

# Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

2400 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55404  
612-872-5108  
FAX 612-874-8119

## *Apollo: to the Moon*

By  
**Mary Hall Surface**

*Apollo: to the Moon* was originally produced by Smithsonian's Discovery Theatre in 1989.

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Apollo: to the Moon is a solo performance piece. The actor portrays Scott Gibson, as well as James Webb, Lyndon Johnson, Werner Van Braun, Benny and Gus Grissom. All other characters are created through voice-overs (And are noted in the script as V.O.)  
\*\*p.23 - 25: The voice of Mission Control and the Questioner should be done by the actor playing Scott.

In the original production, the set included rear screen projections of 140 historic photographs of the period and a sound track of music from the 1950s and 60s. The set consisted of one rolling stool and one multi-use unit (served as lab table, treadmill, seat, etc.) All props were mimed except for a retractable pointer for Werner Van Braun.

Recorded voice of mission control, counting down to the lift-off of Apollo 11. A slide of the rocket on the launch pad. Scott enters, looking downstage, as if watching the broadcast.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.) T-minus one minute, thirty-five seconds and counting on the mission, the flight to land a man on the moon. All systems are...  
(FADES)

SCOTT July 16, 1969. The world holds its breath. A tiny piece of earth is about to shake as a giant of a rocket struggles to break free.

Countdown continues. Slides show the pre-launching rocket.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.) We're approaching the 60 second mark. T- minus 60 seconds and counting. We're past t-minus 60. 55 seconds and counting.

SCOTT Free from the bonds of earth. Free to explore the stars.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.) Second stage tanks now pressurized, 35 seconds and counting. We are still go. 30 seconds and counting.

SCOTT The Moon-- tempting us from the beginning of time - like a jewel just beyond our reach. Now we can grasp it. We are going to the moon.

Countdown heard simultaneously with Scott's next line.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.) Guidance is internal. 12, 11, 10, 9, ignition sequence start, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, O, all engines running.

SCOTT My dream ...the moon ...the future ...all my life ...I wanted ...the moon!

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.) Lift off, we have lift off.

Explosion of ignition segues into Scott, age 12, "landing" complete with his own sound effects, like the space ship in "the day the earth stood still."

SCOTT No really, Sarah, there's this spaceship and it lands right beside the Washington Monument. (landing noise and move.) And everybody is

running around and screaming, and the army brings out hundreds of tanks and guns, but nothing happens. So they wait. (*scott makes music noise*) And wait. (*another dramatic music noise.*)

SARAH (V.O.)      What're you doin' Scott?

SCOTT                I'm telling you what happens in the movie ! OK. Finally, the door of the spaceship slides back. (*he makes the sound effect.*) And out walks this guy in a silver space suit. He looks pretty human, so nobody gets too scared. But then this big robot guy comes walking out.

*Scott does the music walk of the robot.*

SCOTT                He's made all out of this special steel and he's got no face. Then the space guy says, "I come in peace." Then this army guy shoots him.

*Scott makes a gun sound then screams.*

SARAH (V.O.)      Why?

SCOTT                That's what army guys do. Anyway, this makes the robot really mad, so he lifts up the visor on his face (*sound and action*) and vaporizes the weapons of the army guys. (*vaporizing sounds.*) The space guy escapes. And he hides out where this kid Bobby lives with his Mother. And Bobby and the space guy become friends. Then the space guy says he wants to get all the scientists of the world together, so he can tell them something really important. He says it will save the earth! Save the earth from something terrible. (*scott makes his scary music noise again.*) Be-da! Bu-da! Be-da!

SARAH (V.O.)      Scott!

MOTHER (V.O.)    Scott, are you scaring your little sister again?

SCOTT                No, Mom. I'm just telling her about the movie, "The Day the Earth Stood Still."

MOTHER (V.O.)    Did you see that again today?

SCOTT                I've only seen it four times. It's great! It's about this space ship and it

lands right beside the Washington Monument ...

MOTHER (V.O.) You've TOLD me about the story, Scott. Now, it's time for you and your sister to go to bed.

SCOTT &  
SARAH (V.O.) MOM!!!

SCOTT I can't go to bed now! It's a three- quarter moon! Can I at least stay up 10 more minutes to look through my telescope?

MOTHER (V.O.) Three minutes.

SCOTT Five?

MOTHER (V.O.) Four minutes. Then lights out.

SCOTT Good-night, Mom. G'night, Sarah. (*whispering*) I'll tell you the rest of the movie tomorrow.

Scott crosses into his room. Music. He looks through his telescope. He is working with a notebook. Slides of the moon appear.

SCOTT (*reading*) "Oceanus Procellarum. The Ocean of Storms. A large part of the western half of the Moon's visible surface." (*looking through the telescope*) Why did they name it that? There can't really be an ocean on the moon. There's no water. No air. Wonder what it's really like up there in the Ocean of Storms or in the ... (*checking his book for another name*) ... Sea of Tranquility? Wonder if they could see me from earth if I was standing on the moon?

Scott blasts off and stands on his bed, waving slowly as if on the moon.

SCOTT Hi, Mom! (*beat.*) Probably not. (*goes back to his telescope*) But everybody all over their world would look out their windows and say, "There's somebody up there tonight-- somebody on the moon." (*to the moon.*) You've waited for billions of years for somebody to come visit you. And it's gonna be me.

Music changes to a popular tune of 1958. Scott does a big physical shift. The music is a kind of

signal to him to get on with the story-- he's already in college. He changes the scene as he speaks and puts on a letter sweater.

SCOTT                    1958.I won a full scholarship to study astronomy. I'm in college now! All that star-gazing as a kid paid off! (*remembering what night it is*) Star gazing!!

Scott crosses to a radio and struggles with a radio antenna to bring in a clear signal. Sound of radio static, a faint signal.

SCOTT                    Come on, radio . Come on. The most incredible night of my life and I can't get a decent signal on the radio. Maybe if I adjust the antenna. (*the signal comes in clearer.*) That's it. (*the signal becomes audible.*)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.) The President of the United States is about to send a message around the world via the first communications satellite. Ladies and Gentlemen, President Eisenhower.

RADIO MESSAGE FROM EISENHOWER (V.O.) "Through the marvels of science, my voice is coming to you from a satellite circling in outer space. Through this unique means, I convey to all people America's wish for peace on earth and good will toward men."

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.) This is a miracle, ladies and gentlemen. Merry Christmas, America.

segues into Christmas music.

SCOTT                    A satellite. Orbiting the earth. This is fantastic! (*calling up to the satellite.*) Hey! You're doin' a great job! (*remembering*) Sarah. I gotta call Sarah! (*picks up the phone*) Operator? Give me Palo Alto, California. 519-2145, please. (*waits*) Sarah? Yeah, hello, Merry Christmas! (*pause*) I miss you, too . Did you just hear on the... (*she interrupts*) I'm sorry I couldn't get home. I've got all these projects going in the lab. Were you listening just now...(*she interrupts.*) Yeah, that's your brother, Super-Scientist! Sarah. Would you listen!! (*he turns off the radio*) There's a brand new star in the sky tonight. A satellite. Isn't it incredible? We are living in the Space Age, Sarah. It's a whole new world! (*static*) What? Speak up. We've got a bad

connection. *(she speaks)* Yes, the Russians sent up a satellite first, but we'll beat 'em next time. *(she speaks.)* What are they for? Satellites can revolutionize the telephone for one. *(static)* What? The telephone. It can improve te-le-phon-e com-mu-ni-ca-tion. Look, I'll call you back. I'LL CALL YOU BACK! MERRY CHRISTMAS. *(he hangs up.)* Ga. *(talking to the satellite.)* Hey, could you hurry up on the telephone service, please?

Scott sees the moon out the window. Moon music.

SCOTT                    I can't seem to stop staring at the moon. You see, the moon always keeps her same face towards the earth. It seems like she is always looking at me.

California beach music.

SCOTT                    The space age isn't going to get ahead of me! A college graduate-- top of my class. Next stop: Graduate school in California . *(SCOTT LEAPS ONTO HIS "SURFBOARD" STOOL THEN LEAPS OFF AND SHIFTS THE SET.)* It's April 1961. A big press conference is happening at my school. I really want to meet this guy-- Mr. James Webb. He has all of the same dreams for space that I do.

Scott turns upstage to become Webb.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I'd like to introduce the director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration-- Mr. James Webb.

Webb crosses to podium. Sound of reporters talking. Asking questions all at the same time. Webb struggles to deliver a speech, then to recognize one reporter at a time.

WEBB                    Thank you. First I have a quick statement that I'd like to make... Yes, but let me say a few words ... Well alright, we'll start with questions. *(pointing to a reporter)* Yes.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.) Mr. Webb! Space travel belongs in science fiction books. Does man really have a place in space?

WEBB I know this all sounds like a Flash Gordon comic book. But space is truly the new frontier. The United States has only begun to open up this whole new world.

REPORTER 2 (V.O.) But the Russians have already sent a man into space! We've just sent a couple of satellites and a chimpanzee .

REPORTER 3 (V.O.) If the Russians can build rockets that powerful, they can also build new bombs and missiles.

WEBB Missiles that can reach the United States, you mean?

REPORTER 4 (V.O.) Exactly.

WEBB NASA is fully aware that we cannot be outclassed by new Russian technology. And yet, I dream that space will bring the nations of the world together in the excitement of discovery.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.) But aren't we already behind in the "race for space?"

WEBB Let's just say the Russians got a running start! Yes, the Russians have sent up cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. But we'll be right behind them in just a few weeks with Astronaut Allan Shepherd-- the first American in space.

REPORTER 2 (V.O.) What's Mr. Shepherd really like? What kind of person does it take to sit on top of a rocket like that and be blasted into outer space?

WEBB Well, it takes an extraordinary person. The seven men we have chosen - the Super Seven - are all military test pilots. It takes someone with self-confidence without egotism, with fast reflexes but who will not panic in a crisis ...

Webb turns upstage to transform back into scott.

WEBB (V.O.) Fear without cowardice, bravery without foolhardiness, intelligence without genius, physical fitness without being muscle-bound ...

SCOTT I'm self-confident, I've got fast reflexes. I've got fear but I'd never panic. OK. I'm NOT a test pilot, but I KNOW I could make it.

*(fantasy music begins.)* Could I make it? What would it be like?

VOICE *(distorted, fantasy-like)* Astronaut training.

SCOTT Astronaut training. *(he takes the flight suit off its hook.)* Me?

VOICE Go ahead. Dream ...

SCOTT Dream, OK.

*He quickly puts on the flight suit as the voice repeats "dream". He crosses down.*