

CREATED BY **SUNNY DRAKE** DIRECTED BY **ANDREA DONALDSON** FROM **OCT 21 - NOV 16, 2025**

CHILD-ish

TORONTO PREMIERE
TORONTO PREMIERE



TARRAGON THEATRE

A TARRAGON THEATRE PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE CHILD-ish COLLECTIVE

October 21 - November 16
Extraspace

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Please Note: icons highlighted
in yellow may be of particular
interest to educators.

About the Playwright

Sunny Drake is a writer, creator and producer. His inventive and multi-award-winning theatre works have been presented in over 60 cities across the world and translated into 6 languages. His wide range of audiences have spanned international arts festival goers, queers in underground warehouses, and seniors in regional theatres.

As a prominent theatre leader, Sunny was selected to write the 2019 World Theatre Day message for Canada. He was awarded the inaugural Johanna Metcalf Performing Arts Prize 2019 for having a significant impact on performing arts in Ontario, a national Canadian Tom Hendry Award - Comedy Award (2021), and a national PACT Award in 2024 (The Green Award).

You can learn more about Sunny on his website:
www.sunnydrake.com

Creative Team

Sunny Drake - Creator & Playwright

Andrea Donaldson - Director

Oliver Pitschner - Nightwood Shadow Director

Brian Quirt - Adult Dramaturg

Amanda Wong - Set Designer

Ming Wong - Costume Designer

Andre Du Toit - Lighting Designer

Adrian Sheperd-Gawinski - Composer & Sound
Designer

Laura Warren - Projection Designer

Jessica Greenberg - Director of Child & Youth
Engagement

Frank/ie - Stage Manager

Jacob Beecher - Apprentice Stage Manager

Jobina Sitoh - Child Minder

Amir, Axel, Coco, Gavriel, Kent, Madeline, Maya,

Neko, Pepper, Sage Neptune, Sevryn (Sizzle),

Sloane, Vesper, Zephyr Mars - Child Collaborators

(production)

Elora, Emmanuelle, Eponine, Mia, Owen, Sadie -

Teen Collaborators (production)

Elora, Eponine, Julien, Ozzy, Owen, Sadie,

Sumayya - Young Collaborators (during script

development)

Cast

Karl Ang - Actor 3

Janelle Cooper - Actor 2

Monique Mojica - Actor 1

Jordan Pettie - Actor 4

Asher Rose - Interviewer

About the Play

Synopsis

Kids words for grown ups.

Forty whip-smart and brutally honest children are asked about love, life, and the world. From their fresh perspectives four adult actors speak their exact words and make them their own!

Using the words of a younger generation, new ideas and experiences come to life through the voices of adults. Hilarious, profound, and surprising, *CHILD-ish* is an intergenerational new twist on 'verbatim theatre' from a creative team that spans ages 6-77.

Playwright's Note

Kids are in a constant state of learning: they expect to radically shift their ideas multiple times a day about everything from how to tie their shoelaces to why rainbows form. In adulthood, many of us feel a sense of failure when we don't know something, or a false sense that we know more than we do. But in the scheme of everything there is to know about the universe, grown-ups know very little. Last year, I sat next to a NASA physicist at a brunch in Los Angeles, and he invited us to ask him anything. Between mouthfuls of French toast my partner asked a burning question: "how did time begin?" The physicist shook his head "oh, no-one really knows". I was shocked that we still don't know about this giant thing that impacts every moment of our lives. But for most kids, that not knowing is normal. And in fact, knowing that they don't know, along with curiosity and openness, is what makes so much possible. It is with the spirit of not knowing that I'd like to invite you into this experiment together.

We're also inviting you into the result of a process that has been one of the most joyous and profound of my career. Infused into CHILD-ish is the magic of an intergenerational creative team, aged between 6 to 77. Usually, kids are only involved in professional theatre as an audience, at a show made for them by adults. CHILD-ish flips that script, and has kids participate in making a work for an adult audience. I'm thrilled to invite you all on this journey together. Giddy up!

-Sunny Drake

Director's Note

In making CHILD-ish, playwright Sunny Drake has spent years partnering with young people and older people to platform the honesty, depth and wisdom of kids. Dozens of incredible artists have contributed to the development of this project - more than I've ever seen on a single new work. This is such an expression of Sunny's belief in the power of community and collaboration.

Saying the exact words of kids without acting like a kid is extremely challenging (try it!). These extraordinary actors were carefully selected to represent the over 40 children interviewed for the project, speaking their exact words while embodying an adult mask. This unusual task allows for a duality to exist: we see children's earnest thoughts and impulses from bodies like ours that have been socialized to be 'grown up' through adherence to behavioural norms, status-seeking and aged by the various strains of adulthood. The result is a refreshing, insightful, sometimes silly reboot for grown up audiences that asks us to consider what we've traded in to be a good adult.

This project comes with its own set of rules that defy numerous theatrical conventions. The actors' identities and perspectives are intentionally not consistent in order to hear pops of the multiplicity of perspectives and lived experiences of the real life interviewees. The sense of 'experiment' is always present and yet the earnest, heartening words take us out of our heads and into our hearts.

What a pleasure to have been in great company with all of these beautiful, deep-hearted grown ups and children bringing CHILD-ish to Tarragon - a theatre-home where I grew up and that has been so dear to me.

La la la la, unicorns!

-Andrea Donaldson

Young Collaborators' Note

Imagine a turquoise-coloured studio filled with hot-off-the-press scripts, creative brainstorming doodles, and ever curious artists ready to play. That, in a nutshell, is the CHILD-ish Young Collaborator experience.

When Sunny first interviewed me, he explained this cool idea for a play he was working on - where he would ask me questions and some of my answers would be said by characters in the play. During the interview, I can still remember replying that if I could ask an adult a question, it would be how to tie a bowtie. The next interview we did was about a year later - where he brought his ties and gave me a personal bowtie tutorial. In 2017, I joined CHILD-ish as a Young Dramaturg - someone who could be an outside eye and help the playwright write the best they can.

However, my role as a Young Collaborator has meant more than its dictionary definition. Being a part of CHILD-ish was like being a part of a family; experiencing what it was like to grow up with the project and continuously build towards something meaningful together taught me teamwork, leadership, and creativity in ways that no other place could have done.

As I've gotten older, being a Young Collaborator has shifted. Since the pandemic, moving to Ottawa, and preparing for post-secondary, being a part of the piece has meant cheering the team on from afar. I now have the privilege of witnessing the show grow, bloom, and thrive in all of its iterations, as well as guiding the next generation of Young Collaborators on how to bring out the kid in the adults watching the show (and reading this program!).

-Eponine

Process

1



The Child-ish Collective's Ethos

Take a deep dive into the collective's ethos around collaborating with young people and their working protocols.

2

CHILD-ish Key Development Stages

Learn more about the timeline and development stages of this play.



3



CHILD-ish Web Series

Check it out here!

Verbatim Theatre



1

National Theatre of Great Britain

Four short videos exploring the creation, process, and ethics of Verbatim Theatre.

2

The Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators

A 5-lesson unit for educators.



3

Project: Humanity

This Toronto-based company is one of Canada's leading Verbatim Theatre producers.

4

Verbatim Theatre and Social Research

Ethnographic research on Verbatim theatre in urban secondary schools and professional theatres in Toronto.



5

Non-Canadian Resources



History of U.S. Documentary Theatre



'Verbatim Theatre': Oral History and Documentary Techniques

The Insight of Children

1



Important Things We Can Learn From Children

Playwright Sunny Drake shares his thoughts
in this Georgia Straight article.

2

TedTalks from Kids



*Why Parents
Should Listen
to Kids* with
Anyue Sun



*What Adults
can Learn From
Kids* with
Adora Svitak

3

TedTalks from Teens



*How to Parent a
Teen from a Teen's
perspective* with
Lucy Androski



*Teen Stress
from a Teen
Perspective* with
Michaela Horn

4

From Sean Illing



*The
Spirituality
of Parenting*



*The Wisdom
of Children*

Climate Change and Families

1

Youth



Court Sides with
Youth in Historic
Climate Case
Against Ontario



Youth
Climate
Lawsuit



Tools for
Young
Climate
Activists

2

Mental Health



*Climate Change
and Mental Health -
FAQ from CAMH*



*Climate Anxiety
from Harvard
Medicine*



*Mental Health from
Climate Atlas of
Canada*



*How to Deal with
Climate Anxiety
from NPR's LifeKit*

3

Parenting



Parenting
in the Age
of Climate
Crisis



How to Talk
to Your
Kids About
Climate
Change



*Parenting
Through the
Climate
Crisis from
The Gray
Area*

More on Climate Change

1

Canadian Research and Government



Climate Change and Flooding from The Canadian Climate Institute



Strategies and Initiatives from The Government of Canada

2

CBC Gem Documentaries



Coextinction



Ice and Fire: Tracking Canada's Climate Crises

3

Indigenous Initiatives

How Indigenous Peoples are Leading the Way on Global Biodiversity Protection



Environmental Organizations and Associations



City of Toronto Indigenous Climate Action Grants

4

Podcasts



The Environment in Canada



Not Built For This



The Wide Open



Hot Take

Additional Points of Interest

1



Beauty - Beyond the Binary -

Christina Willings' documentary explores the lives of five gender-creative kids.

2

The Long-Term Impact on Children of Parents and Caregivers Constantly Using Phones

From CBC's *All in a Weekend* with Sonali Karnick



3



Normalizing Non-Monogamy

A married non-monogamous couple interviews people from across the spectrums of gender, sexuality, and relationship styles.



Check out associated resources here!

4

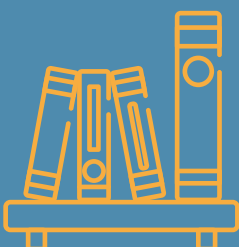
Colourful Conversation: Talking to Kids About Race

Anti-racism consultant Laurabel Mba talks to CBC correspondent Ife Alaba on how to navigate the subject.



5

Talking to Kids About Consent



A resource list
from U Waterloo



A webinar
from U of T

Mental Health Resources

- Kids Help Phone (for children and youth, 20yr and under):
 - 1-800-668-6868, Text #686868, or Live Chat
- Youthdale (for children and families): 416-363-9990
- Good2Talk (for post-secondary students): 1-866-925-5454
- LGBT YouthLine (peer support helpline for youth of all sexual and gender identities, under 29 years old): 1-800-268-9688, Text 647-694-4275, or Chat (Sun-Fri 4pm-9:30pm)
- Trans LifeLine (peer support helpline for persons identifying as transgender): 1-877-330-6366 (everyday 10am-4am)
- Anishnawbe Mental Health Crisis Management Service (for all Indigenous peoples): 1-855-242-3310
- Warm Line (for peer support, 18+): Call 416-960-WARM (9276) or text 647-557-5882 (everyday 6pm-midnight)
- Toronto Distress Centre (for anyone in crisis or distress): 416-408-4357, Text 45645
- Gerstein Centre (for anyone in crisis or distress): 416-929-5200
- Toronto Seniors Helpline (for anyone 65+ years old looking for counselling or resources): 416-217-2077 or TTY 1-844-946-1700, (Mon-Fri 9am-8pm; Sat-Sun & Holidays 9am-6pm)
- Victim Services (for anyone affected by crime and sudden tragedies): 416-808-7066
- Assaulted Women's Helpline (for survivors of gender-based or sexual violence or abuse): 1-866-863-0511, TTY 1-866-863-7868, Text #SAFE (#7233)
- Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (for survivors of gender-based or sexual violence): 416-597-8808



Click here for additional
youth crises resources



Conversation Starters

Did anything from the children's interviews surprise you?

Why did you find it surprising?

Is there a topic you would be interesting to explore using verbatim theatre?

If you were one of the young people interviewed for this project, what wisdom would you want to impart to adults or your peers?

As an adult, what is one thing you would tell your younger self today?

Share your feelings about climate and the environment with the group.