

**CHILDREN'S THEATRE**  
**A VIDEO DOCUMENTARY**

**ID 499**  
**SENIOR HONOR'S THESIS**

**BY**  
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**THESIS DIRECTOR**

  

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**MUNCIE, INDIANA**  
**MAY 19, 1988**

**EXPECTED DATE OF GRADUATION -- MAY 21, 1988**

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***DOCUMENTARY***

***SCRIPT***

VIDEO

CG -- CHILDREN'S THEATRE

A DOCUMENTARY BY  
KIRSTEN JOHNSON

SHOT OF TREE

ANOTHER TREE

THREE SHOTS OF FLOWERS

STUDENT AT COMPUTER

AIRPLANE ON COMPUTER SCREEN

STUDENT AT COMPUTER

WALK / WAIT LIGHT

STUDENT WALKING

MANY STUDENTS WALKING

CARS AT INTERSECTION

SHOT OF CHILDREN PLAYING

FIVE CLOSE-UPS OF CHILDREN

TWO CHILDREN WALKING

STUDENTS REHEARSING IN GYM

AUDIO

MUSIC UP

MUSIC UNDER

ANNCR: Today's world is full of changes, and today's young people are having to adapt to fast-paced lifestyles never dreamed of by our ancestors. In such a society, where changes are an everyday occurrence, we need to be especially aware of how we are raising our youth. We all know they are the leaders of tomorrow, but our awareness must start today.

What do our children need to be taught? It is very important that they learn self-assurance, and learn to be proud of who they are. This can only come with inner searching and learning to find out who's really in there. Teaching our young people that they are important, and that each one of them has something to offer the world, is one of today's most pressing social issues.

There are a number of ways in which we can work with children to teach them the things necessary to survive in today's world, and one of the most fun and interesting ways is through children's theatre.

VIDEO

TWO SHOTS OF ELAINE WITH STUDENTS

MS STUDENT

MS STUDENT

SHOT OF ELAINE EXPLAINING AN EXERCISE

SHOT OF STUDENTS IN CLASSROOM WORKING ON EXERCISES

STUDENTS DOING EXERCISES

CLOSE-UP OF STUDENT

MS ELAINE

CU STUDENT

CU STUDENT

CU STUDENT

AUDIO

Most of us were either in a play when we were young, have children who have played a tree or a rock in a school play, or have heard of children who have, but most people do not know the great amount of caring and thought which go into such productions. The number one priority is to make certain that each student is aware that they are as important in the production as anyone else, and that they are all given the chance to exercise their creativity.

The first step necessary in working with children to produce a play, are some exercises which help the director get to know the children, while the SHOT children are busy getting to know each other. This helps the director know what roles and activities are appropriate for which person, and the exercises also help the children get to know the director. It is very important that the students trust and feel comfortable around the director.

The drama director at Saint Mary's Elementary School in Muncie, Indiana, Elaine Kloser, talks about the exercises she uses when starting a new production. . .

KLOSER: Theatre is the gradual discovery of self, and so to start off with, before we could even get to know each other, I sort of had the kids delve

VIDEO

MS GIRL LAUGHING

CU STUDENT

STUDENTS PRESENTING THEIR  
PROJECTS

TWO STUDENTS WORKING ON  
IMPROVISATIONS

GROUP WORKING TOGETHER

GIRL LAUGHING

CU STUDENT

STUDENTS IN CAFETERIA

AUDIO

into themselves and really find out what made them tick.

To start off with, I had the kids make a folder, and on the outside of the folder they were to put their outside self, and inside the folder they were supposed to put their inside self, so they cut out magazines, and pictures from magazines, and drew pictures about what they were like on the outside; what people saw every day, and then they thought about what was inside of them, and some things that people really didn't know about them.

They put it all together and presented it; that was one exercise we did where they got to know themselves better, and each other better.

Some of the creativity exercises we did were we had group stories, and everybody would add a part to the story, and we tried some improvisations before they really knew what improvisations were.

We did little skits and to start off with I had them change a fairy tale from the original ending to a CU different wacky ending. This kind of broke the ice and made them comfortable with each other. In that way they had already started doing theatre and didn't even realize that they were doing improvisations.

The kids being normal sixth graders seemed to

## VIDEO

STUDENTS WITH EYES CLOSED

STUDENTS WORKING ON SCRIPT  
ON STAGE

CU STUDENT

TWO STUDENTS WITH SCRIPTS

GIRLS WITH SCRIPTS

CLASS ON STAGE

ELAINE WITH STUDENT

## AUDIO

have problems with concentration. The only thing that sixth graders concentrate on is for sixth grade girls it's eighth grade boys, and the sixth grade boys would only be able to concentrate on Rambo. Since we weren't doing a play about eighth grade boys or Rambo, we had to do some concentration exercises. It was just an exercise in creating and remembering details, which is good for concentration.

In order that the kids could see that every line of dialogue could have more than one conotation, we did an exercise where I gave them a line of dialogue to say, and they had to say it four or five different ways, using different emotions. By doing this I think the kids realized and added more depth to their character. They would analyze each line and figure out what emotion they should say on that line.

NATURAL SOUND: "You did it! You killed my husband!" "I may have said that, but I didn't mean it."

ANNCR: The next important step is to decide on a particular production. The most-used method is to choose a script specially developed for children. After a script is chosen, the children then work to memorize their lines, then do the show. At Saint

## VIDEO

CU ELAINE

LS ELAINE BLOCKING THE PLAY

CUs OF STUDENTS CREATING THEIR  
CHARACTERS

## AUDIO

Mary's, however, Elaine believes it is important for the children to play an integral part of developing the play as well as performing in it. Through a series of improvisational exercises which were as fun as games for the students, characters and a plot were developed. Elaine then used all of the material created through these sessions, then wrote the play titled The Unknown Shot, a "whodunnit mystery."

KLOSER: The creation of the script was a very intriguing process. The class voted that they wanted to do a mystery, so I decided just to set a catalyst for the script by telling them that there was a man, named Herbert Windly, who they were either related to, or acquainted with, and one of them had to kill him, well, they had to have a motive to kill him, so we went through an extensive character building process, and then examined the relationship between their character and Herbert, and between each other, and they analyzed all aspects of their character; the physical, mental, and emotional state of the character, and familiarized themselves with even the smallest details of their persona.

Each child gives so much creativity to the script; first of all in building the character they just

## VIDEO

MS STUDENT

ELAINE EXPLAINING TO STUDENTS

REHEARSALS ON STAGE

CU OF STUDENT WITH ZOOM OUT  
TO WHOLE GROUP

SHOT OF STUDENTS WORKING ON  
SET (ZOOM IN)

## AUDIO

completely come up with that out of their own mind. Part of that character is them. It's something that they can really relate to because they created it, it's not something out of a book that they have to conform to. They made it up themselves. Annr: As with any theatre production, with adults or children, there must always be rehearsals. The students at Saint Mary's were only able to practice 2-4 hours per week, for only a few weeks, but because of the organization of the director, they were able to get many things accomplished during that time. There was time set aside for the core members of the drama class which had worked with Elaine throughout the entire school year, in addition to time when the entire class worked together.

It is always necessary to keep in mind that not every student loves the idea of performing in front of an audience. These students need some extra attention so as not to feel left out of the group who is working on their lines, their make-up, etc. There are plenty of extra jobs for these students, though, and a they are a welcome addition to the production staff.

At Saint Mary's students were needed to help with the lights, the audio, and set design.



VIDEO

STUDENTS IN CIRCLE ON FLOOR OF  
GYMNASIUM

STUDENTS EXERCISING  
CUs OF STUDENTS WORKING ON  
MAKE-UP

ELAINE WITH STUDENTS  
(SHOT GOES OUT OF FOCUS)

MONTAGE OF SCENES FROM THE  
FINAL PRODUCTION

AUDIO

KLOSER: Children should never be forced to participate or get in front of people. When you look at the polls in the newspapers today, the thing that people are most afraid of, even before being afraid of death, is speaking in front of people. So you don't want to force kids because there are so many ways that they can get involved. As you go along, you'll find out that some of them who didn't want to participate at the beginning, in the end will maybe be the star of the show.

ANNCR: As the day of the production drew near, a Saturday workshop was planned.

MUSIC UP AND UNDER

During this five-hour workshop, Elaine planned a Saturday workshop for the students,

MUSIC UP AND UNDER

so they could totally immerse themselves into all aspects of the production.

MUSIC UP

MUSIC UNDER

ANNCR: Then the day of the production finally came. At Saint Mary's the students were a bit apprehensive about remembering their lines, but since the play was their own creation, as were their characters, they were more excited than they were

VIDEO

LS STUDENTS VIEWING VIDEO

ELAINE PRESENTING AWARDS

STUDENTS ACCEPTING AWARDS

MONTAGE OF INTERVIEWS WITH  
STUDENTS

MONTAGE OF THE REHEARSALS

AUDIO

uncomfortable. The play was indeed a success.

MUSIC UP

MUSIC UNDER

ANNCR: Especially when working with children, directors should always let the students know how well they did. At Saint Mary's, Elaine had a screening of the final production for the students, then gave every one of them an award for their accomplishments. The students were very pleased with The Unknown Shot, and loved their drama class.

(STUDENTS' VOICES PUT OVER THE VIDEO OF THEM ACCEPTING THEIR AWARDS.)

MUSIC UP AND UNDER

STUDENTS: It's interesting how you can do stuff. You can participate in plays and you can do more stuff. You can participate in more stuff and you can make your own stuff. It helps train your mind to be creative. It put me in a different mood and I could act like I would act if I was that person. I don't think that you should have to be good in gym and stuff like that. You can use your mind for

## VIDEO

## AUDIO

creative stuff and you can create in your mind.

I like doing the plays that the whole class makes up because you get to make your own character and if you know ahead of time what's going on, you might have time to practice.

I liked playing the games and improvisation. I like making up the play because then we could be whatever character we felt like being. You don't have to be real sporty, you don't have to be especially cool or anything.

I think it's better if you help formulate it because then you know the lines better and it's easier for you to memorize them and also because when you're just handed a script you don't know the characters as well.

ANNCR: Children's Theatre is not only a fun activity for the students, a great deal of learning is involved. When working with the theatre, children are able to develop their imagination, by thinking independantly, as well as in a group. Cooperation is necessary, building a social awareness, as well as giving the students a channel for a healthy release of emotions.

## CU's OF CHILDREN

KLOSER: As the ancient Chinese proverb goes, "What I see I remember, what I hear I react to, but

VIDEO

AUDIO

what I *do*, I understand."

CREDIT ROLL

*MUSIC UP FULL*

**CHARACTER GENERATOR FOR BEGINNING**

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CHILDREN'S  
THEATRE

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(PAGE 2)

A  
DOCUMENTARY  
BY  
KIRSTEN  
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# CLOSING CREDITS

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AND PRODUCED BY*

KIRSTEN JOHNSON

*WITH SPECIAL THANKS  
TO:*

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*ST. MARY'S SIXTH  
GRADE TEACHER  
BETSY SNAPP*

*THESIS DIRECTOR  
NANCY CARLSON*

*THE PLAYERS:*

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JASON CONLON  
KAMI CONLON  
AARON CONRAD  
RACHEL COOL  
ANGELA DAFFORN  
AMY ELLISON  
EMILY FLOOK  
KIM GILDERSLEEVE  
SARAH HABANSKY  
KATHY HOSSOM  
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