

A scarecrow stands in a field of golden corn. The scarecrow wears a wide-brimmed straw hat, a dark brown jacket, and a vibrant blue skirt with a white and black pattern. Its hands are made of straw and hold a red book. The background is a warm, golden-yellow sky with several large, delicate, golden leaves floating around. The entire scene is overlaid with a fine, golden mesh pattern.

OLD JAKE'S SKIRTS

DRAMATURGICAL RESEARCH

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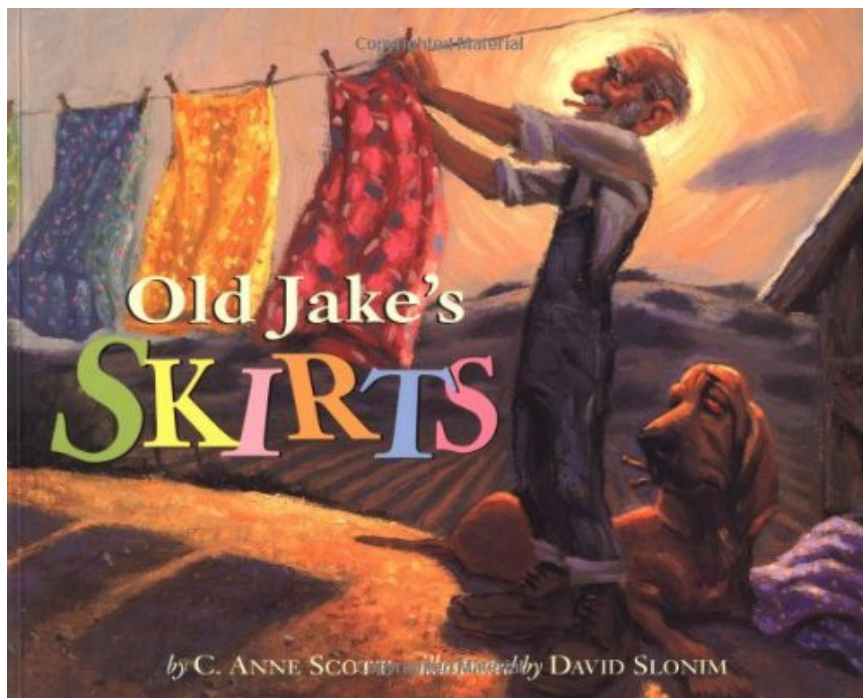
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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Adapted by José Cruz González
From the Book by C. Anne Scott
Original Illustrations by David Slonim
Directed by Joshua Rashon Streeter

Emerson Stage | Semel Theatre
November 9-13, 2022



Synopsis:

Old Jake is a lonely pumpkin farmer, until he and his dog find an old trunk filled with calico skirts beside the road. They take the trunk home and with every skirt—and the imaginative ways he uses them—color begins to slowly creep back into Jake's world.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION CONT.

Premiere:

Premiered at **Childsplay** in Tempe, Arizona

This production was a part of their mainstage series during the 2004-2005 season, with an educational school tour following from September 2005 through December 2005

Childsplay Mission:

"To create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, those hallmarks of childhood that are the keys to the future."

- Founded in 1977
- Chosen audience is children (average annual audience of 250,000 students, teachers and families)
- Supplements lack of arts education resources in Arizona public schools



Production History:

Braman Public School, Braman, Oklahoma (11/19/2009)

Lexington Children's Theatre, Lexington, Kentucky (9/1 to 12/18/2011)

Island City Academy, Eaton Rapids, Michigan (5/30 to 5/31/2013)

County Seat Theater, Cloquet, Minnesota (3/5 to 4/25/2015)

Trinity School at River Ridge, Eagan, Minnesota (1/26 to 1/7/2019)

Brunswick High School, Brunswick, Georgia (10/15 to 11/13/2021)

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT

“There are a lot of stories that are not being told. We need variety, and we need those hidden voices.”

- José Cruz González



Bio

Contemporary playwright of color

Child of migrant workers

Raised in Watsonville, California, where he found inspiration from the surrounding nature of California's central coast for his plays

Credits his grandparents, who would come back from working in the fields, with his desire for storytelling

B.A. in US History/Chicano Studies from the University of California, San Diego with a minor in Theatre

M.A. in Theatre from Arizona State University in Tempe, then an MFA in Directing from the University of California Irvine

Collaborative playwright, devising plays with communities of color

Member of The Dramatists Guild of America and TYA/USA

Associate Artist with Cornerstone Theater Company (California), and Playwright in Residence with Childsplay (Arizona)

Was a professor at California State University Los Angeles

Notable Recognitions:

NEA Directing Fellowship (1985)

NEA/TCG Theatre Residency Program for Playwrights (1997)

Recipient of a 2004 TCG/Pew National Theatre Residency

Emmy nomination for PAZ

2012 Ann Shaw Fellowship by Theatre for Young Audiences/USA

2010 Kennedy Center National Teaching Artist Grant

2009 American Alliance for Theatre & Education Distinguished Book Award

Outstanding Professor at California State University Los Angeles

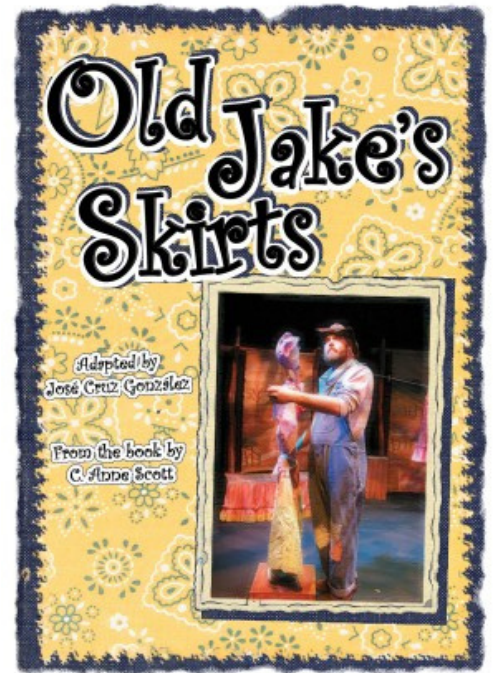
2021 Inaugural TYA/USA Reimagine Grantee for Pia's Wondrous Adventures in Tlaxlandia, a Musical Toy Theatre, Puppetry, Graphic Novel Mashup for a Brief Digital Age

ADAPTATION: FROM PAGE TO STAGE

Old Jake's Skirts was adapted in 2004 from the book of the same title by C. Anne Scott, which was originally published in 1998.

Definition:

In theatrical adaptation, material from another artistic medium, such as a novel or a film, is re-written according to the needs and requirements of the theatre and turned into a play or musical. The transformation of a dramatic work into a meaningful, living performance.



*The majority of Theatre for Young Audiences productions are adaptations. According to TYA USA, 91% of popular titles in the 2018/2019 season were adaptations.

Richard Kearney, Irish Philosopher and professor in philosophy at Boston College, suggests “that if storytelling is used as a practice of articulation that seeks to shape human experience and imagination in purposeful and profoundly interconnected ways, then storytelling through adaptation can in turn be regarded as an adherence to, and perpetuation of, the same desire.”

Emma Rice of Kneehigh (British Theatre Company), regards that “story” announces a journey of the imagination, an undertaking to rouse curiosity, stir emotions and feed an appetite for discovery. Crucially, story also stands for a place in which different kinds of audience might come together, a common ground, not because a story means the same to everyone but because anyone can tell, listen, remember and retell a story and in so doing can make it significantly their own. Proposing a connection between theatre today and an older performance tradition of oral storytelling acknowledges the distinctive character of traditional tales as widely and immediately comprehensible on the level of surface narrative, yet simultaneously capable of yielding multiple and rich interpretive possibilities for culturally mixed audiences of all ages.”

* **Courtesy of Storytelling as Adaptation: Adaptation as Storytelling**

ADAPTATION: FROM PAGE TO STAGE CONT.

The Origin of *Old Jake's Skirts* as Adapted for the Stage:

The adaptation of *Old Jake's Skirts* at Childsplay was a group effort conducted by five actors, two directors, a playwright and a musician/composer. José's goal was to use as much of the original written story as possible, **which is why you see a lot of crossover between the text in the book and the play.** The only new element added was music, which plays a role in the play of expressing emotional tone, showing the passage of time, etc. For the first production, it was decided that there would be a live musician playing multiple instruments, as well as multiple roles, and models like Old Jake's truck and the cabin would be miniatures at various points in the story. Four actors would play all of the characters. A staged reading with audience feedback was presented prior to the 2004-2005 performance season.

So We Ask: How Is This Story Being Told vs. Reading The Story?

With Multiple Voices Onstage:

Tracking actors, giving each member of the ensemble a unique character with specific traits, while contributing to the whole of the company ensemble.

Through Devising:

Using movement, light and sound to create the world of the story, show the passing of time, and express emotional tone.

Using Objects:

Through handheld miniature models to represent larger set structures (wooden cabin, dog, truck, grocery store, pumpkin patch, rabbits, convertible toy car, scarecrow, white pickup truck, church, etc.)

A Bit of Puppetry:

A company member creating and manipulating a believable representation, while giving life to character (Shoestring, Old Jake's hound-dog).



STORYTELLING MODALITIES

What is the aim?

- To present a full-sensory experience onstage.
- To engage with theatre as a multidisciplinary medium.
- Challenge the imagination with the willingness to accept illusion as reality, while noticing and appreciating the material reality of the performance.

“In adaptation, you’re still making choices, but just not as many. It’s more like a buffet that is already laid out for you, and you need to pick the choices for you and your audience that will keep it savory and not make you sick and not overindulge” and “at the same time, it really needs to offer tools for kids to deal with the real world.”

- **Karen Zacarias, Playwright-in-Residence at Arena Stage**

What devices are needed to present all of the ideas of this story with little to nothing?

Puppetry:

“The puppet pleurably challenges its audience’s understanding of what it means to be an ‘object’ and what it means to have a ‘life’”- Otakar Zich

How are the actors interacting with the puppet?

- By buying into illusion, not manipulation. The emphasis is on the character and emotional reality of the puppet (Shoestring).
- Eyes follow the puppet, not the actor.

How do audiences respond to the illusion or to the material reality of puppets in a theatre performance?

- By investing fully in the character of the puppet, and at the same time, appreciating and engaging with the manners through which the character was created. “Engagement with one enhances the other” (Matthew Reason, The Young Audience).
- Showing empathy to the puppet as you would the actor.

Magical Realism:

Magical realism is a genre of literature that depicts the real world as having an undercurrent of magic or fantasy.

Elements:

- Realistic setting that is familiar to the audience.
- Fantastical elements that do not appear in our world, but presented as normal within the piece.
- Uses a unique plot structure that does not follow a typical narrative arc.
- Offer implicit critique of society.
- Limited information of unexplained magical moments deliberately included to reinforce everyday life.

STORYTELLING MODALITIES CONT.

Wondrous and mysterious versus representational limitations: both can exist!

Magical moments: When do these appear? How?
Communicating illusions onstage using set, costumes, lighting and performers.

Elements to Note:

Toy Theatre: How do we suspend our disbelief with objects?



Janie Geiser "Evidence of Floods"
Toy Theatre

Adult Mechanisms: Memory play with mature themes interwoven throughout scenes.



"A Streetcar Named Desire" - National Theatre
Memory Play

Sound: Using everyday objects, instruments and foley to create sound.
How do we authentically do this?



Cameron Wells, Foley Artist
Around the World in 80 Days - Theatreworks

Breaking The 4th Wall: Characters communicate directly with the audience to reveal vital information and evoke deeper emotions in connecting to the audience.



Bob Martin, Man in Chair
"The Drowsy Chaperone"

PLAYS IN SIMILAR STYLE

A Play with Multiple Modalities:

Rick Elice's ***Peter and The Starcatcher***

- Based on Dave Berry and Ridley Pearson's best selling novel, *Peter and the Starcatchers*. A new origin story for Peter Pan.
- Features a dozen actors playing more than 100 characters.
- Uses ingenious stagecraft and the limitless possibilities of imagination to bring the story to life.
- Adaptable. Can be paired down to fit technical needs and abilities.
- Considered "rough, homemade and exhilarating for being that."



Peter and The Starcatcher. Broadway Production (2012)

A Memory Play:

Tennessee Williams' ***The Glass Menagerie***

The term "memory play" was coined by Tennessee Williams in a way to describe this play. He used unconventional techniques—impressionistic lighting, stories told in flashback, unusual set design—to get to what he believed was "a closer approach to the truth."

- *The Glass Menagerie* is the gritty story of a Depression-era family, told with poetic language, dreamlike music, and nonrealistic set design.
- This play also uses devices, similar to *Old Jake's Skirts*, to drive the story such as narration, poetic language, metaphor, projection, lighting and music.



The Glass Menagerie. Guthrie Theatre (2019)

A memory play has three parts:

1. A character experiences something profound and usually painful.
2. An amount of time elapses. There is an "arrest of time."
3. The reliving of the same painful experience over and over again, until the character is able to reach redemption.

COMPANIES WITH CROSSOVER

PigPen Theatre Co.

- Began creating their unique brand of theatre, music, and film as freshmen at the Carnegie Mellon School of Drama in 2007.
- Provide a space for audiences to engage with their imaginations.
- Small bite sized parts to give the impression of the whole.
- Simple mechanics and time tested ideas in theatre used in the context of the story to become powerfully evocative and surprising.
 - *The Old Man and the Old Moon*: "This is a story of time and tides and quests, the sort of fable on which mythologies and religions are founded ... [PigPen] asks us to appreciate the finer arts of wild storytelling, while speaking to the childish mind in all of us." - Ben Brantley of The New York Times.



Elements:

- Music: A visual to synthesize complex ideas (passing of time, emotion experience).
- Puppetry: Shadow puppetry to expand the playing space.
- Lights: to direct focus, to color a scene, transform into different characters.

*See PigPen Co's [Ted Talk](#) on storytelling and transcending the limits of engagement.



"There is nothing more interesting than something just out of sight. It's what keeps you watching, leaning forward and keeps you guessing."



The Old Man and the Old Moon

Photos by Joan Marcus, Jenny Anderson, T. Charles Erickson, and Bart Cortright.

COMPANIES WITH CROSSOVER CONT.

Manual Cinema



The Company
Photo: Maren Celest



Frankenstein at the Court Theatre (2018)
Photo: Michael Brosilow

Emmy Award winning performance collective, design studio, and film/video production company, combining handmade shadow puppetry, cinematic techniques, and innovative sound and music to create immersive stories for stage and screen. Uses vintage overhead projectors, multiple screens, puppets, actors, live feed cameras, multi-channel sound design, and a live music ensemble to transform the experience of attending the cinema and imbue it with liveness, ingenuity, and theatricality. Manual Cinema is included in the ArtsEmerson season this year!

Frankenstein | Arts Emerson 2022-23 Season

What similarities do you notice at play between the practices of these companies and our production?

- Actors playing multiple roles as a company of characters, narrators, inanimate objects, etc.
- These are ensemble-driven practices.
- Puppetry and object work.
- Innovative ways to connect and engage with the audience with nothing but the imagination.
- The use of technical elements to transport the audience through space and time.

THEMES, AESTHETICS & ART

Themes:

There are SO MANY in this piece. A few to cull out-

Hope: Where do you find it in your life?

Discovery: New ideas and new life. How can your point of view shift to shape how the world is seen around you?

Memory: How is the past referenced? What do we know? What do we infer?

Dichotomies:

A division or contrast between two things that are or are represented as being opposed or entirely different.

- Connection vs. Isolation
- Hardship vs. Reward
- Small vs. Big
- Perception vs. Reality
- Softness vs. Roughness (In texture and emotion)

Metaphors:

- New Beginnings
- Lost and Found
- Gifts
- Nature
- Growing Season/Seasons of Life

Symbolism:

- Clothesline: Physically separating Old Jake from everyone
- Calico: The breath of life around Old Jake, coloring his world and what he has been missing
- Scarecrow: Rejoining society, togetherness, joy
- Garden: "Tend to your garden before tending to others"
- First Baptist Church of Quail's Good Samaritan Ladies: Representation of community and hope



REFLECTIONS ON SETTING, TIME & CHARACTER

Setting:

- Not a specific period, but recognizable and noticeable.
- Small town.
- Multiple seasons referenced.
- Transportation is a necessity.
- Significance of a general store.
- Everybody knows everybody.
- Religion plays a key role in community.

Where could this story take place?

The script signals to a variety of regions:

- **The Northeast**
 - “Landscape of hills and farmland”
 - Pumpkins are typically grown in the Northeast
- **The Midwest**
 - Twisters are caused by the cool, dry air surface temperatures of the Midwest
- **The Southwest**
 - Jack Rabbits tend to inhabit deserts, hills and plains in Southwestern regions
 - Although we haven’t seen a locust plague in the United States in years, locusts can be found from Northern Georgia to New York and west of the Mississippi River in the Midwest
- **The South**
 - The play’s original score and the variety of stringed instruments referenced allude to Southern Bluegrass style (Violin, Guitar, Mandolin, Banjo)
 - Imaginary rabbits appear. A stringed instrument is plucked to create them.
 - A violin is plucked to create raindrops.



Northern Appalachian Hills



REFLECTIONS ON SETTING, TIME & CHARACTER CONT.

For Context and Scope:

Great Depression Era vs. Appalachian Small Towns Today

1930s: Depression Era Appalachia

- Early 1930s - Stock Market crashed in 1929
- Many owned and lived on family farms in mining communities.
- Worked in mines and in the logging business to pay their debts.
- Lived off of nature's bounty, raising their own livestock and crops to make a living. Nothing went to waste.
- Proudful of their resourcefulness. Not used to having money; made anything that they needed to live with, canned food, carried their own water, hunted, and built and traded within their community.
- Relied on General/Community Stores for the things they couldn't make. You could use money or trade.
- Community was crucial. Everyone worked together to support each other.



DuBois, PA. 1930s

Photo courtesy of the DuBois Area Historical Society

Today: Small Town Appalachia



DuBois, PA. 2021

Photo courtesy Doug Kerr

- Of the 25.7 million people that live in Appalachia, almost 2.5 million, or nearly 10% of residents, live in rural counties. The highest concentration of rural counties are found in Mississippi, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.
- Appalachia is known for its agricultural success.
- Self-sustainability is one of the many foundations of Appalachian culture. Teaching future generations the importance of loving the land and showing them how to do something as simple as growing a tomato plant or a small herb garden in a windowsill box could go a long way in showing them how to respect the practices that the Appalachian forefathers relied upon to stay alive.
- Appalachians also have a strong sense of what is right and what ought to be. They resist change.
- Real and functioning culture that is revealed through its arts and crafts, traditional music, traditional foods, its customs and its traditions.

REFLECTIONS ON SETTING, TIME & CHARACTER CONT.

General Store:

SARAH: *It was still dawn when Old Jake rose. He was planning an early start into town to pick up supplies at the general store.*

- Often carry a wide variety of supplies to satisfy day-to-day needs.
 - Purchase what you don't grow or make yourself.
 - OLD JAKE: *Gonna get us a sake of flour, a can of lard, a new whetstone for my whittlin's knife, and a bone for you.*
- Typically remain open for long hours.
- Historically, it would offer sales on credit or trade for its customers.
- Seen as a community gathering space.
 - SARAH: *Old Jake wanted to get his start before the morning regulars arrived for their morning round of coffee and chitchat.*
 - OLD JAKE: *Nothin' worse than coffee and chitchat.*



Courtesy of Kim Howland, Elsie General Store (IL)



Courtesy of Marshfield Hills General Store (MA)



1965 Ford Pickup Truck.
Courtesy of Hot Rod Archives

Transportation:

This play references a few modes of transportation: Old Jake's truck, the Good Samaritan Ladies white convertible, Otis Brown's truck.

A necessity and a privilege to have transportation.

Sometimes it is up to 20 miles to the nearest town.

- SARAH: *Old Jake would use an unwired coat hanger to hold the truck door shut. And getting the truck started was always an adventure.*
 - Is Old Jake's truck a junkyard car? Is it something he put together himself? Has it been in the family for years? Is the truck a project? Something to do with his hands?

REFLECTIONS ON SETTING, TIME & CHARACTER CONT.



Good Samaritan Church Ladies
Courtesy of the Pine Journal

Religion:

- The region of Appalachia is god-fearing.
- Christianity is the dominant religion of this region. How does this impact daily life?
- It is a custom to regularly attend church as it is a community gathering space, and Appalachia centers community.
- Hymnals are an essential part of church meetings.
 - **"Amazing Grace"** (John Newton, 1772): An immense grace that saves from wretchedness.
 - *How has Old Jake been saved?*
 - The discovery of the skirts brings joy and color to his world.
 - Meeting Young Sarah puts the meaning of living a full life into perspective.
 - **"Shall We Gather At The River"** (Robert Lowery, 1864): Typically used as a baptism song.
 - Sung by the Good Samaritan Ladies.
- If "baptism" means the "purification and cleansing of sins" and the Good Samaritan Ladies sing this song as they enter, does this symbolize the regeneration and admission to the Christian Church, and in this case, society, for Old Jake?

Time:

How does it pass?

- **One Planting Season:**
 - Old Jake is a pumpkin farmer.
 - Gourds are typically planted in the spring and can take 90-120 days to grow. They require an inch of water per day, though they can withstand brief periods of drought. They need at least 6 hours of sunlight per day, as well, and ample space to grow. Some varieties have vines that can grow up to 25 feet in length.
- **Plagues:**
 - Old Jake marked his years by the plagues that had visited him.
 - The year of the...
 - Crows
 - Twisters
 - First Baptist Church of Quail's Good Samaritan Ladies' Committee
 - He measures and predicts plagues that will be brought upon him and his farm. What does this say about him?
- **Emotional Tone:**
 - Despair and worry turns to hope and joy.
 - Isolation and loneliness turns to contentment and connection.
- **Music:**
 - Used as a transition between scenes, signify the weather and to reiterate plot points through the repetition of musical themes and use of foley sounds.

REFLECTIONS ON SETTING, TIME & CHARACTER CONT.

Character:

A Deeper Look into Old Jake and Sarah

Referencing **Erikson's Stages of Development:**

OLD JAKE: *a tall, thin man with a beard. He wears overalls. His face is weathered from working the land. His clothes are loose on him. Old Jake is a pumpkin farmer and raises chickens for sale. His home is Stillwaters Farm, which is located on a hillside. He doesn't have much, but with the work he does it's enough to keep him going. Jake lives alone with his old hound dog, Shoestring. When he isn't working, Old Jake likes to carve little figurines. There is something sad and lonely about him.*

- Age is fluid. Is he middle-aged? Retirement age? What was life before this moment? How has that impacted how he has aged?
 - Middle-Adulthood (40 to 65): **Generativity vs. Stagnation**
 - Will I provide something of real value?
 - Maturity-Death (65+): **Ego Identity vs. Despair**
 - Have I lived a full life?
- Handy: His inventiveness has made him resourceful and independent.
- Isolation: Has impacted his literacy; insecurity around speaking and writing among others.

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Approximate Age	Psychosocial Crisis/Task	Virtue Developed
Infant - 18 months	Trust vs Mistrust	Hope
18 months - 3 years	Autonomy vs Shame/Doubt	Will
3 - 5 years	Initiative vs Guilt	Purpose
5 -13 years	Industry vs Inferiority	Competency
13 -21 years	Identity vs Confusion	Fidelity
21 -39 years	Intimacy vs Isolation	Love
40 - 65 years	Generativity vs Stagnation	Care
65 and older	Integrity vs Despair	Wisdom

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Stages of Psychosocial Development



SARAH: *a young woman. She is our storyteller. She also plays **YOUNG SARAH.***

- Sarah: Mid-20s to 30s.
- Does Sarah now have children of her own?
- How has her history shaped her view of the world around her?
 - Young Adult (19 to 40): **Intimacy vs. Isolation**
 - Am I loved and wanted?
 - “Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness.”
- Young Sarah: Somewhere around 8 - 10 years old.
- How is/has Sarah coped with the loss of her mother? Does the traumatic memory outweigh the joyful memories associated with this experience?
 - School Age (6 to 11): **Industry vs. Inferiority**
 - How can I be good?
 - “Children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.”

NOTABLE HISTORIES

Calico Fabric:



OLD JAKE: *Why that storm stopped when we let them skirts out, Shoestring. What do you think about that?*

- Origin: Southwestern India, 11th Century
- During the 15th century, calico from Indian Gujarat traveled as far as Egypt and Northern Africa, and in the 17th century trade with Europe began. It was in the 16th century that England became well acquainted with Indian calico, after seizing a Portuguese ship which had the precious calico fabric on board
- 'Calico' comes from the word 'Calicut' which was a European name for the city of Kozhikode, in Kerala (Southwestern India)
- Plain-woven textile, made from half-processed and unbleached cotton fibers
- Generally very cheap due to its unfinished nature, and the fact that it remains un-dyed and raw
- Versatile, sturdy and durable
- Often used for items such as bags, aprons, curtains and furnishings. These items will see daily wear and tear, but need to remain strong and withstand some abrasion and dirt
- By the 1840s textile mills in Eastern United States produced cotton cloth varying in width from 25 to 32 inches and woven in plain weaves, stripes, plaids, and white muslin sheeting
- Calico was made from cotton and often had a floral print. Due to its inexpensive cost, calico was often bought by families in bulk, with the result that many families attended calico balls dressed in the same print. Additionally, a woman could use extra calico fabric to make a men's tie to match her dress
- When families migrated to the west, carrying possessions with them became a difficult task. Although they were starting new lives, families were forced to pack smart and only bring necessities. Women only had two to three dresses, most of which were made of calico. This cotton based material usually included ornamentation of some type matched with a simple design. Colors were limited and the designs were made using roller printing
- Calico fabric was popular because it was washable, durable, and affordable; all of which were important during this time of change and development. Women had little to no time to do laundry, allowing calico fabric to be even more practical. As mentioned before, calico fabric had small printed designs, which were also used to hide stains
- Calico allowed women to still look presentable and neat, even if their dresses were not made with more expensive fabrics such as silk or wool. Many women referred to calico as, "cloth of the slaves and lady's maids."

What does the trunk full of calico skirts tell us about Sarah's Mother? Where could they have come from?

NOTABLE HISTORIES CONT.

Superstitions in Farming:

OLD JAKE: *We shouldn't have opened this trunk, Shoestring.*

SARAH: *A dark superstition had hatched inside of him.*

OLD JAKE: *Lord knows what mischievous spirits we let loose.*

SARAH: *You see, Old Jake, after all, a believer in plagues.*

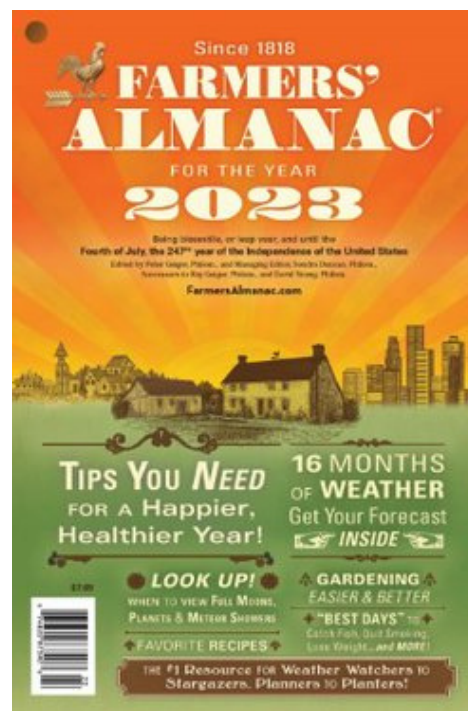
OLD JAKE: *It's going to be the Year of the Skirts.*



- **Plant in the Moonlight:** The moon can determine the health of your harvest.
 - Planting anything that grows above the ground, in our case pumpkins, should be done when the moon is waxing, moving from new to full, in order to get the best results.
 - Plants that mature underground like root vegetables must be planted in the timeframe that starts about 48 hours before the moon is officially full and 10 days following the full moon.
- **Predict the Rain:** Check for signs that tell imminent precipitation. For example, condensation on equipment, as well as the behavior of animals (chickens hiding their heads under their wings, horses shaking their heads and acting restless and owls hooting more at night also foretell rain.
- **Plant North to South:** It is a long-held belief that crops sown from North to South will produce a healthier harvest than those planted East to West.
- **Carry an Acorn:** Ancient myth states that acorns are potent symbols of fertility and long life. They can not only bring you good health, but can also bless your crops if you carry one when planting or harvesting.
- **Pay Attention to the Wind:** If the wind is frosty and it comes from the North, plants will be fine, if it comes from the South, it will be very harmful.
- **Avoid the 13th:** Avoid laboring in the fields on the 13th of the month. Some farmers even go as far as to avoid the 31st, the inverse of the 13th, too.
- **And Many More!**

Farmer's Almanac

- Published every year since 1818.
- Long-range weather predictions that deny the use of the satellite tracking equipment, groundhogs and weather lore.
- Longtime almanac followers maintain that the forecasts are 80-85% accurate.



NOTABLE HISTORIES CONT.

Bluegrass Music:

The premiere of Old Jake's Skirts included a musician whose musical accompaniment was music based on bluegrass tradition.



Instruments primarily include acoustic string instruments. The instruments referenced in the play's original score include the guitar, banjo, mandolin and violin. Other popular Bluegrass instruments include spoons, washboards, psaltery and washtub bass.

- Traced to the people who came to America in the 1600s from Ireland, Scotland, and England. The music they brought with them are generally considered to be the roots of modern bluegrass music.
- As the settlers began to move out into North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia, they wrote songs about daily life in the new land. Settling in mainly remote areas, many of the songs reflected life on the farm or in the hills.
- Its development included the blending of elements from gospel music and the blues music that was prominent among people of African origin who lived in the Mississippi Delta region.
- The invention of the phonograph and the onset of radio in the early-to-mid 1900s brought this music out of the hills and into the homes of people all over the United States.



William Smith "Bill" Monroe
Creator of the Bluegrass Genre

REACHING THE YOUNG AUDIENCE

“A university setting is the perfect venue to produce thoughtful plays that have 'deep social significance.' If educators seek to create the next generation of theatre artists and theatre-goers, it is their duty to give productions the full value they deserve.” - Mary Schuttler and Gillian McNally

Megan Alrutz offers a take on new rules to elevate American Theatre For Young Audiences:

- How is convention and innovation at play?
- How does the work engage in beauty and little death?
- How am I achieving economy and cohesion?
- How is the work making me think and feel?
- How does the work engage and acknowledge young people (their experiences, identity, etc.)?

*How is *Old Jake's Skirts* keying into these rules for Theatre For Young Audiences?

Young Spectator vs. Young Audience

Phillip Pullman: Theatre- The true key stage (published in **The Guardian**)

- “When we are adults, and if we're lucky enough to have developed the habit, we can find our own way to plays and operas, but children can't do it on their own. They need to be helped into the experience by people who've been there before, and who can excite their curiosity. A little knowledge helps a great deal. A theatre especially set up for children helps even more; and plays presented by people who know how to perform for children without talking down to them, or being facetious, or leaving their brains behind, are best of all.”

This is an Opportunity to Engage a Future Theatre Artist, Audience Member, Advocate and Supporter

“What is implied when theatre with and for youth is consistently (and dismissively) referred to as sweet or cute? It insinuates that we do not think theatre with and for youth is “real” theatre, that TYA is less rigorous and a less important form in comparison to “professional” theatre.”

- Sarah Coleman - **“Don't Call It Sweet”**

Target Audience: 2nd-4th Grade

What are these students like at this learning level? What do they understand now?

- **Third Grade Students Can...**
 - Use sense memory to enhance and inform pantomime activities.
 - Develop appropriate onstage and offstage behavior.
 - Identify theatre terminology (audition, rehearsal, projection, casting, rehearsing, blocking).
 - Listen to constructive criticism and respond in a positive way.
 - Create geometric shapes (line, circle, oval, triangle, diamond, square, rectangle, etc.) using body movement, imagination and spatial awareness.

REACHING THE YOUNG AUDIENCE CONT.

- **Fifth Grade Students Can...**
 - Apply playwriting skills by writing monologues, dialogues, and short scenes.
 - Make expressive use of secondary tools of theater (sets, costumes, makeup, props, lighting, sound) in activities or performances.
 - Use emotional recall as the basis for character choices.
 - Define the roles of people who work in the theater (actor, director, playwright, designer).
 - Increase literacy skills by dramatizing stories, poems, and books from world literature.

*Courtesy of National Arts Standards, The Developing Theatre Student and Curriculum Guidelines

It is also key to honor childrens' developmental needs: 7, 8 and 9 year olds.
Courtesy of Chip Wood, Yardsticks

Seven Year Olds: This is an inward, consolidating period of growth. Often like to work individually. Visually, they tend to focus on small details. Perfectionists. Good listeners, enjoy being read to. Hypersensitive to many hurts, real or imagined.

Social-Emotional Growth Patterns:

- Inward-looking; sometimes moody, touchy, depressed, sulky or shy.
- May change friendships quickly and feel “nobody likes me.”
- Need security and structure; rely on adults for help and constant reassurance.
- Don't like taking risks or making mistakes.
- Sensitive to others feelings but sometimes tattle.
- Conscientious and serious; have strong likes and dislikes.
- Keep belongings neater at home and school than at six.

Eight Year Olds: Full of energy, imagination and little sense of their own limits. Exploring potential. Expanding awareness of the broader world.

Social-Emotional Growth Patterns:

- Enjoy socializing and sharing humor.
- Love group activities and cooperative work, preferably with peers of the same gender.
- Adjust well to change; bounce back quickly from mistakes or disappointments.
- Form larger friend groups than at seven.

Nine Year Olds: Often confused and troubled. Beginning to worry about events around them. Nothing is fair. Often feel singled out.

Social-Emotional Growth Patterns:

- More individualistic.
- Often feel worried or anxious.
- Impatient.
- Often complain about fairness issues.
- Critical of self and others (including adults).
- Can be sullen, moody, aloof, and negative; often say “I hate it,” and “it's boring,” etc.

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