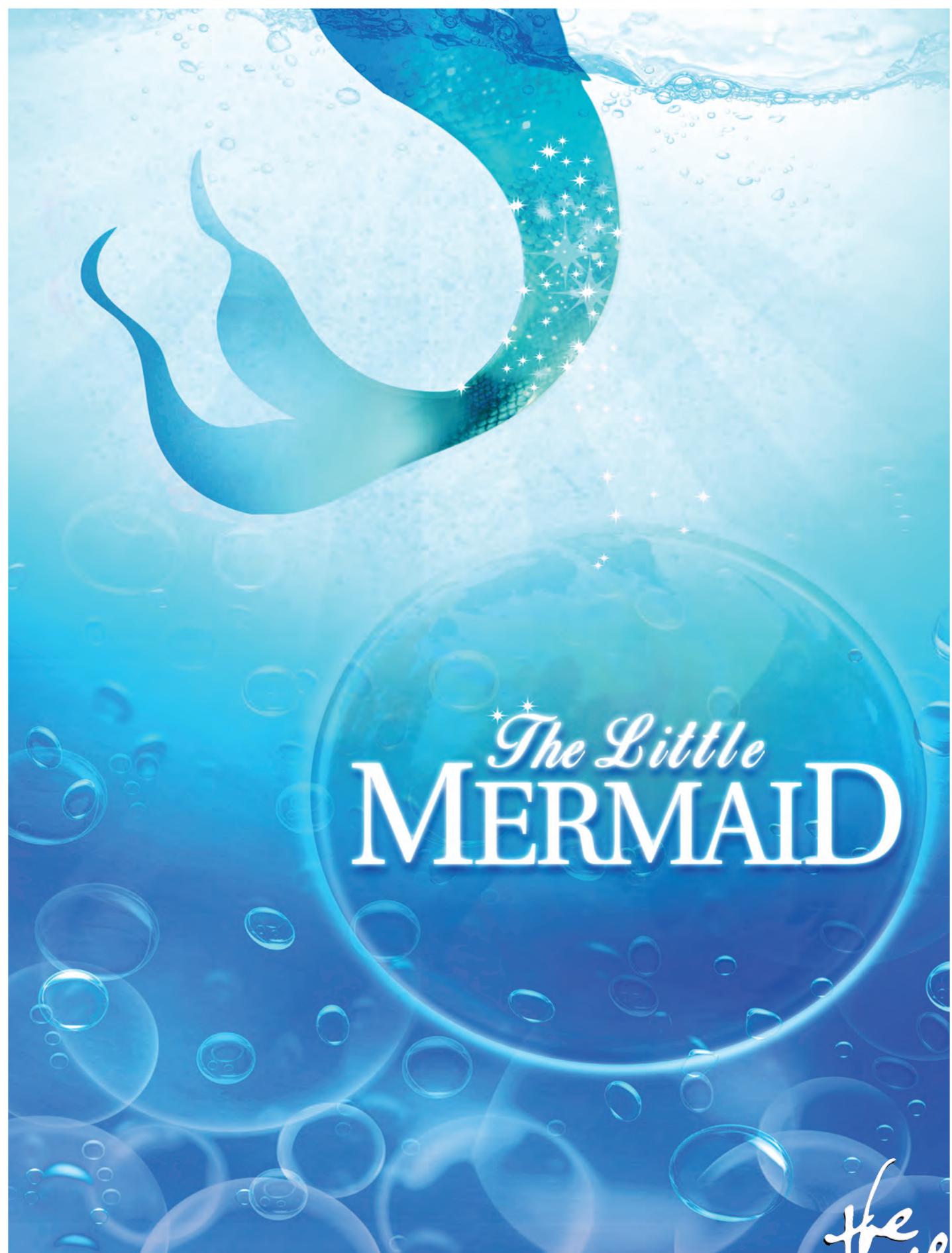


ARKANSAS REPERTORY THEATRE



Study Guide, December 2015
Prepared by Robert Neblett

Introduction

In the fall of 1989, Walt Disney Pictures unleashed a new era of animation with the release of its feature film *The Little Mermaid*. Combining stunning visuals, a heartfelt story and a rollicking Broadway sensibility in its score by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, the success and critical acclaim of *The Little Mermaid* restored the Disney reputation on the big screen after a series of commercial and artistic misfires.

In the wake of this groundbreaking animated film, Disney released a series of blockbusters in the 1990s that dominated the box office, awards ceremonies and the hearts of audiences, including *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*.

In 2008, a live Broadway spectacular based on *The Little Mermaid* opened on Broadway and plunged audiences once more “Under the Sea” with Ariel and her aquatic companions. Now, the Arkansas Repertory Theatre is proud to bring this beloved story to life for Little Rock audiences, complete with a Calypso beat, amazing special effects and the story you’ve loved for decades.

This Study Guide is designed for educators to utilize this unique theatrical experience to explore *The Little Mermaid* with their students as a catalyst for encouraging critical thinking and multidisciplinary connections between literature, music, science and technology, to name a few. Please use this guide as a tool for beginning stimulating, lively conversations with students, whether they are first-time audience members or regular patrons of the arts.

Thank you for being a “Part of Our World” at the Arkansas Repertory Theatre, and enjoy *The Little Mermaid*!

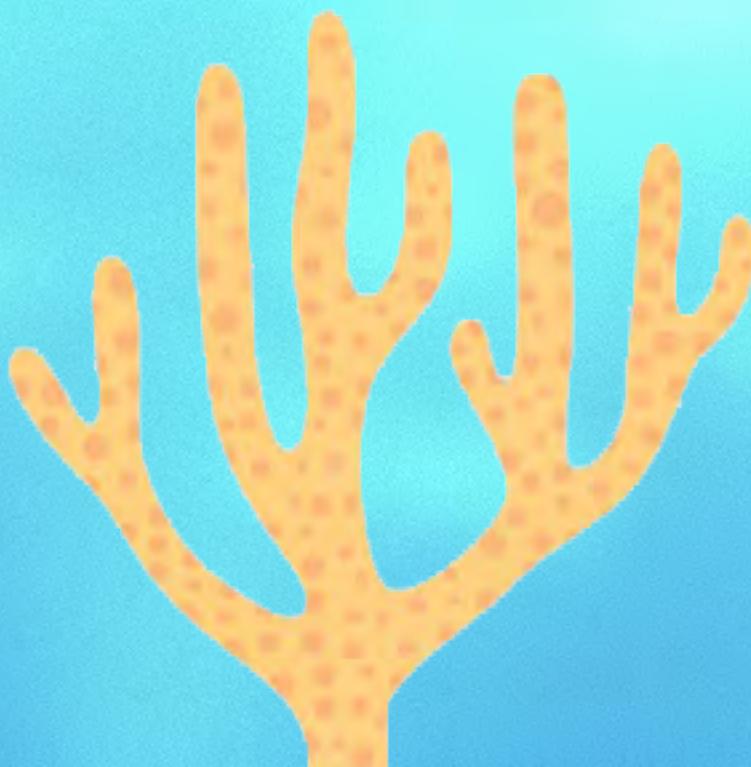


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Synopsis



Act I

The mermaid princess Ariel breaks through the surface of the ocean and sings about her fascination with the human world ("The World Above"). Suddenly Prince Eric, his adviser Grimsby, and sailors appear aboard a ship at sea. Grimsby tries to tell Eric that he must return to court to fulfill his birthright as king. However, Eric hears a beautiful voice and commands it to be followed ("Fathoms Below"). Before the ship disappears from view, Eric throws a fork overboard, which Ariel retrieves.

She is joined by her friend Flounder, and they consult seagull Scuttle about the mysterious object she has found. Scuttle proclaims the fork a "dinglehopper." Ariel suddenly remembers that she is missing her father's concert beneath the waves.

Deep on the ocean floor, a concert in honor of a defeated coup d'état by sea witch Ursula is underway, being performed by the daughters of Triton, the sea king. King Triton's court composer, Sebastian, has composed a song for his seven girls to perform ("Daughters of Triton"). However, Ariel is not there for her solo, bringing the concert to a grinding halt.

Ariel appears and is berated by King Triton, who is angered to learn that she has been on the surface again as contact between the mer-folk and human world is forbidden. Ariel rushes off, upset, and King Triton assigns Sebastian, whom Ariel made a laughingstock because of her absence at the concert, to watch over Ariel and make sure she doesn't get into any trouble ("If Only").

Elsewhere, Ursula is planning revenge against her brother, King Triton. She explains that she was banished from the palace because she used black magic, and tells her minions Flotsam and Jetsam to keep an eye on her lovely young niece ("Daddy's Little Angel").

Ariel sits alone in her grotto, which contains her collection of human things, and sings about how she does not believe humans are so bad ("Part of Your World").

Ariel and Flounder meet Scuttle at the surface to see Prince Eric's ship and the people on it up close. Grimsby tries to reason with Eric telling him he must find a bride and take his place as king. A storm suddenly hits, and Eric is tossed overboard. He almost drowns, but Ariel saves him and drags him to shore. Ariel realizes that she is falling in love with him, and vows to somehow find a way to be with him ("Part of Your World (Reprise)").

Ariel returns to her underwater home, and her changed behavior makes her sisters and Flounder suspect that she's fallen in love ("She's in Love"). On land, Eric is determined to find the woman who saved his life, but the only clue he has is "Her Voice." He and Grimsby come up with the idea of holding a ball where foreign princesses will sing to him in hopes that one will be the girl for whom he is looking.

Sebastian tries reason with Ariel by pointing out the wonders of the undersea world ("Under the Sea"). As all the sea creatures join in the jamboree, King Triton arrives. As Ariel and Triton quarrel, Triton uses his trident to destroy Ariel's human collection and he swims away.

Ariel is left alone and wishes that her father would try to understand her ("If Only - Ariel's Lament"). Flotsam and Jetsam appear and sweet talk her into seeking help from Ursula ("Sweet Child").

Ariel goes to Ursula, who presents a deal: Ariel will be turned into a human for three days, during which she has to get the kiss of true love from Eric. If she does, she will be human permanently;

if not, her soul will belong to Ursula ("Poor Unfortunate Souls"). Ariel signs the agreement with the ink from her aunt's tentacles. She sings into the shell and swims up to the surface. During this time, Ursula's spell takes effect, and Ariel is transformed into a human.



Act II

Sebastian and Flounder bring Ariel, newly human and mute, to the shore. Scuttle and the seagulls give her a pep talk to bring her spirits up and get her used to her new legs ("Positooosity"). Thinking Ariel is being attacked by seagulls, Eric chases them off. When Ariel tries to speak with him, she realizes she cannot talk. Eric brings Ariel back to his palace, where the maids bathe and dress Ariel nicely for her night out with the prince. Ariel is fascinated by the human world she finds herself in and the maids wonder why Prince Eric would bring such a girl to the palace ("Beyond My Wildest Dreams").

That night Chef Louis cooks dinner for Ariel, Grimsby and Eric. He almost cooks Sebastian for the grand finale, but he manages to escape as Louis, the other chefs and the maids start chasing after him ("Les Poissons"/"Les Poissons (Reprise)").

Later, Eric takes Ariel to the ballroom and teaches her to dance ("One Step Closer").

Meanwhile, Ursula is anxiously waiting for the three days to end and sends Flotsam and Jetsam to hurry things along ("Daddy's Little Angel (Reprise)").

The next evening, Eric takes Ariel on a quiet boat ride through a lagoon. Sebastian and some of the lagoon animals try to create a romantic atmosphere for Eric to kiss Ariel ("Kiss the Girl"). Just before they kiss, Flotsam and Jetsam give the boat an "electric shock" and swim away gloating ("Sweet Child (Reprise)").

Sebastian and Flounder tell an angry King Triton about Ariel's deal with Ursula. Fearful for his daughter's life, Triton races off to find her. As the second day ends, Ariel wishes she could tell Eric everything, Triton worries about where his daughter has gone, Sebastian is concerned for Ariel since her time as a human is almost up, and Eric still dreams of finding the girl who saved him even though he does not want to lose Ariel ("If Only - Quartet").

On Ariel's last day as a human, the contest takes place. All of the foreign princesses sing to Eric to the tune of "Part of Your World" to see if he can recognize the girl for whom he is looking ("The Contest"). All of them fail to do so. Ariel chooses at that moment to dance for him, and Eric picks her. Ursula then appears, floods the ballroom, and tells Ariel that the sun has set and she has lost. Flotsam and Jetsam grab Ariel and take her back to the sea.

King Triton arrives to confront his sister and rescue Ariel, who has returned to her mermaid form. He agrees to take Ariel's place, and Ursula celebrates her victory ("Poor Unfortunate Souls (Reprise)").

Ariel grabs the magic shell, regains her voice, and smashes the shell, which destroys Ursula. Triton reappears and is reunited with his daughter.

Triton soon realizes that he must let Ariel go and transforms her back into a human ("If Only (Reprise)"). Ariel and Eric are married and sail away happily on a ship ("Finale").

Characters

(In Order of Appearance)

ARIEL, a mermaid, King Triton's youngest daughter

PILOT, helmsman of Prince Eric's ship

SAILORS

PRINCE ERIC, a human monarch

GRIMSBY, guardian of Prince Eric

FLOUNDER, a fish, Ariel's best friend

SCUTTLE, a seagull, expert in human artifacts

SEA CREATURES of various shapes, sizes and species

WINDWARD & LEEWARD, trumpet fish, heralds in King Triton's court

KING TRITON, King of the Sea

SEBASTIAN, a crab, advisor to King Triton

MERSISTERS (Aquata, Andrina, Arista, Atina, AdelIa, Allana), daughters of

King Triton

FLOTSAM, an eel, lackey to Ursula

JETSAM, an eel, the other lackey to Ursula

URSULA, the Sea Witch, sister of King Triton

GULLS

MAIDS

CHEF LOUIS, the Palace chef, a culinary perfectionist

CHEFS, sous staff of Chef Louis

PRINCESSES, potential mates for Prince Eric

Fun Facts and Trivia

The visual model for Ariel in the 1989 animated film was actress Alyssa Milano (TV's "Who's the Boss?"). The visual model for Ursula was noted drag performer Divine (Hairspray).

If you compare "Somewhere That's Green" from Little Shop of Horrors and "Part of Your World" from The Little Mermaid, there is a musical and conceptual similarity between the two songs. Ashman and Menken noticed this and nicknamed the latter song "Somewhere That's Dry."

In the film, Ariel was deliberately red-haired to distinguish her from Daryl Hannah in 1984's Splash. This was partially due to the fact that Disney had been considering a similar plot for a sequel to Splash.

Sebastian's full name is "Horatio Thelonious Ignacious Crustaceous Sebastian."

Samuel E. Wright, who voices Sebastian in the film, also played King Mufasa in the original live Broadway theatrical production of The Lion King.



Samuel E. Wright



Little Shop of Horrors

Many of the shots of Ariel seated on an ocean rock in the film are modeled after the Copenhagen statue of "The Little Mermaid."

The Little Mermaid was the first animated fairy tale by Disney since 1959's Sleeping Beauty.

It was also the first Disney film since 1971's Bedknobs and Broomsticks to receive an Academy Award nomination.

The Little Mermaid was the first animated film to ever receive a Golden Globe nomination for Best Picture.

Hans Christian Andersen was dyslexic and never learned how to spell correctly.

The 1952 Danny Kaye film, Hans Christian Andersen, was originally intended to feature animated sequences by Walt Disney.

Q&A WITH SHOW'S AERIAL CREATORS: 2 RING CIRCUS' JOSHUA DEAN

One of the more exciting technical elements of the Arkansas Repertory Theatre's theatrical production of *The Little Mermaid* will be the extraordinary aerial effects utilized to create the watery undersea kingdom of King Triton. Using special flying effects, The Rep's artists will create the illusion of characters swimming in mid-air, as well as some of the magical transformations that occur in the story.

In order to accomplish these feats of flight and fancy, The Rep has enlisted the unique talents of 2 Ring Circus.

Based out of New York City, 2 Ring Circus strives to merge the art of circus with the heart of Broadway. Taking the term "triple threat" to the next level (literally), they take their love of dance and musical theatre to the air to create a polished theatrical experience that is taking the Great White Way to new heights. Founded in 2011, the company offers multiple tour-ready production shows varying in cast size from two to six. These intimate spectacles play extremely well in a variety of spaces and are custom-designed for easy set-up and touring. 2 Ring Circus prides themselves on creating "Huge Little Shows" that pack a punch in talent and entertainment while remaining affordable to all budgets. They also specialize in programming customized circus entertainments for corporate events and parties as well as Theatrical Collaborations and Creations.



2 Ring Circus

We asked 2 Ring Circus' Artistic Director Joshua Dean about his experiences as a member of this innovative company and about their vision for *The Little Mermaid*'s spellbinding effects.

Here is what he had to say:

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT 2 RING CIRCUS.

2 Ring Circus is a company of four friends who came together to create their own brand of circus. We all came from musical theater or dance backgrounds before becoming circus artists. Now, we try to combine the theatricality of those genres with the excitement of the circus to create a one-of-a-kind experience.

For more information, visit their official website at www.2ringcircus.com

HOW DID YOU FIRST BECOME INVOLVED WITH THIS TYPE OF MOVEMENT/AERIAL WORK?

I was asked by director Donna Drake to choreograph and perform aerial fabric in a show that she was directing. I began taking classes at once and it all grew from there. I spent several years working to become a professional aerialist and then began to teach. As a teacher, I began to train my friends and future company members.

IS THIS THE FIRST TIME YOU HAVE EVER WORKED WITH THE THE REP? HAVE YOU WORKED WITH ANY OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE LITTLE MERMAID'S ARTISTIC TEAM?

This is my first time working at The Rep. Ben, Lani and I are all very excited to create the circus elements for the show. Ben has worked with our amazing director, Melissa, before and Ben and myself have done several shows with Adam, our choreographer.



Joshua Dean

WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO A PROJECT LIKE THE LITTLE MERMAID?

As a company, we love to combine theater with circus. Two of our original production show creations have a very theatrical feel. We like the challenge of making circus elements integral to the plot and finding apparatus and movement that can help forward the story without distracting unnecessarily.

HOW IS THIS KIND OF SPECIFIC MOVEMENT/AERIAL WORK INTEGRAL TO A MUSICAL LIKE THE LITTLE MERMAID?

This show has the potential for lots of magic and spectacle. We are using circus elements to make the life under the sea even more exciting. For example, it will feature the various sea creatures floating around under the ocean, to the drowning prince being rescued, to a mermaid floating on an anchor. These are just a few examples of how you will see circus integrated in the show.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOMENT IN THE SHOW A) FROM A CHOREOGRAPHIC STAND-POINT AND B) FROM AN EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVE?

My favorite moment to create in the show will be the transformation. It is the moment when Ariel first gets her legs. It is going to be quite tricky to get it all right, but that is what will make it worth it. In that instance it will take every department: costumes, direction, choreography, lights, tech crew pulling lines, etc. Trying to make everything work as we have conceived it is the fun moment for me. It will take a lot of tries, but I am certain it will be worth it.



Who are Howard Ashman and Alan Menken?

A great deal of the success of Disney's animated screen adaptation of The Little Mermaid can be attributed to the film's infectious score by lyricist Howard Ashman and composer Alan Menken. Featuring bouncy production numbers such as "Under the Sea," romantic ballads such as "Kiss the Girl," and the ode to Ariel's longing, "Part of Your World," these musical numbers add tone and color to the story, but more importantly, they deftly reveal character motivation and the emotional undercurrents of the story.



Prior to The Little Mermaid, Ashman and Menken were best known for their 1982 sci-fi rock musical based on Roger Corman's 1960 dark comic film, The Little Shop of Horrors. The musical, which grounds the action in its 1960s time period by utilizing doo-wop, rock-and-roll and Supremes-like girl group, R&B numbers, was an overwhelming success Off-Broadway. It was later turned into a 1986 film musical starring Steve Martin, Rick Moranis and Ellen Greene. In 2003, the musical opened in New York in its first official Broadway production. In July 2015, a concert version of the show played New York City Center's Encores! Off-Center series, starring Ellen Greene and Jake Gyllenhaal.



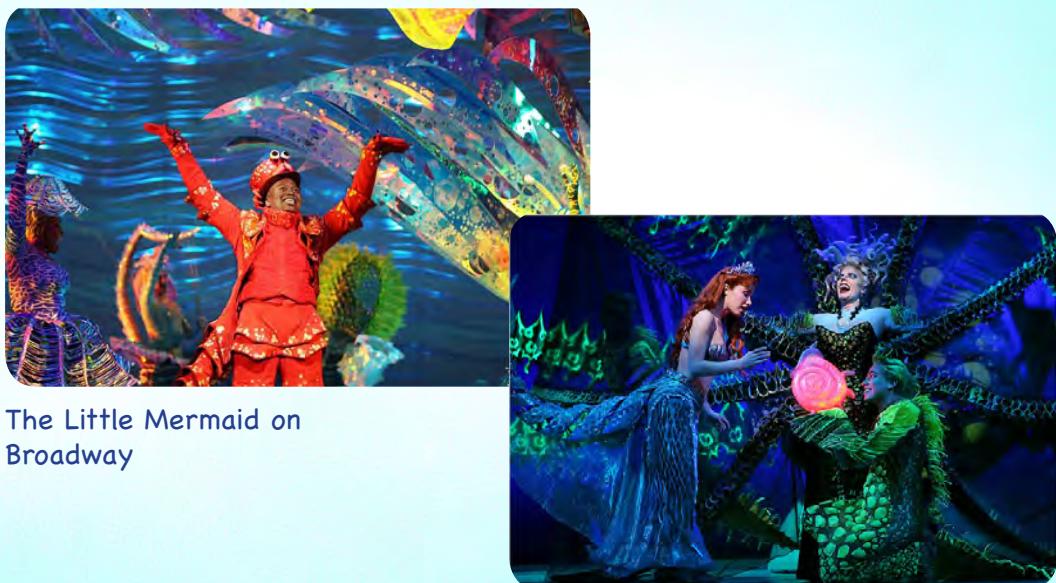
Following the release of the 1986 film of Little Shop, Ashman was brought into Disney Studios to assist with the film Oliver & Company, when he was recruited (along with Menken) to create the score for The Little Mermaid. The film broke box office records and ushered in what is known as the "Disney Renaissance" of the 1990s, a return to the quality and popularity of Disney's animated features of several decades before. Their contributions to the film won two Academy Awards, two Golden Globes and a Grammy.

Ashman and Menken collaborated on two more mega-hits for Disney: 1991's Beauty and the Beast and 1992's Aladdin. However, Ashman would not live to see the premieres of either of these films. Diagnosed with HIV in 1988, he passed away in March 1991. Beauty and the Beast was dedicated to his memory.

Broadway lyricist Tim Rice (Jesus Christ Superstar, Evita) assisted Menken with completing the songs in Aladdin. Menken went on to compose music for Newsies (1992), Pocahontas (1995), The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996), Hercules (1997), Enchanted (2007) and Tangled (2010).



In 2007, Disney Theatricals mounted a live stage production of *The Little Mermaid* on Broadway at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre, with an expanded score featuring the film's songs by Ashman and Menken and additional lyrics by Glenn Slater. It was helmed by noted opera and theatre director Francesca Zambello and starred Sierra Boggess as Ariel, Tituss Burgess as Sebastian, Norm Lewis as Triton and Sherie Rene Scott as Ursula. The original production encountered several script and technical issues and was reimagined in 2012 for subsequent performances, most notably updating the undersea effects with aerial flying technology.



The Little Mermaid on Broadway

In 2011, Disney Parks unveiled a new advertising campaign that featured images by acclaimed photographer Annie Leibovitz. Actor and musician Queen Latifah portrayed Ursula in one of the central images of the campaign.



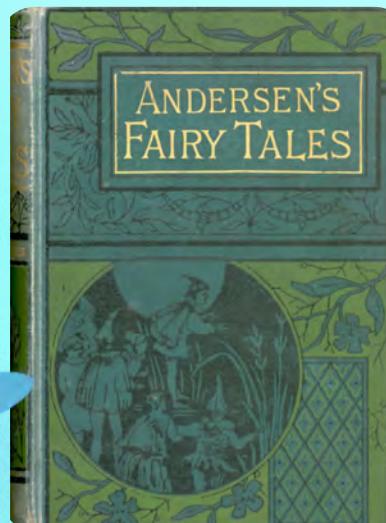
Queen Latifah as Ursula

A Look at Hans Christian Andersen

Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875) was born in Odens, Denmark, as the son of a shoemaker who died when Hans was a young boy. He attended local public schools and apprenticed as a tailor. After his mother remarried, he moved to Copenhagen at 14 years old, hoping to make a career in the theatre. Hans continued his education, supported by private donors, and soon became interested in writing. He wrote several plays, autobiographical works and novels, but became most known for the *eventyr*, or fairy tales, that he crafted from memories of Scandinavian folk-tales he heard in his youth. He published three major collections of these stories in 1835, 1837 and 1838, although he continued to compose them throughout his life. In 1845, his stories were successfully translated into English, and he became a globally recognized figure. He traveled throughout Europe, bolstered by his popularity as an author, becoming close friends with British author Charles Dickens and being acquainted with famous figures such as playwright Henrik Ibsen and singer Jenny Lind, as well. In 1875, after an incapacitating accident and a prolonged bout with liver cancer, Andersen passed away at the home of a friend. At the time of his death, he was considered a national treasure by the government of Denmark.



In 1952, Samuel Goldwyn Productions released a cinematic musical based loosely on Andersen's life, combining elements of his biography with versions of his famous stories. The film, starring Danny Kaye, featured a score by Broadway composer Frank Loesser (Guys and Dolls, How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying).



The 1900 English edition of Andersen's collected fairy tales



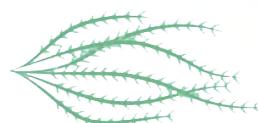
The Little Mermaid

“The Little Mermaid” is a perfect example of this explosive meeting of two worlds, as the title character leaves her wondrous, magical undersea kingdom to join her human love on land. In the original story, first published in 1837, not only does the unnamed mermaid seek to become human because she has fallen in love with a human prince, but she also does so in order to attain an eternal human soul. The Sea-Witch steals her beautiful voice by cutting out her tongue, rendering her mute, but she gains the ability to dance more beautifully than any other human woman. When she discovers that her prince is arranged to marry another woman, she is given the opportunity to kill him and return home beneath the waves. Instead, her heart breaks and she turns into sea-foam. Even though the ending of Andersen’s tale seems to reject a traditional happy ending, the mermaid’s selflessness permits her to gain an eternal soul. Some scholars suggest that Andersen changed the natural tragic ending to impose a more optimistic tone.



“The Little Mermaid” statue in Copenhagen, Denmark

In 1985, Rosa Guy published the novel *My Love, My Love, a Caribbean*-flavored retelling of “The Little Mermaid,” in which the supernatural characters are portrayed as the island gods associated with voodoo. In 1990, a musical based on Guy’s novel entitled *Once on This Island*, with music and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, opened on Broadway. The novel and the musical restore the original melancholy ending of Andersen’s story.



In 1909, a statue of The Little Mermaid was commissioned to honor Andersen and his contributions to world literature and the Danish identity. Designed by Edvard Eriksen, it was unveiled in 1913 on the harbor outside of Copenhagen and has become a symbol of the city. Despite being a major tourist attraction, it has been the victim of regular graffiti and damage, including several decapitations



The 1990 Broadway cast of *Once on This Island*

Other Famous Tales

While "The Little Mermaid" may be one of Andersen's most famous fairy tales, largely in part to the success of the 1989 Disney film adaptation, many others have made their way into the beloved public consciousness.

"The Princess and the Pea"

In this story, a prince who wants to marry a "real" princess rejects a barrage of suitors until a young woman who claims to be a "real" princess comes to his castle. The queen tests the girl's true royal sensitivity by placing a pea under a large stack of mattresses to see if she can feel it. The next morning, she complains of the pain she felt throughout the night, which prevented her from sleeping. This convinces the royal family that she is an authentic princess and she and the prince are married. This story was adapted into the 1959 Broadway musical *Once Upon a Mattress*, which starred a yet-unknown Carol Burnett as Princess Winnifred.



Carol Burnett

"The Emperor's New Clothes"

A vain emperor is tricked by a pair of scoundrels claiming to be tailors, who promise to make him the most elegant set of clothes in the kingdom. They present him with the garments, which they claim can only be seen by those with the most discerning tastes. Not wanting to be considered stupid or uncouth, the emperor praises the garments and decides to parade through the center of town "wearing" them. None of the courtiers or townspeople want to be considered dull enough to not be able to see the clothes either, so they all pretend to marvel at the craftsmanship and elegance of the fabric, stitching and design. Only one honest child in the crowd cries out that the emperor is naked, which opens everyone's eyes to the truth of their vanity and hypocrisy.

"Thumbelina"

A childless peasant woman is given a magic kernel, which grows into a tiny girl no bigger than her thumb. The child, Thumbelina, is eventually kidnapped and engages in many adventures trying to return home. She is forced into marriage arrangements with a number of animals in the countryside, but eventually escapes and falls in love with a fairy prince. They wed, and she is transformed into a fairy, as well.

In 2002, pop fusion trio GrooveLily adapted the story into a contemporary musical entitled *Striking 12*.



Fairy Tales in the 20th and 21st Century



Most of the fairy tales we are familiar with today were published in the 19th Century, although their origins often spring from oral folk tales from centuries before. In recent years, literary and cultural scholars have discovered new unpublished or un-translated collections of fairy tales in Germany, including the unedited version of the original stories by the Brothers Grimm. Readers are routinely shocked at how cruel and dark these versions are, particularly when compared with the beloved versions they were exposed to as children.

A large part of this disconnect can be attributed to the work of Walt Disney and his animation studios, whose animated feature film debut was 1937's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The success of this film led Disney to create famous film adaptations of many other fairy tales, such as *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*. After Disney's death, the studios continued developing these stories into feature films, most famously during the "Disney Renaissance" of the 1990s (*The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Emperor's New Groove*, *The Princess and the Frog*). In order to make them "family friendly," their creators removed some of the graphic violence and sinister tone of the originals. This notorious whitewashing of source material is one reason that author P. L. Travers was opposed to Disney's plans to adapt her *Mary Poppins* stories into the 1964 film featuring Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke.

However, some experts claim that the gloom and terror intrinsic in the original fairy tales is essential to their effectiveness. In 1976, Bruno Bettelheim explored the fairy tale genre using Freudian psychological concepts in his landmark work *The Uses of Enchantment*, in which he contends that the true journeys of the characters (particularly the young female protagonists) is really a subconscious voyage out of the innocence of childhood and adolescence into the experience of being an adult, and that most of the threats portrayed in the stories are metaphors for the onset of sexuality. Broadway composer Stephen Sondheim and playwright James Lapine incorporated Bettelheim's ideas into their award-winning 1987 Broadway musical *Into the Woods*, which was adapted by Disney for the screen in 2014.

Joseph Campbell, a cultural anthropologist whose primary work focused on comparative mythology, proposed that fairy tales possess an inherently mythic structure which he famously dubbed "The Hero's Journey." In his 1969 volume of essays, *The Flight of the Wild Gander*, Campbell interprets the works of the Brothers Grimm as a representation of the inner odyssey or rite of passage of characters into a heightened sense of enlightenment.

In 1977, American Christian theologian Frederick Buechner reenvisioned the story of the New Testament in terms of a fairy tale in his book *Telling the Truth: The Gospel As Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale*. In this work, he theorizes that Christians possess the innocent spirit of children, but that it is still possible to lose oneself in the dark woods of spiritual despair.

In 1994, American satirist published a lampoon of the onset of political correctness in late 20th-Century American culture called *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories: Modern Tales for Our Life and Times*. This book parodied the fairy tale genre and the social buzzwords of the time by challenging the gender roles of the original stories and often reversing the identities of the heroes and villains.

Similarly, children's author Jon Scieszka irreverently turned popular fairy tales on their heads in the 1990s with the publication of *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (1989), *The Frog Prince, Continued* (1991), *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992) and *The Book That Jack Wrote* (1994). Several of these books have been popularly adapted for the stage by children's theatre companies across America in recent years.

Questions for Discussion and Writing

- 1 What is a fairy tale? What are the components that it must have in order to distinguish itself from a myth, a tall tale, a legend? Use your favorite fairy tale from your childhood to determine what is essential in the creation of a good fairy tale? Is it the structure? The characters? The moral?
- 2 Write a journal entry about a time that you felt like you didn't belong in your school, your hometown, your family, a social group. Where did you envision yourself instead? What are the sacrifices that you would have to make to leave one for the other?
- 3 Watch the 1989 Disney animated film version of The Little Mermaid and compare it to the stage version presented by the Arkansas Repertory Theatre. What elements were different? What elements were similar? Were some moments more effective onstage than on screen, and vice versa? Why? Share your ideas with your classmates in an open discussion. Be sure to respect other people's opinions, even if you disagree with them. Keep your mind open to other possibilities.
- 4 Compare the musical with the original Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale. What elements did the musical's creators keep from the story? Which ones did they discard? Which ending is more satisfying? Which ending is more honest? In what ways does Andersen's original fit your definition of a fairy tale from Question 1?
- 5 Does a fairy tale need a happy ending? Give three reasons why and three reasons why not. Share your ideas with your classmates. (For reference, watch Jim Henson's *The Storyteller* (Season 1) and pay attention to the dark tone of these original fairy tales that serve as the basis for later, happier versions.)
- 6 Is Ariel's anger at her father Triton justified? Are there other ways that she could have reacted that might have defused the negative feelings between them? How do you deal with disagreements with your parents about your life choices?



The 1989 Disney animated film version of *The Little Mermaid*

Activities

Read one of the fairy tales by Andersen in the list below and create a plan for a musical version of the story. Who would the main characters be? Would you change any aspects of their personalities? Would you change the time period or location in which they occur? What would the music be like? Would it have a particular style (rock and roll, jazz, reggae, hip hop, etc.)? Create names for the songs and determine who sings them and where they function in the plot of the drama. Is there comic relief in the musical? How is it presented, and are there specific characters who deliver the humor? Who is the villain? Is there a way to make the villain an appealing role than an actor would want to play onstage?

The Emperor's New Clothes
The Princess and the Pea
Thumbelina
The Nightingale

The Steadfast Tin Soldier
The Tinder Box
The Ugly Duckling
The Red Shoes

Sit in a circle. Have your teacher begin a story chain with the words "Once Upon a Time..." and create an original fairy tale. Each student must introduce a new element to the story (a new character, a new plot element, a new revelation, a new setting, etc.) before passing the next link of the chain to the student next to you. Continue this until your story is complete. Videotape the exercise and watch it during your next class period, writing down the main elements of the fairy tale. Rewrite the story for yourself, using the parts that speak to you. You may have to make up new "links" in the story chain if you eliminate any from the exercise. How is your new story similar and/or different from the group's tale? Does it have a new message? Share your new fairy tales with the class and observe which elements remain the same, regardless of the storyteller, and which ones disappear.

Which fairy tale from your youth would benefit from a staging feature aerial effects like those contributed to The Little Mermaid by 2 Ring Circus? How would the acrobatics and flying enhance the storytelling and/or the spectacle of the theatrical experience? Choose a story as a class and create a plan for all of the aerial effects in your imaginary production. Divide students into groups, assigning them characters or scenes to focus on. Then present your findings as a single "production team."



Arkansas Curriculum Framework Taught in Study Guide, Attending The Show and Show Discussion

FINE ARTS

R.7.THI.1-5, R.7.THII.1-5, R.7.THIII.1-5 Students will perceive and analyze artistic work.

R.8.THI.1-2, R.8.THII.1-2, R.8.THIII.1-2 Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

R.9.THI.1-2, R.9.THII.1-2, R.9.THIII.1-2 Students will apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

R.7.TA.2-4, R.8.TA.1-2, R.9.TA.2 Students will perceive and analyze artistic work.

CN.11.TA.2-9 Students will relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

R.7.SCI.1-2, R.7.SCII.1-2, R.7.SCIII.1-2 Students will perceive and analyze artistic work.

R.8.SCI.1, R.8.SCII.1, R.8.SCIII.1 Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

R.9.SCI.1-2, R.9.SCII.1-2, R.9.SCIII.1-2 Students will apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

CN.11.SCI.1-9, CN.11.SCII.1-9, CN.11.SCIII.1-9 Students will relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

R.7.2.1, R.7.3.1, R.7.4.1 Students will perceive and analyze artistic work.

R.8.2.1-3, R.8.3.1-3, R.8.4.1-3 Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

R.9.2.1, R.9.1.1, R.9.2.1-3, R.9.3.1-3, R.9.4.1-3 Students will apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

R.7.5.1, R.7.6.1, R.7.7.1, R.7.8.1 Students will perceive and analyze artistic work.

R.8.5.1-3, R.8.6.1-3, R.8.7.1-3, R.8.8.1-3 Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

R.9.5.1-3, R.9.6.1-3, R.9.7.1-3, R.9.8.1-3 Students will apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

CN.10.5.1, CN.10.6.1, CN.10.7.1, CN.10.8.1 Students will synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

CN.11.5.2-3, CN.11.6.2-3, CN.11.7.2-3, CN.11.7.2-3, CN.10.8.2-3 Students will relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

DRAMATIC LITERATURE

DE.1.DL.1-11 Students will demonstrate understanding of the elements of drama through the study of a variety of dramatic texts.

Our Story

Founded in 1976 and enjoying its 40th Anniversary Season, Arkansas Repertory Theatre is the state's largest non-profit professional theatre company. A member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT D), The Rep has produced more than 300 productions including 40 world premieres on its 377-seat MainStage located in its historic Galloway building in downtown Little Rock. The Rep relies on season subscriptions, special events, foundation support, corporate and individual donations, and several grants, including Shakespeare in American Communities, The Shubert Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts.



Our Mission

Arkansas Repertory Theatre exists to create a diverse body of theatrical work of the highest artistic standards. With a focus on dramatic storytelling that illuminates the human journey, The Rep entertains, engages and enriches local and regional audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

Contact Information

For questions or comments concerning this production of *The Little Mermaid* or Arkansas Repertory Theatre, contact our offices at (501) 378-0445. Additional information may also be found at TheRep.org. The Box Office may be reached at (501) 378-0405.

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