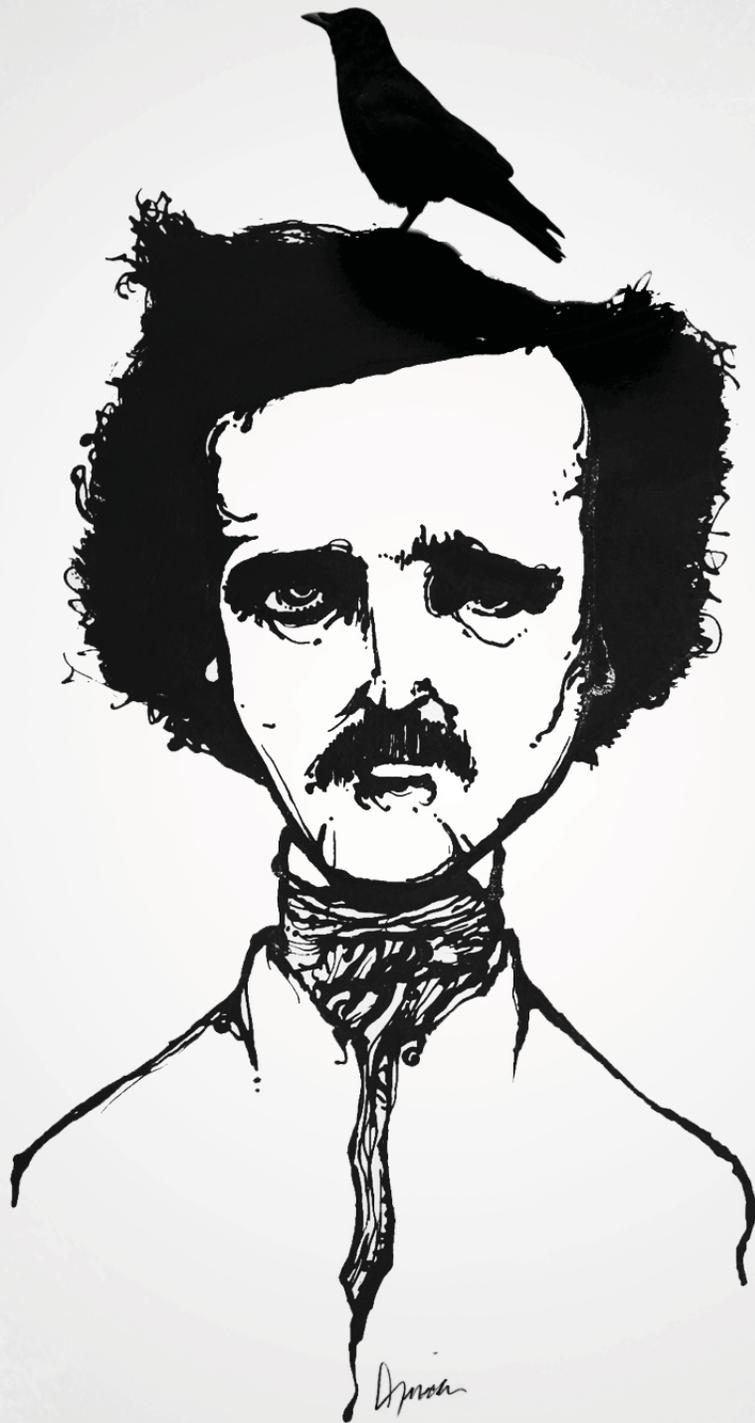


STUDY GUIDE



TheatreSquared presents

The POE SHOW

**BY MORGAN HICKS, JORDAN HAYNES
and KRIS STOKER**

**ARKANSAS
STATEWIDE TOUR**

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ABOUT THEATRESQUARED

"We believe that theatre, done well and with passion, can transform lives and communities." – from the T2 Vision Statement

TheatreSquared (T2), founded in 2004, is a regional professional company dedicated to creating exceptional works of theatre. Merging a strong artistic vision with innovative educational programs, TheatreSquared develops new audiences through creative partnerships, and fosters economic and artistic growth in Northwest Arkansas.

T2's annual season of plays includes four productions and the Arkansas New Play Festival of emerging works. Productions are presented in the 130-seat Studio Theatre at Nadine Baum Studios, a Walton Arts Center venue, in downtown Fayetteville, Arkansas.

In addition to its season of theatrical works, T2 creates innovative educational programming including student and teacher workshops, professional training academies, and immersive student matinees and discussions.

PRODUCTION WHO'S WHO

Morgan Hicks

co-author, director

holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting from Arkansas State University, and studied political theatre at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland. She received her Master of Arts in Performance Studies from Missouri State University and a Master of Fine Arts in Directing from the University of Arkansas. Morgan has worked in Arkansas, Missouri and Illinois as a director, teaching artist and arts administrator, notably serving as Company Manager of BareStage and General Manager of Writer's Theatre in Chicago. She is one of the co-founders of TheatreSquared where she currently serves as Director of Education and Program Development, and recently directed *Boeing, Boeing...The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep* and *Fully Committed*. Morgan teaches at Arkansas Governor's School and the University of Arkansas.

Kris Stoker

co-author

is no stranger to TheatreSquared, where he previously appeared in the World Premiere of Robert Ford's *My Father's War* and as Clown #1 in *The 39 Steps*. He recently returned to the Northwest Arkansas area after a two year stint as a resident ensemble actor and teaching artist with the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, where he performed such roles as Lord Goring in Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* and Cassio in *Othello*. A Missouri native, he has spent time in New York studying long form improvisation with The Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre and holds an MFA in Acting from the University of Arkansas.

Jordan Haynes

co-author

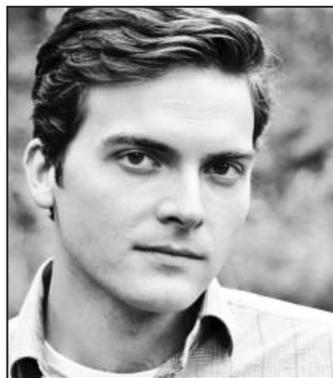
is currently a resident of Chicago, Illinois, where he attends the conservatory training at Second City. He holds a B.A. degree from the Drama program at the University of Arkansas, where he was involved in numerous shows including leading roles as a part of the ensemble cast of *All in the Timing*, Vince in *Tape*, and John Barrymore in *I Hate Hamlet*, as well as major roles in the Not-A-Penny Productions of *Plan 9 from Outer Space the Musical* and *Form*. He was also seen onstage in TheatreSquared's productions of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)* and *Every Christmas Story Ever Told*.

CAST



Caden Worley

attended the UofA, majoring in both theatre and English, where he performed in numerous productions. Some favorites including Peter in *Stop/Kiss* and Lady Clementia/Dr. Septimus Podgers in *Murder and the English Gentleman*. He also performed in the production *Bombs, Babes, and Bingo* for the Artist's Laboratory Theatre, which went up at the New Orleans Fringe Festival. This is his first production with TheatreSquared!



Thomas Hunter

is happy to appear in his first TheatreSquared production. He's originally from Pine Bluff, Arkansas and is a graduate of Pine Bluff High School. He attended the University of Arkansas as a drama major where he appeared in numerous production on the mainstage as well as for NotAPenny Productions. He is a founding member of the comedy improv troupe, Dan's Party and currently lives in Chicago, Illinois where he's pursuing his acting and improv career.



Justin Cunningham

is a graduating senior at the University of Arkansas with an emphasis in Acting. Some of his acting credits include: The title role of *Othello* (University of Arkansas), Hot Blades Harry-Urinetown (University of Arkansas), Chip Tolentino- *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (University of Arkansas), and Biff Loman-*Death Of A Salesman* (Nadine Baum Studios). He has appeared in staged readings of *Sundown Town* and *Look Away* for TheatreSquared's Arkansas New Play Fest.

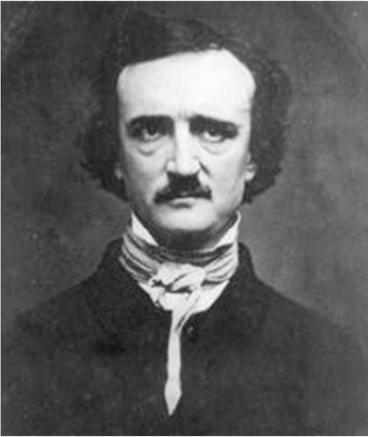


Erika Wilhite

returns to Theatre Squared as "Erika" in *The Poe Show*. Her regional credits include Audrey in *As You Like It* and Martha in *The Secret Garden* (Orlando Shakespeare Theatre). In Fayetteville, she has been seen in *Bombs, Babes, and Bingo* and *Show and Tell: A Sheet Fort Experience* at The Artist's Laboratory Theatre, as Ariel in *The Tempest* presented by Trike Theatre, and most recently as "Berthe" in *Boeing Boeing* at Theatre Squared.

SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

EDGAR ALLAN POE



Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was an American author, poet, editor and literary critic, considered part of the American Romantic Movement. Best known for his tales of mystery and the macabre, Poe was one of the earliest American practitioners of the short story and is considered the inventor of the detective fiction genre. He is further credited with contributing to the emerging genre of science fiction. He was the first well-known American writer to try to earn a living through writing alone, resulting in a financially difficult life and career. He was born as Edgar Poe in Boston, Massachusetts; he was orphaned young when his mother died shortly after his father abandoned the family. Poe was taken in by John and Frances Allan, of Richmond, Virginia, but they never formally adopted him. He attended the University of Virginia for one semester but left due to lack of money. After enlisting in the Army and later failing as an officer's cadet at West Point, Poe parted ways with the Allans. His publishing career began humbly, with an anonymous collection of poems, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, credited only to "a Bostonian". When he was 25, he married his 13-year-old cousin Virginia Clemm. They were married for 11 years, until her death of tuberculosis in 1847. Poe wrote throughout his entire life, short as it was, and died in 1849, at age 40, two years after his wife's death.



Two actors (Justin and Thomas) have been invited by your school to make a presentation for the student body. The goal of the presentation is to make the work of Edgar Allan Poe "come alive" for the students. Everyone knows that students have trouble with Edgar Allan Poe...and our actors have worked hard to create "access points" for a variety of learning styles.

The play begins with their interpretation of "The Cask of Amontillado", a dark tale that follows our anti-hero as he seeks revenge for a perceived slight perpetrated by his acquaintance, Fortunato. After a comedic interpretation of the dramatic conflict in that tale, we are introduced to Erika - the stage manager. Erika has been given the unenviable task of keeping the boys in line and on schedule. She urges them to move on...and Thomas shares his contribution - a slide show of "The Black Cat" done in a decidedly graphic novel style.

Things get even crazier when the boys decide to teach "The Masque of the Red Death" targeted to the kinetic learners in the audience...which, of course, means INTERPRETIVE DANCE! And that's not all! Their approach to the challenging work "The Descent into the Maelstrom" is designed for tactile learners and requires an audience volunteer!

As the show begins to spin out of control and Erika is unable to get the boys back on track, a mysterious figure from the audience takes issue with their "creative" approach. The boys argue with the stranger. "No one knows Poe like we know Poe" ...but is that really the case?

The story that now unfolds becomes a mystery. Who is this stranger and why does he have such an investment in making sure that the works of Poe are treated with dignity and respect? How will he help Thomas and Justin understand the more challenging "The Tale Tell Heart" and "The Raven"? Will Erika ever get the boys back in the van and on the road to the next show?

Find out by joining us for "THE POE SHOW". Fo' sho.



Caden Worley, Justin Cunningham, Thomas Hunter and Erika Wilhite in TheatreSquared's production of "The Poe Show"!

POE TRIVIA!

Since Poe had such a contentious relationship with his foster father John Allan, he hardly ever used his middle name. He always published as "Edgar A. Poe"—unless, of course, he made up a new name altogether.

By 1843, Poe was so broke that he found himself down to his last \$4.50 and spent time stopping people on the street to ask for money for food.

In 2000, New York University announced plans to demolish the home where Edgar Allan Poe lived from 1841 to 1844 in order to make room for its law school. Outraged preservationists and Poe fans took to the streets in protest, leading to a compromise in which NYU promised to use the bricks from the original façade in the new building.

Every year since 1949, an anonymous fan known as the "Poe Toaster" has visited Poe's grave on the night of his birthday and has left a partially filled bottle of cognac and three roses.

The Baltimore Ravens football team is named after Poe's poem *The Raven*, which he wrote in Baltimore.

After losing a Super Bowl bet when the Baltimore Ravens beat the New York Giants in 2001, New York Senators Chuck Schumer and Hillary Clinton joined Maryland Senators Barbara Mikulski and Paul Sarbanes for a reading of *The Raven*.

As a student at West Point, Poe used to tell fellow cadets that his grandfather was the infamous traitor Benedict Arnold. Great story, not true.

What does that mean?

In the *Cask of the Amontillado*, Poe introduces many terms that might be unfamiliar.

Amontillado- [uh MON te YAH doh] Dry, amber wine. The word Amontillado is derived from Montilla, the name of a Spanish town. The suffix *ado* means in the style of. Thus, Amontillado is a wine in the style of the kind made in Montilla, Spain.

Aperture- Opening.

Carnival- Festival just before Lent, called Mardi Gras in some western countries. The word carnival is derived from the Latin words *carne* (meat) and *vale* (farewell). Thus, it literally means "farewell to meat." During Lent, Roman Catholics do not eat meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays thereafter, until Easter.

Catacombs- Underground burial places.

Circumscribing- Encircling, surrounding; tracing a line around.

Fetter Shackle -chain, bond.

Flambeau- Torch; plural, flambeaux.

Hearken- Listen carefully.

Immolate - Kill a person as a sacrifice.

Imposture- Deception, fraud.

Impunity- Freedom from punishment; exempt from punishment.

Médoc -Red wine from the Bordeaux region of France.

Nemo me impune lacessit -[NAY moh MAY im POO nay lah CHESS it] Latin for No one injures me with impunity. This sentence appeared on coins of James I of England.

Nitre- Potassium nitrate.

Palazzo- Palace; splendid home.

Pipe- Cask holding 126 gallons.

Puncheon- Cask holding 84 gallons.

Rapie -[RAY pe er] Two-edged sword.

Rheum- [ROOM] Watery discharge.

Roquelaure- [rok uh LAHR or rok LAHR] Knee-length, often fur-trimmed cloak after Duc de Roquelaure (1656-1738)

Sconce- Bracket on a wall for holding a candle or a torch.

PRE SHOW ACTIVITIES

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Create timeline demonstrating events in Poe's life and simultaneous events in American and global history. Then, draw connections between Poe's work and these different personal and historic events. How do these events affect Poe's writing. Is he a product of his time and place?

Explore the popularity of the themes of science fiction and horror in the media (television, movies, fiction, videogames) today. Why are these themes popular? What similarities between modern works of science fiction and horror and works written by Edgar Allan Poe exist?

THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR

An unreliable narrator typically displays characteristics or tendencies that indicate a lack of credibility or understanding of the story. Whether due to age, mental disability or personal involvement, an unreliable narrator provides the reader with either incomplete or inaccurate information as a result of these conditions.

Poe is known for his unreliable narrators. They are often mentally deranged or drunk or both.

Write an essay that compares and contrasts the narrator of *The Black Cat* with the narrator of *The Cask of the Amontillado*. How are they unreliable? Is one more reliable than the other? Why?

What about other unreliable narrators? Are they present in any modern day storytelling? Think of popular literature today. Can you think of movies or TV shows that have a narrator you might not be able to totally trust?

Write a paragraph about something that you have done in your life from your own point of view. Go through the events and try to explore the thoughts and feelings that you experiencing as the events transpired. Now write about the same experience from the perspective of an outside narrator. Think of a person that would have viewed the events differently. Maybe they didn't have all the information you had. Maybe they had an alternate agenda. You might select a stranger, a baby, an elderly relative, a friend or an enemy. Whose view of the events is more accurate? For even more fun, write an additional paragraph from a completely different narrator's perspective. Whose view of the events is the most interesting?



ANAPHORA

Poe frequently uses anaphora, a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of a clause or another group of words.

Anaphora imparts emphasis and balance. Here are boldfaced examples from "The Black Cat":

I grew, day by day, **more** moody, **more** irritable, **more** regardless of the feelings of others.

[T]hese events **have** terrified -- **have** tortured -- **have** destroyed me.

When reason returned with the morning -- **when** I had slept off the fumes of the night's debauch -- I experienced a sentiment **half** of horror, **half** of remorse,

Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is **one** of the primitive impulses of the human heart -- **one** of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of man.

I blush, **I** burn, **I** shudder, while **I** pen the damnable atrocity

One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and **hung it** to the limb of a tree -- **hung it** with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart -- **hung it** because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no reason of offence -- **hung it** because I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin.

Here is another example of the anaphora by Oscar Wilde:

There is only one thing in the world worse than **being talked about**, and that is not **being talked about**.

Find the anaphora in the passage from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* found below!

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way...

Now write your own poem or prose using anaphora!

A **rhetorical device** is a technique that an author or speaker uses to convey to the listener or reader a meaning with the goal of persuading him or her towards considering a topic from a different perspective. While rhetorical devices may be used to evoke an emotional response in the audience, there are other reasons to use them.

The goal of rhetoric is to persuade towards a particular frame of view or a particular course of action, so appropriate rhetorical devices are used to construct sentences designed both to make the audience receptive through emotional changes and to provide a rational argument for the frame of view or course of action.

Personification (giving a non-living thing a human characteristic) -Death in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him and enveloped the victim. [Here, Death is a person.]

Simile (uses "as" or "like" to compare something to something else)-So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until at length a single dim ray like the thread of the spider shot out from the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye. [The simile is the comparison of the ray to the thread of the spider with the use of the word like. It increased my fury as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage. [The simile is the comparison of the heartbeat to a drumbeat.]

His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness. . . . [The simile is the comparison of the darkness to pitch.]

Alliteration (the repetition of the beginning sound of a word) -Hearken! and observe how healthily, how calmly, I can tell you the whole story. Meanwhile, the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It is the beating of his hideous heart!

Irony (a technique of indicating, as through character or plot development, an intention or attitude opposite to that which is actually stated.)-

I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him.

Now choose your own rhetorical device and explore through writing prose!

POST SHOW EXERCISES

Isn't it Romantic?

Poe was a poet of the Romantic era, a time when emotion trumped reason. Read aloud a particularly dark or scary excerpt from one of his short works. While you read, tell students to write in their journals about how the words of the story make them feel.

Ask students to identify specific words and phrases that especially add to the mood of the writing. Students then share their answers. Discuss how good word choice in a piece of writing adds to what the reader feels when he or she is reading the work. Then, reread the short work or excerpt, telling students to focus on the wording of the literature, after you add appropriate setting to the room by turning out or dimming the lights in the classroom, playing "mood" music in the background, and lighting candles. Discuss how the physical setting in which a work is read affects one's interpretation of that work. Were the words you read just as scary without this special setting?

Goth/Emo or Poser? Put Poe on Trial!

Not everyone thought Poe was as awesome we do.

Thanks to Rufus Griswold's memoirs, Poe posthumously gained a reputation for being a drunk and a drug addict. His talent as a writer has also been scrutinized. More than a few writers at the time questioned his talent. Empower the students to decide for themselves after researching the evidence and weighing the facts in a prepared argument over the following topics.

1. Divide the class into small groups, assigning specific topics of research: the poetry and fiction of Poe vs. the writings of his contemporaries, such as Mark Twain and T. S. Eliot.
2. In small groups, research Poe's alleged chemical dependence. What was written about him in his Memoirs? Why is this source possibly unreliable?

Your class can find many primary resources such as letters, reviews, and literature online or in the library!

My Own Poe Show - Fo Sho!

Select a piece of Poe's work to adapt and mock-produce as a play. In theatre, many artists are involved in collaboration to make a play- the playwright writes the script, a director conceptualizes the play and transfers it from the page to the stage, leading a group of actors in the staging of the play. A scenic designer comes up with physical setting of the play (based on the directors concept). The costume designer creates the wardrobe for all the characters of the play. The sound and lighting designers create the mood of the play by creating "looks" on stage with lighting and by underscoring the play with music and sound effects. Each artist is essential to making a play, and each element can tell the story in its own way.

In small groups, choose a short story or poem by Poe to adapt into scripted dialogue. In each group there should be a playwright who adapts the story (or a scene from the story), scenic designers who imagine and illustrate the scenery and poster, a costume designer to imagine and illustrate the clothing of the characters (costumes tell stories too!), and assign the lighting and sound designers to choose the perfect look and musical mood of the play. Encourage the students to get creative with the project and to work together first in a production meeting. Everyone needs to be on the same page before working individually.

What kind of music and sound effects will be used to underscore their play (have a boom box ready for their presentations)? What time period will be reflected in the costume designers clothing choices? What is the director's vision for the play? Each artist will illustrate their concepts with drawings or explain through writing. After the designers and directors give their presentations, have the groups read the play aloud.

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TheatreSquared
northwest arkansas' professional theatre company



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Penguin, 1996.
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Walsh, John Evangelist.
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http://www.youtube.com/webenglishteacher#p/a/u/0/fWzmS3cX_8M

AUDIO

http://www.thecabinet.com/poe/index.php?sub_id=edgar_allan_poe_theater

ONLINE RESOURCES

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