

STORY THEATRE CO

ON TOUR

JIM LEARD, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

GREAT
ONE *AND* ONLY
storytelling
VAUDEVILLE
REVUE

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A TEACHER'S GUIDE



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We like these people that keep us “on the road”

ABOUT THE COMPANY...

The Story Theatre Company is a professional theatre company performing mostly for children in the school systems across Canada and at times creates work for adults and performs for the general public.

The company was created in 1981 by Jim Leard, the Artistic Director, as a supplement to reading programs in the regional public library system in Victoria, B.C. It now tours internationally with its infectious blend of storytelling, music and games receiving rave reviews and invitations to return wherever it plays.

Simple imaginative staging of Classical literature, Traditional Folklore and new modern stories is a trademark of the company as the lively troupe of performers keeps audiences of children and adults enthralled with their energetic, fun performances.

The Story Theatre Company pursues themes of Literacy in the Schools, tackles issues such as Bullying in the schoolyard and always takes the time to have fun while doing it.

The company has performed in almost every Province in Canada, in the Yukon, in the eastern United States from New York to Florida, in Arizona and California, and most recently in Singapore.

OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Jim Leard is a native born Victorian, trained at the University of Victoria's theatre department and has a long history of performing, touring to the schools, and teaching.

His credits include several appearances on local stages with Bastion Theatre, Pacific Opera, and The Belfry Theatre; television appearances in The X-Files, Davinci's Inquest, the Cold Squad, and Intelligence. He is also well-known and in demand as a storyteller spinning tales for young and old alike in the schools and for the general public.

He writes and develops most of the work for The Story Theatre Company, spends time writing and creating new shows, teaches at the Canadian College of Performing Arts, and often offers courses in the summer at Uvic's theatre department on storytelling and story theatre techniques.

“The joy of performing for young people is that everything is fresh and new for them which makes it new and fresh for us.”

“If we share the fun of performing or telling a story with them, they share the fun they are having with us...a real circle of life.”

OPENING SONG

Our Opening song is taken from the traditional folk song “DONKEY RIDING”. We changed the lyrics to sing about our subject or “Storytelling”.

Donkey Riding” was a traditional work song sung by sailors of Celtic and English origin as they loaded timber on the decks of ships in the Canadian harbours of Quebec and Miramichi

When loaded the ships sailed away to London, England; Fortune Bay in Newfoundland; or even around the Cape Horn of South America. “Riding The Donkey” refers to sailors work loading the ship using the donkey engine, a single-cylinder steam engine invented in 1881. It was used to load logs onto ships for transport around the world.

Story Theatre version:	Traditional version:
<p style="text-align: center;">Chorus</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Way hey and away we go Storytelling, storytelling Way hey and away we go Telling tales to you guys</p> <p style="text-align: center;">We’ve been traveling all around Countryside to city and town And all we’ve got is hand me downs Telling tales to you guys</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Anyone heard someone say Saw the strangest thing today To see it again, I’d even pay Telling tales to you guys</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ever risen in the morn Looked outside and I’ll be sworn There on the grass was a unicorn Telling tales to you guys</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ever heard someone cry Got so scared I jumped this high</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Chorus</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Way hey and away we go Donkey Riding, Donkey Riding Way hey and away we go Riding on a Donkey</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Was you ever in Quebec Launchin' timber on the deck? Where ya break yer bleedin' neck Ridin' on a donkey!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Was you ever 'round Cape Horn Where the weather's never warm? Wished to God you'd never been born Ridin' on a donkey.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Was you ever in Miramichi Where ye tie up to a tree, An' the girls sit on yer knee? Ridin' on a donkey</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Was you ever in Fortune Bay See the girls all shout, "Hooray!"?</p>

<p>See it again and it'll be Bye-bye Telling tales to you guys</p> <p>Ever notice late at night How easy it is to take a fright As shadows dance in the firelight Telling tales to you guys</p>	<p>"Here comes dad with ten weeks pay Riding on a donkey."</p> <p>Was you ever in London-town See the King he does come down? See the King in his golden crown Riding on a donkey</p>
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ACTIVITY “Create your own song!”

Using the tune from “DONKEY RIDING” make up your own song about a class activity like recess games or going on a fieldtrip. Listen to the song “Donkey riding” while doing this exercise. “Great Big Sea” has a lively version on “ROAD RAGE”

For the verses it’s a simple three lines rhyming followed by the fourth line as being the action line. (The action of the song)

Here’s an example that you can add to or try a different theme/idea and create a new song:

“RECESS PLAYING”	“FIELDTRIP TRIPPING”
<p>Chorus Way hey and away we go Recess playing Recess playing Way hey and away we go Playing games at recess</p> <p>Do you like to run and play? You could do it every day Then have your whole class say We’re playing games at recess</p> <p>Have you ever played a game? Where they call you over by name And then your side it does the same? We’re playing games at recess</p> <p>Ever play tag or tetherball Trip over your feet and had a fall Then the duty teacher you would call Playing games at recess</p>	<p>Chorus Why hey and away we go Fieldtrip tripping, fieldtrip tripping Way hey and away we go Going on a fieldtrip</p> <p>Have you ever been to Mars? In those special school board cars They’ll even take you to the stars Going on a fieldtrip</p> <p>Ever travel to the zoo Where a monkey takes your shoe And the giraffe won’t even say boo Going on a Fieldtrip</p> <p>Take a bus or a special plane Travel along in your very own train So much fun, you’d do it again Going on a fieldtrip</p>

ACTIVITY

THE STORIES

Our production includes several stories but we start with very basic AESOP'S FABLES in which we demonstrate the "story theatre" style of performance.

In story theatre, the narration is spoken and performed by the actor so that the words are both seen and heard at the same time... an excellent language arts experience.

We present here the original story, our adaptation for the actors to perform, and another fable for your students to adapt and perhaps perform themselves.

"THE WIND AND THE SUN"

It seems that years ago the wind and the sun had an argument. The wind bragged that he was stronger than the sun and to prove it he blew the leaves off trees, blew the branches backwards and blew the trees right over and when the sun came out...

The wind gathered up all the dark clouds and covered the sun so that no one could see her.

Finally the sun had had enough of the wind and proposed a contest to determine who was the stronger.

Just then a traveler appeared. He was walking along a country path all alone, minding his own business on a fairly pleasant day.

"Let's see who can remove the cloak from that traveler", said the sun, pointing to the lonely traveler on the road below.

And the wind agreed saying, "I will get the cloak off first" and the wind began to blow. He started with a gentle puff... just to get warmed up. Then he gathered up a little more power and struck again... Then he began rolling all the little swirls of wind into a mighty gust...

But as the wind became stronger, more intense... The traveler clutched the cloak closer to him.

Then the wind gathered all the gusts into a howling hurricane. There was a moment of silence... the quiet before the storm... and then the wind struck! The hurricane twisted into a tornado. It sounded like a hundred locomotives echoing through a thousand tunnels. And the force of it ripped at the traveler's skin and clothes, it tore at him... pushing him backwards

But still the traveler held onto his cloak... he held on for dear life... bent almost double. And the wind poured everything he had into it.... He blew until he could blow no more. It was the sun's turn.

But the sun didn't attack. She just gently beamed, sending a warm radiance to fill the air and the traveler liked that and he relaxed and then the sun got warmer and the traveler got warmer.

Still the sun did not stop. The warm air became hotter until the traveler undid his cloak, loosened his cloak and finally... he took it off the cloak altogether and carried on his way, marveling at the recent weather patterns.

And the sun proved that she was the stronger... or at least you can achieve more with warmth and kindness than by being a blustering nuisance.

"THE WIND AND THE SUN"

The Story Theatre Script

NARRATOR

It seems that years ago the wind and the sun had an argument. The wind bragged that he was stronger than the sun.

WIND

And the wind blew the leaves off trees, blew the branches backwards and blew the trees right over. He blew into the farmyard and knocked the feathers off chickens, made pigs fly, and sent the cow jumping over the moon. The wind could do anything.

SUN

And when the sun came out...

WIND

The wind gathered up all the dark clouds and covered the sun so no one could see her... After all, all she did was sit up in the sky... beaming.

SUN

But the Sun only smiled and carried on her way, ignoring the winds bragging (she zaps him with a sunbeam)

WIND

"Bragging? It's not bragging if it's true.

SUN

Finally the sun had had enough of the wind and proposed a contest to see who is stronger.

WIND

Oh yeah... well how about a contest to see who's stronger?

TRAVELER

Just then a traveler appeared. He was walking along a country path all alone, minding his own business on a fairly pleasant day.

SUN

Let's see who can remove the cloak from that traveler. And the sun pointed to the lonely traveler on the road below.

WIND

And the wind agreed. I will get the cloak off first and the wind began to blow. He started with a gentle puff... just to get warmed up.

Then he gathered up a little more power and struck again...

Then he began rolling all the little swirls of wind into a mighty gust...

TRAVELER

But as the wind became stronger, more intense.... The traveler clutched the cloak closer to him.

WIND

Then the wind gathered all the gusts into a howling hurricane. There was a moment of silence... the quiet before the storm... and then the wind struck! The hurricane twisted into a tornado.

TRAVELER

It sounded like a hundred locomotives echoing through a thousand tunnels

WIND

And the force of it ripped at his skin and clothes, it tore at him... pushing him backwards

TRAVELER

But still the traveler held onto his cloak... he held on for dear life... barnyard animals went by, chickens, pigs cows... even a house went by but still he held on... bent almost double.

WIND

And the wind poured everything he had into it.... Until (puff, puff) he could blow no more.

SUN

And the traveler was still wearing his cloak. It was the sun's turn.

TRAVELER

What? Oh no.

SUN

But the sun didn't attack. She just gently beamed, sending a warm radiance to fill the air.

TRAVELER

Oh... and the traveler liked that and he relaxed.

SUN

And then the sun got warmer.

TRAVELER

And the traveler got warmer.

SUN

Still the sun did not stop. The warm air became hotter...

TRAVELER

And the traveler became hotter and he undid his cloak.

SUN

And finally...

TRAVELER

And finally... he took it off all together. And carried on his way, marveling at the recent weather patterns... El Nino?

SUN

And the sun proved that she was the stronger... or at least you can achieve more with warmth and kindness than by being a blustering nuisance.

In comparing the two stories, you can see how we kept the majority of lines and distributed them to the actors while making up some new "action" lines. A general rule is that an actor speaks the lines that deal with what "His" character is doing. It is also fun and comedic if a different actor speaks a different character's "action lines" as it gives a different interpretation... a different point of view on that particular action.

We're including another story that the students could take and separate lines to create a script. They might work in teams and then produce it.

THE OAK AND THE REED

There was once a mighty oak standing tall upon a hillside and beside him grew a slender and delicate reed that bent and swayed with every little wind and breeze. "Stand up tall and proud like me", said the oak, reaching even taller into the sky. The reed tried to stand up like the oak but it was too hard and she bent and swayed in the wind.

The oak scorned the little reed and continued to stand proudly upon the hill. One night there came a wind, a mighty wind that turned into a gale. The little reed tried to stand up to the wind but bent right over to the ground. The mighty oak stood proud and firm and braced himself but the wind was too strong and the mighty oak snapped. He broke right in the middle and fell to the ground.

The next day the little reed sprang back up and noticed the broken body of the mighty oak and thought that maybe it was better to bend and sway with the wind that try to oppose it.

This is a very simple story with two characters... (There might be three if using a narrator or the character of “the wind”)

A more ambitious telling might see the wind as being a chorus of dancers doing a windy storm dance... The reed could become “the reeds” and have several of them doing exactly the same thing...

ACTIVITY CHORAL SPEAKING

Choral speaking is very similar to story theatre in that it assigns lines to different individuals or groups to assist in the meaning of the story or poem or gives special emphasis to certain lines.

Choral speaking is also like working with a musical choir except that there is no music. The student’s voices are the only instruments. With a small group, individuals can be assigned lines and become the character while in larger groups (class size) lines or poem sections can be assigned to sections made up of different numbers or voice qualities found in the class.

Our poem was divided amongst the actors to give the impression of three young people being threatened by an outside force but it could also be set up as a main character and two monsters threatening that person by changing who says what lines and how they are “acting”.

The process to set up a choral speaking exercise is fairly simple...

1. choose a short poem that is easy to memorize
2. Rewrite it so that lines are separated into character lines
3. Teach the whole poem to the class then assign “parts”.
4. Separate the class into their groups and direct the “poem speaking” like a conductor.

EXAMPLE... **Mary had a Little Lamb**

The class divided into a BOY’S group and a GIRL’S group and smaller divisions are made within that to give a little variety to the vocal quality.

Generally I divided them as the girls with the Lamb and the boys making statements about Mary or the lamb.

I subdivided to build volume from the secretive whisperings about a lamb at school and the rules to the louder more triumphant “Mary appearing for the lamb who was waiting for her...” (a big moment for the lamb).

I added the teacher in for one line as a surprise character joining in... she's part of the performance by being the conductor and she might as well turn and have a line... the kids would enjoy that participation as well. A commitment to the performance, to being part of the group, not just leading...

It's possible to add the teacher earlier with "And so the teacher turned him out" but the surprise of the single line by the teacher right near the end is rendered less effective.

Another possibility is to add the sounds of sheep "baa, baaa..." on some of the lines... It would be best to have a group that just does the "baaas". It's a comedy bit and needs some sense of timing by the kids performing... those with a sense of timing who listen well.

MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB (speaking script)

GIRLS

Mary had a little Lamb

BOYS

Its fleece was white as snow

GIRLS

And everywhere that Mary went

BOYS

The lamb was sure to go.

BOYS SUBGROUP 1 (whispering)

He followed her to school one day

GIRL'S SUBGROUP 1 (whispering)

That was against the rule

BOYS SUBGROUP 2 (louder)

It made the children laugh and play

EVERYONE (quite loud)

To see a lamb at school

And so the teacher turned him out

BOYS SUBGROUP 1 (whispering)

But still he lingered near

GIRL'S SUBGROUP 1 (whispering)

And waited patiently about

EVERYONE (triumphant)

Till Mary did appear

BOYS

“Why does the lamb love Mary so?”

GIRLS

The eager children cry

TEACHER

Why, Mary loves the lamb, you know

EVERYONE

The teacher did reply.

ACTIVITY

CREATING THE STORY

The Story Theatre Company creates stories every year from fables, folk tales, classic literature, poems and one of its favourites... from suggestions given by the audience. One of the things that is the same for all of these is the following of a simple pattern or structure that facilitates making things up or developing our scripts.

THE FIVE PART PLAN

- 1. Who is the story about? What is their job or occupation or hobby or sport?**
What we're looking for is something that might define their personality. Often it is clichéd but that's good since we all know the qualities under that cliché. Example: An accountant has a different “feel” to how they are going to react to things as opposed to a football player. If the accountant reacts like a football player then that becomes interesting too.
- 2. What is their problem or what are their needs that have to be satisfied.**
A story started about an accountant describes his ordinary job or his ordinary life. (Explore the cliché) Gets up, goes to work on the bus, always gives his seat to older people and continues a humdrum ordinary life but he really wants to have an adventurous holiday.
- 3. Goes through possible solutions. (things that don't really work or do not satisfy his needs)**
He tries watching the “travel channel”
Watches shows on Egypt, Africa, Europe... A place where his family came from (expand on these, but they are not satisfying)
He takes the bus to town on a weekend and is a “tourist in his own town”
What little adventures does he have? Watches street performers... goes on little ferries in inner harbour. (expand on how he reacts to these little events, but they are not satisfying)
- 4. Comes up with, discovers, or tries what becomes...“The best solution”.**

He goes on a trip somewhere special and sees things that he could only watch on television, he meets people that like him... maybe he saves a young lady's life... and they fall in love... Whatever happens it's wonderful.

5. He returns to his life a changed person.

Is he now happy in his life? Does he change his life? "Lives happily ever after..." "We'll always have Paris..." Quit his job and became a travel agent... it doesn't really matter but he is changed.

ACTIVITY

Let's input something that kids would relate to since it is kids that we want to stimulate to create stories...

Activities that kids do:

Paper route, play baseball, Dance class, Sports teams, Choir, Swimming, playing hockey, skating, skateboarding, ice skating, mow the lawn, clean up their room, collect comics, collect hockey cards, collect movie cards (star trek)

Write an activity on the board and ask for suggestions on personality and traits that someone who might like this activity would have... traits like strong, fast, smart, neat, nervous...

Ask and write suggestions of problems they might have in any of these activities

Ask for possible suggestions of how to solve these problems and write those down.

As an example the teacher leads the telling using these suggestions for a rough outline (add some details)

1. INTRODUCTION

A. Start a story about the character ...adding a few more ordinary details...

B. The character sets off to get involved in one of the suggested activities ...choose a fairly simple one and give character's attitude (emotion) to the activity

2. BUT he runs into a PROBLEM (as suggested by students)

3. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

A. He tries one of their solutions but it doesn't work

...something happens so that the effort fails but show the "trying"

B. He tries another...and trying harder... it doesn't work.

4. BEST SOLUTION

He tries a third and after difficulty and determination...it works!

5. SATISFACTION

Success! The main character returns to his activity.

Another Example:

THE JOB OR ACTIVITY?

A boy with a paper route

A PROBLEM?

His bike is stolen

1. INTRODUCTION OF CHARACTER

The boy

Give the boy a name...

Bobby

Give the boy an age...

12

How does he feel about his job?

Loves it

The job

What time does he deliver the papers?

Early morning

What adventures or events happen every day?

Dark and scary, dogs bark...

What is a little problem with the job?

Gets wet in the rain

2. PROBLEM

One day when he goes to begin his route he discovers his bike is stolen

3. SOLUTIONS

A. He has to walk on the route to deliver his papers

a. takes a long time and he's late for school

b. the bag is heavy and he has to drag it

B. The next day he borrows his sister's pink bike

a. Embarrassing on his "sister's" bike

b. Too small for all his papers, not a proper carrier

C. He goes in search of his stolen bike

a. He sees it in the scary lady's back yard...on her porch

b. If she catches him she'll have him arrested... or killed and made into stew.

- c. He tries and then gets too scared and runs away when he hears her coming. (He gets caught but escapes her witch-like grasp?)
4. BEST SOLUTION... A Confrontation.
He goes to her door and asks her about the bike. She had found it abandoned in her yard and put it away. She returns it to him. She's not so scary just old and lonely. He makes a friend and gets a new customer.
 5. SATISFACTION...
He returns home and locks up his bike even when at home... sets traps for whoever stole it in the first place... "It could have been aliens..."

Each step presents the opportunity for a number of ideas to be explored, try different ones.

Step one:

What are the Jobs and occupations; personalities of people in those jobs; their emotions? (How they feel about their lives). Start with the ordinary events in their lives.

Step two:

Deciding on one of the occupations and characters, explore or brainstorm the problems that this person might encounter based on their present life, activities and emotions. (Needs this person might have)

Step three:

The character sets off on a journey or tries different things to satisfy his needs or solve the problem BUT it does not work! It's dramatic to see someone fail a few times but keep trying. Brainstorm what someone might do CONSIDERING the job, activities, emotions, and characterization of part one.

Step four:

Does the person solve the problem? What are the rewards? What happens to those that helped him? Opposed him? What happens when he returns to his ordinary life? Does he return?

ACTIVITY

FOLLOW THE PATTERN

1. Someone or a group of people or animals are having a problem with something. **(A fox keeps raiding the hen house and eating the chickens)**
2. Various solutions are tried to remove or solve the problem. All suggestions fail. **(Traps are set, poison is set out, new locks are set)**
3. From another source comes another possible solution. It is reluctantly taken. **(A hunter is hired to protect the chickens)**
4. After some difficulty the problem is solved.

(The hunter has different encounters with the fox. What three things could the hunter try to do?)

5. What is the satisfaction for the people... for the hunter?
(What is done to pay the hunter when the job is done?)

Simple stories can be made from this pattern.

Tell the same story from the point of view of the fox who has to feed his family.

ACTIVITY

THE STORYBOARD

Draw a picture of some of the important moments in the story of THE SECONDHAND STORE.

1. A picture of Mary-Anne getting ready to go shopping.
2. A picture of Mary-Anne in the store with the noise coming from the back
3. Mary-Anne and the creature protecting the cave.
4. Mary-Anne in the cave finding the key.
5. Mary-Anne twirling magically either out of or into the secondhand store.

Put these together in sequence around the room so that you can see (visualize) the story.

THE LETTER

Write a letter to Old Neddy and offer suggestions of what the next adventure might be.

Does something make its way through the portal?

Does someone else come to the store with special powers?

What might happen if Old Neddy went through the portal?

Who might the bad guys on the other side be?

What do the creatures and bad guys on the other side want?

THE PICTURE

Draw a picture of one of the Dark Lords on the other side of the Portal, the one who is controlling all the evil forces.

(Don't scare yourself!)

STORYTELLING GAMES

The company always saves a few minutes in every show to make up stories using ideas from the audience. The ideas are shaped by storytelling games demonstrated for the audience. We hope the kids try playing the games themselves and with teacher's prompting.

In all the games the emphasis is on developing the story, following the story structure, and finding a beginning, middle and end...not just making a quick joke.

THE ONE WORD GAME

2-4 players in a group. Each is allowed to say only one word of the story.
Try to say the first word that makes sense grammatically. (or at least close)
Speak so that your partners can hear. (volume and clarity)
Listen carefully for the meaning of the story.
Go quickly.
If it all falls apart and doesn't make sense, start over. It's only a game.

THE PHRASE GAME... give and take.

2-4 players in a group. Each is allowed to say a few phrases at a time.
Don't say too much before "GIVING" the telling to one of your partners.
Allow others to develop the story before "TAKING" the telling from your partners.
Always add to ideas that someone has presented. (Developing an idea)
Never say no or negate something that someone has presented.

NOTES

Skill levels develop with practice like any sport.
Add detail about characters, environments, and emotions.
Let the stories be silly, stupid, and nonsensical for a while.
Never let them think too much about the stories. Keep the pace moving.
If the story is not working... move on! It's only a game.

REMINDER

Go back to the structure of a story or Five-part plan to develop the different areas of a story and follow that when creating stories on the spot.

THE NURSERY RHYME REVUE

This is a game that might best be played in a music program over several classes.

A simple familiar Nursery rhyme is chosen. (One with a distinct rhythm is best)

Mary had a Little Lamb, Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star, Sing a Song of Sixpence

Write out the poem with all of its verses.

Then pose the question,

“What if these words or images were used by other musical groups to create their songs?” For example, how would Elvis, Mick Jagger, or Roy Orbison sing “Mary had a little lamb” or rock bands, rap groups?

Take an Elvis song and put the words to the rhythm. (“heartbreak hotel” works well)

How would an ancient choir sing it? A group from the sixties?

Hints:

Try to stay close to the words of the poem but allow them to change, repeat or be adjusted to fit the music.

What are the different musical styles that the class is familiar with?

Suggest Country and Western, Hillbilly, Rap, Heavy Metal, or suggest individual singers and their styles.

We use a variety of instruments for this but find that the simplest tunes work best.

It's quite amazing what students can come up with when sent off to work on their own on a particular style, individual or group. This works best with older students who have some musical background and listen to a variety of groups and styles.

Aesop's fable word search:

Find and circle the words: SPIDER, WIND, SUN, CUBS, HYENA, BEAR, LION, FOX, DONE, DAB, SIP, and ONE. These are the 12 words hidden in the puzzle below. Can you find them? Circle those you find. They are up, down, and across but not backwards.

O H Y E N A
C W F D A B
C L I O N E
U S U N X A

B I Z E D R
S P I D E R