

THE PAPER BAG PLAYERS GREAT MUMMY ADVENTURE

Created by The Paper Bag Players
Ted Brackett, Laura Canty-Samuel, Kevin Richard Woodall and Judith Martin
Music composed by John Stone and Donald Ashwander
Directed by Ted Brackett



2009-10 Study Guide



THE PAPER BAG PLAYERS GREAT MUMMY ADVENTURE is the title of our new show. And what an adventure this year has been for me. In May I became the new Artistic Director of The Paper Bag Players! Over my 23 years working with the Founding Artistic Director Judith Martin, as performer then as Associate Director, I learned so much. I was very anxious to put what I learned into practice.

The very first thing I wanted to do was create some new pieces. I needed a creative team to work with me to achieve this goal. I asked John Stone, our musician and composer and performers Laura Canty-Samuel and Kevin Richard Woodall for their help

At first, I was nervous. Would we come up with any good ideas? Would I be able to say no to ideas that didn't fit in? But from the time we sat down our collaboration was exhilarating! Ideas just flowed—musical ideas, visual ideas, funny ideas! Sometimes I went home with a sore stomach from laughing so hard. We worked

through the spring. In the summer, Jon Peck, our scenic artist joined in, and in the fall, Amy Walsh.

I have tried in this Study Guide to reflect our collaboration, and the fun we had in creating **THE PAPER BAG PLAYERS GREAT MUMMY ADVENTURE**. I even asked the other Paper Bag Players to continue to help.

I am very glad you and your class will be attending **THE PAPER BAG PLAYERS GREAT MUMMY ADVENTURE**. This year's show has all the elements that The Paper Bag Players performances are known for: unforgettable songs, free-wheeling dances, jokes, painting, audience participation, paper bag costumes and scenery—and lots of adventure!

Part of the fun for me of going to see a show is imagining before hand what the show will be about. I like to picture the different possibilities in my mind. What will the story be? What will the scenery look like? How will the story be told? I will describe some of the pieces you will be seeing—being careful to not give away any surprises—so you can imagine what's in store for you.

Lets start with the title number *The Great Mummy Adventure*. What does that title bring to your mind? Egypt? The desert? A Mummy? A Camel? Well our show has all those things—along with some crooks, a treasure map and a tomb. It is real epic—that means large scale—big! And in our epic adventure we ask for your help. We ask you to become extras in our “movie.” Extras are used to fill a scene with life! You'll get to be a crowd at an airport, a flock of birds and even the voice of a Pharaoh's curse, all from your seats! So... get ready for your close-up!

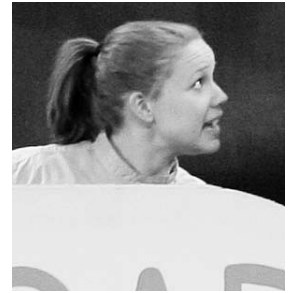


Ted Brackett, The Paper Bag Players new Artistic Director, prepares for the new show. Note the cardboard movie camera.

Do you like riddles? Paper Bag Player Amy Walsh does too. Amy has come up with a few riddles to go along with THE PAPER BAG PLAYERS GREAT MUMMY ADVENTURE.



- 1. What is the most important day in Egypt?**
- 2. What is a Mummy's favorite type of music?**
- 3. Where do Mummies go for a swim?**
- 4. Who belongs to the Pyramid PTA?**
- 5. What do you call a Mummy who eats cookies in bed?**
- 6. What did the Mummy say when he smelled a skunk?**



Amy in last year's show

Here are the answers to the riddles:

1. Mummy's Day, 2. Wrap Music, 3. The Dead Sea, 4. Mummies and Deadies, 5. A crummy Mummy, 6. That Sphinx! I bet you guessed a lot of them. — Amy Walsh

A very dramatic piece in this year's show is *When Winter Stayed Too Long*. We wrote this when winter seemed to be going on and on and on. We were all looking forward to spring. In our play Winter is very stubborn. Sun tries to reason with him. Winter tricks the mighty Sun and covers Sun with a Cloud. It takes a crafty tropical Wind to blow away Winter. In real life it takes weeks for seasons to change. Our play is over in minutes;



Sun, Cloud, and Wind talk and when Spring arrives he is a man dancing with a bunch of flowers! Do you have a favorite season? Do you ever want one season to end and the next to begin? Sometimes the seasons blend together and I am surprised to see the change in nature.



What are some signs of the different seasons?



Ted as Winter and Kevin as The Wind in "When Winter Stayed Too Long"

Kevin Richard Woodall has acted with The Paper Bag Players for thirteen seasons. His roles include the Woodchopper in "Tree Angel," the Bully in "Big Bully" and the Alligator in "That's Good." Kevin is a wonderful performer. Here is an excerpt from an interview with Kevin. I thought you'd like to hear some of his thoughts on acting.



Kevin dances as Spring in "When Winter Stayed Too Long"

When did you first become an actor? *Well, really you'd have to go all the way back to my pre-school. I was around 4 or 5. My teacher called my Mother and told her that everyday at cookies and milk time, which I guess was supposed to be a quiet time, I was getting up in center of the circle and doing funny little dances and songs and making everyone laugh. So, I guess you could say that was the very beginning!*

What was your first real role? *My parents signed me up to study with a theater group in the small town where I am from, Kankakee, IL. The group was called the Lilliputian Theater. My very first role was the Badger in "The Great Cross Country Race" but the role I really remember as my first was Bilbo Baggins in "The Hobbit."*

What was your favorite part? *I'll tell you any part that has movement and dance in it. When I am doing a funny character dance I am so happy. In this year's show I do the spring dance in "When Winter Stayed Too Long" and I know Ted and I will put a lot of movement into the roles of the Crooks in "The Great Mummy Adventure." It should be a happy year!*

Do you have any tips on being a successful actor? *You have to believe in yourself and always give 100%—even when you aren't feeling so good you have to give it your all. Work hard, believe in yourself, give it your all—yep, that's it.*

The complete interview with Kevin can be found at thepaperbagplayers.org on Teacher's Corner.



We like to have contrast in our shows and *The Postman's Dream* fits this perfectly. This is the simple, poetic story of a Postman delivering his mail. His bag is heavy with letters. When he finally comes to the last two houses on his route; he is so tired, he falls asleep. He dreams he is a butterfly. He is flying—a butterfly delivering the mail. The dream is so real when he awakes he is not sure if he's a butterfly or a postman. Do you think it is possible to mix up real things with things we imagine? Has this ever happened to you?



ften in our plays The Paper Bag Players take an object and change it into something else—a boot into a funny hat, a mop top into a frisky puppy, a comb into a mustache! How does that happen? It is like when you are playing with a big cardboard shipping box and it becomes a castle or a fort. It is how you play with the box, use the object that makes it what it is. In theater this is called "transformation." I just call it fun. You can even make it into a game. You could play this game with your friends—maybe your teacher would help. Stand in a circle. Take any object, maybe something from the classroom: a book, an eraser, a ruler. Pass the object round the circle. Each person as they take the object should change into something else by the way they handle it. I bet you'll be very surprised at all the transformations you'll see! — Ted Brackett

Do you have a pet? A cat? A dog? A hamster? A turtle? Amy has a pet chicken—a very unusual chicken. Amy's chicken is the star of our play, *Amy's Chicken*. It's a jolly story with lots of laughs and surprises. Can you guess what a Paper Bag Players chicken is made of? (If you said paper you'd be right!) And Amy's chicken is very large. Even so she loses her pet. It is only with your help she finds it. I love stories about pets. Do you think you could make up a story about your pet—or your imaginary pet? Would it be funny? (Laura loves to make up stories—see below.)



Laura in last year's show

This summer Laura performed her one-woman show *Sunday Best* at the New York City International Fringe Festival. Her show was full of stories just like ours. I asked Laura to tell us a little about how she comes up with ideas.

When I start writing stories I always try to start with a simple idea. I might think. . . sometimes socks are stinky. From there I begin to imagine if I were a sock, how would it feel, what could I have done to become so stinky, do I talk to shoes or belts, and do I like being on really big feet or tiny little feet? I write it all down. I let my imagination run wild on paper. Then I go back. I keep the things that I like most in the story and save the rest for another day.

Writing stories collaboratively (that means writing with someone else) can be fun yet challenging. When Ted, Kevin, John and I sat down to create a brand new batch of stories for The Paper Bag Players, we each had lots of ideas. Sometimes one of us would have an idea that someone else didn't understand or sometimes even like! That was tough. We had to be patient, listen, take turns and work hard to co-operate. In the end, because we were willing to share ideas and work together, we came up with funny stories that we each love and can be proud of.

The most important thing to remember is to never be afraid of using your imagination. It's your story, not anyone else's. But, don't be afraid to listen to other people's ideas because they might come up with something that will make your story even greater than it is! — Laura Canty-Samuel

Some of the stories we came up with for this year's show really made us laugh and laugh. *Ants in My Pants* is one of them. This piece takes place in a park. Four friends are playing catch. They are tossing beach balls to each other—the audience even gets involved in their game of catch. Hungry from their game they all sit down on a large blanket eager for a delicious lunch, unfortunately that's when the trouble begins. Fortunately, you get to help them out. You also get to sing. I asked John to tell you about that. Turn the page to read John's story.





We all wanted to do a skit about a picnic. It wasn't long before we imagined some city folk (us) at a picnic. A nice peaceful picnic—but then the ants arrive! A song, a dance and lots of shaking, jumping and twisting, done faster and faster, is required to get rid of those ants. That's where you come in! The song you'll sing is printed below. Good luck and don't forget to sing loud and clear we need your help!
— John Stone

Ants in My Pants

John Stone

John at the electric piano. (Faster with each repeat!)

After seeing a show the thing I like best is to talk about it! Sometimes talking about what you have seen is almost as fun as seeing it! I love to hear if my friends felt the same way about the show that I did. Sometimes they feel completely different! Here are some suggestions to help get your “after theater” discussion going.

Did anything in the show surprise you? Were there things in the show that were exactly like you imagined?

Music plays a very big part in our shows. Often it sets the mood, the feeling, for a scene. Can you think of an example when this happened in the show? What was the mood set by the music in *The Postman's Dream*? Was it the same mood in *Ants in My Pants*?

The stories in our show are told with lots of action. They could be told differently. Could you tell the story of one of our short plays? Feel free to change the story anyway you'd like. (Another way to tell a story is by drawing a picture—you might like to try that too.)

The Paper Bag Players act lots of different roles in our show. Everything from a Mummy to a Cloud to a camel! Do you think you would like to be an actor like Kevin? Or Amy? Would you like to be a Paper Bag Player? Each of the Players wears sneakers of different colors. What color would your sneakers be?

I hope this Study Guide helped you to get ready for a good time when you arrive at the theater and even bring some of the fun into your classroom.

The Paper Bag Players are always interested in hearing how children responded to the show. We welcome letters and drawings and try to respond to each we receive. Teachers, I would be very pleased to hear from you about how you felt about the show and Study Guide. Don't forget to visit our website and Teachers Corner.

See you at the show,

THE PAPER BAG PLAYERS

185 East Broadway, New York, NY 10002

212-353-2332 pbag@verizon.net thepaperbagplayers.org



All The Paper Bag Players material is inspired by the vision and imagination of **Judith Martin**, The Paper Bag Players Founding Artistic Director.