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## **HOLIDAYS AROUND THE WORLD**

an interactive storytelling show  
written by Brian Guehring

Draft # 5.33

This is an interactive storytelling show about 55 minutes long introducing children and their families to winter holiday stories from around the world. A distinguished, but silly inventor invites the audience to try out his new transport devise to travel all around the world and help teach his uptight research friend how to have fun for the holidays. The audience will experience a German story about the Christmas Spider, the Chinese New Year story of the invention of fireworks, the Jewish dreidel game, the Mexican Christmas legend of the poinsettia and a Kwanzaa tale from Africa about the lazy rabbit.

This play was first produced by the Omaha Theater Company for Young People for school groups and public audiences in December 2002.

storytellers: Brian Priesman and Tina Dixon  
director: Kevin Barratt costume designer: Helen Humble  
set designer: Sprite Hascon dramaturg: Michael Miller

It was remounted in December of 2003 and 2004 with these new artists:

Dr. Upton: Amanda Kibler          Stanley: Brian Priesman          director: Janeve West.

It was remounted in December of 2005 and moved to the mainstage with these artists:

Dr. Upton: Amanda Kibler          Stanley: Konrad Case  
Set Designer: Michael Miller          Director: Janeve West

A new story from Germany was added in December 2006:

Dr. Upton: Erin Bragg          Stanley: Konrad Case          Director: Jim Hoggatt

The play was produced by CATS Theater in Arlington Texas in the winter of 2007.

It was remounted in December of 2011 by the Omaha Theater Company with a new story from China with these artists:

Dr. Upton: Samantha Shatley          Stanley: Walter Shatley          April: Jennifer Ettigner  
Mindy: Sara Kaus          Director: Michael Harrelson          Stage Manager: Dani Taylor

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Brian Guehring

# HOLIDAYS AROUND THE WORLD

## an interactive storytelling show

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Draft # 5.33 2011 Design Draft

### Character List

#### Employees at the Institute

**DR. PETUNIA UPTON** a prim and proper, highly intelligent lecturer at the Global Research of Universal Multicultural Practices Institute, the leader in cultural research in the USA. She wears a lab coat and is very professional in appearance. She carries a notebook/ clipboard/ briefcase filled with research.

*Plays Nun, Giraffe*

**DR. STANLEY SCHILLIE** an energetic new employee at the Institute who invented a Transimaginaveller

*Plays Father Christmas, Chinese Villager, Padre de Maria, Lion*

#### Volunteers from the Audience

GERMAN CHILDREN, SPIDERS

CHINESE VILLAGERS

DREIDEL SPINNERS

MARIA, and MEXICAN CHILDREN in POSADA

RABBITS, TURTLES, ELEPHANTS, HYENAS

### Settings

Main Lecture Hall of Global Research of Universal Multicultural Practices Institute

#### *Transimaginaveller Stops*

a German home during Christmas a long time ago

a Chinese Village

a Hanukkah celebration in Israel

a posada parade in Mexico on Christmas Eve

a village in Africa during Kwanzaa

### Time

the winter holidays now

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## Part 1: Welcome and Introduction

*(As the audience enters the theater, they are greeted by a lobby display with pictures and stories of the Finnish Joulupukri, the Italian La Befana, the English story of Boxing Day, and more. PRE-SHOW music plays Christmas Carols and Holiday music from around the world.*

*The stage is set is decorated with holiday symbols like the dreidel, the star, the Kinara, the poinsettia, etc. There is a large map or globe visible to the audience.*

*Ten minutes before the show begins APRIL and MINDY {two interns wearing the GRUMP Institute white lab coats} walk into the audience and begin to welcome the students to the Institute. They are welcoming and excited and even hint that there will be a fun surprise. When it is time to start, they get a "text" from Stanley and exit to find him. Or they possibly go on stage and act as "flight attendants" acting out the following speech)*

### OPENING SPEECH

Welcome, visitors, to the Rose Blumkin Lecture Hall at the Global Research of Universal Multicultural Practices Institute. We ask all visitors to the Institute to please turn off all cell phones, pagers and any inventions you brought with you that make noise. We also ask visitors to turn off all cameras, video phones, or other recording devices as all information in today's lecture is copyrighted by the Institute. For the sake of your fellow visitors, please no texting during today's show as we will assume you are stealing our research for our rivals and we will be forced to take your phones and erase its entire memory. Your sixty minute lecture will begin shortly.

*(DR. UPTON rushes in wearing a lab coat. She sets up a lecture podium center stage)*

### DR. UPTON

Oh, you're already here *(looking at her watch)*. And its time to start. Welcome to the Global Research of Universal Multicultural Practices Institute, the leader in cultural research in the country. My name is Dr. Petunia Upton and I'll be one of your lecturers today. You have been assigned the Holiday Symbol Archeological Origins Reseach Lec-

ture. We will explain the scientific beginnings of all of the Holiday symbols that we see everywhere this time of year. We'll learn about Hannukah, Kwanzaa and Christmas symbols. You will all learn quite a bit and that understanding will certainly augment your holiday pleasure.....*(looking to the door again)* ....I'm just waiting for our new employee and my co-lecturer, Dr. Stanley Schille ,.....who is supposed to be here already....*(looking at the door)*....If you'll excuse me, I'm going to call Dr. Schille to make sure he's alright. I'll be right back.

*(DR. UPTON exits UL STANLEY, a laid back, fun loving professor enters DL moments later wheeling a box to center stage)*

STANLEY

This will be awesome. So much fun. What is this podium doing here? We don't need that.

*(STANLEY exits DL and DR. UPTON enters UL)*

DR. UPTON

Sorry about that. I called Dr. Schille's home and he's is on his way. So we'll begin shortly. I apologize for the delay. How did this humongous box get on stage? It clearly states in Section 2, paragraph 4 of the manual the lecture hall must be clear before we begin. Of course, I have to clean up the lecture hall too.

*(DR. UPTON exits with box DR. STANLEY enters DL)*

STANLEY

Hey where is my invention? *(noticing people in seats and putting down gizmo)* Oh, you're here. I didn't see you before. Happy Holidays to you one and all. Welcome to the GRUMP Institute. A really stodgy, boring place. But I'm working on fixing that. My name is Dr. Stanley Schille, but you can call me Stanley. I'll be one of your leaders today. Well, I'll just go put on my costume. I'll be right back.

*(STANLEY saunters off UR . DR. UPTON hurriedly enters DR)*

DR. UPTON

Sorry, I don't know where Dr. Schille is. I apologize for the inconvenience. I'm sure....*(noticing gizmo)* Where did the podium go? Sorry, I apologize for the disorganization. I'll be right back.

*(DR. UPTON exits to find podium. STANLEY enters UR with his costume a crazy vest/jacket thing made of many different colors and fabrics and obviously homemade)*

STANLEY

Alright, I'm ready. Hey, have you seen Dr. Upton? *(Audience reacts)* Did she tell you about the program for today? *(audience reacts. )* Well don't let her scare you. I promise this won't be a boring lecture. I actually need your help today...*(looking at the floor again) ....*Where did my invention go? It was right here. Do you know where that box with all the wires and things went?

*(audience points him to DR and STANLEY exits. DR. UPTON enters DL)*

DR. UPTON

I can't find the podium. Maybe Dr. Schille knows where it is. Have you seen him yet? *(audience answers)* Was he here? *(audience reacts)* Where did he go? *(Audience points DR. )* Thank you.

*(DR. UPTON marches off DR and STANLEY enters UR with Box)*

STANLEY

Here's my invention, the Transmagnaveller. Do you like it? I made it myself. You guys are going to help us try it out for the first time. Now you all have met Dr. Upton already right. Did she seem like she was having fun? *(audience reaction)* Didn't think so. Well I asked you all to come today to help to teach Dr. U how to use her imagination and have fun. I only sent out invitations to the most creative kids who know how to have fun. And I can tell you are perfect. Transmagnaveller experts.

DR. UPTON *(off-stage)*

Dr. Schille?

*(STANLEY shhhs the audience and hides on stage)*

DR. UPTON *(panicking)*

Is he there?

*(STANLEY sneaks up behind DR. UPTON and taps her on the shoulder. SHE jumps and STANLEY laughs)*

STANLEY

Are you alright?

DR. UPTON

I just couldn't find you. And we were making these people waste their time. We have a job to do, Dr. Schille.....What are you wearing?

STANLEY

Its my costume. I made it myself. I thought it'd be fun.

DR. UPTON

Well we should start on the lecture. Have you seen the podium?

STANLEY

We're not going to use it.

DR. UPTON

We're not?

STANLEY

No.

DR. UPTON

How will we lecture about the cultural significance and historical origins of traditional holiday symbols?

STANLEY

We won't lecture about it. We're going to experience them.

DR. UPTON

I've already prepared my lecture and my notes...

STANLEY

That's great. And we'll use them. But we'll also use my new invention. You'll love it. Its a Transimaginaveller.

DR. UPTON

A what?

STANLEY

A Transimaginaveller. A people transporter that runs on imagination power. It will actually transport this entire room to a different country. Then we could actually go to the locations where the stories take place.

DR. UPTON

So this invention will take all of us to a new country to hear the lecture?

STANLEY

No, better. It'll take us to a new country where we'll perform your stories. That's why I invited this group of kids. To help us act out these stories. Raise your hand if you might be willing to help us out. (*audience reacts*) Excellent. See? We have a lot of imagination experts.

DR. UPTON

I guess.

STANLEY

Then let's do it. Did you do the research on the first story?

### STORY 1: GERMANY The Legend of the Christmas Spiders

DR. UPTON

Yes, the folktale of the Christmas Spider.

STANLEY

I love spiders! With their 8 legs and huge eyes!

DR. UPTON

Well this legend comes from Germany.

STANLEY

Well let's all go to Germany. Put your arms like this.

(*STANLEY puts DR. UPTON's hands into a strange pose.*)

DR. UPTON (*putting her arms down*)

Why are you putting my arms like that? That's silly.

STANLEY

Being silly helps your imagination. Just do it.

DR. UPTON

If you say so.

*(DR. UPTON puts her arms back)*

DR. UPTON

Remember, Germany is in Europe. *(pointing to map)* Right there.

STANLEY

Now if you say Merry Christmas in German the Transmaginaveller should know where to take us: to Germany during Christmas.

DR. UPTON

Fröhliche Weihnachten *(FROY-likh-eh vy-NAHCK-tehn)*

*(the lights flicker and the box moves a little)*

STANLEY

That was starting to work. We need a lot more power than I thought. We'll need all of you transmaginavellers to help. So everybody please hold their arms like this. And lets all say it together. Repeat after me. Fröhliche Weihnachten.

DR. UPTON and AUDIENCE

Fröhliche Weihnachten.

*( Magic happens! The box lights up in glow in the dark paint and cool traveling music fills the room. Lights return to normal as German music is heard).*

STANLEY

Cool! It really worked! Thanks audience, for your imagination expertise.

DR. UPTON

We're in Germany?

STANLEY

We sure are. I can just smell the bratworst and lebkuchen *(LEHB-koo-kehn)*.



DR. UPTON

You can smell saugage and German spicy cookies? I can't smell anything.

STANLEY

You must have a cold, because the smell is real strong. Hey look. The Transmaginavel-ler materialized some costumes in here. Are there spiders, a mother, some children, and Father Christmas in your story?

DR. UPTON

Yes.

STANLEY

I'll play the Father Christmas. I need 4 imagination experts with nice loud voices to play the children in the house.

*(STANLEY picks out four audience members. DR. UPTON maybe gives each of them a vest or hat or something)*

DR. UPTON

Who's going to play the mother?

STANLEY

Then I'll play that part, too.

*(STANLEY takes costume)*

DR. UPTON

But that would be very silly.

STANLEY

Exactly. And fun.

DR. UPTON

Fine. Then we need 4 more imagination experts to play the spiders in the house.

*(DR. UPTON picks out three audience members. STANLEY maybe gives each of them a vest or hat or something)*

DR. UPTON

Let's begin the story. Many, many years ago, in a small German town on Christmas Eve, a proud mother with four children were just about to decorate the Christmas Tree.

*(STANLEY brings on a Christmas Tree ).*

STANLEY as MAMA

Well children, that is the most beautiful tannenbaum I've ever seen. Don't you think our Christmas tree is pretty? *(Children Volunteers may vocally agree).*

STANLEY as MAMA

Now, children, we won't decorate the tree until every speck of dust, dirt, and cobweb is cleaned up.

DR. UPTON

Well, when the spiders in the corner heard this, they started to shake in fright.

*(STANLEY helps spiders shake)*

DR. UPTON

But one child said "We can't get rid of the cobwebs"

CHILD VOLUNTEER 1

We can't get rid of the cobwebs.

STANLEY as MAMA

Why not?

DR. UPTON

The second child answered, "Where would the spiders live?"

CHILD VOLUNTEER 2

Where would the spiders live?

STANLEY as MAMA

Outside, where all bugs and insects should be.

DR. UPTON

The third child then said, "But it's so cold outside"

CHILD VOLUNTEER 3

But it's so cold outside.

STANLEY as MAMA

I don't care. This house has to be spotless for Christmas. Who cares about those spiders? I'm going to get the cleaning supplies. And there won't be another word about it!

*(STANLEY exits to get cleaning supplies)*

DR. UPTON

Well the children didn't want to hurt the spiders. Luckily the fourth child got an idea and said, "Spiders hurry up to the attic and hide!"

CHILD VOLUNTEER #4

Spiders, hurry up to the attic and hide!

DR. UPTON

And the spiders, scurried along to hide in the attic.

*(STANLEY helps spiders get to the attic a then returns to room as MAMA )*

STANLEY as MAMA

Children, let's start cleaning.

*(STANLEY hands out the cleaning rags)*

DR. UPTON

The mother and the children cleaned the muddy footprints off the floor.

*(STANLEY and CHILDREN wipe the floor)*

DR. UPTON

Then the mother and her children wiped clean all the windows

*(STANLEY and CHILDREN pantomime wiping down the windows a little faster)*

DR. UPTON

Then they cleaned all the cobwebs out of the corners.

*(STANLEY and CHILDREN pantomime wiping down the corners a little faster)*

DR. UPTON

Then they cleaned the dust off the ceiling

*(STANLEY and CHILDREN jump to reach the ceiling)*

DR. UPTON

Then they cleaned the stairs to the attic

*(STANLEY and CHILDREN run to the attic)*

DR. UPTON

Then they cleaned hallway...

*(STANLEY and CHILDREN run to another part of the stage)*

DR. UPTON

And the kitchen...

*(STANLEY and CHILDREN run to the another part of the stage)*

DR. UPTON

And finally, the mother said....

STANLEY as MAMA

I think the house is clean enough. We can now decorate the tree.

*(MAMA and CHILDREN each put up two large ornaments on the tree)*

STANLEY as MAMA

As we decorate the tree, I will sing a traditional German Christmas Carol: O Tannenbaum

OH TANNENBAUM, OH TANNENBAUM  
HOW LOVELY ARE YOUR BRANCHES!  
OH TANNENBAUM, OH TANNENBAUM  
HOW LOVELY ARE YOUR BRANCHES!  
NOT ONLY GREEN IN SUMMER'S GLOW,  
BUT ALSO IN THE WINTER SNOW.  
OH TANNENBAUM, OH TANNENBAUM  
HOW LOVELY ARE YOUR BRANCHES!

STANLEY

Then her children, the spiders, and even their neighbors joined in singing the second verse. *(to audience)* I put the lyrics on the autograph card you got when you entered the GRUMP Institute.

*(AUDIENCE and actors sing second verse.*

)

OH TANNENBAUM, OH TANNENBAUM  
A SOURCE OF SIMPLE PLEASURE  
OH TANNENBAUM, OH TANNENBAUM  
A SOURCE OF SIMPLE PLEASURE  
REMINDING EV'RY GIRL AND BOY  
OF HOLIDAYS AND CHRISTMAS JOY  
OH TANNENBAUM, OH TANNENBAUM  
A SOURCE OF SIMPLE PLEASURE.

STANLEY as MAMA

Well that singing was beautiful, the house is beautiful, and this tannenbaum is beautiful. I think Father Christmas will be pleased. Now let's all go to bed and we'll see what he brings you for Christmas.

*(STANLEY as MAMA leads CHILDREN volunteers to sleep )*

DR. UPTON

As soon as the children were asleep, the spiders said, " I wonder what the Christmas Tree looks like?"

SPIDER VOLUNTEERS

I wonder what the Christmas Tree looks like?

STANLEY

Then the grandmother spider said....

DR. UPTON

There is no grandmother spider in any of the research....

STANLEY

Well there is one now.....

*(STANLEY puts a costume on Dr. UPTON)*

STANLEY

The grandmother spider said, "If we're quiet we can sneak downstairs and look."

DR. UPTON as GRANDMOTHER SPIDER (*in monotone*)

If we're quiet we can sneak downstairs and look.

STANLEY

So the spiders all snuck down from the attic...

*(DR. UPTON and SPIDERS sneak down)*

STANLEY

And they were amazed at the tree. The spiders all said, "It is so beautiful!"

SPIDERS

It is so beautiful.

STANLEY

Because spiders are so small they couldn't see the whole tree, so they all climbed up to get a closer look.

*(DR. UPTON hands out cob web to the spiders who stand up with their backs to the audience and use their hands to go up and down the tree and put cobwebs everywhere)*

STANLEY

The spiders climbed from branch to branch, swinging and playing and exploring every ornament on the tree. They were so busy looking at all the beautiful ornaments, that they didn't notice that Father Christmas had arrived.

*(STANLEY puts on FATHER CHRISTMAS outfit)*

STANLEY as FATHER CHRISTMAS

Guten Nacht, little spiders.

*(DR. UPTON and spiders stand to side and show the cobweb covered tree)*

DR. UPTON as GRANDMOTHER SPIDER

Guten Nacht, Father Christmas.

*(FATHER CHRISTMAS starts leaving presents under the tree)*

STANLEY as FATHER CHRISTMAS

It looks like you spiders have been climbing all over this tree.

DR. UPTON as GRANDMOTHER SPIDER

We have. Haven't we, spiders?

*(SPIDERS all agree)*

STANLEY as FATHER CHRISTMAS

You have left your spiderwebs all over the tree.

DR. UPTON as GRANDMOTHER SPIDER

Oh no, if the mother finds these spiderwebs, she will shoo us out of the house and we will freeze in this cold weather.

STANLEY as FATHER CHRISTMAS

Well, that won't do, will it? For Christmas is a celebration for all creatures. Let me see what I can do....

*(lights go down as STANLEY turns the tree around)*

DR. UPTON

Well on Christmas morning, when the children woke up and came down the stairs.....

*(DR. UPTON helps children wake up and come to tree. )*

DR. UPTON

They were amazed.

*(Lights come up to reveal the tree covered in sparkling silver and gold tinsel)*

DR. UPTON

Father Christmas had magically transformed the spider webs into silver and gold thread.

*(STANLEY as MAMA comes down)*

STANLEY as MAMA

Oh, Children, it's beautiful.

DR. UPTON

Then she saw the spiders hiding.

STANLEY as MAMA

And little spiders, I was wrong. You do no harm. You actually help catch the bugs and flies in the house. I must remember to be nicer to all creatures.

DR. UPTON

And too this day, we put tinsel on our Christmas trees to remember the German legend of the Christmas Spiders.

STANLEY

And to remember to be kind to all of God's creatures.

DR. UPTON

Let's give a big hand for our these imagination experts: the children and the spiders.

*(Audience volunteers return costumes and return to their seats.)*

STANLEY

Dr. Upton you did a wonderful job as the grandmother spider.

DR. UPTON

It wasn't as bad as I thought. You did a wonderful job as mother and Father Christmas.

STANLEY

Thank you.

DR. UPTON

Where are we going next?



**Brian Guehring** is the Playwright in Residence of the Omaha Theater Company, one of the nation's largest professional theaters for young people. Brian has adapted the world premiere scripts of the Newberry Award winning novel **Julie of the Wolves** (directed by Everett Quinton), **Miss Bindergarten**, **If You Give a Cat a Cupcake**, **The Misfits**, **Holiday Time Around the World** and **Sacagawea: Discovering History**. Brian's scripts have won several national and regional awards. His adaptations of **Where the Red Fern Grows** and **Old Yeller** and his original Theater in Education play **The Super Adventures of Pyramid Man and Dr. Nutrition** won AATE (American Alliance for Theater and Education) Unpublished Play Project Awards. His script **The Bully Show** was selected for the 2002 New Visions/New Voices new play development workshop at the Kennedy Center. Brian received a playwriting fellowship from the Nebraska Arts Council in 2002. His new adaptation of the Newberry Award winning novel **The Giver** was honored as one of the best theater productions of 2008 in Omaha by the Omaha World Herald. His original script **King Chemo** won the Southwest Theater Association's 1997 Best New Play for Children, and his original play **Creating Haley's World** was selected in 2003 for development in the inaugural Playwrights in Our Schools program. His plays have been produced by Imagination Stage in Washington, D.C., Lexington Children's Theater, Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia, Barter Theater of Virginia, South Carolina Children's Theater, A. D. Players in Houston, Apple Tree Theater for Young Audiences in Chicago, Town Hall Theater in Dayton, and other schools and theaters. **King Chemo** and **The Bully Show** are published by Dramatic Publishing Company. He also contributed to Dramatic Publishing's **The Bully Plays**, an anthology of 10 minute plays about bullying for teen performers.

Brian is also the Education Director of the Omaha Theater Company which does drama and dance education outreach for every single child in over 80 local schools each year. His teen theater troupe **Pride Players** (which uses improvisation to explore issues facing gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and straight allied teens) won a Human and Civil Rights Award from the National Education Association in 2006. In 2010, Brian was elected to the Board of Theater For Young Audiences/USA. Brian earned his MFA in Children's Theater and Creative Drama from the University of Texas at Austin.