

# Study Guide for Galilee Multicultural Theatre Company's *Sofia's Drawings* By Dana Lambert

Every spring, the Chicago Humanities Festival offers **Stages, Sights, and Sounds**, a mix of the best theater, music, dance, puppetry, and visual art the world has to offer. 2010 features three international companies making their Chicago debuts: Scotland's Visible Fictions, Israel's The Galilee Multicultural Theatre, and France's Vélo Théâtre. Two Chicagoans, Frank Maugeri of Redmoon Theater and beatboxer/vocal percussionist Yuri Lane, treat us to brand-new work. At the audience's request, we also welcome back Leah Mann and Ela Lamblin, the dynamic duo behind Lelavision, whose stunning physicality and musical sculptures made it the runaway hit of the 2008 festival.

We have prepared study guides for each of the 2010 performances. These materials will help teachers ready their classes for the 2010 **Stages, Sights, and Sounds** and provide activities and ideas to explore with students long after the Festival is over.

## **ABOUT THE CHICAGO HUMANITIES FESTIVAL**

The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) creates year-round opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic circumstances to explore, enjoy, and support the arts and humanities. We accomplish this by presenting programs throughout the year, culminating in two annual Festivals of the Humanities, one in the spring specifically for children and families and one in the fall for the general public. The CHF's mission of providing broad access to the humanities – at a low ticket price – depends in part on the generosity of its most committed and enthusiastic supporters.

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## Lesson Plan:

# *Sofia's Drawings*

Galilee Multicultural Theatre Company

*Sofia's Drawings* combines actors, a puppet theatre, black theatre as well as the making of a video in front of the audience. The play is based on a series of drawings made by Sofia, a 16-year-old girl; Sofia made these drawings in Holland while she was hiding from the Nazis during the World War II. By making use of the drawings through various visual techniques, the play tells Sofia's life story during that period.

Sofia was the daughter of Clara Asscher-Pinkhof, a well-known children's author. Before Clara was sent to concentration camps and Sofia went into hiding, they published a series of children's stories – written by Clara and illustrated by Sofia – together. These stories were published in the weekly Jewish newspaper in Amsterdam. Sofia, in time, became a painter.

Efrat Hadani, an actress, puppeteer and sculptress, and Sofia's daughter, acts in the play and relates her mother's story. The play, a result of meetings between Efrat Hadani and Pablo Ariel, the director and an actor in the play, uses a special language and allows a meeting of three generations of creative women. The play, which is mainly visual and uses hardly any words, is accompanied by a translation into various languages, allowing it to be performed in front of multilingual audiences.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

The Galilee Multicultural Theatre has developed a visual theater style in which the actors use objects, puppets, their own bodies, and almost no words. The company includes actors, musicians, artists, environmentalists, and human rights activists, members who represent the diverse population of the region. Members include both Jews and Arabs who come from various cities, villages, development towns, and kibbutzim in the Western Galilee area. Some have been living in the area for generations, while others are immigrants from all corners of the world.

# STAGES SIGHTS & SOUNDS

### **CONTENTS**

In this guide you'll find:

- A lesson plan and activities recommended for ages 8 and up.
- The lesson plan will take: one class session.
- These activities can be used to prepare students for the **Galilee Multicultural Theater Company's** performance or in response to what they see during **Stages, Sights, and Sounds**.

**ACTIVITY: WRITING AN ALPHABIOGRAPHY**

Storytelling is one of the oldest art forms, intrinsic to most cultures. Stories are not only a means of communicating from one person to another but they also help people make sense of a world full of dilemmas and hardships. Stories invite people to discover other ways of doing, feeling, thinking, and behaving. Perhaps most importantly, stories can translate memories into a more concrete form that can be handed down to educate and inspire others.

**Purpose:** Just like Sofia, everybody has a unique story to tell, unlike any other. Students will see how their own personal story is constantly changing and being rewritten to reflect their life experiences. Efrat Hadani used her mother's drawings to tell the story of Sofia during the Nazi invasion. Using the performance of *Sofia's Drawings* as an inspiration, students will tell their own story by writing an alphabiography using a word of their choice and recording important events from their life for each letter of the word.

**Students Will:**

- Write an alphabiography using the letters of a word of their choice
- Describe significant life events and interests
- Create a drawing to represent their significant life events and interests

**Time Frame:** Discussion (20 minutes); Writing (One (1) class period.

**Getting Started:** Begin the session by discussing the performance of *Sofia's Drawings*. What did students like or dislike? What was unique about Sofia's life? What was unexpected in the performance? What kinds of feelings did the performance evoke?

Ask students to brainstorm a list of words that describe the performance or feelings evoked from watching (i.e. scared, angry, melancholy, star, Jewish, drawings, children, happy). Once there are 15-20 words have students choose one of the words. Tell students that they will be writing their own alphabiographies by recording an event, person, object, or feeling associated with each letter of the word they choose. Tell students they will also be creating a drawing to represent each alphabiography entry.

The idea of an alphabiography may be confusing at first so it would help to quickly discuss the difference between a biography and an autobiography. Mention that *Sofia's Drawings* is an example of a biography – the telling of someone else's life. Encourage students to break the word alphabiography into two parts to determine its meaning.

Pass out copies of the Sample Alphabiography Entry and read the model with the class (see example below).

As students work on their entries, talk to them and observe their work. Pay particular attention to the connections they make from their life to their writing. Since this type of autobiography breaks out of chronological order, students can choose what has been important in their lives. And since the writing pieces are short, even reluctant writers are eager to write!

**EXTENSIONS:**

- Instead of picking a single word, have students write an alphabiography using the entire alphabet.
- Draft a letter to the potential reader of their alphabiography that explains why they choose that particular word and why it is important to reflect on your own life and learn from your experiences. Students could discuss how reading their entries may help others.
- Adapt this strategy as a book report alternative, asking students to write alphabiographies from the point of view of a character in a book they have recently read or a person they learned about in history.

**SAMPLE ALPHABIOGRAPHY ENTRY**

**WORD: STAR**

**S IS FOR STEP-SISTER**

by Katie Miller

When I was in kindergarten my parents divorced. I lived with my mother and visited my father every other weekend. I was an only child and I didn't mind splitting my time up between my parents. Both of them equally paid attention to me. When I was in 3rd grade my mother remarried. I didn't mind my new step-father, Brian. Brian was really nice and I could see he made my mom happy. What I did mind was Brian's daughter, Sarah, from his first marriage. Sarah lived with her dad like I lived with my mom. When my mom married Brian, Sarah came to live with us too. I was not happy. Not only did I have to share my own bedroom with her, but I also had to share my toys. I was an only child until Sarah came into the picture. It was very hard for me because I no longer received constant attention. I think I was jealous. I quickly realized that sulking was not going to change anything and Sarah was not going to go away. At that point I decided to give her a chance. I began to talk to her and ask her about things she liked to do. I soon realized that we had a lot in common. We both liked to climb trees, ride bikes, and draw with colored pencils. I really like having Sarah around now. She is my sister and my best friend. I could not imagine my life with Sarah.