

by Docia Zavitkovsky

Docia Shares a Story about Children's Performances

Enjoy a Docia Story

As I watched a group of young children “perform” at a parent meeting, my mind flashed back to a memorable experience I had when I was their age.

It took place a long time ago but in many ways it seems like yesterday. There we were, six angelic children standing in the wings waiting to go out on the small church stage to recite the pieces we had so laboriously learned.

We were flowers. I was a daisy and my best friend was a petunia. The director, quaint and mid-Victorian in dress, speech, and manner, hovered over us. She kept admonishing us to stand still, not wiggle or squirm. It was an impossible request.

Finally, it was our turn. The cue was given and we self-consciously trooped to the center of the stage. We giggled, nudged each other, and waved to everyone we knew in the audience. Because it was Mother's Day, our lines had to do with motherhood and, though they had little meaning to us, we managed to say them in a fairly acceptable manner.

Everything proceeded smoothly until it was the rose's turn. We had all wanted to be the rose because she had the best costume and the best part. We knew her lines better than the ones we delivered — “I have a mother needless to say, that's why my heart is so happy today.”

We watched the rose step forward. She opened her mouth to speak but instead of the immortal words, she vomited. We stood transfixed. We were stunned. What should we do? There was a murmur of voices from the audience as the director rushed out, pulled the rose off stage, and hissed at us to follow her. We did. Mechanically. We were more interested in the vomit than in the rose. I can't remember what happened next but it was a happening I will never forget.

I shared this story at a parent-staff meeting and invited people to share an experience they remembered. Their remarks ran the gamut: “wetting my pants,” “swallowing my gum,” “crying for my mother,” “getting in a fight,” “having someone lead me off the stage,” “forgetting what I was supposed to say,” “falling off the chair.”

With recall so vivid, dramatic, and sometimes traumatic, maybe we should take a second look at having children “perform.” Adults love it, but the children — I wonder. What would the rose tell us if she were talking with us today?

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