

Study Guide: Students & Educators

POLKADOTS: THE COOL KIDS MUSICAL

ATLANTIC ACTING SCHOOL



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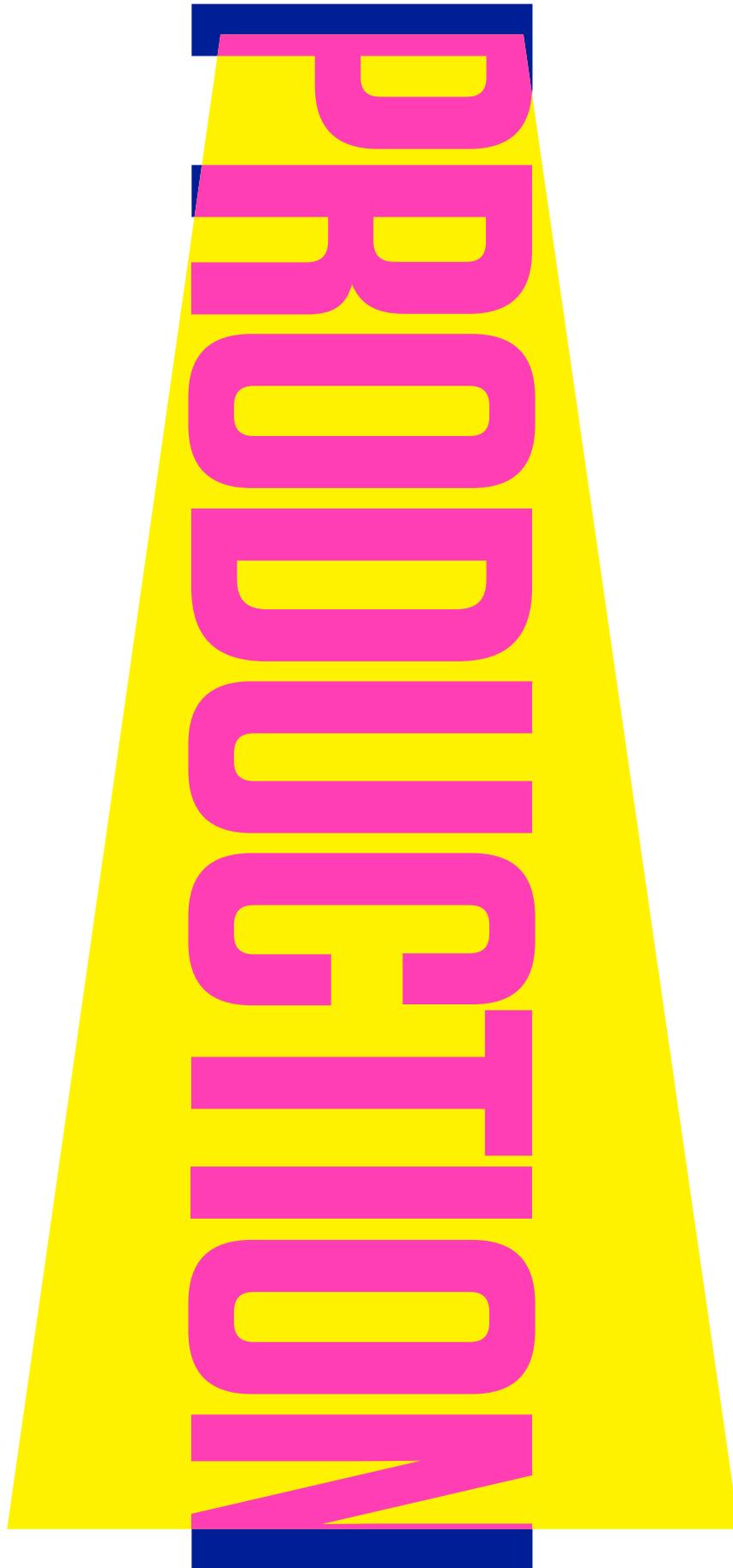
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Section VI

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Section I: The Play

Characters
Setting
Themes



CHARACTERS, SETTINGS & THEMES...OH MY!

TEACHER OBJECTIVE:

To introduce students to the characters, settings, and story of *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*.

STUDENT GOAL:

To understand that the actors will simply and truthfully create the story of the play.

SYNOPSIS:

Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical follows 8-year-old Lily Polkadot who just moved to the “Squares Only” small town of Rockaway. As the first polkadot in an all Square school, Lily faces an almost impossible task of gaining acceptance from her peers. From daily bullying, to segregated drinking fountains, Lily’s quest seems hopeless until she meets Sky, a shy Square boy whose curiosity for her unique polka dot skin blooms into an unexpected pal-ship.

Inspired by the events of The Little Rock 9, *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*, serves as a colorful history lesson for children, reminding them that our individual differences make us awesome, not outcasts.

SETTING:

Rockaway, an all-Square town

CHARACTERS:

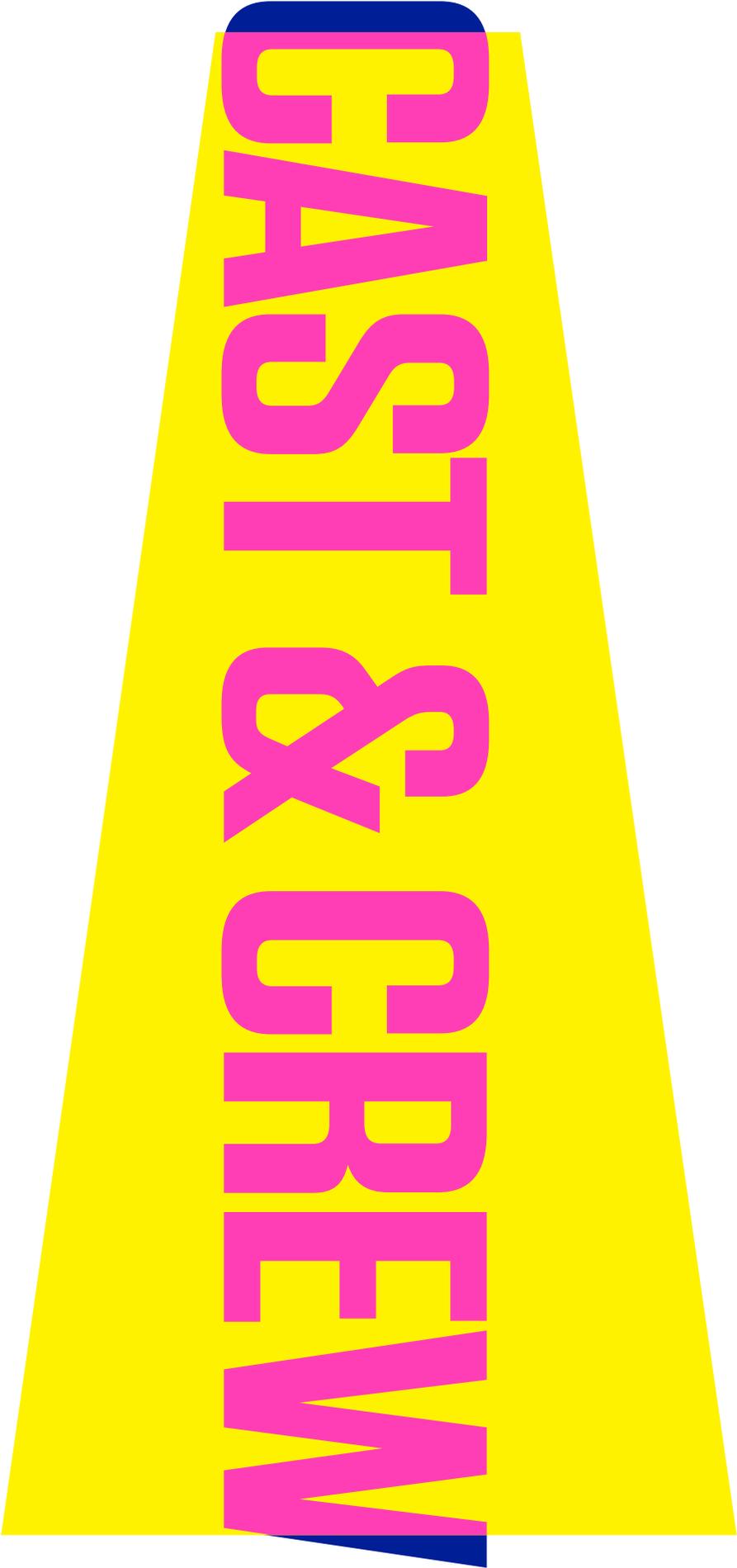
Lily Polkadot
Sky Square
Penelope Square
Mrs. Square
Mama Square

THEMES:

Celebrating differences
Inclusivity
What it means to be cool
The bravery it takes to be different

**Section II:
Creative Team**

Cast & Creative
Biographies



CAST



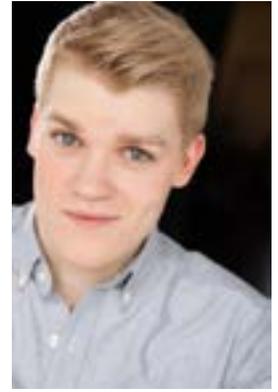
LAYTOYA EDWARDS
(Lily Polkadot)



BROOKE SWEENEY
(Penelope Square)



STEPHANIE TOUPS
(Ms. Square/Mama Square)



CHRIS RENALDS
(Sky Square)

CREATIVE TEAM

DOUGLASS LYONS (Music, Lyrics, Original Concept) is a composer-lyricist and actor who's originated roles on Broadway in *The Book of Mormon* and *Beautiful*. As a writer Douglas was awarded the Bully Free Communities Spotlight Award for *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* at Ivoryton Playhouse. Upcoming world premieres: *Five Points* at Theater Latte Da and *Peter, Darling* at Casa Mañana Theatre. With composer Ethan Pakchar his lyrics have played Lincoln Center, The Old Globe, Seattle Rep and more. Douglas is currently in residence at The Directors Company and under commission with Seattle's 5th Ave Theatre and Premieres' Inner Voices.

GREG BOROWSKY (Music) is a songwriter and producer from South Africa, signed to Sony ATV. He is the creative producer and writer behind some of South Africa's biggest SAMA (SA Grammy) winning artists. His debut album, signed to Universal Music SA was nominated for a Metro FM Best RnB Award and his single "Chocolate Vanilla" was nominated for a Best RnB Channel O Africa Award. After co-writing and producing the official "20 Years of Freedom" song for the South African Government, Greg moved to New York to complete his next producer album, "The Greg Dean Project" featuring soul and Broadway artists, which reached #1 on the UK Soul Chart and remained on the USA Billboard RnB chart for 6 weeks in 2016. Greg is extremely honored to be a part of this special Polkadots family, and to be making his Off-Broadway composer debut with this Atlantic Theater Company production.

MELVIN TUNSTALL III (Book) is thrilled to be making his Atlantic Theater Company debut as playwright! Melvin began his writing career while still a student at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music as a founding member of the AMP Theatre Company. A proud participant in the Yale Institute for Musical Theater, Melvin took a small break from writing to make his Broadway debut in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* after originating the role of "Ja'Keith" in the Toronto Company of the Broadway smash *Rock of Ages*. The acting bug now quenched, Melvin returned to writing with commissioned adaptations of the Broadway musicals *Wonderland* and *The Wiz*. His original musical *BLoom!* was a finalist in the renowned NAMT Festival in New York City. *Peter, darling...*, his highly anticipated new musical version of the classic *Peter Pan*, was commissioned by and will premiere at Casa Mañana Theatre in TX Spring 2018. Melvin currently resides in New York City where he is hard at work writing the book, music and lyrics to *Higgins In Harlem: a new musical Pygmalion*.

TAMILLA WOODARD (Director) is co-founder of PopUp Theatrics, a partnership creating site specific theatrical events internationally and the Artistic Director of The Five Boroughs/One City Project, a multi-year initiative of The Working Theater. She is a past Time Warner Directing Fellow at the Women's Project Theater, a Usual Suspect at New York Theatre Workshop, alumnus of The Lincoln Center Directors Lab and artistic affiliate with New Georges. She graduated from The Yale School of Drama's Acting program and is the recipient of The Josephine Abady Award from The League of Professional Theatre Women. For the 2016-17 season, Tamilla's work includes *Fit for a Queen* by Betty Shamieh at The Classical Theatre of Harlem, *Harbur Gate* by Kathleen Cahill at Salt Lake Acting Company in Utah, *PopUP theatrics immersive*, *INSIDE* at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, *James Scruggs 3/Fifths* at Three Legged Dog/3LD and *Beto O'Byrne's Loving and Loving* at Stella Adler.

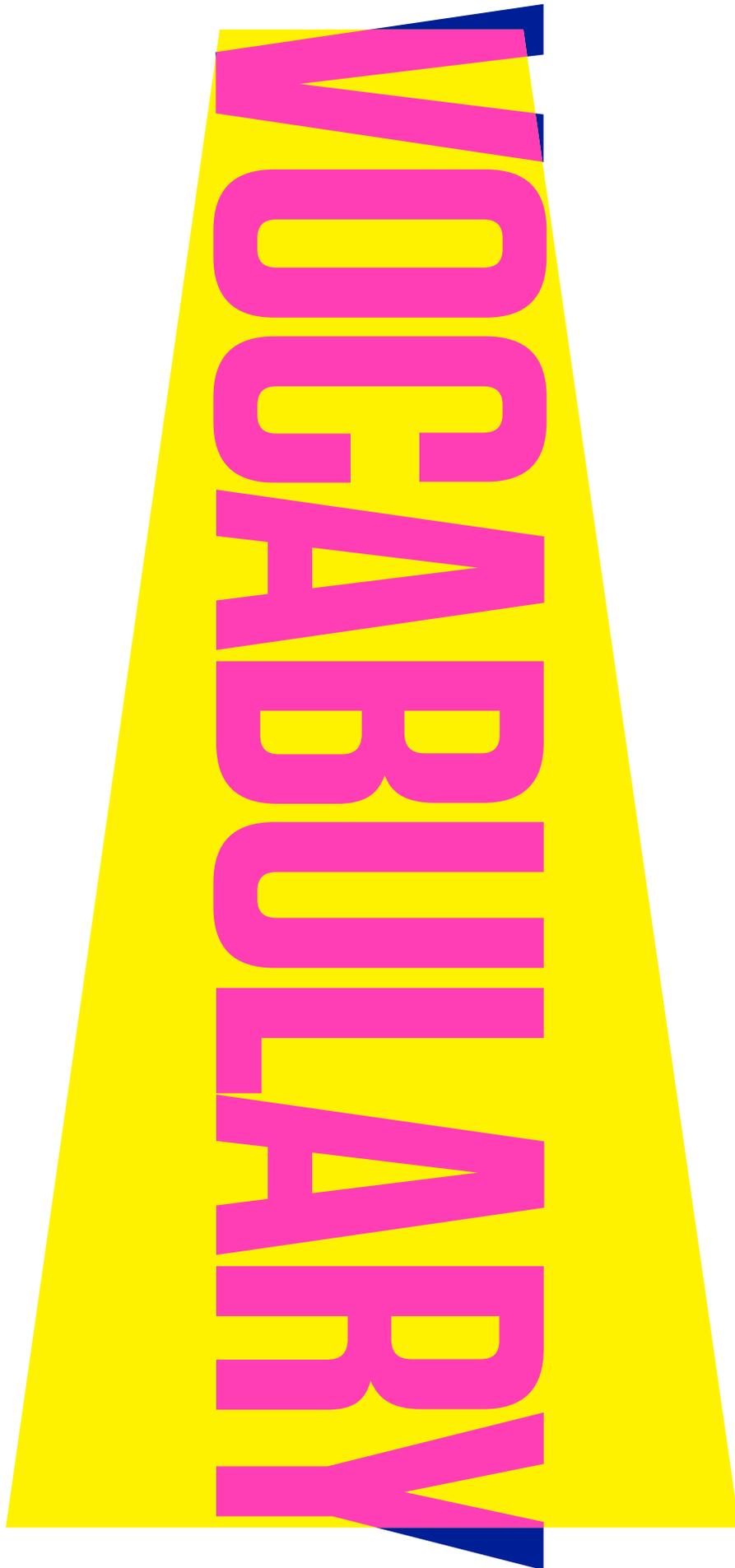
TED ARTHUR (Musical Director) is a New York-based music director/pianist who currently works at *Dear Evan Hansen*, *Wicked*, and *Miss Saigon*. He works closely with Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and has music directed and assisted on a number of productions with Royal Caribbean and Busch Gardens. Ted has worked on earlier productions of *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* and is thrilled to see this heart-filled show make its Off-Broadway debut.

SHEA SULLIVAN (Choreographer). Select credits include: Off-Broadway: *PAGEANT!* (Drama Desk Nomination Best Revival), *I'll Say She Is*. For Cape Playhouse: *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Sweet Charity*, *Legally Blonde*, *Crazy For You*, *Kiss Me Kate*. For Maltz Jupiter Theatre: *The Producers*, *The Will Roger Follies*, *The Music Man* (Carbonell Award), *Crazy For You* (Carbonell Award). For Barrington Stage: *Ragtime*, *Southern Comfort*. "Pan Am" (ABC), *White Christmas* (ACCC), *A Christmas Carol* (Fords Theater), *Dames at Sea* (Bay Street Theatre), *DanceBreak '08*. Proud member of SDC and a board member of the Musical Theater Factory and the Ziegfeld Club. www.SheaSullivan.com.

ETHAN PAKCHAR (Orchestrations) has played guitar for the Broadway productions of *Hamilton*, *Wicked*, *The Book of Mormon*, *The Lion King* and more. Half of the songwriting team "Lyons & Pakchar" who have been heard at Lincoln Center's Broadway Songbook Series, Joe's Pub at The Public Theater, Goodspeed's Johnny Mercer's Writing Colony, The Old Globe, Seattle Rep, The Musical Theatre Factory and more. Commissions: Seattle's 5th Ave Theatre ('64). He holds a B.M. from NYU.

**Section III:
Your Students
As Audience**

Theater Vocabulary &
Vocabulary Cards
Putting Polkadots in
Context: The Little Rock 9



THEATER VOCABULARY

Teacher Objective

To be able to discuss theater through a common, shared vocabulary.

Student Goal

To understand that the most effective way to discuss theater and new ideas is through a shared vocabulary.

CHARACTERS: Individuals the audience learns about from their actions and reactions. Ensemble: A group of performers working together to create a complete production.

DIALOGUE: The exchange of speech between two characters which reveals the feelings of the character as well as the story of the play.

MONOLOGUE: A speech by one actor on stage which is intended to reveal the inner thoughts of the character the actor plays.

CHARACTER ARC: The change produced in a character by the events and other characters in the play.

MUSICAL THEATER: A twentieth century creation where writers and musicians collaborate to create a play which features song, dance and drama.

MOOD: The overall feeling the play evokes.

COSTUME: The clothes, boots, etc., worn by the actors based on their character.

PROP: Objects used by an actor to enhance their character. For example, wine glasses at a bar for drinks.

SET: The constructed environment of a play within which the action takes place. Sound: Noises and music used in the play.

Protagonist

The main character in a book, play, or movie who is involved in a conflict or cause.

Obstacle

Something that makes it difficult to do something else. An object that is in your path.

Antagonist

A person who opposes (goes against) another person. In a play, the antagonist opposes the protagonist.

PUTTING POLKADOTS IN CONTEXT: THE LITTLE ROCK 9

Polkadots: the Cool Kids Musical is inspired by the true story of The Little Rock 9, African-American students from Little Rock, Arkansas who integrated into Little Rock Central High School in 1957. Before 1954, schools were allowed to be “white-only” or “black-only”, based on the idea that they were “separate, but equal.” The Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned this idea, and set up the basis for schools to allow black and white children to attend school together.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) branch in Little Rock created a plan to begin integration of the school district. It involved one school, Little Rock Central, and volunteers from a different school district. Nine 14-17 year old students volunteered. They were Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford, Jefferson Thomas, Terrence Roberts, Carlotta Walls LaNier, Minnijean Brown, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Thelma Mothershed, and Melba Pattillo Beals. They all had excellent grades and attendance.

The Little Rock 9 were set to begin school on September 4th, 1957. When they arrived at Little Rock Central High, they were met by a huge crowd of protestors. They tried to enter the school, but the Arkansas National Guard, sent by Governor Orval Faubus, blocked the doors. They were forced to turn around and go home.

Little Rock’s mayor, Woodrow Mann, sent word to President Dwight Eisenhower about this problem, and the president immediately issued a proclamation telling everyone who was involved in obstructing the students to leave. Governor Faubus’ troops didn’t listen, so the president sent the Arkansas National Guard to escort the students into the school. On September 24th, the Little Rock 9 were finally able to enter school and begin their school year.

Their struggles were far from over, however. All the members of the Little Rock 9 were targeted by bullies who wanted them out of the school. One of the girls, Minnijean Brown, wanted to sing with the glee club, but was bullied so much that when she tried to fight back, she was expelled. Any classmates who tried to help the Little Rock 9 were bullied as well. Despite all of this, they persisted in their schoolwork and tried as hard as they could to make it through the year.

In May, Ernest Green became the first black student to graduate from Little Rock Central High School. The following year, Governor Faubus shut down the public schools of Little Rock altogether. This caused outrage amongst all the residents of Little Rock, who blamed the African-American community for their loss of public education. Nevertheless, in September of 1959, the rest of the Little Rock 9 were able to return to Little Rock Central to continue their studies.

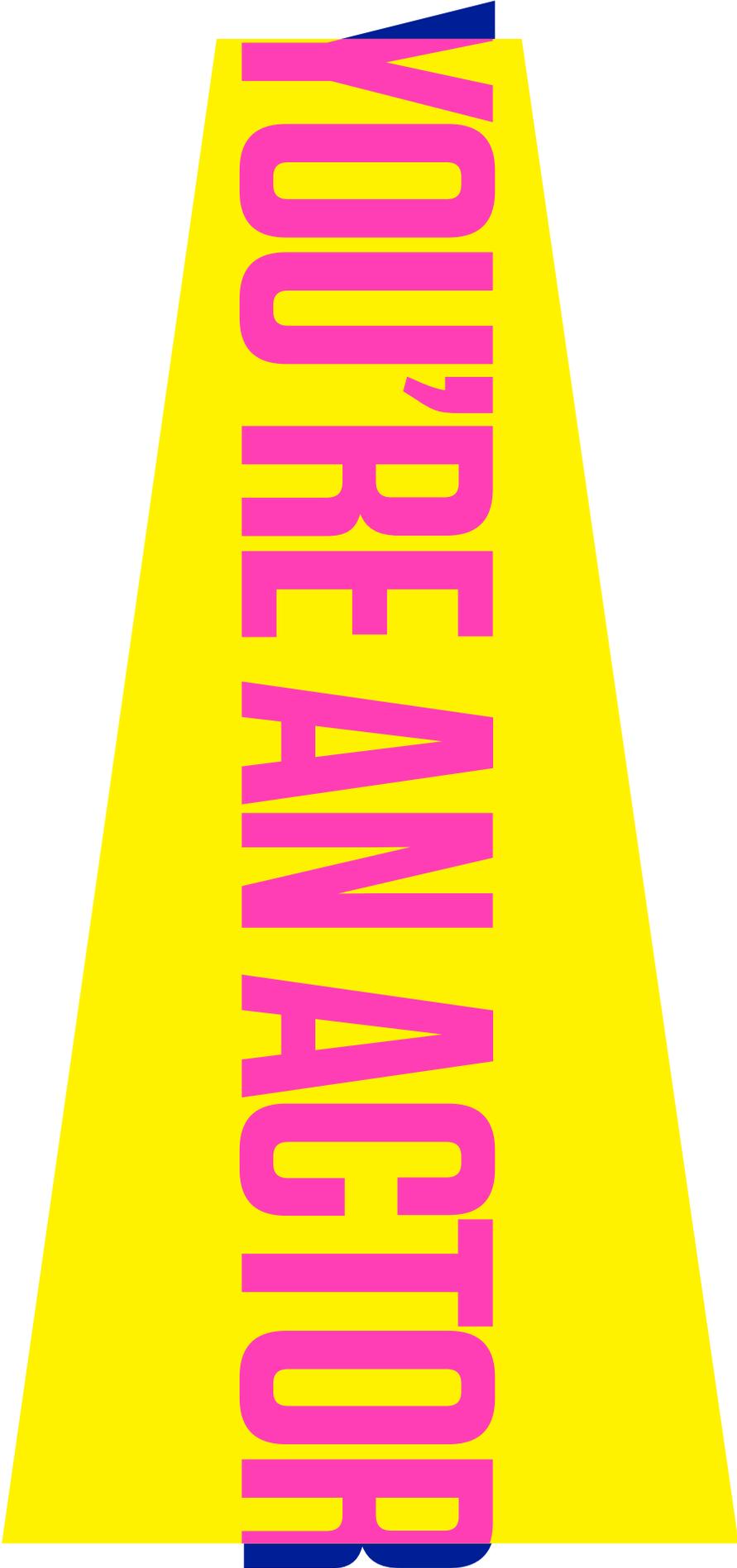
By 1968, all forms of racial segregation, including in housing, the military, and public amenities, had been outlawed.

-Uma Paranjpe

Sources:
History.com
Npr.org

Section IV: Your Students As Actors

Your Students as Artists:
Up-Stander Check-In
Creative Writing Activity
Postcard Activity
Creating Your Own Review
I Am... I Am Not



YOU'RE AN ACTOR

WARM-UP GAME

Teacher Objective

To engage students by using their minds and bodies together as communication tools.

Student Goal

To explore effective communication using their minds and bodies together.

Materials: Open space for movement.

Step One

Students will imagine themselves to magically be underneath an apple tree. They will be given the task of picking five apples. They will do this by stretching up to the sky, bending forward to pick an apple, and putting the apples in their imaginary baskets. Students will pick out the best “apple” they have in their basket, dust it off, and find a classmate to give it to.

Step Two

There’s a blazing sun above the apple tree. Ask the students to put on their imaginary sunglasses. Once they have them on, tell the students to give two thumbs up and say, “Hey, I’m cool.” Next, have the students make eye contact with a peer and say, “Hey, you’re cool.”

Step Three

Keeping their cool sunglasses on, students will imitate a cool statue: A pose and expression that gives off a “cool vibe.” The teacher will walk around the “statue park” and take note of all the cool statues.

Step Four

Tell the students to tap their heads to find a “magic string.” Ask the students to feel how that string journeys all the way to the sky, causing their backs and heads to stand tall.

Step Five

Keeping their “magic string” connected to the sky, tell the students to first look right, then left. (Repeat 3x)

Step Six

Keeping their “magic string” connected to the sky, tell the students to look up, then down with their heads. (Repeat 3x)

Step Seven

Keeping their “magic string” connected to the sky, tell the students to raise their arms up, then drop them down. (Repeat 3x)

Step Eight

Share a “secret” with the students by telling them that magic jumping beans were put in their shoes while they weren’t looking. Tell the students to “shake them out!” Students will shake around the magic beans from limb to limb (hands, arms, shoulders, hips, knees, feet, and then everything), as the teacher guides the students with a shake out song that helps the beans disappear. Once the song is finished, tell the students to “go bananas” until they actually become bananas (arms reaching up to the sky, hands touching). Finally have the students “peel the banana” into their “cool statue.”

Vocal Warm Up

Ask the students to breathe into their bodies, especially their bellies, as if it were a balloon-getting bigger with the air they breathe in and getting smaller with the air they breathe out. To help with this process, have the students exaggerate the expansion and deflation with their whole bodies. Then have them focus on just expanding and deflating their bellies through breath.

Starting at a low volume (level 1) and ending as loud as possible (level 5), ask the students to echo you, saying the phrase “Hey, I’m cool!” Once they understand the range in which they can use their voices, encourage them to say the phrase with a different emotion, exploring the many ways one phrase can be expressed (happily, sadly, scared, tired, angrily, etc.) The exercise will finish when each student finds a peer to say “Hey, you’re cool too!”

Transition to the Song

Ask the students to stand very still and get ready. Students will be guided through the “finishing touches” we need to be ready to dive into *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*. Have the students “crank up” their listening ears (pretending to crank their ears as if turning a dial), put on “focus sunglasses” (pretend to put on glasses), wake up their faces (stretch their faces), double check to make sure their imaginations are “on” (gently tap head), and then tell them to give someone next to them a high five while switching on their smiles.

SING-ALONG WITH MRS. SQUARE

Teacher Objective

To introduce the students to professional New York City actors, their talents, process and motivation.

Student Goal

To understand that actors use the words of a song to advance the storyline of their characters.

Materials: The lyric sheet (below.)

“THE FIRST”

SOMETIMES LIFE TAPS YOU ON THE SHOULDER UNEXPECTEDLY
YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A RING OF FIRE, FULL OF RESPONSIBILITIES
THERE’S NONE LIKE YOU TO CALL YOUR OWN
YOU ARE AFRAID, LEFT ALL ALONE
LIFE IS UNFAIR! YOU’RE THE UNKNOWN!
BUT KNOW SECRETLY YOU ARE THAT SPECIAL ONE!
YOU’VE BEEN PLACED RIGHT HERE TO CHANGE THE WORLD
AND BRIGHTEN UP THE SUN!
YOU’RE AN ORIGINAL! SURROUNDED BY TYPICAL!
FOCUS ON THE GOOD AND WHAT YOU’VE BEGUN!
WHEN YOU’RE THE FIRST,
PEOPLE WILL POINT, MAKE JOKES OR WORSE
BUT REMEMBER, THAT YOU WERE CHOSEN BECAUSE OF YOUR WORTH
DON’T BE CONCERNED WITH ALL THE GOSSIP ON THIS EARTH
KEEP YOUR HEAD TALL AND RISE ABOVE IT ALL
YOU CAN’T REHEARSE BEING THE FIRST

READING A SCENE FOR UNDERSTANDING

Teacher Objective

To introduce the Practical Aesthetics “tools” for breaking down a scene. To understand the character and the story of the scene by relating the character’s action to the student’s own life.

Student Goal

To understand that an important part of creating a simple, honest character involves knowing what that character “wants.”

Materials: Copies of the scene from *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*.

SCRIPT:

SKY SQUARE

(Rushing to LILY) How did you do that?

LILY POLKADOT

Do what?

SKY SQUARE

Stand up to Penelope. You scared her away!

LILY POLKADOT

Nah, I think I was saved the bell.

SKY SQUARE

No, that was some Magic Thunder level 3 supersonic lightning tornado action! You destroyed the beast!

LILY POLKADOT

If you say so.

SKY SQUARE

No really! Why aren't you afraid of Penelope?

LILY POLKADOT

Why should I be afraid of someone who's scared?

SKY SQUARE

She's scared?

LILY POLKADOT

I think so. Scared of things changing. Being different. You know how you can really tell when someone is scared?

SKY SQUARE

How?

LILY POLKADOT

They start yelling. You ever notice in a scary movie when someone is scared of a monster they yell "GO AWAY!"

SKY SQUARE

Yeah.

LILY POLKADOT

I figure if Penelope is yelling for me to go away, then she must be the one that's actually scared.

SKY SQUARE

Whoa...

LILY POLKADOT

Remember that next time she yells at you!

SKY SQUARE

I will! Next time she's mean to me, I will be brave and tell her "I am NOT-"

PENELOPE SQUARE

(YELLING) SKYYYYYYY!

SKY SQUARE

(Scared out of his mind) AHHH! (He looks at LILY, embarrassed) Maybe tomorrow. Bye Lily.

SCENE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Here are your "tools" for understanding your character:

If you're playing LILY POLKADOT:

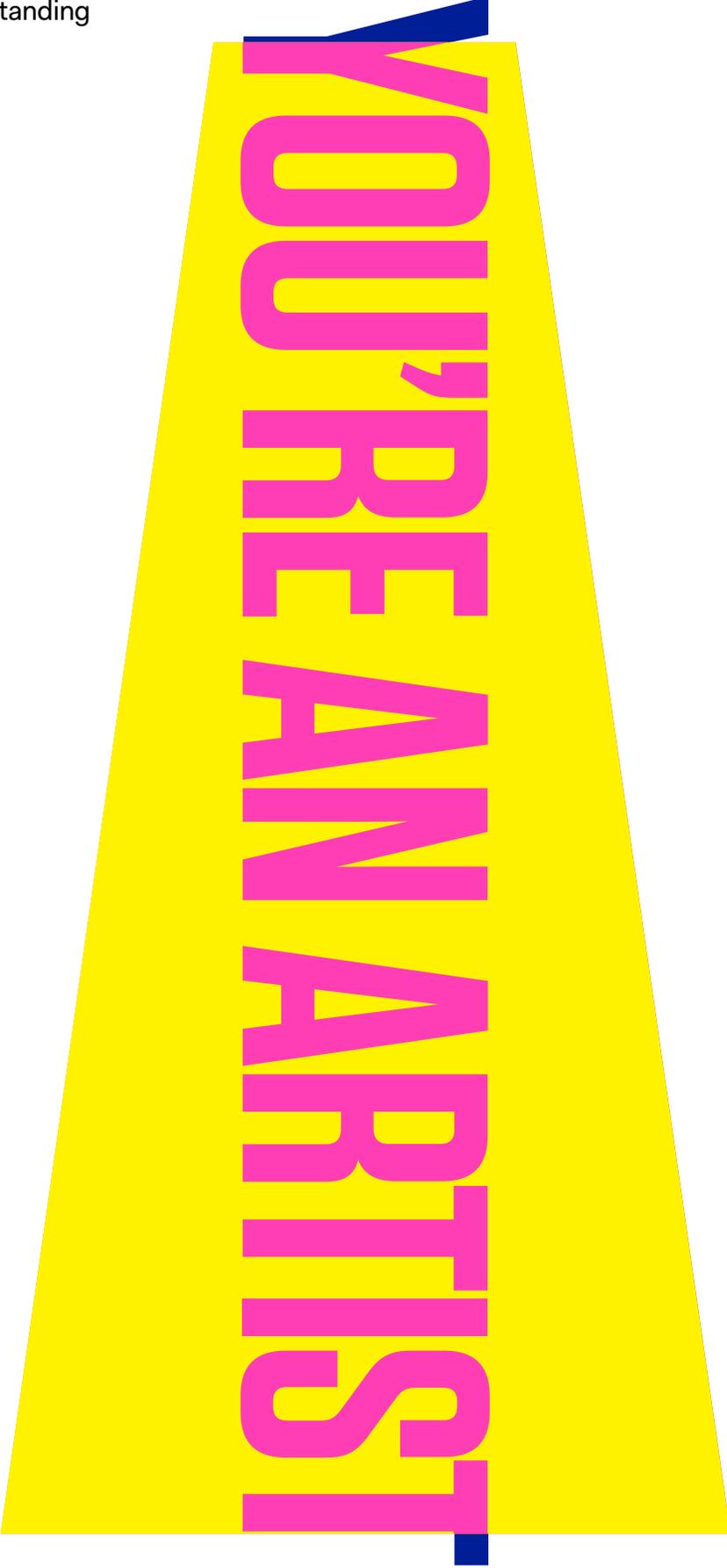
- What is my character literally doing?
Lily is literally talking to Sky about his older sister.
- What does my character want?
Lily wants Sky to stand up for himself.
- What is the action I'm going to play?
To inspire.

If you're playing SKY SQUARE:

- What is my character literally doing?
Sky is literally talking to Lily about his older sister.
- What does my character want?
Sky wants to understand how to stand up for himself.
- What is the action I'm going to play?
To ask for advice.

**Section V:
Your Students
As Artists**

Warm-up Game
Reading a Scene for Understanding
Scene/Character Analysis



YOU'RE AN ARTIST

UP-STANDER CHECK-IN (GRADES 2 - 6)

Teacher Objective

To engage students in conversation around the concept of being an up-stander (someone who sees something wrong and acts to make it right.)

Student Goal

To explore the definitions, ideas, and actions of an up-stander.

Materials: Copies of the attached graphic organizer and a pen or pencil.

Step One

Before seeing *Polkadots: The Cool Kid Musical*, ask the students to write their thoughts on being an up-stander in the “What I Know” and the “What I Think I Know” sections of the graphic organizer.

Step Two

As a class, share and review the ideas of both sections.

Step Three

After seeing the show, ask the students to write the ideas they may have gathered during the production in the “What I Learned” section of the graphic organizer.

Step Four

As a class, share and review the ideas of all three sections.

UP-STANDER CHECK-IN GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

WHAT I KNOW

**WHAT I WANT
TO KNOW**

WHAT I LEARNED

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY (GRADES K - 2)

Teacher Objective

To engage students in a thoughtful narrative writing piece on the subject of “the first time I felt different”.

Student Goal

To create a piece of narrative writing around a personal experience of “the first time I felt different”.

Materials: Copies of the writing prompt on the following page and a pen or pencil

Step One

Ask students to think of a moment when they realized that they felt “different” (from someone else, from a group of other people, etc.)

Step Two

Instruct students to think about that experience for a moment and remember the details; The specific things they heard, saw, said, felt, thought, and did.

Step Three

Encourage students to think of at least two examples for each category.

Step Four

Ask students to start writing using the writing prompt on the next page. Encourage them to use all of the details they brainstormed and to dive in using strong details.

Step Five

If you like, as additional writing practice, have students revise their work to ensure that every sentence is active and that the writing is rich and descriptive.

POSTCARD ACTIVITY (GRADES K-2)

Teacher Objective

Develop the students' critical thinking skills, drawing on a number of skills.

Student Goal

To draw the details from their favorite visual moment in the play and to write a personal response.

Materials: Pens, pencils, crayons or markers, and copies of the postcard design provided.

Step One

On the front of the card, have the students draw their favorite scene from *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* with as much detail as possible (color, design, background, etc.). Have them fill the entire front of the postcard with their drawing.

Step Two

On the back of the card, write to a friend or family member about your feelings concerning the scene on the card's front.

Step Three

Have the students address the postcard to the friend or family member.

NOTE: Small groups may arrange their postcards in the sequence in which their drawn scenes appeared in the play to create a fun storyboard of the show.

CREATING YOUR OWN REVIEW: THUMBS UP OR THUMBS DOWN (GRADES 4 - 8)

Teacher Objective

To introduce the critical thinking skills involved in expressing one's personal opinion.

Student Goal

To understand that the 4Ws can be used to critically describe an artistic experience. To enhance the literacy skills of the 4Ws and sequencing in writing.

Materials: Paper, pen, copy of *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* program, attached worksheets.

Step One

Review the four W's (who, what where, when).

Step Two

Review the "Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down" worksheet with your students. Remember there is no right or wrong response. Each student's review will be based on individual opinion.

Step Three

Using the "Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down" worksheet, ask the students to write their review in three paragraphs (beginning, middle, and conclusion.)

Step Four

Post the reviews in the classroom.

“I AM . . . I AM NOT” CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY (GRADES 5 - 8)

Teacher Objective

Develop the students' critical thinking skills, drawing on a number of creative writing skills.

Student Goal

To draw the details from their favorite emotional moment in the play and to write a personal response to the message of the play.

Materials: Pens, pencils, crayons or markers, and copies of the notebook-style worksheet provided.

Motivation: Discuss the play with your students, asking them to reflect on the characters' journeys of self-discovery in the show.

Step One

Using the worksheet, have the students brainstorm six statements that proclaim to the world who they are at age 11, 12, 13, 14 . . . Encourage the students to look beyond the obvious, (i.e. I am tall, short, blonde, etc.) and explore themselves more deeply. For example, “I am growing so much taller and taller each day, my brother is starting to look so small.

Step Two

Using the worksheet, now have the students brainstorm six statements that proclaim to the world who they are **NOT AT** age 11, 12, 13, 14 . . . Again, encourage the students to look beyond the obvious. For example, “I am not a young man who bullies or pre-judges others.”

Step Three

Have the students do a polished draft of their I AM . . . I AM NOT statements. Ask the students to share their “proclamations” with the group for positive feedback.

Section 6: The Atlantic Legacy

Atlantic Theater Company &
Atlantic Acting School

Inspired by the Group Theater, Stanislavsky, and a passion for ensemble acting, David Mamet and William H. Macy formed the Atlantic Theater Company with a select group of New York University Undergraduate drama students. Since its inception in 1985, Atlantic has produced more than 100 plays and garnered numerous awards, including: 12 Tony Awards, 15 Lucille Lortel Awards, 16 OBIE Awards, six Outer Critics Circle Awards, seven Drama Desk Awards, three Drama League Awards, three New York Drama Critics Circle Awards and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Noted productions include: *Spring Awakening*, *Port Authority*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Boy's Life*, and *American Buffalo*. The Atlantic Theater Company's mission is to produce plays simply and truthfully, utilizing an artistic ensemble. Atlantic believes that the story of the play and the intent of its playwright are at the core of a successful theatrical production.

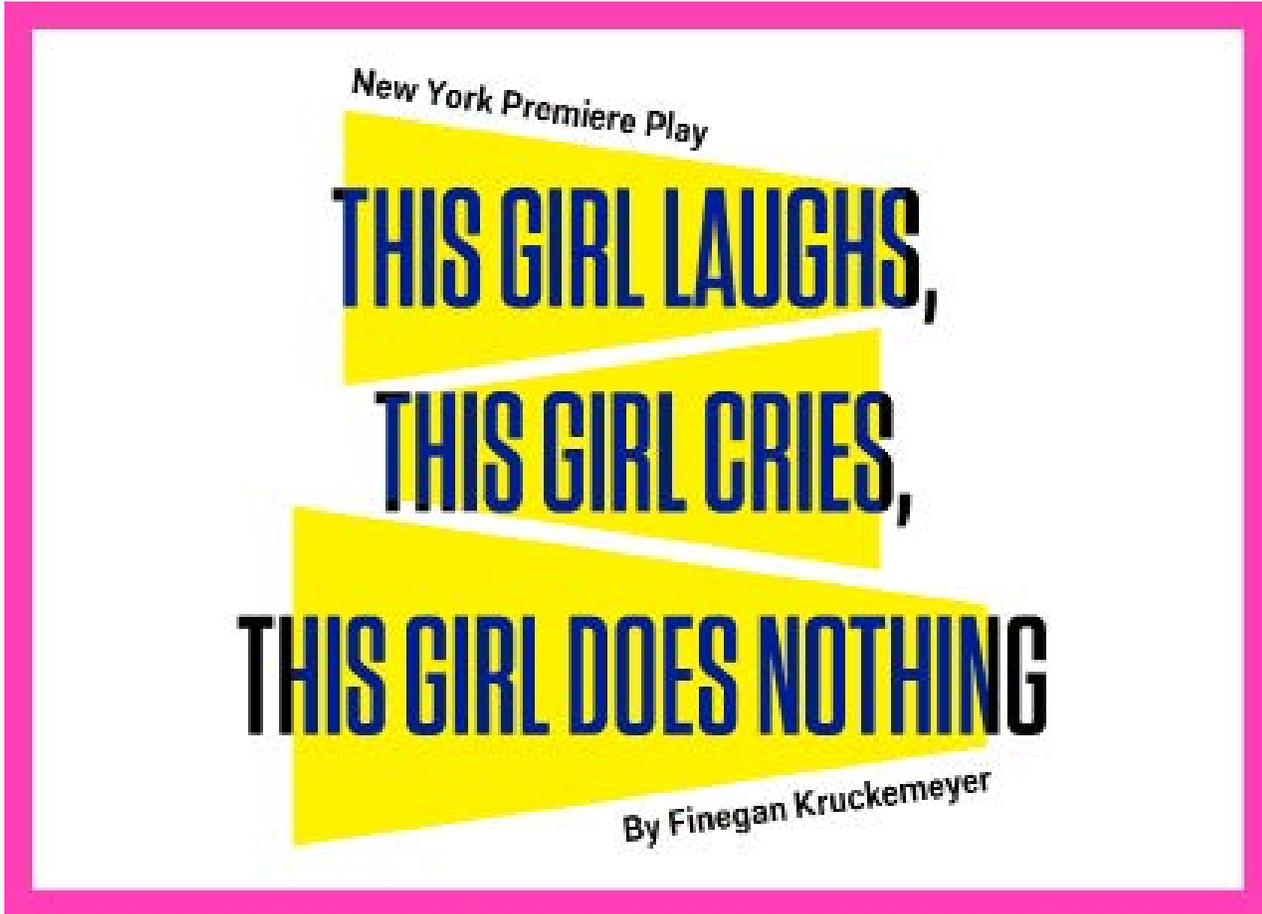
The Atlantic Acting School fosters new generations of actors by passing on the tools learned from Mamet and Macy and by preparing students for all aspects of a career in film, television and theater. The Atlantic offers studies through New York University, a full-time conservatory program, part-time programs and summer workshops. Atlantic for Kids offers acting classes in an after school setting as well as summer programs for children ages 4 to 18.

Linda Gross Theater
336 West 20th Street
New York, NY, 10011

Atlantic Stage 2
330 West 16th Street
New York, NY, 10011

ATLANTIC ACTING SCHOOL

NEXT UP:



February 10 - March 4

Three young sisters are left in a forest by their woodcutter father and forced to find their own way in the world. From this fairytale beginning, three resolutions are made – one sister walks one way to find purpose, one the other to find adventure, and the third stays right where she is to create a home. Years later, having circumnavigated the globe and fought vikings, crossed oceans, tamed wilds, and achieved greatness, the three sisters meet again, as women. A moving and irresistibly charming modern-day fable for the whole family, recommended for ages 6 and up.