

South Coast Repertory

to the
2008-09 Theatre for Young Audiences Production
of



A musical based on the book by
KATIE COURIC

Music and Lyrics by **MICHAEL FRIEDMAN**

Book and Lyrics by **MELANIE MARNICH**

Directed by
SHELLEY BUTLER

Prepared by Linda Sullivan Baity, PhD
School and Community Programs Director

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Part I: THE PLAY

Characters

- Ellie McSnelly** She carries a huge backpack. It's full of things she'll need throughout the play, no matter how extraordinary. Wears her hair in braids that have a life of their own. 7 years old.
- Carrie O'Toole** Ellie's best friend. Has a gift for wearing clothes with fabulously mismatched patterns—and loves it. 7 years old.
- Ricky Jensen** Not really a bad kid. He just can't resist stirring things up. Always covering up his klutziness. 7 years old.
- Peter Barsinsky** Ricky's best friend. Not a bad kid at all. He just follows Ricky a little too much. 7 years old.
- Miss Kincaid** Their 2nd grade teacher. Mid-30s.
- Laslo S. Gasky** The new kid at school. Spiky, white-blond hair. A slight Hungarian accent. He's not strange, just very different from the other kids. An important distinction. 7 years old.
- Cafeteria Lady** Ageless in the way Cafeteria Ladies can be. Shaped like an egg. Big loose teeth. Perhaps a moustache.
- Mrs. Gasky** Lazlo's mom. Her accent may be a little more obvious than his.
- Also** Doodle the Poodle, The Tree, and The Bird.

Please note: All roles are being played by adult actors.

Setting

The action takes place in the imaginary town of Delasky, mostly at Brookhaven School — in the second grade classroom, the school cafeteria, and on the playground. Other locations include Ellie's bedroom and around Lazlo's house.

Synopsis

In the town of Delasky, Miss Kincaid's class is starting second grade. Most of the students know each other very well. *"We're all familiar. We're all from right here. We know each other's names, and we're all the same."* When Miss Kincaid calls the roll, they notice there's a brand new kid named "Lazlo" and he's not the same as they are. *"There's something strange about his hair. Something weird about his eyes. I don't like the look of this kid, you guys."* Lazlo looks, talks and acts different because he's from Hungary — a fact that pretty much guarantees nobody wants to be his friend. *"What am I, invisible? This being new stuff is really miserable."* Lazlo feels left out and gets picked on constantly by Ricky, Peter and Carrie. Only Ellie feels bad for him. When Lazlo turns to his mother for help, Mrs. Gasky reminds him that mean kids are everywhere, and needs to keep looking for a friend. *"Don't cry. Try."* But in fact, Mrs. Gasky isn't happy in Delasky either, and wonders if perhaps she should put Lazlo in another school.

In the meantime, Ellie tries to figure out what she can do to help Lazlo. *"I should be nice to him. I should be kind, instead of doing ... nothing."* They share a dream in which they're friends, so the next morning, they're both determined that things will be different. Ellie goes home with Lazlo after school and has a wonderful time getting to know his mother and his dog, Doodle the Poodle. Somewhere between the yummy Hungarian strudel and the pick-up soccer game, they realize that they're not so different after all. *"I think you're great. Worth the wait. Working as a team. Like in our dream."* But the next day at school when the kids tease Ellie about her new "boyfriend," she starts ignoring Lazlo. *"Yesterday was a blast. But not today — the fun didn't last."* Now Ellie feels bad, too, so she apologizes to Lazlo and proudly calls him her friend in front of the whole class. Then Lazlo turns the tables, politely pointing out to the kids that all of them are, in fact, a little bit weird themselves. *"It's hard to fit in when you stand out like me. But you're not as alike as you think you might be."* Suddenly it's a brand new day for the brand new kid and his brand new friends!

Songs

1. The Delasky Overture Song Company
2. A Brand New Year Song Company
3. The Brand New Kid Song Lazlo and The Kids
4. The We Can't Help Ourselves Song Ricky and Peter
5. The Sad Gaskys Song Lazlo, Mrs. Gasky
6. The In His Shoes Song Ellie, Lazlo and The Kids
7. The Strudel Song Mrs. Gasky
8. The Soccer Song Ellie, Laslo, Doodle, Tree, Bird
9. A Bad New Day Song Ellie and Lazlo
10. The Keep Away Song Ellie, Lazlo and The Kids
11. The You Could Have Asked Song Lazlo, Ricky and Peter
12. The Brand New Day Song Company

Source

The Brand New Kid is adapted from the children's book by Katie Couric, with illustrations by Marjorie Priceman, published in 2000 by Doubleday. At that time, Couric was co-anchoring NBC's "The Today Show," a position she held from 1994-2007. Currently, she anchors the "CBS Evening News," and is a contributing reporter for "Sixty Minutes," also on CBS. She has been awarded six Emmys, a George Foster Peabody Award, was named one of *Glamour Magazine's* Women of the Year, and has earned widespread recognition for her journalistic expertise.

In her preface "Dear Readers," Couric explains the book's genesis:

"As a mother watching her two children grow, I am sometimes reminded of difficult lessons from my own childhood... that as loving and wonderful as they are, children can sometimes be cruel. Kindness can be taught, and perhaps we can all do a better job helping our children learn about tolerance and inclusion. As a journalist, I have also been struck by the frightening incidents of school violence that can arise from feeling alienated and ostracized. I hope that The Brand New Kid can be used as a springboard to talk about the importance of basic human kindness and compassion in our daily lives. Surely we have all known someone like Lazlo. It sometimes takes courage, but I hope this story will inspire all of us to reach out and make someone feel a little less scared and a little less lonely."

Ellie McNelly and Carrie O'Toole
were running and laughing — their first day of school
was today! And they wondered just what was in store.
Would this be a good year? Would school be a bore?

They kept fingers crossed they'd be in the same class,
and on a big table that they had to pass
they checked to find out to which room they should go.
"McSnelly ... 240, O'Toole, I don't know ...

"Oh, here it is, dear, you're 240 as well."
They squealed with delight. Oh gee, this was swell!
240 meant they would both have Miss Kincaid,
the best teacher by far in the whole second grade.

They took their seats quickly, Miss Kincaid called the roll.
Emily Allen (here!) Tyler Antole ...
(Here!) Peter Barsinsky, Raquel Brooks (here too!)
She went down the list until she was all through.

Then she got to the boy who was not in her book.
"We have a new student" ... they all turned to look.
"His name is a different one, Lazlo S. Gasky.
He's new to our school and the town of Delasky."

PART II: IN THE CLASSROOM

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

These introductory exercises are designed to prepare students for their visit to SCR. Try to complete as many as possible before seeing the production. The more they learn about what they're going to see, the more benefit they are sure to derive from the experience. (Please note: Parenthetical data refer to specific domains, strands, and standards for Grades 3 and 4 in the curriculum areas of English-Language Arts or Visual and Performing Arts.)

1. Introduce Katie Couric's book to the class by either reading aloud, or asking students to read aloud. **(Reading Grades 3 & 4 - 2.2, 2.3, Listening and Speaking 1.9)**
2. Ask students to:
 - a. Identify the main events of the plot, their causes, and their effects on future actions. **(Reading Grades 3 & 4 - 3.2)**
 - b. Discuss the traits of major characters, their motivations and contributions to the dramatic action. **(Reading Grade 3 & 4 - 3.3; Theatre Grade 4 - 1.2)**
 - c. Identify speakers or narrators. **(Reading Grade 3 - 3.6)**
 - d. Determine underlying theme or message. **(Reading Grade 3 - 3.4)**
3. Discuss the differences between realism and fantasy. Is this story purely imaginary or could it really happen? Talk about what students like and dislike about these two literary genres, identifying universal themes, character types, and actions. **(Reading Grade 3 – 3.2, Grade 4 – 3.1)**
4. Ask students to answer these questions:
 - a. How do you feel on the first day of school?
 - b. Have you ever been the new kid in class?
 - c. Have you ever felt as if you didn't belong because you were different?
 - d. Have you ever picked on someone you thought was "weird?"
5. Allow students to retell or dramatize the story by employing different vocal tones and attitudes to explore multiple possibilities in a live performance. **(Theatre Grade 3 – 2.1; Grade 4 – 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1)**
6. Examine the structural differences between fiction and drama. **(Theatre Grades 3 & 4 – 1.1; Reading Grades 3 & 4 - 3.1)**
7. Explore what it means to "adapt" literature from one form to another, specifically from fiction to musical drama. Discuss various ways the content of books might have to change in order to be suitable for staging, using information in the book as well as prior knowledge of the conventions of live theatre. **(Reading Grade 3 - 3.1; Theatre Grades 3 & 4 - 1.1)**
8. Ask students to make predictions about the play they're going to see based upon their knowledge of the source text. For example, every character or event in the book may not appear in the play. Which ones do you expect to see onstage? What will the actors look like? Scenery? Costumes? Props? How will the music sound? **(Theatre Grades 3 & 4 - 1.1; Reading Grade 3 - 2.4; Grade 4 - 2.3)**
9. Listen for these vocabulary words in the play: *bacteria, bizarre, cafeteria, collective, compartment, coordinated, demise, eavesdropping, elephantine, equation, excess, futile, geography, goulash, hysteria, identity, ignorant, illusion, invisible, language, logically, massive, miserable, obvious, reliably, resistance, strudel, tedious, undeniably.* **(Reading Grades 3 & 4 – 1.0)**

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

1. Discuss ways in which the play differed from students' predictions, paying special attention to the differences between the rhymed couplets in the book and the dialogue in the stage play. **(Listening and Speaking Grade 3 - 1.1, 2.0; Grade 4 - 1.0, 2.1)**
2. Ask students to use the vocabulary of theatre (see Part IV of this guide) to describe the performance. **(Theatre Grade 3 - 1.1, 4.1; Grade 4 - 1.1, 4.3)**
 - a. How did the actors look (costumes, makeup)?
 - b. How did the actors move? **(Dance Grades 3 & 4 - 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)**
 - c. How did the stage look (scenery, lighting, props)? **(Visual Art Grade 3 - 1.5, 4.1; Grade 4 - 3.1, 4.1)**
 - d. How did the play sound (music, singing, special effects)? **(Music Grades 3 & 4 - 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1)**
3. Give students an opportunity to create their own variations of the play and present to the class as dramatic interpretations. **(Speaking Applications Grade 3 - 2.2)**
 - a. Tell the story from the point of view of a character other than Ellie.
 - b. Choose another ending by rewriting the last scene.
 - c. Add a brand new character and see what happens.
 - d. Imagine a continuation: what happens after the last scene?
4. Discuss the concept of narration. Did any character(s) serve as narrators in the play? How did songs help to tell, or narrate, the story? **(Reading Grade 3- 3.6)**
5. Story circle – One person begins a story featuring a character from *A Brand New Kid* and a character from another book that students are familiar with. The first person stops after a few sentences. The next person picks up the story and continues it, then stops. Next person adds to it and so on until the tale comes to a resolution. You may wish to provide a title to guide the exercise.
6. Ask students to come up with definitions for the vocabulary words listed in Question #9 on the previous page. Locate each word in the script in order to discover how context offers clues to meaning. **(Reading Grades 3 & 4 - 1.0)**
7. Have students imagine that they are reporters interviewing one of the characters in the play. Write and present orally to the class a brief newspaper article containing descriptions of concrete sensory details to support their impressions of people, places, things or experiences. **(Reading Grade 3 - 2.1, 2.2; Speaking Applications Grade 3 - 2.1, 2.3)**
8. Compare characteristics of the play's non-human characters (dog, bird, treehouse) with their real-life counterparts. What are the similarities and differences?
9. Write letters to SCR describing favorite moments in *The Brand New Kid* and what you will remember the most about your visit to the theatre. **(Writing Grade 3-2.3; Grade 4-2.1; Written and Oral Conventions Grade 3 & 4-1.0)**

Please send 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 336-seat 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 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, you will feel that behind the curtain lies the secret of that new world which is about to come to life before your eyes. 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 carefully to the SCR staff member who will board your bus with last-minute tips.
- * Take your seat in the theatre *before* going to the bathroom 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.
- * Feel free to talk quietly in your seats before the show.
- * Show your appreciation by clapping for the actors at the end of the play.
- * After the lights come back up, wait for the ushers to escort your group out of the theatre.

Filling the Bill

Everyone who attends a Theatre for Young Audiences performance at SCR receives a program, also called a playbill. Patrons at weekend public performances receive their programs from the ushers upon entering the theatre. At the conclusion of each weekday matinee, teachers will be given programs for their students which can be distributed back in the classroom. In addition to the customary information about the play and the players, the program for *The Brand New Kid* contains features and activities that students will have fun working on after the show, either in class or at home on their own.

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, to feel what they touch and to understand more clearly what they integrate into their own experience.

Basic Theatre Vocabulary (Theatre 1.1)

Acting The process by which an individual interprets and perform the role of an imagined 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.

Backstage The space behind the acting area, unseen by the audience.

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.

Director The person who oversees the entire process of staging a theatrical production.

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 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.

Narrator A character who tells the story of the play directly to the audience.

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.

PART V: WEB RESOURCES

Web Links

Ask 4Geo About Hungary

<http://www.ask4geo.com/hungary.php>

Authentic Hungarian Strudel

<http://www.geocities.com/bakonyvilla/authenticstrudel.html>

Cuesheet Study Guide from Kennedy Center

<http://www.olkincommunications.com/Documents/BrandNewKidCueSheet.pdf>

Food and Beverages in Hungary

<http://mygastronomy.blogspot.com/>

Hungarian Children's Songs and Rhymes

<http://www.mamalisa.com/?lang=Hungarian&t=el>

Hungary from Kids Konnect

<http://www.kidskonnect.com/content/view/323/27/>

Introducing Hungary

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/hungary>

Kids Culture Corner

http://www.aupairinamerica.com/resources/kids/culture_corner/hungary.asp

Let's Learn About Hungary

<http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/europe/outreach/pdf/brosch/Hungary.ppt>

Top 10 Coolest Home Science Experiments

<http://listverse.com/science/top-10-coolest-home-science-experiments/>

Welcome to Orange County Hungarians

<http://www.orangecountyhungarians.com/>

