

MI CASA THEATRE'S WOLF CHILD

Curriculum Guide for Grades 3-8



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About Mi Casa

Mi Casa has been making work based out of Ottawa since 2009. Headed by Emily Pearlman and Nicolas DiGaetano, we make performances that mix theatre and music with a healthy dose of hanging out with the audience.

Blending experience in physically devised work rooted in cabaret, circus and vaudeville with contemporary approaches to interdisciplinary collaboration, Mi Casa creates new work out of disparate vocabularies. Throughout our process, play, listening, bad jokes, impulse, and wonder remain central values.

- ¥ We reframe the ordinary to expose the magical qualities of the mundane and texture the tragic with surprise and whimsy.
- ¥ We make the Process evident in the Performance by embracing the pleasure of collaborative problem-solving, and extending that joy to the audience.
- ¥ We acknowledge that Spectators and Performers are all sharing the same sensory space.
- ¥ We unravel the secret life of lost and discarded objects by giving them new functions in a theatrical context.
- ¥ We give audiences the agency to understand not just through their heads, but through their bones, their bellies and their own experiences.

Mi Casa's shows include *Inclement Weather* – a solo clown show that can be performed in any language; *Countries Shaped Like Stars* – a site-adaptive fairy tale for adults and precocious children (Kids fest 2013); *REVISED from the Belly of a Whale* – a reconciliation concert with stories; and *Collapsible* – a piece co-created with professional actors and young people, and then performed in the nooks and crannies of an old house. They have performed in over 60 venues in 17 cities across Canada and into New Mexico.

"Gently unhinges language and logic, so that we can play in the spaces between words and bathe in the emotions that underlie reason. Another way of saying this is that Countries Shaped Like Stars makes you feel as openhearted and happy as a kid"
– Colin Thomas, The Georgia Straight

"If everyone could have as much fun as Emily Pearlman and Nicolas Di Gaetano so evidently do while performing, the world would be a much better place... simply magical to watch."

- Holly Gordon, The Wig

About *WOLF CHILD*

THINGS THE KIDS SHOULD KNOW

This is a play about wolves who have been captured and brought to school. Probably that is all anyone should know for an optimal viewing experience, however, teachers may also be interested in the more extensive summary below.

SUMMARY FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T MIND SPOILERS

In *WOLF CHILD*, the audience is cast as wolves and brought to be civilized in a classroom by two stern but hapless educators who are desperately trying to suppress the fact that they too, were once wolves.

The educators know how to play at being teachers, but in actuality, they are urgently trying to impart as much knowledge as possible, because shortly, the higher-ups at The Glorious Pedagogicum will arrive and decide who of their charges are IN and will succeed, and who are OUT...

But there is something about this specific class that makes the educators yearn for a different option. So with the help of the young wolves, the educators find their own wildness, and stage a great escape with the audiences through an obstacle course, through the secret corridors of the performance venue, and into new possibility.

Mixing theatrical New Wave synth pop, an imposing art-deco aesthetic and participatory-play, *WOLF CHILD* is a shared experiential journey with a true performance role for audience

This is a show about wildness, for young people age 8+

Wolf Child was commissioned for the Ottawa International Children's Festival and premiered May 2015.

Created, performed and composed by Nicolas Di Gaetano and Emily Pearlman

Directed and dramaturged by Karin Randoja

Stage and production management by Madeleine Boyes-Manseau

Costume Design by Vanessa Imeson

Sound Design by AL Connors

Video and Logo Design by Pascal Huot

Things to know in advance

AN ESCAPE

Don't tell your students, but at the end of the show, we stage an escape from the theatre. We tell everyone to stay with their wolf pack leaders (their teachers) and we have a very clear path to take, but we need your assistance when it comes to getting them up and moving quickly. The escape path is fully accessible, but please let us know in advance if any of your students have mobility concerns.

"EARS" AN IDEA!

All the audience members are cast as wolves, so if they show up wearing any wolf gear, it would be extra-exciting. If you are looking for fun activities for your kids (especially in the younger grades), you could follow these patterns and get them to make ears that they could wear to the show. They could personalize them with their wolf name, or draw pictures of them doing their wolf skills, or anything else that would help with their wolf identity.

Ears like this —> can be easily made from recycled cardboards and then attached to a cardboard or fabric headband with staples. This pattern was reprinted from *Sculpture Vultures* with permission from the authors Susan Jolliffe and Jane Ellens.

SHAPED EARS

Shape ears by cutting strips of cardboard and then fold, bend, and curl them. If you are going to decorate with paper later, try not to make them too detailed.



SHAPED EARS

One-Cut Kitty Ears

1. Cut two identical pieces of cardboard in the shape of irons.



2. Make a cut at least 5 cm (2 in.) up the centre (it has to be this long to get the stapler through).



3. Slide the two sides of this cut over each other and staple.



Vocabulary and Language

In the play, we use made-up or outdated words so that we can create a world that is different than ours. These things might be useful to discuss pre-show.

Illustrious Representatives of the Glorious Pedagogicum: In this world, anyone who works for the school system (The Glorious Pedagogicum) is an illustrious representative.

- What does it mean to be “a representative”? Are you a representative of your family? Your classroom? Your neighbourhood? Your country?

Pupil: This word historically meant an orphan who is a minor and under the protection of the state, but now refers to a student under the supervision of a teacher.

- What are the different things you could call someone who was learning something? What would you like to be called? (student, pupil, scholar, disciple, novice, observer, learner, neophyte, beginner, trainee)

Diorama: A model representing a scene with three-dimensional figures, either in miniature or as a large-scale museum exhibit.

- In the play, the characters talk about a “Living Diorama.” What do you think that might be?

Mnemonic: A device such as a pattern of letters, ideas, or associations that assists in remembering something.

- In the play, the characters use songs, actions, slogans and rhymes to try and help their students remember things such as “the Moon Drill.” We rely a lot on computers to remember information, but can you make up a mnemonic to help you remember something? What about a mnemonic for geographic places or word definitions?

Doctrina, Vigilantes, In Aeternum: This is the Latin motto for the Glorious Pedagogicum. It means Teaching. Watching. Forever. A motto is a short sentence or phrase chosen to encapsulate the beliefs or ideals guiding an individual, family, or institution. We used latindictionary.net to come up with a translation of these three words.

- If you had a Latin motto, what three words would you use to encapsulate your guiding beliefs or ideals?

Questions before the show

The play is called *Wolf Child*; what do you think it will be about?

In this play, wolves are brought into a school to be taught to be like humans. What sort of problems might this cause? How could it be good? How are we different from wolves and how are we the same?

- WRITING EXERCISE

Finish the sentence "If I was a wolf..." Think about what you would be concerned with, what would you spend your time doing, what would be your biggest fear or love?

The first thing you will see in the play is the set up of the room before the performers arrive. What do you think the play will be about based on what you observe in the room?

Here are some performance rooms we have set up. What do you think these pieces were about? What parts get you excited or scared? What do you hope will happen?



Questions after the show

What were the moments that scared you, or made you laugh and why?

What were the objects in the play and how were they used in ways that you expected or ways you did not expect?

Did you suspect that the teachers were once wolves? Why or why not?

Why do you think the teachers hid the fact that they were wolves?

Were they good at teaching you music and dance-grammar? Why or why not?

Thematic follow-up questions

WILDNESS

What do you see as the difference between kids and adults?

What do you think you have to learn from your parents?

What do you think they could learn from you?

IDENTITY

What is your favourite thing about you? What makes you, you?

How would you feel if someone took that away from you?

Have you ever felt that someone was trying to make you be someone you are not?

Historically, how do people exercise power by removing elements of your identity?

SCHOOL AND TEACHING

How do people learn in different settings?

How do you feel you learn best?

If you had to teach someone a simple task – let's say a dance move – how would you do it?

Language Activities

DUDE! WHAT'S MY ACRONYM?

In the play, we name the pupils DUDES, which is an acronym for "Dutiful Uprights Doing Exceptional Service."

Have the students choose a name for their class, and then turn it into an acronym by brainstorming what it could stand for.

IMAGINARY INVENTIONS

Mi Casa likes to imagine inventions and then have the audience decide what the inventions do. This allows the audience to have some of the fun in imagining rather than having us do all the work. Some of our inventions have included items you would find at a market like strawberry binoculars and cumin-scented moustaches, or mysterious punishments like the Cerulean Mason Jar and the Brigantine Closet. What do you think these things are?

1. Make a list of ten of your favourite things.
2. Label each thing 1-10.
3. Combine your list with a partner's list and see what you come up with.
Your #1 Typewriter + their #1 Cactus =
 - a. Typewriter Cactus – a cactus that leaves words on your skin rather than scratches?
 - b. Or Cactus Typewriters – a typewriter that prevents people from stealing your writing ideas?
4. Go through and explore different combinations. When you find a match that makes you giggle or dream, write a short haiku about what it does. Or draw a picture of it. Or write a jingle for it and try to sell it on TV.

Interpreting Theatrical Images

There are a lot of signs and symbols in the play. How do we understand what things mean if there are no words?

READING PICTURES

1. Look at the logo for the Glorious Pedagogicum.
2. What is your initial reaction to it? What do you think it means? Brainstorm possibilities
3. Describe it in as much detail as possible using ONLY objective language (ie what objects are depicted, how they are depicted in relationship to one another, what sort of shapes, colour and line are used)
4. How do you think the makers of this logo WANT you to interpret these symbols? WHY?
5. How is your gut impulse about an image supported by carefully studying it?
6. GO FURTHER: Look at an advertisement or poster and figure out what they want you to think. How is it related to the truth?



Interpreting Theatrical Images

READING OBJECTS

In our living diorama we use apples to represent the wolves. Why not just little wolf figures? What did you see the teachers doing to the apples? How does that relate to the story?

1. Chose an object and brainstorm all the words associated with that object, and all the things that object does. (An apple is red, from nature, healthy, round, edible, rots, delicate, has seeds in it, you can stick things in it, it can be plucked from a tree etc)
2. What sort of person might that object be?
3. Create a scene where one person interviews the object, and another answers questions as if that object was a person.

READING BODIES

In the show both of the characters are wolves, but we see them as humans. The actors watched a lot of videos of wolves to observe how they moved and used that when they were developing their characters.

What sort of wolf movements did you see?

(Sniffing, running in circles when in captivity, sensing, snapping, tentative steps and then pouncing?)

1. Choose an animal to study. Observe how their limbs move, how they walk, sleep, relax, eat, what do they do when they are scared, happy or playing?
2. Try and become that animal using your body. See if your classmates can identify what sort of animal you are imitating.
3. After you have the animal part down, how can you keep some of those body movements while still looking like a human?

Multi-Sensory Activities

Wolves rely greatly on their senses.

They can smell things that are 1.75 miles and use their sense of smell to find their pack, prey and enemies.

They have a great sense of pitch – they don't want to get lost in a howling pack, so everyone picks a different note.

They can hear things from 6 miles away in the forest, or 10 miles in the open.

What sense do you rely on most? How would you go through the world differently if one sense was stronger than another?

How do we use our senses to find our way home?

We have the ability to get around using more than just google maps and i-phone apps, but we need to practice and develop our skills in multi-sensory observation.

WRITING EXERCISE

Describe a room or a place or a person using every sense except sight.

We often lack vocabulary to talk about the other senses, because they are so subjective – how do we describe smells for example?

MAPPING EXERCISE

1. Write out or draw your route home from school.

There will be things missing. That is ok.

2. Each time you take that route after, observe and take notes using a different sense.

3. Create a multi-sensory map and see if someone can follow it.

“Walk on the crunchy gravel until you get to the smell of cherry blossoms. Turn to the traffic noise and stop when the smoke fumes get in your eyes.”

IDENTIFYING PEOPLE THROUGH TOUCH

Close your eyes and walk slowly around a room

When you find a person, reach out and explore their hands with your hands. No talking. Do you know who they are based on what they feel like and how they move?