School Matinee Series • Study Guide

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia

*The Rainbow Fish*

Mon • October 1 • 10 am
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 email that accompanies this guide—Hop staff often request details about your visit including how many buses you’ll be bringing and what accommodations you need.

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

Lunch—sometimes we are able to offer a space for schools to eat bag lunches following the show. Check the email 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 your 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

Special thanks to Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia for its educational resources.

Enjoy the Show!
Hopkins Center Outreach Department:
Stephanie Pacheco, Outreach Manager
Mary Gaetz, Outreach Coordinator

The Hopkins Center Outreach and 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?
About the Show

This gorgeous performance weaves together three of Marcus Pfister’s *Rainbow Fish* stories to tell a tale of adventure and self-discovery. Rainbow Fish is the most beautiful fish in the sea; his silvery scales are admired by all the other fish. But when asked to share his scales, Rainbow Fish refuses, and the other fish no longer want to play. A wise octopus helps him learn that sharing is the key to being happy, and Rainbow Fish gives away all his scales but one, delighting his friends and himself. Suddenly, Rainbow Fish’s last glittery scale is lost; it sinks down to the bottom of the deep, dark sea. Rainbow Fish must find the courage to go down and find it. Once there, he discovers that what he thought was a scary place is a wonderful world filled with friendly creatures of all shapes, sizes and colors. After finding his lost scale, Rainbow Fish and his friends—new and old—have fun playing with opposites: up/down, in/out, over/under, big/little and long/short.

The *Rainbow Fish* uses Mermaid Theatre’s signature black-light puppetry to create imagery that fondly replicates Marcus Pfister’s beloved illustrations. Original music accompanies recorded narration of the storybook’s text. The performance is followed by a short question-and-answer session led by the puppeteers.

Fun Fact

Mermaid Theatre’s productions are “non-shushing,” meaning audiences are welcome to react with their voices to what they see on stage.

About the Company

Mermaid Theatre has been in continuous operation since it was founded in 1972 in Nova Scotia, Canada. Each year they present more than 400 performances for 200,000 spectators—many of them first-time theatergoers. Over six million people have seen a Mermaid Theatre production! Mermaid regularly tours Canada and the United States, as well as many other countries; simultaneous tours have enabled the company to appear in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom on the same day! Closer to home, Mermaid’s Institute of Puppetry Arts offers puppetry classes in Windsor, Nova Scotia. Believing that young people benefit substantially from early exposure to literature, Mermaid Theatre strives to produce work that generates enthusiasm for the art of reading using innovative puppetry, striking scenic effects, evocative original music and gentle storytelling.
About the Artists

MARCUS PFISTER—AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR
Author and illustrator Marcus Pfister was born in Bern, Switzerland, where he attended art school and trained as a graphic designer. Eventually, he started writing books for children. The Rainbow Fish was extremely popular when it was published in 1992, in part because it innovatively used holographic foil in the colorful illustrations. Marcus has published 49 books in 50 different languages and continues to explore ways to artistically enhance his books for young people.

JIM MORROW—DIRECTOR AND PRODUCTION DESIGNER, MERMAID THEATRE
Jim has performed as a puppeteer in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan. He creates puppets for stage, television and film productions. He has directed some of the most beloved shows for Mermaid Theatre, including The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Swimmy, Frederick, Goodnight Moon and The Runaway Bunny. He travels all over the world teaching classes in puppetry.

STEVEN NAYLOR—COMPOSER
Steven has created the music for more than a dozen Mermaid shows including Stella, Queen of the Snow; Guess How Much I Love You & I Love My Little Storybook; Goodnight Moon; The Runaway Bunny and more. When not working on puppet music, he writes the music for films and television programs, teaches at a university, and enjoys writing and performing contemporary music.

Company members—three professional puppeteers will perform The Rainbow Fish, aided by a stage manager.

Contextual Background

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia (pronounced NO-vah SCOH-shuh) is a province in Canada. Nova Scotia is Latin for “New Scotland.” Out of the ten Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia is second-smallest and is almost an island; it is connected to New Brunswick, Canada, by a tiny piece of land. The province is located on the Bay of Fundy, which experiences the highest tides in the world. About 923,000 people live in Nova Scotia, compared to 623,000 in Vermont and 1.3 million in New Hampshire. The province is also the ancestral home of a First Nations people, Mi’kmaq, who live there still and have a rich tradition of fishing and hunting. Nova Scotia is the world’s largest exporter of Christmas trees and lobster.
Puppetry

A puppet is an object that is moved by someone using strings, rods or hand movements. Puppetry originated around 3,000 years ago in China and India. Some of the earliest kinds of puppets were masks with hinged jaws that allowed the mouth to open and close. Puppets grew from masks into doll-like figures with movable body parts. Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia uses several different kinds of puppets in its productions. Amazingly, all the puppets and scenery are performed by just three puppeteers!

**HAND PUPPETS** are among the most popular and versatile of puppets. Designed to cover the hand and lower part of the arm, some are simple, crafted from scrap and everyday items, like socks; others are more elaborate. To work the puppet, a hand is inserted into the body of the puppet. On many hand puppets, the hand makes the mouth move to show the puppet speaking. Puppeteers performing with hand puppets are often able to stay hidden behind a curtain or puppet stage.

**ROD PUPPETS** are bigger than hand puppets and more easily seen from a distance. They are held upright by a rod that goes through the center of the puppet. With smaller rods extending out, you can move the center rod to make the puppet move. Because these puppets are generally bigger and more complicated to move, it can be harder to hide the puppeteer behind a curtain or puppet stage.

**HAND AND ROD PUPPETS** combine the two previous puppetry styles. One hand is inserted into the puppet while another moves a rod connected to a different part of the puppet. This allows the puppet to move in a variety of ways. Many of the Muppets on *Sesame Street* are hand and rod puppets. It takes a lot of practice to work a hand and rod puppet.

A sock, buttons and yarn are used to make this hand puppet

A Mermaid Theatre puppeteer works a rod puppet from their show *Brown Bear, Brown, What Do You See?*

Example of a hand and rod puppet
WHAT IS BLACK-LIGHT PUPPETRY

Since Mermaid Theatre uses different kinds of puppets in their performances, they have developed a unique way to hide their puppeteers using special paint and special light.

**Paint:** Mermaid Theatre makes all their puppets very carefully out of a variety of materials. After the puppets are sculpted, they are painted with a special paint that is very brightly colored, called fluorescent paint. Everything must be carefully covered in fluorescent paint—even the scenery, like the rocks and seaweed in *The Rainbow Fish*—so they will glow when placed under the special light.

**Light:** Mermaid Theatre uses special lights called black lights. These lights only show things that are white, brightly colored or covered in fluorescent paint; things that are dark become hard to see. This is because black lights use ultraviolet light instead of the normal light in regular light bulbs. The ultraviolet light makes the phosphors in the fluorescent paint appear very bright, while the puppeteers—who are dressed entirely in black—blend in to the dark background. The puppets glow and appear to float, fly or swim through the ocean.
Other forms of puppetry:

**SHADOW PUPPETRY**

Often considered the oldest form of puppetry, shadow puppetry began thousands of years ago in India and China. Shadow plays are usually traditional folk tales and legends, sometimes showcasing the struggle between good and evil. Shadow puppets are flat and can be made from a variety of materials: paper, leather, plastic, wood. Areas within the puppet are punched out with sharp knives. These areas suggest facial features and clothing. The puppets are made from separate pieces which are joined together with wire or string. They are controlled by long rods from behind a white screen made from paper or cloth. Lamps or candles on the puppeteers’ side of the screen provide the light: the audience on the other side sees the moving shadows. Cut-out areas within the figures allow light to shine through.

**MARIONETTES**

A marionette is controlled by several strings that are used to move various parts of the puppet. The strings are attached to a bar that is held above the puppet, and the puppeteer stands above the puppet to move the strings, making the puppet walk, dance or move its arms. Marionettes are another old form of puppetry, dating back to ancient Greece. Very old marionettes were made of clay. Today, marionettes are made of a variety of materials such as wood, cloth and even Styrofoam.
Pre-performance discussion questions

• What do you know about Rainbow Fish and the books about him?

• Why do you think Marcus Pfister wanted to write books about Rainbow Fish?

• Having friends is fun, but sometimes having friends can be difficult. How can we help when one of our friends is upset or needs help?

• Rainbow Fish learns an important lesson about sharing. Do you remember a time you found it difficult to share? Was there ever a time you wanted someone to share and they wouldn’t? How did it make you feel?

Post-performance discussion questions

• What did you see Rainbow Fish do during the show?

• In addition to Rainbow Fish, who were the other characters you saw onstage?

• Were you able to see the puppeteers, or were they difficult to see?

• What did you hear during the show?

• What did you learn during the question-and-answer session with the puppeteers? Did you ask a question? What questions do you still have?

Learning Activities

Friendly Fishy Fingerplay (grade: PreK)

Start in a circle. Recite or chant the words.

Rainbow Fish, Rainbow Fish — extend arms in front of body with hands together, thumbs up
Swim in the sea — move hands back and forth like a fish in the water
Rainbow Fish, Rainbow Fish — keep hands together and raise them up above head
Dive down deep — bend knees and “dive” hands down to the floor
Rainbow Fish, Rainbow Fish — come back up to standing
Cold and dark — wrap arms around self
Rainbow Fish, Rainbow Fish — place hand horizontally over eyes to “look”
Is that a shark? — jump into an “X” with your whole body
Rainbow Fish, Rainbow Fish — jump back to standing
Make a friend — shake hands with or hug a neighbor
Rainbow Fish, Rainbow Fish — extend arms in front of body with hands together, thumbs up
Swim home again — “swim” around the room, back to desk or other spot in room
That’s Me/Go You/Woo Woo (grade 1)

Being a good friend means liking similar things, but also accepting that you may like different things. Have a student stand in front of the class and state something they like: a favorite color/animal/food/toy/family tradition/outdoor game/indoor game/movie/book/character. Ask students who also like that thing to quickly stand and say “Me too!” then sit back down. Next, have students that don’t care for that thing quickly stand and say “Go You!” followed by everyone standing and cheering “Woo Woo!” then sitting back down. After everyone has a turn, ask students to discuss what makes it hard to make friends. What makes it easy? How do we get to know other people so we don’t have to guess who they are? How do we let our differences not get in the way of being friends? What things make someone NOT a good friend?

Build a Sea Creature (grades 1–2)

Read The Rainbow Fish aloud to students. Share some images of sea creatures and talk about their general qualities. A great resource is the Monterey Bay Aquarium website: montereybayaquarium.org/animal-guide (this aquarium inspired the Marine Life Center in Finding Dory!).

Lead students in a discussion that compares and contrasts the sea creatures in The Rainbow Fish and the sea creatures you find in an aquarium or at the beach. How did the imagination of the author change the sea creatures for the book?

Have students draw a friendly, never-before-seen sea creature. The sea creature should have qualities that are both “real” (based on fact, e.g. squirts ink, has camouflage) and “imaginary” (inspired by imagination, e.g. can talk, eats cotton candy). Next, have students practice moving like their creature. How does it move in the water? Is it fast or slow? Does it turn in circles or go in straight lines? Does it have tentacles or other parts that move?

Show and tell: have each student move like their animal and then explain why they move the way they do. Why is it important to understand how real sea creatures look and move? Why is using your imagination important too? Extension: ask students to write 2–3 short sentences about their sea creature. Hang drawings and writing together so students can see each other’s work. What ideas did others have for their sea creature?
**Vocabulary**

**Ancestral:** refers to a person’s family in former times, especially when the family has property or land for a long time

**Composer:** person who writes music

**Contemporary:** from the present; new

**Continuous:** without stopping or interruption

**Evocative:** good or interesting because it produces pleasant memories, ideas, emotions and responses in people

**Exporter:** a person or country that sends goods to another country to be sold there

**First Nations:** a name for the people who first inhabited Canada. This term is used as people in the United States use the phrase “Native Americans”

**Fluorescent:** very bright and dazzling in color

**Holographic:** containing holograms, three-dimensional images formed by the interference of light beams from a light source

**Innovative:** something new that has never been done before

**Phosphors:** substances that exhibit the phenomenon of luminescence or “glowing”

**Province:** in Canada, ten separate areas that, like the 50 states in America, make up the larger country

**Puppeteers:** people who perform or work with puppets

**Simultaneous:** at the same time; together

**Spectators:** people watching something in a group, like an audience in a theater

**Stage manager:** a person who helps a performance from backstage

**Styrofoam:** a sturdy material made of plastic that has many uses

**Tours:** travels to different places

**Ultraviolet:** relating to or producing electromagnetic wavelengths beyond the violet end of the visible light spectrum

**Versatile:** able to adapt to many different functions

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**Resources**

Read more about Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia at: mermaidtheatre.ca

Learn more about Rainbow Fish at: rainbowfish.us/about-me

Watch wonderful videos of undersea exploration at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website: oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/oceanos/explorations/ex1404/logs/leg3-dive01/ex1404-l3-dive1.html

Check out the Monterey Bay Aquarium: montereybayaquarium.org

Keep up with Marcus Pfister’s work at: marcuspfister.ch
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Fishing Boats in Yarmouth, NS 14 August 2007 James Somers
Photograph of a sock puppet 21 June 2011 Ron
Two black lights 27 October 2011 Chetvorno
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Tholpava koothu shadow puppet Ramayana show setup 20 October 2016 Suvash Dwivedi
By User Chmouel on en.wikipedia - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1091860
Map of Nova Scotia 1 Nov 2017 “Map of Maine (US) and the Canadian Maritimes 2017” creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/ Ron Cogswell