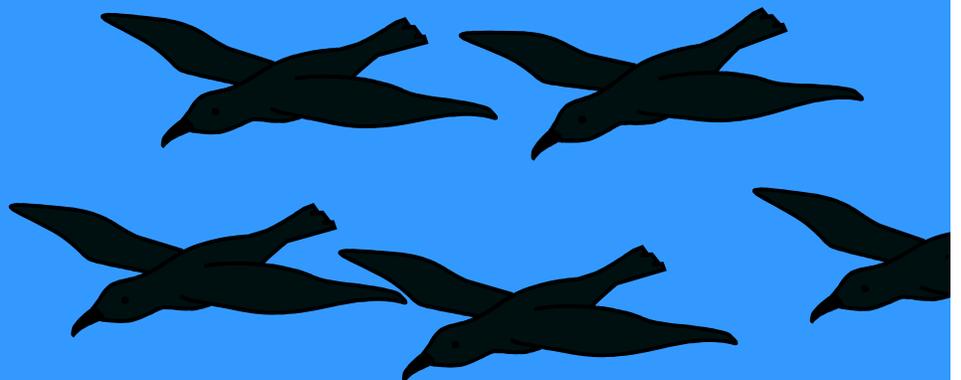


Jonathan Livingston Seagull

By Richard Bach

Adapted and directed by Jenny Anne Koppera

Study Guide



From the adaptor/director

I first read *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* when I was a teenager. I was trying to find my voice and to figure out what direction I wanted to go with my life. The book allowed me to accept myself and to trust that my life would support my dreams. I have performed it many times and have given many copies of the book away to my peers and students. I love the message and the capacity for hope within it. I chose it for this production because of its message and its prime theatrical element – flight.

Students: This is an original production! You are the first to see it ever! And we hope that you will pay attention to all of the theatrical choices: Flight! (How we were able to express it – puppetry and movement?), Music (How did it add to the production?), and Actors (How many roles did each actor play? How did it work?)

Educators: There are many themes, levels, and theatrical choices at work in our production. We hope to engage with students on a variety of these elements. We hope that it leads to some artistic journeys in puppetry, movement, music, adaptation, etc as well as discussions on the themes and characters within the story.

Enjoy the flight of Jonathan Livingston Seagull!

Jenny Anne Koppera



Plot Summary

Part One:

Jonathan Livingston Seagull is a seagull who is bored with the daily squabbles over food. He has a passion for flying. He pushes himself, learning everything he can about flying. Against his parent's will, he is unwilling to behave like an ordinary gull and spend his time hunting for food. His unwillingness to conform results in his expulsion from his flock. An outcast, he continues to learn, becoming a better flyer and increasingly happy with his abilities.

Part Two:

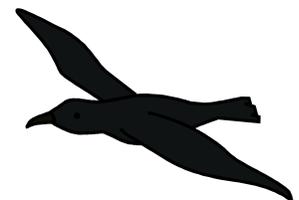
One day, Jonathan is met by two gulls who take him to a "higher plane of existence" where he meets other gulls who love to fly including Sullivan. He discovers that his tenacity and desire to learn make him "pretty well a one-in-a-million bird." Jonathan befriends the wisest gull in this new place, named Chiang. Chiang teaches Jonathan new and more difficult skills. Jonathan becomes a teacher and decides to return to his flock.

Part Three:

Jonathan returns to Earth to find others like him, to bring them his learning and to spread his love for flight. His mission is successful, gathering around him others who have been outlawed for not conforming. Ultimately, the very first of his students, Fletcher Lynd Seagull, becomes a teacher in his own right and Jonathan leaves to continue his learning.

Themes:

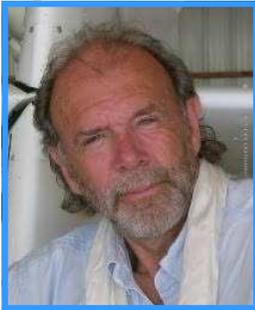
Following your dreams
Forgiveness, kindness, and peace
Love of learning
Personal freedom
Giving back to future generations



Richard Bach, Author

(b. June 23, 1936)

Richard Bach is an American writer widely known as the author of the hugely popular 1970s best-sellers *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, *Illusions: The Adventures Of A Reluctant Messiah*, and others. Richard Bach attended Long Beach State College and served in the Navy Reserve, then later in the United States Air Force (USAF) as a jet pilot. Afterwards, he worked a variety of jobs, including technical writer for Douglas Aircraft and contributing editor for *Flying* magazine. He served in the USAF reserve deployed in France in 1960. He later became a barnstormer/stunt pilot. Most of his books involve flight in some way. *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* was published in 1970 and was a best-seller. It was adapted into a movie in 1973.



Interesting Facts:

Richard Bach has a son named Jonathan.

Richard Bach was an airplane pilot.

He claims to be a direct descendant of Johann Sebastian Bach.

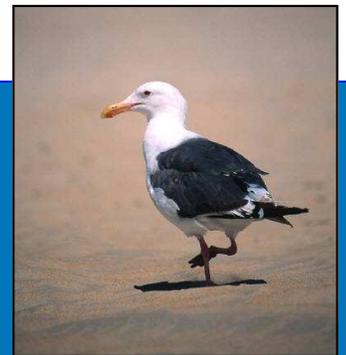
*Jonathan is that brilliant little fire that burns within us all,
that lives on for those moments when we reach perfection.*

-Richard Bach

Facts about Seagulls



- There are approximately 28 regularly found species of gulls in North America, with Herring Gull being the most common.
- Seagulls have a long bill, webbed feet and long wings.
- Gulls range in size depending on the species. They are between 11 and 30 inches long with a wingspan of 30 inches-5 feet.
- Their plumage is usually white with gray or black markings on the back, wings, and head.
- Gulls are very social birds and prefer to nest in colonies. Once a colony is well established, they are faithful to it and reluctant to settle elsewhere.
- Gulls will eat almost anything—clams, small fish, insects, smaller birds, bread, french fries, etc. They are scavengers.



CREATION

How did we create the show?



Puppetry

In *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, the cast uses a variety of puppets to represent the birds in the show. The puppets range in size from two feet to only a few inches. Some of the puppets have realistic appearances with moveable wings and some are as simple as feathers on rods. The puppets allow the audience to imagine the birds in flight and at different heights in the sky.



Q & A with Director/Adapter Jenny Anne Koppera

Music

Vocal music
Rhythm/Percussion Instruments
Found Objects

We've used several elements of music to create a "soundscape" for the show—like a sound track created with live instruments and vocal sounds. The soundscape may depict mood, environment or the action in a scene. For *Jonathan..*, the cast and director use Rhythm/Percussion Instruments to highlight and punctuate powerful moments and vocal melodies to transition the audience from one section to the next.



Activity Idea:

Sit in a circle and close your eyes. Using your voices, create your own "soundscape" of a beach or a story you all know

What are the major elements in this show?

The major theatrical elements in the production are movement, puppetry, and music. They all surround the idea of flight – physical flight, emotional flight, and the flight of 'ideas!'

What do you hope the audience leaves with?

A renewed sense of hope. A delight in the idea of flight and possibility. A reflection on dreams and determination. And a desire to find ways to continue building community.

What was surprising to you about the process?

Getting a personal email from the author, Richard Bach, giving the go ahead for the project! I am also surprised how potent this story is and how well it translates to the stage. There seem to be many levels at work within the story.

What was most fun/challenging to work on?

Adapting the book for the stage was challenging, but in the end, very fulfilling. Also, I enjoyed finding all the different ways to express flight, creating a set that can tour to different locations and collaborating with other artists to create a unique production – fully dependent on all the strengths of those involved.

Any last thoughts?

Enjoy the flight of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*! Listen to your own dreams! And allow yourself to soar on your own new adventure!

Audience Behavior!

The performers in a live show can hear what you are saying and doing in the audience. They can also feel the energy in the room and tell if you are engaging in the live show by actively watching and listening.

Remember

- It's ok to laugh, clap and respond to performers during the show! You're part of what makes the show happen!
- Listen and watch the performers carefully. Be sure to also notice the acting & design choices (sets, costumes and lighting).
- Please do not talk, whisper, unwrap candy or make loud noises during the production.
- Absolutely no photography or recording is permitted (including camera phones).
- Please turn off your cell phone, blackberry, etc.

Thank you!

Questions PRE SHOW

In *J.L. Seagull* there are many theatre challenges that we needed to solve. How might you solve them? *Be creative!*

- People playing seagulls
- Flying seagulls/characters
- Three different sections of the book.
How would you show that we are at a new part?

Ideas to try: pretend to fly, be a seagull or a flock, act out different parts of the story, make bird puppets, research seagulls, etc.

Questions POST SHOW

- What did you notice?
List as many answers as you can!
- What different ways did the actors act out flying?
- Who were the different characters? How did they connect to each other? How did we create the characters on stage?
- What set & costume pieces did we use?
 - What was the sound/music like?
Make your own "soundscape"!



how would YOU draw FLIGHT?

Give it a try! See the attached worksheet

How would you show flight with your body?

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EMU Theatre for Youth 2009-10 Season

Jonathan Livingston Seagull, School Tour, Oct-Dec 2009

Antigone, School Tour, March-April 2010

The Prince, the Wolf and the Firebird, School and Family Matinees, December 2009

Bud, Not Buddy, School and Family Matinees, April 2010

Name: _____



how do YOU draw FLIGHT?

Other ideas: Pretend that you are a bird or a character in *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. How would *they* draw flight?