



Audio Description Notes for *The Little Prince*

WELCOME

Welcome to the Guthrie Theater's production of *The Little Prince*. My name is Elana Centor, and I will be your audio describer for this performance, which is approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes with no intermission.

The Little Prince is a play based on the book of the same name by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Composer Rick Cummins and playwright/lyricist John Scoullar have adapted *The Little Prince* into four different versions: two musicals and two plays (the Guthrie is producing one of the plays).

This adaptation is directed by Paris native Dominique Serrand, who was the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of the celebrated Theatre de la Jeune Lune in Minneapolis from 1978 to 2008, where he acted, conceived, directed and designed for most of the theater's productions. He currently serves as Co-Artistic Director of The Moving Company in the Twin Cities.

The idea for *The Little Prince* first came to Saint-Exupéry while he was sketching on a blank page. He drew a petite character that was so charming, it became a permanent figment in Saint-Exupéry mind — and eventually his writing. It is said that Saint-Exupéry looked at the drawing and asked, "Who are you?" The drawing responded, "I'm the little prince." *The Little Prince* first hit bookshelves in 1943. Today, it is the second-most translated book ever published, right behind the Bible. It has been translated into over 500 languages.

Saint-Exupéry wrote the story as a children's book, but most people believe it's a book for adults. At its heart, it's an allegory of Saint-Exupéry's own life — his search for childhood certainties and interior peace; his mysticism; and his belief in human courage, friendship and love.

The play centers on an Aviator who has become disillusioned with the lack of imagination in grown-up life. He now prefers to keep his own company, which he does until his plane goes down in the Sahara desert. Miles from human habitation, he is surprised to encounter a Little Prince who claims to be from another planet. The Little Prince appears each day at sunset and describes life on his planet and the reason he set out on his journey: a confusing relationship with a Rose. As the Little Prince recounts his travels and the people he encountered, the Aviator's own situation becomes more dire, with dwindling provisions, hallucinations and a damaged plane. Perhaps among the Little Prince's story and lessons will be the key to the Aviator's survival and a renewal of his own imaginative possibilities.

This production contains haze and fog.



STAGING AND PROPS

This production is on the McGuire Proscenium Stage. The set is Saint-Exupéry's studio in New York City where he wrote the book while exiled from war-torn Europe during World War II. Scenic Designer Rachel Hauck describes the sparse set as a "giant toy box" that "creates illusions and holds endless creative opportunities." Director Dominique Serrand told the *Star Tribune* that he is "trying to put onstage the room in which Saint-Exupéry is and the sense of the war and isolation."

The shapes in the studio are draped with parachute-like fabric to resemble sand dunes and, with some help from the lighting design, evoke a desert landscape. Hauck says, "I wanted to create a set that could quickly shift worlds and perspectives just like the play, which is exquisite and episodic." As a result, the set includes pockets for the actors to play and for the characters to expand their imaginations.

In the *Star Tribune* interview, Serrand also shares that originally, he thought of having the play on the Guthrie's thrust stage but decided the proscenium was a better fit. Serrand explains, "There's a lot of magic in the show — not Las Vegas-type magic, but truly magical moments — and the proscenium allows us to do things we want to do in a beautiful way."

The set includes an industrial-style rectangle table that is 8 to 10 feet long with thin legs that create an open space underneath the table. Beneath the center of the table, there are four drawers from the tabletop to the floor. The effect creates two distinct spaces underneath the table. On one end of the table, there are two round seats attached to each side of the table.

The set also has wooden crates and an industrial-style bookcase. Additional props include a moving step ladder with a platform, toy plane, toy volcano and toy baobab tree. There is also a large hand truck/dolly with a wooden platform used to transport characters on and off the set.

CAST, CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

This is a five-person cast. Only two cast members play one role: **Steven Epp** plays the **Aviator**, and **Reed Northrup** plays the **Little Prince**. The remaining cast members play multiple roles. The costumes are an integral part of the storytelling. Because of the magical nature of this play, the costumes are magical as well.

As the **Aviator**, **Steven Epp** is dressed as a pilot from the 1930s, including a helmet, goggles, bomber jacket, shirt, pants and boots. The helmet, bomber jacket and pants are brown. He has a white shirt that starts out tucked in his pants and later becomes untucked.

Epp is a middle-aged, light-skinned, gray-haired male. Epp has performed in multiple productions at the Guthrie, including *Metamorphoses*, *Indecent*, *Refugia*, *A Christmas Carol* and *To Fool the Eye*. He is the recipient of many awards.



CAST, CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES (continued)

As the **Little Prince**, **Reed Northrup** wears a blueish-green, transparent, silk organza tunic designed to create an impression that he is ethereal, untouchable and from a different realm. As Costume and Puppet Designer Olivera Gajic shares in the play program, “The gentle and delayed movement of the fabric helps communicate his weightlessness and otherworldliness.” He wears white, wide-leg pants underneath the tunic and is barefoot. In addition to the costume, Northrup creates a sense of weightlessness and otherworldliness by walking on the tips of his toes throughout the performance.

Northrup is a light-skinned young adult with a slight frame. This is Northrup’s Guthrie debut, and he holds an M.F.A. in Acting from Yale School of Drama.

Catherine Young plays the **Rose/Businessman/Geographer** and serves as a **Puppeteer**.

While all the costumes in this production are incredible, the Rose is breathtaking. Gajic says she designed the costume to show the Rose growing from a little seedling to a magnificent flower. The fabric is silk charmeuse, which was selected to mimic the shine and softness of rose petals.

When the **Rose** first appears onstage, it is quite mysterious and presents as a green, phallic-like statue. As the entity starts moving, it blooms from a green seedling to a full-grown Rose by shedding its green outer layer to reveal a luscious, red flower. The Rose costume includes a form-fitting, red, sleeveless and backless top with a floor-length, puffy skirt. The petals form a headdress that completely frames the Rose’s face. Think of an innertube with huge rose petals.

As the **Businessman**, Young’s costume gives the appearance of a self-operated marionette. He wears a traditional dark gray, double-breasted suit and a bowler hat. The suit has fantastical shoulders that are oversized and raised to the height of the Businessman’s eyes. With the hat on his head, it gives the appearance of a headless suit.

Young also portrays the **Geographer** who is half-human and half-puppet. Like the Greek centaur with the head of a human and the body of a horse, the Geographer has the head of a human and the body of a puppet. The audience is let in on this bit of theater magic when the Geographer walks onstage and the puppet is attached to the upper part of the actor’s body. Quickly, the Geographer kneels behind a wooden crate so the bottom half of the actor’s body is hidden. The puppet’s body sits on the top of the crate with its legs dangling off the edge. The human Geographer wears a hat with flaps that stick out like Dumbo’s ears, round wire-rimmed glasses and a dark handlebar mustache. He also wears a white shirt, plaid vest and gray jacket. The puppet bottom is wearing gray pants that are hiked up to show knee-high, argyle socks that are green, orange and white. The ensemble is completed with ankle-high black boots.

This is Young’s Guthrie debut. She has performed with Purchase Repertory Theatre and Walden Alumni Company. She is a tall, slim, light-skinned female with short, black hair.

CAST, CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES (continued)

Nathan Keepers portrays the **King/Snake/Fox**. The **King** makes his appearance sitting on top of the bookcase about 12 to 15 feet off the ground. He has a Humpty Dumpty vibe, sitting on the edge of the wall. His all-white body is rotund, and his legs look so skinny, they appear to not be strong enough to hold up the weight of the King's body. Any extremity not covered by the costume is painted white, and he wears a gold paper crown on his head.

The **Snake** costume is half-human and half-puppet. Part of the ensemble is worn by the actor while the midsection and tail are operated by two puppeteers. Gajic says this costume is highly stylized and inspired by Sankai Juku butoh dance troupe known for their use of slow choreography and white makeup. The Snake is huge, and the fabric was chosen to resemble the elegant, sleek and hypnotic movements of a snake.

The **Fox** costume looks human until its long, curvy tail is revealed.

Keepers has performed in multiple productions at the Guthrie, including *Noises Off*, *Refugia* and *King Lear*. He is a light-skinned male of average height.

Wariboko Semenitari portrays the **Conceited Man/Lamplighter** and serves as a **Puppeteer**.

As the **Conceited Man**, Semenitari wears a blue and white, vertical-striped, muscle tank top with body-forming, blue stretchy shorts. He has a white, sombrero-like hat.

The **Lamplighter** has a chandelier headpiece and a crank on his chest to turn the lights on and off. The rest of the costume is mostly in the shadows to emphasize the crank and lights on the chandelier.

This is Semenitari's Guthrie debut. He has performed locally at Theater Latté Da and Mixed Blood Theatre. He is a dark-skinned male of average height with a muscular frame.