

ENRICHMENT GUIDE

INTO *the* WOODS

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Book by James Lapine

Originally Directed on Broadway by James Lapine

Orchestrations by Jonathan Tunick

JOHN HIRSCH MAINSTAGE

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Into the Woods

Enrichment Guide

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Orlando Shakespeare Festival
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The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

Arrive Early: Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask schools and other groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player /gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

Talking During the Performance: Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

Food/Drinks: Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre. We strive to be a scent-free environment and thank all patrons for their cooperation.

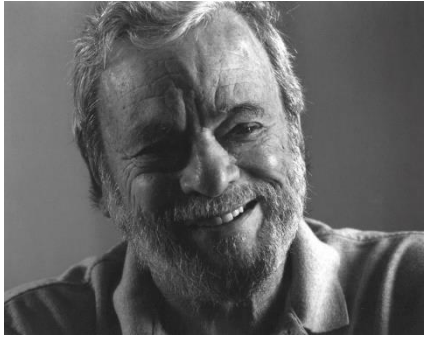
Leaving During the Performance: If you leave the theatre during a performance, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

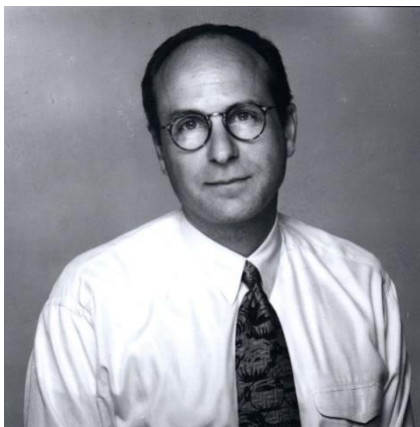
Talkbacks: A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

The Creators of *Into the Woods*



Stephen Sondheim was an American lyricist and composer. He studied music from a young age and was mentored by Oscar Hammerstein. Sondheim attended Williams College, where he majored in music. After graduating from the school in 1950, he studied further with avant-garde composer Milton Babbitt and moved to New York City. Over the course of his career, he wrote the music and lyrics for *Saturday Night* (1954), *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* (1962), *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964), *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971), *A Little Night Music* (1973), *The Frogs* (1974), *Pacific Overtures* (1976), *Sweeney Todd* (1979), *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), *Sunday In The Park With George* (1984), *Into The Woods* (1987), *Assassins* (1991), *Passion* (1994) and *Road Show* (2008) as well as lyrics for *West Side Story* (1957), *Gypsy* (1959) and *Do I Hear A Waltz?* (1965) and additional lyrics for *Candide* (1973). Anthologies of his work include *Side By Side By Sondheim* (1976), *Marry Me A Little* (1981), *You're Gonna Love Tomorrow* (1983), *Putting It Together* (1993/99) and *Sondheim On Sondheim* (2010). He composed the scores of the films "Stavisky" (1974) and "Reds" (1981) and songs for "Dick Tracy" (1990) and the television production "Evening Primrose" (1966). His collected lyrics with attendant essays have been published in two volumes: "Finishing the Hat" (2010) and "Look, I Made A Hat" (2011). He received a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015 and in 2017 was the first composer-lyricist to win the PEN/Allen Foundation Literary Service Award for "a critically acclaimed writer whose body of work helps us understand and interpret the human condition." In 2010 Broadway's Henry Miller's Theatre was renamed The Stephen Sondheim Theatre in his honour; in 2019, London's Queens Theatre was also renamed after him. Sondheim died suddenly on November 26, 2021, aged 91.



James Lapine is a playwright and director. On Broadway he has worked with Stephen Sondheim on *Sunday in the Park with George*; *Into the Woods*; and *Passion*. He also conceived and directed the musical review *Sondheim on Sondheim*. With William Finn he created *Falsettos* recently revived by Lincoln Center Theater; *Little Miss Sunshine*; *Muscle*; and directed Finn's *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Other Broadway credits include his play based on Moss Hart's memoir *Act One* (also LCT), *Amour*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Golden Child*, and *Dirty Blonde*. He has written the plays *Table Settings*, *Twelve Dreams*, *The Moment When*, *Fran's Bed* and *Mrs. Miller Does Her Thing*. Lapine has been nominated for eleven Tony Awards, winning on three occasions. He has also been the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize, SDC's Mr. Abbott Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theater, and inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame.

Related Resource Links: PBS hosts articles about [Sondheim](#) and [Lapine](#). You can find more life and career details at the [Stephen Sondheim Society](#) and [Concord Theatricals](#).

Journey to the Stage

Provided by the Orlando Shakespeare Festival

In contemporary American musical theatre, most new works follow a series of developmental steps before arriving on Broadway. *Into the Woods* followed this pattern before its successful Broadway opening in the fall of 1987. By presenting the show in a workshop format and in a regional theatre production, the writing team and their artistic collaborators had a series of valuable opportunities to learn about the ways in which the show was “working” for themselves and for its audiences.

Into The Woods began as a workshop at Playwrights Horizons in the summer of 1986. It was produced without costumes or sets. The performers wore baseball caps with signs on them indicating their character names. When they changed roles, they changed caps. The cast was grouped around a piano bench which became a variety of locations and props. The next step in the development of *Into the Woods* was a fully staged production in December 1986, at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego. While it was far more elaborate than the workshop had been, economic constraints still required a physical production that was less ambitious than the Broadway version. For instance, panels of branches gathered by local Boy Scouts were used to represent the woods in that production. The Witch had a punk rock look and a Tina Turner wig. An additional two-week workshop took place at 890 Studios in New York in August 1987, prior to rehearsals for the Broadway production. The Broadway production opened on November 5, 1987 and ran for 764 performances.

Into The Woods was Stephen Sondheim’s second musical with librettist-director James Lapine, the first being *Sunday in the Park with George*, winner of the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It also involved some of *Sunday*’s original stars (Bernadette Peters and Barbara Bryne), set designer (Tony Straiges), lighting designer (Richard Nelson) and music director (Paul Gemignani). Costumes for *Into the Woods* were conceived by Patricia Zipprodt and Ann Hould Ward, who is credited with the costumes for the Broadway production. The choreography for the Broadway production was contributed by the modern dance choreographer Lar Lubovitch. Orchestrations were by Jonathan Tunick. In addition to Bernadette Peters, the original cast included Joanna Gleason, Chip Zien, Tom Aldredge, Robert Westenberg, Kim Crosby, Danielle Ferland, Merle Louise, Ben Wright, Joy Franz, Edmund Lyndeck, Kay McClelland and Lauren Mitchell. During the Broadway run, the Witch was also played by Phylicia Rashad, Betsy Joslyn, Nancy Dussault and Ellen Foley. In the summer of 1988, Dick Cavett took over the part of the Narrator for several months. Performers in the show who have been in previous Sondheim shows, in addition to Bernadette Peters, were Robert Westenberg, Barbara Bryne, Danielle Ferland (*Sunday in the Park with George*), Merle Louise (*Sweeney Todd*, *Company* and *Gypsy*), Joy Franz (*A Little Night Music*, *Company*) and Edmund Lyndeck (*Sweeney Todd*). The road company, which toured for 10 months and featured Cleo Laine, Mary Gordon Murray and Charlotte Ray, opened in Fort Lauderdale in November, 1988. A London production was mounted in the West End in 1991.

The original cast album was released by RCA Victor, as was the London cast album. The show was also taped with the original cast for PBS' "Great Performances" series.

In this article from Playbill published in 2014, [the original Broadway cast shares some of their favourite memories](#) from working on the production.

Related Resource Links: Read this [article about the Lapine-Sondheim collaboration](#) from Writers Theatre; Watch this [7-minute video from PBS of a conversation with Sondheim](#); The MTI Conversation Piece was intended as a guide for groups producing the show, giving detailed insights and analysis. ([Video playlist of approximately an hour total](#)). The MTI video segments are also each featured throughout this guide where they correspond to information or an activity.

This [article from American Theatre about the Baker's Wife](#) offers interviews with actors who have played the character – contains spoilers!

Characters

Adapted from the Orlando Shakespeare Festival

The Narrator – helps the story along for the audience.

The Baker – A Baker who cannot conceive a child with his wife due to a curse.

The Baker's Wife – Confident and intelligent woman who wants a child with her husband, the Baker, but cannot have one.

The Witch – Rapunzel's guardian. She has many powers. She has cursed the Baker's family with infertility.

Rapunzel – Kept high in a tower by the Witch. She has long flowing hair, as yellow as corn, which the Witch climbs to get to her in the tower.

Cinderella – A poor young girl with a mean step-mother and two mean step-sisters. She wishes to go to the King's Festival.

Cinderella's Step-mother – Selfish and mean-spirited, she puts Cinderella below herself and two daughters.

Florinda and Lucinda – Cinderella's beautiful, but cruel, step-sisters. They both want to marry a Prince.

Cinderella's Mother – Though no longer living, she gives Cinderella advice and guidance.

Cinderella's Father – Out of touch with his family.

Cinderella's Prince – Handsome, charming, and entitled Prince, who searches for Cinderella after meeting her at the Festival. Brother to Rapunzel's Prince.

Rapunzel's Prince – Also handsome and pompous like his brother. He seeks Rapunzel after hearing her singing in her tower.

The Wolf – Meets and tries to eat Little Red Ridinghood in the woods.

Jack – A very ambitious boy who loves his cow, Milky White.

Jack's Mother – Wishes Jack wasn't such a dreamer. Terribly worried about money.

Little Red Ridinghood – A spoiled and naïve girl who journeys from youth and innocence into adulthood and responsibility through an adventurous and scary path.

Granny – Little Red Ridinghood's grandmother.

The Mysterious Man – A presence in the woods with a secret.

The Prince's Steward – Serves Cinderella's Prince.

Content Overview

This section may contain spoilers.

Some suggestive material including infidelity (non-explicit) and lascivious behaviour, fantasy violence and perilous situations. While the fairy tale characters may be familiar, themes and events are dark.

Plot Summary

Provided by the Utah Shakespeare Festival

Into the Woods begins with a montage of familiar fairy tale characters and stories.

Cinderella wishes to attend the Prince's festival, but her cruel stepsisters and stepmother are trying to prevent her from going. Jack (of Jack and the Beanstalk) wishes for a better life; but his mother, desperate for money, makes him take his cow, Milky White, into the woods to sell her. Little Red Riding Hood visits the Baker and the Baker's Wife to purchase bread to take to her sick grandmother in the woods.

Meanwhile, the Baker and his wife lament the fact they are childless. Soon, the Witch from next door visits and reveals she is the cause behind their infertility: in the past she placed a curse on their family because they stole from her precious garden. In order to reverse the curse, the Witch assigns them a series of tasks to complete in "three days time." During their quest to fulfill the witches' demands, they encounter Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, Cinderella, and numerous other fairy tale figures in the woods. Each story is altered and intertwined, and most eventually work towards the same goal, but not until they each realize the repercussions of their desired "happily ever afters."

Plot Synopsis

This section contains spoilers.

For another format (and a quicker version of a plot synopsis), try this [5-minute episode of Script Tease podcast!](#)

Act 1

A Narrator introduces four characters: Cinderella, who wishes to attend the King's festival; Jack, who wishes his cow Milky White would give milk; a Baker and his Wife, who wish to have a child. Cinderella's step-family mocks her wish and Jack's mother laments that she wishes for wealth. Little Red Ridinghood appears at the bakery wishing for bread and sweets to bring to her grandmother's house. Cinderella's stepmother dumps a pot of lentils into the fireplace for Cinderella to clean up, promising that only then will they let her go to the festival. To help, Cinderella calls for birds in the skies. Meanwhile, the Witch reveals to the Baker and his Wife that they are infertile because of a spell she placed on the Baker's father many years ago. She explains that his father stole vegetables from the her garden to appease his pregnant wife's appetite, and some beans for himself that he did not realize were magic. When they were taken from the garden, the Witch lost her beauty. In return, she stole their daughter Rapunzel and cast the spell over the family. The only way to lift the spell is to find four ingredients in the woods: a cow as white as milk, a cape as red as blood, hair as yellow as corn, and a slipper as pure as gold and bring them to her before three

midnights are struck. As Cinderella's step-family prepares to leave for the festival, they once again refuse Cinderella's wish to go with them. As he is preparing to leave, the Baker finds six magic beans in his father's old jacket. All begin their journeys into the woods: Jack to sell his beloved cow; Cinderella to seek advice from her mother's grave; Little Red to her grandmother's house; and the Baker, refusing his Wife's help, to find the ingredients ("Prologue: Into the Woods").

When she gets to her mother's grave, Cinderella repeats her wish to attend the festival and the spirit of her mother gifts her with a gown and golden slippers ("Cinderella at the Grave"). A Mysterious Man mocks Jack for valuing his cow more than a "sack of beans". Little Red meets a hungry Wolf who distracts her from her path, hatching a plan to eat both her and her grandmother ("Hello Little Girl"). The Baker, secretly followed by his Wife, meets Jack. Together, they convince Jack that the beans in the jacket are magic, trade them for the cow and Jack bids Milky White a tearful farewell ("I Guess This Is Goodbye"). The Baker feels guilty about their deceit, but his wife reassures him that it will pay off when they get their child ("Maybe They're Magic").

The Witch has raised Rapunzel in a tall tower, only accessed by climbing Rapunzel's long, golden hair ("Our Little World"); a Prince spies Rapunzel and decides to try for himself. When the Baker passes by Little Red's grandmother's house, he finds that the Wolf has eaten them both. In pursuit of her red cape, he stabs the Wolf and rescues Little Red and her grandmother. In return, Little Red gives him her cape, and reflects on her experiences ("I Know Things Now"). When Jack's Mother sees the exchange Jack has made for Milky White, she angrily tosses his beans aside, which grow into an enormous stalk. Cinderella flees the Festival, pursued by another Prince, and the Baker's Wife helps to hide her. When asked about the ball, Cinderella is unimpressed ("A Very Nice Prince"). Spotting Cinderella's gold slippers, the Baker's Wife chases her and loses Milky White as a clock chimes twelve times ("First Midnight").

Jack describes his adventure climbing the beanstalk ("Giants in the Sky") and gives the Baker gold he stole to buy back his cow. The Baker is hesitant, so Jack returns up the beanstalk to find more. The Mysterious Man questions whether the Baker cares more about the money or his child, and takes the money. Cinderella's Prince and Rapunzel's Prince lament over their loves ("Agony") and the Baker's Wife overhears their talk of a girl with golden hair. As she takes hair from Rapunzel, the Baker finds Milky White, aided by the Mysterious Man. The Baker admits to his Wife that they must work together, and they hatch a plan to seize Cinderella's slipper ("It Takes Two"). Jack arrives with a golden egg for the Baker but Milky White dies as midnight chimes ("Second Midnight"). The Witch discovers the Prince's visits and demands Rapunzel stay sheltered from the world ("Stay with Me"). Rapunzel refuses, and the Witch cuts off her hair, banishing her to a desert. Jack meets Little Red, now sporting a wolfskin cape and knife. He brags about his adventures in the sky, and mentions a golden harp owned by the Giant. She skeptically goads him into climbing to retrieve it.

Cinderella, torn between staying with her Prince or escaping, leaves him one of her slippers, putting the decision into his hands ("On the Steps of the Palace"), and trades shoes with the Baker's Wife for the last magic bean, though she throws it away. The Baker arrives with another cow and they rejoice, however, the Witch discovers that the Baker has covered a cow in flour to make it appear white. The Witch resurrects Milky White and Jack returns with the harp. There is a crash, and Jack's mother reports a dead Giant in her backyard, though no one pays attention. The Witch instructs the Baker to feed the objects to Milky White. The Witch realizes that the hair is Rapunzel's and will not work because she had touched it. When the Mysterious Man proposes using corn silk instead, Milky White produces the potion and the Witch drinks it, making her young and beautiful again. She also reveals that the Mysterious Man is the Baker's father, though he dies as soon as she drinks the potion.

Cinderella's Prince seeks the girl who fits the slipper and the desperate stepsisters mutilate their feet. The Prince eventually sees Cinderella and realizes that she is the one ("Careful My Toe"). Rapunzel is found by her Prince and as the Witch attempts to curse her, she realizes that in exchange for her beauty, she has lost her powers. At Cinderella's wedding, her stepsisters are blinded by birds, and the Baker's Wife, now pregnant, thanks Cinderella for her help. Congratulating themselves on living happily ("Ever After"), the characters fail to notice another beanstalk growing.

Act 2

The Narrator continues, "Once Upon a Time... Later". Everyone still has wishes: the Baker and his Wife face new frustrations with their infant son; newly rich Jack misses the kingdom in the sky; Cinderella is bored with life in the palace ("So Happy"); but all are still relatively content. With a tremendous crash, a Giant's foot destroys the Witch's garden, and damages the Baker's home. The Baker travels to the palace, but his warning is ignored by the Steward. Returning home, he finds Little Red on her way to Granny's; he and his Wife escort her. Jack decides to slay the Giant and Cinderella investigates her mother's disturbed grave. Everyone returns to the woods, but now "the skies are strange, the winds are strong" ("Into the Woods" Reprise). Rapunzel, driven mad, also flees to the woods. Her Prince follows and meets his brother; they confess their lust for two new women, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty ("Agony" Reprise).

The Baker, his Wife, and Little Red find Cinderella's family and the Steward, who reveal the castle was set upon by the Giant. The Witch brings news that the Giant destroyed the village and the Baker's house. The Giantess – widow of the Giant Jack killed – appears, seeking revenge. The group decides to offer up the Narrator as a sacrifice. Jack's mother defends her son. This angers the Giantess, and the Steward keeps Jack's mother quiet and ends up killing her. As the Giantess leaves to find Jack, Rapunzel is trampled ("Witch's Lament"). The Baker pleads for The Royal Family to stay and fight, but they flee. The Witch vows to give Jack to the Giantess. To protect him, the Baker and his Wife split up to find him first. Cinderella's Prince seduces the Baker's Wife ("Any Moment"). The Baker finds

Cinderella and convinces her to join their group. The Baker's Wife reflects on her affair with the Prince ("Moments in the Woods"), but encounters the Giantess and is killed.

The Baker, Little Red, and Cinderella await the return of the Baker's Wife when the Witch arrives with Jack, found weeping over the Baker's Wife's body. The Baker blames Jack and the all argue and blame each other before all turning on the Witch ("Your Fault"). Chastising their inability to accept the consequences of their own actions, the Witch throws away the rest of her beans, regaining her powers so that she can vanish and abandon the group ("Last Midnight"). Grief-stricken, the Baker flees, but is convinced by his father's spirit to face his responsibilities ("No More"). He returns and the group devises a plan to kill the Giantess. Cinderella stays behind with the Baker's child and confronts her Prince over his infidelity; he explains his feelings of unfulfillment and that he was only raised to be charming but not sincere, and she asks him to leave.

Little Red discovers her grandmother has been killed by the Giantess, as the Baker tells Jack that his mother is dead. Jack vows to kill the Steward but the Baker dissuades him, while Cinderella comforts Little Red. The Baker and Cinderella explain that choices have consequences, and everyone is connected ("No One Is Alone"). Together they slay the Giantess. The other characters – including the Royal Family, most of whom have starved to death, and the Princes with their new paramours (Sleeping Beauty and Snow White) – return to share one last set of morals. The survivors band together, the Baker, Cinderella, Jack and Little Red decide to live together, and the spirit of the Baker's Wife comforts her mourning husband, encouraging him to tell their child their story. The Baker begins to tell his son the tale, while the Witch and the rest of the characters, dead and alive, offer a final lesson: "Careful the things you say: Children will listen" ("Finale").

Context and Related Resources

By Dr. Meg Upton, provided by Victorian Opera

Theatre Style and Structure

The key theatrical style apparent in *Into the Woods* is musical theatre, specifically chamber musical theatre. Stuart Maunder comments that “the ultimate aim of the musical is to tell a story, whether through spoken word, sung word or presence”. Musical theatre is a form of theatre that combines songs, spoken dialogue, acting, and dance. The story and emotional content of the piece – humour, pathos, love, anger, fear, denial – are communicated through the words, music, movement and technical aspects of the entertainment as an integrated whole. A key feature of the musical is the ‘presentational’ nature that it demands. In presentational acting the performers acknowledge the audience by speaking or singing to them. Traditionally a “presentational style” eliminates the 4th wall, or the pretense that the audience is looking in on the real world of the characters. This may not be present in all musicals, all the time, but you may notice it in certain moments!

Musical Theatre Songs

In musical theatre the key to successful songs is how well lyrics and music work together. Songs may function dramatically in several ways, a primary one being to define character. Within the genre of musical theatre such character songs serve a number of functions.

Character songs

“I am” songs: Because musicals are by nature “presentational,” characters may introduce themselves directly to the audience through “I am” songs. “I am” songs can also allow characters to express freely how they are feeling at that moment (for example “I Feel Pretty” in *West Side Story*), and sometimes characters discover something about themselves in an “I am” song. Besides defining oneself and providing moments of self-revelation through these types of songs, characters may also assert themselves against a challenge.

“I want” songs: Where ‘I am’ songs describe a present state, “I want” songs suggest a course of action for the future. Characters often express their goals and dreams through these types of songs. For example, in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye dreams of wealth in “If I Were a Rich Man”. Some characters may also use these songs to say what they don’t want.

Reprises: Often a song will occur again in the musical as a reprise which can be used effectively to reveal how a character has developed during the story. An effective reprise which functions dramatically reveals the development of character since the last time it was sung. The lyrics may reflect a change in the character’s attitude or self-awareness, or they may indicate a change in situation. In *West Side Story* Tony and Maria reprise their romantic ballad “Tonight”, but now it is the night of the gang’s street fight and it takes on a new meaning.

Emotional climax songs: When characters reach a point in the drama where they can’t help but explode with feelings or love or success or simply the joy of life, music serves to amplify these emotions to a level above mere words. Emotional climax songs are exuberant, celebratory and infectious, allowing the audience to share the character’s passion and excitement.

Songs that tell the story

Exposition songs: Because songs take up time reserved for dialogue in the play, musicals must move quickly to establish the dramatic situation, introduce the main characters, and give audiences some reason to care about them. Exposition songs inform an audience what has happened and what may have brought the characters to this point in the action. They may also preview the themes of the story.

Conflict songs: At the heart of every drama lies conflict. Some of the most interesting and exciting songs in Musical Theatre involve conflict, when characters struggle.

Narration songs: Narration songs describe events that we otherwise may not see – what has happened off-stage for instance.

Summary songs: Similar to narration songs, summary songs compress lengthy amounts of time into one song.

Songs with special functions

Comment songs: A character not in the dramatic scene may step to one side and sing about events on stage. Stephen Sondheim uses this device in several of his musicals including *Company* and *A Little Night Music*.

Musical metaphors: These songs take advantage of the unique qualities of musical theatre to portray a situation in presentational, non-literal fashion. Much of *Into the Woods* acts metaphorically, especially with regard to wishes and desires.

Cameo songs: Cameo songs feature a minor character in a memorable number, someone who otherwise might be forgotten. A good cameo song defines a minor character quickly and effectively as well as giving a performer in a small role time in the spotlight.

Parodies: These rely on an audience's familiarity with music that is not in the show they are watching, but is used to evoke an appropriate mood.

Fairy Tales

A fairy tale is a fictional story that may feature folkloric characters (such as fairies, goblins, elves, trolls, witches, giants, and talking animals) and enchantments, often involving a far-fetched sequence of events. The term is also used to describe something blessed with unusual happiness, as in "fairy tale ending" (a happy ending) or "fairy tale romance," though not all fairy tales end happily. Fairy tales are a genre in literature. They have their roots in the oral tradition. Fairy tales with very similar plots, characters, and motifs are found spread across many different cultures.

Fairy tales also tend to take on the colour of their location, through the choice of motifs, the style in which they are told, and the depiction of character and local colour.

You may see some common elements in fairy tales:

Special beginning and/or ending words

Once upon a time...and they lived happily ever after. Sometimes, there's a surprise ending...

Good character

Do you see a kind, innocent character? Is the good character clever? Is s/he helped by others?

Evil character

Do you see a witch? A demon? An evil stepmother? In the end, the evil character usually loses somehow...

Magic and Enchantments

Do you see magical things happening?
Do you see talking animals/objects? You might see fairies, trolls, elves, goblins, etc.

Royalty

Is there a castle? A prince? A princess? A king? A queen?

Poverty

Do you see a poor working girl, a poor family, a poor shepherd? Do you see poor people trying to eke out a living to have enough to eat?

Reoccurring Patterns / Numbers

Do you see any patterns? Often, you'll see things, phrases, tasks appear in "threes," "sixes," and/or "sevens"

Universal Truths

The tale probably touches on some universal experiences (i.e., coming of age) or hopes (i.e., to have enough food and love)

The Brothers Grimm: Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859)

The Brothers Grimm (or Die Brüder Grimm), Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859), were German academics, linguists, cultural researchers, lexicographers and authors who together collected and published folklore. The brothers spent their formative years in the German town of Hanau. Their father's death in 1796 (when Jacob was eleven and Wilhelm ten) caused great poverty for the family and affected the brothers for many years after. They both attended the University of Marburg where they developed a curiosity about German folklore, which grew into a lifelong dedication to collecting German folk tales.

Romanticism and Romantic Nationalism in early 19th century revived an interest in fairy tales. The Grimm brothers were deeply interested in the fairy tales referencing German folklore or culture. Charles Perrault's tales published in 1697 were also highly influential. The brothers began collecting tales for the purpose of creating a scholarly treatise of traditional stories and of preserving the stories as they had been handed from generation to generation—a practice that was threatened by increased industrialisation. They published their collection as 'Children and Household Tales' – 'Kinder und Hausmärchen' – in 1812. The collection contains legends and folk stories, the vast majority of which were not intended as children's tales. At the time there was deep concern about the content of some of the tales—such as those that showed children being eaten— and it was suggested these aspects be removed. Instead the brothers added an introduction with cautionary advice that parents steer children toward age-appropriate stories. None of the tales were eliminated from the collection, in the brothers' belief that all the tales were of value and reflected inherent cultural qualities, as well as being didactic in nature.

Some scholars argue that the Grimms published their collection as a resistance to French occupation. They are indeed 'grim' and often violent, which some believe reflect their medieval beginnings, or deeper Germanic mythologies. Interestingly, during the Third Reich, the Grimms' stories were used to foster nationalism and the Nazi Party decreed 'Kinder-und-Hausmärchen' was a book each household should own. Later in Allied-occupied Germany, the book was actually banned for a period of time.

Related Resource Links: Grimm's Fairy Tales in various translations are available online— you can [read Grimm stories online here](#) and [download Grimm ebooks here](#). Virginia Commonwealth University has [many options for Grimm stories including audio recordings](#). Note that you may find more violence and crude language in these versions than the retellings that are familiar to most modern readers, so please vet the tales before sharing with your students. [Hear James Lapine speak about the fairy tales](#) that inspired the production in this video (3:58)

Glossary

Appeased – Satisfied or relieved; appetite appeased means not hungry anymore.

Beseeming – Fit for, or worthy of. Behaviour that is not beseeming is not suitable for someone in that position.

Biers – The stand a corpse or coffin rests on before burial. (The Princes say they cry over Snow White and Sleeping Beauty's biers.)

Carnality – Indulging in the body's passions and appetites.

Bohemian - unconventional; usually describing someone literary or artistic.

Dell – A small, usually wooded valley.

Delirious - in an acutely disturbed state of mind characterized by restlessness, illusions, and incoherence of thought and speech.

Deleterious – Harmful, hurtful, or detrimental.

Disdain – To consider beneath oneself, to treat with contempt.

Dispel – To cause to vanish (the Baker wants to dispel the curse).

Dither – To be indecisive or waver in your opinion.

Fatiguing – To make tired and weary with physical or mental exertion.

Fleetly – Moving swiftly or rapidly.

Glade – An open space in a forest.

Heed – To give careful attention to (Red should heed her mother's warnings and advice).

Manticore – A legendary monster with a person's head, horns, a lion's body, and the tail of a dragon or scorpion. The Witch tells the Baker that they are imaginary.

Mollified – Having been restored to a state of calm and peace.

Mortify – to humiliate or hurt someone's pride. The step-family says Cinderella would "mortify the Prince," injuring his feelings and embarrassing him.

Naught – Nothing; "naught to fear."

Pitch – Sticky residue that comes from distilling tar. It's used several times in the play for setting traps.

Rampion – A species of bellflower with leaves that can be used like spinach, and a root that can be used like radishes. It is the Witch's "champion, my favourite" from her garden. Interestingly, a nickname for rampion is rapunzel.

Raping - An act of plunder, violent seizure, or abuse; despoilation; violation; how the Witch sees the robbery of her garden.

Spill – A fall; Cinderella takes a lot of spills as she runs through the woods.

Unblush – To show no shame or remorse.

Whither away? – Whither means "to where?" so when the Wolf asks Red this, he means "where are you going?"

Withers – The ridge between the shoulder bones of a horse or other animal. When a cow "casts her withers" it usually refers to a problem with their uterus, though it isn't known why that word is used. Regardless of which body part Sondheim was referencing, the phrase "while her withers wither with her" is a clever play on words that refers to Milky White wasting away.

Explore More: Recommended Library Reading List

Explore More Re-Envisioned Fairy Tales

The Bloody Chamber, Angela Carter Carter's masterpiece spins familiar fairy tales and legends like "Little Red Riding Hood," "Bluebeard," and "Beauty and the Beast" into subversively dark and sensual versions told in gorgeous Gothic prose. FICTION CARTER

Gingerbread, Helen Oyeyemi Influenced by the mysterious place gingerbread holds in classic children's stories, this bewitching and inventive novel tells a delightful tale of a surprising family legacy, in which the valuable inheritance is a recipe. FICTION OYEYEMI

The Princess Bride, William Goldman This modern classic is a timeless story about quests for riches, revenge, and, of course, true love. You may find it inconceivable to think of *The Princess Bride* as anything other than the sweet romance of Westley and Buttercup, but the movie tells only a fraction of the full satirical and ingenious tale. FICTION GOLDMAN

The Tiger's Wife, Téa Obreht In a Balkan country mending from war, a young doctor tries to unravel the mysterious circumstances surrounding her beloved grandfather's recent death. Searching for clues, she turns to the stories he told her of his encounters over the years with "the deathless man." FICTION OBREHT

Wicked, Gregory Maguire The basis of another famous Broadway musical, this enchanting novel views the land of Oz through a darker lens and tells its story from the viewpoint of the much maligned Wicked Witch of the West. FICTION MAGUIRE

Explore More Musicals

Look, I Made a Hat: Collected Lyrics, Stephen Sondheim All the lyrics (together with excluded songs and early drafts) of multiple musicals, including *Into the Woods*, plus behind-the-scenes anecdotes, advice on song writing, discussions of theatre history and the state of the industry. Essential reading for any fan of musical theatre. 782.140268 SON 2011

Musicals: the Definitive Illustrated Story. A beautifully illustrated book covering the complete history of the genre, from its earliest origins in dance halls and vaudeville to the spectacular West End and Broadway shows of today. 782.1409 MUSICALS 2021

The Secret Life of the American Musical, Jack Viertel Beginning with an overture and concluding with a curtain call, with stops in between for production numbers, star turns, and finales, Viertel shows us how musicals happen, what makes them work, and how one landmark show leads to the next. 792.60973 VIE 2016



There are 1.4 million books, movies, audiobooks, eBooks and more at the Winnipeg Public Library, and all you need to borrow them is your library card. There are 20 locations throughout the city and there's an online catalogue for requesting items for pick-up at your library of convenience. An e-Library has thousands of eBooks, eAudiobooks and more! All free with your library card. Visit us at Winnipeg.ca/library

Discussion and Writing Prompts

Preshow: Some actors play multiple roles in this show. Consult Royal MTC's website or *Ovation* to see the cast list. Why do you think certain roles are paired together? **After the show,** discuss any new ideas about why these pairings were made.

Sondheim says "Among other things, the show is about community responsibility."

- How is the theme of community depicted throughout the show? (Think in particular of songs that exemplify this, as well as the journey of the characters and how it may be echoed in the director's vision.)
- What is community? Where in your own life do you see community? (Points from this [article from the Stanford Social Innovation Review](#) may be helpful.)
- Sondheim's quote continues "You can't just go and chop down trees and tease princes and pretend that beans are worth more than they are. Everybody has to pay for that." Discuss how responsibility relates to community.
- How does the meaning of community in the play echo our society or real-life situations?

The following prompts were adapted from those by Dr. Meg Upton for Victorian Opera.

Using the song types defined earlier in this guide, identify which might apply to: A Very Nice Prince (Cinderella), Children Will Listen (Witch), Agony (The Princes)

(You can find the [original cast recordings on this playlist](#))

How do the song lyrics contribute to the narrative of *Into the Woods*? Analyse and evaluate the narrative or story of a song. Whose story is told? What does the song reveal? What comment does it make?

Related Resource Links: Videos from Music Theatre International that feature Sondheim and Lapine giving extra insight into how the characters of [Cinderella](#) and [The Princes](#) come through in their songs.

More generally, how does music help to build the world of the play? How does it contribute to themes and ideas in the production? How does music connect with characters?

Related Resource Links: Videos of Sondheim explaining musical aspects of the following: [The Opening Number](#), [Five Recurring Notes](#), [The Witch's theme](#), [Cinderella's theme](#), [Hello Little Girl](#), [Agony](#), [The Bean Theme](#), [No More and No One is Alone](#)

Into the Woods uses fairy tales as its premise.

- What is magical about the world of the play? How is the magic or fantasy established? Consider the characters, narrative, design, and music.
- What is real in the play? Which characters anchor it in reality?
- Some say that the nature of the musical is to be heightened and stylized. Do you agree that this is true about musicals in general? What is heightened or stylized about this production of *Into the Woods*?

Suggested Classroom Activities

Before and After: Production and Artistic Elements. Everything that you see on the stage is there because of a choice. Use Royal MTC's [Theatre People library](#) to get an overview of the job of the director, music director, choreographer, and set, costume, and lighting designers.

- Before the show: read the Plot Summary in this guide (or, if you're okay with spoilers, the full plot synopsis or short podcast). Have students, individually or in groups, consider what choices they would make in the above roles. This can be a discussion, in writing, or involve visual creation for the design aspects. What would your overall directing concept be – setting, time period, themes, etcetera – and how would you communicate that to the audience?
 - o Prepare a cast list for the major characters. Using the plot summary and your knowledge of the original fairy tales, list traits that you would look for in performers for each character. (Optional: select real-world actors from film and theatre who suit your criteria)
 - o How could a set enable multiple locations needed in the play?
 - o As a designer, what kinds of colour palettes would you use for the set and lighting of the environment? How might you change tone from Act 1 to Act 2?
 - o What colours do you associate with certain characters for their costumes? Use any media to create a colour palette for the set and characters. (Who blends in, who stands out? Who matches someone else, who contrasts?)
 - o What other features do you think the main characters' costumes could incorporate? For example, whose costume is simple vs elaborate, whose might be tight instead of loose, whose is well-maintained or ragged?
- After the show, discuss whether the choices made were the same as yours.
 - o Can you identify the director's concept? What time and place were used? What was emphasized about the themes and messages, and how?
 - o Compare your casting ideas to the choices made. Why do you think the particular actors were chosen for these roles?
 - o Was the design realistic or more abstract?
 - o Did you notice any visual patterns (eg use of colour or shape) in the designs?
 - o How did the set enable multiple locations, and many entrances and exits?
 - o Did the lighting convey certain feelings or moods? How?
 - o How did the costumes enhance each character and give you an idea of their personality, class, or status?
 - o How did the costumes affect movement, and vice versa?
 - o What else did you notice about movement and choreography?
- Also after the show: Music Theatre International, the show's rights holder, made videos of James Lapine's thoughts for producing companies. What does he say that resonates with you? Did Royal MTC's production match any of his suggestions?
 - o Watch videos on [directing](#) (7 minutes), [casting and characters](#) (6 minutes), and [design](#) (10 minutes)

Actor Transformation: The actors that play more than one character must make sure that the depiction is different enough that we don't think they're playing the same person in a different outfit. Actors use their bodies and voices to help show us that difference. Here are some ideas for exercises to explore these elements.

- **Getting into the body – environment walks**

Move around the room as if in different environments, for example: warm summer day, a light rainfall, a torrential downpour, the first snowfall, a windstorm, hail.

Move around the room as if going through or on the following: a mud field, an icy sidewalk, hip high grass, a rocky mountain, a vat of Jell-O, quick drying cement. As a next step, show how you feel about the environment with your facial expression.

- **Using the body to show character (Adapted from Theatrefolk)**

You can tell a lot about a character by how they stand, how they gesture, and how they walk. One way to begin to establish a character is by placing their shoulders. Practice creating the following character types with these shoulder positions.

- Are they a tense character? (shoulders up around the ears)
- Are they a relaxed character? (shoulders sloped down)
- Are they a shy character? (shoulders slumped forward)
- Are they a confident character? (shoulders pulled back)

Then, combine these positions with movement. Move through the space quickly or slowly, directly or on a meandering path, with small or large movements, with a light or heavy walk. When you combine one of these with a shoulder position, what kind of character do you become? Have students experiment and settle on a character, then decide that person's age and emotional state. They then introduce themselves to a group.

For example, a character with shoulders up, slow movements and small steps might be nervous about going into the woods. A character with pulled-back shoulders, big steps and a heavy walk might be someone like one of the Princes – confident, well-known and bossy.

- **Vocal character**

Use characters from the play or choose your own archetypes (a kind grandparent, a member of the royal family, a child, an exhausted parent....) and use nonsense dialogue such as "peas and carrots" to speak like them. Think about how you would use your voice in terms of pitch, speed, emotion, volume or any other aspects to convey your character.

Curriculum Connections

Attending Royal MTC's production of *Into the Woods* and discussing it, or participating in some of the suggested or similar activities, will fit into the Manitoba curricula in Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts, and English Language Arts.

English Language Arts

General Learning Outcome 1: Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.

- Express ideas 1.1.1
- Consider others' ideas 1.1.2
- Experiment with language and forms 1.1.3
- Develop understanding 1.2.1
- Explain opinions 1.2.2
- Combine ideas 1.2.3

General Learning Outcome 2: Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print, and other media texts.

- Prior knowledge 2.1.1
- Experience various texts 2.2.1
- Connect self, texts, and culture 2.2.2
- Appreciate the artistry of texts 2.2.3
- Forms and genres 2.3.1
- Experiment with language 2.3.4
- Create Original Texts 2.3.5

General Learning Outcome 3: Manage ideas and information.

- Make sense of information 3.2.5

General Learning Outcome 4: Enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.

- Generate ideas 4.1.1
- Choose forms 4.1.2
- Organize ideas 4.1.3
- Appraise own and others' work 4.2.1

General Learning Outcome 5: Celebrate and build community.

- Cooperate with others 5.1.1
- Work in groups 5.1.2
- Share and compare responses 5.2.1
- Relate texts to culture 5.2.2
- Appreciate diversity 5.2.3

Dance

Responding: The learner uses critical reflection to inform dance learning and to develop agency and identity.

- DA-R1: The learner generates initial reactions to dance experiences.
- DA-R2: The learner critically observes and describes dance experiences.
- DA-R3: The learner analyzes and interprets dance experiences.
- DA-R4: The learner applies new understandings about dance to construct identity and to act in transformative ways

Music

Connecting: The learner develops understandings about the significance of music by making connections to various times, places, social groups, and cultures.

- M-C1: The learner develops understandings about people and practices in music.
- M-C2: The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of music.
- M-C3: The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of music.

Responding: The learner uses critical reflection to inform music learning and to develop agency and identity.

- M-R1: The learner generates initial reactions to music experiences.
- M-R2: The learner critically listens to, observes and describes music experiences.
- M-R3: The learner analyzes and interprets music experiences.
- M-R4: The learner applies new understandings about music to construct identity and to act in transformative ways

Visual Arts

Creating: The learner generates, develops, and communicates ideas for creating visual art.

- VA-M2: The learner develops competencies for using visual art media, tools, techniques, and processes in a variety of contexts.

Drama/Theatre

Making: The learner develops language and practices for making drama/theatre.

- DR-M1: The learner develops competencies for using the tools and techniques of body, mind, and voice in a variety of contexts.

Creating: The learner generates, develops, and communicates ideas for creating drama/theatre.

- DR-CR1: The learner generates ideas from a variety of sources for creating drama/theatre.
- DR-CR2: The learner experiments with, develops, and uses ideas for creating drama/theatre.

Connecting: The learner develops understandings about the significance of the dramatic arts by making connections to various times, places, social groups, and cultures.

- DR-C1: The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.
- DR-C2: The learner develops understanding about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.

Responding: The learner uses critical reflection to inform drama/theatre learning and to develop agency and identity.

- DR-R1: The learner generates initial reactions to drama/ theatre experiences.
- DR-R2: The learner critically observes and describes drama/ theatre experiences.
- DR-R3: The learner analyzes and interprets drama/ theatre experiences.
- DR-R4: The learner applies new understandings about drama/ theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

Sources

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Plot synopsis adapted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Into_the_Woods

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Thank you to our fellow theatres who allowed us to reproduce some of their materials in this guide!

Orlando Shakespeare Festival: <https://www.orlandoshakes.org/>

Utah Shakespeare Festival: <https://www.bard.org/>

Victorian Opera: <https://www.victorianopera.com.au/>