

theatre:
CALGARY

Stafford Arima, Artistic Director

PLAY GUIDE

BOOK BY
IRIS RAINER DART & THOM THOMAS

MUSIC BY

MIKE STOLLER

LYRICS BY

IRIS RAINER DART

BASED ON THE NOVEL BEACHES BY

IRIS RAINER DART

DEVELOPED IN COLLABORATION WITH DAVID AUSTIN

BEACHES

THE MUSICAL



MAY 18 - JUNE 16, 2024

This production is made possible
by the generous support of the **AL OSTEN & BUDDY VICTOR**
LEGACY FUND

Generously supported by:

canada  life

Stronger
Communities
Together™

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2** **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**
- 3** **ABOUT THE PLAY**
Summary
Character Breakdown
Historical + Social Context
- 7** **WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATRE**
- 10** **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**
If you have 15 minutes...
If you have 30 minutes...
If you have an hour...
- 13** **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION + DISCUSSION**

SPONSOR

Thanks to our Student Learning sponsor: **canada**  **life**™

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Welcome educators!

Theatre Calgary's 2023-2024 Play Guides are intended to support your students' experience at Theatre Calgary this season. We encourage you to use some or all of these materials to provide context for your students before, during, and after their visit to Theatre Calgary. While not mandatory for students to enjoy the production, opportunities to connect art to personal life can deepen understanding and appreciation.

With that in mind, each guide provides you and your students with a range of contextual material. You will find background information on the play and playwright; social, linguistic, and historical context; expectations for the theatre; activities for you to lead in the classroom; and reflection questions to guide discussions. You'll find activities that connect to current events, are interdisciplinary, can be tied into your curriculum, and can be facilitated for various lengths of time.

Pages marked with a ★ can be photocopied and distributed to students.

We hope that you and your students enjoy your experience at Theatre Calgary this year!

ABOUT THE PLAY

SUMMARY.

We first meet Cee Cee Bloom on the set of her television show as she rehearses for a live taping of her show (*You Believe in Me*). She receives a phone call from her old friend, Bertie, who appears to us as a child. We are transported with Cee Cee to the New Jersey beach where she and Bertie first meet as children (*Mother Said*). We see instantly how different they are. CeeCee is loud and brash, while Bertie is weepy and anxious.

Cee Cee drags the lost Bertie backstage at the show she is rehearsing in Atlantic City (*Watchin' a Star*). Bertie is floored by Cee Cee's performance and dressing room. They play with makeup and costumes until Leona, Cee Cee's mother, enters. We get a glimpse into the life of a child star when the director, an agent, and a competing stage mom all crowd in shouting about who deserves a shot at Hollywood.

As the girls escape to the beach again, we start to see the cracks in Cee Cee's confident exterior (*Wish I Could be Like You*). Cee Cee and Bertie play in the water and walk along the beach to help Bertie find her way back to her hotel, when they encounter Bertie's very proper mother, Rose. Leona arrives to retrieve Cee Cee and the two instant friends go their separate ways, promising to write letters.

We flash forward to Cee Cee being dropped at the airport in disguise after walking off the set of her show.

As we continue to jump in time, we see Little Cee Cee and Little Bertie as they write letters to one another, as promised (*The Letters*). Then we see the girls as teenagers discussing Bertie's future husband, Michael, already selected by her mother.

Time moves forward to show us that Bertie is faced with a proposal from Michael while Cee Cee struggles at auditions. Even from afar, Bertie continues to be Cee Cee's biggest cheerleader (*Show the World*).

The next time we see Bertie and Cee Cee in the same physical space, Bertie is surprising Cee Cee at her summer theatre, after cancelling her wedding. They convince John, the company's Artistic Director to give her a job, and Bertie moves into Cee Cee's dorm. As they get to know one another as young adults, their different lifestyles become overwhelmingly clear, but we see that their lifelong friendship has withstood all of their differences (*Wish I Could Be Reprise*).

STORY WHOOSH

is an interactive storytelling technique that enables any kind of plot to come alive, even without participants having prior knowledge.

- The teacher facilitates the shared storytelling by bringing individuals and groups in and out of the action.
- As soon as characters, objects, places, or events in the story (i.e., servants, bad thoughts, ships, etc.) are mentioned, the first students step into the circle and make a shape or pose that represents what has been narrated.
- At any time the teacher can say “Whoosh!,” and students quickly return to their ‘places’ in a circle.
- Continue the story around the group, so that different students get to play various characters and everyone gets a chance to try several roles, regardless of gender.

Bertie starts to fit in with the “bohemians” in the theatre company, changing her look, improving the business, and drawing the attention of John—that is, until her mother arrives to bring her home. Bertie, however, proudly stands her ground, refusing to return to the life her mother wants for her (*The Brand New Me*).

Following Bertie’s confrontation with her mother, auditions begin for a new musical directed by a fancy New York director. With her newfound confidence, Bertie convinces the director to hear Cee Cee sing (*A Real Woman*). Cee Cee does more than sing, though, she tells the director how to fix his song, and he ends up bringing in an actor from New York City.

When she confronts John about this casting decision and how disappointed she’s been with all of her parts at the Summer Theatre, he tells her she’s too good to be there. He tells her he’s too good for him and that he doesn’t want a romantic relationship with her.

The next morning Bertie finds Cee Cee on the beach. A place opened at the university and Bertie’s mother is allowing her to go to college, so she is returning home to Pittsburgh. She also reveals to Cee Cee that while John turned Cee Cee away last night, Bertie spent the night with him. They say goodbye with their continued promise to write (*Wish I Could Be Like You Reprise*).

We jump ahead to Cee Cee at the airport attempting to board a full flight to Monterey, California. She reveals her identity to get someone to give up their ticket. We flashback to Little Cee Cee and Little Bertie talking about ensuring that their future loves become friends. Then we see Bertie’s college graduation in a *split scene* (where both are on stage at the same time) with Cee Cee performing at The Ramrod Club, a gay bar in Los Angeles.

John enters the scene with Cee Cee, and Michael, Bertie's jilted fiance, enters the scene at graduation. A change happens for both women: John shows that he's clearly still attracted to Cee Cee, despite telling her otherwise, and Michael forgives Bertie and invites her back to his hotel. We learn that Bertie is pregnant, and she agrees to marry Michael (*Weddings*).

Before the wedding, Cee Cee arrives, audaciously interrupting a mother-daughter moment with Rose and Bertie. Bertie reveals that she had a miscarriage, and Cee Cee tries to convince her to leave Michael again—if she's not pregnant, she doesn't need to marry him. But Bertie goes through with the wedding this time.

The next scene shows Cee Cee marrying John in a less-than-formal Jewish wedding ceremony followed by Michael and Bertie visiting Cee Cee and John at their Malibu beach house a few years later.

The husbands bonding on the patio while the women laugh uncontrollably inside (*God Bless Girlfriends*). As they catch up on their lives, Cee Cee accidentally slips that John and Bertie were together many years ago and shares Bertie's secret aspirations to go back to school. It puts a damper on the evening, and John and Bertie head their separate ways to bed (*My Best*). To get back at them Michael kisses Cee Cee, and the act ends when Bertie catches them.

Act Two begins with Cee Cee's performance at a Pittsburgh nightclub (*I'm All I Need*). When she comes offstage, she discovers that Bertie didn't show up to see her. After a Las Vegas show, John tells her that Bertie declined a flower delivery for her birthday, but in Miami, Bertie shows up backstage.

Rose had a stroke while on vacation and is in the hospital. Bertie comes to see Cee Cee to tell her she forgives her for kissing Michael that night. They get into a huge fight about what really happened and the letters that Bertie returned to sender, unread. Cee Cee, furious that Bertie would believe that she would kiss her husband, kicks her out of her dressing room (*Words I Should Have Said*).

A BRIEF GUIDE TO YIDDISH (ייִדיש)

Cee Cee Bloom and her mother, Leona, can often be caught using words that might be unfamiliar to the average Theatre Calgary audience member. Words like "schlep" or "oy vey" might be familiar, but they come from the Yiddish language. Yiddish is the spoken language of a considerable portion of the Jewish people. The language combines elements from Hebrew and German and is written in Hebrew characters.

Below are some Yiddish words (and their translations) that you might hear in *Beaches the Musical*.

Shvitzin'. Sweating

Farkakte. Dingy, low-quality

Shtarker. Strong, brave

Shtupping. Vulgar for having sex

Mitzvah. Good deed

Oy. Exclamation of woe

Goyish. Not Jewish

Plotz. To burst (with pride)

Shlemiel. An inept person

Mazel Tov! Congratulations!

Cee Cee goes to visit Rose in the hospital, where Bertie overhears her telling her what she probably should have said to her face. We see Little Cee Cee and Little Bertie talking about what it would be like to fight. The women have made up.

Backstage at Cee Cee's Miami gig, John tells her he's leaving her. Cee Cee won't have it, but when she walks away to greet her fans, he leaves without saying goodbye (*All I Need Reprise*). We then see Bertie returning her wedding ring to Michael.

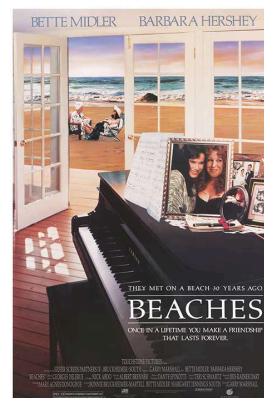
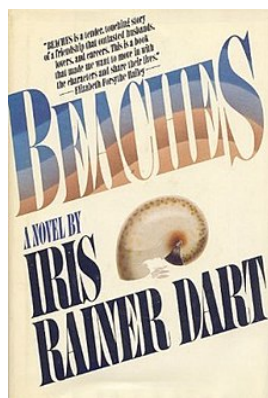
At Bertie's home in Florida, we learn that Michael had cheated on her. Cee Cee has resorted to doing drugs to lose weight so she can get acting jobs (*Normal*). Bertie tells her she's pregnant, and they agree to raise the baby together—that is, until Cee Cee gets a call inviting her to host her own television show, and Cee Cee leaves.

After Cee Cee arrives in Monterey, we see a montage of outlandish birthday gifts she has sent Bertie's daughter, Nina, over the years. At age 9, they travel to Hollywood to see Cee Cee's show complete with a surprise cake and birthday song by the studio audience. Bertie reveals that she may have a serious medical issue.

Cee Cee finally arrives at Bertie's home in California. She's quite ill. She's sent Nina to stay with a relative so she doesn't see her so sick. Cee Cee fires the nurse and insists on taking care of Bertie herself (*A Day at the Beach*). They spend weeks together along the beach as Bertie gets weaker. The nurse is rehired.

Bertie dreams of making it to Christmas, but it's only July, so Cee Cee brings Christmas to her in the form of a decorated tree and the ultimate gift, Nina. As expected, she's upset to learn how sick her mother is, and when she leaves, Cee Cee asks Bertie if she can care for Nina after she's gone (*My Best*).

Cee Cee and Nina sit on the beach together discussing what will happen to Nina when Bertie passes. The nurse lets Cee Cee know that it's time. The play ends with Nina and Cee Cee collecting seashells along the beach, just like Bertie used to do (*Wind Beneath My Wings*).



CHARACTER BREAKDOWN.



CEE CEE
once a cocky child star,
trying to make it as an
actor in New York City

BERTIE
a rich kid who has every
luxury she could ever desire

ROSE
Bertie's mother

LEONA
Cee Cee's mother

**LITTLE
CEE CEE**

**LITTLE
BERTIE**

JOHN
Artistic Director at Beach
Haven; Cee Cee's husband

MICHAEL
Bertie's husband

**TEEN
CEE CEE**

**TEEN
BERTIE**

MARTY MELMAN
a tired casting director

JERRY GREY
a showman who exploits
talented children & fancies
himself a star maker

ENSEMBLE CHARACTERS

**TV STUDIO
STAGE MANAGER**

**SUZY
AT BEACH HAVEN**

ANCHORMAN

MRS. LEWANDOWSKI
a stage mother living off her
daughter's success

KAREN
the most gorgeous
child that ever lived

**RAMROD
STAGE MANAGER**

**TAXI
DISPATCHER**

MAID

SANDY
an actor who plays the
ingénue because no
one else wanted it

MONICA
an actress whose better
days have passed

**CUE CARD
GIRL**

ANNOUNCERS

MOM

JANICE CARNES
a dedicated hospice worker
who grew up in Monterey
and never left

HIPPIE RABBI
probably takes LSD before
morning prayers

**BEACH HAVEN
STAGE MANAGER**

**TV STUDIO
DIRECTOR**

**CASTING
DIRECTOR**

STEPHEN MARLOWE
a flamboyant playwright
obsessed with divas

NINA
Bertie's daughter

NUNS

**AIRPORT
AGENT**

HISTORICAL + SOCIAL CONTEXT.



5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BEACHES THE MOVIE

- 1** *Beaches* was released in 1988 and has since become a cult favourite of women of all different ages and backgrounds.
- 2** *Beaches* was originally a book written by Iris Rainer Dart, who also wrote the screenplay and book of *Beaches the Musical*
- 3** Mayim Bialik (*Big Bang Theory*, *Jeopardy!*) played the young version of Bette Midler (*Hocus Pocus*, *First Wives Club*).
- 4** The theme song, *Wind Beneath My Wings*, performed by Bette Midler, was a #1 single and won the Grammy for Song and Recording of the Year.
- 5** The movie was remade in 2017 starring Idina Menzel (*Frozen*, *Wicked*) and Nia Long (*NCIS: LA*, *The Cleveland Show*).

WHAT TYPES OF SONGS WILL YOU FIND IN A MUSICAL?

Characters in musicals sing because their emotions are so high, they can no longer speak. They express their emotions through some of the following types of songs:

Action Songs | move the plot forward

Ballads | slow, romantic and reflective.

Eleven O'Clock Number | energizes the audience for the final scenes

Exposition Songs | introduce main characters and give audiences some reason to care about them; inform the audience about what has happened prior to the play

Finale | carries an emotional wallop, leaving audiences with a powerful last impression

"I Am" Songs | characters introduce themselves directly to the audience

"I Want" Songs | one or more of the main characters singing about the key motivating desire

Realization Songs | character reaches an insight or new level of understanding

Reprises | a tune that occurs more than once; reveals how a character has developed during the story

SCREEN TO STAGE

How many of these films that were adapted into stage musicals can you recognize?

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9 to 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Bring It On: The Musical</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>How to Dance in Ohio</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>School of Rock</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Almost Famous</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Carrie</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Kinky Boots</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sister Act</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Amélie</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Color Purple</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Legally Blonde</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Some Like It Hot</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Back to the Future the Musical</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Dirty Rotten Scoundrels</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Little Miss Sunshine</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Spamalot</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Band's Visit</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Elf</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Mean Girls</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sunset Boulevard</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Beetlejuice</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Everybody's Talking About Jamie</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Mrs. Doubtfire</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Tootsie</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Big</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Groundhog Day</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Once</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Waitress</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Big Fish</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Hairspray</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Pretty Woman</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Wedding Singer</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Billy Elliot</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Honeymoon in Vegas</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Producers</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Xanadu</i> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rocky the Musical</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Young Frankenstein</i> |

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATRE



An open mind.

Let the performance surprise you! Stay open to what can happen. Look for moments of theatrical magic (how did they change that costume so quickly?) and unexpected dialogue.

Assigned seats.

Every seat in the theatre offers a unique perspective on the action. Appreciate what you can see from your seat that someone else might not.

Live actors.

The performers on stage can see you, hear you, and feel your energy. And actors love student audiences! Laugh when something is funny! Gasp when you're surprised! Applaud when you're impressed! The actors thrive on audience reactions.

A break from reality.

Theatre-makers ask the audience to "suspend their disbelief." If someone on stage says the red ribbon is blood, then it is! If an actor takes flight, then imagine you can't see the strings. This is what the actors ask of the audience. Embrace the magic of theatre.

Questions.

Listen carefully to the story being told. If you have a question, keep your voice to a whisper so it doesn't disturb others. (See the call out on Q + As to help you form great questions for the team behind the show.) Let yourself be challenged by the content. What new ideas or perspectives are you hearing?

Disconnection.

Put your phone away and immerse yourself in the technology of the theatre. The sounds and lights from your device are distracting to the actors, fellow audience members, and you! Plus, the law says that photos and videos aren't allowed, anyway.

PREPARING Q'S FOR A Q + A

While you watch the show, consider how the creative team (see pg. 10) brings the story to life on stage for you.

Consider questions about the process:

- How did the lighting / set / costume / sound designer...
- What made the director choose to...
- How did the playwright decide to...

Ask questions about the story:

- Why did [character] make the decision to...
- Can you explain how...
- Why didn't _____ happen?

Learn more about each job:

- Why did you decide to become a...
- What do I need to do to become a...
- What has been your favorite...



THEATRE TEAM TALKBACK

Theatre is a 'team sport,' and it's not the actors alone who bring a production to life. After your show, you'll have a chance to ask questions of the creative team. Here are some of the folks you might expect to speak with:

The Playwright writes the script, sometimes from an original idea, and sometimes adapted from a book or story—decides what the characters say and, often, gives the designers guidelines on how the play should look.

The Director creates the vision for the production, how it will look on stage, and works closely with the actors, costume, set, and lighting designers to make sure everyone tells the same story.

The Actors use their bodies and voices to bring the playwright's words and the director's ideas to life on the stage.

The Designers imagine and create the lights, scenery, props, costumes, and sound that will compliment and tell the playwright's story in a way that matches the director's vision.

The Stage Manager assists the director during rehearsals by taking detailed notes and making sure the actors and designers understand these ideas. They run the show during each performance by making sure the actors' entrances and exits and the lights and sound all run smoothly.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

IF YOU HAVE 15 MINUTES...

Opposites Attract

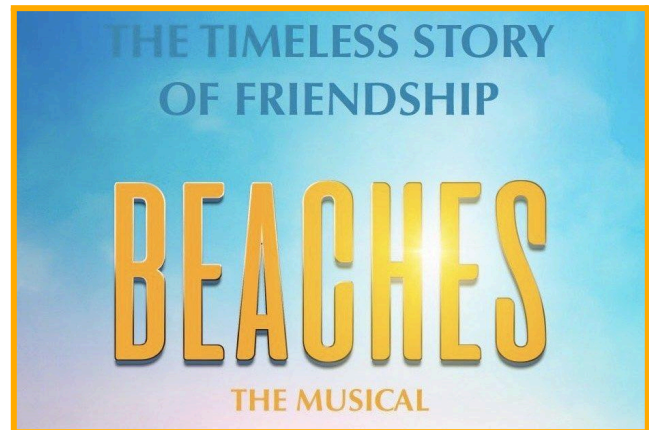
A recurring theme in Beaches the Musical is that opposites attract. This activity asks students to consider how to visually represent this theme by designing a logo for the show.

Focus Question. How do we visually represent a story's theme through color, texture, and text?

Objective. Students will be able to illustrate the title of the show to reflect the theme.

Procedure.

- 1 Provide them with varied materials—blank paper, crayons, markers, pencil crayons, even digital devices, if accessible.
- 2 Share [Theatre Calgary's Beaches the Musical logo](#) with students.
- 3 Ask students to provide suggestions to visually represent opposites. Consider colour, texture, spacing, and font. Examples might include: using complementary colours, magnet imagery, etc.
- 4 Give students time to try out their ideas.



EXTENSION: Set up a Gallery Walk for students to travel about the room, view one another's designs, and leave feedback in the form of sticky notes.

IF YOU HAVE 30 MINUTES...

Letters to My Past

In *Beaches the Musical*, CeeCee and Bertie remain friends by writing letters (Real ones! With stamps! In the mail!) to one another across many years. This activity allows students to write a letter to someone in their past that they've lost touch with.

Focus Question. How do we share something about our lives through letter-writing?

Objective. Students will be able to communicate successes, missteps, and celebrations with someone from their past through the writing of a letter.

Procedure.

- 1 Share the sample [Letters to My Past](#). *Discuss:* What are some things that the example letters all have in common? What would you want to share with someone you're not in touch with anymore?
- 2 Ask students to choose a person from their past that they've lost touch with. It could be because they've moved away or passed on. It could even be a person who they met once on a playground but never saw again. It could be a friend, a grandparent, or even a lost pet.
- 3 Provide students with the following prompts to help them write their letter:
 - What is a memory you have with this person? Why has it stayed with you?
 - How did you feel when you were with this person?
 - What do you wish you could have said or done differently then?
 - What are the main things that you've learned since losing touch with this person?
 - What wisdom, knowledge, or advice do you wish you could share with this person?
- 4 Give students time to write (or dictate) their letters.
- 5 As this can be very personal, only ask for volunteers to share their letters. *Discuss:* How does it feel to put some of those ideas on paper? What do you think this person would say if they could read your letter?

IF YOU HAVE AN HOUR...

Musical Theatre Songwriting

Beaches the Musical is the world premiere—meaning all of the songs are original to this production. This activity will allow students to explore the musical theatre writing process using tagline songs.

Focus Question. How do songwriters craft a musical theatre song?

Objective. Students will be able to draft an 8-line song with original lyrics.

Procedure.

- 1 Use the [slideshow](#) to introduce tagline songs.

A tagline song is one where two (or more) characters share a similar philosophy and take turns singing their own perspective and then repeat the same tagline.

 - The tagline can come at the beginning or end of the verse.
 - The characters can have opposing perspectives, as long as the tagline remains the same.
 - A tagline is different from a chorus in that it is shorter.
- 2 Share examples of Duet Tagline Songs, starting with “Extraordinary” from *Beaches the Musical*, featuring Shoshana Bean and Whitney Bashor (to :47). Other examples included in the slides are:
 - “What a Wonderful World” feat. Shawn Mendes and Camila Cabello (to :53)
 - “A Whole New World” from Disney’s *Aladdin* (from 1:06 to 1:38)Have students identify the tagline and the pattern in the music before sharing the slides with the lyrics.
- 3 Pair students, and have them choose a tagline—a statement they can both agree on. Independently, each partner will write three lines that either precede or follow their tagline.
- 4 Play the backing track (to :35). The first time you play it through, have students just listen for the melody. Play it a second time as students review their lyrics.
- 5 Send partners back together to complete their tagline song together—replaying the melody, as needed.
- 6 Allow volunteers to share their pieces. Lead a discussion:
 - What was your creative process?
 - How might you approach this differently with a new melody?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

A theatrical experience is not complete without reflection. What is the audience talking about when they leave the theatre? Here are some questions to pose to your students following their experience with *Beaches the Musical* at Theatre Calgary.

- 1 How did you feel about the sacrifices each friend was willing to make for the other?
- 2 What role do the male characters in this story have on the friendship between CeeCee and Bertie?
- 3 What is the message Iris Rainer Dart is sending when it comes to friendship? Do you agree or disagree with this sentiment?
- 4 At the end of *Beaches the Musical*, Bertie gives Cee Cee permission to raise her daughter, Nina. What do you think about this choice? What would you have done?
- 5 When in your life have you connected with someone who is the seemingly opposite version of yourself? How did that relationship affect you?

THEATRE CALGARY PLAY GUIDES DEVELOPED BY

Aliza Sarian

www.alizasarian.com



Please provide feedback on your experience with this Play Guide by following this QR code to complete a brief survey.