



STUDY GUIDE!

SECTION 1

ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION

WRITTEN BY
Elliot Lorenc

DIRECTED BY
Mandy Khoshnevisan

SCENIC DESIGNER
Kyra Sanford

COSTUME DESIGNER
Jenna Cady

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Violet Costales

SOUND DESIGNER
Abbie Northrop

PROP DESIGNER
Signe Larsen

STAGE MANAGER
Ephriam Harnsberger

ASST. STAGE MANAGER
Annika Elliott

SYNOPSIS

In *The Ballad of Iron Jo*, our hero, Aurelie, befriends a monstrous creature named Iron Jo, a talking goose named Skyler, and a woodland construction crew, as they seek to liberate their town from the corrupt Coyne Enterprises in this imaginative adventure full of laughter and heart.

Inspired by the Grimm Brother's "Iron John" and other folklore, this world-premiere adventure was created through Bag&Baggage's emerging artist program, conceived and written by Elliot Lorenc. Featuring puppets, music, magic, and mayhem, *The Ballad of Iron Jo* is a brave re-telling of a classic tale about growing up, building community, and caring for the environment.

ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES



ELLIOT LORENC (he/they) — Playwright, Coyne, & Others

Elliot holds a Bachelors in Applied Theatre from Pacific University. After many years being Bag&Baggage's previous Marketing Manager, Elliot is thrilled to step onto The Vault stage for the first time - at least, if you don't count the filmed version of this play! Recent work includes Henry IV Part 1, Henry IV Part 2, and Henry V (as Hotspur, Judge Silence, and Dauphin respectively), Macbeth (as Malcolm), and Titus Andronicus (as Chiron), all with Salt & Sage Theatre, as well as in the director's chair for Pacific University Theatre's productions of Constellations and Tunnel City. You can catch Elliot in the upcoming production of The Winter's Tale with Oregon Adventure Theatre, and then in The Winter's Tale (yes, again) and Much Ado About Nothing with Salt & Sage Theatre. When not acting, directing, or otherwise doing theatre things, Elliot spends his time performing tenor guitar with his celtic and folk music band, playing a myriad of silly tabletop games, convincing people to come see plays at his day job with Profile Theatre, and annoying his cat. Elliot is endlessly grateful to the entire B&B team for giving this goofy (sometimes prescient) little play its live world premiere, and to you for coming out and seeing live theatre. "CLEAN THE POND AND SAVE THE FORES



RAE DAVIS (he/they) — Aurelie

Rae's over- and underlying passion is storytelling with the purpose of human connection and acknowledgement. When Rae is not on the stage they are busy barista-ing at Woodstock Cafe, making music, teaching at Oregon Children's Theatre or materializing an assortment of crafts with as many strange trinkets he can get his hands on. He has had the privilege to make art with so many wonderful artists throughout the Portland Metro and is incredibly grateful to be invited back to this project to give it love, life and laughter. As a Black, trans, nonbinary, neurodivergent artist, he strives to make space for any and every kind of person he may encounter as a way to better understand and empathize with them



TREVOR HARTER (he/him) — Baba Yasha, Skylar, & Others

Trevor Harter (he/him) is thrilled to be back on stage at Bag&Baggage, previously appearing as Cinnamon Sugar and others in *Hardboiled Eggnog*. He recieved his Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from Pacific University in 2019 and went on to join the Emerging Artists program here at B&B. Since then, he has stayed busy around the Portland art scene working with Laika Studios, Portland Center Stage, Stumptown Stages, and of course Bag&Baggage. When he's not making art, he must be gardening or doting on one of his small dogs. He would like to thank Nik, Mandy, and the whole production team for all their incredible work.



MURREN KENNEDY (he/him) — Iron Jo & Others

Murren is a graduate of Portland Actors Conservatory. He previously appeared with Bag&Baggage in Tartuffe (as Tartuffe), and the pandemic-shortened production of The Measure of Innocence by Anya Pearson. Past highlights in Portland area theatre include Misery with Experience Theatre Project (as Paul Sheldon), Blithe Spirit (as Charles Condomine) and Shakespeare in Love (as Marlowe) with Lakewood Center for the Arts, Romeo & Juliet (as Romeo) and The Henriad Trilogy (as Various) with Salt & Sage, and The Winter's Tale with Portland Shakespeare Project (as Polixenes). Love to Jessa and the cats.

THEMES & TOPICS

I. COMING OF AGE

A coming-of-age story focuses on detailing the growth of the protagonist from a child to an adult. The majority of these works typically follow pre-teens and teenagers who are traversing into the world of adulthood. This genre of literature has been around for centuries and can be found in children's stories, classic literature, contemporary novels, as well as in movies and television. It's a genre that is applicable to all of humanity, which makes it a meaningful and popular way in which to present various ideas regarding the maturation process.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

Can you think of other examples in media (movies, TV, books) that tell a Coming of Age story?

ACTING EXERCISE

When one character in a play gives a speech alone, that's called a monologue. Try writing your own monologue from the perspective of a character in a Coming of Age story.

II. COMMUNITY

Community is a network of solidarity and connection that attests to the need of all human beings as social animals. Community is an important source of meaning and validation in all our lives and is predicated on a set of commonly held beliefs, values, interests, knowledge and information, and the interpretive frameworks deemed as good by those who belong to the community. A sense of belonging to a collective is an integral aspect of community. As David Bradford says in his book *Connect*: “When we find ourselves in an exceptional relationship—the kind of relationship where we feel fully understood and supported for who we are—it can seem like magic.”

DISCUSSION QUESTION

What are some ways in which you can help build community in your local school, neighborhood, or city?

ACTING EXERCISE

In partners or small groups, take turns where one of you pretends to be a visiting space alien trying to learn about human communities. Teach the alien about your community and, as the alien, ask questions as if you’ve never met before.

III. ENVIRONMENTALISM

Environmental themes refer to the recurring motifs and messages in literature or other media that focus on the relationship between humans and the natural world. These themes often explore issues like sustainability, ecological balance, the consequences of human actions on the environment, and the spiritual connection people have with nature. They encourage you to reflect on environmental issues and the impact of human behavior on the planet.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

What are some of the major ways humans impact the environment?

WRITING EXERCISE

Improvise and perform a short scene from the perspective of a non-human part of the environment (a tree, a river, a bird, etc) and how they might feel about the way humans impact their home.

SECTION 3

Q&A WITH THE DIRECTOR

(director extraordinaire!)

AN INTERVIEW WITH MANDY KHOSHNEVISAN

What is one thing you want students to know before they see the show?

MK: It's hard to pick just one thing — how about this one: yes, this play is funny on purpose.

What excites you about this production?

MK: I am super excited to be working on this project again, for many reasons! In addition to the great people working on it onstage and backstage, it's got a lot of my favorite theatrical elements: puppets, live music, a little dancing, and some very dumb jokes. It's a script that is about serious issues, but it doesn't take itself too seriously. It's also a script that points out the "theater magic" (there are only a few actors to play all the characters, for example!),



but also still makes the magic feel magical in the moment. I think that in a modern world where so many things are already polished and packaged, coming to a show where some of the magic is created really obviously by hand is a rare and delightful experience. The instruments are really being played, by the actors' hands!

SECTION 3: Q&A WITH THE DIRECTOR

The set moves because people are moving it. In that kind of play, it can be especially cool when the magic is also being created by the audience's collective imagination. We don't try to hide the puppeteers most of the time, for example; the audience's minds just make that make sense. In general, I'm very excited about a production that combines all the coolest and silliest things about theater, and that is (I think) very funny — and that also has a relatable message about chosen family and standing up for each other.

What do you hope young people will take away from seeing The Ballad of Iron Jo? What do you hope the impact will be?

I hope that young people take away a few things: excitement about my favorite things (puppets, music, theater magic) is one! Another one is the personal journey of the main character, Aurelie. In some fairy tales, the main character wins by just being

good and perfect all the time until someone notices and rewards them for it. In this particular story, Aurelie has a lot of chances to make choices (so do the other characters), and sometimes it turns out they're not always the "right" choices. But one "wrong" choice doesn't make someone a "bad person" forever, and it's sometimes even harder and even more brave to admit you were wrong and try to do something about it. Another takeaway is thinking about ideas of chosen family and community, looking at the town at the beginning of the show versus the end of the show. And a bonus takeaway is thinking about the power of that community to speak up for its people against injustice.



SECTION 4

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

THE AUDIENCE'S ROLE

Going to the theater is a fun and unique experience! It's important to be mindful of "audience etiquette," or how to behave at the theater.

The Audience's Role: The audience plays an essential role at the performance of a play. Without an audience, the actors are only rehearsing. Audience members' concentration and responses, such as laughing and applauding, provide energy to the actors as they bring the performance to life.

Behaviors to Avoid: It's not like going to the movies! Since the actors can hear the audience so clearly, it is important not to engage in behaviors that might disturb or distract them—or fellow audience members.

These actions include:

- Talking
- Texting
- Allowing cell phones to ring
- Taking photographs or video
- Getting up to leave before intermission or the end of the show (unless it is a true emergency!)
- Eating or drinking

DISCUSSION QUESTION

Compare and contrast your experience of seeing a live play versus going to the movies, watching TV, or seeing a sports event.