

# The Ring of Cool

by Tracy Hudak ©2008

~ kids conquering global warming workshop & play



## introduction

The Ring of Cool is an outline for a play and a workshop plan that serves as a springboard and guide for empowering youth to create a piece of theater about using collective creative action to stop global warming. This play is intended to be presented in conjunction with your larger scale community action. The creative involvement and investment of children in this process serves the dual purpose of giving them a voice and hearing what they have to say which will ultimately encourage and support us all to take the difficult but necessary personal steps to create real and lasting change.

The workshop plan provides tools and encouragement for making and presenting a play that is the perfect fit for your resources and your community. The greatest resource that you have at your disposal is the imagination of a child. You and your children can create your own interpretations of the text, the action, the characters, and the setting. You can make it as simple as a movement-based play with no dialogue, or a reading where the children take turns, or a dance where adults deliver the dialogue. It could even be a puppet show or a series of drawings presented in an exhibition.

*In the time of the Greeks, theater was a sacred rite that connected the Gods to the community. Thespians and their tools—voice, imagination, gesture, and the body, channeled this connection. In this same spirit, let our children channel divine love as expressed through the will and desire to value life, care for the earth, and perpetuate justice.*

## steal this play

Rather than a written play, The Ring Of Cool is an outline for a play and a workshop plan for working with children's imaginations to create the action, characters, dialogue and general magic of the play. While this document provides a brief overview of the Ring of Cool play and workshop process, the full version will be made available on the web to download and use as you like. See page 2 for synopsis and sample of a workshop plan.

The play itself is intended to illustrate the following: our interdependency, our interconnectedness with nature, the negative forces of consumption, the importance of ritual and magic, the necessity of diversity, and the power of collective action to create justice and freedom for all.

The full web version will include notes and ideas on how to workshop with children, even if you have no prior theater experience—how to play with the ideas of the play, how to use democracy in action to give kids equal voice in the process, how to encourage yourself and the children to think outside the box for solving the magic of the play (how does the Ipod enter? as a person, or a prop?), tips for using simple theater magic versus costly or elaborate props, sets, and costumes, as well as ways to re-imagine theater as something that can be presented in a variety of forms and in unexpected places. The Ring of Cool process will ultimately show that theater can be an accessible, vibrant tool for empowering youth and connecting your community.

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# The Ring of Cool ~ kids conquering global warming (continued)

## play synopsis

The play begins in a Magical Forest that is driven by the rhythmic harmony of work, ritual, and play between trees, people, and the elements (earth, air, fire & water). The trees school us on what we need to know about global warming. Enter the Ipod (or a small white box that plugs into the humans ears). The Ipod turns people into I Want Stuff monsters who can only say, move and breathe, "I Want Stuff."

In the Second Act the forest has become a Factory where each person plays a repetitive, mechanical part in making Stuff. Some trees grow sick and die, which makes everyone a little sicker and sicker. Breaks from work allow for brief naps where each person dreams and acts out a different action than what they do in the factory. Eventually each person attempts to break out of the rhythm of the factory, but fail.

In the Final Act the trees go on strike, refusing to absorb any more toxicity which forces the factory to stop. Everyone gets the chance to talk and to start to put his/her dream ideas together. There is conflict where some argue that everyone has to do the same action. Eventually the people discover that if they each do their own thing in a particular magical order, the trees come back to life and harmony is restored. The play closes with a song.

## workshop plan sample ~ hope this gives you a little taste of what is possible...

The workshop process can be broken down into 4 simple elements:

1. DISCUSS—sit in a circle and figure out what questions we have.
2. VOTE—make democratic choices about what we will play with.
3. ON OUR FEET—experiment in motion to discover what needs to be spoken, what can be conveyed through movement, or a sound, or a drawing.
4. ASSEMBLE—piece it together like a collage and rehearse.

DISCUSSION EXAMPLE: *Act 1 - How do we make a magical forest?*

- What elements are in a magical forest?
  - Mountains? River? Trees? Plants?
  - Make some specific choices about which of these to work with.
- What beings are there?
  - Animals? Humans? Magical beings?
  - Make some specific choices about which of these to work with.

ON OUR FEET EXAMPLE: *Act 1 - What is a day like in our magical forest?*

- Who are we? - Get on our feet and try it
  - How do we as beings move or behave?
  - What do we do all day?
  - Do we have special powers? Play with them.
- What do we do together? What do we do alone?
- What do we do in morning, afternoon & night?

ASSEMBLE EXAMPLE: *Act 1 - Create ritual of the day in our magical forest*

- Choose movement & gestures from On Our Feet for each child for morning, afternoon and night and repeat 3 times. Establish rhythm.

**The greatest resource that you have at your disposal is the imagination of a child.**