

Arts Club Theatre Company

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

Bed and Breakfast

2018/2019 Season



Granville Island Stage

APRIL 4 – MAY 2, 2019

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Welcome

This guide was created for teachers and students. It contains an overview of the play’s story, as well as informative resources and activities for teachers and students. The guide aims to provide background knowledge and critical perspectives on the play that will yield fruitful discussion and foster an understanding and appreciation of the theatre arts.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the guide, please contact our group sales representative at 604.687.5315 ext. 253 or groups@artsclub.com.

This guide was written by Liam Monaghan, Kerri Lee, and Becky Gold.

About the Arts Club Theatre Company

The Arts Club of Vancouver was founded in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors. It became the Arts Club Theatre in 1964 when the company opened its first stage in a converted gospel hall at Seymour and Davie Streets.

Now in its 55th season of producing professional live theatre in Vancouver, the Arts Club Theatre Company is a non-profit charitable organization that operates three theatres: the Granville Island Stage, the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, and the Goldcorp Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre. Its popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics.

Learn more about the Arts Club Theatre Company at <http://artsclub.com/>

Learning objectives

After viewing a production of *Bed and Breakfast* and completing the following activities, students will be able to:

- Think critically about identity and privilege through discussion, written reflection, and a kinesthetic exercise
- Experiment with the technique of *vocal masque* in order to hone their skills as actors

Connections to New BC Curriculum

Arts Education – Drama (9)

Big Ideas

- Identity is explored, expressed, and impacted through drama experiences
- Drama provides opportunities to gain insight into perspectives and experiences of people from a variety of times, places, and cultures
- Drama uses a unique sensory language for creating and communicating

Curricular Competencies

- *Exploring and creating:* Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through dramatic experiences; Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of personal, social, cultural, historical, and the environment in relation to drama
- *Reasoning and reflecting:* Describe, interpret, and evaluate how performers and playwrights use dramatic structures, elements, and techniques to create and communicate ideas
- *Connecting and expanding:* Reflect on creative processes to make connections to personal learning and experience; Demonstrate respect for oneself, others, and the audience

Social Studies (9)

Big Ideas

- Emerging ideas and ideologies profoundly influence societies and events
- Disparities in power alter the balance of relationships between individuals and between societies

Curricular Competencies

- Explain and infer different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs

English Language Arts (9)

Big Ideas

- Language and story can be a source of creativity and joy
- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world

Curricular Competencies

- *Comprehend and connect:* Apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, and visual texts, guide inquiry, and extend thinking; Recognize how different features, forms, and genres of texts reflect different purposes, audiences, and messages; Think critically, creatively, and

reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts; Recognize how language constructs personal, social, and cultural identity

- *Create and communicate*: Exchange ideas and viewpoints to build shared understanding and extend thinking; Use writing and design processes to plan, develop, and create engaging and meaningful literary and informational texts for a variety of purposes and audiences

Plot Summary

Bed and Breakfast is a bright and airy comedy that conveys a serious moral message. Brett, an interior designer, and Drew, a hotel concierge, are a gay couple in their 30s living in Toronto. They are trying to buy a house in the city, but are outbid every time they place an offer. When Brett's Aunt Maggie dies suddenly in a car accident, he inherits her beautiful old house in a small town outside of Toronto. After attending her funeral, the couple decides, with some hesitation, to move in and open a bed and breakfast.

Brett and Drew are initially attracted to the prospect of a new life by the small-town-charm and friendly inhabitants of Aunt Maggie's home. Once they've moved, however, they're greeted by some of the residents with outright homophobia that makes them reconsider whether they made the right decision after all. On the one hand, the play is about Brett and Drew renovating their new house and turning it into a viable business. On the other, it tells a more profound story about the challenges of building a life in a community that must learn to accept them for who they really are. Along the way, audiences are treated to a wide array of colourful character studies. *Bed and Breakfast* is diversely populated by cleverly drawn portraits of various comedic types, all portrayed by two actors in a performative tour-de-force.



Meet the Playwright: Mark Crawford

Mark Crawford is an actor and a playwright. His first play, *Stag and Doe*, premiered at the Blyth Festival in 2014. *Stag and Doe* has quickly become one of the most-produced Canadian plays of the decade, with nine professional productions since its premiere.

Bed and Breakfast premiered in 2015 at the Thousand Islands Playhouse (TIP) in Gananoque, ON, where it broke box office records as the best-selling show in the history of TIP's Firehall Theatre. *Bed and Breakfast* had productions at the Centaur Theatre (Montreal, QC) and Belfry Theatre (Victoria, BC) in 2017.

Characters

Bed and Breakfast is performed by two actors, telling Brett and Drew's story. Each character takes on several other roles during the play.

Brett: An interior designer.

Drew: A concierge at an upscale hotel.

The actor portraying Brett plays the following additional characters:

Lynda: Brett's mother

Steve: Brett's older brother

Jeffrey: A barista with attitude

Ray: A real estate agent and friend

Allison: A café owner

Dustin: Carrie's teenage son

Little Girl: A six-year-old

Sharon: Married to Chuck

Sylvia: Right-wing, about seventy

A Voice: Male, older

The actor portraying Drew plays the following additional characters:

Reverend: The voice of a Minister

Martin: Brett's father

Cody: Brett's teenage nephew

Carrie: A real estate agent and friend

Doug: A contractor

Harold: A neighbour

Chris: Married to Alison

Chuck: Married to Sharon

Travis: Just married to Alexa

Alexa: Just married to Travis

Discussion Questions

These questions can be used as writing prompts, as well as prompts for small-group and large-group discussions.

Pre-show discussion questions:

The following questions have been included in order to spark discussions and to get students thinking about what they might experience prior to viewing the production.

- Have you seen any live performances on stage before? What are your expectations about what you will see on stage in this production?
- What do you already know about the play, including the plot, production elements (such as lighting, sound, costumes, and sets) and the characters? How do you anticipate that these elements will come together in the play?
- What do you know about the *vocal masque* technique? How do you think this will come into play during the performance of *Bed and Breakfast*?
- What does *acceptance* and *inclusion* mean to you? Do you feel like your school is an accepting and inclusive space? What about your community? What can we do to create more accepting and inclusive spaces?
- Have you experienced, or witnessed another individual experience bullying, harassment, or injustice based on their identity? How did you feel in this situation? What did you do?

Post-show discussion questions:

The following questions are ideal for engaging students in reflection and exploration of the major themes, characters, and other elements of the production.

- What ideas or themes did the play make you think about?
- What did you notice about the ways in which the characters communicated with one another?
- What did you notice about the ways in which the characters displayed their emotions?
- What did you think about the technical elements of the production: which elements stood out to you the most, and why? What effects did this have on your understanding of the play?
- Imagine that you could meet with members of the cast, crew, artistic team, or production team. What questions would you ask them about the choices and elements in the production?
- What difficulties did the main characters face in their community due to their sexuality? How did they react, and what actions did they take?
- What did you notice about the use of the *vocal masque* technique in the play? How did this affect/enhance your understanding of the play?
- What were the key turning points for the characters in *Bed and Breakfast*?
- Imagine the sequel to this play: what do you think would happen next in Brett and Drew's future?
- One of the lines in the play is "*love is stronger than hate.*" Can you think of specific examples and/or events in the play that illustrated this? What connections can you make to your own experiences?

Activity One: The Privilege Walk

(Recommended for any class)

Rationale: Invite students to explore privilege by moving through space in order to understand the ways in which their ethnic/social background or sexual orientation may impact their level of privilege in the world, either positively or negatively. Students will be offered the opportunity to reflect on their own privileges.

Step One: The Walk

Ask your students to stand in one long line, all facing the same direction. The teacher/facilitator will read out the following list of statements. When a statement applies to a student, he or she should do as the statement indicates. If a student does not want to acknowledge that the statement applies to them, they do not have to move. Teachers may use their discretion to omit certain statements or add as they see fit. Ensure that there is time for a debrief following the activity.

Privilege Walk Statements

- If your ancestors were forced to come to Canada, not by choice, take one step back.
- If your primary ethnic identity is "Canadian," take one step forward.
- If you were ever called names because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If there were people who worked for your family as servants, gardeners, nannies, etc., take one step forward.
- If you were ever ashamed or embarrassed of your clothes, house, car, etc., take one step back.
- If one or both of your parents were "white collar" professionals—doctors, lawyers, etc.—take one step forward.
- If you were raised in an area where there was prostitution, drug activity, etc., take one step back.
- If you ever tried to change your appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed, take one step back.
- If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school, take one step forward.
- If you went to school speaking a language other than English, take one step back.
- If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up, take one step forward.
- If you ever had to skip a meal or were hungry because there was not enough money to buy food when you were growing up, take one step back.
- If you were taken to art galleries or plays by your parents, take one step forward.
- If one of your parents was unemployed or laid off, not by choice, take one step back.
- If you or your parents have health insurance benefits, take one step forward.
- If you have ever attended private school or summer camp, take one step forward.
- If your family ever had to move because they could not afford the rent, take one step back.
- If you were told that you were beautiful, smart and capable by your parents, take one step forward.
- If you were ever discouraged from academics or jobs because of race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were encouraged to attend college by your parents, take one step forward.

- If you have a disability, take one step backward.
- If you were raised in a single parent household, take one step back.
- If your family owned the house where you grew up, take one step forward.
- If you saw members of your race, ethnic group, gender, or sexual orientation portrayed on television in degrading roles, take one step back.
- If you or your parents own a car, take one step forward.
- If you were ever offered a good job because of your association with a friend or family member, take one step forward.
- If you were ever denied employment because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were paid less or treated unfairly because of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever accused of cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you or your parents ever inherited money or property, take one step forward.
- If you had to rely primarily on public transportation, take one step back.
- If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If your parents own their own business, take one step forward.
- If you were generally able to avoid places that were dangerous, take one step forward.
- If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation but felt unsafe to confront the situation, take one step back.
- If you were ever the victim of violence related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If your parents did not grow up in Canada, take one step back.
- If your parents attended college, take one step forward.
- If your parents told you that you could be anything you wanted to be, take one step forward.
- If you are able to take a step forward or backward, take two steps forward.

Step Two: Activity Debrief

Introduce the students to the concept of *privilege*, defined as “a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group” (Oxford Dictionary). Those who were able to step forward were, with respect to that one statement, privileged; those who were not, lack privilege in the area described by the statement. Ask the students to reflect on *Bed and Breakfast*: which of the characters in the play are privileged, and why? Which are not, and why? Finally, ask them, in a written reflection, to interrogate their own privilege. In what ways have they benefited from their privileges? In what ways, large or small, can they take personal responsibility for creating a more equitable world?

Activity Two: Vocal Masque

(Recommended for use with Drama classes)

Rationale: Both actors in *Bed and Breakfast* play about a dozen roles each. To achieve this seamlessly, they use an effect called *vocal masque*, which is an athletic and physical form of theatre where actors make sharp shifts in voice and body to help differentiate between different characters.

Step One: Introduce students to the concept of *vocal masque*, as defined above.

Step Two: Ask the students to experiment first with a range of tongue twisters and vocalizing exercises—“Red Leather, Yellow Leather,” vocal trills, etc.—in order to warm up their voices. Ask them to explore at least three different ranges in their voices: low, medium, and high. How does each register feel in their body? How can they adjust things in their body to adjust the quality of their vocal intonation and projection? (You may also wish to do some breath work, time permitting.)

Step Three: Finally, circulate the following two excerpts from *Bed and Breakfast*. Ask the students to bring the characters to life by focusing on the quality of their voices; the aim is to experiment with the technique of vocal masque as the actors did. Stress the importance of originality in their portrayals.

Excerpt One: Drew & Alison Meet at her Café

BRETT/ALISON. Ahhh! Sorry! Sorry!

DREW. No, I'm sorry!

BRETT/ALISON. No, I'm sorry. I wasn't looking where I was going. Sorry. I'm behind. I spent an hour with my head in the toilet. Morning sickness. The worst. Sorry.

DREW. Are you open?

BRETT/ALISON. Sorry! I am! Open!

They enter Alison's cafe and we hear the ding-ding of the bell above the door.

DREW. Cool place. Do you do lattes?

BRETT/ALISON. The best lattes in town! Well, the only lattes in town really, but yes I do!

DREW. Great. Can I have a grande?

BRETT/ALISON. Sorry. We don't have that here. I could make you a large...

DREW. A large would be perfect.

BRETT/ALISON. From Toronto?

DREW. Is it that obvious?

BRETT/ALISON. You on vacation?

DREW. No, I'm—we're—just in town for the week to clean up a house, put it on the market.

BRETT/ALISON. Oh yeah, whereabouts?

DREW. Just up Queen Street there. *(He points...and she points the right way.)* There. Corner of Queen and George.

BRETT/ALISON. Maggie's place? Oh, we're going to miss her. What a shock.

DREW. Yeah.

BRETT/ALISON. Brett spoke at the funeral, right? So you must be...

DREW. Drew.

BRETT/ALISON. Drew! Yes! Sorry. Hey Drew, I'm Alison. *(They shake hands.)* Oh, did I get milk on you? Sorry. OK, so one latte, that's three dollars.

DREW. Three dollars?

BRETT/ALISON. I know. Sorry. Small business.

DREW. No, no. *(Reaching for his wallet.)* Shit...I was running, I don't have my wallet.

BRETT/ALISON. That's OK.

DREW. No, I will run home and grab it and run right back and—

BRETT/ALISON. Sorry, no. Last summer, for my and Chris's wedding, Maggie did my hair. And I was complaining about how the yellow roses for the boutonnieres didn't match the bridesmaid dresses. Sorry, I know. But she went home, cut honest to God every single rose from her garden, brought them back, the perfect colour, dozens of them. We only needed four. So in the spirit of that generosity, there you go. *(She hands him the latte.)*

DREW. I will get you back.

BRETT/ALISON. Don't worry about it.

DREW. Thanks, Alison. It was nice...running into you! Mmm... this is good.

Excerpt Two: Carrie and Drew / Cody and Dustin

DREW/CARRIE. Oh my God, Brett, you are never going to believe this.

BRETT. What?

DREW/CARRIE. I have these new clients. A very nice couple. But they live overseas. They're retiring at the end of the summer and they want to move here and run a B and B. Where were they in September, right? Only they want a place that's ready to go. They came across the pictures on your website and they fell in love with this place.

BRETT. Carrie...what? We just opened. It's not for sale.

DREW/CARRIE. Oh my God, I know. But they told me what they'd be willing to offer. *(She writes it down.)* It's...this much...

BRETT. *(Looking at it.)* Oh my God.

DREW/CARRIE. That's exactly what I said! They don't need an answer right away. September first. I know it hasn't been all sunshine and rainbows for you guys, so...it's an option.

BRETT. *(To us.)* Remember how we said we have a decision to make?

DREW. Yeah... That's the one.

BRETT. July.

Shift. Loud music. Doorbell...doorbell...doorbell. Cody answers the door. It's Dustin with a box of baking.

BRETT/DUSTIN. Oh! Like hi. Can I just like drop these off in the like kitchen?

DREW/CODY. I dunno. What are they?

BRETT/DUSTIN. They're like muffins. And like croissants. Brett and Drew like hired me to do the baking for the B and B. They like tried to do it, but I think someone almost like died.

DREW/CODY. I dunno. These look professional.

BRETT/DUSTIN. Like, I guess. Are you like a guest here?

DREW/CODY. *(Eating one.)* I dunno. I'm Cody. I'm here for the summer. Working for Doug.

BRETT/DUSTIN. Can you like let them know Dustin dropped these off?

DREW/CODY. I dunno. This is really good.

BRETT/DUSTIN. Like...thanks. *(Starts to exit, stops.)* Oh and like by the way, I like... like your music.

Step Four: Finally, ask the students to reflect on their experience in discussion or in writing. *How does utilizing vocal masque affect the process of creating a character? How does it make for a different kind of acting experience than what they might have previously experienced?*

Sources

Curriculum Documents:

British Columbia Ministry of Education: “Arts Education: Drama 9.” (n.d.): n.pag. Web.

British Columbia Ministry of Education: “Social Studies 9.” (n.d.): n.pag. Web.

British Columbia Ministry of Education: “English Language Arts 9.” (n.d.): n.pag. Web.

“Bio.” *Mark Crawford, Playwright*, Marquis Literacy, <https://mqlit.ca/playwrights/mark-crawford/>.

Privilege Walk – Additional Resources:

- Time and Place at UBC; Our Histories and Relations: <http://timeandplace.ubc.ca/user-guide/theme-ii/privilege-walk-version-1/>
- Peace Learner lesson plan: <https://peacelearner.org/2016/03/14/privilege-walk-lesson-plan/>