JAMBOY!

ZiguZajg
Arts Festival for Children & Young People

the SHRINKINGvioLETS
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SYNOPSIS

JAMBOY comes from a huge, slightly mad – but generous and kind – family. He lives with his siblings, grandparents and many lost souls welcomed by his family – who affectionately nicknamed him ‘Jamboy’in his young childhood.

Jamboy is a quiet boy who loves to draw. He sees things that others dont. He sees beneath peoples’ exteriors to the real person underneath. So, he draws all the time, and he draws what he sees. You’ll find him sketching away in a corner of his school, where he is neither popular nor unpopular. He’s just Jamboy.

One day, a new Head Teacher is appointed, who is determined to raise the dilapidated school to a level of EXCELLENCE – the new buzzword in the school corridors! She introduces the very unorthodox Wall of Shame to spur students (and teachers) into performing better – or otherwise be featured on the Wall with a list of their failings. The Wall is ready to be unveiled the next day. Panic spreads, and everyone goes home filled with dread, convinced they’ll be the first on the Wall.

What happens next is unexpected and will change their lives forever. Jamboy shows us that everything is a matter of perspective. He sees people as potential superheroes and never takes things at face value, because it’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.

ABOUT ZIGUZAJG

The Festival’s vision is to position the creative arts for children and young people at the core of Malta’s creative ecology. It does this by:

- Presenting an annual programme of high-artistic excellence that celebrates creativity and diversity in the arts;
- Nurturing audience development and active participation through our practices;
- Providing professional development opportunities for artists seeking to work in the sector;
- Developing a national repertoire of creative work for children and young people;
- Championing social inclusion and accessibility in the creative industry;
- Establishing international networks and collaborations with strategic partners.

https://www.ziguzaajg.org/schools/

THE SHRINKING VIOLETS

The Shrinking Violets is a theatre collective made up of five female theatre practitioners: Maria Buckle, Jo Caruana, Chiara Hyzler, Cathy Lawlor and Denise Mulholland. Each Violet brings different skills in the performing arts into the mix, but all five Violets are performers (singers/actors) with professional experience in directing and creative production. Collaborating with other artists from Malta and beyond, the collective focuses on thought-provoking, high-quality theatre performances that are new to Maltese audiences. On the back of the Violets’ success with Ernest and the Pale Moon by Oliver Lansley (Oct 2017) and Us/Them by Carly Wijs (Oct 2018), The Shrinking Violets are very excited to present Jamboy.
A NOTE FROM CHIARA HYZLER, JAMBOY DIRECTOR

Jamboy is about looking beyond the exterior to who a person truly is inside. It’s about perspective – after all, the way you look at something may be different to the way your friend looks at the same thing. Sometimes we can be very quick to label others and ourselves, and it can be very difficult for everyone – especially children – to lose those labels. This is why we’ve created Jamboy. Putting people in boxes is easy. Taking them out of those boxes and better yet putting those boxes in the recycling bin is much harder, needs more effort and takes a bit longer.

Everyone has ‘superhero’ qualities that are often kept hidden and only revealed to the closest few. I hope Jamboy encourages people to look for those superhero qualities in others and in themselves. ‘Excellence’ is a word which is thrown about too much these days- and it has the potential to be a harmful word, because there is no single definition. What excellence means to you isn’t necessarily what it means to me- as Jamboy says, it’s all a matter of perspective. By all means strive to be the best you can be, but remember that excellence is a bit like perfection, it doesn’t really exist.

To kids: Life is about a lot of things. It’s not just about grades at school, looks or popularity. Those are important (to greater and lesser degrees) but there are other things which matter even more. Bravery, compassion, kindness- those qualities never get old. It’s great to want to participate fully, to try your hardest, do that little bit extra and be the very best that you can be – both in and out of school. But being kind and helpful to yourself and everyone around you? Now you’re describing a superhero!

To adults: Jamboy’s got the same message for you! Those superhero qualities don’t lose their appeal as we get older. Childhood is short and it never comes again- our lives are already so stressful and lived at top speed, please let’s leave some space for children to be children.
MEET JOSEPH ZAMMIT – he’s the actor who plays Jamboy!

What made you want to take part in Jamboy?

I love the overall concept of how the story is told using a person’s glasses, rather than people. The message within the story – about discovering what makes people unique – resonates strongly with me. It also challenges the idea of ‘striving for excellence’ in schools, which I think is something we all need to reflect on deeply. Parents, teachers, heads of schools and children – all of us – need to re-think that word and replace it with more encouraging words that centre on humanity and providing real value, like ‘striving for kindness, happiness and open-mindedness’.

Who would you put on your Wall of Fame?

That’s a tricky question! But, I think that I would put Tim Minchin on my Wall of Fame because he’s someone I really look up to. He’s an incredibly multi-faceted and talented performer, who doesn’t just fit snugly into any one box. He’s a comedian, actor, writer, composer, lyricist, director… the list goes on. But, above all, he doesn’t seem to be scared of taking on a challenge, and this has seen him work across genres in theatre, radio, TV, film and so on. He’s not just a pretty face!

What’s your secret superhero skill?

My secret superhero skill is that I am exceptionally good at keeping things hidden. Maybe one day – if you’re really lucky – I’ll let you in on the secret!

What do you hope audiences take away from the play?

I would like audiences to reflect on certain things or people that we take for granted. There is much more to a person than what appears on the surface. I would like us all to make more of an effort to avoid judging people and to really get to know each other – to look beneath the surface and find what makes us special and different. Everyone has a story. More often than not, the story is going to be an interesting one, so why not get to know it?
We sat down with JAMBOY WRITER, DENISE MULHOLLAND, to discover how she wrote the show.

How was Jamboy born?

Around a blank piece of paper and a lot of coffee! The members of The Shrinking Violets have a lot of experience in creating and developing productions, and we know that the best way to generate ideas is to brainstorm and write everything up on a wall – even if it doesn’t make the final cut. We came up with the title first, and we loved the idea of creating a backstory for our reluctant hero. We also all work with young people and have experience in schools, so we wanted to touch on issues that we feel are relevant to young people and teachers today.

Who would you put on your Wall of Fame?

My parents – without a doubt. They are true superheroes, both of them. They both grew up in difficult circumstances, and life wasn’t always kind or easy for them, but they made the very best of every opportunity. They were unfailingly kind and enthusiastic every day of their lives, and I think that makes them both worthy of a place on any Wall of Fame!

What’s your secret superhero skill?

I never park my car so close to anyone that it will make it impossible for them to move their car. I have been known to go out in the middle of the night to move my car to free up space for people.

What do you hope audiences take away from the play?

First and foremost, I hope they enjoy it and laugh a lot. I would like them to see themselves in this strange Jamboy world and perhaps realise that everyone feels the same way sometimes. Life can be a difficult course to navigate, and most of us are still making it up as we go along. But, it’s worth remembering that maybe the thing that you don’t think is very important is actually the thing that someone else admires most in you.
JAMBOY ACTIVITIES

Classroom: Create your own Wall of Fame

Work together to create your own Wall of Fame with everyone’s picture and a special note about them. Hang this in your class and send us a picture!

Advice for teachers: Depending on the size of your classroom, you could also do this in smaller groups. The students need arts and crafts supplies.

Writing: Secret Statement

Write something positive about someone in your class. What do you think makes him or her special? Decorate your description so that your friend can keep it somewhere special.

Advice for teachers: Instead of getting students to pick their own person, place all the students’ names in a bag and let each student blindly pick a name from the bag. Print the students’ statements on adhesive paper so that they can stick them in their diaries. The students need arts and crafts supplies.
JAMBOY ACTIVITIES

Imagination: Superheroes

A superhero uses their special power for good. What would your power be? Can you draw yourself as a superhero using your power?

Look around your classroom and think of what super power your friend might have. Draw them as a superhero too!

Advice for teachers: When children draw their friend’s super power, have them sit back to back while doing so to add a little unexpected element to the classroom. Then, they can spin around and surprise each other with the superhero pictures when they’ve finished. The students need arts and crafts supplies.

Reflection: Make your own glasses

What makes you the happiest in the world? Using the template, design a pair of glasses to show what you love doing the most.

Advice for teachers: The students need arts and crafts supplies. Print the glasses on thick paper so that they’ll be sturdier when cut out.
Round Eyeglasses