

ENRICHMENT GUIDE

Prepared by OLIVIA GORDEN & DAVID A. VANCEAVE

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown



PM YOUNG
ARTISTS
THEATRE

FEB 15-24
STONER THEATER

DEAR PARENT,

Thank you for taking your student to see our production of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. We know that Des Moines is rich enough to have plenty of theatre options for families. We appreciate you choosing to spend time with us and we hope you continue supporting the arts in our community.

This guide contains related information to what you have experienced or will experience in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. Whether you're reading this guide before or after the performance, we hope your family enjoys taking the audience experience further with our theme explorations, curriculum connections, history, games and more.

We do want to acknowledge that our audiences come in all ages. It's a beautiful thing and we're thankful for each and every one. However, when writing an educational guide like this, it can be tricky. While none of the information included is inappropriate for younger students, we always encourage parents read through the material before passing it along to the younger ones. That way, you'll be prepared should your student have questions or you find an opportunity to engage meaningful conversations. If you have suggestions on what to include in future guides, please let us know! We'd love to hear from you. Our Enrichment Guides are a newer DMYAT initiative, and we know there's room to grow.

Thank you again for choosing to support Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre and the next generation of great theatre artists. We hope the production and this enrichment guide inspire you and your family to be the best versions of yourselves, to be good, to never give up hope, and to discover Happiness.

Sincerely,

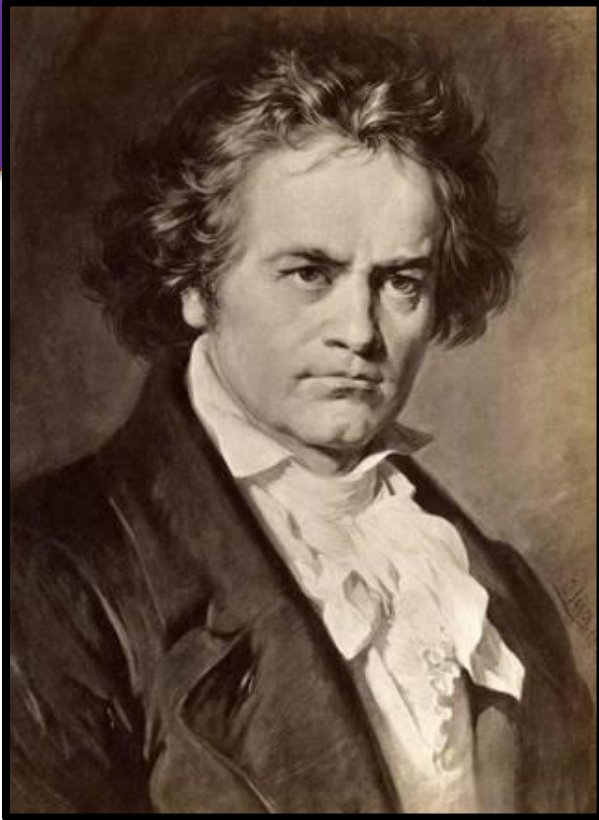
David A. VanCleave
Executive Artistic Director

Olivia Gorden
Dramaturg



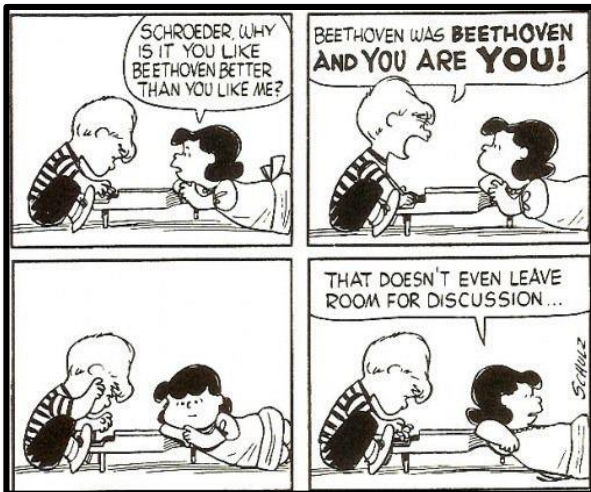
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

WRITTEN BY OLIVIA GORDEN



Ludwig Van Beethoven is a man who everyone knows. They know his music, that "Moonlight Sonata", but not everyone knows how complex his life truly was. Beethoven was born on December 17, 1770 in Bonn, Germany. He was a crucial figure for classical music during the Romantic era, conducting large symphonies, composing chamber and classical music, playing the piano, and even writing an opera named Fidelio. His first music teacher was his father, Johann. As he got older he learned from family friends, local composers, and his father's friends. All together learning the piano, violin, viola, organ, and the harpsichord. Beethoven's talent for music was obvious at a young age, outstanding for a young boy in the lower class. His training became so intense that he was often brought to tears, mostly due to his insomniac teacher, Pfeiffer, who held him to complete long late night sessions.

In November 1792, at the age of twenty-one, he moved to Vienna. There, he began studying composition with a man named **Joseph Haydn**, and gained recognition as a gifted pianist. In the early days, to pay for his living he gave piano lessons to neighbors, one of those neighbors was a young, upper class girl: Josephine Brunsvik. She is believed to be the subject of Beethoven's well known letter, "Immortal Beloved," a ten-page note that describes his undying love for a mystery woman. Unfortunately, Josephine did not seem to reciprocate these feelings, as shortly after their lessons started she married another. Yet Beethoven continued to teach her and **became close with her family. He never married.**



At only twenty-eight years old he started to suffer from hearing loss. The cause is unclear, but is believed to have been related by autoimmune disorders, and even for dunking his head in freezing water to stay awake. After his hearing started to decline he went through a rough emotional period, and became less involved in his work. Instead he focused on taking care of his brother, who was suffered from tuberculosis. The cost of taking care of him, and not making public appearances left Ludwig penniless. Around 1800 he started composing and playing again, but because he couldn't completely hear his performances weren't the same as before. People said he would play like a mad man, playing so loud it shook the chairs people sat in.

He continued working until 1827 when he became bedridden until his passing. His cause of death is unclear. People have argued it was lead poisoning, syphilis, or even infectious hepatitis. Ludwig Van Beethoven died on March 26, 1827 at the age of 56 at night during a thunderstorm. His close friend, Anselm Huttenbrenner, who was present at the time claims there was a large crack of thunder at the moment of his death. Over 200,000 people attended his funeral services, remembering this talented musician. Although he has been dead for over 1,500 years, he is still one of the most recognizable classical musicians of all time. No one will ever forget the name: Beethoven.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTORS ADAM YANKOWY & LIBBY WATERBURY

What is your “philosophy” when it comes to directing?

Libby: Adam and I are so opposite in how we approach tasks, and it makes us a very good team. I'm big picture, he's detail-oriented. For blocking, I prefer to plant the seed with general stage directions and see what happens, while Adam is very planful about what he wants to happen. But it switches when it comes to acting. He asks the performers what they think is happening in a scene and how they might find meaningful ways to relate that to their own life experiences, where I tell them what's happening and see if they can recreate that feeling, because I geek out on the layers of meaning behind relationships, movement and dialogue.

Adam: As a director, the first time I read the script, I strive to find the essence of the story. I use those themes and words throughout the process with the actors and the design team. For *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown*, “happiness” has been the word that most describes this story. In my opinion a good director is a good collaborator. As a collaborator with the team, empower the artists and designers to share their visions and creativity to bring the story to life. Theatre is about community. I can not tell this story without the help of this amazing team.

What made you want to be involved in *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*?

Libby: A few things. First, I'm relatively new to the area, and I was excited to work on building deeper relationships within the Des Moines theater community. Second, 10 years ago, Adam and I were in the same graduating class at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in New York City – in fact, we were in the same orientation group. I knew and respected him as an extremely talented artist, so I was excited to collaborate with him. Finally, I was very impressed with DMYAT's philosophies and policies focused on inclusion and growing educational theater experiences for young people in Iowa. It all sounded like a great fit.

Adam: When David asked me to direct and music direct, I was honored. I have known of DMYAT for years, having seen several of their productions, most recently *Bring It On*. The talent of the young artists in this city is extraordinary and I wanted to experience that first hand. Secondly, I am fortunate enough to get to work with Libby. We have known each other since we went to school together at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in NYC.

How does this iconic children's musical compare to other shows you've worked on?

Libby: The vignette style of the show is quite a bit different. Most shows have a story line that carries through, chronologically, from beginning to end. But YAGMCB is more world-building with some short scenes, some long scenes, and some *Laugh-In* style one-liners. So the challenge becomes, how do you keep the audience engaged? How do you show character growth? How do you find and showcase a through-line that carries a show for two hours and gives us that satisfying resolution at the end? It's all very subtle, and that's part of the charm of the show, and of *Peanuts* in general.

Adam: I have had the privilege to work with Des Moines young artists as the Music Director for Des Moines Performing Arts Summer Camps. This model only allowed me to interact with students for one week at a time. In this process, I am constantly amazed at the talent and love for theatre that these artists possess. Several of the students who I have worked with during the summer camps are in our production of *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown*. I have loved seeing their growth and skills expanding as they participate in various theatre projects.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTORS

ADAM YANKOWY & LIBBY WATERBURY

What is your favorite song or scene from this show?

Libby: I love *Book Report*, because we get to see how several of the key characters act when their personalities are pushed to the extreme. What starts as a quiet song devolves into this cacophony of crazy joy and angst and silliness, and it's all over, as Lucy says, "... a stupid book about a stupid rabbit who steals vegetables from other people's gardens." (Consequently, that's my favorite line in the show.)

Adam: It is very hard to choose just one favorite. If I had to pick my top three, I would say "My New Philosophy" because Maya Falcone and Gbomi Kayode, playing Sally Brown and Schroeder respectively have wonderful stage chemistry and are so funny together. Second, I love "Schroeder" because Vivian Klein who is playing Lucy Van Pelt has completely enveloped the character and is singing in a true Lucy style. Lastly, I love "Happiness." Libby Waterbury, my fellow director, has staged this song beautifully. The playfulness and whimsy is truly magical. It will leave our audiences in awe.

How will this production differ from other versions of YAGMCB? How is it uniquely DMYAT?

Libby: A lot of versions of this show are very crisp and clean — there's only six characters, usually adults playing kids, and they have very specific movement choices and acting beats, almost minimalist ... I love seeing that kind of performance done well. But this version of YAGMCB is more scrappy ... which is also a pretty fitting metaphor for DMYAT. There's a lot of heart, a lot more bodies bringing fun, funny things to the stage, and a lot of raw, rough-around-the-edges talent that Adam and I enjoy harnessing — but are often happy to step back from and let run wild. We hope the audience experiences the same joy emanating off the stage that we see every night at rehearsal.

Adam: Our production of *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown* is different than most because we have a cast of artists ranging in age from 9-15. This musical was written for adults who would play the iconic Peanuts characters. When you actually have students playing their age, the humor and humanity of the the characters is truly evident. Another exciting challenge has been the staging for the Stoner Theatre. Due to the audience being on three sides, this has been fun telling this heartfelt story in this performing space.



One of the most notable things about Charlie Brown and his pals were how relatable they were. Even though they were children, not to mention cartoons, the comics were not afraid to talk about real life topics like religion, mental health, and the sometimes harsh relationships between children. These characters talked about mature ideals, like what the point of life was, and it intrigued people. Charles Schulz, the author of all peanuts strips, took his real life situations and culturally significant topics from everyday life and made them plot points in his cartoons. This significance of art imitating life is what has moved these characters from comic strips to movies, to books, to a full blown musical.

Schulz used many real life inspirations for creating his characters. He named his protagonist after his colleague, Charlie Brown, from the Art Instruction Schools in Minneapolis, where he worked as an instructor following his return from World War II. Brown agreed to lend his name to the strip's hard-luck protagonist, not knowing it would soon become one of the most recognizable in American popular culture. Another example, the little redhead girl that Charlie Brown pines for, although is never seen in the musical, was a character added after Schulz's real life failed romance. While employed at the school, the cartoonist became romantically involved with a redheaded woman named Donna Johnson, who worked in the accounting department. He became so enamored with her, he eventually proposed. Unfortunately, she rejected him for another man, leaving Schulz crushed. This inspired the cartoonist to add the little redhead girl into the comics, Charlie Brown's unrequited love. Even Snoopy was based off a black and white dog Schulz had as a child, although his dog was named Spike. He originally planned on naming the dog Sniffy, but later on changed it to "Snoopy". A name his mother had suggested to name their families next dog. In 1968, following the assassination of Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., Schulz introduced into the strips his first African-American character: Franklin. Another character, although not based off a person but event, was Snoopy's pal, Woodstock. Obviously named after the 1969 landmark music festival.

Charles Schulz even included insecurities and feelings of loneliness to Charlie Brown to show him as the average middle man in life. Though, those feelings were based off of Schulz's feelings of being isolated and feeling a decline of mental health in his army days, and felt as though he was often made the butt of jokes. Exactly how Charlie Brown is portrayed to feel. Even Lucy's psychiatry booth is a relatable feature everyone seems to get a kick out of. Instead of it being a lemonade stand, Lucy has a psychiatry stand where she charges a nickel for useless advice she gives. A more adult initiated humor, and was brought around the time the importance of mental health became more apparent.

Not everything connects, but the way Charles Schulz made these characters so real and relatable by reflecting his life through his art is what makes Peanuts so iconic. The jokes and connections always stands for itself, which is why Charlie Brown was relevant in October of 1950, is relevant in 2019, and will be relevant for many years to come.

ART REFLECTING LIFE



written by
OLIVIA GORDEN

SECURITY BLANKETS

written by **OLIVIA GORDEN**

In childhood development the term transitional object is normally used. It is something, usually a physical object, which takes the place of the mother and child bond. It's usually a blanket, a doll, a teddy bear, or could even be something non-physical like a melody or a simple word. This object represents the components of "mothering". It helps the child fantasize a bond with the mother when she starts to separate for longer periods of time. This object is vital at the time of going to sleep and as a defence against anxiety. In multiple studies, it is shown that children who carry a security blanket tend to be better adjusted as they grow older. It gives them the opportunity to have a focus that will provide relief during a situation that is producing anxiety.

In some extreme cases children become so reliant and attached to their object they can not go anywhere without it. Like Linus from *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*. In the early years of the comic strips, Linus is seen carrying his blanket everywhere he goes, is not embarrassed by it, and can't seem to live without it. In one of the earlier comic strips, Lucy uses Linus and his blanket as a science fair project. As she takes away the blanket Linus starts to get dizzy, nauseous, and eventually passes out. It might seem unhealthy, but these objects are the first things they associate as something that is truly and completely theirs that they can always rely on, that is not their mother. Most children even see it as a "sanctuary" or "safe place", like in *My Blanket and Me* Lucy sings about Linus being a baby for always having his blanket, but Linus doesn't seem to be embarrassed about it.

As children grow older, of course they start to lean off their object. As the Peanut comics go on the blanket starts to disappear from Linus' life more and more unless it is being used as a plot point. Just like children, once they start to become secure in themselves and learn to deal with anxiety, and make friends, they have less needs for their objects. They might keep it around in a box or in a closet, because it will always remind them of security, but just like Linus, they become their own person.



ASK THE ACTORS: WHAT IS HAPPINESS?



JACK ANDERSEN
Ensemble

"Spending time with my friends and family (especially my dog!!) and also performing on the stage!"



DRAKE CARNEY
Charlie Brown

"Having the people around me experience happiness."



CORIA CHALOUPECKY
Ensemble

"Friends. Dog. Family. Music. Softball."



MADDIE DAVIS
Ensemble

"Entertaining people onstage!"



MAYA FALCONE
Sally Brown

"Eating and making cookies, playing games with my family, making crafts, watching TV with my family and my cat and my dog. They make me feel like I belong and that I am safe. AND!!! They make me laugh!"

ASK THE ACTORS: WHAT IS HAPPINESS?



KATELYN HENZI
Ensemble

"It means art, my family, and everything that I love in my life. I also want to make everyone else in Charlie Brown happy; that is important to me and makes me happy."



RYAN HENZI
Snoopy

"It means playing games and having fun with loved ones."



GBOMI KAYODE
Schroeder

"Everything that makes me smile- especially family and friends."



OLIVIA KELDERMAN
Ensemble

"Happiness is surrounding myself with friends and family that bring me laughter and love!!!"



VIVIAN KLEIN
Lucy Van Pelt

"For me happiness is being loved and respected for who you are, not what society tell you to be."

ASK THE ACTORS: WHAT IS HAPPINESS?



GRETA PAULSEN
Ensemble

"It means art, my family, and everything that I love in my life. I also want to make everyone else in Charlie Brown happy; that is important to me and makes me happy."



ADDISON TULLIS
Linus Van Pelt

"Happiness is being around people who I love and make me feel happy and confident."

**WHAT DOES HAPPINESS
MEAN TO YOU?**

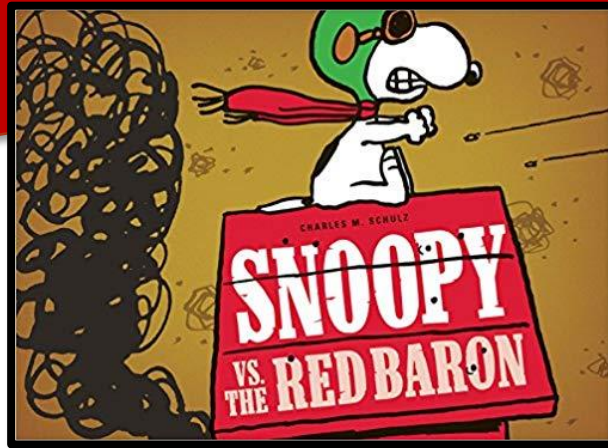
**YOUR
TURN!**



NAME: _____

THE REAL RED BARON

WRITTEN BY
OLIVIA GORDEN



Manfred Albrecht Freiherr Von Richthofen. A fighter pilot in World War I in the German Air Force. Known as the ace-of-aces, the best of the best, or more commonly: *The Red Baron*.

Born on May 2, 1892 in Wroclaw, Poland. Richthofen's father was a major in the German army and it was clear since he was a kid that he would also enter the army. When Manfred was eleven years old he entered the Wahlstatt military school in Berlin, Germany. There he trained to be an officer in the German army. When he graduated at 19, he joined the German cavalry in 1911. Within a year Manfred was promoted to lieutenant.

He originally was a cavalryman, a soldier who fights on horseback, until he transferred to the air force in 1915. He worked his way up through different fighter squads until he became the leader of the larger fighter wing unit Jagdgeschwader 1, also known as "The Flying Circus" or "Richthofen's Circus". Due to the bright colors of the planes, and because of how the way the unit always transferred from one area to another it seemed like a traveling circus, and usually set up tents on improvised airfields.

By 1918, Manfred was regarded as a national hero in Germany, and respected by all, especially his enemies. He was a "Freiherr", which translates to free lord. A title of nobility often translated to Baron, and because his aircraft was painted a bright red he gained the nickname, "The Red Baron". He is credited so how approximately eighty air combat victories, received twenty-nine awards and decorations during his career, and had six tributes dedicated to him. Five of them being in Germany, and the sixth being in America in the International Air and Space Hall of Fame.

April 21, 1918, at the age of twenty-six the young fighter pilot was killed. Of course, like a true legend, there is a lot of mystery clouded around his death. No one has ever identified the individual who killed him. He was a skilled fighter that never lost, his enemies respected him, and even after his death he is still one of the most well known pilots in the world, possibly of all time. So who could have killed him so easily? He was found in his cockpit after his plane crashed, with a bullet in his chest. When it comes to the one who did the deed, many people have claimed to have done it. Yet, none of them have ever been proven. Anyone would have proudly said they killed the fighter pilot - and many did.

100 years after his death, his presence is still strong in today's society. With a pizza named after him, making a guest appearance on *The Scooby Doo Movies*, a Christmas song with his name in it, and most importantly being Snoopy's arch nemesis in Peanuts. He may be gone, but his victories and legacy will forever live on.

Tell us a little bit about your journey in theatre. What lead you to *Charlie Brown* with DMYAT?

Well Back in my day you had to walk to the theatre barefoot.....

My first real memory of Theater was way back when I was probably 8 or 9. It was a vocal music show, and they did some scenes from Tom Sawyer. The teacher needed someone to turn the lights on and off. I volunteered, and for some reason they chose the 8 year old. It was at Windsor Elementary here in Des Moines, they had these strip lights that you could turn the breaker and make them red, amber, white, or blue. I discovered that I really enjoyed watching something, and realizing that it's night time, so I should turn on the blue light. It's day time, so I should use Amber and White. So, not so little awkward 8 year old me is behind the choir at the breaker box (as the break box was literally onstage) turning the lights on for different transitions in the scenes. My love of Theater Design was born.

David [VanCleave, DMYAT EAD] and I did shows at the Des Moines Playhouse way back when we were both in High School. We both went our separate ways for college, but both were drawn back to Des Moines. I am drawn to the commitment to young artist; art education is so important. We need to support theater in our schools, as well as opportunities of growth outside of the classroom. I hope that by working DMYAT that maybe I can help inspire another 8 year old and show them the magic of theater.

Tell us about your creative process for Scenic Design and Lighting Design...

The Scenic Design process can vary from project to project. I have some projects that have a 8 month development time, and other project I have 8 days to develop. For Charlie Brown and Dog Sees God we all met as group about 6 weeks ago. Usually I have a design and ground plan before rehearsal starts. Once the rehearsal process starts 4-5 weeks out from opening, we go into the build process. This is where either myself or another person actually creates the design. Then we usually have about a week of technical rehearsals where we step back and adjust if needed and then open! In a dream project you would meet with a Director about 8 months out, so you can go through a couple of versions of the design. Part of designing is being able to throw away and start over if something isn't working. What I love about theater is you really live in 2 worlds. Dream World and Reality, it's my job to meld those together. So sometimes I do that entire process in 2 weeks.

The Lighting Design process can be a little quicker. Usually you have to wait until some rough scenic ideas are in before you can add your layer of design. A lot of the design work is done the last 3 weeks before opening.

What is the most challenging part about being a designer for two separate categories? How do you balance it out?

It is hard, the nature of this business is collaboration. But the reality is sometimes that I have to do both. Usually I go by the ¼ rule. ¾ of my time is focused on Scenic, and then I have to step back and think from a Lighting Designing perspective. As we get closer to opening it starts to even out and I start splitting my time between both.

I have designed an all white or gray set, and I stop and think, "Wow this would be really hard to Light. Let's choose a different direction."

What is the most rewarding part about these positions/this job?

Creating an environment that enhances the story. I strive to teach my students that theater is never about one person, one actor, one prop, or one designing department. It's about of group of things coming together to tell ONE story.

The most rewarding thing, would be stepping back and watching a story come to life of the stage, and having it all work as one. I designed a production of Fun Home this fall at Iowa Stage. There is a beautiful moment when Helem, played by the amazing Erin Horst, has this climax of the song where she has this heartbreaking moment in "Welcome to Our Home on Maple AVenue". The Actor turns around and looks at the house, and we see her shadow thrown up on the wall and it's creating this intense stage picture. What an audience doesn't always realize many things have to happen for that one moment. The director and I had to talk so she could block the actors actions, I had to work with my master electrician to get the angle and type of light just right, I had to create a scenic design where that was possible, someone programed the lights to change, a Stage Manager had to call the light change on the right beat, and the Orchestra had to hear the actor. Hopefully the audience will have a deeper understanding of how Helen Feels in the moment. The Magic of Theater. I love to think through those moments.

How does this set differ from past and other productions of YAGMCB?

I love how imitate the Stoner Theater is. You really get up and close with these characters. The space always dictates the design. I think this one has lots of fun and bright colors, I did a lot of research and really found that I love the cartoon colors from the 70's.