

*In a forest where rivers sing, trees giggle, and curious dragonflies come to visit,
a little old man lives in his little house.*

*Every day is exactly the same and he likes it that way, until one day...
a magical creature leaps into his life and everything changes!*

October 26th, 2018

Dear Parents and/or Guardians:

We would like to thank you for supporting your child's attendance to Theatre Direct's production of *Old Man and the River*. We are so glad that your child will be able to join us as they participate and experience firsthand, the joy and curiosity of theatre and the arts! In recent years, *Old Man and the River* has toured across the country and has engaged thousands of young audience members with its whimsical story and characters.

Performed without words, using artful tabletop puppetry and music, *Old Man and the River* was researched and created especially for young children. The use of symbols and patterns as well as gesture and action as a form of storytelling makes it a truly engaging and age-appropriate experience. The gentle, welcoming atmosphere, interactive pre-show program, and post-show demonstration makes *Old Man and the River* a **perfect introduction to live theatre for young students**. *Old Man and the River* is an accessible performance for young children of all needs and abilities and is supported by an on-line Social Story. Additionally, Theatre Direct has provided your child's teacher with a comprehensive study guide for the purpose of continued creative exploration and active learning through dramatic play within the classroom!

"I was so impressed with the elegance, sophistication and gentle humour of this piece. I was watching the audience very carefully and seeing how they responded to the emotional and magical world that was created by your ensemble. The music, design, creativity and commitment of the performers captivated them from beginning to end." - Tracy Thomson, Early Years, Toronto District School Board

This theatre experience is more than just going to see a children's play as it directly connects to your child's learning journey. *Old Man and the River* was especially designed to be aligned with the Full Day Kindergarten Curriculum with particular emphasis on **"Belonging and Contributing"**, and **"Self-Regulation and Well-Being"**.

"The Role of the Arts in Kindergarten"

"Along with the development of skills in the arts, participation in the arts provides children with opportunities to experience the satisfaction of contributing something of their own within their social sphere, which helps them **develop a sense of belonging**. For that reason, the arts-related learning expectations are included in the Belonging and Contributing frame of the Kindergarten program. Engagement in learning through the arts also supports the development of children's self-regulation skills. As children observe the art works of others, work independently on their own creations, or take the risk to try something new with an idea, they are **learning to self-regulate**. As they share their ideas and listen to the diverse views and opinions of others, they are also **developing respect for others and the ability to collaborate**. In addition, their **ability to deal with stressors is increased**. The arts provide children with a **vehicle to explore and express their thoughts and feelings. Communication happens through creative expression**. When children manipulate materials, explore music and movement, create symbols, and engage in imaginative expression (e.g., visual art, storytelling), and dramatic play, they are communicating. **Creating**

and designing fuse together the cognitive, emotional, and physical domains – thinking, feeling, and doing. The creative expression of ideas, feelings, and interpretations using a variety of materials also **helps consolidate children’s learning; enhances their creative, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills; and strengthens their memory and sense of identity**” (pp 104-105).

- *The Kindergarten Program*, Ministry of Education (2016)
- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/index.html>

Furthermore, **theatre experiences inspire role play which fosters empathy** as the child "begin[s] to understand that other players have perspectives different from their own" (p 97). **"Dramatic play connects to the whole child and contributes to multiple developmental domains"** (p 99):

- **SOCIAL**: "When children have positive role models who support dramatic play, they gain skills in executing dramatic play and in turn **they become more socially competent**" (p 107).
- **EMOTIONAL**: "Dramatic play **enhances children’s emotional development**. Unlike adults, children generally are not able to verbalize feelings. They experience the same feelings as adults; however, **they express their feelings through play. Children feel safe in play**" (p 105).
- **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**: "Story drama is used in the early learning environment as a way to help children understand the structure of a story and see how language affects others. For early learning practitioners, it offers **a natural and authentic way to promote literacy learning**" (p 115).
- **COGNITIVE**: "When engaged in dramatic play, children start to make sense of their world". **In Piaget’s cognitive developmental theory**, "children assimilate concepts and ideas, practice, and expand on their ideas during play with others. **Play interactions contribute to children developing perspective-taking, especially when they can put themselves in another’s shoes while role-playing**" (p 97).
- **PHYSICAL**: "When children act out stories, situations, and ideas, **they use their bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to express themselves**. They do this through gesture, voice, and/or movement" (p 98).
 - *Playing and Learning: In Early Childhood Education*, Dietze, B., & Kashin, D. (2012)
 - *Early Learning for Every Child Today, a Framework for Ontario Early Childhood Settings*, Ministry of Education (2014)
 - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/excerptsfromelect.pdf>

A child feels engaged when they can "express joy and wonder in their encounters with the environment, the natural world, and other people" (p 37). **A child can express themselves** when they are able to "use varied forms of creative expression to communicate feelings, experiences, ideas, and understanding of the world around them"; and when they can "participate in meaningful interaction and communication with peers and adults, regardless of their abilities" (p 43).

- *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*, Ministry of Education (2014)
- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/howlearninghappens.pdf>

Theatre Direct’s mission and philosophy are *"to nurture our audience’s appreciation of the arts and each other through community and education-based programs"*. *"Our work is driven by a belief that young people deserve truth not diversion – that they have a right to meaningful cultural content and experiences. Theatre Direct views their audience as thinking, feeling, complex individuals – not a market, nor future audiences, but rather their present audience of emerging citizens that demands relevant theatre that engages all their faculties, feelings and intellect"*. Theatre Direct hopes to inspire your child while integrating accessible and authentic dramatic arts, music, and cultural experiences into this wondrous adventure to the theatre!

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD’S ART EDUCATION!

Many times, children wish to see the performance again, please visit our website at <http://theatredirect.ca/> to find the times and locations of our public performances.