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### Still Life

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Dietz, Steven. *Still Life with Iris*. 1997. 60 pp.

## A

*Still Life with Iris* is an imaginative jaunt through Nocturno, a world parallel to our own where the things we enjoy every day are created and perfected--the inhabitants busily paint spots on ladybugs, rope the moon to pull it in at daybreak, and teach the wind to whistle. All the citizens of Nocturno wear brightly colored "PastCoats." These garments hold within them the memories of their owners. A small tear or lost button may cause the wearers to forget trivial facts; however, if the owners were to lose their coats entirely, they would lose all of their memories--literally their whole identity. Near the land of Nocturno is the Great Island, residence of the Great Goods, rulers over Nocturno and its residents. The Goods compulsively gather one of every thing in their world--the very *best* one.

In their search to have the best of everything, they decide they must have Iris, a young girl from Nocturno whose mother teaches the wind to whistle and whose father used to rope the moon, until he mysteriously disappeared when Iris was just a baby.

Dietz has succeeded in writing a story that journeys into, around, and through the imagination as blithely as a child set free in a meadow. His parallel world of Nocturno is full of imaginative people and unique objects ranging from flower painters and thunder bottlers to individually counted leaves and great barrels of rain. Iris's journeys take us from the secure happiness of a safe childhood, through the terror of losing her mother, into the confusion of not knowing who she is herself, and finally back to a world where her family is complete and safe once more. In many ways, it is a journey of self-discovery in which Iris realizes the power of her own inner strength and rediscovers the love of family and friends. The play requires nine actors, four women and five men, who play twenty-four entertaining characters. The set must be flexible in order to represent numerous locations with minimal effort.

### **This play is found in:**

Frockt, Deborah Lynn. *Seattle Children's Theatre: Six Plays for Young Actors, Volume II*. Smith and Kraus, 2000. ISBN 1-57525-158-2. \$16.95. 295 pp.

\* 8+ Reviewed by Allison G. Belnap