

A Study Guide For



September 28 - October 28, 2007

Originally Adapted and Produced for the Stage by Theatre BAM
Created by George Newall and Tom Yohe.

Based on an Idea by David McCall.

Book by Scott Ferguson, George Keating and Kyle Hall.

Music and Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, Bob Dorough, Dave Frishberg,
Kathy Mandry, George Newall and Tom Yohe.

A Production of

our world is magical!

stages
theatre company



Artistic Director: Sandy Boren-Barrett
Director: Marilee Mahler
Music Director: Sarah Hohenstein Burk
Choreographer: Angela Mannella
Set Designer: Gretchen Katt
Properties Designer: Jim Hibbeler
Production & Stage Manager: Melanie Salmon-Peterson

September 28 - October 28, 2007

at the Hopkins Center for the Arts
1111 Mainstreet, Hopkins, MN

For ticket information, call 952.979.1111
or visit www.stagestheatre.org

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ORIGINAL SERIES

(The following is from the website <http://www.school-house-rock.com/history.htm>, and there is much more information available there.)

The series of animated cartoon shorts-41 segments in all-used appealingly goofy characters, catchy tunes and repetition (airing as often as seven times each weekend) to teach Fruity Pebbles consumers about multiplication tables, the parts of speech, American history, science and computer mechanics. *Schoolhouse Rock's* genesis took place in 1971 when David McCall, chairman of big-time New York ad agency McCaffrey & McCall, noticed that his son could sing every Beatles and Stones lyric ever recorded but couldn't handle simple multiplication tables. His solution was simple: Link math with contemporary music and the kids will breeze through school on a song. To implement his idea, McCall turned to his agency's creative staff, who passed the songwriting chores over to a traditional Broadway jingle house with less than brilliant results. Fortunately, agency director George Newall suggested they hire Bob Dorough, a Texas jazz musician with a knack for infectious grooves. The composer/pianist accepted the mission with great enthusiasm, plowing through his daughter's arithmetic books and plunking out notes until he'd created the soothing ballad "Three Is a Magic Number."

McCall loved the results, but being an advertising executive, he demanded statistical proof that the world at large would love it too. Only after test audiences (consisting of elementary-school students and university professors, who verified the accuracy of each song released) gave the tune a thumbs-up did McCall approve the release of "Three Is a Magic Number" as a phonograph record, which, along with several other songs, eventually was released by Capitol Records under the title *Multiplication Rock*.

The ad men hoped to secure a workbook tie-in deal to go along with the record, but when that fell through, they decided to do an animated adaptation using their own money. M&M's other creative director, Tom Yohe, sat down at his kitchen table to draw up some storyboards, and "Three Is a Magic Number" was transformed into sound and motion.

The next major hurdle involved finding a market for the spot. ABC's head of children's programming at the time, Michael Eisner (of later Disney fame), and his animation advisor, Chuck Jones, fell prey to the charms of "Three Is a Magic Number." They gave the agency the go ahead to produce segments for the rest of the multiplication tables-with the bulk of animation provided by Phil Kimmelman & Associates, a production company specializing in animation for advertising. The network convinced General Foods to sponsor *Schoolhouse Rock*. In a further triumph of innovative business strategies, Eisner instructed Hollywood animation studios like Hanna-Barbera and Warner Bros. to cut three-minute modules from their shows. That way, ABC could use the extra time to run the *Schoolhouse Rock* segments, and when the shows went into syndication, the three-minute modules could be restored. With all the behind-the-scenes deals out of the way, *Schoolhouse Rock* premiered on the weekend of January 6-7, 1973, with "My Hero Zero," "Elementary, My Dear," "Three Is a Magic Number" and "The Four-Legged Zoo."

George Newall remembers the original recording sessions with fondness, remarking, "Going to those sessions was wonderful, because in those days, real guys came in and played real instruments, and New York had the best session players in the world."

Grammar Rock succeeded *Multiplication Rock*, drilling the parts of speech into youngsters' heads. Joining the creative team for the new segments was Lynn Ahrens, a secretary at the ad agency. One day, Newall spied her walking through the office with a guitar case, and when he asked her if she played, she performed for him on the spot impressing him so much that the agency made her a copywriter. Not long after, she wrote and sang on "A Noun Is a Person, Place or Thing" and several other classic *SHR* spots. Since then, Ahrens has gone on to earn five Tony nominations for her work on the Broadway musicals *Once on This Island* and *My Favorite Year*.

By 1976, a patriotic fervor had gripped the nation. Kids were hoarding bicentennial quarters and riding around on red, white and blue Huffys. *Schoolhouse Rock* responded with segments about American history, which they produced under the banner *America Rock*, and which ABC called *History Rock*. The lessons became more ambitious, now addressing such topics as Colonial military prowess ("The Shot Heard 'Round the World"), the concept of Manifest Destiny ("Elbow Room"), and women's rights ("Sufferin' Till Suffrage").

Perhaps even more memorable was "Just a Bill," in which a depressed little scroll of paper is dragged through the labyrinthine legislative process by which a bill becomes law. Not surprisingly, a number of government agencies and lobbyists asked for copies to educate their own staffs.

Although no one found any controversy in times tables or parts of speech, ABC did have a problem with one *America Rock* segment, "Three Ring Government," which dealt with the system of checks and balances among the three branches of government. Skittish in dealings with the FCC, ABC didn't want to risk insulting bureaucrats with "Three Ring's" circus motif, and the segment didn't air until several years after it had been produced.

Science Rock followed next, exploring such topics as the human circulatory system, depletion of the Earth's energy resources, and electrodynamics. One song frequently requested on this series was "Telegraph Line," about the nervous system. "Most of the requests came from medical schools," Tom Yohe recalls, "which doesn't give me a lot of confidence in our medical system. They wanted to show it to first-year medical students. It explained in a very simple, graphic way how the nervous system works."

The final *Schoolhouse Rock* series, *Scooter Computer and Mr. Chips*, was something of a departure from the previous format. The four segments feature *SHR*'s only recurring characters, Scooter Computer (a skateboarder) and Mr. Chips (a roller-skating terminal). Its only reason for being, according to Radford Stone, was "the misapprehension that children have a phobia about computers." Stone barely considers Scooter part of *SHR*, and, in fact, none of the *SHR* creative team seem to recall who contributed what to Scooter. And since the *Schoolhouse Rock* archives, including the animation cels, were destroyed after it went off the air, no one is sure what the Scooter segments' official titles are. "No one remembers them," says Stone.

Over the course of its 12-year run, *Schoolhouse Rock* received many accolades from parents, professional educators and television insiders, even winning four Emmys for Outstanding Children's Programming. But in 1984, ABC had begun sneaking spots that featured Menudo in place of *Schoolhouse Rock* segments. And by 1985, ABC had replaced *Schoolhouse Rock* altogether with Mary Lou Retton's exercise spots. Retton only lasted a year, but the reign of *Schoolhouse Rock* was over.

Song List

Like many of the *Schoolhouse Rock* generation, teachers and parents will have their favorite songs from the series and perhaps play the music in anticipation of their trip to the theatre. These are the songs you can expect to hear when you travel to see *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* at Stages Theatre Company:

- ★ VERB: THAT'S WHAT'S HAPPENING
- ★ A NOUN IS A PERSON, PLACE OR THING
- ★ THREE IS A MAGIC NUMBER
- ★ LOLLY, LOLLY, LOLLY
- ★ UNPACK YOUR ADJECTIVES
- ★ JUST A BILL
- ★ THE PREAMBLE
- ★ READY OR NOT, HERE I COME
- ★ DO THE CIRCULATION
- ★ RUFUS XAVIER SARSAPARILLA
- ★ THE TALE OF MR. MORTON
- ★ A VICTIM OF GRAVITY
- ★ CONJUNCTION JUNCTION
- ★ INTERPLANET JANET
- ★ INTERJECTIONS

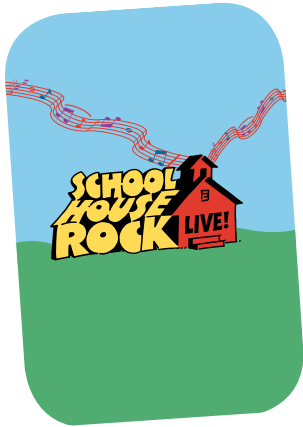
Post-Show Questions

1. Who is Tom and what is he worried about?
2. Who arrives to help him out?
3. What expresses action, being, or state of being?
4. Who do the Schoolhouse Rock characters say they are?
5. What is "...every person you can know, every place that you can go, and any thing that you can show?"
6. Which part of speech does the song, "Lolly, Lolly, Lolly" describe?
7. What song details the process by which laws are created in America?
8. Which song discusses and explains pronouns?
9. Who is the character from outer space that has visited Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto?
10. Hey! Ouch! Wow! Hooray! What are these words called?
11. Who is hit in the head with an apple, according to "The Laws of Gravity?"
12. Tom sings a song called "The Tale of Mr. Morton." What does it explain?
13. Special research question: The Preamble to the Constitution contains four words which are NOT included in the song "The Preamble." What are those words?

- ANSWERS
1. He's a brand new teacher and he's worried about his first time in front of the class.
 2. The Schoolhouse Rock characters help Tom get ready to teach.
 3. A verb.
 4. They tell Tom they are really just parts of him; all the ideas in his head.
 5. A noun.
 6. It describes the adverb, which may modify a verb, an adjective, or even another adverb.
 7. "Just a Bill" describes how a simple "bill" works its way through committees in Congress to finally become the law of the land.
 8. Pronouns and their uses are described in the song "Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla."
 9. It's "Interplanet Janet," of course.
 10. Duh! They're called "interjections."
 11. While sitting under a tree, Sir Isaac Newton is hit with a falling apple.
 12. "The Tale of Mr. Morton" describes the parts of a sentence.
 13. The missing words are "of the United States" which follow the words "We the people."

Stages Theatre Company is committed to the enrichment and education of children and youth in a professional theatre environment that stimulates artistic excellence and personal growth.

..Tell Me a Story! 2007-08..



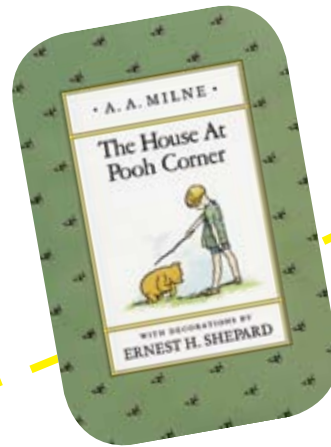
September 28 -
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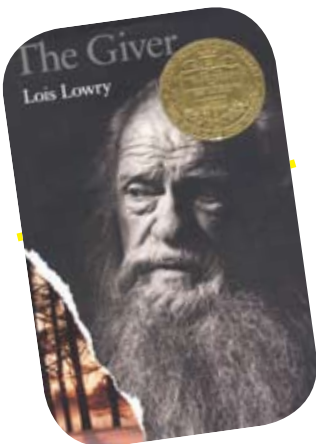
November 16-
December 30, 2007



January 18-
February 18, 2008



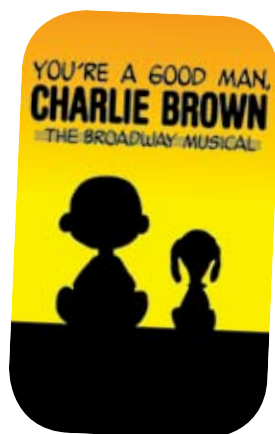
February 22-
March 16, 2008



March 7 - 30,
2008



April 18 -
May 18, 2008



June 27 -
August 3, 2008

To order tickets call 952.979.1111 or visit www.stagestheatre.org

Teacher Pages

At the Theater

Being a good audience and getting the most from the show:

- ★ Have students make a list: “What do we do when we watch television or go to a movie?” Compare the results to the theatre audience etiquette list below. How are they similar? How are they different? (Tied to TAGS)
- ★ Take some time to practice being an audience member. Turn down lights to darken the room. Have a student tell or read a story. When the speaker is done, have the audience applaud. Ask the speaker how the quiet listening and the applause made him or her feel? How did it make the audience feel? (Tied to TAGS)

Theatre Audience Etiquette

- ★ When you take your seat in the audience, you accept the responsibility of a special agreement. Part of that agreement includes believing what happens is real. It is happening *live*, before your eyes!
- ★ Listen carefully and quietly. The audience has an important role in the theatre experience. Let the production unfold and enfold you.
- ★ Respond honestly and sincerely. The actors are aware of your presence and your responses. When the lights go down, a performance especially for you begins. This special relationship only happens in live theatre.
- ★ Just a reminder! Avoid anything that might interrupt or distract the performers. Not only should you avoid speaking for any reason, but rustling papers, gum-snapping, jangly jewelry, cellophane wrappers, cell phones, and pagers are all examples of unwarranted and unwelcome sounds during the play. Flash cameras, of course, are forbidden. Their blinding lights can be an actual danger to the actors.
- ★ Finally, be sure to “tune in” to what is happening on the stage. When the play is over, show your appreciation with hearty applause. These are the sounds that warm the hearts of the actors.