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Art Dog

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Title: Art Dog
Author: John Olive and Sue Ennis
Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin
Publisher: Plays for Young Audiences
Publication Year: 2014
Number of Pages: 26
Production Requirements: Large and vivid sets with reenactments of famous paintings; dog costumes; several special effects.

Estimated Run Time: 45 minutes
Number of Acts: 1
Number of Characters: 8
Cast Requirements: 1 male, 6 either
Time Period: Present Day
Reading/Interest Level: Preschool, Primary
Rating: Excellent

Review

Based on the children’s book of the same name by Thacher Hurd, Art Dog introduces children to famous paintings and artists in a fun and memorable way with a cast composed entirely of dogs. Arthur, a guard at an art museum, spends his days patrolling the rooms of the museum, which feature several famous paintings. At night though, if the moon is shining, Arthur transforms into Art Dog; decorating the walls of his city with his own imaginative paintings. After closing time at the museum one moon-bright night, two thieves break in and steal the “Mona Woofa,” replacing it with a rough new painting. When the police catch Arthur on the street with a paint brush in hand he is arrested for the crime. Once in jail his paintbrush takes on magical powers and he is able to paint himself out of the situation. When he catches the actual thieves and his paintings are discovered, he is invited to present a show at the museum. His show is a success and the next morning Arthur is back to work at the museum, his identity safe.

This adaptation closely mirrors the popular children’s book, fleshing out a few of the characters for a cohesive whole. The colorful characters and music as well as the action packed plot will keep young audiences captivated as will the colorful characters and physical, pun-based comedy. This production provides a great jumping off point for a first time theatergoers as well as a wonderful introduction to famous paintings and artists. Opportunities for pre and post show learning abound. The small cast, and short running time make it an ideal option for touring, but the tricky special effects required would need to be considered.