



Prom

A collaboration between The Children's Theatre Company and New Paradise Laboratories directed by Whit MacLaughlin

MOST
ENJOYED BY
13+

Imagine you are plunked down on the sidelines of some sort of major sporting event. Bells, whistles, color, sound, surround you! You realize this is

something more than a simple contest. It's a kind of rite of passage. Then you learn it is called **PROM**. This show takes you inside the universal, yet excruciatingly personal moments of this high school phenomenon in a way you have never experienced theater before. PROM happens all around you, using multi-media, promenade and presentational theatre styles. Be prepared for an extraordinary experience.

• A SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY •

“They say the events that cause us the most stress and self-introspection are the ones that are the most common to humanity: marriage, childbirth, death. To the list, The Children's Theatre Company adds 'the prom.' The piece reimagines the prom as a full-contact sporting event. Gowns are accessorized with high-tops and glitter-dusted eye-black. Chaperones represent the opposing team. End zones are marked 'past' and 'future' and a referee stands ready to throw his yellow penalty marker for physical or philosophical infractions. The surface aspects of the spring formal are explored - the libidinal longings, etc. - but 'PROM' adroitly pivots to address deeper questions as well - about life and love, commitment and doubt, embarrassment and determination. And though the setup is that of a contest, there aren't winners and losers. There's only the ephemeral truth, the passage of time and the epic struggle to capture one while the other slips past.”

—Dominic P. Papatola, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*

Every U.S. citizen older than 18 has a prom story. Even if she/he never went to a prom. If you didn't go to a prom, then the

crazy reason why becomes your prom story. Likewise, every U.S. citizen currently under the age of 16 will eventually have a prom story. This weird aspect of high school life pretty much binds us all together.

When PROM was created, it started with conversations between the director and the actors: Conversations about kids wanting to become adults and adults wanting to feel like kids again. About wanting to fall in love, to see the future - to have a future. There was talk about the love that adults have for kids and the bizarre and delightful and effective and sometimes deranged ways they have of expressing that love. And there was talk about the massive effort required for kids to interpret the language of adulthood. Into the mix were added conversations about neurosis and embarrassment and confusion and determination, and about the passage of time. Gradually out of all that talk, all those shared ideas, the concept for this theatre piece emerged. It is not simply a single story of one prom in one place on one night of one year, but rather it presents Prom as a phenomenon of modern American culture.

Things to imagine, think about and do

The journey in between what you once were, and who you are now becoming is where the dance of life really takes place. -Barbara De Angelis

NOTE: This piece may feel strange at first. It doesn't necessarily travel in a straight narrative line. But it will yield meaning over time, and there is no right or wrong interpretation of the event. Simply experience it, and know that no two people need to interpret it in the same way. Soak the piece in now and talk about it later. Hopefully it will be a powerful, memorable experience. Just like your prom.

What is PROM?

PROM \ˈpräm\ n [short for *promenade*, to go forward] : a formal dance given by a high school class in the years preceding graduation

PROM \ˈpräm\ n, v, adj, adv

1. THIS PLAY **2.** a rite of passage in which young persons move forward out of dependence on adult approval and drive forward into approaching adulthood **3.** an event which is a defining moment in life **4.** an opportunity for self definition and expression contextualized by peers **5.** a primary occasion for the phenomenon of embarrassment **6.** a fantasy/a nightmare

Questions to ponder, write about and discuss

- If a prom is a ritual, a rite of passage, what are the elements that make it so?
- Agree or disagree (discuss): Embarrassment occurs when the inner life is exposed to external view, resulting in feared loss of status and power.
- If prom is a defining moment in life, what makes a successful prom? A disastrous prom?
- Do a Google search for “prom.” Spend no more than 15 minutes surfing. Seriously. Time yourself. Write (or talk about) your perceptions of what you find.

The Children's Theatre Company has created PROM in conjunction with New Paradise Laboratories (NPL), founded by Whit MacLaughlin. This movement-based, experimental theatre company's stated purpose is: the creation of original theater work that has some relationship to popular culture, in an attempt to see beneath the surface of it to the images, archetypes and potential meanings underneath.