

The Fantasticks

Book and Lyrics by
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Music by
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The Fantasticks © 1960 by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt
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CONTENTS

ABOUT THE FANTASTICKS	2
THE FANTASTICKS PRESS	3
THE CHARACTERS IN THE FANTASTICKS	4
PLOT SYNOPSIS.....	5
THEMES AND TOPICS TO EXPLORE	9
The Fantasticks as Drama.....	9
Characters in The Fantasticks	12
Searching and Coming of Age.....	12
Symbols, Images and Metaphors	14
Disillusionment and Self-Deception	14
Parents and Children.....	15
Adaptation and Musical Theatre.....	16
The Fantasticks as Musical Theatre.....	17
The Creators of Musical Theatre	19
AABA Song Form	19
Other Production Elements.....	21
Create Your Own Musical	22
Critical Analysis.....	23
Quick Takes	24
APPENDIX	
About the Authors.....	25
About the Original Director	26
The History of The Fantasticks	26
Facts about The Fantasticks.....	27
Recordings	28
Cast Recordings	30
RESOURCES.....	31

About *The Fantasticks*

The Fantasticks, which has book and lyrics by Tom Jones and music by Harvey Schmidt, is the world's longest-running musical and the longest-running legitimate show in any category in American theatre history.

The Fantasticks is an exquisitely crafted, primal theatre ritual; a beloved experience that audiences of all ages come together to share again and again. This simple musical fable of a boy, a girl and the pain of growing up is told by eight actors on a bare wooden stage that is as full of theatrical magic as any in American musical theatre history.

The modest tale is told through a score that is as wry as it is rhapsodic. *The Fantasticks* is a symphony of the human experience which sparkles from its first note to its last as its characters exchange their illusions for a few precious grains of truth.

This unique work has not only worked its spell in America, but is also adored around the world. At any given moment, there are dozens of productions taking place, some in English, some in a wide variety of foreign tongues. In such far-away places as Budapest, Bangkok, Beijing and Tokyo, someone is hanging a cardboard moon and inviting the spectators to: "Try to remember and if you remember, then follow ... "

The Fantasticks' Press

"... a gracious and musical fable that has spawned plenty of talent in its time. The children who saw it decades ago now bring their children to enjoy it."

- Ruth Gilbert, *New York Magazine*

"Certainly, one of the best musicals within my entire playgoing experience ... some of the best songs ever sung on any American musical stage ... simply takes your breath away."

- Ward Morehouse III, *The New York Post*

"... an unpretentious musical parable which has an extraordinary ability to make one fall in love with it."

- Frank Meyer, *Variety*

"At the Sunday matinee I attended, the theater was packed with four generations of faces that smiled throughout as if they were possessed. The allegorical, almost Biblical appeal of this oh-so-fragile romance about two fathers who use reverse psychology to coax their children into love. It made me realize that there are still surprising things to discover about *The Fantasticks*."

- Jan Stuart, *7 Days Magazine (British)*

"The love story and clever songs make this the perfect place to teach your children about love."

- *Parents & Kids Directory*

"Heartbreaking. Hypnotic. Charming. Reminds you why *The Fantasticks* has touched so many people over so many years."

- *Associated Press 2006*

"The long-running musical fable returns, relatively unchanged and still dewy as the dawn. The show hasn't lost its appeal; it feels like a game of make believe. *The Fantasticks* is just like the kind of teen-age love it depicts; nectar-sweet, exempt from time, and not nearly as simple as you may remember."

- *The New Yorker 2006*

"Heartbreakingly beautiful!"

- *Broadway.com 2006*

"The perfect musical. It's a gem!"

- *The Wall Street Journal 2006*

Characters in *The Fantasticks*

The Narrator (El Gallo)

The Girl (Luisa)

The Boy (Matt)

The Boy's Father (Hucklebee)

The Girl's Father (Bellomy)

The Old Actor (Henry)

The Man Who Dies (Mortimer)

The Mute

Plot Synopsis

ACT I

During the OVERTURE, the members of the company (except for the Old Actors) arrive and prepare to do the play. They take down the lettered drape of *THE FANTASTICKS*, set out the wooden bench, and put the finishing touches on their costumes as The Mute showers the air with brightly colored paper squares. When the music concludes, the actors “freeze” in place for a final tableau. Then they relax while the Narrator, El Gallo, sings to the Audience (TRY TO REMEMBER).

After the song, El Gallo introduces The Boy, The Girl, their Fathers and the Wall that separates them (The Mute). He tells us that Luisa, now sixteen, has changed from an ugly duckling to a beautiful young girl and the transformation has made her “incurably insane.” As if to prove his point, Luisa comes forward and explains to the Audience that she is a princess, that the moon turns red on her birthday every year, and every day she changes in strange and mysterious ways. Then she sings of her determination to have a life of enchantment and magic, not just “keeping house” (MUCH MORE).

Following Luisa’s introduction of herself to the Audience, El Gallo next calls forth Matt, who declares his love for Luisa. As he says, “she makes me young again.” At a command from El Gallo, a wall appears in the form of a stick held by The Mute. In spite of it, the young couple vow to be together (METAPHOR). They relish the risks they have taken to meet at the wall, savoring every moment of the danger. Luisa tells of a dream in which Matt saves her from being abducted by a band of scoundrels. In her dream, after her dramatic rescue, their warring fathers agree to tear down the wall and everyone lives happily ever after.

However, they are brought back to reality by the appearance of the boy’s father, Hucklebee, in the garden. He threatens to make it even harder for the youngsters to see each other. Matt responds by insisting that he will only marry a girl of his own choosing (I’LL MARRY WHEN I MARRY). He leaves as Luisa is joined by her father, Bellomy, who orders her inside.

Left alone, the fathers embrace over the wall, revealing that they are really the best of friends and are only pretending to be enemies in order to deceive their kids. They believe that if their children think they want them to remain apart, they will be sure to come together. Then, confiding to the Audience, they explain how to manipulate children that he will. They enact a mock marriage ceremony (“One Hand, One Heart”) swearing that “even death can’t part us now.” (NEVER SAY NO).

Searching for a way to end the feud, they settle upon the notion of a planned abduction. In fact, Hucklebee has already hired a professional abductor to do the job. And in a flash of light, El Gallo suddenly appears.

El Gallo agrees that he will pretend to kidnap the girl, allowing the boy to save her. A battle with “pirates, Indians, bandits” will follow, which Matt will seem to win, thereby becoming a hero and ending the feud forever. When the fathers inquire about the cost, El Gallo replies IT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU PAY, explaining that such theatrical charades can be contracted at various prices. After agreeing upon a “First Class” Abduction, the fathers leave to rehearse their parts in the Happy Ending. In need of extra actors to stage his elaborate abduction, El Gallo hears a drum beat from deep within the old theatrical trunk at the side. The Mute opens it and Henry, an ancient actor down on his luck, emerges, followed by Mortimer, an equally aged “extra” dressed in a loincloth and feather. Henry recalls his great performances from the past and Mortimer demonstrates his special expertise at dying.

El Gallo hangs a wooden moon as the lights soften and become blue. He asks the Audience to remember their own youthful trysts as a harp glissando plays softly in the background (THE GLEN SPEECH). Matt and Luisa meet in this secluded glen. He promises her a happy ending and here, in September, before a rainfall, as The Mute sprinkles them with confetti “rain,” they pretend the forest is their castle (SOON IT'S GONNA RAIN).

Their idyll is broken when Henry, Mortimer and El Gallo pretend to attack them and attempt to kidnap the girl (THE ABDUCTION BALLET). Henry and Mortimer pretend that Matt has mortally wounded them. Then Matt and El Gallo do battle until El Gallo simulates death in a highly dramatic fashion. The music becomes jolly and triumphant. The young lovers rush onto the platform and embrace. The fathers rush in and embrace too. Henry and Mortimer exit back into the trunk. The lovers and parents sing “HAPPY ENDING,” striking a pretty pose. El Gallo ends the act by commenting on the difficulty of holding such a pose. He takes the moon and as he exits, declares that it is time for the intermission.

ACT II

El Gallo returns with the moon and The Mute lowers the front drape to reveal the lovers and their fathers still trying to maintain their tableau. El Gallo explains that "the play is never done until we've all of us been burned a bit and burnished by the sun." He reverses the moon and reveals the sun. The music grows more intense. The group members break their pose and comment on the sudden heat. Luisa notices that Matt looks different in the sunlight. He comments that he is not ready to get married yet. She dreams of doing something exciting. He eyes the road out of town longingly. The fathers begin to squabble about their opposing theories of gardening. They all sing THIS PLUM IS TOO RIPE in which, as the song says: "What was last night scenic may seem cynic by today." The lovers miss the moon; the fathers miss the wall. In irritation, Hucklebee reveals that he and Bellomy arranged for the colorful abduction in order to bring their offspring together.

Luisa declares that "we didn't need your moon or bandits. We're in love! We could have made our own moons!" Matt is bitter to discover they were nothing more than puppets. Bellomy is furious with Hucklebee for spoiling everything. The fathers quarrel and set about building another wall. Matt challenges El Gallo to a real duel and El Gallo easily disarms him in front of the girl. Matt and Luisa argue and she slaps him. He decides to take that road out of town; she decides to take her hair down and go swimming in the stream. He threatens to find his madness; she threatens to have an affair. Matt sings I CAN SEE IT, describing the world he believes he will find. His lyrics are countered by those of El Gallo, who sings of the unpleasant surprises that are in store for him. After the song, El Gallo sends him off to learn the truth. Then, "just to add a bit of spice," he releases Henry and Mortimer from the trunk, dressed as pirates, to bamboozle Matt and carry him off.

El Gallo says to the Audience: "It's a little bit colder. A month goes by. We're one month older." The fathers enter to supervise the work The Mute is doing on their wall. Hucklebee says he has heard nothing from his son and Bellomy reports that his daughter wastes her days dreaming. They agree that their gardens, unlike their children, are their solace (PLANT A RADISH).

El Gallo appears to Luisa, sitting in a treetop high above the garden. She climbs up beside him and begins to flirt. She calls him "my bandit," and she shows him the spot where he bruised her arm during the supposed abduction. She has marked it with a ribbon. At her suggestion, El Gallo agrees to take her to see the world (ROUND AND ROUND). For this strange dream-like trip, he provides her with a mask that blots out any expression of compassion or horror. Her face is frozen in joy. As they "travel,"

they encounter Matt in a series of increasingly nightmarish visions, all presented on the little platform like a series of puppet shows featuring the old actors, also wearing masks and colorful headgear from around the world. When Matt is set on fire, beaten, and finally forced to lie on a bed of nails, Luisa tries to hide behind her mask, though, despite El Gallo's prompting, it becomes harder and harder for her to cut herself off from what she is seeing. And despite the fact that the mask is causing her to say cruel and hateful things, there is a growing terror in her eyes.

When the number is over, Luisa and El Gallo find themselves back in the tree. He tells her to pack so they may run away and Luisa, still shaken by some distant memory of the nightmare she has just experienced, turns to him for reassurance. El Gallo kisses her on the eyes. He promises to wait for her, but demands her most treasured possession - her mother's necklace - as a pledge that she will return. Matt returns, but neither of them notices him. Realizing that El Gallo is about to break her heart, Matt demands that El Gallo return her necklace. El Gallo raises his hand and Matt falls back as if struck.

Luisa comes in, realizes that she has been abandoned, and as they sit there, heads bowed, on either side of the little platform stage, El Gallo returns and stands center, between them. After he explains to the Audience why he has done what he has done (A CURIOUS PARADOX), the lovers reunite in a simple and unaffected way (THEY WERE YOU).

The autumn is over. Winter comes, bringing snow - and wisdom. As the fathers joyously rejoin their children, El Gallo closes with a reprise of his opening song: "Deep in December, it's nice to remember - Without a hurt, the heart is hollow. Deep in December, our hearts should remember - and follow."

Themes and Topics to Explore

Our study guide focuses on a wide-ranging list of themes and topics suggested by the content of *The Fantasticks*.

Avenues for exploring each theme and topic are suggested in the form of:

QUESTIONS: Designed to prompt in-class discussions before and after viewing or reading the show.

ASSIGNMENTS: Designed to be researched and written out of class.

The Fantasticks as Drama

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Tell the story of *The Fantasticks* in one paragraph (include all the characters). Tell the story as it develops, action by action, through the play.
- When did the action of *The Fantasticks* first grab your attention? Where did you start to be interested, start to care, start to become excited or amused?
- In his book *Making Musicals*, Tom Jones writes that there are three things you have to know when you write a musical. The first, and often the most difficult to know, is the Premise, which is what the musical is actually about. He tells that, when asked what was the Premise of *Fiddler On the Roof*, the writers could not immediately come up with an answer, except to say that it was about a milkman who had five daughters, etc. It was only when they decided that it was actually about tradition, about a way of life that was about to change forever, that they were able to put the whole thing together. (And in the process they threw out the opening number, called A FIDDLER ON THE ROOF and replaced it with a new song called - you guessed it - TRADITION.)
- The second thing that the writer has to know is the Plot, which is the story-line, what happens to who and in what sequence. And the third thing is the Concept, which is the theatrical style in which the Plot is told and the Premise is revealed. Can you figure out what the Premise of *The Fantasticks* is? Also, what is the Plot? And finally, what is the Concept?

- The script of *The Fantasticks* states at the beginning: “Act One takes place in the moonlight. Act Two takes place in the sun.” To emphasize the difference between these two acts, composer Harvey Schmidt decided to use a different musical “palette” for each of the acts. Can you tell what the differences are? Listen, for example, to the OVERTURE to Act One and then listen to the musical underscoring for the top of Act Two: (THE SUN and THIS PLUM IS TOO RIPE.)
- Listen to the difference between SOON IT’S GONNA RAIN in Act One and I CAN SEE IT in Act Two. Comment upon which is more romantic and which is more dissonant. Finally, can you hear how in the Second Act number ROUND AND ROUND there is an attempt to combine the two forms?
- In a book called *Shakespeare’s Imagery*, Tom Jones discovered that Shakespeare utilized a unifying “palette” of images to provide the proper “texture” for each of his plays. For example, in *Macbeth*, there are more images of darkness than in any other Shakespearean play. In *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the images are of moonlight and flowering plants. In *The Fantasticks*, Jones decided to use images of vegetation and seasonal change to unobtrusively underscore the meaning of the play. Can you point out some examples of these images?
- A decision was made during the creation of *The Fantasticks* to avoid the elaborate, heavy scenery which is the norm for most musicals. Further, it was decided to go back to the “basics” of the theatrical experience. A simple wooden platform was to be the stage. There was a Narrator who spoke directly to the Audience, an “Invisible Prop Man” from the Oriental theatre to sprinkle “snow” or “rain.” Finally, it was decided to do almost the entire play in verse, either “open” and unrhymed or, for special effects, in heavily rhymed couplets and quatrains. Looking at the script, can you identify some of these verse sections and can you point out specifically a rhymed and unrhymed section.
- As another experiment, Jones and Schmidt decided that some of these poetic parts of the script should be set to music - not to be sung, but rather to be spoken to specific bars of music composed for the speech. Listening to the cast album, can you point out an example of this new “spoken lyric” form?
- In the program, the leading character is listed both as Narrator and El Gallo. Can you give some examples of when he is being Narrator and when he is being El Gallo. Do you think he should have any change in manner or speech or costume when he becomes El Gallo?

- *The Fantasticks* was designed to be performed in a small or modest sized theatre with very little stage scenery, and yet it has also been performed in large (sometimes very large) theatres with additional scenic elements and full orchestra. What do you think might be gained, and what lost, by expanding the size?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH OR WRITING PROMPTS

- *The Fantasticks* has been performed in sixty-four different countries in many languages, and the New York production is often enjoyed by audiences who do not understand English. Write an essay about the reasons for the show's universality. What is universality? Which characteristics of the show afford it this quality?
- *The Fantasticks*, in its initial production, opened in New York in May of 1960 and ran through February of 2002. Dwight Eisenhower was president when the show opened and by the time it closed, it had lasted through ten U. S. presidents. Can you name who they were? Can you list any of the historic social changes that took place during its run? Write a short essay about these changes and why this musical was able to last and find enthusiastic public support through these many social changes?
- Three plays which had a specific influence on the writing style of *The Fantasticks* are *Henry V* by William Shakespeare, *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder, and *Aria Da Capo* by Edna St Vincent Millay. Take a brief look at one of these plays and write a paragraph or two about what you think it was that influenced *The Fantasticks*.

Characters In *The Fantasticks*

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is the difference between a major and minor character? Who are the major characters in *The Fantasticks*? Who are the minor characters?
- Who was your favorite character? Why?
- With which character did you sympathize most? Why?
- Did you recognize anything that reminded you of yourself in any of the characters?
- How do The Boy and The Girl change by the time the play ends? Try to identify the specific moments of change.
- What does El Gallo mean when he says he will remember The Girl's kiss?
- How are The Fathers different from one another? What other teams of characters in film or television do they resemble?
- Discuss Henry and Mortimer as characters. What is their function beyond comic relief? Compare their theatrical histories and comment on the fact that they have ended up as a pair.

Searching and Coming of Age

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What does "coming of age" mean? When do young people come of age in your society? What ages are turning points? When do young people make their own decisions?
- What tears The Girl and The Boy apart in Act II?
- Can you explain why their separation is necessary for them to "come of age"?
- What is The Boy looking for on his journey into the world in Act II? What does he find?
- What is The Girl looking for in her relationship with El Gallo? What does she find?
- What does The Girl mean when she says "No. Both. There's room enough for both" at the end of the show?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH OR WRITING PROJECTS

- The basic theme underlying *The Fantasticks* was influenced by two literary works. The first was the Preface to *Androcles and the Lion* by George Bernard Shaw, in which he talked about the concept of “John Barleycorn” and its history as a religious and mythic concept. The other source, *The Golden Bough* by Sir Gerald Frazier, singled out the importance of the changing of the seasons and their symbolic influence on myth and early drama. Looking at one of these sources, write a brief essay on what you think could have been its influence on *The Fantasticks*.
- Have you ever felt the need to search for something that you felt was lacking in your life? Write about the search and the outcome. (Or create a story about a character on such a personal odyssey.)
- Have you ever hidden behind a “mask” to avoid confronting a painful truth? Write about this experience.
- Write about the ways in which our society hides behind various “masks” to avoid confronting unpleasant truths.
- Compare the journey The Boy takes to the journey taken by Candide in Voltaire's novel *Candide*. (Or compare it to a contemporary work with a young person's journey as its theme.)
- The Girl experiences a moment of heightened self-awareness when she realizes that she is pretty. Can you remember a moment like that when you first realized an important change in yourself? Write about it.
- In his first speech, the Boy says “I defy Biology and achieve - Ignorance!” What do you think he means?

Symbols, Images and Metaphors

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is a symbol? How does it differ from the object or idea it represents?
- In what ways is symbolism employed in the theatre?
- What do you think the "tortures" The Boy experiences actually represent?
- What is the symbolic meaning of The Girl's mask?
- In what ways are the characters symbols?
- What are images? How are images different than symbols? Discuss the ways in which imagery is used in *The Fantasticks*.
- What is a metaphor? Why is "METAPHOR" the title of The Boy and The Girl's first duet in Act I?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH OR WRITING PROMPTS

- Make a list of the props used as symbols in *The Fantasticks*.
- Write about the symbols in your family life and in your community's life
- Trace the unifying images of vegetation and the seasons that Tom Jones uses throughout the show.

Disillusionment and Self-Deception

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What are illusions? What is disillusionment?
- What is self-deception? Who is guilty of it in *The Fantasticks*?
- Is self-deception ever necessary to an individual's survival?

ASSIGNMENTS/WRITING AND RESEARCH PROMPTS

- Have you ever felt the sense of disillusionment that The Boy and The Girl feel at the beginning of Act II? Relate the events and circumstances that led to your disillusionment. Describe how you felt and what you did to deal with those feelings. How will it change your actions and attitudes in the future? Relate your experience to that of The Girl and The Boy during Act II.

- Write about a time when you longed for something grand and later realized the true value of something much more accessible.
- During the "ROUND AND ROUND" sequence, the masked Girl is described as laughing and crying at the same time. Have you ever had a sensation like this? Write about it.
- Using imagination or personal experience, create a short story about self-deception.
- *The Fantasticks* has been described as a curious paradox because it celebrates young love and makes fun of it at the same time. Write about this paradox.

Parents and Children

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- How would the lovers' story have changed if their fathers had not interfered?
- How do you feel about the Fathers' manipulation of their children? To what degree do you believe they cared about their children's happiness?
- The Fathers are sure they understand their children completely in the early scenes of the show. Do you agree? Do they ever gain complete understanding?
- Compare the Fathers' points of view in their two songs "NEVER SAY NO" and "PLANT A RADISH." What is your response when your parents say no?
- Are you or your siblings the "radishes" your parents thought they planted, or have you turned out differently than they expected?
- How do you react when your parents express opinions about people with whom you have romantic relationships?

ASSIGNMENTS/WRITING AND RESEARCH PROMPTS

- Write a short story about children who interfere in their parents' lives.
- Imagine you are your parents and write about their concerns for your future.

Adaptation and Musical Theatre

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- *The Fantasticks* was based on a play written by Edmund Rostand called *Les Romanesques*. Musical theatre works are frequently adapted from sources such as plays, novels, tales, short stories, films and television shows. How many examples of musical theatre works like this can you name?
- Name five musical theatre works that were original and not based on any other source.
- What does a team of musical theatre collaborators add to a work from another medium in adapting it for the musical stage?

ASSIGNMENTS/WRITING AND RESEARCH PROMPTS

- Try to find a copy of *Les Romanesques* (sometimes called *The Romantics* or *The Romancers* in English translations), the source for *The Fantasticks*. How does the play differ from the musical?
- Compare the endings of the two works. What are their radically different messages?
- *Les Romanesques* was a parody of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. How does a parody differ from an adaptation? How is the story like *Romeo and Juliet*? How is it different?
- Name the source works on which the following musicals were based:
 - Fiddler on the Roof*
 - Hello, Dolly!*
 - Sweet Charity*
 - The King and I*
 - Cabaret*
 - Guys and Dolls*
 - A Little Night Music*
 - South Pacific*
- Select a novel, play or group of short stories that you think would make a strong musical theatre work.
- Why do you think this piece "sings?" What about it is inherently musical?
- What can music add to its existing form?
- What elements of the source will be hard to transfer to musical theatre?

The Fantasticks as Musical Theatre

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION IDEAS

- Would *The Fantasticks* have been as successful as a straight play without music?
- Why or why not? How does the score heighten the basic storyline? How does it move the action of *The Fantasticks* forward? What do we know because of the music that we might not know otherwise?
- How does the music contribute to our understanding of the larger themes of the show?
- Did the music and lyrics evoke time and place for you? When and where did you imagine the show taking place? What prompted you to imagine this setting?
- In what ways is the music indispensable to the plot?
- *The Fantasticks* features an overture which opens the show. What is established during the overture for *The Fantasticks*? List all the things you learned about theme, setting, characters and energy of the show by watching and listening to it.
- *The Fantasticks* employs a musical device called underscoring that we often experience in films. What are your feelings about the use of music under speeches in a show instead of setting the words to the music as a song? How does the experience of listening to speech underscored by music differ from the experience of listening to either the speech as a song or without the underscoring? How do you think the creators determined when underscoring was the appropriate choice?
- Why do theatre song lyrics rhyme? Write a few verses in prose about something you wish would happen and then write it in rhyme. Compare the experience of writing in the two forms.
- What is internal rhyme? What is alliteration? What is assonance?
- Discuss the ways in which music and lyrics can compress and elevate important information.
- What role does music play in your life? If you were to choose moments in your life worthy of being set to music, what would they be?

- Select one of the following musical segments of *The Fantasticks*:
 - "Try to Remember"
 - "Much More"
 - "Metaphor"
 - "Never Say No"
 - "It Depends On What You Pay"
 - "Soon It's Gonna Rain"
 - "Happy Ending"
 - "This Plum Is Too Ripe"
 - "I Can See It"
 - "Plant A Radish"
 - "Round and Round"
 - "They Were You"
 - "Try To Remember (Reprise)"
- 1. Summarize the contents of the segment. Discuss:
 - a. What do we learn about the character or characters who sing the segment? What do we learn about their philosophies?
 - b. What do we learn about the larger themes of the show from the song?
 - c. What does the song accomplish for the plot? Where is the action when the song begins and when it ends?
 - d. Every dramatic scene has a "main beat" or central moment of importance. Does the song become the "main beat" of the scene in which it appears?
 - e. Does the song exist in real time, suspended time or compressed time? In other words, does it represent the amount of time that it would really take to express its contents? Does it magnify the moment? Does it speed up time?
 - f. What is the physical action of the character or characters during the song?
- Which of the songs are reprised? What is the meaning of the word "reprise?" What is its function? What do you know when you hear the reprise of "Try To Remember" that you didn't know the first time you heard it?
- Imagine you have been asked to create a new musical segment for the show. Who would sing it? Where in the show would it take place? What would it be about? What kind of music would it involve?

The Creators Musical Theatre

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is the meaning of the word "collaboration?" Why is the process of having more than one person create a musical called collaboration?
- How do you imagine a composer and a lyricist work together?

ASSIGNMENTS/WRITING AND RESEARCH PROMPTS

- Read a biography or autobiography of a famous musical theatre collaborator or team. Report on their creative and/or collaborative process.
- Read and listen to other works by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt (such as *110 IN THE SHADE*, *I DO! I DO!*, *CELEBRATION*, *PHILEMON*, *COLETTE COLLAGE* and *ROADSIDE*) to obtain a broader view of their approach to their craft and a deeper understanding of their artistic sensibilities. (Also read Tom Jones' book *Making Musicals*.)

AABA Song Form

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Just as stories can be divided into paragraphs, songs can be divided into sections called stanzas. When we listen to a song, we are not always aware of its structure, but the arrangement of ideas into stanzas and the arrangement of these stanzas in relation to each other is very carefully thought out by the composer and the lyricist. Different songs are arranged in different patterns, depending on their meaning. One classic pattern is called AABA. "Soon It's Gonna Rain" is an example of an AABA song with a verse-intro.

(See next page for example)

VERSE-INTRO

LUISA

HEAR HOW THE WIND BEGINS TO WHISPER
 SEE HOW THE LEAVES GO STREAMING BY
 SMELL HOW THE VELVET RAIN IS FALLING
 OUT WHERE THE FIELDS ARE WARM AND DRY.
 NOW IS THE TIME TO RUN INSIDE AND STAY
 NOW IS THE TIME TO FIND A HIDEAWAY
 WHERE WE CAN STAY.

A

MATT

SOON IT'S GONNA RAIN:
 I CAN SEE IT.
SOON IT'S GONNA RAIN:
 I CAN TELL.
SOON IT'S GONNA RAIN:
 WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?

A

SOON IT'S GONNA RAIN:
 I CAN FEEL IT.
SOON IT'S GONNA RAIN:
 I CAN TELL.
SOON IT'S GONNA RAIN:
 WHAT'LL WE DO WITH YOU?

B

WE'LL FIND FOUR LIMBS OF A TREE.
 WE'LL BUILD FOUR WALLS AND A FLOOR.
 WE'LL BIND IT OVER WITH LEAVES.
 AND DUCK INSIDE TO STAY.

A'

BOTH

THEN WE'LL LET IT RAIN:
 WE'LL NOT FEEL IT.
THEN WE'LL LET IT RAIN:
 RAIN PELL-MELL.
 AND WE'LL NOT COMPLAIN
 IF IT NEVER STOPS AT ALL.
 WE'LL LIVE AND LOVE
 WITHIN OUR OWN FOUR WALLS.

- The first stanza of this song is a verse-intro. This is a classic introduction to a song which sets up the situation of the song for the listener. Would the song work as well for you without this verse-intro?
- The remaining stanzas of this song are arranged as a classic AABA pattern. This means that 3 sections (As) are basically alike and one section (the B) is different. Can you find the A stanzas and the B stanza in the song?
- The last A stanza in an AABA song is often somewhat different in design than the first two As. Is this true in "Soon It's Gonna Rain"? An A stanza that is slightly different in design from the other As in an AABA song is called an A' (A prime).

- Each part of an AABA song has a job to do. The first part of the song, the first A, sets up the situation. How does the first A of "Soon It's Gonna Rain" accomplish this?
- The second A of an AABA song tells more about the situation and deepens its importance to the singer. How does the second A in "Soon It's Gonna Rain" accomplish this?
- The third section, the B section of an AABA song, moves the action of the song forward. How does the B section of "Soon It's Gonna Rain" accomplish this?
- The final section, the A', intensifies the emotion and the stakes, summarizing the message of the song. It also delivers the characters to a different place in their understanding of the situation they have been singing about. During the song, something has changed. How is all this accomplished in the last A section of "Soon It's Gonna Rain?"
- Listen to the song. How does the music for the verse-intro differ from the music for the A sections? How does the music for the B section differ from the A sections? How does the music for the A' section differ from the A sections? How does the music reinforce the thoughts behind the words?
- Many songs have a key or central idea around which they are organized. This idea is called a "hook" because it grabs the listener and brings them into the song. Often the hook is expressed in the same words as the title. What is the hook in this song?
- Do you think that understanding the form of a song helps you to appreciate it more or does it interfere with its effectiveness?

Other Production Elements

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- The setting of the original Rostand play was a realistic garden with a realistic wall. Why do you think the creators of the musical version of *The Fantasticks* chose another stylistic concept?
- Design your own sets and costumes for *The Fantasticks*. Explain the reasons for your choices.
- Read about set designers and lighting designers to learn more about their role in creating musical theatre.
- What is an "open stage?" What other musicals have used this kind of staging? What are the advantages and disadvantages of an "open stage?"

ASSIGNMENTS/WRITING AND RESEARCH PROMPTS

Stylistic elements of *The Fantasticks* were inspired by a variety of theatrical traditions and other sources.

Research and write about the following, discussing their possible influence on some aspect of *The Fantasticks*.

- *Commedia dell'arte* (the platform stage, the concept of the audience seeing the set and costume changes, etc.).
- Japanese theatre (the invisible prop man).
- Chamber theatre (audience address).

Create Your Own Musical

- How do ideas begin? Have you ever begun a project with a simple idea?
- Give examples of great ideas or inventions that began with simple thoughts or images.

Select a classic play that could be turned into a musical.

- What elements of this play make it relevant today?
- Where and when will your musical be set? Would you use its original setting or a contemporary setting?
- Why would this play make a good musical? How would it “sing?”
- What role would music play in your work? What kind of music would your characters sing?
- Outline your musical scene by scene.
- Make a list of the characters.
- Make a list of musical segments you might include.
- Will your work include dance? How will dance be used?
- Try to write the first scene, a turning point scene and the final scene of your musical.
- Try to write a lyric or melody (or both) for one of the musical segments.

Critical Analysis

ASSIGNMENTS/WRITING AND REPORT

Write a review of a performance of *The Fantasticks*. You may wish to include any combination of the following elements in your review:

1. Did the show hold your interest and why?
2. Why was the show interesting to experience?
3. Describe the manner in which the story was presented to the audience. What was the dialogue like?
4. What was the structure of the story? Was there a simple story or where there multiple stories? Was anything about the story unexpected? How did the story begin and end?
5. Describe the way music and lyrics worked in the show.
6. Describe the sets, costumes, lighting and musical accompaniment. How did these elements add meaning to the show?
7. Discuss the effectiveness of the performers.
8. Discuss the ideas presented in the show. Analyze their importance to your reader.
9. Explain why your reader should make an effort to see the show.

Quick Takes: Additional Prompts for Writing or Discussion

- Read Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* and Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters* and discuss their possible influence on some aspect of *The Fantasticks*.
- What is a tableau? Research the way in which tableaux were used in the theatre. Stage some tableaux of your own which make satiric statements on current events.
- Create a box of props like the one used in *The Fantasticks*.
 - Divide into groups and have each group select six props. Build an improvised play around these props.
 - Select a prop and write a short story that revolves around it.
- Using the list of recording artists in the Appendix who have recorded versions of songs from *The Fantasticks*, find different recordings of a song such as "Try To Remember" or "Soon It's Gonna Rain." Discuss the differences in interpretation. Which interpretation do you think is strongest? Why?
- Read *THE FANTASTICKS 30th Anniversary Edition*. The first section, an introduction by Tom Jones called *Trying To Remember*, tells the how the show was created.
- Read the book *The Amazing Story of The Fantasticks* by Donald C. Farber and Robert Viagas to learn about the way in which the show was produced. Create a time-line tracing the evolution of the show.
- Rostand was only 24 when he wrote *Les Romanesques*. Write an essay about the influence of his relative youth on the piece.
- *Les Romanesques* means romantic in the sense of being imbued with love and adventure. Would this have been an accurate title for *The Fantasticks*? What do you think the title of *The Fantasticks* means? Which title would you have chosen?

Appendix

About the Authors: Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt

Tom Jones (Book, Lyrics) and Harvey Schmidt (Music) began their partnership at the University of Texas in 1950 with a college musical. After graduation, they both served in the Army during the Korean War and continued collaborating by mail. After leaving the Army, the pair moved to New York where Schmidt worked as a graphic artist for NBC television and a freelance illustrator for such magazines as *Life*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Fortune* and Jones taught and tried to establish himself as a director.

After writing songs and sketches for several New York revues, *THE FANTASTICKS*, their first full musical since college, opened in May of 1960 and went on to become the longest running production in the history of the American theatre. Their first Broadway show, *110 IN THE SHADE*, based on the play *The Rainmaker* was nominated for numerous Tony Awards and has been revived on Broadway several times, most recently in 2007 in a production starring Audra MacDonald. *I Do! I Do!*, their two character musical starring Mary Martin and Robert Preston, was a success on Broadway and is frequently done around the country and the world. (One production, in Minneapolis, played for twenty-two years with the same two actors in the leading roles.)

For several years Jones and Schmidt worked privately at their theatre workshop, concentrating on small-scale musicals in new and often untried forms. The most notable of these efforts were *Celebration*, which moved on to Broadway, and *Philemon*, which won an Outer Critics Circle Award. They contributed incidental music and lyrics to the Off-Broadway play *Colette*, starring Zoe Caldwell, then later did a full scale version under the title *Colette Collage*.

In 1998, *The Show Goes On*, a musical revue featuring their theatre songs and starring Jones and Schmidt, was presented at the York Theatre and *MIRETTE*, their musical based on the award-winning children's book, was premiered at the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut.

In addition to an Obie Award and the 1992 Special Tony Award for *The Fantasticks*, in 1999 Jones and Schmidt were inducted into the Broadway Hall of Fame at the Gershwin Theatre, and on May 3rd, 1999, their "stars" were added to the Off-Broadway Walk of Fame outside the Lucille Lortel Theatre.

About the Original Director: Word Baker

Word Baker, who attended the University of Texas with Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, came to *The Fantasticks* following a triumph with an early off-Broadway success, the 1958 production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, which ran for 571 performances. Baker's version of the play was one of the first theatre-in-the-round stagings in New York City.

Baker, who credits *The Fantasticks* with giving him the courage of his convictions, has also directed *Now Is The Time For All Good Men*, *The Pinter Plays*, *The Last Sweet Days of Issac* and the fifth-longest running off-Broadway musical, *I'm Getting My Act Together and Taking It On the Road*.

The History of *The Fantasticks*

The Fantasticks is the longest-running legitimate show in any category in American theatre history. The day it opened, a nationwide civil defense drill took place, Vice President Richard Nixon and Senator John F. Kennedy won the Indiana presidential primary and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama was awarded to a musical, *Fiorello!*, by George Abbott, Jerome Weidman, Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick.

The creators of *The Fantasticks*, Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, had originally thought of the show as a spoof of *Romeo and Juliet* which took place on two ranches in the Southwest, one Anglo and one Spanish. After spending several years trying to force it into a Rodgers and Hammerstein mold, the writers were ready to abandon the project. When Word Baker, a director who had been their college classmate at the University of Texas, was offered the chance to direct three one-act plays at a summer theatre at Barnard College in 1959, he asked the team if they could create a short version of the show to be included in the production. In three weeks, they reinvented the show, throwing out the typical Broadway musical form and filling the piece with "presentational" devices garnered from the history of the theatre. Their mission was to break the proscenium and not be constricted by the "fourth wall." Producer Lore Noto, who had discovered the show as a reading in an acting class, saw the production at Barnard and became the producer of the off-Broadway version of *The Fantasticks*.

From the first, Noto, a former commercial artist and sometime actor, thought of the show as a remarkable artistic achievement that crossed time and generational barriers and he had complete faith in its three collaborators throughout the creative process. *The Fantasticks* opened to mixed notices in 1960 and had a rather slow start. However,

Noto nurtured it until it established itself in its tiny, charming Greenwich Village home on Sullivan Street. Resisting offers to move it to a Broadway theatre, he guided the show through its amazing run.

The Fantasticks was scheduled to close on June 8, 1986. After the closing notice caused public disbelief and a spontaneous flood of protest in the form of petitions, a persistent cast and crew caused producer Lore Noto to change his mind. In 1994, another closing scare occurred, but once again, audiences rallied to support the show and the notice was withdrawn. Finally, in 2002, with Lore Noto gravely ill with cancer, the show played its final performance at Sullivan Street Theatre.

Just four years later, in the summer of 2006, new producers re-opened *The Fantasticks* in a brand new Off-Broadway theatre located in mid-town Manhattan. Named after Jerry Orbach, the original El Gallo and later a famed Broadway and television star, this new theatre was designed to recreate the feeling of the Sullivan Street while being conveniently located in the heart of the theatre district. As of this writing (December 2008), this new revival is humming along in spite of the current severe economic downturn and the closing of many Broadway and Off-Broadway shows.

Facts About *The Fantasticks*

There have been more than 12,000 productions of the show in the United States in over 2,000 cities and towns. It has played in all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

The state with the most productions is New York, which has had 673. California has had 581. The state with the least productions is Nevada, which has had only 18. Other states with many productions are Pennsylvania, Texas, Ohio and Illinois.

There have been 15 national touring companies in the United States, an extended tour of U.S. Military bases in the Pacific and in Europe, plus 32 additional productions at bases throughout the world.

In addition to the original and continuing record-breaking run at the Sullivan Street Playhouse, *The Fantasticks* has established records in Houston for 8 months, San Francisco (1964-1970,) the Los Angeles Youth Production (1964-1968), and the Denver Third Eye (1968-1973.)

The Fantasticks has had 482 productions in 68 foreign countries and has been produced 191 times in Canada, 48 in Germany and 38 in Australia. In Scandinavia, 43 productions include 1 each year since 1962, when it won an award as that year's Outstanding New Theatrical Piece.

Japan has seen 15 productions, New Zealand 7, Saudi Arabia 5, Czechoslovakia 4 and Israel 3. *The Fantasticks* has played Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. There have been recent productions in such cities as Dublin, Milan, Budapest, Port of Spain, Bangkok and Beijing.

The Fantasticks has had 21 productions in Washington, D.C. including two at Ford's Theatre, one of which gave a special performance at the White House.

Opera companies around the world have mounted productions including those by the Cleveland Opera, T.O.T. (a branch of the Houston Opera) and the Albuquerque Light Opera Company.

The Hallmark Hall of Fame presented a national television version starring Bert Lahr, Ricardo Montalban, Stanley Holloway, John Davidson and Susan Watson.

Recordings

The following artists are among those who have recorded such classic songs from *The Fantasticks* as "Try To Remember," "Soon It's Gonna Rain," and "I Can See It."

Ed Ames

Burt Bacharach

Harry Belafonte

Tony Bennett

The Brothers Four

Carol Burnett

Charlie Byrd

Perry Como

Ray Conniff

Bobby Darin

John Davidson

Blossom Dearie

Placido Domingo

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra

Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops

The Four Tops

Robert Goulet

Merv Griffin

Don Ho and The Allis

Kingston Trio

Gladys Knight and The Pips

Andre Kostellanetz

Patti Labelle and The Bluebells

The Lettermen

Liberace

Barbara Mandrell

Mantovani

Mabel Mercer

Liza Minnelli

Nana Mouskouri

Jim Nabors

Rick Nelson

Peter Nero

Anita O'Day

Roy Orbison

George Shearing

Barbara Streisand

The Temptations

Dionne Warwick

Andy Williams

Roger Williams

CAST ALBUMS

The Fantasticks

Original Cast Recording Featuring Jerry Orbach

(Remastered on cd)

Decca Broadway 314 543 885-2

The Fantasticks

The Japan Tour

English speaking company in Japan featuring Tom Jones

as the Old Actor and Harvey Schmidt at the piano

DRG Records 19005

The Fantasticks

The New Off Broadway Recording (2006)

Featuring 27 Musical Numbers plus Bonus Track

Ghostlight Records 8-4415

The Show Goes On

Original Cast Album featuring Tom Jones & Harvey Schmidt

Songs from their shows plus early opening number which was

replaced by "Try To Remember"

DRG Records 19008

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She has a string of musical lyricist-librettist credits: *On the Swing Shift* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Heidi* (Theatreworks USA) and *Follow the Sun* (Hudson Guild), among others. She just completed work on *Love Comics*, a musical interpretation of the romance comics of the 1950's and '60's, with David Evans. Ms. Schlesinger also is working on *O'Henry's New York*, as well as writing lyrics for a new musical based on Frank Baum's *Queen Zixi of Ix*.

She is also the author of recent non-fiction works published by Random House/Villard, William Morrow, Avon Books and the Princeton Book Company.

Music Theatre International

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL is one of the world's major dramatic licensing agencies, specializing in Broadway, Off-Broadway and West End musicals. Since its founding in 1952, MTI has been responsible for supplying scripts and musical materials to theatres worldwide and for protecting the rights and legacy of the authors whom it represents. It has been a driving force in cultivating new work and in extending the production life of some of the classics: *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *Les Misérables*, *Annie*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Damn Yankees*, *The Music Man*, *Evita*, and the complete musical theatre works of composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim, among others. Apart from the major Broadway and Off-Broadway shows, MTI is proud to represent youth shows, revues and musicals which began life in regional theatre and have since become worthy additions to the musical theatre canon. MTI shows have been performed by 30,000 amateur and professional theatrical organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada, and in over 60 countries around the world. Whether it's at a high school in Kansas, by an all-female troupe in Japan or the first production of *West Side Story* ever staged in Estonia, productions of MTI musicals involve over 10 million people each year.

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