

STEPPENWOLF FOR YOUNG ADULTS

October 3 – October 27, 2018

A play by **Simon Stephens**

Based on the novel by **Mark Haddon**

Directed by **Jonathan Berry**



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

When You Feel Lost, How Do You Find Your Way?

Steppenwolf for Young Adults is Proud to Present...

Dear teachers,

This spring Steppenwolf for Young Adults is more than just proud, we are ECSTATIC to present Jackie Sibbles Durrý's epic: *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as South West Africa, From the German Südwestafrika, Between the Years 1884 – 1915*. (Yep, that's the full title!)

The play explores what happens when a group of actors gathers together to give a presentation about a long-forgotten—or possibly never remembered—genocide, and realize that summaries based on history books aren't nearly enough to capture the complexity of human extermination—or human interaction. *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation...* tells the story of what happens when, in an effort to dig deeper, the nobly intentioned ensemble crashes into their own simmering fears and unconscious prejudices, coming face to face with the potential for brutality in all of us.

From Hallie Gordon, Artistic Director of Steppenwolf for Young Adults:

"SYA is dedicated to creating work that is both provocative and drives us to think harder and deeper about who we are and the choices we make. We are so excited to be producing *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation...* a powerful story that explores themes of race, representation, storytelling and the power group-thinking can have on an individual. Our season theme is "When you feel lost, how do you find your way?" – a question that every character in this play must ask themselves. SYA hasn't yet produced a play structured like this one, and we are thrilled that we have the opportunity to share it with our audiences."

We hope that you can join us this spring in conversation and exploration! To book your tickets, make sure to visit steppenwolf.org/education while availability lasts!

The Steppenwolf Education Team

Index

- 2** Welcome Letter
- 4** Curiouser and Curiouser: 29 Facts You Didn't Know About *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*
- 8** *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* Play Synopsis
- 10** Mapping Christopher's Journey
- 12** The Inhabitants of Swindon, on the Night of Wellington's Demise
- 14** The Curious Commute of the Student in the Morning Time (*Classroom Activity*)
- 18** Disorder or Simply Our Differences
- 20** Facilitating Accommodations: A Conversation with a Sensory Consultant
- 22** What is Your Truth? (*Classroom Activity*)
- 26** Neurodiverse Changemakers
- 29** Additional Resources
- 30** Common Core State Standards
- 31** Acknowledgements

RELAXED/SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE
Saturday, October 27 at 3:00pm (public performance)

**AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE-INTERPRETED/
OPEN CAPTIONED PERFORMANCE**
Friday, October 19 at 7:30pm (public performance)
Wednesday, October 24 at 10:00am (student performance)

AUDIO-DESCRIBED PERFORMANCE AND TOUCH TOUR
Saturday, October 20 at 1:30pm tour, 3:00pm curtain

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Curiouser and Curiouser:

By Education Intern Ramona Li

29 Facts You Didn't Know About *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

Curious about how *Curious* was written? Read on to learn more about novelist Mark Haddon's inspiration for Christopher, get a better sense of Christopher's hometown, and have fun with some trivia about the Tony award-winning adaptation of the critically acclaimed novel!

2

A Curious Name

The title of Mark Haddon's book (and this play), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, is a direct reference to *The Adventure of Silver Blaze* - a story from the Sherlock Holmes series by British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In the story, Sherlock Holmes discusses with Gregory, a Scotland Yard detective:

Gregory: Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?

Holmes: To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.

Gregory: The dog did nothing in the night-time.

Holmes: That was the curious incident.

The title directly reflects Christopher's interest in Sherlock Holmes's detective stories. In the novel, Christopher says that "I think that if I were a proper detective [Sherlock Holmes] is the kind of detective I would be".



3

And the Winner Is...

Christopher's adventure has dazzled audiences all around the globe. After winning a record-breaking 7 Olivier Awards in 2013, the production made its way from London to Broadway in 2014. In addition to winning a Tony Award for Best Play, Alex Sharp, who played Christopher, won the Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play (the youngest ever winner of the award). *Curious* was Sharp's first professional acting job after he graduated from college - way to go, Alex!



5

Be Sure to PROJECT

The Broadway *Curious* production placed a heavy emphasis on constructing spectacles for the audience. Elaborate projections were used to help immerse the audience and overwhelm their senses - giving them the opportunity to experience Christopher's acute attention to all the details that surround him. Different from the Broadway production, the Steppenwolf for Young Adults production of *Curious* will instead focus on the relationships between Christopher, his family, and the members of his community.

7

"My Name is Christopher John Francis Boone."

Haddon has often stressed that he did not set out to write a story about teenagers with Autism Spectrum Disorder (as Christopher is often diagnosed by fans), rather, he wanted to tell the story of a single young person, and the peculiar way their mind worked - thus, Christopher was born. Haddon himself did take care of individuals with disabilities, including Autism, after graduating from college, the experience of which, in part, did inspire the character of Christopher.

11

Prime Time

Christopher is obsessed with prime numbers because, as he explains "Prime numbers are what is left when you have taken all the patterns away. I think prime numbers are like life. They are very logical but you could never work out the rules, even if you spent all your time thinking about them." In the novel, chapters actually proceed in increasing prime numbers (and in this article, facts proceed in much the same way).

32
511

13

Don't Judge a Book By Its Cover

Did you know that there is both an Adult and Young Adult edition of the novel? There is no significant difference between the content of the two editions aside from cover designs. The book won a Guardian Children's Fiction Prize. However, Haddon once clarified where his true literary ambition lies: "I sometimes put it like this: I had the second-best job in the world (children's writer). Greedily, I wanted the best job in the world as well (novelist)."

17



"What sort of Tube?"

In the story, Christopher travels on the London Underground for the first time. Why is the London Underground called the Tube? It makes sense if you think of the tunnels the trains travel through! The word "tube" referred to the method used in its construction: "tunneling through the earth and placing segments of iron to line the tunnel, creating a cylinder or tube." The word "tube" first appeared in an official advertisement of the underground railway system in 1905.

19

Aw, Rats!

The names of the rat actors featured in the production were voted on by fans. In the London and New York productions, the role of Toby was portrayed by Splat, Nellie and Marilyn. Tradition holds that whenever a new cast starts rehearsing, the actor playing Christopher always meet the rats first, so that they can have as much time for bonding as possible.

23

A Renaissance Man

Mark Haddon is not just a novelist - he dabbles in many different art forms! Haddon is quite the accomplished abstract visual artist. He often illustrates his own literary works! Haddon has also written a number of screenplays for the BBC (British Broadcasting Chanel) including *Coming Down from the Mountain*, which first aired in 2006. The drama features two young brothers, one of whom has Down's Syndrome.

29

Round and Round in Circles

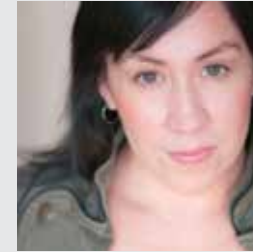
Swindon, Christopher's hometown, is a large town in south England, about 71 miles west of London. It is home to a bizarrely shaped traffic circle named "The Magic Roundabout", which was once voted as the scariest junction in all of Britain. 5 smaller traffic circles are enclosed in this giant conglomerate of swirliness. No wonder Christopher has a hard time finding places in this town!



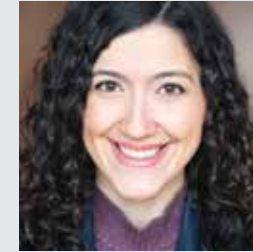
Meet the Steppenwolf Education teaching artists who work on exploring the themes of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* with thousands of students across the Chicagoland area as a part of our In-School Residency Program!



Peter Andersen



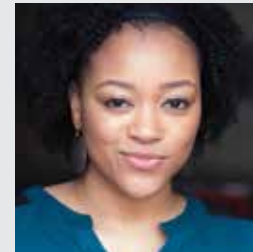
Jazmín Corona



Christina El Gamal



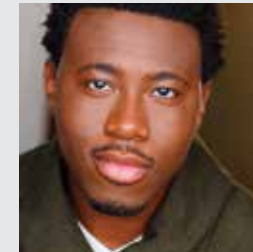
Monét Felton



Tiffany Fulson



Charles Andrew Gardner



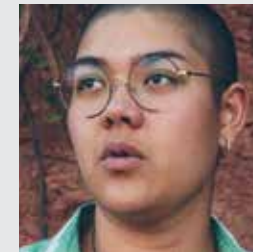
Greg Geffrard



Cara Greene Epstein



Larry Grimm



Airos Sung-En Medill



Fatima Sowe



Mara Stern



Wilfredo Ramos Jr.

Interested in learning more about our In-School Residency Program? Email Education Manager Jared Bellot at jbello@steppenwolf.org.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time Play Synopsis

By Teaching Artist Jazmín Corona

1

Seven minutes after midnight, fifteen-year-old Christopher Boone discovers his neighbor's dog, Wellington, dead in the yard with a garden fork sticking out of its side. Thinking that Christopher is the culprit, Mrs. Shears, Wellington's owner, calls the police. The police officer questions Christopher and tries to grab him. Christopher screams and hits the police officer because he does not like to be touched. Ultimately, the police issue him an official warning and release him to his father, Ed. Ed asks him to let the matter go but Christopher makes the decision to find out who killed Wellington.

2

At school, Christopher is writing a book about his adventures. He tells his teacher, Siobhan, that two years ago, his father shared that his mother, Judy, was admitted to the hospital and died of a heart attack. Later that day, Ed visits Christopher's school and insists that Christopher take his Math A Levels (an advanced standardized exam). He is met with resistance by school administration, but it is ultimately decided Christopher will take the test to place him.

3

Christopher begins his investigation into Wellington's murder, speaking with Mrs. Shears and the other neighbors on his street including Mrs. Alexander, who reveals that Christopher's mother and Mr. Shears (Mrs. Shears' ex-husband) were having an affair. Christopher determines that Mr. Shears is the main suspect in his investigation.

4

Ed reads Christopher's book which contains everything he knows about his investigation about Wellington and the things he found out about his mother. Ed becomes upset at Christopher for meddling and their argument turns physical, with Christopher punching Ed and Ed pushing Christopher over. Ed angrily leaves the house without giving Christopher his book back.

5

The next day, Christopher decides to find his book. He looks all over the house and finally ends up in his father's bedroom. He comes across a shirt box, inside of which he finds his book and several unopened envelopes addressed to him in his mother's handwriting. Hearing his father coming home, Christopher leaves the letters unopened.

6

The next day, when his father is out, Christopher reads the letters and learns that his mother is still alive and lives in London with Mr. Shears. Ed returns home and tries to explain why he lied about his mother's death, and admits to Christopher that he is the one who killed Wellington after feeling betrayed by Mrs. Shears. Christopher decides he has to get out of the house and will go live with his mother in London.

7

Christopher begins his long journey to London. By asking many questions and dodging the police, he finally arrives at his mother's doorstep.

8

Reunited with his mother, Christopher reveals that his father had told him she was dead. Ed arrives. They have a confrontation. The police arrive and convince Ed to leave. Ed promises Christopher that he will come back for him.

9

Judy and Mr. Shears decide Christopher can stay. His stay proves to be challenging for everyone, especially Mr. Shears. Judy tells Christopher that she has called the school and he will take his A-Levels next year instead, but Christopher wants to take them now, as planned. He screams and screams. Judy makes the decision to take Christopher back to Swindon.

10

In Swindon, Christopher and his mother stay at Ed's house while they look for an apartment. Back at school, Siobhan lets Christopher know that he can still take his A Levels if he wants to. He does. Ed tries to regain Christopher's trust and promises that in time, their relationship will get better.

11

Siobhan gives Christopher the results from his A-Levels exam. He receives an A. Christopher begins spending more time with his father and he shares his plans to take future A level tests, go to University, and become a scientist. "I can do these things," he says.

Mapping Christopher's Journey

By Teaching Artist Fatima Sowe

For American audiences, many parts of Christopher's journey may seem unfamiliar to us due to differences in language from our friends across the pond. Check out the map below to navigate your way through the story for a deeper understanding of the play:



Garden Fork

Don't worry, Wellington wasn't murdered by a kitchen utensil used to eat salad -- he was however murdered by a garden tool called a garden fork that is primarily used to loosen and turn over soil. Garden forks though not specific to the UK are often confused with pitchforks which are still pronged, but lighter and used for pitching hay.

Caution

After Christopher hits a police officer in Mrs. Shears' yard the night of Wellington's murder, he is issued a caution as opposed to being placed under arrest. A caution is a recorded warning issued to anyone over the age of 10 for minor offenses, though you must agree to the offence in order to be cautioned. That said -- not agreeing to the offence could lead to arrest, so it's in your best interest to go along with it!

Cashpoint Card

Before leaving for London, Christopher steals his father's cashpoint card to help pay for his train tickets. A cashpoint card is just like an ATM/Debit Card.

Willesden, London

London is HUGE and is home to 48 different neighborhoods (for reference, Chicago is 234 square miles to London's 671 sq miles!). So when Christopher gives his address at the information desk at the train station, only indicating 451c Chapter Road -- it's no wonder no one knows how to help him. Christopher amends his answer to include Willesden, a postal mailing zone in the to help orient (it's sort of like saying Steppenwolf Theatre is located at 1700 N. Halsted, Lincoln Park, Chicago, IL).

Swindon Station

Christopher sets out on his journey to London's Paddington Station from Swindon Station. In addition to being Christopher's home, Swindon is also historically significant as a famous railroad city where trains were manufactured in the 19th and much of the 20th centuries, and as a point halfway between two major cities, Bristol and London.

Bakerloo Line

Christopher is on the Bakerloo Brown Line for about 15 minutes from Paddington Station to Willisdan Junction. The Bakerloo is one of the London Underground's 11 lines. The Bakerloo serves 25 of the Underground's 270 stations. It also has the oldest trains-cars on the London Underground. Fun fact: you can follow the line on Twitter @bakerlooline.

Paddington Station

Christopher's final destination on his train journey is Paddington Station. Paddington serves not only as the terminus for the Great Western Rail which connects London to the greater UK, but also as the central hub for the London Underground (Tube) the city's public rail transport, our CTA equivalent.

Complan

In London, Christopher's mom Judy needs for him to eat something and offers him Complan -- Roger disparagingly scoffs at this because Complan is a nutritional supplement drink for individuals who have difficulty eating and staying well nourished.

First Class Honors

Christopher intends to graduate from a college with a first class honors degree, studying science. This is the equivalent of graduating from college with the highest academic honor, Summa Cum Laude -- meaning that grades qualify to be within the top 15% of the graduating class.

A-Levels Math

Christopher is way ahead of the curve taking his math-A-levels at the early age of 15! In the UK, most students take their A-Level exams (which are the higher of two levels of standardized testing focusing on a specific area of study) around the age of 18 or 19. Students interested in pursuing undergraduate studies enroll in A-Level courses after the completion of their Secondary Education (which roughly equated to junior year of high school) and spend two years preparing for the exams.

The Inhabitants of Swinden on the Night of Wellington's Demise: Character Descriptions

By Education Intern Ramona Li

Meet the characters of *Curious* that make up Christopher's community. As he investigates the murder of Wellington, several different people shape his path on his journey of discoveries. In Steppenwolf for Young Adults' production of *Curious*, some actors will also be a part of the Ensemble, meaning that they will play multiple characters and voices throughout the story.

“ My name is Christopher John Francis Boone. I live at 36 Randolph Street, Swinden, Wiltshire. I know all the countries of the world and capital cities. And every prime number up to 7,507.

– Christopher Boone ”



Christopher Boone (played by Terry Bell):

A teenager with an extraordinary mind, Christopher Boone is the protagonist of our story. He is fascinated by stars, the universe, and math, which he excels at. Christopher finds interacting with others puzzling, and prefers being given time and space for solitary contemplation. Equipped with a black-and-white sense of morality, he is determined to investigate the murder of Wellington (his neighbor's dog) despite the disapproval of his father.



Ed Boone (played by Cedric Mays):

Christopher's father. He lives alone with Christopher in the family home. Although a bit hot-tempered at times, he harbors much gentleness for his son.



Judy Boone (played by Rebecca Spence):

Christopher's mother. She loves Christopher immensely, but is often worn out by Christopher's tantrums. Two years before Christopher discovers Wellington, she disappeared. Christopher's father dishonestly informed him that she died of a heart attack.



Siobhan (played by Steppenwolf Ensemble member Caroline Neff):

A teacher at Christopher's school who mentors him on essential life skills. Genuinely concerned with Christopher's well-being, she is his guiding post as he navigates the complexities of society.



Toby:

Christopher's pet rat who joins Christopher on his journey to London.



Wellington:

Mrs. Shears's dog, a black poodle. Found dead in Mrs. Shears's garden with a garden fork sticking out of the side of his body.



Mrs. Alexander (played by Meg Thalken):

A friendly woman in Christopher's neighborhood who offers him treats and aids him in his investigation.



Mrs. Shears (played by Eunice Woods):

The Boones' next door neighbor, and Wellington's owner. She kindly cared for Christopher after his mother disappeared, but becomes upset at Christopher at the start of the play, thinking that he killed her dog.



Mr. Roger Shears (played by Scott Allen Luke):

Mrs. Shears' husband who now lives in London. Christopher's primary suspect in his investigation.



Reverend Peters (played by Christopher M. Walsh):

A priest at Christopher's school who discusses the existence of heaven with him.

The Curious Commute of the Student in the Morning-Time: A Classroom Activity

By Teaching Artist Fatima Sowe

ACTIVITY TIME: This activity (as outlined) is designed for 45 minutes; to be conducted before or after students see the show.

In the play *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Christopher looks out the window of a moving train and notices the countryside, remarking:

“I see everything. Most other people are lazy. They never look at everything. They do what is called glancing, which is the same word for bumping off something and carrying on in almost the same direction. And the information in their head is really simple.

But if I am standing looking out of the window of a train on to the countryside I notice Everything. Like

1. There are nineteen cows and in the field. Fifteen of which are black and white and four of which are brown and white.

2. There is a village in the distance, which has thirty-one visible houses and a church with a square tower and not a spire...”

How often do we experience our own lives and travel with such exquisite detail and attentive focus to the world around us? What if we all applied a Christopher-level of focus to the otherwise “glanceable” routines in our lives? This activity challenges students to recollect the details of an everyday journey, accessing all those details through memory. What do we pay attention to and what do we ignore when we navigate in the world?

5 mins



STEP ONE – DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS

On the handout located on page 16 of this guide, have students identify their commute to school, noting the A: Point of Departure and B: Point of Arrival.

A: POINT OF DEPARTURE	B: POINT OF ARRIVAL
Ex: My home	Ex: My school

5 mins

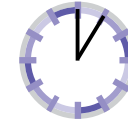


STEP TWO – GLANCING OUT OF THE WINDOW

Facilitate the recollection of the commute for your students using the lens of soft focus. Ask students to imagine their commute (from start to finish) 1-3 times with their eyes closed, by simply “glancing” at their surroundings. While reflecting, guide students to think generally about the following details: **What landmarks do you see? What street names? Types of Transportation? Advertisements? People? Detours? Barriers? Colors? Sounds? Fabrics? Temperatures? Have students write down their noticings on page 16 in C: SOFT FOCUS.**

C: SOFT FOCUS
Ex: Ashland Avenue, cars, people riding bikes, black asphalt, potholes, orange construction signs, etc.

5 mins



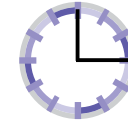
STEP THREE – GLANCING OUT OF THE WINDOW

Instruct students to again take the same trip from Point A to Point B, this time focusing their recall by choosing one sense from the following: TASTE, SMELL, HEARING, SIGHT, TOUCH and experiencing the journey entirely from that sense, writing down as many details as possible on page 16 in D: Sensory Focus. Students might consider the following: **What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What can you feel? At what points in the journey do you feel a noticeable change? What makes those shifts in sensing significant? Are there patterns along the way – can they be described quantitatively? (i.e. 73 honking horns, 14 flashing lights, 3 mugs of coffee, etc.)**

D: SENSORY FOCUS

Ex: The sound of jackhammers drilling, honking horns, starts quieter – sounds of families, kids on their way to school – gets louder the closer you get to the center of the city, more honking horns, the sound of trucks, etc., hearing the lyrics to “Sunday Candy.”

15 mins



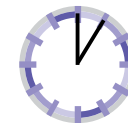
STEP FOUR – MAP MAKING

Using these two lenses soft focus and sensory focus, students will make a memory map of their commute to school on page 17 in E: Map Making. These maps can be literal, figurative or abstract. The objective is simply that the students are to draw from their memory to describe this journey in a way that makes sense to them. (See sample of page 16 of guide.)

- Each map must clearly indicate Point A and B (i.e. Home and School)
- Each map must represent two words from our Soft Focus lens. (i.e. Ashland Ave)
- Each map must embody the chosen Sensory Focus lens. (i.e. Hearing, all the lyrics to Chance’s “Sunday Candy” the only song I listen to on repeat on my way to school.)

Tip: If you are having difficulty, think of maps that you use regularly from Google Maps, to the CTA map and start there!

5 mins



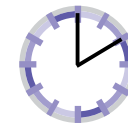
STEP FIVE – MAP LOST AND FOUND!

Have students display their maps around the classroom and take part in a silent gallery walk exploring their classmates’ works of art.

Guided Questions:

What do you see? What do you notice? What is familiar and discernable – can you decipher where this map is coming from? What might be a clue as to where that is? What does this map tell you about the author? What do you wonder and what are you curious about?

10 mins



STEP SIX – REFLECTION/CLASS DISCUSSION

Silently or as a group, have students reflect based on the following questions: **Did you find any similarities between the map you created and the partner’s map you explored? What was similar or different? What did you notice about the journey someone else took with your map? What do we pay attention to and what do we ignore when we navigate in the world? How is this similar or different from what Christopher pays attention to?**

NAME:

A: POINT OF DEPARTURE

B: POINT OF ARRIVAL

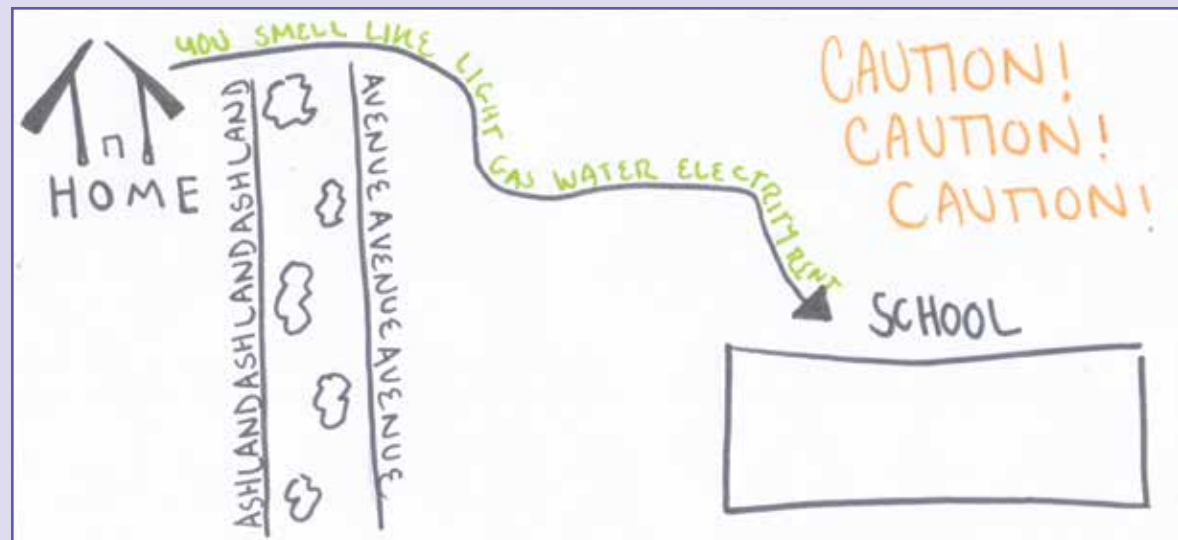
C: SOFT FOCUS

*Glancing at the landscape of your commute, what are the general things you notice?
(i.e. What landmarks? Street names? Types of Transportation? Advertisements? People? Detours?
Barriers? Colors? Sounds? Fabrics? Temperatures?)*

D: SENSORY FOCUS

Focusing on a specific sense (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch), spend more time exploring the details of your commute – what are the details that you notice?

MAP MAKING: EXAMPLE MAP



E: MAP MAKING

Disorder or Simply Our Differences? What does it mean when we say “Neurodiversity?”

By Education Intern Ramona Li



Author Mark Haddon

In *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, we are given a glimpse into the inner landscape of Christopher Boone. At the train stations he visits throughout his journey, Christopher experiences a sensory overload from the bedazzling sounds and sights. In this moment, he is not just struggling with navigating an unfamiliar place, but also with a hypersensitivity to and hyperawareness of his surroundings. You may wonder if Christopher has Autism Spectrum Disorder – a developmental disorder characterized by challenges with non-verbal communication, difficulties understanding figurative language and fixation on narrow topics. While these diagnostic labels may be consistent with some of Christopher’s behavior, through the lens of Neurodiversity, we may look at the story, and at Christopher in a new way.

“**Neurodiversity is a concept where neurological differences are to be recognized and respected as any other human variation.**”

WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

Neurodiversity is a concept where neurological differences are to be recognized and respected as any other human variation.

The concept of diversity is not unfamiliar to us. Over the course of the past century, many social movements fought to ensure fair treatment for different gender, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Neurodiversity evokes a similar concept that acknowledges diversity of experience is natural –not just basic emotions like happiness or sadness, but all sensations and perceptions. It proposes that all the different ways in which we experience the world reflect our individuality. Unique as each of them are, they are all worthy of recognition.

“**Labels tell us very little about the person who has been labelled and a lot about the people doing the labelling. If you want to find out who someone is, just ask them.**”
– Mark Haddon

PRACTICING EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING

We do not have a way of being fully in another person’s head or completely taking on another’s perspective. As such, *Curious* highlights the importance of practicing empathy and understanding in our day-to-day lives. Mark Haddon, author of the novel, cautions readers:

“I’ve always regretted that the phrase ‘Asperger Syndrome’ appeared on the cover of *Curious Incident* when it was first published. Mostly because the central conceit was that Christopher himself had written the book (for a long time it had the dull but accurate working title, *Christopher’s Book*) and ‘Asperger Syndrome’ is not a phrase he uses. In the book he refers to himself only as ‘someone who has Behavioural Problems’...”

I prefer the wry humour in these words. I like the way it gently mocks the diagnostic medical language. I like the way it includes all of us (who doesn’t have behavioural problems?). But I like it most of all because it is Christopher’s own phrase. Labels tell us very little about the person who has been labelled and a lot about the people doing the labelling. If you want to find out who someone is, just ask them.”

According to Haddon, the primary focus of *Curious* is to present the world through Christopher’s eyes. His goal in creating Christopher was to construct a character who sees the world differently than the vast majority of their community. Christopher was not meant to be a prototype for Autism Syndrome. In fact, in both the book and the play, Christopher is never diagnosed with any one type of developmental disorder. Haddon hopes to explore this particular story of this teenage boy with a particular mind. Through the lens of Neurodiversity, he reminds us there are many different ways in which people see and experience the world. With Christopher, Haddon asks us to look beyond the simplicity of a label to truly understand someone. He warns us that, when treated as a short cut for knowing others, labels actually prevent us from truly understanding the experience of another human being.

This message from Haddon parallels existing efforts to normalize cognitive disorders in mainstream culture. Neurodiversity is the foundational value in these advocacies. The essence of the argument for Neurodiversity is that there is no binary of “good” and “bad” neurological traits. Granted, certain neurological traits can make navigating society more difficult. So, what do all of us need to do to make adjustments to our world to make it easier to navigate for all?

Ask yourself as you continue to explore *Curious*: how is Christopher’s world different from my own? What does that tell us about the world we share?

Facilitating Accommodations: A Conversation with a Sensory Consultant

Conducted by Education Manager Jared Bellot



Chuck Gruman at a Steppenwolf
Relaxed/Sensory Friendly performance

In the lead up to the start of rehearsals for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Education Manager Jared Bellot caught up with Chuck Gruman, a Chicago-based Sensory Consultant who works with Steppenwolf and other cultural institutions around the city to help provide accessible services to all audience members. The two spoke about Chuck's work, the Neurodiverse community, and Steppenwolf's upcoming Relaxed/Sensory Friendly performance of *Curious*!

Jared Bellot: Chuck – thank you so much for chatting with me! You've been such a wonderful resource and thought-partner on the topic of Neurodiversity and working with folks with autism and other sensory processing disorders and I'm so excited for this conversation! To start, how would you describe the type of work that you do?

Charlotte "Chuck" Gruman: I'm a Sensory Consultant. I advise performing arts organizations on creating welcoming spaces for all Neurodiverse individuals. I make sensory friendly toys (weighted blankets, fidget toys, coping tools, etc.) for folks for whom these resources might be helpful. It is my goal to make these kinds of tools more available and more socially acceptable to use and to get rid of some of the stigma or embarrassment that often goes along with needing this type of accommodation.

Jared: How did you become interested in this type of work?

Chuck: I identify as having a sensory processing disorder. I grew up in Southeast Asia and Australia and New Zealand where relaxed and sensory friendly environments were more socially acceptable than they are in America, and I was able to participate in programming that was made available for people who might have issues with sensory processing. I became interested in helping to facilitate this type of programming when I came to America for school and I realized that type of programming was not as popular here.

Jared: Working on *Curious*, a term that has become a larger part of my vocabulary is "Neurodiversity." What does it mean when we use that term?

Chuck: It has a lot to do with access and representation. Not all of our brains are wired in the same way, and Neurodiversity is acknowledging this fact and embracing it rather than being afraid of it or unwilling to make accommodations as a result. Some brains are what would be called "typical," some "atypical." Neurodiversity encompasses the differences we have and moving forward, especially in the arts, understanding Neurodiversity means creating programming to better serve the needs of *all*.

Jared: Is there such a thing as a "typical" way a person who has sensory processing difficulties experiences the world?

Chuck: There is no such thing as a one size fits all model, and to me, that's kind of the beauty of it. When I speak about Neurodiversity, please recognize I am not speaking for every person who identifies as Neurodiverse; I am speaking for myself as an individual and the way I experience the world.

“When I speak about neurodiversity, please recognize I am not speaking for every person who identifies as neurodiverse; I am speaking for myself as an individual and the way I experience the world.”

Jared: Last year at Steppenwolf, we introduced Relaxed/Sensory Friendly performances for our Steppenwolf for Young Adults' shows. For someone who has never experienced a Relaxed/Sensory Friendly performance before, how is it different than what we may consider a "traditional" theatre performance?

Chuck: When you walk into a space that is designated to be a relaxed and sensory friendly space, it's important to let go of any preconceived notions about what attending a play is like (quiet in the audience, no moving around, no fidgeting in your chair). Often, at a relaxed/sensory friendly performance we don't make any big artistic changes (maybe we leave the house lights on at 70% or lower over-stimulating sound cues) but the biggest difference is saying outwardly to the audience, this is a play-watching environment that people can come in and feel welcomed regardless of their specific needs. This is not something that is just for a specific audience, it is for everyone coming to that performance. Everyone who comes should feel they were understood, they were acknowledged, and they were welcomed.

Jared: For folks who are interested in learning more about any of this, do you have any particular resources or starting points that you would recommend that have been of particular help or guidance to you?

Chuck: If people have sensory processing disorders or know someone who does, I've found that Facebook groups are the most effective ways of getting information, especially in your area. Also, the Chicago Cultural Accessibility Consortium is a wonderful resource that works to empower Chicago's cultural spaces to become more accessible to visitors with disabilities. You can learn more about their work and join their mailing list online at chicagoculturalaccess.org.

Jared: Thank you! See you on October 27th at 3pm for our *Curious* Relaxed/Sensory Friendly performance.

Chuck: See you then!

What Is Your Truth?

A Classroom Activity

By Teaching Artist Jazmín Corona

ACTIVITY TIME: This activity (as outlined) is designed for 45 minutes; to be conducted before or after students see the show.

This activity is inspired by the concept of truth that is explored throughout the play. Christopher is guided by telling the truth always and searching for the truth in all situations. It is his need for the truth that helps him navigate the world around him. It shines a light on his path so he can clearly see what his goals are in life. In this activity, we allow the students to explore this theme by asking, what is the truth within ourselves that gives us strength and guides us through our own journey?

10 mins



STEP ONE – WARM-UP: TRUTH MOVE

"I always tell the truth." -Christopher

In this first step, divide the class in half. Half of the students are on one side of the room and the rest are on the other. The teacher will offer a variety of statements, one at a time. If that statement is true for a student, they will cross to other side of the room. Begin with fun, low-risk statements like, "my favorite food is pizza" or "I have black hair." As you move through the exercise, feel free to dig a little deeper. E.g. "I am in love today. I like being alone. I am a confident individual. I am scared of the future."

Take a moment to reflect on the exercise using the questions below as a guide.

- Was it difficult to share your truth?
- Do you have more/less in common with your classmates than you thought?
- Were you surprised by your truth or anyone else's?

10 mins



STEP TWO – CORE ACTIVITY: WHAT IS YOUR TRUTH? (PART 1)

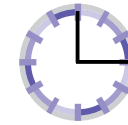
"It's because of all the light pollution in London. All the light from the streetlights and car headlights and floodlights and lights in the building reflect off tiny particles in the atmosphere and they get in the way of light from the stars." -Christopher

We will now ask questions of ourselves to dig a little deeper into our truths. We will remove all of the "light pollution" and take a look at what is underneath.

Each student receives a hand-out (located on page 24 of the guide) with 10 questions. They are to be answered as honestly and openly as the student feels comfortable doing. Remind the students that the answers to these questions will be shared with a partner.

1. What is your favorite food?
2. Do you want to go to college?
3. What is your dream job?
4. What or who makes you happy?
5. What place, person, or thing inspires you to be your best self?
6. If you saw someone getting bullied, would you stand up for them?
7. If you were an animal, what kind of animal would you be?
8. Who is someone you consider a good friend?
9. Do you prefer sneakers or dress shoes?
10. Do you prefer daytime or nighttime?

15 mins



STEP THREE – CORE ACTIVITY: WHAT IS YOUR TRUTH? (PART 2)

"I'm not a stranger, Christopher. I'm a friend." -Mrs. Alexander

Students now work with a partner. Each student chooses an answer to one of their questions to explore further. Here is where we use an acting technique to explore further. We ask "Why" over and over again to deepen the conversation and find what is at the core of that truth the question. The students will ask their partner "Why" 5 times. For example:

The question I chose to explore further is, "Do you prefer daytime or nighttime?"
Answer: Nighttime.

Why? Because it's quieter

Why? More ideas come to me in the stillness of nighttime.

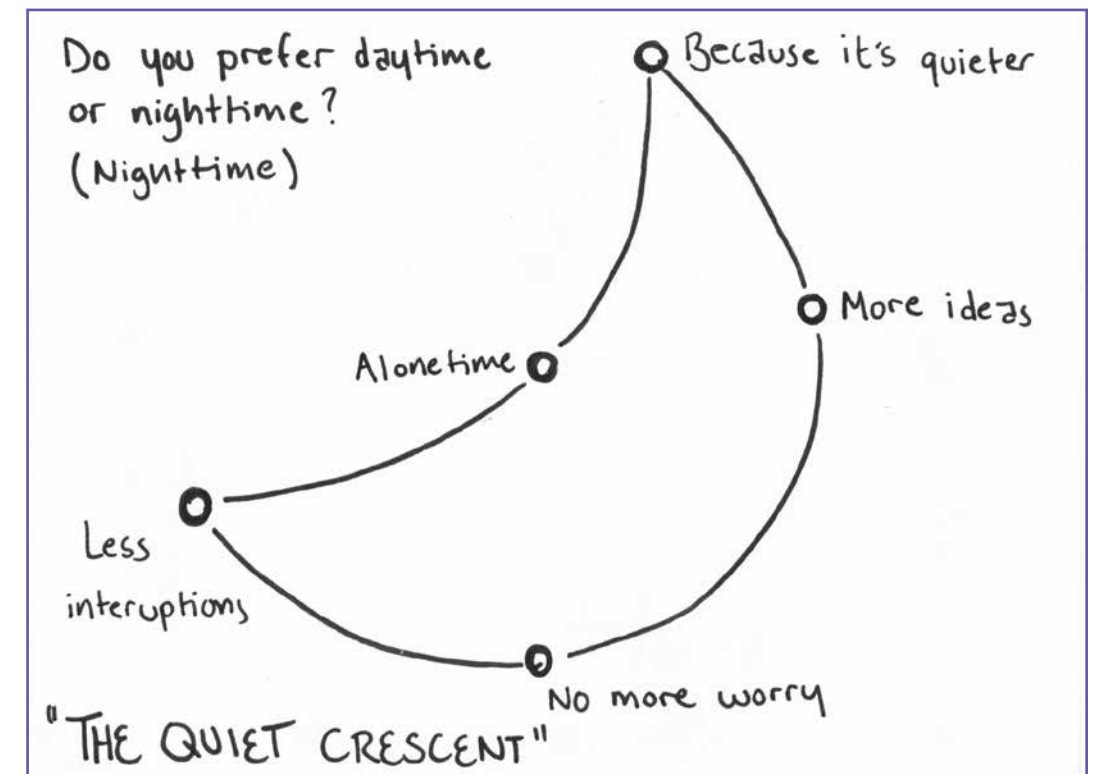
Why? Everything else has been accomplished so my mind doesn't have to worry anymore.

Why? There are less interruptions so I can focus on myself.

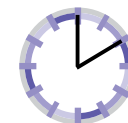
Why? I need some alone time everyday to do what I choose.

(Be sure to model this step with one of your own answers for the students.)

Have the students write down the answer to each "Why" question. Once they have finished (about 10 minutes in), hand out the sheet of paper with a sky full of stars as the background from page 25. Have the students plot each of their answers to the questions "Why" somewhere on the paper and connect them forming a truth constellation in a way that visually embodies their exploration. Once done, have them name their truth constellation.



10 mins



STEP FOUR – REFLECTION

Take some time to reflect on what the students observed using the questions below as a group:

- What did you learn about yourself? Did anything surprise you about your answers?
- What aspects of yourself did you see in your partner?
- What truths about yourself would you like to continue exploring?
- What is your "north star" (guiding principle in your life)?

1. What is your favorite food?

2. Do you want to go to college?

3. What is your dream job?

4. What or who makes you happy?

5. What place, person, or thing inspires you to be your best self?

6. If you saw someone getting bullied, would you stand up for them?

7. If you were an animal, what kind of animal would you be?

8. Who is someone you consider a good friend?

9. Do you prefer sneakers or dress shoes?

10. Do you prefer daytime or nighttime?

HAND THE SHEET TO YOUR PARTNER

Which question are you exploring further:

Why?

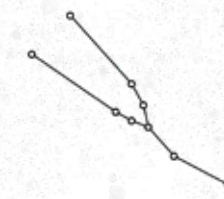
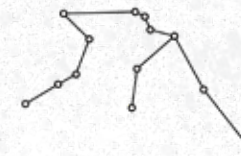
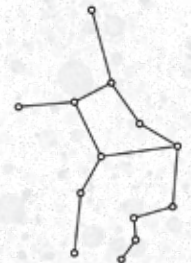
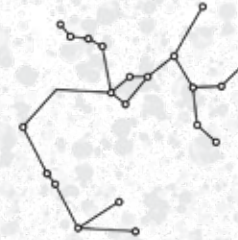
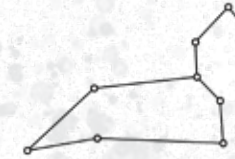
Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

MAP YOUR CONSTELLATION HERE



Neurodiverse Changemakers

By Director of Education Megan Shuchman

As Autism Spectrum Disorder is a fairly new diagnosis and the concept of Neurodiversity even newer still, there are many change-makers throughout history who could be characterized as having extraordinary brains, like Christopher. These changemakers have left their mark on society.

Here are six examples of individuals who identify as being Neurodiverse:

- Acclaimed Actor, Dan Aykroyd
- Television producer and writer, Dan Harmon
- Singer and *Britain's Got Talent* winner Susan Boyle
- Singer and *American Idol* winner James Durbin
- Sir Anthony Hopkins (actor)
- Activist and a *TIME's* 100 Most Influential Person, Temple Grandin



SUSAN BOYLE

In 2009, Susan Boyle's rendition of *I Dreamed a Dream* for the show *Britain's Got Talent* went viral, and the Scottish singer became an international musical sensation, selling 14 million records worldwide. Boyle was not diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder until later in her life, but welcomed the diagnosis saying "Asperger's doesn't define me. It's a condition that I have to live with and work through, but I feel more relaxed about myself."



JAMES DURBIN

According to *Huffington Post*, "Durbin was first diagnosed with Asperger syndrome and Tourette syndrome at age 10. Says Durbin, 'Right around the time when I was diagnosed, I got a hand-me-down guitar with a chord book and a cheap busted tuner. Music is like medicine... [Music] is all about focus and for me, not only on the Autism spectrum but also the Tourette's spectrum, focus was something I needed help with. Music is my focus.'"



DAN AYKROYD

The actor and creator of the acclaimed film, *Ghostbusters* told *Daily Mail*: "One of my symptoms [of Autism Spectrum Disorder] included my obsession with ghosts and law enforcement – I carry around a police badge with me, for example. I became obsessed by Hans Holzer, the greatest ghost hunter ever. That's when the idea of my film *Ghostbusters* was born."



ANTHONY HOPKINS

Actor Anthony Hopkins was diagnosed as [sic] autistic only 10 years ago. When asked whether he thinks having Autism Spectrum Disorder has helped him as an actor, he says, "I definitely look at people differently. I like to deconstruct, to pull a character apart, to work out what makes them tick and my view will not be the same as everyone else. I get offered a lot of controlling parts, maybe because that's how people see me. And maybe I am very controlled because I've had to be." Source: *Daily Mail*



DAN HARMON

Harmon was developing a character for his television show, *Community*, and started looking up symptoms of persons with Autism and "the more I looked them up, the more familiar they started to seem." According to *WIRED*, "Harmon now sees that he may fit somewhere on that spectrum, though figuring out exactly where could take years."



TEMPLE GRANDIN

A professor of Animal Sciences who has been referred to as the most accomplished and well-known adult with autism in the world, Temple Grandin is an educator, author and advocate who was named one of *TIME's* 100 most influential people in 2010, and is the subject of a HBO biopic starring Claire Danes. Grandin says "Autism's a very important part of who I am. I like the logical way I think, and I wouldn't want to change that."

How does knowing about these six changemakers change the way you understand Neurodiversity?



STEPPEWOLF FOR YOUNG ADULTS

The Young Adult Council is a unique program for passionate and motivated high school students who wish to learn the inner-workings of professional theater from the most celebrated artists in the city. In addition to face time with these leading professionals, Council members attend the best plays in Chicago, learn how to analyze and speak about these plays and lead events for their peers around Steppenwolf productions in hopes of inspiring a new generation of theatre enthusiasts and practitioners.

Applications are available on March 1, 2019.

Like the Steppenwolf Young Adult Council on Facebook and Instagram!
Or visit steppenwolf.org/youngadulthood for more information.

Additional Resources

NON-FICTION

***Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from my Life with Autism* by Temple Grandin**

In this book, Temple Grandin, a woman with autism who revolutionized her field, shares a series of original, linked essays about her life and work.

***The Reason I Jump: One Boy's Voice from the Silence of Autism* by Naoki Higashida**

This book was written by a Japanese teenage boy with autism, who is largely non-verbal, but is able to communicate utilizing facilitated finger writing. Each chapter endeavors to answer a different question one might ask a young person with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

FICTION

***Rules* by Cynthia Lord**

Catherine has spent years trying to teach her brother with autism, David, rules in an attempt to stop his atypical behaviors. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a paraplegic boy, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, she is forced to ask herself: What is "normal"?

***Anything but Typical* by Nora Raleigh Baskin**

Jason Blake, a teenage boy with autism, finds understanding and a potential friendship for what feels like the first time when he finds PheonixBird, a person who posts stories to the same online forum that he does. However, he fears that when he meets PhoenixBird – Named Rebecca – that she will only be able to see his autism, and not who he is.

TV & FILM



TED Talk: The World Needs All Kinds of Minds, Temple Grandin
Temple Grandin is a designer of livestock handling facilities who revolutionized her field of work, and has also been diagnosed as a person with autism. In this talk, she discusses how different types of minds on the autism spectrum function, and how our world needs these different types of minds.

***Atypical* (available on Netflix)**

A teen on the autism spectrum decides to seek a romantic relationship, and this newfound independence places him and his family on a new journey.

Common Core State Standards Aligned With Activities in This Study Guide

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING, STANDARD 2:

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

See **Play Synopsis and Character Descriptions, pages 8 and 12**

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR WRITING, STANDARD 3:

Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

See **'What is Your Truth Activity' page 22**

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING, STANDARD 9:

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

See **'Disorder or Simply Our Difference' and 'Facilitating Accommodations' on pages 18 and 20**

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING, STANDARD 1:

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

See **Examples throughout guide**

If you need further information on how grade-specific standards fit into these anchor standards, please let us know.

Acknowledgements

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THOSE WHO PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FOR STEPPENWOLF FOR YOUNG ADULTS.

Allstate Insurance Company is the Leading Corporate Season Production Sponsor of Steppenwolf for Young Adults.

Major Support for Steppenwolf for Young Adults is provided by the Paul M. Angell Foundation, the Crown Family, J.P. Morgan, the Polk Bros. Foundation and United Airlines.

Steppenwolf's young professionals board, the Steppenwolf Associates, dedicates its support to Steppenwolf for Young Adults.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IS PROVIDED BY THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS:

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John and Carol Walter Family Foundation
Zell Family Foundation

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IS PROVIDED BY THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:

Andrew and Amy Bluhm
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Ann and Richard Carr
Carol and Douglas Cohen
Nora Daley and Sean Conroy
Amy Eshleman and Lori Lightfoot
Mary and Paul Finnegan
Joan Hall
John H. Hart and Carol Prins
Eric and Liz Lefkofsky
Lynn Lockwood Murphy and Barrett B. Murphy
Anne and Don Phillips
Cari and Michael J. Sacks
Robert and Louise Sanborn
Ilan and Becky Shalit
Bryan Traubert and Penny Pritzker
Nina B. Winston

This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Steppenwolf for Young Adults is a citywide partner of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) School Partner Program.



THE SCENE

THE SCENE is a special opportunity for high school students to score an affordable ticket to a Steppenwolf production, meet Chicago's most celebrated artists and connect with other teens who are passionate about theater. Each ticket includes dinner and post-show discussion with the actors.

TICKETS ARE JUST \$10

Purchase tickets at the door 30 minutes before the show, or in advance by calling **Steppenwolf Audience Services** at 312-335-1650. Use code 43428

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE SCENE: *THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME*
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20 @ 3PM (post-show)

THE SCENE: *WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT A PRESENTATION...*
SATURDAY, MARCH 9 @ 7:30PM (post-show)

STEP IN

STEP IN is a series that offers teens from all over the city the chance to participate in hands-on theatre workshops alongside some of the most exciting theatre artists working in the city right now while learning more about the Steppenwolf Young Adult Council, an afterschool program for teens interested in careers in the arts.

ADMISSION IS FREE!

To reserve your spot, please RSVP to Education Associate Abhi Shrestha at ashrestha@steppenwolf.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10
WEDNESDAY, MAY 1

All events last from 4:30-6:00pm

Questions? Please contact Steppenwolf's Education Associate **Abhi Shrestha** at 312-654-5603 or ashrestha@steppenwolf.org.