



# Preview Guide for Teachers and Parents to Childsplay's Production of **Power Play**

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...

When an unexpected power surge causes a school science movie to go bonkers in a big way, it's up to three bumbling electricians, and the audience, to save the entire universe! This high-voltage multimedia production combines video, live action and music into an amazing journey of self-exploration. The audience is part of the performance in this theatrical tour-de-force that empowers children to realize their incredible potential to move mountains through the powers of self-worth, imagination and kindness. Whether facing bullies, self-doubt, or other personal challenges, the audience will be given a fresh and empowering way to think about their place in the world. It will remind them that inside each of us, no matter our size, strength, or status, can be found the most consequential kinds of power: the means to help ourselves, serve others, and make this world a better place.

## A Word About Theatre 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.

- ◆ 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!
- ◆ *Power Play* is an interactive theatre piece. At various times during the play, the actors may ask for help from the audience or from individual audience members. Encourage your students to participate!

## Power Play

By **Barry Kornhauser**

Directed by **Eric Johnson**

Music and Lyrics by **Ron Barnett**

Videography by **Adam Larsen**

Illustrations by **Timothy Truman and the students of the Pennsylvania School of Art and Design**

Scenic Design by **Robert Klingelhoef**

Costume Design by **D. Daniel Hollingshead**

Lighting Design by **Michael J. Eddy**

Stage Manager: **Ginny Nagel**

### THE CAST

Yolanda London  
Gordon Waggoner  
D. Scott Withers  
with Stephen Anthony Spiess  
as the "Narrator"

Winter/Spring 2004

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- Medtronic Foundation
- Phoenix Arts Commission
- Scottsdale Cultural Council
- Tempe Diablos
- America West Airlines Education Foundation
- The Medtronic Foundation
- Pacific Life Foundation

**You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.**

**~Ralph Waldo Emerson**

## Things to Talk About Before Seeing the Play...

**Power:** What is power? Look up power in the dictionary and you will find many definitions. Religious texts refer to a “higher power.” Movies and books feature heroes with “super human powers.” There is “nuclear and solar power”. Our country is considered a “super power.” Power struggles exist on many different levels from international conflicts among countries to struggles between a parent and child. Power can be used in a positive way or, unfortunately, in negative ways (as in the imbalance of power that occurs between a bully and a target).

What does power mean to you? When and how do we use power? List the many answers on the board.

**Power Play** focuses on several different types of power:

**\*The Power of Imagination:** Imaginations have the power to help us through fear or loneliness, to solve a problem or to make a task more pleasant.

**\*The Power of Kindness:** In her book *The Kindness of Children*, Vivian Paley says “acting out kindness makes us realize what we are capable of. It feels good to be in power, but it feels terrific to see yourself as a giver of kindness.”

**\*The Power of Connection:** Connecting with others can create support, community or a team. There is power in numbers!

**\*The Power of Positive Perspective:** The way we look at life affects us greatly. It is far healthier to see the glass half-full than half-empty.

**\*The Power of Believing in Oneself:** Having self-confidence

helps when faced with challenging goals (both positive and negative).

**Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate.**  
~Albert Schweitzer

### **Bullies, Targets and Witnesses:**

Bullying is one of the leading social problems facing young people today. It is a form of abuse that can do permanent damage to its target. All children get into conflicts and need to learn how to handle them. However, conflict becomes bullying when:

- It's a repeated and consistent negative behavior.
- There are contrasting feelings between the target and the bully.
- There is an imbalance of power.

Bullying includes verbal and physical abuse, social alienation, and intimidation by peers. While boys are more often the perpetrators and victims of direct bullying, girls tend to bully in more indirect ways, relying more on verbal and psychological techniques than physical intimidation. A girl might, for example, pointedly exclude a classmate from a birthday party or start a hurtful rumor.

Children who are bullied may experience low self-esteem that remains a problem until adulthood. As targets of this aggressive behavior, they may exhibit physical problems, school phobia, and symptoms of aggression. School performance may also decrease.

Children who bully often become adults who bully. Research shows that 60 percent of chronic bullies have a criminal record by the time they reach their twenties. Bullying is linked with other antisocial behaviors such as fighting,

vandalism, drug and alcohol abuse, and developing gang alliances. Bullying knows no social, economic, racial or geographical borders. Bullying tends to start at elementary age, peak in middle school years, and steadily decline by high school age.

Talk about bullying with your students. Have you ever been bullied or have you ever bullied someone else? How did it make you feel? Have you ever witnessed someone else being bullied? What, if anything, did you do? What can you do if you witness bullying or become a target yourself? Ask the students to watch for examples of bullying in the play.

**160,000 children in this country miss school every day to avoid being teased, harassed or physically assaulted.**

**Clowning:** The three main characters in the play are clowns. A clown is an artist or performer whose goal it is to make an audience laugh by being funny. Clowns have all sorts of different ways to make an audience laugh: costume, make-up and physical appearance, physical humor (falling down, pie throwing), pantomime (communicating without speaking), magic, juggling, joke telling, and the use of puppets or “dummies”. Clowns have been around for hundreds of years. Look at the history of clowns. What are the different types of clowns found throughout history? Who were/are some famous clowns? Find pictures to support your research!

**Intolerance is the root of most violence. Teach tolerance by respecting and celebrating our differences and similarities!**

## Things to Talk About and Do After the Show...

### **Talking Points:**

\*What problems did the characters face in the play?

\*What are some examples of bullying that happened in the play?

\*After the clowns find their power, they have a choice as to how to use it. They can either get revenge on the narrator or help him find his way. Did they make the best choice? What if they had made a different choice?

### **Creative Drama:**

**Personal Clown Faces:** Each clown must create his/her own special "Face" (face here meaning character or personality). The "Face" is created with make-up, wigs, and costumes and by giving a personality to the clown. Once a clown creates this "Face", it becomes his/her trademark, and no other clown is to use it. Create your own clown character! Draw and color your clown's face and decide on personality traits for him/her. Is your clown happy, sad, angry, clumsy, or shy? How does your clown entertain the audience? Does your clown speak? Come up with a name for your clown as well.

### **Personal Hellos**

Now that you have a clown character, create a personal hello for your clown! It can be a physical gesture (a wave or salute), a verbal phrase, a full body greeting or a combination of all of these! Once you have your hello, share it with the rest of the class!

**Electric Current:** Stand in a circle and tell students that you are holding a lightning bolt in your hand. Swallow it and then show the electric current running through your body (into your hands, feet, head, etc.). After it has gone through you, pass it to the person next to you (using any part

of your body). That person must catch the current in the same way it was passed. Pass it all the way around the circle. When it comes back to you, send it around again this time adding sounds to the movement.

**Tangle:** Divide into two groups-- boys and girls. Each group should clump together in a very small circle and put their hands in the middle of the circle grabbing the hands of two different people. Each group must now try to untangle itself without anyone letting go of a hand. Be patient and use teamwork!

### **Literature:**

**Power Stories:** Read aloud some of the classic stories that deal with issues of power. Greek myths (like *Midas* or *Icarus*), Aesop's Fables (*The Lion and the Mouse* or *The Frog and Ox*), and fairy tales (like *The Brave Little Tailor* or *Aladdin's Lamp*) are great sources of power stories. Discuss how power is used or abused in the stories. Can you relate any of the stories or characters to people or stories in the news today?

### **Creative Writing:**

**Power Stories:** Write a story about how you used (or could use) power to help someone, to help yourself or to solve a problem. It can be something that really happened (or could happen) or it could be something completely fantastical and made up! Use the power of your imagination to help you!

### **Art:**

**Super Power Heroes:** Create a super hero of your own! Decide what sort of super power he or she has and draw a detailed picture including their super hero costume. Next, create a 3 or 4 frame comic strip in which your super hero uses their power in a positive way! Display in the classroom or hallway!

### **Social Studies:**

#### **Simple Acts of Kindness:**

Perform at least one act of kindness a day for a week (or a month) and keep track of your acts in a journal. Make notes of what you did, how it made you feel and how you think it made someone else feel. Choose one journal entry that you can share aloud with the rest of the class.

**Community Kindness:** As a class, choose an activity that will support your community. Come up with a detailed plan for an ongoing program, special event or activity that will help out a family, your school, an organization or your community in some way. Here are some examples: have a community litter pick-up day, collect books for a homeless shelter, or hold a food drive for a food bank.

#### **Bully Proofing Your School:**

Come up with an anti-bully policy for your class or school. Start by taking the following pledge (print it out on a poster board):

1. We will not bully other students.
2. We will help others who are being bullied by speaking out and by getting adult help.
3. We will use extra effort to include all students in activities in our school.

Discuss and map out what is considered bullying and what the consequences of bullying are.

### **Science:**

**Salt River Project Web Site:** SRP has great information for teachers and students alike. With a partner, go to [www.srpnet.com](http://www.srpnet.com) and click on the *Site Map*. Next, look for *Community Activities* and click on *For Kids*. There you will find lots of information on energy and some fun activities to try! Choose one of the areas to explore and then report back to the class on what you did and what you learned!

## Power Play Booklist

Prepared by Tim Wadham, Children's Services Coordinator and the Children's Services Staff of the Maricopa County Library District



### For Younger Readers

*Fables Aesop Never Wrote* by Robert Kraus  
*Hooway for Wodney Wat* by Helen Lester  
*Fables* by Arnold Lobel  
*Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell  
*The Recess Queen* by Alexis O'Neill  
*Mr. Lincoln's Way* by Patricia Polacco  
*The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse: An Aesop Fable* by Janet Stevens  
*The Tortoise and the Hare: An Aesop Fable* by Janet Stevens

### For Older Readers

*Be a Clown! Techniques from a Real Clown* by Ron Burgess  
*Break a Leg: The Kids Book of Acting and Stagecraft* by Lisa Friedman  
*Stick Up for Yourself: Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem* by Gershen Kaufman  
*Agnes Parker: Girl in Progress* by Kathleen O'Dell

All materials are available through the  
Maricopa County Library District  
Check it out!

**Speak well of your friend, of your enemy say nothing.**  
~Proverb

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

## Interesting Internet Sites:

### **Bullies and Targets:**

www.stopbullyingnow.net  
www.bulliesandvictims.com  
www.bullying.org  
www.safechild.org/bullies.htm  
www.bullybeware.com  
www.mtwp.net/schools/schaeffer/nobullying.html  
-a school's anti-bully plan and links to other great sources  
www.lionlamb.org  
-to stop the marketing of violence to children  
www.nationalsave.org  
-Student's Against Violence Everywhere; a fantastic site for both students and teachers  
www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/juvenileprob  
-get the free Fight Back With Love anti-bully program (also in Spanish)  
www.bullypolice.org  
-for info on anti-bullying laws and what you can do to get one in AZ

### **Clowning:**

www.coai.org  
-a good site to go to for a brief history of clowning  
www.sunniebunniezz.com/clowning/clowning.html  
-a source for kids to learn about clowning



## Books for Teachers and Parents

*The Parent's Book About Bullying: Changing the Course of Your Child's Life* by William Voors  
*Bullies, Targets and Witnesses* by Su Ellen Fried and Paula Fried, Ph.D.  
*The Bully Free Classroom* by Allan L. Beane, Ph. D.  
*Bully Busters: A Teacher's Manual for Helping Bullies, Victims and Bystanders* by Arthur M. Horner

## Arizona's Academic Standards

Your visit to the theater and the preparation and follow up activities can involve many content areas from the Arizona Department of Education K-12 Academic Standards. Many of the suggested discussion topics and activities can be tied to several standards. For example, a Math activity on creating Story Problems can fulfill standards in the areas of math, language arts and the arts (theater).

To access the K-12 standards go to:  
**www.ade.state.az.us/standards/contentstandards.asp**

We are always looking for ways to help you prepare your students for the theatre experience and at the same time fulfill curriculum and standards requirements. If you have any suggestions as to how we might improve in this area, please email Katie McFadzen at kmcfadzen@childsplayaz.org

We appreciate your input!