



This is Not a Pipe Dream

by Barry Kornhauser

Directed by **Anthony Runfola**

Scenic Design by **Katherina Hantke**

Costume Design by **D. Daniel Hollingshead**

Projection & Sound Design by **Anthony Runfola**

Stage Manager: **Samantha Ries**

The Cast

Interlocuter. Jessica Blaszak
 Mother/Teacher/Georgette. Alette Valencia
 Father. Cale Epps
 René. Eric Zaklukiewicz

Field Trips October/November, 2005

School Tour November 2005- June 2006

Tempe Performing Arts Center, May 2006

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Bashas'

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City of Tempe / Tempe Municipal Arts Commission

The Medtronic Foundation

National Endowment for the Arts

Pacific Life Foundation

Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture

Scottsdale Cultural Council

The Eliot Spalding Foundation

The Stocker Foundation

Tucson/Pima Arts Council

Wells Fargo

Preview Guide for Parents and Teachers to Childsplay's Production of

This is Not a Pipe Dream

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.

About the Play:

Young René Magritte is beginning to envision the world not as it is but as it *might* be. Although his father calls his desire to become an artist "a pipe dream," with his mother's encouragement René follows his vision into the delightful absurdity of the paintings we've come to love. An unorthodox adventure featuring fanciful slapstick and a dash of Keystone Cops, *This Is Not A Pipe Dream* looks at the life and work of a singular surrealist painter—and at the very nature of art itself.

This might sound a bit abstract for the average five-year-old but do not fear! This is a play which will be enjoyed and appreciated on a number of levels and should provide everyone with plenty of laughs *and* something to think about afterwards. The youngest of audiences will be amused by the slapstick antics of the cast, by chases and hat tricks, by physical humor and word plays. They will also readily understand the simple story of a boy, encouraged to pursue his interest in art by his mother, but whose father thought art a waste of time, a foolish "pipe dream."

Older audiences will gain a wealth of other insights into Magritte, a painter who preferred to be described as "a thinker who communicates by means of paint," his childhood, his art, and the images which were meaningful to him. They will be introduced to the more serious subjects of reality and illusion, words and their relationship to the objects they describe, and the nature of art and the artistic process.

Arizona Academic Standards:

Your visit to the theater as well as 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 standards in several areas. We have included some standard connections that are noted in parenthesis. *If you would like a more detailed list of standard connections for your particular grade we would be happy to assist.* Simply email Katie McFadzen at kmcfadzen@childsplayaz.org or call 480-350-8105.

Things to Talk About Before the Production

The Artist

René Francois-Ghislin Magritte was born in 1898 in Lessines, Belgium. His family was solidly middle-class: his father, Leopold, was a tailor and textile merchant and his mother, Régina, a milliner. Magritte was the oldest of three brothers. Most accounts of Magritte's cheerless childhood include the fact that he and a playmate enjoyed exploring cemeteries, being particularly fascinated by burial vaults, which they opened and investigated. This experience would prove a great influence upon his later artwork, as wooden caskets and granite tombstones recur in many of his paintings. René's mother encouraged his artistic pursuits, while her husband was clearly disapproving. He first took drawing lessons at the age of 12. His mother committed suicide in a nearby river when he was 14. She was found with her nightgown wrapped around her face. Some critics point out that several of the subjects in Magritte's paintings are veiled in white sheets as a reference to his mother's suicide. René studied art in Brussels at the Academy of Fine Art. In 1922 he married Georgette Berger, whom he had first met at the age of 13. Soon after getting married, Magritte supported Georgette and himself by painting wallpaper designs and designing posters, devoting only his free time to serious painting. He was profoundly influenced by a painting he saw in 1922, Chirico's "The Song of Love" and his style of painting changed from that point on. His first one-man show was in 1927 and it received harsh criticism. The Magrittes



apparently led quite a suburban life, in direct contrast to his paintings which are by turns disturbing, amusing, unconventional and intriguing. Magritte painted in realistic style, with crisp lines and sharp edges. He took familiar objects from everyday life (apples, shoes, bowler hats, birds, clouds) but he positioned these objects in a way that challenged the rational order. His compositions are known for their juxtaposition of common objects, often skewed in scale and placed in incongruous and bizarre settings. René Magritte died of cancer in 1967.

Magritte's Techniques

Magritte used many different techniques in his art. Talk about these terms while looking at examples of his art.

- ~**Dislocation:** something "out of place" (a train emerging from a fireplace)
- ~**Transformation:** merging two objects (an object which appears to be a bottle turning into a carrot)
- ~**Dramatic Scale Change:** objects that are much larger or smaller than real life (a wine glass large enough to fill a room)
- ~**Incongruence:** something that does not fit with the normal order of things (a ship silhouette filled with ocean)
- ~**Replacement:** part of objects or figures changing place (figure of an adult woman with the head of a baby holding a baby with the head of a woman)
- ~**Levitation:** something that floats in space (an apple floats in front of a face)

Surrealism

Surrealism is a movement in art and literature that tried to represent the subconscious mind by creating fantastic imagery and juxtaposing elements that seem to contradict each other. The term surrealism literally means "over-realism." The movement was founded in the 1920s and included not only painters but also spilled over into poetry, music and theater. Surrealists aim to liberate the imagination and the unconscious

mind, and celebrate the freedom of the artist from rational thought. Many surrealist works were pure fantasy, reconstructing the world of dreams, hallucination and the grotesque. Magritte disassociated himself from the movement after several ideological disagreements.

The Title

The title of the play is an excellent example of the kind of wit and word play that abounds in *This is Not a Pipe Dream*. One of Magritte's most well known paintings is a realistic representation of a pipe. Underneath is written "*Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe*" (this is not a pipe) illustrating his opinion that his painting is definitely not "the real thing" but merely a painting of a pipe. As pointed out in the play, an apple and a stone are, in reality, very different things, but in art they are the same, just pigment on canvas. Nor is a play "real life" but "the performing artist's living canvas." For this reason, the actor who plays Magritte is always referred to as René and never Magritte "for he is no more Magritte than this pipe is a pipe or a play is real life." Father holds the opinion that René's plan to become an artist is nothing but a pipe dream. A pipe dream is defined in the play as "any fantastic hope or wish that could never be fulfilled." Thus, the title: *This Is Not A Pipe Dream*. The "play on words" continues throughout the script. Father is told to "pipe down" and later the French pronunciation of pipe (peep) becomes a joke during a scene in which René's father says "not another word, not a peep."



Theater Etiquette

(3AT-R2) It's helpful to review the rules of theater etiquette before seeing a show especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students. Please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance.

- ◆ Stay seated during the performance.
- ◆ Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance.
- ◆ Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.
- ◆ Use of cell phones, cameras and any other recording device is not allowed at any time during the performance!

Things To Talk About After Seeing the Play...

*(3AT-R1) 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? What happens at the beginning of the play? The middle? The end?

*René's mother tells him he must always honor his dreams. Talk about what she means by this. What is a good way to honor our dreams?

*René "lost" his mother in the play. What does that mean? Have you ever lost someone or something you cared very much about? How did it make you feel?

Arts and Language Arts Activities to Try After Seeing the Play...

Creative Drama

(1AT-R3, 1AT-F1):

*In the play, René's mother and father have different ideas about the subject of his art lessons. In pairs, play out a scene between his parents in which they discuss whether or not René will be

allowed to have lessons. Decide who wins the argument and why. Share with the class and discuss your discoveries.

*In groups of 3 or 4, create a realistic scene using a combination of ordinary objects that would not normally be connected (apple, clock, bowler hat, and tuba, for example). Come up with a list of objects by having each student write down one idea on a piece of paper. Put all of the pieces of paper into a hat and have each group pick four. The group must come up with a scene that incorporates all 4 objects in some way (using pantomime and dialogue), has a beginning, middle and end and as well as people, in a place, with a problem (character, setting, conflict). Share the scenes with the class.

Surreal Collages

(1AV-R4, 1AV-F2): Now that you looked at some of Magritte's artwork and know about the techniques he used (on previous page), try and incorporate at least 2 of those techniques into this project. Use magazine cuttings or printed images from the internet to create your own collage in the style of Magritte! Give your art a title, describe what you've created to the class and display in your school.

Dream Journals (Strand 2, Concepts 3& 4):

Remembering our dreams can be difficult at times. It's best to try and write them down right when you wake up because they are fresh in your mind. Sometimes something will happen during the day that triggers a memory. Keep your journal close so you can write dreams down as you remember them. Keep track of your dreams every day for a week (or more). In addition to entries about actual dreams, write entries about the dreams you have for yourself, your life, your family, or the world! Focus on finding your own voice

and using descriptive language to help your reader "see" your ideas.

Dream Illustrations (1AV-R2):

The dreams we have when we're asleep tend to be very surreal. Now that you have some dreams written down in your journal, choose one that you can illustrate. Use crayons, markers, or colored pencils to create a picture of your dream. Focus on communicating thoughts, ideas and feelings. Give it a title and share with the class. Create a *Dream Gallery* in your classroom or school.

The Exquisite Corpse:

This technique or game used by Surrealists is a method by which a collection of words or images is collectively assembled, the result being known as the "exquisite corpse." You can always change the title if you find it too morbid!

This is how it works:

The Writing Version-

Start off by creating an interesting sentence or theme (like "the dark sky hung over us" or "Peace"). Divide into groups of four. Fold a piece of paper into four sections. One at a time, write down a sentence that connects to the sentence or theme you have chosen, making sure the next person doesn't see what has already been written. Unfold the paper and have one person from the group read it aloud to the class.

The Drawing Version-

Decide on what you will draw (a body, monster, building or a free-form drawing in response to a word or theme). Fold a piece of paper into four sections. The first person draws on the top section, extending the lines just over the fold; the next person draws on the second section extending the lines just over the fold and so on. If you are drawing a body, for example, you might want to suggest dividing the body into four sections. Unfold and analyze. Hang around the class.

The Evolution of Art During Magritte's Career

René Magritte started painting in the 1920s and continued into the 1960s. Styles of art, music, theater and dance went through a huge evolution during the 20th century. Divide the class into 5 groups and assign each group a decade (1920's-1960s) to research what was happening in art, music, theater and dance during their assigned period. It can be as simple as finding an example from each area or as complex as adding fashion and cultural trends. Encourage the use of pictures, drawings, recordings, demonstration and props for a final presentation to the class. Divide a wall in your classroom into 5 sections so each decade can be represented in a display. You may even want to add historical events in a timeline format.

This is Not a Pipe Dream Booklist:

Prepared with the help of Tim Wadham, Youth Services Coordinator for the Maricopa County Library District



Recommended Reading

Art

Seen Art? By Jon Scieska and Lane Smith
I Spy: An Alphabet in Art by Lucy Micklethwait
I Spy: Shapes in Art by Lucy Micklethwait
You Can't Take a Balloon into the Metropolitan Museum
by Jacqueline Preiss Weitzman
The Dot by Peter Reynolds
The Art Lesson by Tomie De Paola

Surrealism

Math-terpieces: The Art of Problem Solving by Greg Tang
Surrealism by Linda Bolton
Salvador Dali by Mike Venezia

Reality vs. Illusion

Virtual Reality: Experiencing Illusion by Christopher. W. Baker
Chasing Vermeer by Blue Balliet
The Great Good Thing by Roderick Townley
Into the Labyrinth by Roderick Townley

Self-Discovery

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E. L. Konigsburg
Call Me Maria by Judith Ortiz Cofer
Jip: His Story by Katherine Paterson
Sammy Keyes and the Art of Deception by Wendelin Van Draanen

Honoring Your Dreams

Fanny's Dream by Caralyn Buehner
Lily at Ballet by Rachel Isadora
Puppeteer's Apprentice by Anne D. Love
An Angel for Solomon Singer by Cynthia Rylant



Physical Comedy

The Teacher's Funeral: A Comedy in Three Parts by Richard Peck
Dog's Don't Tell Jokes by Louis Sachar
Art Dog by Thacher Hurd

All materials are available through your local library. Check it out!

"I seek to uncover a real world we think we know but don't know at all."

René Magritte

Interesting Internet Sites:

These are great sites for information on Magritte and surrealism. Due to the content of some of Magritte's paintings, the sites are recommended for adults.

www.atara.net/magritte

www.magritte.com

www.artcyclopedia.com/history/surrealism.html

www.surrealist.com

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