

Isaiah's Dream - A Parade of Poets

"ISAIAH'S DREAM - A Parade of Poets" is a piece inspired by a little boy in one of our children's workshops. He came from a ghetto area, where he feared every day for his life. Some of his friends had been killed before his very eyes. He was eight years old. Though he was a difficult child to deal with, we came to love him dearly. When it was discovered that he was almost illiterate, we asked what he would like to write about. He said, **"Martin Luther King and what he did for the black people -- and the white people."** The most perfect poem poured out of him and it was posted, word for word, in the window of the arts center. He was surprised and then beamed with pride that he had created something we thought had value. This piece is centered on Isaiah trying to do a poetry assignment and not knowing what poetry could mean to his life. He falls asleep and is awakened by **Rabindranath Tagore**, who tells him about his struggles in India. Tagore introduces: **Julia de Burgos, Pablo Neruda, Maya Angelou**, and many others. **Finally Langston Hughes** appears, speaking directly to Isaiah's life and experience. The poets teach him about struggles in every culture and how they survived through art. Some poems are performed bilingually. In the end, Isaiah proudly recites the poem about Martin Luther King.

Poets, in Order of Appearance: Hilaire Belloc (France), Rabindranath Tagore (India), Pablo Neruda (Chile), Nikki Giovanni (US), Maya Angelou (US), Etheridge Knight (US), Julia de Burgos (Puerto Rico), e.e. cummings (US), Rumi (Persia), Wu Men (China), Nazim Hikmet (Turkey), Mary Oliver (US), Anais Nin (France), Langston Hughes (US), Isaiah (US)

Music: Jazz selections from NYC composer Paul Serrato's *More Than Red* album

Feedback from Teachers & Librarians

I have highly recommended this program to our Programs and Exhibitions Department for audiences of all ages.

**-- Elizabeth Ridler, YA Cluster Specialist
Brooklyn Public Library**

Congratulations on a successful opening performance of "Isaiah's Dream"! When I saw it last month at the Shooting Star Theatre, I was excited by the possibility that young people were going to have an opportunity to hear, see, and touch an art form that is often under-represented in their lives -- poetry. And what a rainbow of poets came to life in less than an hour. Thank you, Neruda, Hughes, cummings, et al, for your words. Thank you, Melba and NY Artists Unlimited for your fine presentation. And thank you, Isaiah, for dreaming. Sometimes, dreams do come true.

-- Jean Hart, playwright & NYC Middle School Teacher

The show kept the kids' attention the entire time. They were listening to the poetry. Well done.

-- Henry St. Settlement after-school program

And, the children said...

*I learned about new poets who I never knew about before.
Tagore was COOL!!!*