

Residency Rochester MN review R.Post Bulletin, 1983

Play tells children to be themselves

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Patrick Scully tells a tall tale with a moral for a lot of short subjects.

"Life could be a breeze if I could be anyone but me," he sings as the tall boy character in an original musical mini-play. The show is intended to show elementary school children it's OK to be different.

Free-lance choreographer Scully, 29, who really is tall, was in Rochester Tuesday as part of the Young Audiences program sponsored by the local chapter of Women's Association for the Minnesota Orchestra.

Scully and pianist/co-actor Kevin Jackson brought their three-part performance to about 300 first-through sixth-grade and 15 mentally handicapped students at Lincoln at Mann Elementary School.

The Twin Cities artists began by acting out a story about the tall boy who leaves his village believing he is unloved because he is so tall.

On his travels he meets up with a short, wide bug and the two argue who has it worse. Eventually he makes friends with a blind man, but discovers he must risk confronting a ghost to revisit his new-found friend.

Magical ashes seem to make the spectre vanish, but the boy realizes the ghost was nothing more than his own fears.

"The one secret to happiness," the blind man explains, "is to learn to face your fears and they will disappear."

The young (and short) audience at the school seemed to understand the play's moral, and gave some interesting answers to Scully's question, what they thought would scare him as a performer.

One voice piped up, "Yeah, I think you're afraid of an eclipse."

Scully carefully considered this response, and replied earnestly "You know, I've never danced when there's been an eclipse."

Other children thought he might

be afraid of forgetting a line or not being accepted by the audience.

Earlier, Scully had confessed to the crowd he used to fear people might think him a sissy since he sometimes wore a leotard and tights as a dancer.

To experience what performing felt like, 26 children were handed a letter of the alphabet and with a partner formed the letter with their bodies to illustrate a Mother Goose rhyme.

This free-form spelling bee gave way to a question-and-answer period in which one student asked Scully "How tall are you?"

Climbing up the 10-foot ladder he uses as his only prop, Scully quipped "Right now, I'm 14 feet 8 inches."

"When I stand in my bare feet," he said as he descended, "I get a cold."

For the record, Scully is 5 feet 20 inches tall, he says.

Scully and Jackson performed their tale "A Different Song and Dance" three more times on Tuesday, and have additional performances March 21-23 for a total of 10 schools.

In upcoming Young Audience programs in Rochester, Steve Budas will become the "Illuminaria Mime" March 23 at St. Pius, St. John's and Gage schools for a lecture-presentation on "What's Invisible Can Be Real."

On April 5, Maria Bergh will present African tribal dances and songs at Folwell, Franklin, Holmes and Churchill schools.

A couple of weeks ago, the Early Music Quartet performed on authentic period instruments at Hawthorne, Longfellow and Bishop schools.

This is the ninth year Rochester WAMSO has raised funds and worked with the Twin Cities chapter of Young Audiences to offer a variety of performing artists to all schools in the city.

Observers are welcome.



A hug to make you spin is what Patrick Scully gives Bonnie Barnhart, left, and Jason Vernick in the final scene of a mini-play Scully presented to students at Lincoln at Mann Elementary School as part of the Young Audiences program.



No matter how you spell it, acting out letters is fun work. It shows on the faces of these Lincoln at Mann Elementary School students

who helped illustrate a Mother Goose rhyme during a portion of the program.

Post-Bulletin Photos by Merle Daleen