

ACTIVE AUDIENCE GUIDE

THE BEST SUMMER EVER!

By **KEVIN KLING**

Directed by **STEVEN DIETZ**

**AN INTERVIEW WITH
PLAYWRIGHT
KEVIN KLING**

**HOW TO TALK TO
CHILDREN & YOUTH
ABOUT DISABILITY**



SEATTLE
CHILDREN'S
THEATRE

SYNOPSIS | THEATRE ETIQUETTE | VOCABULARY LIST | SUGGESTED READING

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THE BEST SUMMER EVER!

MAR 22 – APR 17 | RECOMMENDED FOR PATRONS 8 YEARS & OLDER

COURAGEOUS COMEDY

Summer means sleepaway camps, days with friends by the pool, and late nights gazing at the stars. For nine-year-old Maurice Abernathy Anderson, a significant loss and one little lie means his summer just got more complicated. Written and performed by nationally acclaimed storyteller, Kevin Kling, and featuring rousing sing-a-longs, *The Best Summer Ever!* joyfully explores the way childhood is measured by sights, sounds, feelings, and love.

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SYNOPSIS

This show is performed by Kevin Kling himself. Kevin enters and introduces himself to the audience. He points out that everyone has something that makes them different from others. Kevin, for example, has only four fingers on his left hand and his right arm doesn't move.

We then join Maurice, played by Kevin, on the last day of school. The bell rings. As everyone leaves, Maurice waits for his sister Emily to walk him home. He used to walk home with his brother, Marv, but one day they got into some trouble at a convenience store, so now Emily is tasked with providing supervision. Emily, annoyed that she had to wait for Maurice for so long, hastily tries to grab his hand to walk him across the street when she realizes she accidentally took the hand of a boy from her grade. In that moment, Maurice notices a change in Emily. He tells us that everyone in his family changed that summer, which is why it was the best summer ever.

The summer started with the funeral of Maurice's Uncle Alfie, which is held at their grandparent's farm. At the farm, Maurice talks with his grandpa. Maurice sees that chicken and tells him that Joyce stopped laying eggs, which means it won't be long before she becomes dinner. Fearing for her life, Maurice secretly takes Joyce home with him.

When the family arrives home, dad finds Joyce in the trunk. Maurice pleads with his dad to let him keep the chicken as a pet and his dad agrees as long as Maurice builds her a coop and promises to feed and take care of her.

Later that summer, Grandpa comes to visit. Maurice shows him the garden where he planted the seeds, but Grandpa sees that the garden is not growing well. He tells Maurice to leave out plates of food for the little people who live in the garden. If you don't leave out plates of food for the little people, Grandpa tells Maurice, the little people will cause mischief.

Grandpa tells Maurice a fairytale about a girl who once lied to her father and the consequences she faced. Maurice realizes that Grandpa knew he was lying about his love for farming. He promises never to lie to his grandpa again, and admits he's a terrible farmer. Grandpa agrees to help Maurice with his garden. Maurice now launches into the story of his sister Emily's worst day that summer. Emily was taking part in a car wash fundraiser for her marching band. Maurice is watching from across the way when he sees the boy Emily held hands with in the crosswalk earlier. Maurice yells to Emily pointing to the boy on the bike. Emily gets in the car she's washing and drives after the boy. While she's driving, she crashes into an ice cream truck, the back of which falls open and we discover Marv with armfuls of ice cream bars. All the children are in deep trouble.

It's the Fourth of July and Maurice is grounded. He is sequestered to watch the fireworks from the backyard with his grandpa. Grandpa thinks the fireworks look like flowers. Maurice starts to see the similarities. Then Grandpa points out some constellations and the two of them begin to make up their own constellations such as pizza and wiener dogs. Maurice enjoys the time with Grandpa and makes a wish on a wishing star. Grandpa tells Maurice, "One day I'll be up in those stars," but not yet, they both agree.

One day, Marv gets a letter telling him that he failed a class and needs to go to Norwegian Camp to make up the grade. Maurice misses Marv while Marv is gone and asks to go to Norwegian Camp, but his father takes him backyard camping instead.

While camping, Maurice asks Dad to tell him a scary story. Dad tells Maurice about the "Collector," a man who escaped from an asylum nearby. He loves the smell of bug spray, Dad tells Maurice, which frightens Maurice because he just put on some bug spray. The Collector, however, hates the smell of roasted marshmallows. Maurice runs into the house and gets some marshmallows, graham crackers, and chocolate, and that's how he learned to make s'mores.

A week later, the family receives a letter from Marv asking to be picked up from Norwegian Camp, which is followed the next day by another letter. The second letter tells how Marv rallied the other kids at Norwegian Camp to attempt to plunder items from other nearby camps. This proved to be quite difficult, however, and they returned to camp a little worse for the wear. Because of his role in leading this attempted revolt, Marv was being sent home.

Summer is almost over. One night, Maurice's parents go out and leave the kids with Grandpa. Maurice goes out to the backyard to spend some time with Joyce, when he sees one of Grandpa's tools lying in the grass unattended. It is very unlike Grandpa to leave tools out, so Maurice knows something is wrong. Maurice finds his Grandpa on the ground, clutching his chest and saying, "my heart, my heart!" The kids jump into action, piling into Grandpa's car. Emily drives, Maurice navigates, and Marv sits with Grandpa to calm him down. They get him to the emergency room and once he's being taken care of, the kids call their parents. The doctors tell Mom and Dad that the kids helped save Grandpa's life.

School begins again. Emily holds hands with the boy she chased in the car, Marv gets a letter from a friend at Norwegian Camp and decides he wants to go back next year, and Maurice sees that a bluebell has grown in his garden. The bluebell is the flower of Norway, which reminds Grandpa of his home. He tells Maurice he is a good farmer.

STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

The Best Summer Ever! touches on many themes and ideas. Here are a few we believe would make good **Discussion Topics**: family, storytelling, and adventure.

We believe that seeing the show and using our Active Audience Guide can help you address these **21st Century Skills**:

- Creative Thinking
- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Perseverance
- Growth Mindset

We also believe that seeing the show and using the AAG can help educators meet many of the **Washington State Learning Standards**. Below are some that might fit in well with certain articles or activities. Where more than one standard within a specific area applies, we selected a few examples. Multiple standards could apply to most of these articles and activities.

Standards are grouped by the AAG articles and activities they connect to. Descriptive text of chosen standards is on the following page.

ATTENDING A PERFORMANCE OF *THE BEST SUMMER EVER!*

ARTS

Theatre Arts | Anchor Standards 7–11

ARTISTS WITH DISABILITIES

Learn about the many artists and companies working to increase disability representation onstage and in the media.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading Standards for Informational Text | RI.1, RI.2, RI.4, RI.7

Writing Standards | W.7, W.8, W.9

AN INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN KLING; A WORD FROM OUR DESIGNERS

Explore the perspectives of theatre artists involved in the creation of *The Best Summer Ever!*

ARTS

Theatre Arts | Anchor Standards 7, 8, 11

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading Standards for Informational Text | RI.1, RI.2, RI.4, RI.7

DRAMA IN ACTION

ARTS

Theatre Arts | Anchor Standards 1–6

VOCABULARY LIST

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Language Standards | L.4, L.6

Reading Standards: Foundational Skills | RF.3

JUMP START

ARTS

Theatre Arts | Anchor Standards 1–6

Visual Arts | Anchor Standards 1–2

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Speaking and Listening Standards | SL.1, SL.4

Writing Standards | W.1, W.2, W.3

ACTIVITY PAGES

ARTS

Visual Arts | Anchor Standards 1, 2, 8

Writing Standards | W.3

WASHINGTON STATE K-12 LEARNING STANDARDS

ARTS

THEATRE ARTS

Anchor Standard 1 | Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2 | Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 3 | Refine and complete artistic work.

Anchor Standard 4 | Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Anchor Standard 5 | Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Anchor Standard 6 | Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

Anchor Standard 7 | Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8 | Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard 9 | Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Anchor Standard 10 | Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standard 11 | Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

VISUAL ARTS

Anchor Standard 1 | Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2 | Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

COMMON CORE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

LANGUAGE STANDARDS

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L.4 | Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on age appropriate level reading and content.

L.6 | Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases

READING STANDARDS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Phonics and Word Recognition

RF.3 | Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

READING STANDARDS FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Key Ideas and Details

RI.1 | With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RI.2 | With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

Craft and Structure

RI.4 | Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RI.7 | With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS

Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.1 | Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about age appropriate topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

SL.4 | Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

WRITING STANDARDS

Text Types and Purposes

W.1 | Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell the reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., My favorite book is...).

W.2 | Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what



they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

W.3 | Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.7 | Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

W.8 | With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

W.9 | Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

AUDIENCE MEMBER GUIDE

Experiencing theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allows the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. *We invite you to laugh when it is funny, cry when it is sad, gasp when it is shocking, but refrain from talking during the show, as it disturbs audience members and performers alike.*

HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL GUIDELINES ON HOW TO ENJOY THE PERFORMANCE:

Leave cell phones, tablets, hand held games, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home or turn them completely off.

Do not text during the performance. The light and the motion is very distracting to those around you, on stage, and the tech crew behind you.

Gum and food must stay in the lobby. Drinks are only allowed if they have a lid.

The lights dimming and going out signal the audience to quiet down and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

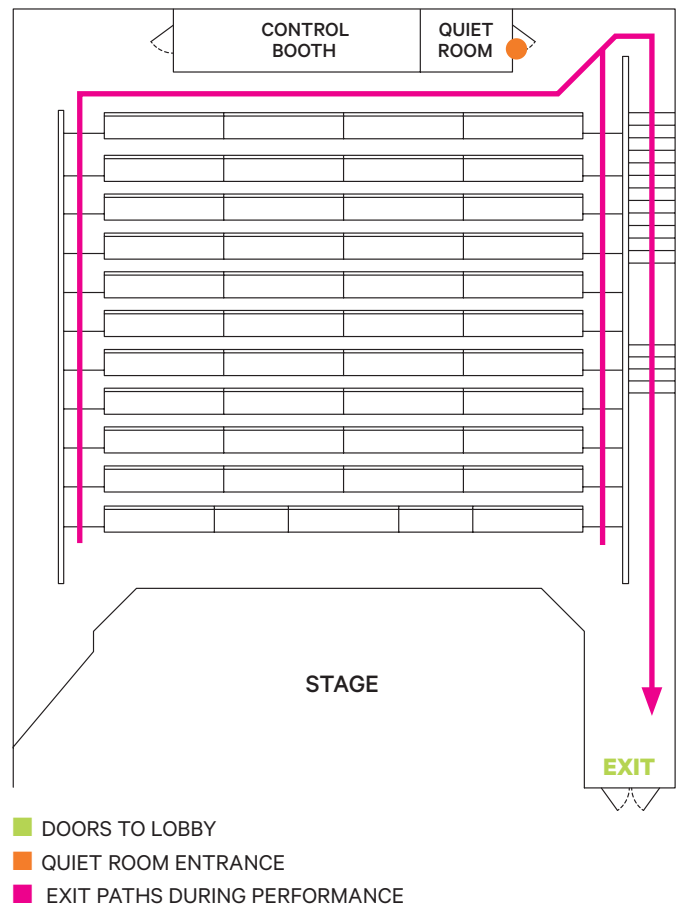
Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp — whatever the performance draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain in your seat during the play. Please use the restroom before or after the show, as well as during intermission.

During the curtain call remain in your seat and applaud because this is part of the performance too. The actors will come out on stage one more time to say thank you for your participation as an audience member.



THE EVE ALVORD THEATRE



Thank you being part of the SCT family. If you have any questions please visit our FAQ page at WWW.SCT.ORG/FAQ or contact us at hello@sct.org.

HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN & YOUTH ABOUT DISABILITY

The Best Summer Ever! Playwright and lead actor Kevin Kling is a beautiful, creative and funny storyteller and performer. While watching the play, students will likely notice he also has physical disabilities that impact the use of his arms. It is normal for students to notice disabilities and it is very likely that they will have questions about it.

Talking openly and honestly about disability with your children or the students in your class is a critical first step in living in a more inclusive community that celebrates and embraces diversity.

Here are 10 strategies you can use to talk to children about disability:

1. Embrace your child's curiosity & let children ask their questions.

Adults are often hesitant to talk about differences regarding how a person looks, sounds, communicates, or behaves with children. However, whether or not you talk about differences, children notice them. By avoiding children's questions, they are taught that it is a rude or taboo topic. When your child asks a question about someone with a disability, consider it an opportunity to talk about a new and interesting topic.

2. Be honest, direct and respectful.

Example 1: Imagine a child sees another child who uses a wheelchair or walker. They may ask, "Why can't she walk?" you could reply, "I am not sure why she uses a wheelchair and it is possible that she does also walk as well. We can go talk to her and ask her if she would like to tell us more about herself. Remember, she may not want to tell us about her wheelchair and that is okay. It is her body and she gets to decide what she wants to share."

Example 2: "What is that thing in his stomach?" a child may ask, in reference to another child's feeding tube. Instead of feeling uncomfortable or telling your child it is impolite to ask questions like that, you could reply in a matter-of-fact way, "This is Jack's feeding tube. Some people eat through their mouth like you do, and others eat through their stomach like Jack."

Example 3: In the case of the play, The Best Summer Ever! children may ask, "Why are Kevin's arms different lengths? Or, "What happened to his arms?" At the moment, you may not know the answer. That's okay. You can say that to your students. "I am not sure but after the show we can take some time to learn more about him." After doing research, you will learn that Kevin shares in his professional bio about his disabilities.

From Kevin Kling's Bio: "Kevin was born with a congenital birth defect — his left arm is about three-quarters the size of his right arm, and his left hand has no wrist or thumb. In 2001 Kevin was in a motorcycle accident and suffered brachial plexus injury (BPI). The brachial plexus nerves in his right arm were pulled completely out of their sockets. Currently, he has partial use of his left arm and cannot use his right arm at all."



This language is coming directly from Kevin so sharing his words back with your students is a safe way to ensure you are using language that he would feel comfortable with.

For younger students, you may decide to share just a part of his description of his disabilities.

You may simplify the language so it is developmentally appropriate and say something like, "Kevin was born with arms that were two different sizes. You can give other examples of differences between children to rein home the point that disability is part of the human experience "We are all unique. Isn't it interesting that no two people look the same?" With older students you may share more information and it can be framed as part of a bigger conversation about human diversity.

3. Avoid making assumptions and interpretations.

Whether you know the person your child is asking about or not, avoid adding your interpretation of how a person may feel about their disability or what caused it. You don't know what that person is feeling or experiencing if you haven't taken the time to get to know them.

4. Keep your explanations positive. For example, explain that hearing aids help others hear and wheelchairs help others move around, instead of using a negative connotation (he can't hear, she can't walk, etc.) Use the term "disability," and take the following terms out of your vocabulary when talking about or talking to people with disabilities. Don't use the terms "handicapped," "differently-abled," or "special needs" or "retarded" as these terms frame disability as a negative thing and thus further perpetuate the exclusion, isolation, and negative stigma of people with disabilities.

5. Lead by example.

Children look to adults for guidance on how to act, especially in a new or unfamiliar setting. If you stare, point, quietly move to the other side of the street when interacting with someone with a disability your kid will notice. Similarly, if you whisper about someone, talk down to, or raise your voice high like you would a little child when talking to someone with a disability, your child will internalize those behaviors and knee-jerk reactions. Instead, model inclusive and respectful language.

6. Prepare for tough questions and avoid shushing their questions.

It is not uncommon for children to ask questions like, “What’s wrong with that girl?” When an adult hears this, they often try to shush their children. They are embarrassed that their child said something rude and potentially hurtful to another person. However, it is key to remember that children are not trying to be rude, they are trying to make sense of what they are seeing. A question like that, however, can be damaging if not addressed in an appropriate way. Explain to your children that there is nothing wrong with people with disabilities. Explain that a child may have trouble talking or difficulty in a group situation but that doesn’t mean there’s something “wrong” with them.

7. Talk about human diversity (and neuro-diversity) with your children.

We are all different in some way and that we all do things every day to adjust to our unique circumstances. For example, someone who wears glasses uses them to correct blurry vision, just as someone who is non-verbal may use an assistive device like an iPad to communicate. None of these things are “wrong” they are just different ways of being in the world. Children use the word “wrong” because they have been socialized by adults and society’s attitudes about what is considered “normal” versus “abnormal”. We can expand the notion of “normal” by talking about neurodiversity with children and talking about how ALL body types, ways of moving, communicating, thinking, and behaving are normal and healthy.

9. Learn about disabilities together.

As children get older they are able to ask more complex questions and are hoping to get more complex responses. Take your kid’s questions as opportunities to learn about different disabilities together. What do you know about Downs Syndrome? Cerebral Palsy? Sensory Processing Disorder? If your child asks about one of these and you don’t feel prepared to answer your child’s question at the moment you can always say, “ I’m not sure. Let’s learn more about it together.”

10. Facilitate conversation.

No matter the age, social interaction with children and teens stems from having shared experiences together. Adults can help children with and without disabilities talk to each other, to help them find common ground, understand different forms of communication, or help to slow down a conversation if children need more time to process or to help the children really hear what the other said.

8. Emphasize similarities and shared interests.

Avoid focusing solely on differences, doing so sends the message that people with disabilities are inherently different from other children. Instead, emphasize similarities. ALL children are children first and foremost and everyone wants the same things- to have friends, to play, to be loved, to laugh, feel included, and to participate in activities together with their friends and family.

Using the strategies to guide you, brainstorm how you might reply to the following questions children may ask about another person or child’s disability:

Is he really 5? This is in reference to a child with cerebral palsy in an inclusive preschool class who has limited mobility and verbal communication.

Why can’t she walk?

Can he talk? Will he ever talk?

What’s that thing? (This could be in reference to a tracheostomy tube, a g-tube, a ventilator, or orthotics).

What’s that thing? (This could be in reference to a tracheostomy tube, a g-tube, a ventilator, or orthotics).

Why does she make those sounds?

Why does she always do that? (in reference to self-stimulating behaviors)

What is that in her stomach? (in reference to a g-tube)

Why does he eat that way?

Pause & Reflect:

What did you learn about your comfort level talking to children about disability? Did it help you to brainstorm responses to tough questions?

About the PlayGarden:

The Seattle Children’s PlayGarden is a 1-acre fully fenced garden in the heart of Seattle. Our mission is to provide children of all abilities a safe, accessible and adventurous place to play.

This resource is part of the Seattle Children’s PlayGarden free, online inclusion learning hub. The learning hub is a place where people in the community such as parents or other youth-care providers can come and learn how to end the stigma of disability and increase the meaningful inclusion of children, youth and adults with disabilities in all parts of our community. We invite you to visit the PlayGarden’s Inclusion Learning Hub to continue to learn more about disability, inclusion, and belonging.

AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT

Kevin Kling

CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE IDEA OF BEST SUMMER EVER? HOW DID IT ARRIVE?

My grandparents. My grandfather is my hero. He was strong and kind and he laughed a lot. He was also a farmer so I always wanted to be a farmer. In some ways I am a farmer but instead of soy beans and corn I grow stories. They start with a seed, an idea, and with care, and a bit of luck, they grow. At some point they say "Ok, I'm ready for the market."

WHEN YOU SIT DOWN TO MAKE A NEW PLAY OR STORY DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE CAPABLE OF?

This is a great question. I will sit down and write a story, and then memorize it. The first time I tell it, with the help of the audience, the story will say "this is what I'm really about." That's when I have to listen, listen to my own story. Then I'll rewrite it, maybe add or take away characters, expand sections where people need more explanation, always trying to find the very best version, the most truthful and entertaining way to tell it. I have to tell a story many times before I'm happy with the way it sounds.

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT REMINDER WHEN STORYTELLING GETS DIFFICULT?

I want storytellers to know that audience is really on your side, they want to have a good time, go on an adventure, laugh, be frightened, and safe. We all want a story to be good.

DID YOU WRITE AS A CHILD? IF SO, WHAT DID YOU WRITE ABOUT? WHAT CAPTURED YOUR ATTENTION OR SPIRIT?

Yes, I wrote a bit but most of all I heard stories. I still would rather hear a story than tell one. There is nothing like laughing with my friends or being moved by another person's experience, or learning a new way to look at something.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE AUDIENCES BRING TO THE PLAY?

As always, I hope my stories make you think of your own life. When did you do something you weren't supposed to do, go somewhere forbidden, or found a new friend in unexpected places. Bring your own life!



**THERE IS NOTHING LIKE LAUGHING
WITH MY FRIENDS OR BEING MOVED
BY ANOTHER PERSON'S EXPERIENCE,
OR LEARNING A NEW WAY TO LOOK
AT SOMETHING.**

WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST DREAM FOR THE PLAY?

This is my dream for the play. To get to perform it for you, for us to go on a journey together and then especially to hear your stories. Stories are what connect us, to find out how we are the same and learn from our differences. I truly hope it reminds people of their own families and to remember stories from your own life. ■

SUGGESTED READING

A CAMPING SPREE WITH MR. MAGEE

by Chris Van Dusen

CAMP REX

by Molly Idle

SECRETS OF THE CICADA SUMMER

by Andrea Beaty

TORTILLA SUN

by Jennifer Cervantes

GOLDFISH ON LOCATION

by Sally Lloyd-Jones

***EVERYTHING YOU NEED
FOR A TREEHOUSE***

by Carter Higgins

HOOKED

by Tommy Greenwald

THE GOLDEN GLOW

by Benjamin Flouw



The Seattle Public Library

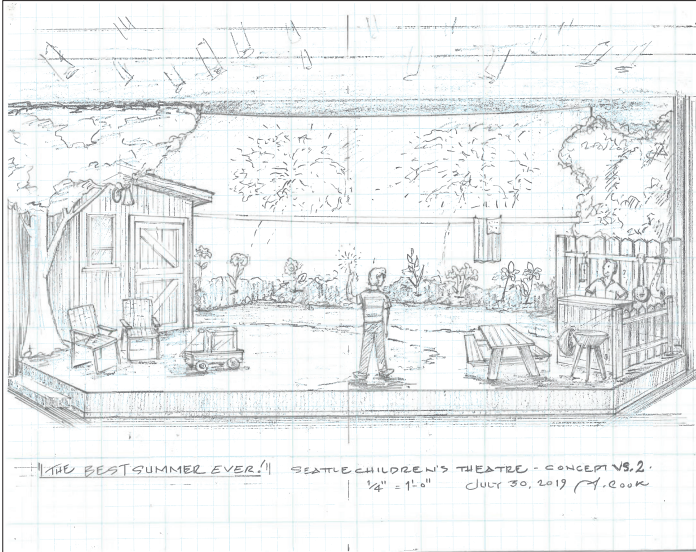


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A WORD FROM OUR DESIGNERS



Above: Preliminary sketch of the scenic design © Jeffrey Cook

As Kevin Kling tells his stories in *The Best Summer Ever!*, I will be on stage with him playing live musical accompaniment. There are over a dozen musical instruments that I will play during the show. We are trying to figure out unique ways to introduce each instrument. For example, what looks like a charcoal cooking grill turns out to be a steel drum. An accordion might roll in on a little red wagon. And many of the instruments will be discovered hanging inside Grampa's tool shed. The music in the show includes summer camp songs, Norwegian folk music, and musical themes which help illustrate certain characters in the show. I have been listening to orchestral music such as *Peter and the Wolf* and *The Carnival of the Animals* in order to get melodic ideas. I have also been inspired by my own family; my dad, who taught me to play the clarinet, and my grandpa, who played the piano.

ROBERTSON WITMER, sound designer & composer



Above: Scenic design scale model © Jeffrey Cook

The Best Summer Ever! is a play where the set could be almost anything—no specifics were given in the script for how it should look.

As the set designer, I worked with the director, Steven, and the production team to envision this environment for our stage. We viewed photos of summer when we were kids, how our world looked and the types of objects we had. We decided that the set should represent the outdoors, like a backyard, with trees and grass and objects that encourage outside activities. We also wanted to have some kind of a building that things could be stored in, and leave room for our musician and his piano. From there, it was kind of filling in the blanks. The director didn't want the set to look too realistic; this story is more about memories and the imagination of the storyteller, Kevin, so when you look at the set you will see that things are "representational" rather than "actual." There are also some fun little art pieces that come and go throughout the show to help illustrate the stories being told, but you'll have to see it to find out what those are!

JEFFREY COOK, scenic designer

In designing the costumes for *The Best Summer Ever!*, we were creating a look that allows Kevin Kling to move seamlessly between being a young person and being an adult as he tells the story. Research was a great deal of fun and included looking at the production team's photos from summer when they were kids, including my own childhood spent on my grandparents' farm in the Midwest. I also researched other candid photos from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s—trying to hone in on details that felt timeless and grounded in reality while also feeling vintage and nostalgic. Creating this nostalgia involved care in choosing specific patterns, colors and details found in our research—such as using the same style of hat for Maurice's grandpa that Kevin's own grandpa wore, finding a vintage Minnesota Twins cap and my favorite—black tube socks with colored tennis shoes—which seemed to show up in all the photos of boys in the 1970s. Designing this show reminded me that there is a great deal of thought put into the details of even the simplest of costumes.

SARAH BURCH GORDON, costume designer

Below: ICEE concept illustration © Jeffrey Cook

Upper Right: Costume design for Kevin Kling © Sarah Gordon

Bottom Right: Costume design for Rob Witmer © Sarah Gordon



DRAMA IN ACTION



EXERCISE: Story-Telling Jamboree

GRADES: Second and up

TIME: 15 minutes

SET-UP: Works best in an open space

SUPPLIES: None

In *The Best Summer Ever!*, Kevin shares a lot of stories about family and what it's like to grow up. Each mini-tale within the play has a clear beginning, middle, and end—vital aspects to successful storytelling. Music, animation, and pictures also play a large part in helping Kevin tell his stories. In this exercise, students will use their bodies to create the beginning, middle, and end of original stories.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Have students move around the room like they would on a normal day. Explain that this is actor neutral. Prompt the students to imagine they are on a camping trip. Tell them to imagine what that place looks like, making sure to be as specific as possible. Explain that when you clap your hands twice, they are to freeze in a position that would help tell an audience where they are and who they might be. Talk about some the things you observe about the frozen students (I see some low to the ground bodies; I see some happy faces; etc...). Have the students come to life for 10 seconds to explore what their character would say. Clap again to freeze.

Now introduce a problem, this is the middle of their story. Perhaps a bear has stolen all the food, maybe the tent is leaking. How does this change their body and face? Come to life for 10 seconds. Clap again to freeze. Finally, explain that everyone has found a solution to the problem! This is their ending. Come to life for 10 seconds. Freeze one final time and find a partner to share stories!

Repeat the process with two or three other environments, an additional problem, and a solution. If students seem ready, come up with the ideas together! Some examples could be:

- A car wash where no cars are showing up
- A farm where the chickens have escaped from the coop
- A summer camp where some other kids are being mean to you

VARIATION:

After trying one example, you can split students into small groups of three or four. They can then come up with their own environment and three part story together.

Designate a specific “stage” space. Come up with a beginning, middle, and end of a story all together. Invite each student up one by one to create the frozen environment. Encourage them to add on to other things they see, rather than adding something entirely new. Once everyone is on stage, switch to the middle, then the end, telling the story as one cohesive team.

Bring the SCT experience back to your classroom! Expand your experience of watching *The Best Summer Ever!* with a Mainstage Season Workshop all about the production. Engage your students’ bodies, voices and imaginations while deepening their knowledge about the themes, characters, historical context and production elements of the play. Mainstage Season Workshops can occur either before or after seeing the play, and can be held at SCT or at your location. To learn more about our community engagement programming and to reserve a workshop for your class, contact educationoutreach@sct.org!

JUMP START

IDEAS FOR THINGS TO DO, WONDER ABOUT, TALK ABOUT, OR WRITE ABOUT BEFORE OR AFTER YOU SEE *THE BEST SUMMER EVER!*.

Write about a summer that has been important to you. What did you do? Who was with you?

Draw a picture of Joyce the Chicken.

Tell the story of the play from Marv's point of view.

Go or look outside and see if you can name three different flowers.

The set design of the play is meant to look like a backyard. Draw a picture of your ideal backyard.

What part did Maurice's family play in helping him that summer? How does your own family help you?

Write a letter to someone who has played an important part in your life thanking them for what they did.

Draw a picture of the night sky. Make up your own constellations and their origin stories.

Think of your favorite song about summer. Sing it while you are traveling from place to place.

What happens when a person is dishonest? How was Maurice dishonest with Grandpa?

The play uses a lot of surprise instruments. Create your own surprise instrument.

THE BEST SUMMER EVER! VOCABULARY

APTITUDE (n) a natural ability

*She had an **aptitude** for swimming.*

DISREGARD (v) pay no attention; ignore

*He **disregarded** his mother's advice.*

FAIRWAY (n) part of a golf course between the tee and corresponding hole where the grass is kept short

*A curious squirrel ran across the **fairway**.*

IDENTICAL (adj) similar in every detail; exactly alike

*The four children wore **identical** blue scarves.*

LAUREATE (n) a person who is honored for a creative award

*The Poet **Laureate** of the United States gave a rousing talk at the event.*

MOSQUITO (n) a slender, long legged fly with aquatic larvae

*The pesky **mosquito** bit me on my leg.*

ORDINANCE (n) a piece of legislation or rule enacted by a public authority

*The city council signed a noise **ordinance** so that its residents could enjoy quiet evenings.*

UNDISCLOSED (adj) not revealed or made known publically

*The home was bought for an **undisclosed** amount of money.*

UNSTRUCTURED (adj) without formal organization

*Late in the day, the teacher offered **unstructured** play time for the students.*

THE BEST SUMMER EVER! ACTIVITIES

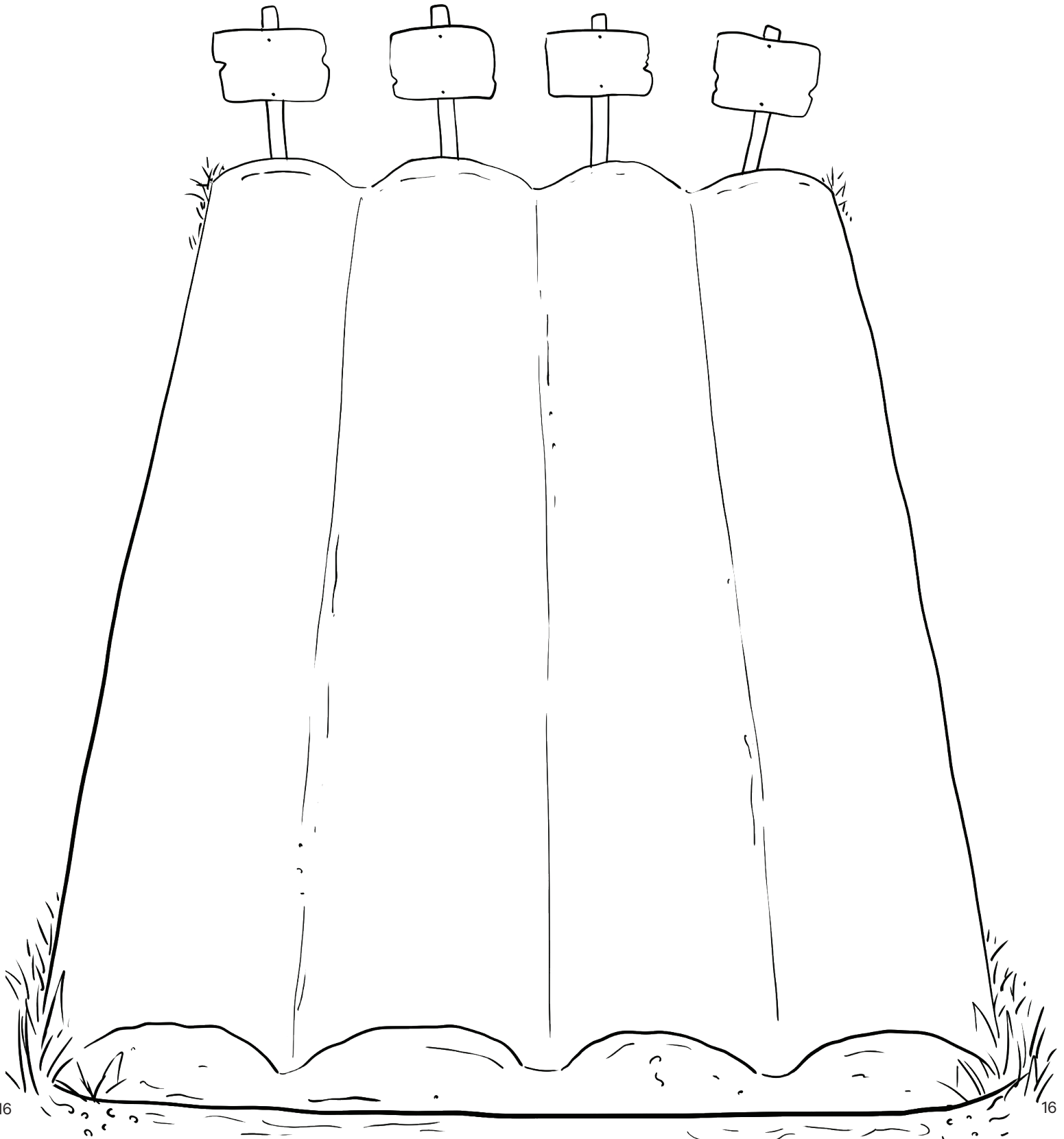
WRITE ABOUT YOUR BEST SUMMER EVER (REAL OR IMAGINARY)!

TITLE:

THE BEST SUMMER EVER!

ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

IF YOU COULD GROW YOUR OWN GARDEN (OR IF YOU DO HAVE A GARDEN) WHAT WOULD YOU GROW IN IT? DRAW WHAT YOU WOULD GROW IN THE GARDEN BELOW!



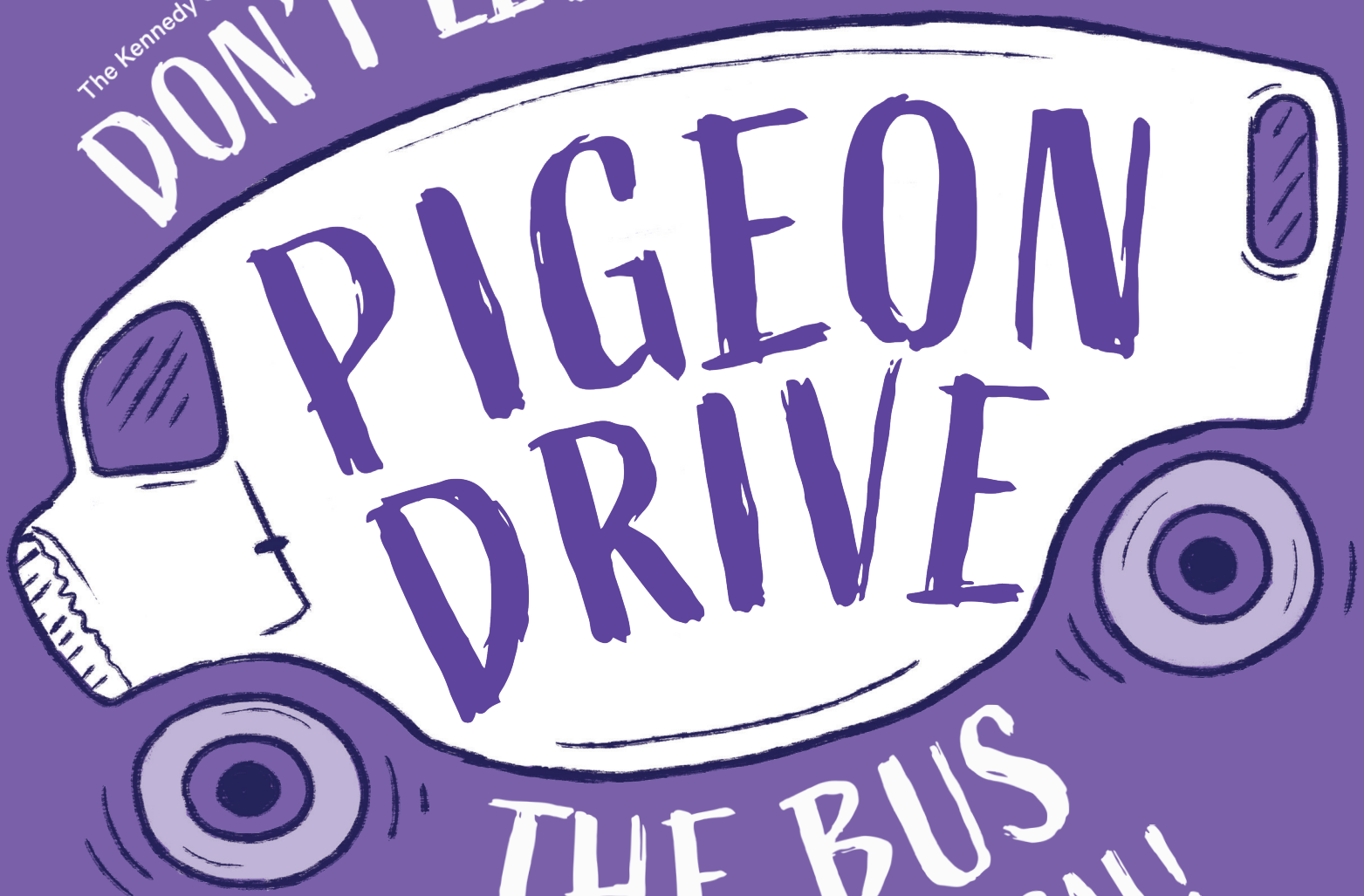
NEXT UP

TICKETS AT WWW.SCT.ORG



The Kennedy Center Theater for Young Audiences on Tour Presents

**APR 5 -
MAY 22**



**THE BUS
:THE MUSICAL!**

Based on the books by **Mo Willems**
By **Mo Willems & Tom Warburton**
Lyrics by **Mo Willems**
Music by **Deborah Wicks La Puma**

