THEATREWORKS USA

Dragons Love Tacos

Mon • September 25 • 10 am

Hopkins Center Outreach & Arts Education • hop.dartmouth.edu/outreach • 603.646.2010
Welcome to the Hop

A performance needs an audience, so be prepared to play your part!

Theater Etiquette

When entering the Hopkins Center, show consideration for all those sharing the building by remaining quiet and respectful in common areas.

Be aware and use quiet voices. Remember that live theater differs greatly from watching television or movies or attending a sporting event. Live performers can hear and see you and are easily distracted by any talking or moving around in the audience. Even the smallest sounds can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to be quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance. Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation!

Important to remember: Backpacks, food, drink, and gum are not allowed in the theater. Please turn off all cell phones and note that recording the performance or taking any photos is strictly prohibited. Hats off! It is respectful to remove hats during your time in the theater.

Information For Teachers

Prepare—review this study guide for context that will help your students engage with the performance. Check in with the Hop if you have any questions or concerns about content. Read the letter that accompanies guide—Hop staff often requests details about your visit including how many buses you’ll be bringing and what accommodation you need.

Arrive—arrive 30 minutes prior to start time to allow time for Hop staff to check you in and escort students to their seats. Hop staff will ask you for a head count of students. Please visit hop.dartmouth.edu/online/plan_a_successful_visit to review our bus policy before arrival.

Lunch—sometimes we are able to offer a space for schools to eat bag lunches following the show. Check the letter that accompanies this guide to confirm. If staying for lunch, please confirm with Hop staff one week prior to show. The day of the show, please bring lunches in boxes or tubs labeled with school’s name. Hop staff will take lunches to the lunch space and escort school group there following the show. Schools are responsible for calling their own bus back to the Hop when they are ready to leave.

Ticketing Policy—no tickets are issued for school matinee performances. Seating placement for each school group is determined by Hop staff. Please let them know if you have a seating request or accommodation; we do our best to keep each school group seated together. Payment is required 30 days before the performance regardless of whether all students are able to attend on the day of the show—please feel free to bring extra chaperones or school staff to fill any empty seats.

Photography—though photography by the audience is prohibited, the Hopkins Center may take photographs during the performance for use on our website or other promotional materials. If you or your students do not wish to be photographed, please let Hop staff know.

The Show Must Go On!—we do not cancel events due to school closings for inclement weather. Performances will only be cancelled if the artist is unable to reach the theater. Schools will be notified by phone if this occurs. We do not issue refunds for performances missed due to school closure. Please contact Hop staff if you find your school unable to attend for this reason.

This study guide was created by the Hop’s Outreach and Arts Education team. To download copies of this and other guides, visit hop.dartmouth.edu/online/outreach

Enjoy The Show!

Hopkins Center Outreach Department:
Stephanie Pacheco, Outreach Manager
Mary Gaetz, Outreach Coordinator

The Hopkins Center Outreach & Arts Education department embodies the Hop’s mission to “ignite and sustain a passion for the arts.” It provides Dartmouth, the community and beyond rare personal contact with artists and a broad context for the performing arts. Unveiling the creative process of extraordinarily diverse artists, Outreach programs touch more than 14,000 lives each year.

Did You Know?

• The Hopkins Center opened in 1962.
• The Hopkins Center was designed by Wallace Harrison, architect of Lincoln Center and the United Nations Building in New York City.
• Spaulding Auditorium houses one of the largest pipe organs in New Hampshire. Can you find it?

hop.dartmouth.edu/outreach • 603.646.2010
About the Show

Dragons Love Tacos is Theatreworks USA's newest musical revue of beloved contemporary children's books!

What is a musical revue? A musical is a production that tells a story using song and dance. The characters talk to each other, but they also sing songs and dance when something important happens in the story or they have something important they want the audience to know. Music helps us understand a character’s feelings better and quicker than just speaking. A revue is a collection of two or more short musicals performed one right after the other, creating one, longer performance. In this musical revue, you’ll see five different stories, all based on picture books:

Dragons Love Tacos, Interrupting Chicken, The Dot, Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride and Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa: School Days

In Dragons Love Tacos, we discover that dragons love all sorts of tacos—except spicy ones! When a boy throws his new dragon friends a spicy salsa taco party, red-hot trouble ensues.

It’s bedtime for the little red chicken in Interrupting Chicken. Papa is going to read her a story, but the chicken can’t help interrupting. Will the chicken ever get to sleep?
The Dot is a story about the creative spirit in all of us. Vashti can’t draw, but when her teacher says, “Just make a mark and see where it takes you.” Vashti discovers she is an artist, after all.

Mercy, a porcine wonder, and Mr. Watson go for a ride every Saturday in Mr. Watson’s automobile. But one Saturday, guess who winds up behind the wheel? Find out in Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride.

In Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa: School Days, Cowgirl Kate and her loyal horse, Cocoa, are the perfect pair. They do everything together until school is in session—horses are not allowed in school! What will Cocoa do?

Though each book has its own author and illustrator, each story had to be adapted to be performed onstage. Several writers, or playwrights, worked to take the words of these stories off the pages of a book and put them into a script that can be performed onstage: Janet Allard, Joe Kinosian, Brian Lowdermilk, Brendan Milburn, Sam Salmond, Marcus Stevens, Mark Sonnenblick and Ben Wexler all helped write this musical revue. Some of them also helped compose the music you will hear in the show.
About the Company

The mission of Theatreworks USA is to create, produce and provide access to professional theater for young and family audiences nationwide, including disadvantaged youth and under-served communities. Since their founding in 1961, they have presented more than 90 million children and their families with opportunities to enjoy our theatrical productions in 49 states and Canada. Each season, three million children, many of whom have no other access to the performing arts, attend original productions in venues as varied as local elementary school gymnasiums, regional fine arts centers and major Broadway-sized theaters. Theatreworks USA tours approximately 16 shows each season from a repertoire of 133 plays and musicals.

Contextual Background

Theatreworks USA goes on tour with its productions, meaning it travels from town to town. First of all, there are only five actors, even though there are many more than five roles in the production. The actors are double-cast, meaning they play more than one character throughout the production. In addition to playing all the different characters onstage, the actors also help unload and set up the scenery and costumes. When the show is done, they pack it all back up again and drive to the next venue. The scenery and costumes must be able to pack into a small truck or van so the group can easily travel from town to town. The other person in the Theatreworks USA company is the stage manager. The stage manager makes sure the group knows where they are going next, helps get the lights and sound set up at each venue and does lots of other things to make sure each performance goes well.

It would be fun to have real dragons, chickens and other animals real and imagined onstage, but it is also fun to play pretend. In this performance, the actors pretend to be all the different creatures. They use their bodies, voices and imaginations to show the audience how a dragon, chicken and horse might act if they loved things like taco parties and driving a car. Unlike animals, actors can dance, sing and talk. To become their characters, the actors will change their voices and movements. They will put on costumes that help show what creature they are—the dragons have hoods with soft spikes on them for example. This is where the audience comes in—they are an important part of the show. Audience members bring their eyes to watch, their ears to listen and, most importantly, their imaginations. When they see something funny, they can laugh. When they see something they like, they can smile or clap. This tells the actors that the audience is using their imaginations too. We hope you’ll laugh along with Dragons Love Tacos!

About the Authors and Illustrators

All of the characters you will see onstage in Dragons Love Tacos were first characters in books. Here is a little bit about each book’s writer and illustrator.

Dragons Love Tacos was written by Adam Rubin and illustrated by Daniel Salmieri. Adam is the author of eight picture books including Those Darn Squirrels, Secret Pizza Party and Robo-Sauce. He currently lives in Barcelona, Spain. Daniel does illustrations for books and magazine and newspapers.

Take note!

“Books have the power to fill our lives with moments of great pleasure and deep meaning. They connect us to ourselves and to the world outside ourselves.” Erica Silverman
Interrupting Chicken was written and illustrated by David Ezra Stein. David was born in Brooklyn, NY. By the time he was three, he was asking adults, “Wanna come to my room? Read books?” This love of reading grew into a love of telling stories and then writing. His books have been translated into Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, French and Finnish.

The Dot was written and illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds. Peter also illustrated the Stink and Judy Moody books and is the author-illustrator of many others. Born in Canada, he now lives in Dedham, Massachusetts, where his family runs a book store.
Kate DiCamillo wrote *Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride* and Chris Van Dusen did the illustrations. Kate has written many well-known books including *Because of Winn Dixie* and *The Tale of Despereaux*. Chris lives in Maine, and growing up he didn’t have video games or computers to entertain him, so he drew instead. Now he has a career drawing pictures for books.

Erica Silverman wrote and Betsy Lewin illustrated *Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa: School Days*. When not writing books, Erica is also a librarian and a teacher of English to immigrants. Betsy Lewin’s mother was a kindergarten teacher who read her books every night. Now she illustrates books of all kinds using pen and ink and watercolor paint.
Pre-performance discussion questions

• In each of the stories, a character is learning something new. Do you like learning new things? What is good about learning new things? What is scary about learning new things?
• What is an imagination? Why do you think it might be important when watching this performance?
• Why is reading important?
• How do you think the actors will make the animal characters come to life (pig, horse, dragon)?

Post-performance discussion questions

• What part of the performance was most memorable? Did you see or hear something unexpected?
• Which story did you like the best when you saw it onstage? Do you think you’d like the book as well?
• If you’ve read these stories, describe how they were the same and different when presented by actors onstage.
• What questions do you still have about the performance?

Just for Fun!

Learn a song about making tacos for dragons!

Music:
nbp.org/downloads/gep/dragon-song.mp3

Lyrics:
nbp.org/ic/nbp/programs/gep/dragon/ge_dragonsong
Learning Activities

Chicken Dance, Interrupted (grades PreK–2)
Teach students the movement to the chicken dance (youtube.com/watch?v=Hb9FwlubyIQ). Play the music and have students dance along. Once they have the pattern down, abruptly change the music to a different genre. Uh-oh! Have students adapt the dance moves to the new type of music. How does the dance look when you dance to violin music? Piano music? Country music? Jazz music? Not all chickens dance the same!

Fractured Fairy Tales (grades K–1)
Read all or some of the fairy tales from Interrupting Chicken (Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, Chicken Little) to the class and then read Interrupting Chicken. Discuss how Chicken changed the fairy tale. Which way did the students like best? Assign them a fairy tale and ask them what they would do if they were in the fairy tale. Which character would they want to be? Have them draw a picture showing themselves in the fairy tale. How is the story different with them in it?

**EXTENSION:** Read The Jolly Postman or Other People’s Letters by Janet and Allan Ahlberg to the class. Set up a writing center in your room filled with paper, pencils, markers, crayons, envelopes and fun stickers to use as stamps. Invite students to send drawings, postcards and letters to fairy tale characters similar to those the Jolly Postman delivered. Encourage them to include questions for the characters: What happened after the ending? What do they like to do for fun? Do they have brothers and sisters? Decorate a shoebox mailbox so the kids can send their fairy tale mail. Have parent volunteers or older students in your school respond to students’ fairy tale letters as different fairy tale characters.

Mercy’s Seat-Belt Crusade (grades 1–3)
In Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride, Mercy flew out of the car because she was not wearing a seat belt. Discuss the importance of wearing a seat belt. Have students create a seat-belt campaign using Mercy as the mascot. Each campaign should have a motto and a poster. As an example, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has used the motto *Buckle Up!* to encourage people to use their seat belts. Students can work individually or in groups. When they are finished, create a display of all the campaign posters in your classroom or hallway. Invite someone from the local police department to come see your posters and speak to students regarding safety in general (seat belts, bike helmets, etc.). From candlewick.com.

**EXTENSION:** Ask your students to discuss or write answers to the following questions: Baby Lincoln hid in the back seat of Mr. Watson’s car. Is that a safe thing to do? On page 35, Eugenia Lincoln says, “That is my point exactly. I do think. And apparently, I am the only one around here who does.” What does Eugenia mean by this statement? Mr. Watson pulls out of his driveway very quickly. “Mr. Watson is a forward-looking man. He does not believe in looking back” (page 10). What is the double meaning of this statement? Should Mr. Watson have been given a ticket? Why or why not?
**Dragon Charades (grades 1–5)**

In *Dragons Love Tacos*, dragons love parties with charades. Prepare two sets of words—one for regular students and one for dragons. Use regular words to play the first round of charades. If you need a refresher on how to play, visit familyeducation.com/fun/family-games/how-play-charades. Divide into groups for a faster game. Coach students to be creative and really use their body to show the word as best they can. Once everyone has had a turn, ask students to create a dragon persona. Write a bio for their dragon with basic information—home, age, color, etc. Students can draw their dragon and explore the size/shape/etc. If you have the book *Dragons Love Tacos* or additional books featuring dragons, students may use illustrations for inspiration. Now play charades again, but with students acting as their dragon playing charades. Talk briefly about how dragons play charades (e.g. blowing fire on each other would make the game very short). How was playing as a student different from playing as a dragon?

**Make a Dot, Share a Dot (grades 2-5)**

Using a compass or tracing a template, have students draw two circles 12” in diameter in the center of two separate sheets of paper. Have each student take one blank circle and make it into a piece of art using paint, markers, collage, or any supplies that are available to them. Fill the entire circle. Once all students are done decorating their circle/dot, ask each student to turn it over and use a ruler to divide their circle into eight equal parts. Find the center and then bisect vertically and horizontally to make four sections; next, diagonally bisect each of the four sections (feel free to divide into fewer/more sections using a compass/math). Cut along the lines to have eight sections of the circle. Each student keeps one section, gives away seven sections and collects seven separate pieces from other students. Using the second blank circle, reconstruct a new circle of all the new pieces, including original piece. Cut out and display all of the “dots” together. *Adapted from Peter Reynolds’ website.*

**EXTENSION:** Discuss with students: how did it feel to put in all that work and cut it up? Which do you like better, the original dot you created or the combination dot? Why? Would you do anything differently if you were to repeat this activity?
**Vocabulary**

**Actors:** people who use their imagination to act out characters on stage or in movies

**Adapted:** a story that has been changed to make it work for a movie, play or other performance

**Author:** a person who writes stories

**Career:** a particular job done by a person for a length of time

**Cast:** all of the actors who are in a play or musical together

**Character:** a person or animal in a book, play or movie that is played by an actor

**Company:** all of the people involved in a production—actors, stage manager, etc.

**Compose:** write or create music

**Contemporary:** new

**Costumes:** pieces of clothing in a play or musical worn by actors to help portray their character

**Illustrated:** a story that has pictures, usually drawings or other original artwork

**Illustrator:** a person who creates original artwork and pictures that accompany a story

**Immigrant:** an individual who has left their home country and traveled to a new country to live

**Musical:** a play that uses singing and dancing to tell the story

**Play:** a performance for theater using actors

**Playwright:** a person who writes plays, creating dialogue for characters or lyrics for songs

**Porcine:** resembling a pig

**Production:** all the parts of a play or musical: costumes, lights, sound, actors and backstage workers

**Props:** short for “properties,” an item easily moved by actors in a play

**Script:** the written words of a play or musical, spoken or sung by the actors

**Series:** a set of related items

**Scenery:** also called the set; the pieces of furniture, walls and other items that create the place setting for a play or musical

**Tour:** a journey made by a group in which they perform in several different places

**Venue:** a place where performances can take place; could be a school gymnasium, a park or the Hopkins Center for the Arts

---

**Additional Resources and References**

- theatreworksusa.org/home.cfm
- danielsalmieri.com/about
- kidsreads.com/authors
- peterhrenolds.com/dot/dot_activities.html
- ericasilverman.com/bio.htm
- katedicamillo.com/about.html
- chrisvandusen.com/
- npb.org/ic/nbp/programs/gep/dragon/ge_dragonmain.html
- ericasilverman.com/files/brs_cowgirlkateandcocoa_guide.pdf