



Education Pack

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About the play

Sammy and the Snow Leopard

by **Brad McCormick**

Sammy is 9 years old and likes animals. No...he LOVES animals. The problem is his Mum won't let him have any pets. But when his best friend Hokey Pokey tells him about the 'Adopt a Snow Leopard' programme, Sammy reckons he's found a way to have a pet that doesn't actually come to the house. Perfect! But then Sammy gets an unexpected gift – and finds himself on an adventure that quickly spirals out of control...

This is a high-energy show involving stuffed animals, evil neighbours, school projects and limes that will enchant everyone over 6.

Travelling Light are renowned for producing innovative and inspiring shows for young audiences.

Writer's Vision

The idea for Sammy and the Snow Leopard came to me as I was watching an advertisement for the 'Adopt a Snow Leopard' charity programme. And after the initial thought of 'wouldn't it be funny if....' I realised that there could be a show in it.

At the time I was a new arrival in the UK with little clue about how to break into acting here. Armed with my new idea, I figured the best solution was to write a show, put it on and hope for the best. I wish I could say that there was considered thinking behind it being a solo piece but the truth is that at the time I started writing it I didn't really know anyone else who could be in it with me. But I think the solo form works well because the audience become actors in this too and they play a big role. It's brilliant for me as a performer to see and hear the children participate, it gives the piece so much more life.

Having the idea picked up by Travelling Light has meant that 'Sammy' has turned out even better than I imagined – I always wanted it to be surreal, cartoonish and quirky and with Travelling Light's help it has become that and much more.

Brad McCormick

About Brad

Brad is an actor, deviser and theatre-maker, originally from New Zealand, now based in Newcastle.

He studied Acting at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School, and subsequently studied Commedia dell'arte with Antonio Fava in Italy and Clown, Bouffon, Vaudeville and Neutral Mask at the John Bolton Theatre School in Auckland.

His other solo work currently in development is called *THE FIXER*, which has a maximum audience of two and takes place primarily in a moving vehicle. He is also the Artistic Lead for participatory theatre company Cap-a-Pie that works with a wide range of participants including refugees, young people with autism and university academics.



We decided to ask Brad some of the questions that school pupils have come up with...

Is it hard to perform so many characters?

Changing from character to character takes a bit of getting used to when you first start practising the play, but it gets better the more you do it. Each character has a physicality that they always start with (eg. Mr Bracknell and his fringe, Hokey Pokey dancing) which makes it easier for the audience to know who is speaking and makes it easier for me to perform the character. Sometimes I might just practice moving from one character to the other many times so my body gets used to doing it and during the play I don't have to think about it because my body just knows what to do.

How do you learn all the lines?

I'm lucky that I've got quite a good memory to start with but it can still be hard work to learn lines. There's no magic trick unfortunately, you just have to sit down and go over and over and over the lines until you know them really well - it can be quite repetitive but it's worth it in the end. For this play it's a bit easier than usual to learn the lines because I wrote them all myself and for some reason that means I can remember them better.

Why did you decide to write a play about a snow leopard?

When I'm trying to come up with ideas for plays, sometimes I sit down and try and brainstorm interesting ideas and sometimes they just come to me out of the blue. For this one, I was watching TV one day and a commercial for the 'Adopt a Snow Leopard' charity programme came on and the idea for this show just popped into my head.



How long did it take to write it?

That's a tricky one to answer because there have been a few versions of the play that were written over a period of about 7-8 months but during that time I would do a bit of writing, maybe leave it for a few weeks and then come back to it. Sometimes having a break from writing a play can be helpful because new ideas can come to you during that time, or when you come back and read it again you realise that maybe a part of the story doesn't quite work and you could do it better.

After I'd written two versions, a very experienced writer called Adam Peck came on board to help me. His job was to make sure that my story was as strong as it could be and that everything made sense in the world of the play. If I remember rightly, there were another two versions after that.

How did you come up with the idea of what Mr Bracknell looked like?

I think I wanted Mr Bracknell to have a very unusual look - not necessarily an evil look, just something quite weird. That's where the idea for the haircut came from, I don't think I've ever seen anyone in the street who has a haircut like him. And I think it just made sense to me that he was tall and thin. As for the small nostrils, well I have to be honest and say that I was probably thinking of Voldemort from the 'Harry Potter' films who doesn't actually have a nose at all but has little slits in the middle of his face where his nose should be.

About the characters

There are lots of different characters in **Sammy and the Snow Leopard**. These are all played by one actor, doing multiple roles.

Why not see if you can guess them all and remember – or invent - what they look like!

Activity – Post-show

1. See if you can remember all of the characters

Answer: *Sammy, Mum, 4 dog walkers, Mr Bracknell, Kaiser, Hokey Pokey, Delivery Man, Vanilla, Mr Kruger, Policewoman*

2. Call out one of the characters and see if the children can describe what they look like.
3. Try making some frozen statues of these characters.



Endangered species

Many species of animal are categorised as endangered because their numbers are dropping so low that they could soon become extinct. A Snow Leopard is an endangered animal. There are many ways to help protect them, including adopting one, like Sammy!

About Snow Leopards

Sparsely distributed across 12 countries in central Asia, snow leopards are usually found in high, rugged mountain landscapes. They are solitary creatures, who hunt at dawn and dusk and are successful predators, able to kill prey up to three times their own weight. Their beautiful spotted coats change with the seasons – from a background of thick, white fur to keep them warm and camouflaged in winter, to a fine yellow-grey coat in the summer. The pattern of spots is unique to each individual snow leopard.

Poaching, conflict with people and loss of prey are persistent threats to their existence. Over the past 20 years, snow leopard numbers have declined by at least 20% – though exact numbers are uncertain because these cats are so elusive.

Why they matter

As top predators, snow leopards' favoured prey are the mountain sheep and goats that share their habitat. These herbivores graze on the sparse alpine plants of the region. Without the snow leopard, there would be too many herbivores, which would overgraze and degrade habitat, leaving no food for other wildlife.

The snow leopard's habitat also provides important resources for the many people who live there – from food and medicine to wood for shelter, heat and fuel. So by helping to protect the snow leopard, we're helping to conserve its environment for the benefit of people and nature.

Threats

- Habitat fragmentation
- Human-wildlife conflict
- Illegal wildlife trade
- Climate change

To find out more about Snow Leopards and how you can do more to help, visit:

http://www.wwf.org.uk/wildlife/snow_leopard/



There are lots of other endangered species. Here are a few facts...

- If an animal is endangered, that means that there aren't many of that kind of animal left and that the ones that are left are having trouble surviving.
- Plants can be endangered too – the term 'endangered species' can apply to both plants and animals.
- We can help endangered species through conservation. This means doing things – maybe even changing the way we do things – to make sure those plants and animals are protected.
- Zoos can play a big part in animal conservation. They work to keep different species happy and healthy, with the hope of one day releasing animals back into their natural home in the wild. You can learn more about animal conservation from people who are working on it right now by visiting a zoo or aquarium near where you live.
- If a plant or animal becomes extinct, life just doesn't go on as usual – for instance, if an animal always ate a certain kind of plant that no longer exists, then they have to find something else to eat. If they can't find anything else they like as much, then that species of animal will have a hard time surviving. It's all part of the food chain, and when you take one bit out of the chain it can take a while for the rest of it to figure out how to adapt.

There are lots of different ways to help them too...

Activity I – Post-show

1. Ask students to think about different types of endangered species, particularly ones in your area (e.g. Bees)
2. Discuss different ways you can help protect them. For example:
 - Make your home wildlife-friendly
 - Learn about endangered species in your area and share the information with friends and family
 - Visit or get involved with local wildlife centres
 - Drive safely and slowly
 - Recycle everything you can
 - Protect local habitats
3. Get into groups and design a **campaign** to help protect an endangered species. This could include a poster and/or drawings, and could also include reading cards, like Sammy has. Children can invite others to read their facts and ideas!
4. Present these to the rest of the class and get them to join in

Top Tip...

Perhaps you could help the bees by building a solitary bee house or planting more flowers!

Creative Writing / Speaking

Activity 2 – Post-show

In the play Sammy's mum won't let him have a pet, even though he tries asking for lots of different animals. In the end he persuades her to let him adopt one.

1. Ask the children to pick an animal they would like to adopt (perhaps an endangered one)
2. Ask them to write a letter to an adult they live with, trying to persuade them to let them adopt that animal
3. Include as many positive reasons as they can why it would be good to adopt the animal

Activity 3 – Post-show

The story of Sammy and the Snow leopard is based around the idea that, instead of a cuddly toy, Sammy gets a real Snow Leopard!

1. If their letter worked and the children were allowed to adopt their animal, ask them what might happen if a real one turned up on the doorstep: Where would they keep it? What would they feed it? What noise would it make? How would other people in their family react to it? What might happen if it escaped?
2. Invite children to share their ideas with the class or even tell a mini story, encouraging speaking and listening.
3. Get the children to write their stories down.

Story Tools

Below are some story cues you could use to encourage pupils to describe their animal and what it is like...

I opened the door and there was a	I heard a it sounded a bit like	It was the size of a	I thought it might like some to eat
I tried to hide it in	When it sleeps it	I touched it and it felt	I tried to stop it escaping by

Pre-show Activity

Activity

During the performance the audience will be asked to participate and play some of the characters. This will involve reading some cards which Sammy holds up.

Below are some examples that you can use with your class to practice reading out loud.

You could invent an activity that involved reading cards (eg. a short play, or instructions for a game such as Shipwreck) and then write and design your own cards for it.



Creative Team

Written and performed by
Director
Composer
Set & Costume Designer
Dramaturg

Brad McCormick
Craig Edwards
Stu McLoughlin
Chris Gylee
Adam Peck

Travelling Light

Artistic Producer
General Manager
Production Manager
Participation Director
Creative Learning Officer
Office Manager

Jude Merrill
Dienka Hines
Jo Woodcock
Georgina Trevor
Lizzy Cummins
Alison Sully



Make believing since 1984

Travelling Light specialise in creating accessible, live performance that puts the young audience at the heart of the piece. The productions include a variety of art forms such as dance, puppetry and physical comedy. Music is integral to all their productions and stories are told in visually inventive ways.

Okay

You can stay

Sammy!

What's that noise?

Sammy!

Time for School!