

Consciente de la fascination des enfants pour les histoires véridiques, l'auteur en raconte une dont le personnage principal n'a que sept ans. Peter, un petit garçon qui vivait à Granby, au Québec, était triste qu'il n'y ait pas d'éléphants au Zoo de sa ville. Quand il apprit que l'on en trouvait en Inde, il eut la bonne idée d'écrire au Premier Ministre de ce pays pour lui demander de lui en envoyer un. Le rêve de Peter se réalisa.

“La Bergère de Noël” et “L'eau de Pâques” sont deux histoires au sujet de la religion. La première rappelle aux enfants où Jésus est né, qui sont son père et sa mère et insiste sur le fait qu'il est le Sauveur du monde, le Messie, qu'il faut l'aimer et l'adorer. Quant à la deuxième, c'est l'histoire bien triste d'une petite fille aveugle dont la mère est morte et qui, le jour de Pâques, à l'aide de la Vierge Marie envoyée par sa mère, atteint l'eau de source et recouvre la vue.

Le livre finit par l'histoire du “petit cheval de l'Ouest”, Héros, qui aide son maître à payer ses dettes en travaillant dans un cirque.

Nouse pensons que les enfants à partir de l'âge de cinq ans sauront apprécier ces récits intéressants et fascinants. Ils pourront également, en les écoutant, chanter avec les enfants de l'autobus scolaire, avec François au Carnaval de Québec, avec les alouettes La diversité des sujets présentés captera l'attention des enfants, suscitera des discussions que beaucoup de professeurs d'écoles françaises et d'immersion françaises accueilleront avec plaisir.

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A Potential Children's Dramatist

J.K. LEARD

The Bling Said Hello, and You'll Never Be The Same. Georgette Guay. Playwrights Co-op, Toronto, 1979. 40 pp. \$3.00.

A well written children's play is difficult to find but even more elusive is the writer who approaches children's theatre with an understanding of the needs and interests of the various age levels. The two plays, *The Bling Said Hello* and *You'll Never Be The Same* by Georgette Guay show a writer who is wrestling with this problem. The first play skims the surface of what could be an interesting story but never quite satisfies our expectations, whereas the second is a good attempt at exploring how pressure to conform is a common source of stress in children. Both plays suffer from a number of problems, particularly *The Bling Said Hello*, but the development of both the writing and theatrical skill from the first play to the second shows that Ms. Guay has potential.

The Bling Said Hello, first produced in 1977, is the earlier of the two plays and familiarity with it will help in understanding the second play. The plot, too simple for the nine-to-twelve age group suggested in the introduction, is more suitable for the pre-school or primary range. The play begins as the Bling lands his spacecraft, which is having mechanical problems, in an isolated community. The editor of the local newspaper sees the Bling – so-named because the only sound he makes is “bling” – and makes up the story that the Bling will destroy the town unless he is given \$50,000. The editor, of course, wants the money himself so that he can move to a big city. The heroine of the play, Sandy, hears the bling sound, investigates, and learns that the Bling has no such designs on the community. Sandy tells her mother, a policewoman, this news. Mother is a little skeptical but eventually catches the editor out. When Sandy looks for the Bling again, he is gone.

This play is not truly science fiction, as it might seem. The “alien” (Bling) plays almost no role in the plot: Ms Guay missed a delightful opportunity here to develop this character. Our expectations of science-fiction are deflated as the play unfolds, for it seems to be a rather flat copy of a television drama.

For the most part the characters are as flat as the plot. The editor lacks the dimensions of a true villain and when caught he receives no punishment. The editor's wife makes an unrealistic change from being someone who loves the community to being someone who wants all the things that money can buy. Sandy's mother is the stereotyped “nice mom”. Sandy is the most developed, in a two-dimensional way, but the main trouble is that no character is given enough depth to come to life.

There is a narrative that fills in some of the gaps, but it does not substitute for good characterization and might have been better handled if the narration had been assigned to the characters. Such is a “Story Theatre” technique which allows the audience to see inside the motives of the characters.

In summary the play needs to develop the narrative bits, make logical mood and character transitions and fill the plot out with interesting twists

using the Bling as an active participant. *The Bling Said Hello* seems to me to be hastily written, or perhaps it was developed through improvisation in rehearsal. It is an interesting first draft which would benefit from a number of rewrites and revisions.

The second play, *You'll Never Be The Same* shows a vast improvement over the first, both in writing and in theatrical skill. Instead of structuring this play around an adventure story, Ms. Guay builds it up through the exploration of a theme: she examines the effect of peer pressure on children. Sandy, of Bling fame, is rehearsing for a puppet show when some friends come along and want her to join them in a skateboard competition. Unfortunately, it is to take place at the time when she is supposed to be performing her own show. She chooses to do the show. A friend then tells her that some of the kids think her a little weird, always playing with dolls. This hurts Sandy: she doesn't want to be different or lose her friends. That night she decides to throw away her puppets and join the gang. However, in a dream, she is taken to "Samenessness Land" where everyone looks the same, thinks the same, and lives every day just like every other day. She soon realizes that she doesn't want to be the same as everyone else, and the rest of the play deals with her adventures in trying to escape and return home. The adventures include a return appearance of the Bling.

Although this play is much better than the first, it still has a few problems. There needs to be more action at the beginning to make Sandy really want to be part of the group. Her decisions are made more from talking about her friends rather than from reacting to them. We need to see her shunned by the group so that we also see the reason for change. The same problem appears in "Samenessness Land", where she almost immediately wants to go home without really sampling what it has to offer.

I also object to the out-of-the-woodwork appearance of the Bling. Although references are made to the previous play, these references are only meaningful to an audience which has seen the other play. Furthermore, the Bling is still not an active participant in the play (he only gives suggestions on how to escape), nor does he derive from the plot. He seems merely to be an afterthought.

I did enjoy some of the characters in the imaginary "samenessness" land and thought of a number of delightful ways to stage various incidents. Also, Sandy's escapes from situations are interesting: an audience would delight in helping her escape by shouting out antonyms and synonyms.

As a director I might consider *You'll Never Be The Same* for production, but I would hope for another rewrite from the author. The play needs developmental work at the beginning and the Bling needs better integration. The play has both educational and entertainment value and, with changes, could be interesting.

Ms. Guay is a dramatist with promise, as development of her skill from

one play to the next shows. Finally, I should add that my critique is of the written script and that sometimes these problems can be cleared up in production; if they can be rectified in the script, however, it is more likely that a director will choose to mount the play.

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A Quand L'écriture de Textes Dramatiques D'Enfants?

HÉLÈNE BEAUCHAMP

Place au théâtre, (sketches pour enfants), Raynald Talbot. Québec: Les éditions du Merle Bavard, 1978. 113 pp. \$6.00.

Fanfreluches, (Saynètes pour les 6 à 8 ans), Raynald Talbot. Québec: Les éditions du Merle Bavard, 1979. 40 pp. \$3.00.

Les écrivains québécois ne se sont pas encore beaucoup arrêtés aux textes dramatiques qui peuvent être dits et joués par les jeunes. Ils écrivent beaucoup *pour* eux: des romans, des contes et du théâtre, mais ils résistent aux textes à être théâtralisés *par* eux. Et avec raison, à mon avis, car cette dernière tâche demande à être envisagée avec beaucoup de circonspection. Quelle serait la teneur des textes à faire dire aux enfants? Pouvons-nous identifier clairement la marge qui peut séparer les enfants des adultes dans, par exemple, l'interprétation du réel? Et surtout, sommes-nous suffisamment conscients de l'importance de faire parler les enfants eux-mêmes de ce qui les touche? soucieux de les amener à développer leur propre créativité?

Raynald Talbot a, lui, publié de nombreux textes à être joués et dits par