

PAUL TRACEY

Word to the Wise

Art Form: Music
Style: Traditional
Culture: World Cultures

MEET THE ARTIST:

Paul Tracey was born in Durban, South Africa, where his father, Hugh - a well known ethnomusicologist - was director of the radio station. Paul's parents separated when he was seven, and for the next 10 years he attended boarding schools in England. On his return to South Africa, he learned of the immense amount of work his father had accomplished, traveling throughout Eastern, Central and Southern Africa recording traditional music. His father was a font of fascinating stories and information about African culture, its songs and stories, its music and dancing. Paul worked as a chicken farmer alongside the farm foreman, a Swazi man named Simon Shabalala who gave Paul great insight into the character of Africans. At the same time, Paul was developing show business skills, and joined his brother Andrew to sing concerts as "The Tracey Brothers." Together they formed the nucleus of "Wait a Minim!," a musical revue that ran for seven years on four continents, including over a year on Broadway. When his daughter was born, Paul began to write his own songs, some of which have been featured on the Tonight Show and Jim Henson's The Muppet Show. In 1976 he moved to Los Angeles where he has created 7 different assembly programs, many of which reflect his international background and travels.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Socrates said, "I was the wisest of all the Greeks. It is because that I know that I know nothing." Paul Tracey also does not claim to be wise, but does claim that he has managed to live a full and satisfying life. This show is about the wisdom and advice he has learned from a variety of people, both famous and ordinary. He refuses to believe that people can learn only by making their own mistakes, so through songs and stories, he shares some of the ideas that he wished he had known while growing up. With the cooperation of artist Jon Pearson who drew 14 life size portraits of historical figures, Paul sings about proverbs, sayings, common sense, superstitions and rules - especially "the Golden Rule."



PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

Students will see life sized portraits of famous people as they enter. They should be able to recognize these people and know about their place in history.

Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865, our president during the Civil War who tried to reunite the country, but without slavery.

George Washington, 1732-1799, our first president, known as "The Father of our Country," it is said that he could not tell a lie.

Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790, multi-talented man -- publisher, philosopher, scientist, inventor and statesman -- he discovered that lightning is an electrical discharge.

Albert Einstein, 1879-1955, scientist of extraordinary ability, best known for his Theory of Relativity, also enjoyed playing the violin.

Susan B. Anthony, 1820-1906, an early champion of women's causes, equal pay for women and their right to vote.

Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929-1968, a minister who advocated passive resistance to segregation, he was the leader of the civil rights movement.

These portraits will be turned around to reveal others:

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 1917-1963, an inspiring leader, the youngest man to ever hold the office of president, tragically assassinated. He stated, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

Mahatma Gandhi, 1869-1948, leader of India's fight for independence from England, developed the principle of non-violence.

Michelangelo, 1475-1564, best known for his painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

Confucius, 550 -478 B.C., a great moral teacher from China whose rule of happiness was very similar to our "Golden Rule."

Eleanor Roosevelt, 1884-1962, wife of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a great humanitarian worker in her own right.

Five banners will be seen:

Quote, Proverb, Rule, Motto, Saying. Ask students to define or look up these words in the dictionary. Also define the word "assassinate."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Who do you think was the wisest person who ever lived? Why?
- What are the two ways that "The Golden Rule" is expressed? ("Do unto...." and "Treat others.....")
- "Never judge a book by its cover." What does this mean? Is this always true?
- Can you remember some of the superstitions that Paul referred to in his song, "Take my Advice"? Do you know any other superstitions? Should they be taken seriously?
- "Every cloud has a silver lining." What does this saying mean?
- Give an example of a quote. Does it have to be said by someone famous?

FRAMEWORK FOCUS - LANGUAGE ARTS:

Create your own proverbs as Benjamin Franklin did. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

If you want to be truly happy, _____!
Ask a foolish question, _____.
When in doubt _____.
He who is late _____.
If you remember only one thing, remember _____.
Don't teach your grandmother to _____.

Now create your own from scratch.

List three bits of advice that your parents always give you. Why do they do this? What are the reasons behind their advice?

List three bits of advice you might want to give your parents.

List three bits of advice that you might give to your own children.

Research some of the historical characters featured in Mr. Tracey's performance. Why do you think they were wise?

Discuss "Bad things can happen to good people."

- Legend:
- 🌀 Artistic perception
 - ❖ Creative expression
 - ▶ Historical & cultural context
 - ⇒ Aesthetic valuing
 - * Connections, Relations, Applications

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

- * Give examples of "common sense," e.g., If it's raining, do you water the garden? If you take a mouthful of soup that is too hot, what do you do?
- ❖ "The Golden Rule." Design and create a beautiful plaque that spells out this rule. Make it so well that you will be proud to display it on your refrigerator or wall at home. Try writing the text in a different script, like calligraphy or Old English:

Do Unto Others

As You Would Have Them

Do Unto You.

While you are doing this, think of a time when you treated someone in the way that you want to be treated - or a time when you did not.

- ⇒ Think of a person whom you know and admire. Write an essay on why you admire this person, using specific examples of how they handle situations in life.
- ▶ If you would like to be included in a future version of this performance, what great contribution might you make to society? What are the steps you might take to accomplish this?
- ❖ With a partner, create a story in the style found in the book *Fortunately* by Remy Charlip. Here is an example based on the book:

Fortunately one day, Ned got a letter that said, "Please come to a Surprise Party." But unfortunately the party was in Florida and he was in New York. Fortunately a friend sent him an airplane ticket. Unfortunately the plane was going non-stop to South America. Fortunately there was a parachute in the airplane.
- 🌀 Look at your face in a mirror. Which of your features do you think a caricature painter would exaggerate? Draw your face very large; draw your body very small doing your favorite activity.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Charlip, Remy. *Fortunately*. Four Winds Press. New York. 1987

Kennedy, John F. *Profiles in Courage*. 1956

Martin, Linda, Editor. *1000 Makers of the Millennium*. DK Publishing, Inc., New York, NY, and London, 1999.

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