

## ABSTRACT

A Director's Approach to *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*

Meredith Virginia Sutton

Thesis Chairperson: DeAnna M. Toten Beard, Ph.D.

This thesis concerns the Baylor University Theatre production of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, as directed by Meredith Sutton. Chapter One provides the history of the creation of the *Schoolhouse Rock* franchise, the development of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, and a critical and historical review of musicals. Chapter Two analyzes the script as well as educational theories that support its success as a learning tool. Chapter Three encompasses the elements of design in the production, while Chapter Four discusses pre-production decisions, auditions, rehearsals, and the revival of the production. Chapter Five concludes with a critical evaluation of the production.

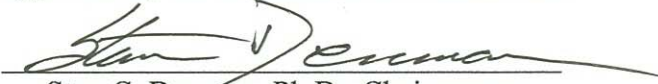
A Director's Approach to *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*

by

Meredith Virginia Sutton

A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Theatre Arts

  
Stan C. Denman, Ph.D., Chairperson


Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Master of Fine Arts

Approved by the Thesis Committee

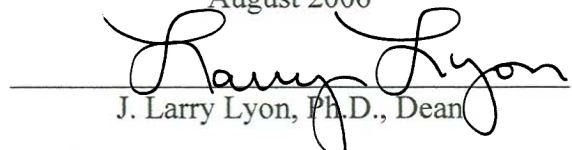
  
DeAnna M. Toten Beard, Ph.D., Chairperson

  
Marion D. Castleberry, Ph.D.

  
Stan C. Denman, Ph.D.

  
Tony L. Talbert, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School  
August 2006

  
J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Copyright © 2006 by Meredith Virginia Sutton

All rights reserved

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	v
Acknowledgments	vi
Chapter One: American Musical Theatre and the <i>Schoolhouse Rock</i> Franchise	1
Introduction	1
Musicals	3
History of the <i>Schoolhouse Rock</i> Franchise	13
Cultural Materialism and <i>Schoolhouse Rock</i>	21
Theatre in Chicago and <i>Schoolhouse Rock Live!</i>	26
Chapter Two: An Analysis of <i>Schoolhouse Rock Live!</i>	32
Introduction	32
Synopsis	33
<i>Schoolhouse Rock Live!</i> : A Revue	35
<i>SRL!</i> 's Balance of Theory and Practice: The Conjoining of Behaviorism and Constructivism	38
Chapter Three: The Design Process	44
Introduction	44
Scenic Design	45
Set Design	46
The Proscenium	48
The Screen	48
Props	49
Costume Design	49
Costumes	50
Make-up	51
Lights	53
Sound Design	54
Conclusion	55
Chapter Four: The Production Process	58
Pre-production Decisions	58
Auditions	59
Rehearsals	61
Problems	65
The Gimmicks	68
Verb: That's What's Happening	68
A Noun is a Person, Place or Thing	69
Three is a Magic Number	69

Mother Necessity	71
Sufferin' 'til Suffrage	71
Lolly, Lolly, Lolly	72
Unpack Your Adjectives	72
Just a Bill	73
The Preamble	74
Ready or Not, Here I Come	74
Do the Circulation	75
Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla	75
Figure Eight	76
A Victim of Gravity	77
Zero, My Hero	78
Conjunction Junction	78
Great American Melting Pot	79
Elbow Room	79
Interplanet Janet	80
Interjections	80
The Tale of Mr. Morton	81
Interjections Reprise	81
The Encore Performance	81
Chapter Five: Conclusions	85
Appendix A	93
Appendix B	101
Works Cited	120

## LIST OF FIGURES

Color Plate #1: <i>Interplanet Janet</i>	101
Color Plate #2: <i>A Noun is a Person, Place or Thing</i>	102
Color Plate #3: <i>A Victim of Gravity</i>	103
Color Plate #4: <i>The Tale of Mr. Morton</i>	104
Color Plate #5: <i>The Preamble</i>	105
Color Plate #6: <i>Great American Melting Pot</i>	106
Color Plate #7: <i>Mother Necessity</i>	107
Color Plate #8: <i>Sufferin' 'til Suffrage</i>	108
Color Plate #9: <i>Pre-show at Waco Hall</i>	109
Color Plate #10: <i>A Noun is a Person, Place or Thing</i>	110
Color Plate #11: <i>Three is a Magic Number</i>	111
Color Plate #12: <i>Sufferin' 'til Suffrage</i>	112
Color Plate #13: <i>Unpack Your Adjectives</i>	113
Color Plate #14: <i>Figure Eight</i>	114
Color Plate #15: <i>Conjunction Junction</i>	115
Color Plate #16: <i>Interjections Reprise</i>	116
Color Plate #17: <i>Pre-show at Waco Hall</i>	117
Color Plate #18: <i>1,500 Fans at Waco Hall</i>	118
Color Plate #19: <i>SRL! Cast with Brookview Elementary at Waco Hall</i>	119

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my appreciation to the students, faculty, and staff of the Baylor University Department of Theatre Arts for their support and encouragement during the play production and thesis writing process. The cast, crew, and production staff are equal to none. Their creativity and skill of craft were demonstrated time and again. I extend special thanks to Stan Denman, Ph.D., who first suggested the play, to Marion Castleberry, Ph.D., who never let me give up, to Tony Talbert, Ph.D., whose enthusiasm alone allowed Chapter Two to be written, and to DeAnna Toten Beard, Ph.D., who is the single most amazing woman in the universe. This program has been an adventure in learning, and I thank Dan “My Man” Inouye for the pleasure of his company along the way. Many thanks to my family, both for the sacrifices they made providing dance, piano, and art lessons while I was young, and for the constant love and support that I receive and benefit from daily. Isaac, Noah, and Seth: Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make this happen for us.

## CHAPTER ONE

### American Musical Theatre and the *Schoolhouse Rock* Franchise

#### *Introduction*

*Schoolhouse Rock Live!* is a musical whose broad appeal is two-fold—entertainment and education. A directing thesis about a theatrical production generally begins with a biographical sketch of the playwright, an exploration of other works by the playwright, a discussion of the place of the play within the author's canon, and an evaluation of noteworthy past productions of the play. From there, the author can analyze the elements of the play and discuss in detail the particular artistic choices that the director made in the thesis production. However, in the case of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* this traditional approach is not always useful; in fact, it becomes at times all but impossible.

*SRL!* is based on the eponymous series of popular television cartoons that originated in the early 1970s. The co-creators of the television franchise made their living in advertising rather than theatre, and they employed dozens of artists to compose the forty-seven songs that appeared over the series. The libretto to the 1993 stage musical *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* was co-written by three members of a small Chicago theatre, and the team has not produced additional material since. For all of these reasons, a biographical sketch of the "author" of *SRL!* would be impractical. Another issue that limits the effectiveness of a traditional analysis of the play is its genre and dramatic structure. *SRL!* is a musical revue rather than a book musical, meaning that it places little



emphasis on dialogue and character development, relying instead on a thinly constructed plot to hold together a collection of musical numbers.

However, the original mission of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*—to entertain while educating—suggests an exciting opportunity for an individualized, nontraditional, analytical approach to the play. To understand the entertainment value of *SRL!*, the play's original development and its unique dramaturgical structure as a musical revue based on a television program must be explored. The creation and successful application of *Schoolhouse Rock* as an educational vehicle can be dissected in order to understand the series' impact over the last four decades. The successful blending of pleasure and purpose in *Schoolhouse Rock* and *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, coupled with the longevity and success of the entire franchise, is an interesting case study in cultural materialism. Together, these considerations make for a thorough and practical analysis of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* and illuminate the particular approach to the play for the thesis production at Baylor University Theatre.

The first chapter of the thesis will therefore discuss the history of the musical revue genre, the development of the *Schoolhouse Rock* television series, the issues of popular commercial culture which surround the franchise, and its subsequent use as the source for the musical created by Scott Ferguson, George Keating, and Kyle Hall. Chapter Two examines the structure of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* as a musical revue and takes a close look at the educational theories that under gird both the songs and the play as a whole. The third chapter explores the design elements which were developed for the thesis production, and the fourth chapter details the entire rehearsal process. Finally, the

thesis concludes with a brief chapter of critical reflection about the strengths and weakness of the production as well as the director.

### *Musicals*

A search for a clear definition of American musical theatre among the various scholarly studies of the genre is like trying to find two zebras with matching stripes. Even its historical roots are argued. In her 1984 article, “Origin of Species: Conflicting Views of American Musical Theater History,” Edith Borroff identifies twenty-eight differing historical origins used by academics. From Hugo Leichtentritt’s theory that musical comedy “was derived upon Jewish sensitivities brought to bear upon Negro styles” to Abe Lafe’s assumption that the American musical was modeled after the European influence of the burlesque-extravaganza and operetta (104), the theories are not only varied, but competing. Borroff then adds her “antitheory” as the twenty-ninth, “which claims simply that metaphors of descent and derivation are false. A creative person is influenced by his or her predecessors, potentially by everything he or she has ever experienced; the process of selection remains mysterious, but certainly it is not genetic” (105). For Borroff then, there is no such thing as the singular, definitive, and clear story of the development of musical theatre. While this may well be true, we can still categorize variations in the form and trace significant influences on this most American of theatrical genres.

According to Merriam-Webster, a musical is “a film or theatrical production typically of a sentimental or humorous nature that consists of musical numbers and dialogue based on a unifying plot.” However, the definition places limitations on what a musical is by its use of the word “plot.” A more accurate and thorough definition would

add the words “or theme” to the end of the entry. Without the addition, musicals are limited to operas, operettas, musical comedies, and the traditional American book musical. With the addition of the unifying element of theme to the definition of musical, the category of musical revue becomes a complementary genre to the book musical.

Generally speaking, a musical revue is a theatrical performance that presents popular songs organized by some sort of through line. A book musical on the other hand is defined as a play in which song and dance are used to further plot, character, and thought. Yet the simultaneous development of musical revues and book musicals in American theatre history makes such distinctions of form very difficult to trace. Indeed, it is not until well into the twentieth century that people began to feel the need to clarify various sub-genres of musical theatre.

Like most things American, the theatre in the United States was born from a cutting of a European root. While music has been an element of theatre since the Greeks, and even shepherded through the Elizabethan period by Shakespeare, the musical as a genre saw its birth in the seventeenth century Italian art form of opera, when the first theatrical tale was set entirely to music. The eighteenth century saw the opera morph into the ballad opera, or operetta, in England, where dialogue moved the plot, and the music was used as an emotional crutch to establish the sentimental value. As the rise of the English operetta coincided with the theatrical beginnings of colonial America, it was all but coincidence that the first performance of musical theatre in the Colonies was an operetta. The earliest speculation of a musical theatre performance in the American colonies was of a London ballad opera performed in Charleston in 1703; however, the

earliest recorded performance was not for another thirty-two years. (Bordman *American Musical* 1)

An endeavor to change the tone of musical performance in America, “a new Comic Opera” entitled *The Disappointment* by the American Company (a troupe of British actors) in April of 1767 lived up to its name when the press preyed on the prudish sentiment of the masses, and the production was closed before it opened as to not disenfranchise the company—which already battled the general population’s opposition to theatre—from its patrons. In his history of the American musical, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, Gerald Bordman credits *The Disappointment* as “one of the precursors of musical comedy” (2-3). Fourteen years later—the Revolution now won—the new nation saw perhaps the first “American” attempt at musical theatre in *The Temple of Minerva*. The piece by Francis Hopkinson, who called his work “oratorical entertainment,” served to usher in another genre onto the musical scene—the spectacle or extravaganza. The performance was presented as a concert<sup>1</sup> in Philadelphia; the cast sang of Minerva and her high priest combining the talents of France and America in eternal allegiance to each other as they closed with homage to General Washington. (Bordman *American Musical* 3)

The first three-quarters of the nineteenth century saw little advancement of American musical theatre. On Broadway, the straight play and serious drama dominated the playbills; however, orchestras and musical (song and dance) entertainers were used to entertain the audience before the show and during intermissions. As drama dominated

---

<sup>1</sup>During this time of rampant anti-theatrical sentiment in America, largely because of the Puritan population in the colonies, theatrical events were presented as “lectures” or “concerts” rather than “plays” to make the public less nervous about the sinfulness of the event.

most of the early century, the precursors for several genres of musical theatre found their way to stages. A forerunner of the musical revue was seen in Charles Mathews' 1835 production of *Comic Annual*, which was a series of sketches of cities, countries, and their characters. (Bordman *American Musical* 7-8) A notable precursor of the book musical appeared out of burlesque performance in 1866 when a troupe of Parisian ballet dancers were stranded in New York. They were incorporated into performances of a melodrama called *The Black Crook*, and the combination of the dance with the spectacle, music, and story was so popular that the production ran for sixteen months and inspired many imitations. (Brockett and Hildy 350) While not the only production of its kind in the era, *A New Glance at New York*—a *Guys and Dolls* of its era—is considered the real beginnings of the book musical. The play, which opened at New York's Olympic theatre in 1848<sup>[0]</sup>, used dialogue to prompt the characters' songs of sentiment and thereby to support the action of the play. (Bordman *American Musical* 7-8)

Around the same time, the American musical revue began to be developed on Vaudeville stages. Vaudeville was a variety entertainment born of Tom and Jerry shows (a series based on the adventures of two cousins), burlesques, and black-face minstrels. While the productions showed a much more unpleasant or unglamorous side of life than operas, they maintained the truths as tongue-in-cheek. (Bordman *American Musical* 7-13) Ned Harrigan and Tony Hart<sup>2</sup> led the migration to the Broadway stages, to be followed later by Joe Weber and Lew Fields (Flinn 100). When Harrigan and Hart took over management of the Theatre Comique at the beginning of the 1876-1877 season,

---

<sup>2</sup>Hart and Harrigan achieved much of their success at the Theatre Comique, a popular Variety hall, with playlets by Harrigan that generally contained a couple of songs by David Braham. In May of 1875, the two left the Comique to stage a near-full length play at Wallack's that contained a small variety bill in order to fill the evening and appease loyal followers. (Bordman *American Musical* 39)

many thought that the pair would retain the theatre as a Vaudeville house, but with the rising popularity of Harrigan's sketches and spectacles, the house became the breeding ground of the revue (Bordman *American Musical* 41). From 1873 to 1903, the productions of the pairs featured intertwined skits of caricatures of immigrants, ethnic groups, and the poor and middle classes. The theatricality of the lives of segregated, ethnic, and "common" cultures brought a new demographic to the theatre houses who delighted in their reflection onstage making them feel like part of America. (Flinn 100)

But it was Florenz Ziegfeld who established the shape and form of the musical revue, successfully producing on Broadway and revolutionizing theatre in the first thirty years of the twentieth century.

Even before Ziegfeld focused on the musical revue, his early productions borrowed heavily from the European night clubs and cabarets with chorus lines of beautiful women as seen in *The Little Duchess* and 1906's *The Parisian Model*. The *Follies of 1907* was Ziegfeld's first official revue and was met with moderate success that led to a tour and what would be many more editions. While Ziegfeld had a taste for quality and understood the importance of collaboration, he did not have a discerning ear for music. The 1908 edition of *Follies* began another trend in the musical revue when Ziegfeld used "Shine on Harvest Moon," which was the first hit song to be used in a revue. He did not stop with that hit and went on to use popular songs (many by Irving Berlin), popular stars like W.C. Fields, Fred Astaire, Will Rogers, and Ed Wynn, and popular forms of entertainment, including tap, that ensured successful runs and editions of the *Follies* for years. (Flinn 102-4) The use of popular culture—in music, dance, and

celebrities—differentiated it from its Parisian ancestors and its Vaudeville cousins.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, just as the book musical (or musical comedy) was developing from European operetta, the musical revue was born from Parisian night clubs, cabarets, and the Vaudeville stage.

To be sure, at the turn of the century there was not always an easy distinction to be made between the musical revue and the book musical. Often musical revues feature hints of a story while the plots of book musicals can feature storylines that are transparent at best. The main difference is that book musicals contain character driven plots that move the story along. (Flinn 99) The 1902 program for Ziegfeld's *The Little Duchess*, a show that also ran in 1901 with a libretto by Harry B. Smith, read "Owing to the length of the performance the plot has been eliminated" (Flinn 102). Arguably, that little phrase unintentionally announced the birth of the musical revue as a genre within the world of musical theatre. Though it was not the first musical revue, it was one of the first that completely disassociated itself from a story.

It was in 1914 that George M. Cohan's *Hello, Broadway!* finally gave the musical revue credibility. After the first two weeks of *Hello, Broadway*'s run, the *Dramatic Mirror*'s head story read, "The revue, which for the last two years has been the most popular form of musical entertainment in London and Paris, is invading New York. . . . The musical revue seems to be what the public wants, judging from attendance . . ." (Bordman *American Musical* 350). One particular element of the play proves that *Hello,*

---

<sup>3</sup>Ziegfeld did more for theatre than make his name synonymous with the musical revue and spectacle. He produced many book musical hits, including *Show Boat*. His collaboration with Joseph Urban revolutionized scenic design in the theatre through color and design. Sets were united by a color palette and designed to flow seamlessly during changes that often had the actors remove pieces of the set as they exited the stage. (Flinn 105-6; Bordman *American Musical* 350) Ziegfeld also began social change in theatre by hiring the first black entertainer, Bert Williams, to work on Broadway and firing any who refused to work with him (Flinn 104). All of these were capitalized on by the emerging book musical.

*Broadway* was more than a little aware of its own groundbreaking nature. Throughout the show there was a hat box on stage that, according to the performers, contained the plot. At the end of the show the hat box was opened to reveal nothing—a visual statement to that fact that there never was a plot, and the success of the show proved it was never needed. It was a “statement” that defined the American musical revue. (Flinn 110)

The book musical began its insurgence into musical theatre in the seven years from 1914-1921 for several reasons. First, as war in Europe raged, America found itself disenchanted with all things European, and with the sinking of the Titanic, began to believe that Europe was not invincible. The second, was a coming of age of an original American culture, as the development of musical art forms (jazz, ragtime, tap, etc.) gave American artists self-confidence in who they were. The third reason was the timely deaths of several composers whose Central European origins influenced the tastes of Broadway. (Bordman *American Musical* 343)

Oddly enough, the first successful book musical of the period was Charles Frohman's 1914 production of *The Girl From Utah*. Though American in subject, the production was imported from a London stage. The plot worked for American audiences as it followed a Mormon girl, Una Trance, fleeing to London, to avoid an unwanted Mormon marriage. While there, she meets an actor with whom she falls in love. The adventure unfolds as the pursuant Mormon would-be husband leaves with Una, who very craftily leaves a trail for her beloved to follow. Upon confrontation, the Mormon realizes that Una and the actor belong together and returns to the states alone. Though the show had been a hit on London's West End, Frohman realized that the score by Paul Rubens



and Sidney Jones did not equal the book that had been written. When the show moved to New York, he hired Jerome Kern to interpolate Americana into the score, which insured the success of the production in America and his fame as a composer and lyricist.

(Bordman *American Musical* 344; Bordman *Companion* 250)

Though *The Girl From Utah* was a success in its own right, the Golden Age of the American book musical did not begin until 1924, for several different reasons. While early theatrical companies were careful to label productions with non-antagonistic words such as “concert” and “lecture,” America had grown accustomed to, if not accepting of, the theatre. The popularity of the musical revue with its demographically diverse audiences led to the mass productions of the revue, demonstrating the capitalist economics that have always governed America, but tastes began to change as America roared into the twenties and became more romanticized. The beginning of the era also saw a changing to the musical guard from the old school composers and lyricists such as A. Baldwin Sloane and Raymond Hubbell—early twentieth century Broadway composers whose songs never found lasting popularity—to the innovative and unique talents of Ira Gershwin (“I’ve Got a Crush on You,” “Embraceable You,” “I’ve Got Rhythm”), Lorenz Hart (“My Funny Valentine”), and Cole Porter (“Anything Goes,” “I Get a Kick Out of You”) whose works revolutionized the musicality of theatre and continue in their popularity today. Along with this new breed of composers came the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP). This organization, which manages the rights of music and lyrics of composers and lyricists, began to win the rights of entire scores for their clientele giving composers more control over material once it was published. (Bordman *American Musical* 437)

While *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1924* enjoyed its second longest run of the *Follies* with 401 performances, the critical success of the season went to the Americanized operetta *Rose-Marie*, which would not be surpassed in the box offices until *Oklahoma!* twenty years later. Oscar Hammerstein II saw the achievement of the success because “the musical numbers of this play [were] such an integral part of the action that [they did] not think [they] should list them as separate episodes.” He went further to say, “The history of musical comedy has passed through a variety of phases, but the type that persists, that shows the signs of ultimate victory, is the operetta—the musical play with music and plot welded together in skillful cohesion” (Bordman *American Musical* 440). He would later state that there was one type of musical that would “attain the heights of grand opera” which was the musical play (book musical), that avoids the topical and contemporary to sentimentalize America, a direct descendant of the operetta (Bordman *American Musical* 588). The next several decades from the 1920s into the mid-1960s proclaimed the success of the American book musical and can be described merely by listing titles: *Show Boat*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Babes in Arms*, *Oklahoma!*, *On the Town*, *Carousel*, *Finian’s Rainbow*, *Brigadoon*, *High Button Shoes*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, *Peter Pan*, *Redhead*, *The Music Man*, *Flower Drum Song*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *The Fantasticks*, *The Sound of Music*, *She Loves Me*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and many, many others.

This is not to say that musical revue died its death in the early 1920s. On the contrary, Ziegfeld’s *Follies*, the Cohan revues, Irving Berlin’s *The Music Box Revues*, and other musical revues, in one form or another, were successful through the rest of the decade up to the stock market crash. They would also see success in the 1930s and even

into the 1940s with *Red, Hot and Blue!*, *Anything Goes*, *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1943*, and *Take a Bow* (Bordman *American Musical* 551, 590, 596) but the sheer number of revues running at a time would never be the same. After 1929, they would rarely reach the success they had garnered in the first thirty years of the century.

The 1950s is often considered the heyday of Broadway, and indeed the early years of the Vietnam War saw a decline in popular escapist theatre. The popularity of the television, the lost romantic notions of war, and the changing face of New York's Time Square (bars and pornography shops in place of the trendy night clubs and restaurants) aided in the decline of the sentimental book musical that had revolutionized the American theatre in the previous decades. While musical theatre was no match for the changing of the cultural tide, it proved its sensitive relationship to the deflating American economy as ticket prices soared due to inflation. (Bordman *American Musical* 699) The 1970s would produce a more aggressive style of book musical with edgier music and libretto in the likes of *Hair*, *Sweet Charity*, and *Cabaret* that challenged the form of the book musical by introducing rock music and experimenting with play structure. However, sentimentality would occasionally reign as demonstrated by the successes of shows like *Mame* and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

The seventies continued a lackluster enthusiasm for musicals though there were successes. In the eighties and nineties, the British invasion of Broadway by Sir Andrew Lloyd Weber and the intricate lyrics and overlapping melodies of Stephen Sondheim revived interest in musical theatre. Book musicals such as *Grease*, *Pippin*, *The Wiz*, *Chicago*, *Annie*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *Sweeney Todd*, *the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, *Woman of the Year*, *A Chorus Line*, *Dreamgirls*, *Little Shop of Horrors*,

*Sunday in the Park with George, Les Misérables, Miss Saigon, The Who's Tommy, The Goodbye Girl, Kiss of the Spiderwoman, Blood Brothers, and Phantom of the Opera* found success, and so did the reemergence of the revue. The traditional musical revue was seen in the likes of *That's Entertainment, Side by Side by Sondheim, Dancin', Cats, Sugar Babies, Sophisticated Ladies, Black and Blue, Jerome Robbins' Broadway, The Will Rogers Follies, Five Guys Named Moe, and Jelly's Last Jam* with success. Also during this time, revues in the form of one-man shows by Bette Midler, Liza Minelli, Josephine Baker, Sammy Davis, Jr., Carol Channing, Diana Ross, Peter Allen, Shirley Maclaine, proved to be as successful. (Bordman *American Musical* 721-801) The mid-1990s into the present continue a theme of successes for good shows rather than genres with the new musicals and revivals. Recent surges of interest in musical theatre have resulted in record-breaking attendance, increased revenues, and rave reviews for book musicals such as *Ragtime*, the revival of *Kiss Me, Kate*, the revival of *42nd Street, The Producers, Wicked* and the many Disney cartoon musicals, and revues, such as *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk, Smokey Joe's Café, and Fosse*.

In the middle of these successes was *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, which enjoyed a successful run in Chicago and year-long Off-Broadway run.

### *History of the Schoolhouse Rock Franchise*

*Schoolhouse Rock* was not another entry in a long line of musical credits for its creators. Nor was it another notch in a television belt. However, the creative team behind the phenomena had been around both for years as creative executives of a successful New York advertising agency. So how then do advertising men come to create what would become a children's educational television juggernaut?

The story of *Schoolhouse Rock* began during a horseback ride in Wyoming, when the multiplication difficulties of a boy named Davey, and the timeless appeal of the Rolling Stones became the catalysts for an idea that would become one of the most popular children's educational series of all time. Davey was the son of David B. McCall, president of McCaffrey and McCall Advertising, and he was having problems remembering multiplication tables. While riding that horse during his vacation in 1971, McCall realized that while his son could not retain the fundamentals of his math education, he knew every lyric of every Rolling Stones song. McCall understood his son needed a way to memorize fundamental educational facts as easily as he remembered rock-and-roll lyrics. (Yohe and Newall xi)

McCall returned from his vacation and shared his conundrum with Tom Yohe and George Newall, his creative team at McCaffrey and McCall. "How do we do this?" (Yohe and Newall xi). McCall put the question to his colleagues. The three quickly hatched a vision of mathematics set to music.

As fate would have it, McCall's creative team of Yohe and Newall were more than talented ad-men. Tom Yohe's colleagues describe him as being "entirely more talented than he needed to be" (Burd 6). In addition to being a successful executive, Yohe was also an extremely talented animator and cartoonist. Most "creative directors" were more managers than artists, delegating portions of projects out to assistants. However, Yohe actually created his own storyboards and created his own characters, which would come to life with one stroke of his pen. (Burd 6-7)

Newall was especially talented as well, with an extensive background in music. He was a music major in college and played jazz piano for a living from the time he

arrived in New York in 1960. When he later got into advertising, he had a penchant for combining the two. For his client Pfizer, he put together a deal where the Beatles would endorse its new aftershave which would be called “Help” after the English band’s number one hit. The deal fell through, however, when the pop stars asked for \$1,000,000. But all was not lost as Newall simply renamed the aftershave and composed a new song. Over the next ten years the popular “Hai Karate” earned Pfizer over \$200 million. (Burd 13)

The first attempt at McCall’s idea of combining education with catchy kid-friendly music was given to a jingle writer at McCaffrey and McCall. The result was less than successful as McCall described it as a cross between the melodic soothing tones of “The Singing Lady”<sup>4</sup> and the verbiage of an ointment ad. The decision was made to look for a fresh sound that was uninhibited, if not off-beat. (Yohe and Newall xi-xii)

Newall spent many evenings at the Hickory House bebop club, which gave him an outlet to play his music (Burd 9). As a result, he became acquainted with many of the musicians there. “There was a Christmas party at McCaffrey and McCall, and I was asked to play,” recalled Newall in some personal notes contributed in the CD jacket of the *Schoolhouse Rock* box set. “So I hired the Hickory House rhythm section – Grady Tate (drums) and Ben Tucker (bass)” (Burd 10). Heeding McCall’s suggestion, Newall asked Tate and Tucker if they knew anyone who could write the kind of music they needed. Tucker gave him the name of his partner, Bob Dorough.

---

<sup>4</sup>In the 1930s and 1940s, Irene Wicker was known as the “The Singing Lady” and hosted the first children’s program on network radio. While a true pioneer in radio and children’s entertainment, she is best known for the discovery of Mel Torme. Torme won a singing contest at the 1934 Chicago’s World’s Fair, when he won a singing contest she judged. She made him a child star when she cast him in a radio soap opera. She received a Peabody Award in 1960 for her work in children’s media. (“The Singing Lady,” *Did You Know?*)

Dorough, a jazz musician and composer from Texas, whose songs contained lyrics about mattress tags and other offbeat articles, was brought in to give the idea of entertaining children's educational music a try. Dorough immersed himself in his daughter's math books and returned several weeks later with "Three is a Magic Number". The sound and lyrics were exactly what Newall and Yohe were looking for. "We were completely blown away. Astonished. Astounded," said the pair in *Schoolhouse Rock! The Official Guide*. "Bob had taken the number three and twisted and turned it so many ways that it had truly been transformed into 'a magic number.'" (xii).

As the team realized the magic of "Three," the recording was given to several teachers in New York's Bank Street College of Education system—whose board just happened to include David McCall. When the songs were tested in both urban and suburban schools, the response from teachers was overwhelming. They were able to use the song not only as a tool for students in remedial mathematics programs, but as an introduction to multiplication tables for younger students. (Yohe and Newall xii)

The success of "Three" in the classroom prompted the creative team to explore another avenue. If the notion of a financially successful product had not crossed the minds of these executives in the world of selling and pitching, the next step in the *Schoolhouse Rock* journey would. Dorough's lyrics and rhythms lent themselves easily to visualization, so the team decided to take the next step to create an educational film. Given the talents of Yohe and Newall, the division of labor seemed pretty clear. Yohe would serve as co-creative director over animation with Newall his counterpart over music. Yohe not only oversaw the animation, but jumped at the chance to do the

illustrating himself. “I started drawing the little magician and stuff,” explains Yohe, who worked at his kitchen table at night because he so enjoyed the project. (Burd 7)

Yohe’s storyboards caught the eye of Radford Stone, another executive at McCaffrey and McCall. Stone’s main account—American Broadcasting Company Television Network (ABC)—was looking for children’s programming of the “pro-social” sort. At the time, ABC was under intense parental and political pressure in regards to the naughty, violent, and commercial content of its Saturday morning line-up. (“History,” *Schoolhouse Rock!*) Stone set up a meeting with Michael Eisner, then Vice President of Children’s Programming and later president, chairman and CEO of the Walt Disney Company. Eisner invited to the meeting cartoon legend Chuck Jones, creator and animator of the Looney Tunes. At the end of the presentation, that included Dorrough’s lyrics visually accompanied by Yohe’s storyboard, Eisner asked Jones for his opinion. He merely stated, “Buy it” (Yohe and Newall xii).

Once ABC decided to purchase the cartoon short, the network executives wasted no time finding a place for the three minute feature. They announced that each program in their Saturday morning line-up for the following season would be cut by three minutes (Burd 5). As one of the three networks in the pre-cable days, ABC found a vehicle that worked in many of the same ways as a commercial—a link between shows. *Schoolhouse* held its audiences captive, but entertained with the repetition of entertaining music and educational concepts. *Schoolhouse Rock* premiered on January 6, 1973 with “Three is a Magic Number,” “Elementary, My Dear,” “My Hero, Zero,” and “The Four-Legged Zoo.” (“History,” *Schoolhouse Rock!*) The first year the shorts were seen five times on Saturday morning and twice on Sundays. (Burd 11)



That was fantastic news, but then came the realization ABC wanted more than “Three;” they wanted a “franchise.” Certainly more material was needed. Realizing that the crux of a *Schoolhouse* song is the novelty of the education contained within the lyrics, they sought composers and lyricists and decided the best place to look for those new members was the world of jazz. Newall explains, “The thing that always struck me is that even though it’s called *Schoolhouse Rock*, it has very little to do with rock music really. The creators of it from the composing standpoint are consummate jazz musicians and they brought that sensibility to it” (Burd 10). David Frishberg and Lynn Ahrens were added to the music team.

Like his good friend Dorrough, Frishberg<sup>5</sup> was a talented jazz musician and lyricist with a reputation for the witty and quirky. He wrote songs that strung lists of baseball players or clichés, or excuses rather than tell a story as he did in “Blizzard of Lies”:

We'll send someone right out /  
this won't hurt a bit /  
He's in a meeting now /  
the coat's a perfect fit. (Lydon, “Singer/Songwriter”)

Dorrough called Frishberg when the franchise decided to move beyond the realms of multiplication and numbers to social studies and other subjects. As Frishberg pilfered through grade school text books, he found a diagram showing how a bill became a law. He used the diagram as inspiration for one of the most recognized *Schoolhouse* songs, “Just a Bill”, which was sung by legendary jazz musician Jack Sheldon. (Burd 20-1; Yohe and Newall xiii)

Lyricist and composer Lynn Ahrens, a recent college graduate who was a secretary in the copy department at the time, would bring her guitar into work and

---

<sup>5</sup>While Frishberg was a successful musician beyond his association with *Schoolhouse*, he admits that he has produced eight to ten CDs, but that “you really have to seek my work out” (Burd 22).

play during lunch because she was bored (Burd 18). Newall explains, “When Yohe saw her with her guitar one day, he asked her to play a little, “She played and we were just knocked out” (Burd 10-1). She was recruited to join the team where she wrote “A Noun is a Person, Place or Thing,” “Interplanet Janet,” and many other *Schoolhouse* hits. Ahrens’ success and fame would only grow in the years following, adding musical credits from films such as *Anastasia* and Broadway musicals such as *Ragtime* and *Seussical, the Musical* to her resume. (Burd 10)

The initial installments of the franchise were labeled *Multiplication Rock*. As it grew, the second subject in the *Schoolhouse* was *Grammar Rock*, which lived up to the success of its mathematical counterpart by teaching viewers the functions of verbs, nouns, interjections, and the many other parts of speech. As the nation celebrated its bicentennial, *America Rock* took up the challenge of politics and history through “The Shot Heard Around the World,” “Elbow Room,” and “Sufferin’ ‘til Suffrage.”<sup>6</sup> The final subject of the original *Schoolhouse Rock* education was *Science Rock*. The “Telegraph Line,” *Schoolhouse*’s explanation of the nervous system was the most requested song of the series, which worried the creators as most of the requests came from medical schools. (“History,” *Schoolhouse Rock*!)

By the mid-eighties, ABC had turned its attention towards exercise and heart-throbs, replacing the *Schoolhouse Rock* segments with spots by the latest pre-teen pop idols such as the band Menudo and exercise spots with Olympic gold-medal winner Mary Lou Retton. Responding to renewed interest in the cartoon shorts, and more likely the lucrative success of the series, *Schoolhouse Rock* returned to the airways in October of

---

<sup>6</sup>My research for *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* has produced two spellings for the title of the song: “Sufferin’ ‘til Suffrage”—as I will use—and “Sufferin’ Till Suffrage.”

1993 with three new installments including “Dollars and Sense”<sup>7</sup> and “The Tale of Mr. Morton” and “Busy Ps” to the *Grammar Rock* collection. (“History,” *Schoolhouse Rock!*)

It was not until years later that Tom Yohe would realize the impact of what the group had created. In the liner notes of the boxed CD set, Yohe commented on the occasion that revealed to him the real cultural force that his *Schoolhouse* creation had become:

Six years ago, I got a phone call out of the blue from an undergraduate at Dartmouth. She said the senior class was doing a weekend-long symposium on education. The committee decided that *Schoolhouse Rock* had an impact on them. I went up to Hanover, NJ and they booked me into the biggest auditorium on campus on a Saturday night. It held 900 and I thought, ‘Come on! Six kids are going to show up.’ They filled the thing! We showed the films. They were all singing along with them. I was absolutely dumbstruck! It was my first rock concert, albeit a *Schoolhouse Rock* concert. I just had no idea. It hit me then that this had had an incredible impact on this generation. It was a startling revelation. (Burd 8-9)

In all, the *Schoolhouse Rock* franchise produced five categories of educational music, including *Mathematic Rock*, *Grammar Rock*, *Science Rock*, *America Rock*, and *Scooter Computer & Mr. Chips*<sup>8</sup>, forty-seven songs, two Emmy Awards, an original television run of twelve years, a television revival, an original award-winning musical with an Off-Broadway run, CDs, DVDs, stickers, lunch boxes, toys, books, and millions of fans who know what a noun is.

---

<sup>7</sup>“Dollars and Sense” taught the value of a dollar, but was originally supposed to be a lesson on the deficit. As George Newall reflected, “It was too complicated a subject to take on. It’s too bad, really. I was thinking about all the PR possibilities. We could have taken it to Washington and maybe taught Bill Clinton something” (“History,” *Schoolhouse Rock!*).

<sup>8</sup>*Scooter* diverted from the original formula of the *Schoolhouse Rock* songs. It followed the recurring characters of Scooter Computer and Mr. Chips through a series of shorts that were created to help with what was “the misapprehension that children have a phobia about computers,” muses Radford Stone (“History,” *Schoolhouse Rock!*).

### *Cultural Materialism and Schoolhouse Rock*

The enormous success of *Schoolhouse Rock* as an educational device in the mass market of commercial television is a phenomenon that merits special consideration. One method for exploring the significance of *Schoolhouse Rock*—and, by extension, of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*—is the critical lens of cultural materialism. As a fundamentally Marxist theory, cultural materialism is interested in institutions like television that have tremendous social impact through economics. “The world impresses itself on our ideas,” writes theatre theorist Mark Fortier in his discussion of cultural materialist thought. “If we want to understand ourselves and our world, we have to understand the material forces at work in our world” (153). The material forces in question with *Schoolhouse Rock* are the business tactics of commercial television in general and the huge money making power of television products marketed towards children. It would be naïve to think that little Davey’s multiplication issues were at the heart of ABC’s decision to run the educational series for thirteen years, and then to revive the series again just as the children who watched it during its original run had children of their own waking up at 5:30 to watch Saturday morning cartoons.

At the heart of all things Marxist is economics. As mentioned earlier, the materialist theory is influenced by the forces of economic factors. “Marxism says that we can best understand those forces in terms of modes of production, the structure of economic relations in any society” (Fortier 153-4). Perhaps economics was not the catalyst for *Schoolhouse Rock*, but certainly the matters of finance came in the next thought. In fact, knowing that they had a hit, but not wanting to relinquish advertising dollars when the shorts aired in place of bill-paying advertisers, the creative team from

McCaffrey and McCall convinced another large client, General Foods, to sponsor the airtime. Thus, the *Schoolhouse Rock* program gave ABC the revenue it sought, and General Foods exposure and association with a quality family entertainment product. (“History,” *Schoolhouse Rock!*)

Networks are undoubtedly in the business of making money through their product, and yet materialism dives deeper than pure economics and explores the relationship between producers and products. So, how or why does *Schoolhouse Rock* serve ABC? The Federal Communications Commission requires networks to allot a certain number of hours of broadcast time to educational programming. If *Schoolhouse Rock* counted as time served to fulfill the requirements of the Children’s Television Act, then ABC found a way to fulfill the requirements to satisfy the FCC while still turning a profit. The program benefited by getting the nationwide network exposure that its creators desired. Such exposure was of course not just an artistic triumph for David McCall, George Newall, and Tom Yohe, but a means to their own economic success as well.

Figures of profits made from *Schoolhouse Rock* as a television show are not available, but the assumption can be made that budgets for new developments and revenues for products and licensing of similar vehicles would reveal similar bottom lines. Financial estimates for similar shows in 1995 reveal PBS’s *Barney* was worth a half billion dollars, Nickelodeon was investing \$30 million dollars in development of original prime-time children’s programming, and ABC itself had invested \$30 - \$40 million in a joint production venture with Jim Henson Productions. In the same year, Disney was in the process of acquiring ABC. The eventual acquisition enabled Disney/ABC to spin-off

its movies and animated features into series that generated mass exposure in the United States and abroad. (Lowry 36)

The 1992 revival of the series on Saturday morning television capitalized on its popularity with the coming of age with its original audience. The economic strength of *Schoolhouse Rock* for ABC was not just for the original run of the series. The show's money making power extended to a second run of the series including new cartoons about money and computers inspired by the original, as well as to various *Schoolhouse* related products such as a boxed CD set<sup>9</sup>, videos and DVDs, CD-ROMs, a 1996 tribute album by alternative rock stars, and quite literally millions of websites (Campbell 18). ABC's revival of the series directly inspired *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, which dawned on the stages of Chicago and later Off-Broadway as an extension of the brand, and has made money for many individuals and organizations through its runs in Chicago, New York, and several national tours.

Karl Marx's view of culture was that of "a superstructure dependent upon a socioeconomic base" where "art is most often a direct reflection of economic conditions" (Fortier 154). His theories examine art, literature, and cultural issues based on the economics of that period in history. The theories of cultural materialists, such as Raymond Williams and Frederic Jameson, build upon Antonio Gramsci's reading of Marxism to say that culture has a reciprocal effect as the affective source of the social, political, and even economic factors that govern life. A sectional view of the history and success of *Schoolhouse Rock* supports a materialist reading. The cultural saturation—the

---

<sup>9</sup>The 1995 release of the CD box set featured a rebate campaign with Tropicana's Season's Best juices with \$5 coupons on 9 million specially marked cartons good for the purchase of individual tapes. The tapes were sold for \$12.95, \$3 more than other similar products on the market, but with four million loyal viewers each week and the cost of digital remastering, ABC Video president Jori Peisinger cited the price as "a number of factors" (McCormick and Swan 62).

economic factor—of the Saturday morning product became a tremendous influence over entertainment, society, and education in the 1970s and 1980s. The revival of *Schoolhouse* demonstrates how the coming of age of children who had been influenced by *Schoolhouse* during its initial run affected the culture of the early nineties. Cultural nostalgia commanded the revival of the series which was easily capitalized on by ABC with the return of the shorts to television and the many licensed products that hit the market.

In the seminal cultural materialist study *Political Shakespeare*, theorists Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield suggest that theatre be viewed as an institution in the Marxist sense and literature as practice. During the Renaissance, critique of text shifted from the analysis of a single reader to its effect on a much larger audience, the masses if you will. This shift was of interest to the church and state, who realizing the significance of entertainment to the masses, were extremely concerned with the effect of this new analysis and sought to use it as instruction for the people. “Cultural materialism includes work on the cultures of subordinate and marginalized groups like schoolchildren and skinheads, and on form like television and popular music and fiction” (Dollimore and Sinfield vii-viii). However, on the flip side, performances were used to subtly, and at times not so subtly, influence the audience in insurrection.

While *Schoolhouse Rock* does not advocate revolution<sup>10</sup>, it is definitely a tool of education for the masses, and rightly so, considering its original intent to help little Davey learn his multiplication tables. However, as the series expanded to social and

---

<sup>10</sup>ABC did take issue with one installment of *America Rock*. “Three Ring Government” explained the systems of checks and balances between the three branches of government, but ABC was apprehensive when it came to dealing with the FCC and did not air the segment for several years (“History,” *Schoolhouse Rock!*).

political issues, the passing of bills and women's suffrage, the impact of such issues on children cannot help but impact them in the long-term. Do girls of the seventies live as feminists in the new millennium because of the catchy tunes and rhymes of "Sufferin' 'til Suffrage" and "Interplanet Janet?" While it is most probable that Janet and the Sufferers did indeed encourage some girl somewhere to pursue the higher cause of all things female, it is most likely that those who do consider themselves feminists merely possess cereal box—or Saturday morning—intelligence on the subject. The biggest long-term effect of these shorts on girls was the enduring memory of some historical information set to a catchy tune. Likewise, children of the seventies do not seem over-burdened with frustration for the current ruling political party from exposure to a Saturday morning cartoon that showed "the long, long journey" of a bill becoming a law illustrated by the sad frown and frumpy walk of "Bill" as he suffers filibusters and committee politics. They do however have a better understanding of the constitutional steps to make a bill into a law. Like a good liberal education, *Schoolhouse Rock* provided educational facts and exposure to new information in a fun, pleasing way without upsetting the status quo.

*Schoolhouse Rock* then becomes a model of the powerful relationship between economics, culture, and indoctrination. In fact, the social and economic force of the franchise continues to find new expression—and methods of education—even in the world of developing twenty-first century entertainment technologies. In January 2006, ABC and *Schoolhouse Rock* further demonstrated their materialist relationship by announcing that it was releasing the collection of songs for sale on iTunes ("Disney," *USAtoday.com*).



*Theatrebam Chicago and Schoolhouse Rock Live!*

In the early nineties a group of young theatre professionals and educators would meet at a Chicago restaurant called the Melrose to discuss opening a theatre of their own. Nina Lynn, Scott Ferguson, Kyle Hall, and George Keating, alumni from Northwestern University and the Theatre School of DePaul, had the idea of developing a company that would tour schools with children's theatre. Thus, in 1992, Theatrebam Chicago was born—named for their Sunday morning get-togethers: “Breakfast At Melrose” (Ferguson e-mail interview). The new theatre's mission was “to create dynamic theatre productions that attract and engage new and young audiences. . . . by creating new works, reinterpreting familiar texts, and building educational programs” (*Schoolhouse Rock Live!*).

Even though Theatrebam Chicago's original intent was to be a touring company for children's theatre, their first several productions varied in subject matter and genre. Their debut was the one-man show, *Manson: Fires in Your City*, written, directed and performed by Kyle Hall, who co-wrote the book and was assistant director of the original production of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*. *Manson* was based on Charles Manson's writings and interviews from the Tate-LaBianca trials; the show received exceptional reviews from the *Chicago Tribune*. Other projects for the theatre company include *Frozen River*, a musical based on the Lizzie Borden trials, *The Miss Alphabet City Beauty Pageant and Spelling Bee*, and *Holiday Spin*. (*Schoolhouse Rock Live!*) Though not its debut project, *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* was one of the original production ideas of the theatre. Founding member of Theatrebam Chicago, Scott Ferguson remembered, “We formed a company and produced *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, and it took off and since then, since the

founding of it, we've really only done a couple of other things besides *SRL!*" (Telephone interview).

With the Theatrebam's goal of touring children's theatre established, Ferguson presented the concept of developing the television series *Schoolhouse Rock* into a live stage performance for children. The idea for *SRL!* was inspired by the response to the cartoons at a party Ferguson hosted shortly after his college graduation. He went to his local Blockbuster store with the intent to rent music videos to play on the television during the party for background noise, but while he was there he saw the old *Schoolhouse Rock* cartoons on video and thought it would be a great gimmick for his party. It was truly a success at the party since "everyone, like, stopped and sat down and sat on the couch and laughed and sang and just was having such a good time," recalls Ferguson (Telephone interview).

With the idea in place, Ferguson set out to find the owner of the live production rights—a process that took a year and half. According to Ferguson, no one at ABC knew who owned the rights, "ABC would send me to a lawyer and then they'd say, 'Here, contact this lawyer.' Then I would send a letter to that lawyer, and I wouldn't hear back from them, and so three months later I would send another letter and finally they'd call and say, 'We don't know. Try this lawyer.'" (Telephone interview). The cycle repeated itself several more times as Ferguson was bounced from lawyer to lawyer until he received an early wake up call from George Newall in June of 1993. The seemingly endless pursuit of attaining performance rights was resolved in a simple phone conversation when Newall arranged for Theatrebam to be given permission and exclusive

live performance rights. At the end of the conversation Newall made the task of assembling the show even easier when he gave him Bob Dorrough's phone number.

Within two weeks of the phone call, Theatrebam had attained the live performance rights and received the original vocal scores for the musical numbers they wanted to incorporate into their show. Also within those two weeks, notices were posted, auditions were held, the show was cast, and a six week rehearsal period ensued. As Ferguson noted, songs could not be chosen on popularity and familiarity alone:

I looked at all of those and then tried to literally figure out which ones did I think would translate the best on stage in a theatrical sense. And so, for example, "The Shot Heard Around the World." Everybody loves "The Shot Heard Around the World," but I just couldn't envision it on stage. It was too difficult at the time. It just covers so much territory and it's so wordy and it's just like, this is not one that's going to translate well on stage. So that one got kicked out. So it was just a matter of choosing ones that I thought were theatrical. (Telephone interview)

Rather than transfer the cartoon from the screen to the stage, "We knew from the beginning we weren't going to have someone dressed up like a bill," states an emphatic Ferguson. They decided that they needed to focus on the lyrics. "We wanted to create our own version of the show. So we started with all of the songs and just started working on choreographing them, figured out how to put them on stage" (Telephone interview). Ferguson, also one of the show's choreographers, enlisted two dancers that he knew from his days in the Northwestern Dance Ensemble, Kate Dowe and Karyn Pauli to help with the choreography<sup>11</sup>.

The rehearsal process went well, but with only two weeks left, the new show still had no real structure. "I knew I did not want it to just be a musical revue. I didn't want it

---

<sup>11</sup>As the show opened its second run in Chicago, followed by the Off-Broadway run in New York, a return to Chicago, and three touring productions, Ferguson changed or added to the choreography. The choreography for Theatrebam Chicago's *SRL!* at present is Ferguson's choreography based on original ideas of Dowe and Pauli. (Ferguson telephone interview)

to just be songs. ‘Let’s not just do song, song, song.’” Ferguson reflected. As Ferguson chatted with Keating and Hall one evening, they realized they wanted the audience more invested in show rather than just listening to music. “Since we were doing it for schools, I guess that’s where the idea came from. ‘Well, what about that? I mean, it’s a teaching tool, what about a teacher?’ And it just hit us, ‘That’s what it needs to be.’” (Telephone interview) While the three wanted the show to have a structure, they also realized that they were selling *Schoolhouse Rock* to the public:

We knew that was just going to be looking for a way to get to the next song. So we decided, “Let’s just put a thin plotline that will tie them together and that will also not waste time, y’know, that will simply get to the next song. The point of it will be just to get to the next song.” That’s how it happened. We tried to find clever, cute, little, quick ways to get to the next song, so in that sense, it’s a book musical in that it has a plot structure but it definitely would be categorized as a revue because there are not very many musicals that have twenty-one songs. (Telephone interview)

The decision to support the music with a framing story and passages of dialogue led to more rearranging of the order of the songs in order to assist in character development (Ferguson e-mail interview). The show was still a revue, despite Ferguson’s desire to make it otherwise, though the addition of a loose plot did wonders to give unity to the disparate collection of song styles and subjects.

*Schoolhouse Rock Live!* opened as a workshop performance on August 26, 1993 at Cabaret Voltaire, a basement theatre below an eclectic vegetarian restaurant. The goal of the workshop performances was to figure out how the show would work and get it ready to tour schools and to capitalize on the show’s novelty and nostalgia with the adult crowd. The show ran at 9:00 on Friday and Saturday evenings, and within two weeks they were playing to sold-out houses simply by word-of-mouth. “People just loved it and

it was so much fun. It was such a hit and we would pack a hundred people into this little tiny basement theatre for every show,” Ferguson enthused (Telephone interview).

Theatrebam added additional shows at 11:00 on each night, and *SRL!* ran for a record breaking eight months. After a short hiatus, the show was reopened in June 1994 where it sold out for seven months at The Body Politic Theatre. It was during this second run that the show received awards for “Outstanding Production” and “Outstanding Ensemble” from *After Dark Awards*. (*Schoolhouse Rock Live!*)

In 1995, the company joined forces with Move On Productions for an eleven month Off-Broadway run, first at the Atlantic Theatre and later at the Lamb’s Theatre<sup>12</sup>. In order to retain creative control, the theatre company financed the show itself on a budget of \$100,000. In an article with the *Chicago Tribune*, Nina Lynn, managing director of the New York run, explained that the show struggled to adapt to the theatre culture of New York, “We wanted to charge a low ticket price, but we were told we couldn’t. If we charged \$10 or \$12, people would think we weren’t any good. We had to charge \$25” (Smith 1). Another struggle the show encountered was New York’s slower summer season, but after a slow start—the local New York media would not give the show press—at the Atlantic Theatre, the show began to reap the benefits of its word-of-mouth audience as it had in Chicago; however, Atlantic Theatre had already decided to move another production into the space (Smith 1). The Lamb’s Theatre, a theatre complex and community center owned and operated by The Lamb’s Manhattan Church of the Nazarene offered theatre space to the homeless show. Citing complementary mission

---

<sup>12</sup>A phone conversation with a representative of the Lamb’s Theatre in the spring 2005 questioned the use of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* as a production in the theatre season. Apparently, the show’s novelty was not as popular when in competition of the “seriousness” that other New York stages have to offer.

statements as a beneficial relationship, the Lamb's support allowed the show to reopen November of 1995. ("Little Show")

The production went back to its hometown of Chicago in 1996, first at the Victory Gardens Theatre and then to The Theatre Building, where it closed on March 2, 1997. Three official national tours were produced in conjunction with Troupe America out of Minneapolis: 1998-1999, 1999-2000, 2000-2001. (Telephone interview) The production has enjoyed runs in Canada and London's West End. While licensing through Music Theatre International allows national tours and productions to run continually, the original continues to take a forty minute version of the original production—the rotating cast occasionally featuring the original George (Ferguson phone interview)—on the road six to eight days a months to audiences including tutoring programs, the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School, The University of Chicago Lab School and as well as many Chicago area schools (*Schoolhouse Rock Live!*).

The success of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* over its thirteen year history is due in no small part to the powerful franchise from which it was derived. However, the cultural, economic, and social significance of the television series that the musical is built upon does not completely account for the achievements and popularity it has enjoyed. The musical revue structure of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* showcases a group of songs designed to help an audience learn by employing popular learning techniques. Therefore, an analysis of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* which explores both its nature as a revue and its pedagogical methodologies helps explain the play's value as not only entertainment but also as an educational tool.

## CHAPTER TWO

### An Analysis of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*

#### *Introduction*

While an exploration of the history and cultural impact of the *Schoolhouse Rock* television franchise is very useful, such considerations do not completely explain the series or the musical it spawned. The achievements of *Schoolhouse Rock* and *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* rest squarely upon the use of key entertainment and educational theories. This chapter will explore the structure of *SRL!* and describe the reasons behind its pedagogical effectiveness in order to better illustrate the play's successful blending of pleasure and purpose.

#### *Synopsis*

The structure that supports the music of *Schoolhouse Rock* in *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* is a storyline following a young teacher through his renewed discovery of the joy of learning. The cast consists of Tom, the teacher, and five different parts of his imagination, personified in Dori, Dina, Shulie, George, and Joe.<sup>13</sup> The play takes place on the morning of Tom's first day as second grade teacher.

Tom wakes up full of anxiety and turns on the television to calm his unsteady nerves. As Tom watches the old *Schoolhouse Rock* cartoons, people magically appear onstage and sing "Verb: That's What's Happening," showing Tom where the action is. As he begins to recover from his initial shock of strange people showing up in his "rec"

---

<sup>13</sup>The TheatreBam Chicago ensemble that developed *SRL!* used their first names to name the character that they played. As discussed in chapter four, this convention was appropriated in the Baylor Theatre production.

room, Dori sings “A Noun is a Person, Place Or Thing” as she and the cast explain that they are all the ideas in his head. George encourages Tom about teaching by explaining it will be as easy as “1-2-3.” The cast then teaches the multiplication table for the number three in “Three is a Magic Number.” As the cast explains that Tom has invented them subconsciously, Dina segues into “Mother Necessity” revealing that necessity was the mother of many inventions. Tom remembers that one reason he became a teacher was because there were many generations of teachers in his family. They were all women and chose the profession mainly because that was the only job available for them. The women in the cast discuss the plight of women in the United States as they struggled for the right to vote in “Sufferin’ ‘til Suffrage.” Joe shows Tom how using memories can develop different methods of teaching as the three generations of “Lolly, Lolly, Lolly” use a general store set up to explain adverbs. Shulie shows Tom how to teach the function of adjectives by telling a camping story in “Unpack Your Adjectives.” As Tom begins to understand that his imagination is helping develop new ways of teaching old subjects, George shows him how to apply this new creative method to social studies in “Just a Bill.” Dina continues the lesson on social studies by reminding Tom how he passed a Constitution exam using *Schoolhouse Rock*’s “The Preamble.” When Tom comments, “You know, in all my years of serious training to be a teacher, they forgot one important thing. . . . That learning should be fun. . . . ” (Ferguson, Keating, and Hall 45), Joe shows him a game of the multiplication of the number five in “Ready or Not, Here I Come.” The women apply the “learning should be fun” method in “Do the Circulation” as they describe the function of circulation in the body through song and dance. Joe demonstrates the very important function of pronouns in our language by taking on the



persona “Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla.” Shulie teaches Tom a song to learn the multiplication of the number eight in “Figure Eight.” In “A Victim of Gravity” George and the guys teach Tom a lesson in physics as they don 1950’s persona. George explains the importance of the zero as a number to Shulie in “Zero, My Hero.” “Conjunction Junction” helps Joe explore the linking of language using conjunctions. The girls remind Tom that America is made up of many diverse cultures in “Great American Melting Pot.” Dori continues the principles of American culture to explain the physical growth of our country in “Elbow Room.” Shulie gives Tom a tour of the solar system as “Interplanet Janet.” When the cast begins shouting interjections, Dina realizes that this is the perfect opportunity to sing Tom her favorite *Schoolhouse Rock* song, “Interjections,” and shows him yet another way to make learning fun. She leads him through a doctor’s visit, a romance, and a football game to describe the wide array of emotions expressed by interjections. Her final emotion is one of disappointment as she injects, “Darn, that’s the end.” As the cast begins to leave so that Tom can start his day, he asks them to stay for one more song. He makes up his very own *Schoolhouse Rock* song with a lesson in predicates in “The Tale of Mr. Morton.” The play ends when the last of the imaginary characters leave and Tom feels ready to begin his life as a teacher.

*Schoolhouse Rock Live!* delivers education in a different medium. While the songs remain the same as the original television shorts, the stage allows the music to be visually interpreted using unique reinforcements of the educational message. There are twenty-one different musical numbers in the play, each approximately three minutes in length; this is to be expected seeing that the songs came directly from the original score for the cartoon shorts. The dialogue between songs that contains the interactions between

Tom and the cast and communicates the story of Tom's preparation to teach, totals about fifteen pages of the overall 102 page length of the script.

### Schoolhouse Rock Live!: *A Revue*

*Schoolhouse Rock Live!* is not your typical musical. It is not an original idea, nor is it based on an existing play, book, or even a movie. Rather, *SRL!* was created directly from television shorts linked together by the fact that they are educational in nature. For this reason, the goal of each scene in the show is not only to entertain, but to teach a specific concept—from the Preamble of the Constitution to gravity to multiples of the number five. The scenes are linked by a loose frame story about a nervous young teacher, and because of this semblance of a plot, *SRL!* could possibly be considered a book musical. However, as was seen in the overview of musicals in chapter one, musical revues frequently have loose plot lines. As the director, I approached the show as a revue for several reasons: 1) it does not have a character driven plot, 2) though the songs are all connected, in that they are all educational songs from the original *Schoolhouse Rock*, the theme is too wide to be considered a unified meaning, and 3) it depends on familiarity and “hit” value of the songs to draw and entertain an audience.

Because *SRL!* is a musical revue that follows a loose storyline/plot through songs and short pieces of dialogue, it makes an interesting challenge for analysis. An attempt to analyze *SRL!* using a standard tool such as the procedure developed by Francis Hodge does not work well with the musical revue format. Yet, some basic information can be gleaned using the Hodge technique. A journey into the shallow back story shows the inciting incident of the play is Tom's decision to become a teacher. The musical also contains given circumstances including the fact that Tom is from a long line of teachers,

has a “rec” room in his house, grew up watching *Schoolhouse Rock* on television, and that he has a very vivid imagination. The show is set in present day, at six o’clock in the morning on Tom’s first day of school as a second grade teacher.

As analysis continues in a Hodge approach, the search for the protagonist and antagonist reveals that Tom is both because every “character” on the stage is “all the ideas in [his] head” (Ferguson, Keating, and Hall 9). The journey that ensues through the play with Tom and the different parts of himself leading the way resembles a Greek chorus in which the group on stage frequently comments on the action, advises the main character, and directly addresses the audience. While *SRL!* demonstrates Aristotle’s six elements of drama, it certainly does not fit the definition of either comedy or tragedy. This is a play structure outside of the forms imagined by our Greek theatrical forefathers.

Another major analytical tool is the examination of repetitions in themes, gestures, language, imagery, etc., in search of organizing elements of the play. Such analysis can reveal how the play creates meaning for an audience. The application of this exercise to *SRL!* does not produce the same results that would be found in other plays or book musicals. The simple scenario that frames *SRL!* is flimsy. It is a very loose framework that is used to transition—though sometimes not very smoothly—the characters from song to song. The major organizing element of the play is the driving theme that learning is fun, but there are no repetitive gestures, phrases, or any other imagery built into the dialogue of the script, and a focus on the lyrics of the songs does not reveal repetitions that link song to song.

Yet there is clearly something that holds the musical together structurally and makes it successful. This fact produces questions that extend beyond conventional

dramatic analysis: Why do the songs work? Why is the show—both the television original and the musical—popular? Why can thirty-somethings in America collectively sing the Preamble of the Constitution? How did a great majority of the population learn four times five is twenty from a song? Further, why do they understand that fact? Why is three a magic number? How does the fact that the musical is based on cartoon shorts affect its structure and meaning? These admittedly hyperbolic questions come together to reveal that analysis of *SRL!* cannot be made of the musical as a whole, but rather through examining the small units that make it up. Microcosms of the show’s overall concept and structure are found within the individual pieces of music, and analysis can be drawn from theories contained in the formula for each song in the show. While this repetition and reinforcement may not hold subtext or deep meaning for *SRL!* as a literary piece, they are an extremely valuable learning tool. Indeed, the key role that repetition and reinforcement play in learning was one of the ideas that originally motivated David McCall to write educational songs for children like his son.

One of the most important parts of a musical revue is the music, and maybe even more important than that—as Ziegfeld discovered—is the popularity and the recognition of the music. Because of the marketing of the *Schoolhouse Rock*, several generations have been exposed to the catchy tunes. Say “Conjunction Junction” to anyone between the ages of thirty and forty, and ninety percent will respond “What’s your function?” They know this because of the exposure that they had on Saturday mornings “between bowls of Coco Puffs” (Ferguson, Keating, and Hall 45). For twelve years from the 1970s into the 1980s, and later in their revival in the early 1990s, Saturday morning ABC programming was saturated with the cartoon shorts. Thus repetition of *Schoolhouse Rock*

on television created not only popularity of the music, but also generated deeply set memories. It is not an overstatement to describe *Schoolhouse Rock* as an historical and cultural phenomenon.

Repetition and reinforcement have primary and secondary functions: memorization, dramatic structure, and thematic unity. Thus, as we analyze *SRL!*, we discover that the significance of repetition to the show has less to do with dramatic structure and thematic meaning, and much more to do with memorization. All of the songs either repeat key facts verbatim or pattern their main theme to set the important knowledge in the memory. In “Three is a Magic Number,” the multiples of three are repeated several times forwards and back. In “Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla,” Albert repeats the pattern of nouns and pronouns as he relates the story of each character. The words of the Constitution are repeated twice in “The Preamble” while dialogue is used between the two choruses to explain its meaning. All of the songs repeat, and in that way, rote memorization occurs. That, in turn, is the beginning of understanding.

*SRL's Balance of Theory and Practice:  
The Conjoining of Behaviorism and Constructivism*

The learning process described above combines several educational theories that, in some instances, seem generally opposed to each other, but manage to merge in music. The songs of *Schoolhouse Rock* work—both musically and lyrically—because they entertain; but they also work because they draw upon two major theories of learning in order to educate: behaviorism and constructivism. These two educational theories come together in the *Schoolhouse Rock* franchise to create an effective learning tool.

Behaviorism is a theory that crosses the sciences of physiology, neurology, and psychology. The concept has been explored since the early Western philosophers and is the basis of several teaching methodologies.<sup>14</sup> Behaviorism can most simply be defined as “the view that psychology (1) should be an objective science that (2) studies behavior without reference to mental processes” (Myers G-2). In other words, behaviorism is a theory that counts solely on measured observable behaviors to stimuli in order to describe mental functions. As a learning theory, elements of behaviorism include repetition, word association, and reward. Repetition reinforces memory, and association links words to each other so that word context is identified through the relationship of meanings—kiss and love, sword and battle. Behaviorist experimentation led to the observation that frequency and reward shape response. As the noted behavioral psychologist B. F. Skinner declared, “man is not free to choose since he is controlled in given situations based on his past” (Frieberg 5-6).

The application of behaviorism to childhood education involves the use of repetitions and word associations as well as both classical and operant conditioning.<sup>15</sup> Examples would include rote memorization of multiplication tables, spelling using the methodology of phonics, or a teacher rewarding students’ appropriate behavior with candy or verbal praise. Though the results of such learning are observable and notable, the results are not always a judge of true knowledge.

---

<sup>14</sup>As a theory, behaviorism dates back as far as Aristotle, who discussed associations of words in relation to each other in his essay *Memory*.

<sup>15</sup>The ideas of classical and operant conditioning, respectively, by Ivan Pavlov and B. F. Skinner, two of the most notable behaviorists, define the fundamentals of behaviorism. Classical conditioning is a response—physiologically, psychologically, neurologically—to stimuli that through repetition can be used as a learning tool when applied with reinforcement (“Pavlov,” *The Psi Cafe*; Frolov 49-54). Skinner took the theories regarding classical conditioning with reinforced behavior and combined the results of the responses with specific consequences to create what he called operant conditioning (Frieberg 7).

A 2004 *Foxtrot* comic strip by Bill Amend offers an excellent illustration both of the influence of *Schoolhouse Rock* and of the arguments against behaviorism as a learning method. In the cartoon, a daughter asks her father what a conjunction is. He spontaneously erupts into the lyrics of *Schoolhouse*'s "Conjunction Junction." When the father finishes the moment of nostalgia, the daughter asks the father to explain it "in normal language, please." The father's reply was simple, "I forget." Critics of this form of rote learning would point out the father's lack of understanding of his stored knowledge as its major downfall.

Constructivism, also referred to as cognition or cognitive behavior, is a theory that developed on the coat tails of behaviorism. The theory "describes knowledge as temporary, developmental, nonobjective, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated" (Fosnot ix). While a constructivist acknowledges observable behavior via conditioning, he would argue that memorization is of no use if the student does not understand what the information means or its context.

The application of constructivism in a classroom can be demonstrated through the use of a cat. A behaviorist would have the word "cat" written in block letters on the chalkboard. The class would recite the letters and repeat the phonetic sounds over and over until the "cat" was drilled into their brain. On the other hand, the constructivist would bring a cat to school. The students would become acquainted with it making observations about what a cat is, what it looks like, how it acts, etc. Once the students had made concrete observations and had conceptual knowledge of "what is a cat," then the teacher would write "cat" on the chalkboard.

Many sing the praises of constructivism because of its ability to teach conceptual and applicable knowledge, but it is not without its faults. A critique of constructivism is best summarized with a personal anecdote. A friend related to me that one of the smartest children in their class growing up was a girl who had spent her first three years of elementary in Nevada school systems, where they experimented with learning techniques by eliminating the phonics from its method of teaching spelling. While this girl had an advanced vocabulary and an amazing ability to articulate her knowledge, she simply could not spell. While she had been taught to discover, explore, and construct a working knowledge about cats, she was quite literally never taught the ABCs of “cat.”

Up until the 1960s, behaviorism was the main model of educational theory being used in the classroom. At that point, like most things during that turbulent social time, a wave of liberal experimentalism swept across education, and constructivism made its way into the school systems. This would coincide with both Davey McCall’s struggles in multiplication and the schoolgirl’s issues with spelling. Even though *Schoolhouse Rock* is used in the example against behaviorism above, the cartoonist fails to look at the context and concepts provided in the verses of the songs as constructivism. The same can be said of a constructivist teacher who does not look beyond the context and concepts of music to realize its structure and usefulness through theories of behaviorism.

*Schoolhouse Rock* blends behaviorism and constructivism into a proven learning tool. Repetition is the basis for most songs, and as Karl Kimmel, Ph.D. states, “A song is probably the best all-around mnemonic device for facilitating a student's recall of facts, definitions, and concepts” (Quoted in “Why Use Songs to Teach Science?” *Eissler Science Idol*). The structure of songs with repetitive choruses feeds the memory, and the



music and rhythms provide stimuli for reinforced response. The repetitions or stimuli in *SRL!* embed the educational facts into the minds of the observer. Thus, after listening to “Three is a Magic Number” several times, the automated answer or reflexive behavior is “3” to the question “What is 3x1?” For a behaviorist who might define learning as simply the acquisition of new behavior or skills (“Behavior,” *Funderstanding*), *Schoolhouse Rock* is an ideal learning tool. However, the lyrics in the songs of *SRL!* are not just an exercise in behavior or repetition, they also reflect the theory of constructivism, for as Kimmel continues, “a music mnemonic works because it allows students to link new knowledge to their existing knowledge base” (Quoted in “Why Use Songs to Teach Science?” *Eissler Science Idol*).

While Kimmel reveals the mixed teaching methods in *Schoolhouse Rock*, and the reasons that each work, perhaps his most resounding comment is geared to those who teach either or both methods as he warns educators and songwriters:

A study of the *Schoolhouse Rock* version of the “Preamble of the Constitution” suggests that the information students learn in a song is likely to stay with them for the rest of their lives. This presents educators and educational songwriters with the responsibility to keep their songs accurate and focused. (Quoted in “Why Use Songs to Teach Science?” *Eissler Science Idol*)

The advice here is applicable to theatre artists approaching *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* as well. A good production of the show demands attention not only to its entertainment value, but also to the educational intention of the text.

*Schoolhouse Rock Live!* is an unusual analytical subject. At first glance it seems virtually impossible to analyze using common theatrical analysis, but once it is defined as a revue whose theme is “learning is fun,” analysis using educational theory can be seen as a practical way to understand the play. Whether the advertising men who began the

*Schoolhouse Rock* franchise realized it or not, they developed a powerful learning tool by merging two prevailing educational methodologies. With this understanding of the structure of *SRL!*, its musical genre, and its use of educational theory, I set out to lead an artistic team of designers, actors, and musicians to create an informed production of the show.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Design Process

#### *Introduction*

The development of a play production very often begins with preliminary concept meetings between the director and the designers. In such meetings, the director typically presents a vision for the show including ideas about the visual palettes for color, texture, and shape. My goal for every aspect of the design of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* was to create a theatrical playground upon which the show would take place; this idea motivated choices in scenery, costumes, lights, and sound. As was previously discussed, *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* is a musical revue based on the songs of the Saturday morning cartoon shorts, *Schoolhouse Rock*, that have been watched by children over four decades. Because of the nostalgia of the material to adults and the timeless appeal of the songs to children, I knew that the unifying concepts of the show needed to be young, energetic, and extremely playful; in short, the show needed to be fun. I also knew from my analysis of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* that the educational content of the play is intended to be delivered in a highly pleasurable and appealing manner. Yet, I entered the first design meeting with nothing physical to present to my designers. I did not want to give the designers any guidelines except to say that the show would only succeed if it were fun, playful, and relatable to children. In the collaborative design process, it is often the case that one idea sparks the imagination of the team. As the scenic and costume designers would later reveal to me, the word “fun” was a trigger word for the creative process of the entire production design.

*Scenic Design*

The scenic design process for this production of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* began with a brief, casual conversation between the designer and the director:

SCENIC DESIGNER. So, what are you thinking?

DIRECTOR. I want a playground, not slides and swings, but a theatrical playground. I want ups, overs, downs, throughs, and crazy levels. I want to play.

SCENIC DESIGNER. (*with a knowing grin*) Yeah, I can do that.

It may seem a risky conversation to have with a designer, but I have had the distinct privilege of seeing many previous designs from this faculty member and had complete faith in what I would be presented to me. However, I did have one request when it came to the design of the set. The show calls for audience interaction throughout the script. I wanted the audience to be able to relate intimately with the cast, but with the orchestra pit lowered, the distance between the audience and cast felt more like a chasm than a few feet. I asked the scenic designer if we could add platforms to his design that would cover the corners of the apron to give the cast and audience closer accessibility to each other.

The scenic designer took our initial conversation and the word “fun” from the first design meeting as the starting point for his design. Shortly after that initial conversation, we met to look at pictures of preschool toys—shape sorters, pull trains, blocks, beads, etc. They were all primary colors and fundamental shapes. He suggested the primary colors as a palette for the show, which I thought was a perfect choice. In keeping with concepts of play and fun, he introduced me to the idea of using over-sized toys in the set. His first suggestion was the train—a given in any child’s toy box—and with “Conjunction Junction” being a signature song, it seemed like a perfect fit for the show. We liked the shape of several other pieces, and I asked him to continue with his designs.

I was not exactly sure how he was going to use these toys, but I had seen enough of his work to know to trust him. As it happened, the scenic design for *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* influenced the direction of the design for all other areas of the production. In the spirit of true collaboration, the other designers followed the lead of the scenic designer; the design of every area of the show shared a primary color palette, simplicity of line, and strong recognizable shapes.

### *Set Design*

After several conversations, the scenic designer generated a rendering and scale model of his final design for the set. The renderings and models that were presented included two mobile utility ladders, an oversized train engine with three boxcars, and a giant shape sorter—all on castors. (Color Plate #1) With the castors, the designer gave me complete freedom to choreograph every element of the show. However, the designer did not stop there. The train engine, boxcars, and shape sorter were all comprised of individual pieces that were primary colored preschool shapes that could be used as either props or set pieces. (Color Plate #2) The scale model that was used during design meetings and throughout the rehearsal process was a tremendous hit with the cast and crew. In fact, everyone knew exactly what to do when they saw the model: they played with it. It was the designer's intent to create a set that was playful and useful, but simple enough to capture the spirit of the action.

The pieces of the train engine included three cylinders that served as the wheels, a cattle rail that let the engine rest on the wheels, a giant green cylinder that held the smoke stack, and the cab. The boxcars were comprised of two red cylinders that served as wheels and two geometric pieces that, when together, formed a rectangular box, but taken

apart became stair units, ramps, and a cutout dome. Each individual piece was made of Styrofoam and reinforced with wood framing in order to make it strong enough to be used as an individual set piece, but light enough to be moved quickly by anyone in the cast. The shapes were then wrapped in muslin to protect the Styrofoam and aid in the painting process.

The shape sorter, standing six feet, eight inches, also had a railing on top of it that made the piece useful as another platform that was accessible by the rolling ladders used on stage. (Color Plate #3) The original design had openings at opposite corners of the box, but after I choreographed “Verb,” I asked that they be moved to the center of two of the sides in order to have symmetrical accessibility. As a shape sorter, each of the three sides of the box contained three brightly colored removable shapes—square, diamond, triangle, shamrock, parallelogram, star, circle, half circle. The fourth side of the box resembled the front of a house and had a regular working door. (Color Plate #4) Originally, the door was to give actors accessibility in and out of the box in order to store props; however, the costume designer designed her costumes with props in mind. Eventually, the door front side of the box would become integrated into staging for “The Tale of Mr. Morton.”

The designer envisioned that the box have its own personality, perhaps moving by itself as to play a joke on a character and using the empty cutout spaces when the shapes were removed to surprise the audience with lights or confetti or noise. As director, I used many of his suggestions. While the initial movements of the box were by the cast members placing it on stage, by the third number, the box began moving itself. Two

technicians<sup>16</sup> were housed in the box during the show and moved the piece from point to point. At different moments in the show, these technicians would also blast fire extinguishers and confetti cannons from the different openings.

### *The Proscenium*

The proscenium was one of the most ingenious elements of the set. It was inspired by the preschool toy that allows children to move wooden beads along mazes of metal trails. The designer took the idea and looped the proscenium with blue tubing and placed brightly colored papier-mâché balls strategically on the maze.<sup>17</sup> (Color Plate #5) The effect was mesmerizing and provided the audience with a topic of conversation before the show began.

### *The Screen*

Most of my decisions, as director and choreographer, were inspired by the set. The flexibility of the design allowed me to give each of the twenty-one musical numbers its own individual look and feel. One excellent example is the large projection screen—designed to complement the proscenium—that hung in the middle of the stage.

*Schoolhouse Rock Live!* is a prop-heavy show, and much of what is called for in the script is signage. By allowing signs and props to be displayed electronically rather than physically by an actor, the screen provided much more freedom in choreography and interpretation of songs than would have been permitted otherwise. This was especially

---

<sup>16</sup>During the first technical rehearsal, the movement of the box with the technicians inside was a bit of a disaster. It was discovered that the second technician was claustrophobic and thus reassigned crew assignments.

<sup>17</sup>The balls were strategically placed during the technical load-in and focus, not only for aesthetic design, but also to accommodate the lighting designer as part of the loop fell below the natural proscenium line.

beneficial for staging numbers such as “Mother Necessity” which will be discussed in the next chapter. Each slide for the screen (approximately six foot eight inches square) was placed in a PowerPoint presentation that a computer technician ran during the show using musical cues called by the stage manager.

### *Props*

As was just mentioned, *SRL!* is an extremely prop-heavy show, the weight of which was alleviated by the use of the projection screen. Even with the projections, however, there were many props that had to be incorporated into the production. Many of the props were on hand—quills, balls, bats, roller blades, scooters, books—in the inventory of the theatre or personal closets. While others had to be purchased—sunglasses and water guns—at dollar stores and on E-bay—the kangaroo, aardvark, and rhinoceros for “Rufus”—still other props had to be made. For instance, at every performance “confetti” adjectives were thrown into the audience during “Unpack Your Adjectives.” The most elaborate of the handmade props were those used in “The Great American Melting Pot,” including a six-foot diameter melting pot made of black duvetyn fabric and a matching oversized stirring spoon, pepper shaker, and sifter. (Color Plate #6) All of the props were procured, located, or made by the student properties master and her crew with guidance from the scenic designer.

### *Costume Design*

The synopsis of the original script reflects a cast of six; however, during the pre-production process, it was decided that the cast size would be doubled for the production. Though there were twelve actors in *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, eleven of the characters



were the reflection of one, the protagonist. The costume designer wanted to reveal the characters in the actors while maintaining a sense unity, as they were all different parts of the same person. Thus, costumes were identical in shape and form using color to establish and differentiate character. Since the actors were allowed to find and develop their own character in the show, the costumes were designed so that they could be actor-driven in many of the choices, especially color. The question “What would Patrick wear?” then became a leading motivator in the costume design.

### *Costumes*

The basic costume was composed of splatter-painted T-shirts, simple vests, blue jeans, and Converse sneakers—all composed of the primary and secondary color palette established for the production. (Color Plate #7) They were designed to be modular to work with the needs of the show, functional to accommodate the movement and choreography, and fun to maintain the spirit of the show for the target audience. Color in all elements of the costume, including hair and make-up, then would be the defining element that would establish character.

The color palette for each character was chosen by the actor. That decision was based on the shoes. Cast members were told they could purchase their sneakers for a discounted price if they wanted to keep them. There was the possibility that the actors could have chosen duplicate colors, requiring the designer to intervene and assign colors, but it was not an issue as the actors maintained their individuality and all chose different colors of their own accord. Once shoe color was established, the rest of the color palette for each character was implemented. The vests were the same bright color as the shoes, but were lined to reflect a complementary color. The T-shirts were splatter-painted with

all of the colors of the palette—red, blue, orange, yellow, green, purple, pink—to unify the costumes.

The costume designer further allowed the costumes to be actor-centered by allowing them to use different pieces to best suit the character and the song. Every character had a baseball hat—used for specific choreography as will be discussed in Chapter Four—that could be worn in any style throughout the show. Bandanas were also given to each actor. Some tied them around their legs while others hung them from a pocket. One cast member became particularly attached to his and, when it could not be found for the encore show given at Waco Hall, he asked the costume shop to make him another citing it was integral to his character. The bandanas were also used to accentuate costumes for the girls in “Victim of Gravity” and “Conjunction Junction,” while they were used as a prop in “Sufferin’ ‘til Suffrage.”

In a brilliant suggestion by the costumer designer, shoulder bags were made for each actor to carry props that would be used through the show. The bags alleviated many potential logistical problems in staging by concealing props and helping make scene transitions go more quickly. The bags were designed to coordinate with the palette of each character having both a primary and secondary color—they were reversible—to complement the vest and shoes.

### *Make-up*

The make-up designer used the 1980s as a point of inspiration for the hair and make-up design to add a sense of heightened scale, in both size and color, which was necessary in order to balance the actors to the size and color of the set, lights, and costumes. The make-up, especially the eye make-up, was pared down to basic shapes to

echo not only the design of the set—based on children’s toys—but also the make-up on dolls. Another goal of the design was to keep it simple enough for the actors to do independently without much hands-on assistance from the make-up crew, which was important because of the size of the cast. (Color Plate #8)

The designer individualized the designs for hair in order to reflect and complement the personality of each actor. One of the women in the cast had red painted pigtails that reflected girlishness, while another had four pink twists that showed off the sassier side of her character. Several of the men in the cast also decided to incorporate their facial hair into the design by coloring their beards and goatees. Input from the actors was garnered to develop distinct and funky shapes that suited their characters, but to ensure comfort and durability as well. (Color Plate #9) The exciting hair styles with their vibrant colors did require a lot of time, including touch up work during the show. For example, one actor’s mohawk had to be repaired and the green color reapplied after "Noun" because of the hats that were used in the number. Overall, hair color chosen to coordinate with the costumes was a good choice because it added visual appeal and helped make each character more identifiable.

The make-up for the show was designed by a student under the tutelage of the costume designer. When approached with the renderings for the make-up and hair designs, the costume designer admitted that it was not her instinct in design, but that in the end, it was the correct instinct. The make-up and hair became a mask for the actors that allowed them to delve deeper into the playful nature of the production.

### *Lights*

The lighting designer for *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* began her design process by watching clips of the television series. While her peers grew up singing “Conjunction Junction,” her TV-free upbringing left her out of the cultural phenomenon. Though her first impression was that all of the songs sounded the same, upon further research and repeated listening, she developed the idea for a design that revolved around the pop-music nature of the songs. The designer envisioned a rock-and-roll extravaganza based on old school rock-and-roll with visible shiny silver PAR cans—lighting fixtures used to blanket large areas with light—that blinked on and off and period-specific special effects. “I would take the older audience members back to a simpler time, before moving lights and strobes and giant LCD screens,” said the lighting designer (Rapier e-mail interview). She researched footage of rock concerts of the 1970s and began imagining the lighting cues for each song.

However, the scenic design, with its concept of children's toys and play, was not compatible with the idea of a seventies rock concert. When the actors began rehearsing with the actual scenic pieces, it became clear that the lighting designer's original concept was off target. The designer realized that the production was not a rock and roll extravaganza, but a children's show, pure and simple:

There was a sweetness in the production that I hadn't heard in the music, and I had to change my direction. A lighting designer's duty is to the production first and foremost, so I put my initial concept aside and went forward with a simple and colorful design that would support but never ever overwhelm the actors. (Rapier e-mail interview)

The biggest challenge for the lighting designer was the white floor that she had asked the scenic designer for in order to play with the palette more easily. The designer

knew that it would be difficult to control the light as it bounced and reflected, but she used her experience, and at times a trial-and-error process, to achieve the desired color and textural variety. (Color Plate #6) The intent for both scenic and light design was to use the theatre's scrim. However, on the day of the lighting focus, the production staff and design team realized that there was not enough light to support the white floor and the scrim without losing and "muddying" color. In an act of mutual agreement, a black backdrop was decided upon.

### *Sound Design*

The sound design consisted of two primary elements—special audio effects and amplification of the actors' voices. During initial design meetings, it was decided that floor and boom microphones would be used instead of a wireless system unless it was deemed necessary as the production drew closer. The theatre did not own a wireless system and renting one for the production would have been cost prohibitive. There was the option to borrow microphones from other departments across campus, but not knowing the compatibility with the house system or if they would be needed, this option was not pursued.

The Jones Theatre, a 350 seat proscenium theatre, is small enough that, if the band is balanced correctly, the acoustics carry voices with little to no amplification. Moreover, the depth of the orchestra pit can be adjusted to strike the perfect balance between voices and instruments. After this was accomplished, foam padding was placed around the area the drums would occupy in order to absorb the sound and balance the drums with the rest of the band that was using individual amplifiers through the house system. A sing-through rehearsal with the band proved that the balance between the

voices and the instruments was very close, and the use of the floor and boom microphones would give the voices enough additional amplification to provide the final fine-tuning. The designer set two boom microphones in the upstage areas (to catch the voices when actors were on top of ladders and the box) and four floor microphones spread evenly along the apron. However, major issues with amplification arose during technical and dress rehearsals.

There were three sound effects used during the show, all of which happened within the first minute of the show—an alarm clock, a school bell with children talking, and the opening theme to the *Schoolhouse Rock* television show. The sound designer recorded sounds of an alarm and school bell overlaid with the chatter of children. Both effects worked, although the bell had to be lengthened to provide the desired affect. Because the opening montage from the cartoon was shown as well as heard, the sound was used with DVD using the house audio/visual system to project the cartoon along with the soundtrack at the same time.

The sound designer also compiled a CD of pre-show music that was a collection of songs from the 1970's that complemented the musical styles in show. The band enjoyed the pre-show music and, in dress rehearsal, began playing along to the recorded pre-show music. We decided to keep the effect. Then, at a certain point, the CD stopped and the band played unaccompanied. The effect was energetic and helped keep the pre-show period smooth.

### *Conclusion*

While there are moments of spectacle in any production, most plays and book musicals rely upon plot, character, and language. A musical revue does not have the

luxury of a strong story and must rely heavily on the music and spectacle as a framework for the actors. *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* is no exception. The play, and especially this production, relies heavily upon spectacle to sustain itself.

In Baylor's *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, the design was an enormous and very active part of the production. While every production has its own look and personality simply because the production staff changes from show to show, this production of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* was truly unique. With the dynamic color palette, oversized toys to climb, and exciting light effects, the stage really became a theatrical playground. As director and choreographer, my ideas for staging and movement for each musical number relied heavily upon the utility of the scenic, costume, and lighting designs. Throughout the entire process, and especially into rehearsals, the design team remained committed to the good of the show, making adjustments as needed. The properties master and the projection designer also did exceptional jobs at continually adapting their tasks as the production continued to evolve toward opening night.

Not only did the designs of Baylor's production of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* provide the show's need of spectacle, the design elements served as a conduit for education and entertainment to combine in a successful endeavor—as they have through the entire *Schoolhouse Rock* franchise. The physical functionality of the designs was readily reflected in the staging and was not merely limited to the spectacle of the production for entertainment's sake. The way the set, costumes, lighting and sound were manipulated allowed the spectacle of the production to physically employ the educational theories applied within the songs and to visually reinforce the lyrics. Thus, the designs

served the function of framework, entertainment, and education, all the while supporting the director's concept of a fun, playful theatrical production.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Production Process

#### *Pre-production Decisions*

The characters of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* represent different sides of Tom's personality, and the original cast used their first names to represent the characters in the show. While the original script calls for a cast of six (three male, three female), the size can easily be expanded without damaging the script by dividing characters' lines and solos. Newly added characters can then take on personas of their own. During initial design production meetings, a cap of twelve was put on the cast size, in order for costume renderings to begin, with the caveat that the size could be cut down if the casting pool had a lesser number of performers who fit the show. While some see the use of a large cast as difficult, there are many benefits. A larger cast would help fill the stage of the Jones Theatre (36' x 54'). Choreography and movement are much easier *en masse* if the actors are not fully trained dancers, as was the case for this show. A large cast would also render the option to use twelve as an ensemble or to consider using a chorus to back-up the six original characters if we had those who could sing well, but had poor movement skills, and vice versa. One last benefit of a larger cast would be the opportunity to take full advantage of the many talented actors of the Baylor University Department of Theatre Arts who can not only sing well, but dance and move.

### *Auditions*

Auditions for *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* were held Wednesday, January 12, 2006 with callbacks the following day in Theatre 11 at the Hooper-Schaefer Fine Arts Center at Baylor University. Groups of twenty were seen in five forty-five minute time slots to accommodate the approximately ninety who auditioned. They were asked to prepare sixteen bars of a contemporary musical or pop music piece and be ready to learn choreography. The auditions were watched by the director, the musical director, the conductor (who also served as co-musical director), and a couple of department faculty members who routinely attend auditions to evaluate the progress of the students and serve as advisors during the casting process.

After the first round of auditions, it was obvious from the high level of talent seen and heard in the vocal auditions that casting twelve was going to be easy. The real difficulty, it seemed, would be cutting the thirty who were called back down to a cast of only twelve. Before the callback auditions, it was determined that the cast would need to include two sopranos, two second sopranos, two altos, three tenors, and three basses. This determination helped to establish a set of goals for the callbacks. The first goal was to evaluate who could follow and hold a musical line while blending with the voices around them. The second goal was to see the physical energy and character they could bring to the production.

As predicted, there were several extremely talented actors to choose from, making the task of casting rather difficult. There were several actors whose auditions left no questions about their casting. They were good performers, and their past credits spoke to their skill, dependability, and growth. After those very strong actors were cast, there

were two male and two female roles to fill with about five candidates for each spot, each clearly capable of performing the roles.

What then should be the criteria for selection? Teaching and working in educational theatre can present a couple of problems when it comes to casting. Personal feelings, whether good or bad, in or out of the classroom, can influence decisions. There is a real danger of mentally pre-casting—envisioning the production with the talent that has been seen in past departmental productions. This was one of the stumbling blocks of casting for *SRL!*, but once those preconceived notions were set aside, a cast of twelve was assembled whose talents would allow the requirements of the show to be fulfilled in the areas of music, dance, and character performance.

Choosing a cast was not the last obstacle in the pre-production process. Because of the strength of the twelve that were cast, I decided to use them all as an ensemble rather than divide them into principals and chorus. The larger cast meant planning all the music and dialogue—with the exception of the role of Tom—anew, taking into account that the six distinct characters written in the script were now twelve. The decision was made to allow each actor to define their own character onstage using any part of their own personality or creating an entirely new persona. For this reason, we followed the lead of the original production and cast the actors as themselves: Austin (our Tom, the teacher) and the figments of his imagination—Clay, Haley, Jeff, Kelsey, Lauren, Mary, Michael, Meredith, Patrick, Suzanne, and Zach.

Reassigning lines and solos required a meeting with the musical directors and an “assignment” read-through with the cast. Solos were given based on the needs of the song and the quality of voices that were in the cast. Personality was also a contributing

factor to the solo assignments. Several of the *SRL!* songs possess lyrics that could not easily be developed and transcribed to the stage through movement or choreography. These songs required a performer who could largely “sell” a song without a lot of spectacle.

### *Rehearsals*

Five and a half weeks, though a standard rehearsal time allotment, is not a lot of time to produce a musical revue with twenty-one numbers. The rehearsal schedule was precise with the stage manager not only working out the details, but also promising to hold the production to task in order to maintain the schedule. Because the performers were students, each taking a full college load, rehearsals were limited to four hours a day, five days a week. Working backwards from the dates of productions through required dress and technical rehearsals, the designer run was scheduled for February 26, 2006. This left three weeks to complete and learn music, choreography, and blocking with a week afterwards to polish, to refine, and to work out any problems in the production before turning the show over to the designers and technicians.

The first week of rehearsals was devoted to music, and rehearsals were scheduled for those involved in individual songs rather than having the entire cast for the duration. This worked well since two cast members were still involved in the production that ran previous to *SRL!* The musical director and conductor worked to teach parts to each musical line in choruses and to finesse solos. Because of the time crunch that the production was under, the importance of retaining what they learned day-to-day was stressed to the cast. The cast did a stupendous job with music and did not have to be re-taught.

The concept for the Baylor production of *SRL!* was to “push” the songs beyond the folk quality of the originals in order to give them a fresh interpretation. Several of the songs developed an edgier rock feel, while some became jazzier, and still others were transformed to novelty/performance art. Many of the songs were given more intensity musically through small changes in the vocalization. This decision in turn changed the flow of the movement as it was first conceived listening to the television show’s soundtrack in preparation for the thesis production. During the week of musical rehearsals, the tempo and feel of each song was established which allowed the choreographer to adjust to the unique musical quality the production would enjoy.

Weeks two and three were a transfer of the music from the studio to the stage adding blocking, movement, and choreography. The goal was to average two songs per rehearsal, allowing about two hours per song. The rehearsal schedule was set to allow for overflow time which was used on a few occasions, especially in the first days of rehearsals. Because of the nature of the set, numbers could not be staged out of order, allowing for longer, more difficult musical numbers to be scheduled with shorter, more easily staged acts; but rather, the show had to be blocked in order to alleviate confusion and to insure the correct transitions from one scene to the next.

The first two songs of the show are the longest and most difficult because they are the most active musically and vocally. While they did take longer to set than originally anticipated, by the end of those rehearsals the final outcome of “Verb” and “Noun” instilled confidence, not only in the cast, but also in the production staff. This allowed the pace to be picked-up and the production to remain on schedule. By this time as well, the actors and the production staff had become aware of and more comfortable with

rehearsal styles. Once again, the cast proved capable of retaining the blocking, movement, and choreography. As rehearsals progressed and changes needed to be made, their skills and willingness to adapt for each other and the good of the show were proven.

The first three weeks of rehearsal concluded with a run-through for the designers and the technical staff and crew. While the production was still two and half weeks from opening, there was only a week before technical rehearsals began. That week was devoted to cleaning up the show, especially in transitions, and becoming comfortable with the nature of the show. The show is primarily geared toward children, and there are many opportunities to play and be silly. The dialogue is at times silly, if not poor, but focusing on the fact that the show is an educational fun show for children helped the cast—primarily used to performing material of a more serious genre—become comfortable with being silly and performing some awkward scenes.

The entire twelve member ensemble was on the stage for the majority of the play while the remainder consisted of small scenes and numbers with only a few actors. Not only were the actors in front of the audience for long stretches at a time, they were also used as stage hands to place the set from scene to scene—and sometimes in the middle of scenes. While the performance energy stayed high during the numbers, the energy plummeted between scenes, especially for those not involved in the dialogue. To combat this problem, the cast was reminded that every movement had to be done with purpose. While the set pieces needed to be moved from one spike mark to the next in order for the show to run, it would be detrimental to the show for them to move the pieces as though they were dressed in “tech-black” looking for spike marks with dim transition lighting. The goal then had to be to make every set transition part of the entertainment. Once this

concept was explained and executed, the energy of the musical numbers was maintained through the rest of the show.

The majority of the time during week four of rehearsals was spent cleaning up transitions and polishing choreography and blocking. For most of the first three weeks of rehearsal, the cast used substitute props or the parts of the set that were available. As pieces were finished and added to rehearsal process, some of the movement and staging that had been choreographed for the actors with the pieces had to be adapted to work with the actual size or weight of the set piece. For example, in “Mother Necessity” one of the boxcars was used to help simulate the Wright brothers’ flight. Patrick sat on top of the box with his arms out—like a child pretending to fly—while Zach pushed him around the stage. (Color Plate #7) The original blocking was timed and choreographed to a musical phrase of six eight-count measures<sup>18</sup>. The entrance was made on one, followed by specific movements for two-three-four-five, and an exit on the sixth eight. This was easily accomplished during the first weeks of rehearsals while the bottom platform was all that was used. Once the rest of the boxcar was completed and added, it weighed considerably more than expected, and the mobility was severely limited. The issue was easily remedied by simplifying the movements between the entrance and exit. Another example was the use of the individual shapes in “Three is a Magic Number.” The cast was placed in various locations around the stage (standing, sitting, or kneeling on top of the box, the ladders, or on the floor) and had to manipulate their shape by spinning, lifting, or turning. Several of the shapes were either too heavy or too cumbersome to be

---

<sup>18</sup>If the time signature for a piece of music is four-four, a musician counts four beats to a measure or phrase. Dancers count two phrases at a time—counting to eight once rather than four twice. Thus, if a musical chorus had four phrases as counted by a dancer (or eight measures as counted by a musician) a choreographer would say they choreographed four eights.

used by the actors in the more awkward positions, so shapes were reassigned according to accessibility and ease of movement.

The fifth week of rehearsals was devoted to the technical elements of the show as lights, sound, costumes, and special effects were added. While most of the adjustments were made with ease, the transition from rehearsal to production was not without its difficulties. The easiest addition was the band—piano, guitar, bass, and drums. The conductor had played the piano and keyboards through the entire rehearsal process, including the first week when music was taught and style was decided upon. In reflection, it was a very important non-decision that was made correctly. Often in musicals, a rehearsal accompanist is hired to play the first several weeks before the conductor and orchestra are added in the last days of rehearsal before the production opens. Even more often, tempos and the feel of the music are adjusted either by the musicians or the actors on stage. Because the conductor had been present for all of the rehearsals and helped establish the tone and rhythm for each piece, he was able to clearly communicate with the band, making the transition seamless. The sound of the full band greatly enhanced the energy of the show.

### *Problems*

There were three issues discovered through the rehearsal period that caused problems for the production: 1) the inability to make crossovers<sup>19</sup>, 2) the noise of the castors when moving the set, and 3) the use of floor microphones. Though they were individual issues, decisions to remedy the situations directly affected related issues. For instance, each of the three issues listed above were all affected by the design team's

---

<sup>19</sup>A crossover is the ability to move from one side of the stage to the other—offstage—without being seen.



decision to use the black backdrop rather than the scrim—a decision that was made after the entire show had been blocked.

As the show was being staged, at the end of daily rehearsals, the cast would run as much of the show as had been blocked. At the end of the second week of rehearsals, one of the professors of the department watched a run-through of about half of the show. Her main point of concern for the show at that point was the use of the set. The noise of the castors overshadowed the vocal projection of the cast and the constant transition of set pieces was too distracting to watch and enjoy the show. I knew that the noise of the castors was going to be an issue, but assumed that microphones would rectify that situation by amplifying the voices of the cast. From watching the nightly runs, I knew there was something wrong, but I could not place the problem. Once the movement of the set was pointed out as an issue, I was able to re-block the show, simplifying the movement of the set by becoming more economical in the transitions.

It was at this time that the decision to use the black drop rather than the scrim was made. The show had been blocked keeping the limitations of the use of the scrim in mind. When the scrim is in use, there is no room for backstage crossovers. There are doors on each side of the stage including a load-in door on stage right; however, the door on stage left is a normal door that could not accommodate the size of the set. Once the decision was made to use the black backdrop, set movement onstage was simplified even more due to the ability to make backstage crossovers. Thus the task of re-staging was not as difficult a task as it could have been.

Even after set transitions were modified there was still the issue of the noise of the castors. The technical director and set crew worked diligently to solve the problem.

They made sure that each roller of castors—there were three per castor—was functioning properly. They also tried different styles of castors, but it was determined that a single castor would not give the pieces the mobility that they needed to perform. It was noted that the box did not generate as much noise as the much smaller boxcars. It was determined that the size of the box helped eliminate much of the noise of the castors by reducing vibration under its increased weight. Consequently, the crew added stage weights to the carts that held the boxcars to give them more weight to help control the roar of the castors. While the noise level was definitely improved with help from the weights, it was still a distraction. Because of the design, blocking, and time issues, we decided to rely on microphones to assist in amplifying the voices above the noise of the mobile set. Ultimately, I was satisfied with the decision to use the microphones to overcome the noise; however, that decision did not resolve the issues.

The sound design discussed in Chapter Three spoke of the decisions and reasons to use floor and boom microphones over a wireless microphone system. The design would have worked effectively except for the unanticipated noise of the set. The floor microphones did a great job amplifying the voices, but they also did a great job of amplifying the castors which, in turn, worked against the voices. By the time the situation with the microphones presented itself, it was too late in the process to rent or borrow a wireless microphone system. Further, the use of the modified apron was not taken into account during the pre-production planning of the sound design. Thus, actors that used the apron platforms had no amplification to help them project over the band. They were closer to the audience and still heard, but the proper balance between voice and music was not achieved.

### *The Gimmicks*

As was previously discussed, *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* is united by a common theme of education through music and is held together by a flimsy plot. With the wide variety of musical styles, movement was going to be important, but it would not be enough to support many of the more unusual numbers. I knew that in order for the show to work that each number would have to possess the ability to stand alone if taken out of context of the show. For some of the more unusual numbers this would require the development of a gimmick—an idea that carries a piece via spectacle. Some directors would be insulted at the idea of using gimmicks, but in the case of a musical revue with this sort of personality, I argue that this was exactly the right approach.

#### *Verb: That's What's Happening*

“Verb” is an active piece of music that makes for the perfect opening to the show with its quintessential 1970’s rock feel. To reflect the nature of the music and the lyrics, the choreography and blocking were bold and active. The women were used as choreographed back-up singers while the men told the story and physically introduced the audience to the set by rolling it out. Putting this number together was a lot like assembling a jigsaw puzzle. Detailed notes were kept on the placement and responsibility of each cast member by the stage management team on a musical phrase-by-phrase basis in order to insure safety, but also to create a balance on stage of actors to set.

### *A Noun is a Person, Place or Thing*

There are four verses in “Noun” that help explain several persons, places, and things. The set became an integral part of the song as it allowed the soloist to physically travel through the verses. Verse one describes a trip on a train, which made for easy staging considering there was a mobile train in the set. The second and third verses utilized the versatility of the boxcars. In the second verse, the boxcar containing the stair units was used as a base while the ramps from the second boxcar were placed on top of it to assemble Mrs. Jones’ house. The third boxcar was turned over and the dome was removed to indicate the ferry taken to the Statue of Liberty. During the fourth verse, different pieces of boxcars and set were assembled to make a drugstore counter.

The original stage directions for “Noun” call for the actors to wear vests spelling out the word “nouns” with a letter on each vest. I did not like the idea of spelling the word using vests because they are used in a similar fashion later in the show. Instead, another approach was attempted. Each cast member had a baseball cap to be used at their discretion through the show. My thought was to put the letters on the tops of hats so that they were revealed when the actors bent the tops of their heads towards the audience. (Color Plate #10) This allowed for some innovative choreography for the entire cast—most of the cast did not have extensive dance training, but they were all coordinated enough to move their heads up, down, right, and left.

### *Three is a Magic Number*

“Three is a Magic Number” was the first song that truly became audience interactive, while at the same time producing a tempo change with less action in the music. The two previous numbers were extremely active in choreography and blocking

which made this a great number to not only give the actors a break on stage, but also for the audience to relax as well. However, this presents a problem: How do we keep the audience engaged and responsive while at the same time adjusting the choreography and blocking to the mellow mood of the music?

The song repeats the multiples of three and specifically asks for participation from the audience. I knew that the blocking needed to be minimal because of the nature of the song and the activity of the two previous songs, but I also knew that we needed a physical representation of the chorus. My first thought during the design process was to use the projection screen to simply display the numbers as they were sung, but during the rehearsals, I realized that we would lose the interest of the audience. It was not until we were in the rehearsal process that I knew what needed to be done. There are ten multiples of three in the song. The chorus actually sings, “3 6 9 12 15 18 21 24 27 30.” During rehearsal I noticed that there were shapes in the box. After confirmation that I could have one more shape made, I had the multiples of three painted on the back of each shape. The cast—minus the characters of Austin and Clay, the soloist—each had a shape and flipped it to reveal their number every time it was sung, visually leading the audience during the singing of the chorus. (Color Plate #11) It was a creative use of the shapes and a practical display of the multiples of three that assisted in the educational chorus of the song using the theories of behaviorism. The verses and dialogue in the song likewise incorporated the theories of constructivism with verbal explanations and examples of the number three.

### *Mother Necessity*

The use of the projection screen and slides in this number enabled the cast to truly perform the song rather than become merely vehicles of transportation for various props. “Mother Necessity” is the story of inventions by famous sons, and the script calls for signage or actual props of the inventions to be brought onstage. Instead of using this convention, our production displayed the named inventions on the big screen while the cast continued to sing and move. In fact, the projection designer came up with the idea to show various versions and improvements upon each particular invention thereby tracing advances of technology through history—a feat that could not have been accomplished onstage. It added another dimension to the song, and allowed the cast freedom to make up the characters that they were portraying in the song. (Color Plate #7) As a side note, my favorite addition by the actors was the use of the ghost light pulled from offstage to demonstrate Edison’s invention of the light bulb.

### *Sufferin’ ‘til Suffrage*

The six women cast in *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* had all been trained in dance which enabled the choreographer to stretch the style of movement in the production. The decision was made between the director/choreographer and the conductor to “push” the sound of the number in order to give it the feel of a rock anthem. (Color Plate #12) As each soloist sang, they were backed-up with strong yet still very feminine choreography. Acting choices that were made in the dialogue before and after “Sufferin’” were exceptional. Before the song the women “overpowered” Austin to show him the girls were in control. As he sat and watched the “girl power” anthem, he became more and more involved in the song. At the song’s finish, Austin was so caught up in the

“Sufferin’” movement that he did not notice Jeff enter—catching him in not the manliest of positions. The dialogue that ensues discusses hardware and manly things, which Austin played up to establish his manhood and redeem himself. The manly sounds that Austin used are a good example of the ways that nuances to the vocal styles and choreography contributed directly to acting choices and even helped make better sense of the clunky dialogue between songs.

### *Lolly, Lolly, Lolly*

In “Lolly” we emphasized the Vaudeville rhythm and feel of the music by giving the three actors bowler hats and canes. The mood was further enhanced by the use of footlights—reminiscent of the Vaudeville stages and the early Ziegfeld revues. The choreography was simple steps with synchronized movements for the canes. Audiences seemed to really respond positively to the act, especially when the actors tapped their canes on the boxcars—it produced laughs at every performance. Since they were not experienced dancers, the original intent of the tap was to give the actors a beat to end the phrase. As a choreographer and dance teacher, I am convinced that every person is capable of dance in one form or another: it is my job as the choreographer to find not only the right dance steps for each level of dancer, but to also give them the tools they need to accomplish them.

### *Unpack Your Adjectives*

“Adjectives” describes a camping weekend including an adventure with a bear. The stage directions use a puppet for the encounter with the bear, but I decided to go life-size. The mascot for Baylor University is Bruiser the Bear, and coincidentally, one of the

cast members was an official school mascot. He got permission to use a retired Bruiser costume, and we had our real “live” bear. Also called for in the stage directions are water guns to spritz the audience when describing sunny and rainy days. We decided to give our bear an extra large water gun as he was “a scary bear.”

During the rehearsal I decided to see if we could take the bear gimmick a little bit further. As soon as the bear ran on stage, we did a stop-time in the action and movement and led the audience in a “Sic ‘em” bear chant<sup>20</sup>. (Color Plate #13) When it was over, the cast ran back into position and resumed the action where they had left-off. It was a huge hit with the Baylor audiences. In fact, after the first performance, the actors adjusted their timing with the rest of the scene as it took several seconds for the crowd to settle down after their cheer and being soaked by water guns.

### *Just a Bill*

The process of a bill becoming a law is a complicated ordeal that the creators of *Schoolhouse Rock* have easily explained to children for generations. Indeed, “Just a Bill” is perhaps the best example in all of the *Schoolhouse Rock* canon of the successful blending of difficult educational material and high entertainment. To theatrically demonstrate this process, we used the set and the actors to physically show the journey of the bill with basic blocking to give focus to the lyrics and dialogue. The boxcar comprised of the stair unit was unfolded to symbolize the steps of the Capitol building while the other boxcars were used to signify the House and the Senate. As a subtle

---

<sup>20</sup>At all Baylor functions, the university staff, faculty, students, alumni, and fans raise their right arm in the air shaking their hand, simulating a bear claw, all the while yelling, “EH!” As the chant grows louder, the leader signals the crowd to lower their arms and raise them again shouting, “Sic ‘em Bears!”



political-feminist move, Mary was placed on top of the box representing the President at the White House.

### *The Preamble*

“The Preamble” is positioned before and after several complex and physical songs. We used the piece, much like we did “Three,” to change the pace of the show and to give the actors a moment of rest. The actors were set in a stage picture and made small transitions to other stage pictures during the dialogue in the song. Several of the cast members were positioned close enough to the audience to encourage them to sing during the familiar chorus. (Color Plate #5) At any given performance, several voices who were brave enough to show their age and their vocal talent sang along with the cast—some more enthusiastically than others.

### *Ready or Not, Here I Come*

The premise to “Ready or Not” is a game of hide-and-seek. I had the cast simulate the game in two separate attempts to stage it. The first attempt had the cast on stage using the many pieces of the set to hide. However, it became a very messy process with twelve people running around with twelve pieces of scenery. In the second attempt to block the number, I used minimal blocking on stage and had the cast hiding in and around the audience. When the control was then turned over to the cast, the result was an energized, creative game of hide-and-seek with the cast using audience members, each other, and parts of the theatre to hide. The lighting designer also added a great element of play to the number by using the spotlights to find the cast members. The audience enjoyed the improvisation of the actors as they used their skills when they were “caught”

in the light. While a bit of a distraction at times, Patrick was able to lead the audience in counting by fives on the fingers with a little help from the cast in the audience singing and demonstrating during the choruses. Just as in “Three,” the song and the staging merge the concepts of behaviorism and constructivism through repetition and reinforcement and the demonstration of “the experience.”

### *Do the Circulation*

The success of “Circulation” was a combination of choreography, costuming, and audience interaction. The women of the cast sang and performed back-up choreography for the entire song while the men were used to physically act out the circulation of blood through the body. At one point, the men turn their vests inside-out to reveal the functions or parts of the body they represented. After their demonstration, they went into the audience and found volunteers (usually children, female friends, or potential dates) to help them dance—demonstrating a way to circulate. They had basic choreographed moves with which to lead the unknowing audience participants. Towards the end of the run, the men began targeting younger audience members more and more and would lead them in “interpretative” dance movements like “shaking their booty” and crazy kicking. The result was much more energized than the planned choreography.

### *Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla*

“Rufus”<sup>21</sup>—a wordy song by no accident—is the explanation of the function and necessity of pronouns. The slides on the projection screen displayed the pronouns as they

---

<sup>21</sup>“Rufus” was blocked by the assistant director in order to give her experience working with musical theatre. She handled this opportunity well, using the creative resources of the set while keeping with the style and theme of the production. I observed her carefully in this process and was prepared to intervene if her blocking started to drift away from the central direction of the play.

were sung. Very basic blocking was used to move the actors around the stage to tell the story of Rufus and his friends with their—quite literally stuffed—kangaroo, aardvark, and rhinoceros. While the song is a bit absurd, in words and story, the actors took the camp qualities of the song seriously which played well to the audience.

### *Figure Eight*

“Figure Eight” was the one number in the production that had to be completely re-worked during the rehearsal process. The lyrics and the changing rhythms and moods of the music made it difficult to conceptualize. The original blocking involved homage to every local Christmas pageant’s black light special, as cast members carried fluorescent painted numbers that appeared as the soloist sang them. The result was an uninteresting, trite, disorganized mess.

However, blocking was not the only problem with the concept. First there were the technical issues of not having black lights and not being able to control the white in the actors’ shirts. Next, I had become convinced that the black light effect was simply not right for the number. Because I knew how I wanted the stage set and with which pieces, I decided to move on to the next number while I waited for inspiration, which came in the form of a conversation with the lighting designer.

I originally had Mary placed on top of the green cylinder from train downstage center. The designer suggested keeping that placement but playing to the 1960’s feel of the music by using a multicolored gobo to surround her in light. She then suggested enhancing the unusual sound of the piece by using fog machines. (Color Plate #14) At this point, collaborative theatre kicked in again as I realized the other actors then needed to skate around the stage on roller blades and scooters behind Mary as she sang. The

result was a much more interesting piece to watch, but there was still something that was not working in the piece.

“Eight” was blocked about two and one half weeks into rehearsals and at about the halfway point of the semester right before Spring Break. Many students were feeling tired and stressed, and soon the actor playing Mary became sick with a throat infection. During one of the rehearsals, she asked if she could speak her song rather sing it because her throat was very sore. We obliged, she began, and the result was exactly what the song needed. As she could not sing the performance, she still performed, but with her speaking voice finding interesting ways of delivering the lines. The original concept for the song was to sing it with the carefree flow of a 1960’s flower child melody; however, the result of the spoken performance ended up sounding like early sixties beat poetry. There was still the issue of the change in the music, so we decided to combine the two approaches—half the song was spoken beatnik while the other was delivered like a flower child. The result was very funny and entertaining.

### *A Victim of Gravity*

In “Gravity” the men donned sunglasses, leather jackets, and 1950’s, *Grease*-like personas. The boys strutted around the stage bebop style to Jeff’s “too cool” lead singer. As they did, the girls rolled up their jeans and stood on top of the box which served as the window from which to admire the boys during their slumber party. (Color Plate #3) In order to engage the boys and the girls, Meredith—the first girl to realize the boys were serenading them—tossed a ball down to Jeff displaying the effects of gravity. To further enhance the fifties’ feel, a poodle skirt—appliquéd with Sir Isaac Newton’s apple—was designed for Meredith to wear during “Gravity” as she whirled around the stage with Jeff.

### *Zero, My Hero*

The lone ballad of the show is “Zero” with only two actors on the stage. The song is about a boy’s very serious fascination with the number zero. In what some thought as an odd decision, I gave the solo to the most animated member of the cast. While most would cast him in a very active role, I gave him this solo to show other sides of his talent and at the same time to use his lack of inhibition to literally interpret the song with all seriousness. What could have been a lackluster song became a surprisingly sweet and memorable number.

### *Conjunction Junction*

Our version of “Conjunction Junction” was much jazzier than the original. In many ways, this number was staged to appeal to the adults in the audience who remembered the cartoon shorts from childhood, more than to the kids themselves. This choice was made because of all the *Schoolhouse Rock* songs, “Conjunction Junction” is usually ranked as the one towards which adults feel most nostalgic. Austin served as the conductor and the women as his back-up singers who were wheeled out on the boxcars appropriately displaying signs “and,” “but,” and “or.” (Color Plate #15) The women’s choreography consisted of simple railroad movements with the arms, but with just enough footwork to keep the movement interesting. Originally, they only moved during their chorus, but they were later added into the blocking with Austin to give the piece a fuller affect.

### *Great American Melting Pot*

The stage directions for “Melting Pot” ask for a small black cauldron onstage into which dolls of various ethnic backgrounds would be placed to symbolize America’s nickname. My vision of that idea with the movement that would accompany it would be swallowed by the depth of the stage and distance of the audience. Jokingly, we discussed having a life-size melting pot into which we could place the actors. Upon hearing the discussion, the scenic designer thought it was a great concept and added it to the props and set pieces. The result was a six foot black duvetyn pot with matching utensils. The women donned chefs’ hats and assisted Suzanne as she “whipped up” her recipe of American heritage. The men then donned ethnic hats and were placed in the pot. Though we liked the idea, it was missing something, and choreography was not the answer. We decided to put the piece on hold before finishing it—like we did with “Eight”—until inspiration hit us. During another professor’s visit to the rehearsals it was pointed out that we had lost the theme of audience participation toward the end of the show. That was all that needed to be said to give the “Melting Pot” the action it needed. The men went into the house and brought audience members onstage where they were given ethnic hats to wear and placed in the pot. (Color Plate #6)

### *Elbow Room*

My original thought for “Elbow Room” was to use the lights in areas on the stage to show the growth and expansion of borders of the United States, but I knew that I wanted the entire set on the stage for “Interplanet Janet.” I also realized the lyrics of the song told a story which we could physically represent through the staging. Thus, I

decided to use my original idea of having the light pared down during the figurative first verse so that three of the girls struggled to control the light until it began to grow; from there, the set was used to tell the story. Sacagawea was rolled across the stage on the green mobile ladder as she led Lewis and Clark on an expedition, and the train was used to signify the expansion of the railroad from one side of the country to the other.

### *Interplanet Janet*

With the entire set onstage (Color Plate #1), there were just enough pieces to let everyone be a planet with Patrick as “Pluto” up in a lighting portal. His placement high above the stage came to the delight of the audience as they each discovered him either on their own or when he was pointed out by Kelsey as “Janet.” With the exception of Michael as Saturn—who I made show off his rings with oversized glowing toy rings for his fingers—the actors were given complete freedom to interpret their planet. For example, the assistant costume designer designed a crown “worthy of a diva” for Haley who played the sun. The words during that verse refer to the sun as the largest star, so Haley took the meaning and turned her sun into a “superstar.” We then accentuated the go-go pop beat of the music with a fun hand jive that was easy for the audience to learn and participate.

### *Interjections*

“Interjections” is another song that uses stories as examples to explain the function of a part of speech. I relied on the improvisational skills of the actors as I grouped them by verses. At the end of the “hallelujah chorus,” we had the box move to the center of the stage, and Haley spoke the last line of the song, “Darn! That’s the end.”

On that cue, a confetti cannon was ignited and spewed streamers and metallic confetti from the top of the box to signify the end of the show was at hand.

### *The Tale of Mr. Morton*

As the last song of the show, “Mr. Morton” is appropriately another “example by story” song. However, unlike the other stories whose examples are limited to verses, “Mr. Morton” has an entire song to tell his story. For this last song we used the fourth side of the box with the door. (Color Plate #4) Realizing where we were going with the song, the scenic designer had a window pane painted beside the door, and the box became Pearl’s house. We also used the screen and the actors to engage the audience. As Austin would sing the song, the screen would display the lyrics, and the cast encouraged audience participation.

### *Interjections, Reprise*

The show closes with a final chorus of “Interjections,” we repeated the cannon blast at the end, and the lighting designer added another treat for the audience by having bubbles blow from lighting portals during the song and curtain call. (Color Plate #16) The cast took their bows, introduced the band, acknowledged the crew, and thanked the audience before they danced offstage.

### *The Encore Performance*

When *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* was decided upon as the thesis project, the idea of touring the show was tossed about in a faculty meeting. Moving the show to the local theatre was discussed, but because of lack of manpower, it was not pursued further. The following Monday after the first weekend of shows—the production ran Thursday



through Sunday for two weekends—I told the chair of the department about the overwhelming response from the parents and their request to get it into the schools. Now that the show was a success, the idea that had been shelved was now in the forefront. Knowing we had little time and resources, we brainstormed about performance options. One was to pare down the show to a forty-minute program and travel from school to school, but it was quickly determined that a traveling show was not feasible because of limited time and financial means.

It was determined that the best option would be to find a large performance space so that several hundred children could see the production at one time. Within a couple of phone calls we discovered that the department could have access to the 2,400 seat auditorium on campus free of charge and that the proposed date of performance would work with their calendar. After several more phone calls, faxes, and e-mails, we had conjured enough interest to fill the auditorium for a show. With the opportunity to perform the show in a house the size of Waco Hall, all twelve actors and the band eagerly agreed to rehearse and stay on campus for a few extra days at the end of the semester. The support of the show was so strong that the entire technical crew stayed as well, and students that had not been involved in the original production at the theatre volunteered wherever needed—load-in, ushering, etc.

The encore was six weeks after the first run had closed. A walk-through rehearsal, two rehearsals with the accompanist, and a dress rehearsal were scheduled. Because of the school schedules, we had to cut our one hour twenty minute show down to an hour. The thought of cutting a beloved show was agonizing, but in the end “Mother Necessity”, “Zero, My Hero”, “Elbow Room”, “The Tale of Mr. Morton”, and the

“Interjections” reprise were cut. The actors made adjustments to the new transitions and stage dimensions—Waco Hall had ten extra feet in width, but ten less in depth. The load-in of the set at Waco Hall was an easy process since the entire set was on castors. The proscenium arch and the projection screen were the only two pieces of the set that were not transferred because they would have been dwarfed on the stage in the larger theatre. However, Waco Hall has two large projection screens on each side of the stage that we were able to use with our slides to keep the rest of the show intact. With the addition of wireless headset microphones for each performer (borrowed from sources across campus), the encore was ready to perform.

The performance happened at 9:30 AM on Wednesday, May 10, 2006 with a projected 1,500 in attendance. Because of the logistics of coordinating the transportation of a crowd that large, the children began arriving at 8:45 that morning. The chair of the department suggested having the cast greet the children before the show to help ease their forty-five minute wait. At first, I did not like the idea because I wanted to surprise the audience with green mohawks and blue hair, but I did relent, and in hindsight it was the right thing to do. The cast walked through the audience and introduced themselves to the children who were absolutely star struck. (Color Plate #17) We also used the time before the show to give the children a quick lesson in theatre by asking them not to talk during the performance, but also to let them know that their participation was encouraged. They were told they could sing along with any of the songs they know—many teachers use the videos in the classroom as it is approved as curriculum in the state of Texas—and by teaching them the hand jive from “Interplanet Janet.”

Once the lights went down and curtain went up, the children and teachers clapped, sang, and, as the case was with several, danced in their seats. The energy that flowed between the actors and the children was like nothing I had ever seen before. (Color Plate #18) We were making an impact on these students—educationally and theatrically. Rather than have the cast bow and exit by dancing offstage at the end of the show as they had in the first run, I had them exit and dance through the audience to say good-bye to the children. This was also a big hit, and served as crowd control for an orderly exit.

The performance at Waco Hall was a success. Teachers praised it as the best field trip they had taken any of their previous classes. They applauded not only the quality of the performance, but also the organization of the “production” of maneuvering 1,500 school children in and out of one room. Several classes sent handmade cards thanking the actors, telling them who was their favorite, and hoping they could do something like that again. (Color Plate #19) The observation of the success of the show by the administration at Baylor and the administration at the schools, I hope, will ensure many more presentations of children’s theatre at Baylor for the community.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusions

I am extremely proud of this production of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, but I must admit that I had serious doubts about it both as a production and as the subject of a thesis. It was not my first choice. I have known since the moment that I began working in the MFA Directing program that I wanted to direct a musical for my thesis. I had hoped for a grand American musical, but there were reasons preventing every musical I chose. After much consideration, I decided on *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. However, a local theatre was bringing in a national tour six months prior to the date of my opening. As a matter of respect and theatre courtesy, I decided to choose another show. So, I proposed *Oklahoma!* I had worked as choreographer on the show five years earlier and was very pleased with my work on the whole show. I think one of the best pieces I have ever choreographed was the “Dream Ballet” sequence for that production of *Oklahoma!* I was interested in revisiting this show with the vision of director. However, after another bit of research, it was discovered that the local community college had just performed the show within the last eighteen months. Once again, I decided to choose another show, but I had no idea what it should be.

I fretted over it for a couple of weeks. I brainstormed with professors and colleagues, but there was not a single musical that stood out from the rest. Frankly, I like them all. At one point during this process, it was pointed out by a professor that one of the reasons for my difficulty was the fact that I had been a choreographer longer than I had been a director and was therefore used to working like a choreographer. As a

choreographer, I am hired to come into projects that have already been chosen. I then listen to the director and develop my work within the framework of his or her vision for the musical. In other words, as a choreographer I am used to being creative within a canvas someone else has given me. As a director, I was overwhelmed with the vastness of selection, and this deeply engrained working mentality did not help.

Stan Denman, Ph.D., chair of the department of theatre arts at Baylor University, made one of the most interesting suggestions to me—*Schoolhouse Rock Live!* He and his family had seen the show in Chicago in the mid-nineties and said that they had never had more fun at a musical. He said they sang along as they strolled down memory lane and were entertained by the personalities developed by the cast. The suggestion definitely intrigued me since I am a child of the seventies and knew the material rather well from many Saturday mornings in front of the television.

One of the biggest discussions within the theatre arts department is how to grow an audience. A remarkable statistic about Baylor University Theatre is that 98% of the audience is required to attend the productions in order to fulfill the requirements for the Theatre Appreciation class. Waco is not a small Texas town. Waco proper has a population of about 110,000, and tens of thousands more living in the smaller towns in the surrounding areas. The city supports a symphony, a small community theatre, an opera, and several other artistic endeavors; however, less than one percent of Baylor Theatre's audience comes from outside of the Baylor community. This is typical of theatre as we are losing much of our audience to cable, TiVo<sup>®</sup>, and the X-box. In *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, I saw an opportunity to expose two new demographics to our theatre by reviving nostalgic memories of parents—thirty-and forty-somethings who

grew up watching *Schoolhouse Rock*—and educating their children. In this regard, the show absolutely succeeded. At every performance young families filed into the theatre, and as they left the children spoke about their favorite numbers with excitement, and the parents talked about how to get the production in the schools, which led to the Waco Hall encore performance. While theatre is an art practiced best by trained and skilled artisans, it can also be a viable form of commercial entertainment. The popularity of this production and its effective targeting of untapped demographics for Baylor University Theatre demonstrate both the market realities of theatre and its potential.

*Schoolhouse Rock Live!* pushed me as a director. I was required to unify twenty-one songs into a cohesive show while finding the gimmick that made each number work on its own. This was accomplished by looking at the scenes as individual pieces, then determining the strengths and weaknesses of my actors. I also took advantage of good advice and creative suggestions that were offered to me from several different fronts. The challenge of working with a flimsy plot and suspect script was ultimately overcome by the dedication of fearless actors who took my direction and used the freedom I gave them as actors to explore what was for many of them a new style of entertainment. In fact, I think one of my greatest strengths as a director is the ability to cast well. I firmly believe that the success of the show was due to good casting decisions.

My other strength is at the same time my biggest weakness. When I am working with my cast, I am very patient. I understand, especially in an educational environment, that these are young performers with minimal experience. I expect hard work and results, but I know that the process of perfection takes time. As the director, I think this builds confidence within the actors. For example, the men in “Lolly” had a very hard time

memorizing and commanding the words much less the choreography, and there were times that I thought that they would not get it before the show opened. Yet, I always encouraged them. The patience and faith I showed these three resulted in one of the most likeable numbers in the show. Moreover, my patience helped the three actors in this number grow as performers. For these reasons, I see my patience as a director to be a real virtue.

However, this strength became a weakness when I dealt with the issue of sound. When I realized that it was not working out, I played my role as “patient” director and assumed that the problems with the sound would work themselves out. While the sound definitely improved from rehearsal into the first several performances, it was never right. Perhaps it was my inexperience as a director that showed here as well. When there are noted deficiencies (i.e., lack of equipment, budget restraints, proper training), how much can I ask as a director? For my next production I know that if I have any questions about limitations and what can be done that I will step-up and ask early enough in the process to make alternate plans as needed.

As the choreographer of this revue with extreme styles, I was challenged to create movement of diverse styles that remained unified, all the while adapting to the different levels of dance ability in the cast. One of my strengths as a choreographer is working with non-dancers giving them not only the appropriate choreography for their level of dance but also giving them the confidence to perform it. This works hand-in-hand with my abilities as a director. I also have the ability to observe physical movements of people and develop choreography that complements their natural motion.

Yet as in my directing work, one of my great strengths as choreographer can all too quickly become a weakness as well. As a choreographer, I work very organically. I study the music and context of the scene and approach the rehearsal with an idea that I want to convey. Very rarely do I arrive with exact movements and sequences in mind. This approach allows me to adapt as I need to with the level of the cast, and it also helps me to feed off of their creativity—either directly or indirectly through observation. Because this show is a revue and most of the numbers were based in the movement of the piece, this attribute definitely served as a strength. However, this style of organic choreography can consume precious rehearsal time. I can foresee how working organically as a choreographer while also directing a book musical, could cause problems for the production if time is not well managed.

Most importantly, *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* was an education in full-scale production management for me. It was my first opportunity to develop a concept for a show that others would then design. My biggest fear of the process was thinking about the presentation of the designs. I dreaded the possibility of not liking them, and further having to tell the designers—my colleagues, professors, and friends—that their designs were not right for the vision of the production. Fortunately, the design created a magical world for me to play in—just what I wanted and asked for.

The biggest part of this educational experience was not what I learned about the performance, but what I learned about the technical side of productions and how I want my future shows to work and how to work within the parameters of an established theatre's system. Sound was the biggest technical problem in the show, but the issues were the fault of circumstantial boundaries rather than the fault of individuals. The



theatre department did not have the financial means to amplify a large musical. The sound element was added to the production too late in the rehearsal process simply because “that’s how it’s normally done.” The department does not have a professor whose expertise is sound—as we have a costume, lighting, and scenic designers on faculty—and we rely on students with minimal training and exposure to run the sound board. Though sound for the show would have still encountered difficulties, had the sound board operator been brought in earlier, some of the problems could have been fixed during rehearsal rather than in the second or third show. The implementation of sound earlier in the rehearsal period would have also exposed the need for floor microphones on the aprons and the amplification of the castors rather than the voices on the stage proper.

From these trials and the run success of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, several things have happened for the Baylor theatre department. The popularity of the production, which led to the encore show, exposed the need of a wireless microphone system and funds were mandated to make the purchase of a system for future musical theatre productions. In the post-mortem meeting for the production, the problems of the sound have ushered in a change of policy for shows that require sound, bringing the element into the rehearsal process much earlier. The production of *SRL!* also exposed a need and desire for children’s theatre from the community. With very little notice we were able to get an audience of 1,500 students to see the show because the administration from the local schools saw the opportunity for an alternative educational experience for their children. Even our regular theatre audience expressed the need for children’s theatre. One patron wrote:

I would encourage the department to offer at least one production a year geared toward the kids in all of us. Having the opportunity to see live theatre with our children and grandchildren is always a memorable occasion and being able to have that privilege right here on the Baylor campus is even more special. (Maggard letter)

The challenges of the production that prevented it from being perfect were far outweighed by the experience gained by those involved in the production, the enjoyment had by the audience, and the distinct pleasure to be a part of the show. Further more, learning to appreciate the educational theories at work in the songs of *Schoolhouse Rock* and then bringing those lessons to life for an audience in the theatre has been extremely rewarding. The experience of researching, analyzing, and directing *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* has demonstrated to me quite conclusively the stage's ability to simultaneously delight and edify an audience.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## Telephone Interview with Scott Ferguson, June 13, 2006

Meredith Sutton: So tell me, if you would, about the history of TheatreBAM Chicago. Who were y'all/ are you? Why did you do this? Just a quick little history if you will.

Scott Ferguson: Well, the company was founded in 1993, actually, maybe we actually were founded in 1992.

MS: Yeah, that's what I saw.

SF: Yeah, because our first show was of course *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* And we were basically just friends that went to school together. It was myself and Nina Linn, the producing manager and Kyle Hall and George Keating. And the four of us got together and formed the company. And the original idea for the company was to do children's touring programs—that was the whole idea, to tour to schools. And so as a producing agency we ended up starting with this idea of *Schoolhouse Rock*. And so we formed a company and produced *SRL!* and it took off and since then, since the founding of it, we've really only done a couple of other things besides *SRL!*, just being reading of a couple of new scripts and we produced a one-man show once.

MS: That was the one with Kyle. I saw that.

SF: Pretty much we only do *SRL!*. That's all we've done.

MS: I saw that on y'all's site with Kyle. So, did y'all start with the intent to go after *SRL!* or...

SF: Well, no. We started... the intent was originally to just do a children's touring show.

MS: Children's touring. Ok.

SF: A touring company. And so we were trying to decide what we wanted to do and that's when I had the idea to explore the possibility of doing *Schoolhouse Rock* as a show.

MS: Ok.

SF: And so we started trying to get the rights and it took us about a year and a half to actually get permission to do it.

MS: Very good with that. Who did you have to go through at ABC?

SF: Yeah, that was the trick, was trying to find the...to get the rights just took forever because at the time when I was looking to get the rights, it was '91-'92. At that point, the cartoons had been off the air. They pulled them off the air in 1989, I think.

MS: '85.

SF: '85 was it? So it had been so many years that nobody really knew who owned the rights. ABC would send me to a lawyer and then they'd say, "Here, contact this lawyer." Then I would send a letter to that lawyer and I wouldn't hear back from them and so three months later I would send another letter and finally they'd call and say, "We don't know. Try this lawyer." And I'd write another letter and I'd wait three months and then they would send me to someone else and it just went on and on and on getting sent to different people and different lawyers and different people, blah, blah, blah. Well, finally, somehow it finally got back to George Newell—the creator George Newell and Tom Yohe were the creators—and they finally...it got to them and they went into the vault and checked the contracts that were originally created with ABC back in '73 and found out that actually, George Newell and Tom Yohe owned the right to...live performance rights.

MS: Oh, really?

SF: Yeah, they had the control. So they were the ones who were able to give permission for us to do the show. So one morning, in I think it was early June of '93, I got a phone call at 8 o'clock in the morning, being 9 o'clock in New York. And he was like, "Is Scott Ferguson there?" and I was like, "This is Scott." And he was like, "Yeah, this is George Newell." And I was like—sound of surprise—"Finally!" [George:] "You want to do a live version of *Schoolhouse Rock*?" and I was like "Yeah." And he goes, "Ok." And I was like, "Is that it?" and he was like, "Well, yeah. What do you need from me?" and I was like, "Well, I need a contract that says that we have permission, and I'd really like exclusive rights to the material if possible." And he goes, "Well, Ok. I can do that." So he typed up a contract and he said, "Are you going to need the music?" and I said, "Well, if you have that." And he was like "Here, let me give you Bob Dorrough's phone number."

MS: Oh, beautiful.

SF: So I called Bobby Dorrough the next day and he said "All right, I'll put all this...I'll get the music together," and I gave him a list of all the songs that I thought would be possibilities which was, y'know, because there's...

MS: Yeah, there's close to 50.

SF: So I chose the songs that I thought would be the most theatrically viable. And he sent me copies of all the music and I mean, original vocal scores from the original cartoons.

MS: Oh, wow.

SF: And I started working on it.

MS: That is phenomenal.

SF: Yeah, we had auditions two weeks later—like, I found out we could do it, I put a posting in, we had auditions cast the show and we started rehearsal. We rehearsed for six weeks and it opened in August of '93.

MS: Six weeks rehearsal....Wow, that is really fascinating. Now, y'all are non-eq, right?

SF: Correct.

MS: Ok. I thought I'd seen that in one of your press releases about moving the shows to New York, about keeping it a non-equity show.

SF: Yeah, that was a big deal.

MS: I can imagine. So...right now, TheatreBAM Chicago, is *SRL*! your main thing or your only thing? Or...

SF: That's really the only thing we do. We've been touring it around to schools in the Chicago area for 15 years.

MS: Ok, do you all still have original cast members that go in and out of that or do you just kinda have to hold auditions?

SF: George Keating still does it occasionally. We just did a production here in Chicago at the Drury Lane Oakbrook Theatre and George Keating did that show. And the cast was all people that have done the show before. They weren't original cast members, George is the only one original cast member in the show but everybody else had done one of the national tours or had done it when we were running it here, like right after New York. It ran here for two years and then it went to New York and it ran in New York for a year and then we came back to Chicago and it ran for another two years in Chicago.

MS: Two years, I don't think I saw that. I knew it was one year.

SF: It was about a year and a half after New York, we came back for the rest of the year.

MS: Ok, I know I have that theater written down in my notes. So was there a specific reason for you—I'm going to assume that we're close to the same age, children of the '70s—

SF: I'm 38.

MS: Ok, I'm 33. ... Was *Schoolhouse Rock*, I mean, obvious draw for children, but was it a nostalgic thing for you as far as picking that material?

SF: Yeah, I mean that's why I did it. The whole idea originally came from, I had a party right after college, I had a party, and I went to Blockbuster at the time and just "I'm going to get a music video," and I thought a music video that I could just play on the TV during the party. And I saw *Schoolhouse Rock* at Blockbuster and I thought "Oh that would be hilarious." So I rented it and put it on TV at this party and everyone, like, stopped and sat down and sat on the couch and laughed and sang and just was having such a good time. I thought, "Oh my God, this is hilarious." And so that's where the idea came from.

MS: That is quite an original way of getting a show out there.

SF: Originally, when we opened at the Cafe Voltaire—it was this little tiny basement theatre in the basement of a vegetarian restaurant—it was a late night show. So it opened originally as kind of a workshop, because we were planning on doing it for a school show, like to tour to schools, but we also knew this has to be a hit with people our age as well. At the time we were all 25. We were thinking everybody loves this so much, we should do it as a workshop in a real theatre and do it for adults and then we'll figure out how it's going to work and then we'll also tour it to schools. Well, it opened at this theatre and we started...it was a 9 o'clock PM performance. It took like two weeks before we were all of a sudden selling out. Word of mouth just went out like wildfire. So we added another show. We had shows at 9 and 11.

MS: Oh, mercy.

SF: It was nuts.

MS: Your cast must have just been like endurance...

SF: They were but it was so much fun. People just loved it and it was so much fun. It was such a hit and we would pack a hundred people into this little tiny basement theatre for every show. We had two shows on Friday and two shows on Saturday. It ran at this theatre for eight months.

MS: That's fantastic. Well, that's how... your Chicago show is how I found out about you. The chairperson, the chairman in my department, he has two daughters, I guess they're about 14 and 13 or 12 now and when they were little—it was probably after you came back from New York—they were in Chicago and randomly... "Oh let's go see a show," and "We can take the girls to this." And he said they had more fun and just totally rocked out with everyone. So when I was trying to choose my piece, he was like, "What would you think about this?" And I was like, "I never knew about it." And so anyway...your Chicago show spread everywhere.

SF: Yeah, I know.

MS: All right. Very cool process. I love the party thing. Tell me a little bit about development. You said Kyle and George co-wrote the book with you. Tell me about coming up with the concept...it's kind of...I've kind of, in my thesis, have categorized it under musical theatre more as a musical revue than a book musical. So I was just wondering about developing the thin plot that goes through it, y'know, Tom's first day of school, but also which songs, what order, just a little bit about that process.

SF: Right. Well, basically it started out...I thought about trying to come up...like I said, I went through all of the songs, every song, and I thought, "Which of these songs, No.1, are most popular. What are the songs that most people remember?" And so I did a lot of research. I asked around. I asked people and friends and people my age, "What are your favorite *Schoolhouse Rock* songs? Which ones do you remember? Blah, blah, blah. And then I looked at all of those and then tried to literally figure out which ones did I think would translate the best on stage in a theatrical sense. And so, for example, "The Shot Heard Around the World." Everybody loves "The Shot Heard Around the World," but I just couldn't envision it on stage. It was too difficult at the time. It just covers so much territory and it's so wordy and it's just like, this is not one that's going to translate well on stage. So that one got kicked out. So it was just a matter of choosing ones that I thought were theatrical. So we started the rehearsal process with that in mind and we just literally started working on the songs and "How are we going to stage this?" And we wanted to come up with clever ways to transform them from a cartoon to the page and so we went about the process for that. We decided, No. 1, let's go from the lyrics in the music. In other words, rather than trying to just reenact the cartoon, like putting them onstage, we knew from the beginning we weren't going to have someone dressed up like a bill. Now, I've seen productions and pictures of production where they do that, they make a costume of the little bill thing. I just think that's the wrong take. It's not that. It's supposed to be the lyrics and the music and then make it its own thing. So we wanted to create our own version of the show. So we started with all of the songs and just started working on choreographing them, figured out how to put them on stage. And then it wasn't until, like I said we had a six-week rehearsal process, so it wasn't until about the fourth week we were opening in two weeks and we still didn't have a structure. And I knew I did not want it to just be a musical revue. I didn't want it to just be songs. Let's not just do song, song, song. We wanted to have some sort of a structure for it so that, No. 1, you had a little more to it, like, as an audience you were invested a little bit more. It wasn't just 'Let's watch songs' it was "Let's try and find a way to tie them together." And since we were doing it for schools, I guess that's where the idea came from. One night we were chatting, me and Kyle and George were just chatting about it and said, "Well, what about that? I mean, it's a teaching tool, what about a teacher?" And it just hit us, "That's what it needs to be." Now along those same lines like you had said, we wanted it to have a structure but we also knew that when you see the title *SRL!*, people want to come see *Schoolhouse Rock*, they don't want to see the story of a teacher. So we knew that was just going to be looking for a way to get to the next song. So we decided let's just put a thin plotline that will tie them together and that will also not waste time, y'know, that will simply get to the next song. The point of it will be just to get to the next song. That's how it happened. We tried to find clever, cute, little, quick ways to get to the next song, so in that sense, it's a book musical in that it has a plot structure but



it definitely would be categorized as a revue because....there are not very many musicals that have 21 songs.

MS: No, there are not. Boy, blocking and staging and choreographing those...

SF: It's a lot.

MS: I was looking at my rehearsal calendar going "Ok, I have 5 and a half weeks including a week and half of text and dresses and designer runs and things like that. How the heck and I going to choreograph all this?"

SF: Yeah, that's one of the reasons I had the other choreographers work with me.

MS: Let's go into that a little bit, just because you are listed as director/choreographer, which I think, me personally, I think you have to be the choreographer and the director at the same time.

SF: Yeah you really do. And that's what happened. It was exactly that. There was so much work. It was so many songs that I just wanted to have some help with it. I had a couple friends of mine from college as well, Kate Dowe (?), who is now Kate Swan, and Karen Pauli, who is now Karen Harrelson—they're both married. I had them come in. Basically, what I did is just broke it up. I asked them if they would help a little bit and they said, "Sure," so Kate choreographed four songs and Karen choreographed four songs so I did the rest.

MS: What is your background? You went to school, theatre, dance?

SF: I studied theatre. Almost all of us did. We went to school at Northwestern University. So Karen and Nina and Kate and Kyle all went to Northwestern University. And George Keating went to DePaul. So the two girls choreographed eight and then I did the rest. And that's what happened it, it ran for eight months and then it opened in a new theater and when it opened in a new theatre, we changed some stuff and added some new choreography and then when we went to New York we changed a lot more. So every time we changed I sort of changed the choreography myself so at this point now the show I do now is pretty much all mine. A couple of things are based on stuff they did.

MS: As far as choreography and dance did you have that within the theatre department at Northwestern? Was that part of your education there or something that you'd done?

SF: Yeah, I took dance classes while I was at Northwestern and choreography classes. There's a company at Northwestern called the Northwestern Dance Ensemble and I was a part of that.

MS: Oh, ok. Very good.

SF: As a director, most of what I do is musicals and stuff like that.

MS: Ok. I'm actually a dancer/choreographer... Would you say that on the tours you do now you have a bit of a rotating cast?

SF: Yeah, I saw that in your e-mail. I think what you're talking about...there are hundreds and hundreds of productions of this show and the tours you're talking about I have nothing to do with.

MS: Oh really?

SF: Yeah, another producing company is producing that. The shows available through music theatre as you well know because you're doing your own production, there are other companies around the country that license the show and then they do tours. There were two official, three actually, three official national tours that were done by me. That was the original production. And that was done through Troupe America out of Minneapolis. That was done in '98-'99, '99-'00, '00-'01 and those were mine. The other tours are not. Like that person you mentioned in your e-mail? I have no idea who that is.

MS: Ok. So he was just on another one.

SF: It's such a bizarre thing. Every once in awhile somebody will go "Oh my God, so you know Tom Salinger," and I'll be like, "Who?" And they'll say, "Well he did the national tour." There are so many national tours.

MS: As far as Theatrebam's productions, your website says you still do Tuesday Thursdays, about eight a month or so.

SF: Right.

MS: So do you have a small rotating cast?

SF: Yeah, we have... the group that tours to schools is actually a shorter version and it has four actors instead of six and I usually have eight people a year. There's four regular touring members and four swing members—two men and two women—that swing in and out of the show during the year. It tours from October to the end of June.

MS: You've obviously been successful because you still have things running thirteen years later. What is the response of people? I know they like the show but is it "Thank you for bringing this nostalgia back" or is it...do you know what I'm asking?

SF: It's all over the map. It depends on who's...the reaction is so varied because No. 1, you have the people in our generation who definitely do that. Love it because of its nostalgia. They feel like it's so much a part of their childhood that they just love it, just nuts. And then there's a whole new generation. We tour the show to schools all year long and we've been doing it for thirteen years and it's like a huge success every year we do it. We still pretty much sell the show out the entire year because there's this whole new generation of students—kindergartners through sixth grade now—that have been

growing up with it as well because all of their teachers and their parents grew up with it. They're seeing it on DVD now and they all know it just as well.

MS: The state of Texas, I think it's third grade curriculum. *Schoolhouse Rock* is part of the curriculum. State mandate. So you're mainly looking at a K-6 audience?

SF: Yeah, that's what we tour to.

MS: We did eight shows at our theatre and I got so much response the first weekend I went to my boss and was like "They want us to take it to the schools" and he said "We'll see what we can do" so we did one encore production. We brought in about 1,500 kids, kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. And it was a freaking rock concert. It was nuts. My cast came out before the show just for crowd control because getting 1,500 kids into a theatre takes a bit and after the show they were running up and down the aisle, high-fives, kids just going nuts. It was fantastic. So ya'll really did a fantastic job.

SF: Fantastic.

MS: Thank you so much.

SF: You're welcome and if you have any other questions or anything feel free to give me a call.

MS: Fantastic.

SF: Thanks and good luck with the thesis.

MS: Oh thank you so much. This is going to help immensely. Thanks a lot, Scott. Good luck to you.

## APPENDIX B



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #1

*Interplanet Janet*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #2

*A Noun is a Person, Place or Thing*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #3

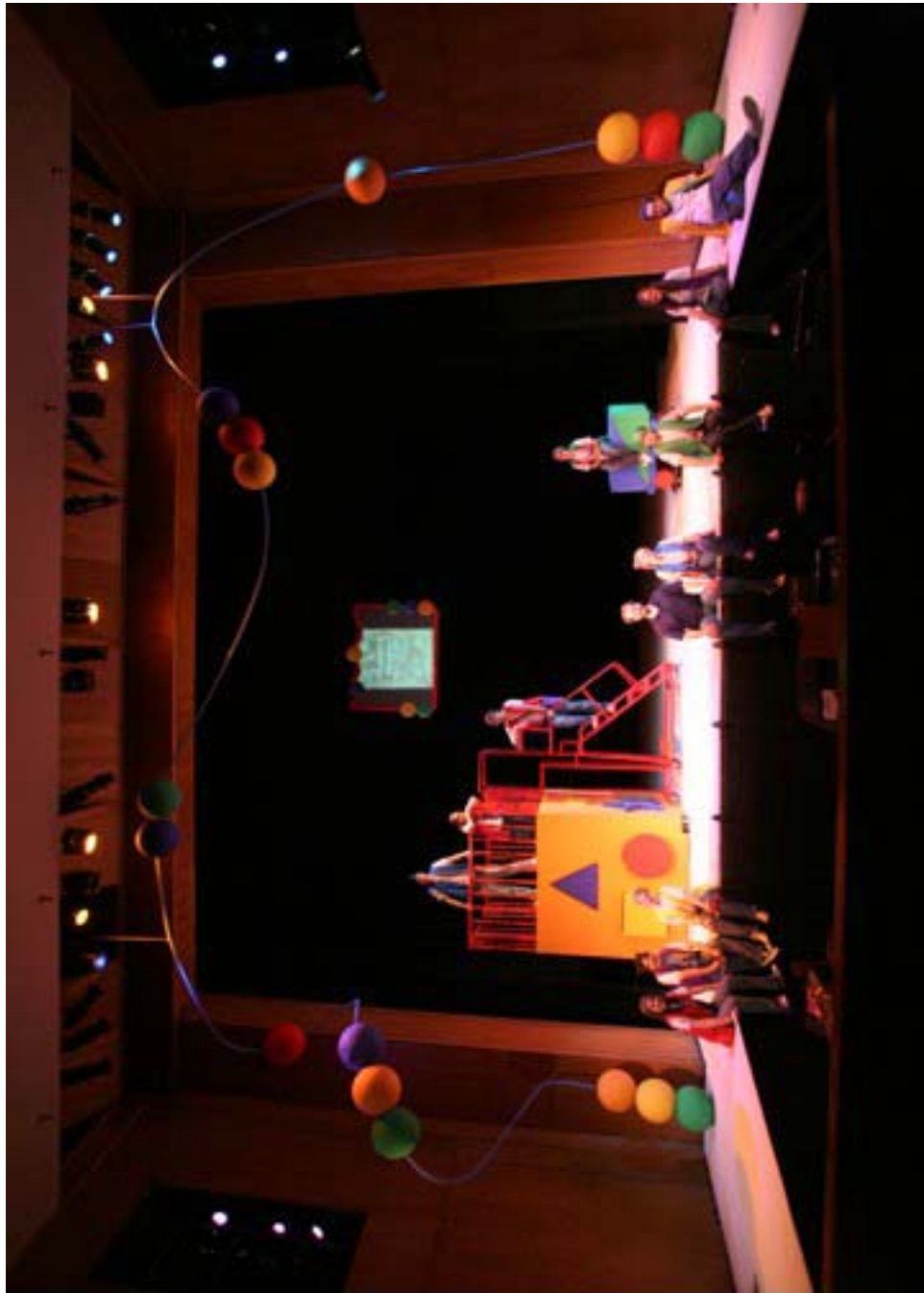
*A Victim of Gravity*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #4

*The Tale of Mr. Morton*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #5

*The Preamble*





© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #6

*Great American Melting Pot*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #7

*Mother Necessity*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #8

*Sufferin' 'til Suffrage*



Color Plate #9

*Pre-show at Waco Hall*





© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

### Color Plate #10

*A Noun is a Person, Place or Thing*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #11

*Three is a Magic Number*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #12

*Sufferin' 'til Suffrage*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #13

*Unpack Your Adjectives*

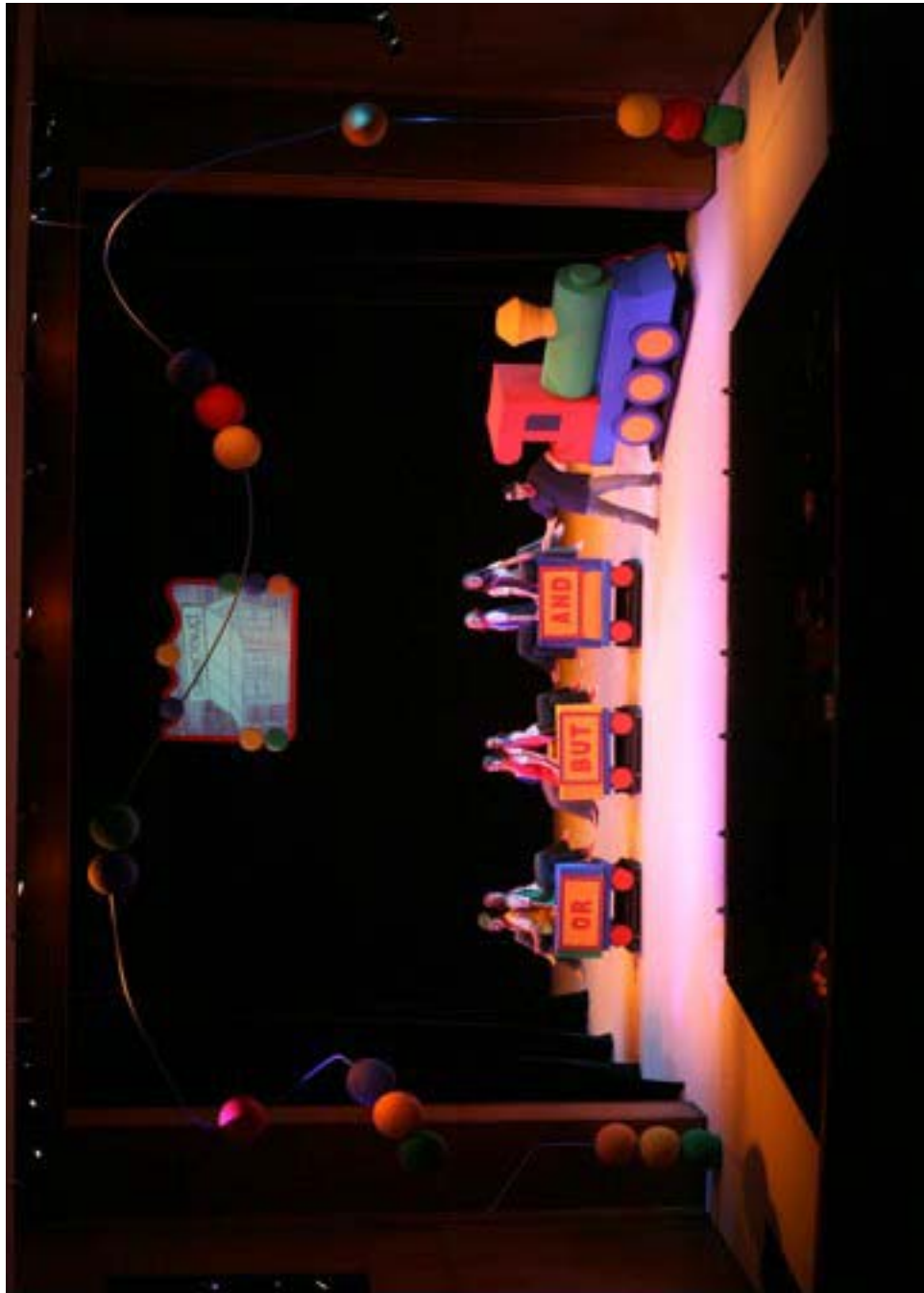




© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #14

*Figure Eight*



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #15

### Conjunction Junction



© 2006 Baylor Photography (Robert Rogers)

Color Plate #16

*Interjections Reprise*



Color Plate #17

*Pre-show at Waco Hall*





Color Plate #18

*1,500 Fans at Waco Hall*



Color Plate #19

*SRL! Cast with Brookview Elementary at Waco Hall*

## WORKS CITED

- Amend, Bill. *Foxtrot*. Comic strip. 3 Feb. 2004.
- “Behaviorism.” *Funderstanding*. 1998. On Purpose Associates.  
<<http://www.funderstanding.com/behaviorism.cfm>>.
- Bordman, Gerald. *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford University Press: New York, 2001.
- . *The Concise Oxford Companion to American Theatre*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1987.
- Boroff, Edith. “Origin of Species: Conflicting Views of American Musical Theater History.” *American Music*. 2.4 (Winter 1984): 101-12.
- Brockett, Oscar G. and Franklin J. Hildy. *History of the Theatre*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003.
- Burd, David. Liner Notes. *Schoolhouse Rock!* Rhino Records, 1996.
- Campbell, Kim. “‘Schoolhouse Rock’: 1970s TV Cartoons Keep Bopping Along--and Educating.” *Christian Science Monitor*. 2 Aug. 1996:18.
- Cosgrove, Mark P. *B.F. Skinner’s Behaviorism: An Analysis*. Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Publishing House, 1982.
- “Disney Adds More Shows for Sale on Apple’s iTunes.” *USAtoday.com*. 2006. Reuters, San Francisco. 3 Jan. 2006 <[www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2006-01-03-disney-itunes\\_x.htm?POE=TECISVA](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2006-01-03-disney-itunes_x.htm?POE=TECISVA)>.
- Dollimore, Jonothan and Alan Sinfield, eds. *Political Shakespeare: New Essay in Cultural Materialism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Ferguson, Scott. Telephone interview. 12 June 2006.
- . E-mail interview. 12 June 2006.
- Ferguson, Scott, George Keating, and Kyle Hall. *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* ABC and Theatrebarn Chicago, 1995.
- Flinn, Denny Martin. *Musical! A Grand Tour: The Rise, Glory, and Fall of an American Institution*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1997.

- Fortier, Mark. *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Fosnot, Catherine Twomey, ed. *Constructivism: Theory, Perspectives, and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1996.
- Freiberg, H. Jerome. "Beyond Behaviorism." *Beyond Behaviorism: Changing the Classroom Management Paradigm*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1999. 5-7.
- Frolov, M.D., Professor Y. P. *Pavlov and His School: The Theory of Conditioned Reflexes*. Trans., C. P. Dutt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1937.
- "History." Schoolhouse Rock! *Sites for Teachers*. <<http://www.school-house-rock.com/history.htm>>.
- "The Little Show that Could." *Theatrebam Chicago*. Press release. 18 July 1994.
- Lowry, Brian. "Everybody into Kids' Programming Pool." *Variety*. 6-12 Nov. 1995: 36.
- Lydon, Christopher. "Singer/Songwriter Dave Frishberg." *WBUR.org*. 2006. Boston University and WBUR. 2 Feb. 2006  
<[http://www.theconnection.org/shows/2000/02/20000217\\_b\\_main.asp](http://www.theconnection.org/shows/2000/02/20000217_b_main.asp)>.
- Maggard, Judy. Letter to Dr. Stan Denman. 5 Apr. 2006.
- McCormick, Moira and Amy K. Swan. "ABC Plans a Lengthy Syllabus for 'Schoolhouse Rock' Line." *Billboard*. 22 July 1995:62.
- "Musical." *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. 2005. Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. <<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/musical>>.
- Myers, David G. *Psychology*. 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. Holland, MI: Worth Publishers, 2004.
- "Pavlov." *The Psi Café: A Psychology Resource Site*. Page, Nicole A., ed. Portland State University Department of Psychology. 2005. Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology.  
<<http://www.psy.pdx.edu/PsiCafe/KeyTheorists/Pavlov.htm>>.
- Rapier, Jessica. E-mail interview. 11 June 2006.
- Schoolhouse Rock Live!* 2005. Theatrebam Chicago.  
<<http://www.schoolhouserocklive.net>>.
- "The Singing Lady." *Did You See?* 2006. Gemstone Publishing, Inc.  
<[http://scoop.diamondgalleries.com/scoop\\_article.asp?ai=3966&si=126](http://scoop.diamondgalleries.com/scoop_article.asp?ai=3966&si=126)>.



Smith, Sid. "New York or Bust: Despite Risks, Big Apple Tempts Many Chicago Theaters." *Chicago Tribune*. 28 Jan. 1996: Arts and Entertainment 1.

"Why Use Songs to Teach Science?" *Eissler's Science Idol*. Linwood Schools.  
<[http://www.linwoodschoools.org/eissler/IDOL/eisslers\\_science\\_idol.htm](http://www.linwoodschoools.org/eissler/IDOL/eisslers_science_idol.htm)>.

Yohe, Tom and George Newall. *The Official Guide: Schoolhouse Rock!* New York: Hyperion, 1996.