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How I Learned to Drive received its world premiere at the Vineyard Theatre, New York City. Off-Broadway production produced by the Vineyard Theatre in association with Daryl Roth and Roy Gabay. This play was made possible by generous support from the Pew Charitable Trust and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation. It was written and developed at the Perseverance Theatre, Juneau, Alaska, Molly Smith, Artistic Director. How I Learned to Drive is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

April 5 - 23, 2017
As you take your students on the exciting journey into the world of live theatre we hope that you’ll take a moment to help prepare them to make the most of their experience. Unlike movies or television, live theatre offers the thrill of unpredictability.

With the actors present on stage, the audience response becomes an integral part of the performance and the overall experience: the more involved and attentive the audience, the better the show. Please remind your students that they play an important part in the success of the performance.

A FEW REMINDERS...

**audience etiquette**

**BE PROMPT**
Give your students plenty of time to arrive, find their seats, and get situated. Have them visit the restrooms before the show begins.

**RESPECT OTHERS**
Please remind your students that their behavior and responses affect the quality of the performance and the enjoyment of the production for the entire audience. Live theatre means the actors and the audience are in the same room, and just as the audience can see and hear the performers, the performers can see and hear the audience. Please ask your students to avoid disturbing those around them. Please no talking or unnecessary or disruptive movement during the performance. Also, please remind students that cellphones should be switched off completely. No texting or tweeting, please. When students give their full attention to the action on the stage, they will be rewarded with the best performance possible.

**GOOD NOISE, BAD NOISE**
Instead of instructing students to remain totally silent, please discuss the difference between appropriate responses (laughter, applause, participation when requested) and inappropriate noise (talking, cell phones, etc).

**STAY WITH US**
Please do not leave or allow students to leave during the performance except in absolute emergencies. Again, reminding them to use the restrooms before the performance will help eliminate unnecessary disruption.
Dear Educator,

Live theatre is a place for people to gather and experience the joys, triumphs, and sorrows life has to offer.

The Syracuse Stage education department is committed to providing the tools to make learning in and through the arts possible to address varied learning styles and to make connections to curricula and life itself. It is our goal in the education department to maximize the theatre experience for our education partners with experiential learning and in-depth arts programming. Thank you for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

Lauren Unbekant
Director of Educational Outreach

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2016/2017 EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH SPONSORS

Syracuse Stage is committed to providing students with rich theatre experiences that explore and examine what it is to be human. Research shows that children who participate in or are exposed to the arts show higher academic achievement, stronger self-esteem, and improved ability to plan and work toward a future goal.

Many students in our community have their first taste of live theatre through Syracuse Stage’s outreach programs. Last season more than 15,500 students from across New York State attended or participated in the Bank of America Children’s Tour, artsEmerging, the Young Playwrights Festival, the Franklin Project, Young Adult Council, and our Student Matinee Program.

We gratefully acknowledge the corporations and foundations who support our commitment to in-depth arts education for our community.
Paula Vogel has written *How I Learned to Drive* (Pulitzer Prize, New York Drama Critics Award, Obie Award, Lucille Lortel, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and many more.) Other plays include *A Civil War Christmas, The Long Christmas Ride Home, The Mineola Twins, Hot N Throbbin’, The Baltimore Waltz, Desdemona, And Baby Makes Seven, The Oldest Profession, and Indecent*, opening on Broadway on April 18th. Her plays have been produced by Second Stage, New York Theatre Workshop, Vineyard Theatre, Roundabout, and Circle Repertory Company. Her plays have been produced regionally all over the country at the Center Stage, Intiman, Trinity Repertory, Woolly Mammoth, Huntington Theatre, Magic Theatre, The Goodman Theatre, American Repertory Theatre, Dallas Theatre Berkeley Repertory, and Alley Theatres to name a few. Harrogate Theatre and the Donmar Warehouse have produced her work in England.

Her plays have been produced in Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand as well as translated and produced in Italy, Germany, Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, Romania, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Canada, Portugal, France, Greece, Japan, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Brazil and other countries.

John Simon once remarked that Paula Vogel had more awards than a “black sofa collects lint”. Some of these include Induction into the Theatre Hall of Fame, Thornton Wilder Award, Lifetime Achievement from the Dramatists Guild, the William Inge Award, the Elliott Norton Award, two Obies, a Susan Smith Blackburn Award, the PEN/Laura Pels Award, a TCG residency award, a Guggenheim, a Pew Charitable Trust Award, and fellowships and residencies at Sundance Theatre Lab, Hedgebrook, The Rockefeller Center’s Bellagio Center, Yaddo, MacDowell, and the Bunting. But she is particularly proud of her Thirtini Award from 13P, and honored by three awards in her name: the Paula Vogel Award for playwrights given by Vineyard Theatre, the Paula Vogel Award from the American College Theatre Festival, and the Paula Vogel mentorship program, curated by Quiara Hudes and Young Playwrights of Philadelphia.

From: http://paulavogelplaywright.com/
Characters

Li’l Bit - a forty-something year-old woman who we see at many ages.

Uncle Peck - her aunt’s husband. An attractive man in his forties, he appears to be a model father figure.

The Greek Chorus - three actors who play all the subsidiary characters, including Mother, Grandmother, Aunt Mary, Grandfather, classmates, a waiter, and a teenage boy.

The Cleveland Play House, *How I Learned to Drive*, Photo by Roger Mastroianni
“Sometimes to tell a secret, you first have to teach a lesson,” confides Li’l Bit in the opening moments of How I Learned to Drive. We first meet her as an adult, but she soon guides us through a series of vignettes from her childhood and adolescence that help us and Li’l Bit herself understand how she became the woman she is. Using the framework of driving lessons she took from her aunt’s husband, Uncle Peck, we soon learn that Li’l Bit is a victim of long-term sexual abuse.

Uncle Peck is seductive and manipulative, but also an appealing figure for the young Li’l Bit, who is unsure of her place in the world and in her insensitive family, which assigns humiliating nicknames to its members. His character is meant to confuse us. He appears gentle, loving, and a bit pathetic, but beneath the surface, he is a classic predator.

In scenes punctuated by dark comedy, we see Li’l Bit as she maneuvers through the uncomfortable landmarks of adolescence: a sock hop where she is afraid to dance because the boys will see her jiggle, gym class where she’s taunted by her classmates, uncomfortable family gatherings, and the increasingly chilling driving lessons from Uncle Peck.

In a New York Times interview in 1997, Paula Vogel said that she wanted this play “to get the audience to go along for a ride they wouldn’t ordinarily take, or even know they’re taking”. It moves as seductively as Uncle Peck, sliding from the comic into darker, more uncomfortable places, exposing patterns of guilt and responsibility with discomfiting shifts of power.

“The nearest sensation I feel - of flight in the body - I guess I feel when I’m driving.”

-How I Learned to Drive
In *How I Learned to Drive*, Li’l Bit’s reminiscences are fragmented and presented out of chronological sequence. Along with her, we are putting together a puzzle. In examining each piece of her relationship with Uncle Peck, we get a picture of how sexual predators operate and how they continue to destroy lives long after their deeds are done.

All supporting characters in *How I Learned to Drive* are played by three actors who Paula Vogel calls a Greek Chorus. They move from role to role while Li’l Bit and Uncle Peck stay in sharp focus, the only two characters maintaining one identity. Like the classical Greek Chorus, they are the voices of the community in which Li’l Bit lives.

In *How I Learned to Drive*, realistic scenes and situations play out on a non-realistic stage set representing a landscape of memories. The voice of instructional manuals and the educational films of Li’l Bit’s youth often punctuate the action. The controlling metaphor is driver education and the voices often sound like the bland narration of driver’s ed films from the twentieth century.

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**Resources for Reporting and Counseling Victims of Child Sexual Abuse**

In a project funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network provides a valuable website entitled, “Coping With the Shock of Interfamilial Sexual Abuse.” In a readable format, it provides strategies for families of children who have been abused.

http://nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/caring/intrafamilialabuse.pdf

Reporting sexual abuse: NY State Office of Children and Family Services mandates that doctors, school officials, police, childcare workers, mental health workers, social workers, and others report suspicions of child sexual abuse. The number for Mandated Reporters is (800) 635-1522. The Public Hotline number is (800) 342-3720.

To report Abuse by Institutional Staff call 1-855-373-2122. For complete list of mandated reporters, indications of suspected sexual abuse, and other important information see http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/Pub1159.pdf.

The McMahon/Ryan Child Advocacy Center in Syracuse offers medical evaluations, child abuse advocacy, investigative interviews, therapy, community awareness and prevention programs, and professional education training. For more, see http://www.mcmahonryan.org
elements of drama

PLOT
What is the story line? What happened before the play started? What do the characters want? What do they do to achieve their goals? What do they stand to gain/lose?

THEME
What ideas are wrestled with in the play? What questions does the play pose? Does it present an opinion?

CHARACTER
Who are the people in the story? What are their relationships? Why do they do what they do? How does age/status/etc. affect them?

LANGUAGE
What do the characters say? How do they say it? When do they say it?

MUSIC
How do music and sound help to tell the story?

SPECTACLE
How do the elements come together to create the whole performance?

Other Elements: Conflict/Resolution, Action, Improvisation, Non-verbal communication, Staging, Humor, Realism and other styles, Metaphor, Language, Tone, Pattern & Repetition, Emotion, Point of view.

Any piece of theatre comprises multiple art forms. As you explore this production with your students, examine the use of:

WRITING
VISUAL ART/DESIGN
MUSIC/SOUND
DANCE/MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY
At its core, drama is about characters working toward goals and overcoming obstacles. Ask students to use their bodies and voices to create characters who are: very old, very young, very strong, very weak, very tired, very energetic, very cold, very warm. Have their characters interact with others. Give them an objective to fulfill despite environmental obstacles. Later, recap by asking how these obstacles affected their characters and the pursuit of their objectives.

INQUIRY
How are each of these art forms used in this production? Why are they used? How do they help to tell the story?
elements of design

LINE can have length, width, texture, direction, and curve. There are five basic varieties: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, curved, and zig-zag.

SHAPE is two-dimensional and encloses space. It can be geometric (e.g. squares and circles), man-made, or free-form.

FORM is three-dimensional. It encloses space and fills space. It can be geometric (e.g. cubes and cylinders), man-made, or free-form.

COLOR has three basic properties: HUE is the name of the color (e.g. red, blue, green), INTENSITY is the strength of the color (bright or dull), VALUE is the range of lightness to darkness.

TEXTURE refers to the “feel” of an object’s surface. It can be smooth, rough, soft, etc. Textures may be ACTUAL (able to be felt) or IMPLIED (suggested visually through the artist’s technique).

SPACE is defined and determined by shapes and forms. Positive space is enclosed by shapes and forms, while negative space exists around them.
Sources and Resources:


GREAT EXPECTATIONS
OCTOBER 19 – NOVEMBER 6

DISNEY AND CAMERON MACKINTOSH’S MARY POPPINS
NOVEMBER 26 – JANUARY 8

DISGRACED
JANUARY 25 – FEBRUARY 12

AIN’T MISBEHAVIN’
THE FATS WALLER MUSICAL SHOW
MARCH 1 – 26

HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE
APRIL 5 – 23

DEATHTRAP
MAY 10 – 28

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