PlayNotes
Season: 46
Issue: 2

Read to Me

by Brendan Pelsue

PORTLANDSTAGE
The Theater of Maine

Discussion Series

Page to Stage discussions are presented in partnership with the Portland Public Library. These discussions, led by Portland Stage artistic staff, actors, directors, and designers answer questions, share stories and explore the challenges of bringing a particular play to the stage. Page to Stage occurs at noon on the Tuesday two weeks before a show opens at the Portland Public Library's Main Branch.

The Artistic Perspective, hosted by Artistic Director Anita Stewart, is an opportunity for audience members to delve deeper into the themes of the show through conversation with special guests. A different scholar, visiting artist, playwright, or other expert will join the discussion each time. The Artistic Perspective discussions are held after the first Sunday matinee performance.

Curtain Call discussions offer a rare opportunity for audience members to talk about the production with the performers. Through this forum, the audience and cast explore topics that range from the process of rehearsing and producing the text to character development to issues raised by the work Curtain Call discussions are held after the second Sunday matinee performance.

All discussions are free and open to the public. Show attendance is not required. To subscribe to a discussion series performance, please call the Box Office at 207.774.0465.

Fairbanks, Alaska.

Read to Me

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Portland Stage Company Educational Programs are generously supported through the annual donations of hundreds of individuals and businesses, as well as special funding from:

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Focus Questions

by Isabella Brezenski & Madison Worthington

1. In *Read to Me*, Tony has a private tutor, Lawrence, who is helping him learn to read. They are reading a book about Elmo, but Tony is not interested so progress is slow. It is not until Tony finds something he is interested in that he begins to read with more speed and excitement. What was your favorite book to read when you were Tony's age? What sort of reading material interests you?

2. Tony discovers the joy of pen pals. He uses these letters to meet people from all over the country. Have you ever had a pen pal? If yes, what did you enjoy about writing and receiving letters? What did you write about to each other? What did you learn from the experience? If you have not had a pen pal, who would you be interested in starting a correspondence with?

3. Tony's father, Sam, is cautious of telling Tony too much about his illness. Tony picks up on the fact that there is something his father is not telling him and this is upsetting. Do you think Sam made the right choice to keep secrets about Tony's illness, or should he have told Tony more information?

4. When Lawrence teaches Tony about the post office, Tony is skeptical. He is not convinced the US Postal Service is real. Is there something you questioned as a child, but have now come to understand and believe in?

5. The playwright, Brendan Pelsue, and his brother Rory Pelsue, the director, are collaborating together on this production. Do you have a sibling or family member you have collaborated with? What was it like? If you have not collaborated with a sibling in the past, would you collaborate with one in the future?

Pre-Show Activities

by Isabella Brezenski & Madison Worthington

1. Brendan Pelsue is a young playwright at the beginning of his career. In fact, this production is the world premiere of *Read to Me*. If you could have a world premiere at Portland Stage, what would your play be about?

2. The setting of *Read to Me* is a children's hospital. Some children, like Tony, have extended hospital stays. Research what resources are used at a children's ward to ensure education is continued and to provide an enjoyable environment for children. (Read *What is it really like in a Children's Ward?* pg 18.)

3. In *Read to Me*, Tony learns about the logistics of sending a letter. Research the US Postal Service and what happens to your mail. (Read *Your Mail: A Day in the Life* pg 24.) Discuss with your classmates some cool things you learned.

4. Write a note or make a card to a child in a children's hospital and send it to Cards for Hospitalized Kids. This organization sends notes to hospitals all over the country. Use this website to find inspiration! cardsforhospitalizedkids.com

5. The practice of shamanism and shamans are mentioned throughout the play. Have you ever heard of shamanism and/or shamans before? Research this spiritual practice (read *What is Shamanism?* on pg 32) and discuss with a partner what you have learned.

Thoughts from the Editors:
What Was Your Favorite Book as a Child?

I didn't really enjoy reading until I discovered the author Judy Blume. I was about eleven when my dad encouraged me to read her books, as Blume primarily writes stories about preteen girls dealing with growing up, love, and friendship. After reading one of her books, I was so happy to have found an author I loved who had written many stories for me to devour. My dad started reading Blume's books to me and my younger sister before bed so we could all enjoy the ups and downs of these characters' lives. Some of my favorites include: *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* and *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*.

- Isabella Brezenski Education Intern

My favorite book as a child was *The Night Before Christmas*, illustrated by a family friend Julie Downing. I thought it was so cool that the beautiful watercolor illustrations were made by someone I knew, and it became a family tradition to read it together on Christmas Eve. Now as an Education Intern at Portland Stage, I have the fun opportunity to read lots of children's books and discover new favorites! My current number one recommendation is *Raise Your Hand*, by eleven-year-old Alice Paul Tapper. Of course, the fact that an eleven-year-old wrote her own book is in itself inspirational, but the content of the book is equally impressive. Tapper challenges girls everywhere to speak up by telling the true story of how she encouraged other girls like herself to have the confidence to literally and figuratively raise their hands. She established the Raise Your Hand Pledge and Patch Program with the support of Girl Scouts of America, was interviewed on TV, and wrote an op-ed for the *New York Times*.

- Madison Worthington, Education Intern

My favorite book as a kid was *Wild Child* by Lynn Plourde and illustrated by Greg Couch. My mom was always keen on supporting Maine authors, so we always had plenty of books by Lynn Plourde, who grew up in Skowhegan, Maine (the town that I grew up in). In *Wild Child*, Mother Earth tries to put her wild child, Autumn, to bed, but Autumn is never quite ready. I think what really drew me to the book as a kid was the beautiful relationship between a mother and daughter (and the fact that I, like Autumn, never wanted to go to bed certainly helped). I also found the autumnal illustrations by Greg Couch mesmerizing.

- Kaylee Pomelow, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern

I really enjoyed both reading and being read to as a child. I loved imagining the characters and the far-away places they lived. Some of my fondest childhood memories are of my mom and dad reading to me before bed, so it is no coincidence that my favorite books as a child were often those that were originally read aloud to me. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* was released in the United States when I was seven years old. My mom read me the first three books in the series, and I loved the accents and unique voices that she gave to each of the characters. In the summer of 2000, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* was released, and my mom and I read it together towards the end of my school vacation. She would read a chapter or two to me before bed every night, and after she tucked me in I would read the next chapter by myself. After I'd fallen asleep, she would take the book back and catch up to the point I had left off, and we would pick up there the next night. I grew up with Harry, Ron, and Hermione, and the books marked my transition from being read to, to reading by myself. I feel fortunate to have had this experience, and give a lot of credit to J.K. Rowling and the boy who lived for truly introducing me to the magical world of reading.

- *Meredith G. Healy, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern*

My favorite book as a child was *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo, and my love for reading was absolutely influenced by the adults who read to me growing up. Ever since I can remember, my parents read me bedtime stories, the most memorable of which included the entire *Little House on the Prairie* series, the *Winnie the Pooh* books, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. My mother actually found out about my ability to read when I corrected her after she mispronounced a word one night. She looked at me and said, "Wait, you can read that?" She then proceeded to have me read to *her*. I was also read to by teachers all throughout elementary school, the most memorable of which being my fourth grade teacher who read us the first *Harry Potter* book, which sparked a lifetime love and, eventually, a first tattoo (sorry, mom!).

The reason *Despereaux* stands out to me in particular is because it is one of the first books where I felt taken seriously as a young reader. Thinking back on it now, while there is nothing exceedingly graphic, it contains rather intense imagery and more complex themes that you would typically expect within a children's book. This made me as a reader feel challenged, which aided me in my journey to becoming such an avid reader. Aside from this aspect, *Despereaux* is also just an excellent, whimsical book about a mouse and his adventures in a palace as he tries to save a princess from rats while using a needle and thimble as a sword and shield. What's not to love about that?

- *Lizz Mangan, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern*

About the Play

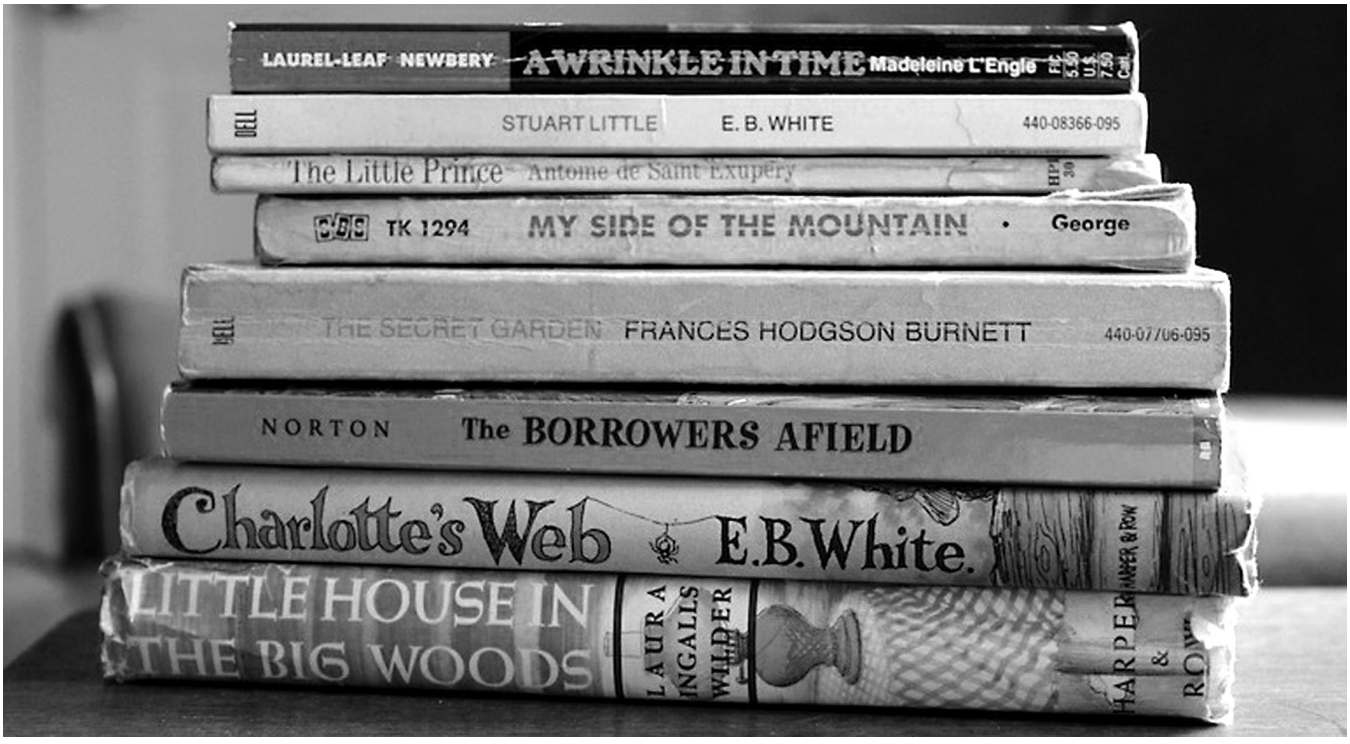
by Lizz Mangan

Picture this: You're an average college graduate who is just trying to figure out what the next step is. Maybe you'll go to divinity school. Who knows? Not you. For now, you've landed a job tutoring in a hospital, and your first student is a young boy named Tony with a terminal illness. Despite your best efforts, Tony is not interested in your various attempts to get him to read the terrible Elmo book you've brought him. Instead, Tony is adamant about getting answers to life's questions that the adults in his life won't answer. So, in an attempt to curb his curiosity and get him to read at least a little, you turn to the obvious solution: the US Postal Service.

Tony's quest to find the answers to life's questions puts him in contact with a sea of new people, including the oldest woman in Alaska and a "shaman" who just so happens to be named Elmo (though he is "more man than muppet"). Tony discovers that his quest to find life's answers is one that is not exclusive to a child, and is in fact relevant to all ages, that a true answer is elusive unless one has experienced a full spectrum of what life has to offer. Tony's father, Sam, is scared of what may happen to his son, but he cannot find the courage to tell him the truth about the severity of his condition. Elmo is trying to find a way to figure out how to help others. And, of course, Lawrence is trying to figure out what to do with his life, while also recognizing he is lucky to have the privilege to worry about what comes next.

Read to Me by Brendan Pelsue also presents a series of other questions for audiences of all ages to consider, such as the possibility of protecting loved ones from something you cannot stop, the weight of secrets, and the impact of a young life on others. Pelsue does not end the play by tying all these thoughts up with a neat bow. Instead, what transpires is summed up in a short monologue by the Nurse at the end, leaving us to determine our own conclusions.

Read to Me was first workshopped during the 2015 Bay Area Playwright Festival. More recently, the play was workshopped in Portland Stage's Little Festival of the Unexpected, and is the winner of the 2018 Clauder Competition, a playwriting competition open to New England-based playwrights. Portland Stage's production of *Read to Me* will be the play's world premiere production.



About the Cast & Characters

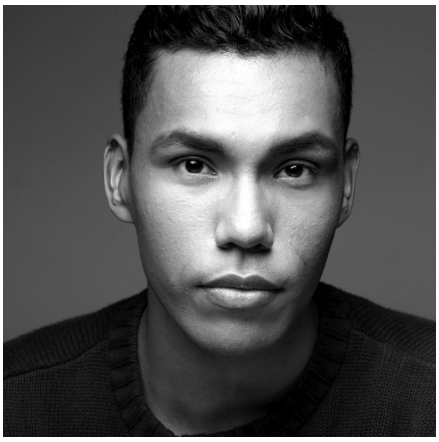
by Lizz Mangan

Name: Grace Bauer
Character: The Nurse
She knows the drill.

Name: Ian Carlsen
Character: Sam
Not the best man, but a good-enough man, which is the best man anyone can ask for.

Name: Lukis Crowell
Character: Tony
Canny, except about what he does not know—which is lots.

Name: Tom Ford
Character: Elmo
We all know better shamans.



Name: Esaú Mora
Character: Lawrence
A lost young man with a bicycle.

Play Synopses - English, Arabic, French, Portugese

by Todd Brian Backus
Translated by House of Languages

Synopsis

Tony has always been a sickly child, and has spent more of his life in the hospital than not. While he's a pretty smart kid, he's fallen through the cracks and isn't reading on the level he should—that's where his new tutor Lawrence comes in. Tony's interest in Lawrence's Elmo books quickly fades and the two start writing letters to the outside world to catch Tony's imagination. The catch is, while Lawrence and Tony's father, Sam, know that Tony is going to die, Tony himself has been left in the dark. When Tony starts asking hard questions that Lawrence isn't always willing to answer, Tony turns to his letters and people all over the world respond. As Tony's health worsens he forms a strong bond with Abigail Brightman, the oldest woman in Alaska, and their lives intertwine in this magical story about the bonds we forge and how the things that happen to all of us, also happen to each of us in particular.

Brendan Pelsue is a playwright, librettist, and translator whose work has been produced in New York and regionally. His play *Wellesley Girl* premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays. *Hagoromo*, a dance-opera piece for which he wrote the libretto, has appeared at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Pocantico Center. Other work includes *New Domestic Architecture* at the Yale Carlotta Festival, *Read to Me* at the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, *Lost Weekend* with the Actors Theatre of Louisville Apprentice Company, *Parking Lot, Riverbank: a Noh Play for Northerly Americans* at the Yale School of Drama. Commissions include South Coast Repertory, American Opera Projects, Westport Country Playhouse, and the Actors Theatre of Louisville. He was a 2017 artist-in residence at Chateau de la Napoule, France, where he produced the podcast *We Are Not These People*. He is currently working on an adaptation of Paul Harding's novel *Tinkers*, a new translation of Molière's *Don Juan*, and *One Thousand Years of Music and Two Americans*, a chamber opera, with composer Matthew Suttor. Originally from Newburyport, MA, he received his MFA from Yale School of Drama and his BA from Brown University, where he received the Weston Prize in playwriting.

Read to Me is the grand prize winner of the 2018 Clauder Competition for New England Playwrights. This production is its world premiere.

شخصيات المسرحية
توني هوتشكيس – شاطر، باستثناء الأشياء التي لا يعرفها — وهذه كثيرة. عمره 8 سنوات.
سام هو هوتشكيس – والد طوني. ليس أفضل رجل، لكنه رجل جيد بما فيه الكفاية، وهو أفضل رجل يمكن لأي شخص أن يطلبه. جبان. في الأربعينات.
لورنس – شاب ضائع يملك دراجة وهو يقرأ لطوني. في العشرينات.
إلمو الساحر – كلنا نعرف ساحرين أفضل منه. قد لا نعرف حالمين أفضل. + 40 سنة.
الممرضة – هي تعرف كيف تتدبر الأمور. فوق ال 35 سنة.
أبيغايل برايتمان – أكبر النساء سناً في ألاسكا؛ هي ألاسكية في عزلتها وعظمتها.

الملخص
كان توني هوتشكيس دائما طفلا" مريضا"، ومأأمضاه من عمره داخل المستشفى أكثر مما أمضاه خارجه. ورغم أنه طفل ذكي جداً، إلا أنه تخلف عن غيره وليس قادراً على القراءة في المستوى الواجب عليه— وهنا يأخذ المدرس الجديد لورنس دوره. ان اهتمام توني بما يقدمه لورنس من كتب إلمو يخبو بسرعة فيبدأ الاثنان بكتابة الرسائل إلى العالم الخارجي لاصطياد مخيلة توني. ان ماتم اصطياده، في الوقت الذي يعرف فيه لورنس وسام والد طوني أن توني سيموت قريبا، هو أن توني نفسه تُرك في الظلام. وعندما يبدأ توني في طرح الأسئلة الصعبة، وحينما لايرغب لورنس دائما في الإجابة عنها، يلتفت توني إلى رسائله والناس على امتداد العالم يجيبون . وبينما تتدهور صحة توني ، يشكل رابطة قوية مع أبيغايل برايتمان، أكبر النساء سناً في ألاسكا، فتتشابك حياتاهما في هذه القصة السحرية عن الروابط التي نشكلها، وكيف أن الأشياء التي تحدث لنا جميعًا، تحدث أيضًا لكل منا على وجه الخصوص.

Lis-moi quelque chose

Personnages

Tony – Il est futé, sauf pour ce qu'il ne connait pas – c'est à dire des tas de choses. Il a 8 ans.
Sam – Le père de Tony. Pas le meilleur des hommes, mais décent, en fait le meilleur des hommes qu'on puisse espérer. Un lâche. Dans les 40 ans.
Lawrence – Un jeune homme perdu qui vient faire la lecture à Tony à bicyclette. La vingtaine.
Elmo le Shaman – Nous connaissons tous des shamans meilleurs que lui. Il se pourrait cependant qu'on ne connaisse pas de meilleurs rêveurs. La quarantaine entamée.
L'infirmière – Elle sait comment s'y prendre. Plus de 35 ans.
Abigail Brightman – La plus vieille femme d'Alaska. Une vraie autochtone d'Alaska dans son isolement et sa splendeur.

Synopsis

Tony a toujours été un enfant maladif, et a passé la majeure partie de sa vie à l'hôpital. Bien qu'il soit un gamin assez intelligent, il s'est laissé aller et son niveau en lecture est inférieur à celui qu'il devrait avoir – c'est là que Lawrence, son nouveau tuteur, entre dans sa vie. L'intérêt de Tony pour les livres sur Elmo amenés par Lawrence s'estompe rapidement et tous les deux se mettent à écrire des lettres au monde extérieur pour stimuler l'imagination de l'enfant. Le problème est que pendant que Lawrence et Sam, le père de Tony, savent que Tony va mourir, Tony est laissé dans l'ignorance. Quand Tony commence à poser des questions difficiles auxquelles Lawrence n'est pas toujours prêt à répondre, Tony se tourne vers l'écriture de ses lettres et des personnes du monde entier lui répondent. Pendant que sa santé se détériore, Tony commence à tisser des liens forts avec Abigail Brightman, la femme la plus âgée d'Alaska. Leurs vies s'entrelacent dans cette histoire magique sur les liens qu'on établit et la façon dont les choses qui nous arrivent à tous, arrivent aussi à chacun de nous en particulier.

Leia para Mim

Personagens

Tony – Sagaz, exceto sobre o que ele não sabe – o que é muito. 8 anos de idade.
Sam – Pai de Tony. Não é o melhor homem, mas um homem suficientemente bom, que é o melhor homem que alguém pode pedir. Um covarde. Por volta dos 40 anos de idade.
Lawrence – Um jovem perdido com uma bicicleta que lê para Tony. Por volta dos 20 anos de idade.
Elmo, o Xamã – todos nós conhecemos melhores xamãs. Podemos não conhecer melhores sonhadores. Mais de 40 anos de idade.
Enfermeira – Ela sabe o que fazer. Mais de 35 anos de idade.
Abigail Brightman – a mulher mais velha do Alasca; Alasquiana em seu isolamento e grandeza.

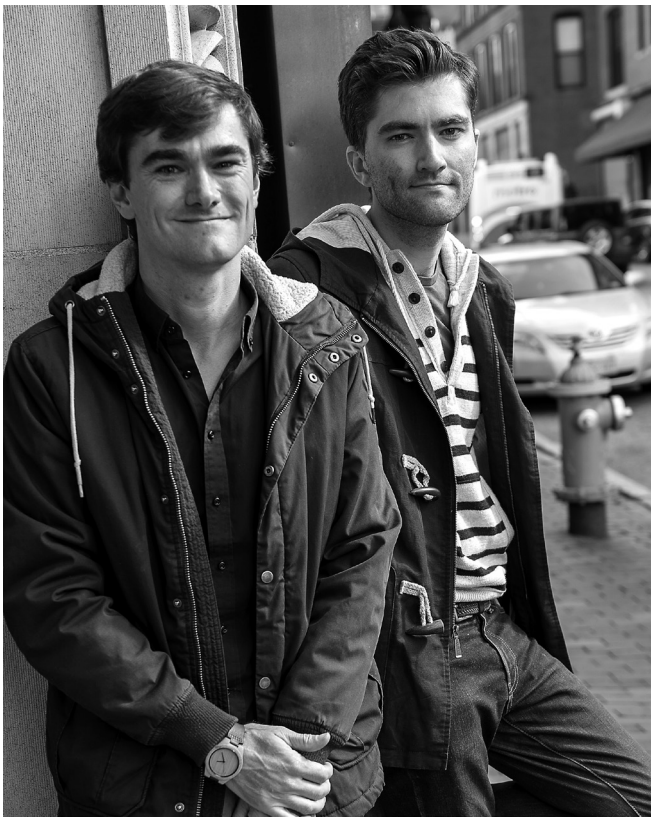
Sinopse

Tony sempre foi uma criança doente, e passou mais tempo de sua vida no hospital do que não. Apesar de ser um garoto muito esperto, ele ficou para trás e não está lendo no nível que ele deveria – é onde seu novo tutor Lawrence aparece. O interesse de Tony nos livros do Elmo de Lawrence rapidamente desaparece e os dois começam a escrever cartas para o mundo exterior para capturar a imaginação do Tony. O segredo é, enquanto Lawrence e o pai de Tony, Sam, sabem que Tony vai morrer, o próprio Tony foi deixado no escuro. Quando Tony começa a fazer perguntas difíceis, que Lawrence nem sempre está disposto a responder, Tony vira para suas cartas e pessoas de todo o mundo respondem. Conforme a saúde de Tony piora ele forma um vínculo forte com Abigail Brightman, a mulher mais velha do Alasca, e suas vidas se entrelaçam nesta história mágica sobre as ligações que nos fortalecem, e como as coisas que acontecem a todos nós, também acontecem a cada um de nós em particular.

An Interview with the Playwright & Director: Brendan and Rory Pelsue

Edited for Length and Clarity by Lizz Mangan

Directing and Dramaturgy Intern Lizz Mangan sat down with brothers Rory and Brendan Pelsue, the director and playwright respectively of *Read to Me* to ask a few questions about the Clauder Winning play and world premiere production.



Brendan and Rory Pelsue. Photo by Mical Hutson.

Lizz Mangan (LM): ***What is it like working with family? Have you both worked on any other projects together?***

Rory Pelsue (RP): It's great! We have not worked together professionally. We were in plays as kids together!

Brendan Pelsue (BP): The first play I ever wrote, we wrote together. It was a ten minute play for a local contest in our town when we were in highschool. I would say to me it seems like theater was sort of always what Rory knew he wanted to do, and it was something I came to in a more roundabout way.

LM: ***Rory, What has your journey as a director been like?***

RP: I think a lot of a lot of times, when you go to see theater as a kid and you love it, you think that you want to be an actor because it's the only part you see or have access to. So, I definitely wanted to be an actor as a kid. But then in college, I sort of acted, but I also started directing. I found I enjoyed it more and felt I was better at it. I was able to try a lot of different kinds of directing, which was great. By the time I left undergrad, I knew I wanted to be a director. I've never really thought about doing anything else. And, of course, with that comes the process of trying to see as much theater as you can, assisting people, and learning about the craft of directing and different ways to do it, which is something you can always always learn more about. And then I went to grad school for directing, which really solidified things.

LM: ***What do you value most in a rehearsal process as a director?***

RP: I think, although it may be corny to say, collaboration. I like the sense that people really want to be there; it's funny, because it's so obvious, but you don't always get it for free. I like people who are willing to problem solve. I like when everybody tries to work on the play as though we're all working on the same body on a table. We're all trying to come at the play as a whole thing. So, the actors aren't just thinking about their contribution or their parts, and I try not to exclusively think about the way it looks or the staging. I enjoy that sense of collaboration and open heartedness with people not being afraid to ask questions or try things.

LM: ***Brendan, what has your journey as a playwright been like?***

BP: I also sort of acted when I was growing up. I was in little local plays and things like that. Rory and I played two bumblebees in a Springtime pageant. But, I always wrote things as a kid, like

stories. When I went to college, I went to Brown where they have an MFA Playwriting program. It's really great because you're around people who are writing new plays, and for the first and second year students there's a new play showcase every year so you have a lot that you can go and see. I was actually much more of a literature major. I was writing a thesis on metaphor in *Paradise Lost*, but then I wasn't really feeling the thesis. I did a reading, and the woman who was the head of the MFA program at the time came to it and gave me the option to change to a playwriting thesis if I would like, and I said I would like that. Then I actually didn't write plays for a while until a group of friends from undergrad asked me to write a play for them when I was just freelancing after college. I agreed, and I used that play to apply to graduate school. It felt like I was reconnecting to something that I had felt really connected to a few years earlier, and it felt like a really meaningful way to be inventive, creative, and collaborative while asking big questions. For me, it combined part of what I was getting out of the fun experience of being in a play and what I was getting out of writing my honor's thesis on Milton's *Paradise Lost*. It was a synthesis, a way of existing multiple worlds.

LM: ***What inspired the play?***

BP: I worked as a very unprepared tutor at a hospital with some very sick children. Beyond that, the play is not really inspired by anything specific that happened to me, but I think that it's inspired by the kind of emotional world and terrain that I encountered. It's also inspired by a book. When I was first starting graduate school I was in a used bookstore and I found this book called *The Private Worlds of Dying Children*. It's out of print and quite hard to find, so it was really random that it was at this bookstore. I opened it because I had been doing this tutoring work right up until I went to graduate school, and although it was written in the 70's, it felt so perceptive to the environment today and everything that I had experienced.

LM: ***How has the process been workshopping Read to Me at Portland Stage from Little Festival of the Unexpected (LFU) until now?***

BP: It's been really great. I think that plays, for me, reach a point where you really need other people to come in and help you with them. Or, you really need to hear it out loud many, many times. A play exists in time and it exists in space, and at a certain point you can't have a sense of how it's working just by reading it on the page. Little Festival of the Unexpected was really useful for that. It's funny, because there are things that you hear and know you want to change immediately, and then there are things that are sort of a slow burn. So there were things at LFU that made me think to myself, "Okay this part's not quite right," and then I found myself thinking the same thing when we were workshopping it later in the summer. It's not really until you get into rehearsal that what it is that you actually want to do coalesces. I really think it is that process of hearing it in real time and hearing it with actors multiple times that brings those things to clarity.

LM: ***How does working on a new play differ as a playwright versus a director?***

BP: As a playwright, you really only do new plays. Although, I am doing a translation of a Moliere play, which is not a new play.

RP: It's interesting, because you want it to feel exactly the same. It doesn't, for the obvious and great reason that you have the person who wrote it there, and that person may want to change parts of it. But, as John Caird once said: "you want to treat a new play like it's Shakespeare and Shakespeare like it's a new play." It's tempting in a new play to say, "Oh, well, anything I don't quite understand during the first go-around can be changed." But, it's important to really try to understand what is there, and encourage the writer to do that, too.

BP: The people who were present that first time through having an enormous amount of impact on what the play ultimately is. I really like what you said, Rory, about getting the writer to think about trying something. As the writer, you sort of always know that the only reason the play is the way it is is because you were sitting alone in a room and you couldn't think of anything else. That's not always helpful. You may have had a great impulse when you were alone in that room, but you're not in touch with that impulse in this nerve-wracking moment of the rehearsal environment where something may not be working and you think that it's your fault. That's where the trust in the director comes in. They're able to show you what a moment could be,

and they act as someone who will take your impulses seriously, but not as something that is written in stone. That, I think, is interesting. Then, like I said, I am working on classic play right now. It's a new translation of Moliere's *Don Juan*. And it is really interesting to feel more like an interpretive artist, because it feels like Moliere's vision is there, and then parsing out what that vision is or why the play is what it is is quite difficult. You feel like you're doing more archival work. I really like the act of interpreting. It's like straddling the line between generating something interpreting something.

LM: ***Why this play now?***

RP: As Brendan said, he found *The Private Worlds of Dying Children* at a used bookstore. Reading this book makes you think about your own life. All of our lives are very short, and you start to think, "What do I do with the time I do have?" Because of this, the people in this play are all working to connect with each other, which is very brave.

BP: In general, we live in a world where the rate of child mortality is lower, but that doesn't mean that specific instances of these problems are mitigated. I don't think we're going to overcome death as a species, and I think this play is relevant because it allows us to question life.

LM: ***Do you have any advice for young theatermakers who are starting to make their way in the industry?***

RP: I disagree with the saying "If you can do anything else, do it." For me, I think more along the lines of: if you can do anything else, do it, but also if you are happy with what you're doing (in theater) right now, even if you could do something else, keep doing that. Maybe you'll do something else later, but you should do what you have an interest in for as long as it can be meaningful.

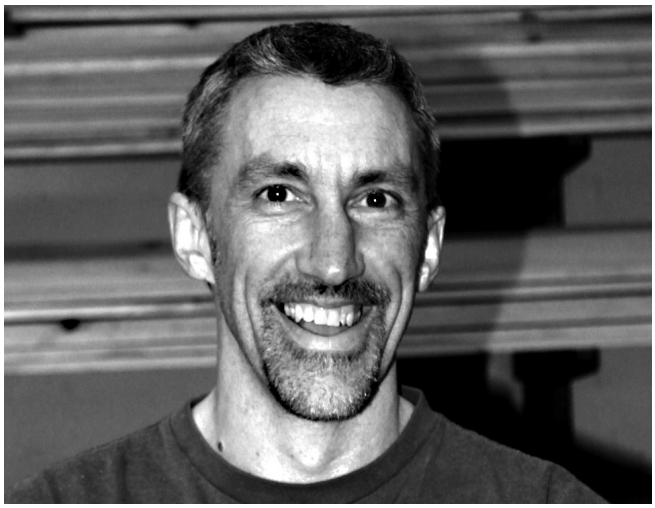
BP: For young playwrights, I would say read and see as much as you can. I think you can learn a lot about different techniques this way.

Rory and Brendan Pelsue with the Cast of Read to Me*, Portland Stage, 2019. Photo by Mical Hutson.*

Making Theater Magic: An Interview with Technical Director Ted Gallant

Edited for Length and Clarity by Meredith G. Healy

During the first week of *Read to Me* rehearsals, Directing and Dramaturgy Intern Meredith G. Healy spoke with Ted Gallant, the Technical Director at Portland Stage (PS), about his work on the show and the magic going on behind the scenes.



Ted Gallant.

Meredith G. Healy (MGH): ***Ted, how long have you been working with PS?***

Ted Gallant (TG): Thirty-two years.

MGH: ***What do you do as the technical director for the theater?***

TG: Oh, gosh, what don't I do? I am in charge of taking the designers' drawings and making all the construction drawings for the scene shop. I make all the purchases. I make the decisions about how things are going to be built. I'm the guy who does all the rigging for all of the scenery. Any little tricks that the set has to do, that is usually me.

MGH: ***In this show, Lukis, the young actor playing Tony, is going to fly. What are the particular mechanisms that we might see used during this moment? Prior to* Read to Me*, have you ever attempted flying anyone during your time at PS?***

TG: Yes and no. We have never flown a person in this manner. We have flown Scrooge during *A Christmas Carol* every time we have done *A Christmas Carol* for the past twenty years. So, we do have experience in safely getting somebody off the ground, with rigging.

This one is going to be a little bit different, in that Tony isn't just suspended. He is traveled offstage. For that, we have a track and we have rated carriers. The carriers are what go on the track. We attach the steel track to one of the battens, which is a big pipe onstage, with chain. The rated carriers have four wheels, and they travel along inside the track. There will be aircraft cable coming down from the track, which is attached to a carabiner, which is attached to the harness.

MGH: ***How long will you be rehearsing with Lukis to make sure he is comfortable? Will that all come together during technical rehearsals the week leading up to the show?***

TG: We're hoping that we have everything here and assembled for a trial run before tech. We'll set up a piece of track in the shop, or we might practice suspending him with cables. We want to give him a chance to feel what it's like in the harness.

MGH: ***It sounds like flying has been a lot to think through. Are there any other challenging production elements that you all have had to tackle for* Read to Me*?***

TG: Absolutely!

MGH: ***I've been hearing the production team talk about the clock behind the nurse's station that moves at different speeds, and the bicycle which will be able to stop and start while the pedals are still moving. Could you talk a little about those effects?***

TG: We have a nine-foot diameter clock, the hands of which have to move. You can't just go out and buy any of these parts. So, I have to design and build from scratch an hour hand that will turn and a minute hand that will turn within the hour hand. The mechanisms will all be mounted on the back side. I've got a motor that will actually drive all of them. I have to build a pulley. If we maintain the relationship between the hour hand and the minute hand to be a twelve-to-one ratio, so every twelve revolutions of the minute hand the hour hand goes around once, then the diameter of the pulley on the backside of the clock for the hour hand will be three feet across. So, I will have to build a three-foot-wide pulley to make this all work.

MGH: ***That sounds pretty big!***

TG: It is pretty big. For the bicycle we have to have an actor pedal a bicycle across the stage. His act of pedaling doesn't do anything but rotate the rear wheel. The whole bike is going to be moved from offstage.

MGH: ***So that is how you are going to create the visual image of Lawrence pedaling, stopping, but still appearing to pedal, and then continuing to move again offstage?***

TG: Correct. So he can pedal and actually go nowhere. We'll have to design and build a cradle that holds the bicycle, maintains it upright, and allows him to pedal, go nowhere, and then finally move when we want him to move.

MGH: ***Which of these elements are you most excited to see come to life when you sit down and watch the show?***

TG: I think that watching Tony fly across the stage could be very visually interesting when that all comes together!

Ted Gallant works on Read to Me *set, 2019.*
Photo by Todd Brian Backus.

Early Literacy, Raising Readers, and Phonemes and Phonics

by Kaylee Pomelow

According to Bernice Cullinan and Brod Bagert from Reading Rockets, a national multimedia initiative, "There is no more important activity for preparing your child to succeed as a reader than reading aloud together."

Here in Maine, parents and children have a resource that encourages just that. Raising Readers is a program, established in 2000 by Maine's Libra Foundation, which provides all Maine children from birth to age five with children's books, free of charge, through medical practices, hospitals, midwives, and adoption agencies. Raising Readers' goal is to improve early literacy skills in children by providing picture books and encouraging parents and guardians to read aloud to their children starting at birth.

According to Raising Readers, the program reinforces the "powerful understanding that literacy begins well before children enter kindergarten." Early literacy skills include building a vocabulary, learning how language works, learning how to use language to tell stories and ask questions, and beginning to write through drawing and scribbling. Additionally, Raising Readers cite studies that show "children whose parents read to them just twenty minutes a day are more likely to find reading enjoyable, enter school with important early literacy skills, and become skillful readers themselves."

To date, 330 hospitals and medical practices participate in Raising Readers; over 2.9 million books have been given at birth and checkups, and 280,000 children have been reached. Furthermore, the books given are by Maine authors whenever possible. Some books that have been given to children by Raising Readers include *How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night?* by Jane Yolen and Mark Teague, Dahlov Ipcar's *Maine Alphabet*, *Pond Babies* by Cathryn Falwell, *The Circus Ship* by Chris Van Dusen, and *Library Lion* by Michelle Knudsen.

We know that having parents read to their children is incredibly important to a child's development of early literacy skills, but how does that child then begin to actually read for themselves?

In order for a child to begin to develop accurate and rapid reading skills, they must begin to understand the connection between letters (and letter patterns) and sounds. In the English language, there are forty-four different sounds, which are referred to as phonemes, and twenty-six different letters. A child beginning to learn how to read must therefore connect the forty-four sounds to the twenty-six letters.

According to studies performed by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, before a child can make the connection between printed symbols (phonics) and sounds (phonemes), they must recognize that our speech can be broken down into smaller units and segmented into short sounds. This concept is called phoneme awareness. The child must then understand that these segmented sounds can be represented by written symbols. This concept is called alphabetic principle. The reason why an understanding of alphabetic principle and phoneme awareness is so important, according to Reading Rockets, is "because if children cannot perceive the sounds in spoken words – for example, if they cannot 'hear' the at sound in fat and cat and perceive that the difference lies in the first sound, they will have difficulty decoding or 'sounding out' words in a rapid and accurate fashion."

With more and more research confirming that early literacy skills are critical for a child's development, Portland Stage has developed their own early literacy programs through Portland Stage's Theater for Kids (TFK). Play Me a Story, an early literacy program for children ages 4-10, is presented on Saturday mornings at 10:30am throughout the season. At Play Me A Story, children will experience the fun and magic of theater through dramatic readings of children's books before diving into an upbeat professional acting workshop. For more information about Play Me a Story, including a full schedule, and other exciting TFK programs, please visit portlandstage.org/education/.

What is it Really Like in a Children's Ward?

BY MEREDITH G. HEALY

Sam: Sure, but for him this place is normal. His world is small. His life is our house and these days mostly the hospital —

PATIENT'S ROOM, CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL COLORADO.

For the duration of *Read to Me*, we see Tony in his hospital room. His life, as we know it, consists of a seemingly never-ending cycle of tutoring sessions with Lawrence, check-ins with his nurse, and roundabout conversations with his father, Sam. The clock at the nurse's station is the only thing that helps Tony and the audience keep track of time during the monotony of his days. Plays offer us a glimpse into the lives of others. But sometimes plays don't address all the parts of someone's experience, and this is true of *Read to Me*. What is life really like in a hospital for a kid suffering from a similar sickness to Tony?

Though the name of Tony's illness is never explicitly stated in *Read to Me*, based on information in the play, it is likely that he has a genetic disease called cystic fibrosis (CF). CF primarily affects the lungs and the digestive system. The lungs are unable to break down mucus, which leads to infection and, over time, to lung deterioration. The pancreas, an important organ in the digestive system, is unable to make digestive enzymes, which are responsible for breaking down food. Approximately 33,000 people in the United States are currently living with CF, and 1,000 new cases are diagnosed annually. The illness is typically diagnosed during infancy, with 75% of new cases found in children younger than two years old. Infants are screened for CF as newborns, and are then officially given a test to confirm the diagnosis. The life expectancy for someone with CF is approximately 37 years, but research continues to discover ways to prolong the lives of those diagnosed with CF.

Children with CF spend varied amounts of time in the hospital. Healthier children with CF have an annual visit at a CF clinic, and then have shorter check-ups at the clinic every few months. Other children have more regular extended stays at the hospital every two to three months. The average length of a hospital stay like this is two to three weeks. The most common reason children with CF have extended stays is due to pulmonary exacerbations, a worsening infection in their lungs.

During these extended stays, a typical day in the hospital is long, with up to 12 hours of treatment with hospital staff. A typical day begins quite early in the morning, with a visit from a nurse to complete a check-up. During this visit, the nurse takes note of the patient's vital signs (temperature, heart rate, and breathing rate) and administers the first round of medications. The nurse is responsible for coordinating care with the other members of the team. At least once a day, the patient and family are also visited by the attending physician, and, if it is a teaching hospital, by residents and interns. At the hospital, children select their meals and snacks from a menu provided by the hospital staff. Those with CF take up to forty pills a day containing enzymes which help them digest the food. These pills must be taken every time the person eats.

At the hospital, children also have a minimum of four daily sessions with a Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP). RCPs are responsible for

Child with CF undergoing vest treatment.

doing chest physical therapy, which utilizes something called vest treatment. Patients spend about 20 minutes per session wearing a vest that is hooked into a machine which vibrates around the lungs and helps dislodge mucus that has accumulated. In an interview, Harrison, a child diagnosed with CF, admits, "I don't really like it because it hurts, it jiggles me a lot." Patients also use a nebulizer three times a day as another way to loosen this mucus. A nebulizer is a device that used for breathing therapy. It turns liquid medicine into a mist that patients breathe in by using the mask attached to the machine.

One aspect of Tony's life in the hospital that we see presented in *Read to Me* is his schooling. There are two styles of schooling that a child could receive during a long hospital stay, bedside schooling or classroom schooling. Tony works one-on-one with his tutor Lawrence on his reading and writing skills at his bedside. This is very similar to what children with CF experience during their longer hospital stays, especially when their immune system is weak and they are confined to their rooms. Children with stronger immune systems generally have an opportunity to go to a classroom located in the hospital for their daily lessons. In this setting, children are either educated individually, or a single teacher works with a small group of similarly aged children. Boston Children's Hospital is a good example of a major hospital with a well-defined structure for schooling. At Boston Children's, tutors come and work with children for one hour each day. In fact, in Massachusetts, public schools are required to provide tutoring for those under the age of 18 who are in the hospital for at least 14 days.

The therapy, doctor and nurse visits, and time spent with a tutor can certainly be draining for children. On top of all of this, they are also missing out on activities, like sports, clubs, and outings with friends, that they experience in their daily lives outside of the hospital setting. This is where another member of the child's care team comes in, a person known as a child life specialist. Shawna Grissom, the director of child life at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, said in an interview that "[o]ur main goal is to help decrease the stress and anxiety experienced in the hospital setting, and we're doing that first and foremost by helping them understand what's happening." The child life specialist is focused on the patient's emotional life. If the child is well enough, the child life specialist can arrange activities to promote socialization and special interests that the child might have, like arts or sports. This can help create as much of a sense of normalcy as possible in the hospital for children and their families. Child life specialists are also trained to help prepare children for upcoming procedures and surgeries, and often help answer questions about the diagnosis.

Children like Tony experience very long, monotonous days in the hospital. Visits with friends and family, outings and activities planned by child life specialists, and working with a tutor can help give children a sense of structure to their time spent in this setting. Many young patients try to maintain a positive outlook despite all the challenges of living with this disease. As Meghan, a girl living with CF noted in an interview, "I just focus on the bright side of things. I don't look back. Life's too short for regrets."

Play Room, St. Louis Children's Hospital.

The History and Allure of Pen Pals

by Meredith G. Healy

In *Read to Me*, Lawrence initially sees writing letters as a means to prove the existence of the US Postal Service to a skeptical Tony. As the play progresses, Tony begins corresponding with people from all over the country. He seeks the answers to difficult questions that aren't being addressed in his daily life from his new pen pals.

Many people's first interaction with pen pals comes in the classroom. For instance, two first grade teachers will connect and facilitate sending letters between their classes as a way to encourage early reading and writing skills. Or, a foreign language class will send letters to students in another country to help them begin to grasp the new language and gain an understanding of different cultures. Writing letters to pen pals is a pastime that is still enjoyed by many in 2019. How did this hobby come to be?

Jon Stewart meets Flat Stanley.

Pen pals first became a popular concept in the 1930s. The Student Letter Exchange, an organization that matches pen pals, began connecting students in 1936 after a teacher decided that exchanging letters with other students around the world would be a great way to introduce his class to new cultures and ideas. The idea of having an international pen pal gained more traction in the 1960s and 1970s. At the 1964 World's Fair, an organization called Penfriends helped fairgoers input their likes and interests into a computer program, which then gave a printout containing the name of a new international pen pal. According to Penfriends, there are pen pals who were matched at the fair who are still corresponding today.

Another unique pen pal-esque program for schools began when a Canadian elementary school teacher, Dale Hubert, started the Flat Stanley Reading Program as a way to help encourage reading and writing by combining snail mail and a beloved character from a children's story book. "In the book, by Jeff Brown, Stanley gets squashed flat by a falling bulletin board," Hubert explained during an interview with CNN. "Stanley's parents rolled him up, put him in an envelope and mailed him to his friend in California. And that just seemed like a way of communicating that grade-three students might enjoy." During 1995, the first year of the program, thirteen schools participated. In 2011, over 4,500 schools participated and the program still accepts applicants today. Participating students send their own versions of Flat Stanley to friends and family all over the world. Those receiving the paper doll pose for a picture with him and then pass him along with a story or letter. It is exciting for young students to get a glimpse into other cultures through the photographs and tales of Stanley's adventures.

There are still many people across the globe who communicate regularly with pen pals. A multitude of online services exist for teachers to connect with other classrooms across the country, or across the world. Some offer email as an alternative to letters, but many still encourage corresponding the old-fashioned way. It seems that over the past decade or so people have discovered a new-found love for snail mail. There is an online push for people to write and mail one postcard a day in February as part of International Correspondence Writing Month, and new pen pal groups have been formed online to help meet this interest. One such group is the International Geek Girls Pen Pal Club, which was founded in 2013. The group's website

states that "the club was designed to bring together the nerd community through shared interests in all things geeky, a love of stationery, and an interest in making friends!"

Other pen pal groups make it their mission to correspond with those who might be in need of a boost. In 2001, Anne Gillespie, a pediatric oncology nurse, created Youth and Pet Survivors, which is a pen pal service that matches terminally ill children with therapy dogs or cats. The animals' owners write the letters on behalf of their pets, and children who are too sick to interact with an animal in person are able to respond via letter. The program is currently only offered to children at Colorado Children's Hospital, but Gillespie hopes that positive research findings will encourage other hospitals to adopt the program. Another group called Tony's Gang accepts letters for hospitalized children in the hopes that the mail will brighten their otherwise long days.

To get an inside scoop about what makes having a pen pal so special, *PlayNotes* spoke to Shannon Wade, a former Education Intern with Portland Stage, about her experience writing to friends and family across the country. Shannon has had an ongoing correspondence with her cousin, Sadie, who lives in Colorado for the past four years. When asked what makes exchanging letters different from other forms of correspondence, she noted the personal touch that this form of communication offers, "It's so tangible–letters and postcards are things you can hold in your hand that someone else held in their hand. I also love handwriting; it just makes it feel so personal in a way that email and texts just can't do. You can also doodle throughout the letter, and put fun flat little gifts in as a surprise for your pen pal!" She also described how writing a letter encourages more of give and take than might exist during face-to-face conversations. Shannon said, "I also think letter-writing is a very patient form of communication. I'm the kind of person who is often quicker to listen to my friends than offer up stories of my own right away...I find myself elaborating and giving more details of stories in a letter than I sometimes get to give in real life. Writing letters really makes me slow down and think about all the little things in life that are fun to hear about but that you don't always get to [share] with the busy-ness of the day-to-day."

Even though technology has given us different forms of communication, for many, there is still something special about sending and receiving a handwritten letter. Thanks to the numerous groups, organizations, and programs across the globe that are still used to connect potential pen pals, it doesn't look like this pastime will fade any time soon.

Should Parents Keep Secrets from Children?

by Madison Worthington

"I am not stupid. I know adults always keep secrets," eight-year-old Tony tells Lawrence, his hospital tutor. In *Read to Me*, Sam, Tony's father, keeps details about Tony's illness hidden from him. However, despite Sam's efforts to keep information from being disclosed to his son, Tony senses something is up. This causes the existing tension between the two to fester. And so, the question is raised: should parents keep secrets from their children?

Currently, "no" is the more common response amongst parents. However, imagine a child's world where absolutely no secrets are allowed: no surprise parties, hidden birthday presents, or unexpected visits from family and friends. The child might also be exposed to inappropriate or emotionally overwhelming material during a very impressionable age. So, unfortunately, there is no simple answer to this big question. Rather, decisions on whether to keep things quiet or to spill the beans should be made on a case-by-case basis. The key factors to consider are the content of the secret, as well as the way it is shared.

Some secrets are more or less universally agreed upon to be harmless, such as playful secrets that cause no harm to children when discovered. Common heavier topics that parents do decide to keep secret from their children include: parent relationship trouble, financial problems, family illness or death, and the details of the child's genetics (such as adoption, surrogate parenthood, or donated sperm or egg).

These heavier topics may, indeed, be tempting to keep secret because of the child's age. The content may be confusing or inappropriate, and the child may get scared, upset, or confused. However, children are very perceptive. If a secret is being kept, there is a good chance the child will sense something is off. We see this with Tony in *Read to Me* when Lawrence asks him what secrets his father is keeping from him. "I know, but I don't know," replies Tony.

Secret-keeping from a child can cause anxiety, stress, or resentment, and lead to a lack of trust. Additionally, children learn behaviors from parents, so if they discover that their parents keep secrets, they are more likely to develop the habit themselves. "Now I have my own secrets. I always did. But now they are written down, so I bet you want to know them," Tony says to Lawrence, showing us that he has picked up his father's habit of secret-keeping.

So, there comes a time when the truth does need to be told: when a child senses something is up, asks questions, and is affected by the content of the secret in a substantial way. Children are entitled to know the truth, and there are many pros to disclosing information, including promoting intimacy and releasing the weight of holding onto a lie.

The question then becomes, how do parents reveal the truth? A key component to opening up about a difficult topic is to check in with what the child already knows and what exactly they want to know. Directly answer the child's question, ask them what they think,

and continue to offer a safe space for more questions to be asked. If they want more information, they will ask, so you do not need to rattle on and give extra information that may be inappropriate or overwhelm the child. Another key component is to be truthful and honest; it is okay to say, "I don't know how to answer that right now," and be open about your own feelings. Finally, do not pass along secrets. If you are deciding to tell your child the truth, they should not have to carry the weight of a secret. If you tell your child, be prepared for others to know.

There is no black-and-white answer to the question of whether or not a parent should keep secrets from their children. What is ultimately important is the well-being of the child. If the secret is causing no harm, then perhaps it is okay to carry on. However, if the secret is causing distress and the child is raising questions, something probably needs to be discussed. At that point, it becomes a matter of how to tell the truth in an empathetic, responsible, and honest way.

In *Read to Me*, Tony's fixation on secrets is never resolved, which is evidenced by the continuing fissure in his relationship with his father. Tony, having taken after his father and developed secrets of his own, tries to open up to Sam; he ends the conversation with, "The secret is so tricky, because I cannot tell it but I still want you to listen." We see a glimmer of the honest connection they long for, but are tragically unable to achieve. The secrets kept between the two have left a void between them that is too wide to cross before time runs out.

The Cast, Playwright, and Director of Read to Me*, Portland Stage, 2019.*
Photo by Mical Hutson.

A Day in the Life: Your Mail

By Kaylee Pomelow

A Brief History

The federal postal service was established on July 26, 1775, by the Second Continental Congress. Benjamin Franklin, a well-known printer, publisher, and politician, was appointed as the first Postmaster General. Although he only spent about a year in the position before leaving the United States to be a diplomat in France, he significantly improved the postal service in his short tenure. By the time Franklin left his position as Postmaster General, he had established routes from Maine to Florida and ensured regular postal service between the colonies and Great Britain. Prior to his time as Postmaster General, he had also introduced a shipping rate chart that standardized the cost of mailing items by weight and distance. By 1789, there were about seventy-five post offices in the United States.

Although Franklin's fundamental designs and strategies are still present in today's postal system, now known as the United States Postal Service (USPS), many additions and improvements have been made thanks to new technologies and innovative thinking: airmail service (1918), one-day residential delivery (1950), self-adhesive stamps (1974), and the USPS iPhone app (2009). The USPS is more efficient than ever before, and although most people in the US have either sent or received mail through USPS, how our mail is processed and how the system operates so efficiently can be a bit of a mystery. So, what really happens to our mail? What kind of journey has that letter or bill really gone on? Below, we've traced the path of a single piece of mail and broken down each step.

Mail Delivery and Processing: Step by Step

Step One: You've properly addressed and appropriately stamped your piece of mail. You either put it in your personal mailbox (with the flag up), a large public collection box, or take it directly to the post office.

Step Two: Your local postal carrier collects your letter from your mailbox or the public collection box and brings it to your local post office. The postal carrier's mail is combined with mail that has been collected by other local postal carriers that day. The mail is then put in a large truck and driven to a mail processing plant.

Step Three: At the mail processing plant, postal workers put the items through a machine that automatically sorts each piece by size and shape, separating letters from larger envelopes and packages (a process called mail culling). After sorting each piece of mail, the machine orients the envelopes so that the addresses are each facing the same way. Then the envelopes are stamped with the date and location the letter was sorted; this is the "postmark." The machine also adds cancellation lines so that the stamp can't be illegally reused.

Step Four: While still at the mail processing plant, the letters are then moved to a machine that imprints a fluorescent barcode on the back of each envelope. Assigned to each individual piece of mail, this unique barcode is used by USPS to identify every envelope. Then the address written by the sender is scanned with an optical character reader; a different barcode representing the scanned address is printed on the front of the envelope. If the optical character reader can't read the address on the envelope, it is sent to a separate location to be processed manually.

Step Five: Different machines then scan the barcode on the front of the envelope (which represents the address) and sort the mail into bins based on ZIP code ranges. Each bin indicates the USPS processing plant closest to the mail's addressed location. The mail from each bin is then further sorted by the specific ZIP code in trays.

Step Six: The mail from each bin is taken from the original mail processing plant and either driven or flown to the final mail processing plant (near the letter's destination).

Step Seven: At the final mail processing plant, a machine scans the barcodes and sorts all of the mail by carrier—each carrier has their own route that they cover—and by the order of delivery for the carrier.

Step Eight: The mail leaves the final processing plant and is taken to individual post offices. The postal carrier then picks up their trays of mail (specifically sorted for them) and puts them in their vehicle.

Step Nine: The postal carrier drives to the correct street, parks their car, and loads their satchel with the mail that they will deliver on that street. They then deliver the mail on foot to the address on the envelope. In more rural areas, a postal carrier might drive from mailbox to mailbox rather than delivering mail on foot.

Community Connections: Center for Grieving Children

Edited for Length and Clarity by Lizz Mangan

The Center For Grieving Children (CFGC) is a resource center in Portland, Maine that serves more than 4,000 grieving children, teens, families, and young adults annually through peer support, outreach, and education. Directing and Dramaturgy Intern Lizz Mangan *s*at down with Sara Asch, the Bereavement Services and Outreach Coordinator at the CFGC to ask a few questions about processing a heavy subject like death.

Sarah Asch, Center for Grieving Children.

Lizz Mangan (LM): ***When was the Center For Grieving Children founded, and what do you do here?***

Sara Asch (SA): We were founded in 1987, and this is our 33rd year. We were the third child bereavement center in the United States and our founder, Bill Hammonds, had a seven-year-old niece whose mom (his sister) died. He was a stockbroker here in Portland and he all of a sudden found that there were no resources to help him understand how to support his niece. So, he switched gears entirely. He gave up his career and went to Portland, Oregon, and there was the Dougy Center. That was the first child bereavement center in the country, and it was founded about three years before we were. He went through the Dougy Center training process, stayed and watched what they did for a little while, and then came back here and gathered a bunch of friends. Our model is different from the Dougy Center's. They have a lot of professionals involved but Bill, along with his friends who were pastors, therapists; and teachers, all felt that grief was not a pathology, and that most people, given loving support and non-judgmental spaces to work through their process, would not so much get over their grief, but learn how to live a full and meaningful life in spite of their grief. So that's what we do. We rely on about 150 volunteers a week who go through a 33 hour training process. We break people into age-appropriate groups like 3-6, 7-9, 10-13, and then teens. We also have young adult and adult groups. And we do that for both bereavement and our Tender Living Care program, which is to support life threatening illness.

LM: ***What does a typical day look like at the CFGC for an employee/volunteer versus a person looking for resources?***

SA: Well, it depends on what program you're talking about. On the Bereavement side of the organization, our days are primarily taking phone-calls from families and organizations that are looking for support and understanding. These circumstances range from someone who has just been diagnosed with something asking, "how do I tell my children?", to a business that's had an employee out because of a death in the family asking how to support them, to a school who has experienced the death of somebody in their community asking how they can support the staff and students, to trainings of organizations that work with children. We work with organizations that also deal with loss and help them support their volunteers and the people they work with using our model, which is mostly reflective listening. Reflective listening means that we're not telling people what to do or trying to fix things. Instead, it's about being present with an open, non-judgmental heart and helping someone feel that they are seen and

heard and not in isolation. This shows that they can talk about their feelings without having their feelings pushed away. For the person coming to us, most of our services take place in the evening. The exception to this is our Intercultural program, which is very different from Tender Living Care and Bereavement. The Intercultural program is a school day process for kids who are either immigrants or refugees who have experienced all kinds of loss. In the afternoons, four days a week from November through May, there's a lot of noise and hubbub here with those kids. Trauma really impacts brain development so their behavior is very different. You think about the stress of sitting in a classroom all day trying to speak English when it's not their first language and the trauma that they may have experienced. When they come here, it's kind of a relief at the end of the day. So, that's very different. The Bereavement and Tender Living Care programs start in the evenings and run for about an hour once a week. We have about 30-50 people who come for services a night, with 20-25 volunteers and night to support them.

LM: ***What is the difference between a grieving process of an adult versus that of a child?***

SA: I think what adults don't understand is the fact that kids do naturally what adults wish and strive to do. That is, to be present in the moment. Kids dip in and out of their grief very quickly. They can be bereft one moment, and then they want a sandwich, to go watch TV, or to just be with someone. A lot of parents will call and say, "Why isn't my child sad?" The fact of the matter is that young children up to about 5 or 6 don't even understand that the person is gone permanently. From 6 to 9 there's this period where they understand the permanence of death, but kids that age also have a lot of magical thinking. So, they know that death can happen, but there's also this idea of, "you promised me you'd be fine", or, "you promised me you'd be there for my birthday." Those promises are actually a kind of magic, too. When somebody makes a promise to you, you feel like you can count on it. We talk a lot about not using euphemisms because it's too confusing for children. It's helpful to use the word "dead" like you would use the word "shoe" so that a child gets to know what that means, and that it's different than going to sleep, getting lost, going away, etc. I think that after the age that you're talking about with Tony (eight), there is this developmental phase that nowadays could actually look kind of creepy. Adults who are overwhelmed with their grief and concern can't understand that the task of a kid around eight years old, nine years old, 10 years old, is to really understand what happens to the body. They'll ask questions over and over again about what happens. I think grief, when you have a trauma or a loss, takes you back to the first time you had any loss, whether it was death or something else. You regress and you touch on those feelings again. Adults can have these glimmers of understanding about what's going on with a kid if they're open to understanding them, but usually, adults are really trying to look and protect and figure out what they need to do to make things safe and okay for a kid. They can forget that understanding is huge part of making it safe for them.

LM: ***In connection with the idea of making things safe, adults have a tendency to want to lie and make it seem like everything's okay because we have a fear that children aren't able to understand. Do you believe that keeping secrets from children about death and illness is helpful to an extent?***

SA: No... and yes. No is more important. There is a spectrum, a 180 degree arc of 0 being the person who just can't function and can give a child no information because they're so immersed in their own grief, and 180 being the person who overshares and drags kids into their own grief by giving them every single detail. There's a lot of space in the middle of the arc for appropriate sharing with a child. What you need to do is consider where the child is— developmentally, functionally, intellectually, emotionally— and find appropriate language that does not overburden them with information. They don't need to know everything. What we tell people to do is to give kids a little bit of information with language they understand. You should remind them it's always okay to ask you questions. I often suggest to ask a kid what they think before you answer. Do not assume about what they're asking. It's also okay to say "I don't know." That can be "I don't know how to answer that right now, and I'm going to think about it. I'll get back to you." But if you say I don't know and

if you say you're going to come back to them, you have to come back to them. If you don't answer questions and if you don't tell the truth, kids get the idea that it's not safe to talk about things, or that nobody is taking them seriously and their questions don't matter.

LM: ***What do you think the role of art is in helping with processing grief?***

SA: Well, I'm an art therapist! I think it's helpful for all ages, but particularly for children who don't necessarily have the vocabulary to express themselves or people who find words to be difficult because they're judged. Any kind of art brings expression to what's being held inside, and an important part for me is that it externalizes what's going on in a concrete way. An individual watching that process or looking at that art can reflect back to the creator of the piece what they saw. They don't need to judge or evaluate it, but can say, "Wow, there's a lot going on in this picture. Do you want to tell me about it?" This helps the creator of the art in question know that it's okay to talk about it. Art helps the creator see what is going on and put it outside themselves. Puppets and drama are also really great. I see kids just willing to talk through puppets in a more open way because it's external. It allows them to be separated from the story for a bit, which then allows them to bring it back in once it's been validated. I think it's important to have a witness to that process.

The Center for Grieving Children, Portland, Maine.

The History of Elmo

By Kaylee Pomelow

The Cast of Sesame Street.

Before Elmo was the household staple capturing the minds and hearts of toddlers and parents every week on *Sesame Street*, a children's television program combining live action, puppets, music, and animation with a focus on early literacy, the fuzzy red monster was just another Muppet lying around the set. Cast members would periodically pick it up and try to create a personality for the shaggy puppet, but according to *Sesame Street* staff writer, Nancy Sans, "nothing seemed to materialize."

Although the Muppet who would eventually be named Elmo appeared in the background of *Sesame Street* episodes as "Baby Monster" in the 1970s (performed throughout the 70s and early 80s by Caroll Spinney, Jerry Nelson, Brian Muehl, and Richard Hunt), it wasn't until puppeteer Kevin Clash picked up Elmo in 1985 that *Sesame Street* writers began to take serious interest. Clash "raised him up and brought energy and life into Elmo and from that day forward we would all write for Elmo," recalled Sans. "Kevin's performance inspired the writers to develop Elmo's character."

Throughout the 1990s, *Sesame Street* began to experience a drop in ratings due to the growth of the children home video industry, the rise of thirty-minute children's programming on cable, and the increase in television shows that were specifically targeting preschoolers, like *Barney and Friends*, *Caillou*, and *Blue's Clues*. After a series of audience studies, it became clear that the magazine format (a series of unrelated short clips) that *Sesame Street* had established over twenty years before was no longer the most effective way to hold their young audience's attention, and that by the end of each episode, most children had lost interest. The solution: *Elmo's World*.

Elmo's World premiered on November 16, 1998, as a new fifteen-minute segment at the end of each *Sesame Street* episode. *Elmo's World* used many of the classic elements of *Sesame Street*, like animation, Muppets, live video, and music, but *Elmo's World* utilized three important elements that *Sesame Street* traditionally hadn't: a sustained narrative, a repetitive structure for each episode, and a Muppet host that was a child, making *Elmo's World* the only segment on *Sesame Street* that was shown from the perspective of a character the same age of the show's target audience.

In 2009, the *Sesame Street* producers decided to raise the age of their target audience to increase *Sesame Street*'s ratings. In order to achieve this, *Elmo's World* was cut from the series and then was briefly replaced in 2012 by *Elmo the Musical*. After an eight-year hiatus, *Elmo's World* returned in 2017 as a five-minute segment when Sesame Street began airing on HBO. Elmo has been performed by puppeteer Ryan Dillon since 2013.

Elmo has also been featured in films such as *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland* (1999) and many books, including *Elmo Says…* (2009) by Sarah Albee, *Potty Time with Elmo* (2006) by Kelli Kaufmann, and *Elmo's Tricky Tongue Twisters* (1998) by Sarah Albee.

Elmo and his current Pupeteer, Ryan Dillon.

Post Show Activities

by Isabella Brezenski & Madison Worthington

1. In Portland Stage's production of *Read to Me*, Tony is played by a young actor; however, in the script, Brendan Pelsue writes that Tony could be played by an adult actor. Write a paragraph on how your experience as an audience member would be impacted if Tony was played by an adult actor, as opposed to a child.

2. Tony's father, Sam, keeps details about Tony's illness secret. If you were Tony's parent, would you do the same thing? As a class, take a poll on how many people agree with Sam and how many people do not. Find a classmate who has a different opinion than your own and discuss.

3. The first letter Lawrence helps Tony send reads: "My name is Lawrence. I am at the hospital with a boy named Tony. If you get this, please write back so that we can get to know you and also so that we can believe in the existence of the postal service. Please tell us if you have any bad loves and if you have been tricky to an octopus." Write a letter of your own in response to Tony.

4. Think about how Tony and Lawrence's relationship develops throughout the play. Draw or find an image that represents the essence of their relationship at the beginning of the play and one for the end of the play. Exchange images with a classmate and describe what you see in each other's visual interpretations of the character relationship development.

5. A clock is given a prominent space in the set. The Portland Stage technical departments worked hard to figure out how to make this clock work. It was a challenge to change the speed at which time progressed. At what points in the play did you notice it the most? How did it contribute to these moments?

6. The character Elmo is a so-called shaman. In the script, the playwright Brendan Pelsue describes Elmo as "a man, not a muppet. He wears a plaid shirt." Given this description, draw your own costume design for the character. Keep in mind the significance of the shaman's name being Elmo.

The Psychology of Understanding Death

By Meredith G. Healy

Tony:
And when you die you lose your memories?
Lawrence:
I don't know—a lot of people think so.
Tony:
And I am dying?
Lawrence:
—.
—.
Yes.

Coming to terms with, and understanding, death is a difficult thing to do. This is especially true for young people. What happens after one dies has long been one of life's mysteries, and this question proves especially compelling for young children when they first start to grapple with the idea of death. How early do children start thinking about this concept, and how does our understanding of death develop and mature as we get older?

The earliest research on this topic was done in the 1930s. In the 1950s, renowned psychologist Jean Piaget posited his "Theory of Cognitive Development," and other researchers were then able to link the emergence of the understanding of death to this theory. Piaget's theory has four operational stages: the sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, concrete operations, and formal operations. The sensorimotor stage occurs in infants and toddlers under the age of two. Two major milestones that occur during this period are object permanence (the understanding that an object still exists even if it is not seen) and the onset of language development. During the preoperational stage, children ages two through seven continue to develop their language and communication skills. They also are able to distinguish the difference between past, present, and future, as a result of the initiation of memory and imagination. The concrete operational stage occurs when children are ages seven through eleven. During this stage, children begin to understand that their thoughts are unique and separate from others. They also become less focused on themselves, and more aware of external events. The final stage is the formal operational stage, which occurs between the ages of eleven and fifteen. Adolescents are able to understand more abstract concepts, like justice and morality, and are able to form hypotheses about the world around them.

Jean Piaget.

There are some important links that can be drawn from Piaget's theory to the ages that children first start considering death. Research suggests that, much like in Piaget's theory, children develop an understanding of death gradually, over a number of years. Children are first able to consider death during the preoperational phase. These are the years when children develop a sense of time and begin to form memories. Death, however, does not preoccupy their thoughts. In fact, many three-year-olds do not understand that death is irreversible and final, but over 50% of four-year-olds are able to grasp this concept. Around five years old, children begin to understand that death means the end for others, but as they are still in

the self-centered, preoperational stage, they do not believe death is inevitable and will happen to them.

Children really start to think about death when they enter the concrete operational phase. During this stage, children are able to acknowledge that they are unique beings, and this coincides with an awareness that everyone, including them, will die at some point. It might be for this reason that children this age can become very preoccupied with death and the rituals surrounding it. Dr. Anthony, a researcher and psychologist, noted that this stage also brings about what he called "eight-year anxiety," which occurs when children begin to fear death. He referred to this phenomenon as "eight-year anxiety" because a death phobia often presents itself when children turn eight years old. Tony, the character in *Read to Me*, is eight years old, and has some big questions and concerns about death.

Researchers have identified four general components to understanding death: finality, inevitability, cessation of bodily functions, and causality. The first two, as addressed above, correspond nicely with Piaget's theory, but the final two are a little more difficult for children to grasp. Though preschool children can understand that bodies are no longer able to move when someone dies, it is more difficult to understand that the more internal factors of humanity, such as dreaming and thinking, also cease to exist when a person dies. Causality, or the principle that everything has a cause, has been identified as the most difficult stage to understand, because of the varied ways that a person can die. Children are able to understand that a person can die as a result of external factors (e.g., a car accident, a violent act) before they are able to understand that a person can die as a result of internal, unseen factors (e.g., old age, sickness). Research supports the notion that "children have more difficulty understanding the less familiar, less concrete aspects of death."

There are other factors besides age that contribute to how a child comes to understand death, and the components surrounding it. Dr. Essa and her colleagues reported that "young children who have a life-threatening illness seem to have an earlier grasp on the finality of death." This would be the case for Tony, who spends his time trying to understand what is happening to him. Children who have experienced the loss of a parent, sibling, or grandparent at a young age will also begin to consider death earlier than those who have not experienced such a loss. Family culture, including a belief in the afterlife, also contributes to a child's understanding of the finality of death.

Understanding and coming to terms with death is a life-long process. It is one that we begin to ponder at a young age, and our thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about the end of life continue to develop as we grow up. A child's understanding of death can be influenced by a number of different factors including: the child's age, cultural or religious background, personal experience with illness or death, and the way that death is talked about in the family. Having open conversations with children about the finality and inevitability of death when they ask about it is important, and can help aid the grieving process when children experience a loss for the first time.

What is Shamanism?

by Isabella Brezenski

"A shaman is—it's hard to explain. It's someone who plays a special role in the communal life of a people," explains Elmo the Shaman in *Read to Me*.

To give one solid definition of shamanism would be difficult because it is a spiritual practice and not a strict form of religion. Shamanism is an ancient practice, thousands of years old, that is made up of spiritual beliefs and specific rituals. Some have used the word *shamanism* to describe any ritual spiritual practice that is specific to any indigenous community. However, this could discredit cultural communities that are not explicitly using shamanism, but still implement connections to the spirit world. There are cultures where people, who are not shamans, will contact the spirit world for healing purposes.

In basic terms, a shaman is a person who communicates with the spirit world. The goal of a shaman is to support their community through spiritual wisdom and guidance, though shamans are primarily relied upon for healing purposes. Many scholars agree that the term *shaman* comes from the Tungusic people of modern-day Siberia. Shamans can be found in many communities in Asia, Africa, North and South America, and Oceania, primarily in indigenous groups.

Let us explore some of the different shamanic traditions from around the world!

Siberia is one of the first documented places to have practicing shamans. A Siberian shaman can be born from shaman parents, or selected by the spirits via an initiation ceremony. Siberian shamans believe there are two souls – a shadow soul that leaves the body in states of sleep or unconsciousness, and the breath soul that provides life to humans and animals. Rituals are primarily centered around hunting and honoring sacred animals such as bears, ravens, wolves, and whales. Siberian shamans often dress in a costume with antlers while performing their duties. A drum is an extremely important element used to help the shaman into their trance. This drum can be made of wood from sacred trees or pelts of animals that have traveled to the spirit realm at one point. Siberian shamans have been stigmatized and vilified in the recent past by Soviet Russian leaders. Many were exiled or killed for their beliefs and practices, but a small group of Siberian shamans remain in northern Russia.

A Guts ritual in Korea.

Shamanism practiced on the Korean peninsula is also known as Muism. Korean shamans are often women called mudangs. They can be born, or selected after going through an illness and a special ceremony of accepting the spiritual call. Shamans can move in and out of trances at will, and it is believed that their souls leave the body to travel to other realms. When someone is ill, the common belief is that the soul is sick and that a shaman can assist with the healing process through their connection to spirits. Muism is quite common in both North and South Korea and has been considered very important to the South Korean government beginning in the 1970s. Muism is considered a way of life, rather than a religion in South Korea. Rituals are known as Guts and can be incorporated into business opening ceremonies or the starting of construction projects, as well as being used to welcome babies into the world, move into a new house, or send off the dead. Muism has been fundamental in Korean society for thousands of years and ties to Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, and Daoism in the contemporary world. Korean Shamans have periodically been persecuted by the government, but have prevailed into modern times.

Nepal is a small country in the Himalayan mountains whose people often seek the help of shamans, in addition to adhering to the major national religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, or Animism. Nepalese shamanism is based in honoring Mother Earth and respecting the spirit within all living things, which is also a large component of Animism. The common belief is that the soul never dies, but is reincarnated from past lives. Nepalese shamans are typically called Dhami/Jhakri and help members of the community with mental and physical healing, as well as protecting their animals and belongings from harm. It is a Dhami/Jhankri's job to restore harmony in all living things and spirits. To do this, a Dhami/Jhankri will go into trances to call upon guardian spirits to pacify possible hostile spirits and re-establish positive spiritual energy. Blessings from both the mother's and the father's side of the family are important in order for a Dhami-Jhankri to assist a soul. Peacock feather headdresses and white skirts (jama) are traditionally worn, along with bells around the waist and necklaces (mala) made of rudracche and ritho seeds; shamans play a double-sided drum (dhyangro). Dhami/Jhakris often work in larger cities where some citizens prefer their treatment to a hospital's. Nepalese shamans have a central role in the community not only as shamans, but also as storytellers, dancers, singers, artists and musicians.

A Curanderos, Peru.

Shamans who live in Peru are called Curanderos, which is the Spanish word for healer. Becoming a Curandero means accepting the calling the Creator is granting you. Curanderos primarily work with plant medicine to create the trance-like state needed to contact spiritual wisdom. There are many types of plants used to induce a trance, but one of the most popular is a brew of ayahuasca, created by a combination of specific types of leaves and vines. The shaman also completes dietas, which are multiple-day journeys used to contact spiritual guides. These brews and journeys are used today and can be experienced through retreats led by Curdanderos and third-party organizations.

Besides traditional shamanism that is still practiced today in non-Western communities, an urban form of shamanism was established around the 1960s in Western cultures. Some in the Western world began to find solace in spiritual and religious practices that focused on nature, community, and spirituality during the large political movements of this era. Neoshamanism and urban variations on shamanic rituals have been found in New Age communities, but are focused more on an individualized process rather than benefiting a larger group. During the same time period, mind-altering drugs became illegal and shamanic rituals were used as a form of alternative state of consciousness. These modern practices often blend many different traditions and rituals together.

Michael Harner, an anthropologist who studied with shamanic groups, is a founding father of Neoshamanism and created the term Core Shamanism. Core Shamanism interprets readings of many traditional practices of shamanism and combines them into a foundation of shamanic principles. These principles became the basis for Neoshamanism. Combining and interpreting many experiences together can be considered cultural appropriation.

In *Read to Me*, Elmo claims to be a shaman, but he has learned his practice from a book on tape called *Now It's Time for You to Become a Shaman*, part of the series *Co-opting Other People's Spiritual Traditions*. Elmo is learning about shamanism not from a shaman, but from a book series that admits its cultural appropriation. This connects to the idea that Neoshamanism may have good intentions, but falls short of respecting many different cultures that practice Shamanism. To break this ancient practice into a list of principles minimizes its cultural significance. As the world becomes more interconnected and awareness of other cultures increases, it is important to acknowledge a culture's narrative to ensure accuracy and respect.

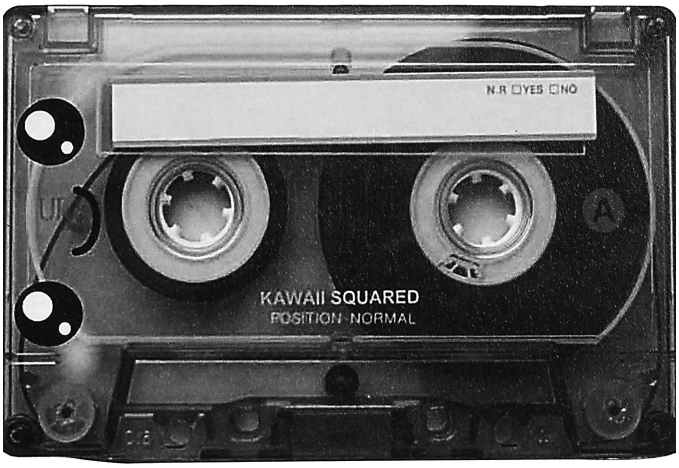
Glossary

by Lizz Mangan

A.K.A: An abbreviation for "also known as".

BiPap: This abbreviation stands for "bilevel positive airway pressure." A BiPap is a type of ventilator. If you have trouble breathing, a BiPap machine can help push air into your lungs. You wear a mask or nasal plugs that are connected to the ventilator. The machine supplies pressurized air into your airways.

Cassette tape: A flat, rectangular container made of plastic or lightweight metal that holds magnetic tape for audio or video recording and playback



Cassette Tape.

Chattanooga: The fourth largest city in the state of Tennessee. The city has received national recognition for the renaissance of its beautiful downtown and redevelopment of its riverfront.

Compost: Decayed organic material used as a fertilizer for growing plants.

Compost.

Consolation: The comfort received by a person after a loss or disappointment.

Co-opt: To take over.

Corroborate: To support with evidence or authority.

Curriculum: The courses offered by an educational institution.

Detroit: A city in southeastern Michigan. Known as the "Motor City," it is where Henry Ford first launched his assembly line for motor vehicle production.

Divinity school: A school dedicated to educating people about religious life and thought.

Eclipse: A loss of significance or power in relation to another person or thing.

Elmo: Elmo is a furry red monster with an orange nose who first appeared on Sesame Street in 1980. He is three years old and generally refers to himself in the third person

Elmo.

Fairbanks: The second largest city in Alaska. The city features a university, an Army base, and an Air Force base.

Flu: The flu (or influenza) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

"Got a calling": When Sam asks Lawrence if he "got a calling," he is referring to the idea of a "calling" as a strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action, especially when accompanied by conviction of divine influence.

Hamden: A town in New Haven County in Connecticut.

Hospital brass: High ranking members of the hospital staff.

ICU: This abbreviation stands for "Intensive Care Unit." The Intensive Care Unit is a designated area of a hospital facility for patients who are seriously ill.

Intensive Care Unit.

IBM: One of the world's largest information technology companies, providing a wide spectrum of hardware, software, and services offerings. This abbreviation stands for "International Business Machines."

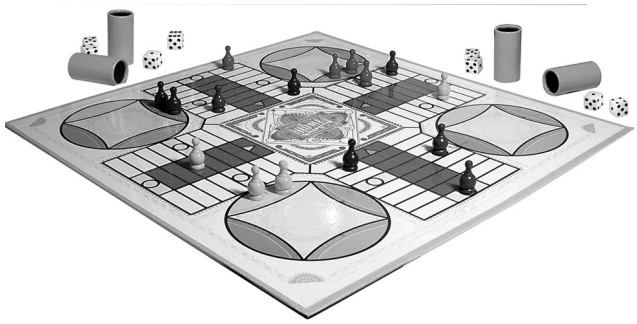
Narcissus bulb: Narcissus is one of the most popular flowers in the world. The name itself comes from Narcissus of classical mythology, who was so enamored with himself that he stared at his reflection in a pool of water until he eventually turned into his namesake flower.

Narcissus.

Newburyport: A city in Massachusetts located on the southern bank of the Merrimack River where it empties into the Atlantic Ocean.

Nursing home: A public or private residential facility providing a high level of long-term personal or nursing care for people (such as the aged or chronically ill) who are unable to care for themselves properly.

Parcheesi: Parcheesi is a game for 2-4 players. It requires a multi-colored board, 16 playing pieces, and two dice.



Parcheesi.

Portend: Be a sign or warning that something (especially something momentous or dangerous) is likely to happen.

Quarantine: A restraint upon the activities or communication of persons or the transport of goods designed to prevent the spread of disease or pests.

Ransom note: A note demanding pay in exchange for the release of someone or something from captivity. These notes often have indistinguishable handwriting, or are comprised of words/letters from newspaper or magazine clippings.

San Antonio: A city located in south central Texas, 150 miles northeast of the Mexican border. It is the eighth largest city in the United States.

Schwa: An unstressed vowel in a word. For example, the "i" in "pencil" is unstressed, making the "c" have more of an "s" sound versus a "k" sound.

Seattle: The largest city in Washington state. Seattle is famous for being the birthplace of Starbucks.

Shaman: A person regarded as having access to, and influence in, the world of good and evil spirits, especially among some peoples of northern Asia and North America. Typically, such people enter a trance state during a ritual, and practice divination and healing.

Cofan Shaman, Ecuador.

Shangri-La: A place regarded as an earthly paradise, especially when involving a retreat from the pressures of modern civilization.

Skepticism: Doubt as to the truth of something.

Spring bulb: A bulb is an underground, modified stem that develops in some flowering plants to store food and water for the plant through a cold or dry season. The blooming season of spring bulbs is usually from late winter to early summer, depending on the species.

Susceptible: Likely or liable to be influenced or harmed by a particular thing.

Tax deductible: Allowed to be subtracted from the total amount of a person's income before calculating the tax he or she is required to pay.

Trance: A half-conscious state characterized by an absence of response to external stimuli, typically as induced by hypnosis or entered into by a medium.

Transplant: To take living tissue or an organ and implant it in another part of the body, or in another body.

"Under the weather": A phrase meaning to feel ill, typically with a minor illness such as a cold.

Unitarian: A member of a religious denomination that stresses individual freedom of belief, the free use of reason in religion, a united world community, and liberal social action.

Utica: A city situated in the Mohawk Valley of upstate New York, approximately midway between Buffalo and New York City.

Vent: The vent being referenced in Tony's book is an ocean vent, which is an opening in the seafloor that spews hot, often toxic fluids and gases.

Ventilator: A ventilator is a machine that breathes for you or helps you breathe. It is also called a breathing machine or respirator.

Ventilator.

Winterize: To make ready for winter or winter use, or to make something more resistant to winter weather. An example of this would be insulating windows so the cold air does not come in.

Instant Resources

by Isabella Brezenski & Madison Worthington

Links to the following resources can be found on our site at portlandstage.org/playnotes.

- ***Students in pajamas and teachers in masks: What 'school' looks like for hospitalized kids***
  - **Description:** Elaine Klingensmith, a full-time educator for Education Inc. in Boston Children's Hospital, gives STAT News a tour of a typical day. Tutors work with the children for one hour per day in an attempt to keep them on track with their class lessons. However, there are many challenges the tutors face, including inefficient communication with schools and teachers, distractions caused by the hospital environment, and limited teaching time.
  - **Source:** STAT News, Boston, Massachusetts.

- **2016 Humana Festival First Look: Wellesley Girl by Brendan Pelsue**
  - **Description:** This is a look into Brendan Pelsue's play Wellesley Girl that was performed at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in 2016. It's 2465. American politics haven't changed much. Except that "America" is now only a handful of New England towns in a walled-in citadel. When an unidentified army encamps at the border, Congress struggles to move beyond personal agendas and petty bickering over procedure to decide the nation's fate.
  - **Source:** Actors Theatre of Louisville

- **Minute Faith ~ Shamanism**
  - **Description:** This video gives a broad overview of shamanism including its origins, stereotypes, and variations, including traditional and modern shamanism. This video features primarily pictures, but also short videos of images associated with shamanism including traces, rituals, and community beliefs.
  - **Source:** Spirit Studios

- **How A Letter Travels**
  - **Description:** This official summary of each step of the mail delivery process covers collection, culling, and postmarking; scanning and lifting images; applying a barcode and sorting; transportation to a processing plant; sorting into delivery order; transportation to a post office; and delivery to addressees.
  - **Source:** US Postal Service

- **Systems at Work**
  - **Description:** This video summarizes the USPS sorting and delivery process with exciting real footage inside facilitiesand all of the technology and people involved in the process. It covers the delivery of letters, flats, and packages.
  - **Source:** USPS TV

Recommended Resources

By The Editors

Books
Cystic Fibrosis: A Guide for Patients and Families by David M. Orenstein
The Fault in Our Stars by John Green
G is for Growing: 30 Years of Research on Children and Sesame Street
The Private Worlds of Dying Children by Myra Bluebond-Langner
Street Gang: The Complete History of Sesame Street by Michael Davis

Plays
I and You by Lauren Gunderson
Mary Jane by Amy Herzog
Rabbit Hole by David Lindsay-Abaire
Wellesley Girl by Brendan Pelsue

TV/Film
Five Feet Apart
Me and Earl and the Dying Girl
My Sister's Keeper
Red Band Society

Maisie Williams in I and You *by Lauren Gunderson, Hampstead Theatre, 2018.*

Portland Stage Company
Education and Outreach

Join Portland Stage as we discuss, debate, and explore the plays on our stage and in the classroom! Portland Stage is dedicated to bringing exciting theater, inspiring conversation, interactive experiences, and thought-provoking literature to a wide audience of youth and adult learners. Whether you take part in a discussion, subscribe to PlayNotes, take a class in our Theater for Kids space, or bring a group of students to see a performance, there is something here for everyone. How would you like to participate?

Student Matinee Series
The Portland Stage Student Matinee Program annually provides more than 7,000 middle and high school students from Maine and New Hampshire with discounted tickets for student matinees. Following Student Matinee performances, students participate in discussions with members of the cast and crew, actively and energetically exploring all elements of the production and the issues raised in the play.

Play Me a Story
Experience the Fun & Magic of Theater on Saturday Mornings at 10:30am with Play Me a Story! Ages 4-10 are welcome to enjoy a performance of children's stories, then participate in an acting workshop with professional theater artists. Build literacy, encourage creativity and spark dramatic dreams! Walk-ins are welcome, but pre-registration is encouraged!

After School Classes
After school classes at Portland Stage produce a safe environment for young people to find a higher sense of play, stretch their imaginations, and gain valuable social skills such as listening, risk taking, ensemble building, public speaking, and leadership through storytelling. These classes are wildly fun, creative, spontaneous, and begin to build skills for the young actor or non-actor's voice, body, and imagination. Visit our website for this year's offerings!

Vacation and Summer Camps
Our theater camps are fun, challenging and enriching. We use stories of all kinds to fuel these active, educational and lively, process-based week-long school vacation and summer programs for youth. Theater for Kids works with professional actors, directors, artisans and composers. Students are invited to think, speak, and act, and even sing imaginatively, critically, and creatively in an environment of inclusivity and safe play.

Classroom Workshop Program
The Classroom Workshop Program partners Portland Stage with regional middle and high schools to enhance the experience of students who participate in the Early Show Program by complementing their visits with pre- and post-show workshops in their own classrooms. Workshops are led by professional Teaching Artists who engage students in the creative process through writing, acting, directing and discussion.

The Intern Company
The Portland Stage Intern Program is committed to training future generations of theater professionals. Applicants should be highly motivated individuals who have acquired basic training in the theater arts and are looking to explore their field further through meaningful hands-on experience. Portland Stage interns can expect to be challenged by a creative process that relies on both ingenuity and collaboration. Interns at Portland Stage work with leading designers, directors, administrators, and our professional production team throughout the season. They leave with a greater knowledge of the theatrical process and the satisfaction of being part of a dedicated theater company where exceptional quality is the end goal.

Portland Stage Company
2019-2020 Staff

Anita Stewart *Executive & Artistic Director*

Artistic & Production Staff

Meg Anderson *Props Master*
Todd Brian Backus *Literary Manager*
Daniel Brodhead *Asst Production Manager, Lighting & Sound Supervisor*
Hannah Cordes *Education Director*
Megan Doane *General Manager & Production Manager*
Ted Gallant *Technical Director*
Mary Hartley *Scenic Carpenter*
Myles C. Hatch *Stage Manager*
Julianne Shea *Education Administrator*
Susan Thomas *Costume Shop Manager*
Shane Van Vliet *Stage Manager*

Affiliate Artists

Ron Botting
Peter Brown
Daniel Burson
Maureen Butler
Ian Carlsen
Moira Driscoll
Abigail Killeen
Callie Kimball
Daniel Noel
Ed Reichert
Hans Indigo Spencer
Dustin Tucker
Bess Welden
Monica Wood
Sally Wood

Administrative Staff

Paul Ainsworth *Business Manager*
Chris DeFilipp *House Manager*
Nolan Ellsworth *Front of House Associate*
Marjorie Gallant *Graphic Design Associate*
Beth Given *Development Director*
Mical Hutson *Marketing Director*
Lauren Kennedy *Social Media & Marketing Associate*
Jennifer London *Company Manager*
Martin Lodish *Finance Director*
Renee Myhaver *Assistant Box Office Manager*
Donald Smith *Audience Services Manager*
Lauren Stockless *Development Assistant*
Nathan Sylvester *Front of House Associate*
Adam Thibodeau *House Manager*
Shannon Wade *Front of House Associate*

Intern Company

Angela Armstrong *Electrics*
Isabella Brezenski *Education*
Jacob Coombs *Sets & Carpentry*
Emma Covert *Stage Management*
Savanna Genskow *Costumes*
Meredith G. Healy *Directing & Dramaturgy*
Zoë Lewis *Company Management*
Lizz Mangan *Directing & Dramaturgy*
Kaylee Pomelow *Directing & Dramaturgy*
Emma Scott *Costumes*
Olivia Tellier *Stage Management*
Madison Worthington *Education*