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# Adapting The End: Responding to Standards of Learning in Theatre for Children

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ADAPTING *THE END*: RESPONDING TO STANDARDS OF LEARNING IN  
THEATRE FOR CHILDREN

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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## Abstract

### ADAPTING *THE END*: RESPONDING TO STANDARDS OF LEARNING IN THEATRE FOR CHILDREN

By Jamie Lish, BS

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2009

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Theatre is the passport to the creation of a balanced educational system in the United States (US), while standardized testing is the downfall of the ideology behind ‘No Child Left Behind’ (NCLB). As an educator, I was greatly influenced by Howard Gardner, theorist of Multiple Intelligences and Neil Fleming theorist of learning modalities. This work has carried over into my work in theatre as a director. Theatre does not have to didactically serve formal education, which emphasizes mathematics and reading/writing, nor does it have to be merely a spectacle. Theatre can be experimental, artistic, cathartic,

foster social and intrapersonal skills and increase intelligences in all areas for children and adults.

The adaptation of the children's book *The End* by David LaRochelle into a play for children demonstrates the potential that lies within the art of theatre to be more than just entertainment. Furthermore, my work on the adaptation of *The End* was greatly influenced by my research and participation in the production of *Pinocchio* with Ohio Valley Summer Theatre in the fall of 2008. From this production, I gained considerable knowledge on the topic of Commedia Del' Arte which impacted my work on my own production *The End*.

## **Introduction**

Theatre is the passport to the creation of a balanced educational system in the United States (US), while standardized testing is the downfall of the ideology behind ‘No Child Left Behind’ (NCLB). According to US Department of Education’s website, “No Child Left Behind is based on stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents” (Overview-Four Pillars). In essence, the program was created to ensure that no child would slip through the cracks in the educational system. That is, all children would be able to reach their full potential instead of living a life of unrealized prospects. In the best situation, this is a noble task and holds school systems to be accountable for the education of our youth. However, in my experience, pressure to get test scores up can cause teachers to spend excessive amounts of time on the skills of mathematics and reading/writing. Creative classes in the arts, such as painting, drawing, music and even some sports, are seeing cutbacks. As a result, students who shine in these areas are limited in creative outlets and positive reinforcement in subjects in which they excel. Simply stated, theatre provides students with a practical working knowledge and application for all areas of intelligences. Theatre does not have to didactically serve formal education, which emphasizes mathematics and reading/writing, nor does it have to be merely a spectacle. However, the

use of theatre within the educational system will not detract from the need for a basic understanding of mathematics and reading/writing but rather reinforce a practical usage for these areas. Students often wonder why they have to learn a subject matter because they do not believe it is practical to 'real life.' When students do not understand why they are learning something, they do not take it seriously. If, however, the students are provided with real life scenarios for learning subject matter they are more likely to retain relevant information.

Theatre for children can also be experimental, artistic, and invoke catharsis for a young audience. Howard Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University, has done extensive work in charting out eight recognized areas of intelligence. Gardner's view on education is quite telling, "In my view, the purpose of school should be to develop intelligences and to help people reach vocational and avocational goals that are appropriate to their particular spectrum of intelligences. People who are helped to do so, I believe, feel more engaged and competent and therefore more inclined to serve society in a constructive way" (Gardner 50). Gardner's view may seem a little utopian but it is in line with the four pillars set forth by the US Board of education's NCLB. It is a shame that more people are not aware of his theory behind intelligences. Another theorist that has affected my work in both education and theatre is Neil Fleming of Lincoln University, New Zealand. Fleming is known for his extensive work on the subject of learning styles. He believes that there are four learning modalities by which people learn. There are Visual learners, Auditory learners, those who learn best through Reading/writing and those that learn Kinetically. In short, his work is widely known as the acronym VARKS. Both Gardner's and Fleming's

work has certainly made an impact on my work in education and in theatre. Theatre can be used as a medium of fostering learning in not just the areas of reading and mathematics but in all areas of intelligences.

When I was a child, my mother babysat my cousins and friends all summer. We spent much time outdoors playing and pretending. From an early age, I can remember taking books and stories that I liked and then adapting them into plays. I would have my younger brother, cousins and friends perform the adaptations for our parents. Two years ago, I was involved with a theatre company called Southern Maryland Actors Repertory Theatre (SMART). With this company, I co-wrote an adaptation of *Hansel and Gretel* by the brothers Grim. I also played Gretel in the production. It was a great learning experience for me and no doubt helped to play a role in the forming of my adaptation of *The End*. In both cases, it was necessary to convert a narrative story into a play with actual dialogue between characters. The dialogue had to flow like normal conversation and reinforce the relationships between the characters. Equally as important, the dialogue also had to support and further the plot of the original story instead of detracting from it or running wild away from the main points of the story.

In the summer of 2005, a year prior to working on *Hansel and Gretel*, I was teaching summer school for second graders in Charles County, Maryland. While I was teaching that summer, I picked up a book called *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch* by Trinka Hakes Noble. Immediately after reading the book, I began to think about how I could adapt it into a play. This was one of the first books I had considered adapting in such a way since I was a child. I was intrigued by the plotline and the twists and turns that

unfolded. The book was imaginative, entertaining and thought provoking for a young reader. This book could spark a child's curiosity about what happens at home when they are not around. Since children often wonder what happens when they are forced to go to sleep or to school, I believe this book could really speak to a child. The setting of the book is somewhere in the Western part of the United States. Farmer Hicks goes to the town of Sleepy Gulch to see what is new. He watches a game of chess, gets his whiskers cut, watches a turtle cross the street and eats eight different styles of potato dishes for lunch. Meanwhile back at the ranch, his wife Elna has won contests for the house, inherits a sum of money, stars in a movie and is named as a diplomat by the President of the United States. In addition, the cat has had kittens, the dog, puppies, the cows, calves and so on. Despite all of this, Elna wonders about what she has missed in town. When Farmer Hicks arrives back home, he is surprised to find all that has occurred in his absence. The contrasting storylines for Farmer Hicks and Elna provide an entertaining and captivating story for children. At that time, I considered adapting the book into a play at some point in the future but did not have the opportunity to do anything about it for years.

It was not until last spring that I again considered turning *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch* into a play again. At this time, I was a teacher's aide in a behaviorally challenged classroom in the local Richmond area. One of my responsibilities was to take the students to the library and read to them. One day, a little boy in the class picked up the book *The End* by David LaRochelle. I began to read the book with the student and we created voices for all of the characters together. Before we had finished reading the book, I had a group of students sitting around the table listening to the story. Later, we read the book for the

class and, again, all of the students enjoyed the text. As I was reading the story aloud, I was taken with the simplistic yet creative plot, as well as the pictures.

The book starts at the end of the chronological story with a wedding between the Soggy Knight and the Clever Princess. The Soggy Knight fell in love with the Clever Princess because she poured a bowl of lemonade on his head. She poured a bowl of lemonade on his head because his curly red beard was on fire. His curly red beard was on fire because he had been tickling a dragon. He had been tickling a dragon because one hundred bunny rabbits jumped into the dragon's cave to escape a giant tomato. The story continues to work its way backwards to the decision that started the whole story, which was the princess' decision to make a big bowl of lemonade. When I first read the book, I thought the idea behind it was innovative and unique. Because of my involvement with elementary schools, I knew that learning cause and effect is an important skill for students to possess.

Children at this age do not always have the ability to determine the cause and effect relationships, nor consequences of actions, for that matter. Not only is this ability important for children's development, but also the ability to determine cause and effect relationships is considered a skill and is often a part of standardized testing. By making theatre for children that emphasizes specific skills, like the relationship between cause and effect, children are able to learn in nontraditional means. Testing in education has been a focal point for a long time, and even more so in recent years with the induction of 'No child left behind'. As an elementary school teacher there were several times where I had to focus my lessons primarily on skills tested on the statewide testing while making the

information interesting and relevant to my students. Theatre productions like *The End* allow students to still learn the skills they need through nontraditional but effective means.

It was no surprise to me when I read the children's book *The End* last spring that I almost instantaneously began to think about the adapting the charming and innovative story into a play, for several reasons. First, the children in the class I was an aide for were so taken with the story that I wanted to do something that had potential for captivating a larger audience. Secondly, I thought the creation of dialogue between characters for the scenes would be an interesting challenge.

When I first decided to do the show, I only had a vague idea of how to go about writing a script and an even vaguer idea of the steps I would have to go through to produce the show. I knew that I had to contact the author of the book to make sure it was okay to produce the show. As I would not be asking any money for the show, my chances of producing the show were good. Initially, I was torn between ideas for venues. I wanted to either produce the show in Shafer Street Playhouse at Virginia Commonwealth University or take the show on tour to local elementary schools. In the end, I decided to take the show to an elementary school where I currently work as an instructor with the School of Performing Arts in the Richmond Community, (SPARC).

Once I received permission from the Ms. Hakes Noble and Mr. LaRochelle to adapt their books, I began considering possibilities for adaptations. It was suggested to me at the time that I focus on one story at a time so I chose to do *The End*. I chose this for two reasons. Firstly, the book was fresher in my mind and I had more ideas about its



adaptation. Secondly, Ms. Hakes Noble also told me that her book had already been converted into a play.

Initially, I was stuck on the idea that I would need to build a castle and heavy set pieces for *The End*. However, my grandiose ideas were throwing a monkey wrench into my plans of taking the show of the road to elementary schools. I would not have a small army to help load the sets and transport them. Furthermore, I would not have a budget big enough to create costumes and set. I put the script aside several times and it was not until the fall of 2008, when I began to learn more about Commedia Del' Arte, that I began to have a revelation.

In the fall of 2008, I had an opportunity to research Commedia Del' Arte for dramaturgical work on the children's show *Pinocchio*, written by Katherine Schultz Miller. While learning about this style of performance, I rethought my angle of converting *The End* into a play. The style of Commedia del' Arte incorporates masks for its characters and I wanted to utilize those masks for the many characters that are in *The End*. Since there are so many characters in the story, I thought the addition of the mask would help the actors to take on different personas for each character. In addition, I found the movement associated with Commedia interesting. In the style, characters look where they are going first, then to the audience and then move to the spot they had just looked. By incorporating the movement and mask traits from Commedia, I hoped to draw attention to the style of Commedia and the various styles of theatre. Another aspect of the Commedia style was the use of lazzi. Lazzi are comical bits that the performers use to keep their audiences attention or provide comedic relief. *The End* worked very well with the style of

Commedia as it was very movement based, had multiple characters and comical in nature. While Commedia is improvisational in nature, I still believe that it is possible to use the style to tell the story of *The End*.

One of the goals in producing *The End* was to provide both an educational and entertaining show for students in grades K-5. My desire with this production was to get students and teachers interested in using plays as an effective teaching tool. In this document, I will first describe my teaching experience, then the work I have done with theatre for children. I will focus on the production of *Pinocchio* I recently did with Ohio Valley Summer Theatre (OVST). The research that I did for *Pinocchio* paved the way for my research and production of *The End*.

## **CHAPTER 1 Teaching Experience**

Do you have a latent intelligence that was not enriched by formalized education? Unless you excelled in mathematics or linguistics, your innate intelligences were probably not enhanced during regular school hours. Even if you do happen to shine in one or both of these areas, did you know that there are currently eight recognized areas of intelligence? What is your learning style? That is, how do you learn best? Are you more of a Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing or Kinetic/Tactile learner? Does it really matter?

It does matter because our school system, and our society, pushes mathematical and linguistic intelligences above all others. Those students born with innate abilities in both areas excel and are held in the highest of esteem. However, those students who do not excel in these areas get lost in the shuffle of formal education. No Child Left Behind holds school systems accountable for criteria in both the areas of mathematics and linguistics, but it fails miserably in the assessment of the remaining six intelligences. I believe that theatre can serve as a medium to help foster understanding and knowledge of all intelligences as it incorporates each of them in the creation of performance.

I received my Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Towson University and my program emphasized the importance of different learning styles and

areas of intelligence. We were required to consider learning styles and multiple intelligences for every lesson plan. Everyone has a different strength for learning. For example, visual learners need visual stimuli for learning such as graphs, videos, and pictures. Auditory learners can listen to a lecture, retain a lot of information, and generally write down poor notes. However, other people need to write down information in order for it to be retained. There are also those who learn by doing and those who need to get it in their bodies. Teachers today, have to consider all of these elements when considering a lesson plan.

Most primary and secondary school teachers agree on the importance of including exercises in lessons that do not put any one student at a disadvantage. In his book *The Development and Education of the Mind*, Dr. Howard Gardner states,

“The real point here is to make the case for the plurality of intellect. Also, we believe that individuals may differ in the particular intelligence profiles with which they are born, and that certainly they differ in the profiles they end up with. I think of the intelligences as raw, biological potentials, which can be seen in pure form only in individuals who are, in the technical sense, freaks. In almost everybody else the intelligences work together to solve problems, to yield various kinds of cultural end states – vocations, avocations, and the like” (Gardner 50).

Humans are complex beings and we all individually have our own mixture of intelligences that deserve to be enhanced. It is also important to briefly take notice that intelligences can change over time and with practice. This is also true for learning styles. However, most

people tend to have innate tendencies and abilities in certain areas and with certain learning styles. Gardner identifies the Intelligences as

“Linguistic intelligence (‘word smart’), Logical-mathematical intelligence (‘number/reasoning smart’), Spatial intelligence (‘picture smart’) Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence (‘body smart’) Musical intelligence (‘music smart’) Interpersonal intelligence (‘people smart’) Intrapersonal intelligence (‘self smart’) and Naturalist intelligence (‘nature smart’)” (Gardner 49-51).

In the same way that modifications are made to lesson plans, in order to allow for students with special needs, so too should lesson plans include activities that incorporate a combination of several intelligences. I believe that most education programs are changing; or they were, until the No Child Left Behind program infiltrated the schools. When I was in school earning my Bachelor’s degree, I had grandiose ideas of what I wanted to teach students and how I could be creative with the implementation of my lessons. However, when I got my own classroom reality set in quickly. I was faced with the actuality of ‘teaching to the test’ or teaching to produce test scores, and consequentially, I was conflicted. On one hand, my desire was to create lessons in all areas of intelligences to demonstrate to the students their seemingly limitless potential, versus adhering to the curriculum standards of learning.

Standards of Learning (SOL)’s are achievement expectations set forth by school systems to ensure learning by grade level is standardized. When I was teaching elementary school I had a curriculum guide, which I was required to follow with my students. In fact, every teacher in the county was required to follow the outlined curriculum by grade level

and each county in Maryland has its own curriculum as determined by the school board to be taught. It is helpful to have all of the information that needs to be taught in a year laid out for you. However, the curriculum often does not allow enough time for students to really learn a subject. It seems as though there is always something else to teach and hardly any time for retention.

On his website, Neil Fleming describes in brief detail the learning modalities associated with VARKS. Fleming claimed, “that visual learners have a preference for seeing (think in pictures; visual aids such as overhead slides, diagrams, handouts, etc.). Auditory learners best learn through listening (lectures, discussions, tapes, etc.). Tactile/kinesthetic learners prefer to learn via experience—moving, touching, and doing (active exploration of the world; science projects; experiments, etc)” (Fleming).

When I taught fifth grade, I gave my students very basic Visual, Audio, Reading/writing and Kinetics or (VARKS) and Multiple Intelligence inventories at the beginning of the year to get to know them. What I found was that the students enjoyed learning about themselves too. It is important to note that a person's learning modality and intelligence in any one area is changeable and not static. At the end of the year, I would give the students the inventories again to see if they had adapted their learning styles or grown in any one area of intelligence. It was fascinating to see how they had grown. My reasoning for this awareness of learning styles and intelligences is simple but profound. I believe it lets the students know that even though they might not excel at math now, they could get better at it later. People are not sedentary and are capable of growing in many ways. Furthermore, if students excel at something that is not within the normal reigns of

the public education forum, then it is important for them to know they still have much to offer and to be proud of their uniqueness. How do we help to create a learning environment that feels safe enough for students to be creative without condemning them for their failures? After all, failing is an essential part of the learning process. As an elementary school teacher, I often sought out ways to integrate the arts into my classroom. I believe that there are multiple intelligences outside of the standardized testing realm. Some students really shine with their people skills and others have an innate inclination for music. When I taught fifth grade, many students did not know or had not been given the opportunity to find out their strengths and areas of improvement.

My experience teaching has given me a very glib account of the inner workings of a public school system. I am sure that other teachers have had completely different experiences than I have. Furthermore, It is hard to say what will be the result of the standardized testing in the end. I fear there is not enough importance placed on acknowledging and encouraging individual distinctive creativity. Theatre can encourage this creativity within students and still teach them necessary skills. The standardized testing does not allow for the assessment of all of the multiple intelligences. Students are tested in reading, writing, mathematics, science and history but they are not tested about various methods of arts. I believe that fear of failure is a social construct that is reinforced in us by our parents, siblings, peers, teachers, etc. Encouraging creativity and natural intelligence in children is imperative.

A friend of mine recently asked, “How do we as teachers encourage our students to be creative artists and let go of the inhibitions that have been reinforced with them since

childhood?" My response to him was that I do not know if you can reach all students. I believe that students must be ready and open to the possibilities within themselves before they will start to feel safe enough to try something in which they may fail. It is important to establish that failing is necessary for long-term growth and success. I believe the best thing you can do is to make your students aware that they are playing it safe and you would like to see them grow because you see the potential within them. Finally, I will now resort to quoting G.I. Joe, "And knowing is half the battle." Awareness truly is the first step in growing and changing.

Teachers need to be aware of the varying types of students they will have in their classes. As a teacher, I think it is important to have an incredibly huge bag of tricks to draw from in order to be most effective. I am always interested in reading or hearing about different acting exercises. Teachers should be open and honest with their students. They should be enthusiastic about the subject they teach and share that enthusiasm with their students. By creating a hook, a teacher might get a little more excited about the class themselves. This can lead to an essential element, good classroom dynamics.

Students need to possess their own intrinsic motivation to make the information relevant. Though this motivation occurs within the student inherently, it can be enhanced or fostered by teachers, parents, mentors, siblings and other peers. There are many classroom community-building activities recommended for the first class period and I have always found an introductory survey to be beneficial. If there is time, I also like to have the students take a learning styles inventory assessment. It is a great way for them to develop their metacognition of their own learning preferences. However, it is so easy to



get side tracked in such a situation, so being able to reign the class back in is essential.

Knowing learning modalities of students as well as their natural intelligences allowed me as their teacher to make lessons that complied with SOLs and the student's needs.

Educators must foster and fortify students as they grow and learn. I do understand how educators need to assess understanding through evaluations. However, I believe that the evaluations we currently have and the education we are forcing on children is really only aimed at creating academics or university professors. There are other jobs and careers for students and it is unfortunate that we do not give all students this equal opportunity to be themselves in school. It is important to help the students identify, utilize and eventually capitalize their own talents.

As an acting teacher, my main goal is to train students who are competent, self-reliant, creative, well rounded people who possess the ability to make it in this business. Within a collegiate theatre program, fostering learning and appreciation of the performing arts and motivates everyone involved (designers, actors, etc.) asserting oneself creatively towards the common goal of creating an extraordinary production. They should also have a firm understanding of how our art can and does impact the world. With support from a diverse and highly qualified faculty, I believe that we can provide an excellent environment in which to thrive. As educators, we should enrich and facilitate the students' academic and professional careers. Practitioners and teachers must be passionate, self-motivated, focused and hardworking and dedicated to the creation of live theatre. Therefore, I believe it is important to foster an understanding and appreciation for all aspects of our art to our students.

Last semester, I took a class on teaching acting, in which I read the article *Zen in the Art of Actor Training* by Robert Benedetti, a world-renowned acting teacher and director. In his article, he states, "...a professional is someone who professes an ethic, and that public art without ethic is empty of purpose and life" (Benedetti 93). As both a practitioner of theatre and a teacher of theatre, I believe it is important to bring ethics to both aspects of our lives. As practitioners, we need to understand that there is more to our art than just pure spectacle. We need substance and artistic integrity. As teachers, we owe such ethics to our students.

"The product of our training is not the student as a commodity but rather a preservation and expansion of the theatre itself, as it will live in the vision and abilities of our students. In this spirit, we do not teach the rules and formulas but rather assist the student in developing richer perceptions and capacities. To do this well requires infinite patience and humility" (Benedetti 104).

This is a tall order for any person, but he is right. A teacher does need both patience and humility in order to be effective. When I stopped teaching elementary school, I grappled with the notion that I would no longer be serving the greater good of society. I felt in many ways as if I was selfish by pursuing theatre as a profession. That is, until I had a realization that I could still make a difference, I could still have an impact on the future. Only now, I would encourage students using the medium of theatre. This realization made my decision to leave classroom teaching and go to graduate school for theatre pedagogy easy.

There are a number of reasons that it has become increasingly difficult to interest elementary schools in bringing their students to see theatre productions. Unfortunately, at the top of the list is usually money. Rising gas prices are always taken into account when planning a fieldtrip. The schools have to pay for not only the bus driver, vehicle wear and tear but they must also factor in the gas money it takes to run the bus. This can run at least \$5 per student. Then, there is paying for the tickets to see a show. Actors and technicians need to be paid as well. Even when the economy is in a good state, getting permission to have a fieldtrip to see a play is difficult. However, the play stands a better chance if it also takes into account some of the Standards of Learning. Sadly, it seems that only after these two elements have been satisfied is a fieldtrip to see a theatrical performance even considered. Those of us who believe that theatre is an excellent medium for teaching children are up against some sticky red tape. A drastic and potential way to overcome this is to make theatre arts a larger part of the mainstream educational system.

The future of education is didactic and somewhat unpredictable. Testing in education has been a focal point for awhile, but even more so in recent years with the induction of 'No Child Left Behind.' I believe that children's theatre practitioners have the potential ability to make theatre relevant to formalized educational institutions. By making theatre relevant to schools and students, there is a greater depth of understanding that can be achieved by students. Theatre has the ability to allow students with all types of learning styles and varying talents or intelligences to excel and learn. Teaching gave me the necessary tools and gave me a look into how the teaching world works. It gave me insight that I hope will guide my future endeavors with children's theatre.

## **CHAPTER 2 Pinocchio**

When a little wooden marionette named Pinocchio comes life and tries to become a real boy, he sets out on an adventure that leads him to becoming a man. Written from 1881 through 1883, by Carlo Collodi, Pinocchio has delighted and educated audiences of all ages for over two hundred years. Just as Pinocchio's journey is one learning experience after another, so too are our lives. We all have something that we can learn from the tale of Pinocchio. Children may learn the importance of not telling lies, or that it is not wise to trust strangers. What I learned recently from doing research on Pinocchio is that we continue to learn well into adulthood. Specifically, and most relevantly, I learned about the performance style of Commedia del' Arte and how it can be used in productions for children. The research insight gained from doing the production also reinforced for me that educating children does not have to occur only in a classroom but can occur anywhere, including a theatre.

### **Commedia dell Arte & Children**

Commedia troupes originated in Italy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and were professional actors who toured the countryside performing improvisational comedies outdoors. The troupes used no scenery and very few props, although many characters wore masks. In

fact, certain stock characters, like the Pantalone, a rich and miserly old man who chased young women, and the Arlecchino or harlequin, an acrobat and trickster and servant, wore specific masks for their characters. Audiences were able to identify the stock characters by their consistent and distinctive masks. There were some characters within the troupes who did not wear masks and they were known as the lovers or *Innamorati*. Characters were often developed out of specific towns or city-states in Italy. Masks were important because they were a way for the crowd to quickly identify the character without formal introduction.

In addition, the characters would first look where they intended to move and then to the audience and then finally move to this spot on stage. This interaction between the actor and the audience is an interesting part of the Commedia performance style. For the actor is indicating action and at times, even asking for permission from the audience to continue with the story. The actors did this for several reasons, among these reasons, was the need to make sure that the crowd paying attention to them, and were not distracted.

The troupes had outlined plots for their storylines but the dialogue was improvised or changed every night and, for the most part, was not written down. However, if an actor(s) found a joke or a gag that achieved laughs, it was used again in later shows and could develop into a *lazzo*. A *lazzo* (singular) or *lazzi* (plural) were comic segments that usually supported the main story and showed off the actors' talents and abilities. These talents might include pantomiming, dancing, music, and acrobatics. Troupes would use these *lazzi* as interludes between scenes. The *lazzi* might also be implemented if the Commedia actors thought they were losing the attention or favor of their audiences.

The comedic elements of Commedia have transcended time and have significantly influenced our theatrical practices today. Many comedic elements such as slapstick, improvisation and audience/actor interaction stemmed from Commedia. This physical humor was a large reason that I wanted to use the style of Commedia in my production. However, it is also important to note that traditional humor of Commedia was also quite raunchy in taste. Thus, it has been an interesting challenge to make children the target audience for the piece.

It has been my recent experience that when I tell people I am doing a show with Commedia influences, the automatic reaction of those who are aware of Commedia's raunchiness say "How can you make Commedia G rated?" Commedia is not only lewdness and sexually charged material. While I understand that many noses of the masks are phallic by creation, I believe that Commedia has a lot to offer children in the way of physical humor, improvisation and the creation of a relationship with the audience.

### **Pinocchio: The Production**

In November of 2008, I went to Athens, Ohio to work for the Ohio Valley Summer Theatre Company for their production of *Pinocchio*. I was asked to do the dramaturgy for the show, in addition to being the assistant director and stagemanager. The director of the show was Bryce Britton, a third year Master of Fine Arts (MFA) candidate at Ohio University. In this section, I will describe the rehearsal and production process of *Pinocchio*, as well as address the research element that I undertook as dramaturg of the production. In early discussions with Bryce, he asked me to research several areas, including the history of *Pinocchio*, Commedia del' Arte and Puppetry. These areas of

research greatly influenced my work on *The End* this spring. Furthermore, it is my contention that my work with *Pinocchio* provided me with a solid understanding of how to direct, research and produce a children's show.

After I had done my research for *Pinocchio*, it was my job to inform the cast about the history of *Pinocchio*, puppetry, and the style of Commedia del' Arte. This was important for the success of our show, as many cast members were unaware of the history of *Pinocchio* and puppetry and inexperienced in Commedia. It was also my job to put together a packet of information for the teachers of the intended audience to use with their students to prepare them for the show. I have included several pages I created for teachers to use in both the instruction for students as well as to introduce our production to them. These documents can be found in the Appendices A through C. In many ways, I laid the groundwork of communication between the cast and audiences when they came to see the show. Having this communication is imperative so that the cast has an understanding of the material and so that audiences know what to expect when seeing the show. Later, when I directed *The End*, I wanted to do the same thing; provide information to the actors and the audience.

The director of *Pinocchio*, Bryce Britton, wanted to capture some of the elements of Commedia del' Arte in the production, so I did a lot of research on Commedia and how it could apply to children. Not much had been written on this subject when I did my research for the show so I tried to find appropriate information about Commedia to pass along to the students. Although the element of Commedia was never fully realized in his production, I was taken with the possibilities I saw. To embody a Commedia character is

to take on a different persona. This style of performance is so imaginative in nature that young students can identify with the transformation that takes place within the actors. Furthermore, the actors seem freer to create extreme characters. When Douglas put the Pantalone mask on, he had one of the most significant changes in posture, movement and vocal qualities of any of the actors on stage that changed characters.

*Pinocchio* ended up not being true Commedia and instead was more of a modern comedy routine. We rehearsed for two weeks, six hour days. Then, we ran the show for two weeks. Sometimes we performed the show as many as three times a day. We would entertain school groups during the day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. On Fridays, we did an evening show for the community. What was great about the performance was that it was the cast's job to come into the space and set up the props. Bryce blocked this into the show as part of the lazzi. During the bows, the cast packed up their props and put them into the trunks again. There was very little that needed to be reset by me in between the shows. Since this worked so well in the *Pinocchio* production I decided to do a similar idea in my show *The End*.

In the end, *Pinocchio* did not adhere very much to the Commedia style but instead to a contemporary comedy. We only used the mask for Pantalone in the show. I was disappointed with this, as I wanted to see the Commedia style applied to theatre for children. Unfortunately, the matter was out of my hands. The costumer for the show had made arrangements with Bryce to use different masks than the Commedia styled masks. Furthermore, the characters did not look where they were going, then at the audience and



travel to the place where they had looked in the style of Commedia. The play was scripted so while there were quite a few improvisation moments, it was not a true Commedia work.

One of the biggest features of the show was “Steve”. Steve was what we named our set, jungle gym for the show. Since Steve is something of an anomaly, he was named out of pure necessity for clarity in communication in production meetings and with the cast. He was made of heavy metal pipe and was welded together so that there were three legs. Steve was over nine feet tall and our players would sit at the top of him. They pushed him down and climbed on him and through the side of him. He became the stage coach at one point too. The only thing that we did not use him for was the whale. For that, we cut up a parachute and used tent wire to fly him over one side of the audience and then down the other. We performed the show at a venue called Arts West. Arts West used to be a church. Therefore, we had two columns of rows and an aisle up the middle of the space. There were two other aisles on the outer side of both sets of pews. This was to show the kids that the whale had eaten not only Ghepetto but also the whole audience and that we had all been burped back out. The kids loved this interaction with the cast. I made note of this at the time because I do wanted to have my actors interact with the audience. My work on *Pinocchio* provided me with a richer understanding and appreciation for the performance style Commedia del’ Arte. I learned that use of masks allows actors to more freely develop distinctive characters, which is especially helpful when playing more than one role in a show. Furthermore, the unusual and unique movement associated with the performance style is thought provoking and captivating for audiences unfamiliar with Commedia del’ Arte. Simply by utilizing the Commedia style in a production, we

increased awareness, for a mainly unacquainted audience. Theatre is not a one trick pony, but rather it has a broad and fascinating history. By increasing awareness of the depths of theatre, I believe we have also increased an appreciation and hopefully, participation in the art form. Lastly, the physical comedy associated with the style also makes the performance an entertaining delight for audiences of all ages. Theatre is both didactic and entertaining after all. These elements are things that I hoped to embrace with my own production *The End*.

## CHAPTER 3 *The End* The Writing, Rehearsal Process, Technical Development and Performance

Armed with my new understanding of the Commedia del' Arte performance style and in combination with my desire to produce a show for children that was both educational and entertaining, I examined the book *The End* yet again.

“The End. And they all lived happily ever after. They all lived happily ever after because... the Soggy Knight fell in love with the Clever Princess. The Knight fell in love with the Princess because... she poured a big bowl of lemonade on his head. She poured a bowl of lemonade on his head because... his curly red beard was on fire” (LaRochelle 1-7).

It was clear to me then that LaRochelle's clever reverse chronological plotline for his book, *The End*, is captivating and enticing for almost any audience. This nontraditional plotline intrigues because of its novelty in style and because of its unexpected and humorous turns. Furthermore, *The End* worked well with Standards of Learning on the subject of 'Cause and Effect' for the state testing. Because of the numerous roles, and physical comedy involved with the plot, the story also worked well with the performance style of Commedia.

I had decided not to adapt *Meanwhile back at the Ranch* into a play for my thesis in the late summer of 2008. I came to this decision sometime after I had contacted the authors of two books, David LaRochelle who wrote *The End* and Trinka Hakes Noble who wrote *Meanwhile back at the Ranch*. I was surprised when both authors gave me permission to adapt their books into plays. Mrs. Hakes Noble also told me that her book had been adapted by classroom teachers into a play before. Therefore, I decided to adapt Mr. LaRochelle's book, *The End* into a play. By adapting *The End* into a play, I had a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate to teachers that theatre not only has rich history but is also a terrific method and medium for encouraging learning. I tried to keep this in mind as I began writing the script for *The End*.

### **Writing**

It was also important to me, in writing the play, to adhere to the author's intent and artistic integrity of the story as much as possible. I tried to make sure that all of the causes and effects still came about in the same manner as in the book. For example, the Clever Princess still decided to make a big bowl of lemonade, the Hungry Giant still had a temper tantrum and threw a teacup that knocked an enormous tomato from its vine, and the bunny rabbits still scared the Great Green Dragon, and so on. However, there are some discrepancies between the original text and the play I wrote. For example, the original text is written as a narrative and none of the characters had any specific lines. As the creator of the play, I had to go through the story and determine how and where to create the scenes. I needed to add dialogue so that the cause and effect element of the story was not lost in the

performance and so that the overall idea of the play was communicated to the audience. I wanted to make sure that the dialogue enhanced the story and did not take away from it. It also was important to keep the storyline flowing natural, and fun. I tried to add as much humor to the story as possible, but I also wanted to allow enough freedom within the script for the actors to create their character traits, voices and some movements. Trained actors are artists themselves and deserve to have some say in their character development. Not only does the style of Commedia Del' Arte lend itself well to this method, but because most of the actors had more than one role in the show, it was essential that they be able to help with forming each of their individual characters. As the director and creator of the play, I had final say on which character traits stayed and what level of improvisation was permitted.

It is true that I pushed my cast towards taking some liberties with the characters in the story. An example of a character I had not quite planned was the cook. I had written the cook as being somewhat of an irritated person because she was tired of the Hungry Giant yelling at her. However, due to casting, our cook ended up being a man, a he not a she. This worked out just fine and I do not believe that this was an issue in telling the story. Mike also played the role of the Blue Pig with Wings and Jeremy the Rabbit. In order to create more of a difference in the characters Mike played, he decided to make the voice of the Cook tough and disgruntled with a distinct New York accent and stereotypical attitude. I enjoyed the direction he took the character and had him take the character a step further and embellish it with large arm movements.

Another area in which I took liberties with the original text was with the relationship between the Flying Pig and the elf looking character. I turned the elf looking character into the guide or narrator of the show. I made the flying pig his assistant, who was somewhat of an instigator. In the play, the Pig was the one who sprayed the knight and picked on him. It was also the Pig that gave the Clever Princess the idea to throw a party. Then, the Clever Princess decided to make a big bowl of lemonade. In the original story, the Princess decided to make a big bowl of lemonade to serve at the party. There was no reason for her to make the lemonade so I added the pig giving her the idea to throw the party. I added this scene because the last picture of the book shows the Princess being shot with a cupid arrow by the Guide who is riding on the pig. There is some indication here to me that the Guide and Pig's arrow was the catalyst for the Princess making the lemonade. Another character I took liberties with was the knight. I made the knight in our show into more of a Capitano character from *Commedia del' Arte*. The Capitano tries to convince everyone that he is brave and tough, but in reality, he is a chicken at heart. Hence, I named the knight, Lamar the Chickenhearted. Despite these adjustments made to the original text I tried to adhere to the main outline of Mr. LaRochelle's book.

The script, however, has gone through numerous changes in the last year. Each time we ran the show, I found more areas where I could expand the text to make the story more cohesive. I made an addition to the script with the Merchant scene because I felt that there was too much of a jump between the Giant's tantrum and the Princess pouting at her castle. Although there was a picture of the Merchant selling the lemons to the Princess in the book, there was no narrative for this page. Before I added the scene, I did not believe

that this was reading well so I decided to insert a new scene. Furthermore, this time last year I was contemplating building a castle, creating a huge dragon costume and finding a kiddie pool so that when the Princess dumped the bowl of lemonade over the knight's head, the water went into the pool instead of all over the stage. However, I am quite happy that I decided to go a different route. I do not believe that our use of minimum props and no setting affected the story we were trying to tell. I decided not to use excessive props or set because I came to realize, after my work on *Pinocchio*, that a set is not essential. Furthermore, I was adhering more to the Commedia style of performance by nixing the set from the production. Instead, we used an easel and giant pad of paper, which had the names of locations of the scenes on different pages. As the play progressed, Tony Sanchez, who played the Guide, would flip the next page of the paper to reveal the location of the scene.

### **The Rehearsal and Development Process**

In the beginning of the spring 2009 semester, I was still working on reformatting the script to work in adaptations for the Commedia style of performance. It was also about this time that I learned that Tony Sanchez, an undergraduate in the theatre program had created a Commedia troupe for children. I approached Tony about my thesis project and he felt his group of Commedia actors would work well with it. Even though Commedia is more unscripted or improvisational than my script, I wanted to incorporate the physicality and style of movement into the piece. Since my work with *Pinocchio*, I had been interested in seeing an entire children's production immersed in the show. I feel that the

Commedia style has a lot to offer children's theatre because of its imaginative and freeing qualities. In this version of *The End*, physical humor, improvisational elements, were used, especially when interacting with our audiences.

We started rehearsals in late March 2009 and rehearsed the show for about a month, two to three times a week, probably about sixteen to twenty times total prior to the performance. The actors were Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) undergraduates. When I do the show again, I would certainly consider using more novice actors for the roles. The play has a lot to teach students of all abilities and backgrounds. I would like to work with younger or novice actors in order to develop characters with the students. However, for the first production of the show I wanted to use actors who had some formalized training. Fortunately, I was able to cast students who had knowledge of the Commedia style, an affinity for physical comedy and who possessed a well-rounded training in acting. In rehearsal, we also discussed characterization and various things the cast can do to begin to develop their characters. I stressed the importance of having fun with the play and learning how to work together to tell the story. I especially focused on nonverbal cues and communication, as one of the roles in the play is mainly pantomiming. I thought earlier in the semester that it would be nice to have nine actors in the troupe, but as time wore on, I really liked the idea of people having more than one role instead. It was wonderful to see how the actors were able to transform themselves into completely new characters with the use of their bodies and voices.

As I mentioned earlier, I reconfigured the piece in the fall of 2008 when I was researching Commedia del' Arte. I was very happy to have Tony on board for the



production because of his knowledge of Commedia. He was able to help the rest of the cast with the finer details of the style. I talked to Tony prior to rehearsals about being another eye for making sure the rest of the cast was following the Commedia style.

Another addition to our cast was Mike Hamilton, a senior in the theatre program. I had the opportunity to work with Mike during Richmond Shakespeare's production of *Amadeus*, so I knew of his work ethic and commitment to character development. Mike graciously accepted the offer to be in the show and told me of a couple of his friends who juggle and have done work with the style of Commedia. Furthermore, because all three could juggle I wanted to work this into a lazzi for the show. We did at one point also have another young lady who wanted to be in the show but, unfortunately, our rehearsal schedules did not work out for her. I continued with rehearsals with the four gentlemen and had Phil initially play the part of the Princess. However, this was not a permanent arrangement. I sent out some emails for an actor who was a quick learner, good with comedic time and had some idea about the style of Commedia. A friend of mine, recommended one of the students in his class, Jessica Jordan, as a quick study. Our rehearsal and show times worked for Jessica's schedule and when she joined the cast, she seemed to be a perfect fit. Therefore, she joined our cast and became the princess, teacup, and bunny rabbit number two. She was a wonderful addition to the cast and a quick learner. Within a very short period, she had her lines memorized and all of her blocking. Although I do not believe Jessica had much experience in this area, she was able to do some tumbling and was able to make some character choices that worked well for the show. Luckily, we had already done quite a bit of the blocking and character development prior to Jessica joining the cast so we had a

head start. Due to the short rehearsal period, it was essential not to waste time blocking and re-blocking the show.

Having actors who worked in Commedia before was also advantageous for the short rehearsal period. During rehearsals, we worked at making the show readable to an audience so that the reverse chronological order could be followed. Sometimes, I had to go back and add to the script if I felt that something was missing, as in the case of the citrus merchant scene mentioned prior. Other times, unclear areas were solved with blocking. I felt like I got too close to the scene or character work and could not see the bigger picture occasionally. In general, I had to keep reminding myself to look at the show through novice eyes and to try and ‘not’ see what someone unaware of the show might not understand. This was a different experience for me, because I was the sole adapter of the work and the one directing the piece. The show is still in workshop and next time I pick it up I would be interested in having outside eyes come to rehearsals and give feedback.

As most of my cast was involved with other productions, rehearsal time was a commodity. There were very few rehearsals where we were able to get everyone together. Because the script was so short and because of the skill of my actors, we were able to pull the show together. Midway through the rehearsal process, Tony got hurt while riding his bike and trying to avoid a dog. He ended up needing to get stitches and missed a couple rehearsals as a result. Tony had to have his stitches removed, so he missed our final rehearsal before the show which meant that the last time the cast had been able to practice all together was on the Sunday before the show. I believe that this did affect our

performance. If Tony had played any other part in the show I believe his absence would have affected the performance even more.

Overall, I was very happy with the work accomplished during the rehearsal period for the production. I believe we were able to make excellent character discoveries and to develop comprehensible transitions between scenes. We incorporated the Commedia style into our performance as well as clearly presenting the relationship between cause and effect. Everyone was committed to the performance and the work that needed to be done. In fact, every member of the cast was great to work with and I would gladly work with any of the cast members again.

### **Technical Development**

On the technical side of the production, my biggest challenge was the creation of costuming and props. Since I had already decided not to use heavy scenery, I did not have to worry about creating an elaborate set. Furthermore, by the spring of this year, my plan was to keep the costumes very basic because most of the actors played more than one character. I knew that each character was going to be wearing a Commedia mask, so that helped to cut down on costs. We were able to borrow the Commedia masks from Aaron Anderson, a professor in the theatre department at VCU. I felt the masks were essential for helping the actors take on the Commedia style. Although we did not get as deep into Commedia as I had hoped, I would still like to try using the masks again. The actors each wore a different solid colored shirt for the show. Mike, who played the Blue Pig, wore a solid blue shirt, Phil who was the Great Green Dragon, wore a solid green shirt and since we had the pink crown already for the Princess, she wore a pink solid shirt. The other two

gentlemen were allowed to wear whatever solid color shirt they had that looked appropriate for the show. Everyone wore black pants to complete the outfits, as it was something that everyone had and provide freedom for movement.

In addition to each character's costuming, they each, for the most part, had a prop or mask to denote each character. For example, when Mike was the Pig he had the water bottle in his hand and when he was the Giant's Cook he usually had a bowl and hand mixer in his hand. The one major costume we had was for the enormous tomato. My mother happened to have a pattern for the tomato costume, so we adjusted the pattern to allow for easy on and off during the show. Another example of the usage of props to denote characters was the pink crown that Jessica wore as the Princess. Later, as the rabbit, as you can see from the pictures, she removed her Columbina mask and crown and put on her bunny ears. Instead of using a teacup costume, we used a giant paper mache teacup that Jessica held over her head while she ran about the stage saying her lines. At one point, we were trying to obtain an actual dragon or dinosaur mask but we were unable to locate one in time for the show. However, when we performed before the group of students, I do not believe that the show was adversely affected by the lack of the mask. Instead, I believe it allowed the audience to use their imagination more.

Each of the characters had specific costume elements or props that were special to their characters. As far as costuming and props went I was pleased with the outcome. I thought that the masks were an excellent addition to the costume as well as the characterizations created by the cast.

## The Performance

A couple of days before the performance, it occurred to me that the children might be frightened of the Commedia masks. If the masks did frighten them, the children might have reacted negatively. I was given the opportunity to address the audience before the show. I told them a little bit about the book and showed them a Commedia mask that was similar to the masks we were going to use. I also mentioned to them a little bit about the history of the masks and when I showed the audience a mask, there was a small ‘ewe yuck’ reaction from some children in the audience. I am glad that I addressed this before we started the show. I have been a part of productions where the children get so focused on one element that they miss out on the rest of the performance. Prior to the performance, most of the students had only been told that they were going to see a show called *The End* and that it was about cause and effect. Before the show started, I talked with the audience and told them a little bit about the story but I did not want to give it away. I did however tell the audience that the story developed in reverse chronological order. Next time I might ask the crowd to give me an example of a cause and effect relationship.

On the day of the show, Tony called me and said he had gotten himself lost, but luckily arrived in time for the performance. When the actor’s entered into the room with their props and began setting up, their energy seemed a little low. But, all of that changed when Phil made the audience laugh at his antics. The rest of the cast was setting up the table and props behind Phil and he was juggling and playing a funny nonsensical tune on his kazoo. At one point, he stopped playing and juggling and he looked back at the rest of the cast to see if they were done unpacking yet. They were not, so he gave a sigh and

when back to juggling and playing his tune on his kazoo. The audience thought it was hysterical. It was this first laugh of the audience that really seemed to wake the cast up and make them come to life. I do not know if anyone else could see the change in their energy, but I certainly did. The first laugh of the audience certainly released my tension as well. As the show progressed, the laughing continued. I stood in the back of the auditorium so that I could see the performance, as well as the children's reaction to the show. The students received the play very well and laughed a lot.

There were some unexpected moments in the show. For example, the lemons had somehow been placed on the table instead of being stage right. Therefore, when it was time for the Merchant's scene, the merchant did not have lemons to sell to the princess. I saw what was about to transpire only minutes before the scene unfolded. The lemons were on the table and not where they were supposed to be. I hoped that Justin, who was playing the merchant, would see this but he did not. Fortunately, Phil held up the lemons for the Citrus Merchant and I seriously doubt that the audience really cared if the lemons came from stage right or if Phil handed the lemons to Justin. Either way, the mix up got a laugh from the audience. This had never been an issue in the rehearsals and it seemed as though it was a one-time fluke. Phil used the fact that the lemons were misplaced as a comedic opportunity. I had told everyone prior to the show that no matter what happens; make light of things that may not be planned. Although every member of the cast seemed to adhere to this, another time that really sticks out in mind again involves Phil when he was playing the dragon. Phil's line as the dragon is "I don't understand what I did. Where did you all come from? I just wanted to enjoy the day painting my own self-portrait. If it's not

knights trying to slay you and put your head on a spit then it's being attacked by bunny rabbits." The audience full of children went "Ewe... Yuck." Phil, realizing that what he had said was grossing out our young audience, agreed with them and said, "Ewe, it is gross isn't it." Phil's ability to use the kid's reaction enhanced the scene. Phil's interaction with the students made them aware that they had some power in the action on stage. Another instances where this occurred was when, during the show, the easel fell down when the knight tried to hide behind it to get away from the dragon. Despite the easel falling, the actors continued with the story and played off the incident true to the nature of Commedia. That is, they made light of it and went on with the show. After the easel fell, Tony just said "Later on at the Princess's castle" or "A few minutes before at the Market." This seemed to work for the story, and perhaps better for some of our youngest audience members who could not yet read. I do not believe that we confused anyone in the auditorium with our show or the character changes that occurred.

Furthermore, I believe that the cast worked well with only five members; it was a good number. There was no excessive down time for any one actor due to the quickness of the show, and this was a good thing. In addition, this saved me from trying to figure out what to do with extra people. If we did have other costume changes and set changes, then having extra cast members would be a great addition. I also believe that it could be or should be longer if I was going to have more cast members. A run through the whole show lasted about fifteen to twenty minutes, depending on the adlibbing of the cast and the physical humor that they used.

During the question and answer period, many students voiced how much they had enjoyed the show and would like to see it again right away. They also liked the flash cotton and wanted to know more about it, so I explained what it was and had Mike show them the flash cotton again. I wanted the cast and audience to have this opportunity to interact with one another. First, it is a unique experience for both the audience and the cast. For the audience, they get to learn that the people they were just watching are real people, who go to school and have real lives. It is important for the students to know that anyone can get on a stage and become an actor. Students need to know that even if they are not the best at math or the fastest kid on the playground that they are still valuable to society and perhaps, they have a place on stage. This question and answer period is also great for the cast to get some interesting feedback and insight into their audience.

Furthermore, I believe that the cast had a lot more fun than they thought they would performing the show. I know that there were times when the cast felt a little silly doing the show, for a lot of their training has been to do revolutionary, political or social theatre. Children's theatre is not at the top priority in their training program. Therefore, I am glad that they all enjoyed themselves so much. While this was not something I had set as a goal of my production, I hope that this experience has taught them that they can do children's theatre and do work that is still valuable. Who knows what this play may do for the children who watched the performance? I believe that it was important for the show to be performed for children instead of being performed at VCU, because children in the audience make the play come to life.



I had quite a few teachers and staff, express to me how much they had enjoyed the show too. I am glad for this because without the teachers and staff's endorsement of the show, the possibility of having another performance at the school would be unlikely. It may also motivate the teachers to incorporate more plays into their own lesson plans. Overall, I felt that the production was a tremendous success and cannot wait to share the outcome of the production with Mr. LaRochelle. I am truly grateful for all of the steps that have led up to this point. I do not believe that the production would have been as rich without my work on the production of *Pinocchio* or *Hansel and Gretel*. Nor can I discount the importance of my work teaching in an elementary school as a classroom teacher and my teaching with SPARC.

Below I have included three pictures taken from the production. The first is a picture of the scene of the bunny rabbits being frightened by the sound of a tomato. This specific picture includes from left to right Mike Hamilton, Phil Reid and Jessica Jordan. The second picture is the scene between the Hungry Giant and His Cook. The third picture is the tableaux scene at the beginning of the play





### **What's Next?**

When I first decided to adapt a children's book into a play for my thesis project I wanted to provide a unique experience for my young audience. I wanted the production to be both educational and entertaining. Now, that I have completed the production I believe that I have accomplished what I set out to do. The student's reaction to the piece was overwhelmingly positive and insightful. *The End* is only the beginning for me. I would welcome the opportunity to share the show with other young audiences, if given the opportunity to do so. Having said that, I believe the show is still in a workshop structure and there are several ways in which the production could grow. There are three areas in

which I would like to continue to expand my work with *The End*. First, I would like to attempt to turn the script into a piece that could be done in a classroom by elementary school students. Secondly, I would like to focus on the Commedia del' Arte element of the show. Finally, I would like to workshop the script a little bit and do an instant rewind or reversal element to the show to increase its length and add further understanding of the relationship of cause and effect to the show for the audiences.

In order to convert the script so that a classroom of children could do it would require a rewrite in some of the stage directions. To make this work, I would need to address the knight's curly red beard being caught on fire and the usage of water to make the knight soggy. In my production we used a squirt bottle to get, the knight wet and pantomimed the dumping of the lemonade on the knight. This might also work for a children's production of the show. Another element that might need to change is the kissing. For example, I had the princess pantomime kissing the pig on the cheek for the idea of having a party. During the production, the students did react to the brief peck on the cheek with an "ewe yuck." This kiss could be cut entirely. If I continue to work with children in theatre, I plan to alter this piece and workshop it more. Given my research on puppetry, I have also thought that the usage of puppets might be an excellent medium in which to do the show in a classroom setting. In the research that would accompany the script it would also be possible to incorporate ideas on how to write their own plays and make their own puppets. Lesson plans that incorporate all intelligences could be included in the packet.

Another important element in marketing the script would be to include dramaturgical research along with the play. This information would be available for teachers to use with their students in a classroom setting. It would help to understand the story and characterization. A similar packet of research could be sent out to elementary schools for a touring show. I would like to include some research about the author and his books, as well as the story of the end. Furthermore, it is easy enough to create worksheets that correlate with the play for students to further their connection to the play and deepen their understanding of the cause and effect. There is possibility even, in teaching students some basic aspects of Commedia so that they could use this in their productions too. If the production included elements of Commedia, research should be provided in the packet of information as well. However, first I would like to finally get the Commedia aspect worked out more in the 'for' children version of the script. I never felt like we got the Commedia del' arte element worked into the style of the show enough. Next time, I would like to add more rehearsal time in order to really focus on the Commedia element of the production. I believe that the style would be intriguing to the modern audience. I am interested in developing the characterization associated with the masks and their characters in the show. I would also like to incorporate more of the physicality into the show. I believe it is a way to spread the notion that there is more to theatre than just what takes places on the stages of Broadway. When Tony answered questions about Commedia masks, the teachers and students of the audience were interested to learn that the masks were originally made of leather. They also found it interesting that the masks eventually took the form of the actor's face. Many non-theatre people do not realize that there is a

very rich history of theatre. By doing a show in Commedia form for an audience, not only am I keeping the style of Commedia alive, I am encouraging interest in theatre history. Of course, doing the show in the style of Commedia would only be for the shows that I directed and would not be a requirement for other productions of the show.

On a separate matter, when I do the show again, I would want to add onto the end of the piece. After the entire cast bows at the 'beginning' of the story, I would work in a kind of instant rewind of the entire show. In this way, we would actually do the show from the beginning and work our way back to the end of the piece. I considered doing this for the show this time, but I was wary to do so as it might be too redundant. I would certainly like to workshop this addition to the script. I have not worked out all of the technicalities of how to make this work, but the show is too short to be done as a professional show. Since most professional shows run for about forty-five minutes to an hour, the show would have to double in length at least. There is a possibility of adding a song or two to the production and an instant rewind where the songs could be done at a higher pitch, faster and possibly backwards. However, before any of this could happen with this show, I would need to check into the legality of this with Mr. La Rochelle and his publishers. With the success of the first show, I am interested in seeing the piece grow in the future. Further, I think that there could be considerable interest from elementary schools, community groups and possibly even traveling theatre companies. Another outcome I hope for is that the children that saw the play would want to read the book. If the piece were to someday be published, it might even increase book sales for Mr. LaRochelle. Whatever happens in the future, I am interested in continuing to adapt stories into plays.

I am very happy with the outcome of the production and I would love the opportunity to read the original book with a group of students to compare it with the play. Children experience theatre the same way that adults experience theatre. Theatre does not have to didactically serve formal education, nor does it have to be merely a spectacle. Theatre is a medium for those students who do not excel in the areas that are mainstream or tested for in formalized education. Someday, I would be interested in writing my own plays and perhaps write my own children's books. Eventually, I would also like to have my own theatre company that provides quality theatre to children. Through my continued work, I hope to demonstrate that theatre for children can be experimental, artistic, and invoke catharsis for a young audience. Theatre can foster social and intrapersonal skills; and increase intelligences in all areas for children and adults.

## The End:

### List of Characters:

Guide

Blue Pig w/ wings

Clever Princess

Soggy Knight

Great Green Dragon

Hungry Giant

The Cook

Enormous Tomato

Giant Teacup

100 bunnies

Market People

roles can be doubled

### Cast of Characters:

Justin Deming: The Soggy knight, Enormous tomato, Rabbit #1, Citrus Merchant

Jessica Jordan: Clever Princess, Teacup, and Rabbit #2

Mike Hamilton: Blue Pig with Wings, Giant's Cook, Jeremy the rabbit

Phil Reid: Great Green Dragon, Hungry Giant, Mother Rabbit and a Town's Person

Tony Sanchez: Guide

### Lazzi :

The pig spraying the Knight with water

Fanfare on Kazoos when the Guide says 'The End'

Pig constantly eating



**PRE SHOW:**

*(The cast will enter carrying their props and playing a song on their kazoos. The cast continues to play the song on their kazoos as they set up the props and stage. One person is designated juggler and while the rest of the cast continues to set up the props he/she juggles and entertains the audience. As each of the cast members finishes setting up their props they walk down stage and also begin juggling. Every time a cast member joins the original juggler he/she stops and they all start together. We also have some one who can do summersaults so she did summersaults behind the three cast members who were juggling. The guide was the last person to finish setting up and when he sees that his cast is goofing off he begins to yell at them but he has his kazoo in his mouth so they can not understand what he is saying.)*

**Guide:**

*(Taking his Kazoo from his mouth) We're trying to do a show, what's wrong with you all. Places!*

**SCENE 1:**

*The Princess and the Knight are (Up Stage Center) the entire cast surrounding them on either side. The crowd consists of the Dragon, village people extras, The Giant and his cook. All are frozen until the Guide and his assistant pig enter. Pig is eating.*

**Guide:**

*Welcome to the End... (The rest of the Ensemble does a fanfare every time the words "The End" is said.)*

**Pig:**

*The end? (Kazoo Fanfare) How can it be the end? (Kazoo Fanfare) We, they (acknowledging audience) just got here.*

**Guide:**

*Yes I know. Just wait a minute and everything will be explained. I am the narrator and this is my assistant. (Acknowledges pig) "The End" (Kazoo Fanfare), (Guide says to the rest of the cast) Would you stop that. (Cast reacts as if they don't know what he's talking about.) Now where was I, ah yes, our story is not like most stories for this story begins where most stories end (Kazoo Fanfare, the guide reacts impatiently). It is a story about cause and effect. But enough of that for now; let me introduce you to our cast. The Clever Princess (*she**

*curtsies) The Soggy knight... (The Guide continues on with his next introduction when he is interrupted by the knight.)*

**Knight:**

Excuse me, I don't mean to interrupt the story but I am not soggy. *(The pig sprays him with a bottle of water on the word 'soggy'.)* I stand corrected. Carry on.

**Guide:**

Thank you. As I was saying, The great Green Dragon, *(Dragon will roar and perhaps use flash cotton.)* An Enormous runaway tomato, The hungry Giant and his cook. One hundred bunny rabbits, and a flying saucer. *(As characters are introduced, they appear and make the final stage picture of the knight and princess getting married. Tomato will do a somersault)*

**Pig :**

Really? A flying saucer?

**Guide:**

Well, a tea cup and saucer... *(Saucer turns back into a towns person)* Well I think we're ready to begin then. The End. And they all lived happily ever after.

**All:**

YEAHE!! *(Music, Fanfare perhaps on Kazoos. Cast celebrating together)*

**Guide:**

They all live happily ever after because the soggy knight fell in love with the clever princess.

**Knight:**

Hello

**Princess:**

It's Nice to meet you.

**Knight:**

I love you

**Princess:**

I know. I mean... I love you, too.

**All:**

AWE!!

SCENE 2:

*(The soggy knight and the Princess lean in to each other to kiss from each other. The crowd disperses and exits. Pig whispers in the Princess's ear, she exits and returns with a large bowl.)*

**Guide:**

The Knight fell in love with the clever Princess because...

**Knight:**

Oh Darling I am so in love with you because...

**Guide:**

Because she poured a big bowl of lemonade on top of his head.

**Knight:**

You poured a big bowl of lemonade on my head. (Realizing what he just said) Wait I... *(Pig sprays the knight again, Princess pantomimes dumping bowl of lemonade on the knight's head.)*

**Princess:**

Sorry.

**Knight:**

It's quite all-right darling. I'm sure there was a very good reason for you to do that. *(To the guide)* There was a good reason was there not?

**Guide:**

Yes

**Knight:**

Good, see my love? No harm done.  
You only poured the lemonade on my head because...

**Guide:**

She poured the bowl of lemonade on your head because.

**Pig:**

Ha ha ha

**Princess:**

What? What is it?

**Guide:**

The knight's curly red beard was on fire.

**Princess:**

*Gasps. (The knight feels at his beard. We'll use flash cotton to show fire in front on knight. The pig will douse the knight again with the water bottle. Princess rushes to the knight once the water has been sprayed.)*

**Princess:**

Are you okay?

**Knight:**

My whiskers. My beard, my beautiful red curly beard burnt off.

**Princess:**

It's not burnt off. It's just a little singed around the edges.

**Knight:**

Oh Darling, I'm so glad that you were there with that big bowl of lemonade. My beard is quite dear to me as it is attached to my face.  
*(The knight and the Princess look at each other.)*

**Princess:**

My, you're handsome.

**Knight:**

Oh, well thank you. You're quite beautiful. I'm suddenly in love with you.

**Princess:**

And I...

SCENE 3:

*(But before she can finish her thought and Sensing that the knight and princess might want to retell the end of the story the guide jumps in with the next line.)*

**Guide:**

His curly red beard was on fire because...

**Knight:**

Dear me, not again. (*Cowers*)

**Guide:**

He had been tickling a great green....

**Knight:**

Don't say dragon, don't say dragon

**Guide:**

Dragon.

**Knight:**

Darn it! Now hold on, I think you've got the wrong knight. I've never tickled a dragon before in my life and do not intend to start now.

**Pig:**

Hmmm. Lets see, you're soggy?

**Knight:**

Yes. But You

**Pig:**

Red curly beard?

**Knight:**

Well, Yes But...

**Pig:**

You are the knight known as "Lamar the Chicken Heart" aren't you?

**Knight:**

Who told you that?

**Pig:**

Relax Lamar, it's just in all of the programs. (*Acknowledge audience*)

**Knight:**

Programs? Now look, I really must insist. I am not the knight you speak of.

**Princess:**

(*Interrupting*) But you must, tickle the great green dragon and catch your beard on fire otherwise, I won't need to dump lemonade on your head and you'll never fall in love with me.

**Knight:**

Ha ha... (*uncomfortably*) Yes. Well of, of course I'm going to tickle the great green dragon. Just as soon as I find out why I'd do such a stupid thing.

SCENE 4:

[*Dragon Enters crying/ Princess Leaves*]

**Guide:**

The knight had been tickling the great green dragon because...

**Dragon:**

(*Dragon plops down and tries to hide his tears but his crying only gets louder.*)

**Pig:**

Laughing.. I love a good BBQ (*dragon looks up from his tears briefly and shoots the pig a threatening look.*) Right... I'm going to leave you to it then.

**Knight:**

(*Hesitantly approaches dragon. May need to be pushed by Guide or Pig*) Excuse me, great green dragon, why are you crying?

**Dragon:**

(Cries louder still.)

**Knight:**

(*Still hesitantly approaching the dragon asks again.*) Excuse me, great green dragon, why are you crying? (*Dragon Continues to cry underneath the next.*)

**Guide:**

But the dragon would not stop crying.

**Knight:**

Do I really have to do this? I mean I could get burnt.

**Pig:**

Don't worry I have the water spritzer here if you need it? (*Dragon cries out again and Knight goes to him.*)

**Knight:**

There, there great green dragon, won't you tell me why you're crying? (*The dragon shakes his head no.*) If you don't, I'm going to have to tickle it out of you.

**Dragon:**

It's too embarrassing. (sobbing)

**Knight:**

There's a lot of that going around. Now, tell me. What's wrong? (*Knight begins to tickle the dragon.*)

**Dragon:**

It was the, the... bu, bu, bunnies. There were so many of them. (*Cries out*)

**Knight:**

Bunnies. (Dragon looks at him) Of course I can imagine. All of those twitching little noses, floppy ears and their big doe like eyes.

**Dragon:**

(*Sobbing*) STOP!! I know what they look like.

**Knight:**

Right. Well. Sorry. They're gone now so you can stop crying.

**Dragon:**

But there were so many of them. So many cottony tales surrounding me. Hundreds of tiny legs jumping towards me.

**Knight:**

Come on now, I'll be forced to tickle you if you don't stop crying.  
(*Knight starts tickling dragon, seems to forget about his beard.*)

**Dragon:**

No, No...ha ha...No, No... ha ha I'm warning you..

**Knight:**

That's a good dragon.

**Dragon:**

HA HA. Har ...Rroar....(*Dragon breaths fire and there is another use of the flash cotton. The Knight runs off stage away from the dragon. The dragon finally stops laughing. We hear from off stage a loud thunder of hopping...The dragon hears this and reacts as well.*)

**Dragon:**

Oh No. Not again. Squeak...Mommy...

SCENE 5:

Rabbits Attack

**Guide:**

The dragon would not stop crying because... one hundred bunny rabbits had hippity hopped into his cave and frightened him. (*The stage is infiltrated by rabbits hopping around on stage all around the dragon. Even the Pig and the Guide can turn in to rabbits briefly.*)

**Dragon:**

(*crying*)...I don't understand what I did. Where did you all come from.? I just wanted to enjoy the day painting my own self-portrait. If it's not knights trying to slay you and put your head on a spit then it's being attacked by bunny rabbits. Ahh...(*Dragon sobbing, is swarmed by bunny rabbits but manages to run off the stage.*)

**Guide:**

Now, you mustn't think that the rabbits were malicious. In truth, the One hundred bunny rabbits had hopped into the dragon's cave because...

**Rabbit 1:**

Did you see the size of that tomato? (*to the audience*)

**Rabbit 2:**



It was enormous!

**Guide:**

They were trying to escape an enormous tomato rolling down the hill.

**Rabbit Mom:**

Jeremy? Jeremy where are you?

**Rabbit 4/Jeremy:**

Here I am mom.

**Rabbit Mom:**

Oh Thank Heavens. Where are your ninety-eight brothers and sisters?

**Rabbit 1:**

And she says she doesn't have favorites. (*to the audience*)

**Rabbit Mom:**

(*Smacking him*) I don't. You watch your tongue or you'll be going to bed without any carrots.

**Rabbit 2:**

Aw man, carrots again?

**Rabbit Mom:**

Perhaps you'd like a giant tomato.

**Jeremy:**

Mom? Why was that enormous tomato rolling down the hill?

**Guide:**

I'm glad you asked that. The enormous tomato was rolling down the hill because... it had been hit by a flying teacup.

**Mom Rabbit:**

You expect me to believe that? Come on kids lets get going. (*A rolling sound is heard off stage.*) What's that sound?

SCENE 6:

*(Rolling gets louder and then the giant tomato appears. All of the rabbits hop off stage in a hurry.)*

**Enormous Tomato:**

Off stage: WATCH OUT BELOW.....WOH!!..... *(Tomato spinning around and around, into the audience and then ending up down stage next to the guide.)* Where am I? What happened?

**Pig:**

*(Catching the tomato and stopping him.)* You rolled down the hill.

**Enormous Tomato:**

Thanks!

**Pig:**

No problem.

**Enormous Tomato:**

*(The tomato begins acting out the following scenario while the giant teacup enters on cue.)* I was just sitting on my vine minding my own business and soaking in the sun so I could finish ripening. Then all of the sudden I heard this screaming.

**Teacup:**

Hey you tomato, get out of my way.”

**Enormous tomato:**

I replied. Don't talk to me that way. I'll have you know that I am a beefsteak tomato.

**Teacup:**

Well whatever you are, I'm coming at you and I can't stop. *(Splat into the tomato. (Tomato is knocked off its vine and sent flying off stage. The teacup follows the tomato off stage.)*

SCENE 7:

Giant Tantrum

**Guide:**

The tomato had been hit by the flying teacup because a hungry giant was throwing a temper tantrum.

**Giant:**

*(Crying/ wailing)* I want my lemon Cheesecake. You promised me lemon Cheesecake.

**Cook:**

Would you settle down?

**Giant:**

I won't. Not until I get my lemon cheesecake. *(Throws teacup off stage)*

**Guide:**

The giant was throwing a tantrum because the cook did not make lemon cheesecake for dessert. Of course, the Giant had started his conversation with his chef a little bit more politely.

SCENE 8:

Giant and Cook

**Giant:**

Where have you been? I'm starving.

**Cook:**

I've been at the Market all afternoon looking for lemons but they were completely sold out.

**Giant:**

I don't care! Where is my Lemon Cheesecake?

**Cook:**

As I told you before, there were no lemons at the market so there is no Cheesecake.

**Giant:**

I don't believe you. Did you go to all of the stores?

**Cook:**

Yes, I searched the market from top to bottom and visited all of the vendors.

**Giant:**

No one had lemons?

**Cook:**

No one had lemons. It's not like there is a Lemons R' Us. Now if you will just finish the left over Peach Cobbler I made yesterday I'm sure you'll still find it to be delicious.

**Giant:**

Peach Cobbler? I don't want Peach Cobbler. I want Lemon Cheesecake. I asked specifically for Lemon cheeseca...

**Cook:**

Perhaps tomorrow the market will have lemons again.

**Giant:**

Tomorrow? I want Lemon Cheesecake today. You'll just have to go down to the market and find out why there are no lemons. (*slams fist down on table*)

**Guide:**

There were no lemons left at the market because...

**Cook:**

It was the princess that bought the lemons. I'm afraid there is no getting her to share any of them.

**Giant:**

The Princess, I didn't know she could cook.

**Cook:**

She can't. She was going to make lemonade.

**Giant:**

Lemonade?

**Cook:**

Yes, it will probably be far too sweet knowing her. (*Giant begins to audibly pout*) Anyway, those lemons have been squeezed by now. The word at the Market is that the Princess is going to have a huge party and the whole kingdom is going. Listen, you've always loved my Peach Cobbler. Why not try it?

**Giant:**

No, I wont, there is no way. You can't make me.

**Cook:**

Just try it, you'll like it.

**Giant:**

NO NO NO (throwing a tantrum) (Both the Giant and his Cook exit.)

SCENE: 9

*Market*

**Merchant:**

Citrus, get your citrus here. Oranges, Grapefruit, Limes, Lemons, Kumquats and Clementines. Citrus...

**Guide:** And, hours before, at the market...

**Princess:**

Hello.

**Merchant:**

Your majesty. (bowing) What brings you to the market place?

**Princess:**

Did you say that you had lemons for sale?

**Merchant:**

Yes Princess. Would you like some?

**Princess:**

Yes. In fact, I must have ALL of your lemons. I am going to make a big bowl of lemonade for my party. Here you are. (Handing money.)

**Merchant:**

Oh! Thank you, Princess.

**Princess:**

You're more than welcome. Here is an invitation for the party. I'm inviting the whole kingdom. See you there!... (As she leaves she hands an invitation to the pig and the guide.)

**Merchant:**

Thank you Princess.

**Cook:**

Excuse me do you have any lemons?

**Merchant:**

No we are completely sold out of them. The Princess just stopped by and purchased all of them. She's having a party tonight and inviting the whole kingdom.

**Cook:**

Great! He'll be livid when finds out. (Tears up the invitation)

**Merchant:**

Can I interest you in some other citrus? We have very tasty navel orange.

**Cook:**

Oh that will never do. I cannot make my lemon cheesecake with a navel orange. I must have lemons. (The cook exits)

**Merchant:**

Citrus, get your citrus here. Oranges, Grapefruit, Limes, Lemons, Kumquats and Clementines. Citrus... (The merchant exits)

SCENE: 10

Princess's Castle: (*Princess enters and sighs three times. Each time the sigh is louder and more desperate. She sits down stage right and continues to appear bored and dejected. The Guide's Assistant enters, still eating, and sees her sitting alone. He walks up to her and find out what is wrong. During the Princess's and the Pig's conversation, the Guide enters unknown to Princess and his Assistant.*)

**Pig:**

Earlier that day at the Princess' castle...

**Pig:**

What's the matter Princess?

**Princess:**

I'm so bored. There is nothing to do in this kingdom.

**Pig:**

Why don't you throw a party?

**Princess:**

A party? Yes, that would be perfect. The castle chefs can whip up hors d'oeuvres.

**Guide:**

Once upon a time a clever princess decided to have a party and...

**Princess:**

And I will make a big bowl of lemonade.

**Pig:**

That sounds right tasty Princess, would I be able to attend?

**Princess:**

Well of course you would. I must go, Thank you! *(She kisses him on the cheek and exits. The Guide's Assistant chuckles and continues eating. Until he is aware that the Guide is now standing next to him.)*

**Pig:**

What?

**Guide:**

So you see how even the smallest action, like making a bowl of lemonade, can lead to unusual consequences.

**Pig:**

Wait, don't you mean the beginning?

**Guide:**

Whatever, the story is over.

**Pig:**

Some may say that it's just begun.

**Guide:**

Don't get smart with me, I'll feed you to the dragon. *(The rest of the company slowly starts to walk down stage for bows.)*

**Pig:**

The Dragon? Ha ha, he doesn't scare me. He was frightened of some little bunny rabbits. I mean come on...(The dragon will tap on the pig's shoulder and the pig looks and lets out a shriek)

**Dragon:**

You were saying?

**Pig:**

Nothing it's not important.

**Guide:**

Good. Thank you all for coming. We hope you enjoyed the show.

Company comes forward and Bows with Masks on then without masks. Following the Bows the company does a brief session of Questions and Answers.



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## APPENDIX A

### **The History of *Pinocchio***

Carlo Collodi originally wrote *Pinocchio* from 1881 to 1883 for an Italian children's magazine. In 1883, Collodi enhanced his story of a stringless marionette and published the book *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. Since its first publication 125 years ago, the classical tale has been translated into over 80 languages and has been adapted into hundreds of plays, films, television shows and books hundreds of times over.

Certainly, the most widely known version of the tale in America is that of Walt Disney's 1940 film. Disney transformed the *Pinocchio* character into a well-mannered and "well-meaning boy led astray" (Philpott, Dictionary 188). However, anyone who has read a translation of the children's classic can clearly appreciate the discrepancies between Collodi's original tale and Disney's cartoon adaptation.

In Collodi's novel, *Pinocchio* is a defiant, rebellious, headstrong and often disrespectful wooden boy. While some may argue that these are already pre-adolescent human characteristics, *Pinocchio* will not be granted his wish of being a 'real boy' until he learns some important morals. As the adventures of Collodi's *Pinocchio* play out, he learns from his past experiences to make better and well-informed decisions. He also realizes that his actions have consequences and impact on others. Just before *Pinocchio* becomes a 'real boy', he devotes himself primarily to the well-being of others. In

Collodi's novel, *Pinocchio* kills the talking cricket, only to have his ghost visit *Pinocchio* occasionally throughout the book. Furthermore, in the story's earliest form, *Pinocchio* is hanged for his numerous illegal activities. However, Collodi was persuaded to alter the end of the story into its current form. In the novel, *Pinocchio*'s transformation into a 'real boy' is bittersweet. It seems to carry a deeper, more profound meaning than the Disney version, with which most of us are familiar.

In Schultz Miller's version, when *Pinocchio* first comes to 'life', he thinks there is nothing that he cannot do. *Pinocchio* is not well mannered and is disrespectful at times to the Blue Ferry and to Hickory Cricket. *Pinocchio* looks for a quick way to become rich, famous and have fun. However, the young puppet soon learns through encounters with devious characters that he has a lot of work to do before he can become a 'real boy' and finally be granted his wish. Schultz Miller's version is considerably shorter than the novel and takes a slightly lighter side of the story. However, by the end of the story, *Pinocchio* has learned some important morals. *Pinocchio* proves that he is "good honest and brave" (Schultz Miller 38) and thus the puppet is granted his wish to become a 'real boy'.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **A Brief History of Puppets: Focus on Westernized Puppetry**

If there is one true origin of puppets, it remains elusive to historians today. Relics of puppets have been found in Egypt, China and India at archaeological sites. There are writings that date shadow puppetry in China to over 3,000 years ago. However, it is also important to note that puppets predate written text. String operated puppets and dolls have been discovered in the tombs of the ancient Egyptian Pharaohs. Later, dolls of clay thought to have been used as puppets were unearthed in burial sites of the Etruscans, early inhabitants of central Italy. Ancient Greek and Roman writings confirm the use of marionettes in dramatic performances. Marionettes are puppets that are worked and controlled from above the playing area or stage by strings.

By the Middle Ages, European churches used Mystery, Miracle and Morality Plays to communicate religious ideas and doctrines to the common man who was not as well versed in Latin as the priests. Puppetry was occasionally used in these liturgical or religious dramas. However, the religious plays were eventually removed from inside the church and were forced out into the streets of the towns. Performers or acting troupes used staged wagons called ‘mansions.’ The glove puppet was popular at this time in Europe as it was very portable or easily moved around. Eventually, the plays were taken over by townspeople and professional guilds. As the wagons were moveable, so were the plays.



The guilds moved their wagon and performed their shows for other towns. Puppetry continued to be used sporadically through the period and into the early 1600s.

Most forms of English theatrical performance were prohibited in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Theatres were closed to guard against religious propaganda, social uprisings as well as because of the out break of the Bubonic plague. However, puppet plays were exempt from the laws forbidding dramatic performances. Traveling puppeteering was also popular and thrived in many other European countries at this time. Traveling puppeteers primarily used glove puppets, marionettes and rod puppets. Marionette puppetry continued to grow in popularity into the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. While stationary puppet theatre companies began to spring up around Europe, traveling marionette puppetry was perhaps more lucrative.

In Italy, traveling marionette shows gained substantial notoriety. Therefore, it should be of no great stretch of the imagination that Carlo Collodi incorporated the immensely popular puppet show into his children's novel *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. In our version of *Pinocchio*, as you will find, the character, Lorenzo is the proud owner of a traveling puppetry troupe called *Lorenzo Magnifico's Magnificent Carnival of Puppets*. Lorenzo is also a money grubbing chap who hounds and connives his audiences for change.

The audiences of the traveling marionette puppetry waned during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, there was a resurgence in the interest and stylizations of the glove puppet. Later in the century, puppets made their way onto television and have remained there

sporadically ever since. Some of the most widely televised and known puppets include Howdy Doody and Jim Henson's Muppets.

Today, puppets can be found on television, in theatre performances and in educational institutes across the world. The staying power of puppetry is remarkable. This is in no way meant to be a summarization of all types of puppetry as the subject is far too vast to encompass here. However, this does provide at least a brief summarization of Westernized puppetry that most correlates with our production of *Pinocchio*.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Puppets in the Classroom**

Over the course of history, puppets have proven to be effective teaching tools and have been used to both entertain and educate audiences. How can you use puppetry in your classroom? In short, puppetry's scope can be as immense as you and your students' imaginations will allow.

Depending on the age and interest of students, puppetry can be used very basically, to teach hand-eye coordination as well as group work and social skills. The use of dramatic arts, which includes puppetry, can help a shy student become more confident. Young students who cannot read yet will learn to develop self-esteem, self-expression, improvisation and story telling skills. The use of plays in the classroom will establish the elements of a story, i.e. - character, plot, setting, order of events, conflict and resolution.

Many pre-written plays incorporate interdisciplinary subjects of mathematics, social studies, science and health. If students are learning about a particular subject such as the early American colonists or the Ancient Greeks and Romans, plays or puppet plays can be fun and creative ways to make learned information come 'alive.' More advanced or older students will enjoy writing their own puppet plays using knowledge already covered in class or sharing some research they learned outside of class about the subject matter. Students will also use elements of dramatic design such as props, costumes and scenery construction.

There are many terrific, image filled books on the subject of puppet construction that provides useable templates. If a teacher decides to have their class create their own puppet show, there are a variety of puppets to choose from depending on the ability of a class. The books I have encountered in my own research included literature and guides for everything from finger, glove, shadow, and stick puppets to rod puppets and marionettes. Most of these books also include a lot of the known puppetry history.

## VITA

Jamie Lish was born in Washington DC in 1982. Theatre and education has been a passion of hers since she was a small child. She graduated Summa cum Laude with her BS in Elementary Education from Towson University in 2004. While teaching elementary school, Jamie continued to work in theatre and earned her AA in Theatre and Dance in 2006 from the College of Southern Maryland.

While completing her MFA at VCU, Jamie worked with children at elementary schools in the Richmond Area. She has taught theatre to second and third graders with SPARC as well as worked as a Teaching Assistant in a behavioral challenged classroom. In addition, Jamie has worked as a Stagemanager and Assistant Director for Ohio Valley Summer Theatre on their productions of *Steel Magnolias*, *The Secret Garden*, and *Pinocchio*. This summer Jamie will be the Stagemanager for the productions of *Crimes of the Heart* and *Oliver* with the company as well. Most recently, she has worked with the Richmond Shakespeare Company as Stagemanager on their production of *Amadeus*, and as Assistant Director for their production of *Henry V*.

Jamie will be attending Ohio University in the fall of 2009 where she will earn another MFA in Professional Theatre Directing.