

TARRAGON THEATRE

study guide for students and educators



book by **Ann-Marie MacDonald** with **Alisa Palmer**
music by **Allen Cole** lyrics by **Ann-Marie MacDonald**

Starring

Sandra Caldwell, Juan Chioran, Tim Howar, Judy Marshak,
George Masswohl, Glynis Ranney

Directed by Alisa Palmer
Music direction by Allen Cole
Set & costumes designed by Astrid Janson
Lighting designed by Andrea Lundy
Choreography by Valerie Moore
Musicians: Allen Cole, Rosemary Galloway
Stage Manager: Alison Peddie

April 25 to June 3, 2001

About the *Anything That Moves* study guide:

This study guide has been created so that your theatre experience at Tarragon is a fulfilling and engaging one. We hope that it will help create discussions, generate ideas and prompt many questions.

The *Anything That Moves* study guide was compiled by Kristen Van Alphen and Mary Wood in Tarragon's **OutReach** department.

Special thanks and acknowledgements to Tim Chapman and Urjo Kareda for their contributions.

The *Anything That Moves* study guide is divided into several sections.

1. **Themes and theatrical elements** in *Anything That Moves*
2. **Post show lesson plans** for your class grounded in the Dramatic Arts curriculum.
3. **Additional resources** including information about Canadian musicals and current newspaper articles about *Anything That Moves*. We encourage your class to discuss them (i.e., Do you agree or disagree?) and develop your own reactions to the reviews and interviews provided.

We encourage you to contact us should you have questions or comments at 416-536-5018 x243.

Anything that Moves

A note from the collaborators:

Anything that Moves is a rare animal. An entirely original musical. With no book, no fairy tale, no known myth as its source, *Anything that Moves* emerged from its collaborators' musings on our own experiences in the high risk world of dating, mating and relating. The story was shaped from observations of human behaviour in the face of modern romance, and was inspired by the image of the contemporary dinner table, battlefield and symposium, a scene of diversity and discovery.

The creation and development of *Anything That Moves* began in February, 1999, as part of Nightwood Theatre's Groundswell. We started with six actors, a raft of classical comic devices and a piano. In this workshop we met the lifeline of our musical, the characters. Throughout that year we held brief public readings which led to the limited run of the premiere production last May, 2000 as part of the du Maurier World Stage Festival. *Anything That Moves*, even in its adolescence, was rewarded with a Dora Award for Outstanding New Musical.

Over the last year, we have been back at the drawing board, sculpting, shaping and refining. Our collaboration has been extraordinary, and the support we received from Nightwood and, more recently, the Tarragon, has made this creation process a positive prototype that we would wish on anyone crazy enough to create a new musical.

After a mere two years and three months, *Anything that Moves* is on its feet, with a vibrant cast and company, new songs, new moves, and new ideas. What you will see tonight is the culmination of our dream to create an original creature that sings and speaks its heart, mind and soul.

Ann-Marie MacDonald, Alisa Palmer and Allen Cole
Anything That Moves

Characters:

Joel	the well-intentioned owner of the Garden of Arden flower-shop who falls in love with Jinny
Tyrone	Joel's best friend, a high-powered lawyer whose caseload does <i>not</i> include monogamy
Jinny	a research scientist whose work and love-life both have led her to rats of various sorts
Alberta	a funeral director and Joel's best client who is contemplating a family plan
Fleur	Jinny's mother, a woman who has redefined herself many times over and is now determined to keep her charkas unblocked
Arthur	Joel's long-estranged military-historian father

Conventions

When we attend a play the audience immediately accept various *theatrical conventions*. For example:

Special blocking

→ seating around a dining room table would not be the same in real life in order for the audience to see and hear the characters on stage

Convention of Time

→ the passing of time on stage; days, months, sometimes years in the span of a 1 or 2 hour show

Fourth Wall

- the characters speak looking out into the audience

In addition to *general theatrical conventions* there are conventions which are *specific* to Musical theatre. The following are conventions (definitions) that exist in musical theatre:

Songs:

- characters sporadically break in to song
- several characters sing at once (rarely does more than once actor speak at once on stage)

Lighting conventions:

- follow spotlight on an actor
- usually musicals are comedies and it makes it more funny to see the actor (it is not very funny to be in darkness)
- atmospheric lighting is done around the spotlight

Musical Props

- for instance, a table in a restaurant may later used as a dance prop when the characters dance on the table
- musical sets, the lights go up and the audience knows exactly where they are, a dining room, a flower shop, a restaurant etc.

Theme and discussion ideas:

Notions of Love, Romantic Comedy Tradition

- In the Italian commedia d'ell arte a basic premise surrounding a love story is that of mistaken identity and miscommunication. In *Anything that Moves*, Jinny mistakes Joel for a homosexual and therefore Joel's romantic pursuit of Jinny undertakes a comedic tone as his lies grow in order to maintain the image Jinny has of him.
- In the tradition of romantic comedy *Anything That Moves* ends happily as Jinny and Joel finally find love in each other.

However, the journey to find and open oneself to love in *Anything that Moves* is not an easy one for the characters. For example, Jinny has been hurt in the past by choosing to be involved with relationships that continued to leave her disappointed (such as being involved with a married man).

We could ask ourselves:

Why is Jinny so afraid to fall in love? Why are people sometimes afraid to open themselves up and be vulnerable? What does it mean to fall in love? Why do people fall in love? Are there other kinds of love that are equally important aside from romantic love?

Homosexual Relationships in *Anything That Moves*:

In *Anything That Moves* some characters are heterosexual (Joel, Jinny, Fleur), gay (Arthur, Tyrone), or lesbian (Alberta). The homosexual relationships are equally represented and explored and humour is a tool used to forward gay/lesbian causes and concerns. However, *several of the characters are limited by societal stereotypes*.

- Jinny refuses to believe that she could engage in a healthy relationship with a heterosexual male (without being hurt). Jinny feeds into the stereotypes that she would prefer a gay man as is expressed in her song, "Why Can't a Straight Man".

- Joel's father Arthur, lived in secrecy for many years not telling his son that he was a homosexual. He creates a socially acceptable "front" for his relationship with his partner by saying to people that he was a "friend" and not his "partner". The funeral service is also exclusive of his involvement as his partner's family did not acknowledge their son's and Arthur's relationship.
- Fleur says to Alberta, "*you don't look like a lesbian*", in saying this she assumes that all lesbians look and behave in a certain way.

Why is it that some people tend to form generalizations about others simply because of their sexual orientation? Why do some people try to hide or deny the existence of homosexual/lesbian family members? Why do you think some people hide their sexual orientation?

Anything that Moves and parallels with Shakespeare's As You Like it:

Search for Idealized Natural World:

In the musical comedy *Anything that Moves* one of the settings is Joel's flower shop called, "*the garden of Arden*". Shakespeare's romantic comedy *As You Like It* is set in the *Forest of Arden*. Both plays, explored through their settings, share similarities. There is a desire for the characters from both *Anything that Moves* and *As You Like it* to attain the "*idealized natural world*." Shakespearean critic E.K. Chambers states about *As you Like It*, "*it is rather the temper of urban disillusion, the instinctive craving of the man who has been long in cities pent for green fields and quiet nights*". It is a reaction against urban life that leads characters of *As You Like It* to the forest of Arden.

Similarly, Jinny in *Anything that Moves*, is attracted to the life and people of the *Garden of Arden* flower shop. She denounces her former lifestyle with heterosexual men and turns to celibacy as a reaction against the hurtful experiences of her past. As the play unfolds it is revealed that Alberta, and Tyrone live a life in their own right, free of the constraints of an often judgmental society when it comes to their choice in sexual lifestyle. As well, Fleur with her quest in New Age spirituality, searches away from her alcoholic past. These characters are all connected through the *Garden of Arden* flower shop.

It is important to note, Shakespeare's forest of Arden is not perfect, "*The penalty of Adam, The season's difference, as the icy fang And churlish chiding of the winter's wind*" exists in the forest. Likewise, in *Anything that Moves*, characters feel pain, and struggles exist. For example, Alberta's partner leaves her after 10 years together, Joel mourns the loss of his mother, and Alfred mourns the loss of his partner.

Disguises:

As You Like It, "*follows the original pastoral novel very closely retaining the disguises, mistaken identities, coincidences etc. which had been the stock in trade of romance from the days of the middle ages*," states E.K. Chambers.

"...*dressing up and especially in the disguises the participants delighted to assume, partly because they gave free play to flirtation and love-making, as had the traditional 'impromptu masking' which had roots both in Italy and in the medieval English 'mummary'*"- John Dover Wilson

The term *romance* denotes a particular type of narrative, with adventure, (often unforeseen) in which the heroes and heroines are involved with disguises mistaken identities and lack of recognition.

Like a Shakespearean romantic comedy, *Anything that Moves* is filled with disguises and mistaken identities:

- Joel poses as a homosexual man (he is heterosexual) so that he can get closer to Jinny.
- At the dinner party Joel pretends that Tyrone's apartment is his and that they are lovers

Set Design

Usually, before rehearsals begin the designer (Astrid Janson) meets 3 or 4 times (for a period of 4 to 8 hours) with the director (*Anything That Moves* is directed by Alisa Palmer). The designer and director thoroughly discuss the play to ensure both parties share a similar vision of the play, and explore how this vision will be represented through scenic design.

There are many different locations in *Anything That Moves* and the set needs to be versatile enough to create an environment for each of these settings.

During *Anything That Moves* setting includes areas such as:

- a flower shop
- outside a theatre
- a restaurant
- in an apartment

It will be interesting to take notice of the following:

- where on the stage certain scenes take place ?
- how scenes are blocked?
- how are outdoor scenes differentiated from indoor scenes?
- what effect does the large rectangular arch in the middle of the stage have?
- how are the doors used to connote different locations?

Costumes:

When designing, the costume designer considers several elements as part of costume creation. Through discussion with the director about the characters the costume designer will research and look to current fashion magazines and stores for research. As well the designer also works from indications within the play's script. Designers must also think practically when designing costumes; for instance what will allow the actors to move about the stage as required? What will remain effective under certain lighting, and costumes that can be created within the designers allocated budget?

Artistic choices

- The designer continues to study the script and looks for hints into the characters' personality and then makes artistic choices for the colour of the costumes, their shape, the fabrics to be used.

Consider the costumes for each character in *Anything That Moves*.

For instance: Why was Alberta only dressed in black and white? What choices would this reveal?

Post Lesson Plan **Movement Musical**

Objective:

- *Demonstrate the use of movement, gesture, and non-verbal communication to express ideas in a drama*
- The Dramatic Arts Curriculum

Warm up:

- The students are to perform a movement piece to music (i.e. A piece from The Mission or other soundtrack)
- Students stand in rows of five one behind each other
- A student volunteer (or initially the teacher perhaps) stands facing the front of the class and begins to lead a slow movement (*suggest the idea of reenacting a sports movement in slow motion i.e. swinging a bat or throwing a ball, to give students initial ideas*)
- The class physically mirrors the movement in the same slow movement
- After a few minutes the teacher taps another student on the back, the new student goes to the front of the class, stands behind the leader and slowly imitates their movement as they replace the leader

Activity:

- Divide the students into groups of 4
- Ask the students to think of miming a movement of a daily routine (i.e. brushing their teeth or making breakfast)
- The students should work on their movement routine as an ensemble choral piece
- Each group will perform their movement piece to the class but to different kinds of music (i.e. a classical piece followed by a heavy rock tune etc.)

Post Activity:

- Discuss how the different kinds of music affected the way in which the movement piece was performed. Which musical piece fit best with their movement activity? Why?

Post Lesson Plan character exploration

Objective:

- Describe how dramatic elements (e.g., costumes...) are used to develop character and theme
The Dramatic Arts Curriculum

Materials:

- Old magazines, pencil crayons, coloured paper, tape, glue sticks etc.

Warm up:

- Lead brainstorming session about each character in *Anything That Moves*
- Write down personality traits about each character (make sure students support their statements by using examples from having viewed the production)

Activity:

- Distribute to each student a blank page with one of the character's names from *Anything That Moves* on it
- Based on ideas discussed in the brainstorming session students make a collage about their character
- When finished the students display their collages around the room
- Students try to guess which collage represents which character and group the same characters together

Post Activity:

- Were there similar elements in collages were about the same character? What were they? Why do you think that happened?

Plays by Ann-Marie MacDonald:

1. ***Clue in the Fast Lane***
(written with Beverley Cooper)
Style: Comedy
Synopsis: A spoof on the Nancy Drew mystery genre. Capable Nancy Prew finds herself drawn into mysterious circumstances as she is jettisoned into the future.
2. ***Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)***
Style: Comedy drama
Synopsis: Constance Ledbelly is trying to decipher a coded manuscript which she believes is the lost source for "Othello" and "Romeo and Juliet." Not only does she decode the manuscript but she literally falls into the two plays and causes each of them to turn from tragedy to comedy. Winner of the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama, 1990.
3. ***Nigredo Hotel***
Style: Chamber Opera
Synopsis: A stressed-out neuro-surgeon goes off the highway in his jaguar and checks into a seedy hotel, deserted but for the bizarre woman who runs the joint and seems to know more about him than he knows himself.
4. ***The Arab's Mouth***
Style: Drama
Synopsis: When the tweedy Pearl MacIsaac decides to dedicate herself to the arena of scientific investigation, she takes her studies with an abundance of enthusiasm with little reserved for the antics of her eccentric brother, Victor.
5. ***The Attic, The Pearls & 3 Fine Girls***
Style: Comedy
Synopsis: Three sisters return to their family home to grieve their father's death. Throughout the funeral party, the women take refuge in the attic where they comfort and torment each other with unfinished business. The emotions rage, tempered only by the search for their mother's long lost pearls.

for more information please visit the Playwrights Union of Canada web site
www.puc.ca