

GREAT
LAKES
THEATER

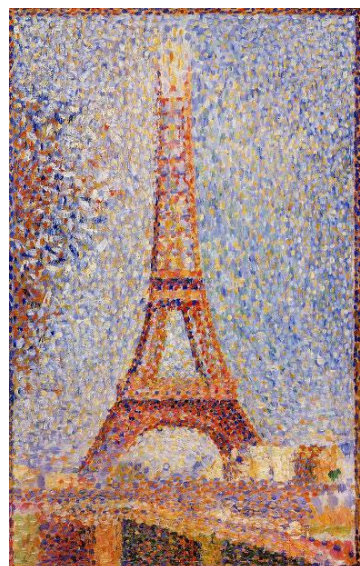
TEACHER PREPARATION GUIDE

SUNDAY *in the* **PARK**
with **GEORGE**



Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
Book by James Lapine
Originally Directed on Broadway by James Lapine
Orchestrations by Michael Starobin
Directed by Victoria Bussert

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Fall 2025

Dear Educator,

We are delighted to welcome you to Great Lakes Theater's **2025–2026 season**, an inspiring lineup of productions that celebrates the enduring power of classic theater. Alongside our mainstage offerings, **we are especially excited to announce a brand-new opportunity for educators: a one-day professional development workshop, *Deep Dive: Romeo and Juliet*, to be held on October 10, 2025.** This immersive experience will provide teachers with dynamic tools for bringing Shakespeare's most beloved tragedy to life in the classroom.

Thank you for reserving student matinee tickets for *Sunday in the Park with George* at Great Lakes Theater. This dazzling Pulitzer Prize, Olivier, and Tony Award-winning musical will be presented in the Hanna Theatre at Playhouse Square from **September 26–October 12, 2025**. A masterpiece that paints a compelling tale of art, love, and legacy, the musical follows Seurat's agonizing struggle to complete his work as his relationship with the enigmatic Dot crumbles. A century later, Seurat's descendant rediscovers his own artistic purpose through surprising connections to the past. Featuring a breathtaking score with unforgettable songs like "*Finishing the Hat*," "*Sunday*," and "*Move On*," this poignant production explores the enduring power of art and the timeless search for meaning in life.

This guide includes essays, discussion questions, and classroom activities designed to introduce students to the world of the play and provide a meaningful entry point for personal exploration. At Great Lakes Theater, we're proud to share high-quality classic theater alongside resources that support your teaching. We're thrilled to welcome you and your students and always appreciate your feedback on how we can best support your classroom experience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Kelly Schaffer Florian".

Kelly Schaffer Florian
Director of Educational Services
Kflorian@greatlakestheater.org

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "David Hansen".

David Hansen
Education Outreach Associate
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A Note to Students: What to Expect at the Theater

You may or may not have attended a live theater performance before. To increase your enjoyment, it might be helpful to look at the unique qualities of this art form — because it is so different from movies or video.

The live theatrical performance not only involves the actors on the stage; it is meant to involve you, the audience, in ways that film and television cannot. In truth, although you are sitting in an auditorium and the actors are on stage, there is very little separating the audience from the performers. How you react to the play *deeply affects* the actors. Something as seemingly trivial as whispering or unwrapping a candy bar can distract them and disrupt the mood and tone of their performance. Due to the important relationship between actors and audience members, there are certain, perhaps obvious, provisions of live theater we wish to call to your attention.

In the Hanna Theatre, it is important to know that the taking of pictures, either with or without a flash, is strictly prohibited. Also, it is essential that all electronic equipment, including cell phones, music players (even with headphones), alarm watches, etc., be completely powered off once you have entered the theatre. Even the glow from a watch or a silent cell phone (used for checking the time, text messaging, or posting social network updates, for example) can be very distracting to fellow audience members, even if you try to mask it under your hand or an article of clothing. Our goal is to provide every person in the audience with the best possible theatrical experience, so we appreciate your respectful cooperation during the performance.

Other differences live theater provides: in film or video, the camera and editing define what we will see. In the theater, however, each of us works as our own camera and editor, choosing our own personal points of focus. And in the Hanna Theatre, you should know that often we do not use microphones. As audience members you'll need to actively listen and "tune in" to the sound of the unamplified human voice.

As for our lighting and scenery, it might surprise you to know that these are not necessarily meant to be realistic. In this production, for example, there may be design elements that are abstract or metaphorical.

The theater's ability to focus on human experience — distilled through the dialogue and behavior of people on stage and enhanced by the scenery, costumes, lighting, music and dance — is a centuries-old tradition. Being part of the communal magic when performer and audience connect — whether at a baseball game, music concert or theater performance — cannot be duplicated.

The performance you will see at Great Lakes Theater will happen only once. It is unique and personal. Though this play will be performed more than a dozen times, the performance you see belongs only to you.

We hope you enjoy it, and we'd like you to share your response with us.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE *Victoria Bussert*

I love the rehearsal room. No matter where I am rehearsing anywhere in the world — Denmark, Russia, Brazil, London or right here in Boise — I recognize each one of these strange looking rooms as home. Big empty spaces, floors taped with numbers, lines and arrows, odd collections of mismatched chairs, benches or wood rehearsal boxes, a random hanging rack with an eclectic combination of petticoats, jackets and a hat or two — all of these simple, mismatched things just waiting to create an infinite variety of imaginary worlds. The rickety chair — no longer in a suitable shape to be used on an actual stage — is now playing a magnificent throne in a beautiful castle; a few ladders suddenly become a dense, ominous forest of trees or push together few black rehearsal boxes and you have a luxurious overstuffed chaise lounge. The actors arrive at rehearsal in their jeans, sweat pants or shorts and then may proceed to throw on an old, long, elastic-waist skirt with their name safety pinned into it or an ill-fitting, ridiculous-looking plaid jacket left over from a production of *Guys and Dolls* twenty years ago (it still has the name of the actor who wore it in the production stitched on a label inside the collar) — and suddenly the King and Queen of this extraordinary magical world have entered the room. This is what we really see as we watch — everything in the room has become the reality created by our imaginations.



As I began my work on *Sunday in the Park with George*, I knew I didn't want the production to be about George Seurat's finished painting, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*; but rather, about the actual process of creating the painting — for me, this is where the real magic happens. George takes his foldable artist's stool to the park and draws — people, trees, water, dogs, hats — then returns to his studio where a new world begins emerge on his canvas:

“Mapping out a sky
What you feel like painting a sky
What you feel when voices that come
Through a window
Go
Until they distance and die
Until there's nothing but sky”

This is the “real” world for George, not the vague, distant world that exists outside the window of the room. Alone in his studio, George's imagination bursts with all sorts of characters — flirtatious ingenues, official looking soldiers, a swaggering boatman, a precocious child and a beautiful lady with an exquisite hat with...a monkey? Where did that come from? It doesn't matter. The artist has agency to freely creates the worlds inspired by their imagination — not the world as it may appear to the outside world. Their art the create invites us to enter and these worlds through the window of their canvas while simultaneously opening new doors in our own imaginations.

My love affair with the art of Stephen Sondheim came early in my career — and I fell hard. The first show I

was offered professionally was the Chicago premiere of Stephen Sondheim’s *Pacific Overtures* — looking back on it now, it seems ridiculous that a young director fresh out of grad school was asked to direct this epic piece as her professional debut — only later was I to discover that three other very experienced directors had turned down the project due to the immense challenges it presents — and honestly, it took almost nine months of intense research for me to really get a handle on it. The success of that production resulted in many more offers to journey into the incredible Sondheim catalog, including *Into the Woods*, *Sweeney Todd*, *A Little Night Music*, *Company*, *Assassins*, *The Frogs* (in an Olympic-size pool) and many more – I’d been so lucky to direct all but three — *Bounce*, the most recent *Here We Are*, and the ever elusive *Sunday in the Park with George*. I wonder if the universe had me wait so long to finally do a production of *Sunday* so I could fully utilize the thousands of hours spent exploring in those dusty rehearsal rooms; how to find a way to translate the process of creating on a canvas to the process of creating on a stage.

This production is not about the final product of the painting, but rather a celebration of what it takes to get there. George Seurat’s finished painting hangs in the Chicago Art Institute and will continue to inspire generations for decades to come; live theatre demands we create a painting at each performance that will only actually live for a few hours — and you are a critical part of that creation. No two performances are ever the same — what you see tonight will never exist in exactly the same way after the final blackout — if it is to live for decades to come, it will be in your memories of the experience. Every theater performance is seen through your perception of the world — you will create your very own “painting” that will live in your memory. Tonight, let us allow our imaginations to soar and enjoy “finishing the hat”, a unique hat we will create together.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ACTOR	ACT I	ACT II
Alex Syiek*	George, an artist	George, a performance artist
Jillian Kates*	Dot, his mistress.....	Marie, his grandmother
Laura Perrotta*	Old Lady	Blair Daniels, an art critic
Jessie Cope Miller*	Nurse/Mrs.	Harriet Pawling, a patroness of the arts
Elliott Block*	Louis, a baker	Billy Webster, her friend
Brian Sutherland*	Franz/Mr.	Bob Greenberg, the museum director
Elijah Dawson*	A Boatman	Alex, an artist
Mia Cabrera	Louise	A Photographer
Ben Senneff*	Jules, another artist	Charles Redmond, a visiting curator
Jodi Dominick *	Yvonne, his wife	Naomi Eisen, a composer
Amber Hurst Martin*	Celeste #1	Elaine, George's former wife
Kinza Surani*	Celeste #2	Lee Randolph, publicist
Diane Sutherland*	Frieda	Betty, an artist
Ethan Flanagan	A Soldier	Dennis, a technician

*Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

Musical Numbers

Act One

“Sunday in the Park with George” — Dot, George

“No Life” — Jules, Yvonne

“Color and Light” — Dot, George

“Gossip” — Celeste #1, Celeste #2, Boatman, Nurse, Old Lady, Jules, Yvonne, Dot

“The Day Off” — George, Nurse, Frieda, Franz, Boatman, Company

“Everybody Loves Louis” — Dot

“The One on the Left” — Soldier, Celeste #1, Celeste #2, George

“Finishing the Hat” — George

“The Day Off” (Reprise) — Company

“We Do Not Belong Together” — Dot, George

“Beautiful” — Old Lady, George

“Sunday” — George, Company

Act Two

“It’s Hot Up Here” — Dot, Yvonne, Louise, Franz, Nurse, Celeste #1, Celeste #2, Frieda, Jules, Soldier, Old Lady, Boatman, Louis

“Chromolume #7” — Orchestra

“Gossip” (Reprise) — Harriet Pawling, Billy Webster, Bob Greenberg, Charles Redmond, Betty, Alex, Naomi Eisen

“Putting It Together” — George, Marie, Bob, Harriet, Billy, Elaine, Charles, Naomi, Lee Randolph, Dennis, Betty, Alex, Blair Daniels

“Children and Art” — Marie, George

“Lesson #8” — George

Move On” — George, Dot

“Sunday” (Reprise) — George, Dot, Company

Spotlight

Sunday in the Park with George at Idaho Shakespeare Festival.

From top right: Jillian Kates & Alex Syiek;
Laura Perrotta, Mia Cabrera, Jodi Dominick,
Alex Syiek, Amber Hurst Martin, & Kinza
Surani; Alex Syiek & Jillian Kates; Alex
Syiek & Laura Perrotta, Elliot Block & Jillian
Kates; Alex Syiek & Jillian Kates.



PLAYNOTES: *Sunday in the Park with George*



Stephen Sondheim at the height of his incredible run of hits in the 1970s.

Stephen Sondheim (1930 – 2021) occupies a rarified place at the pinnacle of American musical theater. His successes put him there, of course, but his failures shaped his mastery too.

In a sense Sondheim was a lifelong outsider. As he once told critic Frank Rich, “I grew up entirely, as one friend puts it, as an ‘institutionalized child’ in that I was brought up either by a cook, a nanny or a boarding school or camp.” Jewish, gay, child of a bitter divorce, with a scorched-earth mother (“belonging to a number of minorities,” he joked)—the young man developed a protective shell that became the source of what Rich called the artist’s “signature emotion . . . the aching, ambivalent and often thwarted desire to connect with someone.”

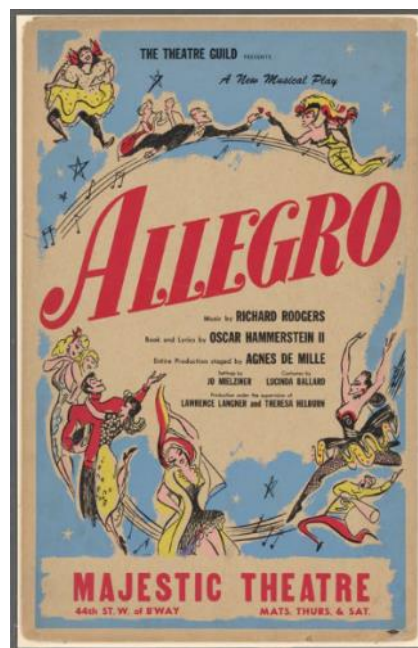
In another sense, the habitual outsider became the consummate insider. At the age of nine in 1939, Sondheim was transfixed by a Broadway musical, remembering, “The curtain went up and revealed a piano. A butler took a duster and brushed it up, tinkling the keys. I thought that was thrilling.” At nearly the same time, the young boy met Jamie Hammerstein, son of the legendary Broadway lyricist, and quickly became, as his friend would later recall, “more a Hammerstein than a Sondheim.”

During high school, Sondheim showed Oscar Hammerstein his first attempt at a musical. According to Sondheim, “Oscar said, ‘It’s the worst thing I have ever read -- but I didn’t say it was untalented.’” The older man became a willing teacher, the younger man soaking up every lesson.

Hammerstein hired his disciple as a “gopher” on the lyricist’s third collaboration with songwriter Richard Rodgers. After the soaring debuts of *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Carousel* (1945), the duo’s new piece, *Allegro* (1947), landed with a thud. Exploring the life arc of a country doctor seduced by success, the show used a Greek chorus to express the characters’ inner thoughts. “What Hammerstein reveals in *Allegro* is huge vision and a limited amount of technical ability to carry it out,” Sondheim later admitted. Though the show was deemed a failed experiment, the young man found it exhilarating.



The young Sondheim “crashing” a Hammerstein family photo.



Poster for the Rodgers and Hammerstein show that so engaged the young Sondheim. “I’ve been trying to fix ‘Allegro’ all my life,” he once declared.

At Williams College, a severe professor—who insisted that music was “constructed” rather than inspired—discouraged many a music student. But Sondheim sought out Milton Babbitt, one of America’s leading music theorists, to learn how to “construct,” using scholarship money to pay for weekly tutorials in New York.

An offer to write lyrics for another daring show came about four years after graduation—an eternity to the ambitious young man. Sondheim was torn because he had trained so arduously to write music. But *West Side Story* (which would open in 1957) already boasted a creative team headlined by composer Leonard Bernstein, book writer Arthur Laurent, and director Jerome Robbins. Referencing those “gifted professionals,” Hammerstein said, “take the job.”

Sondheim heard the same mantra when he was offered lyrics for *Gypsy* (1959), starring Ethel Merman. The young man also promised Hammerstein on his death bed that he would write lyrics to Richard Rodgers’ music for *Do I Hear a Waltz?* (1965). Mixed reviews and soured relationships resulted. Sondheim then vowed that he would only take jobs that offered dual billing as lyricist and songwriter.

Sondheim really began to find his stride in an extraordinary run of box office hits in the 1970s, including *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971), *A Little*

Night Music (1973), *Pacific Overtures* (1976), and *Sweeney Todd* (1979). All were directed by Hal Prince, who helped produce *West Side Story*.

And then came *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981). Like his mentor’s *Allegro*, the audacious production exceeded its grasp. *Merrily We Roll Along* winds backward in time from middle-aged betrayals to the meeting of three young artists twenty years earlier. Though the

Newcomer Sondheim at left with the creative team for *West Side Story*: writer Arthur Laurents, producers Hal Prince and Robert Griffith (seated), composer Leonard Bernstein, and director Jerome Robbins.





Sondheim and James Lapine hammering out a solution early in their collaboration.

show has since been revived successfully, its initial failure, and the gleeful malice of the critics, stopped Sondheim cold.

“They just resented Hal Prince and me so much—our partnership and success—they couldn’t wait to shoot us down,” Sondheim later reflected. “I thought, I don’t want to be in this profession; it’s just too hostile and mean-spirited. So, yes, I was really thinking, What else can I do? I thought, I’d love to invent games, video games; and that was what I really wanted to do. But then I saw *Twelve Dreams*.”

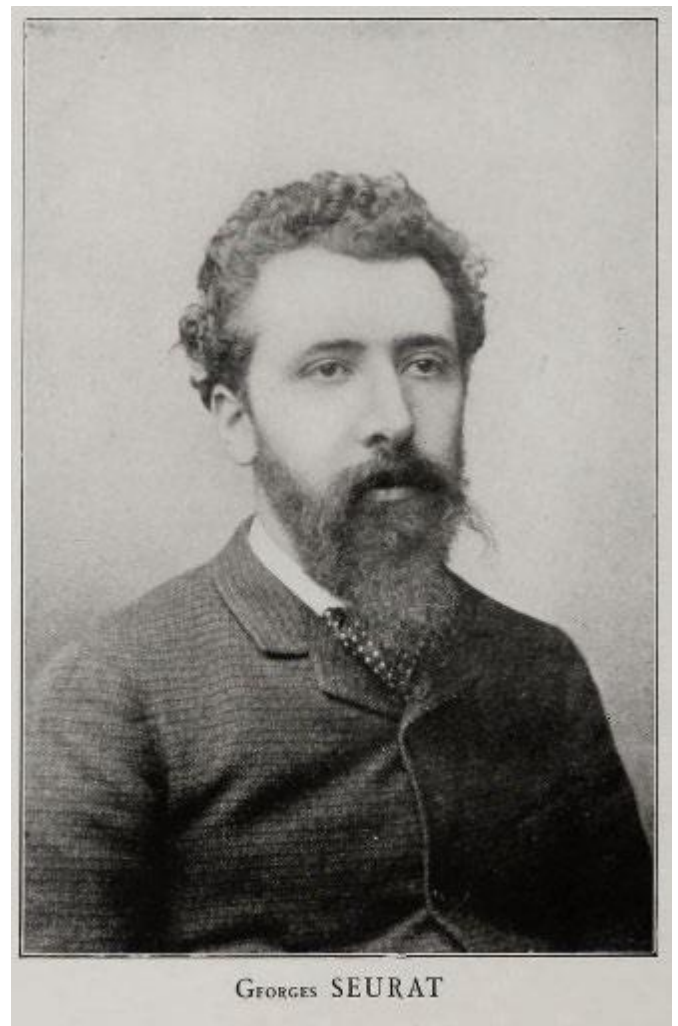
Twelve Dreams (1981), a play based on a case study published by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, was written and directed by James Lapine. Through mutual connections, Lapine scored a meeting with Sondheim, who was nearly twenty years his senior. The novice and the now-grizzled pro hit it off.

Lapine had trained as a graphic artist and was designing theater posters at Yale University when he grabbed his first opportunity to create a theater piece. “One of the students found an abstract

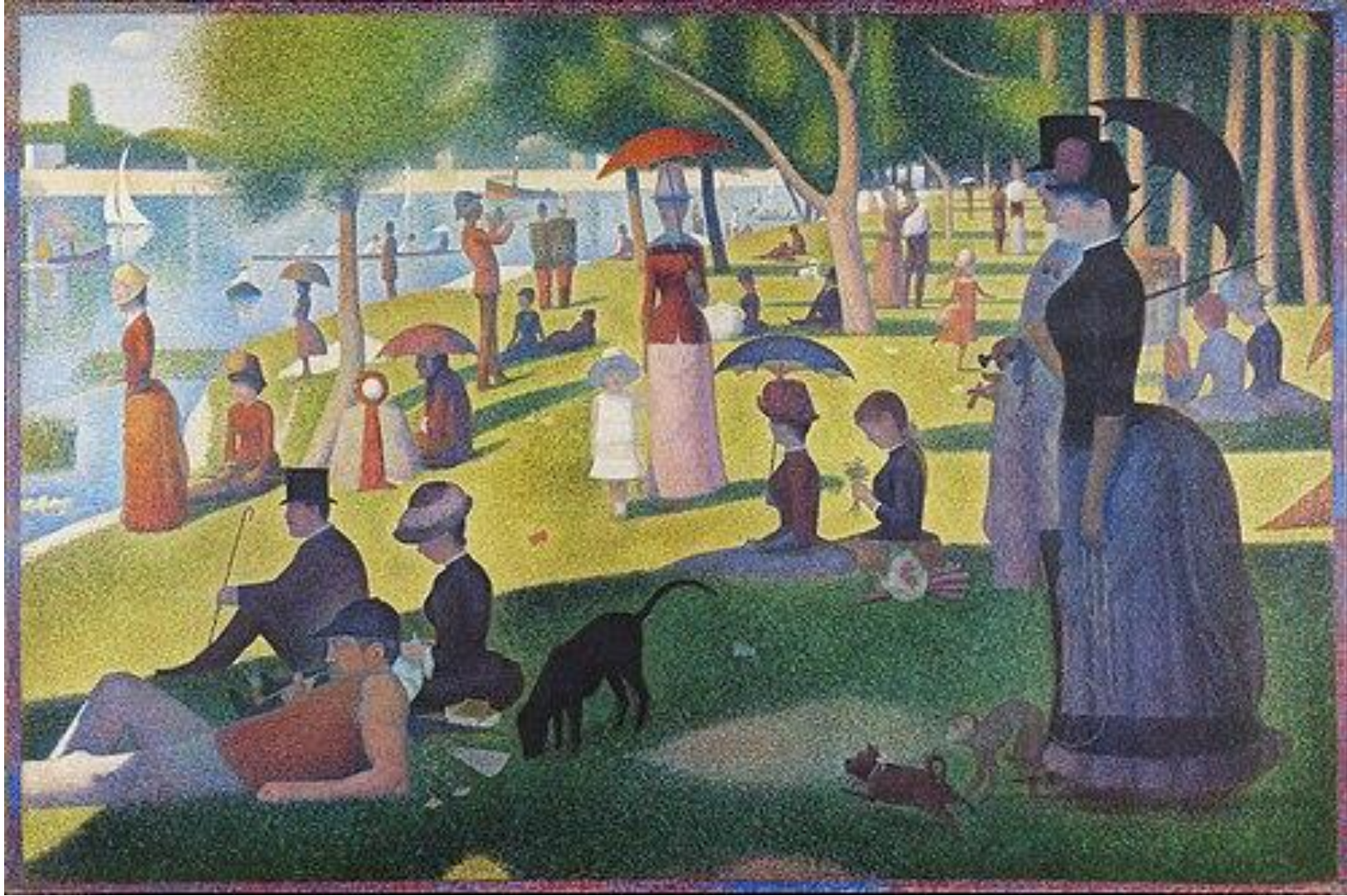
poem/play by Gertrude Stein called *Photograph*, which was five acts long and only three pages in length. [This] gave me free rein to use photographic images to fill out the storytelling, such as it was,” recalled Lapine. “One of the images I used as inspiration was one of my favorite Seurat paintings, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*.”

Lapine returned to his comfort zone when meeting with Sondheim. “The last image I showed you was Seurat’s *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. I brought a postcard of it, and we started riffing on it. You immediately said, ‘Oh, it looks like a stage set,’ and then we just started going on from there.” Sondheim reminded Lapine, “As we were talking, you said the magical thing. You said,

Pointillist artist Georges Seurat, ca. 1888.



GEORGES SEURAT



A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte was painted from 1884 to 1886 and is Georges Seurat's most famous work.

'The main character is missing.' I said, 'Who?'
And you said, 'The artist.'

The artist in question was French pointillist Georges Seurat (1859-1891). A scientific approach to color theory propelled Seurat beyond the impressionism of his older contemporaries. Relentless experimentation led him to juxtapose dots of unmixed paint to create the sensation of mixed colors in the eyes of the beholder. The French painter's preoccupation with "color and light" resonated with Lapine's interest in "theme and variation" and Sondheim's belief that "harmony gives music its life, its emotional color." Used to plundering movies or plays for sources, Sondheim saw a new way forward in Lapine's ideas and images.

Lapine, who would write the book and direct, quickly found that Seurat had created at least

60 sketches, oil studies, and even larger canvases in preparation for *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. Many of these, along with the painter's other work—such as *Young Woman Powdering Herself*—provided ideas for scenes or staging. Stray facts about the artist's life filled in a few character and plot points as well.

Seurat's work was not widely appreciated during his lifetime. He created large-scale monumental paintings of ordinary people, arrayed, he told a friend like the flattened figures "on the Parthenon frieze." But an anonymous critic expressed the more common view that Seurat's "monstrous" painting of *Bathers at Asnières* was "conceived in a coarse, vulgar, and commonplace mind."

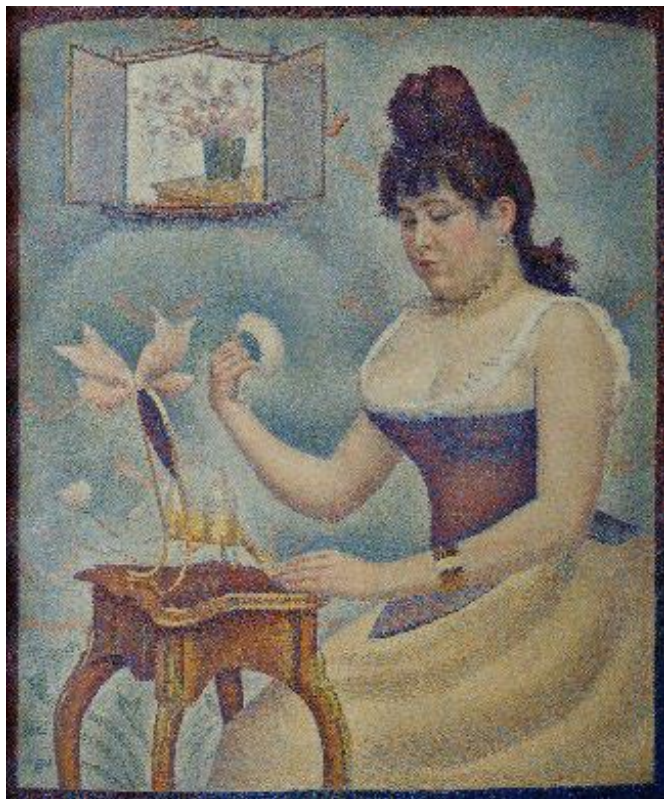
Seurat dined with his mother daily but concealed from her the fact that he lived with a mistress, an

artist's model who bore him a son. When Lapine and Sondheim examined *Sunday Afternoon* in person at the Art Institute of Chicago, "We were really able to get a sense of Seurat's obsessional nature," Lapine said, "the exactitude of his work and the precision of every brushstroke on the canvas,"

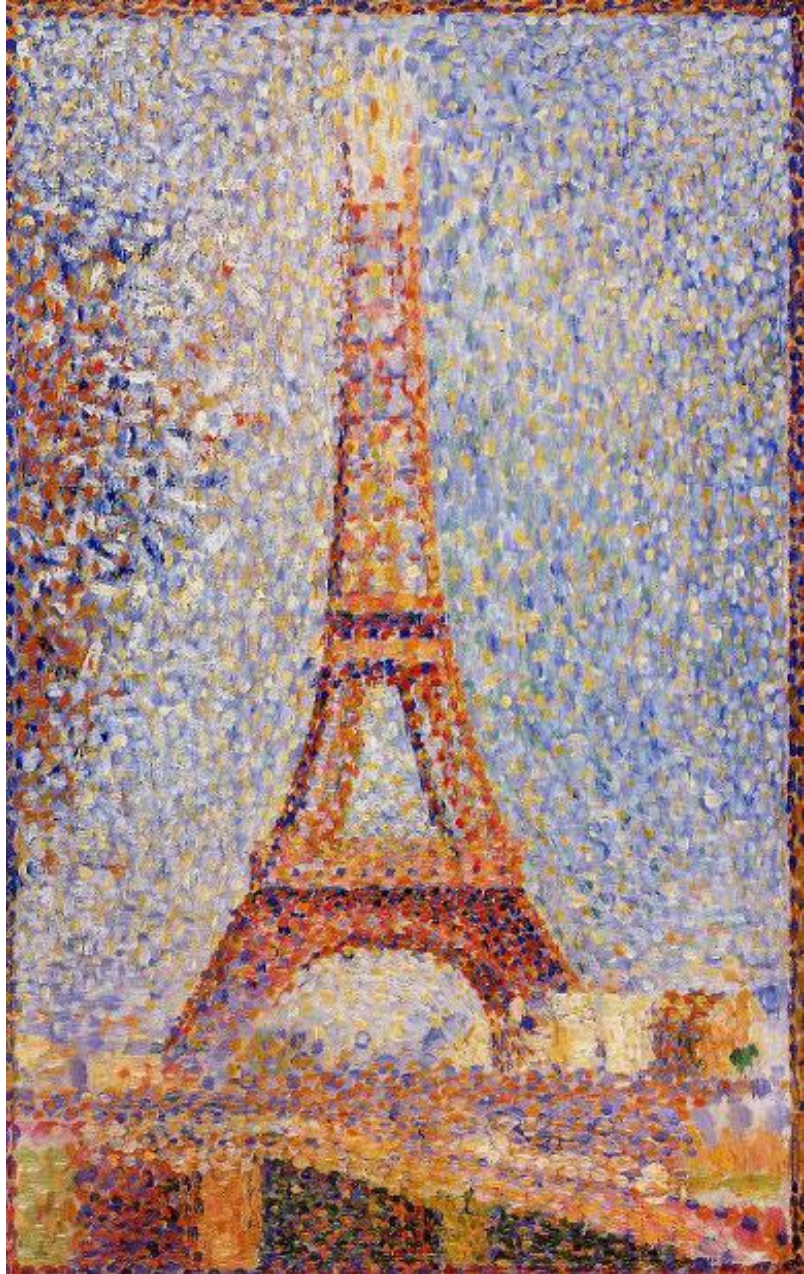
"It wasn't a leap to make Seurat an obsessive and a recluse," shrugged Lapine. The artist's



Seurat's many charcoal sketches, such as this "Landscape with a Dog, Study for *La Grande Jatte*," inspired songs and scenes in the show.



Young Woman Powdering Herself, thought to be a portrait of Seurat's mistress Madeleine Knobloch, inspired a telling moment for the character Dot in the musical show.



Like his fictional counterpart, Seurat found beauty in the changing scenes of Paris.

relative obscurity became a plus, as the collaborators would later recount:

LAPINE: Seurat did us a favor: he died young.

SONDHEIM: And he never opened his mouth.

Seurat was, in fact, a blank canvas.

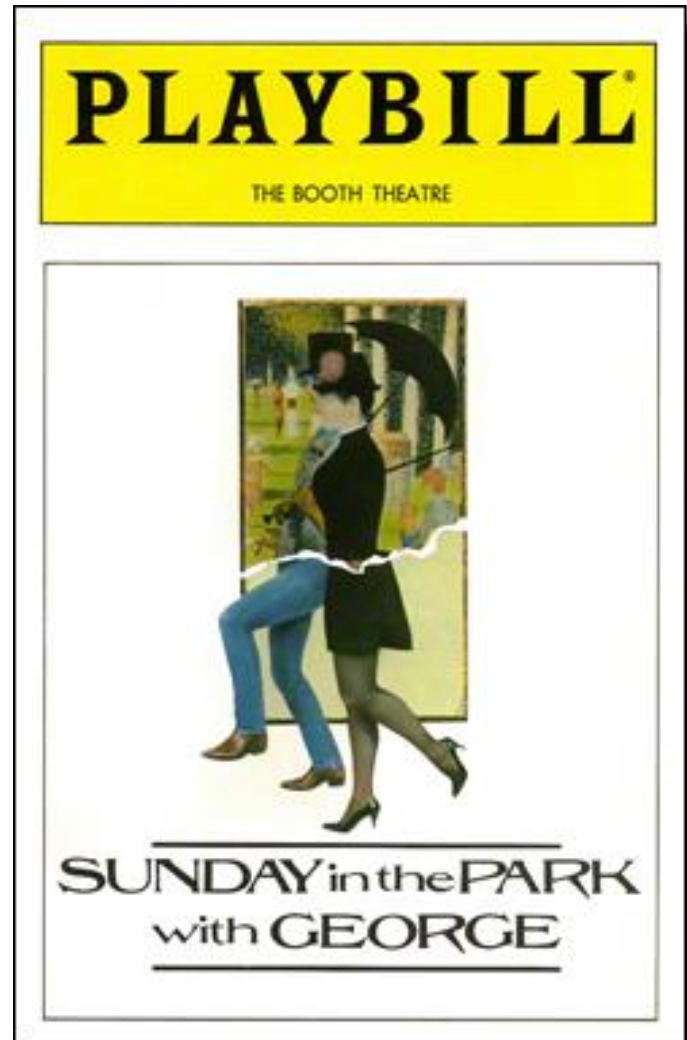
PUTTING IT TOGETHER: The Creation of *Sunday in the Park with George*

With a new kind of subject matter also came a new way of working for Sondheim. The older man was a “Broadway Baby.” The younger one cut his teeth in non-profit theaters. New York’s Public Theater produced Lapine’s *Twelve Dreams*, and Playwrights Horizons had commissioned a new work from him. The writer began to think: “I could use *Sunday* to fulfill that commitment.”

Then-artistic director Andre Bishop was thunderstruck. “Even then Sondheim was a god to people like me,” Bishop later confessed. At a time when workshops were uncommon, Lapine proposed a seven-week workshop to develop what turned out to be the show’s first act. Full costumes and set pieces were needed to work out the director’s elaborate staging ideas. Subscribers to Playwrights Horizons were invited to attend “in-progress” sessions during a month of rehearsal and tech. There would also be three weeks of public performances.

Bishop and his staff had to kick their fundraising into high gear. They almost foundered on opposition from Dorothy Rodgers, the composer’s wife, who headed the New York State Council on the Arts at the time and felt that public money shouldn’t be used to support a commercial product. “We haven’t gone commercial,” protested Bishop. “And if you think this musical that is barely half-written, about a pointillist painter, is commercial, you’ve got to be nuts!” Bishop’s argument won the day.

In the meantime, the collaboration required adjustments. Sharing unpolished songs publicly had not been Sondheim’s practice. In addition, the veteran found himself changing his writing style in response to Lapine’s. Citing “Color and Light,” Sondheim explained, “The flow between spoken and sung monologue, the elliptical heightened language, the stream-of-



Playbill for the original production of *Sunday in the Park with George*, which opened on Broadway in 1984 after a workshop at Playwrights Horizons in 1983.

consciousness fantasies, the abrupt climactic use of unaccompanied dialogue, these are all musical extensions of hallmarks in Lapine’s playwriting.”

Lapine detailed the pressure of the process in his book *Putting it Together*, which pulls together interviews with nearly all the major

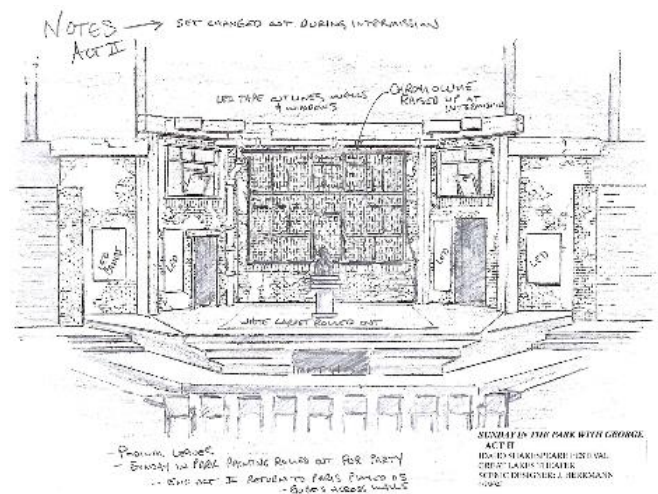
FROM PAGE TO STAGE: Great Lakes Theater's Production of *Sunday in the Park with George*



Scenic designers now build 3-D models using computer software.

Sunday in the Park with George has a special place in the hearts of theater artists—as director Victoria Bussert and her creative team are eager to point out. “We’re all artists,” scenic designer Jeff Herrmann affirms. Costume designer Tesia Dugan Benson adds, “The show is so intimately related to our own process.” “We’re all trying to tell the story,” explains lighting designer Trad Burns, “but each with the language of our own medium.” But everyone, artist or not, Bussert clarifies, “is grappling with how to live the life you’re trying to live.”

Although the show was inspired by a painting, it’s grounded in the experience of a human being, not an object. As the creative team discussed the show, Bussert realized that it’s not about “finishing a project. It’s about process.” When she happened on an exhibit of photographs of artists’ studios organized by the National Trust for Historic



But handwritten drawings and notes still convey information to the scene construction shop, in this case, regarding the changeover from Act I to the gallery space of Act II.

Preservation, Bussert recognized, “That was my light bulb moment. George is not painting in the park. He’s drawing in the park and takes the drawings back to the studio. That’s where he brings the painting to life.” A studio could also serve the first and second acts equally well—as an artist’s studio and as a downtown gallery space.

Jeff Herrmann knew that the studio had to be white; it is the blank canvas that the production fills. Artists of yesterday and today still seek out the same kinds of spaces. Herrmann supplied windows to let light in, enough room to work in, what the designer calls “the tools of the trade,” and finished or half-finished canvases of all sizes.



The GLT production seeks to capture the character of George’s studio, finding inspiration in the stacked canvases, paint splatters, and turpentine rags of Jackson Pollock’s space or the carefully composed window perch of Georgia O’Keeffe.

SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE COLOR PALETTE/PAINTING INFO 6/12/2025



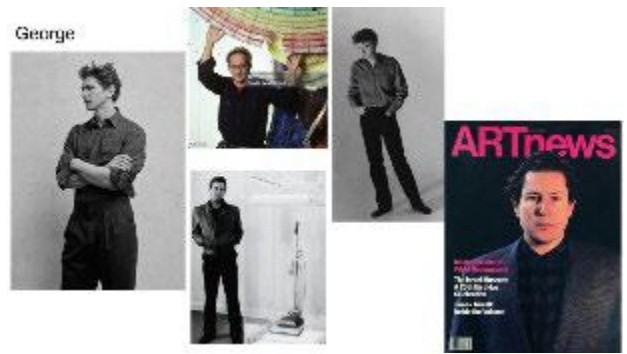
INSPIRATIONAL IMAGE



Scenic designer Jeff Herrmann also assembles research images to provide guidance for the scenic painters.

Clothing supplies vivid color and rich texture to the stage picture in the first act. Following George’s example, costume designer Benson sought to “put two colors next to each other in differing intensities.” Her search for fabrics was color—rather than character-driven. She was especially delighted to find a dupioni silk—red threads shot through with blue—that yields a shimmering effect under stage light. The palette shifts entirely in the second act, to shades of black and grey that evoke a downtown gallery scene. Silhouettes—more flowing for artists and buttoned-down for donors—provide class indicators. Since the women have to wear period wigs in Act I and don’t have time to unpin their hair, modern wigs allow for character-driven hair styles in Act II.

Lighting is another tool for “painting” the stage. At the time of the original production of *Sunday in the Park with George*, lasers were the “new” thing. Today it’s LED lights, which, designer Trad Burns points out, provide points of light. “As modern light designers,” Burns explains, “we mix colored lights to create other colors. I felt a kinship with George.”



Contrasting colors and variegated fabrics reinforce the vision of color that inspires George in Act I.

Within the more restricted color palette of Act II, patterns, textures, and layers help to distinguish characters.

Before she begins working on her own renderings, costume designer Tesia Benson assembles “research collages” on the look she’s seeking for each character. In this case, the sophisticated “downtown” George of Act II.

Burns had to do the customary job of the lighting designer—to show the audience where and how to look. He had to convey through lighting, for instance, when the action takes place in the sunlit park. But he was also responsible for developing the light-based installation piece that the modern George of the second act creates. And to add another layer of complexity, Burns had to make an installation that fails and one that succeeds. The balance of the two acts depends on the audience really seeing the modern George’s credibility as an artist. “We have to see him as a visionary even when he’s stuck. “We have to his struggle in his work,” Burns confides. The second act attends more to the business of art, but it’s deeper meaning, claims Burns, “is that it isn’t easy to have and sustain a vision. You have to find yourself over and over again throughout your life.”

“The investment of everyone has been very moving,” says Bussert. “I’ve been cherishing every moment.” She shares that she “thought continuously” of former GLT artistic director Gerald Freedman, her mentor in theater and life, throughout the process. Freedman once told her that he didn’t feel able to direct

Chekhov until he was 60. Bussert feels the same about *Sunday in the Park with George*, which she’s never directed. “If I had been able to direct it twenty years earlier, it wouldn’t have been the same. I needed to learn to trust and understand the core of what is being said and realize it doesn’t need embellishment. I had to learn to let a moment be. It’s an emotional journey.”

Chromolume Channel Map																									
1	1022	1023	1024	1025	1026	1027	1028	1029	1030	1031	1032	1033	1034	1035	1036	1037	1038	1039	1040	1041	1042	1043	1044	1	
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49	1790	1791	1792	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800	1801	1802	1803	1804	1805	1806	1807	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812	1	

Not only did lighting designer Trad Burns have to execute George’s “installation piece” in Act II—given the name “chromolume” by Lapine, after Chromoluminarism, a coined name for Seurat’s color theory. Burns also had to translate his visual ideas into numeric codes for programming the LED lights.



Louise I

Sunday in the Park With
George



13



John I

Sunday in the Park With
George



12



Yvonne I

Sunday in the Park With
George



11



Franz I

Sunday in the Park With
George



18



Charlotte 2 I

Sunday in the Park With
George



16



Charlotte 1 I

Sunday in the Park With
George



15



Soldier I

Sunday in the Park With
George



21



Freida I

Sunday in the Park With
George



19



Mr and Mrs I

Sunday in the Park With
George



20



George III

Sunday in the Park With George



Marie I

Sunday in the Park With George



Blair Daniels I

Sunday in the Park With George.



Billy Webster I
Harriet Parkin I

Sunday in the Park With George



Bob Grumley I

Sunday in the Park With George



Ala I

Sunday in the Park With George



Philosophy I

Sunday in the Park With George



Charles Richmond I

Sunday in the Park With George



28

Elaine I

Sunday in the Park With George



34

Naomi Ellen I

Sunday in the Park With George



26

Elaine I

Sunday in the Park With George



34

Lee Randolph I

Sunday in the Park With George



30

Betty I

Sunday in the Park With George



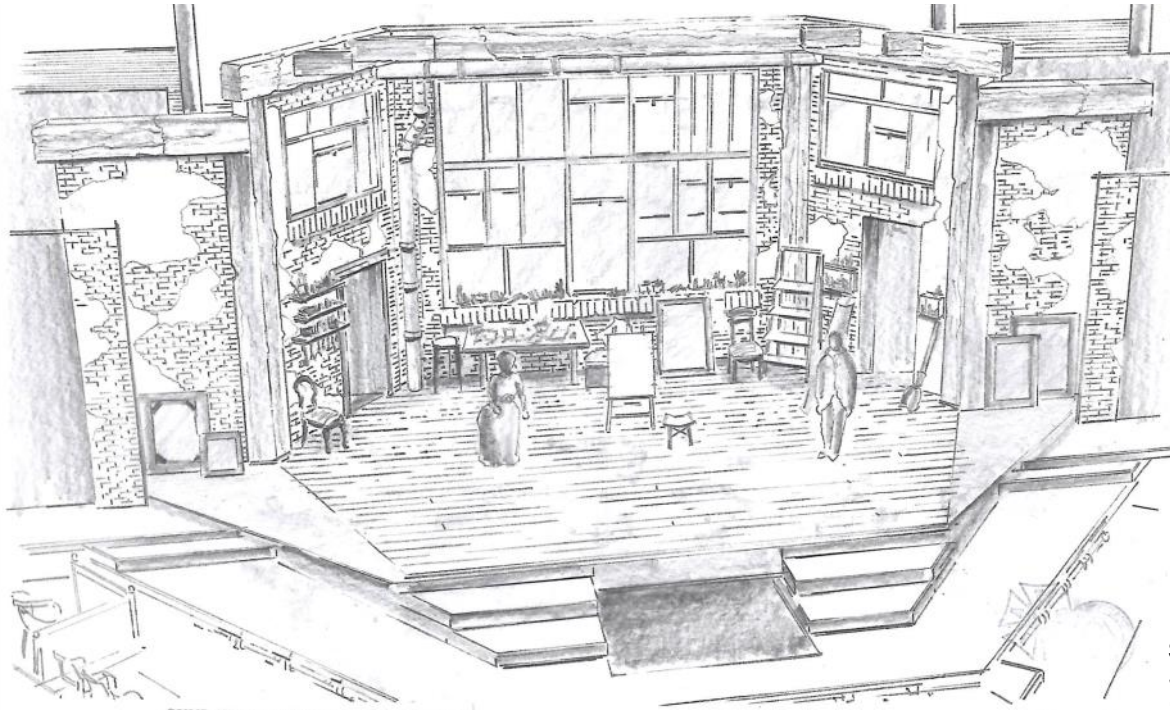
33

Jennie I

Sunday in the Park With George

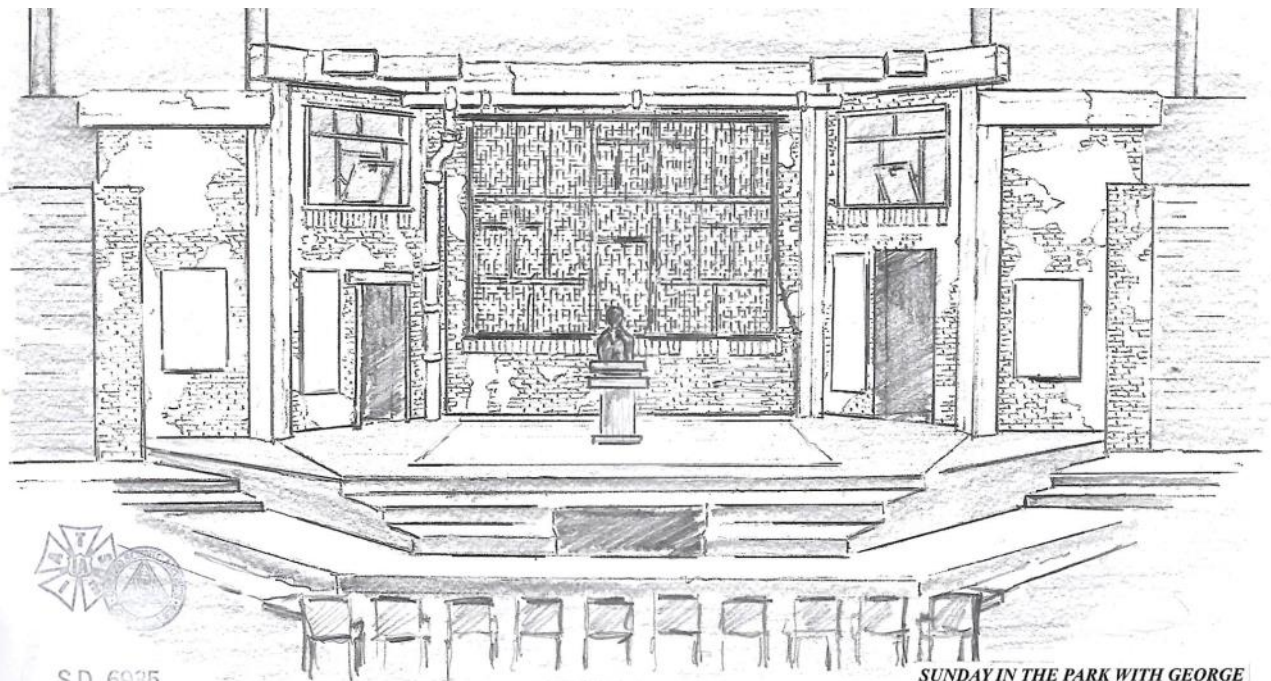


25



SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE
ACT I
 IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
 GREAT LAKES THEATER
 SCENIC DESIGNER: J. HERRMANN
 5/2/2025

Scenic renderings for
*Sunday in the Park with
 George* by designer Jeff
 Herrmann



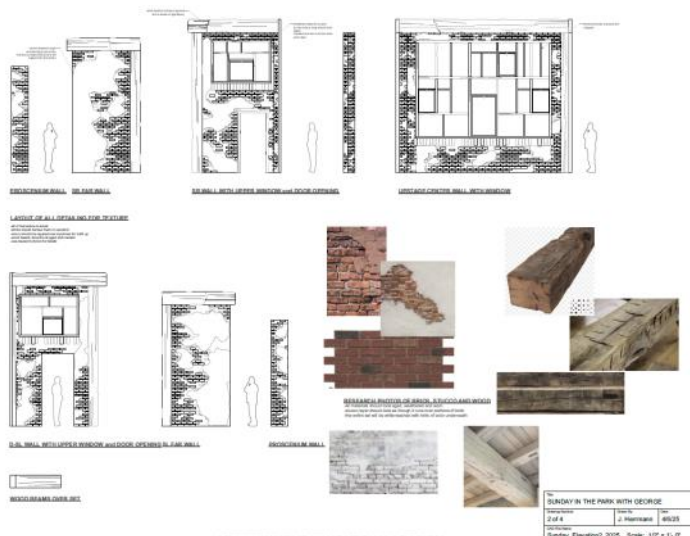
S.D. 6935
SCENIC DESIGNER

SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE
ACT II
 IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
 GREAT LAKES THEATER
 SCENIC DESIGNER: J. HERRMANN
 4/7/2025



3-D Scenic renderings for *Sunday in the Park with George* by designer Jeff Herrmann

The cast of *Sunday in the Park with George* at Idaho Shakespeare Festival. Photo by Zilla Photography.



Research photos and renderings detailing the texture of the brick and wood found on the set

Discussion Questions

1. The first act comments upon the creative urge and the commercial forces upon the world of art as it existed in the late 19th century, the second act focuses upon those same issues as they existed in the late 20th century, when the musical was created. The second act was contemporary then, in 1984, today it is not. In what ways has art (and the business of art) “moved on” in the past forty years? How is it the same as it was one hundred and forty years ago? What about other arts forms, like popular music, television and movies; how much had they changed in the hundred years between 1884 and 1984 ... and today?
2. In the opening song of the first act, “Sunday In the Park With George,” Seurat’s model Dot observes that “artists are bizarre,” bizarre meaning strange, unusual, often to the point of amusement or even derision by the larger society. In the song “Gossip” one of the many citizens in the park observes the character George and remarks, “Artists are so crazy!” Why do artists have this reputation? Is this reputation justified?
3. Think of examples of artists from history (visual artists, conceptual artists, musical artists) or from those living today, whom someone might describe as “bizarre” or “crazy.” List their “bizarre” or “crazy” attributes. Go over that list and ask yourself how you feel about each of these attributes. Do these attributes contribute to their artistry? Do they distract from their artistry? What are some examples of artists whose behavior or outward appearance were once thought of as bizarre, crazy, or even scandalous or offensive, but are entirely acceptable, even considered “normal” in 2025?
4. Creating art inspired by one’s surroundings – drawing the people one sees, writing the words that others have spoken – involves a kind of spying, or even voyeurism, in this case a non-consensual observation and record. A Boatman makes a point of showing his disapproval that Georges has been drawing him without his consent. Later, Georges expresses discomfort when someone looks over his shoulder to see what he is drawing. He feels justified in observing but does not wish to be observed himself. Dot asks for a painting Georges made of her, he says though she was the subject it does not belong to her. What does the artist owe the subject of their art? Have you ever drawn a picture of someone who wasn’t aware you were doing so? Have you ever written down an overheard conversation because you found it interesting?
5. In the song “The Day Off,” one of the subjects of George’s painting, a coachman named Franz, says, “Work is what you do for others, liebchen. (“Liebchen” is a German word for someone you care about.) Art is what you do for yourself.” Franz has a desire to be an artist, but does not consider that practical, which is and has always been a prevailing belief; that creating art is an inherently self-involved, selfish act. Art is not, in and of itself, useful. Dot loves George, but marries Louis, a baker, because unlike Georges he is financially successful, and produces something useful. However, in 2025, this fictional baker’s product was long, long ago consumed and forgotten, while Seurat’s “A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte” hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago, a short walk from Millennium Park and Anish Kapoor’s 100 ton, shining metal sculpture “Cloud Gate” (popularly known as “The Bean”) another seemingly useless work of art that, like “La Grande Jette” is visited and witnessed by countless tourists a year. What is the value of art? How does one calculate the value of art? And what about performance art, intentionally degradable art, graffiti; are they less valuable because they are not meant to last? Who

are the artists from the past forty years that command respect? Which artists are famous, but not respected? When does creating art cross over from one's pastime to one's vocation? A hobby instead of a career?

6. The historic Georges Seurat died at the age of 31. He had married a woman named Madeleine with whom he had two children though both died in infancy. For the purposes of the musical, Sondheim and Lapine created a fictional lover for the character George, his model Dot, with whom he fathers a daughter named Marie, raised by the baker Louis as his own. This fiction allowed Sondheim and Lapine to create a second act which features an aged Marie and her grandson George (we'll call him George 1984) who is himself a successful artist. The creators of this musical take great pains to emphasize that these characters are not the actual progeny of the historic painter Georges Seurat, even as the character of Marie insists they are. This is called historical fiction, drawing upon actual history to create new work. What would the real Georges Seurat think of his portrayal in this fictional work? Would he like what he saw? Be offended? Find it amusing? What do the creators of historical fiction owe to the subjects of their work?
7. The act of creation is a step into the unknown, and that can be scary. The author Gene Fowler is credited as having said (somewhat wryly) that "writing is easy ... you only need to stare at a blank piece of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead." A blank piece of paper is, usually, a white piece of paper. There is nothing there, there are not yet words. George the installation artist (George 1984) knows that white light is all light, which must be broken into colors, the George of Act I, the painter, sees a white canvas and sees "endless possibilities." What do you see when you look at a blank sheet of paper? What are the challenges inherent in the act of creation? What creative challenges do you face when assigned to write an essay, choose an outfit, make something to eat?
8. The form of painting Seurat pioneered has come to be known as "Pointillism" for which the painter creates thousands of individual dots of distinct colors, rather than blending colors together and painting them with strokes. At a distance from the painting, the human eye stops seeing these individual points of color, and they blend together in the mind, creating for the viewer a coherent image. Before it was considered revolutionary, this practice was deemed to be bizarre. What was once considered by many to be merely a visual experiment is now considered to be a major movement towards Modern art – not to be confused with "modern" as in contemporary, but the capital M "Modern art" movement, which signaled a break with traditional conventions and modes of visual art. Why are some artists driven to do things differently? What is the difference between a successful artistic experiment and failure? Why do some artistic experiments succeed when others fail? Originally criticized for being rigid, static, and uninteresting, why is "La Grande Jatte" now considered a masterpiece? What do you have to say about the painting "La Grande Jatte" – after all, your opinion matters, too! What is your opinion of the Sondheim/Lapine musical *Sunday in the Park With George*?
9. Seurat was (as were several of his Impressionist antecedents) criticized for the subjects he chose to paint. Classical works were thought to be reserved for classical subjects; mythical, historic, religious or imperial figures – at least, if they were to be taken seriously. In "La Grande Jatte" Seurat depicts people from a variety of economic backgrounds, all occupying the same space. Why might this be thought to have been unacceptable or even scandalous? How does this compare to today?
10. Recently, British artist Thomas J. Price created a twelve-foot high statue of an anonymous woman dressed in casual, contemporary clothing for display in Times Square. Other bronze statues in Times Square include that of the 19th century soldier and chaplain Thomas J. Duffy, and also Broadway composer George M. Cohan. Neither of these statues ever received any controversy, but Price's new statue, called "Grounded In the Stars," has. Why? Does it matter that the subject of Price's new statue is

of a Black woman, while the other statues are of white men? What statement do you think Price is trying to make? What is considered an inappropriate subject for a work of art? Why do people still have such passionate opinions about creative works of art?

11. The historic Georges Seurat never sold any of his paintings. The fictional George of the second act (George 1984) has been financially successful in creating art installations, which he calls Chromolumines, which require electricity to function (George 1984 says, “no electricity, no art.”) The painting “La Grande Jatte” exists whether the lights are on or off, but in a manner similar to George 1984’s Chromolumine, the painting requires a human brain – and light – to see the painting and make it into a coherent image. To paraphrase a common philosophical query, “If a painting hangs in a gallery and there is no one there to see it, is it art?” To put it another way, if all human life on earth suddenly ceased to exist, what would art be? Define art.
12. When George 1984 visits the actual Île de la Jatte (literally “island of the big bowl” and site of “La Grande Jatte”) which is an island in the Seine River that runs through Paris, France, the audience is informed that the area has become crowded with blocky, Modernist architecture. In the 1980s, decades after these buildings were created, they were subject to criticism for their ugliness, their lack of sophistication, but in the time since have received reconsideration. Since the creation of the musical, *Sunday in the Park With George* tastes have again “moved on.” What were the fashion trends of ten years ago (the 2010s) which are today considered tacky? How far back do you have to go to find fashion trends that are considered classic? The 1990s? The 1980s? The 1970s? How many years will it be before the styles of the 2010s are considered classic?
13. As with their later collaboration, *Into the Woods* (1987), Sondheim and Lapine present a fairly straightforward and traditional narrative in the first act, which is then broken apart and reexamined in the second. *Into the Woods* braids together several well-known and beloved fairy tales which reach their anticipated conclusion by the end of the first act; the second act is a complicated examination of what happens next, after you have received what you always believed you wanted. In *Sunday* the first act illustrates what the artist needs and what they sacrifice to create their work, and culminates with the final creation of the painting “La Grande Jatte.” The second act, however, begins with the song “It’s Hot Up Here,” an absurd rumination on what the subjects of a painting might be thinking as they hang in a gallery or museum for all time, before introducing George 1984, his latest Chromolumine, and there are nearly fourteen minutes of non-musical drama (and comedy) before the next song begins, a reprise of “Gossip” from the first act. The second act is fragmented in other ways; the most familiar song being “Putting It Together” which is itself broken up, starting and stopping, broken up by dialogue as George 1984 interacts with his collaborators, promoters, funders and critics. How successfully do these different approaches to story telling (and singing!) compliment each other? In what ways are they different? What do these two acts, taken together, have to say about art, about the creative process? What happens to a work of art when the artist dies? Which artists (that includes actors, singers, writers) from your lifetime received reconsideration only after they died? Why are they seen differently only now that they are gone?
14. George 1984 calls himself an inventor as well as a visual artist. He is also an installation artist, creating works which transform a space, like a room, a gallery or a theater. He collaborates with an electrical engineer and a musical composer to bring his Chromolumines to life. The fictional George of Act I would appear to create his works entirely on his own; he sketches in the park, he paints alone in his studio. Does George of Act I have collaborators, even if he does not acknowledge them? If so, who are they? How are they necessary to the creation of his work? What are some advantages of creating artistic work with collaborator(s)? What are some disadvantages?
15. The musical *Sunday in the Park With George* marked the first in a successful string of collaborations

between composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim and the playwright and director James Lapine. During the process of development, Sondheim allowed himself to be subject to a development process which was not his custom – by the early 1980s Sondheim was already very successful, famous and respected – as the production received workshop productions and extensive revision based on the observations, comments and criticism they received during this process. What are valuable or helpful forms of criticism? What type of criticism can be useful but easily dismissed? Would you prefer to be graded on the first draft of your work, or do you seek criticism and notes in the development of your work?

16. In the second act, the museum director invites those assembled to witness George 1984's latest work to visit and consider occupancy in the new apartments which are being constructed above the museum. This moment is presented as a form of commentary about the ongoing need for funding in order to support the creative arts, and though some might find the interjection of this real estate pitch in the midst of an artistic presentation somewhat silly, did you know that as you are seated in the Hanna Theatre, watching today's performance, the office space above your heads was recently converted into apartments! If an audience for a theatrical performance were required to pay the entire cost of a production with the price of their tickets alone, without any additional funding to the theater, those ticket prices would be much, much higher. How many different ways do theaters – and museums – receive financial support in the United States today? How should they receive financial support? How should Government play a role in supporting the arts? How should corporations play a role in supporting the arts? How should you?
17. George 1984 has had one constant relationship throughout his life, the one that he has with his grandmother Marie. Marie laments the ending of her grandson's marriage, opining that there are only two worthwhile things we leave behind when we are gone, "Children and Art." Sondheim passed in 2021, he married late in life and fathered no children, and yet much of his creative output involves life-relationships (as it does in *Company*) and the responsibilities of parenthood (as it does in *Into the Woods*). In the song "Children and Art" what does Sondheim communicate about parenthood? Does someone need to have children to write about them? What do artistic creators need to do to accurately capture and present their subjects; on the canvas, on the stage? Are merely artists creative reporters of life, or what more is there to their work?
18. "Art is never finished, only abandoned," is a quote often attributed to Leonardo Da Vinci, though there is no evidence of his having actually said this. When you have a jigsaw puzzle, and you put all the pieces together, it is complete, you are done. How does a painter know when their painting is complete? A novelist when their book is concluded? An actor when their performance is perfect? Who makes this decision, the artist, or others? George 1984 has returned to the same subject time and again, and feels stuck in a creative rut. When is it time to "Move on"? From a project, a work of art, or even from a relationship?

Activities

Write Your Own Musical!

The first act focuses on the creation of Neo-Impressionist painter Georges Seurat's masterpiece "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte." This massive painting (the original is ten feet wide!) depicting a large number of citizens from different social classes engaged in a variety of activities provided creators Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine with a large number of interesting characters with whom they could populate their story.

What other famous or familiar works of art might inspire a musical, play, film script or short story? Think of "Nighthawks" by Edward Hopper, or "American Gothic" by Grant Wood. What other paintings feature interesting individuals in interesting settings?

Choose a famous painting that features people. Write a brief biography for each person depicted in the painting. Compose a poem for each of these characters, one which could be set to music. What genre of music would you choose for each of these poems? Brainstorm a summary for an original story or musical which brings these characters together and gives them life.

Your Family Tree

How much do you know about your relatives, or your ancestors? Create a family tree, including details such as occupation, vocation, or craft, location, place of origin, faith or political affiliation. Choose two family members, each from a different generation, and draw parallels and/or significant contrasts between them. One of these family members can be yourself! Write the outline for a story choosing a significant life event from each of these two family members which reflect and resonate with each other.

Create Your Own Pointillist Painting

Georges Seurat's masterpiece, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, is the most famous example of the art technique called "pointillism" where the artist uses hundreds or thousands of individual dots of color, rather than mixing and brushing color across the canvas, to create an image which is coherent in the mind when viewed from a distance.

Try making a Pointillist painting yourself! You will need paper, cotton swabs (e.g., Q-Tips), paint (e.g., tempera, watercolor) and a palette to keep the paints separate and to rest each individual swab you will be using as a brush.

To begin, use one color to create a basic shape. Try to keep each dot of color separate from the other dots of the same color. Once this color has dried somewhat, add a different color to compliment that original color. Maybe you started with blue, and are now adding yellow. When held at a distance, do the colors blur into green?

Choose a basic subject, like a dog or a flower in a vase. Use a base color to create the shape, compliment with additional colors to add highlights, and shade. Experiment; after all, that's what Seurat was doing!

Writing Prompts

1. Write a diary entry from Dot's perspective after one of her long sittings with George. What does she notice about him? How does she feel about being immortalized in a painting but overlooked in real life?
2. Imagine George Seurat is a guest on a modern talk show. Write the host's questions and George's answers. How would he explain his process of painting with tiny dots? How would he handle questions about Dot?
3. Write a letter from George (the great-grandson in Act II) to Seurat. What advice, frustrations, or questions would the modern artist share with his ancestor about art and legacy?
4. Choose one of the silent figures in *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (a boatman, a woman with a parasol, the monkey on a leash). Write their monologue as they "step out of the frame" to tell their hidden story.
5. Pretend you're creating the audio guide for visitors viewing Seurat's famous painting at a museum. Write a short script that blends art facts with dramatic storytelling, making the scene come alive for listeners.
6. Imagine Dot runs a modern advice column—perhaps called "Ask Dot." A reader writes in about feeling torn between following their passion and choosing a safe path. Write Dot's heartfelt (and perhaps witty) response.
7. Write a review for the Paris newspaper the day after Seurat first reveals his masterpiece. Do you praise his daring new technique—or mock it as strange, unfinished, or cold?
8. Imagine Dot and George's great-grandson meet in Act II. Write a short scene where she gives him advice about art, love, and choices.
9. Write a poem inspired by the song "Color and Light," using repetition and vivid imagery to capture the layering of dots and the layering of feelings.
10. Imagine all the characters from the painting gather for dinner. Write the dialogue of their conversations—who gossips, who complains, who feels honored to be painted, and who resents it?

How to Write A Review

MORE HOW AND LESS WHAT

A theater review is not a book review, you do not need to summarize what happens. Provide the necessary background so the reader knows the name of the play and the basics of what kind of play it is, and then move into your commentary. You do not need to explain WHAT the play is, instead write about HOW successfully it was presented.

THE ACTOR NOT THE CHARACTER

You can disapprove of the decisions a character makes, but how well did the ACTOR perform the role? Was their behavior appropriate to the part as written? Feel free to share your opinions, comparing or contrasting their work with other actors with whom you are familiar.

WHAT IS DIRECTION?

Maybe you have heard of a “director” in theater or film, but do you know what they do? It is not a director’s job to tell the actors how to say every line, but they are the person responsible for creating the general mood and concept for the production. What was your impression of the production as a whole? Was it too funny for a serious play? Or not amusing enough for a comic play? Use words to reflect back to the director how successful the production is as a whole.

DON’T FORGET THE DESIGN

The set you see and the sounds you hear are also unique to this one production of this play. Describe what you see and hear, but also be sure to make clear how successful these designs are in telling the story of the play.

IN CONCLUSION ...

While it is not necessary to give a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” your concluding sentence should summarize your impression of the production as a whole.

THEATER REVIEWS IN THE NEW MEDIA

Reviews in news websites may be 1000 words, they may be as brief as 300 words. Can you write a one-page review? Can you write a 100 word review, to post on Facebook? Do you think you could create a 140-character review that sums up the production for posting on Twitter?

A sample review written by a student follows this page.

A Sample Review Written by a Student

"Gambit": More Poetry Than History — Mark Wood

If Aristotle was correct when he said that poetry "is a higher thing than history," then "Royal Gambit," which opened Friday night at Pentacle Theater, is, I suppose, on the right track.

For those who were expecting a representational treatment of the life of England's Henry VIII, "Royal Gambit" was a shock, if not a disappointment. Those who sought poetry got it, although of a very dogmatic and simplistic sort.

This unusual, highly presentational play by Hermann Gressieker, directed by Ed Classen, is an indictment of modern man as a ruthless opportunist. The Tudor king is a representative of a rationalizing, shiftily society which has become "superior to the highest" while "wallowing in the depths."

As Henry uses the banners of "reason" and "humanism" to obtain then dispose of his six wives, so modern man uses them for his own pleasure and glorification, uses them to wage war in the name of peace, to hate in the name of love.

Such is the grim theme pleasingly presented by a company of seven actors, who performed their roles energetically, if unevenly. The presentational acting style employed here is difficult to perfect. It should be theatrical, yet believable; aimed at the head, yet acceptable to the heart.

Louise Larsen was a standout as Catherine of Aragon, Largely because she utilized this presentational approach and was not afraid of open theatricality. Her flamboyant stage presence, which needed to be toned down in her recent role in "Last of the Red Hot Lovers," found full vent here.

Henry's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, was portrayed by Gale Rieder, who quickly became an audience favorite. Her thick accent was letter-perfect and her direct humor was a welcome contrast to the bitter satire of the rest of the play.

The other four actresses—Kathy Stratton, Marcia Engblom, Polly Bond and Patricia Sloan—each had their exceptional moments. However, they generally seemed tied to more conventional, representational acting styles.

Ron Fox was superb in the role of Henry. Tuxedoed, leering with the look of a demonic marionette, the vacant stare of a deranged orator, Fox dominated the stage fully, commanding both in voice and stage presence.

The technical elements of the play were more than adequate. Musical accompaniment was appropriately sparse and simple.

At one point the play, King Henry roared, "In my realm I decide what constitutes tragedy!" Ironically, Gressieker strips modern man not only of his possibilities as a tragic figure worthy of any sympathies at all. In the final moments of the play, Catherine of Aragon announces the death of modern man and the birth of a new era. It is a scene of great hope, but it is not as profound as her earlier pronouncement to her husband that "the ways of the world are not so cut and dried!"

For my own part, I wish that "Royal Gambit's" statement were not so cut and dried. By making man out to be such a simple monster the play defeats its own purposes and turns poetry into scathing dogma, which is probably even less interesting than, say, history.

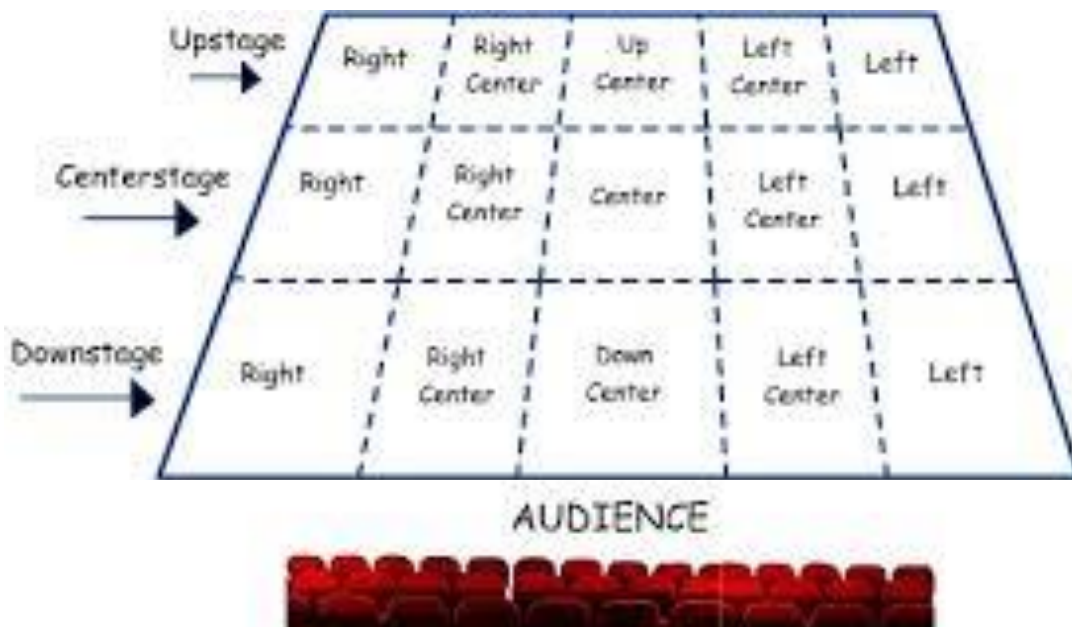
<http://faculty.chemeketa.edu/jrupert3/eng105/Annrev.html>

A Brief Glossary of Theater Terms

Apron	The part of the stage in front of the curtain
Auditorium or House	Where the audience sits
Beam Spread	The area a single light covers
Blackout	Turning off all the lights in the theatre at once
Board	The control center for lights, sound, or both
Book (The)	A copy of the script containing all notes and blocking
Box Office	Where the audience buys tickets
Box Set	A set in a proscenium with three walls
Call	The time certain members of the production need to be at the theatre
Cheat	When an actor takes a realistic action and modifies it for the audience to see
Cloth	Scenery painted on fabric
Cue	A line or action that immediately leads to another action by the actor (for them to speak) designer or stage manager (to change the lights or sound)
Curtain Call	The bows at the end of the show
Dimmer	Equipment that controls the brightness of a light
Director	The creative head of a production. They create a vision for the show and work with actors, designers, and crew to bring that vision to life
Flat	A frame covered with canvas, cardboard, or some other light material which is then painted as part of the set
Floodlight	A light that has a wide unfocused beam covering most of the stage
Fly	A system used to raise set backgrounds, set pieces, or potentially actors
Follow-spot	A spotlight that can follow an actor as they move across around the stage
Footlights	Floodlights on the floor at the front of the stage.
Gel	A piece of plastic placed over the light to change its color
Greenroom	A room where the company can relax, eat, or potentially watch the show if a TV and a camera has been rigged
Notes	The director's notes on the performance or rehearsal
Pit	An area between the stage and the audience where an orchestra can sit (typically below audience level)
Producer	The person responsible for all logistical and financial aspects of a production (as opposed to the creative head, the director).
Properties or Props	Items used by actors in a show (such as swords, plates, watches, etc.)

Proscenium	A type of stage defined by a proscenium arch. Proscenium theatres typically distinctly separate the audience and stage by a window (defined by the proscenium arch). The stage typically will not go far past the proscenium arch (the Ohio Theatre, for example).
Raked Stage	A stage that is angled (upstage is the top of the hill and downstage the bottom) so that the audience can see the action more clearly
Set	The scenery used in a scene or throughout the play
Set Dressing	Parts of the set that don't serve a practical function but make the set look realistic.
Spotlight	A type of light that is focused so that it can light a very specific area
Strike	Taking apart and removing a set from the theatre
Thrust	A stage that goes beyond the proscenium arch so that the audience is sitting on three sides of the set - in front, and on either side (the Hanna Theatre, for example).
Tracks	The rails on which curtains (tabs) run.
Trap	A hole in the stage covered by a door where actors or set pieces can exit or enter
Understudy	An actor who learns all of the lines and blocking of another actor (typically one of the actors in a lead role) who can perform in case the main actor cannot go on
Upstage	The rear of the stage
Wings	The sides of the stage typically blocked off by curtains where actors and crew can stand and wait for their cues

STAGE DIRECTIONS



Learning Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7

Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.A

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.1.A

Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.A

Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.B

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).



Student Matinee Series 2025-2026 Season

Sunday in the Park with George by Stephen Sondheim & James Lapine

Dial M for Murder adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher, original by Frederick Knott

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

The Heart of Robin Hood by David Farr

Macbeth by William Shakespeare

Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson—Apt. 2B by Kate Hamill

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COST: \$150
Receive certificate with 8 contact hours

Join us for a dynamic workshop on *Romeo and Juliet*, designed to help you bring Shakespeare's tragedy to life in the classroom. Gain practical strategies to make the play's language, themes and characters accessible through interactive activities and performance-based techniques, fostering a lasting appreciation for Shakespeare.



1-DAY WORKSHOP **Deep Dive + Performance: *Macbeth***

MARCH 20, 2026 | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, *plus evening performance*
COST: \$175
Includes performance & Director's Night discussion, Receive certificate with 11 contact hours

This immersive workshop is partnered with a performance and live discussion with the production's director. The workshop is designed to provide you with innovative strategies to make *Macbeth* accessible to students, deepening their understanding of characters, themes and language. Attending the play allows you to experience the text in practice, seamlessly merging words with performance to deepen your understanding of the story and better equip you to convey that insight to your students.

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School Residency Program

Bring the Classics to Your Classroom!

Launched in 1981, Great Lakes Theater's in-school residency program is now one of the most successful artist-in-residence programs in the country. Each year over 16,000 students in over 100 schools experience the pleasure, power and relevance of classic literature brought to life in their own classrooms.



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For more information contact Lisa Ortenzi at 216.453.4446

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Kulas Musical Theatre Series
at Great Lakes Theater





Sara Bruner, Producing Artistic Director

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the company seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, bringing students to the theater for matinee performances and sending specially trained actor-teachers to the schools for weeklong residencies developed to explore classic drama from a theatrical point of view. GLT is equally dedicated to enhancing the theater experience for adult audiences. To this end, GLT regularly serves as the catalyst for community events and programs in the arts and humanities that illuminate the plays on its stage.

Great Lakes Theater is one of only a handful of American theaters that have stayed the course as a classic theater. As GLT celebrates over a decade in its permanent home at the Hanna Theatre, the company reaffirms its belief in the power of partnership, its determination to make this community a better place in which to live, and its commitment to ensure the legacy of classic theater in Cleveland.

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