



Guide for Teachers and Parents to Childsplay's Production of *The Beauty Machine*

We hope you find this guide helpful in preparing your children for an enjoyable and educational theatrical experience. Included you'll find things to talk about before and after seeing the performance, classroom activities that deal with curriculum connections and education standards, and resource materials.

The Story...

"Be careful what you wish for" is the theme of this delightful French-Canadian moral fable with a light touch. The inhabitants of the village are quite content until the arrival of the first photography studio. After having portraits taken by Suzy Snapshot, the villagers begin to see their "flaws". One by one, they become dissatisfied with their looks. Enter Professor Hammer and "The Beauty Machine." Hammer claims that, for a small fee, the machine will make people beautiful. All of the villagers submit to the powers of "The Beauty Machine" until eventually everyone looks exactly alike! The village is so obsessed with beauty that the Mayor creates silly laws in order to make his village the most beautiful village in the world: everyone will eat only corn because it is the most beautiful vegetable, everyone will listen to the same music, go to bed at the same time, and read the same books. Things turn chaotic when the villagers are no longer recognizable to each other and realize they've made a mistake by conforming. In an attempt to undo the mess, the villagers try to get the professor to reverse the effects of "The Beauty Machine". Realizing the effects can't be reversed, Professor Hammer fakes a disappearance by having the villagers close their eyes while tossing a hat into "The Beauty Machine" and running off. The chance to change back to normal has vanished with the professor. The villagers think they are doomed to live a life of conformity until Suzy Snapshot solves the problem in a surprising way!

The Beauty Machine

(La Machine A Beauté)

Based on the novel by
Raymond Plante

Stage adaptation by
Robert Bellefeuille

Directed by
Anthony Runfola

Scenic Design by
Geof Eroo

Costume Design by
Liz Ihlenfeld

Lighting Design by
Mike Eddy

Sound Design by
Benjamin Monrad

Stage Manager
Gretchen Schaefer

THE CAST

Albert Hammer.....Thomas Bigley
Suzy Snapshot/
Carmen/Yvette.....Julie Cotton
Beatrice/Nellie.....Jenn Taber
Beetroot/Leo.....Michael Arbuckle
Steven/Jeremiah.....Joe Flowers

The production was supported in part by:

Arizona ArtShare
Arizona Commission on the Arts
Boeing ECF

Bashas
Phoenix Arts Commission
Cox Communications
Medtronic Foundation
Scottsdale Cultural Council
Tempe Diablos

City of Tempe/Tempe Municipal Arts Commission

A Word About Theater Etiquette...

Whether going to the theater or having theater come to you, there are a few important things to communicate to your students before seeing a play. Since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students, please take a moment to discuss the following prior to seeing the performance (3AT-R2).

- ◆ Stay seated during the performance.
- ◆ Remember that the performers can hear and see the audience just like the audience can hear and see the performers. Be respectful to the performers and other students in the audience by not talking and staying in your own space.
- ◆ Appropriate responses such as clapping or laughter are always welcome!



Beauty is not in the face,
beauty is a light in the heart
--Kahlil Gibran



Things to Talk About Before Seeing the Production...

In "The Beauty Machine", there are 5 actors who play 10 roles. The director intentionally hired actors with different body types so that the characters look quite different from one another prior to going through "The Beauty Machine". Once a character has gone through the machine, half masks are used to make everyone look alike (same hair, nose and skin tone). Characters will also make costume changes to help with "sameness". The play takes place in an Italian village in the 1960's. Brightly colored panels with shop fronts, signs, and villagers are used as a backdrop to help create the various locations within the village. Italian folk music is used to enhance the mood and setting. 1960's science fiction films were the inspiration for the design of "The Beauty Machine" itself. "The Beauty Machine" runs approximately 50 minutes. The actors will conduct a short question/answer session following the performance, if time permits.

Topics and Issues Relating to the Production:

Beauty: What is beauty? In the play, being beautiful is being the same. In our society, beauty is often gauged by appearances. The tall, thin, clear-skinned, blond model on the cover of a magazine represents beauty. The shiny, red, convertible sports car is considered beautiful. The fashion and beauty industry tells us what is beautiful (what is in) and what is not (what is out). Discuss with your students the concept of beauty. What do they think beauty is? Talk about the idea of inner beauty versus outer beauty. What do they see in the media that influences their concept of beauty?

Conformity: Conformity is the adaptation of one's behavior or beliefs to match those of the other members of a group. We live in a conformist society. One way that society encourages conformity is with product advertising. What are some examples of products that encourage us to look alike?

Similarities and Differences: A great way to discourage conformity is to celebrate our

differences as well as our similarities. Talk with your students about things they have in common and things that make them unique.

Laws: The mayor of the village incorporates many ridiculous laws. We have to abide by laws in our community as well as rules in our schools. Talk about various laws and/or rules. Which laws/rules do you think are good? Why? Are there laws/rules that you think are silly? Why?

Peer Pressure: Young people experience peer pressure in many different ways. Do you feel pressure to look a certain way? Do your friends pressure you? Do you feel pressure from TV and/or magazines?

Keeping Up Appearances: People constantly change their appearances. How do they do this? (Cosmetic surgery, make-up, clothes, haircuts, hair color, facial hair, etc.) If you could change one thing about your appearance, what would it be? Why?

After the Production...

Questions to Spark Discussion:

- ▶ All plays have three P's: people in a place with a problem. Where does the play take place? Who are the people? What are the problems?
- ▶ The actors each played two roles. What did they do to make the characters different from one another?
- ▶ What did the actors do to look the same once they went through "The Beauty Machine?"
- ▶ What happens in the village when everyone looks and acts the same?
- ▶ Suzy Snapshot is the only person (besides Professor Hammer) who doesn't go through "The Beauty Machine". Why does she decide to stay as she is?
- ▶ The villagers can't undo what Professor Hammer did to them. They have to live with the consequences of their choice. How do they solve the problem of them all looking the same?

The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently. —Nietzsche

Things To Do After the Production...

Art

(3AV-F1, 1AV-F3)

Make a Machine: With a partner or team, invent an imaginary machine that serves a particular purpose. Use cardboard boxes, tin foil, construction paper, or any other materials you can find. Write a brief description of what the machine does. Then, present the machine to the rest of the class. Have a "Best Invention of 2003" contest and vote for a winner!

Differences Profiles: This is a team project. Tape a piece of black construction paper to the wall. One person sits in a chair with their profile to the wall while the other person uses white chalk to outline their partner's profile on the black paper (use an overhead projector to shine light against the person and create a shadow of their profile). Number and put them all on a wall and see if you can identify the people in your class from their profiles! Hang an answer key on the same wall (with numbers and names) to check your guesses.

Conformity Masks: Create half masks to make you all look the same. Start with a paper plate and cut it in half. Cut out eyeholes so you can see. As a class, decide on type and color of hair, what the nose should be like, and what the skin color should be. Use markers, yarn, pipe cleaners or whatever! Use elastic or string to hold it in place.

Creative Drama

(1AT-F2, 1AT-F1, 1AT-R5)

Not-So-Real Commercials: In teams of 2 or 3, create your own TV commercial for an imaginary beauty product. Give your product a name, explain what it does and try to sell it to the TV audience. Add a jingle (song) if you'd like! Commercials should be 30 seconds to one minute in length. Rehearse and share with the rest of the class.

Play the Scene: In groups of 4 or 5, use the half masks created in the art project and play a scene from the play! Or, create a new scene to play. An example might be to find a different ending for the play: what is another way for Suzy Snapshot to solve the problem of everyone looking the same? Rehearse and share!

Math

(2M-E1, W-F4)

Count the Beauty Products: TV is filled with commercials for products that claim to make us beautiful: hair care, make-up, weight loss, male baldness and toothpaste to name a few. Spend $\frac{1}{2}$ hour watching the same television station. Count the number of commercials that sell a beauty product. Write down the television station you watched, the number of commercials and the types of products (also note if the product was for men, women, or both). Bring this information back to class and create a chart that categorizes and counts all of the products from everyone's lists!

•Suggestions for fulfilling specific education standards denoted by abbreviations in parenthesis•

Science

Beauty Claims: Which ingredients in beauty products claim to make us beautiful? Look at the ingredient list on a product like lotion or lip balm. Pick out one of the ingredients and research what purpose it serves in that product.

Creative Writing:

(W-R1)

TV Reports: Write an imaginary breaking news story that a television reporter could read on the air. Begin with "We interrupt this program to bring you a special news report". Trade with a classmate and read out loud for the rest of the class!

Social Studies

(1SS-F2, 2SS-F3)

Keeping up with the Jones':

People like to be alike! Look at historical trends in fashion and beauty. What were they? How are they different from today? What sorts of trends might be popular ten years from now?

Silly Laws: Throughout history there have been a number of laws that seem unfair or ridiculous. For example, in Connecticut, you are not allowed to walk across a street on your hands! In groups of 5, research silly laws! Find at least 3 actual laws and then make up 2 of your own. Now, share with the rest of the class and see if the other students can figure out which laws are real and which laws are made up.

KNUGGET OF KNOWLEDGE:

In Arizona, hunting camels is prohibited (The US Army once experimented with camels in the Arizona desert, and eventually gave up. The remaining camels were set free, and are now protected).

Sources for Parents and Teachers...

Try these websites for more information and ideas:

Beauty:

A very interesting source on beauty and culture.

www.beautyworlds.com

Conformity:

An interesting article on clanning -- belonging to a group that represents common feelings, causes or ideals; validating one's own belief system.

www.faithpopcorn.com/trends/clanning/htm

Inventions:

Sites with wacky inventions as wells as ideas for kids who want to "invent".

www.toyworkshop.com

www.totallyabsurd.com/absurd.htm

www.uspto.gov/go/kids.com

Laws:

Good sites to help students understand how laws are made and how the Government works.

www.congressforkids.net/makinglaws.htm

www.lawsforkids.org

<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/6-8/>

About Childsplay...

Childsplay is a non-profit professional theatre company of adult actors, performing for young audiences and families.

Our Mission is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, the hallmarks of childhood, which are the keys to the future.

We love to hear from our audience members! Send letters, drawings or reviews to:



Childsplay
PO Box 517
Tempe, AZ 85280
Call us at 480-350-8101
1-800-583-7831 (in-state)
Email us at:
info@childsplayaz.org
Web Site:
www.childsplayaz.org

The Beauty Machine Booklist

For Younger Readers



By Hans Christian Andersen
The Emperor's New Clothes

By Nancy Carlson
I Like Me!

By Helen Lester
Three Cheers for Tacky

By Christopher Myers
Wings

By Marcus Pfister
Just the Way you Are

By Dr. Seuss
The Sneetches and Other Stories

By David Shannon
A Bad Case of Stripes

By Kevin Henkes
Chrysanthemum

For Older Readers

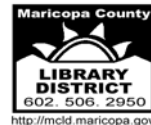
By Tor Seidler
Brothers Below Zero

By Jerry Spinelli
Stargirl

By Mark Twain
The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg

By Stefanie Weiss
Coping With the Beauty Myth

All materials are available through the
Maricopa County Library District



*Prepared by Tim Wadham,
Children's Services
Coordinator, Maricopa
County Library District

I think it would be terrific if everybody was alike.
--Andy Warhol

