

Einstein

The boy Who Wouldn't Stop Asking Questions

An Original Play by Yaara Reshef Nahor

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Directed by: Noam Shmuel

Dramaturgy: Ori Urian

Set Design: Zeev Levi

Costume Design: Avia Bash

Music: Tal Blecharovitch

Movement: Tom Applebaum

Video Art: Nimrod Tzin

Language and Speech: Margalit Gez

Lighting Design: Uri Morag

Assistant Director: Noa Ben-Ari

Scientific and Historic Consultants: Davidson Institute of Science Education, Rehovot;
The Albert Einstein Archives at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem

The Characters:

Adult Albert Einstein / Mr. Leonard

Young Albert Einstein

Maya Einstein

Paulina Einstein / Passerby

Max Talmy / Journalist / Swiss Teacher

Anton / Passerby / Swiss Student

Hendrik / Paper Boy / Swiss Student

Opening Scene

Young Albert and Adult Albert.

Adult: I have a present for you, Albert.

Young: What is it?

Adult: A compass.

Young: A compass? What does it do?

Adult: It shows us the north. Do you see that little metal needle, it always points north, no matter where you are.

Young: Even if I go this way?

Adult: Yes.

Young: And that way?

Adult: Yes.

Young: And like that? *(Stands up-side-down)*

Adult: Even so. Always and everywhere, The compass points north!

Young: But how is that possible?!

Adult: The earth's North Pole pulls the little needle like a magnet.

Young: Magnet?

Adult: The earth is one big magnet.

Young: That's magic! It's like an invisible force!

Adult: There are plenty of forces in the universe we can't see.

Young: What forces?!

Adult: Are you feeling well? You're shivering.

Young: I feel great, tell me what forces?

Adult: We are not yet familiar with all of them, they are the secrets of the universe.

Young: The secrets of the universe? *(Looks around him with excitement)*

Adult: You're all pale, Albert, you're sweating all over.

Young: The secrets of the universe... *(Becomes dizzy and falls)*

Adult: Albert!

Black.

Scene 1

1922, Germany. A Berlin train station.

A photographer and a journalist await the arrival of a VIP, 43-year-old Albert Einstein enters the scene from the opposite direction, carrying a suitcase and a violin.

Boy: (*Handing out newspapers*) Extra! Extra! Read all about it! (*To Albert*) Would you like a newspaper, sir?

Albert: What's new in Germany?

Boy: (*Reads aloud*) A...lbert Ei...n...s...tein... Arrives this evening to Berlin for a... Special lecture on the theory of Rel... Rel...

Albert: Relativity?

Boy: Yes, the "Theory of Relativity" (*Hands him the paper*) Oh... You...?

Albert: Shhh, don't tell anyone, I enjoy the peace of not being recognized.

Boy: Of course... (*Pause*) Albert Einstein!!! It's Albert Einstein from the paper!!! Come see the famous scientist!!!

A lady passerby and a journalist run toward Albert

Journalist: Mr. Einstein! You're here! Welcome back to Berlin! How was your trip to America?

Albert: The trip was –

Lady: Mr. Einstein, I'm such a great admirer of yours... Would you please sign this for me?

Albert: If that's what you want –

Journalist: Mr. Einstein, could you explain the "Theory of Relativity" in one sentence for us?

Another passerby, comes closer and listens in.

Albert: In one sentence?! I spent ten years developing it.

Journalist: Even so, give it a try...

Albert: Well, when you sit in a café with a beautiful lady for a whole hour, you feel like it's only been a minute, but if you sit on a hot pan for one minute, it would feel like an hour.

Journalist: That, even I can understand!

They all laugh.

Passerby: They say you've copied this theory from another scientist.

Albert: They also say I'm Charlie Chaplin's long-lost brother. *(Imitates Chaplin)*

They all laugh.

Passerby: They also say that this relativity theory of yours is a scam! Jibber-jabber that's impossible to prove!!

Albert: Well, tonight I intend to persuade all who think that.

Passerby: No one wants to hear about Jewish physics!

Pause.

Passerby: Albert Einstein is a disgrace to Germany! A disgrace to us! To German science! *(To the boy)* Why are you selling papers with his photograph?! Don't you know he opposes the German Army?! He's a traitor! *(He takes the boy's papers)* Germany must be purged!

Boy: Germany must be cleansed!

Passerby: Germany must be cleansed!

Boy: Germany must be cleansed!

The Passerby and the Boy encircle Albert. The rest look from the side, slowly joining. Suddenly, Maya enters in a hurry.

Maya: Albert! There you are!

Albert: Maya...

Maya: Please excuse us, but we're late, my brother was always bad with time... *(Pulls him aside)*

Albert: Maya... Did you hear them?

Maya: I did. You must leave Berlin.

Albert: I just got here.

Maya: Adolf Hitler wrote in the paper that you were spying against Germany, that you ought to be incarcerated.

Albert: No one takes that madman seriously.

Maya: You just saw that they did!

Albert: Didn't you see the paper, Maya? "Hundreds of scientists from all over Europe arrived at the Annual Scientific Assembly to hear Albert Einstein's lecture..."

Maya: You cannot lecture there tonight! Someone might hurt you!

Albert: In the middle of the lecture?! That will certainly awaken the audience...

Maya: I mean it! Albert! I bought you a ticket for the next train to Zurich! You have to get out of here.

Albert: Are you mad? I have no intention of canceling my lecture.

Maya: What's so important about this lecture?!

Albert: It's my chance to prove my theory to all those skeptics out there!

Maya: You've already proven it! It's talked about all around the world!

Albert: But here they call me a liar!

A train horn blows.

Maya: That's the train to Zurich, please, Albert... *(She gives him the ticket)* It's leaving shortly, you must hurry...

Albert sneaks out.

Maya: Albert!! Albert!! Wait!!

She runs after him.

Scene 2

1894, Germany. The train station.

15-year-old Albert runs to the train station with a compass in hand, 13-year-old Maya chases him.

Maya: Albert!! Albert!! Wait!! School's the other way!!

Albert enters the scene, flinging his schoolbag aside.

Albert: There it is! The newest train in Europe! And the fastest!

Maya enters panting.

Maya: Come, Albert! We'll be late!

Albert: I want to see the train accelerating.

Maya: What's so fascinating about watching a train accelerating?!

The sound of a train starting its engines is heard.

Albert: Shhh!! The train is leaving! *(Checks his compass)* It's headed north-east!

Maya: Swell, now can we go?!

Albert: Look at the woman in the train wagon!

Maya: With the green hat?

Albert: Yes.

Maya: I bet she's going to meet her fiancé! She'll climb down the train at the station, and he'll be there, waiting with a bouquet of flowers, how romantic!

Albert: You make everything romantic. There's a bench, there's a lamppost, they met on the street, how romantic.

Maya: Ah!

A train horn blows.

Albert: Look, the woman closed the blind!

Maya: I bet she wants to get some sleep!

Albert: She won't be able to see the view from her window...

Maya: That's enough, Albert! You'll make us late again!

Albert: (*Ignores her*) When she wakes, the train will probably be going at a constant speed, and then that woman wouldn't know if it was standing still or moving!

Maya: Why not?!

Albert: Because if you're moving at a constant speed and there are no bumps along the way, it's impossible to tell!

Maya: What? As long as her fiancé waits for her with flowers!

Albert: The earth moves much faster than the train, and we don't even feel it!

Maya: Really? That's weird!

Albert: It's incredible!

He grabs Maya and starts spinning with her, Pauline passes them by, and Albert suddenly bumps into her.

Pauline: Albert?!

Albert: Mom?

Pauline: Maya! What are you two doing here? Why aren't you at school?

Albert: Eh... I... I just wanted to see the new train.

Pauline: Albert, your class started ten minutes ago, you're not only late yourself, but you're also dragging Maya after you...

Maya: He didn't drag me, I dragged myself!

Pauline: Maya, let me speak to your brother.

Maya: I'm just saying that it isn't Albert's fault.

Pauline: Albert, you promised you'd start behaving yourself. Now that your father has gone to Italy, you're the man of the house, I must know that I can rely on you.

Albert: I'm sorry, I didn't notice the time.

Pauline: You know how the teachers feel about your tardiness, and especially Mr. Leonard!

Albert: His classes are so boring.

Pauline: Your father worked very hard so you could go to the best school in town, the least you can do is show up at school on time!

Albert glances at his compass, then reluctantly picks up his schoolbag and exits.

Scene 3

In class, Mr. Leonard's points a ruler at words on the blackboard, the students recite the words after him.

Mr. Leonard: Love of the Fatherland is our law.

Students: Amor patriae nostra lex.

Mr. Leonard: Fortune favors the bold.

Students: Audaces fortuna iuvat.

Albert comes in, stands in the doorway.

Mr. Leonard: Well, hello there, young Mr. Einstein, you've finally decided to grace us with your presence?

Albert: I'm sorry I'm late, Mr. Leonard...

Mr. Leonard: This is the third time you've arrived late, I will not allow you inside next time, is that clear?

Albert: Yes, sir.

Mr. Leonard: Sit down.

Albert takes his seat.

Mr. Leonard: Mr. Anton Mavrigh, please read from the board.

Anton: Amor patriae (To love our country) Nostra lex (Is our law). Audaces fortuna (Fortune favors) iuvat (The brave).

Mr. Leonard: Very nice, Mr. Mavrigh. Now, open you're your notebooks and copy the words!

As the students copy the words, Albert notices a ray of light coming through the window onto his notebook. He "clutches" it in the palm of his hand, imagining the beam of light "traveling" from the sun down to earth.

Mr. Leonard: Albert Einstein!!!

Albert startles and comes to.

Mr. Leonard: Pray tell, why is it that you are daydreaming whilst everyone else is busy copying from the board?!

Albert: I'm sorry, sir... I wasn't daydreaming, I was just... Thinking.

Mr. Leonard: Thinking?!

Albert: A strange thought, about the sun...

Mr. Leonard: The sun!

Albert: Yes, how is it that a ray of light can travel all the way from the sun to earth so fast?

Anton: Maybe it hopped on an express train?

The students laugh

Mr. Leonard: Silence! *(To Albert)* This isn't a field trip, Mr. Einstein, nor are we on the seashore, so I suggest you stop thinking about the sun and sit down.

Albert: Yes, sir...

Mr. Leonard: Latin is the language of Christianity! And you must be fluent in it! Notice this nail in my hand. The Jews used this kind of nails to crucify Jesus... On the day of his crucifixion, the sun disappeared, and darkness covered the skies, this paranormal darkness lasted three hours, and it is called...?

Anton raises his hand.

Mr. Leonard: Yes, Mr. Mavrich?

Anton: "The Crucifixion Darkness."

Mr. Leonard: Correct. And now -

Albert: *(Raises his hand)* Mr. Leonard?

Mr. Leonard: *(Sighs impatiently)* Yes... Albert.

Albert: During an eclipse, the moon simply covers the sun, but what would happen if the sun actually died?

Mr. Leonard: *(Impatient)* Why would the sun die?!

Albert: What I mean is, how long would it even take us to notice that the sun has died?

Anton: Einstein and his questions.

Mr. Leonard: What kind of stupid question is that?! We would notice it immediately because everything will suddenly be dark! Now, back to the New Testament -

Albert: I'm not sure that's true...

Mr. Leonard: I beg your pardon?!

Albert: I'm not sure it's true that everything will **immediately** go dark.

Mr. Leonard: Mr. Einstein -

Albert: What I mean is that if we consider the distance the rays of light must travel from the sun to earth, a hundred and fifty million kilometers, and divide it by the rays of light's speed three hundred thousand kilometers per second, we get the time it would take them to get here. If I'm not mistaken... that's five hundred seconds... Meaning – eight minutes and... Twenty seconds! Only after eight minutes and twenty seconds would we notice that the sun had died, because only then will the earth go dark!

Pause. Everyone looks aghast at Albert. The school bell rings.

Mr. Leonard: For our next class, you must know these words by heart.

Students: Yes, Mr. Leonard. *(They stand up)*

Mr. Leonard: *(To Albert)* You're staying here.

Albert: What? Why?

Mr. Leonard: Copy these words from the board.

Albert: I already did!

Mr. Leonard: One hundred times!

Albert: That means I'd have to stay here till evening!

Mr. Leonard: So I suggest you better start, Mr. Einstein.

Mr. Leonard leaves. Albert sits down and takes out his compass and looks at it. Hendrik notices it.

Hendrik: What's that, a compass?

Albert: Yes...

Hendrik: I could never understand how this thing works...

Albert: Oh, it's really very simple ...

Anton suddenly snatches the compass from Albert's hand.

Anton: What have we here?

Hendrik: A compass!

Albert: Hey, give it back!

Anton: Sit down, copy from the board, you've got a lot of work to do. Let's see where the north is... There it is! North-east!

Albert: Why do you have to be such a jerk, Anton?

Anton: Me? A jerk?! Did you hear what the teacher said? The Jews crucified Jesus with nails! Filthy Jews like you!!

Albert: Anton, give me my compass back!

Anton: Say, Einstein, why are you such a freak?!

Albert: I'm not a freak.

Anton: *(Imitating Albert)* "What would happen if the sun actually died?"

Hendrik: *(Imitating Albert)* "If we consider the distance the rays of light must travel from the sun to earth..."

Albert: All I said was that according to the math, the sunbeams -

Anton: No one wants to hear your weird calculations, Einstein! Just be grateful that they even let you go to school here.

Albert: Give me back my compass! It's a gift from my father!

Anton: You heard him, Hendrik, it's a gift from his father... *(Throws it to Hendrik)*

Albert: Hendrik...

Anton: Hendrik's not your friend, and he doesn't want to hear every single thing that goes through your brain!

Albert: At least I have a brain! You think no one notices when you copy off Hendrik during tests?

Anton: Say goodbye to your compass!! This is for what you did to Jesus!! *(He puts the compass on the floor and is about to smash it)*

Albert: Give it to me!

Anton: *(Grabs Albert)* Go ahead, Hendrik! Smash it! Show him whose side you're on!!

Albert: No!!

Hendrik doesn't move a muscle.

Anton: Do it! *(He pushes Albert aside, raises his leg over the compass. Albert dashes over, snatches the compass, and runs away.)*

Anton: Just you wait, Einstein!