IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE
A Live Radio Play
adapted by JOE LANDRY
from the screenplay by
Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett, Frank Capra, and Jo Swerling
Study Guide
Magnus Theatre is committed to presenting top quality, passionate theatre to enrich, inform, empower and educate people of all ages. It is our goal that the performance not only be entertaining but also a valuable educational experience.

This guide is intended to assist with preparing for the performance and following up with your students. It provides comprehensive background information on the play as well as suggested themes, topics for discussion, curriculum-based activities and lesson plans which will make the content and experience of attending Magnus Theatre more relevant and rewarding for your students.

Using this guide, teachers can encourage students to conduct historical research, utilize critical analysis, think creatively, and apply personal reflection in relation to the play and its themes, which often crosses over into other subjects or areas of the curriculum.

Please use this guide in whatever manner best suits you. All activities and lesson plans may be modified to meet your classroom needs in order to make it accessible and applicable for your students.

We hope that this study guide provides stimulating and challenging ideas that will provide your students with a greater appreciation of the performance and live theatre.

If you would like further information about the production, Magnus Theatre, the various programs we offer, or to share your thoughts and suggestions, please contact:

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Magnus Theatre Offers **STUDENT TICKET PRICES!**

- $23 for any show (best seat available)
- Available with valid student I.D.
We want your students, and everyone who attends a Magnus Theatre performance, to thoroughly enjoy it. In a live theatre environment, the performers and other audience members are affected by the students’ behaviour (both positively and negatively). Our actors, technicians, and staff have worked hard to create an enjoyable and entertaining experience for you and your students. Below are a few items that, if followed, will greatly enhance the experience for all concerned.

### WHEN SHOULD WE ARRIVE?
- We recommend that you arrive at the theatre at least 30 minutes prior to the performance (doors open approximately one hour before show time.)
- School matinees **begin promptly at 12 noon** – we cannot hold the curtain for latecomers.
- Please be in your seat approximately 15 minutes before the performance begins. Latecomers are not guaranteed seating.

### WHERE DO WE SIT?
- Magnus Theatre has assigned seating and therefore it is important for teachers/chaperones to pick up the tickets before arriving to the theatre, or to arrive early to allow time for distribution of tickets.
- Students must sit in their assigned seats. We ask that teachers/chaperones disperse themselves among the students to provide sufficient supervision.
- Ushers and/or Magnus Theatre staff will be happy to assist you, if needed.

### WHAT CAN WE BRING WITH US?
- Food and beverages from outside the theatre are not allowed in our auditorium. Concession items will be for sale in the lounge before the show and during intermission.
- Please **turn off** – do not place on vibrate or silent – all electronic devices before entering the theatre. The lights as well as the sounds are very distracting.
- We do not have storage space for backpacks and ask that these items are left at school or on the bus.
- Please refrain from applying perfume or aftershave before coming to the theatre as a consideration for those who may have sensitivities to scents.

### WHAT DO WE DO DURING THE PERFORMANCE?
- We encourage students to let the performers know that they appreciate their work with applause and laughter.
- Please do not talk during the performance. It is disruptive to the other patrons and the actors on stage.
- Please **do not text or use your phone during the performance**.
- Please do not leave your seat during the performance. If absolutely necessary, you will be seated in the back row upon your return and may return to your original seat at intermission. Students needing to leave must be accompanied by an adult.
- We ask that students refrain from taking notes during the performance as it can be distracting to the actors and audience members.
- Please do not put your feet on the seats.
- Please do not go on the stage at any point.

### WHAT DO WE DO AFTER THE SHOW?
- Applaud! If you particularly enjoyed the performance, it is customary to give a standing ovation at the end as well.
- Please stay in your seat until the performance ends and the auditorium lights come on.
- If your group is **NOT attending** the talk back session, please promptly exit the auditorium.
- If your group **IS attending** the talk back session, please remain in your seats. A member of the Magnus Theatre staff will invite the actors back to the stage to begin the talk back session. Students should take advantage of this opportunity by asking questions.

Please review the following with your class prior to attending the performance. Thank you.
Magnus Theatre is a professional theatre company, which operates under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement, engaging professional artists who are members of the Canadian Actor's Equity Association.

Magnus Theatre was founded in 1971 by British director Burton Lancaster in conjunction with a citizens’ committee, and was incorporated June 15, 1972.

In 1998, Magnus received the Lieutenant Governor's Award for the Arts from Ontario Arts Council Foundation.

Magnus in the Park! opened in September, 2001 after a successful $5.5 million campaign.

Magnus services reach over 40,000 adults, students and seniors in Thunder Bay and Northern Ontario each year.

STUDENT TICKETS cost $23 and are available for any show. Simply come to the theatre on the day of the show and present valid student I.D.

Theatre in Education is a community outreach program initiated at Magnus in 1987.

Throughout the year, Magnus operates a THEATRE SCHOOL with classes for all ages in the fall, winter and spring. Drama camps run during March Break and the summer.

The THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES SCHOOL TOUR brings entertaining, socially relevant productions to elementary and secondary schools throughout Northern Ontario, to communities that may not have the opportunity to experience live theatre otherwise. Booking begins in the fall for performances in the spring.

Magnus offers WORKSHOPS for students, teachers and community groups in Thunder Bay and across the region. Workshops can be designed to meet specific needs, or can be selected from various topics including introduction to drama, improvisation, anti-bullying and more.

SCHOOL MATINEES are held Wednesdays at 12 noon during show runs. Tickets are only $12 each, and include a study guide created by an Ontario certified teacher and talk back session with the actors.

Magnus Theatre holds a COLLECTIVE CREATION PROJECT each year. With the guidance of professional theatre staff at Magnus Theatre, a group of high school students from across the city created productions called GOOD TIME, CHARLIE (2019), MIGRATION PATHS (2018), INVISIBLES (2017) and BLOCKED (2016). Students were involved in all aspects of the creation of the play. Auditions are typically held in October and the play is presented on the Mainstage in May.

Magnus Theatre offers the YOUNG PLAYWRIGHT’S CHALLENGE to all students in Northwestern Ontario; three finalists experienced a week of intensive workshops on their plays with Magnus Theatre professionals, culminating in a public reading. We are reinstating this program this season – please let us know if you are interested.

MAGNUS THEATRE YOUNG COMPANY, for students aged 13 - 18, runs from fall to spring and sees students performing in a classic play on our Mainstage.

Throughout the season, we present MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT events when possible. These are held after Mainstage productions with the playwright from the show the audience has just seen, and generally include a reading from the playwright’s upcoming work or a question and answer period.

Magnus Theatre can make learning dynamic, interactive, enriching and –above all– fun! Whether you are interested in bringing your school to the theatre, or prefer having us come to you, there are a variety of educational and entertaining programs that will benefit your students.
Theatre in Education refers to theatre that is used as a tool for educational purposes, with the goal of changing attitudes and/or behaviours of audience members.

Using the art form of drama as an educational pedagogy at any grade level, drama can reinforce the rest of the school curriculum, and has been proven to improve overall academic performance.

It is a multisensory mode of learning, designed to:
- Increase awareness of self (mind, body, voice) and others (collaboration, empathy)
- Improve clarity and creativity in communication of verbal and nonverbal ideas
- Deepen understanding of human behaviours, motivation, diversity, culture and history

It incorporates elements of actor training to facilitate students’ physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.

It also employs the elements of theatre (costumes, props, scenery, lighting, music, sound) to enrich the learning experience, reenact stories and mount productions.

Theatre students are able to take responsibility for their own learning and skill development as they explore the various aspects involved in theatre such as acting, directing, playwriting, producing, designing, building, painting, leading etc.

It is a powerful tool for social change as emotional and psychological responses can be more intense as it is a live event, giving audiences an opportunity to connect with performers.

Theatre can provide a believable, entertaining and interesting way to explore sensitive issues that are not typically discussed in public, such as racism, suicide, bullying and substance abuse. It is particularly effective with young audiences.

By engaging audiences and capturing their attention, theatre can influence positive behaviour and healthy lifestyles, particularly if it is delivered with a message that audiences can understand. Hence, Theatre in Education performances are typically accompanied by study guides, activities, support material and/or workshops. The more interactive and participatory the event, the more successful it is.

The arts, including drama, cater to different styles of learning and have positive effects on at-risk youth and students with learning disabilities.

Involvement in the arts increases students’ engagement, encourages consistent attendance, and decreases drop-out rates in schools.

Drama allows students to experiment with personal choices and solutions to real problems in a safe environment where actions and consequences can be examined, discussed and experienced without “real world” dangers.

Drama makes learning fun and its engaging and interactive nature makes learning more memorable.

Drama increases language development as students express themselves by using a range of emotions and vocabulary they may not normally use.

As students realize their potential, they gain confidence which extends to other areas of learning and their lives.

Did You Know…?

Theatre in Education emerged in the UK at the Belgrade Theatre in 1965. A group of actors, teachers and social workers created a project which successfully merged theatre and education for the first time. A group of children were presented with a scene featuring two actors, one of which was holding the other captive. The children were given information on both characters and their situations and had the choice of whether or not to free the captive character. From this project, Theatre in Education spread across Britain and the rest of the world.
CAST & CHARACTERS

KEVIN HARE
as Harry “Jazzbo” Heywood
(Clarence and others)

DOUGLAS E. HUGHES
as Freddie Filmore
(Announcer, Potter and others)

MELISSA MACKENZIE
as Sally Applewhite
(Mary Hatch)

KATE MADDEN
As Lana Sherwood
(Violet and others)

NEIL PATERSON
As Jake Laurents
(George Bailey)

CREATIVE TEAM

THOM CURRIE
Director

KSENIA BRODA-MILIAN
Set Designer

REBECCA MILLER
Lighting Designer

MERVI AGOMBAR
Wardrobe Designer

MICHAEL O’CONNOR
Scenic Painter

TIM STEPHENSON
Sound Design

NICHOLAS PALINKA
Projections

GILLIAN JONES
Stage Manager

HANNA LAAKSONEN
Head of Properties

SYNOPSIS

"Every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings.” This beloved Christmas classic comes to captivating life as a live 1940s radio broadcast. Adapted from the unforgettable movie and featuring an ensemble of incredible performers bringing dozens of characters to the stage, the heartwarming story of idealistic George Bailey will delight family audiences for the holiday season.

RECOMMENDED FOR GRADES 5+

Did You Know…?

There was supposed to be a sequel (and still may be) called, It's A Wonderful Life: The Rest of the Story. The film was supposed to tell what happened after George Bailey’s fateful night. Originally scheduled to come out in time for Christmas 2015, but it missed the deadline and now it appears the film will not be released.

Source: https://www.southernliving.com/christmas/its-a-wonderful-life-movie-facts
At age 12, Joe's first job was in the film department at the library in his hometown of Fairfield, CT. This was before the dawn of home video, back in the days of 16mm, and their permanent collection included *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Lady Vanishes* and other early Hitchcock films. Joe's other main interest was the theatre. Encouraged by his parents, Joe was introduced to various theatres which he came to call home, including Playwrights Horizons and Roundabout Theatre Company in New York, Westport Country Playhouse and others. In 1995, Joe founded Second Guess Theatre Company, which produced over two dozen new plays, adaptations and revivals to critical-acclaim.

In 1997, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* premiered in Stamford, CT and has since enjoyed productions around the country. Joe's other plays include *Vintage Hitchcock: A Live Radio Play* and an adaptation of the cult classic *Reefer Madness*. Other projects include *Mothers and Sons*, a musical co-written with Kevin Connors and *Lifeboat, Dahling!* with Bert Bernardi. [www.joelandry.com](http://www.joelandry.com)

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**Did You Know...?**

Before “It’s a Wonderful Life,” snow in movies was usually created with cornflakes painted white. However, the sound they created when actors stepped on them was so loud that it often disrupted filming. This resulted in scenes frequently being re-shot and re-dubbing dialogue. However, Russell Shearman, who led the special effects team for “It’s a Wonderful Life,” had an idea. “They created a new way of doing snow, which combined water, sulfite, flakes of soap and I believe sugar,” said Arnold. “They found a way to create realistic-looking snow that did not crunch when you stepped on it. That was a big deal at the time. The snow is really beautiful in ‘It’s a Wonderful Life’ and there’s a lot of it. I think that’s one subtle reason we love the movie so much. Because elements like that really create a cozy feeling when you’re watching it, whether in a theater or with your family.”

It’s a Wonderful Life, American dramatic film, released in 1946, that is widely considered one of the most inspirational and beloved movies in American cinema. The film, which was produced and directed by Frank Capra, has become synonymous with Christmas, when it is frequently televised.

The film opens on Christmas Eve as George Bailey (played by James Stewart) is contemplating suicide. Prayers for George are heard in heaven, and Clarence Oddbody (Henry Travers), a second-class angel who has yet to earn his wings, is tasked with saving him. First, however, he is shown highlights of George’s life in the small town of Bedford Falls. Through a number of acts beginning in childhood, George is revealed as selfless and kindhearted. After the death of his father, George sets aside his dreams of traveling the world in order to run his family’s savings and loan business. His decision earns the enmity of greedy banker Mr. Potter (Lionel Barrymore), who is determined to close the business.

As the years pass, George marries Mary (Donna Reed) and has children. One Christmas Eve, Uncle Billy (Thomas Mitchell) unknowingly gives the company’s bank deposit to the ever-scheming Mr. Potter, who secretly keeps the money. The bank examiner quickly discovers that the deposit is missing, and George faces financial disaster and arrest. Distraught, he gets drunk and heads to a bridge in order to kill himself. At this point Clarence appears and shows George what life would be like for his loved ones and neighbours had he never lived. The experience renews George’s passion for life, and his trials and hardships in turn spark an outpouring of love and benevolence in the small community. After returning home, he is visited by family and friends, who donate money to cover the missing deposit—proving that George is “the richest man in town.” As they sing “Auld Lang Syne,” a bell on the Christmas tree rings, indicating that Clarence has earned his wings.

Made in the immediate aftermath of World War II, Capra’s film initially failed to connect with audiences that were used to his prewar movies known for their snappy dialogue and light comedic touches. Postwar moviegoers were in the mood for joviality, so despite being a critical success, the film was a box-office disappointment. It was only after It’s a Wonderful Life temporarily fell out of copyright and was broadcast routinely on television at Christmastime that the film built a widespread following. George Bailey, Mr. Potter, and Clarence are among the most well-known characters in film history, and names and dialogue from the film have become common references in popular culture.

Source: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Its-a-Wonderful-Life
Radio drama (or audio drama, audio play, radio play, radio theatre) is a dramatised, purely acoustic performance, broadcast on radio or published on audio media, such as tape or CD. With no visual component, radio drama depends on dialogue, music and sound effects to help the listener imagine the characters and story.

Radio drama achieved widespread popularity within a decade of its initial development in the 1920s. By the 1940s, it was a leading international popular entertainment. With the advent of television in the 1950s, however, radio drama lost some of its popularity, and in some countries, has never regained large audiences.

As of 2011, radio drama has a minimal presence on terrestrial radio in the United States. Much of American radio drama is restricted to rebroadcasts or podcasts of programs from previous decades. However, other nations still have thriving traditions of radio drama. In the United Kingdom, for example, the BBC produces and broadcasts hundreds of new radio plays each year on Radio 3, Radio 4, and Radio 4 Extra. Drama is aired daily on Radio 4 in the form of afternoon plays, a Friday evening play, short dramas included in the daily Woman’s Hour program, Saturday plays and Sunday classic serials. On Radio 3 there is Sunday evening drama and, in the slot reserved for experimental drama, The Wire.

The drama output on Radio 4 Extra (formerly Radio 7), which consists predominantly of archived programs and a few extended versions of radio 4 programs, is chiefly composed of comedy, thrillers and science fiction. Podcasting has also offered the means of creating new radio dramas, in addition to the distribution of vintage programs.

The terms “audio drama” or “audio theatre” are sometimes used synonymously with “radio drama” with one notable distinction: audio drama or audio theatre is not intended specifically for broadcast on radio.

Audio drama, whether newly produced or classics, can be found on CDs, cassette tapes, podcasts, webcasts and conventional broadcast radio.

**MERCURY THEATRE ON THE AIR**

After the theatrical successes of the Mercury Theatre, CBS Radio invited Orson Welles to create a summer show radio series for 13 weeks. The series began July 11, 1938, initially titled First Person Singular, with the
formula that Welles would play the lead in each show. Some months later, the show was called The Mercury Theatre on the Air. The show made headlines with its "The War of the Worlds" broadcast on October 30, one of the most famous broadcasts in the history of radio due to the alleged panic it accidentally caused, after which the Campbell Soup Company signed on as sponsor. The Mercury Theatre on the Air made its last broadcast on December 4 of that year, and The Campbell Playhouse began five days later, on December 9.

Source: http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/topics/sound/radio-drama/

Did You Know...?  

Though it was widely reported that The War of the Worlds broadcast caused mass panic, it is a myth. In reality, a small percentage of listeners was frightened by The War of the Worlds. Many of those, it was determined afterwards, had tuned in late and missed obvious clues that it was fiction (and a large percentage of those assumed the U.S. was under attack by Germany, not Mars).

Source: https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/war-of-the-worlds/
Foley is the art of creating sound effects for radio, film, and television. The term actually comes from a man, Jack Donovan Foley, who made sound effects for live radio broadcasts. He focused on creating realistic sounds with the tools he had around him rather than using generic sounds made in other programs. This was reminiscent of the theatrical sounds of vaudeville shows.

Jack Foley started working for Universal Studios in 1914. By the time “talkies” came around in the 1920s, studios wanted to create authentic sound effects for their films. On set, microphones were only used to record dialogue. Therefore sound effects would have to be recorded after the film was shot.

Foley assembled a team that would project the film onto a screen while recording an audio track of sound effects — mostly footsteps. The earliest films had them adding the sounds of walking and doors opening and closing.

Foley became the expert in sound effects audio recording. He continued to perform up until his death in 1967. Many of the techniques he developed are still used today.

Three Types of Foley

Foley artists do not create every sound in a film. Complex sounds like car engines or computer noises fall under the direction of a Sound FX Editor, who uses a library of sounds. The foley artists focus on three key areas: footsteps, movement, and specific props.

1. Footsteps

This category is self-explanatory. The footsteps of the main character are recorded very early in the process. This isn’t as easy as walking by a microphone. Foley artists wear certain shoes and walk on specific surfaces to attain the right sounds for a film.

These surfaces are called foley pits, which offer all sorts of different flooring types. This allows the foley artist to instantly record the sounds of a character walking across a lawn, onto a sidewalk, and into a home. This also includes footsteps of animals, like the famous sound of galloping horse hooves.

2. Movement

Movement focuses on the sounds of clothing a character is wearing. This isn’t just loud clothes like a knight’s armor — even denim blue jeans make a sound when a character crosses their legs or squirms in a chair.
3. Props

Creating the sounds made by props can fall under the foley artist or sound editor. Foley artists tend to work with props that characters interact with, like a sword being unsheathed.

In this video from CBS Sunday Morning, foley artist Marko Costanzo shows how he used leaves to create the swirling sound of the witch from Into the Woods and how he cracked celery to create the sound of breaking bones for The Big Lebowski.

Modern Foley Artists

Hecker now has well over 300 credits to his name. In this video from the SoundWorks Collection, Hecker shows you how he used classic foley techniques to create sound effects for the film Robin Hood, starting with the process of recording the footsteps of the main characters.

Tricks of the Trade

If you're interested in recording your own sounds, check out Recording Foley and Sound Effects: The Fundamentals. Here are a few common tricks you can practice recording on your own.
Breaking bones: break a stalk of celery or head of lettuce

Body punches: hit a phone book

Flapping bird wings: wave a pair of leather gloves

Creaking: An old chair makes a controllable creaking sound

Crunching snow: crush a leather pouch filled with corn starch

Grass crunching: ¼-inch audio tape balled up sounds like grass or brush when walked upon

Whoosh: wave around a thin stick or arrow

Horse hooves: clap together two coconut shells cut in half — as seen in Monty Python and the Holy Grail

Source: https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/art-of-making-sound-effects/

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**Did You Know...?**

The foley crew will include the artist or "walker," who makes the sound, and a technician or two to record and mix it.

Source: http://filmsound.org/terminology/foley.htm
**DIPHTHERIA**

An infection caused by the bacterium Corynebacterium diphtheriae, spread between people by direct contact or through the air. A diphtheria vaccine is effective for prevention.

**DISSOLVE**

To close down or dismiss an assembly or official body.

**FORECLOSE**

Foreclosure is a legal process in which a lender attempts to recover the balance of a loan from a borrower who has stopped making payments to the lender by forcing the sale of the asset used as the collateral for the loan.

**JUKEBOX**

A partially automated music-playing device, usually a coin-operated machine, that will play a patron's selection from self-contained media.

**MALFEASANCE**

Wrongdoing, especially by a public official.
MISAPPROPRIATION

Intentional and illegal use of property or funds.

MORTGAGE

A legal agreement by which a bank or other creditor lends money at interest in exchange for taking title of the debtor's property, with the condition that the conveyance of title becomes void upon the payment of the debt.

SMITCH

A small amount.

WARRANT

An official document, signed by a judge (or magistrate), which authorizes a police officer to arrest the person or people named in the warrant.

Did You Know…?

“It’s a Wonderful Life” may be an iconic Christmas movie, but it was actually shot during the midst of a heat wave in the summer of 1946. It was so steamy at times Capra was forced to shut filming down for a day. In key moments of the film, you can see Stewart breaking a sweat when it’s supposed to be snowing and chilly.

The following lesson plans and activities are intended to be used as preparation for and/or follow-up of the performance. It is our hope that the materials will provide students with a better understanding and appreciation of the production. Teachers may use and adapt the lesson plans as required to suit their classroom needs. Please note that many lesson plans are cross-disciplinary and are based on the Ontario Curriculum.

This Study Guide fulfills the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Curriculum Expectations in the following categories:

**The Arts Curriculum:**
- A. Creating and Presenting or Creating and Performing or Creating, Presenting and Performing
- B. Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing
- C. Foundations
- D. Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts

**The English Curriculum:**
- A. Oral Communication
- B. Writing
- C. Media Studies
- D. Reading and Literature Studies

**The Social Sciences and Humanities Curriculum:**
- A. Foundations
- B. Research and Inquiry Skills
- C. Healthy Relationships
- D. Equity, Social Justice and Change

**The Canadian and World Studies Curriculum:**
- Geography
  - Social Change and Quality of Life
- History
  - Communities: Local, National and Global

**Did You Know…?**

ZuZu didn’t see the film for 40 years. Karolyn Grimes, who played ZuZu, the youngest daughter in the Bailey family who uttered the famous line “every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings”, didn’t see the film until 1980. “I never took the time to see the movie,” she told Detroit’s WWJ in 2013. “I never just sat down and watched the film.” She made up for lost time, though, telling Vanity Fair that she has now seen it over 500 times.

It is important for all students (especially those in younger grades) to know what to expect when they arrive at the theatre. Preparing students for a live performance through discussions and activities enhances their overall experience and creates a more focused audience. Encouraging students to pay attention to certain aspects of the production and/or posing one or two specific questions to the class further enhances their experience as they are actively listening and watching. As well, pre-show discussion provides teachers with an understanding of their students’ prior knowledge on the themes/subjects, thus allowing lesson plans to be tailored accordingly.

**ATTENDING THE THEATRE**

1. **Please review the Theatre Etiquette guidelines with your class (page 4).**
2. How is live theatre different than a movie? How is the role of the audience different?
3. Why attend live theatre? What is the value of attending?
4. Discuss the elements that go into producing a live performance: casting, directing, rehearsals, designing (lights, sets, props, costumes), etc. Ask students to guess how many different administrative, managerial, technical, backstage, on-stage, and volunteer positions are required to put on a production (keep in mind the size of the theatre and the scale of the show). What do they think these various positions entail? In small groups, compare your definitions and discuss how each position contributes to the success of the production. After attending the performance, compare their guesses to what they observed while at the theatre and/or from the information provided in the show program.
5. Ask students to pay attention to the following during the performance:
   a. Staging/blocking: how the actors move on stage, where they move to and from, etc.
   b. Costumes: colours, styles, what they say about the characters, costume changes, how they work with the set, the props and the lighting, etc.
   c. Lighting: lighting cues, colours, spotlights, special effects, etc.
   d. Music/sound effects: songs, background music, sound cues, etc.
6. If your group is attending the Talk-Back session after the performance, brainstorm possible topics as a class and **ask each student to prepare one question** to ask.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY**

1. Read the play’s synopsis on page 6 to students. Based on what they already know about the show, what do they think the play will be about? What do they expect the theme(s) and/or message(s) to be?
2. What is a radio play? Can students name any examples?
3. Who has seen the film version of *It’s a Wonderful Life*? What do students know about it?
4. *It’s a Wonderful Life* examines how one’s actions impact others. How have your actions impacted the people around you? Discuss with a partner.

**DURING THE SHOW AND INTERMISSION**

1. Have students examine the artwork located in the lounge. How does this artwork reflect the production? Does it help establish the tone for the show? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Read the program. Ask students what, if anything, they would change if they were the designer. What would they add?
3. Throughout your visit to the theatre, encourage students to take note of the various people working. Who is responsible for different tasks? How do they work together to produce a show?
While watching a live performance, audiences are engaged physically, emotionally and intellectually. After the performance, discussions and activities allow students to ask questions, express their emotions and reactions and further explore the experience. The questions and activities below are listed by topic and can be utilized in many different courses. Please review the entire list and adapt questions and activities to fit your classroom needs.

### Student's Reactions

1. What was your overall reaction to the performance? Explain.
2. What did you like best about the play? What did you dislike?
3. Are you satisfied with the way the story was told? Explain.
4. What, if anything, would you have done differently if you were the director of the play? An actor? The set designer? The costume designer? The lighting designer? The playwright?
5. Would you recommend this show to your friends and/or family? Why or why not?
6. What can you learn from these characters? Did watching the play offer any insight into your own life?

### Actors & Characters

1. Make a list of the details of the main characters in the play. How did you learn this information – from dialogue, interaction with other characters, costumes, etc.?
2. Did the characters change or grow during the play? Identify specific moments of change.
3. How does their age, status, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. affect each character?
4. How did the actors use their voices and bodies to portray the characters? Were the actors successful or unsuccessful at doing so? Justify your answer using specific examples from the production.
5. Create a physical description of one of the characters from the play including weight, height, body type, hair colour, etc. Share and compare descriptions with those of their classmates.
6. Do you think the characters were well cast? Justify your answer.

### Design – Costumes, Lighting and Setting

1. Describe the use of colour, staging, lighting, costumes and/or other elements used within the production and how it worked (or failed to work) with the play content.
2. Did each character’s costumes seem appropriate for his/her character (personality, social status, age, occupation, etc.)? Why or why not?
3. Did the costumes look like you expected them to? Why or why not? Why do you think that the costume designer, Mervi Agombar, chose to costume them like she did?
4. A realistic setting tries to recreate a specific location. It generally consists of a painted backdrop, flats and furniture or freestanding set pieces. An abstract set, on the other hand, does not depict any specific time or place. Rather, it typically consists of platforms, steps, drapes, panels, ramps and/or other nonspecific elements and is used in productions where location changes frequently and/or quickly. Is this set realistic or abstract? How was the set used during the show?
5. Create a sketch or series of sketches depicting an alternate set or costumes for one, or all, of the actors.
6. A play must establish setting very early in the plot. How was that achieved in IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY?

### Dramatic Arts

1. Blocking is a theatre term which refers to the precise movement and positioning of actors on a stage in order to facilitate the performance. In contemporary theatre, the director usually determines blocking during rehearsal, telling actors where they should move for the proper dramatic effect and to ensure sight lines for the audience. Describe the blocking used in the production. Were there any moments when you felt that such movement was particularly effective or ineffective? Describe them.
2. A tableau is a theatrical technique that requires participants to freeze their bodies in poses that capture a moment in time. Divide into groups of at least four and ask each group to create a tableau depicting the most memorable part of the play. Encourage them to explore levels (high, low, depth, etc.)

3. Name one defining trait of each character in the play. How did the actors portray these characteristics?

4. What do you think that a director looks for when casting a play (e.g. physical appearance, captures the essence of the character, etc.)? What would you look for if you were casting a production of IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY?

5. Discuss dramaturgy with the class. Using IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY, have students create an outline of the research materials they would need if they were the dramaturg for this production. What research materials would you need to provide the actors and director? What terms in the play require definition? What images, photos, video or audio research would be helpful? Assign each student a different research area on which to find information for this play. (For example, in Of Mice and Men, the dramaturg might need information on California history, the dust bowl, migrant workers, mental disabilities, friendship, dreams... etc.) Together, compile a file of information the class would present to their cast.

ENGLISH & LANGUAGE ARTS

1. What is a play-within-a-play?
2. How essential is the setting of IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY? Could this story have taken place anywhere else?
3. Turning points are key moments that change the characters’ lives. Detail the key turning points for George Bailey.
4. In every play characters have back-stories known only in the playwright’s mind. Instruct the students to choose one character from the play and imagine what their life was like before the time of the play. Have each student imagine that they came across their character’s diary from five, 10 or 20 years before the time the action takes place. Assign each student to write several passages from their character’s diary revealing events which may have influenced the way this character evolved.
5. Write a review of the play. Consider the purpose of your review – is it to encourage others to see the play or to warn them about some aspect they may not like? Optionally, send the review to Magnus Theatre by emailing education@magnustheatre.com
6. Write and present a monologue from the point of view of one of the characters in IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE.
7. A dynamic character changes over the course of the play. Which characters in the play-within-a-play are dynamic versus static?
8. Why is IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY presented as a radio play?
9. How does George Bailey impact the lives of others?
10. Do you think Mr. Potter also has a guardian angel? If so, would it have the potential to change his perspective?
11. Would the ending have been more satisfying if Potter got his comeuppance? Why do you think it was written as it was?
12. What is dramatic irony, and how does the play-within-a-play utilize it?
13. Clarence says "Strange, isn’t it? One man’s life touches so many others. And when he isn’t around, he leaves a pretty big hole, doesn’t he?" Do you agree or disagree?

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

1. Using any of the characters in the play, explain how clothing was selected to suit a character’s personality traits or to project a desired image.
2. Do you think it's better to do the stuff George dreams of doing—traveling the world, designing cities—or to live the kind of life he does?
3. What would happen if everyone purposely tried to change his or her community? How can you change your community?
4. Examine the relationship of any two characters in the play. What is the nature of the relationship? Is it a healthy one? What characterizes a healthy relationship? What does each character contribute to this relationship? How is each character’s life influenced by the other? Ask each student to create a Venn Diagram of the relationship between their characters and the impact of this relationship on the play's outcome.
5. Why does George refuse to work for Mr. Potter? Are there any financial repercussions to his refusal? If you were in his place, what would you have done?
6. Give examples of how people in Bedford Falls help each other during the play-within-a-play. How important is it to have community support?

**CANADIAN AND WORLD STUDIES**

1. What effect does the Great Depression have on the plot of It’s a Wonderful Life?
2. How does Sam’s storyline reflect the history of the time period?
3. What was life like in the mid 1940s? Research major historical events, pop culture and the value of popular items at the time.

Subject: Art, drama, English.
Grade: GRADES 7+

OBJECTIVE
Students will adapt a short story or children’s story into a radio play.

MATERIALS NEEDED
- Source material (may be provided or given as a research assignment in advance)
- Writing utensils, paper or access to computers

INTRODUCTION
Discuss the elements of a radio play. What can students identify as the necessary parts of a radio play from IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY?

PROCEDURE
1. Allow students to select source material.
2. Students adapt their source into a radio play. Remind them to ensure they are including the elements discussed in the introduction.
3. Choose appropriate music and sound effects. You may choose to discuss Foley sound with them if the class has not already covered it.
4. Cast and rehearse the play.
5. Perform the piece! Students can perform it live, in front of the class, or record it ahead of time based on your classes’ needs.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
- Written assignment and/or performance

EXTENSIONS
- Encourage students to consider what would need to be added if this was a traditional play. What additional stage directions would they need?

Did You Know…?

The reason many of us are so familiar with this movie is partly due to a massive administrative error. The original copyright for “It’s a Wonderful Life” expired in 1974, and for some reason its copyright owner neglected to renew it — which meant that the film entered the public domain. For the next two decades, it was shown on television nonstop during the holidays, and dozens of distributors sold tapes of the film. In 1993, its original owner regained control and its television screenings became strictly limited.

**IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE: FILM**

It’s a Wonderful Life: at 70


It’s a Wonderful Life (1946)

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0038650/

Why It’s a Wonderful Life is the Nation’s Favourite


**FOLEY SOUND**

Film 101: Understanding Foley Sound and Why Foley Sound Is Important


What is Foley Sound and why do you Need it?

https://www.careersinfilm.com/foley-sound/

What Was That? The Top 15 Foley SFX From Everyday Household Objects

https://blog.storyblocks.com/inspiration/foley-sfx-everyday-household-objects/

**ABOUT THEATRE IN EDUCATION**

‘Actup!’ Theatre as Education and its Impact on Young People’s Learning by Nalita James, Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester, 2005.

www.clms.le.ac.uk/publications/workingpapers/working_paper46.pdf

Arts Edge

http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org


The Effects of Theatre Education by the American Alliance for Theatre and Education

www.aate.com/content.asp?admin=Y&contentid=69


www.fhi.org/NR/rdonlyres/ephz233vypsqhohijn67zfovu5wzgk65q3ozwvwgq3vkuvqcmknatapgzy64jahjkorb2vpgwh4rlaa/theatrefullienyt.pdf

What Drama Education Can Teach Your Child by Kimberly Haynes

www.education.com/magazine/article/What_Drama_Education_Can_Teach

What is Theatre in Education by Act On Info, Theatre in Education Company

http://theatre-education.co.uk
Act - to perform or play a role, or a section of a play that is often subdivided into scenes

**Actor/Actress** – a person who performs a role in a play

Backstage - the areas that surround the stage that the audience cannot see

**Blackout** - a lighting term in which the stage is in complete darkness

**Blocking** - the pattern actors follow in moving onstage, usually determined by the director

**Box Office** - where ticket sales are handled

Cast - to choose the actors to play roles in a play, or the group of actors who perform the roles in a play

**Character** - a role played by an actor

**Choreographer** - an artist who designs dances for the stage

Climax - the turning point or decisive moment in a plot

**Conflict** - struggle between opposing ideas, interests or forces; conflict can be internal (within one character) or external (between two or more characters)

**Costume** - any clothing an actor wears onstage

**Costume Designer** - in accordance to the vision of the director, he/she designs costumes to build, rent, borrow, or buy for a production

Crew - the backstage team responsible for the technical aspects, such as lighting, sound and set/prop movement

**Cue** - a signal for an actor to begin their next line/speech

**Curtain call** - when the actors acknowledge applause and bow at the end of the performance

**Dialogue** - the lines of the play spoken by the actors while in character

**Director** - the person who oversees the entire production; she/he chooses the play, runs rehearsals and develops the artistic vision for the play

**Dramatic conflict** - the conflict in which the main character in a play engages; can be person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self, or person vs. nature/fate

**Exposition** - the beginning of the plot that provides important background information

**Fourth wall** - an imaginary wall between the audience and actors in a play

**Green Room** – lounge area for actors when they are not needed onstage

**House** - the auditorium or seating of a theatre

**Improvise** - to speak or to act without a script

**Lighting Designer** - the person who develops and plots a lighting concept and design for a production

**Monologue** - a story, speech, or scene performed by one actor alone

**Motivation** - a character’s reason for doing/saying things

**Musical Theatre** - theatre that combines music, songs, spoken dialogue and dance

**Objective** - a character’s goal or intention

**Obstacle** - something that stands between a character and his/her ability to meet an objective

**Pantomime** - to act without words through facial expression and gesture

**Playwright** - a person who writes plays

**Plot** - the sequence of events; the structure of a play

**Producer** - the person or company who oversees the business details of a theatrical production

**Property/Prop** - anything that an actor handles onstage; furniture and other items used to enhance the set

**Protagonist** - the main character of the play, who the audience identifies with the most

**Rehearsal** - the time during which performers develop their characters and learn lines and blocking

**Role** - a character in a play that is written by the playwright

**Scene** - the basic structural element of a play; each scene deals with a significant crisis or confrontation

**Scenery** - onstage decoration to help establish the time and place of a play

**Script** - the text of a play

**Set** - the onstage physical space and its structures in which the actors perform

**Set Designer** - the person who develops the design and concept of the set

**Stage Manager** - the director’s technical liaison backstage during rehearsals and performances, responsible for the smooth running of a performance

**Strike** - to remove something from the stage; or to take down the set

**Tableau** - a silent and motionless depiction of a scene; a frozen picture

**Theatre** - the imitation/representation of life, performed for other people; or the place that is the setting for dramatic performances

**Theme** - underlying meaning of a literary work

**Tragedy** - a play that ends in defeat or death of the main character
Magnus Theatre in Education is the premier theatre training facility in the Thunder Bay area. Our classes and masterclasses are taught by professional actors, directors and educators.

**MAGNUS MINIS/YOUTH (Ages 6 – 8 and Ages 9 -12)**  
$115  
Saturday, January 11th – March 7th (no class Feb. 15th)  
@ 10:00 am - 11:15 am (ages 6-8) / 11:30 am - 12:45 pm (ages 9-12)  
This is a great way for children to develop self-expression and creativity while building their self-confidence. Students will explore improvisation, story-telling, creative movement, music and imaginative theatre games. The session concludes with a performance for invited family and friends.

**TECHNICAL THEATRE FOR TEENS (Ages 14 – 19)**  
$249  
Wednesday, March 18th – Wednesday, May 27th  
5:00 – 7:00 pm  
+$10 Equipment Kit  
Are you interested in learning what happens behind the scenes? Technical theatre is an integral part of what we do at Magnus. Get involved in stagecraft, exploring scenic design and construction, painting and prop making. This program coincides with our production projects so that practical skills are developed through real experience. Recommended that students are able to lift 30 pounds.

**SCRIPT WORK AND ANALYSIS (Ages 16+)**  
$250  
Saturday, January 11th – February 29th  
1:00 – 2:30 pm  
This eight-week course will explore the intricacy of script analysis and stagework. Emphasis is placed on finding compelling objectives, playing those objectives truthfully and learning how to stage scenes effectively. Instructor Andrew Cecon has been performing in theatre, television and film in Winnipeg and across Western Canada for over 15 years. He held the position of Artistic Director for Shakespeare in the Ruins for three years. Recent credits include Magnus Theatre’s BANG BANG and MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET, and Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre’s MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET.

TO REGISTER, VISIT MAGNUSTHEATRE.COM/EDUCATION OR CALL 345-5552  
Please note: Class fees are non refundable *Plus tax where applicable