New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

Art Dog

by John Olive

Based on the book by Thacher Hurd

With music composed by Susan Ennis

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Four actors play:

ARTHUR, a museum guard THE PAINTINGS MUSEUM DIRECTOR ART DOG, an artist TWO THIEVES A YOUNG COP THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Dogopolis

Songs/Musical Numbers:

- "The Whistle Song"
- "The Thieves Enter"
- "Mona Woofa"
- "Mona Lulu"
- "Moon Magic"
- "Crazy Moon"
- "A Slash Of Lightning"
- "Chase"
- "We Got Our Dog"
- "Brushmobile"
- "Fight"
- "Best In Show"
- "City Rhapsody"

(In the darkness we hear music: "The Whistle Song." Instrumental, featuring a man whistling a catchy tune.

Fade up on: the Dogopolis Museum. Early morning. The museum is in shadow. We can see the dark oblongs of the paintings.

We meet ARTHUR – our whistler. Slight, with a strong tendency to smile. He walks with a goofy lilt. ARTHUR, like all the characters in this play, is a dog.

Stage business here is TBD, but might include:

ARTHUR carries a flashlight, to light his way through the darkened museum. He finds his coat and puts it on, getting the flashlight mixed up with the coat. The light hits him in the face, making him understand that the light somehow got turned around.

ARTHUR heads toward the paintings. His coat pops open. He turns away from the paintings, endeavors to close his coat again.

ARTHUR pulls the coat closed in back. He notices his tail. Chases his tail. Shines the light on his butt. Calms himself down.

ARTHUR realizes he lacks a hat. He quickly exits and returns, with a jaunty strut, with a hat.

He goes to the various paintings, smiling, fixing things that are out-of-order.

Finally, he moves to the Mona Woofa. Sighs. His favorite.

Then he notices a spot of dust on the painting. He quickly exits.

Loud noises off. Then ARTHUR re-enters with a feather duster. He stops stage center and takes a moment to dust himself: arms, head, armpits – which causes his leg to spasm – etc.

He returns to Mona, marching. He cleans the dust with a single swipe of the duster.

He looks at Mona again, lost in a Woofa dream.

The MUSEUM DIRECTOR enters. She's ditzy and forgetful – and very emotional)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR (sees ARTHUR): Oh!

ARTHUR (reacts, startled)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

You.

ARTHUR (smiles)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

Don't tell me. Um. Oh, dear.

ARTHUR (smiles, waits)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

Aston. No, no. Axelrod. Alfie! Aloysius! That's not it... Oh, dear...

ARTHUR (under his breath):

Arthur.

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

Arthur!

ARTHUR (smiles)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

I knew it all the time.

(Taking the stage, looking at the paintings)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR, con't:

Don't you love the museum in the morning? At first, there is surprise, as if I am seeing the paintings for the first time. But then it comes back, in a rush of wild delight. My friends! My wonderful old friends! Look at them, Adelbert. Blue Dog. American Dog Gothic. Les Chiens d'Avignon. The Vincent van Dog Self-Portrait, which I frankly don't care for.

(As she turns away the van Dog painting sags. It ends up off-kilter. When the MUSEUM DIRECTOR sees it, she says, peremptorily:)

Fix that.

(Approaches the Mona Woofa)

But then. Ah, yes. The masterpiece of masterpieces. She of the knowing, and yet, somehow, unknowable smile. The fresh, and yet eternal, the indescribable, marvelousness personified. The Mona Woofa.

(Choked up)

Excuse me, Albert, while I pull myself together.

(Takes out a large hankie and honks into it several times. ARTHUR waits patiently. Finally he clears his throat)

What? What? Oh.

(Takes out a large pocket watch)

Oh, dear. 9:01. Well. Yes. You may open the museum.

(ARTHUR exits. From offstage, we hear the SNAP of a lock. The DIRECTOR draws herself up)

Good morning, Dogopolis!

(A transitional scene. Much of the action is TBD, but might include:

Music: to be composed.

Several cut-outs, of MUSEUM PATRONS are brought in. Perhaps these are moved about by stagehands.

The MUSEUM DIRECTOR nods to the PATRONS, smiling, then slowly exits.

ARTHUR chats with the PATRONS, shows them highlights of the paintings, always emphasizing his favorite, the Mona Woofa.

Time passes.

Finally, the workday ends. ARTHUR takes off his coat and hat, takes a final look at the paintings, then exits. He hits the lights – Boom! Boom! Boom! The museum is plunged into darkness.

The van Dog portrait lets go a big yawn. This causes a series of events that leaves the other paintings in disarray.

Then, in the darkness, a door slowly opens: CREEEEEEEEEEEAK.

The paintings grow still.

A THIEF enters.

Instrumental music: "The Thieves Enter."

We can tell he's a thief because he wears a thief mask. Also, he moves with a thief-like rhythm, sneaking from wall to wall – casing the joint. When he's sure he is alone:)

THIEF:

Psst.

(Louder)

Psst!

THIEF 2 (off): What?

THIEF 1:

I said, Psst!

(THIEF 2 enters, pulling a large and elaborate burglar's case on squeaky wheels)

THIEF 2:

There's no one here.

THIEF 1 (raises his hand for quiet): Sh!

(Taut moment.

Then THIEF 1 motions for THIEF 2 to come closer. He does. They open the case. This is an elaborate process: it unzips, unsnaps, un-Velcros. Each of these processes is noisy, requiring the THIEVES to ascertain that no one heard it. Finally, they pull back the cover to reveal a keypad. THIEF 2 tries a combination. Buzz. He tries again. Buzz. He consults a piece of paper in his pocket, tries again. Beep. Ah. It's open. THIEF 2 takes a large and nasty-looking crowbar and an electric drill.

THIEF 1 snaps on his light and plays the beam around the paintings. His flashlight finds the Mona Woofa)

THIEF 1:

There she is. The Mona Woofa. Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

(Song, a doo-wop tune: "Mona Woofa")

She's going to make us rich!

THIEF 2:

MONA WOOFA
HERE YOU ARE
OH, MONA WOOFA
SHINING STAR
YOUR SMILE IS A MYSTERY
YOU'RE A PURE BRED WORK OF ART

THIEF 1:

MONA WOOFA
PRICELESS ONE
YOU WILL FETCH A
HANDSOME SUM
BE MY PRECIOUS TREASURE
COME INTO MY ARMS

(Starts working on Mona Woofa's frames with a screwdriver. THIEF 2 hangs back, not sure this is a good idea)

THIEVES (continue the song):

BOOM-BA-LADA, BOOM-BA-LADA, etc.

(THIEF 1 yanks the painting away from the wall. They turn the painting one way, then the other. MONA's face betrays her growing panic. The song climaxes:)

MONA WOOFA:

NO, NO, NO, NO!!!

THIEF 2:

MONA WOOFA I'M BEWITCHED

THIEF 1:

MONA WOOFA
MAKE ME RICH
NOW THAT YOU'RE MINE
I'LL NEVER LET YOU GO

THIEVES:

MONA WOOFA

(THIEF 2 is staring at the other paintings as the Music continues)

THIEF 1:

Here. Hold this.

(Gives him the flashlight, takes out paints, smocks and a tarp out of the case.

Music: "Mona Lulu", a dissonant version of the doo-wop music. Instrumental.

The Thieves paint, with crazed abandon. The Mona Lulu – hideously ugly, eyes crossed, mouth a toothy red slash – takes shape. Finished, THIEF 1 steps back, proud of his work)

THIEF 1, con't:

There. They'll never notice the difference.

THIEF 2 (skeptically, looking at the dreadful painting): Right.

THIEF 1:

Let's make our escape.

("Mona Woofa" is reprised as the THIEVES pick up the painting and exit – or at least try to; closing the burglar case is time-consuming. As they exit:)

THIEF 2:

I'll get the lights.

(Hits a BURGLAR KLAXON by mistake. It begins ringing. Loud)

Oh!

(Exuent the Thieves.

Brief beat, then the MUSEUM DIRECTOR, hair in disarray, rushes in)

MUSEUM DIRECTOR:

Be still my heart!

(Taking deep breaths)

I am calm. As cool as a cucumber. Ah. Yes. I am... in charge.

(The POLICE CHIEF and a YOUNG COP rush in)

CHIEF:

Hold it right there!