into a butterfly, seed growing into a flower, eggs hatching into chicks*)
4. Activate students' schema on caterpillars. What did Nancy learn about their life cycle? What do they turn into?
5. When we are handling small animals should we be excited and rough or calm and gentle? Give examples in the play when Nancy learned this. (*ie: George takes the caterpillar away from Nancy at the beginning of the show because she is jumping up and down with it, Nancy cannot catch the butterfly by chasing it but when she sits quietly it lands on her*)
6. What did you learn about during the post-show discussion that was new?

Writing Exercises

1. Illustrate and describe your favourite moment from the play.
2. Draw a moment in the play that included several characters. If the characters could speak what do you think they would say to each other? Add their words to your picture in a speech bubble like you see in comic books.
3. **Have students list all of the puppets they remember from the show:** *small caterpillar, bird, ant, large caterpillar, baby birds*
Then list all of the mask characters: *Nancy, George, Mother Nature, the large ants, the mama bird, the water sprites*
Which was their favourite character and why?
What do they think would be harder for an actor to perform, a mask or a puppet? Why?
If they could play any part which would they choose? Why?

The following exercises were inspired by different moments in the play or creative process. Have students recall what they remember about these moments and compare how they feel when working on them to how they felt watching them during the show.

Primary Post-Show Activities

Magic Hand

Students Recall: Mother Nature used gesturing to control the animals and the environment.

Recommended Materials: A variety of music, preferably without words or without English words.



Arrange students in an open space so that they are an arm's length away from each other and they can see the teacher clearly. Say "This is my magic hand. As I move my hand try to move your body the way you think my hand is asking you to move. Remember to keep your eyes on my hand and stay in your spot in the room." The teacher may demonstrate this with another student first then put on some music and lead the students with your hand. Inform the students that those who are showing the most focus will have a turn to use their magic hand to lead the class. Allow different students to take turns and change the music regularly so students may experiment with moving to different rhythms.

Mirrors

Student Recall: The scene when George sees himself in the waterfall.

Recommended Materials: calm music, preferably without words or without English words.

Arrange students into pairs and spread the pairs out in the room. One person will be the leader and the other is the mirror. The leader moves slowly to the music beginning with just their hand. The mirror tries to do the same movement as the leader. Both partners need to keep eye contact so that they can read what the other is doing. As they progress they can begin using the rest of their body in the exercise. When the teacher calls switch the role of the mirror and leader reverses so that everyone has a turn to be both. After several "switches" allow half the class to sit and watch while the other half continues the exercise. See if they can tell who is the leader and who is the mirror in each pair. Discuss what they notice the groups doing well and how it impacts their performance. Once both halves of the class have presented have them do the exercise again keeping in mind what they learned about watching the others present.



Stomp Circle



Students Recall: The ants taught George their rhythm so he could copy it and work with them.

Arrange students in a circle in the room. Each student in the circle will demonstrate a short rhythm and the rest of the circle will copy it. Encourage students to use different body parts to make the rhythm including clapping hands, stomping feet, slapping thighs, etc.

Primary Post-Show Activities

Growth Story

Students Recall: There are several life cycles explored in the play – caterpillar to butterfly, seed to flower, eggs to growing baby birds.



Part 1. Arrange students in a circle with an arm's length between them. The teacher can read the short life cycle story below or make up one of their own. As they tell the story the students use their bodies to act it out while staying in their spot in the circle.

Sample Growth Story:

There was a teeny tiny bud on the very tip of the tallest branch of a great old maple tree. When spring time came the teeny tiny bud began to bloom. As summer warmed the earth, out of the bud grew a big green leaf and a single small maple key. One day the wind came up and blew and blew the tree. The maple key was thrown from side to side in the wind. It hung on as hard as it could but one gust was too strong and it knocked the maple key off its branch. The maple key floated and spun down to the ground. The wind had carried it far away from its mother tree. The maple key sat on the ground and when fall came it was covered with leaves from other trees. When winter came it was covered with cold snow and it could feel the weight of the fallen leaves and snow pressing it into the ground. When spring came the snow melted and the maple key sucked up as much of the water as it could hold. Soon he began to grow roots into the soft earth that would hold him firmly in place. Then he began to grow a small shoot with small leaves on the top that reached for the sky. The maple key grew and grew all summer long, up, up, up. Then one day strong winds returned and they blew and blew at the maple key's young trunk and leaves but his roots held him strong in the ground and as hard as the wind blew it could not blow the little tree away anymore.

Part 2. In a circle, the teacher starts off a life cycle story for the students but this time allows each student to take a turn adding a sentence to the story. The rest of the students perform the actions of the story as it is told.

Curriculum Expectations

Dance

- imitate movements found in their natural environment in a variety of ways and incorporate them into a dance phrase
- use dance as a language to express feelings and ideas suggested by songs, stories, and poems, with a focus on the element of body, particularly body shapes
- use varied and/or contrasting body shapes to communicate different types of messages

Drama

- engage in dramatic play and role play, with a focus on exploring themes, ideas, characters, and issues from imagination or in stories
- plan and shape dramatic play by building on the ideas of others
- demonstrate an understanding of the element of character by adopting thoughts, feelings, and gestures relevant to the role being played

Junior Post-Show Activities

The activities below have been designed to fulfill many of the objectives for the Junior drama and dance curriculum as well as expectations from cross-curricular subjects. They require little to no preparation and can be used in the classroom with desks pushed aside or in gymnasiums. Keep them in mind for your DPAs or use them as a drama/dance unit over the course of several days! Your junior students may also enjoy working on some of the primary activities in this book so check them out!

Discussions

1. *Tales from the Garden* tells a story of how George and Nancy are transported to another world and they have to find their way back. This type of story has been used by story tellers all over the world for thousands of years. Can you make a connection to another story like this that you have read or heard? (i.e. *Alice in Wonderland*, *Shrek Forever After*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Narnia*, etc.)
2. Could you tell which actors played multiple parts? What made it difficult to tell who was who? (i.e. *masks they wore*, *ways they moved*) What were some of the clues that help you figure it out?
3. What did you learn about during the post-show discussion that was new?

Writing Exercises

1. In your own words **retell** the story of the play and illustrate your favourite moment.
2. Divide a sheet of 11 x 17 paper into 6 sections. Ask students to draw series of images from specific point in the play that included several characters. If the characters could speak what do you think they would say to each other? Add their words to your pictures in speech bubbles like you see in comic books.
3. Write a short story that includes the story pattern discussed above where a character is somehow transported to another world and has to find their way home again.

The following exercises were inspired by different elements of the play and creative process. Take a moment to have students reflect on how they feel when working and how these methods may have been used in the show.

The Chairs

Objective: *Non-Verbal Communication.* This exercise uses focus and trust to allow students to communicate non-verbally.

Make a circle of chairs with enough for each student except one. Students sit in the chairs with the extra person in the middle. Instruct students that for this game they need to look around the circle and try to make eye contact with someone. When they do, without talking, they need to switch seats with that other person by crossing the circle. If you make eye contact you **MUST** leave your seat to make the switch. The person in the middle will try to steal one of your seats when you get up to cross. If the game starts to slow down the teacher has the option to clap their hands which means that everyone must switch seats at once.

Junior Post-Show Activities

Adam 12

Objective: *Creating A Collective Working Environment.*

Tell students that the next game is about team work which is very important when you are working together to create theatre. Students will begin by moving around in a large, clear area. The teacher will call out a way of moving (*i.e. walk, hop, crawl, skip, etc.*) after a few moments the teacher calls out the name “Adam” with a number (*i.e. “Adam 4”*) Students must get into groups of that size as quickly as possible. For safety, they must keep their arms at their sides once in their groups. If there are any leftover people that can’t fit into a group the other groups must hide them by allowing them to crouch down behind their group. If students don’t get into a group or hide quickly enough they become part of the “audience” and watch for other “performers” who don’t get into place quickly enough.

Hot Seat

Objective: *Character Development.*

Students volunteer to take roles of the characters in the play. They are seated in the “hot seat” and asked questions by the other students (as if they were reporters) about their actions in the play. (*i.e. Why did George swing his backpack at the Mamma bird? Why did Nancy try to feed the baby birds?*)

One Minute Mayhem

Objective: *Collaborative Creation Exercise*

Recommended Materials: *calm music, preferably without words or without English words.*

Students are asked to work in their groups to create objects listed by the teacher. Everyone in the group must be involved and the object must have a moving part (*i.e.: car, refrigerator, tree, fan, umbrella, saxophone, piano, spider etc.*) They are given a limited amount of time to create their object (*i.e.: 60 seconds*) and students should share their objects with each of the other groups before moving on to the next challenge.

Curriculum Expectations

Dance

- translate into dance a variety of movement sequences observed in nature
- use the elements of energy and time in a dance piece to communicate an idea
- use guided improvisation in a variety of ways as a starting point for choreography

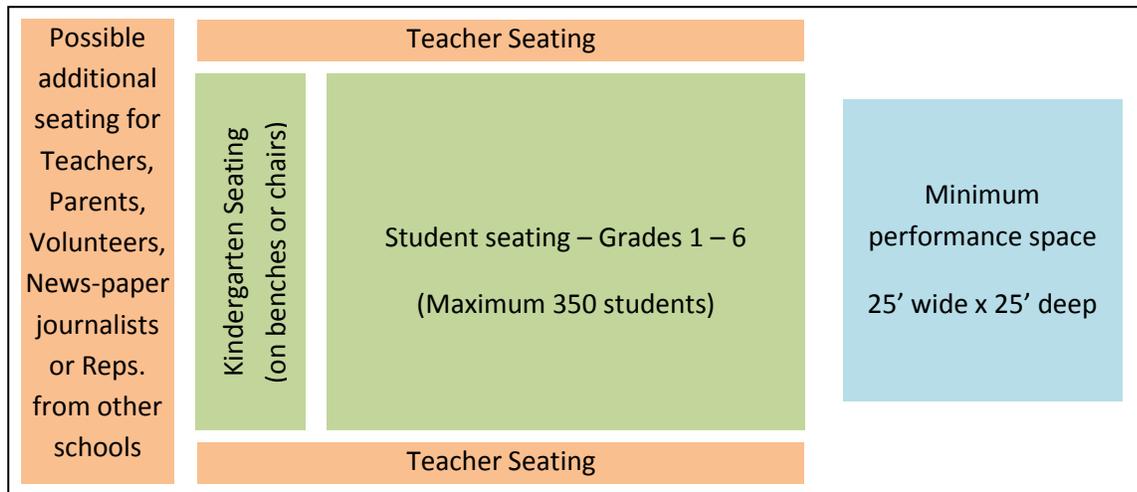
Drama

- demonstrate an understanding of the element of role by selectively using other elements to build belief in a role and establish its dramatic context
- plan and shape the direction of the drama or role play by introducing new perspectives and ideas, both in and out of role

Several additional arts curriculum objectives can also be met using these exercises through repetition and post-activity discussion.

Theatre Beyond Words is Coming to Town!

Recommended Gymnasium Setup



Get More From Your Theatre Beyond Words Visit!

Visit our website

www.theatrebeyondwords.ca

for more educational resources, such as:

- Our new Mask Gallery
- Mask and physical theatre workshops
- Other study guides and drama/dance activities for the classroom
- Potato People Colouring pages
- Information about other Potato People shows

What teachers say about our shows...

“I have taken my classes to many Potato People shows over the years. Excellent actors. Great costumes! I highly recommend them. Please come back!!!”

Sharon Gardiner, Teacher

“We—all children and adults alike—truly loved your show. It was the very best in my 25 years of taking children to live theatre. My kids said it was A++ or 12/10.” *N. Hill, Teacher*

To book a show from Theatre Beyond Words:

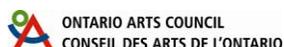
Please contact Theatre Beyond Words
www.theatrebeyondwords.ca
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