

**THEATER UNSPEAKABLE: MOON SHOT****November 13, 2019 10:00am****STANDARDS**

TH: Cr1.1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

TH: Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and works.

**DESCRIPTION OF MATINEE**

**Biggest Story, Smallest Stage.** To recreate the story of America's Apollo 11 lunar landing, seven actors squeeze onto a 21-square foot stage nearly as tight as NASA's original Mercury capsules. Using only their bodies and their voices, this astounding troupe of actors brings to life one of the most daring times in the history of human exploration: the Space Race. From the Cold War to Sputnik, from Yuri Gagarin to Neil Armstrong, this action-packed show brings the company's tongue-in-cheek humor to a whole new atmosphere — one where the rules of gravity no longer apply.

[www.theaterunspeakable.com/moon-shot](http://www.theaterunspeakable.com/moon-shot).

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**GRADE RECOMMENDATION:**

Elementary, Middle and High School

**CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:**

Language Arts

Drama

Social Studies

For performance videos, photos, and information on ordering tickets visit:

<http://nortoncenter.com/education>

## ABOUT THE COMPANY

Founded in 2010, Theater Unspeakable was developed as a platform for devising new physical theater projects. Based in Chicago, the acclaimed theater company performs in venues across the country, including Lincoln Center Education in New York, Palo Alto Children's Theater in California, Center of Creative Arts in St. Louis, Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts (Los Angeles), Mesa Arts Center, Paramount Theater (Austin) and South by Southwest Education. To date, the company has created four original touring pieces including Superman 2050, Murder on the Midwest Express, The American Revolution and Moon Shot, and is currently developing its fifth project based on the life of Sacagawea. [www.theaterunspeakable.com](http://www.theaterunspeakable.com)

## ABOUT THE STYLE

Theater Unspeakable performs a particular style of physical theater called "The Platform." This style came from an exercise developed by the French physical theater teacher Jacques Lecoq. The goal is to a big story in a small space using a stage language that Lecoq called "Cartoon Mime." (Think of people bringing a cartoon to life using mime and words). Each cast member plays multiple roles and all the action takes place on a small platform.

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hello, my name is Marc Frost and I am the Managing Artistic Director of Theater Unspeakable. I created TU with the vision of making great devised, physical theater. What do these terms mean?

Devised theater means that we create our shows from scratch without a pre-existing script. The actors work with me to develop the shows, improvising dialogue and creating choreography, while I direct the process of building the show. It took us over two years, with contributions from many different actors, two dramaturgs, a movement director and a music director, to create Moon Shot.

Physical theater means we focus on the physical and visual elements of storytelling primarily. We tell big stories in small spaces. To do this, we use our bodies in many non-traditional ways: as set pieces, as props, as mechanicals, and even as sound effects.

Those humans' story is the ultimate testament to curiosity and hunger for exploration. Reaching the surface of the moon was an impressive accomplishment, but the insight gained from making that journey is truly awesome. So many aspects of our daily life we inherited from our race to space, and it is time to remind ourselves of our ability to solve the hard problems.

For those of you sitting in the audience who have big stories you would like to tell, I encourage you to start bringing them to life—today. You can create a show anywhere (just take a look at our tiny stage!). Who knows, maybe one day I'll be coming to the theater to sit and watch your big story come to life...

Many Thanks,

Marc Frost, Managing Artistic Director (TU) and Director of Moon Shot

**CONNECT WITH THE CAST OF MOON SHOT**

## Social Media

- Facebook: Theater Unspeakable
- Twitter: unspeakablethr
- Instagram: theater\_unspeakable

## Write a Letter

Theater Unspeakable  
1658 N Milwaukee Ave  
Box 374  
Chicago, Illinois, 60647

**PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS**

Questions for the audience before the show:

1. What makes a person a dreamer? Is it a good thing or a bad thing?
2. How do you determine what's important in life?
  - a. Should you do what is best for everyone?
  - b. For yourself?
  - c. For your family members?
  - d. What should you do if these conflict?
3. Science gives us truly amazing things like cellphones and space ships, but also frightening things like bombs. How far should science be allowed to go?

**PUTTING THE PLAY INTO CONTEXT**

Conversation with Zachary Baker-Salmon, Executive Producer (TU) and Dramaturg of Moon Shot

Why did Theater Unspeakable choose to make this play?

The decision to go to the moon was a bright light in a very dark time. A tumultuous era in American history, the 20th century exposed endemic problems of racism and sexism, as well as the horrors of industrialized war. Amid the gnashing violence, large-scale military intervention, and political confrontation of the 1960's, the American space program spearheaded by NASA and vocally supported by President Kennedy fulfilled a mission which, for a moment at least, unified the country and captivated the entire world.

Theater Unspeakable tells big stories in small spaces. Trying to get from the earth to the moon in a little tiny metal box is extremely difficult, and it took an enormous effort from many different people to successfully pull it off. In a way, it is similar to our own style of working: We have a tiny platform, much smaller than a normal stage, a team of devisers, and one big mission: to present a story that will engage, excite, and entertain people like you. When we chose to come together as a group and tell this story in particular, we were inspired by the audacity of human curiosity, and the collective human desire to explore new worlds and uncover new truths about our shared universe.

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How did you approach this highly technical topic in order to tell a story that could be understood by everyone?

This is often the hardest part about telling any story with such rich, detailed history behind it. Once you get deep into any subject, it's not always easy to know which parts to keep and which to omit. It is our hope that those of you who enjoy our play will be inspired to continue to research the moon landing on your own or with the help of a teacher. We are committed to giving you a sense of the human element—the kinds of people who were involved, what they wanted and why they wanted it, the pressure and adversity they had to face in order to get what they were after—along with some important historical details which base the play in fact.

What message or feeling are you hoping that audiences walk away with?

In the play you will hear the song “Beautiful Dreamer” sung repeatedly. This simple piece is quiet, calm, and clear in its purpose. Each day we are assaulted by a million decisions that must be made, questions that must be answered, rules that must be obeyed. It was not much different in the 1950's and 1960's, but despite all that, a group of people took it upon themselves to follow through on what many others called a dream. Like an astronaut attempting to safely land a lunar module, sometimes our very survival depends our ability to remain quiet, calm, and clear in purpose.

### **PUTTING THE MUSIC INTO CONTEXT**

Conversation with Lucía Mier y Terán Romero, Dramaturg and Music Director of Moon Shot

Why is music important in a show and specifically in this kind of theater form?

In theater and film, music can be as important as any of the characters. Just try to imagine one of your favorite movies on mute and you will definitely feel like something is missing. Music, even if sometimes we are not aware of it helps us to create ambience, places, moods and even characters.

In a theater form like ours, music is a great tool that helps us shape scenes and transitions and gives the platform one more dimension. Since we all play several roles it also works as what is called a 'leitmotif': a musical phrase that comes up every time a character appears on stage, helping the audience understand what is happening or where we are.

A good example of this is what we have come to call 'the space-chord'; this is a type of music chord (three or more pitches played at the same time) that I chose to use as a tool for the scenes that happen in space. You have probably heard of major and minor chords in your music lessons, well, this chord is an augmented chord and this type of chord is not entirely pleasing to our ears, it is dissonant and because our ears don't like it, it creates tension. Since space can be scary, tension is a good way to show this.

How did you decide which music to use for this show? Did you compose it?

Because Moon Shot's main character (the moon) is one that has captivated human imagination for as long as we can imagine, it was not hard to find many melodies that relate to it. I did not compose any of the melodies in this show, but I did research a lot to find the ones that really conveyed what our scenes and characters were asking for. Many of them are well known by famous composers like Wagner, Grieg, Debussy, Chopin or more popular songs like 'Moon River' or 'Beautiful Dreamer' which Zach mentioned before and that is a nice reminder of what this show is about: Humanity can achieve incredible things when we decide to do it and that includes us all. This brings me back to why the music comes from many places: The moon landing was a human effort, with tons of work and effort of people from many, many different places; and even if it wasn't what you could consider a love story, we can still say that when we dream together, we dream bigger.

## SPACE RACE TIMELINE

- 1945 - Wernher von Braun Surrenders to Americans Following the German defeat in WWII, V2 Rocket designer Wernher Von Braun was captured and brought to America, where he was instrumental in designing the rockets which would eventually take astronauts to the moon.
- 1945 - Russians capture the assembled V2 Rockets While the Americans had von Braun, the Soviet Union managed to smuggle the existing Nazi-era V2 rockets out of Germany for use in their very own space program.
- 1957 - Sputnik 1 and Sputnik 2 (Featuring Laika) Beating the United States in the early stages of the space race, the Soviet Union launched the first ever artificial Earth satellite, known as Sputnik 1. Sputnik 2 was launched in the same year, the first satellite to carry a living animal into orbit.
- 1959 - First photograph of Earth from satellite orbit NASA launched the Explorer 6 in August of 1959. This small satellite was designed to study trapped radiation in Earth's atmosphere and to transmit photos back to NASA.
- 1960 - First animals and plants returned alive from space (Belka and Strelka) Two dogs (along with 40 mice and several plant species) were successfully launched into orbit by the Soviets. They returned to Earth alive, and Strelka the dog later gave birth to a litter of puppies, one of which was given as a gift to First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. White House advisors initially opposed accepting the puppy, as they believed it was likely that the Soviets had planted microphones inside the dog in order to listen in on national defense meetings.
- 1961 - First Human Spaceflight (Yuri Gagarin) Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human in space after successfully completing an orbital spaceflight. After the 108-minute flight, Gagarin ejected from the capsule and parachuted to safety from 7 kilometers above the Earth's surface. He landed on a Soviet farm.
- 1961 - First Pilot-Controlled spaceflight (Alan Shepard) Astronaut Alan Shepard became the first human to complete a suborbital flight and return to Earth safely without ejecting from the space capsule three weeks after Gagarin's infamous flight.

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- 1962 - President Kennedy's speech speaking at Rice University in Houston, Texas, President John F. Kennedy publicly announced the United States' intent to land a human being on Earth's moon by the end of the 1960's. This was a serious gamble, as the Soviet Union had shown itself to be a formidable rival in the space race thus far.
- 1963 - First woman in space (Valentina Tereshkova) Once again asserting dominance over the Americans in the space race, the Soviet Union launched capsule Vostok 6 into space with a one-woman flight crew, civilian Cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova. The American Air Force's "Women in Space Program" had been thwarted by NASA just one year prior. The first American woman in space would not come until 1983.
- 1963 - President Kennedy is assassinated while riding in a presidential motorcade in Dallas, Texas, President Kennedy was shot by Lee Harvey Oswald, and died later that day at Parkland Memorial Hospital. In addition to being a national traumatic event, the assassination was particularly harrowing for NASA, as the President had been the most famous and vocal proponent of the space program.
- 1965 - First spacewalk A Soviet spacecraft featuring an inflatable airlock was the site of the first spacewalk. Cosmonaut Alexey Leonov wore a specialized spacesuit in order to complete the 12-minute spacewalk.
- 1966 - Death of Sergei Korolev After living a life in secret, chief Soviet rocket designer Sergei Korolev's death was announced as a tragedy for all Soviets. A hero's funeral was held for Korolev in Moscow.
- 1967 - Apollo 1 Disaster NASA's first manned mission to the moon never made it off the ground. During a launch rehearsal test in January, a fast-spreading cabin fire took the lives of the three-man crew of Apollo 1—Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee. Manned Apollo flights were suspended for 20 months following the tragedy.
- 1969 - First Humans on the moon (Apollo 11) at long last, NASA fulfilled the promise of the late John F. Kennedy. On July 20th, the spacecraft piloted by Astronaut Buzz Aldrin and holding mission commander Neil Armstrong landed on the surface of the moon. The lunar module holding the two astronauts was known as Eagle.

### SPACE RACE KEY TERMS

#### V2 (Vergeltungswaffe 2 "Retribution Weapon 2")

- A large, weaponized rocket built by the Germans during World War II. It could be launched from Germany and used to target cities and towns in neighboring enemy countries, causing death and destruction. It was used to deadly effect in Great Britain, but luckily the war ended before the German scientists were able to mass-produce the weapon.

#### Orbit

- The curved path of an object around a star, planet or moon o For instance, when an object exits the Earth's upper atmosphere, that object is subject to the Earth's gravitational pull o The object will revolve around the Earth in an elliptical motion, known as an orbit

#### Satellite

- An object placed into orbit around the Earth or moon in order to collect information or communicate

#### Cold War

- The state of political hostility that existed between Soviet Russia and the United States from 1945 to 1990

#### Capsule

- A small spacecraft (or part of a larger one) that contains the sensitive instruments or crew

#### The Eagle Has Landed

- A code phrase spoken by mission commander Neil Armstrong after successfully landing the lunar module (codename: Eagle) on the surface of the moon for the very first time

#### Astronaut/Cosmonaut

- A person who is trained to travel in a spacecraft o American space travelers are known as astronauts, Soviet space travelers are known as cosmonauts

#### NASA

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration o Founded in 1958, is an independent agency of the executive branch of the United States federal government responsible for the civilian space program.

#### Women in Space Program

- A program spearheaded by the American Air Force aimed at testing women's physical ability to withstand the rigors of space flight
- Details of the program were presented to NASA, which ultimately decided against allowing American women in manned space flight

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### THE TINY RACE TO TINY SPACE

**Objective:** Students are given a mission: to make history come to life. The students also have an important constraint. They have to do it all on a three-by-seven foot stage platform (just like Theater Unspeakable does in their "Moon Shot" performance).

**Materials:** Stage platform, of approximately three feet by seven feet in size; or alternatively, use tape and tape measure to tape out the dimensions of the platform on the floor.

**Procedure:**

1. Split the students into groups of seven or smaller
2. Have each group create the historic image of American astronauts landing on the moon inside of the platform

3. Have the students create two images of the moments that led to this iconic image as well as two images of the moments that followed it
4. Give the students time to create transitions between these three images
5. Ask students to present the Images and Transitions for each Iconic Image to the class

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Books

- If the Sun Dies - Oriana Fallaci
- Space Race: The Epic Battle Between America and the Soviet Union for Dominion of Space - Deborah Cadbury
- The Race: The Complete True Story of How America Beat Russia to the Moon - James Scheffer
- First Man: The Life of Neil A. Armstrong - James R. Hansen
- Who Was Neil Armstrong? - Roberta Edwards
- One Giant Leap: Neil Armstrong's Stellar American Journey - Leon Wagener
- Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race - Margot Lee Shetterly
- Right Stuff, Wrong Sex: America's First Women in Space Program - Margaret A. Weitekamp
- The Mercury 13: The True Story of Thirteen Women and the Dream of Space Flight - Martha Ackmann
- Leaving Orbit: Notes from the Last Days of American Spaceflight - Margaret Lazarus Dean
- Command and Control - Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident and the Illusion of Safety - Eric Schlosser

### Fiction Films

- Apollo 13 - Directed by Ron Howard
- Gravity - Directed by Alfonso Cuarón
- Hidden Figures - Directed by Theodore Melfi
- The Martian - Directed by Ridley Scott
- Contact - Directed by Robert Zemeckis
- The Right Stuff - Directed by Philip Kaufman

### Documentary Films

- Space Race - BBC Films
- When We Left Earth: The NASA Missions - Discovery Channel
- First Man on the Moon - NOVA/PBS
- The Sixties: "The Space Race" - CNN Documentary
- For All Mankind - Criterion Collection Documentary

### Physical Theatre Companies/Artists

- Complicite
- Frantic Assembly

For performance videos, photos, and information on ordering tickets visit:

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- Kneehigh
- Theatre du Soleil
- Pig Iron
- Theatre Grottesco

## Physical Theatre Schools

- LISPA
- Ecole Jacques Lecoq
- Dell'Arte

## REFERENCES

<https://shawentertainment.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Moon-Shot-Study-Guide.pdf>