

# Plays for Young Audiences

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

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## *Art Dog*

By  
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Based on the Book by  
**Thacher Hurd**

Music by  
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*Art Dog* was first presented by Seattle Children's Theatre for the 2013-14 season.

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Four actors play:

ARTHUR, a museum guard  
THE PAINTINGS  
MUSEUM DIRECTOR  
ART DOG, an artist  
TWO THIEVES  
A YOUNG COP  
THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Dogopolis

Songs/Musical Numbers:

"The Whistle Song"  
"The Thieves Enter"  
"Mona Woofa"  
"Mona Lulu"  
"Moon Magic"  
"Crazy Moon"  
"A Slash Of Lightning"  
"Chase"  
"We Got Our Dog"  
"Brushmobile"  
"Fight"  
"Best In Show"  
"City Rhapsody"

(In the darkness we hear music: "**The Whistle Song.**" Instrumental, featuring a man whistling a catchy tune.

Fade up on: the Dogopolis Museum. Early morning. The museum is in shadow. We can see the dark oblongs of the paintings.

We meet ARTHUR – our whistler. Slight, with a strong tendency to smile. He walks with a goofy lilt. ARTHUR, like all the characters in this play, is a dog.

Stage business here is TBD, but might include:

ARTHUR carries a flashlight, to light his way through the darkened museum. He finds his coat and puts it on, getting the flashlight mixed up with the coat. The light hits him in the face, making him understand that the light somehow got turned around.

ARTHUR heads toward the paintings. His coat pops open. He turns away from the paintings, endeavors to close his coat again.

ARTHUR pulls the coat closed in back. He notices his tail. Chases his tail. Shines the light on his butt. Calms himself down.

ARTHUR realizes he lacks a hat. He quickly exits and returns, with a jaunty strut, with a hat.

He goes to the various paintings, smiling, fixing things that are out-of-order.

Finally, he moves to the Mona Woofa. Sighs. His favorite.

Then he notices a spot of dust on the painting.  
He quickly exits.

Loud noises off. Then ARTHUR re-enters with a feather duster. He stops stage center and takes a moment to dust himself: arms, head, armpits – which causes his leg to spasm – etc.

He returns to Mona, marching. He cleans the dust with a single swipe of the duster.

He looks at Mona again, lost in a Woofa dream.

The MUSEUM DIRECTOR enters. She's ditzzy and forgetful – and very emotional)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR (sees ARTHUR):

Oh!

ARTHUR (reacts, startled)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

You.

ARTHUR (smiles)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

Don't tell me. Um. Oh, dear.

ARTHUR (smiles, waits)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

Aston. No, no. Axelrod. Alfie! Aloysius! That's not it... Oh, dear...

ARTHUR (under his breath):

Arthur.

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

Arthur!

ARTHUR (smiles)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

I knew it all the time.

(Taking the stage, looking at the paintings)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR, con't:

Don't you love the museum in the morning? At first, there is surprise, as if I am seeing the paintings for the first time. But then it comes back, in a rush of wild delight. My friends! My wonderful old friends! Look at them, Adelbert. Blue Dog. American Dog Gothic. Les Chiens d'Avignon. The Vincent van Dog Self-Portrait, which I frankly don't care for.

(As she turns away the van Dog painting sags. It ends up off-kilter. When the MUSEUM DIRECTOR sees it, she says, peremptorily:)

Fix that.

(Approaches the Mona Woofa)

But then. Ah, yes. The masterpiece of masterpieces. She of the knowing, and yet, somehow, unknowable smile. The fresh, and yet eternal, the indescribable, marvelousness personified. The Mona Woofa.

(Choked up)

Excuse me, Albert, while I pull myself together.

(Takes out a large hankie and honks into it several times. ARTHUR waits patiently. Finally he clears his throat)

What? What? Oh.

(Takes out a large pocket watch)

Oh, dear. 9:01. Well. Yes. You may open the museum.

(ARTHUR exits. From offstage, we hear the SNAP of a lock. The DIRECTOR draws herself up)

Good morning, Dogopolis!

(A transitional scene. Much of the action is TBD, but might include Music)

Several cut-outs, of MUSEUM PATRONS are brought in. Perhaps these are moved about by stagehands.

The MUSEUM DIRECTOR nods to the PATRONS, smiling, then slowly exits.

ARTHUR chats with the PATRONS, shows them highlights of the paintings, always emphasizing his favorite, the Mona Woofa.

Time passes.

Finally, the workday ends. ARTHUR takes off his coat and hat, takes a final look at the paintings, then exits. He hits the lights – Boom! Boom! Boom! The museum is plunged into darkness.

The van Dog portrait lets go a big yawn. This causes a series of events that leaves the other paintings in disarray.

Then, in the darkness, a door slowly opens: CREEEEEEEEEEEEAK.

The paintings grow still.

A THIEF enters.

Instrumental music: "**The Thieves Enter.**"

We can tell he's a thief because he wears a thief mask. Also, he moves with a thief-like rhythm, sneaking from wall to wall – casing the joint. When he's sure he is alone:)

THIEF:  
Psst.

(Louder)

Psst!

THIEF 2 (off):  
What?

THIEF 1:  
I said, Psst!

(THIEF 2 enters, pulling a large and elaborate  
burglar's case on squeaky wheels)

THIEF 2:  
There's no one here.

THIEF 1 (raises his hand for quiet):  
Sh!

(Taut moment.

Then THIEF 1 motions for THIEF 2 to come  
closer. He does. They open the case. This is an  
elaborate process: it unzips, unsnaps, un-Velcros.  
Each of these processes is noisy, requiring the  
THIEVES to ascertain that no one heard it.  
Finally, they pull back the cover to reveal a  
keypad. THIEF 2 tries a combination. Buzz. He  
tries again. Buzz. He consults a piece of paper  
in his pocket, tries again. Beep. Ah. It's open.  
THIEF 2 takes a large and nasty-looking crowbar  
and an electric drill.

THIEF 1 snaps on his light and plays the beam  
around the paintings. His flashlight finds the  
Mona Woofa)

THIEF 1:  
There she is. The Mona Woofa. Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

(Song, a doo-wop tune: "**Mona Woofa**")

She's going to make us rich!

THIEF 2:  
MONA WOOFA  
HERE YOU ARE  
OH, MONA WOOFA  
SHINING STAR  
YOUR SMILE IS A MYSTERY  
YOU'RE A PURE BRED WORK OF ART

THIEF 1:

MONA WOOFA  
PRICELESS ONE  
YOU WILL FETCH A  
HANDSOME SUM  
BE MY PRECIOUS TREASURE  
COME INTO MY ARMS

(Starts working on Mona Woofa's frames with a screwdriver. THIEF 2 hangs back, not sure this is a good idea)

THIEVES (continue the song):

BOOM-BA-LADA, BOOM-BA-LADA, etc.

(THIEF 1 yanks the painting away from the wall. They turn the painting one way, then the other. MONA's face betrays her growing panic. The song climaxes:)

MONA WOOFA:

NO, NO, NO, NO!!!

THIEF 2:

MONA WOOFA  
I'M BEWITCHED

THIEF 1:

MONA WOOFA  
MAKE ME RICH  
NOW THAT YOU'RE MINE  
I'LL NEVER LET YOU GO

THIEVES:

MONA WOOFA

(THIEF 2 is staring at the other paintings as the Music continues)

THIEF 1:

Here. Hold this.

(Gives him the flashlight, takes out paints, smocks and a tarp out of the case.)

Music: "**Mona Lulu**", a dissonant version of the doo-wop music. Instrumental.

The Thieves paint, with crazed abandon. The Mona Lulu – hideously ugly, eyes crossed, mouth a toothy red slash – takes shape. Finished, THIEF 1 steps back, proud of his work)

THIEF 1, con't:

There. They'll never notice the difference.

THIEF 2 (skeptically, looking at the dreadful painting):

Right.

THIEF 1:

Let's make our escape.

("Mona Woofa" is reprised as the THIEVES pick up the painting and exit – or at least try to; closing the burglar case is time-consuming. As they exit:)

THIEF 2:

I'll get the lights.

(Hits a BURGLAR KLAXON by mistake. It begins ringing. Loud)

Oh!

(Exuent the Thieves.

Brief beat, then the MUSEUM DIRECTOR, hair in disarray, rushes in)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

Be still my heart!

(Taking deep breaths)

I am calm. As cool as a cucumber. Ah. Yes. I am... in charge.

(The POLICE CHIEF and a YOUNG COP rush in)

CHIEF:

Hold it right there!



CHIEF and YOUNG COP:  
What?

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:  
Look what they left instead of a Leonardo Dog Vinci!

CHIEF (approaches the Lulu):  
Is this Art? Looks like a Mona Lulu to me.

(The DIRECTOR slowly approaches the vile painting)

YOUNG COP:  
Don't touch it, ma'am, it could be evidence.

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:  
Of course it's evidence!

CHIEF:  
I kinda like it.

YOUNG COP:  
Yeah. It has a certain, you know, presence.

MUSEUM DIRECTOR :  
Who could have done this dreadful thing? Who is responsible for this horrible, horrible theft?

CHIEF:  
We'll find the culprit.

(Transition: the museum walls disappear.

ARTHUR enters, making his way slowly through the city. Music here is **to be composed**, possibly based on "**The Whistle Song.**"

Stage business here is also TBD, but might include:

The evil cat. ARTHUR picks up a stick to ward it off. When the cat disappears, ARTHUR becomes aware of the excellence of the stick; a dog, ARTHUR has a large collection. He saves it.

ARTHUR stops to get a newspaper out of a box. The box closes on his tail and ARTHUR frantically has to find another coin.

Slowly, the walls of ARTHUR's cozy flat come together. ARTHUR is home: ahhhhhhhhh, yes. This is an environment he knows and loves.

He removes his jacket, his hat, and other accoutrements, and carefully hangs them up.

ARTHUR flips through a small stack of LPs. He finds one, carefully takes out the record, holds it up. It catches the light. He lovingly places it on the turntable, takes out a dust remover, slowly passing it over the LP. Etc: this is a lengthy process. He starts the player. Music: a scratchy rendition of [Mozart]. ARTHUR listens, swaying.

ARTHUR gets his modest dinner: a cup of tea and a milk bone. He takes this to the chair, sets it down. Fluff his pillow.

Then he sits – but not before he turns in a circle, dog-like, several times. In his chair now, he sighs contentedly, and listens to the music: ahhhhhhhhh.

ARTHUR smiles.

Music, edgy and wild: "**Moon Magic.**"

The MOON begins to rise. Hot and wild, a burning source of light and power. The new music is layered over the safe classical music)

VOICE:

ARTHUR, THE NIGHT WAITS  
SHADOWY PLACES  
WAITING FOR COLOR  
FILL IN THE SPACES  
TIME TO TURN THE WHOLE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN  
GO ON OUT AND BEAUTIFY THIS TOWN

(Now there is new Music: "**Crazy Moon.**"

And now the transformation: ARTHUR finds a hat behind the sofa, a mask, a painter's smock, a box of paints. The Music intensifies. ARTHUR has become

ART DOG!

The apartment walls move away and we're in moonwild Dogopolis.

Music: "**Art Dog Creeping.**"

ART DOG tiptoes quietly. He encounters a blank wall. Kneels, opens his paintbox, takes out his palette. Squeezes paint onto it, chooses a brush. Hesitates.

Then he paints. Long zooming brush-strokes and with each sweep of the brush there is a corresponding surge of music – a soaring electric guitar riff.

Song: "**A Slash Of Lightning.**" Note: most of the following lyrics come from the Hurd text)

ART DOG:

A SLASH OF LIGHTNING!  
A SPLASH OF SUNSHINE!  
GLOWING LIGHTS IN THE NIGHT!  
MONSTERS TEN FEET TALL  
AND FISH WITH TAILS!  
THE SIZE OF HOUSES!

FROGS READY TO HOP HOP HOP!  
OVER SKYSCRAPERS!  
CRAZY BIRDS!  
AND STARS!  
AND LIONS!

WHOA!  
SHA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA

(By now, ART DOG is spent, breathless. He dips his tail in the paint on the palette and with one final musicalized turn of his butt, puts his mark on the painting:

Art Dog.

Suddenly, the CHIEF and the YOUNG COP rush in. ART DOG turns, stares at them, brush in paw, paint dripping. Taut moment)

YOUNG COP:

Okay, buddy. Don't move. We're gonna run you in.

(The CHIEF and the YOUNG COP approach ART DOG, slowly, slowly, slowly)

CHIEF:

Watch him!

(Music: "**The Chase.**" Stage business is TBD, but might include:

Passers-by get unwittingly included in the chase, each with hidden face: a delivery person carrying a stack of pizza boxes; someone carrying a tall wedding cake, a large bunch of balloons, etc.

The YOUNG COP stops and stares, entranced, at one of ART DOG's paintings.

The following dialogue can be used if it's helpful:)

CHIEF:

Get him!!! Down there!

YOUNG COP:

He won't get away this time!

(ART DOG sees a nasty-looking trash can. Hesitates. Then he hops inside it.)

He's gotta be around here some place, right? Right? There's no place else he coulda gone! Where'd he go?! Hey! HEY!

CAT:

Meow!

(ART DOG jumps up from his trash can hiding place, a CAT biting his butt. He pulls the cat off,

jumps out of the can, tries to exit. The YOUNG COP stops him. He tries another way out. The CHIEF stops him. He backs up now, back against a wall as the YOUNG COP and the CHIEF approach. Caught)

CHIEF:

Book him.

YOUNG COP:

Let's go, buddy.

(Transition into the Police Station.

Song: "**We Got Our Dog,**" triumphant, celebratory.)