

The JJ Project

Short Synopsis:

Born with brittle bone disease, surviving the early days of his life, and overcoming the realities of foster care, eleven-year old JJ House united a community while reaching his dream to direct a musical. With support of MTVarts, a community theater production company, JJ assembles a production crew and cast while inspiring the world around him.

Medium Synopsis:

Born with brittle bone disease, surviving the early days of his life, and overcoming the realities of foster care, eleven-year old JJ House united a community while reaching his dream to direct a musical. With support of MTVarts, a community theater production company, JJ assembles a production crew and cast while inspiring the world around him. Jarrel Jatice (JJ) Michael House captured the hearts of a local theatrical production company after having attended two summer musicals and then finally auditioned and was awarded a role in the following summer's production of *Cinderella*. With the support and backing of Theatrical Rights Worldwide in New York, the eleven-year old JJ experiences every bit of the complexity, challenge and anxiety of directing *How I Became a Pirate* (written and composed by Mark Freidman and Janet Yates-Vogt). Throughout the story, JJ's reason for pursuing his dream is to give others hope that they can achieve their dreams, too. His determination to become a director conflicts with his desire to just be an eleven-year-old boy. Some of these moments lead to conflict with his cast, crew of children, the adult mentors, and his family.

Long Synopsis:

The JJ Project is a feature documentary about how JJ House, an eleven-year-old boy born with brittle bone disease has overcome his disability to pursue his dream of directing a musical. Jarrel Jatice (JJ) Michael House captured the hearts of a local theatrical production company after having attended two summer musicals, then finally auditioned and was awarded a role in the following summer's production of *Cinderella*. Because the 37 broken bones in his body have never healed properly, JJ uses a wheelchair to move from one place to another. Despite technological and medical advances in accommodating people in wheelchairs, it is still difficult for JJ to go from

place to place. He cannot go out and play on the playground like other kids, or participate in a game of baseball or basketball. This is why he chose the theatre to connect with the world, then pursue his dream which was to direct a musical.

JJ's *reason* for pursuing his dream is just as important as the actual quest. By pursuing his dream, JJ hopes others will see that they can achieve their dreams, too. Regardless of age, ability, or circumstance, finding your dream and going after it are fundamentally a part of establishing a sense of wholeness and purpose that allows us to forgive past wrongs and focus on the present and future. His determination to become a director conflicts with his desire to just be an eleven-year-old boy, which lead to conflict with his cast, crew, the adult mentors, and his family. With the support of Theatrical Rights Worldwide, JJ journeys through the entire process of directing *How I Became a Pirate*, from pre-production meetings, auditions, planning, and rehearsals, to performances which were staged at the Memorial Theater in Mount Vernon, Ohio, September 27-28, 2013. Additionally, this documentary shows JJ working with the team of children who fulfilled all the other roles of the production team and are worked with adult mentors to host a memorable theatrical production for JJ's hometown of Mount Vernon. Becoming part of the conversations that happen in this authentic learning environment, while experiencing the youthful creativity and energy of the child-producers will resonate with audiences world-wide.

In addition to showing JJ's theatrical involvement, the story reveals much of his background through in-depth interviews. We appreciate how he overcame an abusive birth family, a neglectful foster home, and his disability to rise to a giant human spirit whose stage presence is captivating and whose spirituality is humbling. Described as an "old soul," JJ reaches beyond the borders of his community and touches the lives of people in the performing arts community – and all communities - around the world.