



Sideways Stories from Wayside School

By Louis Sachar
Adapted for the stage by John Olive

Directed by
David Saar

Scenic Design by
Robert Klingelhoef

Costume Design by
Liz Ihlenfeld

Lighting Design by
Tracy Odishaw

Video and Sound Design by
Adam Larsen

Stage Manager
Samantha Ries

THE CAST

Mrs. Gorf and Others Jon Gentry
Dameon D. Scott Withers
Myron Gordon Waggoner
Rhondi. Andréa Morales
Bebe Angelica Frost
Leslie/Miss Valoosh. Katie McFadzen
Louis. Dwayne Hartford
Mrs. Jewls. Debra K. Stevens
or Jodie L. Weiss

Herberger Theater, Center Stage, Sept./Oct. 2003

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Arizona Commission on the Arts
Boeing ECF
City of Tempe/Tempe Municipal Arts Commission
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Scottsdale Cultural Council
Tempe Diablos



Preview Guide for Teachers and Parents to Childsplay's Production of Sideways Stories From Wayside School

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...

In this wacky world, life lessons come flying from every angle. Based on a popular series of children's books by Louis Sachar, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* brings to life an elementary school thirty stories high where the oddest things can happen (the architect accidentally built a school containing thirty classrooms stacked one upon the other instead of one containing thirty classrooms on ground level...he did say he was sorry, though). Wicked teachers turn students to apples. Tornado drills are the norm. Public address systems sprout mouths and tongues and warn of wandering cows. Missing floors and mythical teachers turn out to be real (and intriguingly intertwined). The students deal with various traumas including: not being able to count correctly, the horrors of having pigtails that literally scream to be pulled, and evil substitute teachers.

It's a fun-filled ride, as nationally recognized playwright John Olive brings Sachar's amazing stories to the stage, along with some wonderful truths about living.

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.

- ◆ 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!

Things To Talk About And Do Before Seeing the Show...

Read the Books!

The play is based on the Wayside School series that includes: *Sideways Stories From Wayside School*, *Wayside School Gets A Little Stranger*, *Wayside School is Falling Down*, *Sideways Arithmetic from Wayside School*, and *More Sideways Arithmetic from Wayside School*.

Read Sachar's books as a class in one (or more) of several ways: by reading aloud to the class, by assigning students different chapters to read aloud, by dividing into teams and assigning different books to be read and reviewed or by getting Sachar books on tape and listening to them as a class.

Talk About Louis Sachar!

Pronunciation: SACK er



Louis Sachar was born in 1954 in East Meadow, New York, moved to Southern California when he was nine, and now lives in Austin, Texas.

Louis's first book for children, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* was accepted for publication during his first week of law school. While attending college, he went to work at an elementary school, where he was asked to be the "Noon Time Supervisor" to watch over the kids during lunch. He played games with the kids and earned the nickname, "Louis, the Yard Teacher." Although Louis graduated and passed the bar exam, he decided to be a full-time writer for children rather than a lawyer.

Louis met his wife, Carla, when he was a visiting author at a school in Texas. She was a counselor at the same school. She was the inspiration behind the counselor in *There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom*. They have a daughter, Sherre, who was born in 1987. She was four years old when he started writing the *Marvin Redpost* series and that is why Marvin has a four-year-old sister.

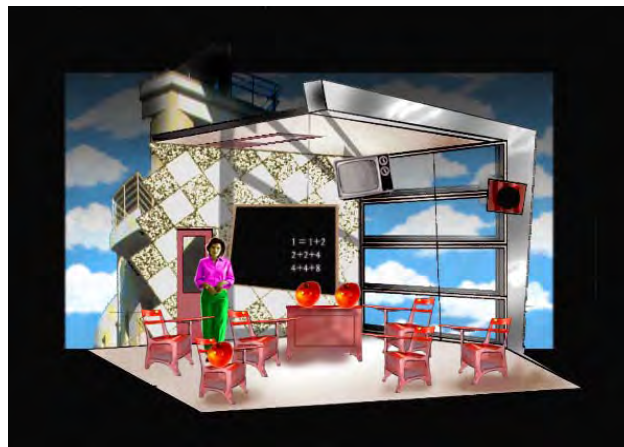
Louis likes to play chess and cards, ski, play the guitar (and sing loudly), but mostly he likes spending time with Carla and Sherre.

In an interview, Louis Sachar stated that his advice to kids is to: "Read, find out what you like to read, and try to figure out what it is about it that makes you like it."

Once You've Read Sideways Stories Talk About...

Following the Rules: In the *Sideways Stories* series, students are punished in ridiculous ways for harmless behavior. Discuss some of these punishments. What is appropriate behavior and punishment in school? Do you feel like you have ever been punished unfairly?

School Anxiety: Everyone has anxiety about school. Some children have fears about other children bullying them, some become nervous when faced with taking a test or doing an assignment, and others experience shyness toward certain teachers. Sometimes rumors get started about how "mean" a certain teacher is or how "scary" it is to visit the school nurse! Even teachers have anxiety! The students at Wayside School have many reasons to feel anxious, nervous or afraid in their school. What causes you to feel anxiety? How do you feel the night before a test? Have you ever felt afraid to go to school because someone was teasing you or because you felt shy? How do you feel when you have to get up in front of the class and read something or do a math problem on the board?



Scenic Design by Robert Klingelhoef

Surrealism: The play has many elements of surrealism in it. Surrealism is a 20th-century literary and artistic movement that attempts to express the workings of the subconscious and is characterized by fantastic imagery and incongruous juxtaposition of subject matter. Preview the topic of surrealism by looking at artists from that movement (Dali, Magritte, etc.). A good way to introduce surrealism is to discuss dreams. What do you remember about dreams? Are there times when your dreams seem so weird that you don't understand them? Are there images in your dreams that don't seem to connect to one another? Discuss ways in which *Sideways Stories* seems surreal or dream-like (e. g. the wandering cow or the talking pigtailed).

Page to Stage: *Sideways Stories From Wayside School* was adapted for the stage by playwright John Olive and premiered at Seattle Children's Theatre. When reading the books, it's hard to imagine how they could be translated to the stage because so many strange and magical things happen. A team of designers works with the director to create the world of the play. The scenic designer, costume designer, lighting designer and sound/video designer all have to work together to help bring the play to life. Here are some of the design renderings for our production:

Costume Designs by Liz Ihlenfeld



Mr. Pickle



Miss Valoosh

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

Discussion Topics:

- ▶ 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?
- ▶ How is the play different from the books? In what ways is it similar?
- ▶ Of the many design elements, (costumes, lights, scenery, etc.) which was your favorite and why?
- ▶ If you could play any character in the play, which would you choose? Why?

Activities to Try!

Art:

Surrealism: Create your own surreal painting using paint, crayons or colored pencils. Look at the works of surreal artists as examples. Start by thinking about an interesting dream you had. Dreams often contain images that don't relate to one another, put together in ways that don't always make sense. If you can't remember a dream, consider combining images into a situation that couldn't exist, such as animals driving cars. For other great art activity ideas, go to www.crayola.com and enter surrealism in the search box!

Architecture: What would your school look like if all of the rooms had been built on top of one another? As a class, create your own version of Wayside School! Start by choosing one room to draw. Draw the room as if you took one wall out and were looking



into it. Next, find a wall where you can display your school. Stack the pictures on top of one another until your school is complete. Put the flagpole on top!

Set and Costume Design:

Create your own costume or set design for an imaginary production of *Sideways Stories*. How would you create the classroom? What would you make Mrs. Gorf (or another character) look like? Challenge: Make your designs different from Childsplay's production!

Math:

Sideways Story Problems:

In teams, create 3 story problems based on Wayside School characters and situations. Then, trade with another group and see which group can solve the problems first! Here's an example: If Mrs. Jewls makes \$39,202.98 per year, how much does she make per week? Per day? For other examples, go to www.abcteach.com.



Creative Drama

Page to Stage: As a class or in teams, find a story or part of a story (any of the *Sideways Stories* would be fun) that you could bring to life! Talk about people, place and problem, then decide on who will play the characters. Next, play out the story making sure it has a beginning, middle and end. Run through the story a few times and then share with the class or another audience!

P.E./Dance:

Miss Valoosh's Tango: Learn the tango and create a short

performance piece complete with music and costume pieces. Research the tango on the internet for help!



Music:

What's a Mooglatch? Mrs.

Jewls gives the students musical instruments like the krullwart and the snorple. Create your own instruments using found objects. Give your instrument a made up name and then perform a symphony with the rest of the class!

Creative

Writing/Literature:

Color Poems: In the play, Mrs. Jewls asks the students to pick a color and write a poem about it. Choose a color that you like and write a 5 to 7 line poem about it! For challenging color choices go to a box of crayons and you'll find colors like periwinkle and salmon. Can you find words that rhyme with periwinkle?

Short Stories: The *Sideways Stories* series is a collection of short stories that all have to do with the daily experiences at Wayside School. Add to these stories by creating your own based on Wayside School. Better yet, create "sideways stories" using your own school and teachers as the subjects!

Miss Mush's Menu: Miss Mush is the cafeteria lady. She has bizarre menu choices like Baked Liver with Purple Sauce. Come up with your own menu items and write recipes for them! Mrs. Gorf's Apple Pie might be a good suggestion to start with (since she turns kids into apples, can you imagine what the ingredients for her pie might be... YUCK).

Sideways Stories from Wayside School Booklist

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



You will love these other Wayside School books by Louis Sachar:

Wayside School Gets A Little Stranger
Wayside School is Falling Down
Sideways Arithmetic from Wayside School
More Sideways Arithmetic from Wayside School

If you like Wayside School, you might like these other great reads from the author Louis Sachar:

Holes
Stanley Yelnats' Survival Guide to Camp Green Lake
There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom
Dogs Don't Tell Jokes

For younger readers, Louis Sachar has written the Marvin Redpost Series including:

Marvin Redpost: Kidnapped at Birth
Marvin Redpost: Is He a Girl?

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

If you liked the Sideways Stories series, try reading the *A Series of Unfortunate Events* books by Lemony Snicket including:

The Bad Beginning
The Reptile Room
The Wide Window
The Hostile Hospital
The Vile Village



Go to this fantastic website for more information!
www.lemonysnicket.com

Some Internet Sites of Interest

www.cbcbooks.org/html/louissachar.html

Interview with Louis Sachar

www.booksontape.com

Would you rather listen to Sachar's stories? This is great site to order Sachar books on tape!

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/sachar.htm>

The Louis Sachar Teacher Resource Page

www.carr.org/authco/sacbibliography.htm

A decent bibliography of Sachar's work through 1999

www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE32.html

A reader's theater script of *Sideways Stories* that you can use in class

www.dancepatterns.com

A cool site that teaches dance steps (like Miss Valoosh's tango) by giving you dance patterns in motion!

www.archkidecture.org

FOR KIDS! About all aspects of architecture

www.educationindex.com

Annotated guide great education related web sites

www.childdrama.com/lessons/html

A site with TONS of lesson ideas and activities related to theatre and drama

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, the 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!

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