

Aditi and Her Rickshaw – Teachers’ Notes

Performance Requirements:

Where possible it is preferable for the performance to be held in the hall. No sound system, microphone or furniture is required. The show takes 1 hour to set up and _ hour to pack up. Performance duration is 45 min followed by a 10 min question time.

About the Show:

The show is based around the journey of the central character, Aditi. She was separated from her parents because of a war in her country. She is resourceful and constructs a rickshaw which she uses for her livelihood and to travel around in search of her family. On her travels her customers share stories with Aditi; stories about home, family, belonging, loss, hardship, courage, bravery, perseverance, hope and reward for right action. These stories, together with Aditi’s own story, form the basis of the show.

The style of the performance is **dramatised storytelling** using rich and colourful characterisations, language and action. It is also a compelling theatrical experience which uses a wide range of **theatrical devices**; music, song, dance, mime and puppetry as well as an array of puppets, props, costumes and musical instruments. The performance presents a range of styles; comedy, tragedy, farce, pathos and explores a range of emotions; fear, hope, greed, generosity, compassion, caring, grief, joy, self esteem and respect.

The Stories are based on three Asian folk tales; **The Silk Brocade** (Himalayan regions of Nepal and Tibet), **The Yellow Thunder Dragon** (China) and **The Snake Charmer** (India). It is hoped that teachers might use the performance as a springboard into classroom activities. Here are a few ideas.

English.

*Talk about the performance. The audience heard about Aditi’s life as well as three other stories.

*Recount the stories trying to remember plot, characters, beginnings, middles and ends.

*What are personal and class favorites from the show, and why. Talk about other folk/fairy stories known by the class.

*Talk about different kinds of stories; fiction and non fiction. This show was made up of fiction, mostly traditional folk tales as well as Aditi’s story which is a contemporary tale, written solely for the purpose of this show but also reflecting the current situation of war and conflict which is faced by the citizens of many counties in our world today.

*Use the library to find traditional folk stories and stories from other cultures.

*Ask students to source folk stories from their own cultural background from family members.

*Ask students to write their own “fairy tale”. You may like to provide the structure, ie. introduction, problem, solution.

*The stories in the show focus on a journey or a quest of some kind. Ask the class to write stories about an adventure or a quest.

HSIE

*Look at Rickshaws as a form of transport in many countries right throughout Asia .Each Asian country has its own version of the rickshaw, although they first originated in Japan. A wonderful resource for this is a book called Chasing Rickshaws by Tony Wheeler. The rickshaw used in the show is called a trishaw and is the type used in Singapore, however, I have decorated it to look like the elaborately ornamented ones used in Bangladesh and India.

*What are the pros and cons of using rickshaws as transport. They are slow and require a lot of very hard physical work by the driver. On the other hand they are very environmentally sound and can cut through busy city traffic. In fact, in my research for the play I found that many cities in Europe are introducing lightweight rickshaws for these very reasons. At the same time cities in India are banning them as it is thought to be too hard a job for people to do. The flip side of this is that rickshaw drivers are angry about having their livelihoods taken away. All these contradictions could be the basis of a class debate/discussion.

*We are lucky to live in a peaceful country where people have access to jobs, healthcare and education. Many countries around the world don't share this privilege. Talk about Aditi's story. She was separated from her family because of war and sent to a refugee camp. After the war she returned home to find her family gone. She built a rickshaw and travels around searching for her family. Talk about the human cost of war and the disruption and dislocation it causes ordinary people.

*The stories in the show focus on the importance of home and family. These are central to the lives of all people no matter what country or culture you belong to.

Creative and Practical Art

*Talk about storytelling. How did the performer tell her stories? It was certainly dramatic and theatrical.

*Talk about the theatrical devices used to tell the stories; music, song, dance, puppetry, costumes and props. Tell stories in class using some or all of these devices, eg. simple percussion to describe action or create mood, simple costumes or fabrics to create character.

*Talk about dramatic devices like the use of comedy, farce, slapstick, as in *The Snake Charmer*, the use of pathos and tension in *The Silk Brocade* or the use of mystery and fantasy in *The Yellow Thunder Dragon*.

*How was interest sustained throughout the show? When I tell stories I always try to show rather than to tell. The more I 'show', the more engaged the audience remains. The means I use to 'show' are through the use of props, costumes, puppets etc. and, also, by creating strong characters whose own words and actions develop the story.

*Make simple puppets and use them to tell a simple story, eg. Sock puppets, stick puppets.

*Even though the stories are based on language there are many strong visual cues in the show eg the backdrop, the rickshaw, the costumes. Talk about the importance of visual art in telling a story and look at the idea that "a picture paints a thousand words". Ask students to paint or draw a story. See if the class can tell what the story is about by looking at the picture.

*Talk about how characters were created in the show through the use of voice and different body movements and postures. Ask students to create different characters using these techniques and ask that character to tell a simple story, "in character".

*Talk about how atmosphere was created using music, song, dance. Have the class listen to a variety of music from classical to world music to contemporary and ask them to describe the mood or atmosphere of the piece. Or ask them to paint, draw or write a story about a particular piece of music.

Useful Resources:

Chasing Rickshaws by Tony Wheeler and Richard L'Anson, Lonely Planet Pub. 1998. *The Fabric of Fairytale* by Tanya Batt, Barefoot Books, 2000. *Stories from Around the World* by Linda Edwards, Usborne Pub. 2000. *Tales Told in Tents* by Sally Clayton, Francis Lincoln Limited, 2004. *The Orchard Book of Magical Tales* by Margaret Mayo, Orchard Books 1993.

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