

# Study Guide for Redmoon Theater's *CAPE & SQUIGGLE*

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Every spring, the Chicago Humanities Festival offers **Stages, Sights, and Sounds**, a mix of the best theater, music, dance, puppetry, and visual art the world has to offer. 2010 features three international companies making their Chicago debuts: Scotland's Visible Fictions, Israel's The Galilee Multicultural Theatre, and France's Vélo Théâtre. Two Chicagoans, Frank Maugeri of Redmoon Theater and beatboxer/vocal percussionist Yuri Lane, treat us to brand-new work. At the audience's request, we also welcome back Leah Mann and Ela Lamblin, the dynamic duo behind Lelavision, whose stunning physicality and musical sculptures made it the runaway hit of the 2008 festival.

We have prepared study guides for each of the 2010 performances. These materials will help teachers ready their classes for the 2010 Stages, Sights, and Sounds and provide activities and ideas to explore with students long after the Festival is over.

## **ABOUT THE CHICAGO HUMANITIES FESTIVAL**

The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) creates year-round opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic circumstances to explore, enjoy, and support the arts and humanities. We accomplish this by presenting programs throughout the year, culminating in two annual Festivals of the Humanities, one in the spring specifically for children and families and one in the fall for the general public. The CHF's mission of providing broad access to the humanities – at a low ticket price – depends in part on the generosity of its most committed and enthusiastic supporters.

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## Lesson Plan:

# *Cape & Squiggle* Redmoon Theater

**Cape & Squiggle** is a new multimedia shadow piece from Redmoon Theater's artistic director, Frank Maugeri. This production endears us to a lapsed superhero as he ponders his mission and mortality.

### BIOGRAPHY

Redmoon was founded in 1990 to promote a unique brand of performance committed to the highest-quality artistic product and to civic well-being. Pulling with conviction from contemporary art forms and ancient theatrical forms, Redmoon has created a performance style that is equal parts pageantry, gadgetry, acrobatics, and ephemera.

Over the past decade Redmoon has garnered international attention for theatrical productions like *Hunchback* and site specific performances, which have been seen everywhere in Chicago from the Jackson Park Lagoon to the façade of the Museum of Contemporary Art. Over recent years, Redmoon has expanded to include projects in Holland, Ireland, France, and Australia. Redmoon is committed to creating unexpected theater in unexpected locations.

Links to performance excerpts, information about Redmoon and step by step instructions on how to make shadow puppets can be found in the works cited section.

# STAGES SIGHTS & SOUNDS

### CONTENTS

In this guide you'll find:

- Three lesson plans recommended for 5th and 6th grades.
- Each activity will take 10 – 30 minutes
- These activities will prepare students to attend the 2010 production of *Cape & Squiggle* by Redmoon Theater or can be used in response to the what they see during **Stages, Sights, and Sounds**.

**ACTIVITY: MOVING THROUGH SPACE**

**Purpose:** Redmoon often explores stories through creative physicalities. This exercise will allow students to understand how our bodies can be used to convey emotion, social status, age, etc.

**Time Frame:** 10 minutes

**Lesson Plan:**

- o Ask the students to begin walking around in an open space the way they would normally walk.
- o Remind them to be aware of others around them and to mix up their patterns so that they are not just walking in a big circle, but rather making a small circle, changing direction, cutting through the middle of the space, etc.
- o Explain that on a 1-10 scale, their speed and energy at this normal/neutral walk is a 5.
- o Ask them to adjust their level to go slower with less energy to a 4, 3, 2, 1.
- o Then remind them to be careful and bring their level higher to a 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- o With a 1-10 range, mix up the numbers so that they are shifting from a 3 to a 6 to a 1 to a 5, etc.
- o Bring the students into a circle and discuss what kind of characters would use which kinds of levels. (i.e.: an old person at a 1, a sleepy person at a 3, someone running late at a 8, etc)

**Variation**

- o Ask the students to move through the space and pick a body part to lead with (i.e.: a nose, a hip, their chest). Have them explore what it feels like to move with that body part leading them through the space at different levels 1-10. What kind of characters might move like this?
- o Ask the students to move through the space as a specific character (i.e.: a soldier, a sumo wrestler, an old person, the coolest person at school). Discuss what changes they had to make physically in order to embody those characters.

**ACTIVITY: SHADOW PUPPETS**

**Purpose:** *Cape & Squiggle* is filled with shadow images that are created live by the performers. This exercise will allow students to create images using their own bodies and a light source.

**Time Frame:** 15 minutes

**Lesson Plan:**

- o Set up a light source which will be pointed at a blank wall
- o A projector can be great but flashlights will also work
- o One at a time, have the students stand in between the light source and the wall so that their shadow appears.
- o Have the class observe what happens to the shadow when the student gets closer to the wall versus when the student gets closer to the light source
- o Then have two students stand in front of the light in a single file line, so one is in front of the other.
- o Have them experiment with creating one body with multiple legs and arms, giving one body moose antlers or a tail by using another person's hands, etc
- o See how many creative images you can make!

**Variation**

- o You can take this to the next step by telling a story with these shadows. We can see the images interact with each other, have a voice, and make sound.

## ACTIVITY: CREATE YOUR OWN SUPER-

### HERO

**Purpose:** When actors play roles, many of them prepare for performance by imagining the background, or backstory, for their character. Thinking about the experiences of the character or what may have happened to them before the action of the story takes place is an important way to fully develop a character. Each character in *Cape & Squiggle* is dynamic and multi-layered. In this exercise students will learn how to make their own fully fleshed-out character.

**Time Frame:** 30 minutes

#### Lesson Plan:

- o Ask the students to think about what kind of super power they would want if they could have any skill possible.
- o On a piece of paper have them write:
  - o The name of their superhero
  - o Their power
  - o How they got their power
  - o Do they use the power for good or evil? And why?
  - o Favorite food
  - o Favorite thing to do for fun
- o Once the students have answered these questions have them find a partner.
- o The partner will ask the student these questions that were just answered and the student will answer in first person without looking at their paper. (i.e.: My name is Calculus and I have the superpower to answer any math question in the world. I got my powers when I was struck by lightning in the middle of a math test in 1st grade., etc)
- o Then switch so the other student has a chance to answer the questions in first person.

o To take this step to the next level have the students come up in front of the class one at a time as their superhero for an interview.

o They will enter the space physically as their character and speak as their character. The questions will also be answered as their character.

### DIGGING DEEPER

**Writing Exercise:** Imagining becoming a superhero is a chance for students to imagine how they want to strive for excellence. However, having them write about moments when they were merely “human” can reveal funny and interesting lessons that will help them connect to each other: Have your students write about a time when they tried to do something that didn’t work out the way they had hoped. Maybe they wanted to surprise their parents by cleaning up but broke something in the process. Or perhaps their parents asked them to look after a sibling, but they forgot. What is something that they learned from this experience?

### WORKS CITED

Redmoon website:  
<http://www.redmoon.org>

Performance excerpts from Redmoon’s productions:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/RedmoonTheater>

A video on making shadow puppets with your hands:  
<http://video.about.com/familycrafts/How-to-Make-Shadow-Puppets.htm>

Illustrations of different shadow puppets:  
<http://www.shadow-puppets.com/>