

EARTH CHILD 1990

a one act Musical to promote discussion of
environmental issues



The Peace Child Foundation

presents

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a one act Musical to promote discussion of
environmental issues

by

David Woollcombe
inspired by a folk story from the Middle East

Songs

by

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INTRODUCTION

How To Do This Presentation

What do you need ?

- 1) A "Theater", large room or outdoor stage. A school assembly hall is perfect. It can be done without a sound or lighting system in a school cafeteria or classroom. Also, since Earth Day falls on a Sunday, it may be done in churches or church halls by Sunday school classes.
- 2) A cast: 20 - 30 kids. Adult roles will normally be played by older kids but, if you can persuade teachers or parents to play the roles of villagers, Presidents, voices of the river etc. - DO! Adults in the cast gives children confidence and makes them feel that what they are doing is important.
- 3) A Piano player: some one who can improvise & transpose. *[In extremis, we do have instrumental tracks on audio cassette; these may be purchased for \$7.50. However, it is much, much better to have a good musician who can bring the music alive, possibly with a synthesizer so that effects may be added.]*
- 4) An audience! - The play is perfect for a school assembly, or a lunch time show. But, if you can, try to get a mixed audience of adults and children.
- 5) Props: You will need five large butcher boards, and felt tip pens.
- 6) Optional: lights, costumes, make-up, sound effects, scenery. An imaginative director will note places for these, and they will certainly enhance the impact of the play; however, as written, it is perfectly acceptable to do it on a bare stage, with the cast creating the sound effects with their own voices, assisted by the piano, and the narrator.

Time Line: This presentation is designed to be done quickly: a talented group of 20 kids with a good pianist could prepare it in a day - Earth Day for example!

However, I suggest that you take 2-4 weeks with a class or group meeting two or three times a week to learn the songs, work through the ideas in the play, research the background, check the facts, and write some excellent drop-ins.

Begin by doing the Improvisation below. Then read through the play and start to learn some of the songs. At each session, spend half to a third of your time on the songs; the rest should be spent on research. If you are short on time, you might like to split this up - have one group look into the state of the planet statistics, another group work on ideas for what can be done in your community, etc. Look at videos - documentaries about environmental subjects. Clip articles from local and national newspapers. Have a speaker come from a local environmental group.

About a week before show time, fix on the script. You can, of course, change minor things - and if things don't work, change them! But, for the sake of your cast, have a set script typed up and distributed to every one. Don't cast it early: allow the children to mature through the process of doing the research and writing lines. If you are lucky, the children themselves will choose who is to play the two leads.

NOTE: This play may be done as a staged reading, with the performers holding books. However, if you have the time, learn it. Kids handle books badly and, if faced with the challenge, always do learn (or improvise) the lines very quickly.

Dialogue Drop-ins: After your cast have done the improvisation, writing a few bits of dialogue in English will be a breeze! After you have done the research, you will have a host of ideas. The purpose of this, like all Peace Child Foundation scripts, is to give you a framework of a play that you can flesh out with your own ideas. Feel free to change any of the dialogue: I always do. Not only do I have new ideas, I find that some lines just do not fit well with children's speech patterns.

However much I tell people to do this, I find that some don't. It is, I guess, easier just do what's written. To force you, there are some places where I have just stopped writing. There is blank space, or DROP INS - where you "drop in" the dialogue, or verses of songs. There are only four such points in the play: work at them, use them to get the creative juices flowing in your cast. Be sure that all the points that come up for them - the points that seem so important as you talk during coffee breaks, or in the car on the way back from rehearsals, or that article that you saw in the local paper.... Make sure that all that stuff is included in the play. Then it will become truly your own work.

If you have a large cast, do try to spread the lines and solos around so that each child feels that they have a solid stake in the show. In the script, most lines are given to the girl and boy (who can be interchanged, or two girls, or two boys!); however, if you are smart, you will be able to find ways to create other characters taking some of the lines scripted for the children.

IMPROVISATION

This play is based on an improvisation which every cast should do. It will take you about an hour, (and it may change your life!) It is based on an exercise developed by Peter Brook, and it was told to me by members of the Gog Theater in England who have used it all over the world. It is very, very simple. Just follow the process outlined here:

- Meet in the theater, on stage, and separate the cast into two groups of equal size, age/sex composition, etc.
- Send each group to a separate room where they cannot see or hear each other. Send a facilitator out with them to explain the exercise.
- While they are out, build a wall down the middle of the stage - use chairs, tables, coats, bits of scenery - anything you can lay your hands on. Build it tall and solid so that no one can see over the top, or see through it.
- Ask each group to create a new culture. This involves creating a new language: (grunts, snorts, Slavic sounds, Germanic, Oriental, Hispanic sounds, singing noises - no recognizable language). Then they must devise new forms of dress (take off the shirt or jacket and put it on backwards; wear ties around the head - be very inventive!); new forms of greeting; new music, new ways of moving, new dance, new life styles. Get the group into the new language as quickly as possible and make sure no one lapses back into English. After five or ten minutes, they will be communicating quite happily in the new tones, describing their houses to each other, having parties, going to new forms of sporting events, painting, dancing.
- Do this for about half an hour, then bring both groups back on stage. Set them up on either side, and ask them to establish their village. After about five minutes, allow them to peek over the wall and see the other group. Let them dismantle the wall, and start to communicate. See where the communication goes.

I do not wish to pre-determine the outcome of the improvisation. Each will be different. The point is to get each member of the cast to focus on the difficulties of cross-cultural communication, - and to get used to being utterly insane on stage and getting away with it!

You will note that this improvisation provides the basis for the main situation in the play. Spend about an hour exploring the outcome it thoroughly with your cast afterwards.

EARTH CHILD

I. THE OPENING

[Have the producer or school principal get up on stage to introduce the play and call for silence.]

The first sound we hear is the rhythmic vamp of "PEACE IN THE HEART". The cast come in through the audience, dancing/swaying to the rhythm as two narrators introduce the different language sections of the song:

Narrators: French! - La Paix du monde!
Spanish! - Acqui llego la Paz!
Russian - Ya boodyet Mir oo Mir!
Swahili - Amani duniامي!
Japanese! - Heiwa seka!
and English! - Everybody's singing, singing Peace in the Heart!

Soloist: Walking inside my mind
I see a vision of mankind
Breathing as one body
In syncopated rhyme
and everybody... everybody.... everybody's singing.....!

Chorus: La Paix du monde -

Soloist: Looking before my eyes
So many colors side by side
moving with a peaceful motion
Sharing the gift of life
and everybody... everybody.... everybody's singing

Each one does a verse of the song, as the cast stand in a circle on the stage, a tightly knit, close ensemble. Do not attempt to do a dance here - let every person on the stage move in rhythm. In the final choruses, let the narrators conduct the chorus, taking the volume down to a whisper - and up to a roar! - then back down to a whisper.... then SILENCE. Hold a moment, then have the whole cast erupt in wild catcalls, cheers, hugs and enthusiasm. Over this the narrators come forward to start the story.

Narrator 1: Welcome! Welcome to Earth Day 2025.

Narrator 2: Only an hour ago, we received -

Narrator 1: - hot on the wire from the United Nations!

Narrator 2: This year's State of the Planet report! [Cast cheers!]

II. STATE OF THE PLANET REPORT

Five members of the cast hurry to bring out large butcher boards. They are marked with big titles: "POPULATION - RESOURCES - POLLUTION - POVERTY - PEACE" The whole cast wait expectantly. The report is presented like a sports cast: the narrators act like carnival barkers, the kids respond with oohs and aaahs!

Narrator 1: Are we ready here? **Narr. 2:** Don't look so worried! It's a good report! You don't remember what it was like 30 years ago! That was really scary!

[DROP INS I: The figures used in the following speeches are mostly guess work. They are based on the World Resource Institute's report, UNICEF's state of the world's children, the Worldwatch Institute's State of the World report, UN Agency and US government statistics. The choice of titles is based on the first International Peace Day Concert's global assessment in September 1989.

I urge you not to trust me! If you have time, get hold of these books from your library and write your own State of the Planet report! If they don't have them, order them. They are indispensable.]

Five "reporters" come out to present the report. The First goes to the chart marked: "Population". He flips the cover to reveal graphs drawn in big magic marker lines illustrating the figures. A new sheet is used for each graph:

Reporter 1: OK - State of the Planet report 2025. As always, we begin with population. And our "Total World Population" is.... 8.2 Billion!! *(The cast all cheer)* Yeah! it's a good figure, but better even than that is the "Rate of Growth" - it's gone down again! - for the fifteenth year running! It's down another point at .68%. *(Cheers)* Problem areas still parts of India and Pakistan; Kenya, parts of West Africa, and Latin America. But - all projections now look for a stabilization in the world population at 10 billion! Population-wise, it really looks like we're going to make it.

Reporter 2: Resources. Not quite so rosy. Forest loss still substantial in spite of the total world ban on the cutting of virgin forest! Topsoil depletion still worryingly high, although massive cooperation between world food producers is halting the decline. Energy?? looking better. Total remaining reserves of oil and natural gas are low - we all knew that: scarcely a decade's supply of oil left, and only about 30 years of natural gas. BUT - alternative energy supplies are taking up the slack and - this is really exciting - we see here the first impact of energy from the Solar collectors out in space! The Sahara and Gobi Desert receiving facilities are now on stream at 1% of capacity and, by mid-century, we are expecting them to be providing more than half our planetary energy requirements.

Reporter 3: Pollution. This was a bumper year! I mean, planet! we really got some of this stuff together this year! OK - CFC output so low, it's almost off the map. Carbon emissions - DOWN 5% since 2020, and the rate of decline is going through the roof! - a massive 1.8% this year! *("Yeah planet!!" cry the kids!!)* Sulfur emissions - still a bit of a problem: a large number of utilities in the Northern Hemisphere are still not meeting the global regulations set down by the World Environmental Council - particularly here in Eastern Europe and the Mandarin Republic of China. Garbage? The figure for the developed world is still high, but going in the right direction - down 1% on last year's figure. The really good news is that the total ban on marine and third world dumping seems to be holding: NO reported cases since Earth Day 2022! Isn't that amazing??! *(Yeah - right - wow! etc.)*

Reporter 4: Poverty. I'm sorry - bad news, as always. For about 2.5 billion of our planetary family things got worse last year. As UNICEF once put it, for them, the March of Human progress has become a retreat. Higher infant mortality, higher figures for illiteracy, especially amongst girls, shorter life expectancy, fewer schools and primary health care, and a total of 480 million environmental refugees...

Kids: What ?? (*loud reaction of disbelief*)

Reporter 4: Up 14% on last year. It's horrendous. (*kids keeping talking in tones of shock*)

Reporter 5: No, we know. (*calming them*) That's just the way it is. We have to deal with it. It's the major challenge of our time. And as we think about that major challenge, let us comfort ourselves by taking a last look at a category that the UN has decided is no longer a significant feature of global assessment: progress to Peace! Look! Military expenditures world wide are down to under \$500 Billion in constant Year 2000 dollars. Number of declared wars? NONE; Number of wars and insurrections in which more than 1000 people have died? NONE! Value of weapons turned into to the UN under the disarmament credit scheme? 128 Billion dollars up 6% since last year. We did it! PEACE! Feels pretty good, eh?

The cast are stunned - still remembering the figures for poverty. There is little excitement.

Narrator 1: Well don't all shout at once! 30 years ago, we would have been over the moon about this. What's the matter with you?

Child 1: The figures for the refugees are such a shock.

Child 2: Much worse than projected. So many will die -

Child 3: Where will they all go?

Child 2: Who knows....

Child 1: What's the under-15 mortality rate?

Narrator 2: For the refugees? 18% of all live births.

They are silent.

Child 2: Hard to get excited with something like that hanging over us.

Child 4: But - there is Peace, man! That's such a brilliant achievement!

Narrator 1: Exactly. It's something to celebrate!

Child 3: Do you really think we can make life better for the refugees?

Narrator 1: Yes - if you make it your priority. Each generation faces a major challenge: our's was Peace and we cracked it - but look how little it means to you. Your generation will crack the problem of environmental refugees, but don't expect your children to praise you. They will be facing some new challenge of their own.

Narrator 2: Shall we get on with the program!! (*The cast EXIT; MUSIC begins*) To mark the fact that our human race has at last learned to live at peace, our celebration this year is an ancient story from the Middle East. It is a story of two villages - two communities separated by a deep river.

Narrator 1: Though it was written thousands of years ago, we feel this story has a relevance today: remember how recently our global community was divided; remember how quickly

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Narrator 1: Though it was written thousands of years ago, we feel this story has a relevance today: remember how recently our global community was divided; remember how quickly

the barriers seemed to fall away, how eager we all were to beat our swords into ploughshares.

Narrator 2: Human beings have dreamed of this for centuries! Why did it all happen so suddenly?? Why now ??

Narrator 1: Perhaps it was because we began to listen to the voices of children....

One of the older students comes forward to sing "CHILD FOR A DAY"

Soloist: I was a child who ran full of laughter
I was a child who lived for a day
My eyes full of sunshine
My heart full of smiles
I was a child for a day

We were the children who ran in the morning
We were the children who laughed at the sun
Who listened to those who spoke with their wisdom
We were the ones - we would say,

Chorus: We're getting older as time goes by
A little older every day
We were the children of yesterday.

We are the men who worry of nothing
We are the men who fight without aim
Who listen to no one, yet speak of our wisdom
We are the pawns in the game..

We're getting older.... etc.

III. TWO VILLAGES

[**DROP IN II: The two cultures.** Following the completion of the Improvisation, have the cast look at this scene and adapt what they have learned. Take some time to give a real identity to each community. An obvious pattern is East and West Berlin. Another is East and West Jerusalem. The two communities look with hostility and suspicion at each other. There are many different ways to stage this. If you can, erect two stages either side of the audience. This is the best way. On a proscenium arch stage, have the cast create the huge gulf running down the center of the stage by their movements and glances.]

There is a party happening in each community. The languages are different, the styles of celebration are utterly different. The result is the same - merriment, feasting, drinking, people hugging each other. The Narrators, possibly two different ones, come downstage center:

Narrator: Once upon a time there were two villages that stood either side of a deep river. From the beginning of history, the two villages had grown up separately: they spoke different languages, had different customs, different ways of enjoying themselves. One village grew rich, the other not so rich, and slowly, over time, a deep and abiding hatred grew up between the two communities....

Think of ways to illustrate the affluence of one community and the poverty of the other: for example, the wine runs out one side; the clothes on one side are colorful, on the other they are grey. The parties quieten down as two children come through the audience to join the two communities. They are dressed differently. They look out of place: the rest of the group regard them oddly.

Narr. 2: Now it happened one day that two children arrived, one in each village. They had been born in another part of the country, and were brought back to the villages when they were some years old. They had learned other languages and were accustomed to different ways of life. It was hard for them to get used to their new surroundings; hard for them to make friends. In their loneliness, they looked to the other side of the river and wondered if life might be better there...

The two children may be of either sex, between 5 and 15. For convenience in the script, I chosen to differentiate them by calling the "Girl" and "Boy" but their roles may be played by either sex and are completely inter-changeable. The two children look at each other across the gulf and hurry back to question their communities:

Girl: (in English) What's that village over there ??

The community does not understand. The child repeats the question in their language, pointing. The communities are dismissive and turn away saying through their words and gestures that the people the other side are evil, not to be talked about. They move to leave as the kids ask -

Boy: (calling after them) Have you ever met them ?

They are gone. The children are left alone with their thoughts. Music begins softly.

Narr. 1: Some years passed and the children got used to their new surroundings and learned to love them. Often they went down to the river - some times they would see each other and wave. Most often, they would find themselves looking at the river, talking to it, asking it about the people on the other side...

Boy (singing): Say you love this world
And you love to dream about the future life on this earth!
Say - you love the summer rain
And this rainbow and the sky with lovely little white clouds.
So do everything just to save this world from being killed
Shake all of this world with the strongest power of your love
To this life
To your friends
To the flowers, to the sun,
To the child who has just been born.

Girl: Can't you just believe
That there is someone who shares your feelings
On the other side of this beautiful planet
Give a little chance to him(her)
Just to feel some times,
He's(She's) not the lonely one -

Duet: So do everything.... etc.
(Written by Ella Vitiuk from Moscow ,age 17)

IV. THE STORM

During the last chorus, the piano makes rumbles which causes the children to turn around. They stop singing. The two communities rush back on stage in panic. Some of the cast stand on the side of the stage making sound FX of thunder and lightning. Another switches the house lights on and off. The children lose the inhibitions they have had for each other and start to yell across the river in English:

Girl: What's happening ?

Boy: It's a storm up in the mountains!

Girl: *(Sound of a mighty crash!)* What was that ?

Boy: I don't know - avalanche maybe...

Girl: How long will this last ?

Boy: Not long. *(Suddenly silence)* Look - it's over already.

Girl: Wow - that was quick.

Boy: Look at the river !

Girl: It's shrunk to a trickle.

Boy: That's all wrong: after a storm like that, it should be a raging torrent! Something must have happened....

River Voice You're darn right, kids. *(The kids swing round, searching for the source of the voice)*

Boy: Why did you put on that funny voice ?

Girl: I didn't! You did!

Boy: I did not!

Girl: You did! You just said -

Voice: Kids, there's been a mud slide at the foot of the mountains. I'm all choked up.

The kids look at the river in sheer horror. The voice of the river should come from the audience, perhaps via a microphone from backstage to a speaker concealed amongst the seats. Discuss with the cast how you wish to do the voices of nature. I have chosen to make them normal human voices: some might choose to mix the voice to sound other-worldly. Talk about what kind of voice nature would have. First question: is it a man or a woman's voice?

Girl: Are you talking to us?

Voice: Course I'm talking to you. Do you see anyone else around here?

Boy: What do you want us to do?

Voice: Clean me out, you fools! If you don't dig me out real quick, I'll burst my banks, and then you can kiss good-bye to both your stupid villages....

Girl: Right. OK - let's get to it.

Voice: And hurry - I'm getting real thirsty down here.

The kids are in shock, but they have gotten the message. They hurry to persuade their respective communities to action. The cast comes on, looks at the river from either side and understand what the children mean. They look in severe hostility at each other, but recognize that this is something that they must work on together. They go off. A narrator comes forward:

Narrator They found the mud slide at the foot of the mountains, just as the river had said. The water was rising dangerously behind the natural dam. They had to work fast. They were forced, reluctantly, to work together pulling out the huge trees and large stones until at last the water broke through. The children were sure they heard the river breathe a sigh of relief. Later they came back to the same spot on the river to see if it would talk to them again.

Girl: Do you feel better now ?

Voice: I feel a little heavy.

Boy: You look pretty brown and dirty.

Voice: You people are cutting down the forests up in the mountain. Whenever it rains, I have to carry half a mountainside down to the sea. Doesn't worry me, but my friends the mountains are getting a bit upset.

Girl: You saved our lives, river. How can we thank you ?

Voice: Stop killing me...

Girl/Boy: Killing you ??

Boy: How are we killing you?

Voice: All the poison and garbage you throw in me. But I'm not supposed to say that: you are our masters! We are your slaves. But I think you should know. I hate it, but I've accepted it.

Girl/Boy: You're really dying ?? !!

Voice: Yes. It's not important. When you've used up this planet, you're so smart you'll just go off and find another one.

Girl: It is important - there is no other planet we can go to!

Voice: No? - ach, you're young: I'm sure the adults have something planned.

Girl: I don't think so...

Boy: Why did you save us? You could have over-flowed your banks, killed us all and save yourself ?

Voice: Ach! You humans! You're bright - full of imagination. We liked you! In the beginning, we thought you were going to help us make this the most beautiful planet in the universe. Then we saw that there was a flaw in your make-up: Your greed. You care more about yourselves than this lovely world in which we live. There's nothing we could do. Not to worry. There's gotta be other planets ...

Girl: You mean you've really given up on this one?

Voice: Most of my friends have.

Boy: You can't give up! We've only just got here!

Voice: I haven't given up on you. That's why I spoke to you. Maybe you can do something. I hate the way your two villages look across me at each other with hate and fear in your eyes, always finding new things to dump in me as though you hated me too. I remember the time when children like you used to swim in me during the summer. Can't do that now. Too polluted. But you two were different. I saw that you two

loved each other - that all human beings can love each other. That love is worth saving a world for... *MUSIC begins:*

Girl: I don't want you to die.

Boy: How can you be so careless about a thing like life and death.

Voice: People are. They are killing me but what do they care ...

Girl: I care! I want to live! I want to grow up, have a full life, have a job, a family, a life of my own! I want to have grandchildren, and for them to have grandchildren - and to believe that there will be a life waiting for them too. I want - I want to Live!

Girl (singing) I want to live, I want to live
The right to live my life
I want to search far and wide
Have the right to wonder why
I want to fly through the air
Like a bird in the sky,
I want the chance to see the world
What I am before I die.

Boy (singing) I want to be, I want to see
A world that's good and free
I want a home, someone to love
To share their life with me I want to have and to hold
A child of my own
I want to live, I want to love
The right to grow old.

Voice of the River joins in a reprise of the first verse to conclude.

Boy: What are we going to do ?

Girl: I don't know. Suddenly I feel like the whole thing's hopeless.

Boy: People my side don't care. They will laugh at me if I tell them the river is asking them to stop dumping their trash in her.

Voice: Tell them they are committing suicide. It is not just me they are killing: my friends the trees, the sky, the sea, the earth itself: they are killing everything.

Boy: Come on, we have to talk to them! *(makes to leave)*

Girl: I think they know. But I think they are comfortable with the fact. You know if you drop a frog in boiling water, it jumps out and saves itself. But if you place it in cold water and slowly heat it, the frog becomes comfortable - settles down and by the time it realizes what is happening, it is too weak to jump out. That's the way that human beings are. We're comfortable. We don't care.

Boy: Maybe we should make an appeal to the presidents of our villages.

Voice: Maybe you should get together - stop shouting across me like this

Boy: You're too deep to cross now -

Voice: I know. Go back up to the mountains: a short way beyond the mud slide, a good friend of mine, big old tree, has fallen across me - a perfect natural bridge. Get yourselves on the same side, then go talk to your people and knock some sense into them.

Girl: I'll go. *(She hurries off.)*
Boy: Thank you river.
Voice: Don't thank me! Save me!

Transitional music: I WANT TO LIVE

V. THE MEETING

The children meet on the same side. The music stops. They gaze at each other - take each other's hands, examining them:

Boy: Look! We are the same!
Girl: Yes!
Boy: The people in our village told me that you had the skin of snakes and the eyes like dragons over here.
Girl: I was told you had claws for hands and you would tear the flesh from my bones if I ever came close to you.
Boy: To think I believed those lies all those years.
Girl: I never did believe them.
Boy: Neither did I, but my friends did.
Girl: Oh - I'm so happy to meet you, so happy to be here!
Boy: It's true, isn't it, what the river said: we can love each other.
Girl: Yes! We may speak different languages, but we are one human family.
Boy: One earth!
Girl: We must save it!
Boy: I have an idea: Let's bring the people of our villages to listen to the words of the river....
Girl: Yes!
Voice: Wait a minute! No one else will hear me. Not that I haven't tried - I've been crying out to them for centuries, but nobody even hears.
Girl: Ah! So what's your next great plan ?
Boy: I don't know. I just want to go to them and tell them that our world is hurting, hurting bad, and that it is us that's doing the hurting, and we must stop or else our world will die.
Girl: They know that. When we first came here, we used to get tons of fish out of the river. Now, there's hardly any left, and if you do catch one, you can't eat it because they are all poisoned.
Boy: Do you remember the dawn chorus. All those birds that used to sing in the morning? All gone now.
Girl: What happened to them?

Boy: Fertilizers and pesticides on the fields poisoned them, and we destroyed the places where they used to live.
Girl: Sad to think our children will never hear that sound.
Voice: They'll come back - if we let them....
Girl: You think so? Do you think we could teach people to hear your voice ?
Voice: Maybe. You could try

Characters from the village enter. In their own language, they point at the girl from the other village and arrest her. The boy protests loudly. The "Village" lines can be spoken by a variety of people:

Villager: Does she speak English?
Girl: Yes!
Villager: You are an interloper, a spy. You want to take our secrets so that your village can be as wealthy and successful as our's
Girl: No. I want us to be friends! To love each other. I want to build a bridge between our two villages so that we can really get to know each other.
Villager: You want to build a bridge so that you can invade our village and kill us all.
Boy: No! - she's my friend!
Villager: You know your village used to belong to us once: there was a bridge up river, but an army from the south came, drove us out. We burned the bridge to protect ourselves.
Girl: That's funny: in our village, people tell that this village once belonged to them, and that a great army from the North came and drove them out!
Villager: Whatever. It belongs to us now.
Boy: It belongs to no one! It belongs to itself!
Villager: What do you mean ?
Boy: The earth is a living, vibrant creature, just like our friend the river.
Villager: (laughs sarcastically) The earth! Alive??!
Girl: Yes! - and the trees, and the mountains, and the sky and the seas. They are all friends and work together - like we should do....
Villager: My children, you are seriously deranged if you think that inanimate objects are alive like we are.
Earth Voice: You bet your sweet bippy we are!
Boy: Who said that?
Earth Voice: I did.
River Voice: Stop it earth, let the children handle it.
Earth Voice: No! C'mon, it's time for a showdown with these folks. You think I'm Dead, huh? I'm just that stuff you put your seeds in, huh? OK so you make the seeds grow without me, put the apples on the trees, and the cows in the meadows as well. I don't care. You've half killed me anyway....
Villager: (to the children) Who are you talking to?

Boy: You mean you don't hear them ?

Villager: I'm hearing something - a very faint, odd voice -

Earth Voice: So you don't like my voice. Let me try another one... *(someone else speaks)*
Darlings, I am your slave! You abolished slavery years ago, but still I am your slave, doing your bidding year in, year out.

River Voice: Lay off, will you - !

Villager: What is going on here?

Child: Are you all ventriloquists or something?

Boy: It's working! You all heard that, didn't you? *(They nod)* You are hearing what you should have heard ages ago - the voices of the natural world crying out against the pain you have inflicted upon them.

Villager: I'm not sure - it could have been the wind blowing through the trees

Villager: That was a voice. *(The firmness in tone brooks no more argument)*

Girl: Will you take us to the president of your village now?

Boy: And will you allow me to bring the President of her village so that we can talk to them together and urge them to be friends...?

Villager: First we have to put you on trial as a spy!

Boy: *(Angry and tired)* Oh forget that stuff! What's the point? Why have any secrets from each other if we're all going to be dead in a short while?

Girl: Don't you understand? That's why the natural world is speaking to us. It's dying and only we can save it - if we love each other, if we work together.

The group from the other village arrive. They try angrily to arrest the girl, speaking in her language. Quietly, firmly, she releases herself from their grip. She goes and stands with her friend as the music starts. As she sings the words, Mr President, the groups part and the leader of the village steps forward, listening to the children's appeal:

[**DROP INS 3:** Ask the children to write their own verses here. This should be a joint activity, and I suggest the following process:

- Ask the children to write down some ideas of what they would like to ask the president if they had only one minute to talk to him.
- Collect up the lists of ideas, shuffle them about, and re-distribute them through the cast.
- Read out the ideas and choose three topics where there is consensus.
- Split into three groups, and get each group to write a verse that rhymes, scans and fits the mood.

Then go through a democratic process to decide who should sing each verse. I have written out the first three verses as a guide.]

Girl: Mr President is it true what they say,
This world will be dead if we go on this way.

Boy: Mr President, can it be what it seems,
There will be no more love, no more life, no more dreams.

Boy / Girl: Mr President, it's a time to be bold,
The kids of the world want the right to grow old!

Chorus: Oh No! (Oh No) It's plain to see (It's plain to see)
 But so hard to understand,
 That this world we all love
 Is fading away, dying today!
 Oh No! (oh no) It's not fair! (it's not fair)
 That mankind should have the right
 For the sake of their greed
 They can take this away
 Without asking why
 Oh NO!

Child 1: Mr President: - ?

Child 2: Mr President: - ?

Child 3: Mr President: - ?

Mr Presidents, it's a time to be brave!
 Announce to us all, that this earth you will save!
 Proclaim Earth Day!

At the chorus, several of the younger children separate themselves from the adults and join the two children. The presidents come forward. They motion the rest of their communities away. They start to talk to the two kids in their own languages:

Boy: Wait! Speak in English so that we both understand.

The presidents look at each other suspiciously and speak in low tones:

President 1: Children, we understand that this outburst of your's is a result of you hearing voices...

Girl: We heard voices, yes - but we can also see. Look! The sad grey face of that river tells us as much as any voice could. We need to work together to heal the river.

President 2: We are not doctors.

Boy: Yes! We are! We must become earth doctors if we are to heal and repair our planet!

President 1: First you must understand, you did not hear voices. *(All the children & young villagers protest violently. The Presidents hold up their hands for silence.)* The earth is inanimate. It did not speak to you. Will you accept that? *(silence)*

Boy/Girl: *(Quietly. Firmly)* No - it did speak to us. We all heard it!

President 2: I repeat, the earth is inanimate. It cannot speak. If you believe otherwise, you must be mad and will finally have to be placed in an institution.

Girl: *(full of compassion and love)* No! The earth does speak! It will speak to you if you listen. Every tree, every plant, ever flower, every molecule - every atom! is a living, vibrant entity.

Boy: They are crying out to you now, human beings and your leaders, because you are cruelly, casually killing them all with careless greed.

President 1: Children....

Boy: No! Listen! Listen to the cry of all life! *(to the audience)* You heard it, didn't you? (They say yes) Course you did. We all want the same thing - us, the animals, the plants and the trees. The Presidents want the same too. We all want to live! Say it with me - I WANT TO LIVE !!"

The children get the audience to repeat it a few times before MUSIC STARTS:

Girl: Yes! Sing it with me!

The audience will have the words printed in their programs, so will be encouraged to sing along. After a couple of lines, the kids stop the song:

Girl: No, no no wait a minute, we can do better than that! You are all the molecules of nature crying out for life!

Boy: You're singing for your lives here!

Girl: Again!

They try again. Still it is not good. The kids stop the audience a second time.

[**DROP IN IV:** This is where you have a chance to get the audience really thinking about the urgency of the situation. It is also the chance for the cast to express why they think the message of the play is really important. You should have a lengthy discussion about what should be said here with the cast, but what ends up in the play must be extremely brief - extremely direct, - pithy. I suggest no more than three single sentence statements. I am not offering any suggestions 'cos I know I could write pages on just this issue!]

The children get the audience to stand up. Start again, and get the whole cast and audience singing at the tops of their voices:

Cast & Audience: I want to live, I want to live
The right to live my life
I want to search far and wide
Have the right to wonder why
I want to fly through the air
Like a bird in the sky,
I want the chance to see the world
What I am before I die.

I want to be, I want to see
A world that's good and free
I want a home, someone to love
To share their life with me
I want to have and to hold
A child of my own
I want to live, I want to love
I want to live, I WANT TO LIVE!!

Voice of the River: Yeah!

Voice of the Earth: OK!

Voice of the River: Sounds good!

Voice of the Earth: Let's do a deal with these guys.

Voice of the River: Sssshh. Let the kids do it.

VI RESOLUTION

The Presidents have stood bashfully apart, with some members of their villages. The press of young people joining in the song is such that the two presidents are standing quite close together as they appear to listen. The children are really happy. (Split the lines, even parts of lines, between all the children of the cast.)

Boy: So - isn't that great!? That's them - that's the voices of the river and the earth - we can all hear them.

The Presidents look at each other.

President 1: I didn't hear any thing.

President 2: Neither did I.

President 1: We heard nothing.

Girl: What's with the "we" all of a sudden!! *(The children all gather round)*

President 2: It's all in your imaginations. Children have wonderful imaginations...

Boy: No wait a minute. You see! You are one - united in your desire not to lose one jot of your power to the voices that every single one of us is now hearing!

Girl: That's great! You can be friends now!

This was not what the Presidents had in mind: they retreat into their own groups, speaking rapidly in their own languages. The kids dive in and pull their respective presidents out. They stand them downstage center facing each other and gently move their hands towards each other.

Girl: Look: we are the same.

Boy: Your hand moves as his hand moves

Girl: Your eyes see as his sees

Boy: What you hear, he hears -

Girl: The same water sustains us both;

Boy: The same earth feeds us.

Girl: There is no time now for hatred

Boy: No time left for fear:

Girl: We must love each other for until we love each other, it is impossible to love the earth.

President 1: What exactly do you want us to do?

Boy: Building a bridge would be a good start.

President 2: We'd have to cut down some of your precious trees to do that.

River Voice: My friends the trees wouldn't mind that. It's a good cause!

Earth Voice: Come on - we're here to serve you. You're the smart guys around here: we couldn't get rocks to the moon by ourselves.

River Voice: But if you do cut down trees -

Earth Voice: - be sure to plant two more afterwards.

President 2: And once we have the Bridge, what then?

Girl: We'll sell things to each other! Your tomatos are excellent, but your bread stinks! Our bread is superb, but our tomatos - not so good.

Boy: We'll have joint meetings to make our river so clean we can all swim in it again;

Girl: And we'll trek up to the mountains and get them to be more careful about logging trees so that our friends the mountains don't lose so much of themselves every time it rains.

Boy: We'll conserve things, care for things so that they last longer...

Girl: We'll care for each other, look after each other's sick, the old -

Boy: And we'll learn each other's language as a mark of respect for our different cultures.

President 1: That's a pretty full schedule.

Boy: For you, maybe - but not for us! We have the rest of our lives!

Girl: And we're gonna make sure that by the end of our lives, no child will ever have to worry about whether or not the world will survive.

President 2: How do you guarantee something like that?

Girl: Faith!

Boy: We'll listen to the earth: it'll pretty soon tell us whether we are doing the right thing.

Girl: Even if you are only hearing it in your imagination, that's enough: it's pretty clear what it's saying.

Boy: "Take care of me, all we shall all die - forever!"

President 1: It seems a pretty substantial challenge, to build a legislative schedule on the voice of a river but we will agree to two things: we will build a bridge (*cheers!*) - and we shall give over one day every year to listen to you, the children, and the voices of your friends in nature.

President 2: What should we call this day?

Girl: Let's call it - our Day for the Earth!

President 1: Earth Day!

The children cheer - and there is silence. The Presidents stand alone, wondering what they have done. Instinctively, a couple of the children come forward and kiss the two presidents.

Boy: Thank you.

Music Starts and the group move back to their respective sides as a soloist begins to sing: "LET'S MAKE PEACE" (written by Pawel Sydor from Poland, age 18)

Soloist: All the time through the day and through the night
I think about my life in this world
So many times I've tried to find
A way to live my life - a way to ease my mind
I know this world could die for ever
And people are the reason why
Children and parents lovers and poets
They just can't hear our planet cry -

Chorus: We want this world to survive for ever
And all the people join their hands together
In a bond of love, kindness and friendship
We can make peace with the earth

Soloist 2: Too many people have died in wars
And we want that no one else should suffer
Not again.
We mustn't forget that many are poor
And some of our children lack even food
I know our World is a wonderful place
It's our home, where we live and where we grow
I want to believe that this world can be
Peaceful and free - a happy home for all!

Chorus: We want this world to survive.... etc. (x 3)

Duet - Boy/Girl: Let's join our hands together
Let's make peace throughout our world!

During the applause, some children make a symbolic bridge and cast members from the two different villages pass beneath, joining hands to take a bow. The narrators who began the show now come forward:

Narr. 1: Thank you, thank you very much.

Narr. 2: They did a good job, didn't they?

Narr. 1: But before we go, we have asked every one of our cast to share their earth day resolution with us.

Narr. 2: It's got to be something real and practical -

Narr. 1: Something that they personally can do when they get out of bed tomorrow morning.
So - let's hear them:

[**DROP INS 4:** Here the children are simply challenged to think of things that they can do in their neighborhood to help clean up the environment, care for the earth or for the disadvantaged in their community. Take some time over this: let the children share their ideas, and encourage them to offer their ideas to each other, so that all end up with good ideas. Include the adults in this process as well, and the voices of the earth and river - and the producers and musicians as well. And then - the ultimate challenge, go down into the audience!? Get some of the kids to go down as statements are being made from the stage. Maybe put a few plants in the audience so that some one will start the ball rolling, but then get as many ideas as you can, and get some one to write them all down on an Earth Day Pledge form and give them to the audience.

This could become a whole second act - a discussion could start up between audience and cast. Excellent if you have time! Keep it going - and exclude all comments on the quality of the play, or otherwise - keep it really focussed on the environmental issues in your own neighborhood. When it starts to flag, have the narrators come back.]

Narr. 1: Thank you. Thank you all very, very much. We'll meet again next year on Earth Day - same time, same place, - and see what we've done about all these promises we have made - and then we'll maybe make some new ones, but for now -

Narr. 2: - all good things must come to an end, and we'd like to finish with a song. It's a song that's in another language - not the make-up languages you've been hearing in the story, but a language spoken by 500 million of our neighbors on this continent, almost all of whom lead lives less affluent than us. The song says "Somos Futuro" which in Spanish means: "We are the future". Let us remember those children born in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Chile - let us think of their future and resolve to do all that we can to make it a future that we ourselves would enjoy.

Soloist: Es al agua de los rios
El olor de la manana
Es un pajarito acoirado
Con las alas desplegadas
Es semilla bajo el surco
Cafetales y palmar
Suelo fértil nuestro pueblo
De sonrisas y amistad

Chorus: Somos futuro alegría y corazón
Centro América unida en una sola voz
Vamos corriendo a la plaza
Juguemos con las estrellas
Crece en el viento la libertad.

Nuestro Pueblo es pan y luna
Una ronda una canción
Es la gente que trabaja
Día día con el sol
es semilla bajo el surco
Cafetales y palmar
Suelo fértil y nuestro pueblo
De sonrisas y amistad

Somos futuro, alegría y corazón... etc. (x 2)

Again, the audience should have the words of this song printed in their programs and be encouraged to sing along with it.

Child: My friends - we have seen the future and it is us! We are the future, if there is one. If there is not a future, we have only ourselves to blame. Good Bye!

The cast wave good bye from the stage.

T H E E N D

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Suggestions for Further Reading

1. There are 4 books which, for me, are indispensable for an understanding of the State of the Planet:

- 1) "The State of the Earth" published annually by WH Norton for the Worldwatch Institute, 1776, Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington DC 20036. (202) 452 1999
- 2) The World Resource Institute's Year book published by the World Resource Institute, 1709 New York Avenue NW, # 700, Washington DC 20006. (202) 638 6300
- 3) "World Military and Social Expenditures" published annually by the World Priorities Institute, PO Box 25140, Washington DC 20007.
- 4) "State of the World's Children" published annually by UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, New York 10017. (212) 326 7342 (publications)

All excellent, authoritative, readable and short. There are other important reports by the World Bank and different UN agencies, but these four above quote all the relevant information from them.

2. For work on the idea of our Living Earth, I suggest that you read something by James Lovelock. "The Ages of Gaia" also published by WH Norton is excellent. His "Gaia Atlas of Planet Management", (edited by James Lovelock,) is superbly illustrated and a useful tool in the classroom.

3. GreenPeace has a useful magazine that will keep you up to date with the latest environmental scandals. It also publishes some very useful Fact Sheets on various environmental issues. Apply GreenPeace, 1436 U Street NW, Washington DC 20009. (202) 462 1177
The UN Environment Program also publishes similar short, 4 page fact sheets. Apply: UN Environmental Program, UN Secretariat, New York 10017. (212) 326 7342

4. Another great organization on the state of the planet is: The World Game Institute. They present a global review on a huge map of the world, having the participants detail population growth, resource depletion, environmental issues, poverty indicators etc. Great people.
Contact: The World Game Institute, 3508 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104. (215) 387 0220.

WHAT IS PEACE CHILD?

Peace Child is the performing art of friendship.

Peace Child is both a musical Play born in England in 1981, and an international Foundation that promotes global and local cooperation through educational programs for youth in the performing arts.

The **Peace Child Play** is always powerful, dramatic expression of young people's visions of a safe and healthy planet though the issues in the script vary with each cast and location.

The **Peace Child Foundation** arranged the first reciprocal exchange of school age children between the Soviet Union and the United States (1986).

The **Peace Child Play** provides a vehicle for youth from different countries to create a moving theatrical experience and develop a mutual sense of responsibility for their common future.

The **Peace Child Foundation** now maintains a full-fledged youth exchange program with the USSR, and has produced tours in Poland, Central America, Japan, Israel, Ireland and England, involving children from over 25 countries.

The **Peace Child Play** is a process by which its participants truly learn the meaning of cooperation and trust, and a vivid message that its audiences share by example.

The **Peace Child Foundation** (USA), incorporated in Washington, D.C. in 1982, is the largest component of an international Peace Child Federation that includes members in 20 nations and offices in Moscow and the Netherlands.

Peace Child programs include international youth exchanges; City at Peace productions involving inner-city and suburban youth; an annual celebration of the International Day of Peace; ongoing local choruses, play productions and peace education activities around the world.

Peace Child - A History

Based on Bernard Benson's *THE PEACE BOOK*, the original *PEACE CHILD* script tells how Soviet and American children build a peaceful and cooperative relationship between their nations through initiating a program of youth exchanges. Premiered in London in October 1981, it debuted in the US in Washington, D.C. in 1982. The same year, the Peace Child Foundation was incorporated to promote the play and to make its vision of cooperation and youth exchange a reality.

The Moscow premiere in July 1985, was the beginning of that reality. For the first time, Soviets and Americans performed together. A satellite space bridge between Moscow and Minneapolis reunited the Peace Child cast members in December 1985. At that pre-glasnost time, unofficial communication between youth from the two nations was not allowed; visits by Soviet teens to the US seemed unthinkable. However, in the summer of 1986, several years of work paid off. In association with the Ministry of Culture, the Peace Child Foundation brought the first "Soviet-American Peace Child Tour" to twelve US and four USSR cities. It was the first time school age Soviets came to the US on a youth exchange. The floodgates opened: Soviet authorities started encouraging youth exchanges.

In 1987, three Peace Child exchanges visited both countries. In 1988, there were five tours to the USSR, four to the US, one to Poland and one to Central America. Although primarily American and Soviet, the 330 cast members included children from thirteen nations. Live audiences of over 120,000 viewed the performances and in the US, each community visited provided a chorus of 50-250 local youth who participated in the play.

In 1989, eight tours went to the Soviet Union, five to the US, one to Japan and one to Ireland. Participants came from sixteen countries. Pilot projects brought together Chinese, Soviet and American teens and in Israel, Arabs and Jews. Ongoing Peace Child projects are formed or forming in 30 US cities, in four USSR cities and in fourteen other nations.

With the casts' input, the script has evolved into a story of international friendship and cooperation among all nations and now focuses on global environmental issues.

Another 1989 pilot brought together inner city and suburban youth in Washington, D.C. to create a new play about the crisis that drugs and violence have created in their communities. And, on the International Day of Peace marking the annual opening of the United Nations General Assembly in September, the Foundation produced its second space bridge linking Peace Child choruses in Moscow and Costa Rica with a chorus of over 250 at the UN General Assembly Hall in New York. The images of children greeting their friends across the world was a powerful symbol of the unity of the human family.

In the 1990s, Peace Child/USA will work with an international Peace Child Federation that includes offices in Moscow, the Netherlands and Israel and volunteer groups in Asia, Africa and Central America to continue the international development and tailor programs to local and global needs and concerns. This year, Israel and England will host their first international Peace Child exchanges and youth from Sri Lanka, Bulgaria, East Germany, Sweden, Kenya and India will join international Peace Child casts for the first time.