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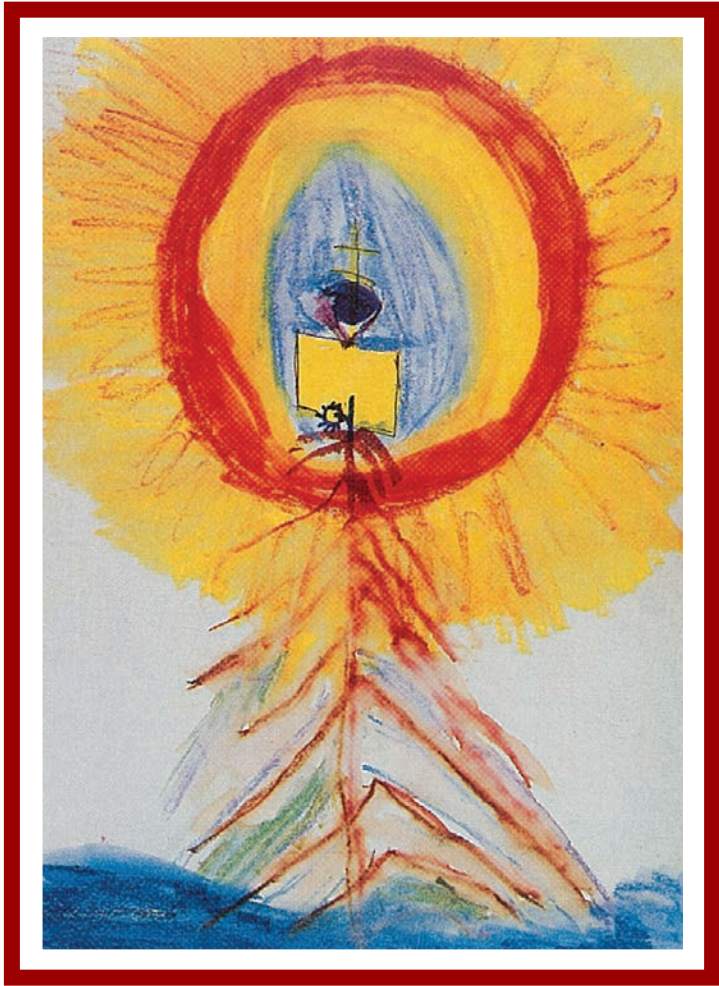
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Dramatic Publishing



The Yellow Boat

Touring Version

by

David Saar

The Yellow Boat

This touring version was developed by the play's production at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Berkeley, California. The story of *The Yellow Boat* is a glorious affirmation of a child's life and the strength and courage of all children.

Drama. *By David Saar.* Cast: 4m., 3w. *The Yellow Boat* is based on the true story of David and Sonja Saar's son, Benjamin, who was born with congenital hemophilia and died in 1987 at the age of 8 of AIDS-related complications. A uniquely gifted visual artist, Benjamin's buoyant imagination transformed his physical and emotional pain into a blaze of colors and shapes in his fanciful drawings and paintings.

A Scandinavian folk song tells of three little boats: "One was blue, one was red, and one was yellow as the sun. They sailed far out to sea. The blue one returned to the harbor. The red one sailed home too. But the yellow boat sailed up to the sun." Benjamin always concluded his bedtime ritual by saying, "Mom, you can be the red boat or the blue boat, but I am the yellow boat." Benjamin's remarkable voyage continues to touch audiences around the world. Recommended for children age 8 and older, parents, families and adults. *Open stage with simple set pieces. Contemporary costumes. Music in book.* Code: Y30

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Yellow Boat (touring version)



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(TOURING VERSION)

by
DAVID SAAR

This final touring version was developed by the play's
production at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre
Berkeley, California.



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DAVID SAAR

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Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY
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For
Sonja and Benjamin

Characters:

Benjamin
Mother
Father

A chorus of 3 actors, play the following roles:

Chorus
School children
School teachers
Parents
School administrators
Kids
Eddy
Joy
Doctors

Playwright's Note:

In the early drafts of the play, the chorus parts were called "T.P.'s" - shorthand for "Transformational Potential." They continue to serve this purpose in the play. They play all the above roles, but can also be used, to create anything else the director might want to use to tell the story.

Time is fluid in the play and should be imagined cinematically rather than realistically. We can, and will move forward, back, and across time. "*Time shift*" means just that - a cinematic shift to another moment.

The "drawings" that Benjamin describes in various monologues are "drawn" in the air or on a blank piece of paper with a prop crayon.

"The boat" mentioned in some stage directions refers to a set piece used in the Tempe and Seattle productions, a small, movable Yellow Boat that was manipulated to become an ambulance, a bed, etc. There are other scenic solutions; this is provided as one example.

The Yellow Boat was first presented by Childsplay, Inc. at the Tempe Performing Arts Center, Tempe, Arizona in October, 1993. It was directed by Carol North. The dramaturg was Suzan Zeder; associate dramaturg, Judy Matetzschk. Scenic design by Greg Lucas, lighting design by Amarante Lucero, costumes by Susan Johnson-Hood. Original music composed and performed by Alan Ruch. The cast was as follows:

Benjamin:	Jon Gentry
Mother:	Ellen Benton
Father:	Dwayne Hartford
Joy:	Debra K. Stevens
Eddy/Chorus #1:	D. Scott Withers
Chorus #2:	Alec Call
Chorus #3:	Alejandra Garcia
Chorus #4:	Helen Hayes

A touring version of The Yellow Boat was first presented in February, 1994, by The Metro Theater Company, St. Louis, MO. It was directed by Jim Hancock. The dramaturg was Suzan Zeder; associate dramaturg, Judy Matetzschk. Scenic design by Nicholas Kryah, lights designed by Jack Brown, costume design by Clyde Ruffin, original music composed and performed by Al Fischer. The cast was as follows:

Benjamin:	Jennifer Makuch
Mother:	Grace Adellen
Father:	Nicholas Kryah
Joy:	Gina Ojile
Eddy/Chorus #1:	Eddie Webb
Chorus #2:	Al Fischer

This final touring version was developed by the play's production at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Berkeley, California, in October, 1995. It was directed by Phyllis S.K. Look.

A study guide is available from
Childsplay, Inc.
P.O. Box 517
Tempe, AZ 85281

**THE YELLOW BOAT is also available
in a full length version.**

Playbooks and royalties are the same for each.

(Soft light, sound swirl. The time is past, present, future. Lights come up on a boy who will become Benjamin playing with a toy boat.)

BOY: It began . . . 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1: Blast-off!

(Vocalized sounds of rocket launching.)

Beep, beep, beep, beep . . .

CHORUS #1 - #3, MOTHER and FATHER: It began before the beginning . . .

(The boy's play holds stage alone for a moment, and then others, the characters who will become the parents, the doctors, the community, become part of the playing space. Their voices overlap, and build.)

#1: This is a story about . . .

#3: This story is about . . .

#2: Not an ordinary story . . .

#1: It happened . . .

#3: Did it happen?

FATHER: How could it happen?

#2: This is a story about . . .

#3: This story is about . . .

FATHER: Not an ordinary story . . .

MOTHER: It happened . . .

#2: Did it happen?

ALL: It happened.

(The Boy looks around at this gathering for the first time.)

BOY: This is a story about . . . me.

(From the perimeter of the playing space the other characters begin to call/sing out different parental labels: a vocalized time swirl.)

MOTHER: Mother . . .

FATHER: Father . . .

#3: Momma . . .

#1: Pappa . . .

#2: Mommy . . .

FATHER: Daddy . . .

#1: My Old Man . . .

BOY: It began before the beginning with a sort of choosing . . .

(Choral voices continue to offer up a variety of "parental choices" from which the boy will make his selection.)

MOTHER: Mommy's here.

#1: You're getting so big.

#3: What did you do in school today?

#2: Brush your teeth.

FATHER: Way to go! I'm so proud of you.

#1: Do I have to stop this car?

FATHER: That's my boy.

MOTHER: Sweet dreams.

BOY: Mom? Dad?

(Boy shifts his focus to Father and Mother. The scene "shifts" to a more realistic style.)

FATHER: You're what!?! Are you sure?

MOTHER: I'm sure.

FATHER: Positive? You're sure? Whooh . . . ! This is great! It is really great, isn't it?

MOTHER: I've never felt so happy; . . .

FATHER: Can you feel him yet?

MOTHER: No, but I know he's there.

FATHER: 'He.' We both said, 'he'!

MOTHER: I know.

FATHER: What does . . . he feel like?

MOTHER: He feels like . . . himself.

BOY: *(The boy points to Mother and Father.)*
You will be my Mom. And you, my Dad. This is a story about us. And it takes . . .

(The chorus begins a vocalized list of "time choices" which overlap and build. The "choices" may be repeated if desired.)

#1: Forty-eight years, sixty-seven years, fourteen years, three years . . .

#2: Ninety-six years, seventy-nine years, sixty-seven years, thirty-two years . . .

#3: Eleven months, five months, seven months, three months . . .

#1: Fourteen days, four days, twenty-three days, nine days . . .

(He stops the time swirl with his announcement.)

BOY: It takes: eight years, four months, twenty-nine days . . .
That's enough!

(This launches a "birth dance" with Mother, Father and Benjamin. As Benjamin names each color, chorus members swirl colored silks into the air, transforming the playing space into a swirl of color.)

I see . . . red.
I hear . . . blue.
I feel . . . purple.
I taste . . . green.
I . . . choose . . . yellow.

(Mother gives birth to a small yellow doll that "becomes" the baby Benjamin. Mother and Father use the doll as baby while the actor playing Benjamin voices and reacts for him.)

FATHER: It's a boy!

#1, #2, #3: Congratulations!

MOTHER: A boy.

BENJAMIN: My birthday. April 19, 1979.

MOTHER: A beautiful boy.

FATHER: Seven pounds, six ounces.

MOTHER: His fingers are right, and his toes are on . . . The nurse says he's the most beautiful child she's ever seen.

FATHER: She says that to everyone!

MOTHER: Still, today . . . I went down to the nursery . . .

FATHER: . . . just to check out the competition?

MOTHER and FATHER: She's right.

FATHER: So what's his name . . . ?

MOTHER: His eyelashes are the longest . . . and his little fingers, look . . .

FATHER: The nurse says they'll hold him for ransom if we don't give him a name.

MOTHER: He's small, and wise, and . . . mine.

FATHER: And mine.

(Mom gives baby to Dad, who doesn't quite know what to do with him.)

MOTHER: That's it!

FATHER: What?

MOTHER: His name. "Benjamin."

FATHER: Benjamin?

MOTHER: It works in lots of languages. Translate: Ben . . .

FATHER: "Son."

MOTHER: Ja . . .

FATHER: "Yes."

MOTHER: Min . . .

FATHER: "Mine."

(Father cuddles his son and parents simultaneously translate his new name.)

MOTHER: FATHER:
Son. Yes, he's mine! Ben. Ja. Min.!

(Benjamin begins a fussy cry, Dad gives doll back to Mom. They move to another space. "Busen lull" underscoring begins.)

BENJAMIN: Once upon a time, there was a Mom,

MOTHER: I'll weave you a sail.

BENJAMIN: . . . a Dad,

FATHER: I'll write you a world.

BENJAMIN: and a little, teeny baby

MOTHER and FATHER: Worktime!

(The Father and Mother separate to their individual "work spaces." The Mother weaves some of the colored silk ribbons, the Father works on a new story. The chorus is used to help create these work environments or assist in the creation of the work itself - they are "transformational potential." Each works to rhythms which weave together and separate. The intention of this movement/music beat is to show the parents at work, and the baby Benjamin discovering that he has the power to interrupt that work. Use the following choral litany to underscore the scene - or figure out another way to do it!)

#2 & #3: Shuttle, Beat. Shuttle, Beat. Shuttle, Beat. Shuttle,
Beat. *(Repeat.)*

#1 & #2: Comma, Dot. Comma, Word. Comma, Dot. Comma,
Word. *(Repeat.)*

(Benjamin awakes, and watches the surrounding activity,

perhaps joining in, or getting in the way, and then, tired of no one paying attention to him, starts to cry. Both parents come running, Benjamin gives them his most charming smile.)

FATHER: What's wrong?

MOTHER: Oh, you're okay.

FATHER: Now, where was I . . . ?

(They return to work, and after a short time Benjamin begins to cry again.)

MOTHER: *(Not wanting to interrupt her weaving.)*

Mamma's right here. *(To Father)* Can you see what he needs?

FATHER: Yeah, sure.

(He tries to ignore the crying for a beat, so Benjamin intensifies his efforts.)

Okay, here's the scoop. I'll write the story, and you color it!

(Father puts down assorted crayons, and returns to writing. Benjamin selects one crayon.)

BENJAMIN: Blue!

CHORUS: Blue?

BENJAMIN: Blue.

(A bluesy kind of music is heard and the chorus illustrates the color in movement as Benjamin colors.)

#1, #2, #3: Cool, cooler, coolest, blue, Smooth, soothing, blues . . .

(Exploration of blue is interrupted by:)

BENJAMIN: *(Holding up another crayon.)* Green.

(Change in sound as he colors and the chorus explores "a mean kind of green" in movement.)

CHORUS: It's a mean kind of green,
Like a scream in a dream,
Like a . . .

BENJAMIN: Ghost . . . on Halloween . . .

(The chorus becomes a drawing on the wall. At this point Mother sees what he's doing and rushes over.)

MOTHER: Oh Benjamin, not on the walls!

(Then looks more closely at the wall, assessing . . .)

Oh . . . !

(Father joins her.)

FATHER: Oh . . . ? Oh . . . ! Look at the . . .

MOTHER: And the . . .

FATHER: Not to mention the

FATHER and MOTHER: *(Appreciative)* Oh . . . , Benjamin . . .

MOTHER: That's a very nice drawing . . . , but it would be so much nicer on a piece of paper . . .

(She hands him a sheet of paper. With her finger she defines the space of the paper. The Chorus drawing dissolves.)

MOTHER: Here. Draw here. You can draw from here to here, and from here to here.

(Mother helps Benjamin draw a long line on the paper.)

MOTHER: A nice, long line that connects from here to here, and from here to here.

BENJAMIN: Line?

MOTHER: Line.

(Benjamin takes the crayon and draws a line.)

BENJAMIN: Line.

MOTHER: Lovely!

(Mother returns to her work. Benjamin begins to explore the concept.)

BENJAMIN: Line! Line here. Here; line, Here; line, Here; line, Here; line!

(Benjamin suddenly draws a long line right off the paper. Suddenly discovering another dimension, he abandons the paper and moves into the third and fourth dimension, moving through space as he explores "line." The chorus illustrates his "line exploration" with colored elastics which they manipulate to create visible lines and shapes in space.)

Line!

#3: S-p-i-r-a-l.

BENJAMIN: Line!

#2: Straight!

BENJAMIN: Line.

#1: An-gle?

BENJAMIN: Line!

#3: Squiggle!

BENJAMIN: Line!

(Benjamin is delighted by his line drawings and his explorations grow bolder and bolder. Finally Father notices.)

FATHER: *(To Mother.)* Look, look what he's doing!

MOTHER: Those aren't just scribbles, those are shapes!

BENJAMIN: Shapes?

MOTHER and FATHER: Shapes!

(A music and movement section follows as Benjamin draws, the chorus illustrates with the elastics and his parents help by naming the shapes.)

MOTHER and FATHER: Square, triangle There's a circle . . .

BENJAMIN: Circle? Wavy circle.

MOTHER: Lines and shapes for a . . .

MOTHER and FATHER: Picture!

BENJAMIN: Picture of . . . a tree!

(Chorus uses elastics to make a tree, evergreen style.)

A heart.

(Chorus uses elastics to make a heart shape that "beats.")

BENJAMIN: A bow and arrow.

(Chorus makes a bow and arrow with elastics which is "shot" through the heart.)

Stop!

(The heart “disappears,” and the chorus moves upstage.)

BENJAMIN: New Drawing.

(Benjamin picks up the paper he was drawing on earlier, and begins to draw again. Mother and Father are seated together. Benjamin joins them.)

Here’s a picture of Mom, and she’s singing to me.

MOTHER: This is a story my mother used to tell to me every night before I went to sleep. It’s about boats, and sails, and . . . it takes place in a harbor . . .

FATHER: . . . far, far away . . .

MOTHER: Now inside this harbor there were three boats. A red one. A blue one . . . and a yellow one. They all sailed far out to the sea, and the red one came back, and the blue one came back; but the yellow boat? The yellow boat sailed straight up to the sun.

(Singing.)

Busen lull, cook the kettle full,
There sailed three boats from the harbor,
The first was so blue,
The second so red,
The third was the color of the sun.

MOTHER and FATHER: Busen lull, cook the kettle full,

MOTHER and FATHER: There sailed three boats from the harbor,
The blue carried hope,
The red carried faith,
The yellow filled itself with love.

FATHER: I sail the blue boat

MOTHER: The red one’s for me

(The lullaby has almost put him to sleep.)

BENJAMIN: I am the yellow boat.

New drawing! Benjamin's body.

One day she sees something funny. *(Benjamin "draws" a bruise.)*

MOTHER: Look at this bruise. It seems to hurt him if I touch it.

FATHER: So don't touch it.

MOTHER: What caused it?

FATHER: It's just a bruise. Stop worrying.

BENJAMIN: I cry. *(He does.)* Loud. Lots! They worry! *(He cries more.)*

MOTHER: He keeps crying, just keeps on crying . . .

FATHER: I'll change him.

MOTHER: He doesn't need changing.

FATHER: Colic?

MOTHER: Four nights straight? Something hurts!

(Benjamin cries more.)

FATHER: Teeth?

(Very loud crying. Both react.)

MOTHER: Something's wrong!

MOTHER and FATHER: Call the Doctor!

(The boat piece becomes the ambulance. Benjamin draws as he tells.)

BENJAMIN: I'm going to the hospital in an ambulance. Just me . . . and Mom, and Dad. Big Siren! Cars scoot out of the way . . . Fast. Neat! Then . . . Doctors!

(Doctors enter with clip boards, and whisk the baby away from the parents. They are robotic, clinical; the parents are left waiting outside, overhearing what is being said.)

DOCTOR #1: Hematocrit every two hours.

MOTHER: What? What does that mean?

DOCTOR #3: Two pints whole blood, . . .

FATHER: What's wrong?

DOCTOR #2: . . . and a CAT Scan.

FATHER: What are you testing?

DOCTOR #1: Wait here, please. Just a few more tests . . .

BENJAMIN: More checks.

(Doctors move to continue exam.)

DOCTOR #1: Left pupil, three millimeters: right pupil, four millimeters. Note.

DOCTOR #3: Check.

DOCTOR #1: Charted?

DOCTOR #2: Check.

DOCTOR #3: Irregular.

DOCTOR #2: Highly irregular.

DOCTOR #1: I don't understand all this bleeding.