

PRESENTS

# The Pencil Project

Study Guide created by Janna Smith and Véronique Bossé 2009  
Available in PDF at [www.youthteatre.ca](http://www.youthteatre.ca)



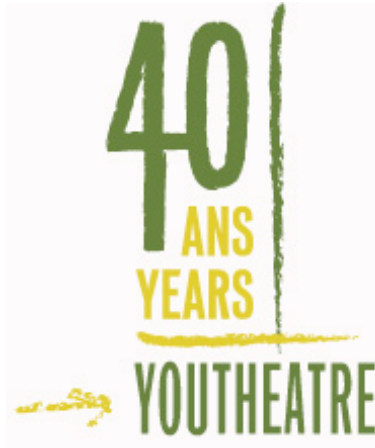
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## WELCOME TO YOUTHEATRE

Youtheatre is one of Montreal's oldest professional English-language theatre companies. We have been performing for young audiences since 1968, and are committed to offering world-class theatre written by Canadian playwrights. The company has performed in some of Canada's most prestigious theatres, including The National Arts Centre, Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People, Imperial Theatre and Manitoba Theatre for Young People. To date the company's work has been seen by children as far East as New Brunswick and as far West as British Columbia. In 2007, Youtheatre toured to Wales and England with *Bang Boy, Bang!*, the company's signature play for teens.

## CELEBRATED A MILESTONE IN 2008!



## ABOUT THE STUDY GUIDE

This guide is meant to be used as a starting point for discussion and to encourage students to get the most out of their theatre experience. You will find that some of the activities are for certain age groups. Feel free to adapt the activities to suit your students. We encourage students to express their opinions by writing letters to Youtheatre. To save on postage, we recommend that you package all of your students' material together, and send it in one envelope. There is also a teacher questionnaire at the end of the guide, which you may wish to fill in and send along to us.

## CAST & PRODUCTION CREW

Created by	Martin Messier and Jacques Poulin-Denis
Directed by	Michel Lefebvre
Production Designed by	Véronique Bertrand
Lighting by	Renaud Pettigrew
Featuring	Yann Godbout as Ian Godfrey Guillaume Lévesque as William Bishop

## CHARACTERS

### Ian Godfrey

Ian is a 10 year-old boy who is full of energy and a bit mischievous.

### William Bishop

William is a 10 year-old boy who is also playful but a bit more studious than his friend Ian.

### Teacher

We never meet the teacher. Their voice is pre-recorded and played through the speakers.

## SHOW DESCRIPTION

**The Pencil Project** is an electro-acoustic concert that is framed by a dramatic structure, meaning that there is a story being told. The story is of two boys who return to class after recess only to be faced with three spelling tests. One boy, William is trying to study at the last minute but is continually disturbed by his friend Ian. Ian is not taking the spelling test seriously and instead just wants to keep playing. Mid-way through the first test, the boys realize that their pencils have come alive with sound and they soon find themselves in the middle of a mini concert, with the voice of their teacher long gone. As the themes of the spelling tests change, so do the sounds created by the two boys. By the end of class, a symphony of sound will have been imagined and enjoyed by all!

## PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### 1) ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC MUSIC

Electro-acoustic music is a term used to describe the interaction of natural and electronically generated sounds and their effects.

A natural sound can be anything found in our environment. It can be the sound of a car horn or a baby's cry or the sound of a carpenter hammering in a nail.

These sounds are captured and recorded by a microphone and then are transformed into electrical signals that are sent to a computer. Once the sounds are in the computer the frequencies can be manipulated so that the original sound (of the car horn for example) can be changed to sound like something else.

Can you think of other natural sounds? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 2) MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

A musical instrument is an object constructed or used for the purpose of making the sounds of music. In principle, anything that produces sound can serve as a musical instrument, for example clapping your hands or stamping your feet. As long as you create a rhythm with that sound (a series of beats arranged in repetition), you have music.

Among the first devices to be considered as instruments are rattles and various drums. Wind instruments were created such as flutes and trumpets. String instruments, such as guitars and violins followed.

**The Pencil Project** will demonstrate how all objects can be made into an instrument. After seeing the show, list the instruments used to make music. Did any of them look and sound like the traditional instruments listed above?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 3) ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC CONCERT

The show you will see, entitled **The Pencil Project**, is an electro-acoustic concert. The two performers will be using found objects (like pencils, rulers, scissors and elastics) as their instruments. They will play these instruments on their desks, which are essentially giant microphones. The microphone will capture this original sound and send it to a computer. The computer has a database of pre-recorded natural sounds that it uses to transform the original sound into something new. That new sound is sent back out to the audience through the speakers.

- a) On a separate sheet of paper, draw a diagram of the process as described above.

### POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

#### 1) WHAT WAS THE SHOW ABOUT?

The show you saw was an exploration of sound that exists in our environment. Every object makes a sound when it comes into contact with another object, even objects as simple as a pencil. When you really listen closely to the sound, you may find that you like it. Maybe it makes you jump with fright, maybe it relaxes you or maybe you think it is just beautiful.

- a) Give examples of sounds that make you feel:

HAPPY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 SAD: \_\_\_\_\_  
 SCARED: \_\_\_\_\_  
 SLEEPY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RELAXED: \_\_\_\_\_  
 EXCITED: \_\_\_\_\_

A specific sound can also trigger a memory. For example the sound of water can remind you of swimming on hot summer days.

- b) Give one example of a sound that reminds you of a place, a person, or an activity you have done in the past: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 2) BE A MUSICIAN

Now that you know all about electro-acoustic music, it is your turn to be a musician.

STEP 1: Take the themes from the spelling tests in **The Pencil Project** and describe what natural sounds you would use to bring the tests to life. Imagine that you have a big microphone and

recorder, think about what you would find in each environment (the animals, the people, the machinery, the weather, etc...).

“ON SAFARI” \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

“THE WILD WEST” \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

“AT THE CONCERT” \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

STEP 2: Take your list of natural sounds and think of an object that can be used to create that sound.

NATURAL SOUND	OBJECT

## ANSWER KEY

### 1) ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC MUSIC

Natural Sounds: dog bark, telephone ring, wind blowing, water dripping, etc...

### 2) MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

List of instruments: pencils  
                                  elastics  
                                  ruler  
                                  stapler  
                                  scissors  
                                  glass bottle with water

List of traditional instruments: guitar  
  violin  
  flute  
  drum