

THE PROBLEM WITH

PINK



A FRANCE-QUÉBEC COPRODUCTION

STUDY GUIDE TO THE SHOW
INTENDED FOR TEACHERS

la parenthèse
CHRISTOPHE GARCIA



Le Petit Théâtre
de Sherbrooke

Concept and editing Gilles Abel |
Christophe Garcia | Érika Tremblay-Roy

www.la-parenthese.com

www.petittheatre.qc.ca

THE PROBLEM WITH PINK

The story

For Alix, Sasha, Lou and Noa, all comfortably safe in their own little world, every new day is equally as beautiful and full of delightful stories as the one before. Sometimes, an event coming from the world outside slightly changes their day-to-day life. A plane passes by, it rains... Until one day, devastating news come to them: pink is for girls. It's a cataclysm! How can they keep living then? And slowly, doubt creeps in. Are they boys? How can they know? Catapulted in an impressive swirl of emotions, they'll venture out to try to find new bearings, for better and for worse.

Choreographer Christophe Garcia and author Érika Tremblay-Roy draw from the raw source that is youth to explore the self-discovery of gender and its perception entwined in cultural and innate. Somewhere between tragic and comic, like a mirror of society, diversity, blurred lines, a priori and fears will be discussed... with, as a filigree, questions of assimilation, acclimation, belonging...

The creative team

Author / Director
Érika Tremblay-Roy

English translation
Alexis Diamond

Choreographer / Director
Christophe Garcia

Assistant Stage Director
Julie Compans

Scenography
Julia Morlot

Lighting
Andréanne Deschênes

Music
Jakub Trzepizur

Costumes
Pascale Guené

Performers
Maria Cagnelli
Maxime Lepage
Marc-André Poliquin
Alexandre Tondolo

The coproducing companies



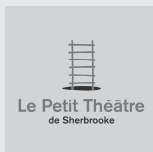
La [parenthèse] / Christophe Garcia

The dance company La [parenthèse] / Christophe Garcia was founded in 2000 with the desire to

tell stories and reveal people through dance, music and text. From the very beginning, its founder was driven by the desire to build bridges between the arts, generations and continents.

Each show offers a unique universe : small intimate shapes alongside ambitious shows. The poetry and dynamism of the artists impart a common tone to all productions.

Since its inception, La [parenthèse] / Christophe Garcia has presented more than 25 creations that have made their mark in France and around the world. The company continues to project itself in creations on different scales, which always remain unifying, joyful and human.



Le Petit Théâtre de Sherbrooke

The mission of Le Petit Théâtre de Sherbrooke is to develop the practice and attendance of theatre

in children and youth by placing words and dramatic art at the heart of research and by offering multidisciplinary teams the creative environment that allows them to experiment with the musical, visual and physical languages.

A theatre that defies convention, always looking for new ways to tell a story and grab young audiences' attention by playing with the codes of performance. A theatre that allows for greater freedom of interpretation, giving young audiences' sensibilities and intelligence a different perspective and trusting their ability to discover new versions of a story.

In 46 years of artistic activity, Le Petit Théâtre de Sherbrooke has created more than 90 plays presented in Québec, Canada, the United States, France, Switzerland and South America.

Behind the study guide

Gilles Abel
Scholar, author
and philosopher

Trained in philosophy for children at the Université Laval in Québec, Gilles Abel has been actively working in this field since 2001, in Belgium. Focusing on theater for children, he works as facilitator, mediator and educator for different cultural institutions, but also as a creative collaborator and philosophical mentor for several children and youth companies in Belgium, France and Québec. Scholar, author, he is actually invested in a doctoral thesis at the Namur University, reflecting on the connections between theatre for young audiences and philosophy for children.

Christophe Garcia
Artistic director –
La [parenthèse] /
Christophe Garcia
Choreographer and director –
The Problem with Pink

Trained as a dancer and initiated to theatre, singing and music, Christophe very quickly gravitated towards choreography. First admitted at l'École-Atelier Rudra-Béjart in Switzerland, he joins Béjart Ballet Lausanne. Between France and Canada, he collaborates with several artistic figures and international organizations, like Robert Lepage and Ex Machina, Robert Wilson and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. Winner of several international choreography awards, he is noticed by his work during European and North-American events. Christophe is invited to work and create for repertory companies: Scapino Ballet Rotterdam, Opéra-théâtre d'Avignon, Ballet d'Europe, Dantzaz Compania, Jeune Ballet du Québec and Jeune Ballet de France. Founder and artistic director for the La [parenthèse] / Christophe Garcia company, based in Angers, France, this is his third collaboration with Le Petit Théâtre de Sherbrooke.

Érika Tremblay-Roy
Artistic director – Le Petit
Théâtre de Sherbrooke
Author and director –
The Problem with Pink

Trained as an actor at l'École de théâtre du Cégep de Saint-Hyacinthe, Erika Tremblay-Roy is an author, director and actress, and is particularly inspired by children and youth theatre. Among other plays, she wrote Tante T and Autopsie d'une napkin, a text for which she received the Louise-LaHaye Award in 2012. For her play Petite vérité inventée, created by Théâtre Bouches Décousues in 2013, she is nominated as a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Awards, given by the Canada Council for the Arts. For Lette pour Éléna, a co-production from Le Petit Théâtre de Sherbrooke and French dance company La [parenthèse] / Christophe Garcia, she is awarded the following prizes : Prix LQJQ : Francophonie and CALQ : OEuvre de l'année for the Eastern Townships. She has been Le Petit Théâtre de Sherbrooke's artistic director for the last 6 years.



The study guide to the show: the premise

This study guide was built in order to help you leap into *The Problem with Pink*, firstly through the path of philosophy, secondly through deeper exploration and creation of movement and choreography. As a matter of fact, Part 1: Exploring content invites you to share ideas with your students and engage in discussions inspired by a few of the themes that are unfolded through the play. Part 2: Experimenting with the form suggests exercises where words and movements come together, exploring steps of the creative process that lead Érika Tremblay-Roy, the author, and Christophe Garcia, the choreographer, to conceive the play.

But before diving into Part 1: Exploring content, we'd like you to take a look at this brief introduction to philosophical dialogue.



Philosophy: what for? And how?

Philosophy has this particular way to ignite a thinking process that goes beyond the simple opinion, often limited to "I like/I don't like", "I didn't understand a thing" or "Beauty is a subjective concept anyway", or even "There's no arguing about matters of taste!". Rather, philosophy is an opportunity for each and every person to realize that it is in fact very possible to reflect - together! - on Theater, dance, art and emotions. And that, when we do, we collectively enrich our aesthetic, critical and relational abilities.

Doing philosophy **is not** just talking, discussing, or saying out loud what we're thinking deep down. Neither is it about piling up ideas and opinions while adopting a straight face.

It's something else: it's a dialogue in which we try to think what we're saying.

In philosophy, it is **essential** to stay suspicious of obviousness and perfect answers. As much as we can, we try to disrupt any form of biases, stereotypes and ideas presented as "what's right", the "common sense", what "everybody knows".

To try to think better and do it in a more critical way, we can rely on abilities such as: **defining** the words we're talking about, giving **examples/counter-examples** and also staying mindful of the **consequences/implications** of what we're saying.

In philosophy, the goal is not **to convince**, but rather **to understand**, as well as to understand in what ways the subjects we're talking about and the questions that they inspire concern us all.

Other abilities are also important to develop: **rephrasing** our ideas or the ideas of others to make sure we understand each other correctly, giving **reasons** to support the idea we're bringing forward, or even identifying **criteria** that would allow us to classify and distinguish our ideas.

Something **paramount:** we discover, little by little, that it's impossible (luckily!) to end up with "good" and definitive answers, or identical conclusions for everyone. Answers tend to become more like a **horizon** toward which we lean, instead of a **result** that we try to obtain.

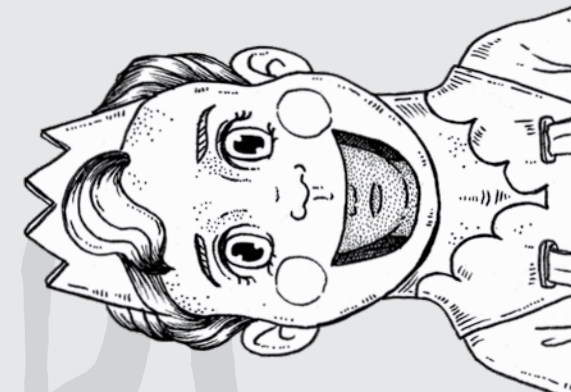
Is it possible to keep ourselves from projecting our adult perceptions onto kids?

The Problem with Pink is not a show about gender, identity or friendship. Neither is it about dreams, imagination, the importance we instil into the gaze of others, or the fear of truly standing for who we are. It's also not a show where the goal is to tell the kids: "What's happening to the characters is or isn't normal". Because if we were to say that *The Problem with Pink* wishes to convey these messages and these messages only, it would be terribly reductive. And mostly, it would consecrate the almightiness of adults' perception over children'.

In fact, by measuring up to the children, we recognize that they are fully-fledged viewers. Not minor viewers, almighty viewers nor even a peculiar, not fully formed specie of viewers. Children are real viewers, with their own sensitivity, their own references, their own perceptions. Even if with time, they can become better at it (just like anybody else, adults included), they already are viewers. As adults, when we embrace that idea, it becomes possible, if not mandatory, to accept that what we see in the show will be different from what the kids see. That what we might recognize as violence, transgression or brutality (with every implication that it has from an adult point of view), might resonate differently for children. And, even if they were to interpret the themes as we would, let's just accept humbly that they will not necessarily perceive them with the same emotional charge as their elders. Which can only make it easier on them. And on us.

The Problem with Pink offers us a lovely opportunity to get a taste of that enjoyable experience as a viewer. **This study guide was created only as a counterpoint, that can allow us to interrogate, react to and navigate through a few of the themes that are intertwined with the show.** Leading a workshop under the angle of philosophical thinking is therefore absolutely avoiding the question "Did you understand the show?" to instead favour questions such as "What have you understood and felt during the show? What stuck with you?" and "In what ways does it give us something to think about?"

This study guide offers the opportunity to measure up to children in order to give them the chance - certainly too rare these days - to think for and by themselves. There isn't only one key to read a play, but many. And everyone is free to find its own.



PHIL

GUIDE

PART 1: EXPLORING CONTENT

- 1 Out loud, read the short excerpts from the play *The Problem with Pink*
- 2 Then, address the different questions to your group and share a few thoughts around every excerpt.

Fear

NOA
I'll go, I'm not afraid.

ALIX
I'm not either.

NOA
I'm never afraid.

ALIX
Me neither.

(beat)

ALIX
Well, go on.

1. What colour is fear?
2. Are there small and big fears?
3. Is growing up scary?
4. Is it possible to be afraid of something and also be excited about it, simultaneously?
5. Can we love being scared?
6. Is it possible to fight all of our fears?

Boys/girls

ALIX
Once upon a time

there were four guys who did guy stuff.

Like guys. Among guys.

Like this, for example. This, this is guy stuff.

Or like this. This is totally guy stuff.

1. Are there colours for boys?
2. Are there colours for girls?
3. Can we make a distinction between games for boys and games for girls?
4. Can we make a distinction between careers for boys and careers for girls?
5. Who decides what it means to be a boy or a girl?
6. What can you do if you disagree with the differences made between boys and girls?

Friendship

SASHA
Will you always be my friend?

ALIX
'course.

SASHA
No matter what?

ALIX
No matter what.

SASHA
And if it becomes too dangerous to talk to each other?

ALIX
Let's make up a code.

1. What colour is friendship?
2. How do we know if someone is our friend?
3. Can we be friends with someone who is very different from us?
4. Can we be friends with someone that we don't always understand, or with whom we don't agree on everything?
5. What's the most important element in a friendship?
6. Do friendships last a long time? Always?

Identity

LOU
What if everyone said I was a girl?

NOA
You're not a girl!

LOU
No?

NOA
Uh... no... ?

LOU
But what if everyone said I was?

NOA
I wouldn't believe them.

LOU
Why not?

NOA
Because...

1. What colour does it feel like, inside yourself?
2. How do we know who we are?
3. Can we decide who we are?
4. Is it easy to be different from others?
5. Does what other people think about us influence who we are?
6. Is it easy not to act like everybody else?

Dreams/ imagination

NOA
Once upon a time there was a giant with huge eyes solid arms a big head

SASHA
Some days, he is bubbling with rage.

NOA
Some days, he steps on people by accident.

SASHA
Some days, he huddles in fear...

Some days, he moves mountains... (beat)

Is the giant a boy or a girl?

NOA
Who cares.

SASHA
Yeah... Yeah. Who cares.

1. When you're imagining, what colour is it?
2. Are imagining and dreaming the same?
3. What's the use of imagination?
4. Can we imagine everything?
5. Is what we imagine real?
6. Is imagination a right?

Belonging

LOU
No, we don't.

If you want to build houses, build houses.

If you want to fish, fish.

If you want pick daisies, pick daisies.

If you want to be president, be president.

If you want to walk on your hands, walk on your hands.

If you want to play with a doll, play with a doll.

If you want to yell really loud, yell really loud.

If you want to dance a waltz, dance a waltz.

If you want to wear high heels

1. What colour is the place where you feel like you belong?
2. What does it mean, to feel like you belong?
3. Are belonging and feeling like we belong the same?
4. Where do you feel the most like you belong in your life?
5. Where do you feel the least like you belong in your life?
6. What could give you a deeper sense of belonging?

EXPLORI

PART 2: EXPERIMENTING WITH THE FORM

How to create by associating words and movement

1. Spread the whole group into a big circle.
2. Alternately, ask everyone to choose a “word for boys” and say it out loud. Then do the same, this time with a “word for girls”. Go around the circle again, asking everyone to pick a word that is neutral, neither a “word for boys” nor a “word for girls”.
3. Silently, and alternately, ask them to make a “boy’s move”, then do the same with a “girl’s move”. Go around the circle again, asking them to make a movement that’s neither nor.
4. Ask each kid to choose one of the words that were said before and associate it with one movement, but chosen from a different category (a “word for girls” with a “boy’s move”, or a “word for boys” with a “girl’s move”). Then, alternately, ask them to say the word they chose while simultaneously doing their chosen movement.
5. Form teams of 3 or 4 students.
6. Ask each small team to build a little dance sequence by connecting 6 words and 6 movements, while being mindful of mixing words and movements identified as “for boys”, “for girls”, or “neutral”. (We don’t want them to be exclusively picking words and movements associated with boys, for example).
7. Finally, ask each team to present their creation in front of the rest of the group, while specifying to the students presenting that they should try their best to do the movements and say the words together, in unison.

How to create an evolution in movement, energy and space with help from external influences

1. Form teams of 2 students.
2. Like an impulsion, using 2 fingers, one of the students induces different pressure points on different parts of the other student’s body. The pressure points need to be repeated at slow, regular intervals.
3. The second student has to move its entire body, intentionally creating each new movement by starting from every given pressure point (the knee receives a pressure point: the movement starts from the knee and then flows through the rest of the body, until a new pressure point is given and so on).
4. Then, they exchange roles.

1. Form teams of 2 students.
2. One of the students finds a way to encircle the other. The circle can be formed by using arms, but also by using one arm and the head, only the legs, etc.
3. The encircled student has to get out of the position, moving in a neat, ample way.
4. Then, they exchange roles.

1. Spread the group into a big circle.
2. One of the students has to walk from one side to the other in a straight line, walking calmly and slowly.
3. While the student is crossing the circle, the rest of the group suggests constraints that can alter the walking pace, the body’s position (on the ground, looking at the sky) or direction, but that can also inspire whole movements, sensations, etc.
4. Then, allowing a new student to cross the circle, repeat the exercise.

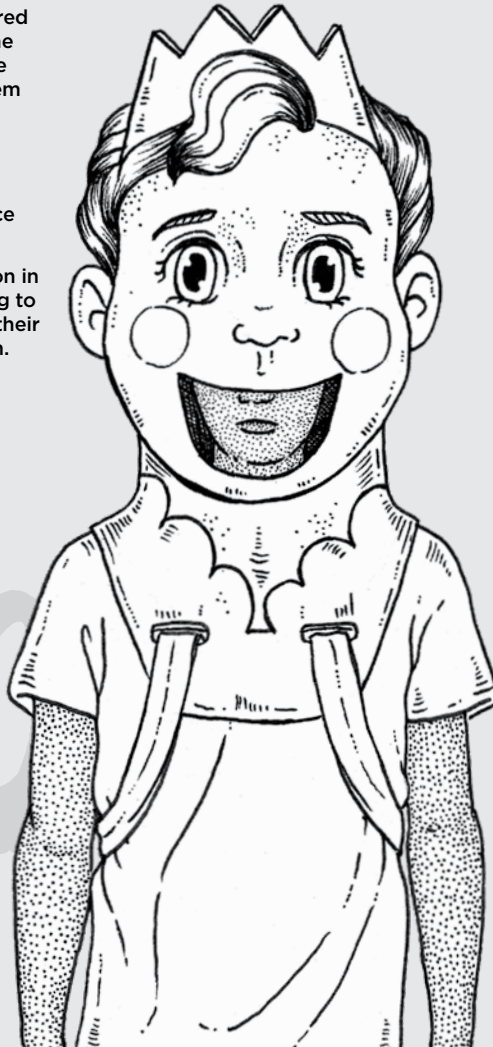
1. Form teams of 2 students.
2. One of them is standing, ready to move.
3. The second student states action verbs (push, turn, shake, vibrate...)
4. The student that’s ready to move has to find movements or sensations related to the action verbs by using its entire body (and not only by using the hands to mime, for example).
5. They exchange roles.



EXPERIM

How to make the words dance

1. Spread the whole group into a big circle.
2. Alternately, ask the students to name a word they love because of its meaning (moon, chocolate...), because of the way it sounds (catastrophe, trampoline...), or maybe, why not, to name a word they just invented.
3. Go around the circle once more, asking the students to say the same word they chose before, but this time by radically changing the way it sounds (by saying it backwards, using a different tone for each syllable, repeating some of the syllables more than once...)
4. Then, ask them to imagine a movement inspired by the new word they just created through the variations explored in the previous step. Once everyone has found their movements, ask them to let go of the word and solely focus on the movement.
5. Form teams of 3 or 4 students.
6. Ask each team to build a little dance sequence by connecting their 3 or 4 movements.
7. Finally, ask each team to present their creation in front of the rest of the group, while specifying to the students presenting that they should try their best to do the movements together, in unison.



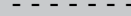
The problem with pink in rehearsal



la parenthèse
CHRISTOPHE GARCIA

Phone number: 06.63.55.95.17
coordination@la-parenthese.com

www.la-parenthese.com



Le Petit Théâtre
de Sherbrooke

Phone number: 819 346-7575
info@petittheatre.qc.ca

www.petittheatre.qc.ca



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