Presents

PANDORA

By Sarah Berthiaume
Translated by Nadine Desrochers

Canadian premiere March 2012
Second production November 2015
Third production (cancelled) March 2020
YouDigital production 2020 - 2021

WELCOME TO YOUTHEATRE

Founded in 1968, Youtheatre is Quebec's oldest professional theatre for young audiences. For more than 50 years, Youtheatre's productions have been performed to over two million young people throughout Quebec and Canada. Youtheatre engages its audience through compelling theatre which provokes, questions, challenges and entertains. Our major area of focus is the creation, development and production of new works for young people by the finest Canadian playwrights and creators.

ABOUT THE STUDY GUIDE

This guide is meant to be used as a starting point for discussions and to encourage students to get the most out of their theatre experience. We recommend that students be introduced to the play's themes before viewing the production. The discussion topics and post-show activities should follow the performance in order to enhance the students' complete understanding of the subjects involved. Feel free to adapt the activities to suit your students and your goals as a teacher. You may photocopy any of the material in this guide. We hope that if there are any questions, thoughtful responses, or engaging discussions, that you will reach out to us to let us know!

Production Team (2020)

Pandora	Cara Rebecca
Alex/Firefox	Gabriel Richardson
Director	Véa
Stage Manager	Emlyn vanBruinswaardt
Sound Designer	Guillaume Lévesque
Sound Editing	Thierry Gauthier
Costume Consultant	Ariane Valade
Lighting Designer	Martin Sirois
Playwright	Sarah Berthiaume
Translator	Nadine Desrochers

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<p style="text-align:center">SYNOPSIS + CHARACTERS</p>

What starts as an innocent internet search quickly escalates for 16 year-old Pandora, as the world of online porn unfolds before her. Conflicted yet drawn in by what she sees, Pandora begins to feel the impact on her real-world relationships. Drawing inspiration from the Greek myth of Pandora's box, *Pandora* explores the dangers of defining oneself through the prism of the internet, and the importance of remaining plugged into the real world.

Pandora: a teenage girl
Alex: a teenage boy
Firefox: a fox head

<p style="text-align:center">THE MYTH OF PANDORA: Pre-Show</p>

It will be valuable for students to be familiar with the myth of Pandora's box before they see the show. The link below is a good, quick overview of the myth!

"The myth of Pandora's box - Iseult Gillespie"
https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-myth-of-pandora-s-box-iseult-gillespie

<p style="text-align:center">THE MYTH OF PANDORA: Post-Show</p>

The myth of Pandora is ancient, and has been interpreted in many ways. In all literary versions, however, the myth is interpreted as addressing the question of why there is evil in the world.

With the framing of the myth, answer the following questions about the play you just saw:
1. Why do you think the playwright chose to tell this story through the lens of the Pandora myth? Do you think it was effective?
2. According to the myth, Zeus gave Pandora a box that contained both evils and hope. Though Zeus did not explain the contents of the box to Pandora, she was made responsible for the box and had to follow the rules set by Zeus. Within the play, what do you think represents the box? Who do you think is Zeus? Are there aspects of the myth that you find relatable to real life?
3. What kind of message do you think the original myth, and the play you just saw, send about curiosity?

Group Activity

In groups of 2-3, think about what the myth of Pandora might look like today and choose one of these three options:

- Write an email from Pandora to Zeus, how does she feel about the box?
- Rewrite the myth for modern times. Think of who is Pandora, who is Zeus, and what the box contains. How would a modern Zeus explain the box to Pandora? You might also want to think about Pandora's reactions to being given the box. Draw a modern "Pandora's box" for your group, what would be inside the box? (You can use drawings/images/words)

Reference : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandora

MEDIA AND SELF-IMAGE

"Body image is a key component of our sexuality. Our sense of who we are as sexual beings is very much influenced by how we view our bodies, and how our bodies experience sexual desire and satisfaction. Researchers have explored the connection between body image and sexuality in various studies. Since women in our society, and in most societies worldwide, are more often judged by their appearance than are men, they have been the focus of many studies that consider the effects of a negative body image on sexual satisfaction."

Sexualityandu.ca
Check the Research, prepared by SIECANN (the Sex and Information Education Council of Canada)

Sexual well-being is an important part of healthy development, yet evidence suggests that sexualization has negative consequences on overall health, including cognitive, physical, and mental functioning.

"*Sexualization* was defined by the task force as occurring when a person's value comes only from her/his sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics, and when a person is sexually objectified, e.g., made into a *thing* for another's sexual use."

"Sexualization of Girls is Linked to Common Mental Health Problems in Girls and Women--Eating Disorders, Low Self-Esteem, and Depression; An APA Task Force Reports" *American Psychology Association,* **February 19, 2007.**

Can you identify a specific situation where you felt sexually objectified, or witnessed somebody else being objectified?
What was said or not said? What actions were taken? What was the result, and how did you feel?

Virtually every media form provides ample evidence of the sexualization, including TV, music videos, music lyrics, movies, magazines, sports media, video games, social media, and advertising.

Over the next 24 hours, take note of how many times you are exposed to sexualization. This may occur in the media as well as in your school and home environment. Compile the list below. Once you are done take a look at your list. <u>What are some of the trends or themes that you have noticed?</u>

<u>Group Activity</u>

In groups of 5-6, compare lists. Are there some trends across everyone's lists? Do you agree about what is sexual objectification and what isn't? What are the differences across the lists? Does hearing about other people's lists change your perspective about what is objectifying? How much do you think personal experience factors into these feelings?

Media that narrowly defines attractiveness obviously has an impact on the people who are exposed to the images. Whether in ads, on instagram, in movies or magazines, we see images of idealized beauty and sexuality that can result in a negative self-image, and unrealistic or negative expectations concerning sexuality.

Obtaining critical skills in viewing and consuming media is key to establishing a healthy outlook. Don't be fooled by the images- remember they are being used in order to sell you something (whether that's a product, a value, a lifestyle, or a point of view)!

Analyze a social media post that presents an ideal of either masculine or feminine beauty and sexuality and answer the following:
1. What does this image say about the ideal masculine body or person?
2. What does this image say about the ideal feminine body or person?
3. What does this image say about gender ideals?
4. What is being advertised? Keep in mind the answer might not be a product!
5. What is the connection the advertiser or poster is trying to make between the image and the thing being advertised?
6. What is happening behind the scenes of this image to make it look this way?
7. Though sexualized images can be objectifying, people can also find empowerment through nudity and sexuality. What do you think is the difference between an image that makes a person feel objectified and an image that makes a person feel sexually empowered?

<u>Group Activity</u>

In groups of 2-3 choose one image that you find empowering and one image that you find sexually objectifying. Explain to the class which images you chose and why. What are some differences between the images? What are some similarities? What about the image makes it feel empowering to you? What makes it feel objectifying?
(Students could find images on social media if they are allowed to access their phones/computers; alternatively, teachers could provide students with magazines randomly distributed to groups.

References :

Sexualization of Girls, Executive Summary; American Psychological Association
Sex and U: Check the Research -
https://www.sexandu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CTR_BodyImage-JULY2011Eng.pdf

<u>BODY IMAGE: Post-Show Questions</u>

1. **How does viewing the videos impact Pandora's perception of herself?**
2. **Whatever your gender, do you relate to the experience of comparing yourself to a media image that is unrealistic?**
3. **How do you think this impacted Pandora's relationship with Alex?**

<u>ADDICTED TO THE INTERNET?</u>

We are part of a culture that has integrated internet and phone use into nearly every aspect of our lives. How do we take advantage of what the internet has to offer without spending our entire day staring at our phones?

1. **How often do you spend on your phone or computer per day?**
2. **What do you spend most of your time online doing?**
3. **What are the pros and cons of the time you spend on your phone, on the computer etc.? In small groups make a list.**

Each person's Internet use is different. You might go online extensively for your homework, or you might rely on social media to keep in touch with family and friends. Spending a lot of time online only becomes a problem when it absorbs too much of your time, causing you to neglect your relationships, your work, school, or other important things in your life. If you keep repeating compulsive internet behavior despite the negative consequences in your offline life, then it's time to strike a new balance.

1. **In your opinion, what constitutes "too much" time in front of a screen?**

Many people turn to the Internet in order to manage unpleasant feelings such as stress, loneliness, boredom, depression, and anxiety. When you have a bad day and are looking for a way to escape your problems or to quickly relieve stress or self-soothe, the internet can be an easily accessible outlet. As much comfort as the internet can provide, though, it's important to remember that there are healthier (and more effective) ways to keep difficult feelings in check. These may include exercising, talking about it, meditating, using sensory relaxation strategies, and practicing simple breathing exercises.

1. **When do you tend to go online? Are there emotional needs you are meeting when you go online?**

General warning signs that your Internet use may have become a problem:

- Losing track of time online. Do you frequently find yourself on the Internet longer than you intended? Does a few minutes turn into a few hours? Do you get irritated or cranky if your online time is interrupted?
- Having trouble completing tasks at work or home.
- Isolation from family and friends. Is your social life suffering because of all the time you spend online? Are you neglecting your family and friends?
- Feeling guilty or defensive about your Internet use.
- Feeling a sense of euphoria while involved in Internet activities. Do you use the Internet as an outlet when stressed, sad, or for sexual gratification or excitement? Have you tried to limit your Internet time but failed?

ADDICTED TO THE INTERNET? Post-show questions

1. **Keeping in mind the warning signs listed above, do you believe Pandora's internet use constitutes an internet addiction?**
2. **Why do you think Pandora was so drawn to the images she saw?**
3. **Why do you think it was so hard for Pandora to talk to Amber about what she was looking at online?**

FANTASY VS. REAL LIFE

"Sexual entertainment is usually, and very intentionally, both fiction and fantasy. Even a video of a real-life couple having sex in their own home or someone's sexy selfies, created without a production department or a fancy website, is still something that was intentionally created and most often intentionally distributed."
"Making Sense of Sexual Media"; *Scarleteen: Sex Ed for the Real World,* **Accessed January 27, 2020.**

Porn has existed in one form or another for millenia. In this day and age, not only is it more accessible than ever, but accessible in new and different ways. According to a 2008 University of New Hampshire survey, 93% of male college students and 62% of female students said they saw online porn before they were 18. Depending on your personal politics, you may or may not believe that porn is "bad" - for many people porn acts as a mode of sexual expression. However, ready access to online porn by young viewers, on unmoderated platforms, with no context, and no avenue for frank discussion, can isolate and harm young people.

> "In the absence of comprehensive sex education, people use porn to learn about sex—what sex looks like, who gets to have it, and what it means to be sexy."
> **Jiz Lee, porn performer via Scarleteen**

Group Activity

In small groups, or as a class discuss the following questions:

1. What false messages do we receive from porn?
2. What kind of context is necessary to better frame porn?
3. Do you have peers or mentors with whom you can discuss images you have seen online?
4. Considering the quote above, what do you think of young people watching porn without comprehensive sexual education?
5. What does mainstream porn leave out? (E.g. consent, different body types, aftercare, fumbling and laughing, communication etc.)
6. Do you think there is a healthy way to engage with sexually explicit material?

POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. Do you think Pandora was actually seeing her own face in the videos she was viewing? Why or why not?
2. How does looking at porn impact Pandora's relationship with Alex? Would it have been different if she could be open about it?
3. What did Pandora believe or fear about herself through the lens of online porn? Would it have been different if the roles were reversed (Alex looking at porn, and not being able to communicate with Pandora)?
4. What role do you think shame plays in this story?
5. How does Pandora's attitude towards sex differ from her friend Amber's?
6. Write a response to this question: At what point, in your opinion, does viewing pornography become unhealthy

Group Activity

Flip the script! In groups of 2-3 rewrite the scene between Alex and Pandora. If Pandora was able to express herself to Alex, what would she say? How would Alex react? If you prefer, you can also write a scene where Pandora talks to her friend Amber about what she is going through. How would Amber react?

References :
Sexual Recovery Institute
http://www.helpguide.org/mental/internet_cybersex_addiction.htm
"What Teenagers Are Learning From Online Porn" by Maggie Jones (NY Times)
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/07/magazine/teenagers-learning-online-porn-literacy-sex-education.html
"Bare Bodies: Reality Checking Mainstream Porn" (Scarleteen)
https://www.scarleteen.com/article/politics_sexual_identity_sexuality/bare_bodies_reality_checking_mainstream_porn_part_one

ALLEGORY: Post-Show Activity

al·le·go·ry (ăl'ĭ-gôr'ē)

n. pl. **al·le·go·ries**
1. **a.** The representation of abstract ideas or principles by characters, figures, or events in narrative, dramatic, or pictorial form.
   From thefreedictionary.com

In the play, Alex reads multiple short stories that Pandora writes and publishes online.
1. What do you think Pandora's short stories represent to her? What do you think they say about her to other people?
2. Why do you think she posted these stories publicly?
3. Why do you think she wrote them in this format, as opposed to a diary entry or a social media story?

As a class, discuss examples of allegory in literature (e.g. Aesop's fables, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, Animal Farm*). On your own, experiment with allegory.

What do you think Pandora's post will look like down the line? In groups of 2-3 write a short story posted by Pandora one year from now.

Have a class discussion or write short answers to the following questions:

1. Did Pandora actually see a fox in the school bathroom?
2. Why do you think there were two Firefox masks?
3. Why do you think the same actor played Firefox and Alex? Do you think they were the same person?
4. What was the symbolism of the ink spreading out of Pandora's pocket?