



Squirrel Stole My Underpants

A poignantly silly adventure tale for families

ABOUT THE SHOW

A lonely, awkward girl is sent out to the backyard to hang up the laundry and keep herself busy. The moment Sylvie's back is turned, a mischievous squirrel appears, steals her favorite piece of clothing and runs off. When the girl gives chase, she finds herself lost in strange lands. As the story unfolds, an entire world emerges from her laundry basket and Sylvie learns that she is a strong girl with magic within herself.



This show features puppetry, physical theater, live music, and a giant pile of laundry.



About The Gottabees

Puppets! Original music! A Tiny Bit of Acrobatics! Adventure and Invention! The Gottabees started making super fun theater for families in 2013 with the creation of *Squirrel Stole My Underpants* and it's follow-up, *Lollipops for Breakfast*, in 2015. They have since been selling out venues and inspiring homemade puppet shows throughout the US and Canada. **They find it deeply satisfying to create original physical theater for families to giggle, gasp, sigh, and cheer in 45 minutes or less.**

Their shows are stories told without words—they embrace the physical and the visual in theater. The result is a poetic, non-linear story that surprises audiences of all ages. One thing that makes members of The Gottabees happiest is when they meet children who have seen a show and parents tell them how their child acted out the entire show for weeks after seeing it. This is the core reason why they make theater for young audiences: **The Gottabees want children to know in their hearts that they, too, can make theater wherever they are and whomever they are.**

This show was awarded a 2013 Jim Henson Foundation family project grant and was developed with the generous support of the Puppet Showplace Theater's Incubator program. It is a 2017 UNIMA-USA Citation of Excellence WINNER and earned an "Artistic Achievement" award from the Puppeteers of America's Northeast Region.



thegottabees.com

Preparation Activities

These are student activities to do before seeing *Squirrel Stole My Underpants*. Do one activity or all of the activities! They will introduce students to the show by providing context clues, giving them a working knowledge of how the story works, and exciting them about seeing the live performance.

Discuss, Write, Draw

Use these questions to frame student discussions, individual drawings, or prompts for writing:

- 📌 Describe your favorite object in the whole world. *It might be the object you sleep with, take everywhere with you, the object that makes you feel better when things are difficult.*
- 📌 Have you ever lost something or had something taken from you? How did it make you feel? What did you do about it?
- 📌 What animal do you think is the most mischievous? What makes them seem naughty?
- 📌 If you went on an adventure, where would you go? What does this place look like? How do you get there?



Draw a comic book thought bubble on paper so that everyone can see it.

What is this? How is it used?

Definition: thought bubbles used in comic books, comic strips and cartoons to allow words to be understood as representing the speech or thoughts of a given character in the comic.

What do you like to think about? If you had a thought bubble following you right now, what would it have in? Can you draw a picture of it?

Define and discuss these words and how they might be related to the performance:

Brave	Mime
Chase	Mischievous
Dance	Music Box
Excited	Party
Frustrating	Puppet
Hand puppet	Relief
Hero	Rod Puppet
Hide	Sad
Imaginary	Scared
Lonely	Sneak
Lost	Theater
Lullaby	Trick

Read and discuss these stories about naughty animals:

- 📖 *Curious George* series, H.A. Rey
- 📖 *Five Little Monkeys* series, Eileen Christelow
- 📖 *Giggle Giggle Quack*, Doreen Cronin
- 📖 *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, Jon Scieszka

Read and discuss these adventure stories:

- 📖 *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, Crockett Johnson
- 📖 *Not a Box*, Antoinette Portis
- 📖 *Olivia Saves the Circus*, Ian Falconer
- 📖 *Where the Wild Things Are*, Maurice Sendak

Audio Activity

Go to this webpage:

<http://www.bonnie-duncan.com/for-presenters1.html>

Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on Music Sample, “Out to Sea” by Brendan Burns and Tony Leva. Play the audio link for students.

- What instruments do you think are being played? (acoustic guitar and upright bass)
- What do you think might happen while this music plays?
- How does the music make you feel?
- Write a story or draw a picture of what you think might happen while this music plays.



A Little Note About Audience Etiquette:

When you watch a performance, it is different from watching TV. You are in the same room as the performers—they can see and hear you! Performers do their best when the audience looks and listens quietly.

1. Pay attention to what the performers are doing so that you do not miss any action.
2. Stay quiet and seated during the performance so that others may also see and hear what is happening.
3. Applaud when the performance ends to tell the performer that you appreciate all of their hard work.
4. At funny moments, it is OKAY to LAUGH!



Follow-Up Activities

*These are activities for students to do after seeing **Squirrel Stole My Underpants**. Do one activity or all! They will give students opportunities to understand what they saw more deeply, be inspired by what they saw, and to imagine their own adventure stories.*

Discuss, Write, Draw

Use these questions to frame student discussions, individual drawings, or prompts for writing:

- 🗣️ How did Sylvie's feelings change as she chased after the squirrel? When and how did Sylvie show that she was sad? Afraid? Brave? Proud?
- 🗣️ Why do you think Squirrel stole the underpants?

Review the vocabulary and discuss how each term related to the show.

Ask students to write Bonnie a letter with any questions or comments about the show.

I love writing letters/emails and promise to respond! Email me for my paper mail address: bonniedone@gmail.com

Make a Puppet!

Photocopy page 6 of this packet and distribute to students. Ask students to design and color their own squirrel and underpants. Then, cut out the squirrel and tape a popsicle stick to the back of the paper to create a rod puppet.

Use these prompts for drama activities and/or writing:

- 🗣️ Interview the squirrel and ask why he/she stole the underpants.
- 🗣️ Ask the squirrel to describe his/her home.
- 🗣️ Ask the squirrel to retell the story of the show.



Ask students to write or act out their own version of **Squirrel Stole My Underpants**.

Here are some guiding questions to structure the story:

- What is the story's setting?
- Are the characters people or animals?
- What is lost / stolen?
- Who is trying to find them?
- Who took them?
- What 3-4 tactics do they try to use to find the missing object? (These tactics fail!)
- What tactic works to find the missing object?
- How does the story end?

Here are some guiding scene prompts, if students act out the story:

- Scene 1: Set the Scene--where & who
- Scene 2: Discover an object is missing
- Scene 3: Try to get back = fail
- Scene 4: Try to get back = fail
- Scene 5: Try to get back = SUCCESS
- Scene 6: Celebration

Questions & Answers with The Gottabees

How do you make your shows?

We start out by brainstorming themes--we talk about ideas, we collect pictures of things we find beautiful or odd, we read lots of books, we interview friends about topics, we listen to music, and we go see other shows. Once we've settled on a theme, we start to explore materials. What material would be interesting or best for this topic? We make "mock-up" (think of them as rough drafts) puppets, objects, set pieces, music compositions, and costumes. We improvise (make things up) as a group, taking notes and making videos of our ideas. We then shape some of these ideas into small scenes. We order the scenes and test them out on small audiences. We get feedback and then re-shape the ideas into larger parts of the show. This continues until we premiere the show.

It takes about a year to a year-and-a-half to get the show ready for performances. We continue to make improvements and changes to the show as we perform it – our audience's response and feedback is really important to us and we are always making our work better.

What was your inspiration for *Squirrel Stole My Underpants*?

Bonnie had a 3 year old and infant twins so she was doing a lot of laundry at the time! More than that, she was very inspired by how much a laundry line could transform and be used for different settings. Something being stolen by a naughty animal came to mind and then it seemed like prized underpants and a squirrel just made sense and made us giggle! Bonnie made everything in the show out of clothing and material because she loves sewing and fabric is perfect for a show about laundry!

How did you compose music for this show?

Lots of improvising while Bonnie explored scenes. Sometimes we filmed certain scenes and then Brendan and I (Tony) would go off on our own, sketch out ideas and then share them with the group.

How did you choose the musical style and instruments for the show?

The emotional content of the scene eventually determines what needs to happen. If something needs to be joyous, we find major harmony and brighter sounds. If something needs to be scary, then we use minor harmony & darker sounds.

What artists inspire you?

Bonnie: Compagnie Philippe Genty, Erin Stead, Frantic Assembly, James Thiérree, Lane Smith, Harvé Tullet, Mo Willems, Pina Bausch

Brendan: Bill Frisell, Mark Dresser, Phillip Johnston, Tom Waits

Tony: Astor Piazzolla, Charles Mingus, Debussy, DJ Premiere, Eric Hofbauer, Henry Grimes

Look up these artists and see if you can see connections!

A Little Bit About the Art of Puppetry:

Puppetry is a form of theatre or performance that involves the manipulation of puppets or inanimate objects, often resembling some type of human or animal figure, that are animated or manipulated by a human called a puppeteer. The puppeteer uses movements of her hands, arms, or control devices such as rods or strings to move the body, head, limbs, and in some cases the mouth and eyes of the puppet.

Puppetry is a very ancient form of theatre, first recorded in the 5th century BC in Ancient Greece.

There are many different varieties of puppets, such as glove puppets, shadow puppets, marionettes, object theater, hand-mouth puppets, finger puppets, humanettes, rod puppets, tabletop puppets, hand puppets, and animatronic puppets.

Puppets are made of a wide range of materials, depending on their form and intended use. They can be extremely complex or very simple in their construction.

Adapted from Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puppetry>

