

LUGAR DA IMAGINAÇÃO (AKA: THE IMAGINATION PLACE)

A play inspired by a
very real moment in time
at a very real place in this world
shared by two very real people.

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A short play for young audiences and families
commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse

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“It’s the broken toys that need the most love and attention.”

-Anthony T. Hincks

“Friendship is the only cement that will ever hold the world together.”

-Woodrow T. Wilson

The People

Senhor Paolo:

70-year old toymaker who owns his own toy shop in Florianópolis, a poor city by the ocean in Brasil. He is the storyteller of the neighborhood. He has the most wonderful of personalities. He is gregarious, compassionate, and wise beyond his years. His store has been a mainstay in the community for past 40 years.

Lucas:

7-year old boy. He is a lost little boy. He is experiencing a world of hurt. His parents died while he was a child so he has been shuffled between one relative to another, never having a sense of home, never truly feeling loved. He is shy, scared, and searching for peace. He is new to the neighborhood.

The Place

Lugar da Imaginação... aka: The Imagination Place

A toy shop that is a factory of imagination and exploration. Toys and love fill the space. However, the toys that inhabit this space are not ones associated with modern times such as gaming systems, virtual reality, and remote-controlled vehicles. Every toy is handmade, either wooden or made of found objects. The cars, the trucks, the board games, the dolls, and other unique toys are meant to inspire kids to imagine, explore, and problem solve. The store is cluttered, chaotic, and messy in only the best way.

The store is divided into two sections:

- (1) The workshop where the toys are made.
- (2) The toy room where all the toys are, not only displayed, but where all the toys can also be played with.

And, this toy shop, like so many other toy shops, but different than the rest...is magical!

The Time

The Present.

(It is the end of the day. SENHOR PAOLO is in the workshop carefully creating another wonderful toy; in this case, he is building a wooden doll, his version of Pelé, Brasil's most famous soccer player. He is focused on the task at hand. After a few minutes, he notices something, rather someone, outside the toy store window; beat. Senhor Paolo stops working on the toy. He waves for the boy to come in.)

Senhor Paolo

(gesturing) Entre...come in.

(The boy doesn't reply. Senhor Paolo becomes more animated in his intent on getting the boy come in, especially, since he realizes the boy is new to the neighborhood. He begins playing with some of the toys, showing the boy how fun the toys are. After another few moments, the shop bell rings. LUCAS slowly enters the stage/store. He is extremely nervous about entering, but doing so nonetheless. He crosses close to Senhor Paolo, but still keeps "his distance.")

Senhor Paolo

Olá.

(Lucas doesn't reply.)

Senhor Paolo

Meu nome é Paolo. That is my name. Seu nome?

(Lucas doesn't reply; beat. He begins looking around the room; amazed by all the different toys.)

Senhor Paolo

It's alright. Go ahead...toque...play.

(Lucas cautiously begins walking around the toy store. He gingerly touches that toy, he examines this toy, and plays with yet another toy, avoiding Senhor Paolo's gaze. During this time, Senhor Paolo notices Lucas' sadness..his loneliness. After a moment, Paolo picks up a particular toy. It is a wooden (automaton) drummer. Lucas' curiosity gets the best of him.)

Senhor Paolo

(pleased) You have good taste. That is one of my favorite toys. All the different pieces working together in unison. (clutching his fingers together) Unidade.

(Lucas continues to examine intricate wooden toy. After a moment, he turns the crank and the toy drummer begins playing, startling Lucas who quickly puts it back down. Senhor Paolo crosses to Lucas. He tries to place his hand on Lucas' shoulder, but Lucas pulls away; beat. Senhor Paolo gently picks up the drummer. He slowly begins turning the crank. Once he has turned it as much as possible, he places it on a nearby table and it the wooden drummer begins drumming.)

Senhor Paolo

(loudly celebrating) Play, Amigo...play!!!

(The sound of the drummer drumming becomes amplified and begins to sound like an actual live drummer creating music. Lucas is both fascinated and shocked. "Where is this music coming from," he is thinking. After a few moments, the toy winds down.)

Senhor Paolo

Bravo!!! Bravo!!!

Lucas

Did you see that?

Senhor Paolo

Yes, of course.

Lucas

It came to life! How did it do that?

Senhor Paolo

Do what?

Lucas

That isn't possible...*impossível*.

Senhor Paolo

Do you believe that? That it is impossible.

Lucas

It's a toy. Toys aren't real. I mean, they don't, uhm, *eles não podem viver*. That's crazy.

Senhor Paolo

(amused) Crazy, you say? *(to the toys)* Did you hear that, my *família*? This young man thinks you are not alive...that you do not exist...that you do not feel.

Lucas

(angrily) Stop making fun of me! I may be a kid, but... *(beat; quietly)* They're just a bunch of stupid toys.

Senhor Paolo

You shouldn't say such things. *Brinquedos* bring joy to this world. They bring happiness to the lives of children and beautiful memories to *adultos* wishing for simpler times. Don't you have a favorite toy that you-

Lucas

(painfully) -no!!! *(beat; sadly)* Nothing happy. Nothing beautiful.

Senhor Paolo

Jovem, please don't ever think that.

(Lucas begins walking around the shop once again; still avoiding eye contact with Senhor Paolo. After a few moments, he looks at the workshop.)

Lucas

Porque? *(pointing to the workshop)* Why?

Senhor Paolo

I believe in imagination and that it is boundless. I believe in building things that make us think. I believe that these toys give each and every one of us the power to create the world we want to live in...*o poder de criar o mundo em que queremos viver*. Isn't that a good thing?

(Lucas doesn't reply; only shrugs his shoulders.)

Senhor Paolo

Minha família was very poor. As a young child, we sometimes went days without food. Our parents couldn't buy us any toys. *(beat; remembering)* I got tired of seeing my little sister cry at night for a doll so, one day, I stole a doll for her...*minha irmã pequena*.

Lucas

Did she like it? *A boneca?*

Senhor Paolo

Oh, yes. That doll would become her best friend. They are still *melhores amigas* after all these years.

Lucas

I don't know what it's like to have friends.

Senhor Paolo

That can't be true. A nice young boy like-

Lucas

(subdued and painful) -it's true. *Eu não tenho ninguém.* I have nobody. No friends.

(Lucas is mustering up all his energy not to cry; beat. Lucas begins to leave the shop.)

Sehnor Paolo

(yelling out) Pare!!! Stop right there!!!

(Lucas stops, but doesn't turn around to look at Sehnor Paolo.)

Sehnor Paolo

All I ask that when inside my toy shop, everybody is truthful. No lies accepted here.

Lucas

(turning around; defiant) *Eu não menti!* I didn't lie!

Sehnor Paolo

Oh, no? *(beat)* You said you had no friends.

Lucas

É verdade.

Sehnor Paolo

That is not true. You have one friend. You have me.

Lucas

(quiet pleading) Don't say that.

Sehnor Paolo

I am your friend. *Você e eu amigos.*

Lucas

(wanting to believe) Really?

Senhor Paolo

(tenderly) Really.

(extended beat)

(Senhor Paolo quietly crosses to the workshop. He picks up the doll of Pelé and begins finishing up the project; saying nothing to Lucas; beat. Senhor Paolo silenty motions for Lucas to join him. Lucas hesitates at first, but decides to do so; still cautious, still vulnerable. Once he does, Senhor Paolo hands Lucas a tiny paintbrush. He gives it to Lucas. He points to where he wants Lucas to paint. It is a quiet beautiful moment; a friendship blossoming.)

Senhor Paolo

Do you know who this is?

Lucas

(smiling and nodding) Pelé.

Senhor Paolo

Está correto.

Lucas

The greatest *futebol* player in the history of *Brasil*.

Senhor Paolo

The greatest *futebol* player in the history of the world! (watching) Just a little more.

Lucas

Did you ever see him play?

Senhor Paolo

Yes. As a young boy, *eu corri para o mercado da esquina*. Senhor Concillio would play his little *televisão* and everyone would gather around. The tv was so small, but nobody cared.

Lucas

They say he was a hero...a true *herói*.

Senhor Paolo

He was a dreamer; the kind of dreamer that inspired others to dream. He could kick the ball a million feet into the air and could score a goal against an entire team by himself.

Lucas

(amused) Now, you're being silly.

Senhor Paolo

(just as amused) Maybe, a little...but, still. *(beat; nostalgic)* Pelé gave people a reason to dream.

(Lucas finishes painting the doll. He hands the paintbrush to Senhor Paolo who takes the paintbrush and then gently begins blowing on the doll to help the paint dry. He motions for Lucas to help blow as well. They both admire the finished product. After a few moments...)

Senhor Paolo

We did good. *Certo?*

(Lucas nods and smiles.)

(extended beat)

(Senhor Paolo gives Lucas the Pelé doll as a gift. Lucas is unsure what to make of the gesture; he is both shocked and ecstatic at the same time. He examines the doll in amazement.)

Lucas

(to himself; quietly) My first toy.

Senhor Paolo

(to himself; quietly) The only toy you'll truly ever need.

Lucas

(truly touched) *Muito obrigado.* Thank you.

Senhor Paolo

(tenderly) You know, I'm getting old. I could always use a helper.

Lucas

I...uhm...are you...I don't...*eu não sei o que dizer.*

Senhor Paolo

Say yes.

(Lucas nods. He is happy; a happy he has never known before; beat.)

Lucas

(worried; not wanting to get in trouble) I have to go. Não quero ter problemas.

Senhor Paolo

I understand. *(beat)* There will be other days.

(Lucas begins to walk towards the door when Senhor Paolo snaps his fingers. The second he does, the toys in the shop come to life. They are animated, loud, and colorful. Lucas is mesmerized by the sight. After a few moments...)

Senhor Paolo

These toys come to life because we believe they can. Not them. You.

(Senhor Paolo snaps his fingers again and the shop goes silent.)

Senhor Paolo

Here...there is no pain. Here...we see the good in people. Here...we have conversations with our ancestors. Here...you are always welcome. This is your home. *Sua casa.*

(Lucas smiles the biggest smile he has ever smiled because he knows that everything Senhor Paolo has said is the truth; that maybe, for the first time in his young life, he's found a safe place, a place filled with love; beat. Lucas excitedly runs out of the toy shop.)

(extended beat)

(extended beat)

(Lucas runs back into the shop and towards Senhor Paolo. He dives into Senhor Paolo's arms and gives him a huge hug.)

Lucas

(still hugging Senhor Paolo) Meu nome é Lucas. My name is Lucas.

(Lucas finishes the hug and, once again, excitedly, runs out of the toy shop. A content Senhor Paolo smiles, takes a moment to contemplate this new friendship, and then walks over to the workshop and begins working on another toy.)

(end of play)