

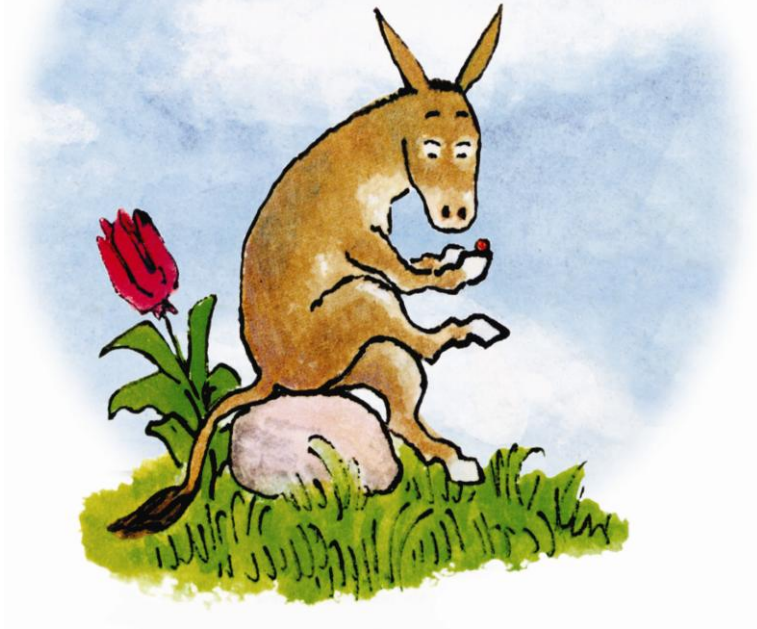
ENCHANTMENT THEATRE COMPANY

Presents

Sylvester

AND THE

MAGIC PEBBLE



By William Steig

A Study Guide for Classroom Teachers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter to Teachers	2
Story Synopsis	3
About the Story	4
About the Show	5
Before you see <i>Sylvester</i>	6
Understanding the Story	
Preparing for the Play	
After you see <i>Sylvester</i>	7
Respond to the Play	
Discover Theater in the Classroom	
Meet the Author, William Steig	9
Introducing Enchantment Theatre Company	10
Supplementary Materials	11-23



Dear Teachers,

Thank you for taking your class to see our production of *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*. We hope you all enjoy it!

We believe that experiencing theater is essential for children to thrive, and it is the initiative taken by teachers like you that enables so many children to see our productions who may not otherwise have this unique opportunity.

We have provided this study guide to help you bring your theater experience into the classroom should you have time for special activities before or after your class trip. In addition to the information and activities in the beginning of the study guide, there are supplementary materials included at the end with additional activities and more detailed information about the theater.

We hope you find some of our suggestions fun, educational, and adaptable to suit your varying needs.

Thank you again and we look forward to seeing you at the show!

Sincerely,

The Staff of Enchantment Theatre Company

*This study guide was prepared by Kate DeRosa Howell, Sara Nye,
Jennifer B. Smith and Faith Wohl*

Visit Enchantment Theatre Company at www.enchantmenttheatre.org

Synopsis of *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*

Once upon a time there was a young donkey named Sylvester Duncan who lived with his mother and father on Acorn Road in Oatsdale. One of his hobbies was collecting pebbles of unusual shape and color. One rainy afternoon Sylvester found an extraordinary red pebble. As he studied the pebble he began to shiver and he said out loud, "I wish it would stop raining." And it did! Sylvester was amazed and he realized that magic must be at work and that the magic must be in the extraordinary red pebble. He experimented holding the pebble and wishing for the rain to stop and start and each time his wish was granted. He set off for home, eager to share the magic pebble with his family. Just as he was crossing Strawberry Hill, he encountered a hungry looking lion. Sylvester was frightened and instead of turning the lion into a butterfly or a gnat, he panicked and couldn't think carefully. "I wish I were a rock," he said, and he became a rock. The lion bounded over to the rock and but couldn't find Sylvester. He was perplexed and bewildered and he wandered away shaking his head. There was Sylvester, a rock on Strawberry Hill, with the magic pebble lying right beside him on the ground, and he was unable to pick it up. "Oh, how I wish I were myself again," he thought, but nothing happened. He had to be touching the pebble to make the magic work.



Sylvester's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Duncan, waited up all night for Sylvester to return. They were very worried. In the morning, they inquired of all their neighbors, Mrs. Pig and the Chicken family, as well as all of the neighborhood children. No one had seen Sylvester since the day before. They went to the police who called out all the dogs in Oatsdale to search, but no one could find Sylvester. Mr. and Mrs. Duncan were very sad and didn't know what to do. They thought they might never see Sylvester again. They tried to go about their usual ways, but their usual ways included Sylvester and they were always reminded of him.

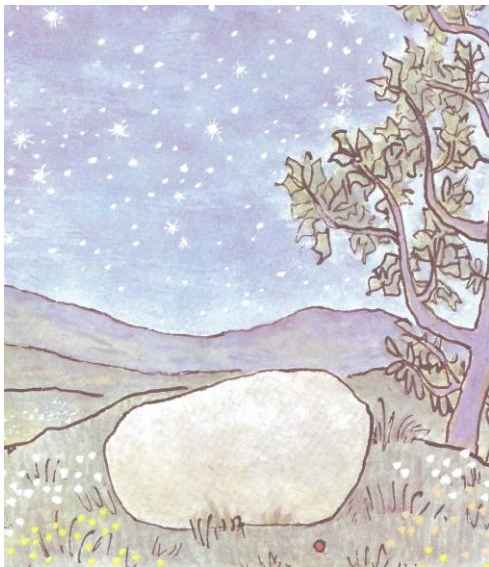
Time passed and Sylvester felt that he would be a rock forever and he tried to get used to it. Fall came and Sylvester slept more and more. Then it was winter and a lonely wolf sat on the rock that was Sylvester and howled. At last the snow melted and spring came. Leaves were on the trees again and flowers showed their young faces. One day in May Mr. Duncan insisted that his wife go with him on a picnic. "Let's cheer up", he said. "Let's try to live again and be happy, even though our dear Sylvester is no longer with us." They went to Strawberry Hill. Mrs. Duncan sat down on the rock. The warmth of his own mother sitting on him woke Sylvester up from his deep winter sleep. He wanted to shout, "Mother! Father! It's me, Sylvester, I'm right here!" but he couldn't talk—he was stone-dumb. Suddenly Mr. Duncan saw the red pebble. "What a fantastic pebble!" he exclaimed. "Sylvester would have loved it for his collection." He put the pebble on the rock. Mrs. Duncan said, oh how I wish Sylvester were with us on this lovely May day. They looked at each other with great sorrow. Sylvester thought, "I wish I were myself again, I wish I were my real self again!" And in less than an instant, he was!

They hugged and Sylvester explained to his parents what had happened. They returned home and Mr. Duncan put the magic pebble in an iron safe. They might want to use the pebble someday, but for now they had all that they really wanted.

About the Story

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble is a delightful picture story in which a winsome young donkey manages to turn himself into a rock and then can't find his way back to those he loves. Enchantment selected this story to adapt for the stage because of its strong message about the importance of family, home and community. Also, we were captivated by the charm of its lead character who, like many children, is eager to explore his world before he is ready to manage the results of his exploration. When Sylvester is attracted to a bright shiny red pebble that seems perfect for his rock collection, he manages to make exciting things happen with the pebble's magic—he can turn the rain on and off! Put the sunshine back in the sky! Wish a wart off his leg! But when he transforms himself into a rock in his panic to escape a mean, hungry lion, he finds himself in a predicament he can't reverse. As a rock sitting on Strawberry Hill, he is alone and scared. He can't pick up the magic pebble lying next to him and wish himself into a donkey again.

Meanwhile, the good citizens of Oatsdale are all aflutter: the Duncans' young son Sylvester is missing. His worried parents enlist all the neighbors in a search that progresses from the streets of the town to the nearby meadows and then into the woods. Along the way, they stop at the police station seeking official help as they continue to try to find him. What they don't know is that Sylvester is nearby but without any way to transform himself again or to call out to his parents to calm their fears.



The seasons pass, bringing changes to the woods, pictured through an artful combination of illustrations projected on screens on stage. Playful squirrels dance beneath the trees in autumn as leaves and acorns fall. In an icy winter, a wolf and a rabbit play near Sylvester; he remains a rock, now covered with a soft blanket of snow. Through the long, cold nights, Sylvester dreams of his parents, seeing them in a vivid dream sequence that envisions a time when they were all happy. Spring comes and his parents, still very sad, decide to picnic nearby. Suddenly, his father finds the magic pebble and places it on the rock. Sylvester again makes a fervent wish to return to his family and this time, with the help of the pebble, they are together at last. While all the characters are costumed and masked as animals, the emotions on stage are very human. Love reunites the Duncans and proves to be all they could ever wish for. Through William Steig's illustrations we see how the experience transforms the family from three individuals living under the same roof, pursuing their individual interests, to a well-connected group of three that is truly together.

In the journey Sylvester takes he observes many things about the world that he did not previously know. He comes to realize the true importance of family and friends. He discovers that his true salvation lies inside of him and not in magic pebbles. He also comes to know that you have to be careful what you wish for, because it just might come true. This seemingly simple tale is beautifully tender and suffused with the magic of love and understanding.

About the Show



The Adventures of Harold and the Purple Crayon

This production of *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* uses a number of theatrical devices to bring the story to life. Here are some of the things you and your students can expect to see:

Masks: In the show, all of the actors wear half-masks to help them portray different characters. Masks have been used in theater since its earliest beginnings, and they help to transform the actor and to transport the audience to another world.

Mime: Mime is acting without speaking or making any noise. In *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, the performers act out the story with their bodies and gestures, but they do not speak.

Magic: Enchantment Theatre Company uses magic to enhance the magical aspects of the stories it tells and to keep our productions engaging and surprising.

Words and Music: There is recorded narration throughout the show to help the audience follow the story. Original music, composed by Charles Gilbert especially for this production, adds to the atmosphere.

Puppets: Some of the characters in the story are played by actors wearing masks and costumes. Other characters—the Chicken family, the Ducks and various animal children—are played by puppets. **ROD PUPPETS** (manipulated by sticks) will be the primary puppet device you'll see.

Projection/Animation: State of the art technology helps create the scenery and atmosphere, using video projections and animation to create Sylvester's world.

Note: Very young children may be confused or even frightened by the characters wearing masks. Show them the production photos on this page and page 10 so they know what to expect. Another way to prepare is to have students experiment with masks in class. Have them silently act out different characters, actions, and emotions while wearing simple masks, and see if classmates can guess who or what they are portraying. Talk about different ways we can communicate without using words or facial expressions. A few scenes in the show are performed in low light. Prepare children who are afraid of the dark by encouraging them to talk about their fears. Ask them to guess what parts of the story might take place when the stage is darker.



Scheherazade

Before You See *Sylvester*

Activity One: Understanding the Story

- Have your class read *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* (see page 2 of study-guide for story summary).
- Discuss reactions to the story and characters.

Questions for Class Discussion:

1. Who is the main character of this story? Are there any other characters?
2. What are some words to describe Sylvester? Explain.
3. What happened when Sylvester picked up the magic pebble?
4. Do you think it was a good thing or a bad thing that Sylvester found the magic pebble?
5. Describe how you think Sylvester felt when he turned into a rock? (Create a list of adjectives).
6. Who helped Mr. and Mrs. Duncan search for Sylvester?
7. Why do you think Mr. Duncan put the magic pebble in an iron safe? Was that a good idea? Why or why not?
8. Look at the picture on the first page of the book and then on the last page of the book (both are of the Duncan family). What's the difference between them? What's changed?
9. If the story kept on going, what do you think would happen?
10. What are some good things about wishes coming true? What problems might this cause?
11. Was there ever anything you wished for and then were sorry when it came true?



Activity Two: Preparing for the Play

Enchantment Theater Company's production of *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* is an **adaptation** of William Steig's book. That means that Enchantment Theater Company read the book and then had to come up with ways to make the story come to life on stage!

Questions for class discussion:

1. Define "adaptation" with your class. (Synonyms: adjust, modify, convert, transform).
2. Ask your class to identify some fairy tales that they know (*Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Pinocchio*, etc.). Find a story that most of the class is familiar with and discuss all the different adaptations of that story.
 - a. How many of you have seen a movie, play, ballet, or cartoon of the *Cinderella* story?
 - b. How many have you have read the story in a book?
 - c. What was different about these different adaptations? What was similar?
 - d. Do you know which adaptation came first?
3. Have you ever read a book and then seen the movie adaptation of that book? How were they alike? How were they different? Which did you prefer and why?
4. The performers will be acting out the story of *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*.
 - a. What do you imagine the play will be like? What will it look like/sound like?
 - b. How do you think the play will be different from the book?

After You See *Sylvester*

Activity One: Respond to the Play

- Review the performance and ask students to describe with as much detail as possible what they remember. What type of costumes did they see? How many characters were in the story? How did the actors transform themselves to play different characters? What kind of music was used?
- Ask the students to help make a list of different things that happened in the performance.
- Write these down on the board.

Questions for Class Discussion:

1. Who is the main character in the story? How do you know that?
2. How did you feel about not being able to see the actor's faces completely?
3. Did you have to use your imagination when you watched this play? Explain.
4. What happened in the story that was surprising? Exciting? Funny? Scary?
5. How was the play different than the story you read in class (if you read the story prior to seeing the play). How was it the same? Were there some new characters in the play who weren't in the story? Who were they? (*Squirrels, Happy Pig Family, Frog, Butterfly*)
6. Did the music help tell the story? How?
7. List some of the characters Sylvester meets along the way. How was each of these portrayed? (*for example, actor, puppet, animation...*)
8. How does Sylvester's relationship with his parents change by the end of the play?
9. What do you think Sylvester learned?
10. What would you wish for if you had a magic pebble?

Activity Two: Discover Theater in the Classroom

In *Sylvester*, the actors were able to communicate ideas and feelings without using words. Discuss with the students how the actors let the audience know what was happening, even when they weren't using their voices.

Use the following activities to explore the possibilities of communicating without speaking:

1. Imagine you are holding a very heavy bowling ball. Pass it around the circle without speaking and without dropping it! Think about how you have to stand to hold a heavy object, what your muscles feel like, how slowly you have to move. Give prompts like, "Be ready for it! It's heavy. Make sure your neighbor has it before you let it go!" When it's gone all the way around, try passing around a very light feather, a hot potato, a live frog. "Don't let it get away!" Don't say what it is you are passing, have the students guess based on how you handle the imaginary object.

2. Ask students to think of actions or gestures they use to communicate. For example, can they think of ways to act surprised using only their face? Can they say something without using any words? Without speaking, try saying:

- Hello!
- I don't know
- Yes! / No!
- I'm hungry
- I'm sleepy
- Go away! / Come here!
- I'm scared
- That's funny!
- I'm going to sneeze
- Where are you?
- It's over there
- My stomach hurts
- I love you



3. Make a space in the classroom for the students to move freely. Tell the students they are standing on a towel on a very hot beach and in order to get to the ocean they must walk through the scalding hot sand. Ouch! How do they move across the space? Other suggestions for environments to move through:

- a. A sidewalk covered with chewed bubble gum
- b. A frozen pond
- c. A very steep hill
- d. A pond scattered with stepping stones
- e. The surface of the moon
- f. A giant bowl of Jell-O

4. Extend the space exploration to include other imaginary activities:

- a. Carefully paint a door. After finishing, open the door and step through it without getting any paint on your clothes.
- b. Build a snowman. The teacher should be able to tell how big the snowman is by how the student uses the space.

5. To conclude, ask the students to list the ways they saw one another communicate without using words (through facial expressions, movement, gesture).

Meet the Author, William Steig

Author and Illustrator of *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*

Who could imagine that an artist and illustrator who spent his life drawing sophisticated cartoons and covers for *The New Yorker* magazine would turn in his later years to writing popular and award-winning children's literature? But that's just what happened in the case of William Steig. He started selling his often dark but always funny drawings to magazines during the Depression to support his family, but ended up writing and illustrating the book that won the Caldecott Medal in 1970, the highest honor in the field of books for children. That book was about a young donkey named Sylvester, who was passionate about his rock collection. It was *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, from which Enchantment Theatre Company adapted their new production.



Following a suggestion from a cartoonist colleague, Steig turned to children's books late in his career, when he was already in his sixties. He quickly became an important figure in the field of books for children, writing 25 before he died in 2003. His best-known work for children was *Shrek*, a book about an amiable green ogre that was ultimately made into three very successful movies.



Born in Brooklyn near the start of the 20th century in 1907, Steig became one of the main—and most prolific—cartoonists for *The New Yorker*, turning out more than 1,600 drawings and 117 covers for that magazine, many of which were collected and published in several books. He also wrote books for adults, among them *The Lonely One*, a collection of symbolic drawings representing states of pain that remained in print for 25 years. At his death, just eight years ago, a fellow artist, Edward Sorel, commented on “the inventiveness of his stories, so often involving transformation...his legacy can only be described as unprecedented.” Since Enchantment always chooses

transformational stories to tell children from the stage, the wonderful tale of Sylvester seemed a perfect fit for its 2011-2012 touring season.

Introducing Enchantment Theatre Company

Enchantment Theatre Company is a professional non-profit arts organization based in Philadelphia whose mission is to create original theater for children and families. For nearly 30 years, the Company has performed throughout the United States, Canada and the Far East, presenting imaginative and innovative theatrical productions for school groups and families. Originally a privately-owned touring company, Enchantment put down new roots in Philadelphia in 2000, when it was reestablished there as a resident non-profit theater. While dedicated to serving its home community, the Company also maintains an extensive national touring schedule that includes performances on its own and in collaboration with the nation's finest symphony orchestras.

In its home city, Enchantment reaches an audience of about 12,000 for its innovative and imaginative holiday presentations of literary classics for children. On tour across the United States each year, the theater group reaches more than 150,000 people in 35-40 states. *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* begins its tour in Pennsylvania on October 8, 2011 and is expected to perform in about 50 venues in 20 states by the time the tour ends. Based on long experience, about 80% of that audience will be children from 5-12 who delight in the company's fantastic life-size puppets, skilled masked actors, original music and startling feats of magic and illusion. It is to their infectious laughs, astonished gasps and enthusiastic applause that Enchantment is dedicated.



Scheherazade

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble

By William Steig

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Additional Pre-Show Activities	12
Explore Imagination	
The Role of Music	
Jobs in the Theatre	
Additional Post-Show Activities	15
Storytelling and Writing	
Neighbors and Community	
Children’s Books by William Steig	16
ETC Mission and Values	17
Introduction to Theater	19
Introduction to Masks and Puppets	19
Introduction to Magic	20
Experiencing Live Theater	21
References	23

Additional Pre-Show Activities

Explore Imagination

Imagination

When you hear a story read to you, you imagine what the characters look like and what they're doing. You use your imagination to create the story in your mind. When Enchantment created its adaptation of *Sylvester*, the artists and designers who worked on the show used their imaginations in the same way. They asked themselves: What will the characters look like on stage? Will the donkeys have hoofs and tails? What kind of masks will they wear? What about their costumes and props? Which characters will be puppets, which will be actors? How will we show the different environments from the story? How will Sylvester turn into a rock? What will the music sound like?

Having an active imagination can help you in many ways.

1. Have you ever used your imagination to solve a problem or find your way out of a difficult situation?
2. Have you ever used your imagination to make something ordinary become more exciting (*for example, pretending that the jungle gym is a rocket ship*)?
3. Have you ever had a dream or a daydream that seemed so real you almost *believed* it really happened? Have students share stories in pairs or with the class.
4. Can you think of a time that your imagination "played a trick on you" and you imagined something scary was happening that turned out to be something different (*for example, you thought you heard a burglar in the house but it turned out to be a mouse*)? Have students share stories in pairs or with the class.
5. Have you ever used your imagination to make up an original story or play?

Use Your Imagination!

1. Draw a simple shape on the black board (*for example, triangle*) and ask students to look closely. If we use our imaginations, what can this simple shape become? Does it resemble anything? (*for example, a mountain, a triangle instrument, a rooftop, a clown hat, a slice of pie, etc*). Have students come up to the board and add details to the shape to create some of these images. Repeat the exercise with other shapes.
 - To follow up with a group shape activity, put students together in small groups and give each group one large sheet of white paper and several basic shapes cut out of colored paper. Ask the students to lay the shapes on the paper in different combinations to create pictures (*for example, a half circle under a triangle to create a sail boat, a triangle over a square to create a house*). When the group is happy with its picture, have them glue the shapes into place.
2. Ask students to scribble on a sheet of paper with their eyes closed. After a few seconds have everyone open their eyes and look closely at the scribbled page. Ask students, "What does your scribble look like? Can you find an image in the design?" Instruct students to take a crayon or marker and trace the outline of the image they see. Then, ask them to add details to turn their scribble designs to create complete pictures.

- To follow up with a group drawing activity, put students together in small groups and give each student a sheet of paper and a different color crayon or marker. Ask the students to start drawing a monster. After a short time (5-10 seconds), ask everyone to put their markers down and pass their paper to the left. Each student should end up with a new monster. Ask the students to pick up their markers and add on to this new monster. After another 5 seconds, ask the students to put down their markers. Repeat these steps until everyone gets back the monster they started.
3. Take your class for a walk through the school or outside. Ask them to imagine they are ... and let that change the way they walk:
- Movie stars walking down a red carpet at an awards ceremony.
 - Travelers lost in a foreign place.
 - Burglars sneaking into a house very late at night.
 - Bird watchers following a rare, exotic bird through the jungle.
4. Take your class for a walk outside. Find a tree or a rock near the school and give it a name. Imagine if it was really a child that had magically turned into a tree or a rock! What happened? How does the tree feel when you visit?

The Role of Music

The music used in this production was composed by Charlie Gilbert, Director of the Ira Brind School of Theater Arts at The University of the Arts in Philadelphia. He created musical arrangements and additional music for Enchantment Theater Company's production of *The Velveteen Rabbit* in 2007 and for the entire score of Enchantment's *Harold and the Purple Crayon* in 2009. He has countless composition credits to his name. The music for *Sylvester* is designed specifically to underscore the action and to help the performers tell the story.

Music and Character

One of the ways the composer helps to tell the story is to create musical "themes" or melodies that occur again and again throughout the play. In this play, each member of Sylvester's family has its own musical theme that captures their personality. There are also other characters that have theme music. Listen for the rock music Charlie composed for the squirrels!

Music and Setting

The music in a performance can often indicate a new setting. Listen for the changes in the music when Sylvester travels to the woods; when his parents go to the Police station; when the family is at home.

Music and Tone

The composer has an important job in setting the tone of a play by the music he creates. For example, when Sylvester is in a scary situation, the music is much different than when he is safe at home.

1. Have you ever seen a scary movie or been to a haunted house? Describe the music you heard. How did the music help make the movie/experience scary?
2. Have you ever been to a circus and heard happy, carnival music? What if you heard that music when you were at school? What would you think was happening?

2. If you were a composer, what kind of music would you write for *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*?

To illustrate the role of music in storytelling, try the following activity:

- Ask your students to recall a personal experience (*for example, a family vacation or the first day of school*). Ask one student to tell his/her story to the class. After he/she is finished, have your student retell the same story. This time, play a dynamic track of music (preferably instrumental) to underscore the story. Ask the class how this music affected the story. When you attend the performance, encourage your students to pay attention to the music, and remember how the music created different moods within the piece.

Jobs in the Theatre

1. Students and teachers can visit Kids Work, a website that allows children to explore a variety of different jobs in a typical community. <http://www.knowitall.org/kidswork/>
2. What kind of jobs do the students imagine people have at the Theater? Can they name five different kinds of Theater jobs? When your class comes to the Theater, look around to see what kinds of jobs people are doing. You will see someone in the box office, ushers and actors. There are also people doing jobs you don't see, like the stage manager who will call the cues for the show, and the lighting technician who will be running the lights. There are also many others who you don't see as well: the director who directed the actors in rehearsal; the costume designer; the designers who created the masks, puppets and magic equipment; the people who publicize the show, answer the phones and sell the tickets.



The Velveteen Rabbit

Additional Post-Show Activities

Storytelling and Writing

Try these writing exercises to get your students writing and illustrating their own stories.

- **Group Storytelling** – Tell a story as a group with each student telling just one line at a time. You can begin the story to set-up the adventure, but you never know where it will go. For example: “One day, Hawthorne School’s fourth grade class (substitute your school and class) decided to go on a walk to Blue Creek Park (substitute a location near you.)” Go around the room with each student contributing one line. Remind students to listen to what has been said and build on what has already happened in the story.
- **Storytelling in Pairs** – Divide students into pairs. Ask each student to write the first line of a story. Ask everyone to put pencils down after the first sentence. Have students trade papers with their partner, read the first line of their partner’s story, and add a second line. Ask everyone to put pencils down and trade papers again. Repeat this process until partners reach a conclusion to both stories.
- **Write your own “Sylvester” Book** – Ask students to imagine that they have found a magic pebble. What kind of wishes would they make? What will happen? Ask students to write a story about their adventures. Once they are done, have students copy these stories onto blank paper, one or two lines per page, and have them illustrate them. Create covers using the student’s names in the title (for example, *Jack and the Magic Pebble*.)

Neighbors and the Community

Mr. and Mrs. Duncan went to their neighbors for help when they were looking for Sylvester.

1. What role do neighbors play in our lives? How can they help when things go wrong?
2. Have you or a family member ever been helped by a neighbor? Describe what happened.
3. What is a community? What does “community” mean to you?
4. Can you name different communities you’re part of? (school community/neighborhood).
5. What makes a good community?
6. What role do different occupations play in a community? (Sylvester’s parents asked the police for help. Who else helped them?)
7. How can you contribute to your community?

Exercise: (construction paper, pencils and scissors)

- Each student traces one hand onto construction paper using a pencil.
- On each finger of the traced hand, the students write or draw a way they can help a community to which they belong. Some examples include playing with a lonely classmate; cleaning the classroom; helping an older neighbor; cleaning up trash in their neighborhood; reading to a younger sibling; helping their parents make dinner.
- Have students use scissors to cut out their construction paper hand. Have students share their finished products. Hang the hands up on the bulletin board in a circle (with fingers pointing out). Write “**Community**” in the center of the circle.

Children's Books by William Steig

- 1968 CDB!
- 1968 Roland the Minstrel Pig
- 1969 Sylvester and the Magic Pebble
- 1969 Bad Island
- 1971 Amos and Boris
- 1972 Dominic
- 1973 The Real Thief
- 1974 Farmer Palmer's Wagon Ride
- 1976 Abel's Island
- 1976 The Amazing Bone
- 1977 Caleb & Kate
- 1978 Tiffky Doofky
- 1980 Gorky Rises
- 1982 Doctor De Soto
- 1984 CDC?
- 1984 Doctor De Soto Goes to Africa
- 1984 Yellow & Pink
- 1984 Rotten Island
- 1985 Solomon: The Rusty Nail
- 1986 Brave Irene
- 1987 The Zabajaba Jungle
- 1988 Spinky Sulks
- 1990 Shrek!
- 1992 Alpha Beta Chowder
- 1994 Zeke Pippin
- 1996 The Toy Brother
- 1998 A Handful of Beans: Six Fairy Tales, retold by Jeanne Steig, illustrated by William Steig
- 1998 Pete's a Pizza
- 2000 Made for Each Other
- 2000 Wizzil
- 2001 A Gift from Zeus
- 2002 Potch & Polly
- 2003 When Everybody Wore a Hat
- 2003 Yellow & Pink [new format]

Enchantment Mission Statement

Enchantment Theatre Company exists to create original theater for young audiences and families. We accomplish this through the imaginative telling of stories that inspire, challenge and enrich our audiences, on stage and in the classroom. In doing so, we engage the imagination and spirit of our audience until a transformation occurs and the true grace of our mutual humanity is revealed.

Reflecting on Enchantment's Values

Originality

Everything Enchantment produces for the stage is completely original material. We do not use existing scripts that have been performed elsewhere. Each show is completely created by Enchantment, based on a time-tested classic story for children that is of enduring value. The music is written specifically to support the show; masks, puppets, costumes and sets are built for our exclusive use.

Why is *originality* important? It demonstrates, for one thing, our thoroughgoing respect for children. We believe they deserve theatrical productions that are as carefully and thoughtfully crafted as shows created for adults. We want what our audiences see to be consistent with that respect, and different from the commercialized and often superficial products that are generally staged for children. One of our colleagues in Philadelphia, Thea Diamond, director of education at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Center, says that "mass marketing often panders to our worst instincts, desensitizing children to violence...rather than opening their eyes and hearts, refining their emotions...and transporting them beyond the known to new realms." We couldn't agree more. Having to think through an adaptation of a classic tale from start to finish demands a level of insight into children's needs and perceptions of the world that is not always available in other theatrical productions.

A teacher whose class attended one of our performances said, "Enchantment takes them to a world beyond their current perception of reality," which she said is an experience of particular value for poor urban children.

Imagination

Maybe it goes without saying that a theater company is creative by definition. But we believe Enchantment takes it one giant step further by operating based on a value called *imagination*. To produce high quality children's theater takes extraordinary imagination to combine an array of arts, including traditional theater as well as mime, mask work, music, puppetry, and always, great story telling. Enchantment does this by the highly creative way it brings together the old and new with the best of Eastern and Western theatrical techniques. We believe *imagination* also means to be completely open to new ways of doing things, both on stage, in the classroom and even behind the stage curtain. And, in the case of *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, it means adding new dimensions to the story to make it theatrical in the most meaningful way.

We also know that combining different art forms in exciting and creative ways can stimulate children’s imaginations and get them to see the world differently. One young attendee at a recent Enchantment production said that he learned from the show, “If you use your imagination, things might turn out better.”

Transformation

This value is embedded right in the company’s mission statement, which says, in part, “We engage the imagination and spirit of our audience, until a *transformation* occurs and the true grace of our mutual humanity is revealed.” While we’re in the business of entertainment, we again want to go one step further. We want children to see that the characters on stage can work through their problems and come to a transformed understanding of themselves and their circumstances. This can give hope to children, a sense of possibility, and the belief that their lives, too, can change for the better.

Love and family relationships are at the core of many of our productions and the vehicle for transformation to a better life. This is an important life lesson for our young audiences, one we teach through the stories we select, the way we stage them for young people and the message that evolves through the development of characters on the stage. This emanates from our fundamental respect for the children we put at the heart of our company’s work. A school child attending one of our performances of *Cinderella* recently told us, “I want my family to see the show. It would probably change their lives forever.”

Community

This value takes two forms in Enchantment’s activities. One is our conscious and continuing attempt to serve the Greater Philadelphia community. The other is our effort to build community by our actions. At Enchantment, we make every effort to reach out to the most underserved people in our home community of Philadelphia—the disabled, the elderly, those for whom English is a second language, the underserved and the poor. We do this in partnership with community-based organizations that support these groups.

Thea Diamond at the University of Pennsylvania has also said that high quality children’s theater “affirms life and attempts to promote community and harmony.” What better way to operate a theater company than to strengthen the community in which it lives, to draw together families in uplifting shared experiences and to work closely with schools to assure that the arts remain an important part of the education and development of our youngest citizens?

Introduction to Theater

Theater did not develop overnight; it evolved slowly out of the practice of ritual. Primitive man cultivated certain rituals to appease the elements or to make things happen that he didn't understand (for example, to make crops grow or to have success in hunting). In Ancient Greece, similar rituals began in honor of Dionysus, the God of fertility, and would include choral singing and dancing. These rituals were so popular, that people began to choreograph, or plan out, the dances more carefully. The songs grew more sophisticated, and eventually included actors speaking in dialogue with one another and with the chorus. Soon, writers wrote full scripts to be performed; entire festivals were organized in honor of Dionysus, and theater as we know it was born.

What makes a theatrical experience? Actors on a "stage," (which might be anything from a huge amphitheater to the front of a classroom) portray characters and tell stories through their movement and speech. But it is still not a theatrical experience until one more very important element is added. It is the presence of an audience—watching, participating, imagining—that makes it truly theater. Theater is the coming together of people—the audience and the actors—to think about, speak of, and experience the big ideas that connect us to our inner and outer worlds.

Introduction to Masks and Puppets

In this production of *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, actors wearing **masks** portray some of the characters. Though masks are rare in American contemporary theater, they have been used since the very beginning of theater. The early Romans used enormous masks that exaggerated human characteristics and enhanced the actor's presence in the huge amphitheaters of their day. Greek theater used masks that were human scale to designate tragic and comic characters. Masks have been used in the early Christian church since the ninth century and were revived during the Renaissance in Italy with the Commedia Dell' Arte. Theater throughout Asia has used masks to create archetypal characters, human and divine. In Balinese theatrical tradition, for example, masks keep ancient and mythological figures recognizable to a contemporary audience, preserving a rare and beautiful culture. Though used differently in every culture, the mask universally facilitates a transformation of the actor and the audience.

"A mask allows the actor to submerge his ego in the service of an archetypal role whose significance dwarfs his own personality...The power of the mask is rooted in paradox, in the fusion of opposites. It brings together the self and the other by enabling us to look at the world through someone else's face. It merges past and present by reflecting faces that are the likenesses of both our ancestors and our neighbors. A mask is a potent metaphor for the coalescence of the universal and the particular, immobility and change, disguise and revelation."

-Ron Jenkins, "Two Way Mirrors" Parabola Magazine, Mask and Metaphor Issue

In Enchantment's production the characters are animals. We don't want to be limited by the size and shape of an actor to portray them...so we use **puppets**. Similar to masks, puppets also have a long and esteemed history. They have been used to represent gods, noblemen and everyday people. In the history of every culture, puppets can be found, from the tombs of the Pharaohs to the Italian marionette and the English Punch and Judy. The Bunraku Puppet Theater of Japan has been in existence continuously since the seventeenth century. In the early days of Bunraku, the greatest playwrights preferred writing for puppets than for live actors.

Puppets are similar to the mask in their fascination and power. We accept that this carved being is real and alive, and we invest it with an intensified life of our own imagining. Thus, puppets can take an audience further and deeper into what is true. Audiences bring more of themselves to mask and puppet theater because they are required to imagine more. Masks and puppets live in a world of heightened reality. Used with art and skill, they can free the actor and the audience from what is ordinary and mundane, and help theater do what it does at its best: expand boundaries, free the imagination, inspire dreams, transform possibilities and teach us about ourselves.

Introduction to Magic

To early humans, the world was filled with magic— stars glittered and constellations moved, lightning flashed and fire appeared out of the sky, nature went through cycles of death and rebirth. Ancient people wished to understand and control their world the same as people do today. Shamans and priests used magic in their ceremonies to assuage the gods, gain support of nature and to give their tribe a sense that they could control their fate. Those who performed magic became both revered and feared. As humans evolved, both holy men and con men were associated with the word "magic": soothsayer and sorcerer; wise man and wizard; mystic and fortune-teller; prophet and trickster. Over time the practice of the magical arts transformed into the religion, art and science that we know today.

In the eighteenth century magic developed into an art form, practiced to entertain and enchant. Magicians performed sleight of hand and illusion to dazzle their audiences, using misdirection, invention and skill. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries magic flourished and elaborate magic productions toured the world. Today magic continues to delight audiences by skillful performers who take on personas both mysterious and comic. Enchantment Theatre uses magic to enhance the magical aspects of the stories that it tells and to keep our productions engaging and surprising.

Discovering and learning about the art of magic is possible for everyone. There are books and magazines in libraries that explain and teach the principles and practices of the art. But one aspect of magic that makes it quite special is that there is a secret to how it's done. The tradition of keeping magic a secret exists to preserve the foundation of this extraordinary art form and to keep it surprising and special for each new generation.

Experiencing Live Theater

Preparing Your Students to be Audience Members

A theater is an energetically charged space. When the “house lights” (the lights that illuminate the audience seating) go down, everyone feels a thrill of anticipation. By discussing appropriate audience behavior as a class ahead of time, the students will be much better equipped to handle their feelings and express their enthusiasm in acceptable ways during the performance.

Audience members play an important role—it isn’t a theater performance until the audience shows up! When there is a “great house” (an outstanding audience) it makes the show even better, because the artists feel a live connection with everyone who is watching them. The most important quality of a good audience member is the ability to respond appropriately to what’s happening on stage...sometimes it’s important to be quiet, but other times, it’s acceptable to laugh, clap, or make noise!

Here Are Some Key Words to Keep in Mind:

Concentration: Performers use concentration to focus their energy on stage. If the audience watches in a concentrated, quiet way, this supports the performers and they can do their best work. They can *feel* that you are with them.

Quiet: The theater is a very “live” space. This means that sound carries very well, usually all over the auditorium. Theaters are designed in this way so that the voices of the actors can be heard. It also means that any sounds in the audience—whispering, rustling papers, or speaking—can be heard by other audience members *and* by the performers. This can destroy everyone’s concentration and spoil a performance. Do not make any unnecessary noise that would distract the people sitting around you. Be respectful!

Respect: The audience shows respect for the performers by being attentive. The performers show respect for their art form and for the audience by doing their best possible work. Professional actors always show up for work ready to entertain you. As a good audience member, you have a responsibility to bring your best behavior to the Theater as well. Doing so shows respect for the actors—who have rehearsed long hours to prepare for this day—and the audience around you.



The Snow Queen

Appreciation: Applause is the best way for an audience in a theater to share its enthusiasm and to appreciate the performers. At the end of the program, it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain drops or the lights on stage go dark. During the curtain call, the performers bow to show their appreciation to the audience. If you really enjoyed the performance, you might even thank the artists with a standing ovation!

Common Sense: The same rules of behavior that are appropriate in any formal public place apply to the theater. If audience members conduct themselves in orderly, quiet ways, with each person respecting the space of those around him or her, everyone will be able to fully enjoy the performance experience.

Some simple rules are:

- Enter the building quietly.
- Food and drinks are not allowed in the theater.
- Radios, tape recorders, video recorders and cameras are not allowed in the theater.
- Please turn off cell phones. You may not take pictures or use a video recorder during the performance.
- Please use the restrooms before the performance.
- Do not get up to use the restroom during the performance unless there is an emergency.

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