

TOSCA CAFE

SEPTEMBER 13 to OCTOBER 2, 2011
Student Education Performances:
September 21st and September 29th

Created and staged by CAREY PERLOFF and VAL CANIPAROLI
The American Conservatory Theater (San Francisco) production

Starring REX HARRINGTON
PETER ANDERSON (*The Overcoat, 7 Stories*)
and DEAN PAUL GIBSON (*Vigil, The Drowsy Chaperone*)

A co-production with the Vancouver Playhouse

Student Activity Guide

Prepared by Dom Saliani

and

Shari Wattling, Artistic Associate, Theatre Calgary

With additional material provided by American Conservatory Theatre



STRONGER COMMUNITIES TOGETHER™

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Note to Teachers | 3 |
| Prepare to Attend the Performance: Theatre Etiquette | 4-5 |
| Prepare for the “Meet the Actors” Session | 5 |
| Checking Your Reading – Crossword Puzzle | 6 |
| Who Needs Words Anyway? | 7 |
| Related Readings and Films | 8 |
| Become the Teacher | 8 |
| Review the Reviewers | 9 |

II. WHILE THE CURTAIN IS UP

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Plot & Character | 10 |
| Setting and Mood | 11 |
| Theme | 11 |

III. AFTER THE CURTAIN FALLS

| | |
|--|----|
| Reflect on Pre-Performance Activities | 12 |
| Cast a Feature Film Version of the Play | 12 |
| Write a Review | 12 |
| Write a Letter to the Director | 12 |
| Reflective Writing on the Theatre Experience | 13 |
| Representing Character, Conflict and Theme | 13 |
| Create a Keepsake Scrapbook | 14 |

IV. ANSWER KEY

| | |
|---|----|
| Solution to Vocabulary Crossword Puzzle | 15 |
|---|----|

A Note to Teachers:

We are happy to provide the following activity suggestions for your students to complete before, during and after attending a Theatre Calgary performance of *Tosca Cafe*

It is not necessary for students to complete all of the following activities.

Consider only those activities that you believe meet the needs and interests of your students.

It is also recommended that, whenever possible, choices be offered and that students engage in group inquiry to complete the activities.

Feel free to post activities on D2L.

Enjoy.

I. BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES

PREPARE TO ATTEND THE PERFORMANCE: THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Theatre etiquette —what is appropriate and not appropriate to do when you are in the theatre — is an important matter to consider before attending a play with your classmates. Below is a list of some “dos” and “don’ts” to consider. In groups, before referring to these lists, generate as many theatre etiquette rules as you can, including both “dos” and “don’ts.”

DOS

- Arrive at the theatre early to ensure enough time to get to your seat before the performance starts.
- Stay seated with your feet on the floor.
- Turn off any cell phones, mp3 players, watch alarms or other electronic devices.
- Leave the talking to the actors on the stage.
- Eat your lunch or snacks in the lobby of the theatre before the performance or during intermission.
- Laugh, applaud, cheer and respond to the performance appropriately.
- Leave your cameras and recording devices at home.
- Feel free to share your thoughts about the performance with your teachers and fellow students after the performance.
- Make sure you thank the actors, crew and other theatre artists with your applause during the curtain call.
- Have an open mind and prepare to enjoy the performance beforehand.

DON'TS

- Arrive late. Latecomers may not be admitted depending on the performance.
- Put your feet up on the chair or stage in front of you.
- Let your phone ring, send/receive text messages, or listen to your mp3 player during a performance.
- Talk or make any noise once the performance has begun.
- Eat your lunch or snacks inside the theatre.
- Shout, whistle or make comments during the performance.
- Take pictures or video during the performance.
- Share your thoughts about the performance while you are watching it.
- Leave the theatre prior to the conclusion of the curtain call.
- Make up your mind about how you feel about a performance before you’ve had a chance to see it.

Make sure to include reasons for the rules. An example is provided in the box below.

| Rule | Reasons |
|---|---|
| <i>a. Don't text message during the performance</i> | <i>The actors are not blind. They can see the illumination of your device as you are texting. This is rude to the actors who are working very hard to entertain you. It is also very distracting.</i> |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |
| 6. | |
| 7. | |
| 8. | |

PREPARE FOR THE “MEET THE ACTORS” SESSION

After each student matinee performance, members of the acting company will be available for a question and answer session with students.

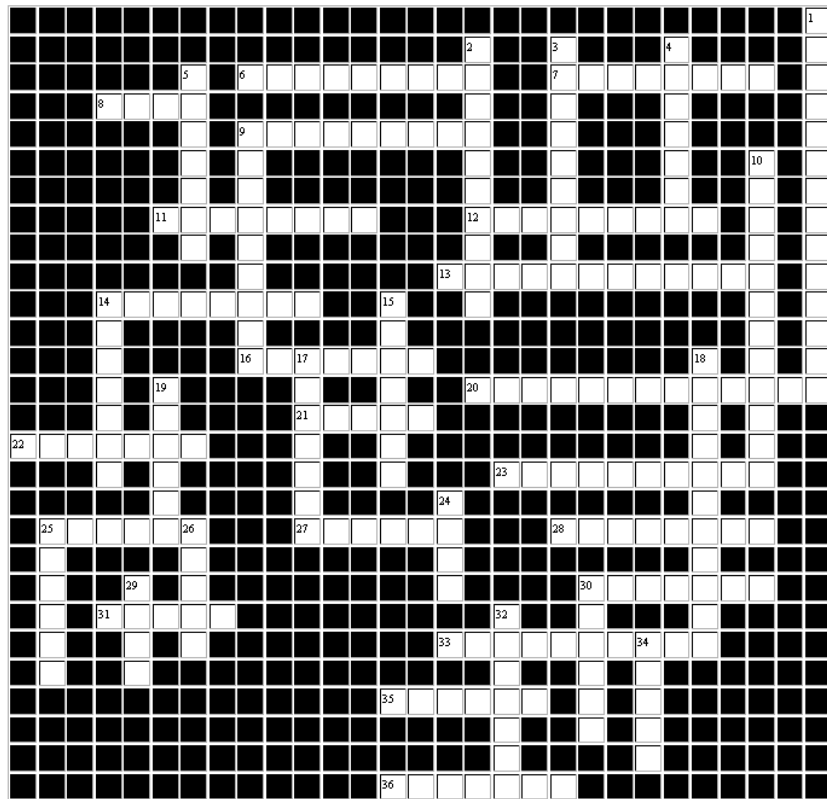
From what you know of the play, which actors would you like most to talk with?

With a partner, generate at least three questions that you would like to ask these actors. The questions can deal with any of the following:

1. When and how they got into acting
2. Their favorite roles in past performances
3. What they do to prepare for a performance
4. Their interpretation of the work in general or the role they play
5. Special challenges in portraying their specific roles in this production
6. Any other aspect of acting or of the play that you are interested in

CHECKING YOUR READING – CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Answers to the clues for the puzzle below are to be found in the “Historical Context and Events” section of the **Enrichment Guide** (pp 15 – 21) downloadable at www.theatre Calgary.com. Challenge yourself by attempting the puzzle without consulting the Enrichment Guide. Then, if you have problems with any of the clues, do not hesitate to check the information. By the way, two word answers include a space between them.



Across

6. new owner of the Tosca Cafe
7. a Judd who loves the Tosca
8. generation popularized by Kerouac
9. Queen of Disco
11. what they were about to play when the earthquake struck
12. illegal drinking place
13. what Ferlinghetti writes poetry on
14. members of the beat generation
16. Russian ballet dancer
20. trait of the beat generation
21. energetic dance popular in the 30s
22. music dispenser in the Tosca
23. specialty coffee of the Tosca
25. dance most often performed in this production
27. first name of Premier who want Nureyev killed
28. occupation of the man who is running from the law
30. author of the Tosca opera
31. type of music played by Sylvester
33. dance loved by flappers
35. group that sung "Red Rubber Ball"
36. name of another famous cafe in San Francisco

Down

1. In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida singers
2. event which began in October 1929
3. what shakes things up in 1989
4. group whose concerts was opened by The Cyrkle
5. nationality of the Bartender
9. length in minutes of "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida"
10. city where the Tosca is located
14. flower children
15. where the Americans were fighting during the 60s and 70s
17. nationality of the Immigrant Woman
18. law which prohibited booze
19. character who dances the Charleston in "It's a Wonderful Life"
24. upbeat music of the 40s and the 50s
25. what the bartenders added to their coffee during Prohibition
26. name of the opera that the Bartender loves to listen to
29. the time of day when the Tosca opens
30. literary form favoured by Beats
32. military men who come to the Tosca before and after the war
34. character who does the Charleston to save a Lion King

WHO NEEDS WORDS ANYWAY?

As you probably know by now, *Tosca Cafe* is not at all like most conventional theatrical works in that it does not rely on dialogue to reveal character and advance the plot. Who needs words anyway?

Besides, words often conceal truths. Can you think of a time when someone asked you how you were? You mostly likely automatically responded with a "Fine. How are you?" You may not have been fine at all, but it is also just as likely that your non-verbal communication gave you away.

Social scientists have estimated that when people talk to each other, about 55% of the information is communicated non-verbally through body language, facial expressions and eye contact. The rest of the information is projected by the words themselves and the vocal aspects of the words (pitch, volume, rhythm, emphasis).

As the actors and dancers prepared for *Tosca Cafe*, they participated in workshops focusing on how to communicate without the use of words or dialogue.

Activity:

The class should be broken up into pairs for this activity.

Write each of the following words on separate slips of paper.

You may have to repeat some depending on the size of the class.

agreement
amazement
amusement
anger
annoyed
confidence
confusion

curiosity
depression
disgust
enthusiasm
fear
gratitude
happiness

hatred
indifference
love
sympathy
understanding
vulnerable
worry

Put the slips of paper into a container and have each member of each pair blindly pick one slip of paper.

Take five to ten minutes and prepare with your partner how each of you in turn will project to the class, the emotion or state of mind you have chosen.

Each pair should go to the front of the class and each member should take turns communicating their emotion to their partner.

Each presentation should include a 3 to 5 second movement to set a context.

At the end of the scene, the presenter should strike a pose that non-verbally projects the emotion and hold the pose for about five seconds.

Then invite the class to guess what emotion was being projected.

By the end of this exercise, you are sure to agree that body language speaks louder than words.

RELATED READINGS AND FILMS

The following titles are works that relate to various aspects of *Tosca Cafe*. As a class, or individually, you may wish to read or view some of these works.

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|------------------|
| F. Scott Fitzgerald | <i>The Great Gatsby</i> (novel and film) | The Jazz Age |
| John Steinbeck | <i>Grapes of Wrath</i> (novel and film) | Great Depression |
| Margaret Lawrence | "Horses of the Night" (short story) | Great Depression |
| Gene Lees | Oscar Peterson: <i>The Will to Swing</i> (non-fiction) | Swing |
| Erich Maria Remarque | <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> (novel) | World War II |
| Jack Kerouac | <i>The Dharma Bums</i> (novel) | Beat Generation |
| Lawrence Ferlinghetti | "The World is a Beautiful Place" (poem) | |
| | "I Am Waiting" (poem) | Beat Generation |
| Allen Ginsberg | "Howl" (poem) | |
| John Phillips | "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Some Flowers in Your Hair)" (song lyrics) | Flower Power |
| | <i>Hair</i> (Broadway Musical and film) | Flower Power |
| Tim O'Brien | "On the Rainy River" (short story) | Vietnam War |

BECOME THE TEACHER

Tosca Cafe is based on a real establishment in San Francisco and takes place over the span of 70 years. As a class, divide into small groups. Each group should research and prepare a short presentation for the entire class on one of the following topics related to *Tosca Cafe*:

- The real *Tosca Cafe* in San Francisco
- Prohibition in the 1920s
- The Great Depression
- The "Hippie" or "Flower Child" generation of the 1960s
- The Vietnam War
- America in the 1940s (WWII)
- Beat Poetry
- Rudolf Nureyev
- Puccini's opera *Tosca*

For a start, brief information about all of these topics can be found in the **Enrichment Guide** for *Tosca Cafe* which can be downloaded online from www.theatrealgary.com.

REVIEW THE REVIEWERS

By the time you are scheduled to attend *Tosca Cafe* at Theatre Calgary, the local papers and magazines will have printed reviews of the play.

Find and read at least two of these reviews.

You can start by checking out the [Calgary Herald](#) and the Calgary Sun ([Canoe.ca](#)) entertainment sections.

What did the reviewers think of the performance?

What did the reviewers like or dislike about the production?

What important information did you learn about the play and the characters by reading the reviews?

Based on the reviews, what are you looking forward to seeing in the performance of *Tosca Cafe* at Theatre Calgary?

II. WHILE THE CURTAIN IS UP - Questions to Consider

PLOT AND CHARACTER

- According to Jean Schiffman, a *San Francisco Examiner* reviewer, *Tosca Cafe* “is an almost textless and basically plotless pastiche of scenes” in which actors “seamlessly waft through time, from Prohibition to the digital age.”

To what extent do you agree with this description?

In what ways do the four main characters serve to unify the action in this work?

- We hope that you agree that many of the scenes in *Tosca Cafe* were quite humorous.

Which scenes do you think were the most humorous?

Describe how humour was created in these scenes.

- In most dramatic works, dialogue is used to reveal character and advance the plot. Since this work has relatively little dialogue, what is used to accomplish these purposes?
To what extent did you feel this approach to be successful?

If this work had more dialogue, what would have been gained AND lost?

- In your opinion, which actors or dancers were most effective in bringing their characters to life?
Explain the reasons for your choice.

SETTING AND MOOD

- What were your first impressions of the set? In what ways was it interesting and multi-functional?
- What did you think of the costumes and make-up used in the Theatre Calgary performance of *Tosca Cafe*?

What did the costumes and make-up reveal or emphasize about the personality of the characters in the play.

- In small groups or as a class, discuss how sound, music and lighting effects were used effectively during the performance.

Focus on the specific moods, atmosphere or effects the use of sound, music and lighting helped to create at various times in the performance. As music is of particular importance in this production, spend some time reflecting on the music choices and how they were effective in demonstrating the passage of time, changes in mood and emphasis on character.

THEME

- Titles of works are very important in that they can suggest theme or contain symbolism that informs the audience as to what is important in the work. What does the title *Tosca Cafe* suggest about the play itself? What does it say about the theme of the work?

Create two alternate and appropriate titles that contain symbolism or which suggest what is truly important in this work. Explain why your choices of title are appropriate and effective.

- Some theatrical works are written merely to entertain or to help us escape from the real world. Such works may feature broad humour, elaborate staging or special effects, unrealistic characters and plot manipulation. These works are not really intended to say significant things about life.

Other theatrical works are written to express significant insights about people and about life. Such serious works invite us to continue thinking about the ideas and the characters well after we have seen the performance.

Still other theatrical works are created to teach moral lessons or warn us about certain behaviours or attitudes. These didactic works tell us how we should live our lives and how we can avoid problems.

It can be said that *Tosca Cafe* does all three to varying degrees. However, what do you think is the MAJOR purpose of this work? Is it primarily to entertain, to reveal significant truths or to teach? Justify your opinion by referring to specific scenes from the play.

III. AFTER THE CURTAIN FALLS – Post-performance Student Activities

REFLECT ON PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

What pre-performance information and activities best prepared you for the play?

What else could you have done or wished you had done to have better prepared you for your viewing of *Tosca Cafe*?

CAST A FEATURE FILM VERSION OF THE PLAY

Assume that a feature film version of the story is being made and that you have been given the job of finding a cast for it.

What well known actors would you choose to play the roles of the major characters?

To justify your casting choices, you should refer to other similar roles handled by each of the actors.

WRITE A REVIEW

Write a review of the performance of *Tosca Cafe* that you have just seen.

Read several newspaper or magazine reviews to get a better idea of the style and structure of typical drama reviews.

A good central source for reviews can be found at:

<http://www.curtainup.com/goingall.html>

Make sure that you do not follow any one review too closely.

Your review should reflect your personal take and evaluation of the performance.

WRITE A LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR

Write a letter to the director commenting on what you enjoyed or did not enjoy about the production.

Focus on how elements such as casting choices, use of lighting, sound and music, costuming, acting and dance contributed to your enjoyment of the production.

REFLECTIVE WRITING ON THE THEATRE EXPERIENCE

Consider the reasons why so many people prefer attending a live sporting event such as a football or a hockey game over watching the same event on TV.

Now consider the ways in which attending a live theatre performance could be preferable to watching a feature film on the big screen or a DVD or video at home.

What did you enjoy most about being part of the audience attending Theatre Calgary and seeing *Tosca Cafe*?

Based on this experience, are you looking forward to attending another play in the near future? Explain.

REPRESENTING CHARACTER, CONFLICT AND THEME

Create a poster by finding (or creating) a series of graphics, photos or illustrations, and words that you think serve, in significant ways, to illustrate or bring to life the characters, the situations, the themes or messages of the play.

Complete your representation on poster paper.

On the back side of the poster, briefly explain why you chose the graphics you did. In other words, what do each of your visuals represent?

Please note that the explanation of the graphics on the back of your poster is not an essay or a formal piece of writing.

CREATE A KEEPSAKE SCRAPBOOK

We hope that you enjoyed the experience of visiting Theatre Calgary and seeing a performance of *Tosca Cafe*. As a permanent keepsake and record of this experience, we encourage you to create a scrapbook/journal which includes artifacts, assignments, and reflections.

Artifacts could include items such as theatre reviews from local newspapers, ticket stubs and a program.

You should also include all the assignments and activities that you completed in preparation for your visit to Theatre Calgary as well as the “After the Curtain Falls” activities.

Here are some other ideas that you may wish to consider for inclusion:

- journal entry commenting on your opinion of the dancers and actors and how they brought their characters to life
- a published review of the play
- photographs taken before and after the performance (Remember that you are not allowed to take pictures during the performance.)
- drawings or sketches of the set
- questions you would like to ask the actors, dancers or director
- journal entry dealing with your thoughts and impressions of being a part of a live theatre audience
- graphics found on the internet relating to *Tosca Cafe*. Be sure to credit sources.
- colourful cover and a detailed table of contents
- anything else that you think will make your scrapbook/journal worth going back to several years from now

Once your scrapbook/journal is complete, you may choose to share it with your teacher and classmates.

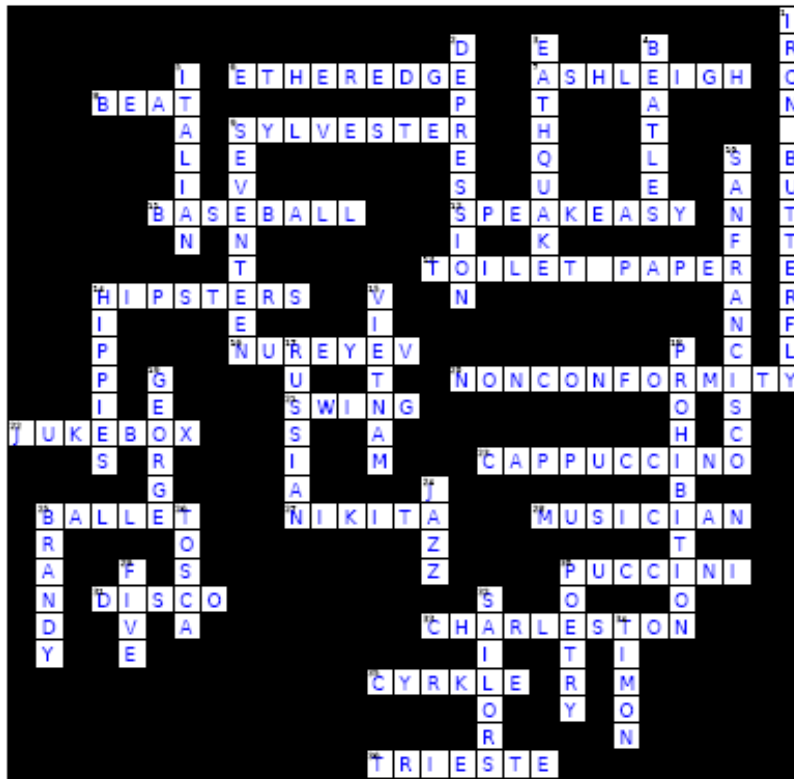
Or you may even choose to share it with the staff at Theatre Calgary.

To do so, you should contact Ryan Bump and he will ensure that it gets shown to the right people.

Ryan Bump can be reached at 294-7440 ext.1391 or by email at:

rbump@theatrecalgary.com

ANSWER KEY for VOCABULARY CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Across

6. new owner of the Tosca Cafe
7. a Judd who loves the Tosca
8. generation popularized by Kerouac
9. Queen of Disco
11. what they were about to play when the earthquake struck
12. illegal drinking place
13. what Ferlinghetti writes poetry on
14. members of the beat generation
16. Russian ballet dancer
20. trait of the beat generation
21. energetic dance popular in the 30s
22. music dispenser in the Tosca
23. specialty coffee of the Tosca
25. dance most often performed in this production
27. first name of Premier who want Nureyev killed
28. occupation of the man who is running from the law
30. author of the Tosca opera
31. type of music played by Sylvester
33. dance loved by flappers
35. group that sung "Red Rubber Ball"
36. name of another famous cafe in San Francisco

Down

1. In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida singers
2. event which began in October 1929
3. what shakes things up in 1989
4. group whose concerts was opened by The Cyrkle
5. nationality of the Bartender
9. length in minutes of "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida"
10. city where the Tosca is located
14. flower children
15. where the Americans were fighting during the 60s and 70s
17. nationality of the Immigrant Woman
18. law which prohibited booze
19. character who dances the Charleston in "It's a Wonderful Life"
24. upbeat music of the 40s and the 50s
25. what the bartenders added to their coffee during Prohibition
26. name of the opera that the Bartender loves to listen to
29. the time of day when the Tosca opens
30. literary form favoured by Beats
32. military men who come to the Tosca before and after the war
34. character who does the Charleston to save a Lion King