

The Guide

A Theatergoer's Resource

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PCS's 2017-18 Education & Community Programs are
generously supported by:



with additional support from

Craig & Y. Lynne Johnston

Holzman Foundation

Mentor Graphics Foundation

Autzen Foundation

and other generous donors.

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Astoria: Part One & Two

Adapted and directed by Chris Coleman

Based on the book ASTORIA: John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire, A Story of Wealth, Ambition, and Survival by Peter Stark

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Key Dates of the Astor Expedition [-Click Here-](#)

Views of Astoria [-Click Here-](#)

Astoria Reading List [-Click Here-](#)

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The Music of Astoria [-Click Here-](#)

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The Astor Expedition [-Click Here-](#)

Who is John Jacob Astor? [-Click Here-](#)

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on the development of Astoria** [-Click Here-](#)

Plot Summary

Continuing the ambitious adventure of Part One, which told the stories of the Astor expeditions by land and sea to establish trade routes to the Pacific Northwest, Part Two is about the extraordinary endeavors that lead to the establishment of Astoria, the first permanent United States settlement on the West Coast.

Portland's Native community is diverse, vibrant and growing; it has grown by nearly 16% in the last 10 year and outpaced the Portland regional population growth and is nearly 70,000 strong (MSA, US Census 2010). We live here and we thrive here. We are numerous. The Portland Urban Native community is descended from over 380 tribes and many of us are multi-tribal and multi-ethnic. We represent varying degrees of tribal affiliation: some of us are tribally enrolled and some of us are not, but we all have ancestral ties to our tribes. Some of us are enrolled members of local tribes with reserved treaty rights to fish and gather in the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, but many of us are members or descendants of more distant tribes. We come to this city for as many reasons as there are clans and people, and our stories are powerful.

The Portland Metro area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River, summer encampments to harvest and use the reserved treaty rights to fish and gather in the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, but many of us are members or descendants of more distant tribes. We come to this city for as many reasons as there are clans and people, and our stories are powerful. The Portland Metro area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River, creating communities and summer encampments to harvest and use the plentiful natural resources of the area.



Portland Center Stage's Stage Door Program seeks to provide all young people with opportunities to experience and directly participate in the art of high-quality, professional theater in a context that supports their education. The following pages contain activities to help students explore themes found in our production of *Astoria: Part 2*. We encourage you to choose the most appropriate activities for your group and adapt as needed.

Goals:

1. To encourage personal connections between the students and the major themes of the play.
2. To excite students about the story and introduce the theatrical elements of the production.
3. To engage students using the actors' tools (body, voice, imagination).

Key Concepts:

- **Shared Responsibility and Decision-Making**
- **The Sensation of Sociology**
- **Storytelling with Multiple Narrative Voices**

Theater Etiquette --Please share the following points with your group of students. Encourage the students to practice these points throughout the workshop. Going to see a play is very different from going to the movies. During live theatre, the audience is as important a part of the experience as the actors.

- **Live response is good!** If you're telling a story to a friend, and they really respond or listen, it makes you want to tell the story better—to keep telling the story. So, the better that an audience listens, laughs and responds, the more the actors want to tell the story. In this way, the audience (as well as the actors) can make a performance great.
- **The actors can hear you talking.** If an audience member is not paying attention, the actors know it. Have you ever had a conversation with someone and felt that they'd rather be someplace else? This is the EXACT feeling actors get when people in the audience are talking
- **The actors can see you.** Even though actors are pretending to be other characters, it is their job to "check in" with the audience in order to tell the story better. This is another way in which theatre greatly differs from the movies. Film actors can do a take over and over to try to get it right. Theatre actors have one chance with an audience and want to make sure they are communicating clearly. Imagine trying to tell a group of fellow students something only to see them slouching, pretending to be bored, or sitting with their eyes closed in attempt to seem disinterested and "too cool" for what you had to say. Think about it...
- **Cell phones, beepers, candy wrappers, loud gum smacking.** Please turn off all cell phones and do not eat or chew gum inside the theater. These things disturb the people



around you as well as the actors. As much as you might be tempted to text a friend how cool the play you're watching is, please wait until after it is over to send any texts.

Thank you to Montana Shakespeare in the Parks for these excellent etiquette suggestions.

Activity I: Pack a Bag

The goal of this activity is to highlight the strain and stress of group travel. Teams will work together to distribute and shoulder the burden.

How It Works:

- Divide into groups of 3-5 (feel free to allow friends to stay together)
- Make a list of what each group will need to bring to get through today (text books, phones, jackets etc.)
- Each group needs to pack a backpack with only the essentials (one math book per group, cell phone chargers?)
- Decide on a plan for the day – will one person carry the pack all day? Shifts? Would it be better to fill pockets in jackets?
- Extend the “day plan” to a “three day plan” to a “three month plan.” Would it be better to plan on re-stocking supplies along the way, or carry all you could need for as long as you’re going?
- Discuss, “the point of no return,” the “Rubicon.”

Sample follow up questions: *What personal item did you have to share with the rest of the group? How did you decide who was going to carry the most? Which items do you “need” to get through the day, and with items did you simply “want?”*

Activity II: Ponder the Journey Rubicon

Explore the topics of, “the point of no return,” “cut your losses,” “turn back now,” etc. to prime the consideration of hope, survival and how shifting goals can weaken resolve (and potentially lead to “madness”).

How It Works:

- With their newly organized “gear”, gather the groups at the end of the room furthest from the exit.
- Indicate that the goal is to reach the other side of the room, with your group intact.
- Feel free to insert some, “Mother May I...” as the groups traverse the distance (one step at a time). Also of value, have each group decide whether they are on foot, or at sea.
- After a few steps, randomly call “Weather strikes! And tag-out one member of each team. They have been stricken or taken by the elements, and can continue no further.
- Re-distribute the goods the downed person was carrying amongst the remaining team members.



- Evaluate with the group, who wants to quit and go back home. Remind them how close they are to achieving their destination. Remind them that there is no guarantee that they will arrive safely back home.
- Once the groups are moving forward again, change the destination. Due to an impasse, the travelers must reroute, which will extend the journey.
- Again, re-evaluate who has the stamina to forge forward, knowing now that their timeline just extended – what seemed like “almost there” just became “barely halfway.”
- Finally, place the destination on the outside of the door. The destination cannot be seen, nor is it longer clear how far away the destination is. Tag out more team members and re-evaluate the option to resign the journey.

Reflection/Discussion:

When did you first feel that you wanted to quit the journey? When teammates were stricken and removed from the group, how did you feel that affected your chances of success? Did the hope that the journey might be over change as the distance changed?

Activity III: This Way Madness Comes

This activity allows the whole group to participate, and simulates the feelings of paranoia and isolation which introduce the group to the social stressors of Astoria’s journeying characters.

How it Works:

- The whole group will mill and seed throughout the space – walking at an even pace, not dawdling.
- Without any overt communication between participants, the group will hone in on one person in the group, choosing to look directly at them whilst walking.
- Each participant should be on the lookout for whom is being looked at, and jump onboard by looking in the same direction.
- Quickly, the group keys into whom is the common focus, and everyone now is looking at the same person.
- Positive Spin 1st: Call the group to a halt, and whomever was the focus, now receives an honest round of applause. The chosen participant, should accept the applause deservedly.
- Negative Spin 2nd: After a couple of rounds of positives, change the instructions to, “Keep walking and looking, but no smiling this round. Slow clap only.”
- Pause for reflection. The difference should be immediately apparent, what once was friendly, now seems much tenser.

Reflection/Discussion:

Describe the difference in the tension in the air when we switched from a positive to a negative spin. How did you feel as a person doing the looking? If you were in the middle, did you begin to wonder why you had been chosen by the group?

Activity IV: Cerberus Storytelling

This activity creates a braided story, by weaving three narrative voices, much like Astoria. Storylines are improvised and collaborative, and share a common theme.

How it Works:

- Each round will need six participants, organized into three pairs.
- With the workshop leader conducting, each pair of participants will work together to improvise their version of story (Why we were late for Thanksgiving dinner).
- The workshop leader will point to the pair when it is their turn to speak. When it is not their turn to speak, they should be silent and listening for elements they can add to their story, when it's their turn again.
- When the activity concludes, the audience can vote for which story sounded the most plausible.
- Try this activity again, and ramp up the stakes with a, “How we got together” story.
- Finally, the third time, have each pair improvise a “Ghost Story.” This should sound tonally different from the first two, and more like the storytelling in *Astoria*.

Reflection/Discussion:

What made the stories seem more believable? How did the different topics affect the storytellers? If you were a participant, how did working with a partner help or hurt your story?