



PERFORMANCE GUIDE

AANIKA'S ELEPHANTS

BY ANNIE EVANS

(RECOMMENDED FOR GRADES 2 AND UP)



WWW.HTYWEB.ORG

**ALOHA FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR,
ERIC JOHNSON**



Aloha!

Welcome to the work of Honolulu Theatre for Youth. We are delighted to share these resources with you. We believe wholeheartedly in the power of stories to bring us together. When that happens we often find great similarities with our fellow humans that strengthen our sense of belonging and shared purpose. Coming from a place that is both geographically remote and culturally diverse, we treasure stories in our community and are deeply honored to share this one with you. Thank you so much for taking the time to look over these resource materials. If you would like more information on the company or our work, please look us up at htyweb.org.

CONTENTS

ALOHA FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, ERIC JOHNSON	2
PRODUCTION CREDITS	3
ABOUT THE SHOW	4
SHOW SYNOPSIS AND NOTES FROM WRITER: ANNIE EVANS	5
WHERE DOES AANIKA LIVE?	6
WHAT IS AN ELEPHANT ORPHANAGE?	6
ELEPHANT FACTS	7
RESOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM	8
ACTIVITIES- CONNECTING WITH THE THEME	10
ABOUT HTY	11



PRODUCTION CREDITS

Produced by

Fiesty Elephant Productions, Pam Arciero Productions, and Little Shadow Productions
in association with Center for Puppetry Arts

LEAD TEAM

Writer and Producer

Annie Evans

Director and Producer

Pam Arciero

Performer and Producer

Jean Marie Keevins

Puppet Designer and Builder

Martin P. Robinson

Composer and Musician

Paul Rudolph

Principle Performer

Jimmica Collins

Principle Puppeteer

Cedwan Hooks

Additional Honolulu Theatre for Youth Team

Lokomaika'i Lipscomb, Jarren Amian, Chesley Cannon, Eric West, Jill Jackson,
Sarah Danvers, Cameryn Richardson, Jack Romans, Isaiah Johnson, and Mark Branner

Show Photography by

Zach Hyman and Martin P. Robinson

HTY Study Guide by
Reiko Ho

National Core Arts Standards compiled by
Daniel A. Kelin, II



ABOUT THE SHOW

Honolulu Theatre for Youth welcomes **AANIKA'S ELEPHANTS**, a beautiful play by Annie Evans, an award-winning writer from Sesame Street.

This world-class show was produced and developed by a team of acclaimed Sesame Street creatives and is a moving and heartwarming story that also educates on the present-day plight of Africa's elephants.

Director **Pam Arciero**, who also is one of the producers, is a Native Hawaiian, multi-cultural director and performer who grew up in Hawai'i, went to Kalani High School and the University of Hawaii, and made it big as a longtime puppeteer on Sesame Street and for the Muppets. Arciero, who has numerous Emmys and other awards for her work, will lead the team which will include Sesame Street puppeteers alongside members of the HTY Artistic Ensemble, and graduate students from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa's Theatre for Young Audiences program.



"This is a new play that is destined to be a children's classic, and we're so fortunate that Pam Arciero is bringing her beautiful work to Hawai'i to share with families in her hometown," said Eric Johnson, Artistic Director of Honolulu Theatre for Youth.

Aanika is the only character in the play that is portrayed by a human actor, Jimmica Collins. The elephants are puppets that were artfully designed by master puppeteers who painstakingly studied the movements and cadence of elephants to create their presence on stage. Audiences around the country have been raving about this show—laughing, crying, and cheering for Aanika and her elephant friends.

The show is produced by Feisty Elephant Productions, Pam Arciero Productions, and Little Shadow Productions in Association with Center for Puppetry Arts

SHOW SYNOPSIS



*“In a time when children are feeling so much division and stress, **Aanika’s Elephants** is a play about compassion, love and conservation.”*

Aanika’s Elephants is the story of a young African girl who meets a baby elephant named Little at the elephant orphanage where her father works. They grow together the way only two young girls can, even if one has a trunk. When Aanika’s father dies, she runs away into the African savannah. Camping that night in the bush the way her father taught her, she is frightened by crashing branches and discovers that Little has followed her. They become a herd of two, working together to survive and steer clear of humanity. Aanika and Little are adopted by a small herd of elephants, and Aanika learns their very beautiful, civil

ways. She is finally tested when she must save her new family from poachers.

It’s a story that shows how family can be anything -- a beloved, widowed father or even a herd of elephants. The audience can use their imaginations to fill in the large rattan-framed elephants, an adorable baby elephant and people represented by just hats and gloves. With music, a variety of puppets and humor, ***Aanika’s Elephants*** entertains and educates both adults and children on the plight of the elephant and our world with grace and compassion.

NOTES FROM WRITER: ANNIE EVANS



I have always been fascinated by elephants. Their matriarch hierarchy. Their loyalty. Their sensitivity. In the hopes of getting closer to these amazing mammals, I joined an Earthwatch Institute team in October, 2000, studying the migration patterns of elephants between the Kenyan game parks Tsavo East and Tsavo West. Every morning, I’d ride in a jeep with several research assistants trying to find and identify my ten assigned elephants. All I had was a page of 10 photographs showing the nicks or rips in their ears or their damaged tusks.

In the afternoons, our team of 10 volunteers, researchers and the lead scientist, Dr. Barbara L. McKnight, rode in jeeps to the huge cattle watering basins. Up to one hundred elephants would gather to drink (an example of local farmers and elephants finding a balance. The elephants never went to the basins until after the cattle had left.) Again, I’d try to identify my 10 elephants. Oh, the joy and rapture when I did!

When I returned to New York, I pondered how to write a story about these beautiful animals and their amazing culture. I churned out scripts for children’s television shows for fifteen more years, waiting for an idea to come to me. It finally did, in a yoga/mediation class. A young orphan girl and an orphan elephant in the bush becoming their own loving family...and that was it for the moment! Then came the Covid 19 lockdown. The perfect opportunity to let that girl and little elephant start talking to me. Memories of my time in the bush flooded back, a first draft poured out, I brought in many talented collaborators, and the result is our production of AANIKA’S ELEPHANTS.

WHERE DOES AANIKA LIVE?



The play is set in Kenya which is a country in East Africa along the coast of the Indian Ocean. It's capitol and largest city is Nairobi. Kenya's geography and climate varies greatly, and it encompasses savannah, lakelands, the Great Rift Valley and mountain highlands. It's also home to wildlife like lions, elephants, leopards, buffalo, and rhinos.

In the play, Aanika runs away to "The Bush." The Bush refers to the African savannah, vast tropical grasslands dotted with acacia trees that is home to African Bush Elephants like Little.



WHAT IS AN ELEPHANT ORPHANAGE?



A keeper with baby elephants at SWT.

An elephant orphanage is a sanctuary that rescues, raises, and rehabilitates orphaned or injured baby elephants, often victims of poaching or human-wildlife conflict, with the goal of reintroducing them to the wild.

The primary elephant orphanage in Kenya is the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) in Nairobi, famous for rescuing and raising orphaned baby elephants to reintegrate them into the wild. Another key center is the Reteti Elephant Sanctuary in the Namunyak Conservancy, focused on community-driven conservation in Northern Kenya

Click the link for more information on SWT:
<https://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org>

**DID YOU KNOW?
FACTS ABOUT ELEPHANTS**

Information from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and WorldAtlas.



1. African Bush Elephants are the world's largest land animal. Adult males, or bull elephants, stand up to 3m high and weighing up to 6,000kg on average. Males only reach their full size at 35-40 years - that's well over half their lifespan as wild elephants can live for up to 60-70 years.

2. Elephant babies or calves can weigh 120kg when born - that's almost 265 pounds!

3. There are 3 types of elephants: African Savanna (Bush), African Forest, and Asian. You can tell them apart by their ears!

4. All 3 types of Elephants are endangered which means they are threatened with extinction.

The African Bush and Asian elephants are listed as "Endangered" and the African Forest elephant is listed as "Critically Endangered." Around 90% of African elephants have been wiped out in the past century - largely due to the ivory trade - leaving an estimated 415,000 wild elephants alive today.

5. Elephants have around 150,000 muscle units in their trunk. Their trunks are perhaps the most sensitive organ found in any mammal. They use their trunks to drink water and and can suck and hold up to 8 liters of water in their trunks. They can also use their trunk like a snorkel when swimming!

6. Elephants can spend up to 3/4 of the day eating! Elephants are vegetarians or "herbivorous"-- they eat grasses, leaves, shrubs, fruits, twigs, and roots depending on the season and their habitat. They need to eat about 300-600 lbs of food per day.

7. Elephants can communicate through vibrations. Elephants are very intelligent and can communicate through vocalizing, body language, touch, scent, and even through seismic signals- sounds that create vibrations in the ground.



8. Every elephant needs a family. Elephants depend on their herd families for protection, survival, and emotional support. Female elephants generally stay with their herd for life. Male elephants often roam alone or form loosely knit herds with other males.

BOOKS FOR THE CLASSROOM



Picture Books for Younger Students

- *The Elephant* by Jenni Desmond (non-fiction)
- *Elmer* by David McKee (Author and Illustrator)
- *Strictly No Elephants* by Lisa Mantchev (Author), Tae-eun Yoo (Illustrator)
- *She Leads: The Elephant Matriarch* by June Smalls (Author), Yumi Shimokawara (Illustrator)
- *A Passion for Elephants: The Real Life Adventure of Field Scientist Cynthia Moss* by Toni Buzzeo (Author), Holly Berry (Illustrator)

For Older Students

- *An Elephant In the Garden: Inspired by a True Story* by Michael Morpurgo
- *The Magician’s Elephant* by Kate DiCamillo (Author), Yoko Tanaka (Illustrator)

WEBSITES AND VIDEOS

- African Elephant- website resource from National Geographic Kids
<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/facts/african-elephant>
- Elephant Facts- website resource from National Geographic Kids
<https://www.natgeokids.com/nz/discover/animals/general-animals/elephant-facts/>
- Teaching Tools About Elephants/ Educator Resource- website with activities and information from World Wildlife Fund
<https://www.worldwildlife.org/teaching-resources/toolkits/teaching-tools-about-elephants>



POST SHOW DISCUSSION

**AANIKA AND LITTLE BECOME A FAMILY IN THE PLAY.
HOW DO YOU DEFINE FAMILY?
WHAT MAKES A FAMILY?**

WHAT DOES ENDANGERED MEAN?

**ARE THERE ANIMALS WHERE YOU LIVE THAT ARE
ENDANGERED LIKE THE AFRICAN ELEPHANTS?**

**IN OUR PLAY, THE ELEPHANTS FACED DANGER FROM
HUMANS (POACHERS). WHAT DANGERS DO ANIMALS FACE
WHERE YOU LIVE?**

BECOME AN ANIMAL CONSERVATIONIST

In our play, we learn about some of the dangers that the African Elephant is facing.

Lesson Objective

Use research skills (science and language arts) along with imagination to create a public service announcement about an endangered animal where you live.

Instructions

Find a partner (or small group) and do research about endangered animals where you live.

Choose an endangered animal from your research.

Learn more about your chosen animal:

Why is that animal endangered?

Are there things that we can do to help?

What are 5 interesting facts?

Where does this animal live?

Write out a “commercial” style, public service announcement.

Become an announcer character.

Perform your PSA for the class

(These can also be filmed)

WRITE YOUR OWN STORY

Lesson Objective

Create and dramatize a story imagined from the research you did on endangered animals in the first activity.

Instructions

Introduce a few facts about the chosen animal.

Have students imagine a story around the facts.

Perhaps imagine what a day in the life of the animal would look like.

What dangers would it face?

A story should have a beginning, middle, and end.

Write out the stories.

Share the stories with the class.

Sample Starter Prompts:

Who are the characters in your story?

Where does your story take place?

What happens to the characters in your story?

If time, **expand the activity into creative drama activity** by having students act out their stories in small groups.



ABOUT HTY

Honolulu Theatre for Youth (HTY) is a theatre of place, deeply rooted in the cultures and people of the Pacific and dedicated to serving young people, families and educators across the Hawaiian Islands. Founded in 1955, HTY is one of the oldest professional TYA companies in the country and is recognized for its long history of innovative drama education programming and the creation of original theatrical works that celebrate the diverse cultures of Hawai'i.

OUR COMPANY

Becky Dunning
Development

Stu Hirayama
School Reservations

Brad DeCaires
Box Office

Stephanie Conching
House Manager

Lee Cataluna
Writer in Residence

Jian Gu
Accounting

Eric Johnson
Artistic Director

Reiko Ho
Artistic Associate/Marketing

Moses Goods
Artistic Associate/Actor

Annie Cusick Wood
Artistic Associate

Artistic Team
Jarren Amian
Chesley Cannon
Sarah Danvers
Serina Dunham
Lokomaika'i Lipscomb
Mattea Mazzella
Hermenigildo Tesoro Jr.
Eric West
Emily Wright

Daniel A. Kelin, II
Director of Drama Education

Tamara Smith
Drama Ed. Administrator

Erin O'Hara
Teaching Artist

Ms. Lisa
Teaching Artist

Kirsten Erickson
Teaching Artist

Jill Jackson
Teaching Artist