

REMOTELY CONTROLLED

A Play in One Act
for Young People

by

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SYNOPSIS

Remotely Controlled is a collection of individual skits that explore the role of television in the lives of young people. It is performed by a variable ensemble of actors, and includes opening and closing musical pieces that frame seven scenes that focus on such issues as excessive watching, obsession with music videos, gullibility, inactivity, reality shows, boredom, and, well, brain-rot! The scenes use metaphors to bring the issues to life in entertaining and provocative ways, providing both delight for the audience and wonderful challenges for the performers.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Remotely Controlled was produced for two studio performances by the Junior Players of the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, GA, in the spring of 2006. The performances took place in the Theatre 3 of the 14th Street Playhouse. The show was presented free of charge, and it was not reviewed.

CASTING

Remotely Controlled can be presented with a minimum cast of 9 actors, and a maximum cast of dozens, depending on the distribution of the roles. The cast should include both boys and girls, as some roles are explicitly or implicitly gender-specific. The original cast had a majority of girls, so most of the characters are female, but many could be gender-reassigned as needed, with name and pronoun changes. The order of the scenes could also be altered as needed.

SET AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Remotely Controlled can, as it was in its original incarnation, be produced with a minimum of set or technical needs, using simple props, neutral stage pieces, and ordinary sound effects to establish the various settings. Conversely, the play could also be presented with more elaborate sets, costumes, lights and sound to create more detailed dramatic locales and stage effects appropriate to the individual scenes.

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Characters

Introduction

Commercial
Nature Show
Sitcom
News
Cartoon
Reality Show
Weather Show
Sports Show
Did You See? Voices

Scene 1: Get A Life

Allie
Bailey
Cameron
Charlene

Scene 2: Vid Kid

Danielle
Mom
Solar Molar
Polar Molar
Grandma
HipHop

Scene 3: Super Duped

Penelope Powers
Jayla
Kevin

Scene 4: Sacked Out

Lizzie
Mom
Dad
Sacker
Sacker
Sacker

Scene 5: Bored Silly

Quinn
Rebecca
Sequoia

Scene 6: Reality with a Vengeance

Tabitha
Eugena
Kandace
Valerie
Mom

Scene 7: Corteoputria

Roxanne
Zachary
Mom
Doctor
Nurse

Introduction

(There is a TV down center, facing upstage, and chairs on stage facing the television and audience. Actors enter with remotes. Actors look at audience. Actors activate each other with remotes.)

Commercial: Brand new from Jellybox Toys. It's Jessica Junkfood. Feed her Cheetos, Fritos, Doritos and even chocolate-covered mosquitoes. She'll even drop crumbs on the carpet.

Reality Show: Wow, when I agreed to be a contestant on Mall Survival, I thought it would be fun. You know, a bunch of kids locked into a mall. But now I spend every minute of my life worried that I'm going to be the next one voted out of the Food Court . . .

Sports Show: We're here at the 17th hole, par 3. To succeed on what the players call the Rhino of No Return, you have to bank the ball just right on the far wall after two speed bumps, otherwise you go up into the rhino's horn, and take a three stroke penalty to get onto the green.

Sitcom: But, Skyler, I told them you could bungee jump! If you don't, our school won't win the prize and then we won't get the new computer Lab, and then we won't pass the tests and they'll shut the school down. It's all up to you!

News: Hi, I'm Devin, and welcome to Kids News. Today we have an interview with that brilliant young actress Shanana. She's the star of that new movie, "Cheerleaders in Outer Space." We'll be talking to her about what it was like to be abducted by aliens from the Galaxy Entrok.

Cartoon (with animated cutouts): It's time for Willy the Woolly Caterpillar, with his friend Tina the Terrible Tarantula. "Hey, Tina, what's going on today?" "Oh, not much, just trying to find someone's shoe to hide in." "Heh Heh, heh, I love playing tricks on the humans!"

Weather Show: Today on Hail Trackers, we're going to be looking at just how big hailstones can be, and our Hailstone Hal is going to do an experiment, standing under our Hi-Tech Hailstone Simulator to feel the impact of these frozen projectiles of the sky.

Nature Show: Next on the Nature Network: join us for a visit to Piranha Playground. These little fish get a bad reputation, but they can be as cute and cuddly as any salmon or flounder. And if they nibble a finger or two . . .

(All get turned off. All turn to audience, look at the audience zombie-like, turning remotes on audience, into.)

All *(in groups, with growing numbers and intensity)*:

Maaa!

There's nothing on!

Daad!

There's nothing to do!

Maaa!

I'm bored!

Mom, there's nothing to pass the time!

I'm tired.

It's too hot out.

It's too cold out.

I'm in a bad mood.

I have a headache.
I can't get up.
Just five more minutes.
Just till the next commercial.
Just ten more minutes.
Just one more episode.
My favorite show is coming on.
Just one more hour.
No, this one is more favorite than the last one.
Maaaaaa!

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Announcer: Next on Nick - watch the adventures of that crazy bunch of castaways. (*Real "Gilligan's Island" theme music. Segue into "Fateful Trance":*)

All: Just sit right back and you see a tale,
A tale of a fateful trance
That started in a picture tube -
We never had a chance!

The scene was a mighty living room
The day was bright and clear
We should have been outside at play
But we were glued right here
 We were glued right here

Our senses started growing numb
Our muscles turned to fudge
If not for the buttons on the old remote
We'd never would have budged
 We never would have budged.

Our trance set us down in the midst of this
Unreal reality
 With Laziness,
 Confusion too,
 Delusions and
 Apathy,
 Obnoxiousness,
 Reduction in Functioning --
All from too much TV!

All: Where am I?

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[From Scene 3: Super Duped]

Kevin: I know what I'd be. Captain Popular. I'd be totally popular without ever having to even think about it. Everyone would want to be my friend, and people would always invite me places and give me presents and stuff. And that way I could get people to stop arguing about things, because they'd all just want to hang out with me when I come around.

Jayla: Who's that coming into the Mall? Why, it's . . . Amazing Shopper Girl!

Kevin: Now, coming in as quarterback -- watch out, it's SuperBall Dude. This game is as good as won!

Jayla: The Homework Crusher!

Kevin: MegaMoney Man!

(Suddenly sound is heard, and Penelope Powers comes running in.)

Penelope: Hey, kids!

Jayla and Kevin: Penelope Powers!

Jayla: How did you get here?

Penelope: I just flew over, walked through the wall, you know!

Kevin: What are you doing here?

Penelope: Well, with my ultra-sensitive hearing, I was listening to you guys, and I thought I'd come and help make your wishes come true.

Jayla & Kevin: Really?

Penelope: Sure. I figure, if kids want to have superpowers, and I can give them, then why not?

Jayla & Kevin: Cool!!

Penelope: The only thing is, those powers you guys were talking about, they were a little weird. What I can give you are powers that will really help you in life.

Jayla & Kevin: Great!!

Penelope: Jayla, your Dad always has to nag you to get to sleep, and then he has to drag you out of bed. So, from now on, you are Early Girl! You'll have the amazing power to go to bed at 6:40 pm, right after dinner, and to wake up at 4:30, to give you plenty of time to clean the house and make everybody else's breakfast.

Kevin: Hah! Early Girl!

Penelope: And Kevin, your Mom always has to remind you to walk the dog. So you are now Super Pooper Scooper. You'll know just when the dog has to go, because you'll be thinking about it all the time, and you'll always have supplies with you. (*Gives him a plastic bag.*) You'll even volunteer to walk other people's dogs, because you're so good at it!

Jayla: Super Pooper Scooper!!

Penelope: Uh oh, there are some computer hackers stealing credit card numbers out on the West Coast. I'm off! (*She exits.*)

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[From Scene 7: Corteoputria.]

Mother: Are you sure you don't notice anything?

Roxanne: Uh . . . nawh.

Zachary: Mom, I can even smell it in my room.

Mother: Then go outside. The Doctor should be here any minute. (*He exits.*)

Roxanne, please, take a deep breath. (*Roxanne does.*) Well?

Roxanne: Unh . . . I dun-no . . . wha youre . . . talkin bout. (*She starts laughing at something on the TV.*)

Mother: What are we going to do?

Zachary (*running back in*): They're here!
(*The Doctor and Nurse follow him in.*)

Mother: Doctor, come in. She's right here.

Doctor: I can tell already that things have progressed too far.

Nurse: Doctor, it's never been this bad.

Doctor: Nurse, we're going to have to get close.

Mother: Should I turn off the TV?

Doctor: No! We must disturb her as little as possible. That's the only way to make an accurate diagnosis and determine the most effective treatment. Nurse, begin.

Nurse (*taking a clipboard out of the Doctor's bag*): How long has she been watching?

Mother: Today, about nine hours.

Nurse: No, I mean -- weeks? months?

Mother: I'm ashamed to say, at least a year.

Zachary: More like two, mom.

Mother: Yes, more like two. Sometimes up to twelve hours a day.

Doctor: Nurse, look at the eyes.

Nurse: Empty.

Doctor: And listen.

Nurse: That hissing sound?

Doctor: Yes. Molecular Breakdown. Poke her. (*Nurse does.*)

Nurse: No response. Doesn't move. Numb.

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