

**SOUTH COAST REPERTORY
TEACHER'S GUIDE**

to the

**2007-08 Theatre for Young Audiences Production
of**



Book and Lyrics by **Doug Cooney**
Music by **David O**

Directed by Stefan Novinski

Honorary Producer
EMULEX

Prepared by Linda Sullivan Baity, PhD
TYA Coordinator

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PART I: THE PLAY

Characters

T-Rex	a scrappy 9-year-old imaginary boy
Sam	T-Rex's real-kid friend, aged 9
Mickey	a nasty 9-year-old boy, real
Smirk	his 8 henchman, real
Rachel a/k/a Rocky	a ro-year-old wdy real-girl, aged 9
Little Debbie	the oldest living imaginary friend
Thumb	a digit
Blankie	the remains of a childhood blanket
Shadow	a lonely crayon
Tullabelle & Lullabelle	slightly Goth imaginary twins

Settings

The playground and inside the imagination

Song List

“Laugh Out Loud”	Ensemble
“This Is New”	T-Rex, Sam
“Imagine Me”	Rachel, T-Rex, Thumb, Blankie
“Outta Here”	T-Rex, Rocky, Aliens
“Crayon Song”	Ensemble
“The Princess Song”	Lullabelle, Tullabelle, Sam
“Crayon Song” (reprise)	Ensemble
“Imagine Me” (reprise)	T-Rex
“Laugh Out Loud” (reprise)	Ensemble

Synopsis

Our story begins as 9-year-old Sam is headed for third grade and anxious to give up all things “baby.” This includes T-Rex, the imaginary friend he made up when he was five and really into dinosaurs. At first, T-Rex refuses to accept that he’s only make-believe. “If I was imaginary, I think I’d know it,” he insists. When Sam and T-Rex both stop believing in each other at the same time, weird things start to happen. Sam disappears and T-Rex finds himself face-to-face with none other than Little Debbie, the world’s oldest—and bossiest—imaginary friend. Debbie explains that the only way T-Rex can find Sam again is to first attach himself to a new real kid. Enter Rachel, a feisty braniac with no imagination of her own. T-Rex takes Rachel on a rambunctious ride to places she could never in a million years dream up for herself, encountering alligators on the Amazon, monkeys in Africa, penguins at the South Pole, and aliens on the Moon. But T-Rex only wants to find Sam again, and once he does, the battle begins to see who gets to be best friends forever.

The Writers

DOUG COONEY is a playwright based in Los Angeles. His play *The Final Tour* was selected for a workshop at the Sundance Theater Lab in 2003. *The Legend of Alex* and *The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip* (both written with David O) premiered at the Mark Taper Forum’s P.L.A.Y. and toured Los Angeles County. Cooney’s other work for the stage has been produced at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center Institute, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Cleveland Playhouse, Dance Theatre Workshop, the International Very Special Arts Festival, and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, among others. He has also published several works of children’s literature, including *The Beloved Dearly*, *I Know Who Likes You*, and *Hugo and Fritz*, as well as *Nobody’s Perfect* and *Leading Ladies* with Marlee Matlin. Read more @ <http://www.dougcooney.com/bio.htm>

DAVID O is an award-winning composer, performer, and musical director. His work has been featured at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Kennedy Center, Mark Taper Forum and the Hollywood Bowl, as well as other venues around the U.S. He has been a featured pianist in concerts with the Los Angeles Master Chorale, including “The New Broadway” and “Toon Tunes,” for which he created Princess Dreams, a medley of songs from Disney movies. Many Los Angeles area children and their parents know David as “The Professor” for his performances in Summersounds at the Hollywood Bowl, produced by the LA Philharmonic. In addition to *The Very Persistent*

Gappers of Fripp and *The Legend of Alex*, both written with Doug Cooney, his original musicals include *Atalanta*, *Focus Today*, *Duel*, and *The Trial of Persephone*. He is the creator of “Voices Within,” an educational outreach program of the LA Master Chorale, through which children are taught collaborative skills while writing songs together. Read more @ http://www.mastersingers.org/pages/meet/featured_performers/

PART II: IN THE CLASSROOM

(Please note: The specific English-Language Arts or Visual and Performing Arts content standards addressed by many of these questions and activities are indicated in parentheses.)

Before the Show : Read About It! Think About It!

1. Discuss the differences between realism and fantasy.
2. Retell or improvise some popular fantasy stories from children’s literature employing a number of different vocal tones and attitudes to explore multiple possibilities in a live performance. (*Theatre 1.3, 2.2*)
3. Identify the main events of plot, their causes, and their effect on future actions. (*Reading 3.2*)
4. Discuss the characters and their contributions to the action. (*Theatre 1.2, Reading 3.3*) Demonstrate emotional traits of characters through movement and gesture. (*Theatre 2.1*)
5. Examine the structural differences between fiction and drama. (*Theatre 1.1, Reading 3.1*)
6. Make predictions about the play based on information in Part I about Characters, Settings, Song List and Synopsis. (*Reading 2.3, Theatre 1.1*) For example: How will these characters and settings appear onstage at SCR? What will the costumes, lighting and props look like? What will the music and special effects sound like?
7. Have you ever had an imaginary friend? How old were you when you first imagined your friend? Do you remember the last time you “saw” your imaginary friend?
8. Locate the Amazon River, Antarctica and the Grand Canyon on a map. Have you ever been to any of these places? How do you imagine they would look, sound & smell?
9. What is your favorite color? If you could make up a crayon color, what would it be?
10. Has anyone ever called you a baby? How did that make you feel?
11. Have you ever heard the word “antidisestablishmentarianism”? What do you think it means?
12. Who is Little Debbie?
13. Do you like broccoli?
14. What do you like to do during recess?
15. If you were asked to design a costume for a Moon Alien, what would it look like?

After the Show: Talk About It! Write About It!

1. How was the play different from the way you predicted it would be? (*Reading 2.3, Listening and Speaking 1.0, 2.0*)

2. Use knowledge of word origins, root words and common affixes to determine the meaning of the following vocabulary words found in the dialogue and song lyrics. (*Reading 1.0*)

chuckle	complain	complicated	condition
convincing	creative	cuddly	curtsy
daydream	disappear	disconnected	dinosaur
embarrassing	extinct	fizzle	focus
gazillion	hassle	imaginary	incredible
information	instruction	opinion	petticoat
popular	professional	rouge	security
spoilsport	swap	tiara	undependable

3. Use the vocabulary of theatre (Part IV) to describe the performance. (*Theatre 1.1, 4.1, 4.3*) How did the actors look (costumes, makeup, movement)? How did the stage look (scenery, lighting, props)? (*VA 3.1, 4.1*) How did the play sound (music, singing, special effects)? (*Music 4.1, 4.2, 5.1*)

4. What was your favorite design element and why? If you designed a production of this play, what would you do differently? (*Theatre 2.3*)

5. If you were an actor, which character would you like to play and why?

6. T-Rex is the story's main character. What are his positive traits? Does he have any negative traits? How does he change from the beginning to the end of the play? Answer the same questions about Sam and Rachel.

7. Which character would you choose as a friend? Why?

8. Which parts of the play made you laugh out loud? Why were those moments funny to you?

9. Add a new character to *Imagine* and see what happens.

10. Continue the play: what happens in your version after the last scene?

11. Write letters of appreciation to our Honorary Producer **Emulex** thanking them for their generous sponsorship of this TYA production and telling them what you enjoyed most about your field trip to SCR (*Writing 1.0, 2.1; Written and Oral Conventions 1.0*)

Please mail all letters to:
South Coast Repertory
Attn: TYA
PO Box 2197
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197

PART III: AT THE THEATRE

Welcome to the Argyros

The beautiful 336-seat Julianne Argyros Stage is the newest theatre space at SCR. It opened in 2002 with a huge celebration and we are delighted that thousands of Orange County school children fill this state-of-the-art facility each season to enjoy our Theatre for Young Audiences productions. The Argyros Stage is a proscenium theatre designed to provide audiences a feeling of intimacy, with no seat more than 39 feet from the stage.



Theatre Etiquette

Theatre is an art form that depends on both the artists and the audience. A performance is influenced by an audience, just as an audience is influenced by a performance. The artists and staff of South Coast

Repertory are creating a special new world for you to visit. When you walk into the theatre, sometimes it's so exciting, you can barely hold still. But remember that once the play begins, you have a very important job to do. Everybody in the theatre is a part of the play. You are connected to all the other people in the audience, as well as to the actors on the stage. Remember, you're all in the same room. They can SEE you, HEAR you, FEEL you, just as you can SEE, HEAR and FEEL them. Your attention, involvement, responses, and imagination are a real part of each and every performance. The play can actually be made better because of you!

Student Tips for Theatre Trips

- * Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- * Listen to the SCR staff member who will board your bus and give you last-minute instructions.
- * Take your seat in the theatre *before* going to the bathroom and/or getting a drink of water.
- * Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- * Please do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you.
- * Absolutely no chewing gum, eating or drinking in the building.
- * No backpacks, cameras, or electronic devices are permitted in the theatre.
- * The performance begins when the lights dim to a blackout and the music starts to play.
- * Feel free to laugh if you see something funny, but no talking or whispering during the show.
- * Show your appreciation by clapping at the end of the play. The actors love to hear applause!
- * Don't leave your seats until after the lights have come back up.
- * Wait for the ushers to escort your group out of the theatre.
- * Programs for the group will be given to teachers following the performance.

Filling the Bill

Everyone attending SCR's production of *Imagine* will receive a copy of the program—also called a playbill—which contains a variety of information and activities designed to enhance the play-going experience for all members of the audience. Included in the program are “kid-friendly” biographies of the actors, director, playwright, composer and designers who collaborated on the creative process of bringing the play from the page to the stage. In addition, the program for *Imagine* includes:

- Make Your Own Amazon Alligator (balloon art project)
- Am I Blue? (guessing game about crazy crayon colors)
- The Amazing Amazon (fantastic fact page)
- Princess Word Search (puzzle with a secret message)
- T-Rex Crossword (double-tricky word puzzle)
- What's in a Word (find hidden words in “imagine”)
- Draw Your Imaginary Friend (your chance to be an artist)

PART IV: EDUCATION STATION

Five Strands of Arts Education

Students in a comprehensive program are expected to master the standards of an arts discipline, which includes the following five strands:

1.0 Artistic Perception refers to processing, analyzing and responding to sensory information through the use of the language and skills unique to dance, music, theatre and visual arts.

2.0 Creative Expression involves creating a work, performing and participating in the arts disciplines. Students apply processes and skills in composing, arranging and performing a work and use a variety of means to communicate meaning and intent in their own original formal and informal works.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context concerns the work students do toward understanding the historical contributions and cultural dimensions of an arts discipline. Students analyze roles, functions, development in the discipline, and human diversity as it relates to that discipline.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing includes analyzing and critiquing works of dance, music, theatre or visual arts. Students apply processes and skills to productions or performances. They also critically assess and derive meaning from the work [. . .] and from performances and original works based on the elements and principles of an arts discipline.

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications involves connecting and applying what is learned in one arts discipline and comparing it to learning in the other arts, other subject areas and careers. Students develop competencies and creative skills that contribute to lifelong learning.

From the California Visual and Performing Arts Framework

Education in the arts is essential for all students. California's public school system must provide a balanced curriculum, with the arts as part of the core for all students, kindergarten through grade twelve, no matter what the students' abilities, language capacities or special needs happen to be. Each of the arts disciplines maintains a rich body of knowledge that enables the students to understand their world in ways that support and enhance their learning in other core subjects. In addition, through this rich body of knowledge, students learn how each of the arts contributes to their own sensitivity of the aesthetic qualities of life. Students learn to see what they look at, to hear what they listen to, feel what they touch and to understand more clearly what they integrate into their own experience.

Language Arts Connections

The educational value of SCR's production of *Imagine* will be significantly enhanced by cross-curricular reinforcement in the classroom. In this way, a number of California Language Arts Content Standards can be satisfied at all grade levels, including:

Reading: 1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development; 2.0 Reading Comprehension; 3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

Writing: 1.0 Strategies; 2.0 Applications

Listening and Speaking: 1.0 Strategies; 2.0 Applications

Basic Theatre Vocabulary (*Theatre 1.1*)

Acting The process by which an individual uses the entire self—body, mind, voice and emotions—to interpret and perform the role of an imagined or assumed character.

Action The core of a theatre piece; the sense of forward movement created by the sequence of events and the physical and psychological motivations of characters.

Ad-Lib To extemporize stage business or dialogue; to make it up as you go along.

Apron The area of the stage that extends toward the audience, in front of the main curtain.

Balcony An upper floor of seats projecting out over the main seating area of a theatre.

Blocking The movement and stage business, designed by the director and performed by the actors.

Boxes Seats separated from the main seating area located on the upper level near the stage.

Box office A windowed space at the front of the theatre building where tickets are sold.

Business Any action performed on stage.

Character The role played by an actor as she or he assumes another's identity.

Choreography The art of creating and arranging dances onstage.

Conflict The problem or incident that creates the action and is resolved by the end of the play.

Costume The carefully selected or specially designed clothing worn by the actors.

Cross The actor's movement from one stage location to another.

Cue The last words or action of an actor immediately preceding the lines or business of another actor.

Dialogue The stage conversation between characters.

Diction The clarity with which words are pronounced.

Downstage The part of the stage closest to the audience. At one time stages were raked, or sloped, with the lower ("down") part closest to the audience, and the higher ("up") part further away.

Ensemble A cast of actors working together effectively to present a theatrical performance.

Flats Canvas or wood-covered frames that are used for the walls of a stage setting.

Green Room A room near the stage where actors await entrance cues and receive guests. The room's name comes from Elizabethan times, when actors waited on a real "green" (or nearby patch of grass).

Improvisation The spontaneous use of movement and speech to create a character.

Lobby The public waiting area outside the theatre space.

Mezzanine Lower level seating area beneath the balcony overhang.

Monologue A solo speech during which the character reveals personal thoughts, either while alone on the stage or unaware of the presence of other characters.

Orchestra Lower level seating area immediately in front of the stage.

"Places" Direction given by the Stage Manager for actors to be in position before each act begins.

Plot The "what happens" in a story: beginning (the setting, characters, and problem); middle (how the characters work to solve the problem); and the ending (resolution of the problem).

Project To speak loudly so the entire audience can hear you.

Props All the stage furnishings, including furniture, that are physically used by the actors.

Proscenium Stage A traditional theatre with the audience seated in front of a proscenium arch framing the stage.

Run Length of time the play will be presented (i.e two weeks, two months, two years).

Script The text of the play, including dialogue and stage directions, all written by the playwright.

Set All of the scenery that makes up the physical environment of the world of the play.

Stagecraft The knowledge and skills required to create the physical aspects of a production; i.e., scenery, lighting, costumes, and props.

Stage Left That part of the stage to the actor's left when the actor faces the audience.

Stage Manager The person who supervises the physical production of a play and who is in charge of the stage during the performance.

Stage Right That part of the stage to the actor's right when the actor faces the audience.

Strike Dismantling the set, costumes and props at the end of the run of a show.

Theme The central thought, idea, or significance of the action of a play.

Upstage The area of the stage farthest way from the audience and nearest to the back wall.

Wings The space off stage masked by the drapes, often used for exits and entrances.

V. TEACHER FEEDBACK

Thank you for choosing SCR's Theatre for Young Audiences production of *Imagine* for your school field trip. The questionnaire included in your program packet will allow us to gather valuable information regarding this live arts experience. Please take a few moments to complete the questions and return to:

South Coast Repertory
ATTN: TYA
Post Office Box 2197
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197