

Teacher Guide

THE
**THEATRE
SCHOOL**
AT DePaul University



by James Ambrose Brown
directed by Ann Wakefield

teacher guide prepared by Mike Doyle, Laura Routh, and
Caitlin Body

April 2 - May 25, 2013

Sponsored by



at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre
60 E. Balbo Drive, Chicago

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CHICAGO PLAYWORKS *for* FAMILIES & YOUNG AUDIENCES

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Teacher Guides are developed by The Theatre School at DePaul University.

Guides are distributed free of charge to teachers and other ticket purchasers and are available on the web. They are intended as a tool to facilitate learning, discussion, and an enhanced theatre experience for our audience.

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Please Note:
We have found that URLs on the Internet frequently change. Some addresses may have changed since this guide was published.

Table of Contents

Welcome Teachers	3
Dear Students	4
Synopsis	5
Raise Your Hand If	5
Playwright: James Ambrose Brown	5
Original Works	5
<i>Member of the Sea: Interview with Director Ann Wakefield</i>	6
<i>Dive Into the Play, Genre: Fairy Tale</i>	7
<i>Design Concepts in The Coral King</i>	8
<i>Message in a Bottle: Raise Your Hand If...</i>	9
<i>Dive Into the Play: Treating People Fairly</i>	10
<i>Message in a Bottle: Discussion Questions</i>	10
<i>Dive Into the Play: Thinking of Others</i>	11
<i>Message in a Bottle: Discussion Questions</i>	11
<i>Dive Into the Play: Theme, Being Environmentally Friendly</i>	12
<i>Message in a Bottle: Activity, Challenge...Accepted</i>	12
<i>Pearls of Wisdom</i>	12
<i>Pearls of Wisdom: Geography and Culture</i>	13
<i>Activity: Naming Geographical Forms</i>	14
<i>Pearls of Wisdom: Activity, Fish in the Sea</i>	15-16
<i>Dive Into the Play: Reusing Our Resources</i>	17
<i>Leaving the Sea, A Post-Show Activity</i>	18-19
Webliography	19
Answer Key	19
Season Schedule	20

Chicago Playworks Program Goals:

- To provide a live theatre experience for students and teachers in the Chicago metropolitan area.
- To provide theatre for Chicago's children that reflects their experiences in a contemporary, urban, and multi-ethnic environment.
- To serve principals, teachers, and students in their pursuit of Illinois State Learning Goals.
- To integrate performances and teacher guide information/activities into the classroom curriculum.
- To offer our performances within a workable, convenient time frame.
- To contact principals and teachers with valuable and solid information that will help them to make choices that fit their students' needs.

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre. Our production of *The Coral King* by James Ambrose Brown is directed by Ann Wakefield. The theatre is a place that fosters creativity, encourages empathy, and teaches us lessons about unknown places. This guide was created to help you to navigate the theatrical experience with your students before, during, and after the production.

Inside you will find:

- o Themes and discussions points which will encourage your students to start thinking about concepts in the play and how these lessons apply to their own lives.
- o Curriculum connections that connect various aspects in the play such as geography and culture to the Illinois Learning Standards and National Standards for theatre and other subjects.
- o Activities which allow students to further immerse themselves in the world of the play and create enthusiasm for the theatrical experience.
- o Exercises and questions which encourage students to think critically and further their writing skills.

The content within is marked in the following manner:



Dive Into the Play: a look into the world of the play.



Message in a Bottle: questions about the play that can be discussed before or after seeing the performance..



Pearls of Wisdom: factual information contained within the play that connects with various school curricula.

We hope you enjoy your visit to *The Coral King*.

~Mike Doyle (BFA3, Dramaturgy/Criticism), Laura Routh (BFA3, Dramaturgy/Criticism)
and Caitlin Body (BFA4/Theatre Arts)



Dear Students,

Welcome to Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre. Our production of *The Coral King* by James Ambrose Brown is directed by Ann Wakefield. Here we will explore the sandy beaches of the Seychelles Islands—right off the northeastern coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean—and the critters and creatures that live in the surrounding sea and the reefs.

When you are at the theatre, it is important to practice some basic rules, or etiquette, so that you and others can enjoy the performance. Make sure to keep your hands and feet to yourself, and do not talk during the performance. You wouldn't want the octopus to grab you because you're misbehaving!

Make sure you have your cell phone turned off so that it doesn't ring during the performance and disturb others. Make sure that your teachers and chaperones turn off their phones as well. You wouldn't want to upset the Coral King!

The scenes onstage may be so nautically gnarly that you want to take a picture, but please don't. Anyhow, you probably don't want to have your camera out when we take an adventure into the ocean because it might get wet!

Remember not to bring gum, food or drinks into the theatre so that our ocean friends have a clean environment to live in!

And lastly, dive in and enjoy your adventure to the Seychelles Islands and the reefs beneath! The water's fine!

~Mike Doyle (BFA3, Dramaturgy/Criticism), Laura Routh (BFA3, Dramaturgy/Criticism)
and Caitlin Body (BFA4/Theatre Arts)



Synopsis

Set on an exotic island in the Indian Ocean, this magical tale involves two “baddies,” **Napoleon** and **Fleurette**, a greedy, selfish, and manipulative pair and their younger brother **Pierre**, whom they cheat and exploit. They are confronted by an eccentric and mysterious **beachcomber** and his magical **Blue Cat**, who gives them several opportunities to heal or aid creatures of the sea, including a **Mermaid** in distress. Fleurette and Napoleon consistently refuse to help. They incur the wrath of the **Coral King**, who sends a storm to destroy their property. Pierre, always eager to learn and alert to the beauty, power, and rights of the Sea, proves to be the hero of the tale that includes a quest for the **Giant Pearl** and an acrobatic **Octopus**. There are underwater revels to celebrate the mighty and mysterious Coral King.

Playwright: James Ambrose Brown

James Ambrose Brown, a well-known South African novelist, journalist, short story writer, and playwright, was born in Scotland in 1919. In 1936, when he was seventeen years old, Brown moved with his parents to South Africa. During his life, Brown wrote a number of children’s plays including *The Three Wishes*, *Circus Adventure*, *Mango Leaf Magic*, and *The Coral King*. Other plays penned by Brown include *The Three Witches*, *They Seek the East Wind*, *His Evening of Grand Guignol*, *Seven Against the Sun*, and *Governor of Black Rock*. Brown wrote the screen adaptation of *The Magic Garden*, a popular South African television program. He also wrote a number of radio plays. Brown received many awards and literary prizes, including the Oude Meester Award for playwriting.



James Ambrose Brown
(photo courtesy of the
National English Literary
Museum, Grahamstown)

Original Works

The Coral King is an **original work**, which means that the playwright created the story himself. Sometimes playwrights will use stories within their culture or books to create a piece of drama. James Ambrose Brown wrote and created this story alone without the aid of long-held cultural stories or contemporary novels.



Member of the Sea: Interview with Director Ann Wakefield

In our production of *The Coral King*, director Ann Wakefield brings her love for islands off the Eastern Coast of Africa, the sea, and its inhabitants to the play. Having vacationed in Seychelles and lived on La Réunion, she has a special bond with the material. Below she shares her respect for the play and the underwater world.



Why were you drawn to The Coral King?

Ann Wakefield: I believe in children's theatre as part of a world of theatre; it really reminds you of the essentials. I love to wake up and journey with the imagination of children. In a world where our sea is tormented by man, it allows for an appreciation of the sea and a love of magical things.

Do you have any personal ties to the piece?

A.W.: I love the sea and want people to care for it and respect it. We wouldn't exist without the sea. It's important for young people to realize that underneath there is another world with its own customs and rituals. It is dazzling, but dangerous. I also want to extend an awareness of the power of nature that is wider and richer than we are.

What sets The Coral King apart from other plays of Theatre for Young Audiences?

A.W.: We, at The Theatre School, haven't done a play about the sea. It is taking us into a different world. We also have not done a play where the setting is a Creole island.

Why is it important today?

A.W.: It is relevant to the preservation of our planet. We are very negligent when it comes to the earth. We need to involve children in an imaginary journey that opens up their awareness and sense of responsibility to our planet. After all, the more we disappear into the machine, with technology, the more we get away from nature.



Genre: Fairy Tale

The main character **Pierre** lives with his older siblings, **Napoleon and Fleurette**. They are mean and very greedy. They make Pierre do all the work. Does this sound like another story you might know?

If you think that this story is similar to *Cinderella*, then you're right! You'll also discover that *Cinderella* and *The Coral King* are both **fairy tales**. Fairy tales are a genre of stories that frequently involve magic, quests, and transformations. Sometimes, the characters are rewarded for their good and kind deeds. Fairy tales have been around for thousands of years. They were passed down by word-of-mouth from generation to generation. Eventually, they were written down for all to read. These tales provided themes or morals that people believed in.

This fairy tale is an original work. The story was created by the author from his imagination and experience.

Here are some other fairy tales that you might know. You might be surprised by how old some of them are and where some of the writers are from.

Dating before 850—*Sinbad the Sailor*, originating in Arab and Persian Culture

1621—*Tom Thumb* by English writer Richard Johnson

1695—*Little Red Riding Hood* by French writer Charles Perrault

1697—*Cinderella* by the French writer Charles Perrault

1697—*Sleeping Beauty* by French writer Charles Perrault

1740—*Beauty and the Beast* by the French writer Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve

1812—*Hansel and Gretel* by the German writers Brothers Grimm

1812—*Rapunzel* by the German writers Brothers Grimm

1835—*The Princess and the Pea* by Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen

1836—*Thumbelina* by Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen

1936—*Peter and the Wolf* by Russian writer Sergei Prokofiev



Illinois Learning Standards: English Language Arts I.B.1b: Identify genres (forms and purposes) of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and electronic literary forms.

Design Concepts in *The Coral King*

Later in his life, Henri Matisse, an influential 20th-century French artist, developed a new artistic style in which he made compositions out of paper cutouts. Matisse did this after he had been hospitalized and needed to use a wheelchair. It was a way to add a new sense of joy to his life. In fact, he referred to the last fourteen years of his life as his second life. Emily Boyd, the scenic designer of *The Coral King*, was highly influenced by the vibrant and colorful cutouts that Matisse created, and she incorporated some of these designs into the set. A scenic designer is someone who designs the set and props for a play. Oftentimes, she will incorporate designs from other, sometimes famous, artists, like the designer for *The Coral King* was influenced by Matisse.



Activity:

Create an Under the Sea Wall

Add some joy to your classroom much like Matisse did by creating a class cutout of the sea and its creatures. Everyone in the class should find a sea-related shape that is interesting to them and cut it out of construction paper. Then, collaborate as a class just like theatre makers collaborate, and arrange all the cut outs together with tape on the wall to create an undersea world all your own. After you've seen *The Coral King*, compare your class wall with the set, and detect any similarities and differences.

What You'll Need:

- Colored Sheets of Construction Paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- A Sea-related Shape You'd Like to Create





Raise Your Hand If . . .

The Coral King contains various places, events, and characters that relate to the following questions.

Read the questions out loud and if they apply to you... RAISE YOUR HAND!

- * . . .if you have read a fairy tale?
- * . . .if you have been to a tropical island?
- * . . .if you have lent a helping hand?
- * . . .if you have made a new friend?
- * . . .if you and your siblings or friends have ever fought over something?
- * . . .if you have ever been selfish?
- * . . .if you have told a secret?
- * . . .if you have done something you were not supposed to do?
- * . . .if someone has treated you unfairly?
- * . . .if you have had to help someone out of a sticky situation?
- * . . .if you have ever seen a mermaid?
- * . . .if you have ever seen a coral reef?





Themes and Discussion Points

Wait...You're the King?: Treating People Fairly

Sometimes people are nicer to others than they are to us. They may have shallow reasons, such as popularity, social class or other factors. By not treating people fairly, you are not treating them with the same amount of respect that you would show any other person.

In history, there have been many instances in which people were not treated fairly. During the American Revolution, Americans were outraged because they did not have a voice in British Parliament. This is the origin of the phrase “no taxation without representation.” Jumping forward in history to the 1960s, Martin Luther King Jr. and other Civil Rights activists fought for racial equality because they were not being treated fairly.

In *The Coral King*, Napoleon and Fleurette treat Billiam Bones rudely because he is poor, looks bizarre, and has a strange job. At the end of the play, they learn **(SPOILER ALERT)** Billiam Bones is the Coral King! Napoleon and Fleurette show remorse only after they are aware of his prestige and power, not because they decide they should treat people more fairly.

Message in a Bottle



Discussion Questions

1. In *The Coral King*, Napoleon and Fleurette treat Billiam rudely. What are reasons that someone might not would treat another person fairly?
2. Can you think of a time when you were not treated fairly?
3. Have you ever failed to treat someone fairly? (Come on, fess up!)
4. Can you think of other examples from history where people were not treated fairly?
5. Can you think of some examples today where people are not treated fairly or with respect?





Theme

“Dude, that’s not my problem.” “Um, Dude, it is!”:

Thinking of others

Did you ever promise to help a friend but then back down at the last minute? Has this happened to you? Several times in *The Coral King*, Napoleon and Fleurette do not help others around them, such as when the Blue Cat is choking.

Their primary concern is for their individual well-being and fortune. Napoleon and Fleurette do not take the time to help others in danger because they are “busy” pursuing money. In the end, they upset the Coral King, proving that this selfish behavior is not beneficial.

Message in a Bottle



Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been too busy to help someone in need?
2. Have you ever kept something to yourself, not sharing with those who should also reap the benefits? Did anything happen as a result?
3. Is any other character in the play greedy, and, if so, in what ways?
4. Why is it important to help other people in need?
5. What are some reasons why you or others may resist helping those in need?





Theme

Being Environmentally Friendly

Many of the characters in *The Coral King* have made their home under the sea. When Pierre visits this world, he is in awe of its natural beauty. He does not want to take anything from this lush and gorgeous place. As humans, we are responsible for making sure the environment—whether it be the land or sea—remains beautiful and clean for future generations. This is called being environmentally friendly or going green.

Activity: Challenge. . .Accepted!

Here's your challenge.

- 2 weeks
- 1 mission: recycling

In the first week, hang a poster or a white board near the trash container listing common items that are thrown away in a classroom such as paper, Kleenex, and other objects. When students throw something away, ask them to put a small check mark on the poster next to the name of the item they are throwing away. Also, on this poster, tally how many garbage bags are used throughout the week.

The next week, divide the garbage in paper, plastic, regular trash—or if possible composting! After the two weeks, reflect on how this recycling experiment has helped the environment. Here are some questions to guide your discussion:

1. How do you think recycling is environmentally friendly?
2. How do you think it's helping your neighborhood and our local body of water—Lake Michigan?
3. How do you think recycling has an impact on the global community?

Pearls of Wisdom



- Walk or ride your bike to reduce gas emissions.
- Switch off the lights to save electricity!
- Use a plastic water bottle instead of purchasing bottled water.

Message in a Bottle



Illinois Learning Standards: Science, Technology and Society. 13.B.1.e. Demonstrate ways to reduce, reuse and recycle materials.

Science, Technology and Society. 13.B.1.d. Identify and describe ways that science and technology affect people's everyday lives (e.g., transportation, medicine, agriculture, sanitation, communication).

Science, Technology and Society. 13.B.2.d. Compare the relative effectiveness of reducing, reusing and recycling in actual situations.



Geography and Culture

The Coral King takes place on the Seychelles Islands. This small group of islands is just off the coast of Northeastern Africa in the Indian Ocean. An **island** is a small piece of land completely surrounded by water. Groups of islands, like the Seychelles Islands where *The Coral King* takes place, are called an **archipelago**. One hundred and fifteen islands make up the archipelago of the Seychelles.



This is a map of the continent of Africa. The Seychelles Islands are outlined in a red box just East of the main part of the continent.

The map below shows the archipelago of the Seychelles Islands.



Activity: Naming Geographical Forms

On the previous page, we named two different types of land masses, **archipelagoes** and **islands**. Can you think of any other types of geographical forms and explain what they are?

Below, we have included pictures of a **mountain** (a large mass of rock), a **plateau** (an elevated, flat surface), a **desert** (a place with no vegetation), and a **plain** (an area of flat land).

Match the terms to the pictures to help you start thinking!

- A. mountain
- B. plain
- C. plateau
- D. desert



Illinois Learning Standards: *Geography 17.B.1.a.* Identify components of the Earth's physical systems.



Activity: Fish in the Sea

In *The Coral King*, some of the characters live in a **coral reef**. A coral reef is a naturally forming habitat located in warm ocean climates where different species live. For example, the clown fish Nemo from the Disney movie *Finding Nemo*, lived in a coral reef off the coast of Australia.

Today, you are going to choose a tropical fish who lives in the Seychelles Coral Reef and do some research. In the Seychelles Coral Reef, there are more than a 1,000 species of fish that swim around. Many animals make the reef so beautiful.

What you will need:

- Computer or books for research on tropical fish or animals they might see in the Seychelles.
- On the next page, students may draw their fish and put down facts that they discovered about their fish.
- Paper, crayons or colored pencils for the students and drawings of the animals they create.
- A wall in the classroom where the students can hang their creature.



Illinois Learning Standards: Science 12.A.1a. Identify and describe the component parts of living things (e.g., birds have feathers; people have bones, blood, hair, skin) and their major functions.

Name _____

Draw your fish! What does it look like?

Name of Fish _____

How big is it? _____

What does it eat? _____



Activity: Reusing Our Resources

In *The Coral King*, the sea is vitally important. Unfortunately, human activity can harm the sea and the creatures in it. Luckily, there are ways that we can help. By recycling, reusing our resources, and reducing the amount of waste we produce, we can all help protect the world around us.

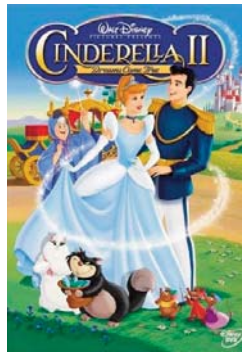
For this activity find something that you normally would have thrown away—a bottle of water or a milk carton—and make it into a sea creature using art supplies. Below are some examples of animals made from things we would normally consider trash.



Illinois Learning Standards: Science Technology and Society. 13.B.1e. Demonstrate ways to reduce, reuse and recycle materials.

Leaving the Sea—A Post Show Activity: *The Coral King, Part 2*

In literature and film, authors often pen stories which continue the narratives of the characters' lives after the end of the original work. For example, the Disney's *Cinderella* and Pixar's *Toy Story* continued their storylines after the first films. These are called sequels, as illustrated below.



Now it's your turn to be the author!

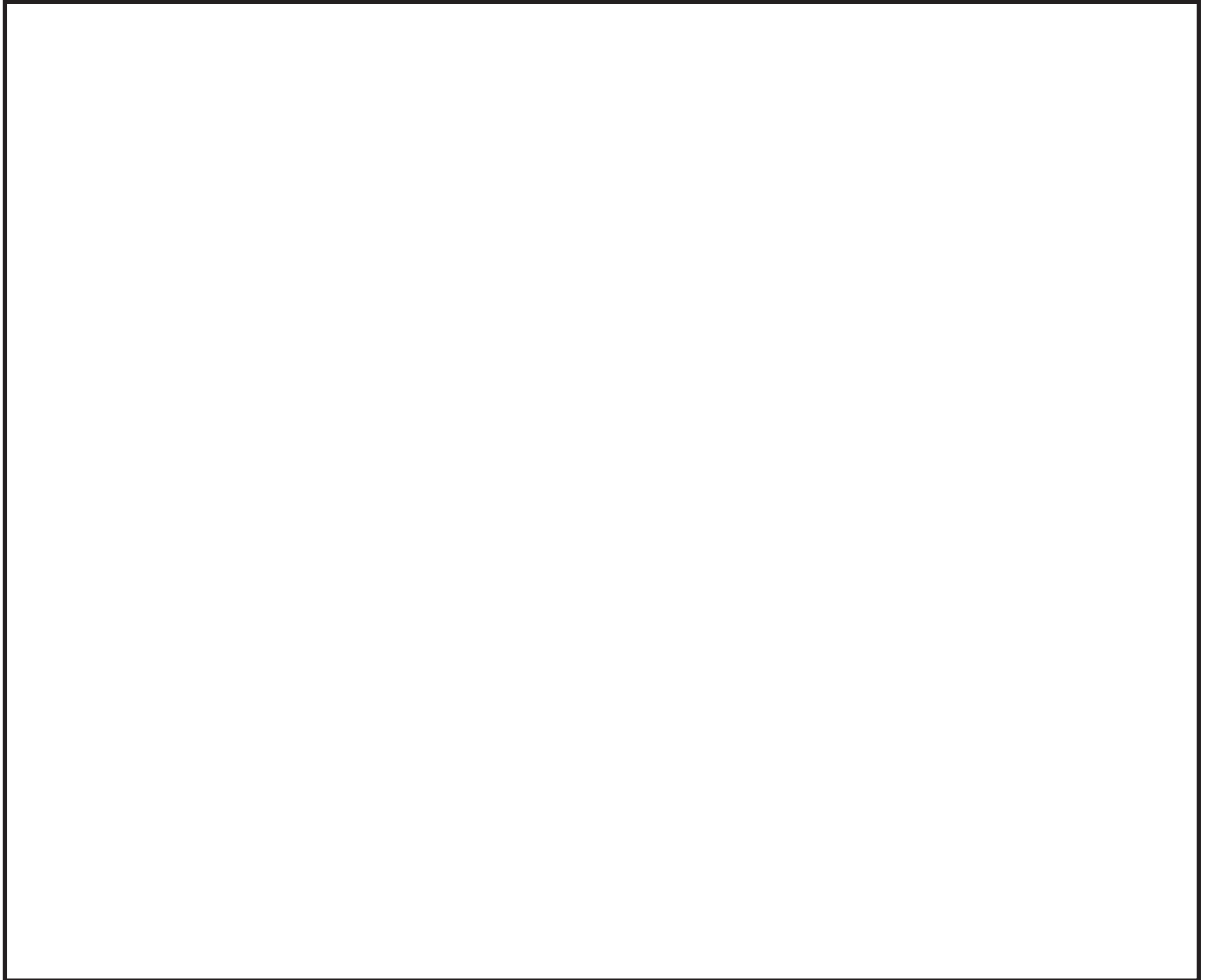
What do you think will happen to the characters in *The Coral King* next? On the next page, write or draw what you think will happen to the characters after the play ends.

Here is some food for thought:

- * Do you think Fleurette and Napoleon will have learned their lesson?
- * Do you think Pierre will help his siblings if they do not change their ways?
- *What's next for Billiam?

Post-Show Activity (continued)

Use this page to write or draw what you think happens to the characters after the play.



Webliography

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[http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fairy tale.](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fairy_tale)

"Seychelles Coral Reef" [http://education.natureseychelles.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Marine%20species%20poster.pdf.](http://education.natureseychelles.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Marine%20species%20poster.pdf)

Answer Key to Geography Quiz on page 13.

1. C
2. A
3. D
4. B

Announcing the 2012-2013 Chicago Playworks Season

Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy

based on the book by Gary D. Schmidt, adapted by Cheryl L. West, directed by John Jenkins
recommended for ages 10 and up

January 19 - March 2, 2013

Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 1/22, 2/5, 2/12, 2/19, 2/26

Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 1/24, 2/7, 2/14, 2/21+, 2/28

Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 1/19, 2/9, 2/16**, 2/23+, 3/2

The Coral King by James Ambrose Brown, directed by Ann Wakefield

recommended for all ages

April 2 - May 25, 2013

Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 4/2, 4/16, 4/23, 4/30+, 5/14, 5/21 Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 4/4, 4/18, 4/25, 5/2, 5/16, 5/23

Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 4/20, 4/27+, 5/18**, 5/25

+dates for ASL/American Sign Language Interpreting

**date for Audio Description and preshow Touch Tour

Announcing the 2012-2013 Theatre School Showcase Season

Angels in America: Perestroika by Tony Kushner, directed by Jane Drake Brody

February 8-17, 2013 (previews 2/6 & 2/7)

Measure for Measure

by William Shakespeare, directed by Catherine Weidner

April 19-28, 2013 (previews 4/17 & 4/18)

MFA13 - Kitchen Sink

by Ike Holter, directed by Dexter Bullard

a world premiere commissioned by The Theatre School, performed by the graduating MFA 3 actors

May 17-26, 2013 (previews 5/15 & 5/16)

Performances are Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m.

Preview performances are **free** to university students with valid identification.

The second Sunday performance of each play is interpreted in American Sign Language and has Audio Description with a preshow Touch Tour. Note: Audio Description for *Angels in America* is on Sunday, 2/10./13.

Post-Show Discussions are scheduled after performances on the first Sunday of each performance run.

details as of date of publication; subject to change.

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