



TREEHOUSE SHAKERS

OLIVE & PEARL STUDY GUIDE



THE PERFORMANCE

Olive & Pearl

Written & Directed by Mara McEwin

Choreography by Emily Bunning

Music by Anthony Rizzo

Costumes & Puppets by Patti Gilstrap

For Ages 2-5

Olive & Pearl tells the story of a young girl, Olive, who is being raised by her Granny, Pearl. Centered on thematic elements of home, and what a home means, young audiences are invited into a cozy and gentle world, rich with sensory experiences. To directly engage young minds, audiences sit within Olive & Pearl's home, which is made out of a dome of cozy, soft felts, crocheted squares, wool yarn and colorful fabric pieces. The story follows Olive throughout her day, as she is affectionately taken care of by her grandmother. Granny Pearl builds fires, warms tea, makes meals, has a comforting lap to tell stories on and safe arms to rock Olive to sleep. Throughout their day the characters play, go on an imaginary journey to the moon, sing songs, and dance. Mythological imagery about home is projected throughout the warm room, like a reflective nightlight. Other images of home are placed throughout the performance; there is a robins' nest above the window, a mouse's hole in the living room, and a fish in its' water bowl. The moon, which is a beautiful puppet, plays a significant role as it moves throughout its phases, changing to signify the times of the day as both a set piece and as a character within the home. Home is not only the structure of one's house, but the place one longs for, like the magic of the glowing moon, to feel safety, love and warmth. **Olive & Pearl** is both a mirror and a window, for the very young child, into what is the meaning of home.

Magical, visual, stimulating, and oftentimes funny, **Olive & Pearl** is performed by two actors, who also represent the additional characters through handcrafted puppets: the moon, the robin, the mouse and the fish. Movement is woven throughout the piece, gently guiding the story, while incorporating the integral and familial connection between the characters. An original live music score, created and played by Anthony Rizzo delicately accompanies the performance underneath. The musical score combines inspired melodies of Bluegrass, Irish Fiddle, and traditional lullabies.

BEFORE SEEING THE PERFORMANCE

AGES 2-3

- ❑ Toddlers love learning about Home:
Discuss *What is Home, Where is Home, Who is In Their Home*
- ❑ Have Your Toddler Draw Their Home & Their Family
- ❑ Discuss Grandparents. Draw pictures of grandmothers & grandfathers.
If the child doesn't have a relationship with a grandparent, they can choose a person they know to be their grandparent.
- ❑ Talk about animals and their homes. For example; a snail carries his home, a chipmunk burrows in his home, a mouse oftentimes a hole/nest in the house, a fish has a bowl, a flower has a pot, a bird a nest. The list is endless.
- ❑ Ask your toddler to draw and describe to you these animals and their homes.
- ❑ Play a dance game: Turn on music and have your child move like a animal going into their home; slowly like a snail carrying his home, burrowing like a chipmunk, building a nest like a robin, a caterpillar in its cocoon.
- ❑ Read books about homes to your toddler.
- ❑ **Olive & Pearl** references the Moon. Begin discussing the moon, and it's simple phases with your toddler. Ask them what they think the moon is made out of: cheese, chalk, soap?
- ❑ Have them draw or paint a moon, and its phases, while begin introducing circles.
- ❑ Since the moon is round, what else is round? Go on a circle shape hunt throughout the classroom or your home.
- ❑ Create a moon dance, by using big circle shapes with different parts of your body. What are different ways you can make your arms into circles, body, legs, head, etc.
- ❑ Act Out Stories about Homes & the Moon: **Three Little Pigs, Little Red Hen, Three Little Bears, Hey, Diddle, Diddle**
- ❑ Make an art project based on the nursery rhyme **Hey, Diddle, Diddle;** using stars, cow & black paper.

Some Great Resource Books:

Home by Carson Ellis

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown

The Full Moon at The Napping House by Audrey Wood

Welcome Home Bear: A Book of Animal Habitats by Il sung Na

The House That Jack Built by Diana Mayo

AGES 4-5

- ❑ Show pictures of different homes, and homes throughout the world; igloos, tiny houses, mansions, cottages, tee pees, boat houses, wigwams, etc.
- ❑ Talk about the home and what makes a home.
- ❑ Draw or Paint a home for an animal. For example if Monkeys were to have any home they could build what would they build it out of?
- ❑ Fairies are rooted in Irish Culture. In the performance, Olive talks fondly of her fairy house. Draw a home for fairies.
- ❑ Create a Fairy House as a class that can be placed outside of the school, or inside the classroom.
- ❑ Discuss the moon & its phases
- ❑ Make a moon out of a paper plate, students can choose which phase to make their moon.
- ❑ Create a Fairy Dance
- ❑ Read books about homes, moons, Irish Culture & Fairies
- ❑ Create a moon dance, by using big circle shapes with different parts of your body. What are different ways you can make your arms into circles, body, legs, head, etc.?
- ❑ Granny Pearl and her granddaughter, Olive, are very close. Discuss grandparents, and what roles grandparents play in our lives.
- ❑ Make a frame for a grandparent, or someone who is close to the child as a grandparent.

Some Great Resource Books:

Home by Carson Ellis

When I was Young In the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant

The Faery's Gift: Irish Folktale retold by Tanya Robyn Batt

Tim O'Toole and the Wee Folk by Gerald McDermott

AGES 6

- ❑ Discuss the Moon & its phases
- ❑ Create an art project using the moon & its phases
- ❑ Create a fairy house as a class, or make individual fairy houses out of small bird-houses that can be painted, glittered and decorated with flowers or buttons.
- ❑ Create poetry for your fairies.
- ❑ Read Irish Folklore to Your Students
- ❑ Have your class act out stories on home: **Little Red Hen, Three Little Pigs**, etc.

Some Great Resource Books:

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

Jamie O'Rourke & The Big Potato by Tomie dePaola

26 Fairmont Avenue by Tomie dePaola

AFTER SEEING THE PERFORMANCE

1. Who were the characters in **Olive & Pearl**? Who was the child, who was the adult?
2. Talk about what happened in the play.
3. What instrument was the musician in the show playing?
4. After seeing **Olive & Pearl**, discuss it with your class.
Who was their favorite character and why? Did they notice which actors and dancers played more than one part? How did the actors' and or dancers' movements help make the puppets seem real?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. (Age 3 & up) Have students create their own tales based on a unique home. You can have them sit in a circle and each make up a part to the story. It's okay if the story doesn't make sense; just encourage students to use their creativity.
2. (Ages 6 and up) Have children create their own story about a child & grown up and their home. They could create this together as a group or as individuals. They could write their stories down, tell the stories out loud, draw their stories or put on a play based on their stories.
3. (Ages 2 and up) Act out a story about the moon. You could choose a story like "The Little Red Hen" or the "Hey Diddle, Diddle" The teacher can narrate and choose students to be different characters. You can have many students play the same part if more than one wants to act out a role. This could be a long project or even a ten-minute project. Tell the story to the students and then have them act it out around the classroom.
4. (2 and up) Make a Moon Puppet with your class. You will need: Popsicle sticks, paper plates and glue. Glue or tie the pipeline on both ends of the large Popsicle sticks to attach for the handle. For older kids have them glue on googly eyes. Have your class make up a story about the moon. Talk about the phases of the moon.

For More Puppet Making Ideas, contact us at contactus@treehouseshakers.com

OLIVE & PEARL RESIDENCIES AND WORKSHOPS

Ages 2-6

Treehouse Shakers offers several residencies and workshops in conjunction with **Olive & Pearl**, connecting young students to the performance they are about to experience. Students are exposed to movement, storytelling, creative drama, and puppet making. Treehouse Shakers takes pride in tailoring our curriculum to your students' needs.

OPTION 1

3-Day Workshops: Students are given one-day introduction workshops (spread out over 3 days) that include; puppet making with household objects, storytelling and creative drama based on cottage folktales, and creative movement. Each workshop lasts 45 minutes for 3-6 and tailored specifically with each age in mind. Age 2 workshops last 30 minutes.

OPTION 2

3-Day Workshops: gearing up to the performance of **Olive & Pearl** that are either in storytelling/creative drama, or creative movement.

OPTION 3

6, 9, 15, 20-Day Residencies: Students spend 6-20 days (can be once or twice a week) with the teaching artist in creating their own puppets, creating a play of their own, or in creative movement.

OPTION 4

15-Day Performance Residency: Older students create a dance-play of their own with creative movement, storytelling and puppets. Two teaching artists for each class are provided. 45 minutes.

ABOUT TREEHOUSE SHAKERS

Treehouse Shakers, Inc., a non-profit dance and theater company, was co-founded in 1997 by Emily Bunning, choreographer/dancer, and Mara McEwin, writer/actor. Treehouse Shakers has created and performed thirteen original dance-plays for young audiences and adults in many established performance venues, including theaters, festivals and schools across the nation. Most recently the company was awarded the CUNY Dance Initiative, Flushing Town Hall 2015-2016 Space Grant, selected artists for the New York State Presenters Network Roster, and as artists participating in the prestigious BAM Professional Development Program in association with the DeVos Institute of Arts Management for the 2014-2015 cycle. Treehouse Shakers also created and performed the dance programming for the Television show, **Alex & The Kaleidoscope**, which won an Emmy this past season.

Currently, Treehouse Shakers has six original performances for young audiences on a rotating tour across the nation including: **Animal Rhythms: Two African Folktales**, **Desert Travels: Tales From the Middle East**, **Coyote's Dance: Tales from the American Indian** and **Let's Talk About IT!**, a piece for teens. **Animal Rhythms** introduces audiences to rhythm, modern dance and theater through the power and culture of West African folklore. **Desert Travels** gives young audiences a mesmerizing taste of life in the Middle East by portraying the sights, sounds and stories of a remarkable culture. **Coyote's Dance** follows Coyote, who is both clown and teacher, on a humorous journey of deceit and adventure. **Let's Talk About IT!** incorporates the vocabulary of dance, world folklore, real-life stories, and video interviews of everyday teens. **Hatched**, for the youngest viewers ages 0-6, is about baby animals and their life on the farm. Our newest piece is the dance-mystery, **Under the Tangle**, about an orphaned young girl who becomes trapped in an enchanted labyrinth, for ages 8 and up. **Olive & Pearl** is our newest piece in development for ages 2-5 to premiere in 2017.

Treehouse Shakers' work has been praised by *The New York Times*, *FOX TV's Good Day Street Talk*, *New York Magazine*, *Time Out Kids*, *New York 1's Parenting Report*, *CBS-TV's Morning Show*, *Mommy Poppins*, *Village Voice*, *New York Post*, and *The Daily News*, among others. Some recent highlighted performance venues for our dance-plays include: *Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)*, *BMCC's Tribeca Performing Arts Center*

(NYC), Queens Theatre in the Park (NYC), United Nations (NYC), The Peter Jay Sharp Theater (NYC), The Ailey Citigroup Theater (NYC), Manhattan Movement and Arts Center (NYC), Symphony Space (NYC), Flushing Town Hall (NYC), The Palace Theatre Stamford (Stamford, CT), Long Island Children's Museum (Garden City, NY), The Egg (Albany, NY), Victoria Theater Associations (Dayton, OH), Alden Theater (McLean, VA), Aronoff Center (Cincinnati, OH), Paramount Theater (Peekskill, NY), Westhampton Beach Playhouse (L.I., NY), Tribeca Film Festival (NYC), Jacob's Pillow (Becket, MA), Two Rivers Theater (Red Bank, NJ), Black Rock Theater (Germantown, MD), Bucks County Playhouse (New Hope, PA) and Elias Center for the Arts (Mifflinburg, PA).



We would love to hear from you! Send us your drawings from Olive & Pearl, or your activities from the study guide. We will post on our website and blog. Thank you!

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