

Melissa Bergstrom

Boston Center for the Arts and Boston Children's Theatre Present Families Connect Workshop : "James and the Giant Peach; March 2012

"Sowing and Growing Seeds"

Goals and Benefits: This full body storytelling activity utilizes creative drama in order to allow the young learner to use their own body to express the process of planting and growing seeds. Concepts of the environment are explored by letting the young actor put the process of growing seeds in their own physical body. The guided instruction gives the activity structure while at the same time providing the healthy parameters necessary for the imagination to be set free and for children to be as creative as they can. The familiar concept of planting and growing seeds serves as a common ground from which to scaffold new performance and social skills.

Materials/Accommodations Needed: This activity utilizes the performer's body as the only instrument needed. In addition, the activity can be structured to take only five minutes as a warm-up and introductory exercise, or can be extended as part of a longer, more formal group storytelling performance of about thirty minutes.

Target Audience: This program is geared towards children ages three through twelve as well as their parents and families accompanying them to the workshop. This guided performance is easily adaptable to a range of ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds as well.

Multiple Intelligences Utilized in the Activity: Naturalistic, Bodily-kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Linguistic.

Programming Plan:

1. Gather participants in a large standing circle (space allowing).
2. Encourage everyone to be mindful of the space around them and to make sure they have enough room to find a place of their own in the circle in which to sit down.
3. Facilitator begins the guided narration. Sample sidecoaching phrases are suggested in italics. (Script is flexible based on number of participants, age, experience, and/or interest)
 - a. Explain that as a group, we are going to be planting a garden. Using our imaginations, we are going to look to our right, and pick up the trowel that is lying next to us. *What is a trowel? What do we need to do next?* Using the trowel, we need to dig a deep hole in the soil in front of us. *Dig your hole deep! We need to make lots of room for the seeds we are going to plant.*

- b. Once the holes are deep enough, ask children to put down their trowel. Explain that as they look to the left, they will use their imagination to pick up your packet of seeds lying next to them. *Pick up your packet, use your fingers to reach inside and pull out a seed. You decide what kind of seed it is.* Give examples of many different seeds to plant; carrots, tulips, broccoli, collard greens, lettuce, roses, etc. *Carefully put one of your seeds in the hole you dug. Drop it in! Now drop another! Drop another!*
- c. Once the seeds are in the holes, guide children in covering the hole with soil. *Now, gently push the dirt back over the top of the seeds. Make sure they are covered, pat down the dirt.*
- d. Brainstorm as a group with the children what we need to grow the seeds. Sunlight, rain, and watering often come up as suggestions. Next, we will explore the rain suggestion. *Yes, these seeds need rain! Everyone sit criss-cross applesauce, and put your two hands up in the air. We are going to make a rainstorm with our bodies!*
- e. Guide children in creating a musical/rhythmic rainstorm; hands begin tapping legs lightly and slowly, and increase in volume, pressure, and speed as instructed by facilitator.
- f. Now, ask children to curl up into a ball on the floor, as small as they can and imagine they are the seed that was planted in the ground. *Curl up as small as you can. Imagine you are a seed in the dark soil, warm and comfortable underground. But as spring comes and so does summer, we get lots of beautiful sunshine and wonderful rain, and we begin to grow.* Guide children to peek a hand up out of the soil, a “seedling”, and guide them to crouching, then standing, until they are as tall as they can be. *Reach, reach, up to the sky! Feel that sunshine on your face. Feel the breeze. Let’s sway back and forth together. Turn your face towards the sun.*
- g. Give each participant a chance to say in one word how they feel fully grown. Some responses may include “I feel...tall/proud/powerful/beautiful, etc. There is no right or wrong, but this is a good way to give children a chance to express themselves verbally in addition to physically.
- h. Give the instruction for everyone to relax, shake out their arms and legs, which have been working so hard. *Shake it out!* Thank everyone for their energy and hard work. *Nice job! That was awesome! Great work!*

Transition to Mask Making portion of workshop, led by BCA Teaching Artist.