

SEATTLE
REP

FREAK THE MIGHTY

BOOK & LYRICS BY
ANTHONY DREWE
MUSIC BY
**RYAN FIELDING
GARRETT**
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
RODMAN PHILBRICK

*A co-production with
Cleveland Play House*

Youth Guide

Welcome to *Freak The Mighty* at Seattle Rep

We believe young people deserve to see stories that are as complicated and interesting as they are. ***Freak The Mighty*** is one of those stories. Through the friendship of two young people who often feel misunderstood by the world around them, the play explores belonging, resilience, imagination, and the importance of seeing one another for who we truly are.

I first connected to *Freak The Mighty* as a teacher, using the novel by Rodman Philbrick in a sixth-grade classroom. I remember one of my students connecting deeply with the character of Max and his experience. Like Max, they often felt judged by others before having a chance to show who they really were. They were especially moved when Max sees himself differently through Kevin's friendship—there were a lot of tears shed in that unit. Later, the student shared that it was the first time they'd ever finished a book and absolutely beamed with pride. Seeing Max discover his strengths helped them discover their own.

Recently, I taught an elementary class about acting and used a page of *Freak The Mighty's* script as our text. When one fourth grader realized that the character of Kevin is a little person, she screamed with delight, "Are you kidding me? ARE YOU KIDDING ME!?" She, too, was a little person and had never seen a person like herself represented on stage. **Representation** is the feeling of being seen while discovering experiences beyond our own.

We hope this new musical sparks your imagination and encourages you to reflect inwardly and empathize with others outwardly. Enjoy the show! We hope to see you again soon.



Deanna Martinez
Education & Community
Programs Director

Understanding Kevin “Freak” Avery in *Freak The Mighty*

by Pamela DiPasquale, with Sofiya Cheyenne & Taleri A. McRae, Cleveland Play House



Kevin Avery, who calls himself “Freak,” is a central character in *Freak The Mighty*. He is a little person; he has dwarfism. Doctors believe Kevin has symptoms of a rare condition (Morquio syndrome) that causes his type of dwarfism. Kevin is also imaginative, confident, and deeply intelligent. Kevin loves stories of knights and quests, and he uses his creativity to transform the world around him.

When thinking about Kevin, it's important to remember that disability is not just about a person's diagnoses. It is also about how the world is designed both physically and socially. The **social model of disability** reminds us that many challenges come from environments or attitudes that are not built with all people in mind. Kevin's experiences reflect this: he navigates a world that isn't always accessible, while bringing his own strengths and perspective to it.

Kevin's disabilities affect his physical body, not his intelligence or imagination. Like many little people and disabled individuals, he uses adaptations and support when needed, but he also leads with his ideas, humor, and sense of adventure.

People with dwarfism and other disabilities live full, independent lives across many fields and interests.

As audience members, practicing respect and awareness matters. Some key ideas:

- **Use respectful language (for example: “person with a disability,” “person with dwarfism,” “disabled,” “little person,” or simply the person's name).**
- **Do not touch someone or their mobility device without permission.**
- **Avoid staring. Treat disabled people with dignity as you would anyone else.**
- **Be curious and respectful. Kevin does not exist to be pitied or “inspiring” for others. He is a complex, fully realized person.**

Finally, raise awareness and share information! To learn more about rare progressive diseases marked by enzyme deficiencies known as mucopolysaccharidosis (MPS), including Morquio Syndrome, please go to the National MPS Society's website mpssociety.org.

Understanding Max "Mighty" Kane in *Freak The Mighty*

by Peter Ogbuji, Cleveland Play House; Edited by Sofiya Cheyenne & Taleri A. McRae

In *Freak The Mighty*, Maxwell Kane lives with the emotional impact of violence, loss, and fear connected to his family history. Because his father has caused harm through abuse and violence, people fear that Max may someday become the same kind of violent person. This affects the way Max sees himself and how he relates to others around him. Max is often misunderstood because of his large physical size. People sometimes make assumptions about him before getting to know him, which can leave him feeling isolated and unsure of his own worth. Rather than expressing his emotions openly, Max tends to keep his thoughts and fears inside, a response that can develop in young people who have experienced fear, instability, or emotional pain.

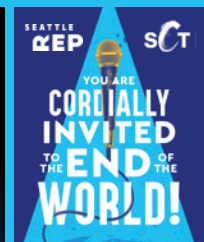
Throughout the play, Max questions his **identity, choices, and belonging**. He wonders whether people are defined by their past experiences or whether their future is shaped by their own values, choices, and relationships.

The story also highlights the **importance of connection, empathy, and support**. Through friendship and shared experiences, Max slowly begins to see his own strengths, including his compassion, loyalty, and emotional awareness. His journey reminds audiences that people can develop a stronger sense of self through trust, resilience, and supportive relationships.

It's exciting to be a part of the life of a new musical. And it's especially exciting when it's a show that takes young people's stories seriously. This is a season full of art connected to young people. Check out what youth programs we and our neighbors at Seattle Children's Theatre have coming up, just for you:

Seattle's Teen Theater Scene STARTS HERE

SAVED ALAMY



Discover more at

seattlerep.org/teens

Tyanna Curry in the 2026 Next Narrative Monologue Competition Regional Finals at Seattle Rep.

SEATTLE REP YOUTH GUIDE

The Power of Collaboration

In *Freak The Mighty*, Max and Kevin build a powerful friendship. Building a new musical also requires a lot of people to use their skills to work together. People who worked on this musical include actors, directors, designers, stage crew members, casting teams, box office employees, front-of-house staff, and many more.

For this activity, you will work with a partner or a group to draw together.

Part 1: Drawing Together Separately

Without talking to each other, each group member should decide what they want to draw. Using the same piece of paper, each group member should take turns drawing. Don't talk to anyone while drawing.



Part 2: Drawing & Communicating Together

Decide as a group what you will draw together. Just like last time, let each group member have a turn to draw. This time, you can communicate throughout the drawing process.



REFLECTION

- What made drawing without communicating easier or harder?
- What made drawing while communicating easier or harder?
- What's another time in your life where you've worked with others?