



K to 7 STUDY GUIDE  
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# Robinson Crusoe

From the novel by **Daniel Defoe**

Adapted by

**Colin Heath and Michael Wolski**

Directed by **Wayne Specht**

Set Design by **Colin Heath and Michael Wolski**

Original Music by **Calvin Cairns and Colin Heath**

Additional Music and Sound Design by **David Rhymer**

Costume Design by **Dorrie Williams**

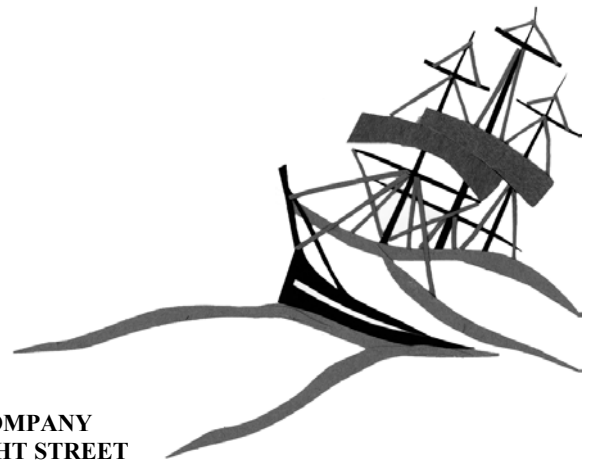
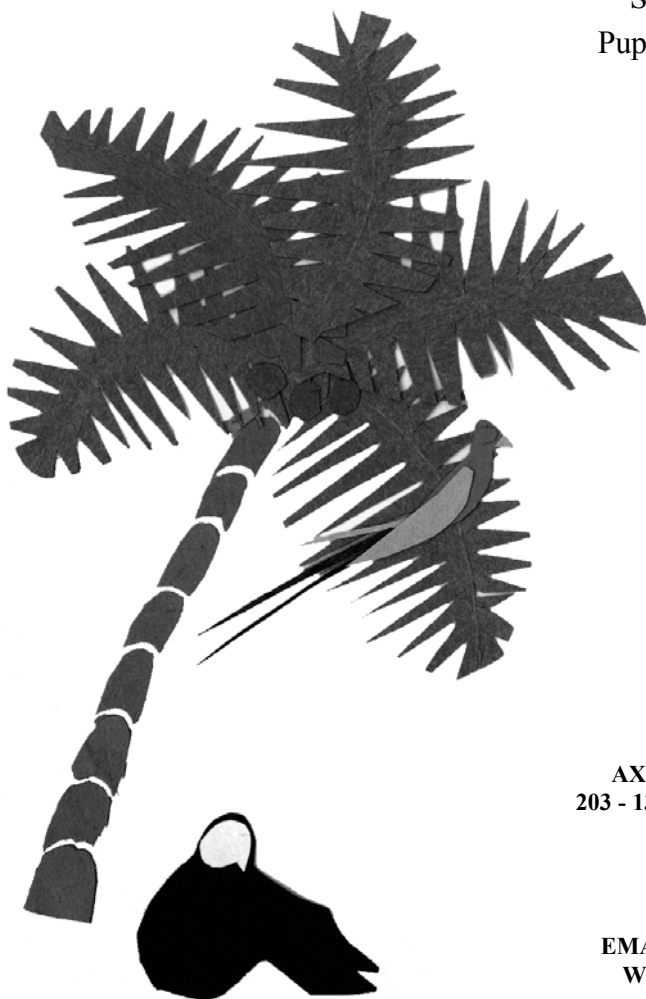
Set Construction by **Terence van der Woude**

Puppets by **Zompopo Flores and Michael Wolski**

Props by **Rick Holloway**

Stage Management by **Yvan Morissette**

Performed by **Yurij Kis and Raugi Yu**



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**R**OBINSON CRUSOE, adapted by Colin Heath and Michael Wolski, is a play about survival against long odds, man's ability to adapt to foreign environments and the strength of the human spirit and the will to live. The playwrights have chosen to tell the tale with a series of flashbacks as Crusoe prepares to leave the island with his rescuers after 28 years of being shipwrecked. The towering set transforms into the multiple locations needed to tell the story which also incorporates puppets to depict the animals on the island.

The play opens with some audience participation as Robinson Crusoe and his friend, Friday address the audience as if they were an Admiral and sailors from a rescue ship. Crusoe excitedly tells his rescuers (the audience) his amazing story of survival and of his meeting with his friend, Friday.

His first adventure focuses on the devastating storm that tosses him into the sea and his eventual washing up on the shore of a strange island. Crusoe discovers himself to be the only survivor of the disaster as he finds his ship floundering just off shore.

Crusoe makes a happy discovery when he is able to recover supplies and materials from the ship. He sets about making a livable habitat and exploring the island for human life. He is thrilled to find that the island is teeming with vegetation and wildlife. Although Crusoe's basic needs are met in terms of food and shelter he soon discovers that he has a great need for human companionship and that is what he misses most.

Many years pass before a young man, who was being chased by pirates, arrives on the island in a dramatic escape. Crusoe chases the pirates off and befriends the young man. Slowly the newcomer learns to trust the Englishman who has rescued him and they become fast friends. In time Friday learns to speak English and in turn teaches Crusoe some of his customs and rituals.

One day a ship arrives in the harbour. As Crusoe and Friday watch, a boat full of people leaves the ship and sets sail for the island. As the boat draws nearer to shore it becomes apparent that the passengers are actually the Admiral and crew of the ship and a group of pirates. Crusoe and Friday overthrow the pirates, rescue the Admiral and reclaim the ship.

As the story concludes Friday declares his intention to stay on the island as it has become his home. Crusoe accepts Friday's decision and after a fond farewell sets sail for England with his rescuers.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**D**ANIEL DEFOE

ROBINSON CRUSOE, Daniel Defoe's first novel was published in 1719, when the prolific writer of narrative realism was almost sixty. To the majority of readers, and above all to children, the book is simply a stirring tale of a shipwreck and adventure on a tropical island. However, the literary historian can regard Defoe as the first English novelist.

### Prologue

Robinson Crusoe is about to set sail for England after being stranded on an island off South America for nearly thirty years. The Crusoe character supposes the audience members to be his rescuing Admiral and crew and invites them to listen to his story of how he has come to stay on the island for these many years. He asks Friday to assist him in telling his story to the audience even though he and Friday have not yet met at this point in the story.

### Scene 1 & 2



The year is 1659. Crusoe survives a terrible storm, all his fellow sailors and the Captain of the Santa Luisa perish in the storm. He is washed ashore on an apparently deserted island somewhere close to Trinidad. Crusoe has experienced a frightening loss but he is glad to be alive.



**Locate Trinidad on a world map and imagine which nearby island Crusoe was washed ashore.**

### Scene 3 & 4

Crusoe is able to rescue some provisions from the quickly sinking Santa Luisa and sets up home in a cave. He is feeling optimistic about his situation and starts recording daily accounts in a journal. He has been able to take from the ship a musket, pistol, some biscuits, various grains, a spyglass and a quill pen and ink. Crusoe goes in search of more food and to see who or what else inhabits the island.



**Write a daily journal for 1 week – make notes and include drawings and interesting observations, thoughts, conversations and new discoveries.**

### Scene 5

In Crusoe's absence, we discover that the island is inhabited with a talking parrot and a foraging goat. In this scene we are introduced to puppets.



**Discuss the use of puppetry in the play. What are some of the other ways we have to use our imagination when we are watching the play?**



### Scene 6

Crusoe is very excited to see the animals and quickly domesticates them. It is now Day 26 and our hero is resigned to being completely alone on the island save his new animal companions. He weathers the rainy season by being very industrious. He constructs various objects of use like a chair, umbrella, candles, a basket and some clay pots. His diet changes to reflect what is available to eat around him.



**Make a list of the animals we have domesticated in Canada and for what purpose. Discuss how someone's diet and lifestyle would differ if they were a carnivore, a vegetarian, or if they lived in different hemispheres.**

### Scene 7

Crusoe succumbs to the inclement weather and becomes quite ill. He experiences an hallucination in which his father appears and taunts him.



**Describe one of your worst experiences of being sick. How did you get better? Discuss why you think Crusoe's father appears to him in a dream.**

### Scene 8, 9,10 &11

Crusoe awakes from his fitful sleep. He emerges a new man, appreciative of what little he has gathered. Even the earth seems to be smiling upon him, as crops magically appear. Once again our hero is grateful for his survival and the natural resources about him. Buoyed by his good luck, and the watchful eye of his guardian angel, he makes bread and cheese, wine and even constructs some clothing from the wool of the goat. It is Day 5180, and we see Crusoe lonely and longing for conversation-even if it's with the parrot. The passing of his fortieth birthday makes Crusoe long for his old life in England.



**How many years has Crusoe spent on the island so far? Record in whatever format you like your goals for when you are 40 years old – i.e. job, where you will be living, what are your hobbies and leisure activities, etc. Keep your record in a safe place for future reference.**

### Scene 12 & 13

Crusoe's prayers are answered. A man appears in the midst of a volley of spears and arrows. The intruder seems fearful for his life and our hero comes to the rescue. After binding his wounds, Crusoe and his new island mate sleep, eat and teach each other their names. His new friend, Friday admires all of Crusoe's possessions including his musket. Friday has obviously had limited and frightening experience with a gun and he takes the time to study and understand how the tool works.



**Imagine what you would do if you wanted to make friends with someone who did not speak the same language as you. Are there useful and harmful ways guns are used as tools?**

### Scene 14 & 15

Friday and Crusoe learn to work together. They thoroughly enjoy themselves and each other, building a fence. When Sunday rolls around, Crusoe wants to rest as is his cultural tradition, but Friday is ready for work and is confused by the custom observed by his friend. They share a meal and Friday teaches Crusoe his own custom of thanking the earth for what you are about to eat.

➤ **Why do we have a “day of rest” in Canada? Do all Canadians rest on the same day? What are some other treasured Canadian customs?**

### Scene 16

In this scene, the climax of the play, the two friends reach an emotional level of conflict. Crusoe, busy with his own work, ignores Friday, without explaining why he needs to have some time alone. Friday dislikes being shunned and his feelings are hurt by the selfish actions of Crusoe.

➤ **Demonstrate verbally with a partner effective ways of letting your friends know you want to be left alone or that you want to do something different.**

### Scene 17

Here, we see a contrite Crusoe reconcile with Friday. They bond together over a death-defying feat that Friday insists they both participate in.

➤ **List some ways you seal a friendship. What are some of the things you do to ‘make-up’ with a friend you have had a disagreement with?**

### Scene 18 & 19

The closing scenes deal with the circumstances of how the rescue ship arrives at the island. It is also the portrayal of a fond farewell between two friends. Crusoe is eager to return to his homeland and Friday is thrilled to remain on the island with all that has been built up over the years. In the end, there is only one thing that they value above everything else – their friendship.

➤ **Discuss whether you think this is a happy or sad ending to the play.**



### SCENE 3 PROVISIONS

There's rice and oats and barley corn  
A musket and a knife

And more rope than I could hope  
To use in all my life!

Hammers, nails and powder kegs  
Flour, sugar too!

Rice! Nice. Dates! Great.  
Pepper? Ah-choo!

And what have we here? A magnificent box!  
If only they'd left me the key for the lock.

There's everything here I could ask for and more  
I'll construct a fine raft to transport it to shore.

After I stowed it into my cave  
I then watched as my ship slipped under the waves.



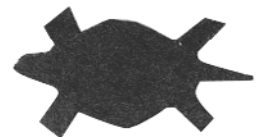
### SCENE 8 RAISING CROPS / COUNTING BLESSINGS

Upon this morning English barley corn is born where nothing grew before.  
Hairy goats are tethered only paces from my door.

I have a house, a home, my health  
water, wealth and I remain alive.

There's nuts and grapes and turtle eggs,  
Clothing, muskets, and powder kegs and knives.

True, I have been left alone,  
No company, all on my own,  
No help, no hope, lonely castaway.  
But why count up what I have not,  
I should give thanks for what I've got  
I prayed for help and help arrived today!



### VOCABULARY TO KNOW

Aft/Port	Batten	Foundered	Castaway
Chrysanthemum	Custom	Provisions	Fore deck
Devastating	Listing	Mock	Musket
Mutineer	Starboard	Tethered	Topsail
Twenty leagues	Antidisestablishmentarianism		



**LIST** the things you would do in order of importance, if you were stranded on a deserted island?

**RESEARCH** a typical family from 17<sup>th</sup> century England and America. Compare them. What did they wear? What kind of work did they do? What kind of food did they eat?

**DISCUSS** if there are pirates that still sail the seas and why or why not?

**DESCRIBE** the person you consider your best friend. What is the one thing your best friend does for you that you like or appreciate. What special thing do you do for your best friend?

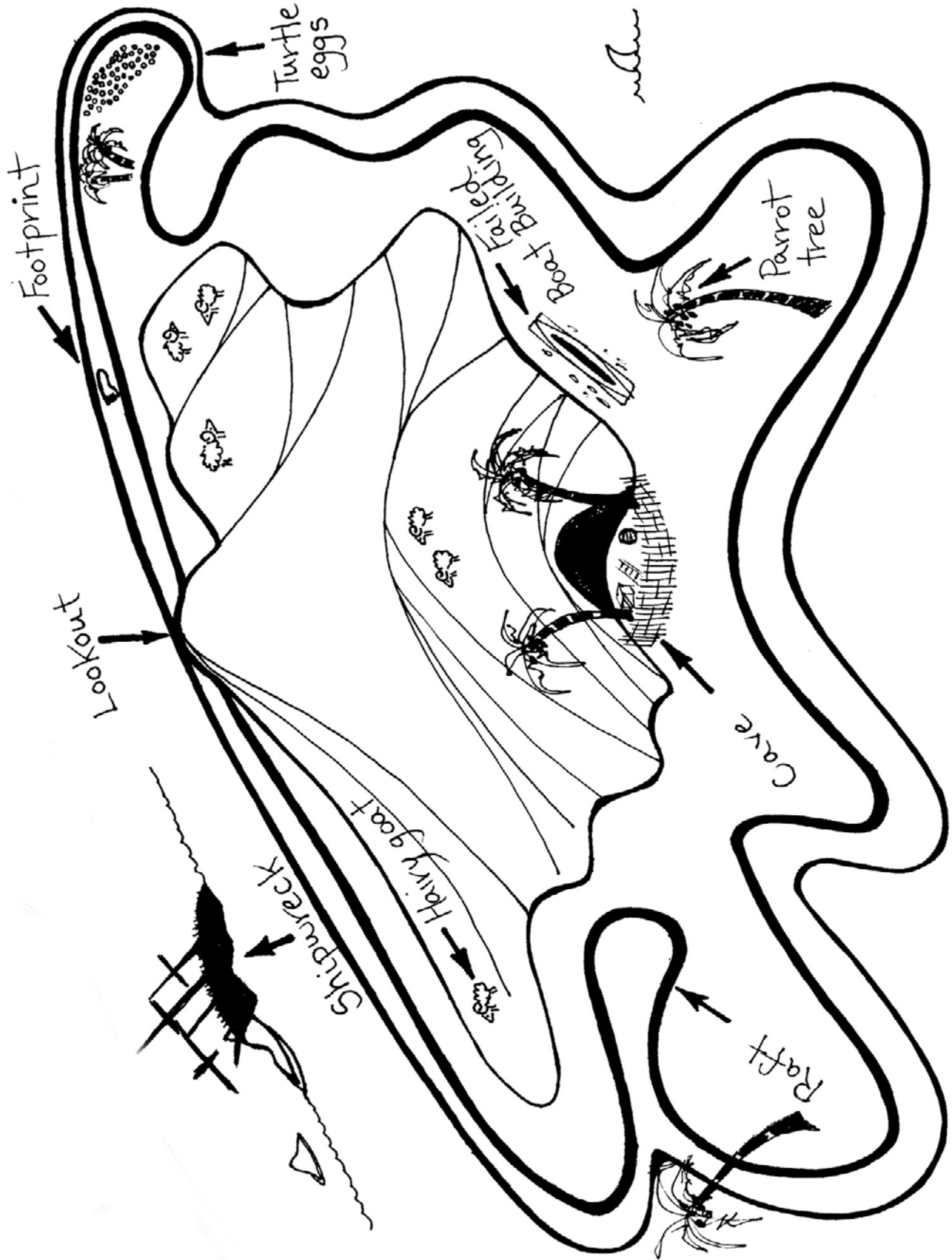
**IMAGINE** you were stranded on a desert island – what five things would you most like to have with you? How long do you think you could survive without any other human contact?

**WORK** with a partner to build a hut out of toothpicks/straws and white glue. Start with a flat piece of cardboard, use enough glue on the wide end of the toothpick and hold it in place long enough for it to dry standing up. Build your foundation. Continue gluing toothpicks layer by layer until you have built your hut for shelter. Did you discover anything about working cooperatively? Did one person make all the decisions or, did you share the responsibility?

**PRACTICE** some of the different cultural rituals people from all over the world use to greet each other. What are some important Canadian cultural traditions?

**SPROUT** several kinds of seeds and vegetables as a class project and keep track of how they grow. (i.e. bean sprout, potato, avocado, grass, carrot, and sunflower)

**MAKE** puppets of some of the different animals that live in warm weather countries, like South America and the Caribbean Islands. Tell a story about the food they eat and how they live.



**CALVIN CAIRNS - music composer** - Calvin is a well-known Canadian fiddler, composer and performer. He has toured Canada, U.S.A., the former USSR, Europe and Australia with various folk music groups. He has also composed, arranged and directed music for numerous radio, TV, CD ROM and theatre productions. Calvin currently lives in Victoria.

**COLIN HEATH - co-writer, co-set designer, co-music composer** - Colin shares a Jessie Richardson Award for Set Design of ROBINSON CRUSOE with co-creator Michael Wolski. He also wrote and directed the award winning Axis Theatre's FOR ART'S SAKE and is also a founding member of their international hit comedy THE NUMBER 14. He toured as an acrobat with Le Cirque du Soleil and has appeared on many other stages throughout Canada, including the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto, the Arts Club Theatre, the Vancouver Playhouse and Bard on the Beach. Some memorable productions include CRAZY FOR YOU in Toronto, SWEENEY TODD and THREEPENNY OPERA for the Arts Club Theatre, several summers at Bard on the Beach, the title role of PETER PAN, and in the successful national tour of THE OVERCOAT. Recently he starred in the sold out Caravan Farm Theatre production of THE BALLAD OF WEEDY PEETSTRAW. Colin's television credits include BLACK STALLION, POLICE ACADEMY, KUNG FU: THE LEGEND CONTINUES, STARGATE: SG-1, and a major role in the upcoming mini-series VOYAGE OF THE UNICORN.

**YURIJ KIS - performer** -Yurij is happy to be back for his third American tour with ROBINSON CRUSOE. Some other theatre credits include PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE, for the Belfry and Alberta Theatre Projects, THE GOOD PERSON OF SETZUAN for Touchstone, and ICE for Dance Arts Vancouver. Television credits include STARGATE SG-1, THE OUTER LIMITS, BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS, DAVINCI'S INQUEST, LEVEL 9, BEYOND BELIEF and THE IMMORTAL. Yurij is a graduate of Studio 58.

**YVAN MORISSETTE - stage manager** -Yvan is very happy to be back on his second tour with ROBINSON CRUSOE. He was last on the road in July and August touring Canada and the USA with the Vancouver Chamber Choir. He's also been the Stage Manager for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. But most of his time is spent designing Sets for Theatre. Over the last 2 years, he has designed over 15 productions. Every summer, he makes sure to spend some time high in the mountains, where he works as a guide in the Canadian Rockies. Yvan is a graduate of Studio 58.

**WAYNE SPECHT - director** - Mr. Specht is the founding Artistic Director of Axis Theatre Company and has, over the last 25 years, performed in, written and directed over forty of the company's productions. Under Mr Specht's leadership Axis Theatre Company has performed its unique style of physical theatre to over 1.6 million audience members in seven countries around the world. Developing stories and producing shows that spark the imagination and inspire creativity, Wayne has developed one of the most effective Theatre-in Education programs in Canada along with producing sophisticated shows geared to mature audiences. He is one of the co-creators and original cast member of THE NUMBER 14. Wayne is also Artistic Director of the Vancouver International Comedy Festival a 17-day annual summer event.

**DORRIE WILLIAMS - costume designer** - Dorrie, a Vancouver designer, costume and props builder has enjoyed working with the cast, crew and director of ROBINSON CRUSOE. An Emily Carr College graduate, she includes the Caravan Farm Theatre, Mortal Coil, Public Dreams Society, and most recently, Cirque Poule as her favorite companies to work with. She is pleased to add Axis Theatre to that list.

**MICHAEL WOLSKI - co-writer, co-set designer, co-puppet maker** - Michael shares a Jessie Richardson Award for Set Design of ROBINSON CRUSOE with co-creator Colin Heath. He has written, directed, designed and built sets and props for many of Axis' past shows. As an actor he starred in SPUD THE AMAZING and NOT JUST JUNK. He is a versatile street performer who regularly travels in Canada and the United States to appear at fairs, comedy festivals, conventions and sporting events. He is also a master puppeteer.

**RAUGI YU - performer** - Raugi is a graduate of The Dome Theatre program in Montreal and the University of British Columbia's BFA Acting Program in Vancouver. Raugi has been a professional actor now for the past four years. This is his first time working with Axis Theatre and his first time on tour. He is very excited and honoured to be part of this grand adventure. Raugi was last seen on stage in a Steve Tesich play ON THE OPEN ROAD, as the Monk, at Presentation House. He has also had various roles on television, shows such as DARK ANGEL, DA VINCI'S INQUEST, SENTINEL and MILLENIUM. You may also recognize his voice as that of the Cook on the new animation, SAGWA THE CHINESE SIAMESE CAT. Along with acting, Raugi teaches Shakespeare to children and youths during the summer. Raugi would like to wish everyone happiness and prosperity and hopes you all enjoy the show.

Axis Theatre Company is currently in its 26th season of producing original physical theatre plays for audiences of all ages. The Vancouver based company regularly tours provincially, nationally and internationally. Its hit comedy, **THE NUMBER 14**, recently returned from a European festival tour, playing in Italy, Finland and Denmark.

Axis produces theatre, which combines mime, physical comedy, dialogue, music, masks, movement, song and puppetry with up-to-date social issues. This year, the company is also touring **MOUSE**, written by Clem Martini, in BC schools and community theatres. **MOUSE** is an allegorical tale of young Jess, who questions why we do what we do, and wonders about the things not talked about in her family.

Wayne Specht, Artistic Director continues his commitment to produce the most thought provoking, imaginative stories for youth and family audiences. Past productions have garnered Axis Theatre Company several Jessie Richardson nominations and awards in the T.Y.A. category.

### AXIS THEATRE COMPANY

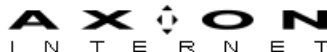


Artistic Director **WAYNE SPECHT**  
General Manager **MARGERET SPECHT**  
Associate General Manager **KENT MARTIN**  
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