

# Huntington

THEATRE COMPANY

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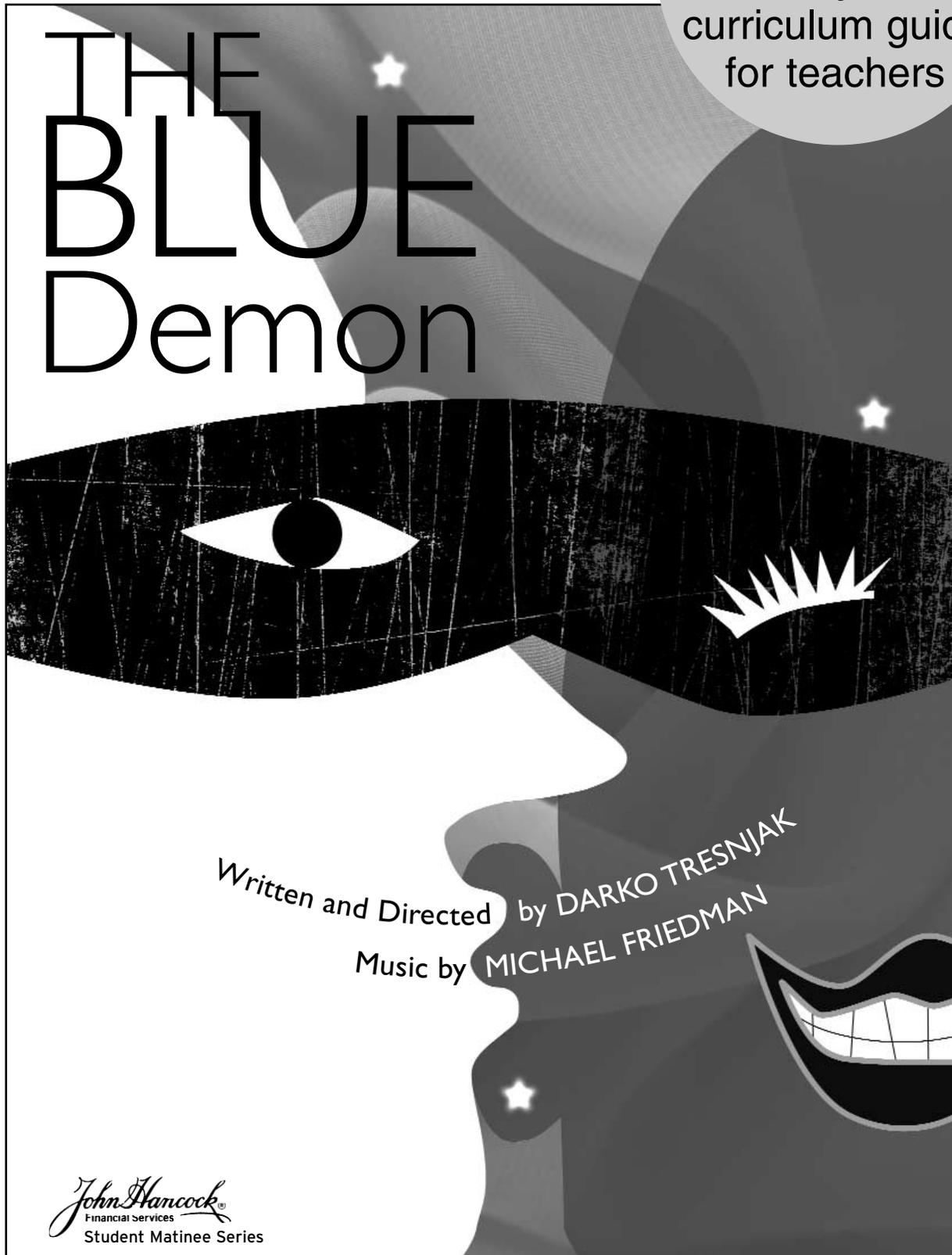
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literary and  
curriculum guide  
for teachers

# THE BLUE Demon



Written and Directed by DARKO TRESNJAK  
Music by MICHAEL FRIEDMAN







# TEACHER LITERARY AND CURRICULUM GUIDE

## The Blue Demon

**Book by Darko Tresnjak • Music by Michael Friedman**  
**Lyrics by Darko Tresnjak and Michael Friedman**  
**Based on an original concept by Darko Tresnjak**

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 The Story of *The Blue Demon*
- 3 Darko Tresnjak
- 4 The Production History and Sources
- 5 A Tale from 1,001 Arabian Nights
- 8 Did You Know...?
- 8 Themes and Related Works
- 9 Audience Etiquette
- 9 Background/Objectives
- 10 Preparation
- 12 Mastery Assessment
- 14 Questions for After Performance
- 15 Open Response and Writing
- 16 For Further Exploration
- 17 Media Assessment
- 18 Lesson Plan/Vocabulary Words
- 20 Handout: Analyzing the  
Fundamentals of Storytelling



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# THE STORY OF *The Blue Demon*

**T**he *Blue Demon* is inspired by tales of the *Arabian Nights*, Jewish stories of the supernatural, Yugoslav folktales, and the poems of Omar Khayaam. *The Blue Demon* (a reference to thoughts that torment your mind in the middle of the night) introduces us to a vicious Sultan who has two joys in his life: his courtesan Scheherazade and his jester Gabbo. When the jester dies, the Sultan suspects murder and demands the execution of the three men — a Jew, a Christian, and Muslim — who are the most likely suspects. Scheherazade intervenes, suggesting that the Sultan instead grant each of the men the opportunity to save himself by telling a good story. The best storyteller will live ... the other two will lose their heads.

Upon drawing lots, the Jewish tailor begins. He weaves a tale of a young couple, Malek and Malka, who are set upon by a lecherous, old wizard who covets Malka's beauty. Proud of his wife's appearance, Malek presents Malka with a gift of beautiful fabric which is to be made into a dress by the Jewish tailor. The wizard corners the tailor, however, and forces him to sew a curse into the dress so that whoever wears the garment fall in love with the old lech. Malka becomes bewitched, lusting for the wizard until she disrobes and the curse is broken.

Next is the Christian scrivener's tale which chronicles a young prince's quest to find a wife of royal lineage from the neighboring kingdoms. He escapes to the woods where he discovers the diminutive Princess Armilla, only 12 inches tall. With each secret meeting, their love for each other grows — and so does the princess until she is full-grown. The two marry and live happily for seven years until the prince is enticed away by an alluring red-haired dancer. With each unfaithful act by the prince, Princess Armilla shrinks until she disappears.

The final story is a bawdy tale from the Muslim jeweler who describes the adventure of a rascally beggar, Faruk, who enters the city of Damascus and is confronted by three virgins desperate to lose their maidenhood. Faruk obliges them, only to discover that a ferocious dragon, demanding one sacrificial virgin daily, plagues the city and that "every man who makes love to a virgin must be castrated." Faruk disguises himself as Achmed, the Dragon Slayer, and plots to rob the city of its jewels. But when he sees the next virgin to be served up, he falls in love with her and abandons his ruse.

As the Sultan ponders the winner of the contest, the court jester suddenly revives from the power of the stories and convinces the Sultan to spare the lives of the three men. The suspects are set free and go out into the world as friends, united — in fact, redeemed — by their love of storytelling: "And they lived in peace, and for a short while, their children lived in peace. And therein ends my tale." Reflecting the theatrical and musical heritages of three cultures, *The Blue Demon* dramatizes how our diverse stories and distinct traditions can, in fact, unite us. 🎬



## DARKO Tresnjak

**D**arko Tresnjak, the director of the Huntington's productions of Moliere's *Amphitryon* and Shaw's *Heartbreak House*, joins us again this season to direct his own original work, *The Blue Demon*. Last January, critic Jon Lehman described Mr. Tresnjak's *Heartbreak House* as "the most enjoyable, visually splendid, emotionally satisfying production of the season in Boston." In May 2001, his talent was recognized nationally when he garnered the prestigious Theatre Communications Group Alan Schneider Award for Outstanding Direction. Known for transforming classic works with a fresh theatrical imagination, Mr. Tresnjak feels that "plays that go to unexpected places have more to say about human nature."

The recipient of a Theatre Communications Group Grant to

be the Huntington's Resident Director, Mr. Tresnjak's work has been embraced by audiences across the nation. "I actually had an offer from a Broadway producer, but it wasn't right, so I turned it down. It drives me up the wall the way some people think shows have to be on Broadway to be important," he explains. "Audiences in Boston have just as much to offer." He has directed at the Williamstown Theatre Festival for five seasons, and received high accolades for his 2001 production of *A Little Night Music* at the Goodspeed Opera House, where he will direct *King of Hearts* during the 2002-2003 season. In addition to his theatrical work, Tresnjak's opera credits include *Der Fliegende Holländer* at Sarasota Opera, *Turandot* for Virginia Opera, *Madame Butterfly* at Opera

Delaware, and *The Magic Flute* at the Opera Theater of St. Louis. During the upcoming season, Tresnjak is slated to direct at the Globe Theatre, the Goodspeed Opera House, and the Sarasota Opera.

Mr. Tresnjak was born in Yugoslavia and moved to the United States at the age of 10. "My mother sensed Yugoslavia was headed for war and since I was the only male child, she wanted to get me out," he remembers. "We arrived in Washington D.C. in the midst of the Bicentennial, and there was a parade every day." He was educated at Swarthmore College and Columbia University. He has worked extensively in dance and puppetry, and toured across the United States and Japan, performing and teaching mask and puppetry with the Mum Puppettheatre.

The composer for *The Blue Demon* is Mr. Tresnjak's frequent collaborator Michael Friedman. Mr. Friedman has worked extensively at the American Repertory Theatre where he served as music director for *Marat/Sade*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Idiots Karamazov*. He was also music director or arranger for *The Seagull* and *Cymbeline* (New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater), *Fully Committed* (Off Broadway and the Huntington), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Subliminal Strategy* (LaMama ETC). He has composed music for *The Song of Songs* (Greenwich Street Theater), *The Communist Dracula Pageant* (Soho Rep), *God Hates the Irish* (Yale Repertory Theatre), *The Winter's Tale*, *The Bluebird*, *A Servant of Two Masters*, *The Time of Your Life* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), and the documentary film *On Common Ground*. ♣

# PRODUCTION HISTORY and Sources



Playwright and Director Darko Tresnjak wrote: "*The Blue Demon* was originally developed in 1998 for a company of 30 student-actors at the Free Theatre, an outdoor performance venue at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. During the past three years I have re-conceived the piece for a company of professional actors, refined the language, and worked with composer Michael Friedman on developing the musical aspects of the piece. This revised production will receive its professional world premiere at the Huntington Theatre Company.

"Its development is a part of my continual interest in creating plays based on ancient texts that have

risen out of folkloric traditions. I believe that these tales, passed down from mouth to mouth, generation to generation — are already dramatic in nature. They have survived over the centuries because they address humanity's most pressing personal and global concerns. They remind us that, throughout history, storytelling and art have sustained us in times of crisis.

"The play incorporates song, dance, percussion, masks, puppets, and acrobatics. It draws on a variety of theatrical techniques and traditions from around the world in order to tell tales which are in turn romantic, haunting, and bawdy. The wide scope of *The Blue Demon* gives me a chance to explore and

reinvent a variety of ancient puppetry, mask, and staging techniques. Some of these techniques are rarely seen in theatre these days. I believe that they have an innocence and a transformative power that can bring tremendous joy to contemporary audiences."

*The Blue Demon* will be presented through a dazzling array of theatrical techniques. The princess of the second story will be first seen as a tiny hand puppet, then grow in size until she appears as a masked actress. The dragon of the third story will be a large puppet operated by three performers.

The original music composed by Michael Friedman will add a thematic unity to the piece, weaving together different cultures to create a musical tapestry. The Jew's tale will feature traditional klezmer music; the Christian's story will use folk tunes from Eastern Europe; and the Muslim's tale will incorporate contemporary Arabian music. The orchestra of *The Blue Demon* will be on stage and incorporated into the telling of each story.

Mr. Tresnjak has developed the play from several illustrious literary sources, including *1,001 Arabian Nights* which provides its framework. *Arabian Nights* is believed to have originated in 10th century Persia, although the stories accumulated over the years from across the Middle East and Southern Asia. These folktales were circulated by traders on the trade routes that linked Northern China to the Middle East, and through Mediterranean shipping routes. The best-known text is based on a 14th-century Syrian manuscript. *1,001 Arabian Nights* tells of a clever girl named Scheherazade, who tells 1,001 tales of love, adventure, sensuality, and fantasy. ●



## A TALE FROM THE 1,001 Arabian Nights

*The story 1,001 Arabian Nights tells of Scheherazade, the clever daughter of the Chief Wazir of the Sultan of India. When the Sultan discovers that the wives in his harem have been unfaithful to him, he becomes enraged and begins a reign of vengeance. Not only does he execute his wives, but he vows that never again will a woman live to betray him. Each night he marries a new bride and the next morning orders her execution. When the Sultan marries the young and beautiful Scheherazade, the new bride, knowing the Sultan's affection for a well-told story, tells a riveting tale and ends it at the most thrilling moment, promising to finish it the next night. The Sultan lets her live, and each night the clever Scheherazade finishes the first story and then begins a new one. The Sultan continues to spare her life, and after 1,001 nights of storytelling he is cured of hate and accepts her as his true love. One of the stories Scheherazade told was The Humpback's Tale:*

There was, in ancient times, in the city of El-Basrah, a tailor who enjoyed an ample income and was fond of sport and merriment. He was in the habit of going out occasionally with his wife, that they might amuse themselves with strange and diverting scenes. One day they went forth and met a humpbacked man, whose aspect was such to excite laughter and dispel anxiety and grief. So they approached him to enjoy the pleasure of gazing at him, and invited

him to return with them to their house for carousal that night.

After the humpback had gone with them to the house, they sat down to eat. The tailor's wife took a large piece of fish and laughingly crammed the humpback with it. Closing his mouth with her hand, she said, "Thou shalt not swallow it but by gulping it at once, and I will not give thee time to chew it." He swallowed it, but it contained a large and sharp bone, which stuck across in his throat and he expired.

The tailor exclaimed, "Alas, this poor creature should not have died but in this manner by our hands!" "Arise," his wife answered, "and take him in thy bosom and cover him with a silk napkin. We will convey him to the physician and claim him as our son that he may give him some medicine."

The tailor took the humpback in his bosom and they proceeded to the house of a physician who was a Jew. They knocked at the door and there came down to them a slave-

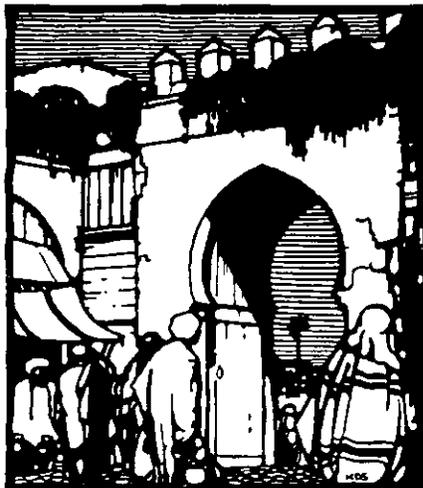
girl, who opened the door. "We have a sick child here," said the tailor's wife, "and we want the physician to see him." While the girl went up to fetch the doctor, the tailor's wife said to her husband, "Leave the humpback here and let us take ourselves away." So the tailor, accordingly, set him up against the wall and left with his wife.

The slave-girl, meanwhile, went upstairs to the Jew, and said, "Below in the house is a sick person." The Jew rising in haste, went down the steps in the dark, and in doing so his foot struck against the lifeless humpback. "O Heavens! It seems that I have stumbled against this sick person and he hath fallen down the stairs and died! How shall I go forth with one killed from my house?" He lifted the humpback and went to his wife to acquaint her with the accident. "And why sittest thou here idle?" she said, "for if thou remain thus until daybreak our lives will be lost. Let us take him up to the terrace and throw him into the house of our neighbor the Muslim, for he is the steward of the Sultan's kitchen. If the body remains there for a night, the dogs will come and eat him up with the kitchen scraps." So the Jew and his wife, carrying the humpback, let him down by his hands and feet to the pavement of the kitchen terrace. Placing him against the wall, they escaped.

Not long had the humpback been thus deposited when the Muslim steward returned to his house and opened the door. Going up with a lighted candle in his hand, he saw a man standing in the corner next to the kitchen. He exclaimed, "What is this? By Allah, it is the kitchen thief that hath stolen our goods — for he cometh down from the terraces!" And so saying, he took up a great mallet and struck him

with it. When the humpback fell down, he found that he was dead. Whereupon the Muslim grieved, and feared for himself. Looking upon the dead man and perceiving that he was a humpback, he lifted him upon his shoulders and went forth from the house. In the dark of night he conveyed him to the market-street, where he placed the body upon his feet by the side of a shop and there left him there.

Soon after there came a Christian, the Sultan's broker, in a state of drunkenness. As he advanced staggering, he drew near to the humpback. Now, some persons had



stolen the Christian's turban early in the night and when he saw the humpback standing there, he concluded that this man intended to do the same. So he clenched his fist and struck him on the neck. Down fell the humpback upon the ground, and the Christian, still in the excess of his intoxication, continued to beat him. A night watchman came by and finding the Christian kneeling over the Muslim and beating him exclaimed, "How is that the Christian dareth to kill the Muslim?" Seizing the Christian, he bound his hands behind him and took him to the house of the Wali.

The Wali ordered the execution-

er to proclaim the Christian's crime, and set up a gallows. The executioner then came, and threw the rope round the Christian's neck and was about to hang him, when the Sultan's steward pushed through the crowd. Seeing the Christian standing beneath the gallows, he cried out to the executioner, "Do it not — for it was I who killed the man!"

"Why didst thou kill him?" asked the Wali. The Muslim answered, "I went into my house last night, and saw that he had descended from the terrace and stolen my goods. So I struck him with a mallet upon his chest and he died. I conveyed him to the market-street where I set him up at the entrance of a lane. Is it not enough for me to have killed a Muslim, that a Christian should be killed on my account? Hang, then, none but me."

The Wali, when he heard these words, liberated the Christian, and said to the executioner, "Hang this man on the grounds of his confession." So he took off the rope from the neck of the Christian broker, and put it round the neck of the Muslim steward, when the Jewish physician pushed through the crowd. He called out to the executioner, "Do it not — for none killed the man but I. He came to my house to be cured of a disease and as I descended, I struck against him with my foot. Kill not the steward, therefore, kill me."

So the Wali gave orders to hang the Jewish physician. The executioner took off the rope from the Muslim's neck, and put it round the neck of the Jew. But, lo, the tailor came and, forcing his way among the people, said to the executioner, "Do it not ... for none killed this man but I. I met the humpback singing merrily with a tambourine, and I stopped to divert myself and took him to my house. We sat down

to eat, and my wife took a piece of fish and crammed it into his mouth. He choked and instantly died. Then I and my wife took him to the house of the Jew where we set the humpback by the stairs. So, when the Jew came down and stumbled against him, he thought that he had killed him." The tailor, then looking towards the Wali, said to him, "Liberate the Jew, and hang me."

When the Wali heard this he was astonished at the case of the humpback and said, "Verily this is an event that should be recorded in books!" And he said to the executioner, "Liberate the Jew, and hang the tailor on account of his own confession." So the executioner put the rope round the neck of the tailor.

Now the humpback was the Sultan's jester, and the Sultan could not bear him to be out of his sight. When the humpback had been absent that night and the next day, the Sultan inquired of some of his attendants. They answered him, "Our lord, the Wali hath taken him forth dead, and gave orders to hang the person who killed him. But there came a second and a third person, each saying, 'None killed him but I!'" When the Sultan heard this, he called out to the Chamberlain and said to him, "Go to the Wali and bring them all hither before me."

So the Chamberlain went and found that the executioner was about to hang the tailor, and he called out to him, saying, "Do it

not." And the Chamberlain took the tailor, the Jew, the Muslim, and the Christian to see the Sultan. The Sultan was so astonished and moved with merriment at hearing this tale that he commanded it should be written in letters of gold. He then said to those who were present, "Have ye ever heard anything like the story of this humpback?"

And upon this the Christian advanced, and said, "O Sultan of the age, if thou permit me I will relate to thee an event that hath occurred to me more wonderful and strange and exciting."

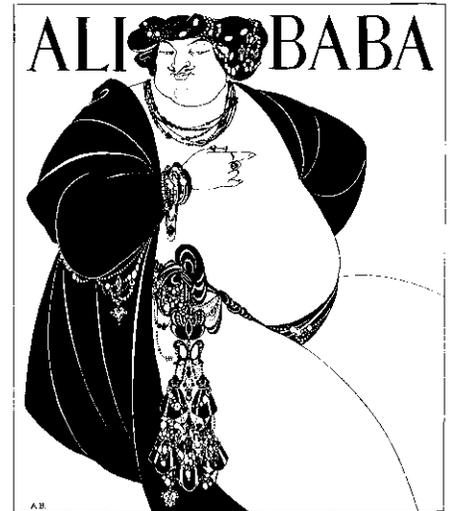
"Tell us then thy story," said the Sultan. And the Christian related as follows ... ♣

Translated by Edward William Lane



# DID YOU Know...?

- The earliest extant manuscript of the *Arabian Nights*, dating from the 14th century, consists of only 10 stories. Antoine Galland, a French Arabist, acquired it in 1701 and began publishing a translation in 1704 to wide popularity. Unfortunately, Galland only had stories for 282 nights, so “under the spell of the title” he began the search for more. They did not exist, so Galland took other Arabic fables and added them. When these ran out, he simply invented stories. In the process, the *Arabian Nights* grew from a modest collection of homogeneous stories to vast collections of heterogeneous stories.
- The best-known tales of *Sinbad*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and *Aladdin* are among those added over the years.
- Another *Blue Demon* source, *The Rubiyat of Omar Khayyam*, is a series of 600 quatrains of poetry ascribed to the 11th-12th century Persian mathematician and tent-maker Omar Khayyam. *The Rubiyat*, which expresses themes of love, desire, fate, time, and transcendence, was translated into English by Edward Fitzgerald in 1859.
- *The Blue Demon* is the name of a popular professional wrestler in Mexico. He appeared in a series of B-films from the 1950s through the 1980s battling a host of demons, crooks, and monsters along with his colleagues Bat Woman and Neutron.



## Themes

Storytelling across cultures  
Religious tradition and myth  
Defining history through folktales  
Jealousy and pride  
Betrayal and love

## Related Works

### Drama

*Kismet*  
by Charles Lederer  
and Luther Davis (1953)

*Story Theatre*  
by Paul Sills (1971)

*The Mahabharata*  
adapted by Peter Brook (1989)

*Arabian Nights*  
by Dominic Cooke (1998)

### Fiction, Folktales, and Poetry

*Tales of 1,001 Arabian Nights*  
(10 century, first published 1701)

*The Rubiyat of Omar Khayyam*  
(11th century, published 1859)

*The Canterbury Tales*  
by Geoffrey Chaucer  
(1387-1400)

"Recollections of the  
Arabian Nights"  
by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1830)

*The Thousand-and-Second  
Tale of Scheherazade*  
by Edgar Allen Poe (1845)

*The New Arabian Nights*  
by Robert Louis Stevenson  
(1882)

### Non-Fiction

*The World of Storytelling*  
by Anne Pellowski (1977)

### Music and Opera

*Le Calife de Bagdad*, opera  
by François Boïeldieu (1800)

"*Scheherazade*"  
by Rimsky-Korsakov (1888)

"*Shéhérazade*"  
by Ravel (1899)

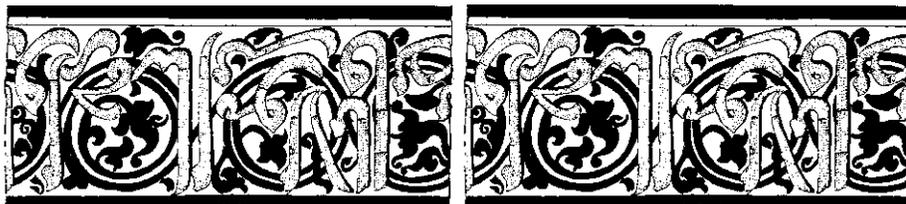
### Films

*The Thief of Bagdad* (1940)  
directed by Ludwig Berger

*Kismet* (1953)  
directed by Vincent Minnelli

*Scheherazade* (1990)  
directed by Philippe deBroca

*Arabian Nights* (2000)  
directed by Steve Barron



# BACKGROUND & Objectives

Using *Tales of 1,001 Arabian Nights* as its framework, *The Blue Demon* is a vibrant fusion of folktales culled from the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. Suspected of killing the Sultan's favorite court jester, three men, Christian, Jew, and Muslim, are temporarily saved from the headman's axe by the intervention of Scheherazade, courtesan to the Sultan. Each man must tell a story, with the understanding that the best storyteller will live to replace the jester and the other two will die. Throughout each telling, although entertained, the temperamental Sultan finds reason to be displeased with the storyteller, ordering immediate execution, but Scheherazade reminds him to hear all three before dispensing his justice. Upon completion of the stories, the jester is resurrected by the power of the tales, prompting the Sultan to spare their lives and reward them as well. Affected by their shared experience, the three men of disparate backgrounds initiate a friendship which transcends their social differences, embraces their similar storytelling traditions, and offers hope for the future between their cultures.

## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Identify central themes in *The Blue Demon*, including:
  - the influence of storytelling within and across cultures
  - the concept of heroism in folktales, myths and religious traditions
  - love vs. desire
  - the uses and abuses of power
  - the consequences of jealousy, pride and betrayal
2. Relate the themes and issues of *The Blue Demon* to their own lives.
3. Analyze the play's themes and issues within the characters' cultural, social and historical context.
4. Compare and contrast their personal values and philosophies with those of the characters in the play (and within the tales).
5. Recognize the role of music, movement, and puppetry within cultural traditions.
6. Participate in hands-on activities to enhance understanding of the play.
7. Evaluate the Huntington Theatre Company's production of *The Blue Demon*.

## Audience Etiquette

Because many students have not had the opportunity to view live theatre, we are including an audience etiquette section with each literary/curriculum guide. Teachers, please spend time on this subject since it will greatly enhance your students' experience at the theatre.

1. How does one respond to a live performance of a play, as opposed to when seeing a film at a local cinema? What is the best way to approach viewing a live performance of a play? What things should you look and listen for?
2. What is the audience's role during a live performance? How do you think audience behavior can affect an actor's performance?
3. What do you know about the theatrical rehearsal process? Have you ever participated in one as an actor, singer, director, or technical person?
4. How do costumes, set, lights, sound and props enhance a theatre production?

# PREPARATION FOR *The Blue Demon*

## **The Arabian Nights**

Have students read the following account of the history of *The Arabian Nights* (excerpted from: <http://www.middleeastuk.com/culture/mosaic/arabian.htm> ) and discuss how the framework of the play is derived from the nights. You may read the tale included in the literary guide and discuss its adaptation as a structure for the play. Students may also be asked to discuss, write a paper or create a presentation detailing the impact of *The Arabian Nights* on art, music, and literature through the centuries (or in a specific era: The Victorian era or the 20th century, for example).

*The Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Nights*, as they came to be known, owes its origins to three distinct cultures and storytelling traditions: that of India, Persia and the Arab world. *The Arabian Nights* first appeared in its Arabic form around 850 AD and it has been considered a remarkable mystery in Classical Arabic Literature. Although many scholars deny its literary importance, *The Arabian Nights* can be viewed as a valuable source of Middle Eastern social history, being composed of the most extensive and intimate recordings of the medieval Islamic period. Generations of Arabic readers have appreciated the versatile and imaginative use of Arabic and the mixture of the classical and colloquial language in many of the stories, a style which helped diversify the characters from the narrative.

While chroniclers from the 10th century maintain that the tales were derived from a Persian book of folk tales called, 'Hazarafsaneh' (A Thousand Stories) the exact origins of *The Arabian Nights* is not certain and academic opinions are divided. Like many folk tales, *The Arabian Nights* may have originated from true stories which were embellished over time for entertainment value. The success of *The Arabian Nights* stories over many other forgotten folk tales may be due to their blend of popular themes; heroic and romantic adventures are littered with mystery, old wisdom and exciting struggles between good and evil.

Two of the most popular stories in *The Arabian Nights* are those of 'Shahriyar and Shahrazad' (see preface to *A Tale from the 1,001 Nights* in the literary guide), the first and main story, and 'Sinbad the Sailor'. The tales bear three main elements or notions which are typical of all the stories in the collection: 1) If there is a problem, there is a solution; 2) Endurance can enable a crisis to reach a resolution; and 3) Fantastic elements help the protagonists to maintain their endurance.

While *The Arabian Nights* knew great popularity throughout the Middle East, it was rapidly translated into a number of other languages, showing its early appeal to non-Middle Eastern readers. Although the subtleties of language are unfortunately lost in translation, the exotic and romantic imagery provided great inspiration for the Western travellers, writers, artists and poets

of the 18th and 19th centuries. This period saw a surge of interest in the Middle East and Persian poems such as *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* were translated or re-translated, often accompanied by illustrations. Romantic poets such as Coleridge, Tennyson, Shelley and Byron were greatly inspired by the mysterious and magical East. 'Arabian' imagery, Middle Eastern history and folklore also provided painters such as Delacroix and Lord Leighton with endless inspiration. Writers such as Walter Bagshot appreciated the wild exoticism of the tales, comparing them to the drab realities of Europe in the age of the railway and the gas lamp. During the later 19th century and 20th century, the Western obsession with *The Arabian Nights* themes was still strong, as we see from Leon Bakst's Russian Ballet designs for *Scheherazad* and the endless cartoons and Hollywood films from the forties and fifties which are based on the adventures of Sinbad, Aladdin and other stories from, or based on *The Arabian Nights*.

As we begin the 21st century, the influence and subsistence of *The Arabian Nights* legacy can still be felt, whether it is in literature, art, music or fashion. The timeless tales of ingenuity and heroism offer universal and positive appeal to the heroic, Bedouin fantasies of Arabs and Westerners alike.

## **Puppetry**

Puppets are objects which represent characters during theatrical performance and have been used as such for thousands of years. The origin and development of puppetry differs from region to region, but the intended effect has always been the same: to animate the inanimate and create the perception of life and spirit; through shape, appearance and movement.

Have students, individually or in groups, research the origins and uses of the following types of puppets:

- String puppets (or marionettes)
- Hand (or glove) puppets
- Rod puppets (different types include Japanese bunraku puppets and the Muppets of *Sesame Street*)
- Shadow puppets
- Animatronic puppets

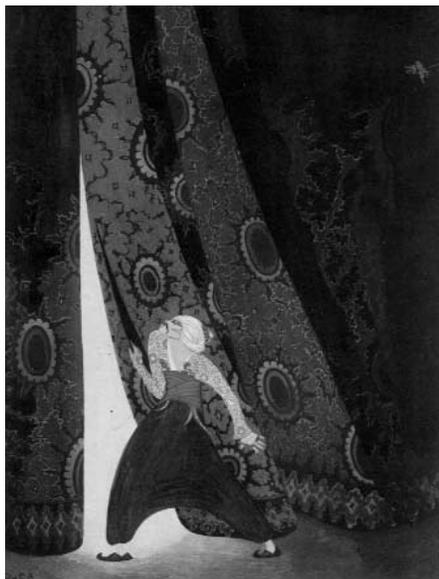
Ask them to trace the puppets from their earliest uses to their contemporary applications in theatre, film and TV (they may not know that the "worm" aliens in *Men in Black* and *MIB II* were a combination of rod puppet and computer-generated images, or that the characters in *Nightmare Before Christmas* were created with puppets and stop-action photography, or of Julie Taymor's use of puppetry in the stage version of *The Lion King*).

## KEY ISSUES

### Love and Desire

In *The Blue Demon*, many of the characters either profess love for another, or demonstrate a desire for someone or something. Although the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, in most instances it is either one or the other that motivates the character.

In a free write session, ask students to define the nature of love. Then, ask them to define desire. Once done, have them compare the two and see if there are any areas of commonality. In small groups, have them share their ideas and come up with two lists for each term, one each of the positive elements and the negative ones that help describe them. Which term, love or desire, has more positive connotations? Which has more negative ones? How many of the elements overlap? Discuss the



*Arabian Nights*, illustration by Rosa

functions of love and desire in relation to folktales/parables.

Have students form teams to debate the statement "Love cannot exist without desire." (or, "desire cannot exist without love.") Have them support their arguments with references from literature, film, and life experience.

### Betrayal

The theme of betrayal is often explored in folktales such as *The Arabian Nights*, as well as others chronicled by the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Anderson, and others. Working in small groups, ask students to come up with several examples of stories of betrayal. What common characteristics do these stories have? What lessons do they teach? What is it that makes them universal in nature? How is betrayal depicted in the media of today (film, television, etc.)?

### Heroism

Have students discuss the concept of "heroes and heroines." Our notion of the "hero/heroine" often stems from our understanding of the Greek, or classical, definition of the "heroic," but examples may be found in folktales and myths of

other cultures, as well as in religious literature. What do we mean by the word "hero/heroine" today? Has that definition changed since 9/11/01? What makes someone a hero or heroine? How do we honor heroes in our society? There are many songs, poems, and stories that deal with the concepts of "heroism" and "heroics," and more than a few can be found in *The Arabian Nights*. Have students read stories about and talk about some of their favorite heroes and heroines. Point out that difficult situations offer particular opportunities for heroic action. Help students expand their definition of hero and heroine to include those not widely acclaimed or even recognized at all. Ask students to write essays about a quiet and unrecognized hero, someone who has overcome great odds to do something quite special. Have students share their essays with one another, either in small groups or in more formal presentations. After viewing the play, consider which characters have elements of the hero in their natures, and why that is the case.

### The uses of Power

In *The Blue Demon* the Sultan exercises his power over the three accused men, the wizard uses his to both enchant Malka and force the tailor to do his bidding, the King in the Scrivener's tale has a power which influences his son's choices, and Scheherazade uses hers to sway the Sultan from his impulsive commands. Discuss the different forms of power that are wielded throughout the play and by whom. Perhaps assign one group to each character, or story, to explore the uses (and abuses) of power, examine the reasons for which it is used, and explain if and how the use of power affected the characters.

# MASTERY ASSESSMENT

## The Hunchback's Tale (part one)

1. Each of the three men, the Jewish Tailor, the Christian Scrivener, and the Muslim Jeweler, believe that they have killed the Sultan's jester, albeit accidentally. What actions do they take? Explain how these actions reveal the nature of the government under which they live.
2. In what ways are each of the three men dissimilar? Is this the function of class, religion, employment, or a combination? How are three men similar to one another? What do their admissions of guilt say about their characters?
3. What is the Blue Demon? Explain the Sultan's fear of the Blue Demon and of the need for his Jester to allay this fear.
4. Describe the relationship between the Sultan and Scheherazade. How is it that the courtesan can wield such influence over an obviously formidable ruler? Provide examples to support your description.

## The Jewish Tailor's Tale

5. Wife: "Oh, Malek! Since when do people buy presents on the day of atonement?" Husband: "They don't unless they have wives as beautiful as I do. And since they don't, I am the only man in Akra who has the right

to buy his wife a present on Yom Kippur... Yom Kippur or no Yom Kippur, I want to make every man in the city jealous." Explain how this quotation supports one of the themes of the play.

6. Why does the tailor succumb to the wizard's demand? How does this element of the tale reflect the framing tale of the three men accused of murder? How do the tailor's actions (or inactions) result in his ultimate ill fortune?
7. Describe how the insidious nature of the wizard actually provides comic elements to the play. Explain how, played differently, the scenes between the wizard and Malka might be dramatic, melodramatic, or even tragic. What comedic elements has Mr. Tresnjak used to create a light tone? Are these elements part of the writing or the direction?
8. Compare and contrast the varying natures of desire with regard to the wizard and the husband. Whose sin is greater? Why do you think so?
9. Describe the husband's reaction when he confronts his wife with dress. Does he have a right to feel betrayed? How does he act once she confesses? Why does he take her to the Rabbinical court? What is the outcome?

## The Hunchback's Tale (continued)

10. How does Isaac react when pressed by the Sultan for details of the tailor's fate? Is his bitterness justified? How do his responses affect the Sultan?

## The Christian Scrivener's Tale

11. Describe the relationship between Prince Gennaro and his father, the King. What accounts for the King's behavior toward his son? How does his son respond, and what are the effects on the kingdom?
12. Upon meeting the diminutive Princess Armilla, the Prince spontaneously asks for her hand in marriage. What do you think prompts his sudden proposal? How does the Princess respond and why?
13. Armilla finally accepts Gennaro's proposal and becomes his bride. Do you feel she shares his love? What other possible reason might she have for consenting to marriage? Support your opinion with examples.
14. Discuss Armilla's statement, "I grow by your love and could just as easily diminish by your lack of love," with respect to the themes of the play. In what ways could you apply this statement to each of the tales?
15. What does the red-haired woman represent? How does this affect Princess Armilla? Does the woman's appearance reveal Prince Gennaro's true nature, or is he the victim of a force outside of his control?
16. Consider the Prince with respect to the King. In what

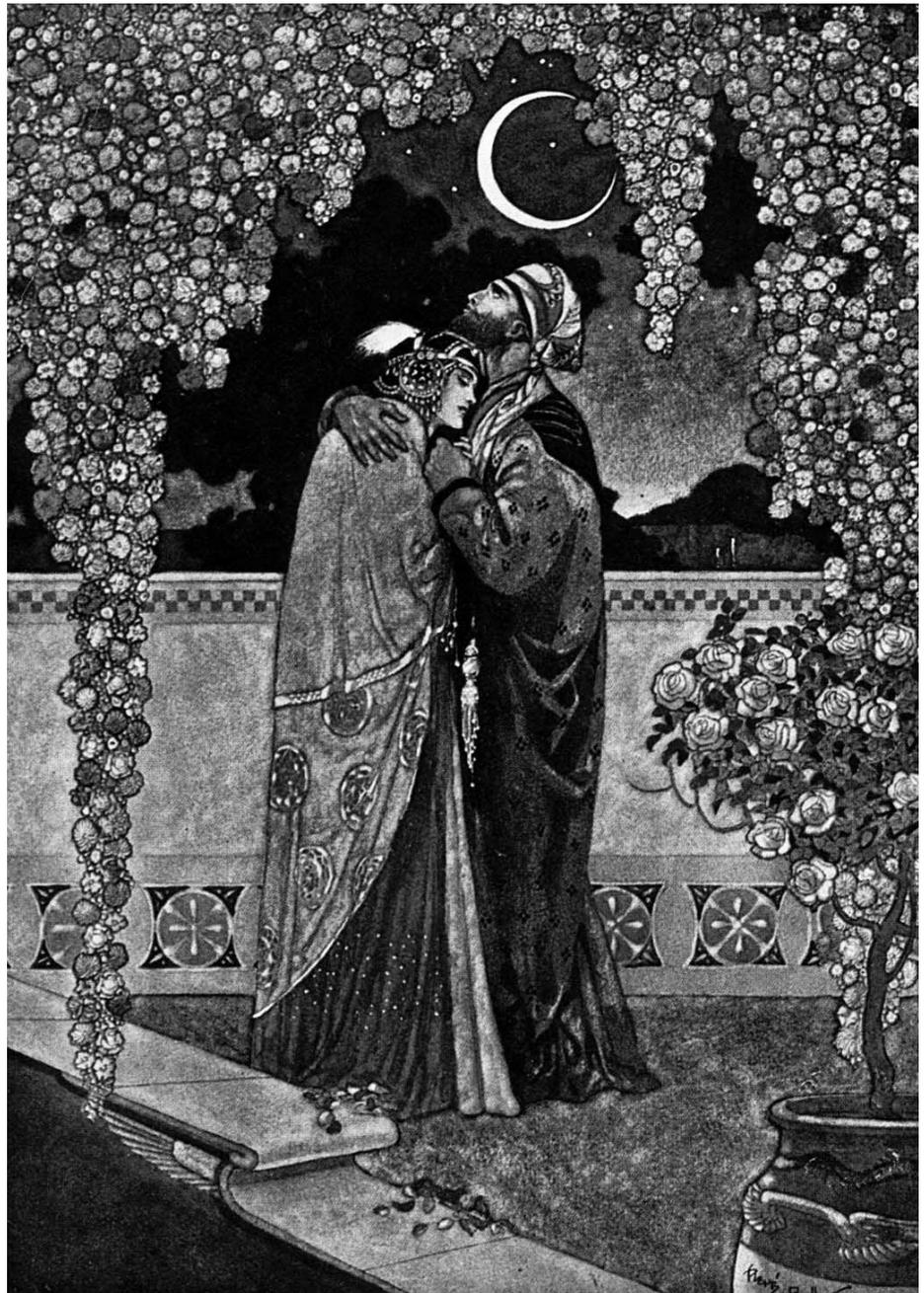
ways does his life mirror that of his father's? Make a case for "the sins of the father" being visited on the head of his son.

### **The Hunchback's Tale (mean-while, back at the palace)**

17. At the end of the Christian Scrivener's tale the Sultan, enraged, declares of the tale, "It is a dangerous story." What does he mean by this? For whom is it dangerous? Is there more than one meaning?

### **The Muslim Jeweler's Tale**

18. Faruk, a beggar, arrives in Damascus, only to be immediately accosted sexually by three young women, one after the other. What does this greeting do to Faruk's sense of self-worth? In what way have the women taken control of their destinies? Does this differ from the other women in the play? How so?
19. After learning of the penalties for his actions, Faruk decides upon a course of action designed to save his skin, as well as change his social status. How does this premeditated selfish act become one of selflessness? What brings about this change? Who else gains redemption through an act of unexpected bravery? Relate these to one of the play's themes.
20. Exactly why is Fatima's sacrificial fate not frightening to her, but a welcome relief instead?
21. Many folktales, as well as contemporary fiction, employ the technique of "hero and side-



*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, illustration by René Bull*

kick." Explain Badar's value as a foil for Faruk's beggar/hero.

### **The Hunchback's Tale (concluded)**

22. What does the Sultan's reaction to the last sentence of the Muslim Jeweler's tale tell you about his concern for how he is perceived by others? Does he feel that being connected to one of a lower station will tarnish his reputation, and compromise his power?

23. Explain how the Jester's line "...at times, truth lives not in one but in many tales" speaks to the way in which our circumstances often influence the way in which we process information. Relate this to the Sultan's initial responses to the three tales. Can you think of any other examples from literature that support this statement? (Perhaps the Indian parable of the three blind men and the elephant?)

# QUESTIONS FOR AFTER Attending the Performance

*Note to teachers: After viewing The Blue Demon, ask the following questions:*

## 1. About the Play and Production

- A. What was your overall reaction? Were you moved? Shocked? Empathetic? Explain your reactions. How was the play structured? Did it build to a single climax? Was it episodic? Did this structure help or hinder your understanding of the play? Was the dialogue interesting? Appropriate? Were you aware of the imagery and symbolism during the course of the play? Would you have been aware of these devices without previous preparation?
- B. Was the pace and tempo of the production effective and appropriate?

## 2. About the Characters

- A. Did the characters touch you personally in some ways? Did you care about them?
- B. Were the characters three-dimensional and believable?
- C. Were the motivations of the characters clear?
- D. What qualities were revealed by the actions and speech of the characters?
- E. Did the characters change/develop/undergo transforma-

tion during the course of the play?

- F. In what ways did the characters reveal the themes of the play?

## 3. About the Set

- A. Was the set usable and workable?
- B. Was the set compatible with the production as a whole? Were there any features of the set that distracted from the action of the play?
- C. Did the design reflect the themes, type and style of play?
- D. Were the artistic qualities of unity, balance, line, texture, mass and color used effectively?
- E. Did the set provide appropriate environment and atmosphere?
- F. Was the set used to present any symbolic images or did it simply represent the space in which the action of the play occurred? Did it contain elements of both a "realistic" and a "symbolic" approach?

## 4. About Lighting and Sound

- A. Did the lighting establish mood and atmosphere? Was the illumination sufficient? Did the lighting harmonize with, and contribute toward, the unity of the production?



*The Story of the King of the Ebony Isles,  
Illustration by Edmund Dulac*

- B. Were the music and sound effects appropriately conceived? Were they executed effectively?

## 5. About Costumes/Makeup/ Hairstyles

- A. Were all of these elements correct in terms of the period fashion? Were they suitable in terms of character and storytelling for the production?
- B. Did the costumes and make-up use of color/ design serve to illuminate the themes, type and style of the play, or any particular choices of interpretations in this production?

# OPEN RESPONSE & Writing

## Open Response Assessment

*Instructions for students: Please answer the following as thoroughly as possible in one well planned and carefully written paragraph. Remember to use topic sentences and examples from the text.*

1. What is *The Blue Demon* about? What does it have to say about our different traditions?
2. Compare and contrast the relationships between men and women in each of the tales. How do the elements of love, desire and jealousy affect the characters?
3. Gabbo, the Jester, sings this song based on a poem by Omar Khayaam: *There was a door to which I found no key/ There was Veil through which I could not see/ Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee/ And then no more, no more of Thee and Me/ My love, could you and I with Fate conspire/ To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire/ Could we not shatter it to bits? And then/ Remake the World into our Heart's Desire!* What do you think this says about Gabbo's outlook on life, and his place in his world?
4. Describe the form of government at work in *The Blue Demon*. (Excepting The Christian Scriver's Tale, the governments within the other two tales parallel that of the framework of the play.) What are the advantages and disadvantages to this form of government? Would your answer change depending on your gender, race, or social status?

5. How is *The Blue Demon* different from a conventionally structured play? In what ways do these differences offer a heightened sense of theatricality?
6. Of three tales told, the Christian scrivener's tale is the most dramatic and poignant, relying less on humor than the other two. Why do you suppose the playwright chose to place it second in order of telling? What dramatic functions do the humor of the first and third tales serve within the context of the framing tale?
7. Betrayal is often a motivating factor for characters in folktales. Examine one character from one of the tales who is betrayed by another. In what way was he/she betrayed? How does this affect the character and dictate his/her actions?
8. Although all three tales are of different cultural derivation, the playwright has chosen to set the play in the in the ancient city of Damascus. How does the setting of the play impact the characters of the play? For what purpose do you feel the playwright chose this particular locale? How is it relevant to today's audience?

## Writing Assignments

1. Choose one of the three accused men from the play. Write a journal entry in his voice as if it were the moment before he is to begin telling the tale upon which his life rests. What are his feelings at this moment? Does he have a plan of attack? Has he already heard one or more of

the other tales told? Write another journal entry for the end of the play.

2. Use a word web to create word choices for poems. Write the given word in the center of your page, along with a simple definition of the word. (Suggested words for themes in *The Blue Demon*: jealousy, betrayal, wisdom, pride, love, desire, etc.) Then write the words and phrases that come to mind by association in your web—radiating outward from your central word. Once the web is complete, write your poem in the meter of your choice. Another strategy for creating word choices in preparation for poetry writing is to put your words or phrases on small cards or "post-it" notes. You can then use these words in the same manner as do the commercial refrigerator-magnet words for writing poems. You will need to add extra words: articles and prepositions (a, an, the, on, to, etc.) and word endings (ly, ed, s, es, etc.).
3. Write an essay exploring the concept of wisdom as it relates to the play. Consider from where wisdom comes, how it is acquired, and its uses. Do those with the highest status necessarily display the most wisdom? Can you find examples from literature or other sources to support your opinion? ("Great men are not always wise." Job, 32:9, "Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile; Filths savor but themselves." *King Lear*, IV,ii,38, "He who thinks himself wise, O heavens! is a great fool." Voltaire, *Le Droit du Seigneur*, IV,i)
4. An English proverb states: "Pride goeth before a fall." Using a character from one of the tales as a focal point, write an essay supporting this sentiment.

5. Write a letter to a friend about a character from *The Blue Demon*. Pretend that you have just met him or her. Describe your first impressions as well as how you feel about the character after the action of the play transpires.
6. Write a short folktale/parable of your own (it may be contemporary in setting) that illuminates the sentiment of one of these lines from the play (or another of your choice): "All men have bad days." or "If he only knew what his foolish pride would lead to—he would have choked on his words." or "As long as you love me, I am yours."
7. Refer to the paragraph on Love and Desire in the Preparation section of this guide. Write an essay comparing and contrasting the three "love" relationships in the tales. Make sure you consider the transformative power of love as well as the ephemeral nature of desire.
8. The title, *The Blue Demon*, is a reference to thoughts that keep you from sleeping at night. Examine one of the central themes of the play with respect to its potential for inducing insomnia.
9. Write a monologue for one of the characters in this play, revealing his or her innermost thoughts. Either rehearse and perform your monologue or direct a classmate to perform your monologue. Suggestions of possible topics include: Isaac the Tailor deliberating about sewing the charm into Malka's dress, Princess Armilla speculating on life away from her own people, or Faruk on his decision to fight for Fatima's life rather than flee with the wealth of Damascus.
10. Write a critical review of the Huntington Theatre Company's production of *The Blue Demon* and submit it for publication in your school newspaper. Be sure to send us a copy.

## FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

1. Consider the nature of comedy. What is it that makes us laugh? Is it the same for everybody? Do we all have the same taste in humor? *The Blue Demon* has many comic moments interspersed throughout the play. How many different comedic techniques can you identify? Be sure to include physical comedy as well as spoken dialogue, characters that are comic in nature and comedy that is situational.
2. If you were assigned to be the dramaturge for a production of *The Blue Demon*, what research and visual imagery would you provide for the director and the actors at the first rehearsal? What sound or music would you offer? Perhaps images of Muslim palaces, Persian rugs, samples of hand-, rod- and bunraku-puppets? Examples of klezmer music, Eastern European folk tunes or Arabian music?
3. Research the theatrical term *Deus ex machina* and the history of its use from the ancient Greeks through today. How does the Jester's resurrection fit the concept? From what burden does this miracle relieve the Sultan? How would the play have changed had the Jester not revived? Write an alternate ending in which the Sultan is forced to keep one of the three men as his new storyteller. Whom does he choose, and why? Consider what, if any, input Scheherazade would have in the decision. How does your ending change the message of the play?
4. The framework of *The Blue Demon* comes directly from the Tales of 1,001 Nights, and Scheherazade is prominent in both as the instrument by which the stories are driven. In the Tales, she is heroic inasmuch as she not only saves her own life, but the lives of many other women by prolonging her own and, ultimately, educating a King. How does she serve a similar purpose in *The Blue Demon*? Can it be said that she educates the Sultan? In what way? In a culture where men can buy and sell women, and eliminate them at their pleasure, what tools does Scheherazade possess that enable her to so strongly influence the judgment of the Sultan?
5. In each of the three tales, there is an element of the supernatural at work (an enchanted dress, a demonic possession, and a virgin-devouring dragon)? Contemplate the ways in which these elements, for good or ill, influence human behavior in the tales. Why are paranormal forces so often used as "excuses" for dishonorable behavior? Why do folktales employ the supernatural to emphasize their lessons?

# MEDIA Assessment

*These questions and hands-on exercises are interactive challenges in Drama, Music, Dance, Visual Arts and Design that inspire further consideration or understanding of the play.*

## Creating Characterization

Have each of your students choose a character from *The Blue Demon* that he/she would like to portray. As though they were preparing for rehearsal, have them ask the following questions about their characters:

- a. What do I want in the play? What is my overall objective (or superobjective)?
- b. What is in the way of what I want in the play? What are my obstacles? Who is/are my obstacles? Does what gets in the way of what I want change throughout the course of the play? How?
- c. Does my character change during the course of the play? What is my character's journey, or plot of transformations?
- d. What are the contradictions inherent in my character?

## Role Playing/Improvisation

Have students improvise some moment from the text of *The Blue Demon* and then test the effects of changing something—tone of voice, some important character trait, or a vital remark. How does such a change affect the selected moment? What repercussions would such a change have on other aspects of the play? The students could improvise what happens before or after a particular point in the play, or what happens after the play's end. Both these

exercises help the students understand how a work of art always involves an interrupted process, or a decision to stop what could endlessly be revised. See if the students can identify some of the playwright's main points of choice or decision in the story.

## Acting

Have students act out a scene from *The Blue Demon*. Or, divide the class into groups to act out each of the three tales told in the play. They should use props and elements of costumes, if possible. Have them consider their placement on the stage, blocking (who moves where and when), gestures, voice tone, music and intended emotional impact.

## Visual Art

Pass out art paper, paints, and brushes. Have students create abstract paintings of a character from *The Blue Demon*. Be sure they do not tell their classmates who their pictures represent. Display the paintings any way you choose (hang them around the room; place them on bulletin boards, etc.). Ask students to pick out qualities, moods and feelings of each painting, and then try to determine who the painting might represent. Next, ask students to identify their paintings and the character they chose, explaining how the various details of the painting depict the particular character. Students then might write a paper analyzing their paintings. The concept of abstract imagery may need to be explained to some students. Emphasize that they are trying to capture moods, feelings, and

conflicts. They need not try to make their paintings look like the character or, for that matter, anything specific.

## Music/Dance

Have students research the forms of Middle-Eastern folk dances. What is the importance of dance within these cultures? What elements of these dances were on display in *The Blue Demon*? Using a short piece of music similar to that heard in the play (klezmer or Arabian music for example), have students choreograph a brief folk dance illustrating a theme from *The Blue Demon*. Alternatively, have students choose a contemporary piece of music that they feel would accurately reflect a mood, theme or character from the play, and design a dance to interpret those ideas. In either case, allow time for students to talk about the process they used in choosing music, creating, rehearsing, and performing their dances.

Create background music and/or sound effects to accompany any of the three tales in the play. If you wish, add them to the acting activity detailed above.

Ask students to select a line from the play that would make a good song title. Develop a song in the style of their choosing (ballad, rap, show tune, etc.) around the line or phrase. Suggested examples might be: "one sexy beggar," "I grow by your love," or "I would wait for a good day—before I took away seven years of someone's life."

## The Design Process

Consider the number of scenic changes in the play. Setting aside the way in which the Huntington Theatre Company accomplished scene changes during *The Blue Demon*, have students describe

# LESSON PLANS

**ONE-DAY LESSON PLAN** introduces students to the plot, characters, author and themes of the play. Requires on class period before viewing the play.

## **DAY ONE - Introducing the Play**

1. Distribute Mastery Assessment questions (insert page #) for *The Blue Demon* for students to read before and to review after attending the performance. Optional: Distribute vocabulary sheet and ask students to define each word. A vocabulary test could be administered after viewing the play.
2. Read the synopsis of *The Blue Demon* given in the literary guide (insert page #). Write the objectives for the play (insert page #) on the board and discuss other works the students have studied that have similar themes and issues.
3. Copy and distribute the pages in the literary guide entitled "A Tale from the 1,001 Nights." Read aloud as a class and discuss the significance with respect to the uses of storytelling and the history of *The Arabian Nights*.
4. Copy and distribute the information about the playwright, Darko Tresnjak and the page on Production Sources (insert page #'s). In groups or individually, have students underline both the highlights of Mr. Tresnjak's life and his quotations regarding the production of *The Blue Demon*. As a class, discuss your expectations for the production. Students may have some very clear ideas about how certain aspects of the play may be presented. If time permits after viewing the play, hold another discussion comparing their early expectations with the actual production design.

**FOUR-DAY LESSON PLAN** introduces students to the play and then, after viewing the performance, asks them to think more critically about it. Includes time for class discussion and critical assessment.

## **DAY ONE - Introducing the Play**

Same as Day One above; completed before seeing the play.

## **DAY TWO - The Play**

Attend performance at Huntington Theatre Company.

**Homework:** Students respond to mastery Assessment questions.

## **DAY THREE - Follow-up Discussion**

Discuss Mastery Assessment answers in class.

## **DAY FOUR - Test**

Individual Assessment: Choose either several questions from the Open Response Assessment or one question from the Writing Assignments (insert page #) for students to answer in a one-period in-class writing format.

*Optional: Students may choose one of the For Further Exploration or Media Assessment tasks to complete for extra credit.*

**SEVEN-DAY LESSON PLAN** plan completely integrates *The Blue Demon* into your schedule. Within seven school days, you can introduce the play, assign reading and vocabulary, teach analysis of the storytelling art, and assess your students on both a group and individual level. Students will ideally view the play after completing all assigned work.

## **DAY ONE - Introducing the Play**

Same as Day One above.

**Homework:** Read "The Hunchback's Tale" and "The Jewish Tailor's Tale" from *The Blue Demon* and answer corresponding Mastery Assessment questions.

*Optional: hand out vocabulary sheet to define (Due: day three)*

## DAY TWO- *The Blue Demon*, part one

Discuss "The Hunchback's Tale" and "The Jewish Tailor's Tale" and answers to questions.

**Homework:** Read the remainder of *The Blue Demon*: "The Christian Scrivener's Tale," "The Muslim Jeweler's Tale," and the intertwined "Hunchback's Tale" and answer corresponding Mastery Assessment questions.

## DAY THREE- *The Blue Demon*, part two

Discuss "The Christian Scrivener's Tale," "The Muslim Jeweler's Tale," and the intertwined "Hunchback's Tale" and answers to questions; assign parts to students to read/act out scenes.

**Homework:** Handout on "Analyzing the Fundamentals of Storytelling" (including assignment)

*Optional: Define vocabulary words*

## DAY FOUR- Analyzing the Fundamentals of Storytelling

Discuss "Fundamentals of Storytelling" Handout; students tell short story

**Homework:** Prepare work from Preparation, key Issues, For Further Exploration or Media Assessment sections

*Optional: review definitions*

## DAY FIVE- Group Work

Meet in groups to prepare presentations; schedule library for this period if necessary.

## DAY SIX- Presentations

Group Assessment: Students present their findings to the class

**Homework:** Complete sample questions from Open Response or Writing Assignments (insert page #) to study for test

*Optional: Study vocabulary definitions.*

## DAY SEVEN- Test

Individual Assessment: Choose either several questions from the Open Response Assessment or one question from the Writing Assignments (insert page #) for students to answer in a one-period in-class writing format. *Optional:* Students may choose one of the For Further Exploration or Media Assessment tasks to complete for extra credit.

*Optional: Administer vocabulary portion of test.*

# Vocabulary Words

Damascus	charitable	damask	oleander	scruples
Muslim	odious	improbable	tedious	sidekick
scrivener	gentile	Rabbinical court	embedded	imbecile
jester	lecherous	Infidelity	predicament	mezzanine
Sultan	atonement	hubris	reverie	brothel
accursed	Yom Kippur	quarry	diminish	flatulent
petrified	ornate	eludes	dispassionate	Kismet
commotion	loathsome	negligent	Sabine women	garrote
merciful	synagogue	chancellor	Pompey	redeemed
wrathful	Gomorrah	lineage	bewildered	eviscerate
Effendi	inhibitions	trivialities	castrated	resurrect
ethnic	Lebanon	resplendent	carpetbagger	Aegean Sea
concubine	pomegranate	idealized	sacrificial	
virtuous	Persia	charade	abominable	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# ANALYZING THE FUNDAMENTALS of Storytelling

**S**torytelling, one of the oldest known art forms, is both a predecessor of and basis for the dramatic arts. Tales told by village elders, shaman, bards and minstrels were used to account for natural events such as storms, lightning, and earthquakes; to reinforce belief systems through tales of heroes and gods; and to communicate laws or moral codes upon which communities and cultures were based. In fact, the folktales and fables handed down by storytellers are some of the oldest educational tools through which cultures have passed down values and lore from generation to generation. Just as the theatre requires both actor and audience, storytelling requires teller and listener, and the tools at the disposal of each party are similar in form and function. The teller must rely primarily on voice and gesture, whereas the actor adds movement as well as physical elements such as sets, props and costumes. The audience, in both cases, utilizes its strongest tool, imagination, to bridge the boundaries of time and space.

## Assignments

1. Read one of the three tales in the play (or, if you choose, the tale included in the literary guide). Answer the following questions, pertinent to the characteristics of good storytelling, in preparation for telling the tale.

**Theme** - What is the tale about? Is there a single, clearly defined theme that runs through the story?

**Plot** - Is the plot well developed? How does the structure of the story lead the reader (or listener) to its intended conclusion? Is it a direct path or a circuitous one?

**Imagery, Sounds and Rhythm** - Does the story include vivid word imagery? Choose a section and count the number and variety of descriptive words (adjectives and adverbs). What about the way certain words roll off the tongue? Can you find instances of alliteration? What about rhythm? Read several passages aloud to see if you can find rhythmic changes. Do they coincide with changes in the tone of the tale? How do certain sounds echo emotional changes for characters?

**Characterization** - How many characters are there in the tale? Write a brief description of each character. Be sure to include physical attributes as well as perceived personality traits. What type of vocal qualities do you think each of the characters has? How are they different from one another? What types of gestures or facial expressions do you feel would be useful in portraying the characters?

2. Prepare a short section of the tale to tell before your classmates. Rather than memorize exact sections of dialogue from the play, substitute your own words and style, remembering to use vivid descriptors. In order to create your story, you may wish to utilize one or more of the following techniques: write the section of the story down from memory, tape yourself telling the story, create an outline of major plot points, imagine the story without speaking (as if played on a videotape in your head), practice different vocal choices for each of the characters, and experiment gesturally to enhance the story.

3. Write a paper comparing and contrasting the elements of storytelling to the tools of the actor. Use examples from the Huntington Theatre Company production and your own storytelling process to support your thesis.

## **MEDIA ASSESSMENT RUN OVER TEXT**

(through sketches, models, or in written explanation) different ways in which scene changes may be effected using flats or set pieces which fly, revolve or are moved in by mechanical means, or by crews during black-outs or curtain closings. Ambitious students may wish to create a full set design through drawings, or models after researching the Tales from 1,001 Nights, reading the script thoroughly, and/or studying Middle-Eastern architectural styles.