

Fort Wayne
youtheatre

EDUCATION GUIDE

CORDUROY





IN THIS GUIDE

- About Us
- Elements of a Production
- About: The Story
- About: The Author
- Your Turn!
- Discussion Starters
- Crafts & Activities

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ABOUT: FORT WAYNE YOUTHEATRE



Did you know Fort Wayne Youtheatre is the fifth oldest children’s theatre in the country? Since 1934, we’ve been on a mission to educate, engage, and entertain through the power of live theatre.

It all started when the Old Fort Players (now Civic Theatre) imagined a place where children participated in theatre to develop poise, self-confidence, and an ability to express themselves creatively. Thus, the “Children’s Theatre” was born! The very first class had 40 students – paying just \$1 for 8 weeks of lessons! Their first show, *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, featured 75 young actors performing for audiences at the Majestic Theatre. Tickets were only 10¢ for kids and 25¢ for adults!

In 1978, Broadway actor Harvey Cocks took the lead as Executive Director, inspiring young performers for more than 40 years. In 1984, the Youtheatre began its independent journey. Over the decades, Youtheatre moved to different homes across the city before finding its place at Park Lake Professional Center in 2025. Today, Youtheatre is guided by Executive Director Heather Closson, Artistic Director Christopher J. Murphy, and a team of amazing local artists.

Youtheatre isn’t just about what happens on stage—we take theatre into the community, too! Our touring troupe, *Youtheatre-On-The-Go*, brings stories to schools, libraries, hospitals, and community centers. In 2018, our *Young Heroes of Conscience* series, which has celebrated inspiring figures like Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges, and Harriet Tubman, won the Mayor’s Arts Award.

For over 90 years, countless youth have discovered their voices, made lifelong friends, and experienced the joy of storytelling. And the story is still being written – by the young artists of today.



ELEMENTS OF A PRODUCTION

SETS

The scenery pieces that form the area in which the performers act out the play. Sometimes scenery is very realistic, making the audience think they are inside a real house, for example. Other times the scenery is quite fanciful or limited. What different sets can you name in the show? What time and place does it look like?

LIGHTS

The lighting instruments that help to create the right atmosphere on the stage. Lights direct the attention of the audience to specific areas of the stage or to a specific performer. The lights may be different colors to add special effects such as nighttime or a storm. How do the lights in this production show changes in the time and place?

PROPS

The objects performers carry to help them act out the story. Look for important props that help define character or place. Can you name a few?

MAKEUP

The cosmetic bases, blushes, lipsticks, mascara and eye liners which helps the performer physically become the character he/she is playing. Make-up is also used so that the performers facial features can be seen clearly under the bright stage lights from a distance. Do you notice any special make-up in the show?

COSTUMES

The clothing the performers wear. Depending on the story being acted out, this clothing may be what a character of the time would have actually worn. It may also be very exaggerated or fantastic in the case of a dream or a fairy-tale. Costumes help the audience know what a character is like or where and when he/she lived. Are the costumes drab or colorful? Do they look realistic? What do they tell you about the time and place?

BEHIND THE SCENES

Read below to learn more about the director of Corduroy, Leslie Beauchamp!

Leslie is a familiar face to area audiences, having been involved in our arts community for over 40 years (Arts United Award Recipient Outstanding Volunteer). Most recently Leslie had the pleasure of directing the Shawshank Redemption for Civic, directing/choreographing Company for IMTF, Big Fish for Arena, Irving Berlin's White Christmas for the Civic Theatre and directed The Masque of the Red Death for the Youtheatre production of Shuddersome. Additional directorial/choreographic works include Civic's Jersey Boys, Hello, Dolly!, Sweeney Todd, Newsies, the all-female production of 1776 (Arts United Award Significant Contribution to the Arts), and the Genesis Outreach production of Ragtime. Leslie serves as Choreographer and Education Director for Indiana Music Theatre Foundation, as Chair for the Regional Arts Council, as President of Arena Theatre BOD, choreographs award-winning area show choirs, is an adjudicator and motivational clinician, and can be heard in local, regional, and national voiceover campaigns. Leslie and her husband Brad were honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award from USF's School of Creative Arts where they were involved in bringing theatre to students and the community at large.



THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH (2024) | DIRECTED BY LESLIE BEAUCHAMP

BEHIND THE SCENES

How old were you when you got started in directing, and what inspired you to start?

“I first got started in directing when I was still in High School, so probably when I was 15 or so. It stemmed from my time choreographing and being inspired by the inimitable Mary Kay Perkins. I directed in College as part of my degree program and enjoyed it immensely, and have been directing for our arts community ever since.”

What is your favorite show you have ever directed?

“Oh my, this is a difficult one because I find something inspiring in every show I direct. The collaborative process is the main reason I enjoy directing. Seeing the joy that creating live art brings is what fills my soul. I would say working on Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Sweeney Todd, and Newsies were all enjoyable for different and wonderful reasons.”

Did you have a favorite mentor or teacher that taught you?

“As I mentioned, Mary Kay Perkins was a huge influence for me as well as Harvey Cocks, Larry Life and Becky Menzie. They all were generous in sharing their knowledge and in allowing an inquisitive kid the honor of being by their side to learn the craft.”

What does your process look like?

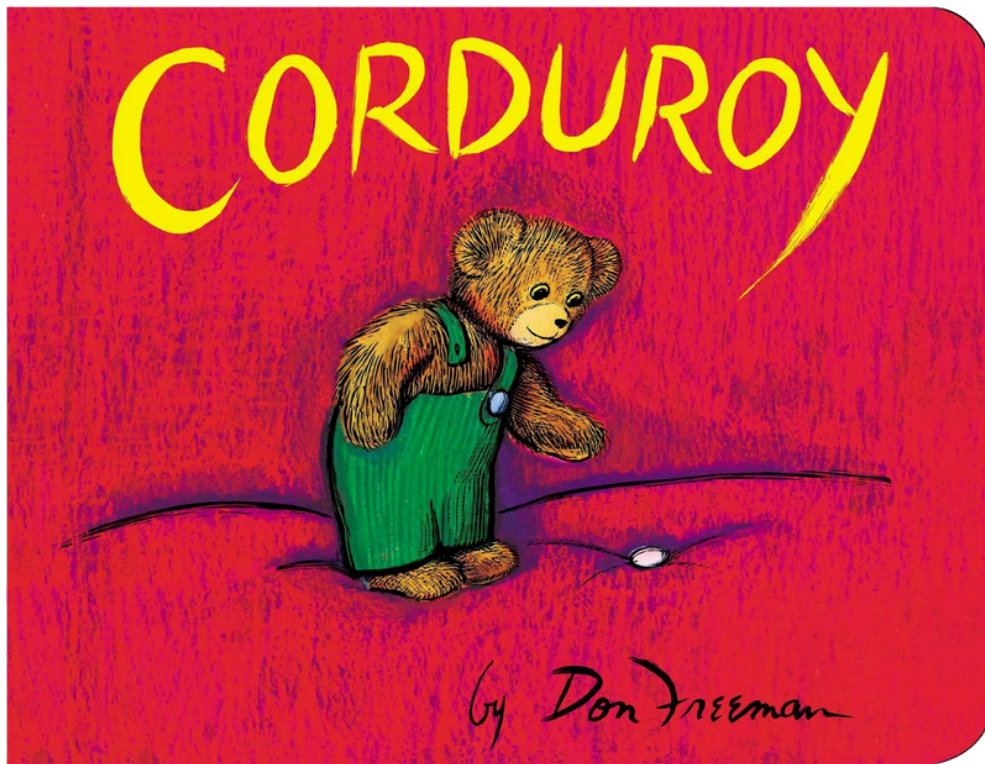
“My process starts with a cold read of the show. I like to get an overall, unbiased opinion of the piece. I then continue with a ton of research - which is also one of my favorite parts! I find it fascinating to learn new things about different times, places and people! Then decide which parts of the research are useable in the show, incorporate them, and then share the vision with the cast. The ideas that the cast then bring to the process is my next favorite part. Then we take the ideas and see how they fit with the overall vision, and begin the work of blocking and working the scenes and bringing the story and characters to life!”

If someone wanted to be a director, how should they start?

“Being at Youtheatre is a fantastic starting point because folks get to try so many different areas of the creative process!! Acting, dancing, vocal performance, improvisation - everything you learn about the creative process can play a part in being a director! I hope to see many of our young creatives try directing!”

ABOUT: THE STORY

Read below to learn more about the story of Corduroy!



The Story: The book follows a small, stuffed teddy bear wearing green overalls who lives in a department store. He is deemed "shopworn" by a mother because he is missing a button, leading him to explore the store at night to find it.

Themes: The story focuses on the desire for friendship and a home, culminating in a little girl named Lisa adopting him.

Legacy: Corduroy is a staple in children's literature, recognized by the School Library Journal as one of the "Top 100 Picture Books" and has sold millions of copies worldwide.

Sequel: Freeman wrote a sequel, *A Pocket for Corduroy*, shortly before his death in 1978.

ABOUT: THE AUTHOR

DON FREEMAN



Don Freeman was a celebrated American Author and Illustrator best known for creating *Corduroy* in 1968. Originally a Jazz Musician and artist in New York, Freeman pivoted to children's books, creating charming, heartfelt stories often featuring themes of belonging and adventure.

Background: Born in San Diego, California, Freeman moved to New York in 1929, where he worked as a Jazz Trumpeter and Artist, specializing in theater and circus scenes.

Career Pivot: After losing his trumpet, he focused on sketching and illustration, eventually entering children's literature at the encouragement of author William Saroyan.

Style: Known for his soft, evocative illustrations and gentle storytelling, he often explored themes of small, vulnerable characters finding their place in a large world.

YOUR TURN!

Be an actor!

Acting requires 3 things:

- **Your Voice** 
- **Your Body** 
- **Your Imagination** 

By yourself, or sitting in a circle as a class, say the words “where is the button?” using these different prompts:

- You're **scared**
- It's a **secret**
- You're **angry**
- You're very **shy**
- You're **hyper**
- You're **tired**
- You're in **love**
- You're **begging**

You can try other phrases too! Challenge the students to not add, or take away any of the words even when they're begging.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

What does it mean to be a friend?

Have you ever lost something that was really special to you?

Lisa does extra chores to be able to buy Corduroy, do you do chores?

Have you ever saved up money to buy something you really wanted?

What is the lesson, or message in the story of Corduroy?

What is the next adventure you think Lisa and Corduroy could go on?

CORDUROY



SNACK IDEA

CORDUROY BOOK CLUB

Before reading the book Corduroy to your classroom make, or buy sugar cookies and punch holes in the middle to make buttons!



FURTHER RESOURCES

Full book:

<https://anyflip.com/ykodg/sduw/basic>

Don Freeman: Why I Wrote *Corduroy*:

<https://donfreeman.info/why-did-don-write-corduroy>

MCNY's "A City for Corduroy" with Don Freeman's son:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6uT7cSmQ0I>

Corduroy Paper Plate Craft:

<https://iheartcraftythings.com/paper-plate-corduroy-craft.html>

Prindle Institute's Education Module

<https://www.prindleinstitute.org/books/corduroy/>

Accessibility for visually impaired

<https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/making-corduroy-accessible-readers-visual-impairments/>

Literture Across Curriculums

<https://neisdlibs.pbworks.com/f/corduroy.pdf>

GET INVOLVED

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ACADEMY
of Performing Arts

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LANGUAGE ARTS

STANDARDS

Most Youtheatre productions are literature-based and on the recommended reading list of the Library of Congress.

Language Arts Standard: Perceive, identify, describe and analyze the distinguishing characteristics of form, structure and style of story.

- Retell story identifying plot, theme, characters, and setting.
- Recall story plot utilizing chronological order.

Language Arts Standard: Evaluate Theatre/Literary work based on critical perception and analysis.

- Share perception of theatre experience in the area of voice, movement, mood and motivation.
- Make suggestions for alternative endings.
- Analyze and critique story and performance through creative writing.
- Create a similar story through creative writing.

Language Arts Standard: Use Theatre /Literary work to develop affective areas of self-concept, problem solving and interpersonal skills.

- React to feelings of self and others within a production.
- Identify conflict within story as it relates to self and others.
- Compare and contrast problems and resolutions found in different stories and real life situations.
- Express personal attitudes, values, and belief systems as it relates to theatre piece.
- Interact freely in conversations, class discussions and dramatic activities.
- Contribute to the solving of problems through dramatization/improvisation.

Language Arts Standard: Examine Theatre /Literary work in a historical and multicultural context.

- Identify similarities and differences between characters from diverse cultures depicted.
- Identify historical differences/figures in different time frames depicted in story.
- Identify significance of historical aspects in story.

Exploring Aesthetics: A Philosophical Basis for Life!

- Attending live theatre helps children value its importance to the community and helps develop a lifelong commitment and love of Theatre and Literature. Students experience aesthetic growth through appreciation of Theatre.
- Students discover through experience that making art is an essential human activity. It requires collaboration, and enhances creative thinking.

