

Open Stage 2023
 Pasadena Playhouse
 Pasadena Unified School District





Objectives

To prepare students and educators for the themes of the musical *Into the Woods*

To explore and define behavioral expectations for the theater

To discover personal connections to the themes presented in the performance

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Theatre Etiquette

Theatre etiquette is how you behave as an audience member in a theatre while watching a performance.

Click here for

⇒ **[Theatre Etiquette 101](#)**

- ★ explore and define behavioral expectations for attending the theatre
- ★ review the plot and summary of *Into the Woods*.

The Production

Into the Woods

Presented by

Pasadena Playhouse &

Pasadena Unified School District

January 2023



The Pasadena Playhouse is a place where people have gathered for 100 years to experience bold and important theater. We are one of the most prolific theaters in American history with a legacy of profound theatrical impact and courageous new work. As the state theater of California, our mission is to enrich people's lives through theater, community programs and learning.

What will I see at the theatre?

INTO THE WOODS

Music & Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Book by James Lapine

Directed by Fran de Leon



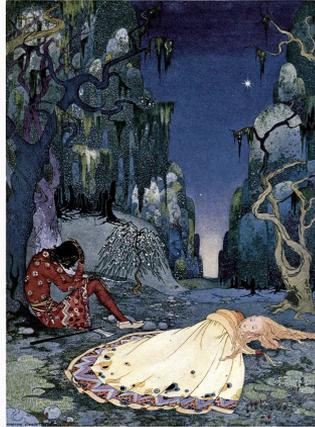
- *Into the Woods* is a musical - a form of theatrical performance that combines songs, spoken dialogue, acting and dance.
- It is a retelling of classic Brothers Grimm fairy tales, featuring all of your favorite characters - Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack (and his beanstalk) and the Witch.
- In a landmark partnership, the Playhouse will collaborate with high school students and teachers of Pasadena Unified School District to present *Into The Woods*, with students working alongside theater professionals in creating their own special production.

Production Design

The **sets** and **costumes** were designed and built by students from Pasadena High School and John Muir High School.

Designers were inspired by the rich history and artists in and around the Pasadena community.

⇒ Look at some of the images that inspired the production design. Then, see how these elements are reimagined and brought to life on stage!



Old French Fairy Tales by artist and author Virginia Frances Sterrett, who lived and worked in Altadena



Colors of the Arroyo (Colorado Street Bridge) and *Pasadena City Hall* by native Southern California artist Karen Winters



Not born under a rhyming planet by Los Angeles-born artist Lezley Saar.



Passengers on the Mount Lowe Railway (Echo Mountain) 1920

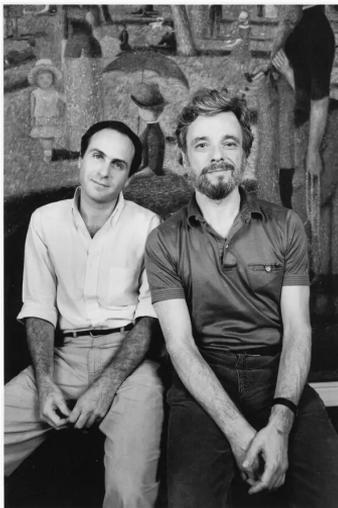
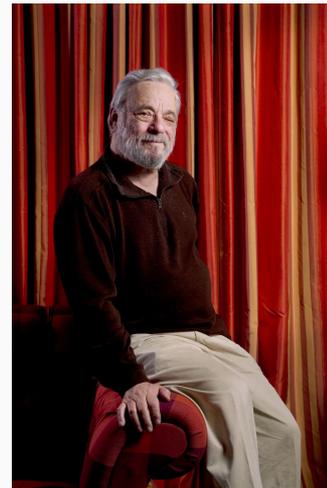
About the Show

Into the Woods

Music & Lyrics
by Stephen Sondheim

Book by James Lapine

Stephen Sondheim (1930 – 2021) was an American lyricist and composer, and one of the most important figures in 20th-century musical theatre. He is known for writing shows that tackle unexpected themes of the human experience, and for lyrics and music with unprecedented complexity and sophistication. During his career, Sondheim wrote the music and/or lyrics for 19 full-length musicals, including *Into the Woods*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. He is the recipient of eight Tony Awards, an Academy Award, eight Grammy Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, and a Presidential Medal of Freedom.



James Lapine (b. 1949) is an American stage director, playwright, screenwriter, and librettist. He was a frequent collaborator with Stephen Sondheim and won the Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical three times, including two collaborations with Sondheim – *Into the Woods* and *Passion*. In addition to his work as a writer, Lapine studied photography, graphic design and architecture, and taught design at the Yale School of Drama.

Synopsis

The story follows a Baker and his Wife, who wish to have a child; Cinderella, who wishes to attend the King's Festival; and Jack, who wishes his cow would give milk. When the Baker and his Wife learn that they cannot have a child because of a Witch's curse, the two set off on a journey to break the curse. On their journey through the woods, they encounter other storybook characters who are seeking to fulfill their own wishes.

Into the Woods intertwines the plots of several Brothers Grimm fairy tales, exploring the consequences of each characters' wishes and quests.

Click here to read a plot summary: [Theatre Etiquette 101 - Plot Summary](#)

Click here to access the full synopsis: [Music Theatre International Full Synopsis](#)

The Show Structure

Sondheim and Lapine created *Into the Woods* from a desire to write a “fairy tale quest musical.” Like many traditional musicals, it was written in two acts.

Act 1 of the narrative is lighthearted and funny, with elements of adventure, magic, and danger. At the end of Act 1, the characters achieve their heart’s desire, and presumably live “happily ever after.”

Act 2, however, takes a darker turn, and we see that the characters’ wishes do not turn out exactly the way they had hoped. To make matters worse, a great disaster sends the kingdom into chaos, with everyone fleeing for their lives. This Act imagines a more realistic journey, with characters facing tough decisions and learning the value of communal responsibility.

***Fun Fact:** *Sondheim, in his musical brilliance, composed the score using the same melodies in Act 1 and Act 2, but changes the chord structure in Act 2 to make them sound much darker.*

Connections



Major Themes:

- Good vs. Evil
- Identity
- Relationships
- Communal Responsibility
- Truth vs. Lies
- Dreams and Wishes
- Loss and Uncertainty

Major Thematic Elements:

- Fairy Tales
- Symbolism
- Hero's Journey
- Archetypes





The Characters

Narrator: A gentleman who helps guide the story along.

The Baker: The “hero” of the story (although his actions are not always heroic), the Baker sets out to “fix” the Witch’s curse, which has left his family unable to have children.

The Baker’s Wife: A confident and intelligent women, she longs for a child and will go to any length to have one.

The Witch: Rapunzel’s guardian and a rather complex character. She has magic powers and placed a curse of infertility on the Baker’s family.

Rapunzel: Kept high in a tower by the Witch, she longs to escape and learn her true history.

Cinderella: A poor young girl who lives with her mean step-mother and two step-sisters. She wishes more than anything to go to the King’s Festival.

Jack: An ambitious boy who loves his cow, Milky White, but also longs for a better life. He sells the cow for magic beans after his Mother tells him they need food and money.

Jack’s Mother: A singer mother, she is terribly worried about money and is angry with Jack for being such a dreamer.

Cinderella’s Prince: Though charming, handsome, and seemingly perfect, Cinderella’s Prince thinks his royal birth entitles him to take anything, and anyone, he wants.

Rapunzel’s Prince: Attractive and pompous like his brother, Cinderella’s Prince, he seeks Rapunzel after hearing her singing in her tower.

Cinderella’s Mother: Though no longer living, Cinderella’s Mother’s spirit guards and aids her, offering comfort and useful advice.

Major Characters



Little Red Ridinghood: A spoiled and fearless girl, she must journey from youth and innocence into adulthood through an adventurous and scary path.

The Wolf: A lustful, hungry creature who lurks in the woods and tries to eat Little Red Ridinghood.

Granny: Little Red Ridinghood's grandmother who lives in the woods.

Cinderella's Stepmother: Greedy, selfish, and mean-spirited, she only wants what is best for herself and her two daughters.



Florinda and Lucinda: Cinderella's cruel stepsisters.

Mysterious Man: A wanderer in the woods, he is full of riddles and a secret (revealed to be the Baker's father).

The Prince's Steward: A self-important and surly servant to the royal family, he accompanies Cinderella's Prince on his journey.

Giant: A loud, angry, and very big creature, she seeks vengeance on the murder of her husband.

Snow White and Sleeping Beauty: Other princesses in the forest who catch the attention of Cinderella's and Rapunzel's princes.

Pre-Show Activities

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Describe the main plot and characters in *Into the Woods*
- Understand the major themes in the musical
- Define expectations for attending a performance at the theatre

Activity 1: Once Upon a Time

*Read and review four classic fairy tales that are woven together in *Into the Woods*, discover important elements of a fairy tale, and explore the characters.*

Activity 2: Into the Woods

Discuss the setting and symbolism of “the woods” in a fairy tale, and explore elements of a character’s journey .

Activity 3: Good vs. Evil

Discuss definitions of “good” and “evil”, and explore these characteristics within a fairy tale and in real life.

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

Lead students in a pre-show discussion about what they will experience at the theatre.

Activity 1: Once Upon a Time

As a class, list some of your favorite stories, and brainstorm elements that make those stories exciting or interesting.

- *Who are the characters in the story? What traits do they have?*
- *Where is the story set? How do you know?*
- *What is the conflict? What do you think will happen?*
- *How is the conflict resolved?*
- *What can we learn from this story?*

Discuss some of the defining elements of a fairy tale:

- *It has a simple story with a beginning, middle, and end.*
- *Animals often play an important role (sometimes appearing as a main character).*
- *The main character has a problem to solve.*
- *Characters learn a lesson (the moral of the story).*
- *The story usually has a happy ending.*

Read and review 4 fairy tales that are woven together to tell the story of *Into the Woods*, and investigate important elements of the stories.

- *Who are the characters?*
- *What happens in the story? What is the plot? The problem and the solution?*
- *What is the moral of the story?*

Fairy Tale Story Map

Who are the major characters? How would you describe each character?

Character 1	Character 2	Character 1
Character Traits: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	Character Traits: 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____	Character Traits: 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____
Describe the story plot points: BEGINNING _____ _____ _____		Setting _____
MIDDLE _____ _____ _____		Conflict _____
END _____ _____ _____		Solution _____
Moral of the Story: _____		

Click below to read each fairy tale:

[Cinderella](#)
[Rapunzel](#)
[Little Red Riding Hood](#)
[Jack and the Beanstalk](#)

Activity 2: Into the Woods

Woods are often a setting in fairy tales. Discuss why you think that might be?

- What elements do you find in the woods (types of plants, animals, other environmental details)?
- What kinds of obstacles might you encounter in the woods?
- Woods are often a metaphor for the unknown or growth. In a story, what else might the woods symbolize? (e.g., danger, privacy, secrecy,

In *Into the Woods*, the characters each go on a journey through the woods in search of something they desire. Choose a character from one of your favorite stories, or think about yourself, and imagine a journey through the woods:

- Who is the character?
- Where are they going? Why?
- What are they searching for? What do they hope to find or accomplish?
- Who will they encounter?
- What challenges might they face?

Document this journey through words or pictures. Guide students in documenting their journey in unique and different ways. For example:

- Write a journal entry or narrative poem
- Draw a series of pictures
- Create a short video

"Though it's fearful, though it's deep, though it's dark, and though you may lose the path - to get your wish you go... into the woods, and through the fear..."

- End of Act 1

"Though it's fearful, though it's deep, though it's dark, and though you may lose the path... you can't just act, you have to think. Into the woods, but not too fast Or what you wish you lose at last. Into the woods, but mind the past.

- End of Act 2

Activity 3: Good vs. Evil

"You're so nice. You're not good, you're not bad, You're just nice. I'm not good, I'm not nice, I'm just right. I'm the witch.

-The Witch

"Take extra care with strangers, even flowers have their dangers, And though scary is exciting, Nice is different than good."

-Little Red Ridinghood

In traditional fairy tales, there is usually an evil character and a hero. Think back to the fairy tales you read in Activity 1, and discuss the qualities and actions of characters that make them "good" or "evil":

- *Who is the hero? How do you know?*
- *Who is the evil character? How do you know?*

In *Into the Woods*, Sondheim and Lapine create characters that are more complex than in traditional fairy tales. Like in real life, the lines between good and evil are blurred.

- Consider the character of the Witch, a traditionally evil character. She is given a story of her own, with a mother who was not very nice to her and a "daughter" who she loves very much. She makes mistakes and is punished for those mistakes but is much closer to a human being with her ability to love and to learn.
- Think about characters from other stories you know or people in real life. Each character or person has the capacity to act "good" and "bad." Sometimes someone is trying so hard to get what they want, they don't realize that they are hurting someone else. They don't even recognize the consequences of their actions.
 - *What actions seems bad or selfish? What actions seems good or selfless?*
 - *Does doing a bad thing make you a bad person?*
 - *What is your definition of a good person?*
 - *Can you think of a time in your life when you did something that hurt someone else? Were your actions intentionally? How did you feel? What did you do afterwards?*

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

Lead students in a discussion about what they will experience at the theatre:

- What do you think you will see and hear?
- What are you excited about?
- What are you curious about?
- How would you synthesize the plot into 3 sentences?
- Based on what you know, what character do you most identify with and why?

Invite students to complete these writing prompts:

- *I can't wait to see...*
- *I wonder if...*
- *I think I will...*
- *I hope...*



Post-Show Activities

Objective

Students will:

- Compare characters and story themes from the original fairy tales with *Into the Woods*
- Define their own wishes and explore the journey to achieving those dreams
- Discover the power of community
- Reflect on their experiences at the theatre

Post-Show Discussion Questions

Reflect on what you saw and experienced at the performance.

Activity 4: Ever After

*Discuss what happens after “happily ever after.” Compare and contrast the original fairy tales with stories and characters of *Into the Woods*, and create your own fairy tale version.*

Activity 5: I Wish

Reflect on the wishes that each character makes, and explore the opportunities and consequences that result in pursuing a wish.

Activity 6: No One Is Alone

*Explore the importance of community and reflect on the relevance of community responsibility within *Into the Woods*, across history, and in our lives today.*

Post-Show Discussion Questions

Lead students in a discussion about what they experienced at the performance:

- What did you see? What did you hear?
- What were your favorite moments of the performance?
- What surprised you?
- How did you feel while watching the performance or after attending the theatre?
- What questions do you still have (about the show, the performers, or the production)?

Activity 4: *Every After*

Discuss the similarities and differences you noticed between the original fairy tales and *Into the Woods*.

- *Are there some similarities between any of the characters?*
- *What themes are present in both stories?*
- *What new lessons can be learned from the reimagined story?*

Pick a character from the play (Cinderella, Jack, Little Red Ridinghood, etc.) and compare their journey in *Into the Woods* to what happens in the original fairy tale.

- *What characteristics are the same? Different?*
- *What does the character wish for? Do they find a “happily ever after ending”?*
- *Which characters get an ending different from the one they imagined? Which ‘ending’ do you think they deserved?*

Using what you’ve learned about important story elements, create a fairy tale of your own or create a new version of an existing story.

- *Who are the characters?*
- *What is the setting, plot, problem, solution, and moral of the story?*
- *If you are adapting an existing story, what will be the same from the original tale?*
- *What will you change?*
- *Consider telling the story from a different perspective (e.g., not from the hero, but from the “bad guy”).*
- *Share your new story through writing a creative narrative, writing a script, or by staging your own musical!*

Activity 5: I Wish

Reflect on the wishes and outcomes of each of the characters in *Into the Woods*:

- Trace a character's journey to make their wish come true.
- Did they accomplish their goal? Why or why not?
- How did the outcome of their wish affect someone else?
- If they had made different choices or decided not to pursue their wish, how would the story have changed?
- George Bernard Shaw observed there are two tragedies in life: "One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it." Discuss this quotation in terms of the structure of *Into The Woods*.

As a class or in small groups, discuss:

- If you could wish for five things, what would they be?
- Do the majority of these wishes serve to benefit you, the world around you, or both?
- Have you ever had a wish turn out in the opposite way you planned (an ironic wish)?
- What did you learn from this situation?

Choose one wish and write a short narrative about your journey with that wish:

- What must happen in order for that wish to come true?
- What would you be willing to do to make it come true?
- Where would you "draw the line?" What would you not be willing to do to make your wish come true?

"I wish I could go to the festival."
- Cinderella

"I wish we had a child."
- Baker

"I wish to help."
- Baker's Wife

"I wish my cow would give us milk."
- Jack

"I wish the walls were full of gold."
- Jack's mother

"I wish to see the world."
- Rapunzel

Activity 6: No One Is Alone

One major theme in *Into the Woods* is the necessity of **community** – perhaps expressing the **“impossibility of being alone once one finds community.** This reimagined narrative also provides an opportunity to find and create thematic relevance, regardless of time or place – “a tale as old as time” that speak truth to the human experience.

Hundreds of years ago when the original fairy tales were written, in 1986 when *Into the Woods* premiered, and today – the world has faced disease, loss, isolation, poverty, violence, and mistrust. Like the characters in our play – those who experience suffering or a turbulent reality may find comfort in a non-traditional community.

“It takes two. I thought one was enough. It’s not true. It takes two of us. You came through when the journey was rough. It took you. It took two of us.”

–Baker

*“Mother cannot guide you
Now you’re on your own.
Only me beside you
Still, you’re not alone
No one is alone, truly
No one is alone..”*

–Cinderella

“Among other things, the show is also about community responsibility...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.” – Stephen Sondheim

DISCUSS:

- What is the meaning of the song, “No One is Alone”?
- In what moments of the play did the characters choose to create community and care for each other? Did they make those choices out of selfishness or selflessness?
- Can you think of instances when disasters have caused members of communities to respond selfishly? Can you think of examples when the opposite has been the case?

WRITE:

- Write an essay about an individual responsibility for a major community issue (e.g., homelessness, hunger, AIDS, pollution). What is your responsibility? How can you care for others in your community? How can we provide a place of community for those who may feel lost or unempowered?

Additional Resources

[Theatre Etiquette 101](#)

[Grimm's Fairy Tales](#)

Essay: "[Why 'Into the Woods' Matters](#)" by Michael Schulman,
The New Yorker, 2014

Essay: "[Into the Woods: An Examination of Fairy Tale Forests](#)"
by Shea Murphy, University of Notre Dame

Video: [Stephen Sondheim: The Last Word](#) by The New York
Times, an interview with Sondheim on his life, career, and
accomplishments.

Website Resource: [Academy of Achievement: Stephen
Sondheim](#) - an in-depth biography, a collection of essays,
podcasts, photos, and videos.

Learning Standards

California Visual and Performing Arts Standards
for Theatre & National Core Arts

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CREATING

Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work

Found in activities:

Standard 1	Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work: <i>Rely on intuition, curiosity, and critical inquiry</i>	2, 4, 6
Standard 2	Organize and develop artistic ideas and work: <i>Discover different ways of communicating meaning</i>	2, 4, 6
Standard 3	Refine and complete artistic work: <i>Theatre artists refine their work and practice through rehearsal</i>	4

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PERFORMING, PRESENTING, PRODUCING

Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation

Standard 4	Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation: <i>Theatre artists make choices to effectively convey meaning</i>	2, 4, 6
Standard 5	Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation: <i>Theatre artists develop personal processes and skills for performance</i>	4
Standard 6	Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work: <i>Theatre artists share and present stories, ideas, and envisioned worlds to explore the human experience</i>	2, 4, 6

Learning Standards *(continued)*

California Visual and Performing Arts Standards
for Theatre & National Core Arts



RESPONDING

Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning

Found in activities:

Standard 7	Perceive and analyze artistic work <i>Theatre artists reflect to understand the impact of theatrical processes and experiences</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Standard 8	Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work <i>Theatre artists' interpretations of a drama/theatre work are influenced by personal experiences and aesthetics</i>	, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Standard 9	Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work <i>Theatre artists apply criteria to investigate, explore, and assess drama and theatre works</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6



CONNECTING

Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context

Standard 10	Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art: <i>Theatre artists allow awareness of interrelationships between self and others to influence and inform their work</i>	2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Standard 11	Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding: <i>Theatre artists understand and can communicate their creative process as they analyze the way the world may be understood</i>	1, 2, 3, 4

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