

A surreal illustration featuring a large, dark-skinned hand reaching down from the top left corner towards a small child. The child, wearing a yellow raincoat and dark pants, stands in a white paper boat. The background is a dreamlike sky with soft, colorful clouds in shades of blue, green, and yellow, and a few small white stars. A single, translucent, teardrop-shaped object floats in the air between the hand and the child.

# *Education Guide*

sometimes the rain,  
*sometimes the sea.*

Villanova University Theatre Department  
Education Guide for

*Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea*

By Julia Izumi  
Directed by James Ijames  
September 20th - October 1st

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## About Villanova Theatre

**Villanova Theatre is a community of artist-scholars committed to transforming hearts and minds through the visionary production of classical, modern, and contemporary dramatic literature.**

Our work is fueled by the imaginative striving common to Villanova's accomplished faculty, versatile staff, and energetic graduate students. Together, we are devoted to creating a vibrant theatre enriched by and overflowing with the ideas explored in our classrooms. In all of our endeavors, we aim to share the dynamic experience of collaborative learning with our audiences in order to engage the intellect and stir the soul. As a facet of Villanova University, Villanova Theatre serves the campus community as well as thousands of theatre-goers from the Main Line and the Greater Philadelphia area.

## How to Use This Guide

This Education Guide is intended to help guide and inspire conversation, reflection and further research connected to Villanova Theatre's production of *Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea*, by Julia Izumi. It contains a series of prompts and topics for discussion organized around the work itself, Villanova Theatre's production concept, and broader themes. They are designed to be used in any order and can be approached as singular topics for reflection or in combination with one another to support a more nuanced conversation about identity, culture and inclusion.

## About *Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea*

### Summary of the Play

Once upon a time, there was a rain cloud with a soul who fell in love with a human named Ralmond. In order to be with him, the rain cloud has to become human, but how? With the help of her cow friend, Bessie, Rain Cloud seeks to win the heart of Ralmond and become human herself. The only problem is, Ralmond has a girlfriend, and mysterious characters from other times and places keep stumbling into the story. Our illustrious narrator, Dolan, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Hans Christian Anderson, seeks to control the narrative of the tale while reassuring us that he is *not* Hans Christian Anderson, and this is *not The Little Mermaid*. In the ensuing excitement, Rain Cloud and the entire cast of characters discover what it means to love someone and what it means to be human.

### Content Note

This play discusses themes of emotional trauma due to rejection and abandonment. There are also themes of environmental destruction.



## Meet the Playwright



Meet **Julia Izumi**, a wearer of many hats, including a playwright, performer, and educator. She received her MFA in Writing for Performance from Brown University and has gone on to receive nominations for awards including becoming a finalist in the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference and an honorable mention on the Kilroys List. She also won the Dorry Award for Outstanding New Play for *Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea*. She is now a playwright in residence at New Dramatists and continues to work on farcical, magical plays that welcome the audience into new experiences with kindness, joy, and humor. For more about Julia, you can check out her personal [website](#).<sup>1</sup>

## Meet the Director

**James Ijames** is a Pulitzer Prize winning and Tony Award nominated playwright, a director and educator. James' plays have been produced by Flashpoint Theater Company, Orbiter 3, Theatre Horizon, Wilma Theatre, Theatre Exile, Azuka Theatre (Philadelphia, PA), The National Black Theatre, JACK, The Public Theater (NYC), Hudson Valley Shakespeare Theater, Steppenwolf Theatre, Definition Theatre, Timeline Theater (Chicago IL) Shotgun Players (Berkeley, CA) and have received development with PlayPenn New Play Conference, The Lark, Playwright's Horizon, Clubbed Thumb, Villanova Theater, Wilma Theater, Azuka Theatre and Victory Garden. James is the 2011 F. Otto Haas



Award for an Emerging Artist recipient, and two Barrymore Awards for Outstanding Direction of a Play for *The Brothers Size* with Simpatico Theatre Company and *Gem of the Ocean* with Arden Theatre. James is a 2015 Pew Fellow for Playwriting, the 2015 winner of the Terrance McNally New Play Award for *WHITE*, the 2015 Kesselring Honorable Mention Prize winner for *....Miz Martha*, a 2017 recipient of the Whiting Award, a 2019 Kesselring Prize for *Kill Move Paradise*, a 2020 and 2022 Steinberg Prize, the 2022 Pulitzer Prize in Drama recipient and a 2023 Tony nominee for Best Play for *Fat Ham*. James was a founding member of Orbiter 3, Philadelphia's first playwright producing collective. He received a B.A. in Drama from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA and a M.F.A. in Acting from Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. James is an Associate Professor of Theatre at Villanova University. He resides in South Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Written by Dory Scott, Production Dramaturg.

<sup>2</sup> From James Ijames' website <https://www.jamesijames.com/about-margot>

## Meet the Dramaturgs

Under the direction of founder Dr. Chelsea Phillips, the Villanova Theatre Dramaturgy Collective is comprised of graduate Theatre students who wish to refine their artistic, scholarly and pedagogical skills as they prepare for careers in theatrical production, education and community engagement.

Production Dramaturgs work behind-the-scenes as context makers. They collaborate with playwrights, directors, designers and actors to provide multidisciplinary resources and insight that informs and supports nearly every aspect of the production process.

The Education Dramaturgy program seeks to strengthen the relationship between Villanova Theatre and the wider Villanova community through exclusive access to productions and resources that enhance the artistic, scholarly and cultural exchange between our audiences and our artists.



**Emma Drennen** (*pictured left*) is a second year graduate student in Villanova's Department of Theatre and Studio Art and the author of this guide. She is the Education Dramaturg for the upcoming production season, and is playing Bessie in this production. Her credits at Villanova include Leonor in *House of Desires*, and assistant stage managing *Sunday in the Park with George*.

**Dory Scott** (*pictured right*) is the production dramaturg for *Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea*. She is a second year graduate student in Villanova's Department of Theatre and Studio Art. Her credits at Villanova include Celeste in *Sunday in the Park with George* and assistant stage managing *Chrysalis*. She is also a costume shop graduate assistant. Her dramaturgy website is linked in the resources section of this guide.

## Topics for Discussion<sup>3</sup>

### Fairy Tales

Despite the contemporary connotation that fairy tales are synonymous with children's stories, in the 16th and 17th centuries the publication and circulation of fairy tales was intended for the entertainment of upper class adults. The Brothers Grimm brought the world of fairy tales into the family home, and over time their focus shifted towards children. The Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault (author of *Cinderella* and *Mother Goose*) adapted and edited folktales to better suit their audience. Hans Christian Andersen pushed the field of fairy tales even further when he published his first collection of *Fairy Tales Told for Children* and said to a friend "I've written them exactly as I would tell a child." Unlike the Brothers Grimm or Perrault, Andersen's stories were not collections of already established folk tales, but were original works. While Andersen did collect folk tales, only around a dozen of his 156 fairy tales were directly drawn from existing stories. The rest were entirely original. His fairy tales also centered children as a part of the story and called them by name, like Ida, Karen, Claus, and many others. This was a comparatively rare practice compared to Andersen's contemporaries.

As fairy tales developed for the entertainment of children, they were expected to have an educational or pro-social component, such as a moral about good behavior, or perhaps a reminder of the power of monarchy. During the time Andersen was writing, another purpose for fairy tales developed: making a profit. Publishers and authors discovered the lucrative aspect of fairy tales. This twin expectation of profit and education carried through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Mickey Mouse was successfully marketed to families by being placed on school supplies (where it could be a constant reminder of Disney and Disney products in the household). Nowadays, fairy tales are marketed, written, and told for children, but they still hold an important, personal place in our lives. As the values and morals of our society change, so do the stories we write for children.

### Prompts

- **What might be some of the educational components/morals originally intended by Hans Christian Andersen in *The Little Mermaid*? Do you think these components still hold up to a modern audience, or are they dated and/or problematic? Which messages still resonate with contemporary audiences and which do not?**
- **Like many, many other fairy tales, *The Little Mermaid* has been adapted and retold in numerous ways. Is there a version that particularly resonates with you? Why? If you could adapt a fairy tale to reflect contemporary society, what messages or educational components would you emphasize?**
- **What influence have fairy tales had on your life and what values did you interpret from fairy tales as a child?**

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<sup>3</sup> All areas of research written with support from Dory Scott, production dramaturg.

### Further Reading

- [Fairy Tale Research Dramaturgy Website](#)

## Industrialization and Storytelling

Huge turning points in human history have been marked by the rise and improvement of industrialization. In early rural societies, storytellers were journeymen that had mastered their craft and traveled to sell their work. They collected stories to bring home and share with their families, friends, and apprentices, creating a network of stories and storytellers. During this time, oral storytelling was the primary distribution of stories. With the advent of the printing press, stories could be written, reproduced, and spread with never-before-seen speed and accuracy. As printed stories grew more popular, oral storytelling traditions declined. More recently, with the development and rise of film, stories have taken on new significance and become cultural touchstones... if their box-office impact is sufficiently impressive.

Industrialization meant that art could be produced and reproduced faster than ever before, allowing artistic creations to grace every household. With this came a type of degradation of art: a photo could only be copied so many times before it lost its sheen and clarity, a story had to be copyrighted so that it wouldn't be stolen or copied, a movie had to be rushed out so that it could speak to the present moment before the present moment passed. It is not uncommon for artists, executives and consumers to feel adrift in a world where there is a twinned need for new content and an overabundance of offerings. Industrialization has caught up with artists again with the advent of AI technology where computers can not only replicate, but rearrange and remix existing works into something new.. It is important that art be accessible and available to any and all, but there is a danger in the distancing of the artist, the storyteller, from the work that they created.

### Prompts

- **What types of industrialization or technological advancements have influenced storytelling in your lifetime? In the last 10 years? In the last 5 years?**
- **What are your concerns or excitements about the rise of AI technology in producing stories and other creative art forms?**
- **What examples of books, plays, films, or TV series can you think of in which the storyteller is a main character? How can centering the storyteller as part of the story support or impede the art of storytelling?**
- **Can you think of a contemporary version of oral storytelling?**

### Further Reading

- [Selling Stories Dramaturgy Website](#)



## Hans Christian Andersen

Hans Christian Andersen was born on April 2, 1805 to a washer woman and a cobbler. At the age of 14 he made his way from his tiny hometown of Odense, Denmark to the big city of Copenhagen to become a performer at the Royal Danish Theatre. While his dreams of performance did not come to fruition, he was able to create connections with the powerful and influential Collins family. With their support, he was able to receive a classical education, and studied subjects including Latin, Greek, and literature. By 1829 he had published his first book and started down the road to becoming a great storyteller. In 1835 he published his first collection of fairy tales, changing the genre forever.

Over his long life, he wrote over 150 fairy tales, several novels, multiple plays, hundreds of letters, and travel logs of his many journeys. He met many influential people during his life and travels including the Brothers Grimm, Kierkegaard, Victor Hugo, and Charles Dickens. By the time he passed away in 1875, he had received many honors and was considered a cultural ambassador for Denmark as his stories opened the door to Danish literature for mainland Europe and as far as America. Today he is called the Shakespeare of Denmark and his fairy tales still have a major impact on culture and childhood.

Though he met and romanced many people in his life, he was a life-long bachelor and spent time in the company of other families rather than starting his own. He had several romantic entanglements, sending a multitude of personal, flirty, poetic letters to both women and men including a member of the Collins family, a famous opera singer, and a famous ballet dancer. For decades, scholars in Denmark wanted to preserve Andersen's image as the "Shakespeare of Denmark", but more modern scholars have begun to hypothesize that he may have been bisexual, asexual, or both. He loved to travel, was extremely nervous, would talk as long (and occasionally longer) as people would let him, wrote constantly (both letters and stories), created beautiful paper cuttings, and left the world with an incredible collection of stories, plays, and fairy tales. Regardless of the fairy tale he spun about his life or the truth that has been uncovered, Hans Christian Andersen left a huge impact on culture and childhood, allowing a place for imagination to grow and providing a unique focus on an outsider finding their way.<sup>4</sup>

### Prompts

- **What influence may Hans Christian Andersen's romantic life, in particular his queer romantic associations with other men, have had on his stories, such as *The Ugly Duckling* or *The Little Mermaid*?**
- **Why might Andersen have chosen to write children's stories despite never having a family of his own?**

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<sup>4</sup> Written by Dory Scott, production dramaturg

- Many of Andersen's stories are about an outsider finding their way in. What other stories can you think of that explore the same theme? Is there a contemporary way to adapt Andersen's stories to make them relevant to today?

### Further Reading

- [Andersen's Life](#)
- [A Timeline of Andersen's Life and Stories](#)
- [Andersen's Loves](#)

## **Additional Resources**

[Dramaturgy Website](#)

[Hans Christian Anderson's Stories](#)

[James Ijames' Website](#)

[Julia Izumi's Website](#)

[LGBTQIA Resources at Villanova](#)