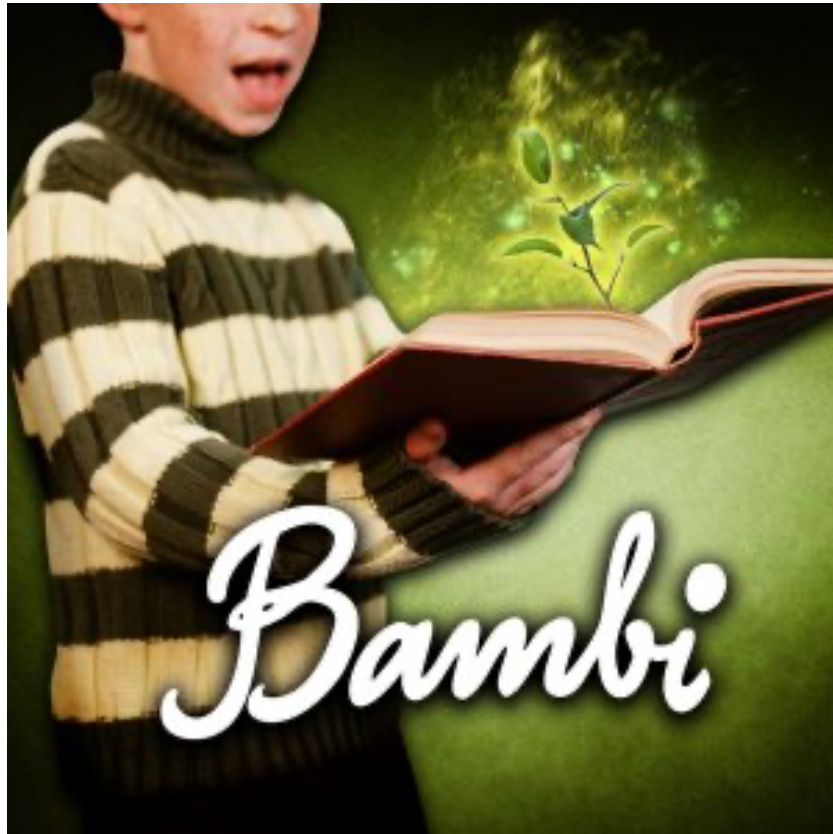


A Guide for Teachers

March, 2023



Written by
James Devita
based on the
book by Felix
Salten



Directed by
Scott Dunlap

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The Cast:

Cast in order of Appearance.

Friend Hare: LILY OBAL

Young Cony, Hare's daughter: LILY SENTELL

Young Kit, Hare's daughter: MILLIE JACKSON

Young Bucky, Hare's son: MAC JACKSON

Young Lapin, Hare's son: BENJAMIN KINKEL

Screech Owl: ETHAN JOHNSON

The Great Prince, Bambi's Father: BRYSON MURR

Ena, Bambi's Aunt: OLIVIA WILLIAMS

Nettla, an older Doe: AINSLEY JORDAN

Young Skunk: REMI MCGARVEY

Bambi's Mother: CHRISTIANA RUSSELL

Young Bambi: BENJAMIN WILLIAMS

Jay 1: NYLA JACKS

Jay 2: CHARLESTYN JOHNSON

Young Faline, Ena's daughter: PENNY JAMES

Young Gobo, her son: HENRY JAMES

Foxes and Butterflies: CLAIRE JAMES, OLIVER PETTY AND HENRY JAMES

Ronno, Bambi's rival: DALTON WILLIAMS

Marena, a doe: SEDONA CRAWFORD

Bambi: OLIVER PETTY

Lapin: CHARLESTYN JOHNSON

Friend Skunk: NYLA JACKS

Faline: CLAIRE JAMES

Gobo: EPHRAIM JAMES

Stage Managers: Sara Crane and Piper Elliott



Director's Note

When we chose “Bambi, a Life in the Woods” for this season, I thought I knew the story. I mean, it is practically a rite of passage to be traumatized by the death of Bambi’s mother, Mr. Disney made certain of that. I discovered, as is often the case with beloved tales from our childhood, that I had no idea what this story was about. See, the thing with many childhood stories is that they are about a great many things that adults don’t like to talk about, so instead we put those themes into books for children, in the hopes that they will become better at talking about difficult subjects, or perhaps they can give us some insight or answers to our problems. And poor Bambi has a lot of problems. There are bullies, absent parents, lack of food and harsh weather conditions, and an unseen monster who stalks the forest. However, that is just the plot, thematically it goes even deeper.

For some, a children’s book is “lesser” because we have an ingrained “smugness of superiority.” Bambi seems to defy that ideology. As I have come to observe, this story is a bit of a “Russian nesting doll,” in that every aspect of the story has some sort of significance or meaning inside of that, and once you have pulled that meaning out, there is another smaller yet significant meaning inside that. “An allegory within an allegory,” if you will. It is no wonder the Nazis banned the book, because they saw it as a “political allegory on the treatment of Jews in Europe.” I have found that children are profoundly more sensible than adults in their response to themes and subtext. In rehearsal, I have asked for their feedback and we have talked a lot about “what it all means” and the actors have had all sorts of insights on: “death,” “community vs. familial bonding,” “traditional parental roles,” “violence in nature vs man-made violence,” “misinformation and/or mistrust,” “school shootings,” “persecution of marginalized groups,” even “societal vs. familial patterns of abuse and/or neglect” have all come up in our rehearsals.

It has been said by some literary scholars that the theme of “Bambi, a Life in the Woods” is “self-perseverance” which seems to also be tied to “taking control of one’s fate.” I would argue that while the author seems to feel that the only person anyone can rely on is oneself, there is another argument to be made for connection with others, along with nature. While Bambi seems to be a template of “self-reliance,” conversely, it could be seen as a list of “what-not-to-do.” At every turn Bambi seems to learn hard lessons and each lesson seems to lead him to become emotionally unavailable and unwavering.

Continued on next page...

My hope is that the lesson we can take away from *Bambi*, 100 years later, is that you don't have to harden your heart, you don't have to only rely on yourself. There is a family (either chosen or inherited) and a community to help. We do not have to harden our hearts to survive, instead we can grow and change in positive ways that benefit not only ourselves, but the community around us. So much of children's entertainment is just to entertain. Sometimes, the lessons presented, while important, are shown in obvious and cliched ways. I hope that with "Bambi, a Life in the Woods" our audiences take this as a wonderful opportunity to have some deeper discussions with their children and students.

Sincerely,
Scott Dunlap,
Director

About the Author: **FELIX SALTEN**

Felix Salten's real name was Siegmund Salzmann. He was born September 6, 1869 in Budapest, Hungary. At an early age his Family moved to Austria where he lived most of his life. Though poorly educated, Salten was able to get a job at an insurance company. During this time he wrote many poems, short stories, and essay's. He published his first book of short stories in 1900, and then, when French writer Emile Zola died in 1902, Salten gained fame by writing his obituary.



In 1923, he wrote two novels: *Bambi*, and *The Hound of Florence*. In 1942, Walt Disney made *Bambi* into an animated movie. In 1959, Salten's book *The Hound of Florence* was made into a live action film by Disney titled *The Shaggy Dog*. Salten had two children, Paul and Anna Katharina. After escaping the Nazis in 1939, Salten and his wife moved to Zurich, Switzerland, where he died in 1945.

About the Play

The play you will be watching is not the Disney movie by the same name. While both the movie and our play are based on the book by Felix Salten, our play follows the book much more closely. There will be no "thumper" or "flower" characters, but there will be Friend Hare and Friend Skunk. It's an eloquent tale of growing up. Bambi must learn how to take care of himself in such a harsh world as the forest, but at the same time, we as an audience see the importance of being an active part of a loving and supportive community. Independence, self awareness, empathy, community, and love are all central to this tale.

This story was written by Felix Salten in 1923. He was a Jewish man living in Austria, a country that suffered greatly during World War I, and would again struggle during World War II. Many people consider the original book to be a parable about the persecution of the Jewish people in Europe during this time period. The universal themes of survival and love through adversity still mean something to us today.

Further Discussion:

Forest as a Community

Bambi is not just the story of a deer but of a forest community. There are many different animals that live in Bambi's forest and each has its own way of living. Together they make up a rich and exciting neighborhood for Bambi. Your neighborhood is filled with many different, rich, and exciting people too. Each has their own way of living and doing things which makes your neighborhood as rich and exciting as Bambi's. After seeing our production of *Bambi*, see if any of the animal characters in it remind you of people you know.

Actors Playing Animals

The one thing that plays and movies have in common is that they rely on humans to tell the story. In cartoons, even though the images are drawn, the voices come from people. No matter how realistic the animals look, if they talk, then there is a person portraying them. When humans portray animals, they must take animals and give them human traits. This is called "anthropomorphization". It's nearly impossible to make the actors look exactly like animals, so we use minimal costumes to give the impression that actors have animal like qualities.

Explorative Activities



Forest Soundscape

A sound circle can be created with claps or vocalizations. These vocalizations can run in themes depending on the lesson. For this one ask the students to think of the kinds of sounds they might hear in the forest. Then, around the circle, one at a time, each person will add his or her sound to the forest. Have them practice this a few times and really listen to what they create.

Transition to working as a community

After they have created their sounds, have them get up, one at a time, and act out the sound they have created. When they all come together in the center with their sound and movement they will have created the environment of the forest. From here you can suggest a dramatic structure by giving them a problem, such as a hunter has entered the forest, or the animals have found a lost baby. Let their suggestions move the action forward.

An Outline of Ourselves

This activity illustrates that everyone has an inner life beyond what we assume about a person. This realization is integral to developing a character for the stage. It is also important to creating empathy for others.

Have each student draw an outline of themselves. Ideally it is just an outline because there will need to be space inside of their outline to write things. Around their outline, have them write things that people would know about them just by seeing them. These may include "tall, brown hair, wears bright colors, straight hair, likes to sing, outgoing, shy" etc. Then have them write on the inside of their outline things about themselves that may not be obvious to those who first meet them, such as "loves anime, is good at drawing, is scared of the dark, wants to be a vet when I grow up" etc.

Can you find Bambi's Friends and Family in the Word Search Forest?

FELIXSALTEN

OWL

GOBO

CONY

HARE

LAPIN

MARENA

RONNO

BUCK

FALINE

BAMBI

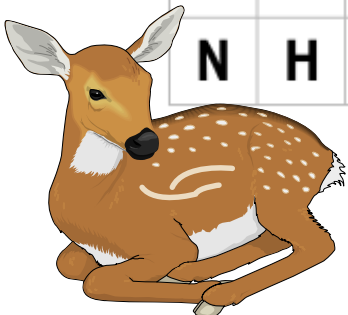
NETTLE

KIT

SKUNK

DOE

R	F	E	L	W	C	Y	H	N	N	K	I	T	T
M	I	L	E	L	T	T	E	N	B	T	B	W	N
M	C	O	N	Y	E	N	C	B	M	L	M	A	X
O	T	E	R	E	E	A	O	M	N	I	I	G	A
K	Y	L	F	E	L	I	X	S	A	L	T	E	N
L	R	E	U	M	K	N	L	N	R	O	W	L	Y
A	K	F	E	N	B	E	B	A	M	B	I	N	E
P	O	E	B	U	C	K	A	A	O	O	B	O	G
I	Y	N	X	O	N	O	N	N	O	R	K	P	F
N	A	I	S	R	B	O	A	M	E	E	O	D	A
K	E	K	U	K	U	X	K	L	E	R	N	R	L
N	R	S	R	N	U	L	B	N	A	B	A	N	I
X	A	N	E	S	R	N	N	K	H	O	G	M	N
N	H	O	O	K	A	R	K	B	N	C	R	S	E



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Director of Productions.....Scott Dunlap
Technical Director.....William Spratt
Costumer Shop Manager.....Cris King
Productions Manager.....Annie Collins
Educational AssociateMary Eliza Henricks
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