

# FEFFU AND HER FRIENDS

EDUCATOR GUIDE

# WELCOME!

American Conservatory Theater's Education & Community Programs Department is delighted to welcome you and your students into the unusual, provocative, and magical world of *Fefu and Her Friends*.

This guide was created in February 2022 by Natalie Greene and Radhika Rao.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This interactive, multimedia guide can be adapted to your students' interests and needs. Take some time to click the hyperlinks and discover more about various topics. Find videos you can use alongside suggested activities and historical information.

You may notice that we share links to videos and resources created by other theater companies and arts education organizations. We aim to highlight the work done by colleagues in the arts education community both nationally and abroad. We are happy to share these in the spirit of virtual collaboration, having curated resources that compliment and speak directly to A.C.T.'s production of *Fefu and Her Friends*.

As you investigate these materials, consider your own perspectives and how your students might receive this content. We hope you adapt the guide to better contextualize this information for your students, and of course, we hope you enjoy the show!

Please reach out to [education@act-sf.org](mailto:education@act-sf.org) if you have any questions or support needs.

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# FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## WELCOME TO A.C.T.'S STRAND THEATER!

We are here to reunite with you in big story: present and available; vulnerable and ready; excited and grateful. Here we go!

We continue Season 2022 with the theme of reunion. It's 1935. Stephany Beckmann, or Fefu, has invited seven friends for the weekend, some of whom have known each other for decades, to rehearse a pitch for arts in education. We get to know these eight women intimately. How they reconnect; how they re-establish or divert from old feelings and bonds; how they impress; how they spur each other on; provoke; inspire; laugh and be silly; be still.

I have wanted to direct this iconic play for years. As we venture beyond our homes and bubbles, it feels necessary. To re-open the Strand Theater with Fornés's ingenious play—exploring a reunion among friends, traveling space-to-space to eavesdrop and learn who these women are to each other—feels more charged, more needed. It's a celebratory open house. The Strand in its entirety is Fefu's home. The lobby, her garden. Backstage, a bedroom. The Rueff Theater, a study on one side, the other a kitchen. Stairwells, breezeways, halls, even the elevator are part of her world. And you are invited.

We treat these spaces around the Strand Theater as unique installations, each with their own relationship between audience and action. Sometimes you surround a scene, sometimes you look down on it, look up to it, within inches, or at a remove. Space, sound, and lights and you are all here to serve the story. Our hope is that each space gets you more in touch with yourself, the characters, this theater, and maybe even theater, the artform, most generally. That by part three you'll be transformed, ready to be pulled deeper in, knowing the players well and knowing you are part of their world.

When I was a girl, I played with doll houses. I had a traditional doll house with a red pitched roof, and added extensions made from shoe boxes and construction paper. At the center of this made-up community was a matriarch, Stella, who called the shots. Luke Skywalker could drop by for a birthday party. Playmobile knights could hitch their horses out front. A tornado could carry a dog, made of clay, or younger sister of pipe-cleaners and cloth into the garden for even bigger adventures. It was a mix-and-match world of possibility. It was good prep for Maria Irene Fornés's *Fefu and Her Friends*. Enjoy!



Pam MacKinnon,  
Artistic Director



**PAM MACKINNON** is the Artistic Director of A.C.T. and the Director of this production of *Fefu and Her Friends*. She is a Tony, Drama Desk, and Obie Award-winning director, having directed upwards of 75 productions around the country, off Broadway, and on Broadway. She has been recognized as among the 25 Most Influential San Franciscans of 2020 by San Francisco Magazine, along with A.C.T.'s Executive Director Jennifer Bielstein.

**PAM  
MACKINNON**  
Artistic Director

**JENNIFER  
BIELSTEIN**  
Executive Director



## PRESENTS

### **FEFU AND HER FRIENDS**

**BY MARÍA IRENE FORNÉS  
DIRECTED BY PAM MACKINNON**

**THIS PRODUCTION IS MADE  
POSSIBLE BY**

#### **Executive Producers**

Kirke and Nancy Sawyer Hasson;  
Donald and Toni Ratner Miller; Aaron  
Vermut and Adriana López Vermut;  
Jay Yamada

#### **Producers**

Anne and Michelle Shonk; Cherie  
Sorokin

#### **Associate Producers**

Anonymous; Dr. Barbara L. Bessey;  
Beverly and Loring Wyllie

#### **Additional support provided by:**



**We would also like to thank our  
generous season supporters.**

#### **Season Presenters**

Barbara Bass Bakar; Jerome L. and  
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and David Sze; Priscilla and Keith  
Geeslin; Michael P. N. A. Hormel, in  
loving memory of James C. Hormel;  
Kenneth and Gisele Miller; Barbara  
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## THEATRE FORWARD

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Theatre Forward, and U.S. Bank.

# FEFU AND HER FRIENDS

**BY MARÍA IRENE FORNÉS  
DIRECTED BY PAM MACKINNON**

## THE CAST

### **CATHERINE CASTELLANOS**

Fefu

### **CINDY GOLDFIELD**

Emma

### **MARGA GOMEZ**

Cecilia

### **JENNIFER IKEDA**

Cindy

### **LEONTYNE MBELE-MBONG**

Sue

### **SARITA OCÓN**

Christina

### **LISA ANNE PORTER**

Julia

### **STACY ROSS**

Paula

## UNDERSTUDIES

### **SOFIA AHMAD**

Cindy, Christina

### **DENA MARTINEZ**

Fefu

### **MICHELE APRIÑA LEAVY**

Paula, Cecilia, Sue

### **LUISA SERMOL**

Julia, Emma

## STAGE MANAGEMENT

### **ELISA GUTHERTZ**

Stage Manager

### **CHRISTINA HOGAN**

Assistant Stage Manager

## CREATIVE TEAM

### **TANYA ORELLANA**

Scenic Designer

### **SARITA FELLOWS**

Costume Designer

### **RUSSELL H. CHAMPA**

Lighting Designer

### **JAKE RODRIGUEZ**

Sound Designer

### **HANA S. KIM**

Video Content Designer

### **CONSUELO T. LOPEZ-ROBBINS**

Hair and Makeup Manager

### **JANICE GARTIN**

Props Manager

### **CHRISTINE ADAIRE**

Vocal Coach

### **DANYON DAVIS**

Movement Coach

### **JOY MEADS**

Dramaturg

### **ALLIE MOSS**

Casting Director

## A.C.T. PRODUCING TEAM

### **ANDY CHAN DONALD**

Associate Artistic  
Director

### **LOUISA LISKA**

Director of General Management  
& Operations

### **AMY DALBA**

General Manager

### **MARTIN BARRON**

Director of Production

*The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States*

**Recording Notice:** The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production, or distributing recordings on any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited.

**A.C.T.'s production of *Fefu and Her Friends* is dedicated in memory to A.C.T. Trustee Olympia Dukakis.**

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



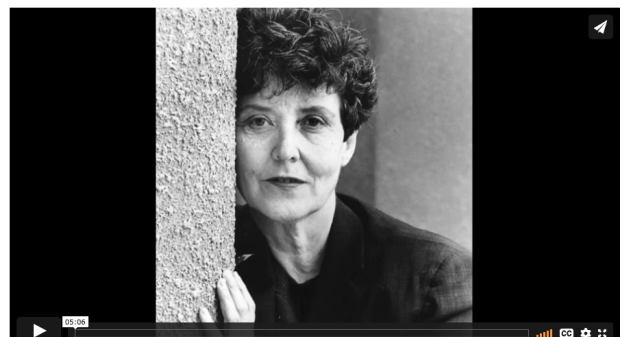
**MARÍA IRENE FORNÉS** (Playwright) was a Cuban American playwright and director, and author of more than three dozen works for the stage. Among her most celebrated plays are *Promenade*, *The Successful Life of 3, Fefu and Her Friends*, *The Danube*, *Mud*, *The Conduct of Life*, *And What of the Night?*, *Abingdon Square*, *The Summer in Gossensass*, and *Oscar and Bertha*. She received nine Obie Awards including one for Sustained Achievement in Theater, a Distinguished Artists Award from the National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation grants, a Guggenheim grant, an award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, a Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Literary Award, a New York State Governor's Arts Award, and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. From 1973–79, she was the managing director of the New York Theatre Strategy. From 1981–1992, she was Director of the INTAR (International Arts Relations) Hispanic Playwrights-in-Residence Laboratory, a national program to stimulate and develop writing abilities of Hispanic playwrights. Ms. Fornés taught at some of America's most prestigious universities including Yale, Princeton, Brown, Wesleyan, and Iowa, and led workshops at leading theatres such as the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles and the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, Scotland.

## WATCH



### “THE REST I MAKE UP”

Trailer for the María Irene Fornés documentary:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQpADQOkkJM>  
(Duration: 2 min. 37 sec.)



### The living legacy of María Irene Fornés:

<https://arts.princeton.edu/events/2018-lat-inx-theater-commons-maria-irene-fornes-institute-symposium/2018-04-14/>  
(Duration: 5 min. 6 sec.)

### DIGITAL ARCHIVE: The Fornés Institute

[www.fornesinstitute.com](http://www.fornesinstitute.com)

The Fornés Institute, an initiative of the Latinx Theatre Commons, is guided by a voluntary committee of artists and scholars from across the United States. The Fornés Institute aims to preserve and to amplify María Irene Fornés's legacy as a teacher, mentor and artist, through workshops, convenings, and advocacy.

# WHAT MAKES A PLAY A CLASSIC?

BY JOY MEADS

A.C.T. DIRECTOR OF DRAMATURGY AND NEW WORKS

I have a degree in Dramatic Literature and Theater History from N.Y.U., and yet the long reading list in my required classes included only three plays that were not written by white men. In the years since, I've worked to make up for the gaps in my education and have been astounded by the depth and quality of work that was excluded from the canon I received. Call them the "America Wasn't Ready" plays: a treasure trove of great works by writers of color, by white women, and by members of other disenfranchised groups that failed to receive the attention they were due from curators who—largely unconsciously—understood universality through the lens of whiteness and masculinity. At A.C.T., we think of classics as works that:

- **Stand the test of time.** Plays that captured something essential in the moment they were written and achieve immortality by revealing fundamental truths about the human condition for each successive generation.
- **Influenced countless other artists.** Works that had a seismic impact on the art form and created aftershocks in the plays that came after.
- **Allow our intellects and imaginations to dance with the greatest minds of generations past.**



Of course, these determinations are subjective, and there are great debates to be found over which works ought to be considered "canonical." (If you see me in the lobby, know that I geek out about these conversations and would love to hear your thoughts.) Over the last years, we've presented work by Alice Childress (*Trouble in Mind*), Caryl Churchill (*Top Girls*), and Lynn Nottage (*Sweat*) alongside work by George Bernard Shaw (*Arms and the Man*), Edward Albee (*Seascape*), and William Shakespeare (*Cymbeline*). We passionately believe *Fefu and Her Friends* fits all of the criteria for a classic and María Irene Fornés ought to be discussed in the pantheon of playwrights like Samuel Beckett, Luigi Pirandello, Eugene Ionesco, and Sam Shepard: formally innovative artists who expanded the boundaries of the stage and galvanized the imaginations of artists to come.

Though her name may be new to many of you, she left an indelible creative imprint on some of the greatest theatrical minds of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

**"THE FORNÉS OEUVRE IS ONE OF AMERICAN DRAMA'S MOST IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS. ... [AFTER SEEING FORNÉS' PLAYS], I LEFT THE THEATER ON EACH OF THESE NIGHTS WANTING TO MAKE THEATER... I WANTED TO BE FORNÉS."**

**—TONY KUSHNER, PULITZER PRIZE AND TONY AWARD WINNING PLAYWRIGHT OF *ANGELS IN AMERICA***

**"IN THE WORK OF EVERY AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT... THERE ARE ONLY TWO STAGES: BEFORE SHE HAS READ MARÍA IRENE FORNÉS AND AFTER."**

**—PAULA VOGEL, PULITZER PRIZE WINNING PLAYWRIGHT OF *HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE***

Fornés with, from left, fellow playwrights Arthur Miller, John Guare, Edward Albee and Horton Foote before a round-table discussion at the Signature Theater in 2000. Photo Sara Krulwich, *The New York Times*



**“SHE HAD HER OWN VERY SPECIFIC VOICE BEFORE A LOT OF US HAD EVEN LEARNED TO SPEAK.”**

— TERRENCE MCNALLY FIVE TIME TONY AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT

**“HER MARK ON ME WAS INDELIBLE.”**

—MACARTHUR GENIUS AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT LUIS ALFARO

**“I’M NOT SURE I WOULD HAVE BECOME A PLAYWRIGHT IF NOT FOR HER AND I KNOW MANY OF MY FELLOW WRITERS FEEL THE SAME. HER INFLUENCE WAS MONUMENTAL.”**

—HEIDI SCHRECK, WRITER OF *WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME*, OBIE AWARD WINNER, AND PULITZER PRIZE FINALIST

# PLAY STRUCTURE

In *Fefu and Her Friends*, Fornés's Obie Award–winning play which she directed and first produced in 1977, she presents eight women in a New England country house in 1935 as they gather to rehearse for a fundraiser to benefit children's arts education. Each character plays a role in this event. Before and after their rehearsal, the women interact with one another, and share their thoughts and feelings about life along with their personal struggles and societal concerns.

## The play is divided into three parts:

**Part 1** begins at noon in the living room of Fefu's country home as the friends gather to prepare for their rehearsal. The play unfolds with a rhythm that is casual and playful, governed by the simple ebb and flow of a social gathering. Characters arrive in ones and twos, and they make small talk until the whole group is there and ready for lunch.

**Part 2** takes place in the afternoon and presents four intimate conversations in which the women talk about romance, love, and sex. Four scenes take place in different areas of the house: the lawn (Fefu and Emma), the study (Christina and Cindy), the bedroom (Julia), and the kitchen (Paula, Sue, and Cecilia). The audience is divided into groups to watch each scene, then they rotate to the next set, as the scenes are repeated until each group has seen all four scenes.

**Part 3** continues in the evening in the living room as the women rehearse for their fundraiser. They exchange and practice different ideas, and when the formal meeting winds down, they simply relax together, singing an old song, serving and sipping coffee, reminiscing about their school days together. At one point, several of the women get in a rambunctious water fight. All this happens while biographical information about these women is revealed. They are friends who share a common cause, the details of which remain sketchy, and there are moments of tension mixed in with moments of wild fun. After the rehearsal, the play concludes with a big surprise.

It will be up to you to decide what you think happens at the end of the play.

*This page is an excerpt from an in-depth study guide for Fefu and Her Friends created by the Fornes Institute:*  
[fornesinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/STUDY-GUIDE-FOR-FEFU-AND-HER-FRIENDS-12.2.20.pdf](https://fornesinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/STUDY-GUIDE-FOR-FEFU-AND-HER-FRIENDS-12.2.20.pdf)



# BEFORE THE SHOW: DISCUSSION

Teachers, before you go and see the play, use these discussion prompts to prepare your students.

**CONTEXT:** Fefu and Her Friends is about a group of friends that gathers together to prepare for a common goal: to rehearse for a charity event that benefits school arts education. In a way, this is a reunion of old friends.

Students, in pairs, discuss with your partner the following questions:

- Who are some of your friends that you foresee staying in touch with after you graduate high school? Why did you choose these individuals?
- How do you choose your friends? Or do they choose you? Discuss.
- What criteria are important in choosing who you would like to befriend? For instance, do you choose people whose backgrounds are similar to yours or different? Do you choose people whose personalities are similar to yours or different? Discuss.



Downtown High School students and teachers, photo by Jay Yamada

# ACTIVITY: FRIENDSHIP TABLEAUX

## (PREPARATION)

### THEATER VOCABULARY: TABLEAU (SINGULAR) / TABLEAUX (PLURAL)

In a tableau, participants make still images or snapshots with their bodies to represent a scene. Students can imagine they are in a scene in a play or a movie, then someone presses pause on a specific moment, and that still image is all we see. Great tableaux include different levels (high, medium, low) and specific details (gestures and shapes that reveal character and story). Examples and instructions can be found here:

<https://dramaresource.com/freeze-frames>.



Photo Credit: Art Core

A tableau can be used to quickly establish a scene that involves a large number of characters. It can be used to explore a particular moment in a story or drama, or to replicate a photograph or artwork for deeper analysis. In this activity, we will create a Tableau of Friendships!

### How To Prepare to Conduct this Activity with your Students:

Watch two sample videos on how to carry out tableaux exercises with your students

**How to Make a Tableaux** from Singapore Repertory Theatre:

<https://youtu.be/YfNmlY1-t5k> (Duration: 2min. 8sec.)

**How to Create a Group Tableau** from Santa Monica Repertory Theater:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6vJTpVDT-c> (Duration: 4min. 34sec.)

# ACTIVITY: FRIENDSHIP TABLEAUX

## (LEVELS 1 & 2)

### FRIENDS TABLEAU 1: BEGINNERS

In groups of 4-5 students create various kinds of Friendship tableaux. The Prompt may be:

“Friends who gather to Study Together” or “Friends who gather to Play Basketball together” or “Friends Who Cook Together,” etc.

Encourage students to create a tableau, where each student has a unique character but the team is united (just like in *Fefu and Her Friends*) to work towards a common goal. Ensure that students create a tableau with different levels, representing varied emotions and actions.



Tug of War tableau with students from AccessSFUSD: The Arc and teaching artist Lauren Kivowitz

### FRIENDS TABLEAU 2: INTERMEDIATE

In groups of 4-5, create a dynamic tableau, where you get to witness the relationships between different friends. Could two friends be closer than two others? What status differences may we see here? Could the friends be resolving a conflict? What social dynamics are at play?

Explore Space, Distance, Levels, Facial Expressions and Gestures.

To prepare, watch this training video from Rockwall ISD Theatre:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbltSPANh\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbltSPANh_c) (Total duration 11min. 38 sec. \* Basic instructions 0:00-3:10 \* Making excellent Tableaux 3:11-7:30 \* Advanced Tableau skills 7:30-9:49 \* Example Tableau scenarios 9:50-11:38)

# ACTIVITY: FRIENDSHIP TABLEAUX

## (LEVEL 3)

### FRIENDS TABLEAU 3: ADVANCED

In groups of 4-5, create a sequence of tableaux that tell a simple story with a beginning, middle, and end. We suggest a sequence of 5 tableaux that follows a basic story structure. You might have students begin with the following writing activity, before choreographing each tableau.

### 5 SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Sentence #	Story Arc	Example words you might use in this sentence
Sentence 1:	<b>Exposition</b>	Once upon a time... It was always a good day when... Every time...
Sentence 2:	<b>Rising Action</b>	One day... Today... In fact... This time... Things changed when...
Sentence 3:	<b>Climax</b>	Then... Next... Unfortunately... Surprisingly... Out of nowhere...
Sentence 4:	<b>Falling Action</b>	Luckily... Suddenly... Finally... Thankfully... Not a moment too soon...
Sentence 5:	<b>Resolution</b>	In the end... Eventually... Never again... The moral of the story is...

### INSTRUCTIONS for writing your 5-sentence story and creating your sequence of Tableaux:

- Starting with a theme of friendship, identify your setting, characters & problem.
- Decide the 5 W's: who, what, where, when, why (bonus: how).
- Break the story into 5 parts (optional: borrow some of the language above).
- Clarify each sentence: make sure it makes sense, consider its legibility for performance (meaning, how well will these sentences work for tableaux?), make final adjustments > arrive at final draft.

Optional: Students write stories by themselves & read stories to their group, then groups vote on which story to create tableaux with.

- Collaborate on casting decisions: who plays what character?
- Re-read the story with your character in mind. What might they be doing in each one of the 5 tableaux?
- Collaborate on the exact positions and interactions for each tableau. Animate the story with dynamic uses of Space, Distance, Levels, Facial Expressions, and Gestures. Rehearse and refine how the bodies tell the story.

Optional: As the tableaux are performed, decide on a narrator to read the story aloud or decide certain characters to say certain words.

OR! Perform the tableaux with no language and see how well the audience understands the story.

- Perform tableaux and discuss what audiences saw, thought, and wondered.

Optional: After performances and class discussions, refine the stories and tableaux and repeat the activity.

# WELCOME TO FEFU'S HOME



Fefu is hosting a gathering at her home and **you are invited too**, to be a fly on the wall watching these eight women gossip, question, flirt, provoke, and ultimately reveal (or hide?) the universal understandings between them.

This is not a play where you sit in one seat and watch the whole show from there. You'll be invited to explore Fefu's home and the play will unfold around you!

## **PART 1**

We'll begin, all together, in the living room of a country house in New England (in the main theater space). The decor is a tasteful mix of styles. Upstage right there is a piano. Against the wall there is an open liquor cabinet. And a double barrel shotgun leans on the wall near the French doors...

Then, in smaller groups, you'll leave the main theater and roam about Fefu's house, discovering new rooms and private conversations.

## **PART 2**

The bedroom is perhaps a room that was once used for storage, and has been set up as a sleeping place for Julia. There are dry leaves on the floor and a sink on the wall. The perfect setting for a hallucination.

In the kitchen, Paula determines the exact length of a love affair: seven years and three months. She follows it up with a scientific recounting of which body parts leave the relationship when.

# WELCOME TO FEFU'S HOME

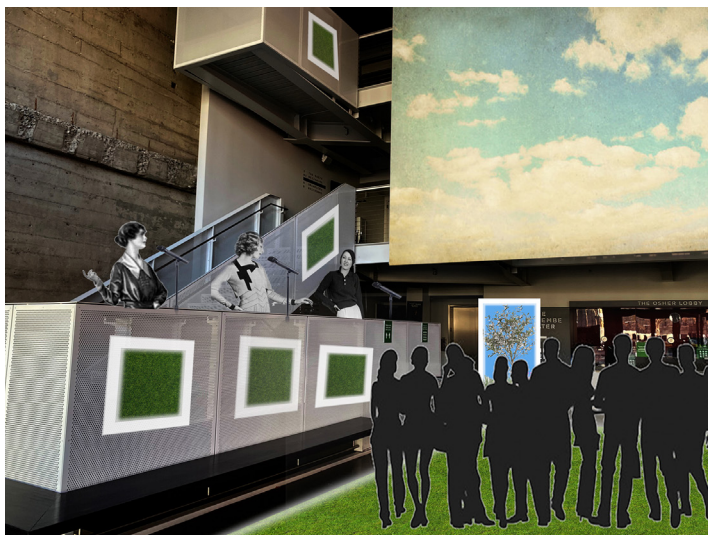
## CONTINUED

In the study, there are books, a desk, chairs, a rug. It's a seemingly normal room, but it reminds Cindy of a very peculiar dream she had last night.

Fefu's garden takes over the Strand Theater lobby. The women bring boxes of vegetables; they wear gardening gloves. And they can't stop thinking about—and talking about—what body parts the vegetables resemble.

### PART 3

Finally, we come back together at Fefu's living room to learn the outcomes of the evening. But remember—the order in which you visited each room may have given you a different perception from another audience member's, and you may have your own interpretation of how the play ends.



# WAIT, THEATER BEYOND A THEATER??

## Yes!

Today's theater world features a variety of ways an audience can experience a play. Sometimes we sit and enjoy a show on a traditional stage, but sometimes we experience theater in different, exciting and interactive settings.

Here is an excerpt of a previous production of *Fefu and Her Friends* that Sarasvati Productions staged in the Ralph Connor House National Historic Site of Canada: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoroP3di7XY> (Duration: 1min. 46sec.)

To learn more about non-traditional theater experiences, check out the following videos:

Site-specific theater: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VG7O-hhrmXw> (Duration: 2 min. 36 sec.)

Experiential theater: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPoXaqC-QOo> (Duration: 2 min.)

Immersive theater: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_C5i6vy3Lyw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_C5i6vy3Lyw) (Duration: 19 min.)



Audiences enjoy San Francisco's devised theater ensemble Mugwumpin performing in a stairwell in the San Francisco Chronicle Building. Photo by Battista Remati.

# ACTIVITY: EXPLORING SPACE

*Fefu and Her Friends* occurs in various locations, not just on one stage. The story takes audiences on a journey of the imagination and on an actual journey through space.

Through this play, Fornés deconstructs the familiar stage, challenging the concept of the **fourth wall**, a performance convention in which an invisible, imagined wall separates actors from the audience ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth\\_wall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_wall)). Scenes are played in multiple locations throughout the theater simultaneously. The audience is divided into groups to watch each scene, then they rotate to the next set, where the scene is repeated until each group has seen all four scenes.

## Explore the spaces of your own classroom or school space

**STEP 1:** Ask students to pick 5 different spaces in your school (like a cafeteria, a study room, or a library) and write their list on a piece of paper.

**STEP 2:** Ask them to close their eyes and imagine they are in one of those spaces...

- What different emotions come up in these spaces?
- What memories come up in these spaces?
- What are some of the things you see in these spaces?
- Who are some of the people you see in these spaces?
- Take a snapshot with your closed eyes and now we will try to recreate it in the classroom. Open your eyes and write down or quickly sketch/map out what elements go into that space.

**STEP 3:** Assign students into groups of 4 or 5 to discuss the spaces they imagined and identify 1-3 from which to create tableaux. Consider working with each group to refine/assign spaces, so that no group embodies the same space as another.

**STEP 4:** Using furniture (like chairs, tables) and objects (like paper, clothing) that are available in the classroom, ask groups to recreate the space(s) they decided upon (like a hallway, classroom, or parking lot). Ideally, each group will create a different space. Assign two of the students to embody two individuals that may be in that space and freeze as part of a tableau.



Downtown High School students, photo by Jay Yamada





# ACTIVITY: EXPLORING SPACE

## CONTINUED

**STEP 5:** Once all of the “School Space tableaux” are formed, the students who are not part of the tableaux will participate as “viewers,” take a walk around the different tableaux “entering” each tableau and experiencing what it feels like to be in different spaces. Take a few minutes for the walkaround, and ask students if they noticed how different spaces make them feel.

- Instruct the “frozen actors” to remain silent and still and not interact with the viewers.
- Instruct the viewers not to disturb or touch the tableaux but instead silently experience what it feels like to be in the space.
- Optional: have each group create quietly and privately, so that their classmates do not know what space they have chosen to embody. The audience then gathers evidence to determine and guess which space each group is embodying.

When Teacher calls “switch,” students can move onto the next tableau and the actors can take a quick stretch/shakeout break before getting back into position.

- Optional: after the viewers have experienced each tableau, they then take the place of the actors and the previous actors now become the viewers experiencing the various spaces themselves.

**STEP 6:** Debrief this activity by asking students how they felt in different places. Inform them that *Fefu and Her Friends* will require them to move from location to location and be part of the different spaces while not disturbing the show and its actors.



# ACTIVITY: TRY ON SOME LINES FOR SIZE!

Have your students take on characters from *Fefu and Her Friends* and read out dialogue aloud. This prepares students for the heightened language of the play, introduces aspects of the story, and welcomes them to consider how actors prepare to take on roles. Reading these scenes and lines are a great starting point to discuss where characters are, what the context is, what each character wants, and more.

**STEP 1: Before you start, discuss the format of a written play.** For example,

- the line follows the name of the characters
- stage directions are given usually in parenthesis/italics

### **Theater Vocabulary: Stage Directions.**

instructions in the text of a play, especially one indicating the movement, position, or tone of an actor, or design elements such as sound effects and lighting.

**STEP 2: Assign characters to students and have them read some of the scenes below.** Have different students read the same scene to see what different choices and discoveries they make. Discuss.

### **Theater Vocabulary: Cold Read**

reading aloud from a script or other text with little or no rehearsal, practice, or study in advance

10 Tips for Cold Reading (though perhaps ignore #5):

<https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/ways-master-dreaded-cold-read-12352/>

**STEP 3: Once they have done a reading, ask :**

- What discoveries did you make about your character? (e.g., after reading for Fefu, I feel her confidence)
- Is this dialogue familiar to you? Is this the way that you speak with your friends? If not, why not? Why do you think the playwright wrote it this way?
- What discoveries did you make about the scene? (e.g., after reading the scene, I feel that Fefu killed Julia on purpose, or that she killed her accidentally)

### **Theater Vocabulary: Discovery**

when an actor realizes something about their character in rehearsal or performance

After these readings, you might also talk about the process of rehearsal and how many elements go into staging a scene: memorization (being “off-book”), studying one’s script, figuring out the emotions and actions that go into the scene, etc.

Doing a cold reading with students can really create a sense of appreciation for what professional actors do to get the play from script to stage!

# FROM THE PLAY

**Excerpt from Part 1** of *Fefu and Her Friends* by María Irene Fornés

Pages 7-8 (this is the beginning of the play)

Cast for this scene: Fefu & Cindy

FEFU: My husband married me to have a constant reminder of how loathsome women are.

CINDY: What?

FEFU: Yup.

CINDY: That's just awful.

FEFU: No, it isn't.

CINDY: It isn't awful?

FEFU: No.

CINDY: I don't think anyone would marry for that reason.

FEFU: He did.

CINDY: Did he say so?

FEFU: He tells me constantly.

CINDY: Oh, dear.

FEFU: I don't mind. I laugh when he tells me.

CINDY: You laugh?

FEFU: I do.

CINDY: How can you?

FEFU: It's funny. —And it's true. That's why I laugh.

CINDY: What is true?

FEFU: The women are loathsome.

CINDY: ...Fefu!

FEFU: That shocks you.

CINDY: It does. I don't feel loathsome.

FEFU: I don't mean that you are loathsome.

CINDY: You don't mean that I'm loathsome.

FEFU: No ... It's something to think about. It's a thought.

CINDY: It's a hideous thought.

FEFU: I take it all back.

CINDY: Isn't she incredible?

FEFU: Cindy, I'm not talking about anyone in particular. It's something to think about.

**Excerpt from Part 2** of *Fefu and Her Friends* by María Irene Fornés  
Pages 39-40 (this is the middle of the play)  
Cast for this scene: Paula & Cecilia

PAULA: Yes... would you like something to eat?

CECILIA: No, I ate lunch.

PAULA: I didn't eat lunch. I wasn't very hungry.

CECILIA: I know.

PAULA: Would you like some coffee?

CECILIA: I'll have tea.

PAULA: I'll make some.

CECILIA: No, you site. I'll make it. *(Cecilia looks for tea.)*

PAULA: Here it is. *(She gets the tea and gives it to Cecilia.)*

CECILIA: *(As she lights the burner.)* I've been meaning to call you.

PAULA: It doesn't matter. I know you're busy.

CECILIA: Still I would have called you but I really didn't find the time.

PAULA: Don't worry.

CECILIA: I wanted to see you again. I want to see you often.

PAULA: There's no hurry. Now we know we can see each other.

CECILIA: Yes, I'm glad we can.

PAULA: I have thought a great deal about my life since I saw you. I have questioned my life. I can't help doing that. It's been many years and I wondered how you see me now.

CECILIA: You're the same.

PAULA: I felt small in your presence ... I haven't done all that I could have. All I wanted to do. Our lives have gone in such different directions I cannot help but review what those years have been for me. I gave up, almost gave up. I have missed you in my life ... I became lazy. I lost the drive. You abandoned me and I kept going. But after a while I didn't know how to. I didn't know how to go on. I knew why when I was with you. To give you pleasure. So we could laugh together. So we could rejoice together. To bring beauty to the world ... Now we look at each other like strangers. We are guarded. I speak and you don't understand my words. I remember every day.

**Excerpt from Part 3** of *Fefu and Her Friends* by María Irene Fornés

Page 51 (this is near the end of the play)

Cast for this scene: Paula, Sue, Fefu, Emma, Julia, Cindy, Christina

*(Loud steps. Paula comes down with a filled pan. Emma hides by the entrance to the steps. Emma splashes water on Paula. Paula splashed water on Emma. She appears with a full pan.)*

PAULA: Truce!

SUE: Who's the winner?

PAULA: You are. You do the dishes.

FEFU: *(From the landing.)* Line up!

SUE: Psst. *(Paula and Emma look. Sue splashes water on them.)* Gotcha!

EMMA: Please don't.

PAULA: Truce. Truce.

FEFU: O.K. Line up. *(Pointing to the kitchen.)* Get in there! *(They all go to the kitchen.)* Start doing those dishes. *(There is a moment's pause).*

JULIA: It's over.

CINDY: We're safe.

JULIA: *(To Christina.)* You can come up now. *(Christina stays down.)* You rather wait a while. *(Christina nods.)*

CHRISTINA: *(Playful.)* I feel danger lurking.

CINDY: She's been hiding all day.

**Excerpt from Part 3** of *Fefu and Her Friends* by María Irene Fornés

Page 61 (this is the end of the play)

Cast for this scene: Fefu, Christina, Cecilia, Julia

FEFU: I'm going to clean it!

CHRISTINA: I think you better not!

FEFU: You're silly!

*(Cecilia appears on the landing.)*

CHRISTINA: I don't care if you shoot yourself! I just don't like the mess you're making!

*(Fefu starts to go to the lawn and turns.)*

FEFU: I enjoy betting it won't be a real bullet! You want to beat!

CHRISTINA: No! *(Fefu exits. Christina goes to Julia.)* Are you all right?

JULIA: Yes.

CHRISTINA: Can I get you anything?

JULIA: Water. *(Cecilia goes to the liquor cabinet for water.)* Put some sugar in it. Could I have a damp cloth for my forehead? *(Christina goes toward the kitchen. Julia speaks front.)* I didn't tell her anything. Did I? I didn't.

CECILIA: *(Going to Julia with the water.)* About what?

JULIA: She knew.

*(There is the sound of a shot. Christine and Cecilia run out. Julia puts her hands to her forehead. Her hand goes down slowly. There is blood on her forehead. Her head falls back. Fefu enters holding a dead white rabbit.)*

FEFU: I killed it ... I just shot ... and killed it ... Julia ...

*(Dropping the rabbit, Fefu walks to Julia and stands behind the chair as she looks at Julia and stands behind the chair as she looks at Julia. She and Cindy enter from the foyer, Emma and Paula from the kitchen, Christina and Cecilia from the lawn. They surround Julia. The lights fade.)*

# HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR EXPERIENCE

## PRIOR TO YOUR VISIT

- If you are the ticket booker, it is your responsibility to communicate A.C.T.'s vaccination and mask policy to others in your party.
- If you are feeling unwell, please stay home. If you or a member of your party is experiencing symptoms similar to those of COVID-19 or have had known exposure to someone with COVID-19, please stay home.

## WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE THEATER

- All audience members will be asked for proof of vaccination and identification at the door. Unvaccinated guests will not be admitted to the theater.
- Masks are required for all students, staff, and guests and are available upon request. Masks should fit well, meaning they cover your nose and mouth comfortably without need of frequent adjustment. You will need to wear your mask for the full performance.
- No food and beverages will be served or allowed. Water fountains are unavailable.
- Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout the theater.

## ASSISTANCE

- Front of House Staff including Security personnel, ushers, and house managers are trained to assist guests and ensure that safety measures are followed. If you feel uncomfortable or perceive a risk at any time, please speak with one of these team members.
- More information about A.C.T. Covid protocols & safety measures can be found here:  
<https://www.act-sf.org/about-us/covid-19-updates/>

## DURING THE SHOW

- Stay in your seat unless using the restroom.
- Read the ACT "Rules of Play" to learn more about how we hope you arrive, engage and enjoy the show!  
<https://www.act-sf.org/your-visit/a-c-t-s-house-rules-of-play/>
- If your students would benefit from additional information about theater etiquette, consider discussing some of the points made by Blake Theater here: <https://www.blaketheater.com/theater-etiquette/>

# AFTER THE SHOW

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER & DISCUSS

- Which characters in *Fefu and Her Friends* did you most identify with?
- Which spaces did you enjoy being in the most? Why?
- Discuss the end of the play. What do you think the playwright intended to convey with this particular ending? What do you think really happened? If you were to rewrite the ending, what might you do?
- Why does this play revolve around Fefu? What about Fefu makes her a protagonist?

## THEATER ACTIVITIES POST SHOW

### Write/Speak a Monologue from the Future

#### Theater Vocabulary: Monologue

In theater, a **monologue** is a speech presented by a single character, most often to express their thoughts and feelings aloud, though sometimes also to directly address another character or the audience.

Ask your students to:

“Imagine you are in 2032. Think about how old you will be. Imagine a life you will have, and who your friends may be. How has your life changed since 2022? What kind of world do you live in now?”

“Now imagine you run into a high school friend. What will you say to them about your life when they ask you what you’ve been up to?”

Teachers: Feel free to write a sample for your students but definitely encourage them to use their unique voice and personal style of communication. For more information on how to write a monologue:

MasterClass:

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-monologue-with-examples#how-to-write-a-monologue>

Squibler: <https://www.squibler.io/blog/how-to-write-a-monologue/>

Questions students can answer through their monologue:

- What do you do now?
- Who do you live with?
- Where do you live?
- How have you changed since high school?
- What kind of friends do you have now? Did your friend circle change?
- Are you happy with your life in 2032? Why or why not?
- What are some of your challenges in 2032?
- What dreams do you have in 2032 for the future beyond?

## OPTIONAL MODIFICATIONS:

- Students record their monologues into their phones (voice memos) and share it in class. We think sound-only recordings are great for this activity, so listeners can imagine the speaker 10 years older.
- After students write the monologues, they will have a sense of how they might respond to the kinds of questions that people ask at reunions. Have students improvise a reunion as if they are coming back together after not having seen each other for 10 years. This could be done in small groups or as a full class. Remind them to ask each other some of the questions in the list above. Afterwards, have students reflect on some of the most interesting and thought-provoking things they heard, shared, and learned during the activity.



## NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS GUIDE

### TH:Cr1.1.I

- a. Apply basic research to construct ideas about the visual composition of a drama/theater work.
- b. c. Use script analysis to generate ideas about a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theater work.

### TH: CR1.1.1.II

- a. Use the rehearsal process to analyze the dramatic concept and technical design elements of a devised or scripted drama/theater work.

### TH:Pr4.1.I

- a. Examine how character relationships assist in telling the story of a drama/theater work.
- b. Shape character choices using given circumstances in a drama/theater work

### THPr6.1.II

- a. Perform a scripted drama/theater work for a specific audience.

### THRe.8.1.II

- a. Analyze and compare artistic choices developed from personal experiences in multiple drama/theater works.
- c. Debate and distinguish multiple aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs through participation in and observation of drama/theater work.

### TH:Cn10.1.I.

- a. Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas and personal beliefs impact a drama/theater work.