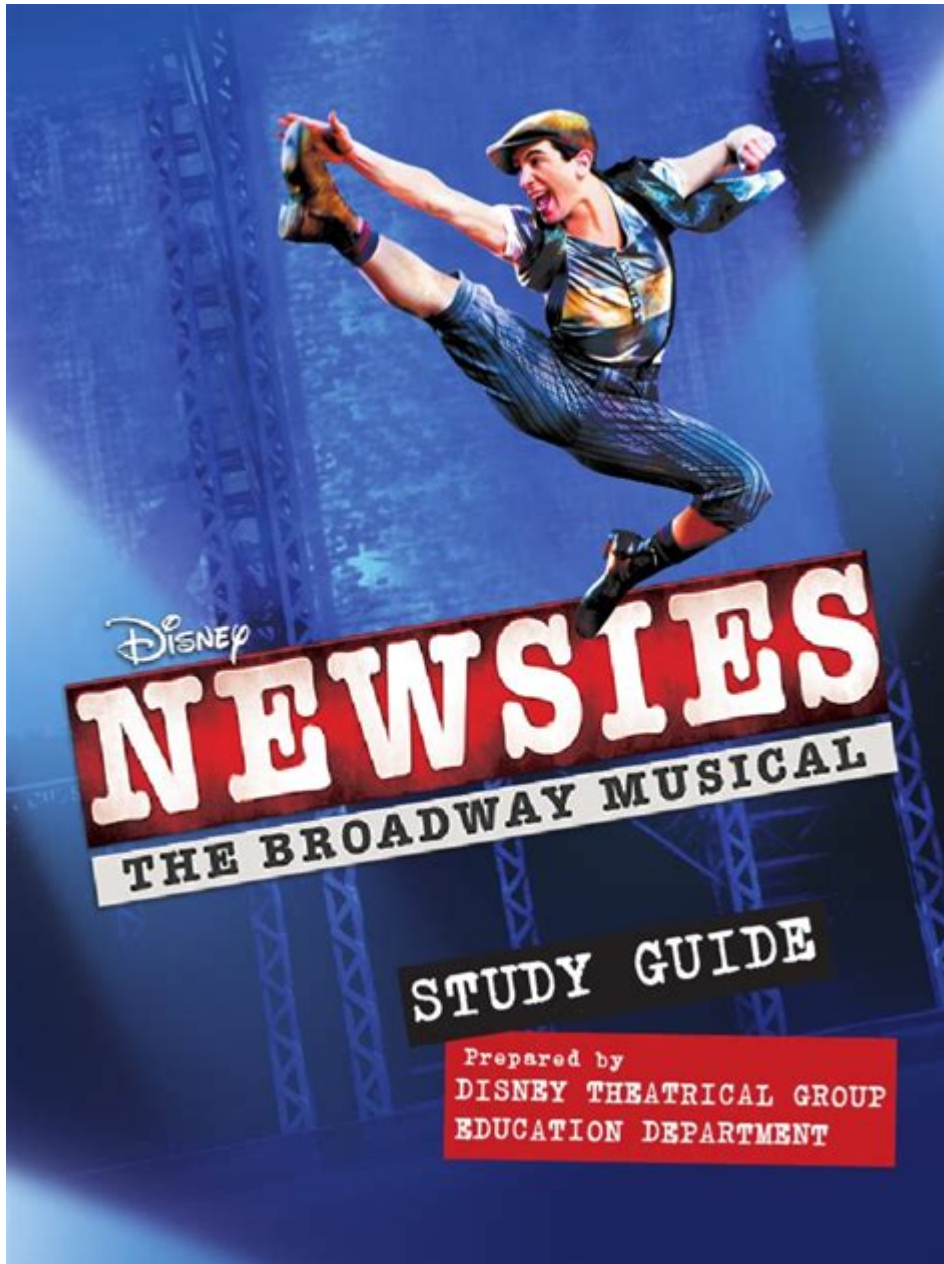


Study Guide For The Musical Newsies



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The musical "Newsies," inspired by the real-life Newsboys Strike of 1899 in New York City, has captured the hearts of audiences since its Broadway debut in 2012. With its dynamic choreography, memorable score, and a gripping storyline, it provides a rich tapestry of themes including social justice, the power of youth, and the fight for equality. This study guide aims to delve into the key elements of the musical, offering insights into its characters, themes, and historical context, as well as providing helpful resources for further exploration.

Overview of the Musical

"Newsies" began as a 1992 Disney film, which was loosely based on the Newsboys Strike. The stage adaptation, with music by Alan Menken and lyrics by Jack Feldman, and a book by Harvey Fierstein, was nominated for several Tony Awards and won for Best Original Score. The show combines elements of drama, music, and dance to tell the story of a group of underprivileged boys who sell newspapers to support themselves and their families.

Main Characters

Understanding the main characters is crucial to grasping the essence of "Newsies." Here are some of the key figures in the story:

Jack Kelly

- The charismatic and ambitious leader of the newsboys.
- Dreams of escaping to Santa Fe and living a life of freedom.
- His leadership qualities inspire the other boys to stand up for their rights.

David Jacobs

- A new boy in town who quickly becomes Jack's right-hand man.
- Represents the voice of reason and is instrumental in organizing the strike.
- Balances his desire for justice with the responsibilities he has towards his family.

Les Jacobs

- David's younger brother, who idolizes Jack and is fiercely loyal.
- His innocence and enthusiasm provide comic relief amidst the serious themes.

Scab

- A character who represents the conflict among the newsboys.
- His choices reflect the difficult decisions faced by the boys in their struggle for survival.

Katherine Plumber

- An ambitious young reporter who becomes an ally to the newsies.
- Challenges gender norms of the time and provides a different perspective on the strike.

Joseph Pulitzer

- The wealthy newspaper magnate whose policies spark the strike.
- Embodies the capitalist elite, contrasting sharply with the struggles of the newsboys.

Historical Context

To fully appreciate "Newsies," it is essential to understand the historical backdrop of the late 19th century in America:

- The Newsboys Strike of 1899: This was a pivotal event where newsboys protested against the increasing prices of newspapers. The strike highlighted issues of child labor, poverty, and the exploitation of working-class youth.
- Child Labor: During this era, many children worked long hours under harsh conditions. The newsboys, often orphans or from poor families, faced numerous hardships.
- Social Reform Movements: The late 19th century saw a rise in various social reform movements aimed at improving labor laws and conditions for children.

Themes

"Newsies" explores a range of significant themes that resonate with audiences today:

Social Justice

The struggle for fair treatment and rights is central to the narrative. The newsboys unite to fight against the oppressive practices of the newspaper moguls, highlighting the importance of collective action.

Empowerment and Agency

The characters, particularly the young boys, embody the spirit of empowerment. Their journey reflects the idea that even the most marginalized voices can create change through determination and solidarity.

Friendship and Loyalty

The bonds formed among the newsboys showcase the importance of camaraderie. Their shared experiences forge deep relationships that are crucial in their fight against adversity.

Dreams and Aspirations

Jack's desire to escape to Santa Fe symbolizes the universal quest for freedom and a better life. The musical emphasizes the importance of having dreams and the courage to pursue them, even in the

face of daunting challenges.

Musical Numbers

"Newsies" features a variety of energetic and powerful songs that enhance the storytelling. Here are some standout musical numbers:

1. "Carrying the Banner": This opening number introduces the audience to the world of the newsboys and sets the tone for their struggles.
2. "The World Will Know": A rallying cry for the newsboys as they decide to strike, this song encapsulates their determination to be heard.
3. "Seize the Day": A powerful anthem about seizing opportunities and fighting for what is right.
4. "Santa Fe": Jack's solo that expresses his longing for freedom and a life beyond the struggles of New York City.
5. "Watch What Happens": Katherine's song that highlights her ambitions and the challenges she faces as a young woman in journalism.

Choreography and Staging

The choreography in "Newsies" is pivotal to its success. Created by Christopher Gattelli, the dynamic dance sequences mirror the energy and urgency of the newsboys' plight. Key aspects include:

- Tap Dance: The incorporation of tap dance adds a lively rhythm that complements the musical score.
- Group Choreography: The ensemble work showcases the unity among the newsboys, emphasizing their solidarity.
- Staging: The use of set pieces resembling rooftops and alleyways helps immerse the audience in the gritty world of turn-of-the-century New York.

Critical Reception

Upon its release, "Newsies" received widespread acclaim for its engaging story, vibrant music, and impressive choreography. Key points include:

- Awards: The musical won multiple Tony Awards, including Best Original Score and Best Choreography.
- Cultural Impact: It has resonated with younger audiences and has been praised for its messages of activism and empowerment.
- Adaptations: The musical has been adapted for various productions worldwide, further solidifying its status as a modern classic.

Further Exploration

For those interested in diving deeper into "Newsies," consider the following resources:

- Historical Texts: Books on the Newsboys Strike and child labor laws provide valuable context.
- Documentaries: Films about labor movements and the history of New York City can enhance understanding.
- Original Cast Recording: Listening to the soundtrack allows a deeper appreciation of the music and lyrics.
- Theatrical Productions: Attending live performances or watching filmed versions can offer different interpretations of the material.

Conclusion

"Newsies" is more than just a musical; it is a tale of resilience, hope, and the power of unity. Through its vibrant characters, historical context, and powerful themes, it encourages audiences to reflect on the importance of standing up for justice and pursuing one's dreams. This study guide serves as a starting point for exploring the complexities and richness of "Newsies," inviting both new and seasoned fans to engage with its inspiring message.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central theme of the musical 'Newsies'?

The central theme of 'Newsies' is the fight for workers' rights and social justice, focusing on the struggles of newsboys in the late 19th century who band together to improve their working conditions.

Who composed the music for 'Newsies'?

The music for 'Newsies' was composed by Alan Menken, with lyrics by Jack Feldman.

What historical event does 'Newsies' take inspiration from?

'Newsies' is inspired by the New York City newsboys' strike of 1899, where young newsvendors protested against unfair pricing set by the newspaper publishers.

Who are the main characters in 'Newsies'?

The main characters include Jack Kelly, the charismatic leader of the newsboys; Crutchie, Jack's loyal friend; and Katherine Plumber, a journalist who supports the newsboys' cause.

What is the significance of the song 'Seize the Day' in the

musical?

'Seize the Day' serves as a powerful anthem for the newsboys, encouraging them to take action and stand up for their rights, embodying the spirit of activism.

How does the musical 'Newsies' portray the role of journalism?

The musical highlights the role of journalism as a tool for social change, showcasing Katherine Plumber as a character who uses her writing to advocate for the newsboys' plight.

What impact did the Disney film adaptation have on the musical's popularity?

The Disney film adaptation of 'Newsies' in 1992 helped to popularize the story and its music, leading to the stage musical adaptation that premiered on Broadway in 2012 and gained a dedicated fan base.

What awards has 'Newsies' won?

'Newsies' won two Tony Awards in 2012, including Best Original Score and Best Choreography, recognizing its musical and dance excellence.

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