

Directorial Proposal for The Frogs

A musical based on the play by Aristophanes with music by Stephen Sondheim

It's The Producers meets Ancient Greece!

A rarely staged show with wonderful, memorable music by Sondheim and Sheelove.

It's a perfect mixture of political satire, theatrical humor, farce, and drama!

Both visually and emotionally electric, it is a piece much needed in our politically charged times.

Plot of The Frogs:

The Frogs opens with two actors debating which play they should perform. They pray to the gods for guidance whilst 'assisting' the audience with a few dos and don'ts - mostly don'ts - during the performance (Invocation and Instructions to the Audience). The two actors reveal themselves to be Dionysus, the god of wine and theatre, and his slave Xanthias, stating that they are on a mission to save the world by bringing back a great playwright from Hades, George Bernard Shaw. They devise a plan to disguise themselves in order to cross the river Styx to rescue the playwright, and set off on their adventure (I Love To Travel). Dionysus visits the one hero he knows who has successfully traveled to and from Hades, the half god Herakles, who gives the two tips on how to sneak into the underworld (Dress Big). After trying on a few lion skins and being given a large club, they are set on their way to the River Styx with a warning to be careful of the frogs within the river who like things just the way they are. They finally meet Charon, the ferryman of the underworld, in his skiff ready to take our duo to Hades (All Aboard). While the two wait to cross, Dionysus sings of his late wife Ariadne (Ariadne). Suddenly the two are surrounded by the sound of the frogs who swear to try and stop the duo any way that they can (The Frogs). The mass of Frogs fight and pull Dionysus off the skiff and into the River Styx to end the act.

The second act begins with Dionysus overpowering the frogs and climbing back onto the skiff with Xanthias just in time for Charon to bring them to the shore of Hades. The two are welcomed by Dionysus' worshipers (Hymn to Dionysus), but rather than be further distracted they continue on to Pluto's palace to rescue George Bernard Shaw. After dealing with a case of mistaken identity between Dionysus and Xanthias trading off who is Herakles, they are met by the god Pluto who flaunts the charms of the underworld in an over the top Vegas-style showgirls review (Hades). Dionysus reveals his true form and explains that the earth is in desperate need of true poetry and art. At this point the chorus breaks the fourth wall to liven up the discussion and remind the audience that (It's Only a Play). To Dionysus' delight, Hades is convinced and brings out Shaw, introducing him to the audience (Shaw). It turns out that Shaw is not the only playwright currently residing in Hades, when William Shakespeare appears and attempts to instigate a fight with Shaw on who is the better writer. The literary giants battle it out in a war of wits and barbs about humanity. It seems to be an evenly matched fight until Dionysus' deceased wife appears from the shadows of Hades to greet her husband. The final topic is presented by Dionysus to the playwrights: Death. Shaw recites a piece from his tragedy Saint Joan and while moving, Shakespeare retorts with a song from Cymbeline (Fear No More) and is declared the winner. Shaw wishes to return to the land of the living but having lost the battle, is dragged back into the depths of Hades. Xanthias sees the benefits of Hades and decides to stay while Dionysus takes

Shakespeare back to Earth and shares one last moment with the audience (Final Instructions to the Audience)

Vision and Why I want to do The Frogs

The Frogs is a piece that speaks to me on multiple levels. It covers many topics that I believe will resonate with an audience. On the surface it's an absurdist play based in Ancient Greece and rife with modern references that poke fun at theater, literature and politics; but a deeper look reveals an examination of life and death and what it means to be human. I have been drawn to comedy and to get a laugh from an audience and not just with satire, farce, or slapstick but with a mixture of all three. There is something for every member of the audience from all ages and backgrounds which will open the show up to a diverse crowd.

The play touches on some serious tones in which conflict, turmoil, and even death are discussed honestly without shying away from these heavy topics. This show will not only make you laugh but will make you think. To wrap up this entire show, the music by Sondheim. Wonderfully memorable music with variation and melody which will pull both audiences and actors to go out for the Kansas City premier of this play. The music, the levels of drama, and it's being based on great literature never before seen locally will intrigue and pull in audiences and actors alike.

My vision for the set and scenery includes scrims to hide entrances, musicians, and set pieces. Most of the scenery will be kept two-dimensional, drawn and painted with visual references to ancient Greek art, such as the Greek Key. During the opening, the traveling, and Hades, everything will be kept simple to highlight two major set pieces; the skiff of Charon and Pluto's Throne. The skiff will look like a small sailboat in which Charon, Xanthias, and Dionysus will roll around on stage and during the Act I finale, will get pushed and thrown around by the chorus while they are Frogs. Pluto's throne comes out and is large enough for Pluto and a chorus of showgirls during his song as well as used by Dionysus while he judges the competition between the playwrights.

The costumes will be a variety of Greek togas and chitons for the leads and the chorus. The chorus will also have colorful green bodysuits to wear when they portray the frogs.

Potential Team

Music Director – Paul Morel

Choreographer – Anna Nissen

Images and Ideas



*One of the larger set pieces ideas would be a ship that could fit 3 actors with painted details of an ancient Greek ship. It would be rolled via casters and could rock being apart of the song **THE FROGS** for the Act 1 finale*





The rest of the set pieces I want to have a stylistic 'painted' look. Just like the borders in the picture above, the 2 – Dimensional columns will have these flourishes of style on them to remind the audience “It's only a play”



The costumes for most of the cast will be simple (left and center) for ease of costuming and movement. There will be added features for different scenes IE travel scene and Hades scene. My idea for the Frogs and the dance would be a body suit (no hoods, I couldnt find an image without the head covering) to keep the dance athletic and aesthetic for the audience. Also here is a picture from the musical for reference.

