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Baby Snooks and Daddy: A Little Gal's Journey to Joy and Jell-O

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The year was 1936. The Great Depression was ending, employment rates were rising. Jesse Owens thwarted Hitler's golden boy in the Summer Olympics. Margaret Mitchell published *Gone With the Wind*. FDR was re-elected. And most importantly, the *Ziegfield Follies Of The Air* was at its late-night radio peak! And who was responsible for that? Why the ever effervescent comedienne Fanny Brice, of course! Brice was a regular on the show and always performed well-prepared bits. At least, the bits *were* always well prepared, until one fateful Sunday in 1936. You see, our gal Fanny had dental issues early in life and wore a full set of false teeth. According to radio lore, on the eve of Sunday, February 29th, 1936 Brice's dentures broke. There was no time to see a dentist before the *Follies*. Brice spoke with a lisp because she was all gums. How could Brice perform? She could barely speak! Luckily, Brice had a "cute baby act" that she performed for her friends. The lisp was just right for that baby. "What do you call her?" the producer cried, "Schnooks!" said Fanny. Moments before the show Phillip Rapp and David Freedman (writers for the *Follies*, and later *Baby Snooks*) found a public domain sketch by Robert James Burdette called "The Simple Story of George Washington." After a few tweaks the plot fit Snooks perfectly, and with that our Jell-O toting hero was born. It is precisely this kind of slap-dash, collaborative, silly, creative whirlwind that ultimately spit out my senior project. And I am gosh darn proud of the marvelously messy little morsel we made.

We can't munch on our morsel of a show before identifying its basic ingredients. We have got to look at the original *Baby Snooks Show* before we can dig into our rendition. As previously stated, Baby Snooks first appeared in the *Ziegfield Follies* radio hour. America fell in love instantly (how could they not?) And Snooks shot to fame as a regular in variety-shows such

as the *Follies*, *Good News*, and Maxwell *House Coffee Time.* Snooks' fan base grew until she finally received her very own situation comedy! Every Tuesday night Americans got a whole hour of their favorite little gal's neat-o antics. Snooks' show was originally named *Post Toasties Time* - in honor of her sponsor Post cereal. But that name didn't have much pizzazz so they renamed it *The Baby Snooks Show* (frequently referred to as "Baby Snooks and Daddy"). The show was OBVIOUSLY a hit. Snooks attracted sponsors such as Post Cereals, Sanka Coffee, Tums, and of course Jell-O. The premise of the show was simple. Baby Snooks (that lovable imp) stirred up comedic chaos while slurping down whichever snack was sponsoring her. Daddy and Snooks always found a yummy solution in the end.

Hanley Stafford (Daddy) and Brice (Snooks) bounced off of each other's wit and timing like basketballs on pavement. The big surprise is that Brice was eight years older than Stafford! That, is the beautiful thing about radio. In radio there is a disconnect between what is seen and what is heard. Fanny Brice created and performed the character of Baby Snooks when she was fifty-three years old. Radio is the only format in which a middle-aged, first generation Hungarian-Jewish woman with no teeth could have played America's "favorite little gal." Radio allowed Brice to occupy a space that she was otherwise excluded from. You could say that cartoons are the modern equivalent of radio. I think about shows like *The Simpsons* or *Bob's Burgers*. On these shows women play men, adults play children. One actor can voice six completely different roles at once. The only difference is that 1940s radio aired in front of a live studio audience. This meant that the audience could see that Brice was not in fact a seven-year-old imp. However, Fanny didn't let that stop her from putting on a show, no siree bob. Brice's method of embodying Snooks complicated the relationship between the aural and

the visual. Fanny always performed in full Baby Snooks garb; dentures out; hair bow tight; the announcer would shout, “Happy Tuesday night!” (Read that aloud, it rhymes.) Sarah and I chose the Halloween episode. The episode aired on November 1st, 1946. We picked it because everyone becomes a character of their own crafting on Halloween. Much like acting, Halloween encourages us to believe in our own pretend. Fanny did the same thing. She did not look like America’s sweetheart and yet she *was* her. A grown woman in a Big-Mac-sized bow looks absolutely loony. Fanny inadvertently made the trappings of the sweetheart-trope ridiculous. When its trappings look ridiculous so does the trope. We wanted our trappings to be ridiculous too. We loved the idea of cartoonish costumes and voices right from the start.

Take a gander at this 1946 promotional photo of Brice in all her Baby Snooks glory.

Now, I’ll let you have a little taste of why this whole thing meant so much to me. I promise it will be almost as scrumptious as a heapful o’ Jell-O. I am absolutely unabashedly smitten with Baby Snooks. I love Snooks because she is weird, tough, funny, and sweet all at once. In his book *Raised on Radio* Gerald Nachman says,

> “The character (Snooks) may have seemed a noisy one-joke idea based on Snooks driving Daddy to a screaming fit, Yet Brice was wonderfully adept at giving voice to her irritating

moppet without making Snooks obnoxious." Nachman goes on to quote Variety critic Hobe Morrison, " 'Snooks was not nasty or mean, spiteful or sadistic. She was at heart a nice kid.' " (Nachman, 225)

Nachman's description reminds me of another hero of mine. Little Lulu was a ten-year old, proto-feminist spitfire. I grew up watching the animated TV series based on the 1930s comic strip. In her article "Feminist Fables" Murray says that the Lulu comics are enjoyable because of

> "their openness to embellishing detail, their wry humor, and the heroine's totally unladylike behavior. More than any other female character in fiction, perhaps, Lulu gets to slug and sabotage her enemies while still remaining a good little girl." (Horowitz Murray, 13)

If that doesn't sound like Snooks then you can call me crunchy!

A 1957 version of Little Lulu in true form.

I love Snooks because she is real. Snooks is a *real* child because she is nuanced. She is not just sweet, she is not just gross. Snooks is complex (in her own special way), just like every other child I have met. Child care has been one of the most consistent parts of my life for as long as I can remember. I am the oldest of four siblings. I have worked in summer camps, day cares, and youth art programs since the wee age of thirteen. My mother is a kindergarten teacher. In child care, what matters most (I have found) is approaching each child thoughtfully. A

responsible adult recognizes the importance of every child's experience. Whether you are in the backyard, the classroom, or summer camp you have to respect every kid's capacity for complexity and emotion.

There is an additional gravity to childhood - to a child everything is brand-flipping-new! They have only been on earth for a few years, so every discovery is earth shaking. I remember looking after two four-year-old best friends - let's call them Snap and Pop. Pop ran up to me crying "Snap says she doesn't want to be my friend anymore!" This was serious. The idea of friendship is absolutely sacred to a child. Before making a friend most kids only have close relationships with family members. A pal is the first relationship a child chooses for themselves. We approached Snap. I leveled with her, "Pop ran up to me feeling pretty sad, she says you don't want to be her friend anymore. How come?" Snap looked at me with tearful, somber eyes. "I can't be her friend anymore because I don't want to play with her right now." We unpacked that. "Snap you can still be friends even if you don't want to play together right now. We can always ask our friends for some space. That's what makes them our friends." Both girls were shocked by the concept of space. It was the first time either of them had even considered the idea. It was a fantastic discovery!

I am sharing this tid-bit because I think it relates to the our version of Snooks. In our rewrite Snooks has to navigate her relationship with Daddy and her relationship with herself for the first time. Can Snooks still be Daddy's buddy if she needs space? Does she have to go along with Daddy's plan just because he is her Daddy? How can Snooks get what she wants without hurting her loved ones?

A photo demonstrating the bond between Baby Snooks and Daddy. The love was real because Sarah and I ADORE each other. (Photo by Chris Kayden)

In our rendition, Snooks grapples with self love in her final monologue (included after bibliography). Snooks discovers this type of love for the first time. She realizes that in order to take care of others, she has to take care of herself. I think about it like a car. The gas tank has to be full before the car can move. The driver must actively fill their tank if they are going to pick up someone who is stranded along the way. Snooks is figuring out how to fill her tank. This is a big lesson that I am constantly learning and re-learning. Writing and performing this monologue meant a lot to me. This character arc does not exist in the original 1946 script. It was thoroughly new.

In a serial sitcom it is hard for characters to change significantly from episode to episode. A situation comedy depends on plot/events not on characters (as much as we love ‘em.) Radio shows like Baby Snooks were about relatively static characters responding to different situations. Baby Snooks was always a jokester, Daddy was always exasperated, Mommy was always sweet.

If Baby Snooks matured, she wouldn't be Baby Snooks anymore. The episodes were formulaic. At first, life is normal at the Higgins home; then an event messes it all up; the characters respond. By the end everything is normal again. Everything is only normal until the next episode. The situations would not work if the characters learned from last week's mistakes. We were making a stand-alone episode, or perhaps the series finale (Ta-da!). There would be no "Tune in next week folks, and remember to buy Jell-O pudding!" In our version the characters had to change because they were not coming back. There is no sequel in sight. This is where Snooks' monologue comes in.

Our Snooks had to learn because this was her one and only chance at self-discovery. The series ends when Snooks matures. In the 1946 script, Snooks is a "real" child only to the extent of her complexity. Her "realness" stops at the point of growth. Real children grow and learn - 1946 Snooks does not. In our version, she had to to be real and true, through and through. I could not, would not represent a stagnant child - because there is no such thing! And I don't want people to think that there is! The 1946 episode is about Halloween pranks. Our version is about a child growing up. I thought about the most "grown up" lesson I have learned. I used the monologue to "teach" it to Snooks. Here's the lesson folks; Treating oneself in a generous way leads to a generous outcome. Now that's a lesson you can take right to the bank! Or the heart! Or something like that!

In the beginning I struggled with Snooks. My initial approach as an actor did not reflect her complexity. I completely negated what I liked most about that little rascal. I reduced the character to a funny voice. Snooks became one dimensional. I wish I had found her sooner. Jenny and Junko's characters depended on Snooks' character. Catherine (Junko) and Taty

(Jenny) had to learn a new character every time Snooks changed. They couldn't dive into one, specific character the way our other actors could. If I had figured out Snooks sooner we would have been able to utilize Taty and Catherine more. They are both wildly wonderful and talented and I wish they had gotten more time onstage.

I struggled with Snooks because I did not do my acting "work." I didn't ask myself the important questions; Who is my character talking to? Why is my character talking to them? How is she feeling? Can I relate to what she is feeling? I was viewing the project from the perspective of a project leader or playwright. I was so focused on the larger arc of the story that I let my specific character fall through the cracks. I had to learn how to take off my "story arc hat" and put on my "actor hat." The story arc is meaningless without well-formed characters. The senior project process as a whole taught me how oscillate between big picture work and specific character work. I am grateful for the advice Lynn Hawley and Jack Ferver gave me during this time.

Snooks' lack of dimension was the biggest critique after our midway showing. It was my problem to solve. I genuinely did not know how to begin answering my "actor" questions. I was at a loss until I had a conversation with one of my fellow theater seniors (the marvelous Melina Young). We were not talking about senior project. We were talking about what we were like in middle school. I realized that the last time I was thoroughly comfortable with myself was in the fifth grade. I wore tutus to school. I was goofy, boisterous, complicated and LOUD (frequently obnoxious). I was so comfortable with my strangeness. I wasn't cute, I was weird, and I liked it that way. Then, as I got older I began to strive towards "cute." I contracted into what I thought was the ideal teenage girl. I stopped taking up space. I played helpless, ditsy, and was

accommodating to a fault. I stopped being my own main character. As I spoke to Melina I realized that Snooks wasn't a goon with a silly voice. Snooks was the middle schooler I am trying to re-become! Snooks is the main character, and she CAN find the solution! Snooks can solve the problem simply because she *is* Snooks. Snooks can do *anything,* and be *anything* with an ounce of help and a dash of Jell-O.

But why did patriarchal America allow Snooks so much agency? Why did America love her for it? Why was I so comfortable with myself before puberty, and so absolutely uncomfortable with myself after it? On the large part, "tough" girls -- *Little* Lulu, *Little* Orphan Annie, and *Baby* Snooks -- were loved for their "toughness", while "tough" women were not. Little girls could take up space, but women could not. The original Baby Snooks and Daddy script reflected this. In the 1946 script Snooks and Phoebe (renamed Jenny) are quippy, active characters. They are funny and rebellious. They have friends! On the other hand Mommy has no personality outside of being the perfect American woman. Mommy is a stereotypical housewife.

The original script reflected a post WWII agenda. During the war women were encouraged to go to work. For the first time women were allowed to do "men's work" because most men were overseas. However following V-E Day, Roosevelt promised a job to every man that served. To make room in the workforce women had to return to their "rightful place." This push back to the home was reflected in advertising and popular culture. Rosie the Riveter was replaced by propaganda urging women home. Mothers needed to set a good domestic example for their daughters. Ads encouraged women to buy appliances, cookware, and beauty products so that they could keep their husbands happy. A woman could save her marriage by purchasing a

certain dish soap, because her husband wouldn't be disgusted by her "dishpan hands." America didn't want women who manufactured, America wanted women who consumed.

A 1930s ad that makes me mad.

The 1946 Baby Snooks promotes this agenda. In it, Snooks and Daddy have a more equal partnership than Daddy and Mommy do. Snooks makes fun of Daddy for his absurd behavior, Mommy coos at him. Mommy has no interests outside of being a mother and a wife. Mommy is oblivious to the pranks and blind to Daddy's utterly abhorrent behavior. 1946 Mommy is reduced to only being a mother and a wife. The ads in Baby Snooks tie motherhood to Jell-O, "I'll bet there never was a youngster yet, including the contrary Snooks, who didn't go for the flavor of butterscotch. And when it's Jell-O butterscotch pudding, well, mothers, get set to serve seconds."(Rapp) All of these issues still permeate our modern society to some degree. We needed to take care of Mommy in our rewrite. We had to expand her. Snooks, Daddy, and Mommy needed to have an equal amount of agency. Sarah and I had long talks with Allegra about physicality, speech and presence until we "found" Mommy. Sarah and I would not have known how to write Mommy's lines if we had not worked with Allegra first. We did this kind of

work with each cast member. We collectively built the final product, everyone had a hand in everything.

The collective was the core of this project for me. After auditions we called back anybody that caught our attention. We didn't have a clue about WHAT our show would be, so we called back the PEOPLE that excited us. Our callbacks relied completely on actor-developed work. We did not give them sides or staging. We gave them scenarios and goals. For example; "You are a ten year old at Baby Snooks birthday, give her a birthday present, it can be WHATEVER you want." We made it clear that there was no "right" answer. We just wanted to see where each person's mind went. We also asked if anyone would be interested in being a director for the project. Sarah and I were in the piece so we definitely needed a third set of eyes. We wanted someone who was enthusiastic about directing, and who made interesting choices. We selected people based on the ideas and energy they brought to the callback.

We also looked for people who seemed especially kind. During casting I remember us saying things like "She was a really generous scene partner, we should cast her" or "I noticed her making an effort to make this other person feel comfortable." We did not cast anyone with a concrete character in mind for them. We needed a mother, two friends, their father, and an announcer. Sarah would be Daddy and I would be Snooks.

The original script reinforced mid-century American stereotypes. We knew right from the beginning that we wanted our piece to flirt with these "types" and "tropes" and then twist them. Nobody actually has a type - types are constructed. We cast actors that we thought would be right for our piece. We cast without any conscious attention to the pesky limitations of (pheno)type casting. Our cast wound up being all women. We let the gang know that we were

going to muss up this neat, 1940s comb-over. In other words we were going to make these crisp characters MESSY. In Rapp's script each role (besides Snooks and Daddy perhaps) is like a hollow plastic form. They are archetypes shaped like the ideal American housewife, or the ruggedly masculine bully. During the rehearsal process each actor poured boiling water into their given "form" This melted the plastic, and warped the shape. We poured until each character was so cartoonishly strange and specific that they only conveyed a shadow of the stereotype they once were. We made our version a TV sitcom so that we could inflate this 1940s world (and its tropes) with more than just aural delivery. We wanted to use visual aspects -- costumes, props, and physicality to make the world absolutely bizarre, just like Fanny and her hairbow.

Can you tell we were trying to make things BIG? (Photo by Chris Kayden)

Mmm do you smell that? Sweet isn't it? Nope it's not the Jell-O. It's the sappy and sacred part of my paper! The most meaningful part of this whole experience was definitely working with my fellow actors. It was the most collaborative (and absurd) piece I have ever participated in. I am so incredibly grateful for the character work our cast accomplished during rehearsals. After a read through of the original radio script we gave out the roles. Allegra was

Mommy, Taty was Friend #1 (Jenny), Catherine was Friend #2 (Junko), Avis was their Daddy, and Hannah was the Announcer. I think our best decision was trusting our actors to create their own characters out of their given roles.

During our first rehearsal we asked each actor to walk around the space on her own. The rest of the cast described which body part she was "leading" with. We asked the individual to exaggerate this body part and then come to center for her "interview." We asked each actor a series of questions, sometimes they spoke in character, sometimes they spoke as themselves. We encouraged them to answer however they wanted to. We explained that all of the information was useful. Aspects of this earliest exercise became crucial parts of each character. For example, in this initial interview we asked the Hannah if she (as the Announcer) had any friends. I remember Hannah's response clearly. Her Announcer struggled to come up with a friend, but still babbled brightly all the while. The room responded to Hannah's weird, lonely Announcer so she took the choice further. Suddenly we all realized that the Announcer longed to be more than an observer. During rehearsals Hannah added more layers to her Announcer. Other layers aside, I can point out threads of this initial discovery throughout the final script. In one line the Announcer says "I'm literally ALWAYS here." In the penultimate scene, the Announcer is ecstatic when she *finally* gets to jump into the story and help Snooks. Every actor made at least one discovery that stuck with her character until the end. Then we moved onto exercises for relationships. We gave group prompts like, "You're at a barbeque, and Junko stole all the cole slaw. What do you do? Include a moment of silence and three tableaus." It was important to me that we began the process with these exercises. I wanted each actor to have a sense of artistic ownership from the very start.

Our lonely and lovely announcer. (Photo by Chris Kayden)

In the beginning of the process our cast thought our scriptless method was bonkers. It *is* bonkers (but so is everything else in this big, wide world.) Our way of developing characters and plot was different from what our actors were used to. Making your own character can feel like a lot of pressure. I remember my first theater experience at Bard. Without a script or a character description to start from I was at a loss. Lucky for me, I was working with fantastic, warm, wonderful upperclassmen. They guided me through it. Making work in this way helped me to realize my creative capacity. It made me feel empowered. Suddenly, I had control over the circumstances happening on stage. It showed me just how many ways I could convey an idea. I became familiar with *my* way of effective communication. I learned to trust my ideas, because they trusted my ideas, and I trusted them. I wanted our actors to feel empowered by our method.

It was important to me that nobody felt put on the spot, or confused. I didn't want anyone to think they were failing because they felt unsure. For me it comes back to my experiences in childcare. In a classroom setting, a good teacher tailors their method to the individual student before them. I watched our actors to see what brought out the best in them. I have a journal full

of notes about what kind of language, exercises, and tactics helped each actor specifically. We tried to give each actor what she needed.

I think about Avis (Sandy), Avis found a rich, utterly strange, absolutely hilarious character on the first day of rehearsals. We were amazed because she immediately created Daddy Sandy's vocabulary. He was raised by bulls. He called his son "soft boy." He had some abandonment issues. It quickly became clear that Avis had a much better grasp on Sandy's language than Sarah and I ever could. If Sandy was a mechanical bull, Sarah and I would have been thrown off IMMEDIATELY. But Avis could hold on 'til the cows came home. We asked Avis to write Sandy Zero's text. She chose every single, hilarious word that she spoke onstage. Avis needed to write her own lines in order to perform the best Sandy possible. That was her individual need as an actor. Avis improvised most of her text during rehearsals, and then kept the lines that worked. I noticed that both she and Sarah found the yummiest jokes through this technique. I recorded it in my notebook, and then invited the two of them over to my apartment for a rehearsal. This became a regular practice. We needed to know exactly who their characters were to each other, and how their text ought to work. During these sessions we went through a number of exercises. At first I was a talk show host, interviewing them individually and then as a pair. Then we played with what Daddy and Sandy were like in high school (there was almost a flashback in the piece!) How did Sandy torture Daddy then? What were they like at parties? My favorite moment was when they each asked "Maria" to the prom (Maria was my water bottle). I have to say, neither was very charming, but that was kind of the point!

A prized-bull if I ever saw one. (Photo by Chris Kayden)

Sarah and Avis were strong improvisers. We held individual rehearsals which focused on each person's strengths. Allegra has a gorgeous, movie star speaking voice. We worked on extending it, and making it larger than life. We found ways to match her physicality to her words. All of a sudden we knew that Mommy was glamorous and absolutely bored. Taty is a fantastic mover. We found ways to give her character large physical gestures. We encouraged sharpness and specificity. Jenny became a fast-moving, buzzy cartoon. Catherine is really good at subtlety. We gave her lines that were quietly odd. Catherine is funny because she is observant. She can see "the silly" in the "everyday." She used aspects of her daily life to build Junko. Her sensitive "soft boy" was inspired by the waxing student-poets of Bard campus. Junko was so funny because he was the heightened version of someone we all know well. These are only a few of my favorite examples.

Jenny and Junko! (Photo by Chris Kayden)

We didn't force anyone to work within the confines of our method. We made our method work for each of them because theater is about generosity. I needed the cast to know that the piece and their characters belonged to them. I wanted the process and the product to be something we all shared. At least once every two weeks we sat our cast down and asked them to help us. We asked questions like, What do you see happening? What feels good to you? What is confusing to you? During rehearsals we came up with jokes on the spot. We kept the jokes that made the cast laugh hardest. Laughter was a huge part of our process. I remember experimenting with Mommy's opening vocal warm-up. Allegra (Mommy) was trying different sounds, pitches, and words. Until finally a deep "Who me? Yes you" boomed out of her. The words were so random and odd, her voice was so thunderous - the whole room was in stitches. Allegra heard the laughter and pushed her choice further, fully committing to what would become Mommy's glorious operatic performance.

Vera Higgins vocalist extraordinaire. (Photo by Chris Kayden)

Everyone felt comfortable contributing because of the rehearsal culture we created as a cast. I am most proud of this. Our actors made hilarious, heartfelt, dynamic characters for two reasons. The most important being that they are all amazing, talented and creative humans who know how to support each other on and off stage. The second is the tone that Sarah and I set in the studio. It was our responsibility to set the tone because we were the project leaders. Setting the tone was easy because our cast mates are all incredibly brave and supportive individuals. Even so, Sarah and I made creating a positive culture our priority.

I think about my experiences working at summer camp. At camp there was an emphasis on "top down culture." This means that the tone of the leader sets the tone of the group. If a counselor treats her campers like shit, then by golly the campers will treat each other like shit. Camp will be ruined for all! This lesson translates to theater. The quality of the product does not matter (and will most likely suck) if the process is miserable. You have to take care of people. Acting is all about vulnerability. A good actor exposes themself. In a comedy vulnerability means a willingness to look silly. It is *really hard* to get comfortable looking ridiculous onstage.

It was our responsibility to make the rehearsal space SAFE so that our actors could go out on a "ridiculous limb" without fear of falling. I lead warm-ups. We danced, we checked in, we stretched, we played games, we screamed swear words - it all depended on what the cast needed that day. When we held a long rehearsal we provided dinner and talked about the show, our days, our workloads, our social lives. During these breaks someone would say something funny and then someone else would shout "LET'S USE IT!" That's how Junko became a chimney sweep.

Now dear readers, onto the show! Our final product was a fast and sloppy jubilee of jokes and Jell-O. One night Hannah (Announcer) said "Bigger, faster, funnier" and it became our mantra. I don't think sloppy is a negative here. I think the speed and slap-dash-ness made the show stronger. We were revising our script until the *last day of dress rehearsals*. The second to last rehearsal had been *rough* and the piece felt excruciatingly slow. On the final day of dress, Sarah and I panicked and wrote an entirely new script. We called our cast about five hours before final dress rehearsal, because we thought we would have to teach them an entirely new piece. However, when our cast read the new - significantly less funny - script they sat us down and said "NO!" I specifically remember Hannah (the Announcer) shouting "Trust yourselves!" We read through the pre-panic script as a cast, and collectively cut out the lines that made the whole thing drag. We finished just in time. This rehearsal epitomized why a positive cast culture is so important. Our cast mates only called us on our colossal mistake because they felt comfortable with us. They shared their opinions because they knew how much we valued them. The piece would have fallen apart without their input.

Look at us!

Throughout the process the script was constantly evolving, devolving, and then evolving again. We *never* over-rehearsed any given script because the script was always changing. We got away with this because we spent most rehearsals getting to know our characters. By the end of the process each actor had a deep understanding of who she was in Scooterville. We could leap into new lines and scenarios because we knew exactly how our characters would behave. Our performance was high energy because we had no time to slow down and overthink. There was no time to be precious because there was no time at all! We all found so much pleasure in performing, because none of us were sick of the show. Nothing felt concrete and so it was easy to make discoveries onstage. I remember the scene in which Sandy Zero humiliates Daddy while the kids (Jenny, Junko, and Snooks) watch. Sandy tricks Daddy into a handshake which turns into an attack. I remember seeing Taty (Jenny) and Catherine (Junko) on the other side of the stage. They were shaking their heads as if trying to warn Daddy about Sandy. We had never rehearsed that! We had never even talked about it! But Taty and Catherine were relishing their time onstage. We each found new parts of our characters every night because we loved being these zany people. The last-minute-ness gave the whole thing a “fuck it, try it” attitude that really

helped the piece. We could take risks because we trusted our scene partners. Nobody was going to let anyone go up in flames. Even if we did crash, we would all dance in the wreckage together. No matter what happened, we were going to ENJOY OURSELVES.

I asked every cast member to sum up the project in one word or phrase. They said "Neon," "Funny," "Wacky," a "Sugar Rush" and a "Whirlwind." I agree with all of them. We found a sacred pandemonium. We found pleasure in it. We worshiped release and felt relief. We embraced the chaos wholeheartedly and found magic in the mayhem. It reminds me of one of my favorite Bard memories. I was waltzing with my best friend. She was leading, and I was fumbling, trying to get the steps right. She told me to "Lean in and let go." When I did I was dancing. I was finally dancing because I let the music, my friend, the whole moment affect me. My time at Bard has been a process of leaning in and letting go. I am so grateful for it. I'm ready now to release my grip on this place and lean into the things that move me. I look forward to a glorious mess.

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Baby Snooks
www.botar.us/babysnooks

The Baby Snooks Show (aka Baby Snooks and Daddy): Public Domain
www.archive.org/details/OTR_Baby-Snooks

Performance photos provided by Chris Kayden, 2019

Snooks Final Monologue
By Sofia France

Daddy I got the water! Oh good, he's not even here! Go get the water Snookers, don't leave me Snookers, miss the best night of your life to do a mean prank with me Snookers! Well you know what Daddy? I'm getting too old for that! For all of that! And that makes me feel really sad. Because I really don't want to be a grown up yet, even though it sounds kind of cool sometimes. I just wanted to have a fun Halloween. Why can't I have that and make Daddy happy, why do I have to pick one? I love Halloween and I love Daddy — I love him so so so so so much... but I think, that I love me more. And I should get to have a happy Halloween! Everybody should have a happy Halloween! I want all of us to have really happy Halloweens! But now! This stupid prank is ruining everything... Or so it seems, this is a sitcom, so theres always a way to fix everything! There's always an answer! And I - I always know how to find it, I'm the main character, I've gotta find it! I'm freakin Snooks! Where's my answer?!