2014-2015 Theatre Season: A Year of Transformations
Blinn College Division of Visual and Performing Arts
Theatre Arts Program-Brenham

Celeste Raspanti’s
I Never Saw Another Butterfly

Resource Guide
This resource guide serves as an educational starting point to understanding and enjoying Celeste Raspanti’s I Never Saw Another Butterfly. With this in mind, please note that the interpretations of the theatrical work may differ from the original source content.
Directed by
Bradley A. Nies
Technical Theatre
Direction by
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Costume, Makeup,
and Hair Design by
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Student Showcase.

Public Performances
April 9 & 10……..........................7 p.m.

High School Recruiting Tour
April 6, 7 and 8
Dr. W.W. O’Donnell Performing Arts Center’s MRW
Studio Theatre
Brenham, Texas

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I Never Saw Another Butterfly

During World War II, 15,000 Jewish children were sent by the Nazi Gestapo to Theresienstadt, a former military camp also known as Terezin. This concentration camp was a stopping place for children and adults on their way to the gas chambers in Auschwitz. When Terezin was liberated in 1945, there were only about 100 surviving children there. These surviving few gathered the writings and artwork created by them, as well as others who had lived at the camp, to put together a published book entitled I Never Saw Another Butterfly.

Using this book, Celeste Raspanti wrote the play version of I Never Saw Another Butterfly in 1971 as an imaginative creation of one of the surviving children; Raja Englanderova. In this play, Raja, with the help of a teacher named Irena Synkova, shares her story of life within a concentration camp.

A 2013 production of the play was performed in Kirkland, Washington at Studio East, a performing arts training organization for children. This production was presented as a musical and used actual poems written by the children.

Celeste Raspanti

A playwright, former nun, and retired college professor, Celeste Raspanti is known for having published and produced several plays. Her special interest in the Holocaust, as well as her interest in the stories from the Theresienstadt Concentration Camp, led to her writing I Never Saw Another Butterfly. Her other plays on this topic include No Fading Star and The Terezin Promise. Raspanti’s work has been acclaimed for its firsthand information garnered from visits, oral histories, and interviews with concentration camp survivors. Today, Raspanti lives in St. Paul, Minnesota.
The Theresienstadt Concentration Camp was created by the Nazis as a place to take certain special categories of Jews: Scholars, Doctors, Engineers, Singers, Diplomats, Actors, Composers, Artists, and Intellectuals. Although its conditions were that of a ghetto, culture thrived as lectures, concerts, and theatre performances took place at the camp. In addition, art classes were taught by well-known artists; one of these, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, was quite a remarkable figure.

A small, fragile, and patient woman, Brandeis refused payment for her teaching of art. Though she had no formal education, children eagerly waited for her to teach them the way she had been taught by artists in Vienna. Her exercises in breathing and rhythm, as well as the freeing of oneself from the outer world of dread, was cherished by all of her students. As she told stories, her students would draw the objects she had mentioned. They drew pictures of their fears and tortured emotions that Brandeis, using art therapy, would try to heal. In doing so, she helped to restore balance to their terrified lives. It is this woman who Raspanti used as a basis for the character of Irena Synkova in I Never Saw Another Butterfly.

*A drawing found in the barracks of a camp in Terezin.*
The Butterfly by Pavel Friedman

Pavel Friedman was a Jewish poet who, after his death, received fame for his poem "The Butterfly" that he wrote while incarcerated at the Theresienstadt Concentration Camp. This poem was included in the anthology I Never Saw Another Butterfly:

The Butterfly

The last, the very last,
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
Against a white stone. . . .
Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it wished to
Kiss the world good-bye.
For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto.
But I have found what I love here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut branches in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.
That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
In the ghetto.

Paintings by children while at Terezin.
Definitions

What were the Nazi Gestapo?
A secret-police organization under the ruling of German dictator Adolf Hitler. This organization employed underhanded and terrorist methods against any persons suspected of disloyalty.

What was a Concentration Camp?
A type of prison where large numbers of people who were not soldiers were kept during World War II. These prisoners were usually forced to live in bad conditions.

What was Auschwitz?
Nazi Germany's largest concentration camp located in southern Poland. Able-bodied Jewish prisoners were sent to a slave-labor camp there, while the aged and the children were executed.

What does Liberation mean?
The act or process of freeing someone or something from another's control.

What was the Holocaust?
The killing of millions of Jewish people by the Nazis during World War II. Adolph Hitler believed that the Jewish race was responsible for the losing of World War I, which was untrue. His solution was to banish the Jews from society by committing genocide.

What is Genocide?
The deliberate killing of a group of people from a particular ethnic group.

What is a Ghetto?
A place, usually in poor condition, in which members of a particular group or race live.
The Butterfly Project

The Holocaust Museum in Houston, Texas is dedicated to teaching people about the Holocaust, remembering the 6 million Jews and other innocent victims who lost their lives, and teaching the dangers of hatred and prejudice. In 2003, they began The Butterfly Project; an undertaking that allowed for children to send in handmade butterflies to honor the innocent children who perished between the years of 1942 and 1945. Several schools, individuals, and organizations took part, and the museum was successful in reaching their goal of 1.5 million butterflies. The donated butterflies will be used to create an exhibition that will be available to the public for viewing once an appropriate venue has been agreed upon.

The Blue-Eyed/Brown-Eyed Exercise

On April 5, 1968, schoolteacher Jane Elliott asked the children in her class if they would take part in an exercise designed to show them how it would feel to be segregated due to race or creed. She separated the blue-eyed children from the brown-eyed children and designated the blue-eyed children in the class as the superior group. In doing so, she also gave the blue-eyed children extra privileges that the brown-eyed children were not allowed. When the brown-eyed children protested against these injustices, Elliott lied to them by saying that blue-eyed children were more intelligence. The "superior" children became arrogant, bossy, and otherwise unpleasant to their "inferior" classmates, and the "inferior" children became timid and subservient. The next day, Elliott reversed the exercise by saying that the brown-eyed children were superior. She noted that while the brown-eyed children treated the blue-eyed children in ways similar to how they had been treated, their approach was less intense.

After much publicity, this exercise was redeveloped for the corporate world as a way to promote teamwork and profits. Companies found the exercise attractive, as they were faced with U.S. court rulings and federal policies to promote multiculturalism within their organizations.
Hey Teachers!

Interested in learning more? Then check out these great online resources!

Internet Source, www.american.edu, Walnut Street Theatre’s Touring Outreach Company’s Study Guide-Contains classroom several activities!

Internet Source, www.hilliardschools.org, Lesson Plan For I Never Saw Another Butterfly-Contains several links and resources for teachers!

Internet Source, www.hmh.org, Holocaust Museum of Houston-Provides a lesson plan regarding The Butterfly Project!

Internet Source, www.holocaustmusic.ort.org, Music and the Holocaust-Teacher’s guides to the music the Nazi party used in its publicity, policy and propaganda!

Internet Source, www.pbs.org, PBS Teachers Website-Includes a study of genocide and provides ideas for activities!

Internet Source, www.stpete.org, Mahaffey Theatre’s Class Act: Applying the Arts to Education-Provides teacher’s resources for grades 5th through 12th!

Internet Source, www.yadvashem.org, The International School for Holocaust Studies-A teacher's guide to selected holocaust poetry!
Sources


