

Nelson Youth Theatre Company

Education Guide



Synopsis

The Narrators set the scene introducing us to Joseph, the dreamer (*Prologue/Any Dream Will Do*). Jacob, who lives in the land of Canaan is blessed with 12 sons (*Jacob and Sons*). His favourite is Joseph, son of his second wife Rachel. Joseph is good and kind, serving his family as a shepherd in the fields. His brothers resent the way in which Jacob dotes on Joseph and their anger against him grows after their father gives his favourite son a coat of many colours (*Joseph's Coat*).

Joseph has amazing dreams (*Joseph's Dreams*), which he knows mean that he is to become a great man and far more successful than any of his brothers. On hearing this, the brothers decide that something has to be done about Joseph and his arrogant behaviour.

Out in the fields the brothers attack Joseph, strip him of his coat and throw him into a pit to face certain death, when a band of hairy Ishmaelites pass by. The brothers sell Joseph to them as a slave

(*Poor, Poor Joseph*) and return to their father. They show him the blood-stained coat and tell him that Joseph has died (*One More Angel in Heaven*).

In Egypt Joseph is sold to Potiphar, a wealthy merchant (*Potiphar*). He is very good at his job and is rapidly promoted to looking after Potiphar's household. Potiphar's wife is very attracted to Joseph and she tries to seduce him. Potiphar, who is a very jealous man, catches the two of them together, immediately jumps to the wrong conclusion and Joseph is flung into jail. (*Close Every Door*).

In his cell, he explains the meanings of his fellow prisoner's dreams. He correctly predicts that the King's butler will be pardoned and given his job back but the King's baker will be put to death in three days' time. (*Go, Go, Go, Joseph*).

The Pharaoh is disturbed by strange dreams (*Poor Poor Pharaoh*). His butler tells him about Joseph in jail who may be able to explain them to him. Joseph is brought before the Pharaoh (*Song of the King*) and interprets the dreams (*Pharaoh's Dreams Explained*), which predict seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. Joseph is given an important job, managing the country's food supplies, and becomes a wealthy man (*Stone the Crows*).

Meanwhile, his family back in Canaan are struggling (*Those Canaan Days*). Famine and plague blight the land, so they leave to seek food in Egypt (*The Brothers Come to Egypt*). They beg for help from Joseph, although none of them recognise him, and he takes pity on them, giving them each a sack of food (*Grovel, Grovel*). To test his brothers, he plants a gold cup in the sack given to the youngest, Benjamin. As they try to leave, Joseph stops them to investigate the 'theft' of the precious cup. (*Who's the Thief*). When it is discovered in Benjamin's bag, the others take the blame and refuse to let anyone think that Benjamin is dishonest. They offer to take Benjamin's place as Joseph's prisoner. (*Benjamin Calypso*). Joseph now realises that his brothers are truly honest men and reveals his true identity (*Joseph All the Time*). Their Father Jacob is brought from Canaan and the family is reunited (*Jacob in Egypt*).

Production History

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat was written by composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice for a boy's school in London as a 'pop cantata' for the school choir to sing at the Easter concert. The March 1968 performance included an orchestra, a rock group call the Mixed Bag and singers from the school.

Lloyd Webber's composer father, William, felt the show had the seeds of greatness. He encouraged and arranged for a second performance at his church, Westminster Central Hall with a revised and expanded format. By its third performance at St Paul's Cathedral in November 1968, it had been expanded to 25 minutes and included songs such as 'Potiphar'.

The show was published and recorded in 1969 as a concept album. David Daltrey, front man of British psychedelic band Tales of Justine, played the role of Joseph; and Tim Rice (Joseph's lyricist) was Pharaoh.

In 1970, Lloyd Webber and Rice used the popularity of their second rock opera, Jesus Christ Superstar, to promote Joseph, which was advertised in America as a 'follow-up' to Superstar. Riding on Jesus' coat tails proved profitable for Joseph.

The show continued to evolve through the early 70's, performed in Edinburgh, London and then becoming closer to the show we know today, at the Haymarket Theatre in Leicester.

Returning to America Joseph opened in off-Broadway in the early 1980's before transferring to Broadway for 749 performances. This production was recorded for release, and is the first to feature the Prologue. The show received several Tony Award nominations including Best Musical and Best Original score. David Cassidy of 'The Partridge Family' fame, took over the role of Joseph in 1983.

With Jason Donovan (famous for his role in Neighbours) in the lead, the expanded show was restaged in 1991 at the London Palladium. The cast album of this production was the #1 UK album for two weeks in September 1991, and the single 'Any Dream will do' from it was also the #1 single for two weeks.

In 1999 a movie version with Donny Osmond in the title role was released. Osmond had toured North America in the role after opening the Toronto revival in 1992. Maria Friedman appears as the Narrator; Richard Attenborough and Joan Collins also appear in the video.

A 2007 revival of the London Palladium production at the Adelphi Theatre was the subject of BBC One's search for a West End star, in the new talent search show, Any Dream Will Do, with the participation of Andrew Lloyd Webber and other theatre luminaries, sought a new leading man to play Joseph. More than 3 million viewers cast votes during the series finale and made 25-year-old Lee Mead 'officially the people's Joseph'. Mead had given up his ensemble role in The Phantom of the Opera to compete for Joseph.

Tickets for the shows originally planned six months run sold out so fast that in three weeks all tickets for the first three months were sold out, and the producers extended the show's run and Mead's contract until 7 June 2008. Before opening night, the producers had banked 10 million pounds in receipts from advance ticket sales. In his review for Variety, David Benedict wrote, 'Mead delivers – he is contracted for at least a year. For as long as Mead chooses to continue in it, Joseph is, commercially speaking, the safest of bets!'

Characters

Narrators

The 4 Narrators tell the story through word and song, guiding the audience through the story of Joseph and his brothers.

Jacob

Also known as Israel, Jacob is the father of twelve sons, his favourite being Joseph

Joseph

Obviously the father's favourite, Joseph early on shows a talent for interpreting dreams and telling the future. This gets him into trouble with his brothers when he predicts his future will include ruling over the other eleven. However, it saves his life when in Egypt he correctly interprets the Pharaoh's dreams. In the end he has risen to a great position of power, but he still forgives his brothers and brings his family to Egypt to partake in the bounty he has accumulated there.

Ishmaelites

Men of the desert, they buy Joseph as a slave, take him to Egypt and sell him to Potiphar.

Potiphar

A powerful and rich Egyptian, Potiphar purchases Joseph and puts him to work in his household, where he soon realises that Joseph is honest, hard-working and a great addition to his pool of help. When he grows suspicious of his wife and Joseph, he grows angry and has Joseph thrown into prison.

Mrs. Potiphar

Beautiful and scheming, Mrs. Potiphar tries to seduce Joseph, but is unsuccessful. However, she does manage to rip off much of his clothing just as her husband comes into the room, thus condemning him to prison.

Baker

One of the Pharaoh's servants, the Baker is in prison with Joseph who correctly interprets his dreams and predicts he will be put to death.

Butler

Another of Pharaoh's servants, the Butler is also in prison with Joseph who also correctly interprets his dreams, this time that he will be released and taken back into the Pharaoh's household. It is the Butler who tells the Pharaoh about Joseph and his uncanny ability with dreams.

Pharaoh

The most powerful man in Egypt, Pharaoh is considered a god on earth. When Joseph interprets his dreams, he promotes him to one of the highest positions in his government. In most productions, Pharaoh is portrayed as an Elvis Presley style figure.

Joseph's Eleven Brothers

Although acting usually as a group. They each have their own different personalities, talents and flaws. As a group they sell Joseph into slavery, but as individuals they deal with the following years and how they can make amends. They sing and dance their way through many situations and places.

Reuben – Eldest son of Jacob; sings "Those Canaan Days"

Simeon – Second son of Jacob

Levi – Third son of Jacob; sings "One more Angel in Heaven"

Judah – Fourth son of Jacob; he pleads with Joseph when Benjamin is falsely arrested for theft of a goblet; sings "Benjamin Calypso". According to the Bible, one of his descendants was Jesus Christ.

Dan – Fifth son of Jacob; the tribe of Israel descended from him

Naphtali – Sixth son of Jacob

Asher – Eighth son of Jacob

Assachar – Ninth son of Jacob

Zebulun – Tenth son of Jacob; he has three sons

Benjamin – Twelfth son of Jacob. Joseph accuses him of stealing the golden cup. After Joseph went missing Benjamin became the most beloved son.

The Wives – The wives to the eleven brothers

Apache Dancer – Solo Dancer in “Those Canaan Days”

Snake & Camel – Creatures Joseph sees in the desert on his journey

Lesson Ideas

Create puppets/models of Jacob and Sons

Materials

Art materials

Brainstorm of the brother’s character traits

Wooden ice cream sticks (for stick puppets)

List Joseph’s family and their personality traits. Create stick puppets/models of each brother, recording their character traits on the back/bottom of each one. Students may also like to research the costumes the brothers are likely to wear and create those out of fabric to add to their puppet. Use the puppets/models to re-enact the Jacob and Sons scene from the musical for an audience.

Interview a character from Joseph

Materials

Video camera

Split the group into pairs. One student will take on the role of interviewer and the other will become a character from Joseph and be interviewed. Allow them time to brainstorm their chosen character and think about how they might feel during key points of the show. What are their likes/dislikes? What do they want or need? What do you want to know about your chosen character? As a pair, create the questions you will ask the character (this allows the person who will portray the character time to think about how they will answer) Once the questions are written, the students can create a script and film their interview with their chosen character. Play these back to the rest of the class and see how they react. Could anything the characters have said change the course of the show?

Create your own programme/promotional poster

Materials

Show programme

Art materials and paper

Create a poster to advertise/promote Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat. Think about using language that has a call to action. Words like, ‘now’, ‘today’ and ‘fast’ will urge people to buy their tickets immediately so they don’t miss out. What sort of image could you use from the show that will entice people to attend? Is it a picture of Joseph himself, or will you use the poster to show people something about the show they don’t already know? Don’t forget to make the dates of the show stand out and include the name of the theatre company putting on the show!

Compare/contrast the movie with the show

Materials

DVD Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat – produced by The Really Useful Group starring Donny Osmond. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnPCIWznEY4>

Have students watch the movie, preferably before they attend the musical so they have an idea of the songs and storyline. The film is 76 minutes long, so ensure you leave time to view it in its entirety. Compare the movie to the musical and discuss the similarities and differences. Were the plot points all covered in the stage show? How is the beginning different? What choices in costuming and staging were made in the NYTC show that differ from the movie? Did you like the movie or the stage production better? Why? The idea is for students to understand the limitations of staging a production vs filming and to start to think about how and why choices are made by those who work in the theatre and to form their own opinions about what they like in the theatre (or not) and why.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat

The Quiz

Materials – computer – internet

Allow students to use the internet to find the answers

1. In what year was Any Dream Will Do voted the Broadway song of the year?
2. Name the actors who starred as Joseph and the Narrator in the 1991 film
3. Who won the television competition Any Dream Will Do and became Joseph at London's Adelphi Theatre? Which judge from the show did he later marry?
4. Name two other musicals by Andrew Lloyd Webber that have become movies
5. May many sons did Jacob have? Name them all
6. How many colours are in Joseph's coat. Name them all.
7. Which country do the brother's go to in search of food
8. What is the name of Joseph's mother?
9. At the beginning of the show, why do the brothers become angry with Joseph?
10. Who is Joseph sold to in Egypt?
11. Why is Joseph brought before the Pharaoh?
12. How do Jacob and sons earn their living?
13. Who do the brothers sell Joseph to as a slave?
14. What do the brothers tell Jacob happened to Joseph?
15. How is the story resolved in the end?

Review Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat

Materials

Computer – Internet connection

Review template

Once students have seen the Nelson Youth Theatre production they can look online for reviews of other performances around the world. Ask them to highlight anything the reviewers have written that they think applies to the Nelson Youth Theatre production of the show. Students can then write

their own review of the musical (using the template provided) and forward on to Nelson Youth Theatre Company for posting on their website/social media.

Theatre Review Template

Theatre reviewed by:

Introduction

Synopsis

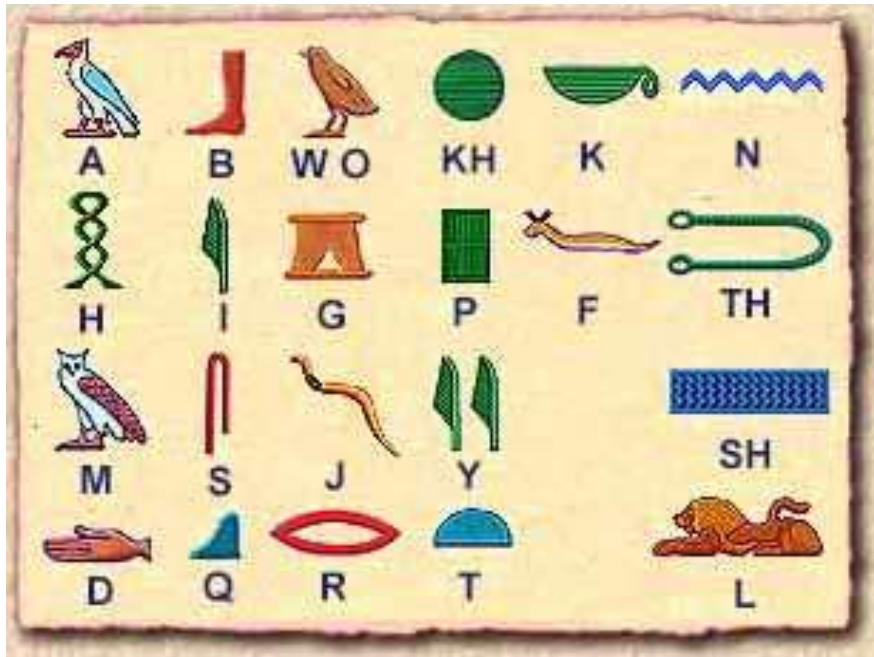
Observations

Background information about the creators of the work

Opinion/Show times/target audience

Instructions

1. Identify the title of the play, the genre, the name of the production company and where it is playing in the opening paragraph.
2. Provide brief synopsis of the play which describes the setting, introduces the main characters and tells the audience what the core conflict is. The purpose of this paragraph is to hook the readers' curiosity about what happens next but should never spoil their own enjoyment of the show by divulging all of the twists and surprises that await.
3. Share your observations about individual performances, the casting, the chemistry, the set design, the costumes and how technical elements such as lighting, sound effects and music enhanced the production (or detracted from it). Offer constructive remarks on what might have been done to make the show better. Example: The amplification or recorded music sometimes made it hard to hear what the actors were saying.
4. Include a reference to the playwright and the other plays/musicals he/she has written. If there is anything interesting or unique about the inspiration behind the script, its performance history or why the director chose to produce it, mention that as well.
5. Provide readers with information on the performance such as dates, times and where to purchase tickets and whether there are any elements of the show such as violence, sex or strong language that make it inappropriate for young children.



Learn to read and write hieroglyphics

Materials – Hieroglyphics symbol chart

Reference books – internet access

Computer

Use the internet or reference books to find out more about hieroglyphics and what they mean. Design your own message, name of the show or your name by either drawing them out or using image fonts and clipart on the computer.