



GOODSPEED MUSICALS
STUDENT GUIDE

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THE *Drowsy* CHAPERONE *a musical within a comedy*

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THE GOODSPEED

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PRODUCTION HISTORY

This project began when Don McKellar, Lisa Lambert, and Greg Morrison wanted to create a parody of old fashioned musicals for Bob Martin and Janet Van de Graaf's stag party. The three of them had known Bob since high school and were all fond of musicals from that era. They staged the earliest version of *The Drowsy Chaperone* at the Rivoli Night Club in Toronto in 1999, charging guests admission fees to help pay for the cost of Martin and Van de Graaf's wedding. Upon watching the work of his friends, Bob Martin was so excited about the show that he joined the creative team as a librettist in addition to playing the newly-created role of Man in Chair.

The four of them soon reworked the project for submission to the 1999 Toronto Fringe Festival, where it caught the eye of David Mirvish, a Toronto-based commercial theatre producer. Mirvish financed an expanded production of *The Drowsy Chaperone* to open at Toronto's Theatre Passe Murail. Continued success led Mirvish to finance further development, resulting in a full-scale production at Toronto's Winter Garden Theatre.

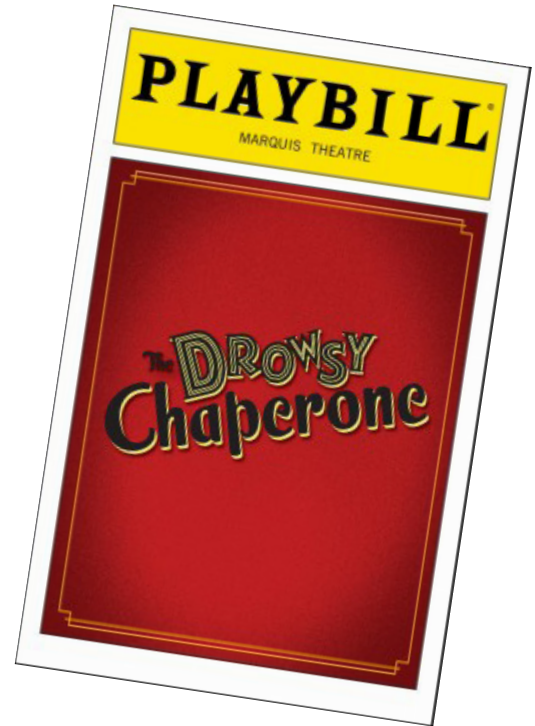
It was during this run that Linda Intaschi, an associate producer of Mirvish productions, invited Roy Miller, a prominent New York producer, to the show. Miller was impressed with what he saw and optioned the rights. Along with the help of Canadian actor and fundraiser Paul Mack, Miller produced a reading for the National Alliance for Musical Theatre on October 5, 2005. Broadway producer Kevin McCollum attended the reading and was so interested that he and Miller, along with several others, committed to fully producing the show. The show soon had an out-of-town engagement at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles in 2005.

The Drowsy Chaperone opened on Broadway on May 1, 2006 with Sutton Foster as Janet Van de Graaf, Danny Burstein as Adolpho, Georgia Engel as Mrs. Tottendale and Beth Leavel as The Drowsy Chaperone. It ran for 674 performances and won five Tony Awards (Best Musical, Best Original Score, Best Featured Actress, Best Scenic Design, and Best Costume Design) as well as seven Drama Desk Awards.

After the close of the Broadway production, the show began its run in London's West End with Bob Martin reprising his role of Man in Chair. However, the show was met with less success than the Broadway production and closed after fewer than 100 performances. The show has since seen productions in Japan, Australia, Brazil, and Finland.

Listen to the American Theatre Wing interview with Bob Martin as he chronicles the journey of *The Drowsy Chaperone* from sophisticated bachelor party entertainment to success on the Toronto fringe to full-scale Broadway musical:

<https://soundcloud.com/american-theatre-wing/episode104>



Bob Martin as Man in Chair and Beth Leavel as The Drowsy Chaperone in the original Broadway production.



Sutton Foster as Janet Van de Graaf in the original Broadway production.

CHARACTERS

A MAN IN CHAIR: A middle-aged Broadway fan, full of nostalgia for theater as it was. He's the owner of the record of *The Drowsy Chaperone*, and plays it for us as he tells us all about it.

JANET VAN DE GRAAFF: The beautiful star of the *Feldzieg's Follies*, but ready to leave her career to marry Robert Martin.

ROBERT MARTIN: A handsome oil tycoon, and Janet's fiancé.

GEORGE: Robert's harried Best Man, tasked with planning the wedding.

MR. FELDZIEG: The producer of the *Follies* in which Janet stars. He's desperate to stop the wedding and ensure that his leading lady Janet doesn't leave the show.

KITTY: A daffy chorus girl desperate to be the star of the *Follies*, and Mr. Feldzieg's girlfriend.

THE CHAPERONE: Janet's jaded chaperone, perpetually "drowsy" from the liquor she has a private stash of.

ALDOLPHO: A Latin lothario, with great powers of seduction and minimal powers of thought.

MRS. TOTTENDALE: The rich, slightly dotty hostess for the wedding.

UNDERLING: Mrs. Tottendale's loyal servant, happy (if a little frustrated) to keep her on track.

THE GANGSTERS: Two pun-loving gangsters in disguise as pastry chefs.

TRIX THE AVIATRIX: A pilot ready to fly in at the last minute.

THE SUPERINTENDENT: The handyman of Man in Chair's building.

SYNOPSIS

SHORT TAKE: Read this for a spoiler-free synopsis

A man sitting in a chair starts talking to the audience about how he's feeling a little blue. To cheer himself up he's going to play a record of one of his favorite shows, a 1929 comedy called *The Drowsy Chaperone*. It magically comes to life in his apartment, as the Man in Chair occasionally interrupts with commentary, both about the history of the show and about his own life.

The Drowsy Chaperone begins in the home of dotty hostess Mrs. Tottendale, which is being prepared for a wedding. Glamorous star Janet Van de Graaff is set to wed Robert Martin, a handsome oil tycoon. The characters assemble—Janet's "drowsy" (aka drunken) Chaperone, George the Best Man, Trix the Aviatrix, two gangsters dressed as pastry chefs, Latin Lothario Aldolpho, chorus girl Kitty and producer Feldzieg, who's desperate to stop the wedding since it will mean Janet leaves his show.

George helps Robert get rid of his cold feet and tells him to go skating in the garden, blindfolded (so he doesn't risk seeing the bride before the wedding). Meanwhile, Janet meets the press, and assures them (and Feldzieg) that she is happy

to leave behind the attention of stardom. Privately, Janet worries that Robert doesn't really love her, and the Chaperone encourages her to go find him and ask. Just as she leaves, Aldolpho arrives and seduces the very willing Chaperone, thinking she's the bride (another scheme of Feldzieg's to try and stop the wedding).

In the garden, Janet pretends to be a French woman to test Robert, who kisses her. While Feldzieg distracts the gangsters (there to make sure Feldzieg's show goes on) with a big number, Janet arrives and tearfully announces the wedding is off.

After a brief setback in which Man in Chair plays a record from another show, act two begins. Janet laments her lost love with a surreal dream ballet. Robert begs her to forgive him, which she does, and three weddings are added to the day's activity—Mrs. Tottendale and her loyal servant Underling, Aldolpho and the Chaperone, and Mr. Feldzieg and his new star, Kitty. They are married by Trix the Aviatrix in a big finale, which is ruined when the power abruptly goes out in Man in Chair's apartment. He is frustrated and once again blue, since he was relying on the show to transport him to a happier mood. Will he be able to find his own happy ending?

SYNOPSIS

SPOILER ALERT! Read the short take for no spoilers.

In a dark theater, a man sitting in a chair onstage starts talking to us. Well, complaining at us, more specifically, about the theater and how great it used to be. He tells us that he's feeling a little blue, so he's going to play for us a record of one of his favorite shows—a comedy from 1928 called *The Drowsy Chaperone*. As the overture begins on the record, the orchestra swells in our theater, and *The Drowsy Chaperone* begins coming to life in Man in Chair's apartment, while the Man in Chair guides us through it with occasional interruptions.

We're at the grand home of dotty Mrs. Tottendale. In a song with her faithful servant Underling, she is reminded (repeatedly) of why preparations are underway in the house—there will be a wedding. Glamorous star Janet Van de Graaff is set to give up her career to marry the handsome oil tycoon Robert Martin, and guests are beginning to arrive. Among them are Janet's "drowsy" (a.k.a. tipsy) Chaperone, the Latin lothario Aldolpho, Trix the Aviatrix, producer Feldzieg and his chorine girlfriend Kitty, best man George, tasked with setting up the entire wedding, and two "pastry chefs" who look suspiciously like gangsters. The Man in Chair gives us background on the actors playing all these parts as the opening number sets up their characters.

Robert and George sing a song about having cold feet on the wedding day, and George joins in for a dance. George tells Robert that dancing is too dangerous, and that he should go for a skate instead—but in a blindfold, so he doesn't risk seeing his bride before the wedding.

Janet is lounging by the pool fielding questions by reporters. Feldzieg, who will lose his valuable leading lady if she gets married and leaves show business, asks Janet if she's really willing to leave behind stardom. She sings a song assuring him that she no longer craves the spotlight—but does so while performing every attention-getting trick in the book. Feldzieg tries another angle: he convinces the lothario Aldolpho to seduce Janet. Meanwhile, Mrs. Tottendale tells Underling that since it's Prohibition, they will need to serve vodka under the code name "ice water." She immediately forgets, and comedy ensues.

Janet is nervous that Robert doesn't love her enough, and the Chaperone encourages her (with a rousing anthem) to go ask him. While she's gone Aldolpho arrives, and mistakes the Chaperone

for the bride. He seduces her with a song announcing his seductive powers. Janet finds Robert in the garden, and since he's blindfolded she pretends to be a French girl, Mimi, to test his love. Robert finds himself drawn to "Mimi," and they kiss.

The pastry chefs reveal themselves to Feldzieg as the gangsters they are and tell him that he's in trouble if Janet leaves the show—their boss has money invested. Feldzieg distracts them by starting a big number, and one by one the characters join in after saying either the wedding is off or that it's back on. It's a delightful mayhem, and then intermission both for Man in Chair and us.

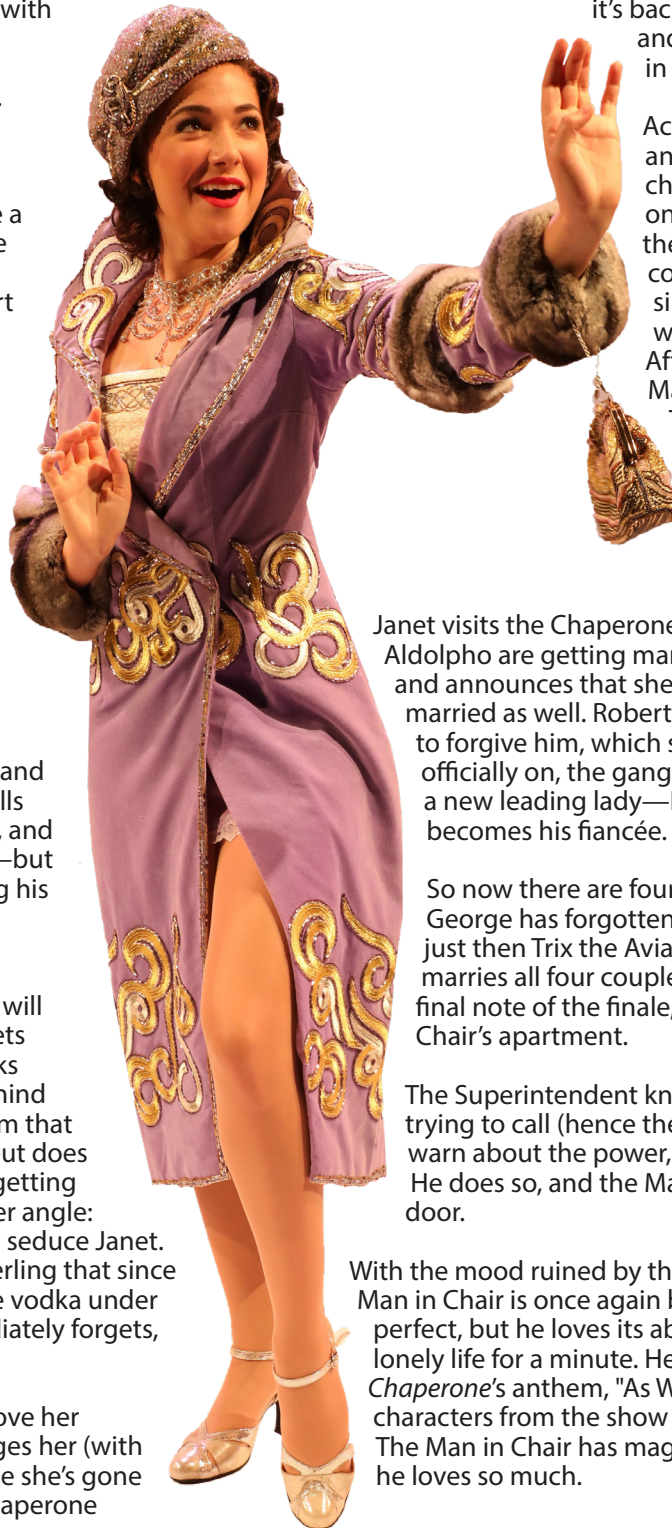
Act two begins with a number with an entirely different setting and characters. Man in Chair rushes on and complains that that's the wrong show. He puts on the correct record, and we see Janet sing a lament for her lost love, which turns into a Dream Ballet. After a brief interruption from Man in Chair's ringing phone, Mrs. Tottendale and Underling sing a lovely (and highly optimistic) tune about love. Man in Chair interjects with some less optimistic opinions about the same subject.

Janet visits the Chaperone, who reveals that she and Aldolpho are getting married. Mrs. Tottendale arrives and announces that she and Underling will be getting married as well. Robert rushes on and begs Janet to forgive him, which she does. With the wedding officially on, the gangsters tell Feldzieg he found a new leading lady—Kitty, who shortly thereafter becomes his fiancée.

So now there are four weddings instead of one, but George has forgotten to secure a minister. Luckily, just then Trix the Aviatrix flies down in her plane, and marries all four couples in flight. But just before the final note of the finale, the power goes out in Man in Chair's apartment.

The Superintendent knocks on the door—he's been trying to call (hence the ringing phone interruptions) to warn about the power, but he can easily put it back on. He does so, and the Man in Chair rushes him out the door.

With the mood ruined by the Superintendent's interruption, Man in Chair is once again blue. He knows the show isn't perfect, but he loves its ability to take you out of your lonely life for a minute. He begins singing *The Drowsy Chaperone's* anthem, "As We Stumble Along," and the characters from the show begin to sing along with him. The Man in Chair has magically become part of the show he loves so much.



MEET THE WRITERS



LISA LAMBERT (*Music and Lyrics*): Lisa Lambert technically originated the role of the Drowsy Chaperone, playing the titular character during its nightclub debut. In 2006, she won the Tony Award for Best Original Score for her work on *The Drowsy Chaperone*. In creating the score, Lambert cited a love of 1920s musicals—and even the movies of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers—as inspiration. Other stage credits include: *Big Rosemary* (book by Blake Edwards); *Cole Escola: First Gay President* (Duplex Cabaret); *Stars of David* (DR2 Theater); *The Ant and the Elephant* (Work Light Productions); *Honest Ed: The Bargain Musical* (Poor Alex Theater), as well as works in The Fringe of Toronto Festival and at Second City. Her work also extends to film and television, including *Slings & Arrows*, *Sensitive Skin*, *Michael Tuesdays and Thursdays*, *Highway 61*, *Blue*, *The Boy Who Smells Like Fish* (Rhombus Media), *Skippy's Rangers: The Show They Never Gave*, *The Joe Blow Show* (Comedy Network), *Portrait of a Serial Monogamist* (directed by John Mitchell), *Pete's Christmas* (Nelvana Ltd.), *Battery's Down*, and *Skinnamarink TV*. Upcoming projects include *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* with music by Greg Morrison and book by Robert Harling as well as a film adaptation of *The Drowsy Chaperone*.



GREG MORRISON (*Music and Lyrics*): Greg Morrison won Drama Desk Awards for both Outstanding Music and Outstanding Lyrics for his work on *The Drowsy Chaperone*. His Canadian credits include: Composer/musical director for *Hello...Hello* (Tarragon Theatre); *Pochsy's Lips*; *Oh, Baby*; *Citizen Pochsy*; and *Pochsy Unplugged* (Toronto Fringe, Canadian/U.S. tours); *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Toronto Fringe, Theatre Passe Muraille, Mirvish Production, Winter Garden Theatre, Toronto); *Mump and Smoot in Something Else* (Canadian Stage, Yale Repertory Theatre); *Mump and Smoot in Flux* (Canadian Stage); *An Awkward Evening With Martin & Johnson* (Tim Sims Playhouse); *The Age of Dorian* (Artword Theatre). TV songwriter credits: *Slings & Arrows* (Rhombus Media for Showcase/Sundance), *Getting Along Famously* (CBC), *The Joe Blow Show* (Comedy Network). Other credits: musical director for the Second City National Touring Company, Alumni Café (Tim Sims Playhouse), *The Chumps and the Muchrakers* (CBC Radio).



BOB MARTIN (*Book*): Prior to his work on *The Drowsy Chaperone*, Martin was a creative director for The Second City Theater Toronto, where he co-wrote and performed in four revues, directing three of the four. After continued success performing sketch comedy with them, Martin went on to co-create the Canadian cult TV show *Slings & Arrows*. He originated the role of Man in Chair for the Broadway production of *The Drowsy Chaperone* in 2006 and reprised the role for the show's run in the West End in 2007. His recent theatrical credits include writing the book for the musical adaptation of the 1973 film *The Sting*, which opened at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey in April. Recent TV projects include: *Michael: Tuesdays and Thursdays I & II* (CBC), *Sensitive Skin I & II* (HBO), and *Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas* (NBC). Recent theatre projects include *Elf* (Broadway) and *Minsky's* (Ahmanson LA).



DON MCKELLAR (*Book*): Before collaborating on *The Drowsy Chaperone*, Don McKellar had a substantial career as a filmmaker, including acting opposite Samuel L. Jackson in the Oscar-winning *The Red Violin* (1998). His screenwriting credits include the film adaptation of *Blindness*, a novel by Nobel Prize winner Jose Saramago as well as co-writing the critically-acclaimed *Thirty-two Short Films About Glenn Gould*. He made his directorial debut with two short films: *Blue* (starring David Cronenberg) and *Bloody Nose*, and he made his feature directing debut in 1998 on *Last Night*, which won the Prix de la Jeunesse at the Cannes Film Festival. For television, he directed his TV series *Michael: Tuesdays and Thursdays* in 2012; as an actor, he has appeared as Curtis in two seasons of *Twitch City*, voiced the character Jack in five seasons of *Odd Job Jack*, and as theatre director Darren Nicholls in *Slings & Arrows*. McKellar studied English and Theater at the University of Toronto, co-founded Childs Play Theatre, and in 1989 he co-founded the Augusta Company. In 2016, he was made a member of the Order of Canada for his contributions

as an actor, writer, and director.

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM



HUNTER FOSTER (*Director*) most recently directed the world premiere of *A Connecticut Christmas Carol* for Goodspeed Musicals at The Terris Theatre and will return to direct a brand-new production in 2018. He also wrote the librettos for two new musicals, *Summer of '42* and *The Circus in Winter*, which both had their premieres at The Terris Theatre. This fall, he will direct the new off-Broadway musical *The Other Josh Cohen* at the Westside Theatre in NYC. He is an Artistic Associate at the Bucks County Playhouse, where he has directed *42nd Street*, *Clue*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Company*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *The Buddy Holly Story* (2016 & 2017), *National Pastime*, *The Rocky Horror Show* (2013, 2014, 2016, & 2017), *Summer of '42*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, and *It's a Wonderful Life*. He also directed the world premiere of the new musical *One Hit Wonder* for the University of Michigan. Other directing credits include *Our Town* (Theatre Aspen), *The Other Josh Cohen* (Geva Theatre); *Cabaret*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Foreigner*, *Clue* (Cape Playhouse); *Grease* (North Carolina Theatre); *Spamalot* (Casa Mañana); and has directed productions of *Million Dollar Quartet* for the Paper Mill Playhouse, Cincinnati Playhouse, Geva Theatre, Ogunquit Playhouse, St. Louis Rep, and at many other theatres around the country. Other book writing credits include *Jasper in Deadland*, *Clyde and Bonnie: A Folktale*, *Sleepy Hollow*, and *The Big Boom*.



CHRIS BAILEY (*Choreographer*) Previous Goodspeed: *Chasing Rainbows*. *Gettin' the Band Back Together* (Broadway), *Jerry Springer the Opera* (New Group, 2018 Chita Rivera Award nomination), *The New Yorkers* and *1776* (New York City Center Encores!), *The Entertainer* with Kenneth Branagh (West End), *Assassins* (Menier Chocolate Factory), *Because of Winn Dixie* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival), 2013 Tony Awards opening number "Bigger" (CBS). At The Muny: *Newsies* (St. Louis Theatre Circle Award), *The Music Man*, *Into the Woods*, *My Fair Lady*, *Tarzan*, *West Side Story*, and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*.



MICHAEL O'FLAHERTY (*Music Director*) is in his 27th season as Goodspeed's Resident Music Director. Broadway: *By Jeeves*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Also: Paper Mill Playhouse, North Shore Music Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, Ford's Theatre, The Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Kennedy Center, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, and the Smithsonian Institution. Musical Supervisor and Cabaret Director of the Williamstown Theatre Festival for 11 years. His original musical *A Connecticut Christmas Carol*, for which he wrote music and lyrics, will be presented at Goodspeed's Terris Theatre in Chester again this fall.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do the director, choreographer, and music director work together to create a musical production? How do people with different skill sets collaborate?

DIRECTOR'S VISION

BY HUNTER FOSTER

When I first read *The Drowsy Chaperone*, my initial impression was that it was a cute show that was very successful at lampooning a certain style of musical comedy. It wasn't until I saw the Broadway production that I realized just how special this little show was. A lot was owed to the incredible performance of Bob Martin. Not only was he hilarious, but, more importantly, by the end of the show, he broke your heart.

Whenever I approach a show, regardless of whether it's a comedy or drama, I look for its core, its heart. I never want a show to just be "funny;" I want the audience to walk away having an emotional experience. Yes, there are a lot of wacky characters, funny dialogue, and hilarious physical comedy in *The Drowsy Chaperone*. But in order for the show to have the complete emotional impact, for it to truly resonate with an audience, we must follow the journey of "Man in Chair."

This sad and lonely character spends most of his time immersed in musical comedy records—especially his favorite, Gable and Stein's *The Drowsy Chaperone*. He is the heart of this show. If we don't care about him, then the show is just a bunch of funny sketches. He is our core, our foundation, and we see *The Drowsy Chaperone* through his eyes.

Before BroadwayWorld.com and YouTube, if you were a fan



Director Hunter Foster at the first rehearsal for *The Drowsy Chaperone*. ©Diane Sobolewski.

of a certain Broadway show and you weren't able to witness the show live, all you had to go on were photos on the cast album. I remember being a kid and buying the record of the musical *Chess*. I never got to see the show, but I stared at the pictures on album and make up my own staging (maybe this was the beginnings of my career as a director!). When I finally saw the show, I was disappointed because it didn't live up to my imagination.

Maybe that's why the show is so special to "Man in Chair": his imagination has created a production that's far better than the original. And that's how the creative team will approach the show. Imagination allows Choreographer Chris Bailey and me to create not how the show was originally staged, but how "Man in Chair" envisions it. This will allow the audience to go on the journey with the character and discover the world as he sees it. Hopefully, by the

end of this hilarious romp, they will also empathize with his despair and loneliness—maybe even seeing a little bit of themselves in him.

I am extremely excited to bring *The Drowsy Chaperone* to the stage at The Goodspeed. I can't think of a more fitting place to stage a show about "one's love of musicals" than at a venue which has such a rich history of bringing classic musicals to the stage.



DISCUSSION QUESTION

One of the most important jobs a director has is to determine the vision and point of view of a show. After reading Hunter Foster's Director's Vision, what do you expect to see in *The Drowsy Chaperone*?

COSTUME DESIGN

BY GREGG BARNES



Gregg Barnes is Broadway's go-to costume designer for everything from the sequined thigh-high boots of *Kinky Boots* to glamorous headdresses of *Follies* to the high school street of *Mean Girls*. He's designed 16 Broadway shows including *Pretty Woman*, *Mean Girls* (Tony nom.), *Tuck Everlasting* (Tony nom.), *Something Rotten!* (Tony nom.), *Aladdin* (Olivier Nom.), *Kinky Boots* (Tony nom., Olivier Award), *Follies* (Tony Award, Drama Desk Award), *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Elf*, *Legally Blonde* (Tony nom.), *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Tony Award, Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics Award, Olivier nom.), *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Flower Drum Song* (Tony nom.), and *Side Show*. For Goodspeed Barnes designed *Mame*, *Emmet Otter's Jug Band Christmas*, *Band Geeks* and *Radio Girl*.

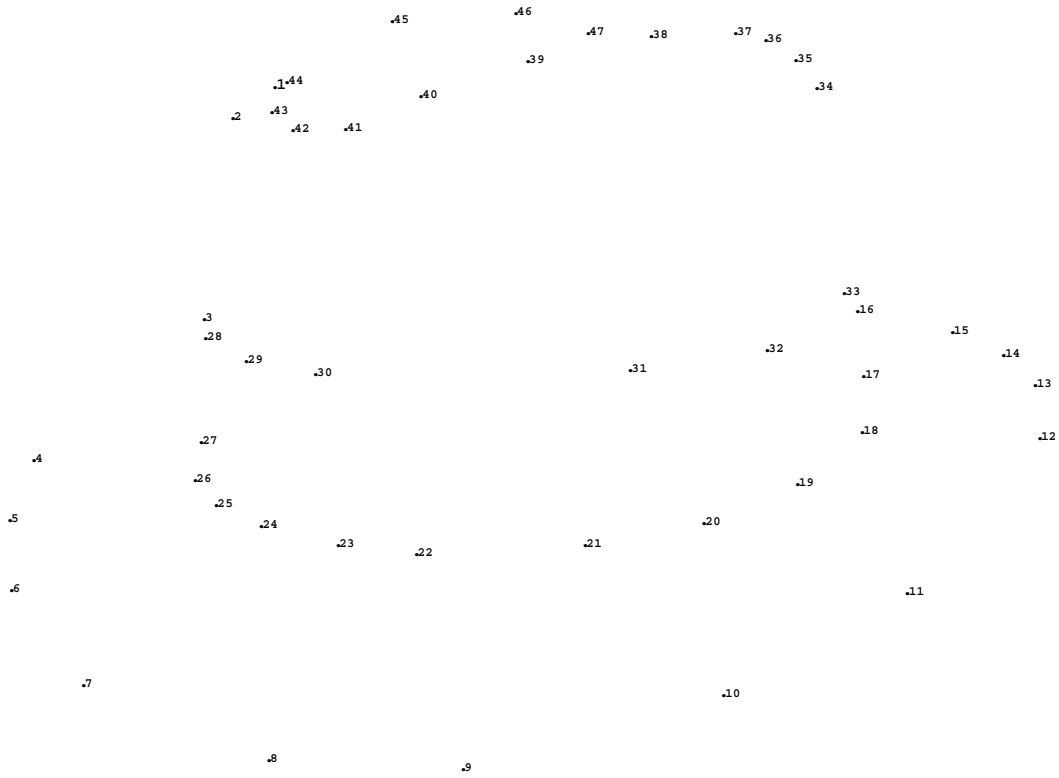
And now, Barnes returns to Goodspeed with his gorgeous Tony-winning designs for *The Drowsy Chaperone*. In an interview, Barnes said this of his work on the original Broadway production: "what's great about being part of a new project is that you become part of the dramaturgy, of the story, in a sense, by the questions you ask. In fact, back to *The Drowsy Chaperone*, I did a sketch for Georgia Engel of her first dress and the song was called "Fancy Dress," but when they saw the sketch . . . and I made the dress be ten years earlier than the '20s, as if it was her favorite dress from another time in her life . . . and they saw the sketch and then they elaborated on the fancy dress so the lyric then evolved because everyone thought it was funny that she was dressed up in this anachronistically fancy dress. So I love that. I love that we get to be part of the bigger picture."



DISCUSSION QUESTION

Most of the characters in *The Drowsy Chaperone* live in the era of the 1920s. How would these costumes change if the show were set in a different decade?

COSTUME CONNECT THE DOTS



THE 1920s MUSICAL

The 1920s in the United States was a decade of great prosperity and innovation. Technology was advancing faster than ever before, and with the advent of radio and film, people across the country could keep up with current events much more regularly. In the world of entertainment, musical comedy was also on the rise. Audiences loved the jazz-inspired music and the common themes and tropes of the time: the clash of high-brow and low-brow culture, cases of mistaken identity, bumbling gangsters, plot twists, showgirls, slapstick comedy, a dose of *deus ex machina*, and a wedding to cap off the night.

In *The Drowsy Chaperone*, a pastiche of those 1920s comedies, we see all the elements of a true Gershwin-era musical. Janet and George supply the love story that holds the piece together, and they even get to dabble with disguise and mistaken identity along the way. The absent-minded dowager, Mrs. Tottendale, and her Underling (known only as "Underling" in the show) provide the contrast of high-brow and low-brow culture when juxtaposed against theater producer Feldzieg and the gangsters—disguised as chefs—who, on orders from their boss, are determined to steer Janet back toward show business and away from married life with George.

Other twenties necessities are also sprinkled throughout the plot, including bootlegged booze under Prohibition, the over-the-top lover Aldolpho, and *deus ex machina* in the form of a literal machine: an airplane (aviation as entertainment was all the rage at the time) piloted by Trix the Aviatrix. With all the twists and turns of early musical comedy, many of them employed this technique borrowed from the Greeks in

which, out of the sky, a character appears to resolve the plot and tie up loose ends.

Beyond capturing the spirit of twenties musical comedy in its characters and plot, *The Drowsy Chaperone* also accesses the sounds of the era through its jazzy score inspired by those of the composers of the time: the Gershwins, Cole Porter, and Irving Berlin, to name a few. In the twenties, musical comedy composers were inspired by and borrowed from the African American musicians who invented jazz in the nightclubs of cities like New York, Chicago, and St. Louis. Though an improvisational art form, composers of musicals and vaudeville acts endeavored to recreate the feeling of this new type of American music in their compositions: rhythmic but freeform, melodic yet unpredictable. The music also inspired new styles of dance like the Charleston that were more individualized than the dances of previous generations.

The decade of the twenties introduced so many enduring elements of our popular culture, not the least of which is musical comedy, and *The Drowsy Chaperone* captures the spirit not only of those early musicals but also of those who love them still.

Just as the audiences of those original musical comedies sought light-hearted, escapist entertainment, so too does the Man in the Chair as he takes you along on the journey of *The Drowsy Chaperone*.



Blakely and Parker Slaybaugh as the Gangsters in Goodspeed's *The Drowsy Chaperone*. ©Diane Sobolewski.

? DISCUSSION QUESTION

Just as all art reflects its contemporary society, many of the characters in *The Drowsy Chaperone* reflect aspects of life in the United States in the 1920s. What are common themes and types of characters we see in modern shows or movies, and how do they reflect our contemporary society?

THE 1920S MUSICAL WORDSEARCH

Name: _____

Z S N U I M V V B Y C U W D W
G G O O Z P E A C F Y Q N E O
E P Z B T X N P U R D B O U E
R S H T K S T I B E E S I S N
O I I W M X E I T P M R T E A
D P S U I V R L D Z O P I X L
M T R T G L T V R Z C X B M P
H Q E E X S A L L A M Q I A R
T I T U M V I R Z J H O H C I
R K S Y U G N D M C I C O H A
W O G J C W M J Z E O G R I M
E B N X Q K E X Y B I Z P N Y
O L A P B K N W K H H A H A D
N L G L G I T G H V U J J R A
R T S I W T T O L P E W Q Z Q

WORD BANK

DEUS EX MACHINA

DISGUISE

GANGSTERS

PROHIBITION

AIRPLANE

COMEDY

JAZZ

CHARLESTON

ENTERTAINMENT

PLOT TWIST

PARODY & PASTICHE

PARODY

A parody is a work that embraces, imitates and makes fun of another author or work. It is used in literary or musical works and aims to ridicule its subject. Though parody is typically done in a negative or critical way, it can also express admiration or be done with a constructive purpose in mind.

The earliest examples of parody in literature can be traced back to ancient Greece, but modern-day parody musicals began in the 1980s when a young “waiter-actor” named Gerard Alessandrini heard a rumor that Richard Burton frequently performed drunk during the run of *Camelot* at New York Stage Theatre. He took the number from *Camelot* called “I Wonder What the King Is Doing Tonight” and created new lyrics for a new song called “I Wonder What the King is Drinking Tonight.” The number became the first in his show called *Forbidden Broadway* which has been parodying different performers, shows and theatrical trends since its first performance in 1982. Other examples of musical parodies include *Avenue Q*, *Spamilton*, and *Disaster!*.

Parody is a special technique that, when done right, creates an enjoyable and humorous experience for theatre-goers and lovers of the subject being parodied. It is important to recognize that the key to writing a successful parody is having a thorough appreciation of the subject being imitated.

PASTICHE

Pastiche and parody are similar in the respect that they both use another work or style as their inspiration. The difference between the two, however, lies in the fact that parody mocks its subjects while pastiche celebrates them. Pastiche imitates the style of a work that came before it and is a sort of tribute.

Pastiche is used in literature as well as musical theatre, and some examples include: *The Second Mrs. Darcy* (which is a pastiche of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*) and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (which is a pastiche of *Hamlet*). Pastiche can also be found in such musicals as *A Gentleman’s Guide to Love & Murder* which is a pastiche of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, *The Will Rogers Follies*, and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*.

PARODY & PASTICHE IN THE DROWSY CHAPERONE

The Drowsy Chaperone can be classified as both parody and pastiche and examples of both run throughout the libretto and score. The creators of *The Drowsy Chaperone* do not call it a parody of musicals, but rather “an homage to old-fashioned shows.” This tribute to older musicals is successful in part due to the “show-within-a-show” style used in the musical. While the audience watches *The Drowsy Chaperone* in the theatre, it is actually watching a narrator watch his favorite show: a fictitious musical, also titled *The Drowsy Chaperone*. “Man in Chair” is the narrator of this show, and it is his excitement and admiration for *The Drowsy Chaperone* that draws the audience in and encourages those watching to view the story through his eyes. Throughout the show, “Man in Chair” critiques or criticizes elements of this fictitious 1920s musical that he watches with the audience, which is one of the aspects of the show that make it a parody. For instance, in one scene that he does not like, he addresses the audience, saying “I hate this scene.”

The show itself is a parody of 1920s musicals. As the audience watches “Man in Chair” explain how he believes *The Drowsy Chaperone* must have looked onstage, a stereotypically loud and flashy view of the 1920s is painted. The show includes two gangsters, a famous celebrity, a European, and an over-the-top love story which are easily recognizable tropes in shows from or set in this time. The characters and storyline are over-exaggerated and archetypal, the exact way they are frequently portrayed in shows from this era, such as *No, No, Nanette*; *Sally*; and the *Ziegfeld Follies*.

Pastiche can be heard in the 1920s Jazz Age sounds throughout the score of *The Drowsy Chaperone* in songs such as “Cold Feets,” “Show Off,” and “Love is Always Lovely.” Though “Man in Chair” sometimes critiques certain aspects of the play, he is enthralled by the music and has a true respect for it. He even tries to engage the audience and invites them to love the music as much as he does, asking “Don’t you just love that number?” The respect that he has for the music is a key part of pastiche and shows that this musical is a tribute to old-fashioned shows.



DISCUSSION QUESTION

Make a T-table for lists of parodies and pastiches. How many examples of each can you name?

PROHIBITION

Prohibition was the period from 1920 to 1933 in the United States during which the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcohol was illegal. Motivated by factors ranging from moral to economic to regulatory, a Temperance Movement concerned with first the moderation of and later the prohibition of alcohol emerged following World War I. Champions of Prohibition believed that eliminating the manufacture and sale of alcohol would minimize reckless spending among the lower and working classes, workplace accidents, and crime across the country. By the time the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which imposed Prohibition nationwide, was ratified on January 16, 1920, over half of the states in the US already had prohibition laws on the books.

Almost immediately following the institution of Prohibition nationally, a black market for alcohol sales and transportation developed, and it proved nearly impossible to enforce the new laws. Bootleggers sold and often produced illegal alcohol like moonshine or bathtub gin; secret, underground bars and clubs called speakeasies cropped up in astonishing quantities (by 1927, there

were estimated to be 30,000 illegal speakeasies—twice the number of legal bars in existence before Prohibition); and rumrunners all over the country smuggled alcohol shipments across state lines. All this activity gave rise to a new kind of gangster that sought to consolidate and control the illegal alcohol trade, and people like Al Capone and George Remus became household names. They even permeated popular culture, particularly musical comedy, as the “gangster” character became a popular trope for situational and slapstick comedy in the theater. Despite it being common knowledge at the time that alcohol was being illegally trafficked across the country, authorities still had difficulty enforcing Prohibition with any lasting effect.

When the stock market crashed in 1929 and the economy collapsed into the Great Depression, the country needed a solution to stimulate commerce and create jobs. Repealing Prohibition would reestablish the brewing industry and the jobs that supported it, and the government would profit from the sales tax. Prohibition ended on December 5, 1933 when the 21st Amendment (which repealed the 18th Amendment) was ratified.

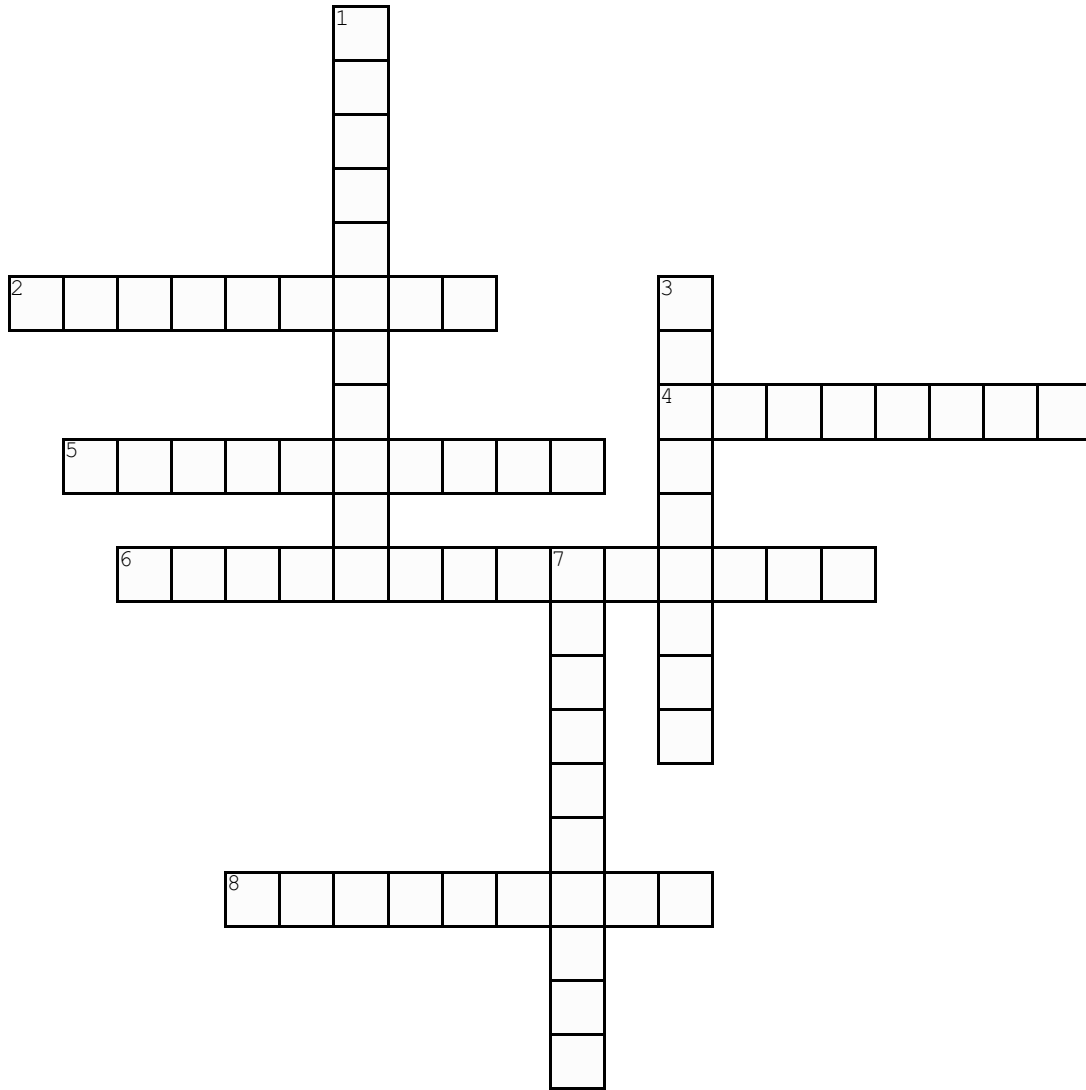


DISCUSSION QUESTION

While historians disagree about the effectiveness of Prohibition, it was ultimately in effect for only 13 years. What other solutions could have been explored to address the issues of poverty, workplace safety, and crime during this era?

PROHIBITION CROSSWORD

Name: _____



Across

2. In 1933, the 21st _____ to the Constitution reversed Prohibition laws.
4. A famous Prohibition-era gangster
5. Which Amendment to the Constitution instituted Prohibition?
6. From 1920 to 1933, the manufacture, sale, and _____ of alcohol was illegal.
8. The name for an underground bar or club during Prohibition

Down

1. Individuals who produced and sold illegal alcohol during Prohibition
3. The type of comedy gangster characters often perform in Prohibition-era musicals
7. The name of the movement that championed Prohibition laws

THE CAST RECORDING

The Drowsy Chaperone's protagonist, called simply Man in Chair, treasures his collection of Original Cast Recordings (OCRs). They allow him to relive his favorite shows, which come to life in his imagination as he listens to the record. This is a familiar phenomenon—many Broadway fans prize their recordings of the shows they love. And the history of cast recordings is an interesting one, interacting with American popular culture in many ways.

DON'T CALL IT A SOUNDTRACK

First of all, a technical note: the albums made of Broadway musicals are usually called original cast recordings (or simply cast recordings, if it's not the original cast) – not soundtracks. This may seem like a small difference, but soundtracks are the musical scores of movies, heightening the emotions of a film during a scene. Musicals, however, have songs written as integral parts of the drama, so their recordings are not quite the same.

TIN PAN ALLEY

The idea of re-creating a favorite song or show at home pre-dated recordings, and indeed pre-dated musicals as we know them. The music publishers of what was called Tin Pan Alley in Manhattan would print and sell sheet music of popular songs, many of which were featured in Vaudeville shows (although songs were usually on Vaudeville because they were popular, and not the other way around). In the early part of the 20th century, recordings had been made of songs from popular shows, but never a full cast recording—which is fitting considering that songs weren't an integral part of the storytelling of a musical until *Show Boat*, in 1927.

THE FIRST CAST RECORDINGS

England was the first to record a full cast recording of a musical, with their production of *Show Boat* in 1929 (the American version, a year earlier, wasn't recorded). Although there was an experimental recording made of *The Band Wagon* in 1931, it wasn't widely released, and a 1932 recording of *Show Boat* used studio singers and only two cast members. 1938's *Cradle Will Rock* featured the full cast of the show, but not the full orchestra—only piano.

Fittingly enough, the first original cast recording as we know it—meaning the full Broadway cast and orchestra—was of the musical considered by many to be the first modern musical as we know it: *Oklahoma!*, in 1943. The show was a huge hit, and those who couldn't buy tickets bought the double-78-rpm record set to have as close to the experience of seeing the show as they could. The album was a hit as well, selling over a million copies on 78-rpm record (and millions more in other forms, including LP and CDs).

CHART TOPPERS

In the 1950s and 1960s, it wasn't uncommon for Broadway cast recordings to top the charts—the albums for *My Fair Lady*; *The Music Man*; *Hello, Dolly!* And *Funny Girl* all hit #1 on the Billboard music charts, and their popular songs were radio hits. But as rock and roll began to dominate music culture and television increasingly captured America's attention, Broadway albums slipped from radio play, and then from the charts. In the past 50 years, only six OCRs have made it into Billboard's top 20: *Hair*, *Dreamgirls*, *If/Then*, *Rent*, *The Book of Mormon*, and *Hamilton* (which made it to no. 3, and also earned a spot on the chart for rap as well).

However, for fans like the Man in Chair, it's not the most popular recordings that are the prize but rather the least. There's a robust community of Broadway fans who treasure their collections of rare recordings. These are mostly from shows that were far from hits, and that exist now only in these few remnants. But with an old record player, any fan can sit down, place the needle just so, and relive a bit of Broadway history.



John Scherer as Man in Chair in Goodspeed's *The Drowsy Chaperone*. ©Diane Sobolewski.



DISCUSSION QUESTION

Even though new cast recordings of musicals are produced every year, few of them cross over to pop music like they did through the 1960s. What do you think has caused this change over time?

THE ORIGINAL AVIATRIX

BESSIE "QUEEN BESS" COLEMAN

Bessie Coleman was born the daughter of a poor, southern farming family in 1892 and grew up to become the first pilot of Native American descent (her father was part Cherokee) and the first female African American pilot in the world. Despite working on the family farm from a young age, Bessie was an avid reader, attended school as often as she could, and graduated from high school. Though she was only able to afford one semester of college, she was determined to leave her mark on the world.

Bessie attended beauty school and worked as a manicurist in Chicago to support herself when she decided to become a pilot. Aviation was still very new technology at the time, and both women and African Americans were hugely disadvantaged in the field—flight schools in the United States enrolled neither women nor African Americans—but after her brother John's incessant teasing about the French women he had met during World War I who had careers as

pilots, Bessie became even more determined. Bessie saved as much money as she could, and on the advice of one of her mentors, she sailed for France where she attended the Caudron Brothers' School of Aviation.

She completed the Federation Aeronautique Internationale's 10-month training program in only 7 months and returned as a celebrity to the United States in 1921; she was the first black woman in the world to earn an aviator's license. Upon her return, she started doing air shows not only to establish herself as a professional pilot but also to increase interest in flying among women and African Americans. An activist for equal rights and treatment, Bessie ("Queen Bess," to her fans) refused to perform for any arenas that had segregated gates or seating, and she always included lectures, exhibitions, and flying lessons to make aviation more accessible to everyday people.



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