

# THE MIXOLYDIAN

BY ASHLEY COOK



GREEN  
THUMB  
THEATRE



TOURING PROFESSIONAL THEATRE  
FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES  
SINCE 1975

## RESOURCE AND ACTIVITY GUIDE

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Green Thumb's offices are located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x̱w̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́ḻílw̱ətaʔṯ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. As a touring company, Green Thumb Theatre's work often takes place throughout the traditional homelands of most of the Indigenous Nations and cultures across British Columbia and beyond.

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Green Thumb Theatre is committed to telling stories that spark empathy and provoke critical thinking and dialogue. This resource and activity guide is intended to help educators facilitate classroom discussions before and after the performance, and to delve deeper into the themes of the show. This guide is authored by Toonasa Luggi, a Dakelh-Wetsuwet'en educator and multidisciplinary artist, raised in the northern interior of BC and currently working and living in Vancouver.

## ABOUT GREEN THUMB THEATRE

Founded in 1975, Green Thumb Theatre creates, produces, and tours plays that explore social issues relevant to the lives of children, youth, and young adults. Green Thumb provides theatre that celebrates the language and stories of today's generation and culture to stimulate empathy, debate, and critical thinking. Green Thumb has performed for over 4 million people and has toured to every province and two territories in Canada, 36 US States, and 11 countries overseas. Original plays commissioned by Green Thumb have been translated into 9 languages and produced by more than 200 theatre companies worldwide. Green Thumb Theatre is a registered charitable not-for-profit organization. [www.greenthumb.bc.ca](http://www.greenthumb.bc.ca)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Page 2** – ABOUT THIS GUIDE AND GREEN THUMB THEATRE

**Page 3** – CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

**Page 4** – ABOUT THE MIXOLYDIAN

**Page 5** – PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Page 6** – ACTIVITY: MAKING DREAMCATCHERS

**Page 7** – ACTIVITY: IMAGINING NANABOZHO, ENVELOPE EXERCISE, DEAR YOUNGER SELF

**Page 8** – POST SHOW QUESTIONS AND RESOURCES

**Page 9** – RESOURCES

**Page 10** – GET IN TOUCH!

# CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Bellevue  
Thomas the Mixolydian/  
Nanabozho, Shoom, Mr. Blue  
Nokomis, Auntie

Merewyn Comeau

Issiah Bull Bear  
Sarvin Esmaeli

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Playwright  
Director  
Dramaturge  
Stage Manager  
Set and Props Designer  
Set Floral Designer  
Costume Designer  
Sound Designer  
Music Consultant  
Violinist  
Anishinaabemowin Translation  
Language Coach  
Study Guide Author  
Promotional Illustrations  
Study Guide Design and Layout  
Seasonal Facilitator  
Seasonal Facilitator

Ashley Cook  
Michelle Olson  
Rachel Aberle  
Samantha Pawliuk  
Emerenne Saefkow  
Sharifah Marsden  
Emily Friesen  
Mishelle Cuttler  
Renaë Morriseau  
Molly MacKinnon  
Alma Bernier  
Deborah Littlejohn  
Toonasa Jordana Luggi  
Grae Salisbury  
The Art Left Creative Group  
Jackson Tse  
Mikenzie Page

## GREEN THUMB THEATRE LEADERSHIP & STAFF

Artistic Director  
General Manager  
Production & Facilities Manager  
Tour & Company Manager  
Accountant  
Development Officer  
Administrative Coordinator

Rachel Aberle  
Shannon Maung  
Madelaine Walker  
Miku Beer  
Susan Cai  
Stephanie Duran  
Tim Carlson





## ABOUT THE PLAY

### THE MIXOLYDIAN BY ASHLEY COOK

Bellevue, an 11-year-old Anishinaabe/Metis girl, is on a journey through the woods. Reconnecting with her culture and language, Bellevue is accompanied by her “imaginary friend,” a shapeshifter named Thomas. Having recently lost her grandfather (Shoom), Bellevue feels out of touch with the stories and words her Shoom used to share. Luckily, with some help from ancestor Nokomis, Bellevue learns that Shoom’s knowledge lives on in her, and there is more to her friend Thomas than meets the eye.



## CHARACTERS

**BELLEVUE:** An 11-year-old Anishinaabe/Metis girl.

**THOMAS THE MIXOLYDIAN:** Bellevue’s “imaginary friend”. Thomas is a shapeshifter who is a mix of several different animals. Thomas does not speak except through music and gesture.

**AUNTIE:** Bellevue’s aunt.

**SHOOM:** Bellevue’s grandfather.

**NOKOMIS:** An Anishinaabe ancestor. In *The Mixolydian*, Nokomis is wise, funny, and a little bit scattered. She weaves dreamcatchers and webs to catch bad dreams. In Anishinaabe storytelling she is Nanabozho’s Grandmother, and serves as an ancestor to all Anishinaabe.

**NANABOZHO:** Thomas’s true identity. Nanabozho is a shapeshifter who takes on both animal and human forms in Anishinaabe storytelling. He is a benevolent culture hero of the Anishinaabe.

## SETTING

The woods behind Bellevue’s Auntie’s house. Also, in memory, Auntie’s house, Bellevue’s classroom, Shoom’s house.

## PREPARING TO WATCH A SHOW

Sometimes, when young people attend a live theatrical performance for the first time, they may not realize how different it is from watching a movie or a television show. With live theatre, the performers are right in front of you, and they can see when you’re moving around or hear if you’re speaking during the performance. To ensure we all have a good time, please remind students to use the bathroom before the show. Let them know that part of being a good audience member is expressing their feelings about what they see, like laughing if they think something is funny or gasping if they’re surprised, but that they should save conversations with their neighbour for after the performance and Q&A.

After the show there will be a question and answer period with the actors and stage manager, and students are encouraged to ask questions!

# **PRE-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS**

**Have you ever been lost?**

- a) How did it feel when you were lost?
- b) What did you do to find your way back?
- c) Have you ever helped someone else find their way back when they were lost?

**Has a friend ever taken something from you without your permission?**

- a) How did it feel?
- b) How did you resolve it?

**Is there anyone you miss a lot when you are separated for a long time?**

- a) How does it feel to be separated from them?
- b) Is there anything you do or say that helps you feel better when you are missing someone you love?

**Do you have a special friend or place you like to visit?  
Why do you like that place or friend?**

**Do you paint, draw, or make visual art? Why do you enjoy that activity?**

**Does your family have traditions? What are they? Do you enjoy them?**

# MAKING DREAMCATCHERS



The dreamcatcher has its origins in the Anishinaabe culture, although it has been adopted by some other Indigenous cultures.

Spider Woman, known as Asibikaashi, is a protector of infants and children. She is a grandmother figure. As the Anishinaabe peoples grew in numbers and spread out across the land, Spider Woman struggled to take care of all the people. Anishinaabeg women wove dreamcatchers to assist Spider Woman in protecting all the children. Dreamcatchers are hung above children's beds. Nightmares are trapped by the web, while good dreams are allowed to make their way through the opening in the center. Traditionally, dreamcatchers are made of willow hoop and sinew web, and are meant to dry out and break down over time.

It is important to convey to students that there is a history of dreamcatchers being appropriated and exploited by non-Indigenous people. This activity is meant to be done within the context of understanding the dreamcatcher's cultural and spiritual origins, and acknowledging an important theme in the play.

While it is acceptable for non-Indigenous individuals to make dreamcatchers for their own personal/family use, it is considered cultural appropriation to make and sell dreamcatchers when those individuals don't belong to that culture. The most important part is to have respect and appreciation for its origins. This helps to preserve and honour its special meaning.

Here are a couple of resources to understand how a dreamcatcher is made, including two video tutorial series on Youtube by Indigenous women. You may not have access to all the materials for a traditional dreamcatcher and may need to make some substitutions:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2h\\_pVjpfxp4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2h_pVjpfxp4) (4 part video series)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jGoF6eENmY> (2 part video series)

<https://www.nativetech.org/dreamcat/dreminst.html>

## IMAGINING NANABOZHO



Thomas or Nanabozho is a shapeshifter that takes on many different forms throughout the play. For example – chickadee, rabbit, wolf, bear, and a mish-mash of different animals.

Students can imagine what a shapeshifting trickster friend would look like to them. Do they imagine Nanabozho as a particular animal, part-human and part-animal, or even have the ability to shift into the forms of inanimate objects?

They can draw, paint, collage, or a mix of all three.

## ENVELOPE EXERCISE



In the play, the characters acknowledge and share their unique gifts with each other. This activity encourages every student to reflect upon the gifts of their classmates and their own. This may be a project that is completed over a few days.

Give every student an envelope to decorate. It must include their name. Students pin their envelopes to the front of their desks or on a display board with the envelope facing forward.

Hand out enough slips of paper to write a note about what they see as their classmate's **gifts**.

*"I think your gift is..."*

*"I admire your skill in..."*

*"You are good at..."*

When they are done, the students can put the slips into the envelopes. Students can read the notes later in the school year or at teacher discretion.

## DEAR YOUNGER SELF



In the play, Bellevue experiences a tough time after her grandfather's passing. When she recalls all the people who care for her, along with memories of her grandfather, she starts to find her way out of a sticky situation.

Students can use a notebook to write a letter to their younger selves.

Students can think of a time when their younger self was having a difficult time. Maybe they were lonely, sad, or angry. For example, it could be after the loss of a loved one, moving to a new place or school etc.

They can write a kind, compassionate, and comforting letter to their younger selves.

*What memories do you think would give your younger self strength?*

*What advice would you give to your younger self?*

*What gifts (yours or others') helped you through a difficult time?*

*What would you say to your younger self to see your way out?*

*What dreams does your younger self have to live for?*



# POST SHOW QUESTIONS

**What are three adjectives that describe...**

- a) Bellevue?
- b) Thomas?
- c) Nokomis?

**When you are angry with your friends, how does it feel?**

- a) Do you give yourself and them some personal space?
- b) When do you know you're ready to forgive and move on?

**When was the last time you helped a friend in need?  
How did it feel to help someone?**

**What items or actions help you to chase bad dreams or  
unpleasant thoughts away?**

**Are there any Anishinaabemowin words you like? Which words were they?**

**Are there activities you do and share with certain loved ones?**  
Eg. Bellevue liked to paint with her moshom/grandfather.

**What gifts do you share with the world?**

**What activities or things (like food, music, or art) make you  
feel connected to your identity? Your family? Your culture?**



# RESOURCES

## CULTURE & AWARENESS

Education website for the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast

<https://brgeducation.com/>

First Peoples Cultural Council

<https://fpcc.ca/>

Orange Shirt Society

<https://orangeshirtday.org/>

## LANGUAGE

First Voices

<https://www.firstvoices.com/explore/FV/sections/Data>

Pacific Association of First Nations Women

<https://pafnw.ca/Languages>

First Peoples Cultural Council

<https://fpcc.ca/>

## SUPPORT

Kids Help Phone

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

Indian Residential School Survivors Society

<https://www.irsss.ca/>



# SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS & OPINIONS!

We love getting mail and your students' feedback!

## GREEN THUMB THEATRE

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Email: [info@greenthumb.bc.ca](mailto:info@greenthumb.bc.ca)

Phone: (604) 254-4055

Fax: (604) 251-7002

## WRITE A LETTER!

Ask your students to write us a letter or draw us a picture to share their thoughts and opinions on the performance of THE MIXOLYDIAN. Send it to us at Green Thumb!

## WRITE A REVIEW!

Have your students write a theatre review about this performance of THE MIXOLYDIAN. Send it in to us at Green Thumb! A theatre review usually includes the following:

- A brief summary of the story
- A comment on the quality of the play itself
- A description of the costumes and set and a comment on whether these were interesting and appropriate
- A comment on the actors' portrayal of the characters and on the director's skill at pulling the whole show together

## CHECK US OUT ONLINE!

 [/greenthumbtheatre](https://www.facebook.com/greenthumbtheatre)

 [@greenthumbtheatre](https://www.instagram.com/greenthumbtheatre)

[WWW.GREENTHUMB.BC.CA](http://WWW.GREENTHUMB.BC.CA)