Welcome to Pippin on Broadway! In this interactive Study Guide, you’ll find everything you need to make your trip to the theater extraordinary (and educational)! Read on for a peek behind-the-scenes of Pippin on Broadway, interviews with the creators of the musical, and special features connecting world history to the high-flying action on stage.

Teachers: Flip to the back of this guide for suggested lessons to take your students’ Pippin experience further.

Enjoy the show!
Introducing… PIPPIN!

The musical Pippin tells the story of a young man at a crossroads in his life. Does he follow in the footsteps of his father, one of the most powerful men in the land? Or does he strike out on his own, to find his own “corner of the sky?”

Pippin is a play within a play. The story is told by a traveling troupe of actors, acrobats and clowns (called “Players”), directed by the mysterious Leading Player. Like a circus or vaudeville act, the Players both act out the roles of the story and speak directly to the audience.

*all photos feature the Original Broadway Revival cast

WHO’S WHO

**Pippin:**
The eldest son of emperor Charlemagne and our play’s hero. Despite the privilege he enjoys as heir to the throne, Pippin is unfulfilled by what life at court has to offer.

**Leading Player:**
The director, producer and lead performer of an eccentric traveling theater troupe. She is narrator, commentator, critic and enabler all at once—but what is her true interest in Pippin?

**Lewis:**
The youngest son of emperor Charlemagne and Pippin’s half brother. A brash and dim-witted soldier, Lewis loves his mother almost as much as he loves himself. He is next in line (after Pippin) to inherit the throne.

**Fastrada:**
Lewis’s mother and Pippin’s stepmother, Fastrada is entirely devoted to Lewis’s happiness and her own power. She wants to put Lewis on the throne at all costs—even if it means defying her husband, Charlemagne.

**Charlemagne (Charles):**
The emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and a firm believer that war, at its most brutal, is the way to maintain rule. He is Pippin and Lewis’s father, and Fastrada’s husband.

**Berthe:**
Pippin’s grandmother and Charlemagne’s mother, Berthe was exiled to the countryside after disagreeing with her daughter-in-law, Fastrada. Wise and a little eccentric, Berthe advises Pippin to seek fulfillment in life’s simple moments.

**Catherine:**
A widow who has been left with a large estate, which she can hardly manage on her own. She meets Pippin at a low point in his life and welcomes him into her home. Theo is her son.

**The Players:**
A fantastical ensemble of acrobats, dancers, clowns and strongmen who help tell the story by playing soldiers, townspeople, farmers and more. They perform incredible feats to dazzle the audience at every turn.

**Theo:**
Catherine’s son. A kind boy whose best friend is a pet duck.
Pippin is over forty years old? How can that be? Pippin, who in 1972 arrived on Broadway on his youthful, idealistic and naive quest for an extraordinary life, has returned to Broadway in 2013. And like any person over forty, much has happened to him along the way.

Actually, Pippin’s life began some five years prior to that, in 1967 at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh. There was a club called Scotch ‘n’ Soda, which presented each spring a new student-written, directed, designed, and performed musical. I had co-written the show my first two years and was looking for an idea for my junior year. A fellow drama student, Ron Strauss, had come across a paragraph in a history textbook about the first-born son of Charlemagne and his attempt to overthrow his father. This was at a time when we drama students were much enamored of James Goldman’s THE LION IN WINTER, able to reel off line after line of its witty acerbic dialogue and delight in its double- and-triple crossing plot twists. What could be more fun than to do a musical medieval court-intrigue melodrama of our own? So we came up with PIPPIN, PIPPIN (I no longer remember why we had two “PIPPINs” in the title), full of plots and counter-plots, bawdy tavern numbers, bucolic love in the French countryside, and as much bitchy dialogue as we could muster. We and our fellow CMU students had a blast with it, and that as we thought was that.

But a year or so later, as I was getting set to graduate, I got a letter from a would-be New York producer who had heard the vanity cast recording we had made of the show, (basically for ourselves and our parents.) He said he thought the show had potential, and asked if I would be interested in developing it. Ron gave me license, literally and figuratively, to do so. I will spare you the details of the show’s odyssey over the next five years, but suffice it to say that along the way it accumulated a book writer, the smart and funny Roger O. Hirson, an experienced producer, Stuart Ostrow, and a legendary director/chorographer, Bob Fosse. And
by the time the now one-name-titled PIPPIN went into rehearsal for Broadway, not one line of dialogue, not one scrap of lyric, and not one bar of music from the original CMU show remained. The show had transmogrified into the story of a young man in search of himself, a story heavily influenced by the social upheaval happening in America at the time. It was of course the time of the Vietnam War and the so-called “generation gap,” with its slogan “Never trust anyone over 30.” America was as divided and polarized as ... well ... as it is now, although along somewhat different fault lines.

Subsequent to the Broadway production, Roger and I as authors made revisions that brought the show more in line with our original vision. For instance, we cut many of the Leading Player’s intrusions in the middle of scenes because we felt they diluted the story’s emotional power. But then a funny thing happened: Over the years, and particularly as I found myself on the other side of the over-30 generation gap, we put them right back in. We even added some. At one point, I found myself telling an interviewer that ironically I had become the “guardian of Bob’s vision” and that “somewhere Bob is looking up and laughing.”

Of course there have been other developments over time as well: We’ve found other cuts and improvements for lines, sharpening of lyrics, better focus for the story in spots. A decade or so ago, I wandered into a Fringe production of the show in London and found that they were trying a different ending, one that Roger and I immediately knew was better than any we had ever tried or considered. There have been several other interesting interpretations I have seen over the years. I particularly loved a brilliant production in 2009 by the Deaf West Theatre of LA in which Pippin was played by two actors, a deaf actor who signed and a speaking actor, and as Pippin’s internal conflict grew throughout the show, the two actors conflicted with each other more and more. I enjoyed a Pan Asian production in which the court of Charlemagne was a Japanese shogunate and a recent production at the Chocolate Factory in London, in which Pippin was caught inside a video game.

Now comes this new Broadway production. I’m particularly excited about it because director Diane Paulus, as she demonstrated with her wonderful productions of HAIR and THE GERSHWIN’S PORGY AND BESS, seems to have a unique ability with revivals, to reinvigorate rather than reinvent, to create a production that delivers what audiences loved about the original show and then goes beyond to enhance and illuminate the material. My hope is that, under Diane’s guidance, Pippin will remain forever young.

Stephen Schwartz
Director Diane Paulus and set designer Scott Pask have a long history of collaborating on theater productions. As you read this interview with Paulus and Pask, think about how they each approached the material before setting foot in the rehearsal room. What about Pippin interests them as artists? How has their experience working as a team contributed to this production?

**Question:** What was your first experience with Pippin?

**Diane Paulus:** I saw Pippin in the 1970s, when it was on Broadway. I saw it three times. I remember loving it as a twelve-year-old. I got the soundtrack and then proceeded to grow up on the music. Like HAIR, it’s one of the shows that I know backwards and forwards from listening to the soundtrack. Now that I’ve spent years with the material, really looking at the story and the book, I have come to understand what a powerful piece of theater it is. It deals with an incredibly serious subject: how far would we go to be extraordinary? Will you burn yourself alive to be extraordinary? This question is deeply relevant to our lives today. It can be relevant to anyone, from an 18-year-old trying to figure out the meaning of their life, to a middle-aged person trying to assess what they’ve achieved in their life. How hard are we going work to be extraordinary?

**Scott Pask:** I think Pippin comes to know what responsibility means to him and what his choices are.

**DP:** What I love about Pippin is that all of this is expressed through a theatrical metaphor. The show is a play within a play. It’s about a troupe of players who are enacting this ritualized performance with the main character. In the world of the play, to be extraordinary is to perform “the grand finale.” It uses theater as a metaphor for examining one’s own life.

**Q:** This idea of the primal, dark, intense nature of Pippin’s journey, when coupled with the persistent metaphor of theater in the show, really highlights the risk and the danger involved in live performance.
Our interest in taking Pippin into the world of Les 7 Doigts de la Main, with their incredible acrobatic feats, takes danger to an even more palpable place: will you literally jump through a hoop of fire? Will you walk a high wire? Circus artists are, by nature, defying their bodies. They challenge themselves to be truly extraordinary. What I love about 7 Doigts is that they approach acrobatics in a way that’s virtuosic, but also emotional. Their work is people-based.

Q: You and Scott also worked with world-class acrobats on Cirque du Soleil’s Amaluna, recently. Are there any lessons from that experience that you’ll be carrying to Pippin?

DP: Working on Amaluna was just such an amazing opportunity for Scott and me to increase our experience of what is possible in the theater. It certainly enriched my perspective on the traditional form of circus. At the A.R.T., where I am Artistic Director, we stress to our audiences that theater is not just a play on the stage—you have to expand your definition of theater further and further. With Pippin, the idea of circus enters the equation.

SP: I hesitate to define this Pippin as strictly circus; I am also thinking of historical environments related to traveling troubadours, old medicine shows, and medieval morality plays.

DP: Pippin almost has the structure of a morality play, where a central figure progresses through a series of difficult trials.

SP: I’m even inspired by the liturgically based pageant plays that are put on in churches today, such as the ones that I went to in my youth and informed work I did on Book of Mormon. With all these traditions, there’s the idea of a traveling troupe. It’s in motion, it isn’t rooted; in a way, it’s like a tumbleweed of a production. It rolls through town and keeps rolling.

DP: It’s written into the script that the Players travel and perform the show, The Life and Times of Pippin. I think that when “the circus comes to town,” you don’t know where they’re from and you don’t know who they are; they might seem kind of dangerous, freaky, from another world. We’re interested in drawing on that imagery and those feelings associated with the circus in giving an identity to the players in Pippin. The idea is to take what we all know and love about Pippin—which includes Bob Fosse’s choreography—and tell the story as powerfully as we can. Chet Walker, our Fosse specialist working on the show, said to me that Bob Fosse was inspired by the circus, as well as the films of Federico Fellini; that was a world he was interested in, though he never truly went there because he made his work with dancers, not circus artists. But there is an impulse built into what he created that points toward that aesthetic…

Q: How long have you been collaborating?

DP: We started as assistants together, when we were both in grad school.

SP: 15 years, I think. We worked on the original Donkey Show, the Lower East Side Projects with her Project 400 group, a couple of operas, HAIR in Central Park, Broadway and London, then Cirque du Soleil. We’ve had a long and really great collaboration.

Q: What makes it great?

SP: I think Diane’s got a great creative vision. She’s incredibly articulate and has an insight into the work she tackles that’s inspiring to be around. It’s a sort of incisive, almost surgical glance towards what she wants to achieve with a piece of work and what its goals are. There is an incredible amount of tenacity to her vision. It’s fantastic to see how she can liberate a show, like HAIR, from so many preconceived ideas…people are shocked to see it laid bare, laid open and almost reinvented.

DP: What I adore about working with Scott is that he’s a thinker—a theater thinker. Of course, his job is to translate ideas into a physical space, but he is a partner in conceptualizing the show. In all the shows that we’ve done together, Scott and I always talked about creating the world of the production. In The Donkey Show, it was an immersive nightclub environment. In HAIR, we started with Central Park as the backdrop to our world. When we moved indoors, The Hirschfeld Theater was the site of the “be-in.” In Amaluna, it was about the immersive environment of a community of women celebrating a ritual, which the audience is invited to. Everything Scott and I work on together is about worlds, environments, and architectural thinking; we don’t create design that feels separate from you, as an audience member. We have a shared interest in the physical, spatial and theatrical possibilities that an immersive experience can offer.
Director-choreographer Bob Fosse forever changed the way audiences around the world viewed dance on the stage and in the film industry in the late 20th century. Visionary, intense, and unbelievably driven, Fosse was an artist whose work was always provocative, entertaining, and quite unlike anything ever before seen. His dances were sexual, physically demanding of even the most highly trained dancers, full of joyous humor as well as bleak cynicism — works that addressed the full range of human emotions. Through his films he revolutionized the presentation of dance on screen and paved the way for a whole generation of film and video directors, showing dance through the camera lens as no one had done before, foreshadowing the rise of the MTV-era of music video dance.

Robert Louis Fosse was born in Chicago, Illinois, on June 23, 1927. Bob was the youngest of six children and quickly learned to win attention from his family through his dancing. It was not long before he was recognized as a child prodigy. His parents sent him to formal lessons, where he immersed himself in tap dancing. By the time he reached high school, he was dancing professionally in area nightclubs as part of their sleazy vaudeville and burlesque shows. Fascinated with vaudeville’s dark humor and teasing sexual tones, he would later develop these themes in his adult work. After high school, Fosse enlisted in the Navy in 1945. Shortly after he arrived at boot camp, VJ day was declared, and World War II officially came to an end. He completed his two-year duty and moved to New York City…

Fosse’s first fully choreographed show was 1954’s The Pajama Game. The show made Fosse an overnight success and showcased his trademark choreographic style: forward hip-thrusts; the vaudeville humor of hunched shoulders and turned-in feet; the amazing, mime-like articulation of hands. He often dressed his dancers in black and put them in white gloves and bowler hats, recalling the image of Charlie Chaplin. He incorporated all the tricks of vaudeville that he had learned — pratfalls, slights-of-hand, double takes. Fosse received the first of his many Tony Awards for Best Choreography for The Pajama Game.

His next musical, Damn Yankees, brought more awards and established his life-long creative collaboration with Gwen Verdon, who had the starring role. With her inspiration, Fosse created a stream of classic dances. By
1960, Fosse was a nationally known and respected choreographer, married to Verdon (by then a beloved Broadway star) and father to their child Nicole. Yet Fosse struggled with many of his producers and directors, who wished him to tone down or remove the “controversial” parts of his dances. Tired of subverting his artistic vision for the sake of “being proper,” Fosse realized that he needed to be the director as well as the choreographer in order to have control over his dances.

From the late 1960s to the late 1970s, Fosse created a number of groundbreaking stage musicals and films. These works reflected the desire for sexual freedom that was being expressed across America and were huge successes as a result. Before Fosse, dance was always filmed either in a front-facing or overhead view. In his 1969 film version of SWEET CHARITY (Fosse’s 1966 stage version was based on an earlier movie by Italian director Federico Fellini, about a prostitute’s search for love; the film was commissioned by Universal Studios after the success of the stage version) and in later works, Fosse introduced unique perspective shots and jump cuts. These film and editing techniques would become standard practice for music video directors decades later.

His 1972 film CABARET was based on Christopher Isherwood’s stories of pre-War Germany. Articles on the film appeared in all the major magazines. Photos appeared on the covers of TIME and NEWSWEEK. The film was Fosse’s biggest public success and won eight Academy Awards.

Pippin (1972) became the highest earning Broadway show in history, as well as the first Broadway show to advertise on national television. Pippin was awarded five Tony Awards for the 1972-73 season, one of them given to Fosse for best direction and choreography. Fosse staged and choreographed a variety show special for NBC starring Liza Minnelli, LIZA WITH A Z, which brought Fosse an Emmy Award and made him the first person to ever win top honors in three entertainment mediums — stage, film, and television.

Two stage musicals followed: Chicago (1975) and Dancin’ (1978). During rehearsals for Chicago, Fosse suffered a heart attack. He survived and used much of that traumatic experience in 1979 in his semiautobiographical dance film All That Jazz. Two other films, Lenny (1974) and Star 80 (1983), were not the popular successes that his other shows had been. Big Deal, Fosse’s last musical, was also poorly received. After a rehearsal for the revival of Sweet Charity, Fosse suffered a massive heart attack and died on the way to the hospital. Fosse’s contribution to American entertainment continued after his death via show revivals and dance classes. His most prominent contribution was through the body of his work recorded on film and video.

Making ‘Magic’ New in ‘PIPPIN’

Deconstructing a Broadway Opening Number*

By PATRICK HEALY and ZENA BARAKAT

For the 1972 musical “Pippin” Bob Fosse created one of the most famous images in Broadway history: brightly lighted hands splayed in the darkness, a visually arresting fit with the seductive first chords of Stephen Schwartz’s opening number, “Magic to Do.” In those few seconds he set the tone for a highly stylized show, about a young man grappling for meaning in life. Fosse’s direction and choreography won Tony Awards and became so sacred that after “Pippin” closed in 1977, no one tempted fate to remount the show on Broadway — until now.

Re-inventing Bob Fosse

The revival of “Pippin” has a bold concept: the fusing of signature Fosse touches with acrobatics, contortionists and trapeze acts imported from the circus. The revival’s director, Diane Paulus, who saw Fosse’s “Pippin” as a child, said her vision was “to find ways to touch the theatricality of the original and bring it forward for the next generation.” Like Fosse, Ms. Paulus wanted to use “Magic to Do” to hook audiences straightaway. But seamlessly blending dance and circus took months of fits and starts. The number is finally done — four minutes of moments that aim to make “Pippin” magical again.
The Silhouette
Ms. Paulus planned to begin “Magic to Do” with Fosse’s legendary glowing hands, to gratify the audience, but decided that imitating him would cheapen the revival. Instead, she and her choreographer, Chet Walker, played with shadows against the circus tent, which doubles as the stage curtain. During rehearsal they asked Patina Miller, the revival’s Leading Player, to stand before light and walk downstage. “Suddenly we had this huge mysterious silhouette, which gets smaller as the figure comes toward the audience,” said Mr. Walker.

The Reveal
Ms. Miller works the edge of the stage, singing. At moments, individual performers step out briefly to deliver a lyric about what the audience can expect. (This introduces the cast’s biggest name, the actress and comedian Andrea Martin, who promises in song “humor, handled by a master.”) But mostly Ms. Miller’s Leading Player continues to prowl, dressed in tightly fitted black and a highly angled miniature top hat. Little does the audience know that controlled chaos is about to erupt behind the curtain. “I think the reveal is our version of the glowing hands of Mr. Fosse,” said Gypsy Snider, who created the show’s circus elements.
The Juggler
In casting the musical, Ms. Paulus found circus performers who were also eager to sing and Broadway performers eager to clown. Among them was Terrence Mann, a Tony nominee as Inspector Javert in “Les Misrables” and Beast in “Beauty and the Beast” — and a juggler. He ended up with the trickiest transition in “Magic to Do.” “Before the curtain reveal, I come out and sing ‘Battles, barbarous and bloody’ with two scimitars,” he said. “Then I race back behind, slide the scimitars into the wings, grab three juggling clubs, get on an elephant stool and make sure I don’t juggle a club into my wife rushing by” — Charlotte d’Amboise, who plays his wife in the show too.

The Handwalker
A risk of blending circus and choreography is overwhelming the senses of the audience. Ms. Paulus did want moments, like the reveal, of “a visceral explosion where you can’t possibly take it all in,” but she also sought instances of singular virtuosity — star turns, if you will, even by performers who don’t have major parts. Ms. Snider created one such moment with the acrobat Philip Rosenberg. The two had worked together on the Off Broadway show “Traces” by their Montreal troupe 7 Fingers (Les 7 Doigts de la Main). Ms. Snider knew he could walk on his hands and noticed that the “Pippin” set included staircases for the Act I finale. She proposed moving one to center stage during “Magic to Do” and having him walk upside down. Mr. Rosenberg said he took a couple of spills in rehearsal, but he hasn’t had one in performance.
The Trapeze
As the ringmaster of the “Pippin” circus troupe, the Leading Player needed to show her stuff in the big tent, Ms. Paulus decided. Ms. Miller had some gymnastics training, so Ms. Snider thought about giving her a try on the trapeze, which always puts its performer in a spotlight worthy of a Leading Player.

The Double Twist
While dancers learn early in their theater careers to time every step to the beat of the music, acrobats don’t count in the same way. “We’re very random — it can be like, ‘five, six, over here, seven, and then,’” Ms. Snider said. “And when you’re in motion — tumbling, being thrown in the air — you can’t really stay focused on a count.” But the task of training the acrobats on counting, and coordinating them with the dancers, was huge for a routine called the double twist, in which timing was essential.

The Wedge
For the number’s big finish, Mr. Walker pulled the acrobats and the dancers together at center stage into a triangle-shaped wedge that he described as a nod to Fosse. For any musical, the applause for the opening number is a telltale sign about whether the audience is (on a sliding scale) truly enraptured, simply impressed, merely pleased or bracing for a long slog. This “Magic to Do,” Mr. Walker said, is an unequivocal bid for rapture. “If we do our jobs right, we’ll have hooked them to take the journey with us,” he said.
The circus is commonly traced to ancient Rome, where gladiatorial combats, chariot races, and mock battles were staged in amphitheaters known as “circuses” (from the Latin word for circle). All across the globe, however, ancient peoples participated circus-type performances. Clowns and acrobats showed off their skills at marketplaces and fairs. It was not until the 18th century that the circus, as we know it today, emerged. In 1768, English horse trainer Philip Astley repurposed the circular arena of his riding school into an entertainment hotspot. At night, Astley wowed audiences with trick horse riding; eventually bolstering his “circus act” with jugglers, acrobats, ropedancers and clowns. This gave rise to the joke that all you need to create a circus is “a ring, a horse and a comic character.” In 1782 Astley opened a circus in Paris and, the following year, his pupil John Bill Rickets brought the circus to the United States.

In 1793, Rickets opened America’s first one ring circus in Philadelphia, PA., featuring trick-riders and clowns. In the early 1800s, the concept of Manifest Destiny encouraged Americans to move westward and govern the land from coast to coast. As Americans began resettling in the Wild West, so too did the circus, establishing shows in new
communities across the country. In 1825, Joshuah Purdy Brown invented the first canvas tent to replace the wooden structures that, until then, housed the circus. Brown’s tents made transportation significantly easier and contributed to the start of a booming traveling circus and menagerie business.

In 1871 Phineas Taylor (“P. T.”) Barnum and William Cameron Coupe originated the sideshow, a type of travelling circus featuring human oddities and exotic animals. Enormous success and high demand caused the circus to expand from its one ring model to include two, three and sometimes up to seven rings—with a different act occurring in each ring simultaneously. By 1881, Barnum had split with Coupe and partnered with Bailey; they became the Barnum & Bailey Circus. This circus toured Europe from 1897 to 1902, earning its nickname the “Greatest Show on Earth.”

Of course, to call yourself the Greatest Show on Earth means you have to keep proving it! Outrageous spectacle, coupled with the constant need to be bigger, brighter and more impressive became the defining characteristic of Barnum & Bailey. Deborah Walk, curator of collections for the Ringling Museums, told PBS:

“How does the story of Pippin evoke the “primitive” (in this sense, basic and universal) elements of humanity? How do the elements of circus, created by 7 Doigts de la Main, add to it? On a related note: What are your own memories of the circus, if you’ve seen it come to your town? What do you recall seeing, smelling, feeling?

Philo logically, the explosion of the American circus, the bigness of it all, is the American gift to the circus,” says Walk. “If you have one tent, why not two? Or three? Space wasn’t a problem, so why not add a menagerie? Some say this was a detriment to (the art) of the circus because there’s so much going on at one time, but it is the extravagance of the American circus. Barnum’s philosophy was, ‘why send out a minnow when a whale will do?’”

The Barnum & Bailey Circus was bought by the Ringling Bros. in 1906 and still can be seen today! Many other circus troupes have emerged over the past century, from the throwback one-ring style of The Big Apple Circus, to the cutting-edge spectacle of Cirque du Soleil, to the hip and in-your-face work of Les 7 Doigts de la Main. There is something about the circus that keeps the world’s attention, something that connects strongly to the story of Pippin. In her PBS interview, Deborah Walk continues: “There’s something thrilling about seeing things live. There is that immediacy, the electricity in the air, the idea that real people are doing real things in real time. The ring is primitive and embedded into our psyche. A community gathers around the ring and the fire is in the middle, and this has been true from prehistoric times. Comedy is the root of our humanity, and the circus pulls these constantly enduring elements together.”

How does the story of Pippin evoke the “primitive” (in this sense, basic and universal) elements of humanity? How do the elements of circus, created by 7 Doigts de la Main, add to it? On a related note: What are your own memories of the circus, if you’ve seen it come to your town? What do you recall seeing, smelling, feeling?
Translating as the “comedy of skills,” Commedia dell’Arte is a type of comedic theater whose popularity flourished in Italy from the 16th to the 18th century. Commedia dell’Arte is an ensemble-based form of theater involving troupes of professional actors, called players. In their prime, Commedia dell’Arte troupes travelled across Italy performing in city streets. The most distinguished troupes performed in palaces and even for audiences abroad in England, Spain, Germany, and France. Commedia dell’Arte consisted of stock scenarios, or pre-determined outlines of scenes. Each masked actor would improvise his or her own dialogue and physical movements, while following the basic plot of the scenario.

Commedia dell’Arte also consisted of a collection of stock characters; these archetypical characters appeared in every show and were easily identifiable by their masks. Physicality was an essential element of Commedia, as masked actors needed to rely on large physical gestures to communicate emotion and story to their audience. Although each troupe was typically comprised of about a dozen players, each player would generally stick with the same stock character for his or her career with the troupe. This way, each player could concentrate on precisely and consistently communicating the specific physical style of his or her stock character.

Commedia dell’Arte was especially groundbreaking in that it encouraged women to perform during a time when most western theater prohibited it. One of the most famous troupes was the Gelosi, headed by Francesco Andreini and his beautiful wife Isabella. Isabella Andreini is considered by some theater historians to be the first celebrity; portraits of her were sold all over Europe, and became a popular collectible for Commedia fans.

Commedia dell’Arte stock characters can be divided into three groups: old men, wacky servants, and lovers. The most famous “old man” roles were Pantalone, a miserable and wealthy old man, Il Dottore, a smug professor and Il Capitano, an arrogant soldier (who is secretly a coward). The most popular servant characters were Arlecchino, a sly and tricky man, Brighella, the macho servant, and Columbina, the flirtatious and intelligent maid. Lastly, the most popular lover roles were Flavio and Isabella (named after Isabella Andreini). These characters were hopeless romantics, and not a little bit vain; they were the only characters not to wear masks.
The fall of the Roman Empire marked the beginning of what became known as the Middle Ages, or Dark Ages. New forms of drama emerged during this period, significantly influenced by the most powerful institution at the time—the Church. Religious services included music, theatrical processions and rituals, and colorful painted scrolls representing scenes from the Bible. As religion played an increasingly important role on the social and political lives of the people, the Church recognized the potential in dramatizing biblical messages to further educate illiterate members of their congregation (they called this period the Dark Ages for a reason). As the Middle Ages progressed, church services would expand to include biblical re-enactments, particularly stories relating to Christ’s birth, his crucifixion and his resurrection on the holidays of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter. These plays would come to be known as Liturgical Plays, as they developed as part of the church service, or liturgy.

Eventually, interest in the theatrical aspects of church services would grow. Performances would be moved from inside the church to churchyards, then to busy marketplaces, village streets and fields. Over time, the Church’s influence on these plays decreased as professional guilds of actors took over. These theater guilds would produce festivals of performances, which mainly stuck to the dramatization of religious texts, but gradually integrated theatrical elements of comedy and farce. These plays were known as “Miracle” or “Mystery” Plays. Each festival consisted of a series, or “cycle” of plays. In order to accommodate large festival crowds, plays were performed on movable vehicles called pageant wagons. Audiences would gather as if on a parade route, with the wagons stopping at various stations to perform. One play could consist of an entire caravan of pageant wagons!

A cycle of Mystery Plays was generally performed one after another, starting as early as five in the morning, and could last up to three days. By the early Renaissance, the Mystery Play had developed into the Morality Play, a more innovative teaching of the principles of Christianity. The early play Everyman is an example of a typical Morality Play, which featured a generic human character on a journey through a series of moral tests (against the temptation of various sins). Pippin could be seen as a modern twist on the Morality Play.

Evolving from the Morality Play came a type of play called the Interlude. The Interlude took similar structure to the Morality Plays, however without the religious teachings. Medieval drama continued to distance itself from its religious source material, and some historians believe that modern drama evolved from the formally structured plays that developed in the Middle Ages.
Part of Pippin’s journey is to fulfill his desire to be “extraordinary.” Consider the definition above. What does extraordinary mean to you?

In the end, Pippin finds the extraordinary in the intimate and simple pleasures of family. All of us can discover parts of our lives (both inside and outside of ourselves) that could be considered “very unusual or remarkable.”

**#EXTRAORDINARY**

**ex-traor-di-nar-y**

adjective

1. very unusual or remarkable.

**I could be extraordinary if**…

(Ex: I could be extraordinary if I had enough money to buy the clothes I want; I could be extraordinary if I had telepathic powers; etc.)

**Share several of these responses with the group. Then, ask students to list five responses to the prompt:**

(Ex: What makes me extraordinary is my group of friends; What makes me extraordinary are my amazing Xbox skills; etc.)

**What makes me extraordinary is/are**…

Share several responses, and analyze the relationship between what we aspire to be, versus what we already value in ourselves. When is there a disconnect between our dreams and our reality, and why? Where do they align?

Ask students to choose an item from their second list (What makes me extraordinary is…) and rephrase it in 140 characters or less.

Using either your school or organization’s Twitter account, a new account, or your students’ individual accounts, post each student’s Tweet about their own sense of the extraordinary.

Add #EXTRAORDINARY and @pippinmusical to each tweet to connect your students’ voice to others across the country!
This production of Pippin is a veritable treasure trove of references to theater history, from the setting of the story within a traveling theater troupe, to the reconstructed Bob Fosse choreography, to the nods to classic circus.

The production could also be seen as a dialogue between theater history and contemporary theater. The Fosse choreography is placed beside new dance moments; the creative acrobatic work of 7 Doigts de la Main melds classic circus motifs with a modern aesthetic; and even the casting of the Leading Player as a woman plays with audience’s historical perception of the role, famously played by Ben Vereen in the last Broadway production!

Before experiencing PIPPIN:
- Review “The Life & Times of Bob Fosse” with students.
- Time permitting; view the suggested videos accompanying the article.
- Review “Magic to Go” with students.
- Discuss the similarities and differences between the historical examples with modern analogues (pop music choreography, Cirque du Soleil, contemporary musical theater, etc.)

After experiencing PIPPIN:
- Discuss what students recognized in the production from their basic study of Fosse and circus history. What was distinctly “Fosse” and what was distinctly “old school circus?”
- How did the production acknowledge, defy, or play with these moments?
- Why do you think the director and creative team decided to include so much theater history in the production?
- Do you think that someone with a background in dance or theater history would appreciate the production more, less, or just differently?
The Ol’ Razzle-Dazzle

An amazing opening number is required for any Broadway musical worth its salt! But what does it take to construct an exciting opening number that tells a story, grabs your audience’s attention, and introduces the world of the play? In this activity, you will create the opening number for a fictional musical.

• Review “Constructing a Number” with students.

• In groups of 6-8, select a song to build your number around. It doesn’t have to be from musical theater, but should be a song that all members can agree to work with. Ideally, the song should be 2-4 minutes long.

• Think of a title for a fictional musical that would begin with this song. Try not to use the title of the song…get creative!

• Brainstorm the world that the musical takes place in:
  ◊ Is there a main character?
  ◊ Is it set in the past, present or future?
  ◊ Is it a familiar world or a fantastical creation?

• In 30 minutes, each group must create a performance piece that includes the following ingredients:
  ◊ A choreographed dance including all members of the group
  ◊ A moment of silence
  ◊ A “button”: a moment that unmistakably marks the end of the performance
  ◊ A moment of unison voice
  ◊ A reveal
  ◊ A solo moment (this does not necessarily mean a singing solo)
  ◊ Must express an element of the world of the play
  ◊ At least two lines of original dialogue
  ◊ A moment of live music (singing, playing an instrument, drumming, etc.)
  ◊ Use lighting in an interesting way
  ◊ Use space in an interesting way

The performance will be set to the song that each group has chosen for their opening number.

After 30 minutes have elapsed, ask each group to share their opening number.

Allow peers to provide feedback according to the following method:
• Audience recaps what they saw (without judgment or criticism).
• Performers ask the audience questions (Was this clear? Did you know I was a robot? etc.).
• Audience asks the performers questions (Why did you choose this song? Could you maybe add the unison voice at the beginning rather than the end?)
TAKE A JOURNEY THROUGH THE WORLD OF PIPPIN

www.pippinthemusical.com

B/Roll Montage:
>>link via Google Drive<<

JOIN US!

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