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A Blogazine, based out of Park Slope, Brooklyn, that features fun and interesting articles written on a variety of topics including: career, innovation, real estate, environmental issues, parenting, spirituality and style.

thursday, july 10, 2008

Introducing Shakespeare to Kids: Not Just a Daydream Anymore



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By **Jen Lee**

Recently, when I took my family to see "Daydream", a free family-friendly interpretation of Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" in Prospect Park, I was persuaded that children and Shakespeare can go together with amusement and giggles galore.

The show, put on by **PLG Arts**, uses puppets, whimsical costumes, and engaging acting to entice the youngest audience members into the tale—original language and all. Any parent looking to introduce Shakespeare in a fun and accessible manner will want to see the show this weekend or next, and HSM readers will want to read on and meet the director of "Daydream", Rohana Elias-Reyes--an experienced director, actress, producer, and arts manager who is particularly interested in bringing the arts into our communities and making them relevant to children and adults.

HSM: How did you make Shakespeare so engaging for the whole family?

Rohana Elias-Reyes: "Midsummer Night's Dream" is perfect for children; it's fast-paced, funny, and full of magic and surprises. But for small children, it is too long – and the multiple plot lines can be confusing. My solution is to stage a half-an-hour version that focuses on the battle between the King and Queen of the fairies, and how some workers from the city get tangled up in their fight. I dress Shakespeare's mechanicals as clown-like versions of construction workers, mix in some hand-and-rod puppets, and you have a show that Brooklyn kids really get.

In fact, even though we haven't modernized the language, people have asked us if we have, because they and their children understand it and they always thought Shakespeare was hard to understand. They see people they recognize from their own world getting mixed up in the magic of their own imaginary play world. . . . They talk to the puppets like they are real people, they shout and warnings and instructions to the actors – and then they stick around afterward to exercise their own creativity.

HSM: What is PLG Arts?

Rohana Elias-Reyes: Founded in 2006, PLG Arts promotes the arts, supports local artists, and builds community through celebrating the vibrant creativity of the residents of Prospect Lefferts Gardens and surrounding Brooklyn neighborhoods. On-going programs include annual free family-friendly performances in Prospect Park; ArtMart 11225, an arts & crafts street fair; Jazz Night at the Inkwell; and visual arts exhibitions.

HSM: Does PLG Arts have any upcoming events for families?

Rohana Elias-Reyes: ArtMart 11225 will take place in late September or early October and there will be activities for children at this annual all-day arts & crafts street fair that fills Lincoln Road between Ocean Avenue and Flatbush with pottery, jewelry, unique clothing, & knit ware, original artworks, and music. Check the website www.plgarts.org for the specific date to be posted soon.

HSM: How could artists interested joining PLG do so?

Rohana Elias-Reyes: They should contact Executive Director Laura

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HIP SLOPE MAMA - Podcast Interview w/**Dr. Paulette Kouffman Sherman**, Author of "**Dating From The Inside Out**"

Frenzer (email: Laura at PLGArts dot org). We're open to people helping with projects already underway, and to them proposing new projects. People may also join our e-mailing list to find out about upcoming events, and we are always looking for volunteers to help out with our community events.

PLG Arts presents Daydream in Prospect Park's Imagination Playground (Ocean Ave. between Lincoln Rd. & Parkside Ave) **Saturdays at 11a.m. and Sundays at 3p.m.: July 12, 13, 19, 20, 2008.** All Performances Free – free post-show activities for children.



Rohana Elias-Reyes holds a BFA in Acting from NYU and a Masters in Nonprofit Management from Milano the New School for Management and Urban Policy. Along with her husband, actor Sean Kenin, she is raising two children in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, 5-year-old Milena and 3-year-old Caleb.

Jen Lee is a Park Slope mother and writer, and a regular contributor for Hip Slope Mama. For more of Jen Lee: Writer, Mother, Newbie Yorker, visit jenlee.net

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Posted by [Monkeydoodle](#) at Thursday, July 10, 2008

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