

# ENRICHMENT GUIDE

Prepared by **ANDREW HILMES, MORGAN REETZ, JOLIE SEITZ & DAVID A. VANCLEAVE**

## DOG SEES GOD

Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead

by BERT V. ROYAL



**DM YOUNG  
ARTISTS  
THEATRE**

**FEBRUARY 16-23**  
**STONER THEATER**

### WARNING

THIS PRODUCTION CONTAINS STRONG LANGUAGE & ADULT THEMES.  
NOT RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 13.

*Dog Sees God* has not been authorized or approved in any manner by the Charles M. Schulz Estate or United Features Syndicate, which have no responsibility for its content.





## DEAR PEN PAL,

Thank you for downloading our *Dog Sees God* Enrichment Guide. We hope the included information enhances your experience with Bert V. Royal's play, our production, and the themes presented.

If you are reading this before attending a performance, we'd like to warn you that **this guide contains spoilers**. We are thankful you are choosing to learn more, but we'd hate it if we ruined our own play.

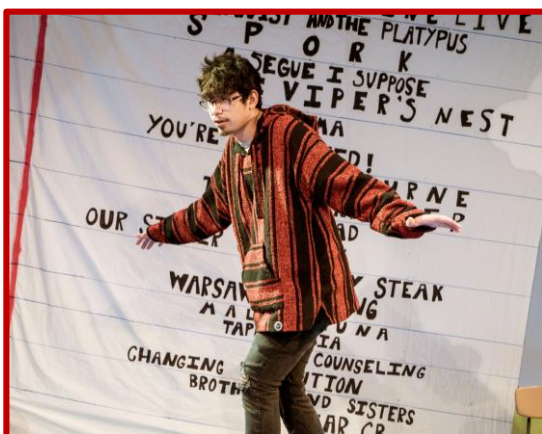
Sometimes art is uncomfortable. Sometimes, it's easier to forget the works that cause us discomfort. We hope this is not one of those times. We know that life can also be uncomfortable and is much harder to ignore than a 90-minute play. Our hope is to remind all audiences of whatever it is that makes them extraordinary. In doing so, we also hope you might acknowledge the extraordinariness of those around you.

Whether you're currently in high school, a parent of a high schooler, or you just came to see your favorite comic strip character drop the F bomb, we're glad you joined us for this ride. If you have suggestions on what to include in future guides, please let us know! We'd love to hear from you. Our Enrichment Guides are a newer DMAT initiative, and we know there's room to grow.

Thank you again for choosing to support Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre and the next generation of great theatre artists. We hope the production and this enrichment guide inspire you and your family to be the best versions of yourselves, to be good, to never give up hope, and to discover Happiness.

Sincerely,

David A. VanCleave  
Executive Artistic Director



Charles Schulz is the reason you are reading this Enrichment Guide. He is why this story can be told, why this message can be spread and why artists were inspired to create these wonderful shows. He had an immense impact on children and families with the Peanuts comics. These led to TV specials, books and more. His life was full of great achievements, tragedy, and many testing moments. This timeline will outline the impact he had on so many, that continues to spread throughout the world.

**November 26, 1922**– Charles Schulz is born in Minneapolis, Minnesota

**1943**– His mother dies of cervical cancer and within days he leaves to Camp Campbell, Kentucky to begin his army career. During the war, he earned many leadership positions that he took pride in, but the events of the war accompanied by his mother's death were quite traumatizing for him.

**1945**– Schulz returns from war and begins to work at his alma mater, Art Instruction, as a professional cartoonist. He begins his first published project (an early version of the Peanuts) titled 'Lil Folks'. These strips consisted of small, precocious children having conversations that seemed to exceed their age.

**Late 1940s and 50s**– This is when the minimalistic style was preferred for newspapers. This meant that cartoonists were pushed to shrink comics to "stripe" sizes with minimal pen strokes. There were also increasingly educated audiences after the war was over, so Charles Schulz's daily gags and intellectual humor was a perfect and natural fit for an ever-changing culture.

**October 5, 1950**– The first Peanuts comic strip is published in seven newspapers nationwide. Although his dream was to become a cartoonist, he never dreamed of the longevity or impact he would have around the world. The success of the Peanuts can be largely credited to the depth and understanding of characters as their personalities and struggles are shown every week.

**December, 1999**– Charles Schulz announces his retirement and leaves a glorious legacy behind.

**February 12, 2000**– Charles Schulz passes away the night before the final Peanuts comic strip is printed in newspapers. He leaves behind him one of the largest and most impactful careers ever. His impact is seen in so many areas of culture, including (but not limited to):

- Having NASA space crafts named after his characters
- Emmy awards for his TV specials
- Official recognition from the United States and other countries
- A concert at Carnegie Hall inspired by him and his work
- Book collections in over twenty-five languages
- A comic strip syndicated in 2,600 newspapers worldwide
- You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown, an amazing musical inspired by his creation that spreads the message that there is happiness and good found in everyone
- Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead, a thought provoking play that will speak to all those on a journey of self-discovery, which is all of us.



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE



## **pal·in·drome**

noun; a word, phrase, or sequence that reads the same backward as forward.

Origin:

early 17<sup>th</sup> century: from Greek *palindromes* "running back again" or "finding the way"

The first platypus was discovered in 1798 by British colonists in Australia and sent to Dr. George Shaw of Britain to be studied. The animal was so contradictory, Dr. Shaw believed it to be a hoax. Mermaid-like creatures had been fabricated by taxidermists and sent to scientists before, so he assumed someone had stitched a bill onto an otter or similar four-footed animal. It wasn't until he tried prying and cutting the bill off that he believed his eyes. If you visit this original platypus at the British Museum, you can still see the cuts from Dr. Shaw's scissors on the bill.

This living paradox has baffled scientists ever since. Its reproductive system closely resembles that of a bird's, but it has mammary glands and produces milk. Its skeleton has the features of a cold-blooded reptile, but the animal is warm-blooded. The webbed feet, bill, body shape and waterproof fur suggest aquatic life, yet it can only survive underwater for a few minutes at a time. The males produce venom like a snake but have no teeth, its eggs contain a chicken-like yolk, its milk proteins match humans.... The list goes on, sharing over 80% of its genes with mice, dogs, opossum and more.

Humans might not be as scientifically perplexing as the platypus, but we certainly are confusing. It can seem impossible to identify, much less *embrace* who we are given the number of intersecting dimensions such as gender, religious, racial, ethnic, generational, sexual, political, cultural, class, etc. Add in life experiences, most notably grief and loss, and it's no wonder we can't seem to figure ourselves out.

No, we cannot be adorable two-feet long furry creatures with suede-like bills who weigh less than five pounds, but we can do something platypuses cannot. We feel.

We feel the pain of letting go of our childhood.

We feel uncertainty at the intersection of identities and pressure to choose a path.

We feel the thrill of throwing our first party and disappointing our parents.

We feel the pain of regret the next morning.

We feel the fire of a first kiss—a kiss both revolutionary and revelatory.

We feel the weight of hiding that Truth within a virtual cloud of shame.

We feel relief when our best friend says they have faith in us.

We feel loss, real loss—when All That Is becomes All That Was.

But what then?

We find our way again.

It is in this running back that we, too, become  
**extraordinary creatures.**

# THE AFTERLIFE

## ACCORDING TO VARIOUS RELIGIONS

written by **ANDREW HILMES**

Throughout the events of *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead*, many religions are referenced by multiple characters. Along with this, the question of what happens after we die is posed on a variety of occasions by the main character, CB. The religions shown in this play provide insight into each character mentioning them and what they are going through at that point in time or what they have gone through. As these characters express many aspects of themselves, their religious beliefs provide context and depth to understanding what they experience. Some are settled on religions, some jump from one to the other, a handful have no opinion, and others seem to struggle finding what they can identify with. In the following section the religions of Wicca, Buddhism, and the Baptist church will be shown in terms of their core values, how they are perceived and their concept of the afterlife. I encourage you to think about the varying ideas of the afterlife around the world as you watch or reflect on the show.

### **WICCA**

Wicca is a Pagan religion, meaning they pray to Gods/spirits of nature. In return for their faith, spirits grant them the power of magic. Wicca is traced back to originating in Ireland, Scotland and Wales but does not have a traditional sacred text. There is no official scripture, and therefore no official stance on what happens after we die. In fact, there are many opinions within the religion, yet no answer is treated as one hundred percent fact. One of the most widely accepted ideas in Wicca is reincarnation. This is a result of Wiccans' view that many things are cyclical (electrons revolving the nucleus and Earth revolving the Sun). The idea that life does not have to be an exception to this rule is represented by reincarnation. Another popular idea of the afterlife in Wicca is the Summerland. They use this as a common word for the spirit world, a second plane of existence that no one truly understands. The idea of a religion not confining those who practice it to one definitive result after death is intriguing as CB struggles for the duration of the play to find what he believes is beyond this life and what his dog is experiencing now. Why does he feel the need to confine himself to one thing? The fact that Wicca is not only the first religion introduced in the show, but also introduced at a funeral, provides interesting insight into the events of this story.

### **BUDDHISM**

Buddhism is a religion that focuses on the spiritual development of oneself. Buddhists strive for insight into the true nature of life and do not worship gods. Their goal is to reach the state of nirvana, by following the path of the Buddha (who went on a quest for enlightenment around 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Buddhists believe that there are three signs of existence: impermanence, suffering and uncertainty. A common Buddhist belief is that nothing is fixed or permanent. This is an interesting thought when considering that Van is the character representing Buddhism in this show. He has such an attachment to his blanket that he could not let it go. If he believes nothing is permanent, yet he wanted to stay permanently connected to his blanket, there is a sense of irony hidden in this idea. This shows that one can subscribe to a certain belief, but not fully understand it, representing the idea that there is room for growth in everyone. Buddhists believe in reincarnation, and that it is an eternal cycle of pain, until one reaches nirvana. One achieves this state by following the Eightfold Path of good actions. These good actions will result in a positive rebirth, while negative actions will result in a negative one.

### **BAPTIST**

The Baptist church is a branch of Christianity. It is named after a belief of publicly proclaiming ones fait by washing sins away and being born into the church. There are around 50 million Baptists in the United States, making it one of the largest Protestant groups in the nation. Baptists believe that the Bible is the only authority in the Christian faith because it has a divine nature. Within the Baptist church there are two major theories on humans fate, the afterlife and overall, our purpose.

Calvinism- Named after John Calvin, the idea that human's fate is predestined, as some will be saved and some are meant for damnation because of original sin. This is an interesting concept and outlook on the afterlife that differs greatly from the others seen in this show. Rather than specify just the where, this theory specifies who will end up there.

Arminianism- Named after Jacob Arminius, the idea that God chose is to bring salvation to all people and we have the ability to make the decision for faith. This means that each indusial would decide on where they would end up after they die based on how they live their life. This is the more widely accepted idea in most of Christianity.

### **OTHERS**

Throughout *Dog Sees God*, we see the character of CB's Sister "trying on" different identities, some of them religious. We see her explore Wicca and Catholicism (though "Our Sister of Mercy" may not be used for any future commercials for the Roman Catholic church) and hear from CB that "just last week [she] came home Baptist." We like to believe that CB's Sister is not just trying on different Halloween costumes, but is actually exploring the various faiths. Doing so is an important part of claiming an identity and discovering your views in life. Are there any other religions that intrigue you? We encourage you to take the time and explore some of the different religions in our world. Regardless of whether or not you convert to a new faith, you'll at least gain insight into why people behave and believe the way they do. And isn't that a good thing?



# the EXTRAORDINARY platypus

written by **MORGAN REETZ**

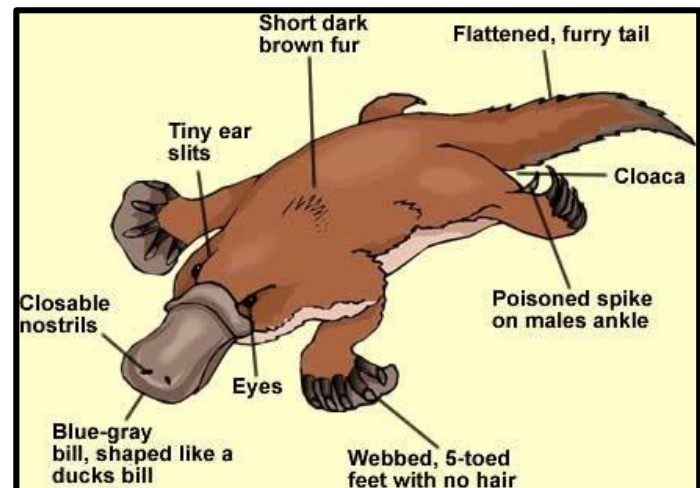


## THE DISCOVERY

- The platypus was first discovered by British colonists in Australia in 1788. The colony just called them Water Moles or Duckbills.
- The first platypus was scientifically described by Dr George Shaw of Britain in 1799. At first, he thought that it was a joke, as it was not uncommon for creatures like mermaids to be sent to scientists within this time. He took a pair of scissors to the bill expecting to see stitches attaching the bill to the body. When he didn't find any, that's when he realized it was actually real.
- Dr. Shaw named the animal *Platypus Anatinus* from the Greek and Latin words meaning "flat-footed" and "duck-like."
- Blumenbach, a German scientist, recommended the name *Ornithorhynchus Paradoxus* meaning "bird-like snout" and "puzzling," but *Platypus* stuck around.

## THE PHYSICAL

- The webbing folds under the foot when out of the water, making it easier for a platypus to walk and use the sturdy front claws to dig burrows. The hind feet are used to help change direction and maintain balance in the water. In addition, they are equipped with sharp, curved claws used to groom the fur.
- The tail's lower surface is covered by short, fine hairs which are replaced each year.
- The platypus is covered in dense, waterproof fur and has a tail like a beaver, and a bill and webbed feet like a duck.
- Has flaps over the ears that close when underwater.



## THE EXTRAORDINARY

- The female platypuses lay eggs and keeps them warm in a nesting burrow until they hatch.
- Even though they hatch from eggs, they are still mammals, so the female platypus feeds its young milk.
- The male platypus has spurs on his back feet which have an extremely painful venom in them to fight predators. The pain from the venom is excruciating and not even morphine would ease the pain. There have been no human fatalities recorded from platypus venom...yet.
- Unfortunately, there have been no cases of a duck turning into a platypus in a cocoon.

# WHAT'S IN A NAME

written by **DAVID A. VANCLEAVE**

Some scene titles in *Dog Sees God* are obvious (such as “Dear Pen Pal” and “Fire Is Bad”), others may seem disconnected, random, or of little reason. However, each one is significant, often giving us the information we needed to fully understand Royal’s intent.

## **CANIS EXEQUIAE:**

*Latin for “funeral rights for a dog”*

*pronounced: CANE-ISS EK-si-kway*

## **NIRVANA:**

*In Buddhism, “Nirvana” literally means “to cool” or “to extinguish.” It is a state where suffering has been extinguished and the flames of desire have been cooled. It is a state of ultimate freedom—freedom from sorrow and freedom from happiness. It is the profound peace when we are liberated from finding pain or pleasure in impermanent objects.*

## **VIPER’S NEST**

*From Isaiah 11:6-8: “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra’s den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest.”*

*This passage from the Bible (quoted here from the New International Version) is Beethoven’s answer to CB questioning if there will be animals in heaven. It is also one of the last things spoken before the two characters share their first kiss.*

*What’s the significance of this passage? What does it mean for the character of CB? What does it mean for Beethoven? How does it advance the story and characters?*

## **NOCTURNE**

*A piece of music*

*Chopin wrote 21 for solo piano*

*French literal translation for night.*

## **OUR SISTER OF MERCY**

*Roman Catholic congregation devoted to faith and to works of charity and education.*

## **MAL DI LUNA**

*Italian for Moonlight Sonata.*

*This is the only classical song specifically mentioned by the playwright that isn’t by Chopin. Incidentally, Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata is the song Schroeder plays when Lucy tries to discuss marriage in You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown.*

## **TAPHEPHOBIA**

*Fear of the grave or the fear of being buried alive.*



**How does this information change your interpretation or understanding of the scenes or characters?**

**What’s in the name *Dog Sees God*?**



# CHOPIN'S NOCTURNES

written by **JOLIE SEITZ**

Between 1832 and 1846, Frederic Chopin published 18 out of 21 instrumental pieces of which he would title Nocturnes. In these pieces, Chopin held the melody in his right hand while maintaining a rhythm of broken chords in his left. Chopin used his song like melodies and an extensive use of the foot pedal to evoke a suspenseful aura while intensifying the emotion and drama of the pieces. These Nocturnes highlight the use of counterpoint, where melodies are harmonically interdependent yet independent in rhythm and contour. Chopin focuses on melodic interaction to create tension and expand complex structures while still exploring his obvious themes of romance and drama.

Within *Dog Sees God*, Bert V. Royal expands upon many smaller dramas within the larger storyline, such as teenage substance use and the exploration of sexuality. In the section titled Nocturne, we see CB and Beethoven discuss the aftermath of CB's public act before Beethoven gives him a CD and they have sex. In this midst of their troubled lives, they seek solace in each other for a night. The fact that this section is titled Nocturnes, in reference to Chopin's Nocturnes is no mistake.

Composer Franz Liszt sums up the importance of the title when he said "The title nocturne aptly applies to the pieces so named by Field, so it bears our thoughts at the outset toward those hours where in the soul, released from all the cares of the day, is lost in self contemplation, and soars toward the regions of a starlit heaven." He continued on to say, "His flight is loftier, though his wing be more wounded... their poetry is more sombre and fascinating; they ravish us more, but are less reposeful; and thus permit us to return with pleasure to those pearly shells that open, far from the tempests and the immensities of Ocean, beside some murmuring spring shaded by the palms of a happy oasis which makes us forget even the existence of the desert."

The strategic naming of this section allows for a careful reader to connect this musical release from reality to CB and Beethoven's indulgence. This scene, as does the build of Chopin's Nocturnes, expands upon structures already known to the viewer to substantiate the direness between the characters. Expansion allows for connection and the concept of a "happy oasis" to come to the surface, ultimately shifting the bleak undertones prior to this scene. The support CB and Beethoven find in each other, mirrored in the history of Chopin's Nocturnes, reveal tangible comfort within a somber time.

**"Here...it's all the Chopin you could ever want. I'm kind of, like, going through this phase."**

**—Beethoven, *Dog Sees God*, Nocturne**

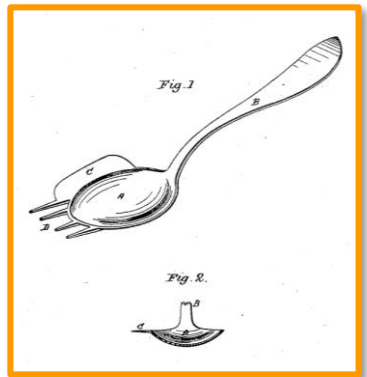


# the SPORK REPORT

written by  
**MORGAN REETZ**

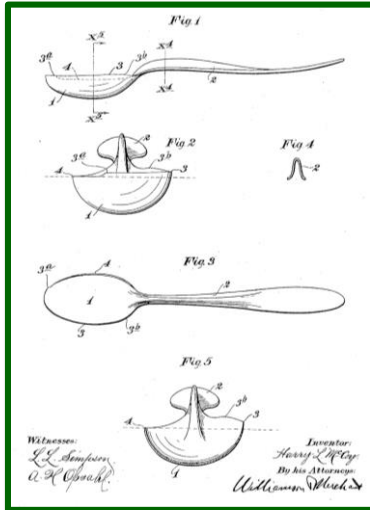
## THE FIRST SPORK

- Samuel W. Francis invented and issued U.S. Patent 147, 119 in 1874.
- A combination of a fork, knife, and spoon.



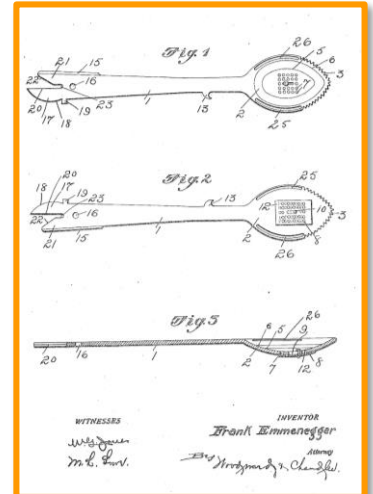
## THE NEXT ONE

- Harry L. McCoy invented and issued U.S. Patent 904,553 in 1907.
- "The Cutting Spoon"
- Was made to be able to cut through vegetables like cabbage and potatoes, and being able to serve them with the same utensil.



## ANOTHER ONE

- Frank Emmenegger invented and issued U.S. Patent 10,448,69 in 1909.
- Cutting edge, can opener, spoon, egg beater, cake/butter knife, and a strainer. (That's 7 or more uses for 1 utensil. I think this one is clearly the winner for best spork.)



## THE WORD "SPORK"

Originated in the early 20th Century when Hyde W. Ballard wrote a letter to the United States Patent Office in 1951, requesting to register the word "spork" as a trademark for any utensil that is a combination between a fork and a spoon.



# ASK THE ACTORS: WHAT IS HAPPINESS



**NIXSON BENITEZ** *Van*

"Happiness is a way you change life in yours, someone's, or anything... What creates happiness is the constant changes I go through and if there is no such thing as change than happiness isn't achieved."



**OLIVIA GORDEN** *Tricia York*

"Being content and looking forward to get out of bed each day."



**NOAH HACKBART** *Beethoven*

"That genuine good feeling from doing something to help or being kind to another person."



**ASHER SUSKI** *CB*

"Making new connections and growing existing relationships, finding people you love & who love you."



**MIKALA CLARK** *CB's Sister*

"To me, happiness means that I love the life I'm living in the present, but at the same time, looking hopeful towards the future."



**LAUREN GRAVES** *Marcy*

"Happiness isn't measured in success. It is measured by the friends you make and the adventures you go on."



**NATALIE MORRILL** *Vans Sister*

"Spending time on a stage doing what I love with friends or people I just met. ...or being with my cat, dragging his string all over the place."



**TANNER TILLOTSON** *Matt*

"True happiness is when you can be who you are and do what you love."



# PEANUTS PSYCHOLOGY

From *THE CHARLIE BROWN THEORY OF PERSONALITY* by **DR. JAMES C. KAUFMAN**

In the world of psychology, there is a theory known as the Five Factor Model, which essentially reduces all of the different possible personality variables into five broad factors: **neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience** (sometimes known as just openness), **conscientiousness**, and **agreeableness**.

In a blog post for *Psychology Today*, Dr. James C. Kaufman proposed The Charlie Brown Theory of Personality, making sense of the factors (and psychoanalyzing / diagnosing comic strip characters for fun).

## **NEUROTICISM (also referred to as emotional stability) = CHARLIE BROWN**

Typically defined as a tendency towards anxiety, self-doubt, depression, shyness, and other similar feelings. Since all personality traits, including emotional instability, exist on a spectrum, everyone is a little neurotic to some degree.

**Charlie Brown** is a model neurotic. He is prone to depression and anxiety and paralyzing fits of over-analysis. Constantly worrying if he is liked or respected, he has a perpetual, usually dormant crush on the little redheaded girl, taking small joys in her foibles (like biting her pencil) that may make her more attainable.

## **EXTROVERSION = SNOOPY**

Extroversion as a personality trait was first proposed by noted psychiatrist Carl Jung in the 1920s. It generally refers to a state of being where someone "recharges" or draws energy from being with other people. These people tend to seek out experiences and environments that allow them to interact with others as much as possible. Extroverts are often referred to as "the life of the party."

**Snoopy** is a typical extravert. Flamboyant, daring, and outgoing to a fault, he tries to join in every activity and conversation. He (perhaps fictitiously) flies gallant missions against the Red Baron and then brags about his exploits. For reasons potentially stemming from his long-ago abandonment of his mother, he aggressively pursues friendship and food (not in that order). Snoopy is Joe Cool, the life of the party.



# PEANUTS PSYCHOLOGY

## CONTINUED

### OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE = LINUS

Extroversion is specifically referring to *social* interaction and experiences. Openness to experience is very similar, but is tied to someone's desire for intellectual and experiential curiosity. People who represent openness to experience (or simply open-minded people) tend to be more imaginative than practical, are open to new and different ideas, and in better touch with their feelings.

**Linus** is clearly the brightest of all of the Peanuts gang. Witty and knowledgeable, he is prone to passionate monologues. He has invented his own creation, the Great Pumpkin, and faithfully waits in the pumpkin patches for him every Halloween. Linus has his own idiosyncrasy, an ever-present blue security blanket – but he does not seem particularly sensitive about it; it's who he is. Too young to actively try new things, he must instead use his intellect to mull over new and interesting ideas.

### CONSCIENTIOUSNESS = SCHROEDER

Conscientiousness refers to one's discipline, rule orientation and integrity. People high in this trait are disciplined, high-achieving, dependable, less spontaneous or flexible, and are often more stubborn.

**Schroeder** is equally just as lovable as the rest, but most casual readers know him for one thing: his piano playing. Yes, Lucy has a crush on him, but that's about her – he will have none of it. He is always practicing. Disciplined and focused on his passion for classical music, one can imagine him setting his alarm clock for seven a.m. on weekends to try Autumn Sonata one more time. His one other preferred activity is playing catcher for the baseball team – again, the sturdy, reliable director of the action on the field. Schroeder would offer to help you move and show up ten minutes early.

### (DIS)AGREEABLENESS = LUCY

Agreeableness is what it sounds like—friendliness and being good-natured.

Defined by a single word (crabby), **Lucy** revels in her disagreeableness. Typical portrayals of Lucy feature her bossing around her friends, dominating her little brother, mocking Charlie Brown's self-consciousness, and generally being a pain in the ass. Her attempts at psychiatry generally involve misguided advice delivered loudly and angrily. One recurring interaction is Lucy pretending to hold a football out for Charlie Brown to kick, and then pulling it out at the last minute. Brown goes thump and Lucy preens.

**Do you think Dr. Kaufman's assessments of the *Peanuts* characters are accurate?**

**Do you think they hold true for the characters in *Dog Sees God*?**

**What factor do you think you most align with? Why?**



**Tell us a little bit about your journey in theatre. What lead you to *Charlie Brown* with DMYAT?**

Well Back in my day you had to walk to the theatre barefoot.....

My first real memory of Theater was way back when I was probably 8 or 9. It was a vocal music show, and they did some scenes from Tom Sawyer. The teacher needed someone to turn the lights on and off. I volunteered, and for some reason they chose the 8 year old. It was at Windsor Elementary here in Des Moines, they had these strip lights that you could turn the breaker and make them red, amber, white, or blue. I discovered that I really enjoyed watching something, and realizing that it's night time, so I should turn on the blue light. It's day time, so I should use Amber and White. So, not so little awkward 8 year old me is behind the choir at the breaker box (as the break box was literally onstage) turning the lights on for different transitions in the scenes. My love of Theater Design was born.

David [VanCleave, DMYAT EAD] and I did shows at the Des Moines Playhouse way back when we were both in High School. We both went our separate ways for college, but both were drawn back to Des Moines. I am drawn to the commitment to young artist; art education is so important. We need to support theater in our schools, as well as opportunities of growth outside of the classroom. I hope that by working DMYAT that maybe I can help inspire another 8 year old and show them the magic of theater.

**Tell us about your creative process for Scenic Design and Lighting Design...**

The Scenic Design process can vary from project to project. I have some projects that have a 8 month development time, and other project I have 8 days to develop. For *Charlie Brown* and *Dog Sees God* we all met as group about 6 weeks ago. Usually I have a design and ground plan before rehearsal starts. Once the rehearsal process starts 4-5 weeks out from opening, we go into the build process. This is where either myself or another person actually creates the design. Then we usually have about a week of technical rehearsals where we step back and adjust if needed and then open! In a dream project you would meet with a Director about 8 months out, so you can go through a couple of versions of the design. Part of designing is being able to throw away and start over if something isn't working. What I love about theater is you really live in 2 worlds. Dream World and Reality, it's my job to meld those together. So sometimes I do that entire process in 2 weeks.

The Lighting Design process can be a little quicker. Usually you have to wait until some rough scenic ideas are in before you can add your layer of design. A lot of the design work is done the last 3 weeks before opening.

**What is the most challenging part about being a designer for two separate categories? How do you balance it out?**

It is hard, the nature of this business is collaboration. But the reality is sometimes that I have to do both. Usually I go by the ¼ rule. ¾ of my time is focused on Scenic, and then I have to step back and think from a Lighting Designing perspective. As we get closer to opening it starts to even out and I start splitting my time between both.

I have designed an all white or gray set, and I stop and think, "Wow this would be really hard to Light. Let's choose a different direction."

**What is the most rewarding part about these positions/this job?**

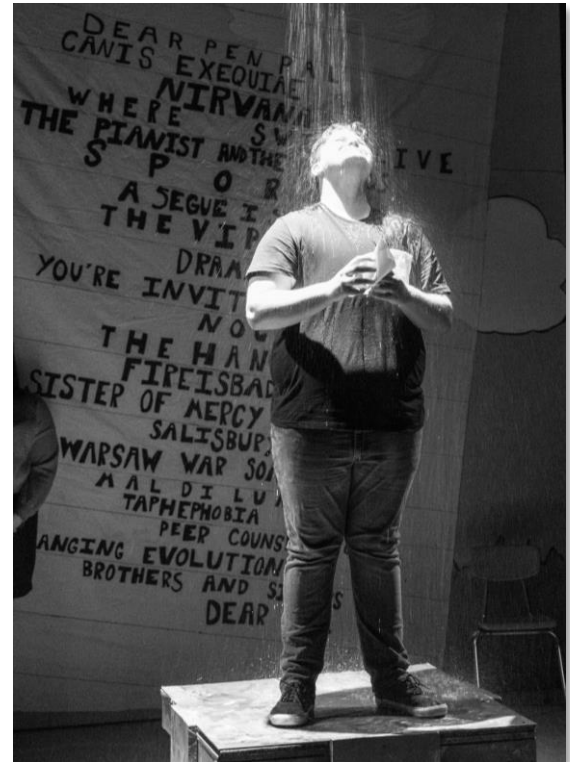
Creating an environment that enhances the story. I strive to teach my students that theater is never about one person, one actor, one prop, or one designing department. It's about of group of things coming together to tell ONE story.

The most rewarding thing, would be stepping back and watching a story come to life of the stage, and having it all work as one. I designed a production of *Fun Home* this fall at Iowa Stage. There is a beautiful moment when Helem, played by the amazing Erin Horst, has this climax of the song where she has this heartbreaking moment in "Welcome to Our Home on Maple Avenue". The Actor turns around and looks at the house, and we see her shadow thrown up on the wall and it's creating this intense stage picture. What an audience doesn't always realize many things have to happen for that one moment. The director and I had to talk so she could block the actors actions, I had to work with my master electrician to get the angle and type of light just right, I had to create a scenic design where that was possible, someone programed the lights to change, a Stage Manager had to call the light change on the right beat, and the Orchestra had to hear the actor. Hopefully the audience will have a deeper understanding of how Helen Feels in the moment. The Magic of Theater. I love to think through those moments.

# LGBT+ SUICIDE

from  
**THE TREVOR**  
PROJECT

- ⇒ Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24.
- ⇒ LGB youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times the rate of heterosexual youth.
- ⇒ LGB youth are almost five times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth.
- ⇒ Of all the suicide attempts made by youth, LGB youth suicide attempts were almost five times as likely to require medical treatment than those of heterosexual youth.
- ⇒ Suicide attempts by LGB youth and questioning youth are 4 to 6 times more likely to result in injury, poisoning, or overdose that requires treatment from a doctor or nurse, compared to their straight peers.
- ⇒ In a national study, 40% of transgender adults reported having made a suicide attempt. 92% of these individuals reported having attempted suicide before the age of 25.
- ⇒ LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGB peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.
- ⇒ 1 out of 6 students nationwide (grades 9–12) seriously considered suicide in the past year.
- ⇒ Each episode of LGBT victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment or abuse, increases the likelihood of self-harming behavior by 2.5 times on average.



*“Maintain in your  
heart all that  
makes you who  
you are.”*

The Trevor Project is  
available 24/7:

1.866.488.7386 or  
[TheTrevorProject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org)