

Director's Notes for church intergenerational performance of "Startull: The Story of An Average Yellow Star" (by Connie Barlow)

Compiled by Tory Sonstroem, Director of Religious Education
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Stockton, California

Note: The Startull script, in 4 parts, can be freely downloaded at:

<http://thegreatstory.org/parables.html>

After considering many possibilities and acknowledging our limitations, this is what worked very well for us on Sunday, February 28, 2010.

Script:

We made no changes in the script, unless an actor had trouble articulating, in which case we omitted a word here or there. We pronounced the title as "startle."

Cast:

Four people recorded a voice-over of the script (Startull, Elder Yellow/Giant Red, Big Blue, and Narrator) and **three different people** (1 adult and 2 children, but 3 children would work also) **stage-acted** the "star" roles. The Narrator's voice did not have a stage actor counterpart.

Set:

- * 8' X 8' stage with steps leading up to chancel and down to a side door off stage
- * 9 mylar helium star-shaped balloons (red, yellow, blue, silver) tied randomly on sanctuary chairs, pulpit, choir loft, etc. **Balloons were given to smallest children after performance.**
- * 8 very large (grapefruit sized) BLUE Christmas lights plugged in and secured along balcony above stage

Sound system:

The script was recorded in advance by congregants with appropriate voices and good reading skills. A 9 year old with a great voice read Startull, 2 women read Elder and Big Blue, and a man read the Narrator.

The recording service was provided by a congregant with an interest in voice-over work and a simple home studio. He added 15 seconds or so of "space music" to

lead into and fade out of the script. He **added sounds of explosions** (from Internet) at the two places called for.

He **burned copies onto CDs so that the stage actors (different from the voice actors) could practice their movements at home** in between rehearsals.

This system was our best innovation! The stage actors did not have to struggle with a script. We didn't have to worry about getting enough microphones. Actors could take the CD home. Rehearsals were easier. It kept us on pace at all times. The audience could hear everything very well.

Costumes:

- * 4 gowns: 2 bright yellow, 1 red, 1 blue (high school graduation gowns from thrift store)
- * 4 caps/beanies: 2 bright yellow, 1 red, 1 blue

Gowns and beanie caps were purchased at a thrift store. To fit the children, the yoke of each gown was trimmed and folded down and stitched closed to make a 1 inch casing for a drawstring neck. Drawstrings were a length of ribbon or shoelace. Gowns were tied in a bow at the back of the neck. Gowns were shortened at the bottom if needed. Zippers were sewn shut at the top to make a pullover garment. No need to shorten sleeves or take in the sides. Black stockings were worn underneath.

Props:

- *1 large blue round mylar balloon with a weight attached

Balloon stood about 3 feet high for the “stars” to study. (An Earth balloon would be ideal if possible.)

Stage Direction:

A drama teacher in the congregation told the **actors to mime out the emotions** in the script in their own way but then she gave them very simple blocking to enhance the actor's natural movements, yet keep it easy to remember. *The whole sanctuary was used—center aisle, stage, chancel, and entry/exit doors.*

Cost:

\$53.00

- * \$38 for ten balloons (could get by with just the one Earth balloon)
- * \$15 for costume pieces (4 gowns, 4 caps)
- * Everything else was at church already or was borrowed or donated.
